

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Classification Appeals and ELSA Programs



Dallas Oversight Division
1100 Commerce Street, Room 4C22
Dallas, TX 75242

**Reconsideration of Classification Appeal Decision
Under Section 5112 of Title 5, United States Code**

Appellant: [appellant's name]

Organization: Research Work Unit [number]
[name of city] Forestry Center
[name of station] Research Station
Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
[city, state]

Agency classification: Support Services Specialist
GS-342-06

OPM decision, April 20, 1998: Budget Technician
GS-561-07

OPM reconsideration decision: Secretary
GS-318-06

OPM decision number: C-0318-06-01

Peter D. Dickson
Director
11/5/98

Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (5 CFR), 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).

Since this decision changes the classification of the appealed position, it is to be effective no later than the beginning of the fourth pay period after the date of this decision (5 CFR 511.702). The servicing personnel office must submit a compliance report containing the corrected position description and a Standard Form 50 showing the personnel action taken. The report must be submitted within 30 days from the effective date of the personnel action.

Decision sent to:

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

Director, Office of Human Resources Management
U.S. Department of Agriculture
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Personnel Officer
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Introduction

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) received a request, dated June 12, 1998, from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for reconsideration of a classification appeal decision rendered by the Dallas Oversight Division on the position occupied by [appellant's name], an employee with the Forest Service. OPM's decision was issued on April 20, 1998. Our original decision reclassified the appellant's position from Support Services Specialist, GS-342-06, to Budget Technician, GS-561-07.

Based on the analysis and information in USDA's request, OPM reopened this case. A Dallas Oversight Division representative conducted an on-site audit of [the appellant's] position on October 14, 1998. Based on additional information and fact-finding, we have revised our classification determination. The following decision regarding the classification of [the appellant's] position overturns our April 20 decision. We have decided this appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

General issues

The USDA and Forest Service raise several issues in their disagreement with OPM's initial decision on the subject position, basically questioning the series, title, and grade determinations. Regarding the application of the grade level criteria in the GS-500 Job Family Standard for Clerical and Technical Accounting and Budget work, the agency believes that credit for level 1-3 is more appropriate to the appellant's position than is the 1-4 level credited in our initial decision. Such crediting would result in a lower grade, GS-06, for the position. The agency also indicates that the GS-318 Secretary Series or the GS-342 Support Services Administration Series is the more appropriate series than the GS-561 Budget Clerical and Technician Series. The agency is concerned with the potential impact of the decision to upgrade [the appellant's] position on many other similar positions nationwide, and they contend that the Dallas decision is inconsistent with the decision of our Chicago office on one of these positions.

Position information

The duties and responsibilities of the appellant's position are accurately described in the position description numbered [number]. She serves as the Research Work Unit's (RWU) principle assistant responsible for accomplishing the administrative and clerical work of the office, including support in the administration of the Unit's budget. She supports the staff and work of the RWU. The mission of the RWU is to provide fundamental knowledge on the ecology and physiology of southern pine species and even-aged management options to enhance and sustain the productivity of southern pine ecosystems. The RWU has two off-site experimental forests located at the [name of site] and [name of site]. The Unit is comprised of 25 employees on permanent, temporary, term, and intermittent appointments. The RWU employees hold jobs such as Research Plant Physiologist, Research Forester, Soil Scientist, Biological Science Technician, Forestry Technician or Aid, Mathematician, and Computer Specialist. In addition to providing services to RWU employees, the appellant provides services to a few other State, Forest Service, or USDA employees who may be working with the Unit on cooperative projects. The appellant supervises one Office Automation Assistant,

GS-326-05. The RWU's Project Leader, a Supervisory Research Forester, GS-460-15, is the appellant's immediate supervisor. The Project Leader reports to the Assistant Director of the Southern Research Station, located in Asheville, North Carolina.

The appellant performs a range of duties, with about 50 percent of her time spent on budget-related work. She assists the Project Leader in developing the annual budget proposal, for submission to the Asheville Station Headquarters office, by making projections based on historical data, past year's spending, and new data on increased costs. The RWU's budget for fiscal year 1998 totaled \$1.8 million, which is typical of the amount of funds allocated each year. She carries out budget administration duties by monitoring the budget through numerous yearly management codes, numbering approximately 23 this past fiscal year. Three management codes, operating, salary, and fixed expenses, are based on appropriated funds. The remaining codes, based on reimbursable or other types of funds, represent various kinds of agreements; i.e., reimbursable, intra-agency, cooperative, and challenge cost-share; the Unit has with universities, other RWU's and Federal organizations, or private industry. The appellant ensures control of the budget by monitoring and reconciling expenditures with National Finance Center (NFC) transaction registers and with project managers statements, resolving discrepancies between those records and her own records. She routinely ensures that charges are made to the appropriate management code and requests of the Station Headquarters Budget and Finance Office adjustments to correct errors. She may also request of the Budget and Finance Office a transfer of funds from one management code to another, as directed by the Project Leader. She prepares monthly obligation reports and advises the Project Leader on the status of the budget and spending levels.

