

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Division for Human Capital Leadership & Merit System Accountability
Classification Appeals Program

San Francisco Field Services Group
120 Howard Street, Room 760
San Francisco, CA 94105-0001

Classification Appeal Decision
Under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code

Appellant: [Name of appellant]

Agency classification: Budget Technician
GS-561-7

Organization: [Appellant's organization/location]
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Department of the Interior

OPM decision: Budget Technician
GS-561-7

OPM decision number: C-0561-07-03

/s/ Robert D. Hendler

Robert D. Hendler
Classification and Pay Claims
Program Manager

November 21, 2005

Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the government. The agency is responsible for reviewing its classification decisions for identical, similar, or related positions to ensure consistency with this decision. There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under conditions and time limits specified in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

As indicated in this decision, our findings show that the appellant's official position description does not meet the standard of adequacy described in section III.E. of the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*. Since position descriptions must meet the standard of adequacy, the agency must revise the appellant's position description to reflect our findings. The servicing human resources office must submit a compliance report containing the corrected position description within 30 days of the date of this decision to the San Francisco Field Services Group.

Decision sent to:

[Name and mailing address of appellant]
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

[Address of servicing human resources office]
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Director of Personnel
Department of the Interior
Mail Stop 5221
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Introduction

On July 26, 2005, the San Francisco Field Services Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [name of appellant]. On August 26, 2005, we received the agency's complete administrative report. The appellant's position is classified as Budget Technician, GS-561-7. She requests that it be classified as Budget Analyst, GS-560, or retain its current title and series, but in either case be classified to a higher grade as determined by OPM. She works in the [appellant's organization/location], U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior. We have accepted and decided this appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

This decision is based on a thorough review of all information submitted by the appellant and her agency. In addition, to help decide the appeal we conducted separate telephone interviews with the appellant and her supervisor.

General issues

Both the appellant and her supervisor, the Administrative Officer, have certified to the accuracy of the appellant's official position description (PD) [number]. However, our fact-finding disclosed that the appellant's PD is not completely accurate and does not meet the standard of adequacy addressed on pages 10 and 11 of the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*. While the appellant furnishes technical support in the budget process by gathering, compiling, and submitting projected budgetary input to the Regional Office for future fiscal year budgets, and monitoring and tracking program expenditures in the field office budget throughout the current fiscal year, she is not responsible for budget analysis, formulation and execution as described in the PD. These tasks are performed by budget analysts at the Regional Office. Therefore, the PD must be revised to reflect our findings.

The supervisor mentioned that as part of the appellant's qualifications, she has a degree in accounting. Qualifications are considered in classifying positions only to the extent that they are required to perform current duties and responsibilities. Therefore, we may consider the appellant's personal qualifications only insofar as they are required to perform her current duties and responsibilities. To the extent that they are needed for this purpose, we carefully considered them along with all other information furnished by and appellant and her agency, including her official PD.

Position information

The appellant is the main point of contact in her field office for all tracking and monitoring of expenditures by program, adding/deleting accounts, and advising managers on status of their specific program budgets. The office administers a budget with multiple funding sources covering resource management, reimbursable work, natural resource damage assessment and restoration, and congressional initiatives, covering single and multi-year funding periods. The appellant provides technical budget support in developing and monitoring the office's budget, and is involved in the end-of-year close out process. She develops data for inclusion in annual work plans and the budget formulation cycle. However, the Administrative Officer retains final

authority for decisions, changes, and recommendations regarding budgetary matters. Budget analysts in the agency's Regional Office formulate, analyze, present and execute the region's budget. Regional Office budget staff receive budgetary information and funds from agency headquarters and disseminate them to Regional Office program components, who in turn distribute budgets and funds to the field offices. Currently, the budget section of the appellant's field office consists of her position, the Administrative Officer, and a purchasing agent.

The results of our interviews and other material of record furnish more information about the appellant's duties and responsibilities and how they are performed. Although not completely accurate, we incorporate the appellant's PD by reference into this decision.

