

February 5, 2009

TO: Teresa Parsons,
Director's Review Program Supervisor

FROM Meredith Huff, SPHR
Director's Review Investigator

SUBJECT: Christine Younger v Dept. of Revenue (DOR)
Allocation Review No. ALLO 08-007

Directors Review Conference

Ms. Christine Younger requested a Director's Review of her position's allocation by letter received on January 29, 2008 from her representative, Tess Millar of WPEA. On December 04, 2008, I conducted a Director's review conference at the Department of Personnel, 2828 Capitol Blvd. in Olympia WA. Present at the review conference were Ms. Christine Younger; Tess Millar and Kathleen Oest, Staff Representatives for WPEA on behalf of Ms. Younger; Dorothy Hibbard, Human Resources Consultant, representing DOR; and observers Tim Scott, Julie King and Bridgit Freeser, Human Resources Consultants from DOR. The timeframe for this review is the six months prior to November 1, 2007, the signature date of the initial Position Review Request (PRR).

Director's Determination

The Director's review of DOR's allocation determination of Ms. Younger's position is complete. The review was based on written documentation, classifications and the information obtained during the review conference. As the Director's investigator, I have carefully reviewed all of the information. I conclude that on a best fit of overall duties and responsibilities, Ms. Younger's position is properly allocated to the Administrative Assistant 3 classification.

Background

On November 1, 2007, Ms. Younger requested a review of her position by submitting a Position Review Request (PRR) to the DOR Human Resources office. Ms. Younger's position was allocated to the Administrative Assistant 3 class. Ms. Younger indicated she believed her position should be reallocated to the Administrative Assistant 4

classification. The supervisor's review section of the PRR is signed by Michael Grundhoffer. (Exhibit 5)

By letter dated January 4, 2008, Ms. Hibbard issued an allocation determination indicating Ms. Younger's position was appropriately allocated to the Administrative Assistant 3 classification. (Exhibit 3) Ms. Younger's representative requested a Director's Review of the findings by submitting a letter on January 29, 2008. (Exhibit 1)

Ms. Younger's comments

Ms. Younger works in the Audit Administration unit of the Operations Division of the Dept. of Revenue. Her current classification is Administrative Assistant 3 (AA3). Her position is located at DOR Headquarters in Tumwater WA.

On the PRR, Ms. Younger indicated that her work is "to perform higher-level administrative support duties for Audit Division Assistant Director (AD) and four [WMS] Band 3 managers. Provide and coordinate administrative support functions for many of the 15 field offices and the out of state region. Coordinate programs and events within the division and make travel arrangements for the division including flights, rental vehicles and accommodations; approve travel requests and maintain travel records." (Exhibit 5, question 1)

During the review conference, Ms. Younger stated she reports to Mike Grundhoffer, Assistant Director for Audit Administration. She stated there are roughly 280 employees in the Audit Administration unit; about fifty of the employees are located outside of Washington State.

Ms. Younger emphasized that she has responsibility for two administrative programs, the recognition programs and employees' travel. Ms. Younger described the recognition program as having three major components: the state and DOR service awards held quarterly, regional recognition programs, and the on-the-spot awards which may happen daily. For these programs, Ms. Younger is assigned the responsibility of coordinating meetings, announcements, nominations, purchasing plaques and gift cards, verifying and maintaining employee records, and announcements of the recipients.

Ms. Younger pointed out that she administers travel for all employees in the unit. She indicated that on an annual basis, she does approximately 300 travel arrangements including making the flight, car rental, and accommodation reservations. Ms. Younger stressed that she verifies, approves and signs all of the travel requests and forwards them to the accounting unit. She collects receipts from travelers and maintains travel records. Ms. Younger mentioned that she reviews, approves and has signature authority for supply requests for up to \$750.00. She negotiates contracts for furniture and office equipment purchases for the unit. She has signature authority for light refreshments for meetings.

