



United States  
Office of Personnel Management

# **Guide for the Evaluation of Program Specialist Positions**

**Oct 1967, TS-70**

**Workforce Compensation and Performance Service  
Classification Programs Division  
June 1998, HRCD-5**

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# Guide for the Evaluation of Program Specialist Positions

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This guide is for use in the grade-level evaluation of professional and highly technical positions which involve the development, evaluation, and promotion of social welfare, social insurance, and related programs administered by State agencies or other public and nonprofit organizations and institutions. The positions require a knowledge of the principles, methods, and techniques of one or more behavioral, social or related sciences, and skill in the consultative process.

The Social Administration Series, GS-102 is abolished. This guide supersedes the single-agency classification standard for the GS-102 series which was published in June 1958.

Positions formerly classified in the abolished Social Administration Series, GS-102 will be placed in the appropriate subject-matter series. For example:

Positions which require a master's degree in social work are included in the Social Work Series, GS-185.

Positions involving the development, promotion, and evaluation of programs for the handicapped and juvenile delinquents which are not specifically classifiable in any other series, are included in the Social Science Series, GS-101.

Positions that require a knowledge of the history, concepts, methods, and techniques of social insurance as related to unemployment compensation are now classifiable to the Unemployment Insurance Series, GS-106.

## **COVERAGE OF THE GUIDE**

This guide applies to all positions formerly covered by the Social Administration Series, GS-102.

Excluded from coverage by this guide are the following positions:

1. Positions in which the duties of reviewing, evaluating, a recommending approval of applications for grants and contracts for conducting scientific research projects are paramount and preponderant. (A separate grade-evaluation guide for scientific positions concerned with research grants and contracts is being considered.)
2. Positions which involve the performance of professional work in the development of comprehensive plans, programs, and regulations for the orderly physical growth and renewal of cities, towns, metropolitan areas, and other population centers. Such positions are classified by reference to the Urban Planning Series, GS-020.

3. Positions involving work in the administration of the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Program. Such positions are evaluated by reference to the standard for the Social Insurance Administration Series, GS-105.

4. Positions which involve the providing of direct professional social work services to individuals and families. These positions are evaluated by reference to the classification standard for the Social Work Series, GS-185.

5. Positions involving professional and scientific work in fields related to social welfare but which primarily require training in the biological or medical sciences or in the field and health rather than in the social sciences. Such positions are classified by reference to appropriate standards in the Medical, Hospital, Dental, and Public Health Group, GS-600.

6. Positions which involve the development, evaluation, and promotion of educational programs administered by State agencies and other public and nonprofit organizations and institutions. Such positions are classified by reference to appropriate standards in the Education Group, GS-1700.

7. Positions which involve advising on, reviewing, and evaluating applications or plans for community action programs. These positions are classified in an appropriate subject matter or administrative series depending upon the paramount requirements of the positions.

### **TITLING PRACTICES**

Basic titles for positions covered by this guide will be established (()) in accordance with the published titling structure in the appropriate series and consistent with the practices described in the Introduction to position-Classification Standards.

The suffix title "Program Specialist" will be added to the authorized official title for all positions involving the kinds of work to which this guide is applicable to distinguish them from counterpart operating positions (e.g., Social Work Program Specialist, Vocational Rehabilitation Program Specialist).

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Federal legislation establishes the scope and extent of Federal participation in and support of social welfare, social insurance and related programs administered by State agencies or other public and nonprofit organizations and institutions. Congress sets certain requirements which these agencies must meet to qualify for Federal assistance.

Each State or other applicant agency is responsible for planning its own programs, preparing requisite budgets, enacting necessary legislation, promulgating regulations, and appropriating the funds needed for carrying them out.

The Federal agency charged with administering the Federal part of the programs reviews all relevant State laws, rules and regulations, program plans, and budgets to certify that they conform to the requirements of Federal law. If the State does not meet Federal requirements, the Federal agency may obtain compliance by:

- rejecting the findings of audits and reviews;
- withholding payments due the State; or disapproving requests for grants; or
- withdrawing all Federal funds.

In practice, the Federal authorities (including program specialists) seek cooperative compliance on the part of the States through the informal devices of consultation and persuasion.

