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Labor Relations Series

GS-0233

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SERIES DEFINITION

This series covers positions that involve the administration, supervision, evaluation, or performance of technical work concerned with labor relations in the Federal service. This includes establishing and maintaining effective relationships with labor organizations that represent Federal employees, negotiating and administering labor agreements and otherwise conferring with labor organizations on behalf of management, and providing guidance, consultation, and staff assistance to management on a variety of labor relations matters. Included positions involved in the Government-wide administration of the Federal labor relations program, such as those involved in policy development, agency guidance, and investigation and resolution of certain complaints and appeals as required under the Executive Orders governing Federal labor relations. Some positions covered by this series also involve advising management on grievances and appeals, adverse actions, employee discipline, and related matters when these are dealt integral part of the labor relations program. Positions covered by this series require as their paramount qualifications a knowledge of Executive Orders, regulations, principles, practices, and technique labor relations; and a knowledge of the objectives, principles, policies, and procedures of personnel management in the Federal service.

This standard supersedes part II of the classification standard for the labor Management and Employee Relations Series, GS-0230, issued in June 1966 as the Employee Management Relations and Cooperation Series, GS-0230.

EXCLUSIONS

Excluded from this series are:

1. Positions combining labor relations work with work classifiable in one or more other specialized personnel series, other than Employee Relation positions are classified in the [Personnel Management Series, GS-0201](#).
2. Positions that primarily involve technical work concerned with management-employee relations and services not directly concerned with bilateral union-management relationships, such as employee conduct discipline, employee appeals and grievances, performance evaluation and appraisal, management-employee communication, and employee services and benefits. Such positions are classified in the [Employee Relations Series, GS-0230](#). Positions primarily requiring the performance of work described above are classified in the GS-0230 series even though some of the procedures to be followed have been established through bilateral negotiations (e.g., the processing of a grievance through a negotiated grievance procedure). In contrast, positions that are primarily concerned with establishing such procedures through negotiations with unions and interpreting the intended application of the specific provisions of those procedures are classified in the Labor Relations Series, GS-0233.

3. Positions that primarily provide clerical or technical support to Labor Relations Specialists by performing limited aspects of labor relations work. Such positions are classified in the [Personnel Clerical and Assistance Series, GS-0203](#).
 4. Positions that involve providing mediation assistance to labor and management in the settlement or prevention of labor disputes connected with the formulation, revision, termination, or renewal of collective bargaining agreements. Such positions are classified in the [Mediation Series, GS-0241](#).
 5. Positions that involve work in investigating, evaluating, and resolving cases arising under the National Labor Relations Act involving representation issues or disputes. Such positions are classified the [Labor-Management Relations Examining Series, GS-0244](#).
 6. Positions that involve technical work concerned with industrial relations matters that affect agency procurement of services and materials from private contractors. Such positions are classified in the [Contractor Industrial Relations Series, GS-0246](#).
- Positions that involve providing labor relations training requiring subject-matter knowledges but for which the career pattern is primarily associated with the field of education and training. Such positions are classified in the [Training Instruction Series, GS-1712](#), and are evaluated by reference to the [Grade Evaluation Guide for Instructor and Specialist Positions Involving Education](#) relations training work for which the paramount qualification requirements for the work and the career pattern for the positions are primarily in labor relations are classified in this series (GS-0233).
 - Positions that involve providing labor relations training but that have as their paramount qualification an understanding of the relationship of employee development and training to management problems and methods, and procedures. Such positions are classified in the [Employee Development Series, GS-0235](#).

RELATIONSHIP TO THE EMPLOYEE RELATIONS SERIES

While labor relations and employee relations positions require knowledges, skills, and abilities sufficiently different to warrant separate series designations, there is also sufficient overlap in the kinds of and responsibilities performed so that a combination of work typical of both series in a single position is not considered to be appropriate classifiable in the GS-0201 series. Therefore, combinations of work typical of the Labor Relations Series, GS-0233, and the Employee Series, GS-0230 are to be classified in whichever of those two series represents the highest grade level of work and the paramount requirements of the position. If the work in each of these two series is of the same grade level, the principal duties and responsibility series determination, i.e., the position will be classified in the series appropriate to the work that takes up a majority of the employee's work time. If the grade level and principal duties and responsibilities of the work in the two series are the same, the position should be classified in the Labor Relations the Labor Relations Series, GS-0233.

TITLES

Labor Relations Specialist is the title of all nonsupervisory positions in this occupation.

Supervisory Labor Relations Specialist is the title for all supervisory positions.

OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

Labor relations is a dynamic and rapidly evolving part of personnel management in the Federal service. While unionism among Federal employees can be traced back to the early days of labor organizations in this country, the issuance in January 1962 of E.O. 10988 established for the first time a government-wide policy for dealings between labor organizations and Federal agencies. This Executive Order set forth the responsibilities, rights, and obligations of both labor organizations agencies, and provided a framework by which recognition, consultation, and negotiation with labor organizations could be accomplished.

Executive Orders 11491, 11616, and 11838 issued in October 1969, August 1971, and February 1975 respectively (hereinafter referred to as "E.O. 11491 as amended" or, "the executive order") maintain the basic principles and objectives of labor-management relations established by E.O. 10988. They are evolutionary in nature and continue the system of relationships that had developed between unions and agencies. However, E.O. 11491 as amended contains far-reaching changes in the overall labor relations structure. The key changes are to:

- S Establish a central authority, the Federal Labor Relations Council, to administer and interpret the order, decide major policy issues, prescribe regulations, and consider certain appeals;
- S Provide third-party processes for resolving representation and unfair labor practice disputes (by the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Labor-Management Relations);
- S Use the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to aid in resolving negotiation impasses;
- S Establish the Federal Service Impasses Panel as the ultimate authority for resolving impasses;
- S Provide for negotiated grievance procedures which may include binding arbitration;
- S Establish exclusive recognition as the only form of recognition at the operating level.

