



PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT ISSUANCE # 5

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Introduction: Human Resources Division is in the start-up phase of developing a central location for issuing branded communication to our customer base. This is the third issuance in a series of information that will be issued from this central location. The format will change to that of a HRD Newsletter, but the process has begun. This information will assist you in developing in the area of Performance Management.

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This is the *fifth* of a series of weekly communications which you will be receiving from now until mid November on performance management. All previous communications released in this series may be found on the HR website at:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/hrdapp?area=home&subject=landing&topic=landing>

The goal of these messages is to remind and inform you of key aspects of performance management: the rules, the process, your responsibilities, etc. – and to let you know where you can get further information.

This fifth communication discusses the basic requirements for an FY 2010 performance plan. It is important to remember that, not only are we closing out FY 2009 with ratings, we are also beginning the 2010 process, and the things we do at the beginning of the process are critical.

(1) Employee Participation. Employee participation is required in establishing or revising performance plans. This can be accomplished by whatever method works best for the parties concerned. For example, the rating official could ask the employee to develop draft performance plans for discussion or the rating official himself/herself could develop draft performance plans for discussion. If there are differences between the employee and the rating official, the final decision shall be made by the reviewing official.

(2) Cascading Alignment. Rating officials should develop performance plans for their employees that include at least 1 critical element with standards that identify clear and measurable tasks and results that are aligned to organizational goals. Rating officials and employees are encouraged to align more than 1 element, where possible. Alignment should be clear and transparent so that employees can see how their performance plans support organizational goal achievement. Merely including a generic statement in performance plans that employees support organizational goals is not adequate for communicating alignment. Simply restating organizational goals without including the metrics for determining performance against those goals is not adequate. It should be possible to map the responsibility for specific organizational goals through the performance plans of the chain of responsibility (SES member, to manager, to supervisor) to the front-line employee.

See your agency performance management policy document for more information.

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(3) Results. Each element in performance plans must include language that holds the employee accountable for achieving expected results. The expected results are stated by explaining the results gained by the employee achieving their standard(s) and may be written individually with each standard (as shown in the example) or as a single statement at the end of all the standards. Results must be appropriate to the employee's level of responsibility. Example 1: "Receives and deposits payments within 18 to 24 hours of receipt. The result is a faster processing of customer payments. This is aligned to the organizational goal of supporting productive farms and ranches." Example 2: "Budget contains well-justified descriptions of budget requests, is accurate, and is completed by the established deadline. The result is a complete budget document. This is aligned to the organizational goal of improving strategic accountability."

(4) Balanced, Credible Measures. All performance plans must include balanced, credible measures; balanced, so that in addition to measuring expected results, performance plans include appropriate measures, such as quality, quantity, timeliness, and/or cost-effectiveness and/or indicators of competencies.

To be credible, performance expectations must be: based on job analysis; clear, specific, and understandable; reasonable and attainable; measurable, observable, or verifiable; communicated in a timely manner, and; foster continual improvement in productivity.

(5) Number and Type of Elements. Rating officials shall establish at least three but no more than seven performance elements

The following critical elements are mandatory for all supervisory employees:

- "Supervision" element
- "Customer Service" element
- "Supervisory Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights" element.

Separate EO/CR and CS elements are not required for nonsupervisors. The elements may be kept separate or built into other critical elements. If the rating official decides that there will not be separate EO/CR and CS elements, the following EO/CR and CS language must be built into the element description piece of another critical element. Rating officials will choose the appropriate element and develop at least 1 standard to address EO/CR component and at least 1 standard to address CS component. If EO/CR or CS elements are kept separate, they must be critical.

Other elements may be required for specific positions. See your agency performance management policy document for more information.

(6) Number and Type of Performance Standards. For each element selected, there must be at least three written standards for measuring performance of the element. Performance standards must be established at the "Fully Successful" level. "Fully Successful" indicates that the work

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performance is of good quality, with the employee producing the expected quantity and quality of work and meeting established deadlines or schedules for completing the work. Although it is only required that performance standards be formally established at the “Fully Successful” level, it is recommended that, where possible, performance standards also be established in the performance plan at the “Exceeds” level as this further contributes to greater understanding of expectations by both the rating official and the employee.

General Applicable Performance Standards

Performance Management Standard. All supervisory employees shall have this standard in their “Supervision” element.

Customer and Employee Perspective Standards. Performance plans for supervisors and managers must take into consideration employee and customer perspective; therefore, supervisors and managers shall have the four Customer and Employee Perspectives standards, the first two in their Supervision element and the last two in their Customer Service element.

Safety and Occupational Health Standards. All performance plans shall contain the applicable safety and occupational health standard under any appropriate critical or noncritical element.

PII (Personally Identifiable Information) Standards. All performance plans shall contain the applicable PII standard under any appropriate critical or noncritical element.

Other standards may be required for specific positions. See your agency performance management policy document for more information.

By all working together, we can make a success of our performance management program.

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FAS, FSA, and RMA performance management policy documents may all be found on the HR website at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/hrdapp?area=home&subject=erpm&topic=prm>.

Handbook 5-PM, "Performance Management and Awards Program", has been updated and is now available at: ftp://ftp.fsa.usda.gov/manuals/5-pm_r11_a01.pdf. This handbook contains complete, up-to-date details on all aspects of the performance management and awards program.