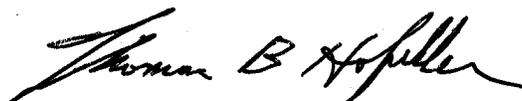


For: FSA Employees

FY 2008 End-of-Year Performance Appraisal Guidelines

Approved by: Associate Administrator for Operations and Management



1 Overview

A Background

The FY 2008 performance appraisal period ends September 30, 2008. Supervisors normally provide their employees with performance appraisals within 30 calendar days of the end of the appraisal period.

B Purpose

This notice:

- reminds all FSA employees that the FY 2008 performance appraisal period ends September 30, 2008
- addresses:
 - appraisal requirements
 - documenting performance
 - necessary steps to rate employees
- discusses results of appraisal (awards and adverse actions based on the rating).

C Extension of Deadline

NFC has announced that, for this year, no performance appraisal or rating based award information should be input during Pay Period 21 (October 12-25, 2008). Because of this, and because of additional pressures because of implementing the new Farm Bill, the deadline for completing the performance appraisal process has been extended to **COB November 30, 2008**.

Disposal Date	Distribution
February 1, 2009	All FSA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices

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1 Overview (Continued)

D Additional Resource

For additional information on rating employees, supervisors may refer to the Performance Management Training already taken through AgLearn. To access this resource:

- log in to AgLearn at www.aglearn.usda.gov
- CLICK “Learning” tab
- CLICK “Learning History”
- locate “Performance Management Training” and CLICK “Review Online Structure”
- select desired topic to review or CLICK “Resources” to review handouts from the course.

2 Rating Employees

A Appraisal Period and Documentation

The appraisal period starts October 1 of each year and ends September 30 of the following year.

Supervisors normally provide their employees with performance appraisals within 30 calendar days of the end of the appraisal period. As mentioned in subparagraph 1 B, this year, the deadline for completing the performance appraisal process is **COB November 30, 2008**.

The performance appraisal provided at the end of the appraisal period is called the Rating of Record. The Rating of Record covers the entire appraisal period. For information about multiple appraisals feeding into the Rating of Record, see subparagraph 5 B. Ratings of Record shall be prepared either:

- in EmpowHR for offices using EmpowHR
- on AD-435 for offices **not** using EmpowHR. See Exhibit 1 for an example of a completed AD-435.

Note: Employee input is strongly recommended when preparing the performance appraisal. The final decision, however, will be made by the employee’s rating and reviewing officials.

2 Rating Employees (Continued)

B Appraisal Requirements

To rate an employee:

- a performance plan **must** have been established on AD-435A and AD-435B or in EmpowHR
- 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 allow for an appraisal to be given.

If employees disagree with their performance plan and refuse to sign, the supervisor will note this on AD-435, item 18, or in EmpowHR, “Reviewer Comments” box. The performance plan is still considered valid for rating purposes.

C Critical and Noncritical Elements

Determine what elements in the employee’s performance plan were identified as critical and noncritical. Critical elements cover duties that are essential to the successful performance of the position. For example, for supervisory employees, the “Supervisory Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights” element, the “Supervision” element, and the “Customer Service” element **must** be critical. At least 1 element must be critical and at least 1 element must be noncritical in all performance plans. On the summary rating:

- critical elements will be scored as 2 points
- noncritical elements will be scored as 1 point.

D Properly Rating Employees

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

- rate appropriately against the standards in the employee’s performance plan
- make distinctions in levels of performance.

Rating and reviewing officials will be held accountable for rating appropriately against the standards in the employee’s performance plan and making distinctions in levels of performance.

Artificial targets (such as quotas or pre-set rating distributions) for performance appraisals should never be used to evaluate employee performance. Performance appraisals must be based on the individual accomplishments of the employee being rated.

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3 Documenting Performance

A Obtaining and Completing Performance Appraisals

Rating officials **using EmpowHR** shall:

- enter summary ratings in the “Manager Self-Service” portion of EmpowHR
- review/respond to written comments entered by employees, as applicable
- verify the employee entered a check (✓) next to “Employee Viewed/Discussed Rating”.

Note: For assistance, slides that show supervisor, reviewer, and employee actions for appraisals entered in EmpowHR are located on the FFAS Human Resources web site at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/hrdapp?area=hrdwebapp&subject=landing&topic=landing>.