Series, title, and standard determination

The agency has classified the appellant's position in the Budget Clerical and Technician Series, GS-561, titling it Budget Technician. However, the appellant believes that it could be classified in either the GS-561 series (retaining the current title), or be classified as Budget Analyst, GS-560, but in either case at a higher grade to be determined by OPM. For the reasons discussed below, we concur with the agency's title and series determination.

As described in the Job Family Position Classification Standard (JFS) for Professional and Administrative Work in the Accounting and Budget Group, GS-0500, positions classified in the Budget Analysis Series, GS-560, and titled Budget Analyst, involve analytical, technical, and administrative duties in one or more phases of the budgetary process, e.g., budget formulation and justification, presentation and enactment, or execution. Budget analysts are responsible for a segment of an organization's budget, programs, and/or organizational structure. A budget analyst normally performs a segment of budget administration work done in the employing component or organization. Many serve as "process generalists," performing a full complement of budgetary functions and duties associated with all phases of the budget process for certain assigned organizational subdivisions, program areas, object classes, or line items. Those specializing in a particular phase of budgeting have broad responsibility for many programs or organizational components; others perform assignments consisting of a matrix of program and budgetary functions and organizational components.

As described in the JFS for Clerical and Technical Accounting and Budget Work, GS-0500, positions classified in the Budget Clerical and Technician Series, GS-561, (titled Budget Technician at GS-5 and above), perform clerical and technician work in support of budget analysis and administration when such work requires primarily knowledge of the procedures which facilitate budgeting as conducted in the Federal service. The work requires practical understanding and skill in the application of administrative rules, regulations, and procedures associated with recording, reporting, processing, and keeping track of budgetary transactions, e.g., the credit, receipt, transfer, allotment, withdrawal, obligation, or outlay of funds. Budget technicians maintain records of expenses, and participate in the budget formulation process by compiling, consolidating, checking, and arranging funding data in requests to cover projected annual operating expenses. Employees may also submit organizational funding requests in proper format through channels for inclusion in the budget request prepared at higher echelons in the agency.

The appellant's position favorably compares to work performed in positions classified in the Budget Clerical and Technician Series, GS-561. Similar to that series, she performs technical work in support of budget analysis and administration (functions primarily found at the Regional Office level) by gathering and compiling input for the office's projected budget, and monitoring and tracking budget expenditures (making adjustments in program funding as necessary) throughout the fiscal year. In doing so, she applies practical skill and knowledge of the agency's budget rules, regulations, and procedures concerning recording, processing, and tracking the field office's budget. The appellant is responsible for forecasting and monitoring various program accounts, reviewing them for discrepancies and errors, and determining whether shortfalls will occur before the end of the fiscal year.

While the field office budget is primarily formulated by budget analysts at the Regional Office, through the use of spread sheets the appellant analyzes, compiles, and consolidates data for individual programs and projected annual operating expenses, prior to submitting the information to the Regional Office for preparation of the budget. As part of this process, the appellant develops what she calls "assumptions" charts which forecast possible/probable scenarios for the next two fiscal years. She presents the "assumptions" charts to the Administrative Officer who shares them with the field office manager and deputy manager for their review. The manager uses the information in the charts to advise subordinate managers and supervisors on the status of their accounts, and possible spending scenarios which can positively or negatively affect their projected program funding. Data gathered by the appellant and reviewed/amended by field office managers and program staff, forms the basis for the next fiscal year's budget request to the Regional Office. The appellant also provides advice and guidance to individual managers in the field office on the status and availability of their funds throughout the year. She keeps her supervisor and the deputy manager supplied with the most current financial information, and monitors and adjusts program amounts daily as new changes are received from program managers or the Regional Office.

The appellant does not perform work typical of positions classified in the Budget Analysis Series, GS-560. Her role is to provide technical support in gathering, processing, tracking and monitoring budget information for her field office. Unlike work in the GS-560 series she is not directly involved in the principal phases of the budgetary process, e.g., budget formulation, presentation, execution. Those responsibilities are assigned to Regional Office budget staff.