### *Forms of Federal Assistance*

The principal form of Federal assistance to State agencies and other public and nonprofit organizations and institutions is the financial grant. Financial grants are used by State and local agencies for direct money payments, contracts for services, personnel and material vendor payments for medical care, training of personnel, and administering of service programs. Also included are training grants (to help strengthen instructional resources); research grants (for studies of social and economic problems); demonstration grants (to develop new or improved methods of dealing with such problems); and other financing arrangements meeting Federal requirements.

Other forms of Federal assistance include guideline material and technical assistance. Guideline material includes both mandatory and illustrative criteria (e.g., policy statements, operating procedures, staffing guides, model legislation, and research designs and findings). This material is used by voluntary as well as tax supported organizations as guides in developing their own policies and procedures and in developing program plans and project proposals to meet the requirements of Federal law.

Technical assistance involves reviewing the administration and operation of programs, compiling statistical data, and providing consultation to help organizations and individuals improve programs for the people they serve. This includes:

- providing short-term training and instruction in technical matters;
- disseminating information (e.g., results of research studies) through publications, institutes, conferences, seminars, and other meetings;
- providing assistance to State and local agency officials in developing proposals and in preparing program plans and project application documents.

Some Federal agencies furnish advice, assistance, and consultation to local communities and voluntary agencies in the administration of related programs that are not supported by Federal grants (e.g., juvenile delinquency).

In summary, responsibility for policy formulation and administration of the programs discussed in this guide is shared by the Federal, State, and/or local governments. Program specialists review and recommend approval or disapproval of program plans and other materials submitted by State and/or local agencies; analyze and develop legislative proposals or provisions in terms of the impact on program resource requirements; develop new and revised operating procedures and standards to incorporate legislative provisions that affect operating activities and requirements; conduct reviews of the administration and operation of programs; and provide advice.

State and local administrators are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the program, experimentation, and development of programs beyond minimum Federal requirements using State and local financing.

## **CRITERIA USED FOR GRADE-LEVEL DISTINCTION**

This guide distinguishes among grade levels on the basis of two broad classification factors, i.e., *Nature of the Assignment*, and *Level of Responsibility*.

### *Nature of the assignment*

This factor is primarily concerned with the degree of complexity and difficulty of problems typically involved in the assignment. Elements covered by this factor are discussed below.

(1) The nature and complexity of material developed take into consideration:

- nature and scope of the function or subject matter to be covered;

- purpose for which it is being developed, i.e., to improve or revise existing programs, to establish new programs, to provide for cooperative arrangements among different jurisdictions, etc; and
  - availability of data sources, including degree of specificity of Congressional directives and interest in the program.
- (2) The nature and purpose of the review of program administration and operation take into account:
- extent to which the program is, on the one hand, established, accepted, and efficiently administered, and, on the other, new, experimental, or partially developed;
  - extent an purpose of review, e.g., primarily for the purpose of determining compliance with regulatory requirements or with administrative and technical practice ,or for the purpose of evaluating such practices against program objectives or to improve program content; and
  - kinds and seriousness of problems and issues that are likely to be encountered in the community, e.g., the extent to which local custom, practice, laws, etc. tend to prevent compliance with Federal requirements.
- (3) The nature and purpose of negotiation, consultation, and coordination measure:
- extent to which there is need for professional advice and guidance in establishing and improving the quality of programs;
  - extent to which there is need to coordinate and integrate the results of others;
  - extent of the need to coordinate the interests and efforts of different jurisdictions, including voluntary and nonprofit organizations, with conflicting objectives to eliminate or reduce duplication;
  - extent to which there is need to accomplish the work through groups and individuals outside of the agency;
  - extent to which the consultative process typically includes a review of the requesting agency's operations and administrative practices; and
  - degree to which implementation of changes negotiated rests with the State or local agency official concerned or a higher level authority (i.e., Governor, State Assembly, etc.).
- (4) Knowledges and skills required take into consideration the need of the program specialist to modify, extend, or develop new techniques and methods. This requires not only a current knowledge of the basic principles, techniques, and methods of the occupational field or discipline involved but an understanding and knowledge of the program objectives, and regulatory requirements of both the Federal and State agencies.

