



**STATE OF WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

STATE HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION | DIRECTOR'S REVIEW PROGRAM
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November 20, 2013

TO: Inti Tapia, Council Representative, Washington Federation of State Employees

FROM: Holly Platz, SPHR
Director's Review Program Investigator

SUBJECT: Christel Ratliff v. Arts Commission (ARTS)
Allocation Review Request ALLO-13-034

Director's Determination

On November 5, 2013, I conducted a review of the allocation of Christel Ratliff's position. Present at the review meeting were you; Ms. Ratliff; Sherri Clarke, Classification Manager for the Washington Federation of State Employees; Maureen Clingman, DES Human Resource Consultant; Jose Vidales, DES Human Resource Consultant; and Lou MacMillan, Deputy Director for ARTS.

This position review was based on the work performed for the six-month period prior to January 15, 2013, the date the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) Human Resources Office (HRO) on behalf of ARTS received Ms. Ratliff's request for a position review. As the Director's Review Investigator, I carefully considered all of the documentation in the file; the exhibits, including those presented during the review meeting; and the verbal comments provided by both parties. Many of the documents Ms. Ratliff provided are outside of the time period of this review. Even though many of the documents were dated after Ms. Ratliff's review request, they are illustrative of the types of communication she was having with vendors, consultants and others in implementing the Online Grants System during the relevant time period.

Based on my review and analysis of Ms. Ratliff's assigned duties and responsibilities, I conclude her position is properly allocated to the Administrative Assistant 3 classification.

Background

The mission of ARTS is "to cultivate a thriving environment for creative expression and appreciation of the arts for the benefit of all." (Exhibit B4). To help achieve this mission, ARTS offers grants to organizations and statewide partners, for K-12 arts in education and for special purposes. ARTS is a small agency consisting of 13 staff; as such, staff within the agency use a collaborative approach to performing their work. The Arts in Education (AIE) program and the Grants to Organizations (GO) program are the agency's two largest grant programs. Each program is the responsibility of a Program Manager.

Ms. Ratliff is recognized as the agency's system expert for the Online Grants System and three Access databases which are used to manage grants from application through completion and to pull data for reports. Ms. Ratliff's direct supervisor is a Deputy Director assigned to the Washington Management Service (WMS) Band 1 position. Ms. Ratliff's supervisor is a first line supervisor for Ms. Ratliff and for a part time Office Assistant. Ms. Ratliff is a lead and provides work direction and training to the part time Office Assistant. Ms. Ratliff also provides support for and works in collaboration with two Program Managers who are assigned to WMS Band 1 positions. The Program Managers are responsible for all aspects of the AIE program and the GO program. In addition, Ms. Ratliff works closely with the ARTS Communications Manager who is assigned to a WMS Band 1 position.

Ms. Ratliff provides administrative support to both AIE and GO using the Online Grants System and the Access databases. The Online Grants System is a product of the Western States Art Federation (WESTAF). The contract with WESTAF for the Online Grants System was signed in August 2011. Ms. Ratliff and her supervisor agree that the system has not lived up to their expectations and that it is clumsy to use, difficult to manipulate and modify and creates challenges for staff, panel members and persons/organizations who use the system to apply for grants. Ms. Ratliff is ARTS' primary contact for persons using the online system and the primary liaison for the WESTAF system programmers. In addition, ARTS contracts with an Access database consultant and Ms. Ratliff is the primary liaison with the Access consultant.

On January 14, 2013, Ms. Ratliff completed a Position Review Request form (PRR) asking that her Administrative Assistant 4 (AA4) position be reallocated to the Program Specialist 3 (PS3) classification. DES's HRO received Ms. Ratliff's request on January 15, 2013. HRO reviewed the employee and supervisor's portions of the PRR form and Ms. Ratliff's position description (PD) form (Exhibit 1G) although the form was not finalized until May 1, 2013, after HRO's determination. The PD in effect at the time of Ms. Ratliff's request for review is found in Exhibit 1K. However, Ms. Ratliff and her supervisor agree that the PRR and the May 1, 2013 PD describe her work duties at the time of the review request. On April 9, 2013, Ms. Clingman denied Ms. Ratliff's request to be reallocated to the PS3 classification and determined that her position should be reallocated to the Administrative Assistant 3 (AA3) classification. (Exhibit 1B)

On April 24, 2013, the State Human Resources Division received Ms. Ratliff's request for a Director's review of ARTS' allocation determination (Exhibit A-1).

