

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

Appellant: [appellant's name]

Agency classification: Lead Information Technology Specialist
(SYSANALYSIS)
GS-2210-13

Organization: [Branch]
Division of Process Engineering, Project
and Customer Services
Office of Enterprise Support,
Architecture and Engineering
Office of the Deputy Commissioner,
Systems
Social Security Administration
[location]

OPM decision: Lead Information Technology Specialist
(SYSANALYSIS)
GS-2210-13

OPM decision number: C-2210-13-01

Robert D. Hendler
Classification and Pay Claims
Program Manager
Center for Merit System Accountability

1/29/08

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).

Although the position description (PD) of record contains major duties performed by the appellant, it is not adequate for classification purposes since it does not sufficiently describe the appellant's personally performed work to permit proper application of the PCS covering that work. Consequently, it does not meet the standard of adequacy discussed in section III.E of the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*. Therefore, the appellant's agency must revise his PD to meet that standard and submit a compliance report containing the corrected PD and an SF 50 showing the personnel action taken. The report must be submitted within 30 days from the effective date of the personnel action to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) field office which accepted the appeal.

Decision sent to:

[appellant's name]
[appellant's address]

Director, Office of Enterprise Support,
Architecture and Engineering
Division of Process Engineering,
Project and Customer Services
Social Security Administration
[installation address]

Human Resources Specialist
Social Security Administration
[installation address]

Director, Center for Classification
and Organizational Management
Social Security Administration
[installation address]

Introduction

On June 11, 2007, the Philadelphia Oversight and Accountability Group (formerly the Philadelphia Field Services Group) of OPM accepted a classification appeal from [appellant's name]. His position is currently classified as Lead Information Technology (IT) Specialist (SYSANALYSIS), GS-2210-13, which the appellant believes should be upgraded to GS-14. The position is located in the [Branch], Division of Process Engineering, Project and Customer Services (DPEPCS); Office of Enterprise Support, Architecture and Engineering, Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Systems; Social Security Administration (SSA); [location]. We received the agency administrative report (AAR) on July 19, 2007. We have accepted and decided this appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C).

We conducted a telephone audit with the appellant on August 30, 2007, and interviewed his immediate supervisor on September 4, 2007. In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully considered all of the information gained from the interviews, as well as the written information furnished by the appellant and his agency, including the PD of record. The appellant is assigned to a standardized PD which covers, in a general manner, the major functions assigned to and performed by him, and we incorporate it by reference into this decision.

Background

In April 2006, the appellant requested the SSA Center for Classification and Organization Management (CCOM) review the classification of his position. They issued a decision on November 21, 2006, under the agency's reconsideration process which found the position was correctly classified as GS-2210-13 Lead IT Specialist (SYSANALYSIS). In January 2007, the appellant filed a classification appeal with CCOM requesting his position be classified one grade level higher. CCOM issued the appeal decision on April 4, 2007, again finding the position properly classified as GS-2210-13 Lead IT Specialist (SYSANALYSIS). The appellant disagreed and filed this appeal with OPM requesting his position be classified at the GS-14 grade level. The organization chart provided in the AAR shows the appellant is assigned to a standardized team leader PD along with 34 other employees.

General issues

The appellant and his supervisor agree his current PD of record, number [number], dated June 7, 2002, accurately describes his assigned duties and responsibilities. However, the appellant disagrees with the agency's classification of both his team leader duties and personally performed work, contending instead that each equates to GS-14 grade level work based on application of the pertinent position classification standards (PCS).

A PD is the official record of the major duties and responsibilities assigned to a position or job by an official with the authority to assign work. A position is the work made up of the duties and responsibilities performed by an employee. Position classification appeal regulations permit OPM to investigate or audit a position and decide an appeal on the basis of the actual duties and responsibilities assigned by management and performed by the employee (title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), 511.607(a)(1) and 609). An OPM appeal decision classifies a real

operating position, and not simply the PD. Therefore, this decision is based on the actual work assigned to and performed by the appellant.

The appellant raises concerns about the agency's conduct toward him as a result of his questioning the classification of his position and makes various other statements about the agency's review and evaluation of his position. In adjudicating this appeal, our responsibility is to make our own independent decision on the proper classification of the appellant's position. By law, we must classify positions solely by comparing their current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). Therefore, we have considered the appellant's statements only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison. Since our decision sets aside any previously issued agency decision, any actions previously taken by the agency in its review of the appellant's position are not germane to this classification appeal process.