### *Level of responsibility*

This factor measures the level of authority and accountability in terms of the extent and degree of latitude and freedom allowed in carrying out the assignment and the use made of results. Elements covered by this factor are discussed below.

(1) Supervisory controls over the position measure:

- limits placed on the assignment;
- extent to which the supervisor provides guides, indicates techniques, methods, and source material;
- extent to which the supervisor assists in resolving difficulties that arise in the course of the work; and
- kind and degree of review given to completed work.

(2) Extent and level of contacts with persons within and outside the agency are directly related to element 3, nature and purpose of negotiation, consultation, and coordination, under Nature of the Assignment.

(3) Scope and impact of recommendations, decisions, and commitments take into consideration:

- their nature;
- their impact on other activities in the program or the program itself;
- the extent to which the agency bases its public stand on the program specialist's recommendations; and
- the extent to which the program specialist's decisions obligate the agency's resources.

## **NOTES ON THE USE OF THIS GUIDE**

This guide is designed to permit evaluation of positions despite variations in the way management organizes the program functions and the positions in achieving the national objective of the program involved.

In using this guide, it is important that both factors (i.e., nature of the assignment and level of responsibility) be given equal consideration. Each position should be carefully considered in terms of its total duties, responsibilities, and qualification requirements. Where the total duties, responsibilities, and qualification requirements do not measure up to the criteria for a given grade level, the position is properly classifiable at a lower grade.

Examples are included in this guide to illustrate the significance of the work assignments. But, for the reasons stated above, any one example is not by itself totally representative of the grade level of the positions described. Users should avoid evaluation of positions solely on the basis of comparison with the kind of assignment covered in the illustration.

Positions may include any one or all of the functions described in this guide (e.g., development of guideline material, program evaluation, and consultation). While any one function may constitute a complete assignment, in practice each tends to merge with the others at some points. Because they require the same basic knowledges and abilities, no extra credit is provided for variety. The matters of scope and impact as well as subject-matter fields are taken into consideration in the grade-level criteria.

Supervisory positions should be evaluated by reference to the General Schedule Supervisory Guide.

This guide does not provide criteria for evaluating positions above grade GS-13. Grade-level criteria in this guide are stated in terms of the assignment characteristics and the kind and level of control which are typical of the grade. Because nonsupervisory positions above grade GS-13 are highly individualized, often one-of-a-kind positions, it is not practicable to provide grade-level criteria for such positions. Such positions may be evaluated by extension of the criteria presented in this guide and by application of sound classification principles.

Specific grade-level criteria have not been provided for grades GS-5 and GS-7 because agencies have not normally filled positions at these levels. However, where such positions are established they may be evaluated by reference to an appropriate related standard for trainee or development positions.

## **PROGRAM SPECIALIST POSITIONS GS-9**

### *Nature of the assignment*

GS-9 program specialists typically perform designated segments of project studies or carry out selected aspects of the on-site review of State and local agency operations. Generally, these assignments are varied and cover all aspects of the program, but the scope and difficulty of problems involve the application of well-established techniques and methods related to the particular situation or specialized area involved. Typical of assignments at this grade level are the following:

1. Assignment involves the development and analysis of relevant data that can be used in preparing analytical and interpretative reports and guides. This requires a basic knowledge of the principles and theoretical concepts of the discipline involved as

well as the administrative mechanisms appropriate to the assignment. In addition, it requires the ability to select the pertinent techniques for data collection and to identify aspects of successful program operations which can be used for improving similar programs.

- Examples:
- (a) Develop and analyze material (e.g., program plans, evaluation reports, statistical reporting) pertinent to minimum facilities required for the operation of a training center for paraplegics.
  - (b) Develop and synthesize data from a variety of sources and prepare reports reflecting national patterns and trends of program administration and operation.
  - (c) Develop and analyze special statistical tabulations and related material (e.g., justification for various assigned parts of proposed legislation, interpretation of bills) for use in Congressional hearings, in response to requests for such data from Congress or the White House, and for meeting informational needs of the agency.
2. Assignment involves working as a team member on a program evaluation or study team with responsibility for factfinding, developing recommendations, and preparing the initial draft of a section of the report of findings. This requires the ability to utilize a variety of factfinding techniques (e.g., interview, case analysis, observation) to elicit appropriate data and to identify areas of operation which significantly deviate from Federal requirements.