The following summarizes Ms. Ratliff's perspective as well as her employer's:

Summary of Ms. Ratliff's Perspective

Ms. Ratliff argues that there is no justification for allocating her position to the AA3 class. She asserts that her position has been allocated to the AA4 class for eight years and that her responsibilities and authority have increased. Ms. Ratliff contends that her position should be reallocated to the PS3 class.

Ms. Ratliff asserts that she has been exclusively responsible for managing all components of the Online Grants System for the GO and AIE programs. She describes the online system as complex and requiring constant rethinking to develop queries and organize data. Ms. Ratliff contends that she works with the system on a daily basis and that working with the system and its users comprises a majority of her time. Ms. Ratliff explains that the system requires ongoing

work and requires yearly updating in order to produce reports because the yearly grant cycles cannot be duplicated from one year to the next. Ms. Ratliff explains that she is the sole person at ARTS who knows the system from both the user's and the administrator's sides. She further explains that she is responsible for communicating issues and concerns on behalf of ARTS to WESTAF programmers as well as sharing issues and concerns with ARTS staff including the program managers, her supervisor and the Executive Director. She also explains that all technical questions about the online system and the application content are forwarded to her and she gives feedback and assistance to applicants. Ms. Ratliff argues that implementing the system required rewriting various guidelines, developing the online application form and training ARTS staff, panel members and applicants in the use of the system. Ms. Ratliff explains that producing reports using data in the system is complicated and time consuming requiring her to query the system, export the data to Excel, clean up the data after it is export and then merge the data into various reports and application information. Ms. Ratliff creates all of the reports that come out of the WESTAF system and indicates that there are about 145 reports in the system. Not all grants are managed through the WESTAF system.

Ms. Ratliff is also responsible for three Access databases used to track information for grants. Ms. Ratliff describes both the WESTAF system and the Access databases as multi-step, time consuming processes that require data cleanup and manipulation in order to produce reports in specific prescribed formats. Ms. Ratliff contends that she monitors budgets, approves invoices, recommends funding, tracks grant expenditures and researches and resolves grantee funding problems.

Ms. Ratliff asserts that she administers the GO and AIE programs, manages each component of the Online Grants System and is the person responsible for creating and organizing reports, organizing data and prioritizing all things related to the system. She also asserts that she is responsible for coordinating meetings, providing training and creating budget reports for the Arts Commission for their final budget approval. Ms. Ratliff contends that her responsibilities have grown with the implementation of the system and asks that her position be reallocated to the Program Specialist 3 classification because it better fits the overall duties, responsibilities and authority of her position.

Summary of ARTS's Reasoning

ARTS argues that Ms. Ratliff's assigned duties and responsibilities do not meet the definition of a program or of a specialist. ARTS explains that Ms. Ratliff's duties are not separate and distinguished from the main body of work or the mission of the agency which is to cultivate and support arts to citizens in their communities. ARTS asserts that the Program Managers have full authority and responsibility of their assigned grants programs and that Ms. Ratliff's work facilitates and supports the administration of the grants. ARTS agrees that Ms. Ratliff has some financial responsibilities such as initialing invoices for payment and making recommendations on the budget but argues that she does not have final authority for any aspect of the budget or for grant expenditures. ARTS asserts that Ms. Ratliff does not manage the programs; rather she provides administrative support for the programs by providing technical support for the Online Grants System, administering the application process, creating complex reports and reviewing applications. ARTS agrees that the online system is not user friendly and recognizes that Ms. Ratliff provides dedicated system support. ARTS explains that Ms. Ratliff collaborates with the Program Managers when revising and updating guidelines and processes but argues that ultimate responsibility lies with the Program Managers and the Executive Director.

ARTS describes Ms. Ratliff as the resident expert in the Online Grants System but explains that policies related to the grant programs and program criteria, including the assessment of late penalties, is the responsibility of the Program Managers and requires their approval. ARTS explains that grant programs are the main body of the agency's mission and that Ms. Ratliff performs a variety of high level administrative functions to oversee program details for the grant cycles. ARTS acknowledges that Ms. Ratliff is a highly valued employee, provides experience and knowledge in various areas of the agency and is well respected by her colleagues, peers and grantees. However, she works under the guidance of the WMS Program Managers who have full authority and responsibility for oversight of the grants programs. ARTS explains that the Online Grants System is not a program but is a tool used to manage the grants and accomplish the core work of the agency.

ARTS asserts that on a best fit basis, the Administrative Assistant 3 classification best describes the variety of Ms. Ratliff's duties and her level of responsibility and authority.