Position information

The appellant works within the DPEPCS which: provides guidance to SSA's systems organization on the development of improved project management, software design and systems engineering practices, and coordinates efforts to plan and implement new system processes and standards; evaluates the process maturity of systems; maintains and/or coordinates a library of established organizational processes, measures and engineering assets; exercises oversight for systems executives concerning component customer service; operates and maintains systems training facilities; performs process analysis, re-engineering and Web development for the Systems Customer Service, Training, Requirements Engineering and Systems Process Improvement initiatives; provides technical expertise to facilitate on-site and remote electronic meetings; supports project teams in executing requirements engineering and management processes; defines needs, procures, tests, upgrades and integrates support tools for requirements definition, management, and analysis into the SSA environment and lifecycle; develops guidelines, procedure manuals and course materials; provides consultant services to project teams; assists project teams in generating their lifecycle documentation and reports; provides ongoing training on requirements documentation; and provides life cycle documentation to internal and external auditors on request.

The primary reason for the appellant's position is to identify strategic IT resources needed to support SSA business processes and operations, and the processes to research, evaluate, demonstrate and implement new technologies in support of SSA's strategic vision. He works in an office that designs, develops, implements, and maintains automated test methods and test data systems and utilities for systems-level and user acceptance testing of administrative, management, and programmatic information systems. In particular, the appellant and his team perform systems analysis for the Requirements Engineering Process (REP) and the Electronic Meeting Facility (EMF) operations. REP is an optional process available to management as part of the software development life cycle. It provides a process/method to identify, gather, document and manage system requirements. EMF operations involve software and equipment used to facilitate divisional on-site or remote electronic meetings.

The appellant leads, mentors, monitors, and coordinates work efforts, and provides technical resources to the team. Team members apply analytical processes to plan, design and implement

new and/or improved information systems to meet the business requirements of customer organizations. Members contribute varying levels of expertise to provide direct consultative and technical services to project teams concerning REP and to support the EMF training facility and software. The record shows the team is comprised of two contracted employees and four Federal civilian employees (i.e., two GS-13 IT Specialists (SYSANALYSIS), one GS-12 IT Specialist (Policy and Planning), and one GS-11 grade level IT Specialist). The GS-11 employee and one of the GS-13 grade level employees spend all their time on the team's work, while the other team members divide their time between the team's REP/EMF work and other non-team related duties. For purposes of this appeal decision we assume the Federal civilian positions to be correctly classified.

As team leader, the appellant serves as main point of contact for REP and EMF projects/activities and provides technical information to current and potential internal SSA customers. He consults with customers to: explain REP and/or EMF processes, discuss and clarify intended uses; determine specific requirements, identify the changes needed for implementation and assess potential impact. Customers are frequently senior management officials or other individuals designated responsibility for implementing the REP in their offices and/or for EMF activities. The appellant is the designated DPEPCS representative to explain the optional REP process to such individuals.

The appellant reports to a GS-14 Supervisory IT Specialist, but may also receive assignments directly from the Division Director. The appellant is delegated independent responsibility to research the technical aspects of his and the team's assigned projects based on his expertise in the assigned areas and systems, and his recommendations are almost always accepted as technically correct and implemented. However, prior to implementation, his work must be reviewed and approved. To this end, he presents his research findings, including information on available options, to management for their review and consideration from an overall standpoint of feasibility; compatibility with other projects/systems; and effectiveness in meeting established requirements. The appellant must also justify requests for additional resources, including staff and budget, before starting any major project assignments.

The appellant's supervisor states the REP is part of a larger SSA succession planning effort to find and document best practices in different disciplines. An operational audit had identified the absence of an REP as a deficiency, and as a result the appellant was assigned to coordinate the efforts needed to develop and implement a REP. The appellant assessed the needs of the division, researched established requirement engineering frameworks, and chose/recommended a case-driven technique that best fit the needs of the organization. He then adapted this framework to align with the division strategic plans and goals and, with approval from his supervisor, contracted with a private sector party to customize an existing tool called Requisite Pro. Throughout the REP development process, guidelines in the form of software development industry best practices and standards, operational policies, and contracted technical support were and continue to be available. The appellant documents REP procedures for the division, drafts procedural manuals and course materials, and trains new analysts in the use of this voluntary/optional process. He also maintains a technical resource library for his team. Although the PD of record contains major duties performed by the appellant, it is not adequate for classification purposes in that it does not describe the appellant's personally performed work

sufficient for application of the PCS covering that work. Therefore, it does not meet the standard of adequacy discussed in section III.E of the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*.

