

**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: [Appellant]

Representative: [representative]

Agency classification: Audiovisual Production Specialist
GS-1071-9

Organization: Department of the Interior
National Park Service
[office]
Audiovisual Arts Division
[city and state]

OPM decision: **Audiovisual Production Specialist
GS-1071-9**

OPM decision number: **C-1071-09-01**

/s/

Frederick J. Boland
Classification Appeals Officer

April 27, 2000

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).

Decision sent to:

Appellant
address
city and state

Representative
office name
address
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Human Resource Officer
Human Resources Officer
Office
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Introduction

The appellant is assigned to position number 1130-000130, classified as Audiovisual Production Specialist, GS-1071-9, by the agency in March 1995. The position is located at the National Park Service, Center, Audiovisual Arts Division, city and state. The appellant contends that his operation and maintenance of the AVID Media Composer, a digital nonlinear video editing system that allows post production editors to randomly access digitized audio and visual information to edit videotape programs and similar productions, warrants a higher grade for his position. He believes that his position description is accurate, but feels his work warrants more credit than the agency allowed, given his independence and the guidelines from which he works, the scope and effect of his work, and the personal contacts required (Factors 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 of the classification standard).

Position Information

The appellant is one of about 20 employees in his division. He reports to the Division Chief, a GS-14 Supervisory Producer-Director. However, most of his assignments come directly from GS-12 Producer-Directors within the division. In addition to the Producer-Directors, the division includes a GS-11 Photographer and various technical and support staff, e.g., GS-9/11 Electronic Technicians, GS-6 Video Editing Assistants, and a WG-5 Sound Recording Equipment Operator.

The appellant assembles, adjusts, and enhances audio and visual elements of productions. He creates a variety of special effects and monitors and controls the technical quality of audiovisual products. He operates and maintains the AVID media composer and selects stock footage for use in productions. His work consists largely of creating rough cuts for producers, assisting them in preparing final cuts from which contractors produce masters, and reviewing completed masters to ensure they meet technical specifications.

He converts sound on slide shows to tape media and produces informational audiovisual tapes that play when a park guest pushes a button on an exhibit. He also assists with photography, videography, and primary audio recording when production crews take to the field.

His other work includes duplicating videos; labeling, storing, retrieving, and tracking videotapes; performing quality control checks of picture and sound quality and special features on incoming videotapes and laser discs; ensuring audiovisual equipment is properly set up and removed from production sites; consulting with his supervisor and other staff regarding requirements for temporary acquisition of specialized equipment; and maintaining inventories of supplies, spare parts, cables, and connectors.

Because the position description overstates the nature of some of the appellant's assignments, as noted under Factors 3 and 8 of this decision, the letter transmitting the decision requests that the agency correct the position description wherever it conflicts with the decision's findings.

Analysis and Findings

Series and Title Determination

Much of the appellant's work is described in the Audiovisual Production, GS-1071, occupational series under the functional area for Editors. Like the appellant, Editors must have a creative sense to construct scenes from volumes of raw videotape and usable precedent material to achieve visual continuity between scenes and to blend in audio elements in a harmonious manner. Like the appellant, they use computerized equipment such as video switchers, character generators, and digital optics generators to assemble video material and create a variety of special effects. They monitor and control the technical quality of the product using wave form monitors, vector scopes, and signal processing equipment.

The appellant also spends a substantial amount of time (at least 25 percent) in other audio visual production functions, such as assisting in electronic field production and videography.

Some of his duties, such as recording audio and maintaining the AVID system (updating hardware components and software, troubleshooting common problems, and minor repair to the system) are incidental to the primary purpose of his work, i.e., the creation of audiovisual products. Equipment operation, maintenance, and repair are characteristic of trade work (Federal Wage System) and fall outside the General Schedule pay system. However, because the position's primary duty concerns the creative productions, it belongs under the General Schedule even though it involves mixed General Schedule and Federal Wage System work.

The prescribed title for positions like the appellant's that consist of a variety of audiovisual duties, like editing, camera operation, and video-electronic graphics, is *Audiovisual Production Specialist*.

Grade Determination

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) *Audiovisual Production Series, GS-1071*, standard, dated July 1992, is in Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. This system requires that credit levels assigned under each factor relate to only one set of duties and responsibilities. Under FES, work must be fully equivalent to the factor-level described in the standard to warrant credit at that level's point value. If work is not fully equivalent to the overall intent of a particular level described in the standard, a lower level and point value must be assigned, unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect of the work that meets a higher level.

