

STATE OF WISCONSIN
CLASSIFICATION SPECIFICATION

AGRICULTURE PROGRAM SPECIALIST
CLASSIFICATION SERIES

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose of This Classification Specification

This classification specification is the basic authority under ER 2.04, Wis. Admin. Code, for making classification decisions relative to professional positions responsible for professional agricultural business development **or** a specialized agricultural program providing direct services and guidance to farmers (e.g., farmer's assistance, mediation, rural electric power services, etc.) typically with a focus on a farmer's current financial status. This classification specification is not intended to identify every duty which may be assigned to positions, but is intended to serve as a framework for classification decision making in this occupational area.

Classification decisions must be based on the "best fit" of the duties within the existing classification structure. The "best fit" is determined by the majority (i.e., more than 50%) of the work assigned to and performed by the position when compared to the class concepts and definition of this specification or through other methods of position analysis. Position analysis defines the nature and character of the work through the use of any or all of the following: definition statements; listing of areas of specialization; representative examples of work performed; allocation patterns of representative positions; job evaluation guide charts, standards or factors; statements of inclusion and exclusion; licensure or certification requirements; and other such information necessary to facilitate the assignment of positions to the appropriate classification.

B. Inclusions

This classification series encompasses professional, as defined in s. 111.81(15), Wis. Stats., positions which are allocated as either a (1) Business Specialist and performing work related to professional agricultural business development **or** a (2) Program Specialist and work with a specialized agricultural program providing direct services and guidance to farmers (e.g., farmer's assistance, mediation, rural electric power services) typically with a focus on a farmer's current financial status.. Senior or Advanced positions may serve as a leadworker.

C. Exclusions

Excluded from this classification series are the following types of positions:

1. Positions which perform paraprofessional or complex clerical duties a majority of the time (more than 50%) and do not meet the definition of professional, as defined in s. 111.81(15), Wis. Stats.
2. Positions which meet the definition of management or supervisor as defined in s 111.81(13) and (19), Wis. Stats., as administered and interpreted by the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission.

3. Positions which are responsible for stimulating the state's economy, increasing exports of WI food and agricultural products, and increasing foreign investment in WI that are more appropriately classified as Economic Development Consultant.
4. 3. All other positions which are more appropriately identified by other classification specifications.

D. Entrance Into And Progression Through This Classification Series

Employees enter positions within this classification series by competition. Movement to the Senior level is typically by competition, but may occur through reclassification on a case-by-case basis when it is clearly identified that the changes to the apposition occurred logically and gradually. Positions with lead-worker duties will be filled by competition. Entrance into the advanced level of this classification will occur through competition.

II. DEFINITION

Positions allocated to this classification series fall within one of two allocation patterns: that of (1) **Business Specialist** or (2) **Program Specialist**. The levels of this series, and the representative definition of duties for each allocation pattern, are defined below and specific to each allocation pattern.

AGRICULTURE PROGRAM SPECIALIST

Positions in this classification are allocated to one of the following:

- (1) **Business Specialist**: Positions in this allocation pattern are responsible for business and market research, development, and promotion for agricultural commodities, industries, or related specialty programs. The scope of business and market development programs may be local, national, regional, international, or a combination thereof, based upon work unit needs with initial work assignments being well defined and short term in duration and gradual progress to long or short term with more independent judgement in determining the specifics and priorities. Agriculture business and marketing principles and practices have been learned prior to entrance into a position in this allocation of the series.

In this allocation, positions are at an entry level, progressing from close to limited supervision. The emphasis is in developing skills in working with and/or understanding the program, state systems, user group(s) and the mechanics of the program; and developing an understanding and applying the statutes, rules, regulations, administrative code and standards required in the program area.

- (2) **Program Specialist**: Positions in this allocation are responsible for a specific agriculture program (e.g., farmer's assistance, mediation, rural electric power services, etc.) typically with a focus on a farmer's current financial status.

Positions in this allocation work under close progressing to general supervision. A majority of work is focused on providing agricultural program resources, training, and customer assistance to WI businesses or farmers. Work also includes activities such as: development and distribution of program survey questionnaires and compiling results for use in program assessment; conducting presentations on established programs or executing small group trainings; responding to calls of a routine or limited complexity on program services or resources available, or similar level duties.

Positions at this level do not serve as a program area manager as do higher levels of this classification, but rather assist Senior or Advanced positions within this classification who may maintain this role.