Rationale for Director's Determination

The purpose of a position review is to determine which classification best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of a position. A position review is neither a measurement of the volume of work performed, nor an evaluation of the expertise with which that 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. Liddle-Stamper v. Washington State University, PAB Case No. 3722-A2 (1994).

Most positions within the civil service system occasionally perform duties that appear in more than one classification. However, when determining the appropriate classification for a specific position, the duties and responsibilities of that position must be considered in their entirety and the position must be allocated to the classification that provides the best fit overall for the majority of the position's duties and responsibilities. See Dudley v. Dept. of Labor and Industries, PRB Case No. R-ALLO-07-007 (2007).

Duties and Responsibilities

Ms. Ratliff and her supervisor, Lou MacMillan, disagree on the percentages of time Ms. Ratliff assigned to her duties in the PRR. However, they agree that her work with the Online Grants System comprises a majority of her work for the agency's two major grant programs. In summary, the majority of her work includes tasks such as:

- Creating queries, reports, contract documents, and payment tracking spreadsheets;
- Fielding applicant questions on how to access and navigate the system;
- Making the system user friendly by communicating with WESTAF and training from the ACCESS database consultant;
- Collaborating with grants managers to develop and support standard reports and templates in support of the grant making process;

- Setting up grant panels which includes creating accounts for each panelist in the online system and training the panelists and board members on the process of how to navigate the system; serving as a panelist for the level A grants;
- Monitoring online applications by screening applications for eligibility and deciding on when to reopen an application after the deadline has passed;
- Monitoring panelists progress in reviewing grant applications to meet deadlines;
- Documenting new processes and updating existing procedures in collaboration with grant managers; creating a one page online grants handout for the AIE grantee convening and creating a panelist orientation guide on how to navigate the system; gathering panel feedback on system functionality, use and improvements;
- Proactively working with and learning best practices from colleagues within other state arts councils and across state government.

In addition, Ms. Ratliff manages the agency's three Access databases. Her duties include, in summary:

- Maintaining, updating and creating reports and procedures for contracting, payments, grant contracts, grant actions, grant history and federal statistics from Access;
- Managing all filing aspects of ArtsWA grants from creation of hard copy files to closing the grant and archiving the files;
- Managing all amendments for active grants; letters of agreement and personal services contracts;
- Providing data of ArtsWA grants to staff, constituents, legislators, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, National Endowment for the Arts and other interested parties.

In summary, Ms. Ratliff's remaining duties include providing administrative support for the agency in general, occasionally providing backup coverage for the Executive Assistant, and other duties as assigned.

During the Director's review, Ms. Ratliff explained her responsibilities for creating queries to pull data from the Online Grant System, loading data into databases, cleaning up and manipulating the data and ultimately producing reports. She described a cumbersome, time consuming process in using the system. She also talked about her responsibility to set deadlines for the submission of information in the system. Mr. MacMillan clarified that the deadlines are set following established guidelines. Mr. MacMillan also explained that the documents and reports that Ms. Ratliff produces are reviewed by the Program Managers who retain authority for their programs and may revise the report information Ms. Ratliff provides before the final version is approved. Mr. MacMillan further explained that the Program Managers are responsible for all information produced in regard to their programs and that Ms. Ratliff works in collaboration with the Program Managers who sign off on the documents she produces. He explained that the documents are also reviewed by the Executive Director. Regarding the final yearly report required by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), he clarified that Ms. Ratliff drafts a portion of the final report but that the final report contains much more information required for continued NEA funding.

Class Specifications

The following classification standards, in descending order, are the primary considerations in allocating positions:

- a) Category concept (if one exists).
- b) Definition or basic function of the class.
- c) Distinguishing characteristics of a class.
- d) Class series concept, definition/basic function, and distinguishing characteristics of other classes in the series in question.

In addition, while not allocating criteria, the typical work or examples of work statements provide support to the duties typically performed at each level within the class series and the Glossary of Classification Terms provides guidance for interpreting the language used in the class specifications.

When considering the appropriate allocation of Ms. Ratliff's position, I considered the Grants and Contract class series. However, examination of this series revealed that the series addresses positions that support writing and coordinating grant applications and fulfilling grant obligations for grantees. The Grants and Contract class series is not intended to encompass positions that administer the grant process for the organization that awards the grants. Ms. Ratliff's position does not fit within the Grants and Contracts class series.

The class series concept for the Program Specialist class series states:

Positions in this series coordinate discrete, specialized programs consisting of specific components and tasks that are unique to a particular subject and are separate and distinguished from the main body of an organization. Positions coordinate program services and resources; act as a program liaison and provide consultation to program participants and outside entities regarding functions of the program; interpret, review and apply program specific policies, procedures and regulations; assess program needs; and develop courses of action to carry out program activities. Program coordination also requires performance of tasks and application of knowledge unique to the program and not transferable or applicable to other areas of the organization.

