

For: FSA Employees

FY 2016 Performance Management Close-Out and Performance Awards; Preparing for FY 2017

Approved by: Acting Associate Administrator for Operations and Management



1 Overview

A Background

The FY 2016 performance cycle ends September 30, 2016. FSA managers should be preparing to:

- complete FY 2016 performance appraisals by October 30, 2016,
- create FY 2017 performance plans by October 30, 2016, and
- enter FY 2017 performance plans into EmpowHR and ensure concurrence no later than November 15, 2016.

B Purpose

This notice highlights:

- FSA leadership’s commitment to performance based awards in 2017,
- key features (due dates, responsibilities, and training) related to closing out the FY 2016 performance appraisal period and preparing for the FY 2017 appraisal period,
- changes to the EmpowHR performance management module,
- updates to outreach standards, and
- the FY 2017 performance management checklists and deadlines for the input of appraisals and processing of the forthcoming FY 2016 performance awards.

Disposal Date	Distribution
January 1, 2017	All FSA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices

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1 Overview (Continued)

C Updated 5-PM, Performance Management System

The updated 5-PM (Rev. 12):

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

B Labor-Management Obligations

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

2 2016 Performance Appraisal Close Out

A Due Dates and EmpowHR Processing

The FY 2016 appraisal period ends September 30, 2016. Performance appraisals **must** be completed within 30 calendar days of the end of the appraisal period. Supervisors should have entered FY 2016 performance appraisals into EmpowHR and ensure that the reviewer and employee concurrence was completed as close as possible to October 30, 2016, but no later than November 15, 2016. Supervisors should only enter FY 2017 performance plans in EmpowHR after they have verified that the reviewer concurs with the FY 2016 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.

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2 2016 Performance Appraisal Close Out (Continued)

C Properly Rating Employees

An employee's FY 2016 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 2016 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 2017 Performance Plan

A Coverage

All FSA employees nationwide are required to have the FY 2017 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 2017 Performance Plan (Continued)

B Employee Participation

Employee participation and engagement is required in establishing or revising performance plans. 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 Employee Performance Plan Required Features

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

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.

3 FY 2017 Performance Plan (Continued)

D Required Elements and Standards (Continued)

Mandatory:

- elements for nonsupervisory employees:
 - equal opportunity, civil rights, diversity and inclusion, and
 - customer service, users may access EmpowHR for a menu of the suggested standards
- 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, and
 - customer service, user may access EmpowHR for a menu of suggested standards, mission results, and supervision.
- standards for supervisors and/or managers:
 - employee 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.

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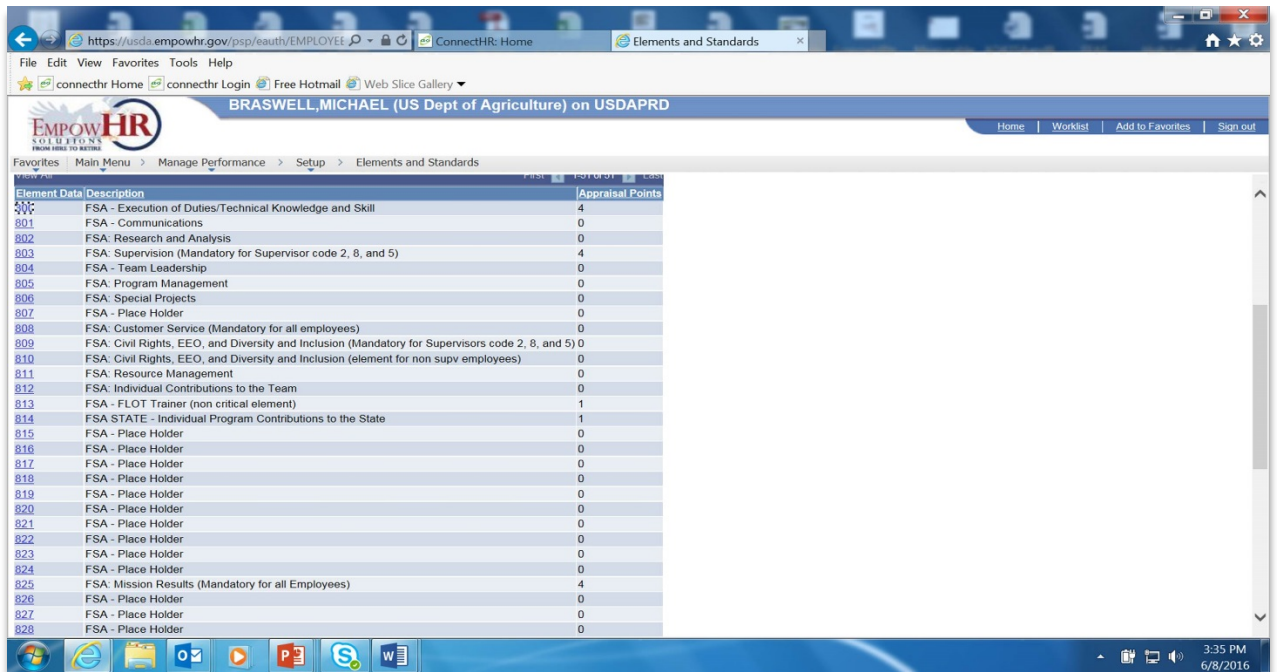
4 Key EmpowHR Modifications Implemented in FY 2017

A EmpowHR Performance Management Modifications

During FY 2015, the National Finance Center (NFC) implemented several modifications to the EmpowHR Performance Management module. These modifications provide FSA/RMA with greater flexibility and independence when adding elements and standards, making required edits or changes, and producing accurate reports. In the past, all USDA agencies using EmpowHR had to agree upon element and standard definitions, changes and edits before updates or modifications could be implemented.