Major distinctions under the new Executive Order are the availability of third-party processes and the impact of labor relations case decisions.

THE LABOR RELATIONS PROCESS

This section outlines the labor relations (LR) process, and the typical role of the Labor Relations Specialist (LRS) in that process, at the operating level. For editorial convenience, the process is

described as concerns a single bargaining unit at an activity. In practice, of course, there are often two or more units, which may be represented by the same or different unions. This multiplicity of units is a complicating factor in the job of the LRS, and is covered in greater detail in subsequent sections of the standard.

For descriptive purposes, operating labor relations (LR) programs in the Federal service can be separated into three broad phases: organization and recognition, agreement negotiation, and agreement administration. In practice, however, these phases are by no means mutually exclusive, with some activities occurring in two or even all three phases. For example, negotiation with unions on changes in personnel practices is required as soon as exclusive recognition is granted, whether a formal agreement has been negotiated. Similarly, unfair labor practice charges may be instituted by a union, an employee, or by management at any stage, including the period during which a union is attempting to organize employees for the purpose of gaining recognition. New agreements are negotiated periodically, concurrent with administration of the existing agreement.

While management should always have a general awareness of the Federal labor relations program, the LR process begins when one or more unions show an interest in organizing a group of employees at an activity. The LRS informs managers and supervisors of the requirements of the LR program and advises them on the kinds of union activities to expect and the ways in which they should and should not react to these activities. The LRS also contacts the union organizers, who might be employees of the activity and/or representatives from the headquarters of the union, to establish a cooperative relationship and to work out suitable arrangements for organizing activities. The organization phase can be more difficult for the LRS if two or more unions are attempting to organize the same group of employees. The LRS must ensure that equal privileges are available for all groups if requested (including any employees who wish to campaign against tile unions) an ensure that management does not inappropriately interfere with organizing activities or express preferences for any particular employee group, or for having no union, to avoid possible unfair labor practice charges against the activity.

When the union or unions gain sufficient employee interest, they file a petition for exclusive recognition with the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Labor-Management Relations (hereafter called the Assistant Secretary). The LRS advises management on the appropriateness of the petitioned-for unit and prepares documentation necessary Secretary to make the final decision. If management disagrees with the unit requested by the union, the Assistant Secretary may hold a hearing, in which case the LRS may represent management at the hearing or prepare the factual material to be presented by another representative selected by management. When the Assistant Secretary approves a unit as being appropriate, the LRS works out the arrangements with the union for an election to be held under the Assistant Secretary. The ballots are counted by the Assistant Secretary's agent, with observers from both the union and the activity present. If no objections to the conduct of the election are filed, the Assistant Secretary certifies the results of the election, designating the exclusive representative, if any.

As indicated above, the right to meet and confer is gained by a union as soon as it is certified as the exclusive representative of employees in a bargaining unit, even though an agreement has not

been negotiated. The LRS advises management on those matters for which negotiation is mandatory, those that; while not subject to mandatory negotiation should be the subject of consultation in order to establish and maintain a good bilateral relationship with the union, and those to be retained as management prerogatives. In many cases, the LRS will meet with the union officials to work out some basic procedures such as those concerning dues withholding, use of official time by union officials and stewards, communication processes, etc. The LRS then maintains regular contacts with management and union officials to ensure that the union is, in fact, being conferred with on appropriate matters, and to assist in working out problems.

The next step in the LR process is the negotiation of an agreement between the management of the activity and the union local having exclusive recognition for a bargaining unit. There are, however, a number of instances where, for a variety of reasons, a union does not wish to negotiate a formal agreement for a particular bargaining unit. In such cases, the LR process remains at the stage discussed above, until such time as the union or management decides to negotiate an agreement or, in rare instances, the employees in the unit vote to discontinue having that union as its exclusive representative (decertification election).

For the LRS, the negotiation phase is, for all practical purposes, a perpetual one, beginning at the time a union is attempting to organize a unit and continuing as long as the union has exclusive recognition. For example, during the organization phase, the LRS must be aware of promises made by the union, as these promises provide significant clues as to the issues likely to be raised for the first agreement negotiation. Similarly, the areas of disagreement between management and the union in the period after the union gains exclusive recognition but before negotiations are requested will also most likely be reflected in the issues to be negotiated.

The following are typical tasks performed by the LRS as part of the negotiation phase:

- S Obtains and analyzes input from all levels of management to the activity's policies on and positions for negotiation;
- S Based on past experiences in dealing with the union, a review of the activity's grievance files and discussions with supervisors and managers, develops and researches potential union proposals in order to have a "head starts in the preparations for negotiation;
- S Advises top management on establishing a management negotiating team - suggests particularly well-qualified candidates, and trains those selected in current LR practices and precedents and in negotiating techniques. Depending on the desires of management and the skills of the individual may serve as (1) the chairman and chief spokesman for the team, (2) a participating member, but not chairman, of the team, or (3) as an advisor to, but not a formal member of the team.
- S Participates in and/or advises on the following activities of the management negotiating team:

- Meets with the union negotiators to establish ground rules for negotiations, such as official time allowed for negotiations, schedule for meetings, number of negotiators and observers, rules on introduction of proposals, etc.;
 - Develops management proposals;
 - Exchanges initial proposals with the union team - may meet with the union team to clarify the meaning of the respective proposals;
 - Analyzes the union proposals, utilizing other personnel and operating officials as necessary to determine the ramifications and costs of each one;
 - Develops documentation necessary for review of higher headquarters, and when required, the Federal Labor Relations Council, in cases where the activity determines that one or more of the union's proposals are non-negotiable under the provisions of E.O. 11491;
 - Develops negotiating strategies, including counter-proposals, final positions, trade-offs, etc.;
 - Obtains concurrence of top management on positions to be taken may have to "sell" top management on the propriety of the proposals and, when necessary, revises the proposals to reflect unforeseen management needs;
 - Negotiates "at-the-table" with the union team, presenting management positions, analyzing revised union proposals, and changing strategies as the situation requires;
 - When agreement is reached by both parties on all issues, obtains formal approval of the agreement from the head of the activity and from higher headquarters as required.
- S** In the event the parties cannot reach agreement on particular issues, mediation(through the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service) may be called for, and eventually, unresolved issues may be submitted to the Federal Service Impasses Panel for resolution. The LRS prepares or assists in preparing documentary materials to be submitted to the third party and sometimes is also called on to present the management views orally.
- S** Prepares a record of the significant details relating to the negotiations, which serves as background information for future negotiations, as well as documentary evidence in the event there are later disagreements on the intent of specific provisions of the agreement.
- S** Develops and conducts or assists in developing and conducting training sessions to explain the meaning of and advise on the implementation of the terms of the agreement to management officials and supervisors

- S Keeps a continuing record of issues and problems arising from the implementation of the agreement, with input from supervisors and managers, in preparation for the next round of negotiations.

After an agreement has been negotiated, the parties must apply its provisions in the day-to-day operations of the various organizations included in the bargaining unit. However, the agreement administration phase of the LMR process typically involves much more than a mechanical application of the words of an agreement. In any agreement that is concerned with substantive issues, there may be disagreements regarding the interpretation of a provision, either as to the original intent during negotiations or as to the application to a specific situation. The LRS is normally the point of contact for both union and management officials on such questions and attempts to find a way to both parties, either on the basis of the LRS's own knowledge of personnel management or by obtaining the assistance of other personnel specialists.

Disagreements between the union or individual employees and management (except those covered by statutory appeals procedures) may be processed through a negotiated grievance procedure. The LRS advises the management officials responsible for responding to the grievance at the various steps of the procedure concerning the meaning of applicable provisions of the agreement, how arbitrators have decided similar issues, possible compromise solutions, and the chances of a favorable decision should the issue go to arbitration.

If the grievance is not resolved within the agency, the negotiated procedure may, and often does, provide for binding arbitration as the final step. The LRS advises top management on the selection of an arbitrator from a panel submitted by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service or from other sources as agreed to by the parties, and prepares or assists in the preparation of necessary documentary pre- and post-hearing briefs, to be submitted to the arbitrator. Some LRSs also serve as spokesmen for management at arbitration hearings or act as technical advisors to another management representative. They may also advise on the propriety of appealing an arbitrator's decision and prepare or assist in preparing written materials necessary to do so.

In addition to matters involving the specific provisions of the negotiated agreement, the role of the LRS in this phase of the LR process also includes continuing participation in management's efforts to maintain a good working relationship with the union. For example, the LRS maintains regular contacts with both union and management to discuss matters of mutual interest and to learn of, and solve, problems before they become serious. Some LRSs may also review proposed issuances of the personnel office and other administrative offices to ensure that the union has been consulted on those areas of concern to them and a bilateral agreement reached on matters appropriate for negotiation.

At times, certain actions of management or the union, (e.g., failure by management to negotiate a change in personnel policies and practices affecting working conditions) result in unfair labor practice complaints and charges. The LRS typically investigates the complaint, advises management on an appropriate resolution based on the facts of the case and precedent decisions of the Assistant Secretary in similar cases, and attempts to resolve the complaint informally. If informal

resolution not accomplished and formal charges are filed, the LBS prepares or assists in preparing briefs and other materials for hearings and recommends appropriate offers of settlement. When appropriate recommend and participate in appeals of the decision.

COVERAGE OF THE STANDARD

This standard provides grade-level criteria directly applicable to non-supervisory Labor Relations Specialist positions at grades GS-05 through GS-12 performing operating or "first-line" labor relations work (such as that described in the "Occupational Information" section above). Such positions are most often found at the local activity level of agencies though they may be found at any echelon when responsibility for performing significant portions of operating labor relations work has been retained at that level.

TREATMENT OF OTHER LABOR RELATIONS FUNCTIONS

The following kinds of labor relations positions and functions are not directly covered by the grade level criteria in this standard, although they are appropriately classified in the labor Relations Series, GS-0233.

- S Agency Staff Positions - Most Federal agencies have positions at various echelons in the organization above the operating level with responsibility for a variety of staff functions in connection with the labor relations program. Such functions may include, for example, developing agency-wide or area-wide policy and regulatory materials; evaluating operating-level labor relations programs; representing the agency and the local activities in third party procedures. reviewing negotiated agreements for conformance with applicable laws, appropriate agency regulations and regulations of other appropriate authorities; and providing technical guidance to operating-level Labor Relations Specialists. The criteria in [part II of the classification standard](#) for the Personnel in this standard should lie used as basic guides in evaluating positions.
- S Positions Involved in the Government-wide Labor Relations Program-Positions included in this series are found in several agencies with responsibility for the Government-wide administration of the Federal labor relations program. Such positions are located in the Federal Labor Relations Council, on the staff of the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Labor-Management Relations, and in the US. Office of Personnel Management. They may be classified by comparison with and extension of the criteria in this standard and other related standards such as that for the [Labor Management Relations Examining Series, GS-244](#), and by application of sound classification principles.
- S Supervisory positions in this series are evaluated by reference to part II of the [General Schedule Supervisory Guide](#). (Many supervisory positions also include a substantial amount of nonsupervisory LR work that may equal or even exceed the level of work performed by the employees supervised. In such cases, the positions should be treated as mixed positions; the supervisory responsibilities should be classified by the General Schedule Supervisory Guide,

while the nonsupervisory work should be separately evaluated on its own merit by reference to the criteria in this standard.)

CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA

The grade levels in this standard are presented under the following two criteria:

- S Nature of assignment; and
- S Level of responsibility

Nature of assignment

This factor measures the scope and complexity of the work assignments, as well as the extent of knowledge of labor relations and personnel management principles, methods, and techniques required to do the work. Assignments range from on-the-job and classroom training in the fundamentals of labor relations to performing complex assignments involving the resolution of a variety of difficult problems.

Level of responsibility

This factor covers the kind and degree of supervision received, the degree of judgment and independence required, and the nature of the person-to-person contacts involved in LR Specialist positions. Levels range from detailed instructions relating to very specific assignments and complete review of work, to independent performance of difficult work requiring a high degree of judgment and originality in resolving complex problems.

KNOWLEDGES, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES REQUIRED

The kinds and levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities required in this occupation are not described under a separate factor in the grade-level criteria. Rather they are reflected in the discussion of the other classification factors.

Knowledges required in Labor Relations Specialist positions include:

- S Personnel management and labor relations theories, principles, and practices;
- S Laws, Executive Orders, regulations, policies, and concepts pertaining to Federal labor relations;
- S Current issues, practices, problems, and precedents in Federal and non-Federal sector labor relations.

Skills and Abilities required include:

- S Ability to establish and maintain effective work relationships with local and national representatives of unions and with agency managers and supervisors, with full consideration of the bilateral nature of labor relations;
- S Ability to balance labor relations requirements against overall management goals;
- S Ability to perform and/or guide others in the negotiation of labor agreements;
- S Ability to provide guidance and advice to management on the implementation and application of negotiated agreements;
- S Tact, discretion, and the ability to obtain the cooperation of others;
- S Skill in written and oral communication;
- S Ability to gather and analyze facts, draw conclusions, and devise practical solutions to problems;
- S Ability to exercise originality and ingenuity in devising solutions to problems;
- S Ability to work calmly and effectively in sensitive, stress-producing situations.

NOTES TO USERS

1. Labor Relations Specialist positions are evaluated in terms of the actual duties and responsibilities performed, rather than the organizational level at which the position is located, the mission of the organization served, or the total workload of the labor-management relations staff. For example, a specialist position at a major industrial installation having many bargaining units that present numerous complex problems may be assigned to provide LR services to an organizational segment having two small bargaining units with problems of average difficulty. The grade level of this position would be lower than other specialist positions that are in the same organization but have more difficult assignments. The effect of organizational level on a position is taken into-account by considering the scope and impact of recommendations and decisions, the nature of the controls and guidelines received from higher authority, the nature of the control exercised over LR activities at lower levels and the nature and difficulty of the person-to-person relationships required by the organizational level involved.
2. Some positions in operating programs are sole Labor Relations Specialists, or supervise one or two subordinates. The grade-level criteria in this standard will normally apply to such positions. In some cases, however, such positions are delegated essentially-full and

independent responsibility for policy development and program planning concerning labor relations at a local activity. Such responsibility typically includes:

- S Serving, under general administrative supervision, as the local organization's final technical authority in the field of labor relations;
- S Formulating the organization's labor relations policies and objectives, and selectively determining the LR activities to be included and emphasized in the program;
- S Planning and scheduling work to meet program goals and broad objectives established by a higher organizational level of the agency;
- S Integrating the labor relations program with other personnel management functions and with related management assistance staff activities, such as budget administration and manpower planning.

Positions which fully meet these program responsibility characteristics often place on the employee a technical demand and degree of responsibility and independence that clearly and substantially exceeds that of the operating LR work described in this standard. In such cases, the position should be considered for classification at one level above that determined by application of the grade level criteria in this standard, except that this provision is not to be used by itself to classify a job above the GS-11 level. The final grade level determination must be based on sound classification judgment with consideration of proper alignment with other properly classified positions in the organization.

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- S Labor relations work is unusual among occupations generally in that its primary purpose is to advise one group (management) on negotiating with another group (unions) in an adversary relationship on the way in which management will conduct its business as it relates to the treatment of its employees. There is no right or wrong way to handle most situations that arise; rather, there is only a way that ends up being accepted by both parties, often as a compromise, and that is hopefully the best management under the circumstances. The result of the work is not a concrete product that can easily be measured in terms of difficulty or complexity. Rather, there are various factors in the total work situation that impact on the difficulty and complexity of problems encountered and the nature of the "solutions" to those problems, all of which interact with each other to different degrees, depending on the particular circumstance. Because of the variability of this interaction, particular issues and problems cannot be categorized into levels of difficulty without considering all of the conditions exerting an influence on them.

The following illustrate the interrelationships of the variables in labor relations work:

- S The complexity of LR activities is related, in part, to the nature and complexity of the organizations serviced. In order to effectively advise and represent management in negotiations and day-to-day dealings with unions, LR Specialists must have a substantial

knowledge of the missions, management philosophies, goals, and production objectives of the organizations serviced. Thus, all other things being equal, larger, more complex, and constantly changing organizations place greater demands for knowledge and judgement on the LRS concerned.