Based on the preceding discussion, the proper title and series of this position is Budget Technician, GS-561. The JFS for Clerical and Technical Accounting and Budget Work, GS-0500, contains grading criteria for positions in the GS-561 series which we have applied below.

Grade determination

The JFS is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format, which employs nine factors. Under the FES, each factor level description in a standard describes the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. Therefore, if a position fails to meet the criteria in a factor level description in any significant aspect, it must be credited at a lower level. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at a

higher level. Each factor level has a corresponding point value. The total points assigned are converted to a grade by use of the grade conversion table in the standard or guide.

Factor 1. Knowledge Required by the Position

This factor measures the kind and nature of knowledge and skills needed and how they are utilized in doing the work.

At Level 1-4, the work requires in-depth or broad knowledge of a body of accounting, budget, or other financial management regulations, practices, procedures and policies related to the specific financial management functions. This includes: knowledge of a wide variety of interrelated steps, conditions, and procedures or processes required to assemble, review, and maintain complex accounting, budget, or other fiscal transactions, e.g., verifying the accuracy of budgetary data, adjusting dollar amounts of accounts by line item and object class, and preparing reports on the status of funds; knowledge of various accounting, budget, or other financial regulations, laws, and requirements to ensure compliance and recommend action, e.g., administrative rules associated with recording and tracking budgetary transactions; knowledge of a variety of accounting and budget functional areas and their relationships to other functions to research or investigate problems or errors that require reconciling and reconstructing incomplete information, conducting extensive and exhaustive searches for required information, or performing actions of similar complexity; knowledge of automated accounting and budget systems to reconcile errors that require an understanding of nonstandard procedures or to provide assistance in the development of automated procedures for clerical operations; and/or knowledge of extensive and diverse accounting, budget or other financial regulations, operations, and procedures governing a wide variety of types of related transactions to resolve nonstandard transactions, complaints, or discrepancies, provide advice, or perform other work that requires authoritative procedural knowledge.

At Level 1-5, in addition to Level 1-4 knowledge, the work requires a broad, in-depth practical knowledge of accounting or other financial management technical methods, techniques, precedents cases, and procedures to resolve especially difficult or sensitive problems. Typically employees use: knowledge of accounting methods, procedures, and techniques to conduct difficult and responsible analysis and determinations within a complete accounting system to validate transactions and to perform research to resolve inconsistencies; knowledge of the interrelationships of various accounting systems applications, and computer file systems and content to resolve problems of processed transactions; knowledge of related financial regulations and rulings covering diverse types of transactions to typically function as a technical authority for the resolution of an extensive range of issues or problems.

Level 1-4 is met. In order to record, monitor, and track the field office's budget, the appellant applies an in-depth knowledge of the agency's budget practices, procedures and policies. This includes knowledge of a wide variety of the processes used to project program budget needs, adjust discrepancies in program financial information, verify the accuracy of budget data, and prepare reports on the status of funds covering eighty-two accounts, some of which are reimbursable with the State, counties, tribal organizations, and private entities. Throughout the fiscal year the appellant records program budget changes, redistributes funds as directed by the

Administrative Officer, investigates problems or errors requiring reconciling accounts and reconstructing information, and compares available funding to costs incurred in previous years to develop program budget projections for future years. Like Level 1-4, the appellant must have knowledge of extensive budget regulations and procedures to provide authoritative procedural advice to program managers on the status of their individual program accounts, and resolve nonstandard budgetary transactions. For example, the field office established the first ever financial agreement with a private entity concerning installation of pipelines. The appellant had to research regulations to make sure that the agreement was correctly done, and that the budget and accounts were properly set up to monitor the status of the project.