B Renumbering of All FSA Elements in EmpowHR

This change allows HRD to be more responsive to your requests for element and standard additions and corrections. FSA's elements and standards now function independently of other agencies using EmpowHR. In order to facilitate the use of independent and tailored elements and standards, FSA was required to renumber all FSA elements. All FSA elements now have 800 numbers within EmpowHR.



The screenshot displays the EmpowHR web application interface. The browser address bar shows the URL <https://usda.empowhr.gov/psp/eaauth/EMPLOYEE>. The user is identified as BRASWELL, MICHAEL (US Dept of Agriculture) on USDAPRD. The page title is "Elements and Standards". A table lists various FSA elements and standards with their corresponding appraisal points.

Element Data	Description	Appraisal Points
	FSA - Execution of Duties/Technical Knowledge and Skill	4
801	FSA - Communications	0
802	FSA - Research and Analysis	0
803	FSA - Supervision (Mandatory for Supervisor code 2, 8, and 5)	4
804	FSA - Team Leadership	0
805	FSA - Program Management	0
806	FSA - Special Projects	0
807	FSA - Place Holder	0
808	FSA - Customer Service (Mandatory for all employees)	0
809	FSA - Civil Rights, EEO, and Diversity and Inclusion (Mandatory for Supervisors code 2, 8, and 5)	0
810	FSA - Civil Rights, EEO, and Diversity and Inclusion (element for non supv employees)	0
811	FSA - Resource Management	0
812	FSA - Individual Contributions to the Team	0
813	FSA - FLOT Trainer (non critical element)	1
814	FSA STATE - Individual Program Contributions to the State	1
815	FSA - Place Holder	0
816	FSA - Place Holder	0
817	FSA - Place Holder	0
818	FSA - Place Holder	0
819	FSA - Place Holder	0
820	FSA - Place Holder	0
821	FSA - Place Holder	0
822	FSA - Place Holder	0
823	FSA - Place Holder	0
824	FSA - Place Holder	0
825	FSA - Mission Results (Mandatory for all Employees)	4
826	FSA - Place Holder	0
827	FSA - Place Holder	0
828	FSA - Place Holder	0

Note: In creating FY 2017 performance plans, do **not** use the copy feature to copy previous performance plans into the 2017 plan. Copying will populate the incorrect element numbers (100's), which are no longer functioning for FSA. To create the FY 2017 plan, you will have to select the appropriate elements and standards from the drop down menu in EmpowHR.

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4 Key EmpowHR Modifications Implemented in FY 2017 (Continued)

C 90 Day Waiver Check Box

Current functionality requires a 90 day wait period from the time the manager indicates concurrence on their employee's performance plan until that employee's plan can be updated to include ratings. In the event the manager could not indicate his concurrence within sufficient time to afford the 90 day wait period, add a check box on the performance review page to indicate a waiver of this 90 day wait period. When checked, all coding that enforces the 90 day wait will be bypassed, enabling updates to the performance plan to be accomplished. The default for this new field should be set to unchecked.

D Eligibility Indicator

The process of identifying employees not eligible for a performance plan was a cumbersome and lengthy manual task. A list of employee's ineligible for a performance plan rating was compiled. Previously there was no capability available within the manage performance module of EmpowHR to record the ineligibility on the employee's record or have it recorded for reporting purposes. The new indicator identifies an employee that is not eligible for a performance plan/rating. This eligibility indicator is visible and selectable from the performance plan page. The default for this new field will be checked, indicating the employee is eligible for a plan/rating. The supervisor or users with the HR admin role may now check or uncheck this field.

E Auto-populated Elements

When a manager initiated a new plan for an employee, specific elements were auto-populated on the page and the plan could not be saved unless three elements were present (maximum of 7). The auto-population feature has been removed which allows a new plan to be initiated without the presence of pre-populated elements. However, notification is retained that the plan **must** contain a minimum of 3 elements (one **must** be mandatory) to save the performance plan.

Note: While OPM requires that an employee's performance plan exist for at least 90 days before being rated, the requested capability to intervene by choosing to use the 90 day bypass function only exposes slight risks when compared to risks associated with not completing the performance plans.

F Assessing Supervisory Performance

A supervisor's failure to meet the performance management requirements and compliance deadlines established by OHRM or FSA (subparagraph G) **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.

