

Agricultural Marketing Service
Office of the Deputy Administrator for Marketing Programs
Fruit and Vegetable Programs
Processed Products Branch
Area Office
GS-303-7, Administrative Support Assistant (Office Automation)

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I. INTRODUCTION

This position is located in an Area Office of the Processed Products Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs. The Area Office is responsible for carrying out program responsibilities related to the inspection of processed fruits and vegetables and miscellaneous commodities for the assigned geographic area.

The incumbent serves as the Administrative Support Assistant responsible for providing technical guidance and oversight of the day-to-day administrative service operations for the field office. The incumbent also performs technical support in the areas of budget, personnel, and billings and collections.

II. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The incumbent provides support to the Officer in Charge and Assistant Officer in Charge by maintaining the administrative operations of the field office through efficient supervision of the other administrative employees and distribution of the office workload.

1. Billings and Collections

Oversees the billings and collection activities of the field office to insure that all documents are processed accurately and in a timely manner. This includes billing for services performed, and collections for services rendered other agencies. Performs and/or coordinates the performance of the following duties through the use of an electronic billing and collection system: based on written or oral requests, prepares applications for services by inputting pertinent data into the electronic system; reviews, verifies, and reconciles financially related data for all grading certificates; receives reports of hours worked from graders in charge of plants under contract and reconciles time sheets as necessary, assuring appropriate charges; reviews applications ledger on a monthly basis to ensure services have been completed and applicants have been billed; reviews accounts receivable status printouts, detail transaction reports, cost responsibility center reports, and various other reports from NFC for discrepancies, errors, or omissions, and follows up with appropriate memoranda requesting corrections as necessary. Identifies delinquent accounts using information from NFC, contacts delinquent plants/companies either verbally or in writing and notifies NFC to move delinquent accounts to claim status.

Prepares and/or oversees preparation of certificates, billing documents and reports for services performed on a cross-utilization basis with other grading programs of AMS or with other federal agencies, including the Department of Commerce.

Assures appropriate records are maintained, that billing documents have been prepared properly by NFC, and that payments for services have been received.

Coordinates the preparation of and/or prepares all grading certificates based on information provided by Graders. Assures certificate information is accurate and complete. Based on familiarity with certificate requirements, identifies missing and/or inaccurate/incomplete information provided by the Grader on worksheets and obtains appropriate/required data.

Responsible to keep accountability of grading certificates and stamps; prepares quarterly accountability reports.

2. Budget and Fiscal

Develops and initiates statistical reports on office fiscal activities. Responsible for all documents related to the office's accounting system. Recommends modified, new, or additional accounting methods. Reviews methods for accuracy and meeting objectives.

Assists the Officer-in-Charge (OIC) in reviewing the status of expenses and revenues. Assists the Officer-in-Charge in monitoring the office's travel costs and recommends ways to economize on expenditures. Provides interpretation of Federal Travel Regulations to the Officer-in-Charge and office staff. Initiates blanket purchase agreements or blanket purchase orders for ongoing operation of the office. Reviews justifications and recommends approval to the OIC. Recommends purchases based on status of funds. Handles emergency purchase needs to keep the program running smoothly.

Prepares budget estimates for the field office which include salary obligations, overtime, travel expenses, equipment purchasing, communications. Programs are financed through user fees (trust funds).

Carries out analysis of expenses and revenues to insure that costs and revenues are properly applied against the proper program funds. Resolves questions from the field on the charging of costs and the accrual of revenues to the appropriate subcenters.

Closely monitors travel costs within the field office area, recommending ways to economize on expenditures. Spot-checks travel vouchers prior to submission to NFC and points out discrepancies to the Officer in Charge. Periodically determines travel cost balances throughout the year. Sends necessary travel authorization information to the Regional Office for preparation of yearly travel authorizations.

Gathers and compiles data for the Officer in Charge in support of developing, analyzing, and evaluating policies regarding the imposition of fees and charges for inspection and grading services for use by Headquarters in setting the fee schedules. Monitors the application of fees charged for work performed to insure consistency in application of the fee schedules and that charges are levied in every instance where appropriate.