Examples of program areas may include, but are not limited to: business enterprises, fund raising, volunteer services, community resources, election administration and certification, juvenile delinquency prevention, recreational education and safety, energy education, aeronautic operations and safety, student housing, financial aid, and registration.

In addition, the Glossary of Classification Terms defines a program as:

A specialized area with specific complex components and tasks that distinguish it from other programs (or the main body of an organization). A program is specific to a particular subject and has a specific mission, goals, and objectives. A program typically has an identifiable funding source and separate budget code.

The specific components and specialized tasks involve interpretation of policies, procedures and regulations, budget coordination/administration, and independent functioning. Typically requires public contact relating specifically to program subject matter, clients, and participants.

Duties are not of a general support nature transferable from one program to another. Performance of clerical duties is in support of an incumbent's performance of specialized tasks. Independent performance of these duties usually requires at least a six-month training period

Ms. Ratliff's position does not fit within the class series concept for the Program Specialist series or meet the definition of a program. Providing grants to cultivate creative expression and appreciation of the arts is core to the mission of the agency. Ms. Ratliff's duties and responsibilities in administering and overseeing the grant processes, including the Online Grants System, are an integral part of the overall grants programs. Her duties and responsibilities are not separate and distinguished from main body of the organization. Allocation to a Program Specialist classification is not appropriate.

In Mausau v. Department of Social and Health Services, R-ALLO-10-001 (2010), the Personnel Resources Board addressed the appellant's request for reallocation of her AA3 position to the PS3 class. The Board found that the appellant who worked as the Medical Staff Coordinator at Western State Hospital did "not coordinate a discrete, specialized program that is separate and distinguished from other institutions within DSHS's Health and Recovery Services Administration. Rather, Appellant provides administrative support duties for a program activity. Appellant's position does not meet the intent of the Program Specialist Class Series Concept." Ms. Ratliff administers the Online Grant System and three Access databases and provides administrative support to grant program activities. Here, as in Mausau, Ms. Ratliff's provides administrative support for program activities for the GO And AIE programs. Her position does not meet the intent of the Program Specialist class series concept.

I also considered the Program Coordinator classification. However, because Ms. Ratliff's duties and responsibilities are not separate and distinguished from the main body of the organization, allocation to the Program Coordinator class is not appropriate.

The Administrative Assistant class series does not contain a class series concept. Therefore, the first allocating criterion is the class definition.

Within the series, I consider the Administrative Assistant 2 (AA2) classification first. The definition for this class states: "[p]rovide administrative and staff support services for a section or unit with delegated authority to act in supervisor's absence in areas of substance." Ms. Ratliff's breadth of responsibilities goes beyond providing support for a section or unit. The majority of her work involves providing administrative and technical support for the agency's two major grant programs and the Program Managers assigned to those areas. In addition, she provides support to members of the Arts Commission, panelists, grantees and grant applicants. Ms. Ratliff's position is not best described by the AA2 classification.

The definition for the Administrative Assistant 4 classification 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.

Ms. Ratliff's position does not fit this definition. She does not provide administrative support to the head of a state agency, or the head of a major sub-division. Rather, her supervisor is the Deputy Director for a small agency and she provides support and assistance to two Program Managers. I recognize that prior to her request for review, Ms. Ratliff's position had been allocated to the AA4 class for eight years. However, whether her position was properly allocated during that time is not a part of this review. This review is based on the work she performed during the six months prior to filing her review request. Her position as described in her PRR and as clarified during the Director's review meeting does not meet the intent of the AA4 definition. Because her position does not meet the definition of the AA4 class, the AA4 classification is not the best fit for Ms. Ratliff's position.

The definition of the AA3 classification provides, "[p]ositions perform varied administrative and secretarial support duties or positions are responsible for one or more major program activities under a second line supervisor."

Ms. Ratliff performs varied administrative duties and is responsible for the Online Grants System in support of two programs. Her position fits within the AA3 definition.

The distinguishing characteristics of the AA3 classification 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.

Ms. Ratliff performs varied, higher-level administrative duties of a substantive nature. Her duties and responsibilities for the Online Grants System are complex, substantive and represent an integral, major part of the GO and AIE programs. If Ms. Ratliff performed her duties poorly, it would create significant adverse consequence for ARTS' grant functions. Ms. Ratliff contributes to budget development, monitors grant expenditures, has extensive contact with vendors, consultants, applicants, grantees and staff, manages grant records and prepares reports. The majority of Ms. Ratliff's duties and responsibilities fit the definition and distinguishing characteristics of the AA3 classification.