- Examples:
- (a) Examine State and local agency policies and procedures relating to such areas as "determination of eligibility," "application process," etc.
  - (b) Perform research and fact-gathering assignments to provide background information to higher level program specialists who are responsible for arranging for and conducting national or regional conferences. Such conferences are called for the purpose of exchanging ideas and discussing the application of new knowledges and procedures dealing with such problems as termination of parental rights, emergency medical needs, or complaints alleging fraud.
3. Assignment involves reviewing portions of proposed changes in program plans, State and

local agency operating procedures, and other supporting material to determine compliance with Federal requirements. This requires a basic knowledge of the program objectives, as well as statutory and regulatory requirements of both the Federal and State agencies to insure that the contemplated State action is compatible with the national objective.

### *Level of responsibility*

The GS-9 program specialist carries out his assignment in accordance with plans, schedules, and samples determined by the supervisor. The supervisor or team leader defines the method of approach to be taken and techniques to be used, and discusses them with the program specialists. The GS-9 specialist discusses initial findings and observations with the supervisor before preparing the draft of his portion of the formal report. The supervisor checks on work progress and reviews the final product for technical and factual accuracy.

## **PROGRAM SPECIALIST POSITIONS GS-11**

### *Nature of the assignment*

In carrying out assignments the GS-11 program specialist works but his analyses and recommendations without assistance before submitting them to the supervisor for discussion and review. This differs from the GS-9 level where initial findings and observations are discussed with the supervisor.

Typical contacts at GS-11 are not only for purposes of obtaining factual information but for explaining regulatory and legal requirements and negotiating agreements to correct inadequacies revealed in the evaluation process.

The following kinds of assignments are typical of the duties performed at GS-11:

1. Assignment involves the development of pertinent factual data and the revision of guideline materials to a complete function, or process.

- Examples:
- (a) Develop revised minimum standards relating to the qualification of State and local personnel primarily concerned with processing applications for money payments.
  - (b) Develop revised minimum standards governing the facilities and personnel which may be utilized in providing programs and services, i.e., training in occupational skill including providing occupational tools and equipment required by the individual to engage in such training.

2. Assignment involves the on-site review of the operation of programs administered by agencies at the State or local levels. GS-11 specialists are independently responsible for obtaining pertinent information about a designated area of operation and taking specific action concerning aspects of program operations that deviate from Federal requirements. In carrying out this assignment, they:
  - discuss with State or local agency personnel all matters needing clarification as well as those matters to be referred to the team leader for further explanation and negotiation with the agency director;
  - explain to these officials regulatory and legal requirements relevant to problem situations covered by established national guidelines; and
  - negotiate agreements with them to correct any aspects of the operation clearly not consistent with Federal requirements. Normally, the issues concerned are not controversial and do not involve extensive reorganization, additional funds or personnel.

Example: Policies and procedures relating to the entire "intake process", such as eligibility determination, establishment of needs or benefit rights, etc.

3. Assignment involves the review of proposed changes to program plans and project proposals to see that all statutory and regulatory requirements are met and to insure that the changes include no provisions contrary to the basic law. The GS-11 specialist identifies those provisions clearly not consistent with Federal requirements and recommends the remedial action necessary to correct the inadequacies noted. The supervisor uses these comments and recommendations as a basis for further discussions and negotiations with the State or local agency.

### *Level of responsibility*

The GS-11 program specialist typically provides assistance to other program specialists who develop the project or program evaluation plan, determine the coverage, suggest methodology, and provide guidance on the handling of technical problems and public relations issues as they arise.

Within this framework, GS-11 specialists organize and carry out their assignments with relative independence from supervision. They work out their analyses and recommendations without assistance before submitting them to the supervisor for discussion and review. Results are reviewed for adequacy of coverage, factual development, and accuracy of presentation.