- S The number of employees in the bargaining units serviced and the relationship of the size of the unit to the total number of employees at the activity also can affect the degree of knowledge and judgment required of the LRS. For example, the number of employees can impact on the complexity of negotiating a particular action; e.g., management can "live with" a proposal to provide employees with a piece of equipment when it involves a small number/percentage of employees but could not afford to agree to that same action if it involved a much larger number. In the latter situation, a greater degree of insight and judgment on the part of the LRS is required to determine the full impact of the proposed action and to devise alternatives that will satisfy the critical requirements in consideration of the needs of a variety of employees as well as those of management.
- S The apparent difficulty or lack of difficulty involved in negotiating and consulting with unions may be the result of one or any combination of a variety of factors. In evaluating LRS positions, it is necessary to look beneath the surface to establish the actual role of the LRS on maintaining effective relationships with unions. For example, a harmonious situation may reflect a general lack of aggressiveness on the part of the LR Specialist in achieving a rapport with an otherwise aggressive union that is conducive to constructive resolution of problems. The reverse may also be true. A situation involving numerous negotiation impasses, grievances, unfair labor practice charges, etc., may be due to unreasonable attitudes of management and/or unions, or to the inability of the LRS to assess the situation correctly, suggest adequate compromise solutions or otherwise establish a constructive relationship with and between the parties concerned.
- S The nature of the unions having exclusive recognition and the organization of the bargaining units may also affect the difficulty of the LR work. For example, the exclusive representative of a unit may be a council of locals comprised of 10 or 15 locals each representing different trades; or several units may request multi-unit bargaining (negotiation of one agreement covering several separate units). On one hand, these may make negotiation and consultation easier in that there is only one entity to deal with and only one agreement to negotiate and apply. However, problems may also be added as a result of internal differences of views within the council or group of units that the LR Specialist must be aware of and take into account in attempting to find solutions to problems. These kinds of situations must also be carefully analyzed and evaluated in attempting to determine the appropriate grade of a Labor Relations Specialist position.

It is this combination and interaction of the variables that establish the grade level rather than the presence of any particular element. Since individual positions will not necessarily match all elements at any grade level, sound classification judgment must be used to determine the level that most nearly reflects the overall grade level concept.

- S** The numerical elements used in the grade level criteria are intended to reflect complexities typically resulting from their presence and the knowledges, skills, and abilities needed to deal with these complexities. The numerical examples are illustrative and do not, in themselves, represent intrinsic values that fix grade levels, nor do they establish absolute limits, either upper or lower, for any level. Furthermore, the numerical data used will not necessarily be found in a fixed or constant relationship in actual positions. Consequently, elements measured by numerical data should be considered in their proper relationship to the qualitative elements which are also described.
- S** The grade level criteria in this standard are based on a "normal delegation of responsibility from higher headquarters and from the Personnel Officer at the local activity (essentially as described in the "Occupational Information" section of the standard). In some instances, however, the higher echelons of Personnel Officers involve themselves in recommendations and decisions ordinarily within the responsibility of LR Specialists (e.g., requiring a review of essentially all actions to be taken, including routine recommendations for the resolution of relatively minor problems, prior to discussing them with the union or management). This involvement may be by direction of the higher authority or at the request of the LR Specialists or their immediate supervisors. In either case, such involvement, if it occurs on a regular basis, serves to weaken the "Level of responsibility" factor and must be carefully considered in assigning a grade level to a position.
- S** The grad-level criteria in this standard cover positions in grades GS-05 through GS-12. Positions above grade GS-12 should be evaluated by extension of the criteria in this standard with the application of sound position-classification judgment. The standard for [Personnel Management Series, GS-201](#) may also be used where applicable.

LABOR RELATIONS SPECIALIST, GS-0233-05

Nature of the Assignment

This is an entrance or trainee level. Labor Relations Specialists, GS-05, receive classroom and on-the-job training in the principles, theories, methods, and techniques of labor relations and personnel management, as well as instruction in agency organization, mission, policies, and objectives. Work assignments involve performing a variety of tasks designed to provide the opportunity to apply the basic principles, procedures, techniques, and guidelines.

Level of Responsibility

Labor Relations Specialists, GS-05, receive close supervision from the supervisor or a higher grade specialist. Assignments increase in complexity as knowledge of basic principles and techniques is acquired. GS-05 LR Specialists perform assignments with specific instructions as to work to be accomplished, methods to be used, and applicable guide lines. Work is closely reviewed in progress and on completion for adherence to instructions, technical soundness, and overall acceptability.

Guidelines include public laws; Executive Orders; issuances and precedent decisions of the Department of Labor, and the Federal Labor Relations Council; US. Office of Personnel Management regulations and instructions; agency policies and directives; and local instructions.

Personal contacts at this level are primarily for the purpose of requesting and providing factual information.

LABOR RELATIONS SPECIALIST, GS-0233-07

Nature of Assignment

This is a developmental level. Work assignments of moderate complexity are selected to combine productive work with supervised on-the-job training in the judgmental aspects of labor relations. In comparison, GS-05 LR Specialists are provided training and work assignments primarily for the purpose of learning and applying the basic principles and techniques of the occupation.

Examples of developmental assignments include: independently gathering factual information from regulatory material, existing negotiated labor agreements, and other technical references for use by higher grade specialists; developing portions of instructions, procedures, and reports; participating with higher grade specialists in discuss stewards, employees, and first-line supervisors concerning interpretation or application of a negotiated agreement, complaints and grievances, advice on day-to-day dealings with unions, etc.

Level of Responsibility

GS-07 Labor Relations Specialists receive assignments with instructions as to the methods and procedures to be followed and the results expected. The assignments are then carried through to completion. In contrast, GS-05 specialists receive specific and detailed instruction throughout each step of the assignment. When working on new or unusual problems, GS-07 LR Specialists receive continuing guidance and instructions during the progress of their work. Completed work is reviewed for technical soundness, adherence to instructions, and acceptability of recommendations.