Series, title, and standard determination

The agency has placed the appellant's position in the GS-2210 Information Technology Management Series and titled it Information Technology Specialist (SYSANALYSIS) based on application of the GS-2200 Job Family Standard (JFS) for Administrative Work in the Information Technology Group. The agency also decided the position meets the requirements for designation as a leader under the General Schedule Leader Grade Evaluation Guide (GSLGEG) and added the prefix "Lead" to the position's title. Therefore, the position is officially titled Lead Information Technology Specialist (SYSANALYSIS). The appellant does not contest the title, series determination, or PCSs used and, based on careful analysis of the record, we concur.

Grade determination

The appellant disagrees with the agency's application of the GS-2200 JFS and the GSLGEG to determine the proper grade for his position. Therefore, we will address his position's work in comparison to both standards.

Evaluation using the GS-2200 JFS

The GS-2200 JFS is written in Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Grades are determined by comparing a position's duties, responsibilities, and qualification requirements to the nine FES factors. A point value is assigned to each factor based on a comparison of the position's duties and responsibilities with the factor-level descriptions in the standard. The points assigned to an individual factor level mark the lower end of the range for that factor level. Each factor level-description represents the minimum or threshold for that factor level. To warrant a given level, the position must fully equate to the overall intent of the factor-level description. If the position fails in any significant aspect to fully satisfy a particular factor-level description, the point value for the next lower level must be assigned, unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect that meets a higher level. The total points assigned are converted to a grade level by use of a grade conversion table in the GS-2200 JFS.

Occupation and specialty specific factor illustrations provided within the GS-2200 JFS are used as a frame of reference for applying factor-level concepts. However, the JFS states that an evaluation is not to rely solely on comparison to illustrations because they may reflect a limited range of actual work experience, and the level of work described may be higher than the threshold for a particular factor level.

The agency applied the GS-2200 JFS grading criteria and credited the appellant's position with Levels 1-8, 2-4, 3-4, 4-5, 5-4, 6-3, 7-C, 8-1 and 9-1. The appellant believes his position should be credited with Levels 1-8, 2-5, 3-5, 4-6, 5-5, 6-3, 7-D, 8-1 and 9-1. Based on careful analysis

of the entire record, we concur with the crediting of Levels 6-3, 8-1, and 9-1. We will address the remaining factors.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts a worker must understand in order to do acceptable work and the nature and extent of skills needed to apply that knowledge. To be used as a basis for selecting a level under this factor, the knowledge must be required and applied. Proper application of the JFS criteria provided for Factor 1 requires full consideration of both the specialty-specific and common requirements described at each level. The agency credited the position at Level 1-8, and the appellant does not disagree. However, as discussed below, the rationale provided by the agency for its decision to credit Level 1-8 does not fully address all the requirements described at that level.

At Level 1-7, employees have knowledge of and skill in applying most of the following common requirements: IT concepts, principles, methods, and practices; the mission and programs of customer organizations; the organization's IT infrastructure; performance management/measurement methods, tools, and techniques; systems testing and evaluation principles, methods, and tools; IT security principles and methods; requirement analysis principles and methods; commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) products and components; Internet technologies to analyze the Internet potential of systems, networks, and data; new and emerging information technologies and/or industry trends; acquisition management policies and procedures; cost-benefit analysis principles and methods; analytical methods and practices; project management principles and methods; and oral and written communications techniques.

This knowledge must be sufficient to: plan and carry out difficult and complex assignments and develop new methods, approaches, and procedures; provide advice and guidance on a wide range and variety of complex IT issues; interpret IT policies, standards, and guidelines; conduct analyses and recommend resolution of complex issues affecting the specialty area; evaluate and recommend adoption of new or enhanced approaches to delivering IT services; test and optimize the functionality of systems, networks, and data; identify and define business or technical requirements applied to the design, development, implementation, management, and support of systems and networks; ensure optimal use of commercially available products; evaluate proposals for the acquisition of IT products or services; prepare and present reports; represent the organization in interactions with other organizations; and provide technical leadership on group projects.

The illustration for the systems analysis specialty at this level describes required knowledge of, and skill in applying: systems design tools, methods, and techniques, including automated systems analysis and design tools; systems design standards, policies, and authorized approaches; systems design precedents or alternative approaches; structured analysis principles and methods; and business processes and operations of customer organizations sufficient to develop requirements and specifications for systems that meet business requirements; advise on the merits of proposed systems development projects; and apply a structured systems analysis approach to the design and development of new or enhanced applications.