Rating officials **not using EmpowHR** shall:

- use Microsoft Word versions of AD-435
- complete AD-435 according to the instructions on AD-435.

Note: AD-435 is available from FFAS Employee Forms Online web site at <http://165.221.16.90/dam/ffasforms/currentforms.asp>.

B Appraising Elements

The supervisor shall evaluate each performance element and determine which 1 of the following 3 rating levels is most appropriate when comparing the employee’s performance with the “Fully Successful” performance standard established for that element.

- **Exceeds Fully Successful.** This level generally describes performance that exceeds the “Fully Successful” standard for the element being evaluated. Employees performing at this level may display initiative, ownership, and/or unusual independence.
- **Meets Fully Successful.** This level generally describes performance of the solid, effective employee whose work meets normal expectations in terms of quality, quantity, and timelines, as outlined in the “Fully Successful” standard.
- **Does Not Meet Fully Successful.** This level describes performance that has failed to fulfill the basic expectation for the work.

Note: Rating officials will provide additional documentation to substantiate the rating for each element for each rating level given (such as, “Exceeds Fully Successful”, “Fully Successful”, and “Does Not Meet Fully Successful”). In addition to this, with assistance from SPO, the rating official **must** prepare a comprehensive written statement describing the employee’s deficiencies for all elements rated at the “Does Not Meet Fully Successful” level. Early identification and correction of poor performance is strongly recommended.

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3 Documenting Performance (Continued)

C Summary Ratings

A 5-level summary rating system summarizes the employee's overall performance and is calculated using the description on AD-435. The 5 summary levels are as follows.

- **“Outstanding”** when all appraisal units are rated “Exceeds Fully Successful”.
- **“Superior”** when more appraisal units are rated “Exceeds Fully Successful” than “Meets Fully Successful”, and no critical element is rated “Does Not Meet Fully Successful”.
- **“Fully Successful”** when as many or more appraisal units are rated “Meets Fully Successful” than “Exceeds Fully Successful”, and no critical element is rated “Does Not Meet Fully Successful”.
- **“Marginal”** when more appraisal units are rated “Does Not Meet Fully Successful” than “Exceeds Fully Successful”, and no critical element is rated “Does Not Meet Fully Successful”.
- **“Unacceptable”** when 1 or more critical elements are rated “Does Not Meet Fully Successful”.

Note: If either the “Marginal” or the “Unacceptable” level occurs, the rating official should contact their SPO for guidance.

D Due Date

EmpowHR processing or AD-435 completion shall be accomplished and distribution made:

- by COB November 30, 2008
- according to subparagraph 5 A.

E Rating of Record and Reduction-in-Force (RIF)

For:

- Federal employees, annual Ratings of Record are used to establish service credit and retention standing in the event of RIF's
- CO employees, best qualifications, skills, and abilities available to handle program responsibilities are used in the event of RIF's; **not** length of service.

Note: For CO employees, service computation dates are only used as a tiebreaker, **not** as a ranking factor. Annual ratings of record are **not** used in the event of RIF's.

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4 Reviewing Performance

A Rating Official Using EmpowHR Action

Rating officials **using EmpowHR** shall review the performance of their employees by:

- comparing the employee's performance of each element with the standards established in EmpowHR
- checking the appropriate rating level for each element
- if necessary, obtaining interim ratings from the employee's prior supervisors or detail supervisors. Rating official shall review and process in EmpowHR.

Note: For CED's, the rating official is the COC chairperson. Hard copies of CED performance plans entered in EmpowHR **must** be signed by the COC chairperson. After a meeting between COC, DD, and CED, DD may then enter the CED's summary appraisal in EmpowHR and print out a hard copy for COC chairperson's signature as supervisor. DD shall sign the hard copy as reviewing official, and CED shall sign the hard copy as employee. This will complete the official action on the hard copy. The review of summary ratings will be documented in the Executive Session of COC meeting minutes. Follow through with completing the appraisal process based on reports to set up in EmpowHR so that appraisal will transmit to NFC.

B Rating Official Not Using EmpowHR Action

Rating officials **not using EmpowHR** shall review the performance of their employees by:

- comparing the employee's performance of each element with the standards established on AD-435A and AD-435B
- checking the appropriate rating level for each element
- if necessary, obtaining interim ratings from the employee's prior supervisors
- reviewing and signing AD-435.