Level 1-5 is not met. Unlike that level, the appellant is not faced with the requirement to conduct difficult and responsible analysis and determinations within a complete accounting or budgetary system to validate transactions and resolve inconsistencies. Because the automated accounting and budgeting systems reside in the Regional Office, her work does not require or permit her to validate transactions or resolve problems within the complete system. Those duties are carried out by the Regional Office budget staff. The appellant tracks and monitors all field office funds through spreadsheets she develops. She has developed techniques to better track field office funds by combining and expanding on her local system, but does not have to deal with the complications and interrelationships of various accounting and computer file systems to resolve problems of processed transactions. Unlike Level 1-5, she does not function as a technical authority for resolving an extensive range of budget issues or problems. Such matters are referred to and are the responsibility of the Regional Office.

This factor is evaluated at Level 1-4 and 550 points are credited.

Factor 2, Supervisory Controls

This factor measures how the work is assigned, the employee's responsibility for carrying out the work, and how the work is reviewed.

At Level 2-3, the highest level for this factor described in the JFS, the supervisor assigns work with standing instructions on objectives, priorities, and deadlines and provides guidance for unusually involved situations. The supervisor may assign work according to a standardized control system such as batched work, caseload level, or other defined structure and provide standard general instructions about timeliness, objectives and relative priorities for doing the work. The employee independently processes the most difficult procedural and technical tasks or actions and handles problems and deviations in accordance with instructions, policies, previous training, or accepted practices. The supervisor evaluates completed work for overall technical soundness and conformance to agency policies, legal, or system requirements. Completed work is reviewed by sampling in a quality review system and/or spot checked by the supervisor or a senior worker for results and conformity to established requirements and deadlines. The methods used to complete the assignment are seldom reviewed in detail.

The appellant's position meets but does not exceed Level 2-3. Like that level, the appellant's supervisor (Administrative Officer) assigns work based on existing instructions, budget program objectives, priorities, and deadlines. The appellant independently carries out her work, seeking

guidance from the supervisor only when unusual issues relating to the budget occur, or interpretations are needed on application of new agency policies or regulations. The supervisor randomly spot checks completed work to ensure that established technical budget requirements and program deadlines are met. Specific methods used to complete the assignments are not reviewed in detail by the supervisor.

This factor is evaluated at Level 2-3 and 275 points are credited.

Factor 3, Guidelines

This factor covers the nature of the guidelines and the judgment needed to apply them.

At Level 3-3, the highest level for this factor described in the JFS, guidelines used are the same as those found at Level 3-2, including established procedures and specific guidelines in the form of agency policies and procedures, Federal codes and manuals, specific related regulations, precedent actions, and processing manuals. However, because of the complicating nature of assignments, they lack specificity, frequently change, or are not completely applicable to the work requirements, circumstances, or problems. When completing a transaction at Level 3-3, the employee may have to rely on experienced judgment rather than guides to fill in gaps, identify sources of information, and make working assumptions about what transpired. At Level 3-3, the employee uses judgment to interpret guidelines, adapt procedures, decide approaches, and resolve specific problems. This can require using judgment to reconstruct incomplete files, devise more efficient methods for procedural processing, or gather and organize information for inquiries. He/she may analyze the results of applying guidelines and recommend changes. These changes may include suggesting specific changes to the guidelines themselves, the development of control mechanisms, additional training for employees, or specific guidance related to the procedural handling of documents and information.

The appellant's position meets but does not exceed Level 3-3. Guidelines used include the Federal Financial System Manual, Federal Personnel and Payroll Systems Handbook, Federal Acquisition Regulations, and the Budget Tracking System User's Guide. However, because of the complicating nature of the appellant's work, they sometimes lack specificity and are not completely applicable to her budget assignments. In such cases the appellant relies on her experience and judgment, rather than the guides, to deal with gaps in information and identify other sources of data. She uses judgment to interpret guidelines and adapt procedures to cover unusual situations, especially when there is insufficient information to resolve deficits in funding, when there is a lack of complete data to project future program needs, or in tracing payments through the system to ensure they are appropriately charged. Similar to Level 3-3, she uses judgment and discretion to reconstruct files having incomplete information, and exercises judgment in devising more efficient methods for recording and tracking expenditures and in assembling information to respond to inquiries from program managers regarding the status of particular budget line items. In applying existing budget guidelines and processing actions, she may suggest specific changes to governing references to improve the procedural processes for monitoring and tracking the field office's budget.