At Level 1-8, the common requirements involve mastery of and skill in applying advanced IT principles, concepts, methods, standards, and practices sufficient to accomplish assignments such as: developing and interpreting policies, procedures, and strategies governing the planning and delivery of services throughout the agency; providing expert technical advice, guidance, and recommendations to management and other technical specialists on critical IT issues; applying new developments to previously unsolvable problems; and making decisions or recommendations that significantly influence important agency IT policies or programs. This level also requires mastery of and skill in applying most of the following: interrelationships of multiple IT specialties; the agency's IT architecture; new IT developments and applications; emerging technologies and their applications to business processes; IT security concepts, standards, and methods; project management principles, methods, and practices including developing plans and schedules, estimating resource requirements, defining milestones and deliverables, monitoring activities; evaluating and reporting on accomplishments; and oral and written communication techniques.

This knowledge must be sufficient to: accomplish assignments such as ensuring the integration of IT programs and services; developing solutions to integration/interoperability issues; designing, developing, and managing systems that meet current and future business requirements and applying and extending, enhancing, or optimizing the existing architecture; managing assigned projects; communicating complex technical requirements to non-technical personnel; and preparing and presenting briefings to senior management officials on complex/controversial issues. The illustration for the systems analysis specialty at this level describes the required knowledge as mastery of and skill in applying business process engineering concepts and methods sufficient to lead/conduct studies designed to identify potential improvements in the way information technology is applied to key business functions.

To correctly interpret and apply Level 1-8, it must be read in conjunction with the preceding level of the factor and, when necessary with Level 1-8 as defined in the Primary Standard (PS) to confirm its intended meaning. Level 1-8 of the PS describes work requiring a mastery of a professional or administrative field to apply experimental theories and new developments to problems not susceptible to treatment by accepted methods; or make decisions or recommendations significantly changing, interpreting, or developing important public policies or programs; or equivalent knowledge and skill.

The agency credited the appellant's REP work at Level 1-8 based on his being recognized by management as an expert on requirements engineering. However, recognition as an expert does not control or permit crediting of Level 1-8. To properly credit a position at Level 1-8 or any other level it is necessary to determine the actual degree of knowledge required to perform the work assigned to and performed by the position's occupant. The appellant's REP work involves researching, selecting, adapting, and maintaining a COTS process to provide an optional method for determining requirements. It does not require a mastery of requirements engineering since his REP work does not require or permit the appellant to: make decisions or recommendations that significantly influence critical agency-wide IT policies or programs; develop and interpret policies, procedures, and strategies that govern the planning and delivery of services throughout the agency; provide expert technical advice, guidance, and/or recommendations on critical IT issues; make decisions or recommendations significantly changing, interpreting, or developing

important public policies or programs, or apply experimental theories and/or new developments to problems not susceptible to treatment by accepted methods as described at Level 1-8.

The appellant is also responsible for the operation and maintenance and improvements to the agency's **EMF** system capabilities. Like the appellant's REP work, the EMF work involves the selection, modification, implementation, maintenance and improvement of COTS software and equipment to meet the agency's needs. The agency evaluated the appellant's EMF work at Level 1-7, and we agree. As at Level 1-7, the appellant plans and carries out difficult and complex assignments, provides advice and guidance on a wide range of complex IT issues, and ensures optimal use of COTS products. He applies substantial IT knowledge and skill to manage and maintain the EMF and REP, lead his team's work efforts and, in consultation with other professionals, adapt and incorporate techniques, methods, procedures and practices to expand the effectiveness of his program areas. Neither the EMF nor the optional REP are critical to SSA's mission or directly impact key business functions. The appellant's work meets, but does not exceed Level 1-7. Therefore, Level 1-7 is credited with 1250 points.

Factor 2, Supervisory controls

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility, and the review of completed work.

At Level 2-4, the supervisor establishes overall objectives and available resources for the work, and the employee and supervisor together develop the scope, timeframes, stages and possible approaches to accomplish the work. The employee determines the approach to take, degree of intensity, depth of research, and the most appropriate principles, practices, and methods to apply in each phase of the assignments. The employee also independently interprets and applies regulations; applies new methods to resolve complex, intricate, unique and/or controversial problems; resolves most conflicts that arise; and keeps the supervisor informed of progress and potentially sensitive and/or controversial issues. Completed work is reviewed from an overall standpoint for soundness of approach, feasibility, compatibility with other projects, and effectiveness in meeting requirements and producing expected results. At this level the supervisor does not usually review the methods used by the employee to complete assignments.