Note: Supervisory employees detailed from their positions of record before the end of the appraisal period shall:

- provide input to the incoming supervisor of record about an employee's performance
- include a recommended rating for each performance element.

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4 Reviewing Performance (Continued)

C Accountability for Performance Appraisals

Rating officials:

- shall ensure that the performance appraisal:
 - contains all elements
 - designates critical and noncritical elements
 - points are properly assigned, that is 2 points for critical elements and 1 point for noncritical elements
 - totals are added correctly
 - summary rating is properly designated
 - employee has checked (✓) “Yes” or “No” on AD-435, item 17
 - contains the required signatures
- **using EmpowHR**, shall ensure the correct boxes have been checked
- **not using EmpowHR**, shall ensure the required signatures are entered on AD-435.

D Providing Additional Documentation

Rating officials shall provide additional documentation to substantiate the rating for each element for each rating level given (such as, “Exceeds Fully Successful”, “Fully Successful”, and “Does Not Meet Fully Successful”):

- for offices **using EmpowHR**, enter an accomplishment statement in the “Reviewer Comments” block
- for offices **not using EmpowHR**, complete AD-435A, item 10 and AD-435B, item 10.

Note: If more space is needed than is provided on AD-435A and AD-435B, additional documentation may be provided on a piece of paper and attached to the rating.

For each element, the additional documentation should explain how the employee’s accomplishments match up against each of their standards.

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4 Reviewing Performance (Continued)

E Completing the Performance Appraisal

Rating officials **using EmpowHR** shall complete the performance appraisal according to the following.

Step	Action
1	Enter the appropriate rating information through “Manager Self-Service” portion of EmpowHR. Note: See http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/hrdapp?area=hrdwebapp&subject=landing&topic=landing for an example of the supervisor, reviewing official, and employee actions in EmpowHR.
2	Obtain the reviewing official’s approval. Note: It is strongly recommended that the discussion between the supervisor and the reviewer be on a face-to-face basis. Alternative methods of communication, such as teleconference, may be used if face-to-face communication is not possible.
3	Discuss the approved rating and basis for the rating with the employee.
4	Verify the employee has entered a check (✓) next to “Employee Viewed/Discussed Rating”.
5	Forward the performance plan and the appraisal according to subparagraph 5 A. Hard copies are not required, except for CED’s, but can be printed by the employee or supervisor whenever needed.

Rating officials **not using EmpowHR** shall complete AD-435 according to the following.

Step	Action
1	Complete AD-435 by transferring the performance elements and appropriate rating level information from AD-435A and AD-435B.
2	Obtain the reviewing official’s approval on AD-435.
3	Discuss the approved rating and basis for the rating with the employee.
4	Forward AD-435, AD-435A, and AD-435B according to subparagraph 5 A.

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4 Reviewing Performance (Continued)

F Reviewing Officials' Action

Reviewing officials:

- shall discuss the performance and rating of employees with rating officials
- shall change the ratings, if appropriate
- **using EmpowHR**, shall check (✓) the “Review Completed” box
- **not using EmpowHR**, shall sign AD-435, item 21 certifying approval of original or revised ratings
- shall return rating to the rating official for distribution according to subparagraph 5 A.

Note: In EmpowHR, the rating will flow electronically back to the supervisor.

G Employee Action

Employees:

- **using EmpowHR**, shall check (✓) the following:
 - “Employee Viewed/Discussed Rating” box
 - appropriate box for USDA regulations about employees’ responsibilities and conduct
- **not using EmpowHR**, shall:
 - complete AD-435, item 17
 - sign AD-435, item 18.

Note: If the employee refuses to sign/accept the rating, rating officials:

- **using EmpowHR**, shall indicate the refusal in the “Reviewer Comments” box
- **not using EmpowHR**, shall indicate the refusal on AD-435, item 18
- forward the rating according to subparagraph 5 A.

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5 Distributing Appraisals and Multiple Appraisals

A Distributing Performance Appraisals

The completed performance plan and performance appraisal shall be forwarded to the appropriate SPO by **November 30, 2008**. For offices:

- **using EmpowHR**, hard copies of documents are **not** required

Note: Employees and supervisors can print a copy of their performance appraisal at any time.

