

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

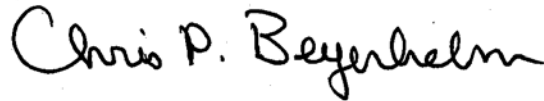
Farm Service Agency
Washington, DC 20250

Notice PM-2948

For: FSA Employees

**FY 2015 Performance Management Close-Out and
Performance Awards; Preparing for FY 2016**

Approved by: Associate Administrator for Operations and Management



1 Overview

A Background

The FY 2015 performance cycle ends September 30, 2015. FSA managers should be finalizing the:

- closing out FY 2015 performance appraisals, and
- FY 2016 performance plan.

B Purpose

This notice highlights:

- FSA leadership's commitment to performance based awards in 2016
- key features (due dates, responsibilities, and training) related to closing out the FY 2015 performance appraisal period and preparing for the FY 2016 appraisal period,
- updates to outreach standards,
- the new receipt for service standards,
- provides FY 2016 performance management checklists, and
- deadlines for the input of appraisals and processing of the forthcoming FY 2015 performance awards.

Disposal Date	Distribution
May 1, 2016	All FSA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices

1 Overview (Continued)

C Updated 5-PM, Performance Management System

The updated 5-PM (Rev. 12):

- covers performance management and the awards programs,
- provides all element descriptions and performance management guidance and policy previously issued in annual performance notices, and
- is undergoing the clearance and approval process.

D Labor-Management Obligations

Where exclusive representation exists, bargaining may be requested to the extent allowed by applicable statutes and according to contract language.

2 2015 Performance Appraisal Close Out

A Due Dates and EmpowHR Processing

The FY 2015 appraisal period ends **September 30, 2015**. Performance appraisals **must** be completed within 30 calendar days of the end of the appraisal period. Supervisors should have entered FY 2015 performance appraisals into EmpowHR and ensure that the reviewer, and employee concurrence was completed as close as possible to **October 30, 2015**, but no later than November 15, 2015. Supervisors should **only** enter FY 2016 performance plans in EmpowHR **after** they have verified that the reviewer concurs with the FY 2015 ratings. This will allow the rating to complete the process cycle in EmpowHR.

B Performance Appraisal Requirements

To rate an employee, **both** of the following **must** have occurred:

- a performance plan **must** have been established, and
- the employee **must** have been under that performance plan for at least 90 calendar days.

Note: If it has **not** been 90 calendar days by the end of the appraisal period, the period may be extended to reach the 90-calendar-day period.

2 2015 Performance Appraisal Close Out (Continued)

C Properly Rating Employees

An employee's FY 2015 performance appraisal **must** be based on documented accomplishments that align with the expectations established in the employee's performance plan. Rating and reviewing officials **must**:

- use the standards in the employee's FY 2015 performance plan to establish a rating and make distinctions in levels of performance (HRD Intranet Exhibits 2 and 3), and

Note: Click this link to view HRD Intranet Exhibits 2 through 6

http://intranet.fsa.usda.gov/fsa/operations/hrd/workforce_succession/Performance%20Management1/Articles_and_Exhibits.htm.

- document and record accomplishments for employee performance above fully successful.

Note: If the employee is rated at the exceeds level for any element, written documentation of the employee's accomplishments is **required**.

D Appraising Elements and Preparing the Summary Rating

For details on appraising elements and preparing the summary rating, see 5-PM, Part 5.

3 FY 2016 Performance Plan

A Coverage

All FSA employees nationwide are required to have FY 2016 performance plan established according to 5-PM, Part 1, **except**:

- individuals in the Senior Executive Service,
- state committee and county committee members,
- individuals excluded from coverage by statute or OPM regulation, and
- individuals for whom employment is **not** reasonably expected to exceed the minimum appraisal period (90 calendar days) in a consecutive 12-month period.

Note: Temporary intermittent employees would only be subject to the performance management system if they actually work a continuous 90-calendar-day period, regardless of the length of their appointment.

3 FY 2016 Performance Plan (Continued)

B Employee Participation

Employee participation is **required** in establishing or revising performance plan. This may be accomplished by whatever method works best for the parties concerned.

Example: The supervisor could ask the employee to develop a draft performance plan for discussion or the supervisor could develop a draft performance plan for discussion.

Note: The example elements and standards found in Exhibit 2 and 5-PM should be used as starting points for draft performance plans.

C Required Features To Be Included in Every Employee Performance Plan

In addition to the required elements and standards, every performance plan should clearly demonstrate all of the following:

- cascading alignment,
- results-focused elements,
- at least one noncritical element,
- at least three standards for each element, but no more than eight, and
- at least one mission results oriented element valued at four appraisal points (that is, mission results, execution of duties, or supervision).