At Level 2-5, the supervisor provides only policy and administrative direction in terms of broadly defined missions or functions of the agency. The employee is responsible for a significant agency-level IT program of function, interprets and applies policies established by senior authorities above his supervisor's level, independently plans and carries out the work to be done, and is a recognized technical authority regarding the work. At this level, the supervisor reviews the work for its potential impact on broad agency-level program goals and policy objectives, and the work is normally accepted without significant change or technical review.

Level 2-5 is not met because the appellant's work does not involve the breadth or importance to the overall agency mission as that described at this level, nor does he exercise the extent of program and/or functional authority implicit at Level 2-5. As previously described, the nature of the appellant's assignments, responsibility for allocated project resources, layers of review necessary prior to his authorization to act, and the manner in which his work is reviewed upon

completion fully meets but does not exceed Level 2-4. Therefore, Level 2-4 is credited with 450 points.

Factor 3, Guidelines

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

At Level 3-4, employees use guidelines and precedents which are very general in nature including agency policy statements and objectives, program directives, and Government regulations. Guidance specific to the assignment is frequently either unavailable, has significant gaps, or is not otherwise completely applicable to the work. Applying available guidance requires judgment, resourcefulness and initiative to interpret and/or adapt it to address particular issues or problems and may involve deviating from established methods. Guidelines provide a general outline of the program goals and objectives, but do not detail the methods used to complete work assignments. At this level, employees resolve complex and/or intricate problems and issues, research trends and patterns, develop new methods and criteria and/or recommend new policies, procedures or practices.

At Level 3-5, available guidelines are often ambiguous, express conflicting or incompatible goals and objectives and require extensive interpretation. Employees at this level are recognized as technical experts by top agency managers and senior staff. They use judgment and ingenuity, exercise broad latitude to determine the intent of available guidelines to develop policy and guidance for specific areas of the agency's work, and formulate interpretations which may serve as the basis for agency-level policy statements, directives and guidelines.

Comparable to Level 3-4, the theories, techniques, policies and guidelines used by the appellant and his team, while often general in nature and requiring adaptation/modification to meet the needs of particular applications, are normally established and available. The appellant applies considerable judgment and initiative to select, interpret, and adapt available guidance and may on occasion build upon this information to suggest new or significantly modified/improved processes and methods. Within his defined area of responsibility, the appellant and his team: resolve difficult/complex problems and issues; research best practices, industry trends, and patterns; and develop and recommend new methods, procedures, and/or practices for management's consideration. The record shows his work does not meet Level 3-5 where guidelines are often ambiguous, conflicting, or incompatible and require extensive interpretation applying broad latitude to develop guidance for specific areas of the agency's work **and** frame interpretations that may serve as the basis for agency-level policies, directives, and guidelines. Rather, the appellant researches and compares existing public and private sector approaches and solutions to similar problems; evaluates the relative merits and problems associated with available options; and develops/recommends tailored solutions adapting proven techniques, methods, processes, and/or practices. The appellant's position meets Level 3-4 and is credited with 450 points.

Factor 4, Complexity

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, 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 4-5, work consists of a various duties requiring the application of many different and unrelated processes and methods to a broad range of IT activities or to the in-depth analysis of IT issues/problems. Employees make decisions that involve major uncertainties regarding the most effective approach or methodology to be applied and work assignments typically result from continuing changes in customer business requirements or rapidly evolving technology in the specialty areas. At this level, employees: develop new standards, methods, and techniques; evaluate the impact of technological change; and/or develop solutions to highly complex technical issues. The work frequently involves integrating the activities of multiple specialty areas.

Two illustrations are provided at this level for the systems analysis specialty. The first describes a work situation where employees plan and coordinate the agency-wide implementation of process improvement methods and concepts to enhance the quality of software products. Employees serve as the principal advocate within the agency for the application of process improvement concepts and practices, consult with senior specialists and IT managers throughout the agency in the implementation of process improvement practices, and exercise considerable judgment and ingenuity in advocating the benefits of implementing business-driven quality and process improvement approaches. In the second illustration, employees: develop standardized systems design methods, identify and evaluate highly effective systems design methodologies, benchmark best practices from industry and other Government organizations, develop and test prototypes, evaluate test results, select methods that result in quality design and high customer satisfaction, and exercise considerable judgment and ingenuity in championing the implementation of standardized methods throughout the agency.

At Level 4-6, work consists of broad functions and processes. Employees at this level plan and lead efforts to address issues in areas where precedents do not exist, and establish new concepts and approaches. Assignments involve an exceptional breadth and intensity of effort and often involve several activities being pursued concurrently or sequentially with the support of others within or outside the agency. Employees decide what needs to be done by conducting extensive investigation and analysis of largely undefined factors and conditions to determine the nature and scope of problems and to devise solutions and make continuing efforts to develop new concepts, theories, or programs, or to solve problems that have previously resisted solution.