Ms. Younger verified she was responsible for two years for making all of the arrangements for the two-day Audit Administration all-staff conference. She negotiated with the Hilton and Red Lion hotels for overnight accommodations, meeting rooms, break out rooms, sound systems, lighting, and food. She stated she worked with a committee that planned the training, break outs, and menus. Ms. Younger stated she makes arrangements for the quarterly field audit managers' meetings which involve hotels, flights, and rental cars for about 35 managers plus guest speakers who attend. Ms. Younger confirmed that she had served on an agency wide committee to automate purchasing functions and another committee to work on process improvement policies and procedures, particularly the policies regarding recognition programs and light refreshment/meals with meetings. Ms. Younger confirmed that any policy change recommendations are approved by higher level administrators. Ms. Younger indicated that she represents her supervisor at the all-staff conference committee's meetings, sometimes at the recognition programs, and in the process improvement meetings.

In response to my questions, Ms. Younger indicated she has unit-wide responsibilities rather than agency-wide responsibilities; she does not have responsibilities for budget development, control and monitoring; she does not deal with grants; she does not assist in setting financial goals and target dates other than some for conference costs or project costs; she does not make short and long term financial plans; and she does not participate in legislation development.

On behalf of Ms. Younger, Ms. Millar stated that she believes all of the information provided supports Ms. Younger's request to be reallocated to AA4 as the best fit for her responsibilities.

DOR Comments

Ms. Hibbard noted that after reviewing the PRR, she believed there was no question that Ms. Younger was completing higher level administrative duties found at the 3 and 4 levels of the Administrative Assistant class. She emphasized that she found Ms. Younger's position to be properly allocated to the AA3.

Ms. Hibbard noted that her training from Dept. of Personnel regarding reallocation of Administrative Assistant classes stressed that there could only be one position assigned at the 4 or 5 level to the unit head. She pointed out that in Ms. Younger's unit, there is another position already assigned to the AA5 class. Ms. Hibbard explained that her understanding is that this situation prevents allocating additional positions, such as Ms. Younger's, to the AA4 or AA5 level. She stated that without that DOP restriction, she believed that Ms. Younger would meet the requirements of the Administrative Assistant 4 class. Ms. Hibbard included these points in her allocation determination letter of January 4, 2008. (Exhibit 3)

Ms. Hibbard indicated that on the DOR organization chart that the first level reporting to the agency director would be considered major subdivisions; Tax Policy, Operations, and Administrative Services. The units reporting immediately to the major division

senior directors, are the departments headed by assistant directors; Legislation and Policy, Audit and several units under Administrative Services. Ms. Hibbard indicated that Ms. Younger's position reports to Mike Grundhoffer, the department head. Mr. Grundhoffer reports to Tremaine Smith the major division director, who reports to the agency director, Cindi Holmstrom. (Exhibit 11)

Rationale for Director's Determination

A position review is neither a measurement of the volume of work performed, nor an evaluation of the expertise with which the work is performed. A position review is a comparison of the duties and responsibilities of a particular position to the available classification specifications. This review results in a determination of the class that best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of the position. See Liddle-Stamper v. Washington State University, PAB Case No. 3722-A2 (1994).

The Personnel Resources Board (PRB) has held the following:

. . . because a current and accurate description of a position's duties and responsibilities is documented in an approved classification questionnaire, the classification questionnaire becomes the basis for allocation of a position. An allocation determination must be based on the overall duties and responsibilities as documented in the classification questionnaire. Lawrence v. Dept of Social and Health Services, PAB No. ALLO-99-0027 (2000).

In Salsberry v. Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, PRB Case No. R-ALLO-06-013 (2007), the Personnel Resources Board addressed the concept of best fit. The Board referenced Allegri v. Washington State University, PAB Case No. ALLO-96-0026 (1998), in which the Personnel Appeals Board noted that while the appellant's duties and responsibilities did not encompass the full breadth of the duties and responsibilities described by the classification to which his position was allocated, on a best fit basis, the classification best described the level, scope and diversity of the overall duties and responsibilities of his position.

Ms. Younger submitted a completed and signed Position Review Request dated November 1, 2007. (Exhibit 5) After the review conference, Ms. Younger submitted a Position Description signed Sept. 28, 2007; the same PD was submitted prior to the review conference without signatures. (Exhibit C) DOR Human Resources submitted a Position Description dated stamped on October 20, 2006. (Exhibit A) The major duties/key work activities on the PRR and the PD documents are similar although the percent of time is more detailed on the PRR.