GS-07 LR Specialists make recommendations on solutions to problems encountered in performing developmental assignments, however those recommendations that are not clearly covered by policies, directives, precedents, or well established procedures are reviewed before final action is taken.

Personal contacts are with individual employees, first-line supervisors, and local union representatives to obtain and provide information on non-controversial matters and to explain well-established policies, procedures, and regulatory requirements.

LABOR RELATIONS SPECIALIST, GS-0233-09

Nature of Assignment

The GS-09 level is characterized by the independent performance of assignments of moderate complexity requiring the application of fundamental principles, concepts, techniques, and guidelines of labor relations. In comparison, GS-07 LR Specialists, while they may work on similar assignments for training purposes, are given substantial supervisory assistance, as they are not expected to have or apply a full knowledge of LR principles and techniques.

Assignments at the GS-09 level are typically concerned with carrying out specific phases of an established labor relations program. Assignments encompass problems that are similar to those previously encountered in the organization and/or can be handled by selecting and interpreting appropriate applicable guidelines. Minor adaptation or modification of precedents and guidelines may be required to fit the local situation, however more complex or controversial matters are referred to the supervisor or specialist of higher grade.

The following duties are typical of those performed by GS-09 LR Specialists (these are illustrative of the concept of the overall level of difficulty - no one example is intended, in itself, to establish the grade level):

- S** Prepares documentation for unit determination by the Assistant Secretary in cases where management is in general agreement with the unit proposed by the union;
- S** Coordinates arrangements for representation elections (e.g., space for voting, procedures for identifying eligible employees, posting notices, time of election, etc.) Must use judgment in working out arrangements with union (s) to avoid unfair labor practice charges;
- S** Participates in preparing for and conducting negotiations of labor agreements with unions, performing such tasks as;
 - S** analyzing records of the activity's past experience with negotiated agreements to suggest possible unions demands and to recommend initial management positions for new negotiations;
 - S** researching and evaluating facts, laws, regulations, and precedents concerning union proposals;
 - S** providing technical advice to members of the management negotiating team on procedural points of order, basic negotiating techniques and methods of presentation, and recommendations as to initial and fall back positions on relatively uncomplicated issues, such as order of priority in scheduling annual leave, amplification of agency rules concerning sick leave, employee parking, etc.; and

- S preparing initial drafts of articles agreed to by the negotiating teams.
- d. Provides advice to first-line supervisors and union stewards on the interpretation and application of specific provisions of the negotiated agreement. Problems encountered at this level are of limited scope and complexity (e.g., do not typically concern issues having significant impact on production or involving significant cost to the organization). Recommended solutions do not deviate significantly from precedent cases or other applicable guidelines.
 - e. Performs factfinding in connection with unfair labor practice charges and complaints that arise from the activities application or interpretation of the negotiated agreement. Gathers pertinent information from union and management representatives and makes recommendations as to possible resolutions to the supervisor or higher grade LRS.

Level of Responsibility

Labor Relations Specialists, GS-09, receive general instructions from the supervisor or specialist of higher grade as to the objectives of the assignment and work priorities. More detailed instructions are provided when new, unusual, or controversial situations are anticipated. By comparison, GS-07 LR Specialists receive specific instructions as to the methods to be followed in carrying out the assignments. As at GS-07, completed work is reviewed for adherence to instructions, technical soundness, and adequacy of recommendations and conclusions.

Personal contacts typical of the GS-09 level are with first-line supervisors, union stewards, and employees of the activity. GS-09 LR Specialists are responsible for maintaining effective working relationships with management and union officials in order to promote cooperation by both parties. By comparison with GS-07, where contacts are primarily to give and receive factual information, many contacts at the GS-09 level are for the purpose of interpreting provisions of negotiated agreements and suggesting resolutions to problems.

LABOR RELATIONS SPECIALIST, GS-0233-11

Nature of Assignment

Labor Relations Specialists, GS- 11, perform a variety of duties that require the application of the full range of Labor relations theories, principles, methods, and techniques. Assignments are more difficult than at GS-09 and require more originality and judgment because the problems encountered are less well defined, precedent cases and guidelines are not directly applicable, and the organizations serviced are typically more complex.

The following characteristics are typical of the difficulty of labor relations work at GS- 11.

1. At GS-11, Labor Relations Specialists typically service an organization or group of organizational segments that is moderately complex in terms of the variety of missions, production objectives, number and kinds of employees, working conditions, etc. that affect the knowledge and judgment required. This level of complexity is illustrated by the following examples (these are illustrative of the concept of an overall level of complexity - no one example is intended, in itself, to establish the level to be credited):
 - S The bargaining unit (s) serviced include employees in several organizational segments in which the missions and work production goals are easily understood and relatively stable.
 - S The LRS services a single bargaining unit covering a preponderance (e.g., 75 percent) of an organization of moderately small size (e.g., 1000 - 2000 employees); three bargaining units represented by the same union. one of which covers a significant port of the total population of an organization of moderate size (e.g., 30 percent) of an organization of 2,200 - 3,500 employees) or comparably smaller percentage of a larger organization (e.g. 10 percent of an organization of 5,000 employees); two bargaining units represented by different unions that include a combined total of 100-700 employees in an organization of moderate size; or other combinations essentially equivalent in complexity to the above.
 - S The employees in the units serviced are in a variety of occupations, most of which are either white collar or trades and crafts. Many of the employees have relatively standard working conditions, although several of the occupations have working conditions that add a moderate degree of complexity (e.g., a small computer group working three shifts with some over-time required, a group of firefighters working rotating shifts involving standby time, or wage grade employees performing maintenance work involving irregular overtime assignments and some eligible for an environmental differential).
 - S The employees in the units serviced are typically at one physical location, although there may be a small number at other locations.
 - S There is some instability in the organization or organizational segments in that there are occasional changes in workload, staffing requirements, an-or changes in technology result in some realignment of work assignments, retraining of employees, minor reductions-in-force (e.g., involving up to 50 employees) etc;
2. The unions involved are active in their dealings with management in that they frequently raise substantive issues in agreement negotiations, in policing the application of the negotiated agreements, and in conferring with management on changes in personnel policy and working conditions. However, the relationships between the unions and management can be characterized as cooperative in that there is a willingness of both parties to resolve problems through consultation and compromise. There are, therefore, relatively few issues that go through third party procedures for resolution. Problem solving may also be facilitated because the unions' controversial issues are essentially matters of local concern and dealings are

primarily with officials with little direct assistance from a national headquarters in such area's as negotiations and third-party proceedings.