The appellant is also responsible for accomplishing other important work for the Unit and staff. She handles the procurement of supplies and equipment through the use of a credit card or convenience checks for purchases under \$2500, blanket purchase agreements with three local vendors, and field purchase orders. She accesses NFC's automated PCMS system to approve credit card and convenience check payments. The appellant carries out personnel administrative procedures, such as initiating requests for personnel actions, ensuring that appropriate supporting documentation accompanies the requests; tracking and following up on personnel actions; maintaining employee development folders for the staff; preparing individual development plans and performance appraisal elements, based on input from the staff; serving as the point of contact with Department of Labor on workers compensation claims; and answering questions from the staff on basic personnel matters.

The appellant manages the administrative aspects of the Senior Citizen Service Employment Program (SCSEP) by tracking hours worked by enrollees, preparing necessary quarterly reports and other personnel paperwork, scheduling annual physical examinations, and coordinating a Recognition Day. She maintains the Unit's library of publications, manuscripts, and other research related documents; tracks the pending and published status of publications; submits manuscripts through the appropriate processes; and orders or personally prepares reprints. She is responsible for pulling together information for and preparing certain sections of different reports. She is involved with preparing the Research Attainment Report, the Station Supervisory Review report, and the Technical Assistance Visit report. The appellant is responsible for property and fleet management duties; the tracking and

coordination of project study plans; word processing services related to correspondence, reports, and manuscripts; administrative computer activities; the review of outgoing correspondence; and the establishment and maintenance of filing systems.

The appellant's Unit is one of three RWU's co-located at the [name of city] Forestry Center in [name of city]. Each RWU reports to the Asheville Southern Research Station, but has its own project leader and operates independently of the other units. The appellant's Project Leader is permanently designated as the Director's Representative at the [name of city] location and has additional responsibilities in this role. The appellant likewise has additional responsibilities due to her Project Leader's role as Director's Representative. She coordinates administrative matters with the other RWU's, attends meetings and takes minutes, and ensures arrangements are made for special visitors.

The appellant oversees the work of the Office Automation Assistant, who is responsible for providing word processing services; preparing travel authorizations and making travel arrangements; serving as timekeeper in taking care of time and attendance matters; procuring supplies and equipment through credit card or purchase order; maintaining and submitting vehicle use sheets; and performing reception, mail, filing, and other clerical duties. The appellant spends a very small percent of her time, less than 5 percent, in carrying out her supervisory responsibilities over this assistant position.

The appellant's Unit is in the position of having some administrative services provided to it by an organization other than its Asheville Station Headquarters office. The Unit is co-located with several Forest Service organizations in the [name of city] Forestry Center. The [name of a national forest] office has shared-service agreements with the appellant's RWU. These agreements cover such matters as building maintenance, fleet equipment, computer mainframe systems, and utility accounts. The Asheville office provides personnel and purchasing services to the Unit (as of October 1998).

Series, title, and standard determination

Although the appellant supervises one employee, these supervisory duties and responsibilities are not evaluated against the General Schedule Supervisory Guide. The supervisory responsibilities do not meet the requirements for coverage under this guide, since the duties do not occupy at least 25 percent of the appellant's overall time or meet the intent of the requirement concerning the supervisory authority exercised.

The appellant is responsible for a wide range of administrative and clerical duties that support the RWU and the staff. The position consists of duties and required knowledge that appear similar to those represented in several series. For positions whose duties fall in more than one occupational group, the most appropriate series for the position depends on consideration of a number of factors. As explained in the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards and the Classifier's Handbook, the series is determined in these cases after considering the highest level of work performed, the paramount qualifications required, sources of recruitment and line of progression, the reason for establishing the position, organizational function, and the background knowledge required.

Our initial decision assigned the position to the GS-561 Budget Clerical and Technician Series. However, in consideration of additional information provided by the agency and the factors noted above, we find the GS-318 Secretary Series to be the most appropriate for the appellant's position.