- **not using EmpowHR**, supervisors shall distribute the completed AD-435 according to the following.

Step	Action
1	Forward the original, completed copies of AD-435, AD-435A, and AD-435B to the appropriate SPO by COB November 30, 2008 .
2	Provide the employee with 1 copy of AD-435, AD-435A, and AD-435B.
3	Retain 1 copy of AD-435, AD-435A, and AD-435B for the supervisor's files.

B Multiple Appraisals

The following provides instructions for performance appraisals for employees detailed or temporarily promoted.

IF the employee...	THEN...
is detailed or has a temporary promotion to other positions in FSA or USDA for 90 calendar days or more	performance plans shall be established. The supervisor responsible for the detail or temporary promotion shall prepare the performance plan and communicate it, in writing, to the employee within 30 calendar days of the start of the assignment. At the end of the assignment, an interim assessment shall be prepared detailing the employee's accomplishments and forwarded to the supervisor of record. This shall be considered in deriving the employee's annual rating of record. Note: When employees are detailed outside USDA, the employing agency must make a reasonable effort to obtain information on the employee's accomplishments from the outside organization.

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5 Distributing Appraisals and Multiple Appraisals (Continued)

B Multiple Appraisals (Continued)

IF the employee...	THEN...
is detailed or has a temporary promotion to other positions in FSA or USDA for 90 calendar days or less	<p>performance plans are not required. However, a narrative document shall be prepared detailing the employee's accomplishments and forwarded to the supervisor of record. This shall be considered in deriving the employee's annual rating of record.</p> <p>Note: When employees are detailed outside USDA, the employing agency must make a reasonable effort to obtain information on the employee's accomplishments from the outside organization.</p>
has a change in supervisors during the appraisal period, including while on detail	each supervisor of 90 calendar days or more shall prepare an interim rating detailing the employee's accomplishments. This shall be considered in deriving the employee's annual Rating of Record.
has position changes during the appraisal period and has served for 90 calendar days or more in the position	the supervisor shall prepare an interim rating detailing the employee's accomplishments. This shall be considered in deriving the employee's annual Rating of Record.
has a transfer of rating (moves to another agency or Department) and has served for 90 calendar days or more in the position	the supervisor shall prepare an interim rating detailing the employee's accomplishments. This shall be sent to the gaining agency or Department to be considered in deriving the employee's annual Rating of Record.

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6 Consequences of Performance

A Ratings Based Awards

Details of ratings based awards will be issued in a forthcoming PM notice.

B Marginal Performance

If the employee's summary rating is "Marginal", the rating official **must** contact their SPO for guidance. The rating official shall:

- assist employee in improving less than "Fully Successful" performance in a noncritical element
- inform the employee as soon as the less than "Fully Successful" performance is apparent and give the employee a chance to demonstrate "Fully Successful" performance
- assist the employee by:
 - determining if training is needed
 - providing closer supervisory review of work
 - holding discussions and providing correction of work products
 - advising the employee when they have achieved "Fully Successful" performance.

A "Marginal" rating will result in the denial of a Within-Grade Increase.

C Unacceptable Performance

If the employee's summary rating is "Unacceptable", the rating official **must** contact their SPO for guidance. Rating officials shall:

- assist employee in improving less than "Fully Successful" performance in a critical element
- inform the employee in writing as soon as the less than "Fully Successful" performance is apparent and give a reasonable opportunity to demonstrate "Fully Successful" performance through an Opportunity To Improve (OTI).

OTI:

- provides formal notice to the employee that performance is unacceptable and provides the employee the opportunity to demonstrate "Fully Successful" performance
- may include activities like developmental assignments, structured employee assistance or counseling, formal or on-the-job training, and mentoring.

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6 Consequences of Performance (Continued)

C Unacceptable Performance (Continued)

Careful records **must** be kept of the assistance offered and results achieved under OTI. Rating officials should provide the following:

- notification of elements in which performance is unacceptable
- specific examples of the unacceptable performance
- performance requirements or standards that **must** be attained to demonstrate “Fully Successful” performance
- a reasonable opportunity period, usually at least 90 calendar days, to demonstrate “Fully Successful” performance on the elements at issue
- notice that the employee **must** improve to the “Fully Successful” level by the conclusion of the opportunity period and **must** sustain that level of performance for at least 1 year from the start of OTI.