Comparable to Level 4-5, there are a number of requirements engineering process concepts, tools, techniques, methods, and precedents available to the appellant. He typically researches various alternatives and approaches used in other processes to determine if they are of value and can be adapted or combined in new ways to meet the needs of the program. Occasionally, when problems do not yield to such efforts, the appellant applies existing requirements engineering concepts, techniques, and methods in new or unique ways to develop tailored applications to

meet division requirements, e.g., he developed a new, refined optional REP which other systems groups may choose to employ in determining/clarifying requirements.

The appellant's efforts to develop new approaches and improvements primarily through modifying, adapting, refining, and tailoring existing software, methods, precedents, and techniques do not meet Level 4-6 where employees make continuing efforts to develop original, new, and unique concepts, methods, or techniques and/or theories to solve problems that have previously resisted solutions; and assignments involve extensive investigation and analysis of largely undefined factors and conditions to determine the nature and scope of problems and to devise solutions. The purpose and structure of the REP and EMF are well defined, as is evident from the wealth of information generally available on these subjects. The appellant's work does not meet Level 4-6. Therefore, the position meets Level 4-5 and is credited with 325 points.

Factor 5, Scope and effect

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, 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 5-4, employees establish criteria, formulate projects, assess program effectiveness, and/or investigate/analyze a variety of unusual conditions, problems, or issues; and the work affects a wide range of agency activities or the activities of other organizations.

Two illustrations are provided at this level for the systems analysis specialty. In the first, employees define and validate the need for proposed new systems through consultation with program officials of customer organizations, review general business and functional requirements which support the need for systems, identify and evaluate potential systems design approaches, and develop final technical specifications for the new systems. The work contributes to the development of applications that improve the organization's efficiency in accomplishing a wide variety of functions and activities. In the second illustration, employees serve as the information systems member of a business process reengineering study. As a member of the study group, they help to define business processes and evaluate alternatives, identify IT solutions that will enable recommended process changes and improvements, write business cases from a technical standpoint, and coordinate the implementation of improved IT tools and practices which foster continuous process improvement. The work results in improvements in the efficiency and quality of business processes.

At Level 5-5, employees isolate and define unprecedented conditions, resolve critical problems, and/or develop, test, and implement new technologies. Work performed by employees at this level affects the work of other technical experts or the development of major aspects of agency-wide IT programs.

Two illustrations are also provided at this level for the systems analysis specialty. In the first, employees evaluate the feasibility of new systems design methodologies in terms of meeting agency systems design requirements and recommend adoption of the most promising new methodologies. They may also develop implementation plans where appropriate. The work

results in the continuous evaluation of new technologies leading to improvements in the agency's systems design and development process and the delivery of high-quality information systems that support achievement of core agency mission requirements. Employees in the second illustration lead multiple design teams in the development of systems specifications for major new applications and the work encompasses all phases of the design process from requirements analysis to post-implementation support. This work results in well-designed systems that support the accomplishment of strategic business requirements.

Comparable to Level 5-4, the appellant defines business processes and evaluates alternatives; identifies IT solutions that enable the recommended process changes and improvements, writes business cases from a technical standpoint, and coordinates the implementation of improved IT tools and practices to foster continuous process improvement. His work results in improvements in the efficiency and quality of business processes. He exercises continuing responsibility for the REP and EMF, and works on other assignments as directed. The appellant and his team analyze, design, develop, modify, validate, and implement REP and EMF initiatives/improvements and maintain these systems which involves the customization of available tools. Work on the REP involves an optional requirements determination process which is ancillary to and supportive of the agency's overall systems design and development processes which result in delivery of high-quality information systems directly associated with the achievement of core agency mission requirements, and the EMF involves the application of available technology adapted as needed to meet particular usage requirements. The appellant's work does not meet the intent of Level 5-5 where employees develop major aspects of agency-wide IT programs involving unprecedented conditions, resolve critical problems, and/or develop test, and implement new technologies.

The agency correctly evaluated this factor at Level 5-4. However, the general manner in which this factor is described in the appellant's standardized PD of record does not accurately depict the scope and effect of his work as currently assigned and performed. The PD states the work "...*directly and significantly* [emphasis added] impacts on SSA's ability to determine the quality, timeliness, accuracy and overall integrity of programmatic operations..." As previously discussed in this decision, it does not. This factor meets Level 5-4 and is credited with 225 points.