Work demanding less than a substantial amount of time (at least 25 percent) is not considered in classifying a position. 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 award.)

The appellant disputes the agency assigned credit levels for five of the nine factors discussed in the standard. Accordingly, this decision details our analysis of the disputed factors. However, we independently reviewed his duties and responsibilities against the other factors and concur with the agency's credit level assignments for those factors, except for Factor 8, Physical Demands, as explained below.

Factor 2: Supervisory Controls

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct and indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility, and the review of completed work. Controls are exercised by the supervisor in the way assignments are made, instructions are given to the employee, priorities and deadlines are set, and objectives and boundaries are defined. Responsibility of the employee depends upon the extent to which the employee is expected to develop the sequence and timing of various aspects of the work, to modify or recommend modification of instructions, and to participate in establishing priorities and defining objectives. The degree of review of completed work depends upon the nature and extent of the review, e.g., close and detailed review of each phase of the assignment, detailed review of the finished assignment, spot-check of finished work for accuracy, or review only for adherence to policy.

The appellant believes his work merits Level 2-4 largely because of his independent operation of the AVID system when editing material. However, Factor 2 assesses responsibility as well as independence. The appellant lacks responsibility for all phases of audiovisual production, programming, and editing from inception to completion, as required for Level 2-4 credit. These broader responsibilities and the technical and artistic considerations that accompany them belong to the producers in his organization.

His audiovisual assignments instead focus on editing, primarily the selection, digitalizing, and rough editing of source materials (original visual field footage and stock footage) for projects on which the producers are working. He is responsible for selecting appropriate source material footage and making the rough cuts and works closely with producers to finalize the video editing and dubbing of the audio portion of the program. Such assignments are consistent with Level 2-3, where specialists, like the appellant, independently plan and carry out the successive steps necessary to produce well-precedented kinds of audiovisual productions and solve commonly occurring problems, obtaining supervisory approval or assistance when assignments call for substantial departures from established program formats or customary production techniques.

We evaluate this factor at Level 2-3 and credit 275 points

Factor 3: Guidelines

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

The appellant believes the nature of his work meets the requirements of Level 3-4 and cites examples of the troubleshooting matrices he uses in support of the AVID system.

The AVID operations manual provides troubleshooting matrices that detail step by step instructions on how to identify, isolate, and fix a variety of problems that may occur during the operation of the AVID system. When malfunctions cannot be corrected using these documents, the appellant must call a technician for assistance.

The appellant's troubleshooting, maintenance, and minor repair of the AVID system and other equipment are tasks incidental to his creation of audiovisuals. The GS-1071 criteria address, among other things, the judgement and creativity exercised in producing audiovisuals. They do not address equipment troubleshooting, maintenance, or repair since trade work is typically excluded from consideration in classifying General Schedule positions. Consequently, these incidental duties are not examined further in this decision.

The appellant's production assignments meet Level 3-3 where production parameters are well-defined in terms of the subject matter to be recorded, the way in which the subject will be presented, and the types of audio and visual elements to be incorporated. Like Level 3-3 specialists, the appellant is usually provided a detailed script at the onset of the assignment and can refer to similar productions for additional guidance. Like Level 3-3 specialists, he uses judgment in translating the script into a finished audiovisual product to achieve the desired purpose and effect and adapts precedent projects, script directions, and approaches favored by clients for aesthetic or practical purposes.

The appellant works from scripts, narrations, and oral instructions from producers when determining what audiovisual footage to use for the rough cut. These guides provide well-defined information, such as to the type of footage required and the pacing of scenes, which the appellant uses to select appropriate material.

The appellant is responsible for quality assurance review of master tapes that are produced by contractors. However, his role is limited to insuring that the quality of sound, video, and special features meet technical specifications. He does not judge the artistic value of the production.

Unlike Level 3-4, the appellant's assignments are well precedent and do not require deviating from standard methods to achieve unusual visual or dramatic effects designed to attract and hold the attention of the audience. Contrary to the position description, he does not develop new or improved techniques or resolve unusual production problems, but follows conventional production practices in dealing with well precedent problems.

We evaluate this factor at Level 3-3 and credit 275 points.

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 direct effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization. Only the effect of properly performed work is considered.

The appellant believes the nature of his work meets the requirements of Level 5-4.