D Required Elements and Standards FY 2015 Performance Plan

The mission results element or at least one other critical element **must** be clearly aligned with FSA's goals.

Note: Outreach standards have been updated and receipt for service standards introduced. Additional guidance will be provided to ensure that supervisors and employees are compliant with forthcoming departmental regulations about training and development for supervisors.

Mandatory:

- **elements for nonsupervisory employees:**
 - equal opportunity, civil rights, and diversity and inclusion, and
 - customer service, users may access EmpowHR for a menu of the suggested standards.

3 FY 2016 Performance Plan (Continued)

D Required Elements and Standards (Continued)

- **standards for nonsupervisory employees:**
 - health and safety, under any element that the supervisor deems appropriate, and
 - PII, under any element that the supervisor deems appropriate.
- **elements for supervisors and/or managers:**
 - equal opportunity, civil rights, and diversity and inclusion,
 - customer service, user may access EmpowHR for a menu of suggested standards,
 - mission results, and
 - supervision.
- **standards for supervisors and/or managers:**
 - engagement, under supervision,
 - cultural transformation, under mission results,
 - diversity roadmap, under supervision,
 - recruitment and hiring, under supervision,
 - retention and succession planning, under supervision,
 - performance management, under supervision,
 - health and safety, **required** for all employees under any element, and
 - PII, **required** for all employees under any element.

E Required Outreach Standards for Field Office Employees

In FY 2014, new performance standards were introduced for all service center employees and outreach coordinators. See Exhibit 1 for outreach standards and Exhibit 3 for receipt for service standards.

4 Key Performance Management Program Modification Implemented in FY 2016

A Computation of Performance Appraisal Rating

To place more weight on the actual work that employees perform, the mission results or execution of duties element shall be worth four (not two) appraisal points. For supervisors, the supervision and mission results elements shall also be worth four (not two) appraisal points.

Note: Only the four point appraisal unit values will be displayed to the viewer on the EmpowHR screen. Although the one and two point values are **not** displayed on the screen, all point values will be correctly calculated when the supervisor completes the appraisal.

**4 Key Performance Management Program Modification Implemented in FY 2016
(Continued)**

B Assessing Supervisory Performance

A supervisor's failure to meet the performance management requirements and compliance deadlines established by OHRM or FSA (subparagraph C) must, at a minimum, preclude an element rating of exceeds fully successful. Failure to meet the requirements in the performance management category altogether must result in an element rating of does not meet fully successful.

Likewise, the second-level supervisor's supervision element rating should reflect the degree to which the first-line supervisor was held accountable for their performance management responsibilities.

C Required Data Reporting

During the performance cycle, FSA is required to attain and report to the department 100 percent completion rates on the following for eligible FSA employees.

All supervisors and/or reviewers must ensure:

- FY 2015 appraisals should be completed no later than **November 15, 2015**,
- reporting of 100 percent completion of all FY 2016 performance plans by **November 30, 2015**, and
- reporting of 100 percent completion of all FY 2016 mid-year progress reviews by **April 30, 2016**.

5 Other Resources, Guidance, Tools, and Training on Performance Management

A Resources, Guidance, and Tools

The following HRD intranet exhibits for additional guidance are available at http://intranet.fsa.usda.gov/fsa/operations/hrd/workforce_succession/Performance%20Management1/Articles_and_Exhibits.htm.

- distinguishing levels of performance (Exhibit 2),
- competencies for selected FSA occupations (Exhibit 3),

Note: Competencies may be used as a reference tool by supervisors and employees to assist in distinguishing performance levels.

5 Other Resources, Guidance, Tools, and Training on Performance Management (Continued)

A Resources, Guidance, and Tools (Continued)

- common rating errors supervisors should avoid (Exhibit 4),
- writing your accomplishments (Exhibit 5), and
- supervisor's checklist for preparing for employee performance reviews (Exhibit 6).

6 Required Documentation

A Required Documentation by Manager/Supervisor

Exceeds element ratings or a summary performance rating above fully successful **must** be supported by written prove-up documentation.

B Required Employee Write-Up of Accomplishments and Contributions

Employees are required to provide their supervisor/manager with a narrative/list of contributions and accomplishments achieved during the performance cycle. The write-up will assist supervisors/managers in accurately assessing the employee's performance. If supervisors and employees are relying mostly on memory to evaluate employee performance, this renders the appraisal process far more difficult than necessary. For this reason, it is best for supervisors and employees to institute a simple recording system to document performance and achievements. The employee write-up of accomplishments can be an effective tool in that it assists the employee in honestly assessing strengths and weaknesses during the performance of job functions. The write-up can be very useful in facilitating feedback between manager and employee during the performance cycle and in developing the required IDP's.