The GS-318 series includes all positions the duties of which are to assist one individual, and in some cases the subordinate staff of that individual, by performing general office work auxiliary to the work of the organization. To be included in this series, a position must be the principal office clerical or administrative support position in the office, operating independently of any other such position in the office. The duties require a knowledge of clerical and administrative procedures and requirements; various office skills; and the ability to apply such skills in a way that increases the effectiveness of others. The duties do not require a technical or professional knowledge of a specialized subject-matter area. Administrative support duties typically provided by secretary positions include planning and arranging the maintenance and preparation of information needed for budget reports.

The appellant's position is the primary assistant to the Project Leader and his staff responsible for performing and coordinating a full range of administrative and clerical duties which support RWU staff members and the work of the Unit as a whole. The appellant assists the Project Leader by figuring budget projections and estimates and monitoring the budget throughout the year; keeping personnel folders and handling personnel administrative matters; gathering and preparing information for reports that are prepared and signed out by him; and tracking pertinent information on the Unit's work, such as the status of study plans and cooperative agreements. She assists the staff and supports their work by performing or overseeing duties in the areas of word processing; travel arrangements; procurement of office supplies and equipment; and maintenance and coordination of documents such as manuscripts and publications. In addition, she carries out numerous other administrative and clerical procedures and duties to ensure the RWU's work is accomplished. The work requires a fair amount of coordination with the staff, the Asheville office, the [name of a national forest] office, other Federal and State organizations, publishing companies, vendors, and staff members of universities. She must be knowledgeable of the work of the Unit, and of the administrative and clerical procedures and requirements for managing and completing the Unit's office work.

The appellant's job overall is secretarial in nature. Both the knowledge required to perform the work and the range and nature of the appellant's duties and responsibilities are typical of the GS-318 series. The purpose of the position is broader than only to perform budget-related work. Instead, the purpose is to accomplish the administrative and clerical work of the office, similar to that characterized in the GS-318 series. As discussed later in this decision, any budget-related work performed by the appellant is not higher graded than the secretarial work. Considering all of this, the GS-318 series is the most appropriate for the appellant's position.

The GS-561 Budget Clerical and Technician Series includes positions that involve performing clerical and technician work in support of budget analysis and administration when such work requires primarily knowledge of the procedures which facilitate budgeting as conducted in the Federal Service. The work requires practical understanding and skill in the application of administrative rules,

regulations, and procedures associated with recording, reporting, processing, and keeping track of budgetary transactions, e.g., the credit, receipt, transfer, allotment, withdrawal, obligation, or outlay of funds.

The appellant's budget-related work is similar to GS-561 budget technician work. However, this work does not control the position's series determination, for the following reasons. The position exists for the purpose of providing an array of administrative services that support the Unit as a whole, the Project Leader, and the other staff members. Since the position consists of a much broader range of duties than just the budget-related work, incumbents to this position need to have other knowledge, skills, and experience to perform the work. Taking into account the organizational structure and career paths in the Research function of Forest Service, budget technician duties are the full time responsibility of GS-561 positions located at the Station Headquarters offices rather than at the Research Work Unit level. As mentioned before, the appellant's budget-related duties, when considered alone, do not represent higher-graded work than the overall work of the position. The position fits best within the GS-318 series and the budget-related work does not drive the series classification.

The appellant's position does not fit well within the GS-342 Support Services Administration Series, the series assigned by the agency several years ago. This series includes positions with primary duties involving supervising, directing, or planning and coordinating a variety of service functions that are principally work-supporting, i.e., those functions without which the operations of an organization or services to the public would be impaired, curtailed, or stopped. Such service functions include, but are not limited to, communications, procurement of administrative supplies and equipment, printing, property management, mail service, and facilities and equipment maintenance.

The appellant's position is responsible for accomplishing a range of administrative and clerical support duties for the RWU, Project Leader, and staff. The range of the appellant's duties, and those duties over which she has supervisory responsibilities, covers areas such as procurement, property and fleet management, mail, travel, maintenance of library documents, and filing systems, such as those areas common to the GS-342 series. The appellant's position, however, does not have planning, coordinating, or advising responsibilities for entire support service functional areas, which is characteristic of GS-342 positions. In the appellant's case, many support service functional areas are handled by various other specialists working in the organization with whom the RWU has shared-services agreements or in the Asheville Station Headquarters office. The appellant is involved in these support areas on a smaller scale than that typical of GS-342 positions. For example, she does not coordinate, plan, and direct the area of purchasing or property and fleet management, since other specialists, outside of her RWU, perform this work. Other support areas under the responsibility of the appellant and her assistant, such as travel, timekeeping, the SCSEP program, library services, and mail, have work to be accomplished at the *Unit* level. This work is not equivalent to the scope of the work of a GS-342 specialist who provides support services to a small field office comprised of various organizational entities, such as program or operational areas, or divisions, branches, and units.