This factor is evaluated at Level 3-3 and 275 points are credited.

Factor 4, Complexity

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of the tasks, processes, or methods in the work performed; the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

At Level 4-3, the employee performs various accounting, budget, or financial management support related duties or assignments that use different and unrelated processes, procedures, or methods. The use of different procedures may result because transactions are not completely standardized; deadlines are continually changing; functions assigned are relatively broad and varied; or transactions are interrelated with other systems and require extensive coordination with other personnel. The employee decides what needs to be done by identifying the nature of the problem, question or issue, and determining the need for and obtaining additional information through oral or written contacts or by reviewing regulations and manuals. The employee may have to consider previous actions and understand how these actions differ from or are similar to the issue at hand before deciding on an approach. The employee makes recommendations or takes actions based on a case-by-case review of the pertinent regulations, documents, or issues involved in each assignment or situation, e.g., using different established procedures to review and reconcile various financial documents and records.

Level 4-4 differs from the previous level by (1) the variety and complexity of examinations, transactions, or systems involved; (2) the nature and variety of problems encountered and resolved; and (3) the nature of independent decisions made by the employee. Typically at this level the work may require analysis, development or testing of a variety of established techniques and methods to evaluate alternatives and arrive at decisions, conclusions, or recommendations. The work involves application of many different and unrelated processes and methods relating to examination or analysis of complex and unusual transactions requiring substantial research and thorough understanding of a wide variety of transactions and accounts. Decisions regarding what needs to be done include assessing unusual circumstances or conditions, developing variations in approach to fit specific problems or dealing with incomplete, unreliable, or conflicting data. The JFS notes that Level 4-4 is creditable only when Factor Level 1-5 is appropriately assigned to the position being evaluated.

Level 4-3 is met. Similar to that level, depending upon the types of accounts tracked and monitored, the appellant uses different and unrelated processes and procedures. Funding sources from other agencies, (e.g., other Federal entities, State and local governments, tribal, and private companies), entail different handling of funds, different agreements, and different timeframes for costing and closing accounts. As funding requirements change throughout the year due to various reasons (e.g., no funding for Trumpeter Swans, funding needed for additional space, attrition of staff, pay adjustments, reimbursable funds increasing and decreasing), the appellant must decide what needs to be done and recalculate available funds according to changed requirements and needs. In doing so, the appellant considers previous actions and determines how they are similar or different from the matter at hand before deciding on the best approach. The changes must be tracked and recorded so that funding can be planned for future years. When new projects occur (e.g., agreement with private entity for pipeline work), the appellant

must devise new procedures for monitoring and tracking the budget aspects. Similar to Level 4-3, the appellant takes actions based on individual case review of relevant regulations, particularly when reconciling specific documents and records relating to a specific budget program item.

Level 4-4 is not met. Unlike that level, the appellant's assignments do not encompass the variety, complexity, decision making responsibility and authority, and degree of originality in interpreting and correcting technical difficulties found at Level 4-4. Given that the knowledge required of the appellant to perform her work does not exceed Level 1-4, assignment of Level 4-4 is not appropriate to this position.

This factor is evaluated at Level 4-3 and 150 points are credited.

Factor 5, Scope and Effect

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work, i.e., the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment, and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization.

At Level 5-3, the highest level for this factor described in the JFS, the employee applies conventional practices to treat a variety of problems in accounting, budget or financial management transactions. Issues might result from insufficient information about the transaction, a need for more efficient processing procedures, or requests to expedite urgently needed cases. The employee treats these or similar problems in conformance with established procedures. The work affects the quality, quantity, and accuracy of the organization's records, program operations, and service to clients.

