



United States Office of Personnel Management

Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions
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Standard: [Equal Employment Opportunity Series, GS-0260](#)
Factor: Factor I, Knowledge Required by the Position
Issue: Organizational levels where "systematic problems" may be credited

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose in the Office of Personnel Management's processing of a position classification appeal submitted by an Equal Employment Manager, GS-0260-12. The Office of Personnel Management found that although the agency's grade determination was correct based on the evaluation of all of the factors in the classification standard for the GS-0260 series, it had misinterpreted a key criterion in Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position. Such misinterpretation could, depending on the circumstances, result in under evaluation of the factor.

The criterion involved, which is one of several found in both Levels 1-8 and 1-9 of both the Factor Level Descriptions and the Benchmarks, indicates that the Equal Employment Manager investigates and resolves "systemic problems." The agency's internal guidelines stated that systemic problems and effective efforts to resolve them could occur only at the department or bureau level, or, in the rare instances, at a large regional or area office level. The Office of Personnel Management disagreed.

Resolution

Systemic problems are far more likely to be subject to resolution at higher level echelons in an agency, i.e., at the agency or bureau level, because at lower levels the organization served is smaller and less diversified and complex and there is less authority to establish or change important policies, practices, and procedures that affect equal employment opportunity. However, organizational level alone is not a valid or reliable determinant of whether systemic problems can exist and be resolved; the nature of the organization is the determinant. Also the agency's restrictive provision in its guidelines is inconsistent with the fact that in GS-14

benchmark 03, Level 1-8 is credited to an Equal Employment Manager responsible for the equal employment opportunity program at an "industrial field activity."

Thus, the Office of Personnel Management concluded that the agency's barrier to crediting Level 1-8 or 1-9 *solely* on the basis that the organization served is below the level of a large regional or area office is not appropriate.