3. The typical problems dealt with by the GS-11 LR Specialist, whether in negotiations, agreement implementation, third-party proceedings, or other day-to-day contacts with union and management representatives are characterized by the following:
 - S They involve issues for which guidelines and precedent decisions are available but require considerable interpretation and adaptation to develop solutions for the local situation;
 - S The issues typically have a significant impact on production, cost to the organization, and/or the effective operation of the organizational segments represented, although they normally involve a relatively small percentage of the employees of the organization;
 - S The problems are typically uncomplicated in that there are normally few if any difficult sub-problems that must be broken out and separately considered, however their resolution requires the consideration of the overall personnel management viewpoint.

Typical examples of such problems and issues, when they generally meet the above criteria, are:

- S Assignment of overtime
 - S Amount of clean-up time permitted
 - S Merit promotion procedures
 - S Unit determination in which management and union disagree on appropriateness of unit - at this level there are precedent cases that are somewhat similar to the instant case but there are several differences that must be explored and clearly defined and explained in the required documentation;
 - S Unfair Labor Practice charge by the union concerning management's failure to confer on procedures relating to a reduction-in-force involving- a small number of employees in an organizational segment.
4. Other advisory services to management provided at this level include the following:
 - S Conducting planned, systematic studies to develop management positions and to respond to union demands at the bargaining table;
 - S Advising negotiating committee members on the applicability and interpretation of arbitration decisions and precedent decisions of the Assistant Secretary and the Federal Labor Relations Council to the local situation;

- S Communicating government-wide and agency LR policies and procedures to management and staff of the local organization or organizational segments serviced.

Level of Responsibility

GS-11 LR Specialists receive their assignments in terms of overall purpose and scope, without specific instructions as to the methods and techniques to be used. The LR Specialists develop the plan, procedures, and operating methods for their own assignments. However, the supervisor is available for assistance on unusually difficult or controversial problems or on matters of a policy nature. In comparison, GS-09 LR Specialists receive instructions as to the handling of anticipated problems. At GS-11, review of completed work is for conformance with applicable policies and guidelines and for overall effectiveness.

Personal contacts are more difficult than at GS-09 in that they involve consultation and negotiation with local union officers and stewards, and with management officials at all levels of the local organization, concerning difficult and controversial issues and problems. LR Specialists, therefore, must be able to explain clearly and effectively their views on approaches to resolving such problems, including the application and interpretation of precedent cases. They must exercise considerable tact in gaining the cooperation of both parties in reaching and accepting satisfactory solutions. Additionally, contacts at this level often involve discussions with LR Specialists at higher level headquarters to obtain advice and assistance on matters of agency-or government-wide scope, such as those concerning the agency interpretation of precedent decisions of the Assistant Secretary and the Federal Labor Relations Council.

At this level, LR Specialists typically take part in negotiations as an equal member of the management team, although in a few instances, e. g., for a unit representing a rather small portion of the organization in which controversial issues are not expected to arise, they may be designated as the chief negotiator. Additionally, LR Specialists at this level often take part in third-party proceedings, such as arbitration hearings and proceedings involving unfair labor practice charges, as a technical advisor and witness for management. In these situations, the issues involved are typically at the level of difficulty described under "Nature of Assignment" above.

LABOR RELATIONS SPECIALIST, GS-0233-12

Nature of Assignment

GS-12 labor relations specialist perform a wide variety of difficult assignments that require extensive training and experience in LR theories, principles, and practices, and a broad understanding of management objectives and implications of the agency's labor relations program. Assignments at this level require a high degree of judgment and originality in resolving complex and controversial problems, often requiring substantial modification and adaptation of guidelines and application of innovative approaches for specific situations.

The following characteristics are typical of the difficulty of labor relations work at GS-12.

1. Labor Relations Specialists, GS-12, typically service an organization or group of organizational segments that is more complex than those typical of the GS- 11 level in terms of the variety of missions, production objectives, number and kinds of employees, working conditions etc. that affect the knowledge and judgment required. This level of complexity is illustrated by the following examples (these are illustrative of the concept of an overall level of complexity - no one example is intended, in itself, to establish the level to be credited):
 - S The bargaining unit(s) serviced include employees in a substantial number of organizational segments, several of which have distinctive and diverse missions requiring a knowledge of goal and objectives in several functional areas.
 - S The LRS services a single bargaining unit covering a preponderance (e.g., 75 percent) of an organization of moderate size (e.g., 2200 - 3500 employees); several bargaining units (e. g., 3-5) represented by two or three unions, two of which cover a combined total of approximately 40% of the population of an organization of moderate size; two or three bargaining units represented by the same union, at least one of which covers a significant portion of an organization of moderately large size (e.g., 30 percent of an organization of 3700 - 6000 employees); or other combinations essentially equivalent in complexity to the above.
 - S The employees in the unit (s) serviced are in a wide variety of occupations, normally including mixtures of both GS and wage grade or professional and non-professional, many of which have substantial differences in working conditions and occupational practices. An example of this level of complexity is an industrial activity in which the units service by the LRS include a wide variety of trades and crafts employees, engineers and technicians, cafeteria workers, clerical employees, guards, and fire fighters, many of which have different problems involving shift operations, standby duty, overtime, environmental pay, promotional opportunities, etc. Another example is an organization in which the unit(s) serviced by the LRS include a wide variety of professional, administrative, and clerical employees having such varied employment situations as a large number of low grade employees with routine and monotonous duties to perform varied overtime and shift requirements, many employees with very limited promotional opportunities, etc.
 - S Many of the employees in the units serviced may be in several geographically dispersed locations; e.g., a regional office that provides the first full level of LR services to 5 or 6 small offices in several States.
 - S The missions of the organizational segments in which the units serviced are located are relatively dynamic, resulting in frequent changes in personnel policies, working conditions, employment levels,; etc. (e.g., major realignments of duties, positions, and employees; changes in technology requiring substantial retraining of employees; relatively frequent