The appellant's position is appropriately classified in the GS-318 series and titled Secretary. The standard used to grade the overall work of the position is the GS-318 standard. To address issues brought about by this reconsideration, Factor 1 of the GS-500 Job Family Standard for Clerical and Technical Accounting and Budget Work is also discussed in this decision. The GS-500 standard is applied only to the position's budget-related work.

Grade determination

Both the GS-318 standard and the GS-500 Job Family Standard use the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format, which employs nine factors. Under the FES, each factor level description in a standard or guide describes the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. Therefore, if a position fails to meet the criteria in a factor level description in any significant aspect, it must be credited at a lower level. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at a higher level. Our evaluation with respect to the FES factors of both standards follows.

GS-318 Secretary Standard

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts which the secretary must understand to do acceptable work and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply this knowledge. In addition, this factor examines the work situation. This refers to the complexity of the organization served, which affects the extent of office rules, procedures, operations, and priorities the secretary must apply to maintain a proper and smooth flow of work within the organization and between organizations.

The appellant's position meets Knowledge Type III. At this level, positions require knowledge characteristic of Knowledge Type II, which is knowledge of an extensive body of rules, procedures, or operations applied to clerical assignments; knowledge of the organization and functions of the office to perform all of the procedural work of the office, including preparation of a wide variety of recurring reports and the request and coordination of personnel actions. In addition, the knowledge required of Type III includes knowledge of the duties, priorities, commitments, policies, and program goals of the staff sufficient to perform non-routine assignments, such as locating and summarizing information from files and documents after discerning which information is or is not relevant. Secretaries at this level are fully responsible for coordinating the work of the office with other offices and for recognizing the need for such coordination in various circumstances.

The appellant is required to have knowledge of an extensive body of rules, procedures, and policies to carry out a full range of clerical and administrative work of the RWU. She must have a knowledge of the organization and function of her Unit and a knowledge of the greater [name of station] Research Station's organization and administrative policies and procedures. Such knowledge enables the appellant to carry out such work as procuring supplies and equipment; managing the Unit's

property and fleet equipment; accessing the NFC automated system to approve credit card payments; managing and monitoring the Unit's SCSEP program; handling and following up on requests for personnel actions; and supervising the timekeeping, travel arrangements, and vehicle use tracking duties of her assistant. The appellant is also required to be knowledgeable of the work, commitments, policies, and program goals of the staff. She uses this knowledge to perform work in the areas of developing budget estimates and projections; monitoring and advising on the budget and spending levels; tracking and coordinating various aspects of the Unit's project study plans and manuscript development and publishing; and gathering and preparing information for the Research Attainment Report, the Station Supervisory Review report, and the Technical Assistance Visit report. This fully meets the Knowledge Type III level.

The appellant's position does not meet Knowledge Type IV. This level requires that an employee be positioned in an environment equivalent to Work Situation B or C (as described next). The appellant's position operates in Work Situation A rather than B or C. Knowledge Type IV level requires that the secretary have a basic foundation of administrative concepts, principles, and practices sufficient to perform independently such duties as studying the clerical activities of the office and subordinate offices and recommending a specific restructuring of the way activities are carried out. This level also requires such a comprehensive knowledge of the supervisor's policies and views that a secretary would be able to develop material for a supervisor's use in a public speaking engagement or brief persons outside the organization on the supervisor's views on current issues facing the organization. The appellant's position does not require the level of knowledge described here.

Work Situation A covers organizations that are small and of limited complexity. In these organizations, the supervisor directs the staff primarily through face-to-face meetings and internal procedural and administrative controls are simple and informal. The appellant's organization meets Work Situation A, in that the 25 staff members make up a relatively small office where the Project Leader directs the staff through weekly meetings and the administrative controls are fairly simple.