Scope

Like Level 5-3, the purpose of the appellant's work is to create conventional audiovisual products, such as rough cuts of audio visual programs for final editing by producers that employ conventional techniques to depict or present clearly defined subject matter information or events.

Level 5-4 may be credited only where the purpose of the work is to create audiovisual productions characterized by breadth or depth of subject matter coverage and involving many individual audio and/or visual components. Such work typically involves unusual production problems, such as those presented when conveying abstract themes or moods, depicting complex activities, or directing live broadcasts. The appellant's assignments do not require him to resolve these types of production problems.

We evaluate Scope at Level 5-3.

Effect

The appellant's work directly affects the adequacy of his organization's public information activities, as at Level 5-3. Whether or not it affects a wide range of agency activities (Level 5-4), credit under this factor remains limited by the scope of the work. To receive credit for a level under this factor, the work must meet the level's criteria under both Scope and Effect. The scope of the work, however, does not exceed Level 5-3.

We evaluate this factor at Level 5-3 and credit 150 points.

Factor 6: Personal Contacts and Factor 7: Purpose of Contacts

Contacts credited under Factor 6 must be the same contacts considered under Factor 7. Factor 6 (Levels 1 to 3) includes face-to-face contacts and telephone and radio dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. 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 (e.g., the degree to which the employee and those contacted recognize their relative roles and authorities). Factor 7 (Levels a to b) addresses the purpose of personal contacts, which may range from factual exchange of information to situations involving significant or controversial issues and differing viewpoints and objectives.

The appellant believes the nature of his work meets Level 3-b credit.

Personal Contacts

The appellant's regular and recurring contacts with producers and other employees in his division equate to Level 1 (employees in the immediate office and in related support offices). His contacts within the agency but outside his organization include National Park Service employees at various park locations, employees of state and local parks, and occasionally representatives from foreign countries, e.g., Brazil. His contacts outside the immediate organization equate to Level 2. His contacts outside the agency are similar to Level 3 in that they are external. Unlike Level 3, however, they typically involve routine requests for information or materials and are highly structured (i.e., the purpose of the contact and the question of with whom to deal are relatively clear).

Level 3 contacts concern moderately unstructured contacts where no routine working relationship exists, the purpose and extent of each contact are different, and the role and authority of each party are identified and developed during the course of the contact. In contrast, the appellant's regular and recurring contacts with outside parties are governed by agency procedures and policies regarding the release of public domain audiovisual footage. As such, the contacts are made within well established protocols and do not require the appellant to establish role and authority in order to conduct business.

We evaluate internal personal contacts at Level 1 and external personal contacts at Level 2.

Purpose of Contacts

As at Level a, the purpose of the appellant's contacts with individuals outside his agency typically is to obtain or request information needed to produce audio-visual products. Similarly the purpose of his contacts with employees at national and state parks is to exchange factual information concerning the availability of audiovisual material. As typical of Level a, these factual exchanges range from easily understood to highly technical information.

As at Level b, the purpose of his contacts with those inside his immediate organization is to plan, coordinate, or advise on work in progress by making recommendations to influence co-worker decisions on creative aspects of productions.

We evaluate Purpose at Level a for contacts outside the organization and at Level b for contacts within the immediate organization. The position receives the higher of the two credit levels, Level 1-b (60

points), rather than Level 2-a (45 points).

We evaluate the combined factors at Level 1-b and credit 60 points.

Factor 8: Physical Demands

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed upon the employee by the work assignment. This includes physical characteristics and abilities and physical exertion involved in the work.

As at Level 8-1, the appellant's work is primarily sedentary, with some walking, travel, and carrying of lightweight equipment and materials regularly required.

Physical exertion typical of Level 8-2, such as long periods of standing, recurring bending or stretching, or recurring lifting of moderately heavy equipment, is not a regular requirement of the position. Contrary to the position description, the appellant's assignments rarely require vigorous walking, hiking, or climbing.

We evaluate this factor at Level 8-1 and credit 5 points.

FACTOR LEVEL POINT SUMMARY

Factor	Level	Points
1	1-6	950
2	2-3	275
3	3-3	275
4	4-3	150
5	5-3	150
6 & 7	1-b	60
8	8-1	5
9	9-1	5
	Total:	1870

The table above summarizes our evaluation of the appellant's work. As shown on page 11 of the standard, a total of 1870 points falls within the GS-9 grade range (1855-2100).

Decision

The proper classification of the appellant's position is Audiovisual Production Specialist, GS-1071-9.