Factors 6 and 7, Personal contacts and Purpose of contacts

These factors measure the type of personal contacts that occur in the work and the purpose of those contacts. These factors include face-to-face contacts and telephone dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. Levels described under these factors are based on what is required to make the initial contact, the difficulty of communicating with those contacted, how well the employee and those contacted recognize their relative roles and authorities, the reason for the communication, and the context or environment in which the communication takes place.

These factors are interdependent. The same contacts selected for crediting Factor 6 must be used to evaluate Factor 7. The appropriate level for personal contacts and the corresponding level for purpose of contacts are determined by applying the point assignment chart for Factors 6 and 7.

Factor 6, Personal contacts

The agency evaluated the appellant's personal contacts at Level 6-3, and neither we nor the appellant disagree. At this level, contacts include individuals or groups from outside the agency, including consultants, contractors, vendors, or representatives of professional associations, the media, or public interest groups, in moderately unstructured settings. Contacts may also include agency officials who are several managerial levels removed from the employee when such contacts occur on an ad hoc basis. Employees must recognize or learn the role and authority of each party during the course of the meeting.

Factor 7, Purpose of contacts

The purpose of contacts at Level 7-C are to influence and persuade employees and managers to accept and implement findings and recommendations. Employees may encounter resistance as a result of issues such as organizational conflict, competing objectives, or resource problems, and must be skillful in approaching contacts to obtain the desired effect; e.g., gaining compliance with established policies and regulations by persuasion or negotiation.

At Level 7-D, the purpose of contacts is to present justify, defend, negotiate, or settle matters involving significant or controversial issues, e.g., recommendations changing the nature and scope of programs or dealing with substantial expenditures. The work usually involves active participation in conferences, meetings, hearings, or presentations involving problems or issues of considerable consequence or importance, and persons contacted typically have diverse viewpoints, goals, or objectives requiring the employee to achieve a common understanding of the problem and a satisfactory solution by convincing them, arriving at a compromise, or developing suitable alternatives.

Comparable to Level 7-C, the appellant represents the REP and EMF in contacts with numerous diverse organizations, offices, groups, and individuals in his capacity as the lead IT Specialist and technical authority for these areas. His contacts are to: clarify procedures, provide training and information regarding the work of the team; participate in planning the work of the component; provide recommendations regarding the team's work and management plans and practices; influence management to accept the plans and recommendations of the team; and, as necessary, to request and justify additional resources needed by the team to expand the scope/coverage of assigned projects in response to newly identified complicating factors. The appellant's contacts generally involve cooperative efforts with individuals, organizations, and groups working toward common or similar goals and objectives.

Unlike Level 7-D, the appellant does not: present justify, defend, negotiate, or settle matters involving significant or controversial issues or substantial expenditures; participate in conferences, meetings, hearings, or presentations involving problems or issues of considerable consequence or importance where the individuals contacted have diverse viewpoints, goals, or objectives requiring the employee to achieve a common understanding of the problem and a satisfactory solution by convincing them, arriving at a compromise, or developing suitable alternatives. Contacts characteristic of Level 7-D would normally be handled by an agency

official one or more levels above the appellant within the organization. This factor is properly credited at Level 7-C.

The combined factors are credited at Levels 3C for a total of 180 points.

Summary

	<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1.	<i>Knowledge required by the position</i>	1-7	1250
2.	<i>Supervisory controls</i>	2-4	450
3.	<i>Guidelines</i>	3-4	450
4.	<i>Complexity</i>	4-5	325
5.	<i>Scope and effect</i>	5-4	225
6. & 7.	<i>Personal contacts and Purpose of contacts</i>	6-3	
		7-C	180
8.	<i>Physical demands</i>	8-1	5
9.	<i>Work environment</i>	9-1	<u>5</u>
	<i>Total</i>		2890

The total points fall within the GS-12 point range of 2755 to 3150 in the JFS.

Evaluation using the GSLGEG

The GSLGEG is divided into two parts. Part I covers work leaders over three or more employees in clerical, or other one-grade interval occupations. Part II which covers positions whose primary purpose is, as a regular and recurring part of their assignment and at least 25 percent of their duty time, to lead a team of other General Schedule employees in accomplishing two-grade interval work. Team Leaders (TLs) under Part II usually participate in the work of the team by performing work that is of the same kind and level as the highest level of work accomplished by the team led. The appellant leads the work of a team of six people. While the number of team members is relatively small, the appellant's TL duties take at least 25 percent of his work time because of the technical nature of the work and the organization's matrix work environment. The appellant provides significant coordination of team member assignments and work products; ensures consistent interpretation of policy, procedures, and the application of logic and judgment; represents the work, plans, and needs of the team in contacts with management; integrates the work of the team into overall management plans for achieving established organizational/SSA goals and objectives; ensures systems compatibility; and represents the team in contacts with activities outside the immediate organization as needed. The appellant personally performs the two-grade interval work of his team and spends 25 percent or more of his time leading such work. Therefore, his position meets GSLGEG coverage requirements.