In Work Situation B, the staff is organized into subordinated segments, which may in turn be further divided. Direction of the staff is exercised through intermediate supervisors and the subordinate groups differ in such aspects as subject matter, functions, relationships with other organizations, and administrative requirements in ways that place demands on the secretary that are significantly greater than those described in Work Situation A. The appellant's unit is not organized into separate groups, with each having a supervisor and different functions, relationships, and administrative requirements. The organization is less complex than Work Situation B.

Level 1-3 (350 points) is assigned.

Factor 2, Supervisory controls

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

At level 2-3, the supervisor defines the overall objectives and priorities of the work in the office and assists the secretary with some special assignments. The secretary plans and carries out the work of the office and handles problems and deviations in accordance with established instructions, priorities, policies, commitments and program goals of the supervisor, and accepted practices in the occupation. The methods used by the secretary to accomplish the work are almost never reviewed in detail. Completed work is evaluated for adequacy, appropriateness, and conformance to established policy.

The supervisory controls over the appellant's position meet level 2-3. The appellant performs her work independently, operating within the overall objectives, commitments, and priorities defined by the Project Leader. She takes responsibility for resolving problems within the framework of established policies and procedures, giving advice in her areas of work and coordinating matters with various organizations. She consults with the Project Leader on unusual situations or complicated matters which are not covered by guidelines or precedents. The Project Leader assesses the appellant's completed work on the basis of its adequacy and conformance to established procedures and policies. Contrary to information contained in the Supervisory Controls section of the position description, the appellant's supervisor does not review the methods used in completing the work.

The appellant's position does not meet level 2-4. At this level, the supervisor sets the overall objectives of the work. The secretary and the supervisor, in consultation, develop the deadlines and the work to be done. In the appellant's case, the work is controlled more through set priorities and schedules than is the work at this level. At level 2-4, the secretary handles a wide variety of situations and conflicts requiring use of initiative to determine the approach to be taken or methods to use. This level is most likely found in organizations of such size and scope that many complex office problems arise which cannot be brought to the attention of the supervisor. Completed work is reviewed only for overall effectiveness. In the appellant's case, it is not her responsibility to resolve a variety of conflicts and problems arising in her areas of work. Also, her work receives a closer review than is typical of this level.

Level 2-3 (275 points) is assigned.

Factor 3, Guidelines

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

At level 3-2, guidelines typically include dictionaries; style manuals; agency instructions concerning such matters as correspondence, or the handling of classified information; and operating policies of the supervisor or organization served. The secretary locates and selects the appropriate guidelines, references, and procedures for application to specific cases, referring situations to which the existing guidelines cannot be applied or significant proposed deviations to the supervisor. The secretary may also determine which of established alternatives to use.

At level 3-3, the highest level described in the standard, the guidelines include a large body of unwritten policies, precedents, and practices which are not completely applicable to the work or are

not specific and which deal with matters relating to judgment, efficiency, and relative priorities rather than with procedural concerns. The secretary at this level applies and adapts guidelines, such as regulations or the supervisor's policies, to specific problems for which the guidelines are not clearly applicable.

The nature of the appellant's guidelines meets both level 3-2 and level 3-3. She utilizes USDA, Forest Service, and local manuals, handbooks, and guides that are directly applicable to the work involving procurement, personnel administrative matters, travel authorizations and arrangements, property and fleet management, the SCSEP program, publication and manuscript management, timekeeping, word processing, and filing. For example, the Administrative Desk Reference Guide contains a wealth of specific guidance on a range of administrative issues. However, part of the appellant's work is covered by guidelines more characteristic of level 3-3. Some of the work, such as figuring budget projections and estimates, ensuring the appropriateness of expenditures being charged to management codes set up for a variety of projects and expenses, establishing and maintaining a system to monitor expenditures, and resolving problems that arise when budget records do not reconcile, involves the use of *general* guidelines and practices and a certain amount of judgment on the part of the appellant.

Level 3-3 (275 points) is assigned.

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 4-3, the highest level described in the standard, the work includes various duties involving different and unrelated processes and methods. For example, in addition to duties described at levels 4-1 and 4-2, such as performing a full range of clerical and procedural tasks in support of the office, the secretary at level 4-3 performs a number of duties comparable to the following: preparing one-of-a-kind reports from information in various documents when this requires reading correspondence and reports to identify relevant items, and when decisions are based on a familiarity with the issues involved and the relationships between the various types of information; or setting up conferences requiring the planning and arranging of travel and hotel accommodations for conference participants when this is based on a knowledge of the schedules and commitments of the participants. Decisions regarding what needs to be done, and how to accomplish it, are based on the secretary's knowledge of the duties, priorities, commitments, policies, and program goals of the supervisor and staff, and involve analysis of the subject, phase, or issues involved in each assignment. The chosen courses are selected from many alternatives.