Ms. Younger also submitted position descriptions for her co-worker, as well as a recruitment for an AA5 in the DOR Business and Financial Services unit. As the allocation process does not include comparisons to other positions, these documents were not reviewed. (Exhibits 12,13,14 and 15)

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT 5 (AA5) (class code 105I)

The **Definition** of the AA5 states: *"Principal assistant for administrative matters to a departmental head, agency director, or the head of a major subdivision of a major State agency. Accomplishes varied and complex projects; makes decisions and acts for supervisor in administrative matters."*

Although the **Typical Work** statements are not allocation criteria, the following AA5 Typical Work statements, copied in part, provide guidance for the level of responsibility and breadth of impact for this class: *". . .Coordinates major policy matters and agency programs within the agency and with other State, Federal, or local agencies; Represents supervisor at meetings, conferences, and conventions; speaks for him/her on agency matters; . . . Investigates operating methods and procedures employed in various agency functional areas and develops improved methods where indicated; Receives and confers with official visitors and the public; meets with representatives of government or private interest groups;.. Serves as liaison officer with the Governor's Office concerning public complaints or problems; investigates complaints..."*

Ms. Younger's position does not serve as the "principal assistant for administrative matters to a departmental head." According to the organization charts and Ms. Hibbard's discussion during the conference review, the "principal assistant" for the supervisor, Mr. Grundhoffer, is another position allocated to the AA5 class.

Additionally, Ms. Younger's position is not responsible to "accomplish varied and complex projects; make decisions and act for supervisor in administrative matters" as identified in the Definition and at the level expected according to the guidance provided in the Typical Work statements. Ms. Younger's responsibilities are unit level rather than agency-wide or state-wide. Her administrative assignments are important but limited to areas of travel and recognition programs within the immediate unit. She also has signature authority for supply purchases up to \$750.00 and negotiates contracts for equipment and furniture for the Audit unit.

The level of responsibility and breadth of impact envisioned in the Definition of the AA5 are of a higher level than those assigned to Ms. Younger's position. The responsibilities assigned Ms. Younger's position do not reach the level anticipated in the Definition of the AA5 class. The Administrative Assistant 5 is not the best fit for the overall duties and responsibilities of Ms. Younger's position.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT 4 (AA4) (class code 105H)

The **Definition** of the AA4 states: *"Positions serve as the assistant on administrative matters to the head of a state agency, the head of a major sub-division or major operating location of an agency, or to the chief administrator or head of a major organizational unit such as a school, college, or major academic/administrative department."*

The **Distinguishing Characteristics** of the AA4 state, in part: *“Positions perform higher-level administrative duties of a substantive nature that are appropriate to be performed by the supervisor, manager, administrator, or professional level employee but have been delegated to the administrative assistant to perform. . . . For general government positions, secretarial or clerical duties are incidental to the administrative functions performed. For those positions in a major organizational unit such as a . . . major academic/administrative department, the “unit” will typically have more than 75 full-time equivalent professional and/or classified staff; . . . OR positions serve as both sole administrative support and the executive secretary reporting to the organizational head. These positions are assigned to major units, with institution-wide responsibility, that have no assistant directors, deans or managers who would share the administrative duties of the position.”*

Ms. Younger does not serve as both sole administrative support and the executive secretary to her supervisor, Mr. Grundhoffer in the Audit Administration unit; in addition to Ms. Younger, an Administrative Assistant 5 reports to Mr. Grundhoffer. Ms. Younger's responsibilities cover the Audit Administration unit rather than being institution-wide as required by the Distinguishing Characteristics of the AA4. Ms. Younger's position does not have the authority and responsibilities that are associated with the AA4 Definition and Distinguishing Characteristics.

The position held by Ms. Younger does not encompass the requirements of the Definition or the Distinguishing Characteristics of the AA4 class such as reporting level, institutional-wide responsibility and sole administrative support to the organizational head. Although there are some elements of the AA4 that may apply to parts of Ms. Younger's position, the AA4 class is not a best fit overall for her duties and responsibilities.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT 3 (AA3) (class code 105G)

The **Definition** of the AA3 states: *“Positions perform varied administrative and secretarial support duties or positions are responsible for one or more major program activities under a second line supervisor.”*

The **Distinguishing Characteristics** of the AA3 state: *“Positions are delegated higher-level administrative support duties or positions are delegated one or more major program activities that would be performed under a second-level professional supervisor, manager or administrator in WMS Band II or above or in exempt service, chief administrator, or head of a major organizational unit such as a school, college, or major academic or administrative department. Only one position will be allocated to an individual second-line supervisor for those positions performing one or more major program activities.”*

A major program activity is defined as a function that is a major element of the supervisor's job. The duty must stand alone and would create significant adverse consequences if poorly performed. However, full delegation can't occur if the

supervisor's position requires specialized licensure such as attorneys, medical doctors, and engineers.