Should an employee’s performance again become unacceptable in 1 or more of these critical elements, a performance-based adverse action or other alternative action may be proposed without the benefit of an additional OTI.

An “Unacceptable” rating will result in the denial of Within-Grade Increase.

C Prior Administrative Actions

Administrative actions initiated against employees whose performance is “Unacceptable” under 5 U.S.C. 4303, the Performance Management Plan, or another program in existence before the effective date of this program, shall continue to be processed consistent with that pre-established set of procedures and requirements.

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7 Contact Information

If there are any questions about rating employees, supervisors may contact the appropriate SPO according to the following.

IF located in...	THEN contact...
National Office	HRD, EPB at 1 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 202-401-0679• 202-401-0694• 202-205-9057 (TTY).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ITSD, Application Development Center• ITSD, Operations and Testing Center• HRD, Kansas City Human Resources Office (KCHRO)• FMD, Financial Services Center• KCCO• MSD, Kansas City Administrative Services Branch• APFO	KCHRO, Human Capital Management Section at either of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 816-823-4669• 800-735-2966 (TTY).
State or County Office	State Office Administrative Officer.

Example of Completed AD-435

The following is an example of AD-435 that shall be prepared for offices **not** using EmpowHR.

United States Department of Agriculture Performance Appraisal		1 Social Security No. 123-45-6789	2 Position Number	3 Pay Plan GS	4 Occup. Series 201
5 Name (Last, First, Middle Initial) Farmer, Rose E.		6 Grade/Step or Pay Level 7/3		7 Appraisal Period From 10-1-xx To 9-30-xx	
8 Official Position Title Program Technician		9 Organization Structure Code			
10 Duty Station Stafford, VA	11 Funding Unit	12 Agency Use		13 NFC Use	
Instructions:		Blocks 15B, 15C, 15D		Rate actual performance by entering 2 for critical elements and 1 for non-critical elements in appropriate column.	
Blocks 1 through 10	Completed by NFC; should be reviewed and, if necessary, corrected.	Blocks 15E, 15F, 15G		Enter total of each column.	
Block 11	Enter funding unit number.	Block 15H		Enter total from 15E, 15F and 15G.	
Block 14	Enter brief description of performance elements.	Block 16A		Check off the correct summary rating described in decision table (16B).	
Block 15A	Check performance elements identified as critical.	Blocks 17-22		Self-explanatory.	
14 Performance Elements		15A Critical Element (3)	15B Exceeds Fully Successful	15C Meets Fully Successful	15D Does Not Meet Fully Successful
1) Execution of Duties		x	2		
2) Customer Service		x	2		
3) Communications		x		2	
4) Resource Management			1		
5)					
6)					
7)					
8)					
9)					
10)					
16B Decision Table (check off Summary Rating in block 16A)			15E Exceeds 5	15F Meets 2	15G Does Not Meet Not Meet
Rating of Outstanding if 15E equals 15H. Rating of Unacceptable 1/ if any critical element is rated in 15D. Rating of Superior if no element is rated in 15D; 15F is greater than zero; and 15E is greater than 15F. Rating of Marginal 2/ if 15G is greater than 15E and no critical element is rated in 15D. Rating of Fully Successful if none of the above apply.			15H Enter total (15E + 15F + 15G = 15H) 7		
1/ Unsatisfactory for SES 2/ Minimally Satisfactory for SES			16A Summary Rating (See Decision Table in 16B)		
17 Employee (Check off appropriate box) <i>I have a copy of USDA and Agency regulations on employees responsibilities and conduct; I have discussed them with my supervisor and questions have been answered to my satisfaction.</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Superior <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Successful <input type="checkbox"/> Marginal 2/ <input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable 1/		
18 Employee's Signature		Date	If employee did not sign, state reason:		
19 Supervisor's Signature		Date	20 Reviewer's Signature		Date
21 Approving Official's or Funding Unit Manager's Signature (Optional)		Date	22 FOR SES ONLY	PLA to ES	Bonus Amount

This form electronically designed by USDA-Farm Service Agency (KC).

Form AD-435 (11/86)