7 Rating-Based Performance Awards

A Rating Based Performance Awards and Processing Deadlines

FSA is committed to providing performance awards for FY 2015 with the goal of payout by the end of this calendar year. Providing performance based awards earlier in the FY is a priority of FSA leadership for 2016.

Rating-based awards are based on employee performance accomplishments over the course of the rating cycle, as documented on the employee's rating of record. The manager's completion and entry of the FY 2015 ratings is required for OBF to calculate the FY 2015 performance awards and issue authorization for the award amounts. Delayed entry of the performance rating may delay issuance of performance awards.

Rating-based awards do not require a separate award justification, provided the justification for the rating of record is thoroughly documented during the appraisal process. A copy of the rating justification must be filed with the award documentation. Once the ratings have been completed further direction will be provided on the amounts of the awards and time off award distribution.

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7 Rating-Based Performance Awards (Continued)

B Award Processing Deadlines

FY 2015 awards **must** be processed by the end of pay period 24, December 11, 2015 for award payouts to occur by the end of the calendar year.

Note: FY 2015 performance ratings **must** be entered in EmpowHR or the Entry, Processing, Inquiry and Correction (EPIC) System **before** entering the performance cash award. Subsequent guidance will be issued on authorizing specific award amounts, once the Office of Management and Budget issues guidelines to all federal agencies.

8 Contacts

A Contact Information

Supervisors may contact the appropriate servicing personnel office (SPO) as follows.

IF located in...	THEN contact...
Washington, DC National Office for the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• awards and processing,• performance management processing, and• servicing personnel specialist.	Kedra Watts, HRD, by telephone at 202-401-0678. Note: TTY is 202-205-9057.
a branch at any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kansas City, Missouri,• St. Louis, Missouri, or• Salt Lake City, Utah.	
any location for EmpowHR assistance	EmpowHR Help Desk by telephone at 816-823-3996.
state or county office	state office administrative officer.

If there are policy-related questions about this notice, contact Michael Braswell by either of the following:

- e-mail to **michael.braswell@wdc.usda.gov**, or
- telephone at 202-401-0392.

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8 Contacts (Continued)

A Contact Information (Continued)

If there are questions about processing award actions, contact the appropriate SPO as follows:

IF the supervisor is located in...	THEN contact...
Washington, DC	HRD, ELRBB, BPMS ATTN: Charlotte Moment Stop 0595 1400 Independence Ave SW Washington DC 20250-0595 Telephone: 202-401-0516 FAX: 202-205-9140.
Kansas City, St. Louis, or APFO	HRD, ELRBB, BPMS ATTN: Dana Candler or Patty Gepford Beacon Facility, Mail Stop 8398 2312 E Bannister Rd Kansas City, MO 64131-3061 Telephone: 816-926-6259 FAX: 816-926-6156.
state or county office	state office, administrative branch or the southwest area regional service office, human resources team.

FY 2016 Performance Plan (AD-435A) Customer Service Outreach Element Alignment Statements and Standards**A Alignment Statement and Outreach Standards for All County Office Employees, Excluding County Office Outreach Coordinators (COOC's)**

FSA supervisors are **required** to insert the following alignment statement and two outreach standards under the enhanced customer service element for all county office employees, **excluding** COOC's:

- The following results-focused measures align with USDA Strategic Management Initiatives and FSA Goal 4: Transform and Modernize the Farm Service Agency, Strategic Objectives:
 - 4.1 - Advance a Culture of Accountability,
 - 4.2 - Promote Diversity, and
 - 4.4 - Improve Customer Service in FSA Strategic Plan.
- Provides timely and accurate FSA program information and assistance to all potential, new, and existing customers with less than three valid complaints.
- Identifies and provides information to internal or external customers of USDA programs, services, and/or initiatives that may be of interest to producer operations or farming interests with less than three valid complaints.

B Alignment Statement and Outreach Standards for All State Outreach Coordinators (SOC's) and COOC's

FSA supervisors are **required** to insert the following alignment statement and two outreach standards under the enhanced customer service element for all SOC's and COOC's.

- The following results-focused measures align with USDA Strategic Management Initiatives and FSA Goal 4: Transform and Modernize the Farm Service Agency, Strategic Objectives:
 - 4.1 - Advance a Culture of Accountability,
 - 4.2 - Promote Diversity, and
 - 4.4 - Improve Customer Service.
- Provides supervisor with a quarterly outreach report update with recommendations, activities, and accomplishments, within four workdays of the end of the quarter with no more than one exception."
- Plans and/or participates in one to two activities targeted at underserved producers that include beginning farmers and ranchers, local and/or organic producers, and minority and veteran farmers and ranchers located in the state and county with emphasis on persistent poverty counties. Ensures that all office outreach activity results are recorded into the Outreach Tracking Information System (OTIS) timely, with no more than two exceptions.