AGRICULTURE PROGRAM SPECIALIST-SENIOR

- (1) **Business Specialist:** Positions in this allocation pattern, at the Senior level, function under general supervision. This is the full performance objective level for most positions within this allocation of the series. Work is directed by management, but completed independently. These positions work to develop agricultural businesses and/or business sectors/industry (e.g., Local Foods, Specialty Crops), promote efficient systems for the distribution and marketing of agricultural products, and to develop, enhance, and/or implement targeted market development and promotional programs for an existing program area that help Wisconsin sellers to develop and expand their market shares. Much time and skill is needed working one-on-one with clients and bringing organizations together, building consensus for cooperative action.

Work is focused on the execution of business and market research, development and promotional activities. Examples of work include:

- Conduct market development activities, such as marketing seminars and trade conferences, which includes completing needs assessment, organizing and executing plan;
- Lead or assist in the execution of grant funded projects;
- Act as liaison to industry representatives in relation to assigned portfolio area and provide guidance and information on aspects of trade and marketing such as financing, transportation, quality, and availability;
- Compile and analyze data on production and market trends, marketing methods, and market promotion programs to justify direction of assigned program.
- Perform grant and/or budget administration activities, monitoring expenditures, for the assigned program area(s).
- Serve as a program area manager, providing or managing services to develop the business market for WI produced products.

- (2) **Program Specialist:** Positions in this allocation pattern, at the Senior level, function under general supervision, positions are responsible for professional work in one or more agricultural programs related to:

- Farmer's assistance (e.g., direct services to underserved farmer's such as beginning, women, and/or minority farmers, etc. who are in need of general farm transfer, business, or basic financial counseling);
- Farm mediation services;
- Program outreach and education activities;

Duties may be focused on a specific agricultural program area or include a combination of work assignments to meet the needs of Division programs and operations. Positions further develop and present training on new programs, regulations, or services that affect farmers or agricultural industry; conduct on-farm visits as necessary; and/or serve as the program manager for an assigned area. Positions typically serve as a media, industry, or program area contact, building relationships and partnerships as part of the program manager role. Positions may serve as a lead-worker.

Examples of work performed at the Senior level in each area of emphasis include:

Farmer's Assistance: Assess farm business and/or financial situations; advise farmers on options to assist in choosing the most appropriate course of action (e.g., downsizing, restructuring, expanding, seeking off-farm income); serve as an advisor to farmers in mediation cases when no volunteer is available.

Farm Mediation Services: Assess contacts from farmers such as business, financial, herd health, etc. and identify priority actions; advise farmers on options to assist them in choosing the most appropriate course of action (e.g., downsizing, restructuring, expanding, seeking off-farm income.); assign volunteer advisors to cases – process mediation requests; develop information needs or assessment surveys.

Program Outreach and Education activities: Serve as a program area manager for a specific program (e.g., Farm to School). This includes serving as the lead or independently developing an outreach strategy for assigned program(s); serve as a liaison to program participants and build new relationships to expand program efforts; manage program budget; conduct program/activity evaluation and provide reports to others. Act as a media spokesperson; plan for program events; etc. Perform tier three technical one-on-one assistance a significant amount of time in addition to other higher level work described here.

Representative Positions:

Farm Mediation and Rural Electric Power Services (REPS) Program: This position selects, trains and oversees volunteer mediators and volunteer Farm Center Advisors statewide; provides technical advice and assistance to volunteers on specific cases; provides information and outreach to program constituencies; and assists in mediation services in special cases. This position prepares program evaluations; coordinates program activities; and recommends program changes and goals.

Farmer's Assistance Program: This position provides direct services to underserved farmers (e.g., beginning, women, minority) who need risk management training including business and/or financial counseling in order to make decisions regarding their farm business; analyzes financial data; and counsels farmers on their options. Positions offer advice of programs, and general knowledge, but not complete in-depth financial analysis or consulting. This position serves as an advisor to farmers in the mediation process and ensures that the terms of the mediation agreement are carried out through follow-up contact. This position creates and implements education and outreach activities relating to business and financial planning for farmers (e.g., farm financial literacy), develop mentoring programs, etc.

AGRICULTURE PROGRAM SPECIALIST-ADVANCED

- (1) **Business Specialist:** Positions in this allocation pattern at, at the Advanced level, function under general supervision and are given a high level of autonomy for decision making. Work is completed independently with little direction from management. Positions recommend, develop and manage new program initiatives from funds attainment through to program evaluation; these functions require much skill in analyzing economic, investment, and business factors to develop an effective business marketing strategy. The work is highly visible and staff work directly with executive management from private industry, association directors, and/or US and foreign government officials in planning, directing, and implementing very diverse and complex agricultural marketing programs. Positions plan and execute educational and promotional events, many of which are high profile and directly impact a statewide initiative or broad based program.