The complexity of the appellant's position meets and does not exceed level 4-3. In addition to having responsibility for carrying out a full range of clerical and administrative tasks, the appellant is responsible for pulling information together for and preparation of sections of various technical

reports, such as the Research Attainment Report, the Station Supervisory Review report, and the Technical Assistance Visit report. These require that she search through numerous documents and files related to administrative matters and to the work of the Unit to identify the pertinent information needed. The work she does in developing budget projections, monitoring and ensuring proper expenditures against management codes, advising on the status of the budget, tracking study plans and progress reports, coordinating the manuscript and publication processes, and gathering and preparing information for sections of reports requires her to make decisions based not only on procedural matters, but also on the work, goals, and commitments of the Project Leader and staff.

Level 4-3 (150 points) is assigned.

Factor 5, Scope and effect

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

At level 5-2, the purpose of the work is to carry out specific procedures. The work affects the accuracy and reliability of further processes. Duties frequently appearing at this level include serving as liaison between the supervisor and subordinate units; consolidating reports submitted by subordinate units; and arranging meetings involving staff from outside the immediate office.

The scope and effect of the appellant's position meet level 5-2. The purpose of the position is to perform and coordinate a full range of administrative and clerical duties which support RWU staff members and the work of the Unit. The appellant's work impacts the work of the Unit's staff and the administrative and technical processes of other offices, such as the Asheville and [name of forest] National Forest offices.

The scope and effect of the position do not meet level 5-3, where the secretary serves an office that clearly and directly affects a wide range of agency activities, operations in other agencies, or a large segment of the public or business community. The appellant's Unit does not have this kind of significant impact on the Forest Service or other large organizations. The secretary at this level modifies and devises methods and procedures that significantly and consistently affect the accomplishment of the mission of the office. The secretary identifies and resolves various problems and situations that affect the orderly and efficient flow of work in transactions with parties outside the organization. The effect of the appellant's position does not meet this level of significance.

Level 5-2 (75 points) is assigned.

Factor 6, Personal Contacts

This factor includes face-to-face telephone contacts with persons not in the supervisory chain. The levels of this factor are based on what is required to make the initial contact, the difficulty of communicating with those contacted, and the setting in which the contact takes place.

At level 6-2, the personal contacts are with employees in the same agency, but outside the immediate organization. People contacted generally are engaged in different functions, missions, and kinds of work, e.g., representatives from various levels within the agency such as headquarters, regional, district, or field offices, or other operating offices in the immediate installation. Contacts may also be with members of the general public, as individuals or groups, in a moderately structured setting.

The appellant's personal contacts meet level 6-2. She is in contact with staff members within her Unit, Forest Service personnel at the Asheville Southern Research Station Headquarters office and [name of forest] National Forest offices, and staff of other RWU's. She also has contacts with vendors; employees from other Federal and State agencies; and representatives from private industry, publishing companies, and universities.

The appellant's contacts do not meet level 6-3. At this level, personal contacts are with individuals or groups from outside the employing agency in a moderately unstructured setting. For example, the contacts are not established on a routine basis, requiring the secretary to identify and locate the appropriate person to contact or to apply significant skill and knowledge in determining to whom a telephone call or visitor should be directed, and the purpose and extent of each contact is different, requiring that the role and authority of each party be identified and developed during the course of the contact. Typical contacts at this level might include people in their capacities as attorneys, contractors, or representatives of professional organizations, the news media, or public action groups when the office deals with them on a variety of issues. The appellant's contacts are more routine in nature and more concentrated within her own agency than are the contacts typical of level 6-3.

Level 6-2 (25 points) is assigned.

Factor 7, Purpose of contacts

This factor covers the purpose of the contacts identified in Factor 6, and may range from exchanging factual information to resolving problems affecting the efficient operation of the office.

At level 7-2, the highest level described in the standard, the purpose of the secretary's work is to plan, coordinate, or advise on work efforts or to resolve operating problems. Typical duties normally evaluated at this level include insuring that reports and responses to correspondence are submitted by the staff on time and in the proper format, making travel arrangements, and scheduling conferences.

The purpose of the appellant's contacts meets and does not exceed level 7-2. She frequently is in contact with Forest Service offices to coordinate various administrative matters. She contacts various budget personnel within NFC, the Asheville Headquarters office, or other Forest Service offices to resolve discrepancies identified when reconciling the Unit's expenditures. Contacts with the RWU staff are to coordinate and obtain information on the Unit's work and to provide information or advice on administrative issues.