## PROGRAM SPECIALIST POSITIONS GS-12

### *Nature of the assignment*

Typical of the kinds of assignments at this grade level are the following:

1. Assignment involves complete studies for the development of revised guideline material (i.e., statements of policy, model operating procedures, and other publications). These materials are used by officials of State agencies or other public and nonprofit organizations and institutions as guides in revising their own policies and procedures as well as in developing program plans and project proposals to meet Federal requirements.

- Examples:
- (a) Develop revised minimum standards of service to groups or individuals (e.g., case work service to children in conflict with the law) in addition to the kind of assignment described at GS-11, such as development of personnel standards for positions concerned with determination of benefit payments.
  - (b) Develop revised minimum standards for vocational rehabilitation services such as transportation, training, guidance and placement services for handicapped individuals.

Typically, the GS-12 specialists select successful methods and techniques used by other State and local agencies and adapt and extend such methods and techniques into new patterns to solve problems in similar situations.

2. Assignment involves on-site review of the administration and operation of State and local agency programs where the review is primarily focused upon the internal operations of the agency to be reviewed. In carrying out this assignment, GS-12 specialists frequently meet with officials of other organizations in the community to explore problems directly affecting the agency being reviewed. They are concerned not only with determining compliance with Federal requirements, but also with ascertaining the responsibility the agency takes in making maximum use of its own resources and other resources of the community to meet the needs of the clientele served. They negotiate acceptable changes in operations and procedures in areas where weaknesses are observed, or recommend solutions to problems based on latest information and trends in the field.

Example of assignment area:

Total operation of an established program administered by State and local community agencies to identify the nature and source both of problems and of successful operation practices in all areas of operation (e.g., competency of staff, organizational structure, resources, relationships with other agencies and organizations).

In addition to this review, GS-12 specialists personally conduct follow-up program evaluations where the agreements reached to correct the inadequacies noted are conditional and the remedial actions recommended require such actions as:

- major changes in operating procedures or practice;
- reassignment or training of staff personnel;
- elimination or realignment of functions; or
- amendments to the program plan or budget to provide for additional resources.

3. Assignment involves the review of program plans and project proposals not only to determine compliance with statutory requirements, but also to determine the extent to which State and local agencies utilize the most advanced administrative and technical methods, techniques, and resources in responding to the needs of the clientele served (e.g., adequate referral systems including follow-up procedures, quality control systems (method of self-evaluation), agreements (formal or informal) to share resources with other organizations in the community).

In carrying out this assignment the GS-12 specialist frequently meets with State and local agency officials to:

- negotiate necessary changes (e.g., conditions that must be met before the plan can be approved-proper methods of administration, qualified staff to administer program, equitable devices for selecting individuals to whom services will be provided) to bring the plans or proposals into consistency with Federal requirements;
- explore problems and questions adversely affecting program operation (e.g., technical and professional skills of workers, adequacy of facilities, coverage of services); and
- assist them in developing plans based on the needs to be met and the types of activity which will best meet those needs.

*Level of responsibility*

Typically, the supervisor or a higher level program specialist provides guidance to the GS-12 program specialist during the time he is developing the project or program evaluation plan. Once the plan is approved, the GS-12 specialist proceeds with considerable independence and functions in all aspects of the assignment within the limits of acceptable practices and administrative policy. He may request assistance from his supervisor on difficult technical problems involving the application of new or questionable techniques and methods.

GS-12 assignments involve extensive contacts with officials of State agencies and other public and nonprofit organizations and institutions not only to resolve problems of noncompliance and negotiate remedial agreements, but also to advise on and render technical assistance in regard to:

- effecting changes or improvements in program objectives;
- utilizing facilities and staff to the best advantage;
- redirecting programs into more fruitful areas of service;
- developing new or revised curricula and programs for staff development; and/or
- developing and installing reporting systems.

Decisions and recommendations made by GS--12 specialists are rarely changed by higher authority.

The final product (e.g., evaluation report, program standard) is reviewed for soundness of judgment, recommendations, and consistency with national objectives.

**PROGRAM SPECIALIST POSITIONS GS-13**

## Nature of the assignment

GS-13 assignments differ from those described at grade GS-12 in that GS-13 program specialists

- Develop national guideline material which includes the whole range of actions, relationships, standards, etc. for which established guidelines have been relatively unsuccessful or largely inapplicable.