TLs work with team members to achieve specific tasks, produce work products and services, and meet program and production goals. They typically assist the team through knowledge and application of leadership and team building skills and techniques such as group facilitation,

coordination, coaching, problem solving, interpersonal communication, integration of work processes and products, obtaining resources and liaison with the supervisor. TLs are responsible to their supervisors and accountable for the timely delivery of quality work products and/or services produced by the team led. To be classified by application of Part II, positions must perform at a minimum, all of the first seven coaching, facilitating and mentoring duties, and a total of at least fourteen of the twenty duties listed in Part II of the GSLGEG. The appellant performs the following 14 TL duties (numbers shown correspond to TL duties as described in Part II of the GSLGEG): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 18, and 20.

Under Part II, TL positions are classified one full grade level above the base level of work led (BLWL). The BLWL is the highest grade level of GS-9 or higher nonsupervisory/nonleader two-grade interval work led on a continuing basis, which represents 25 percent or more of the actual work performed by the team for which the TL is fully responsible. BLWL can also be viewed as the highest grade level of work that represents the portion of the total workload of the team which accounts for 25 percent or more of the *duty hours of the TL's subordinate's* spent on work performed at or above the grade level credited.

Care must be taken to ensure the grade level credited as base reflects 25 percent or more of the work actually/fully led. For example, in a situation where some team members perform higher grade work, but this work receives little or no guidance and direction from the TL, the grade level of that work should not be used as base level because it does not represent an increase in the difficulty of the TL's work. In such cases, the BLWL is adjusted to reflect whatever grade level is performed by the TLs subordinates under "normal" leadership conditions.

The appellant's team is comprised of two GS-13, one GS-12, and one GS-11 grade level employees, and two contract employees. The appellant states the work done by the contract employees is comparable to the nonsupervisory work he performs, which we have evaluated at the GS-12 grade level. The contractors are involved with ongoing REP enhancements and maintenance, serve as mentors and provide advice on the requirements engineering process. The agency has determined this work to be equivalent to the GS-12 grade level, and we agree based on our previous analysis of this work in this decision.

The PD for the team member GS-13 grade level positions states:

Work is received from the assigned supervisor who outlines broad objectives and sets the overall program priorities, objectives and resources available. The incumbent is expected to handle work independently; resolve conflicts which arise; and determine approaches to be taken and methodology to be used.

According to the PD, they all spend at least 25 percent of their time on GS-13 grade controlling duties. However, the appellant cannot be recognized as fully leading the work of an employee exercising this level of independence in the performance of his/her work. Furthermore, while we assume the GS-13 personally performed work occupies the mandatory minimum of 25 percent of the work time required to support that grade, the record does not show sufficient work at that grade level by the team as a whole to warrant crediting the appellant's position with a GS-13 grade level BLWL given our grade-level analysis of the appellant's REP and EMF work.

As previously stated, the BLWL must be adjusted in such situations to reflect the grade level of work performed under normal leadership conditions. In this case, the BLWL is properly adjusted to the GS-12 grade level based on the level of work of these positions which is actually led by the appellant.

The following chart shows the percentage of time creditable at particular grade levels which each team member spends on team related work actually led by the appellant.

Team Leader – Work Led				
Team Positions	Percentage of GS-13 level work fully led	Percentage of GS-12 level work fully led	Percentage of GS-11 level work fully led	Total
2210-13		75		75
2210-13		75		75
2210-12		25	50	75
2210-11			100	100
Senior Contractor		75		75
Senior Contractor		75		75
Work-years of work led by grade	0.0 work-years of GS-13 work	3.25 work-years of GS-12 work	1.5 work-years of GS-11 work	4.75 total work-years of work

The BLWL by the appellant is GS-12. This is the highest grade level of work led which meets or exceeds 25 percent of the workload of the team (i.e., 3.25 work-years out of a total of 4.75 work-years equates to 68.4 percent of the workload of the team led). GSLGEG, Part II, TL positions are classified one full grade level above the BLWL, in a two grade interval pattern. Therefore, the appellant's TL work is properly classified at the GS-13 grade level.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Lead Information Technology Specialist (SYSANALYSIS), GS-2210-13.