Factor 7-2 (50 points) is assigned.

Factor 8, Physical demands

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

As at level 8-1, the appellant's work is sedentary. Typically, she may sit comfortably to do the work, however, there may be some walking, standing, or bending. No special physical demands are required to perform the work.

Level 8-1 (5 points) is assigned.

Factor 9, Work environment

This factor considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings.

As at level 9-1, the appellant's work environment involves everyday risks or discomforts which require normal safety precautions typical of office spaces. The work area is adequately lighted, heated, and ventilated.

Level 9-1 (5 points) is assigned.

Summary

In summary, we have evaluated the appellant's position as follows:

| ✖ | Factor | Level | Points |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|-------|--------|
| 1 | Knowledge Required of Position | 1-3 | 350 |
| 2 | Supervisory Controls | 2-3 | 275 |
| 3 | Guidelines | 3-3 | 275 |
| 4 | Complexity | 4-3 | 150 |
| 5 | Scope and Effect | 5-2 | 75 |
| 6 | Personal Contacts | 6-2 | 25 |
| 7 | Purpose of Contacts | 7-2 | 50 |
| 8 | Physical Demands | 8-1 | 5 |
| 9 | Work Environment | 9-1 | 5 |
| TOTAL POINTS | | | 1210 |

The total of 1210 points falls within the GS-06 point range (1105-1350) on the grade conversion table provided in the standard.

GS-500 Job Family Standard for Clerical and Technical Accounting and Budget Work

As mentioned earlier, this standard is applied only to the budget-related work of the appellant's position as a result of issues brought about by the reconsideration request. Our evaluation of Factor 1 has changed from that discussed in the initial decision. Since our evaluation of the other factors is unchanged, they are not discussed further.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position

At level 1-3, the work requires knowledge of a body of standardized regulations, requirements, procedures, and operations associated with clerical and technical duties related to the assigned accounting, budget, or financial management support function. This includes, for example:

- knowledge of the various steps and procedures required to perform a full range of accounting, budget, or financial management support duties related to recurring or standardized

transactions (e.g., verifying the availability of funds by account and obligating necessary dollar amounts);

- knowledge of various accounting, budget, or other financial processing procedures to support transactions that involve the use of different forms and the application of different procedures;
- knowledge of one or more automated data bases associated with a specific accounting, budget, or other financial management function sufficient to input a range of standard information or adjustments, understand recurring error reports and take corrective action, and generate a variety of standard reports; and/or
- knowledge of the structure and content of accounting, budget, or other financial management related documents (e.g., invoices, reports, travel orders, payroll forms, etc.) to investigate and resolve routine or recurring discrepancies, check documents for adequacy, or perform comparable actions that are covered by established procedures; and/or knowledge of frequently used and clearly stated regulations and rules to determine if a transaction is permitted or to respond to recurring questions from agency personnel, clients, and others.

The standard gives an illustration of positions that function at level 1-3. At this level, employees review documents such as vouchers, purchase requests, work orders, and contract invoices to verify budgetary account codes and dollar amounts. They compare job orders, work orders, and requests for funds with account balances to assure that funds are available. They check closed accounts for unobligated balances. They adjust account balances to reflect the effect of allotments, transfers, obligations, expenditures, and other actions which change the amount of funds available in accounts. They provide information about budget procedures and status of funds to program managers and prepare recurring reports on account balances and status of funds.

The knowledge required of the appellant in performing the budget-related work for the Unit is equivalent to level 1-3. Her work requires knowledge of a body of *standardized* procedures, requirements, operations, and documents. The work requires knowledge of the Unit's budget structure, whereby accounts are established for the Unit, by the Asheville Headquarters Budget and Finance Office, on the basis of appropriated and reimbursable funds. The appellant's work requires that she be knowledgeable of the Unit's object classes, line items, and management codes. The appellant utilizes this knowledge to perform a range of duties in support of the Unit's budget. She prepares projections for annual budget proposals; monitors the RWU's budget through numerous management codes, representing operating costs, fixed expenses, and salaries (appropriated funds), and various different special projects and agreements (reimbursable or other funds); ensures appropriate kinds of charges are made against the management codes; establishes and maintains an automated budget tracking system, based in a spreadsheet software application; uses NFC transaction registers, project managers statements, vendor receipts, time and attendance records, and her own tracking records to reconcile expenditures and charges; resolves discrepancies that occur when records do not reconcile; advises the Project Leader on the status of the budget; requests adjustments to reconcile and balance accounts or redirect expenses to more appropriate management codes;

makes requests for carrying over funds to the next fiscal year and requests for transfers of funds between management codes, at the Project Leader's direction; and prepares obligation reports.

