

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

**Chicago Oversight Division  
230 South Dearborn Street, DPN 30-6  
Chicago, Illinois 60604**

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

**Appellant:** [Appellants Name]

**Agency Classification:** Executive Liaison Officer  
GS-301-12

**Organization:** Department of the Army  
Corps of Engineers  
[Name of District]  
Executive Office  
[City, State]

**OPM decision:** GS-1035

**OPM decision number:** C-1035-12-01

/s/

\_\_\_\_\_  
Frederick J. Boland  
Classification Appeals Officer

May 21, 1998

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the government. The agency is responsible for reviewing its classification decisions for identical, similar, or related positions to ensure consistency with this decision. There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under conditions and time limits specified in the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

The certificate must be implemented no later than the beginning of the sixth pay period following the date of the decision, but not earlier than the date of the decision.

### **Decision sent to:**

[appellant's name and address]

Ms. Carol Ashby Smith  
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[name and address of higher level personnel office]

Dr. Susan Duncan  
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 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
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[name and address of appellant's servicing personnel office]

Mr. William Duffy  
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## **Introduction**

The appellant is assigned to position number 01881, classified as Executive Liaison Officer, GS-301-12. The position is located in the Executive Office of the [Name of] District, Corps of Engineers. The appellant believes his position description is accurate, but feels it deserves more credit than his agency allowed when it applied the Administrative Analysis Grade Evaluation Guide. He further questions the accuracy of the classification of his position based on the fact that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) had once certified the position (in September 1978) as Administrative Officer, GS-341-13. He feels his performance and assignments to act in the Commander's absence are not adequately recognized in his classification.

By law, positions are classified based on their duties, responsibilities, and qualification requirements by comparison to the criteria specified in the appropriate Office of Personnel Management (OPM) classification standard or guide. Other methods of evaluation, such as comparison to other positions or former positions whose duties have materially changed, an individual's relative performance in the position, etc., are not permitted. Similarly, acting, temporary, and other responsibilities that are not regular and continuing are not considered in classifying positions. (Temporary assignments of sufficient duration, though, are sometimes recognized in accordance with agency discretion by temporary promotion if higher graded duties are involved, by formal detail, or by performance recognition.)

## **Position Information**

The appellant is assigned to the [Name of] District Executive Office, which also includes the District Commander, Deputy Commander, Deputy District Engineer, and two Secretaries. The appellant reports directly to the District Commander.

The appellant's duties include serving as a Liaison representing the [Name of] District Commander to the District's various constituents, which include congressional, Federal, state, and local units of government and other interested parties concerned with water resource development, military construction, and environmental and regulatory issues. He serves as the district protocol officer, providing guidance and procedures to be used when planning and conducting visits by dignitaries. He also serves as staff assistant to the Commander, the Deputy Commander, and Deputy District Engineer, relieving them of administrative details by anticipating and understanding their policies and acting independently on their behalf on these matters. He manages administrative matters in the Executive Office and serves as the chairperson of the District's Senior Executive Council.

## **Analysis and Findings**

### **Series Determination**

The appellant's agency placed the position in the Miscellaneous Administration and Program, GS-301, series and evaluated the work using the Administrative Analysis Grade Evaluation Guide. The essential criteria for classifying positions in the GS-301 series are: 1) that the primary work of the position is of an administrative, two-grade interval nature; and 2) that the primary work of the

position is not classifiable in any other series. The appellant's position is of a two grade interval nature; however, the OPM Public Affairs, GS-1035, Series standard, dated July 1981, covers much of the work performed by the appellant. Additionally, the GS-1035 standard has its own grading criteria, better suited to evaluating the appellant's work, which lacks the comprehensive analytical assignments envisioned by the Administrative Analysis Grade Evaluation Guide.

The GS-1035 series includes work, like the appellant's, concerned with establishing and maintaining mutual communication between Federal agencies and the general public and various other pertinent publics. Positions in this series advise agency management on policy formulation and the potential public reaction to proposed policy and develop informational materials that inform appropriate publics of the agency's policies, programs, services, and activities. Work in the series requires, like the appellant's work, skills in written and oral communication, analysis, and interpersonal relations. It also requires practical knowledge of agency functional programs. The appellant's position likewise requires practical knowledge of the District's engineering functions, but not the technical or professional level knowledge required to actually perform such work.

The diversity of program areas in which Public Affairs Specialists are found and the variety of organizational alignments of the public affairs function among agencies produce a wide variability of assignments among positions in this series. While the appellant is not assigned to or charged with managing the District's six member Public Affairs Office (though at one time he did direct the office), he none the less spends the majority of the time representing and communicating information about the District's programs with interested parties like key elected officials, cost share partners, military installation commanders, Chambers of Commerce, and civic organizations. Like Public Affairs Specialists who advise top management and monitor public opinion, he advises the Commander on the likely reaction of special interest groups, state and local officials, and Federal elected officials to District engineering proposals and policy. He anticipates information needs of external parties, personally surveys their interests, and reports on their reactions, employing written and personal communication methods such as written responses to inquiries, articles, newsletters, interviews, briefings, and tours. Like Public Affairs Specialists who focus on internal communications, he also conducts information programs to improve employee morale, such as special recognition programs.

In response to our request for specific work examples, the appellant listed a number of items on which he is currently working. Most of them directly involve planning, coordinating, or hosting events related to providing information on Corps projects. Examples of these are:

- Coordinating the visits and briefings of Generals [Name] and [Name] to [Installation name] and [Name of] Locks and Dam;
- Coordinating the visit and briefing of Generals [Name] and [Name] to [Installation name];
- Planning and coordinating the state natural resource director's conference including coordinating the preparation of the newsletter;
- Leading a team coordinating "Corps Day" activities, which involve the employee awards program, a retiree reception, and a picnic at a local park;

- Keeping a congressional representative and his staff up to date on a permit request; and
- Serving as the chair of the [State] Federal Tourism Council meeting as part of the District's outreach and communications efforts.

The appellant provided the following items as examples of his significant recurring duties:

- Serving as the District's representative on the [City] Federal Executive Association;
- Serving as the District's representative on the [State] Commission on Military Affairs;
- Representing the District on the [City] Chamber of Commerce; and
- Keeping congressional staffs, civilian assistants to the Secretary of the Army, state officials, and locally elected officials updated on projects and issues.

The occupation best matching a position's principle duties (those demanding a majority of time) generally governs its series classification. Most of the appellant's time is spent building and maintaining positive and productive intergovernmental and interagency communications between the [Name of] Engineer District and Federal, state, and local government as well as non-government groups. He maintains personal contacts and trusted relationships with key members of congress or their staffs, state departments of natural resources officials, and officials of other organizations that are critical partners in Corps of Engineers programs and projects. Consequently, his work is classified to the GS-1035 series unless it is subordinate to other work demanding a substantial (at least 25 percent) amount of time.

The position includes duties unrelated to the GS-1035 series and outside the GS-1000 Information and Arts occupational family, such as serving as Protocol Officer, serving as a special assistant and advisor to the Commander and his Deputies, and managing the administrative affairs of the Executive Office. However, none of these duties demands a substantial amount of time. Additionally, they are secondary to the communications duties in terms of knowledge requirements and the primary reason for establishing the position. Accordingly, the GS-1035 series best describes the appellant's work.

## **Decision**

The proper series classification of the position is GS-1035. The agency will exercise its first level classification authority to determine the appropriate grade and title by applying the GS-1035 grading criteria.