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4 Key EmpowHR Modifications Implemented in FY 2017 (Continued)

G 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 2016 appraisals should be completed no later than November 15, 2016,
- 100 percent completion of all FY 2017 performance plans by November 30, 2016, and
- 100 percent completion of all FY 2017 mid-year progress reviews by April 30, 2017.

5 Resources, Guidance, Tools, and Training for 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.

- 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 justification.

B Required Write-Up of Employee 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 assists 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 throughout the performance cycle.

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6 Required Documentation (Continued)

B Required Write-Up of Employee Accomplishments and Contributions (Continued)

The employee write-up of accomplishments can be an effective tool that assists the supervisor in honestly assessing strengths and weaknesses during the performance of job functions. The write-up can also 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 2016 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 2017.

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 2016 ratings is required for OBF to calculate the FY 2016 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.

B Award Processing Deadlines

FY 2016 awards **must** be processed by the end of pay period 24, December 10, 2016 for award payouts to occur by the end of the calendar year.

Note: FY 2016 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.

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8 Contacts

A Contact Information

Supervisors may contact the appropriate servicing personnel office (SPO) according to the following table.

Location/Office	SPO Contact
FSA state or county office	state administrative officer (AO)
FSA headquarters and RMA employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dana Candler by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-mail at dana.candler@kcc.usda.gov, • telephone at 816-926-6117, or • FAX at 816-926-6156 • Patty Gepford by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-mail at patricia.gepford@kcc.usda.gov, • telephone at 816-926-6259, or • FAX at 816-926-6156 • Ernest Kary by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-mail at ernest.kary@kcc.usda.gov, • telephone at 816-926-6225, or • FAX at 816-926-6156 • Karen Williams by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-mail at karen.williams@kcc.usda.gov, • telephone at 816-926-2670, or • FAX at 816-926-6156 • Kedra Watts by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-mail at kedra.watts@wdc.usda.gov, • telephone at 202-401-0678, or • FAX at 202-205-9017. <p>Click this link for Assignment Areas - Retirement and Benefits Branch (RAB).</p>

For EmpowHR assistance contact the Help Desk by telephone at 816-823-3996.

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.

FY 2017 Performance Plan Element**A Customer Service Outreach Education and Engagement Alignment Statement and Standards**

HRD has added the Customer Service Outreach Education and Engagement element to the EmpowHR Performance Management system as new element. It is element **number 815**. The addition of this revised Customer Service element eliminates additional cutting and pasting of Outreach standards into employees' performance plan. When creating plans that require Outreach standards, supervisors/managers should select **EmpowHR element number 815**, Customer Service Outreach Education and Engagement.

B Alignment Statement for All FSA Employees, Excluding Outreach Coordinators

The following results-focused measures align with USDA Strategic Management Initiatives, and FSA Goal 4: Accomplish Our Mission by Effectively Managing People and Serve Capabilities, Strategic Objectives:

- 4.3 - Provide Consistent Outstanding and Equitable Customer Service, which follows with:
 - Strategy 2 - Increase Program Awareness through Enhanced Outreach.

C Outreach Education and Engagement Standards for FSA Employees

FSA employees **must**:

- provide timely and accurate FSA program information and assistance to all potential, new, and existing customers assisted with no more than 3 valid complaints, and
- identify and provide information to internal or external customers of USDA programs/services/initiatives that may be of interest to producer's operation or farming interests with no more than 3 valid complaints.

D Alignment Statement for All SOC's and COOC's

FSA supervisors are required to include the following alignment statement and 2 outreach standards under the "Customer Service" element for all State Outreach Coordinators (SOC's) and County Office Outreach Coordinators (COOC's). The following results-focused measures align with USDA Strategic Management Initiatives, and FSA Goal 4: Accomplish Our Mission by Effectively Managing People and Serve Capabilities, Strategic Objective:

- 4.3 - Provide Consistent Outstanding and Equitable Customer Service, which follows with
 - Strategy 2 – Increase Program Awareness through Enhanced Outreach.

FY 2017 Performance Plan Element (Continued)**E Outreach Education and Engagement Standards for all Outreach Coordinators (State and County)**

All Outreach Coordinators **must:**

- provide supervisor with a quarterly outreach report update with recommendations, activities, and accomplishments, within 4 workdays of the end of the quarter with no more than 1 exception,
- plan and/or participate in 1-2 activities targeted to underserved producers (which includes beginning farmers/ranchers, local/organic producers, minority and veteran farmers and ranchers) located in the county/state (with emphasis on persistent poverty counties). Ensures all office outreach activity results are recorded into the Outreach Tracking Information System (OTIS) timely, with no more than 2 exceptions, and
- identify and work with stakeholder organizations to plan a minimum of 2 collaborative events that educate Ag producers and landowners of FSA programs.

FY 2017 Performance Management Checklists

These checklists are provided to FSA supervisors and managers as tools to assist in developing FY 2017 performance plans and to assist in ensuring that all FSA FY 2017 performance plans include the required features and or language as outlined in the most recent Performance Management directive.

Instructions: Compare the FY 2017 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

2 Required Agency Performance Standards for FY 2017 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, they **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 completed 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.

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.