FY 2016 Performance Management Checklists

These checklists are provided to FSA supervisors and managers as tools to assist in developing FY 2016 performance plans and to assist in ensuring that all FSA FY 2016 performance plans include the required features and or language as outlined in the most recent Performance Management directive.

Instructions: Compare the FY 2016 performance plan to the appropriate nonsupervisory or supervisory checklist and verify that every item is present within the created performance plan. If the required item is **not** present, modify performance plan appropriately.

Nonsupervisory Performance Plan Checklist	
Item	Description
1	EEO/CR diversity and inclusion element
2	customer service element
3	one results-oriented element (four appraisal points)execution of duties
4	one to three additional performance elements (each with a results statement)
5	cascading alignment statement (for at least one critical element) that shows clear linkage to strategic plan
6	results statement for each element
7	PII and safety and health standards
8	at least three standards for each element
9	all standards established at the meets fully successful level
10	a performance plan was provided to and discussed with the employee at the beginning of the rating period (normally within 30 calendar days) for the current rating cycle as demonstrated by employee signature or date stamp.

Supervisory Performance Plan Checklist	
Item	Description
1	EEO/CR diversity and inclusion element
2	customer service element
3	supervision element (four appraisal points)
4	mission results element (four appraisal points)
5	one or two additional performance elements (each with a results statement)
6	diversity roadmap standard under EEO/CR diversity and inclusion element
7	retention and succession standard under supervision element
8	recruitment and hiring standard under supervision element
9	performance management standard under supervision element
10	cultural transformation standard under mission results element
11	engagement standard under supervision element
12	PII and safety and health standards
13	cascading alignment statement for at least one critical element that shows clear linkage to strategic plan
14	results statement for each element in performance plan
15	at least three standards for each element
16	standards are established at the meets fully successful level
17	plan provided to and discussed with the employee at the beginning of the rating period (normally within 30 calendar days) for the current rating cycle as demonstrated by a signature or date stamp

Required Agency Performance Standards for FY 2016 Performance Plans**A Loan Approval Authority Standard**

County executive directors (CED's) with loan approval authorities, district directors (DD's), farm loan chiefs (FLC's), farm loan managers (FLM's), farm loan officers (FLO's) at a grade 11, farm loan supervisors (FLS's), and senior farm loan officers (SFLO's) are required to have and maintain loan approval authorities; therefore, must have the following standard in their performance plan, program management, execution of duties, or similar element:

Meets FSA's standards necessary for maintaining loan approval authority and loan servicing authority.

Note: CED's, DD's, FLM's, FLO's, and FLS's enrolled in the FLO training program must use the FLOT training standard in subparagraph B.

Grade 7/9 FLO's with loan approval authority must have the following standard in their performance plan, program management, execution of duties, or similar element:

Acquires and meets FSA's standards necessary for maintaining loan approval authority and loan servicing authority.

B FLOT Training Standard

Agricultural specialists, CED's, county operations reviewers (COR's), DD's, FLM's and FLO's without loan approval authority, FLOT's, FLS's, loan analysts (LOA's), and loan resolution specialists (LRS's) must have the following standard in their performance plan, program management, execution of duties, or similar element:

Successfully completes assigned training and training activities within established timeframes as required by 6-PM, Employee Development and Training, Part 13.

C Improper Payments Standard

All field office employees who work with farm program payments shall have the following standard in the program management, execution of duties, or similar element:

Successfully completes FSA Improper Payments Information Act training requirements and ensures that FSA's corrective action plan procedures are followed to ensure that payments are accurate and that required payment documentation is up to date and on file.

Required Agency Performance Standards for FY 2016 Performance Plans (Continued)**D Receipt for Service Standard**

DD's, FLC's, and state executive directors (SED's) are required to have the following standard in their performance plan, customer service (also referred to as enhanced customer service) element:

Ensure that all county offices are requiring receipt for service consistent with regulations and steps are taken to regularly monitor compliance that receipts are issued when required.

CED's and FLM's are required to have the following in their performance plan, customer service (also referred to as enhanced customer service) element:

Ensure that all county offices are requiring receipt for service consistent with regulations and steps are taken to regularly monitor compliance that receipts are issued when required. Supports the secretary's receipt for service requirement by issuing receipts for services consistent with regulations.

All other county office employees are required to have the following standard in their performance plan, customer service (also referred to as enhanced customer service) element:

Supports the secretary's receipt for service requirement by issuing receipts for services consistent with regulations.