In addition to the work performed at the Senior level, positions at the Advanced level spend a significant amount of time performing more complex functions related to economic development work, although this is not a majority of time. Work encompasses the entire business development and marketing process such as:

- Strategic planning, including the presentation of new programs and comprehensive strategies to management staff;
- Seeking funding (e.g., grant research and fund acquisition) or investment in WI economic growth;
- Market analysis and/or entry (e.g., facilitating buyer/seller connections such as a WI supplier to a foreign/domestic buyer; evaluation of market conditions, laws, regulations, etc.);
- Production or price point analysis; and analysis of food systems, distribution and/or packaging issues.

Actual product promotion, while important, is secondary regarding the role of the position at this level.

Representative Positions:

DATCP, Division of Agricultural Development – Ag Business and Marketing Coordinator: Under general supervision, this position works closely with DATCP colleagues and a broad network of external partners to provide market development and support for Wisconsin farmers and food and beverage companies to develop and expand the market share for WI products within WI and nationally. The position works to grow WI's agricultural economy by providing industry stakeholders with market development assistance, research, technical seminars, one-on-one business development consultation and other methods. This position will monitor market trends, help businesses understand regulations, connect businesses to resources that can answer technical questions, coordinate efforts of agricultural organizations and more. Develop short and long term goals for assigned program areas and manage business work plans and service delivery models. This position is responsible for direct measurement and evaluation of program services.

(2) **Program Specialist:** Positions in this allocation pattern, at the Advanced level, function under general supervision and perform all of the duties identified at the Senior level of the allocation for one or more agricultural areas, and in addition perform, for the majority of the time, the following job duties and responsibilities:

- Serve as the primary technical expert for work maintaining a direct financial impact to farmers and is typically responsible for providing guidance to other staff who work in the same program area;
- Responsible for strategic planning (short and long term) for an assigned program;
- Research new legislation or keep current on legal matters to determine what impact it may have on farmers or agricultural industry; this may include creating documentation for use in legal proceedings;
- Research trends in farming enterprises or industry and their potential for adoption by WI businesses, producers, etc.
- Research program (e.g., farmer's assistance, farmer's mediation services, program outreach) topics to develop short and long term planning activities as well emerging issues or initiatives (e.g., grant opportunities, policy changes).
- Positions liaise and consultant with internal (Economic Development Consultants) or external entities (attorneys, accounts, lenders, farm center advisors or other outside groups) to provide resources and information on best business practices for program area customers.
- Serve as a training coordinator and technical presenter for farm financials and technical programming.

Representative Position:

Farm Succession and Transfer Program Expert: This position serves as the primary technical expert for Farm Success or Farm Transfer programs and provides planning and overall program guidance and input to management staff, and general program expertise to lower level staff. This position serves as the program area technical expert providing detailed economic and financial impact analysis for the transition plans and directly advises farm entities or guides and advises other agency staff. This position analyzes business plans, provides formal financial projects and provides technical assistances on sources of potential financing or financing provides. The position will serve as the training coordinator and technical presenter for the work unit as it relates to farm financials and technical programming.

III. QUALIFICATIONS

The qualifications required for these positions will be determined at the time of recruitment. Such determinations will be made based on an analysis of the goals and worker activities performed and by an identification of the education, training, work, or other life experience which would provide reasonable assurance that the knowledge and skills required upon appointment have been acquired.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

This classification series was created effective April 13, 1997 and announced in Bulletin CC/SC-65 as a result of the Professional Program Support Survey. This classification was modified effective June 3, 2001 and announced in Bulletin CLR/SC-131 to add an allocation at the Agriculture Program Specialist – Senior level for the Coordinator of the Farmer’s Assistance Program and to remove the allocation for the Rural Electric Power Services Ombudsman position, which is no longer used.

The class specification was modified in January 13, 2013 in bulletin OSER-0318-MRS/SC to re-incorporate line position work related to Rural Electric Power Services (REPS) as the REPS Supervisor position was restructured due to broader Bureau goals and reorganization of staff reporting relationships; the Rural Energy Program Supervisor classification title was also abolished with this review.

The classification series was modified effective May 15, 2016 in bulletin DPM-0423-CC/SC to merge and collapse into this series the Agriculture Marketing Consultant series (separated primarily by allocation pattern) as well as to add an Advanced level for the Program Specialist allocation for the most technically complex positions that serve as a primary expert in the assigned program area. Definition language, exclusions language and representative positions were updated at the same time to reflect programmatic changes and the classification’s first level, Agriculture Program Specialist-Objective was retitled to remove “-Objective” from the title, effective May 15, 2016, and announcement in bulletin DPM-0424-CC/SC

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