3. Administrative Services

Responsible for matters pertaining to space, equipment, telephones, facilities, supplies, GSA vehicles, etc. Prepares requisitions and justifications that are required for procurement of supplies, materials, equipment, and other purchases. Prepares requisitions and justifications to order Government motor vehicles and other major field office purchases. Reviews accident reports for completeness and sees that all of the procedural steps are properly followed.

Maintains the Plant Information Systems (PLIS) data base. Assures accurate information regarding contract status of plants, surety bond information, amount of surety bond, data of most recent plant survey, etc. Prepares all paperwork associated with establishing contracts with plants for grading services, and prepares reports of cancellations or failure to renew contracts, etc. Advises OIC of applicants, based on their continuous on-going use of our grading services that utilize enough service to possibly initiate a contract.

Where applicable, prepares import reports listing certificate numbers, country of origin, product, vessel, pier location, etc.

Researches requests for information from agencies, organizations, or individuals (Federal, State or private). Requests often involve sensitive information and incumbent responds to such requests diplomatically and knowledgeably. Answers requests from the F&V Programs Administrative Office regarding budget and personnel information.

Organizes the administrative support duties of the office. Plans the workflow in the office in advance and establishes priorities.

Takes requests for inspection and, as directed, relays requests to graders in the field. May assist the OIC or supervisor in scheduling graders for plant or inspection assignments.

Utilizes a computer to prepare and input various accounting and personnel records as well as to prepare correspondence. Utilizes a variety of software packages, including Paradox for the military rations program activities, XDB Data Base for the billings and collections activities, dBase applications for PLIS, Lotus Notes, WORD, WordPerfect, Excel, BRIO, BIIS (Billing and Inspection Information System) and FFIS.

Gathers statistics or other information and prepares a variety of reports on office operations.

Prepares and submits, or coordinates the preparation of Time and Attendance (T&A) reports, travel vouchers, and accident forms. Cross-checks T&As against billing documents to assure that hours worked appropriately reflects the time billed to plants/industry.

Maintains statistical information for the preparation of reports covering training, mileage, assignments of employees, and mixed tour employment limitations.

Maintains inventory and accountability records for all Area Office property. Distributes accountable items such as certificates, file codes, Aofficially sampled stamps@and postage stamps. Requisitions office supplies and equipment using purchase orders and/or the Government Visa card, and may solicit bids for janitorial and linen services. Obtains services for repair and maintenance of equipment. Makes recommendations on determining the need for additional or replacement equipment.

Composes and types correspondence, either independently or on brief, verbal instructions or rough drafts from the OIC. Coordinates all the office administrative activities, including reviewing and distributing incoming mail, receiving telephone calls, handling routine requests, procuring office supplies, etc.

Supervises the maintenance of all records and files in the field office. Provides for the disposition of records in accordance with regulations.

Incumbent supports the Officer in Charge by reviewing and interpreting directives issued by the Branch, Program, Agency, Department) drafting instructions through which these policies and regulations are implemented. Develops forms and worksheets as required for internal management use.

4. Personnel Activities

Serves as the liaison on personnel matters with Minneapolis Business Services and the Regional Office.

Discusses personnel situations involving the other administrative staff with the Officer in Charge and makes recommendations regarding personnel actions such as promotions, performance evaluations, performance standards, training and awards. Explains to employees directives issued by the Department, or the Agency. Informs managers and counsels employees on procedural aspects of personnel matters such as insurance, retirement, workers' compensation, merit promotion, benefits, salary inquiries, service computation dates, overtime, travel and time and attendance. Resolves employee pay problems with NFC, including non-receipt of salary checks, travel checks and savings bonds.

Provides guidance on the injury and compensation benefits program. Oversees the preparation of accident reports and injury forms and is responsible for their timely submission to the Regional

Office.

Carries out the basic and operational personnel activities of the Area Office. Maintains current records of all personnel changes for hiring limits, financial reports, and reference purposes.