Higher-level administrative duties are duties of a substantive nature that are appropriate to be performed by the supervisor, manager, administrator, or professional level employee but have been delegated to the administrative assistant to perform. Areas may include but are not limited to, the following: budget development and/or management, expenditure control, office space management, equipment purchases, budget development and/or management, public relations, personnel administration, records management, and report preparation. Incumbents in these positions represent the supervisor's and/or unit's goals and interests and provide interpretation or explanation of the supervisor's policies or viewpoints."

The focus of Ms. Younger's position is to "perform higher-level administrative support duties for Audit Division Assistant Director and four Band 3 managers. Provide and coordinate administrative support functions for many of the 15 field offices and the out of state region. Coordinate programs and events within the division and make travel arrangements for the division including flights, rental vehicles and accommodations; approve travel requests and maintain travel records." As indicated before, Ms. Younger's supervisor is the Audit Division Assistant Director and these tasks are within his scope of authority. Ms. Younger supports her supervisor by relieving him of the administrative responsibility for the travel arrangements for all employees in the unit. She also relieves her supervisor of the administrative responsibility for the employee recognition programs. These responsibilities are encompassed in the Definition of the Administrative Assistant 3 classification.

Ms. Younger's position fits within the Distinguishing Characteristics of the Administrative Assistant 3 classification. She has responsibility for the travel function and coordinates the employee recognition programs. She works with minimum supervision to review, verify, make reservations, approve and sign travel requests and maintain travel records. She coordinates quarterly meetings and staff conferences and negotiates accommodation contracts. She approves and signs for supply orders up to \$750. She negotiates contracts with furniture and equipment suppliers. These are activities under her supervisor's scope of authority.

Ms. Younger's duties and responsibilities are encompassed best by the Definition and Distinguishing Characteristics of the AA3. The scope and level of responsibility and variety of duties assigned to Ms. Younger's position overall best fits in the Administrative Assistant 3 classification. Ms. Younger's position is properly classified.

Appeal Rights

RCW 41.06.170 governs the right to appeal. RCW 41.06.170(4) provides, in relevant part, the following:

Director's Review Christine Younger v Dept. of Revenue

Reallocation Review ALLO 08 007

Page 8

An employee incumbent in a position at the time of its allocation or reallocation, or the agency utilizing the position, may appeal the allocation or reallocation to . . . the Washington personnel resources board . . . Notice of such appeal must be filed in writing within thirty days of the action from which appeal is taken.

The address for the Personnel Resources Board is 2828 Capitol Blvd., P. O. Box 40911, Olympia, Washington 98504-0911.

If no further action is taken, the Director's determination becomes final.

Cc: Christine Younger, DOR
Tess Millar and Kathleen Oest, WPEA
Dorothy Hibbard, DOR
Lisa Skriletz, DOP

Enclosure: Exhibits List

EXHIBIT LIST

Filed by employee January 29, 2008:

1. Letter requesting Director's Review, dated January 28, 2008 from WPEA.
2. Reallocation attachment dated January 14, 2008.
3. HR Allocation determination letter January 4, 2008.
4. AA4 Classification specifications (class code 105H)
5. Position Review Request, signed by supervisors November 2007.
6. October 19, 2007 memo
7. Position Description Form undated and unsigned
8. Position Description Form for Kenneth Capek
9. Audit Admin org chart
10. Audit Roster
11. Agency org chart
12. Position Description Form for Cindy McMeekin
13. January 2, 2008 email
14. Position Description Form for vacant AA5
15. Business & Finance Services org chart

Email submitted by DOR November 18, 2008 with attached:

- A. October 2006 Position Description Form
- B. Letter of support from Michael Grundhoffer, DOR, December 3, 2008.
- C. September 2007 Position Description Form

Exhibits added by Director's investigator:

- D. Administrative Assistant class 3 (class code 105G) and
Administrative Assistant class 5 (class code 105I)