- Negotiate workable agreements to correct problems for which precedent conditions beyond the direct service operations must be met (e.g., amendment to State laws, cooperative agreement with other jurisdictions).
- Provide authoritative advice on program content to officials of State and local agencies and encourage and assist them in setting up new or experimental programs in areas where related precedents or guidelines are generally unavailable.

The following are examples of assignments involving the whole range of actions, relationships, standards, techniques, etc. in formulating an action plan or program:

- (a) Develop a national plan or program for improving and strengthening services to the total family, special groups, or individuals in such areas as foster family care, institutional care, adoption, and the like. Among other things, the plan includes minimum guidelines for:
  - adequate group facilities (e.g., day care centers, residential treatment centers for emotionally disturbed children) and ways of improving them;
  - closer working relationships among workers in related fields of work or programs;
  - personnel qualifications for workers; and
  - evaluation and application of new knowledge and techniques relating to the particular area, such as new approaches in group therapy.
- (b) Develop minimum standards (1) providing for methods and techniques, which are new in the State or locality, for incorporating new services into the network of existing programs or services in the State or local community; or (2) which are specially designed for the establishment of new or expanded services (financial aid, training, relocation expenses) for groups of individuals irrespective of geographic location, having special problems, i.e., unemployed workers who are ill-equipped for the needs of the contemporary labor market, children with emotional and behavior difficulties, etc.

In conducting program reviews of services, facilities, and practices in State and local agencies, the GS-13 program specialist typically serves as the team leader. He negotiates and elicits from agency officials workable agreements to correct problems where there are apparently program weaknesses but no guides to follow in assessing and correcting them (e.g., remedying conditions which are beyond the direct service operations). Negotiations involving the more serious questions of nonconformity (i.e., refusal of State agency director to comply with mandatory Federal requirements) are handled at higher management levels.

Assignments at this level typically involve the review of programs serving different population groups with diverse social, economic, and health problems that require the combined resources of many different official and voluntary agencies with conflicting, overlapping and inconsistent requirements and objectives. In carrying out such an assignment, the GS-13 specialist determines the need for coordination of efforts within a geographic area and provides leadership in formulating methods for getting results through cooperative efforts. He is primarily concerned with negotiating acceptable agreements and eliciting the support of professional societies and other organizations in the community or State to resolve conflicts and controversial disputes over the applicability of Federal guidelines.

The GS--13 specialist is a recognized agency expert in his field. As such, he provides leadership in coordinating the interests and efforts of different governmental jurisdictions having conflicting or overlapping objectives. He confers with and advises and counsels representatives of his own agency, community groups, private citizens, and representatives of foreign governments and official domestic government or quasi-governmental bodies and agencies at the Federal, State, or local level. He encourages and stimulates the development and improvement of programs by making available the best of current knowledge of successful projects which have been conducted in similar situations.

#### *Level of responsibility*

GS-13 program specialists are independently responsible for planning, and coordinating the efforts of key officials of Federal, State, or national organizations (administrative, elective, civic, and professional); and for stimulating cooperation and joint planning by such agencies to get needed programs into operation and make services easier and quicker to obtain. This differs from grade GS-12 where the supervisor provides guidance to the specialist during the time he is developing the project or program action plan. GS-13 specialists are not only responsible for the technical or professional correctness of methods and techniques used, but for developing and applying new ones to solve problems where national guides are largely inapplicable. They must understand the functions and responsibilities of related social welfare, insurance, and health programs and relate their own work appropriately to the total social welfare, insurance, or health field.

The GS-13 specialist recommends to State and local agency officials new approaches (including a set of alternatives for the solution of anticipated problems that are likely to occur) designed to effect desirable changes in program administration and operation. Such recommendations are based on the specialist's own knowledge of the broad specialized area for which he is responsible, and on his own evaluation of the needs, trends, and resources in the area.

Supervisory control normally does not extend beyond approval of priorities, schedule, staff requirement, the extension of a project in progress, and proposed members to serve on review committees. Review committees are convened to review effectiveness and soundness of proposed guideline material.