In addition, the following typical work statements for the AA3 class are descriptive of a majority of the duties Ms. Ratliff performs in support of the GO and AIE programs and with the Online Grants System:

- Establishes procedures and interprets and applies administrative policies to the work of the unit;
- Participates in budget preparation; develops budget estimates; monitors budget status and expenditures;
- Assists in devising unit standards/procedures to ensure adherence to policies regarding tasks such as budgeting, purchasing, and contract administration;
- Coordinates, organizes, and/or directs the operation of a program or major program activity;
- Represents management and serves as the primary contact in assigned program areas;
- Prepares reports, budget, contract, or grant proposals;
- Develops employee training programs/courses, visual aids, or other materials, schedules and conducts presentations and/or training;
- Conducts and/or responds to surveys and studies; composes narrative portions of documents such as brochures and policy statements;
- Coordinates with other departmental staff members on administrative practices and procedures;
- Serves as a liaison between supervisor and other staff; members, relaying assignments and requesting status information.

It is clear that Ms. Ratliff's contributions and dedication to ARTS is recognized and highly valued. However, a position's allocation is not based on an evaluation of performance or an individual's ability to perform higher-level work. Rather, it is based on the majority of work assigned to a position and how that work best aligns with the available job classes. During the time relevant to this review, Ms. Ratliff's position duties and responsibilities aligned with and best fit the AA3.

Appeal Rights

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

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 mailing address for the Personnel Resources Board (PRB) is P.O. Box 40911, Olympia, Washington, 98504-0911. The PRB Office is located on the 4th floor of the Insurance Building, 302 Sid Snyder Avenue SW, Olympia, Washington. The main telephone number is (360) 902-9820, and the fax number is (360) 586-4694.

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

c: Christel Ratliff
Maureen Clingman, DES
Lou MacMillam, ARTS
Lisa Skriletz, SHR

Enclosure: List of Exhibits

CHRISTEL RATLIFF v ARTS
ALLO-13-034

A. Christel Ratliff Exhibits

1. Request for Director's Review
 - 1a. Allocation Determination Letter (duplicate)
 - 1b. Position Review Request Employee Portion (duplicate)
 - 1c. Position Review Request Supervisor Portion (duplicate)
 - 1d. Admin 3 Class Specification (duplicate)
 - 1e. Admin 4 Class Specification (duplicate)
 - 1f. Program Specialist 3 Class Specification (duplicate)
 - 1g. Washington General Service (WGS) Position Description Admin 3 (duplicate)
 - 1h. WGS Position Description Admin 4
 - 1i. Performance and Development Plan (PDP) Evaluation
 - 1j. PDP - Expectations
 - 1k. Position Description Form for Classified Positions - Update
 - 1l. Department of Personnel Upward Allocation Letter to Arts Program Manager1
 - 1m. Department of Personnel Position Description Form for Classified Positions – Reallocation to Admin 4
 - 1n. Summary of Position History
 2. Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF), System Vendor and ArtsWA Internal Communications
 3. Database Consultant's Assessment of Grants Online System
 - 3a. Year End Reporting Online Samples
 - 3b. Create System Tutorial for Panelists and Staff
 - 3c. Survey with other State Arts Councils prior to System Purchase
 4. Email Communications with applicants/constituents
 5. WESTAF Phone Meetings with Programmers
 - 5a. Grants Online Meeting Minutes
 - 5b. List of Duties
 - 5c. Meeting Notes; Meeting with Lou on Workload
 - 5d. Essential Reports to be created in Grants Online System
 - 5f. WESTAF Work Orders
 - 5e. National Assembly of State Arts Agencies Conference Report
 6. Executive Director and Deputy Director Email Communications
 7. Email Communications with Other State Arts Councils
 8. Opening Statement
 9. October 20, 2013 letter from Jillian Lamont Bates
 10. Examples of Invoice Vouchers initialed by Ms. Ratliff
- B. ARTS Exhibits
1. ARTS Allocation determination letter (7 pages)
 2. PRR Employee Portion date-stamped by HR January 15, 2013 (6 pages)
 3. PRR Supervisor Portion (3 pages)

4. May 2013 PDF (4 pages)
5. Organizational Chart
6. AA3 Classification Specification
7. AA4 Classification Specification
8. Program Specialist 3 Classification Specification