The appellant's position meets but does not exceed Level 5-3. Like that level, she applies conventional practices to monitor and track the field office's budget, and resolves a variety of technical budget problems covering program transactions. She is frequently faced with issues concerning insufficient information for particular program budget line items, and has developed her own internal processing and recording procedures to more efficiently track expenditures and project future budget data. The work involves many changes, and many accounts to monitor, adjust, add, close out, and/or research for errors. Her work affects the efficient budgetary workflow of the field office, and the quality and accuracy of its budget records, programs and operations, and service to both public and private sector clients.

This factor is credited at Level 5-3 and 150 points are credited.

Factor 6, Personal Contacts and Factor 7, Purpose of Contacts

Personal Contacts

This factor assesses the level of face-to-face contacts and telephone dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. The evaluation criteria are described in three paragraphs labeled 1 through 3.

Level 2 contacts include employees in the same agency, but outside of the immediate organization. For example, contacts may be with personnel in other functional areas, or with employees in other agencies who are providing requested information. Level 2 contacts may also be with members of the general public in a moderately structured setting. Level 2 is met. As at that level, the appellant's regular and recurring contacts include employees of her agency but outside her immediate organization, such as program managers and staff at the field office, and budget and financial management personnel at the Regional Office.

Level 3 contacts are with members of the general public. For example, contacts are with persons in their capacities as representatives of others such as attorneys and accountants, contractors, public action groups, or congressional staff members making inquiries on behalf of constituents. The contacts are not recurring or routine and the purpose, role and authority of each party must be established each time in order for the employee to determine the nature and extent of information that can be discussed or released. Level 3 is not met. The appellant does not have contact with members of the general public, or representatives as noted at this level.

Purpose of Contacts

This factor assesses the purpose of contacts, which can range from factual exchanges of information to situations involving significant or controversial issues and differing viewpoints, goals, or objectives. The evaluation criteria are described in three paragraphs labeled a through c.

At Level b, the purpose of the contacts is to plan and coordinate actions to correct or prevent errors, delays, or other complications occurring during the transaction cycle. This may involve obtaining a customer's cooperation in submitting paperwork or other information, requesting other personnel to correct errors in documentation or data entry, or assisting others in locating information. Level b is met. Like that level, the appellant meets with budget staff and program managers to gather additional budget data, correct budget transaction errors, and resolve other budget problems during the budget cycle. This includes obtaining the client's cooperation for submitting additional data, and assisting other budget and program staff to correct errors or locate information.

At Level c, the purpose of the contacts is to persuade individuals who are fearful, skeptical, uncooperative or threatening to provide information, take corrective action, and accept findings in order to gain compliance with established laws and regulations. Level c is not met. The purpose of the appellant's contacts does not involve persuading persons who are skeptical, fearful, uncooperative or threatening to provide information or take corrective action.

These factors are credited at Level 2-b for a total of 75 points.

Factor 8, Physical Demands

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee by the work assignment.

The appellant's work requires some physical effort such as standing, walking, bending, and sitting which meets Level 8-1 (the highest level for this factor described in the JFS).

This factor is evaluated at Level 8-1 and 5 points are credited.

Factor 9, Work Environment

This factor considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings, or the nature of the work assigned and the safety regulations required.

As in Level 9-1, the highest level for this factor described in the JFS, the appellant works in an office setting involving everyday risks or discomforts, and only normal safety precautions are required.

This factor is evaluated at Level 9-1 and 5 points are credited.

Summary of FES factors

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. <i>Knowledge Required by the Position</i>	1-4	550
2. <i>Supervisory Controls</i>	2-3	275
3. <i>Guidelines</i>	3-3	275
4. <i>Complexity</i>	4-3	150
5. <i>Scope and Effect</i>	5-3	150
6&7. <i>Personal Contacts & Purpose of Contacts</i>	2-b	75
8. <i>Physical Demands</i>	8-1	5
9. <i>Work Environment</i>	9-1	<u>5</u>
Total		1485

A total of 1485 points falls within the GS-7 range (1355-1600) on the grade conversion table in the JFS. Therefore, the appellant's position is graded at the GS-7 level.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Budget Technician, GS-561-7.