



United States Office of Personnel Management

Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions
November 2000
Article No. 25-08

Standard: [General Schedule Supervisory Guide \(April 1998\)](#)

Factor: Factor 3, Supervisory and Managerial Authority Exercised

Issue: Crediting Level 3-4b

Identification of the Classification Issue

The appellant was the manager of a field unit staffed with about 70 employees. The employing agency credited the appellant's supervisory responsibilities at Level 3-4b on the basis that he exercised final authority for approving the full range of personnel actions and organization design proposals recommended by his subordinate supervisors.

Resolution

Before Level 3-4b may be considered, a position must first fully satisfy the managerial and supervisory authorities described at Level 3-3 under *both* paragraphs a and b of that level (See Digest 19). The basis for this requirement is that the various levels described under Factor 3 are not stand-alone criteria that may be viewed in isolation, but rather represent a continuum of progressively more responsible supervisory/managerial work. Each successively higher factor level description represents *additional* authorities beyond those expressed at the next lower level. Therefore, all of Level 3-3 *must* be met before Level 3-4 may be credited.

Level 3-3a describes a range of managerial authorities that include devising long-range work plans, responding to budget shortages, and planning for long-range staffing needs. Positions at this level are closely involved with high-level program officials (or comparable *agency level* staff personnel) in developing overall goals and objectives related to high levels of program management and development or formulation. The appeal decision noted that most field-level positions would not meet this level. These positions are usually involved in the delivery of basic program services or the

execution of line program activities at the field level. Level 3-3a, in contrast, describes *program management* work normally delegated to higher levels in the organization, where the position is involved in making decisions related to broad staffing, budgetary, policy, and regulatory matters affecting the overall program on a *national* level.

Some decentralized agencies have delegated major programs and/or program segments to large field activities. However, in this case, the appellant's unit was not delegated this scope of program responsibility. The appellant provided input to higher levels of management on these basic program execution issues as they related to the resource requirements and working environment of his unit, e.g., commenting on proposed policy or regulatory changes. He occasionally served on task forces and working groups formed to explore new program initiatives or address continuing program issues or concerns. However, these were infrequent project assignments intended to present a range of options to higher-level decision-making officials. The appellant had no independent authority to make the types of managerial decisions described above. Therefore, Level 3-3a was not met and, by extension, Level 3-4 could not be considered.

OPM found that the employing agency also misconstrued the requirements of Level 3-4b. That level requires the exercise of final authority for the full range of personnel actions and organizational design proposals recommended by subordinate supervisors. It presupposes that the organization and workload are of sufficient size and complexity to require and permit the exercise of these responsibilities on a recurring basis. The appellant's unit was segmented into seven functional divisions. None of these subordinate units were large enough to permit any significant flexibility in the way the work was structured and organized. The unit's mission and activities were stable and did not change substantially over time. The nature of the work performed by the largely specialized professional and skilled labor subordinate positions did not permit reassignment of duties among positions. This type of organizational environment does not allow the opportunity for recurring exercise of the full range of Level 3-4b authorities.

“Back to the Basics”

This decision illustrates that classification standards must be applied in an internally consistent manner. As a threshold standard, each successively higher factor level description represents *additional* authorities beyond those expressed at the next lower level. Therefore, Level 3-3 *must* be creditable in its entirety before Level 3-4 may be considered. The decision also makes clear that all independent field units are not large and complex enough to allow their managers to regularly exercise the full range of authorities required to credit Level 3-4.

Link to [C-0025-14-01](#)