The knowledge required by the appellant's budget-related work does not fully meet level 1-4. At this level, the work requires in-depth or broad knowledge of a body of accounting, budget, or other financial management regulations, practices, procedures, and policies related to the specific financial management functions. This includes:

- knowledge of a wide variety of interrelated steps, conditions, and procedures or processes required to assemble, review, and maintain complex accounting, budget, or other fiscal transactions (e.g., reconciling accounts in accounting systems involving extensive subdivision of accounts, frequent and varied adjustments to accounts, or extensive balancing and reconciling of detailed summary accounts; or resolving problems in balancing accounts, adjusting discrepancies, developing control records, verifying the accuracy of budgetary data, adjusting dollar amounts of accounts by line item and object class, and preparing reports on the status of funds);
- knowledge of various accounting, budget, or other financial regulations, laws, and requirements (e.g., related fiscal regulations and applicable schedules, pay and leave rules, administrative rules associated with recording and tracking budgetary transactions, etc.) to ensure compliance and recommend action;
- knowledge of a variety of accounting and budget functional areas and their relationships to other functions to research or investigate problems or errors that require reconciling and reconstructing incomplete information, conducting extensive and exhaustive searches for required information, or performing actions of similar complexity;
- knowledge of automated accounting and budget systems to reconcile errors that require an understanding of nonstandard procedures or to provide assistance in the development of automated procedures for clerical operations; and/or
- knowledge of extensive and diverse accounting, budget or other financial regulations, operations, and procedures governing a wide variety of types of related transactions to resolve nonstandard transactions, complaints, or discrepancies; provide advice; or perform other work that requires authoritative procedural knowledge.

As illustrated in the standard, employees at level 1-4 maintain extensive records of industrially funded (revolving fund) activities, by cost center on hours worked, standard charges, job orders, transfers, estimates, and reimbursements (payments) to the fund. Tasks performed include examination and verification of cost data, and detection of over- or under-obligation and net expenditures of funds on processing customer orders. Work is complicated by program changes, changes in cost factors, and variations in sources of funding and methods of payment. On a regular basis, employees prepare reports on the status of funds in assigned accounts and activities.

The appellant's budget-related work does not require an *in-depth* or *broad* knowledge of budget regulations, practices, procedures, and policies related to budget functions, but rather a solid knowledge of *standard* procedures, requirements, and operations associated with duties related to budget *support* functions, as at level 1-3. Whereas our earlier decision gave the position credit for requiring a knowledge of a wide variety of interrelated steps, conditions, and procedures or processes required to assemble, review, and maintain complex budget transactions, further fact-finding showed the appellant's transactions to be more standard than complex. The position does not require the knowledge to regularly resolve complex problems in balancing accounts, adjusting discrepancies, or verifying the accuracy of budgetary data. The Unit's budget structure is categorized into numerous management codes (approximately 23 this past fiscal year) and requires a good portion of the appellant's time in tracking expenditures against these codes and monitoring the budget as a whole. However, the work she does in monitoring and tracking the budget by management codes is based mostly on her knowledge of standard procedures and practices, rather than on a knowledge of complex, non-standard procedures.

Level 1-3 (350 points) is assigned.

Summary

In summary, we have evaluated the appellant's budget-related work as follows:

| X | Factor | Level | Points |
|---------------------|---|-------|--------|
| 1 | Knowledge Required of Position | 1-3 | 350 |
| 2 | Supervisory Controls | 2-3 | 275 |
| 3 | Guidelines | 3-3 | 275 |
| 4 | Complexity | 4-3 | 150 |
| 5 | Scope and Effect | 5-2 | 75 |
| 6 | and 7 Personal Contacts and Purpose of Contacts | 2b | 75 |
| 8 | Physical Demands | 8-1 | 5 |
| 9 | Work Environment | 9-1 | 5 |
| TOTAL POINTS | | | 1210 |

The total of 1210 points falls within the GS-06 point range (1105-1350) on the grade conversion table provided in the standard. As such, the appellant's budget-related work is evaluated at the same grade level as the overall secretarial work.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Secretary, GS-318-06.