reductions-in-force, many of which are limited in coverage but occasionally involve a large number of employees, etc.)

- S The units serviced may include one or more "tenant" activities under separate and autonomous management (most often found in defense organizations). In these situations, the LRS must be aware of and consider the diverse views and needs of each group of managers in their dealings with union representatives.
2. As at GS-11, the unions are active in raising substantive issues in all phases of their dealings with management. However, at the GS- 12 level, the relationships between the unions and management are typically more difficult for the LR Specialist to deal with because of such factors as (1) the unions assume more of an adversary role, in that they are more likely to take a hard-line position on a variety of issues, with a significant number going through third-party procedures for resolution; (2) the local union officials often obtain the advice and assistance of professional, highly knowledgeable and sophisticated representatives from a national headquarters staff in negotiations and third-party proceedings; (3) there is a significant turnover in the organization's management and supervisory personnel an/or there is a general resistance by management to constructive bilateral consultation and cooperation (e.g., at an activity where many of the supervisors and managers are regularly transferred in and out, are relatively untrained in the area of labor-management relations, and are used to making unilateral decisions and having them carried out without question).
 3. The typical problem dealt with by the GS-12 LR Specialist, whether in negotiations, agreement implementation, third-party proceedings, or other day-today contacts with union and management representatives are characterized by the following:
 - S Precedent decisions and guidelines on controversial issues are often inapplicable or conflicting;
 - S Controversial issues frequently involve large numbers of employees, rather than just a few;
 - S Issues frequently have a potentially serious impact on mission accomplishment, the organization's budget, etc.;
 - S Problems to be resolved (e.g., unfair labor practice charges, grievances under a negotiated procedure) often are complex in that they involve several inter-related sub-problems that must be considered in order to arrive at a satisfactory solution to the larger question;
 - S The local organization is considered by the unions to be a "lead" activity in the area or in the agency, requiring the LRS to be especially aware of the kinds of issues that would serve as undesirable precedents for bargaining at other activities.

Typical of such problems and issues, when they generally meet the above criteria, are:

- S Unit determination in which management and union disagree on the appropriateness of the unit - at the GS-12 level, the situation has significant elements that are unique and therefore require considerable judgement and originality to relate existing precedent to the specific case in justifying management's views.
- Number and length of rest periods, and length of clean-up time required when a large number of employees are involved. thus making the issues potentially very costly to the organization.
 - An unfair labor practice charge alleging the elimination of certain jobs in the unit for the express purpose of separating union officers for their union activities.
 - Grievance arbitration concerning the propriety of a promotion action which could result in corrective action involving the promotion of the grieving party with a large amount of back pay and the reduction in grade of one or more employees that were promoted inappropriately.
4. GS-12 LR Specialists are recognized for their technical competence and soundness of judgment in LR matters. For example, they may be assigned to serve as the principal spokesman of a management negotiating committee involved in agreement negotiations for bargaining units with complexities typical of the GS-11 level, or, if not spokesman, their views and recommendations on management positions and negotiating techniques for more difficult negotiations have a major impact on the approaches taken by the committee. This same level of participation is also true for third-party proceedings such as unfair labor practice hearings, arbitration hearings, etc. Similarly, their views are heavily relied on in making decisions as to whether to take a grievance to arbitration and other of similar significance.

Level of Responsibility

GS-12 Labor Relations Specialists receive assignments in terms of broad objectives and are expected to plan and carry out their work independently. Whereas GS-11 LR Specialists receive assistance from the supervisor on difficult and controversial problems, GS-12 Specialists resolve most such problems independently except for those of a policy nature. Although work is seldom, if ever, reviewed in progress, the supervisor is kept informed regarding sensitive issues and other matters of interest. The completed work of a GS-12 LR Specialist is reviewed for results attained and conformance with the overall policies and objectives of the activity and the agency.

Personal contacts, in addition to those described for GS-11, include consultation and negotiation with officials and district or regional representatives of the national headquarters of unions as well as those of the unions locals; frequent advice and assistance to top management of the local organization on unusually difficult and highly controversial problems; and discussions with representatives of policy-making agencies (such as the US. Office of Personnel Management, and

Office of the assistant Secretary of Labor/Labor Management Relations) and LR Specialists from other agencies also on controversial issues and on the application of conflicting or vaguely applicable precedents to difficult problems.

As at GS-11, LR Specialists at this level take part in third-party proceedings as a technical advisor to a management representative who is making the presentation of the agency's position; or, at times as the spokesman for the activity. However, at GS-12, the issues are more complex requiring a greater degree of judgment and knowledge in presenting management's position effectively and in rebutting the union's arguments.