Obtains information from regional offices on such matters as alternative means of filling vacancies, including appointment authorities, work schedules, special employment programs, and cooperative agreements. Recommends methods of recruitment for positions within the Area.

Obtains registers of eligible applicants, receives applications for employment, makes pre-employment checks, performs preliminary qualifications checks, and reviews all required appointment documents. Reviews all job applications for mixed tour employees to ascertain eligibility for employment at the appropriate grade level.

Reviews related forms and documents submitted by employees and staff for accuracy. Prepares personnel reports as required for submission to the Regional Office.

5. Equal Employment Opportunity

Adheres to Equal Employment and Civil Rights policies, goals and objectives in performing the duties of this position. Assures that oral and written communications are bias-free and that differences of other employees and clients are respected and valued. Promotes the achievement of EEO and affirmative actions goals for all subordinates, applicants and new hires. Prohibits discrimination in employment based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, or handicap condition.

6. Supervisory Responsibilities

Reviews the work of the administrative staff and provides technical direction in carrying out the administrative functions of the field office. Delegates work to the administrative staff, may help to interview candidates for new mixed tour positions, identify training needs of subordinates and forwards recommendations to the Officer in Charge.

III. FACTORS

1. Knowledge Required by the Position

General Knowledge of USDA, NFC, AMS, MRP and Branch account maintenance system techniques, procedures, and practices to maintain electronic user-fee ledgers, prepare the range of area office accounting documents, and collect on past due accounts.

General knowledge of accounting system and related documents generated by NFC in order to locate and analyze data pertaining to the budget for the program activities.

Working knowledge of the Agency's accounting procedures and policies to accomplish required review and reporting.

Broad knowledge and understanding of the administrative functions (budget, procurement, personnel, administrative services, record keeping, information resource management, space management, etc.) and the ability to interpret policies and guidelines pertaining to those areas.

General knowledge and understanding of budgetary policies, procedures, and regulations issued by the Branch and the program to ensure that budget forecasts and estimates conform to requirements, guidelines and financial objectives.

Sufficient knowledge of the goals, objectives, organization, staffing, work methods, and functions of the Fruit & Vegetable Programs, Processed Products Branch to enable the incumbent to determine whether requests for funds are proper and timely.

General knowledge of applicable USDA, NFC, AMS, MRP and Branch policies, regulations, guidelines and systems associated with the financial assistance and general clerical activities of the Area Office.

General knowledge and understanding of the mission and functions of the area and the agency.

Knowledge of the Processed Products Branch grading and inspection program mission, functions, and objectives as they apply and relate to the financial assistance and general clerical activities of the Area Office.

Ability to establish rapport and conduct oneself in a tactful and diplomatic manner with vendors and program officials at all levels.

Working knowledge of the Agency's Time and Attendance Reporting System.

Knowledge of data collection, and computer technology and practical applications.

Skill in maintaining and compiling statistical data for administrative reports.

Skill in utilizing a computer for word processing, electronic ledgers, the accounting system, certificates, spreadsheets, and other functions. Skill in using an electric typewriter.

A qualified typist is required. Knowledge of grammar, spelling, capitalization, etc., to review and/or prepare correspondence.

Working knowledge of travel regulations and procurement policies.

Knowledge of fiscal policies and procedures to review revenue listings and prepare reports.

Knowledge of personnel, travel and procurement regulations and policies to prepare reports and respond to inquiries for information.

Working knowledge of the agency's personnel operating procedures to enable completion of personnel forms and documents, reporting, and hiring within delegated authority. A general knowledge of personnel regulations and policies.

Knowledge of administrative policies and guidelines pertaining to property and inventory control, space, mail management, records management, vehicle fleet management, etc. The ability to find solutions to complex problems that involve administrative systems and impact program operations and develop solutions to those problems.

2. Supervisory Controls

The employee works under the general supervision of the Officer in Charge. Works independently, receiving a general understanding of expected outcomes from the supervisor. Draws upon knowledge and experiences to resolve difficult situations with needed assistance from the supervisor or administrative specialists. Work is reviewed for the technical accuracy, soundness of judgment, and adherence to requirements and objectives. The employee independently plans and carries recurring assignments in accordance with office practice. Work is accepted as technically correct, and is only spot-checked for conformance with administrative procedures.

3. Guidelines

Guidelines include USDA, NFC, AMS, MRP, Branch and Department fiscal and administrative regulations and instructions, Office Procedures Manual, handbooks and directives which cover the budget process, procurement, and the personnel system and the Federal Travel Regulations. These guidelines include instructions on computing charges to applicants, collections, monthly reports, training reports, time and attendance procedures and travel. Guidelines are generally specific in nature, but are not completely applicable to every situation particularly as it relates to the electronic billing and collection program. Guidelines also include written and oral standard operating procedures.

The incumbent is required to use judgement in locating and selecting the most appropriate guidelines and making minor deviations to adapt them to specific cases. Situations which require interpretation or significant deviation from the guidelines are referred to the OIC or regional office. In those instances where guidance is lacking, the incumbent has a role in developing written procedures for use in the field office.

4. Complexity

The work requires knowledge from various administrative fields, including budget, personnel, purchasing, property management, billing and collection activities, Branch accounting procedures, Marketing Orders, military rations program, variety of office services functions, and a working knowledge of the inspection and grading program activities.

The incumbent assists in preparing budget estimates and justification statements. The employee compiles cost figures to be used in forecasting funding needs and monitors the rates of obligation and expenditure of funds in the annual budget. Provides advice and recommendations to the Officer in Charge.

The nature of the work involves the maintenance of accounts and ledgers for grading and inspection services and the performance of a variety of general clerical support duties. The incumbent must be alert to changes in regulations/procedures and make adjustments accordingly. While the transactions and accounts vary, the tasks and applicable documentation are standardized, subject to similar treatment, and are recurring in nature. The work requires decisions concerning the interpretation of data, planning of work, or refining methods and techniques.

The incumbent must continually adjust the day-to-day work to handle priority items, and determine what approaches to take when encountering unusual problems in billing, fiscal, personnel, procurement or travel matters.

The incumbent performs a full range of administrative duties requiring an extensive knowledge of administrative policies and procedures. The incumbent must ensure that the various policies and procedures pertaining to budget and fiscal, personnel, procurement, etc. are applied. The incumbent must also be able to identify areas where infractions of policies and procedures exist, when to deal with these infractions, or whether to refer such matters to the Officer in Charge or others.

Fills out a variety of forms, documents and reports required in connection with the agency's budget and finance programs.

5. Scope and Effect

The work efforts contribute to the accomplishment of the field office, Branch, Program and Agency missions. The incumbent provides assistance to the Officer in Charge and field supervisors on a wide range of administrative matters.

The accuracy and reliability of the work affects the billing and other administrative processes conducted in the region.

The incumbent is expected to identify and correct errors in documents and records, balance billing accounts, follow up on delinquent accounts, prepare reports, and reconcile discrepancies in

automated accounting reports.

The purpose of the work is to facilitate the prompt and accurate reimbursement of rendered grading and inspection services, and to provide general office services. This assists the local OIC in carrying out the work of the office and the National Office in projecting, planning, and controlling expenditures and revenue.

The budget work is aimed at the effective use of federal funds by assuring that funds are neither over, nor under-obligated, and that monies are obligated and collected on a timely basis in accordance with the purpose for which they were established in the Agency budget.

6. Personal Contacts

Contacts are with co-workers and Branch/Program personnel, MRP, GSA, employees of NFC, Minneapolis Business Services, Federal and State government personnel, industry representatives and users of the service, and the general public.

7. Purpose of the Contacts

Contacts are for the purpose of receiving instructions, exchanging information about the organization's functions, programs, and budget, provide technical guidance of a factual nature to the Officer in Charge and resolve work related problems.

Contacts are to obtain information on the status of actions or administrative policies, resolve errors concerning billing and revenue, and to relay information to employees.

8. Physical Demands

The work is primarily sedentary; however, the employee may be required to walk, stand, bend, stoop and carry relatively light items such as books and files.

9. Work Environment

The work is performed in an office setting.