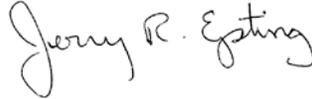


For: FFAS Employees, Except Foreign Service Employees

FY 2011 Mid-Year Performance Reviews

Approved by: Acting Deputy Administrator, Management



1 Mid-Year Performance Reviews

A Purpose

This notice reminds FFAS rating officials (except FAS Foreign Service) to complete an FY 2011 mid-year performance progress review for their employees no later than **June 9, 2011**.

Note: If an employee has not been under a performance plan for the minimum 90 calendar days by this date, conduct and document the mid-year review once 90 calendar days have elapsed.

For FSA only this notice also provides procedural guidance as it relates to the effect of adding a new performance element(s) or standards before the mid-year review process (for example, adding or modifying the "Mission Results" critical element to add the performance standards on Cultural Transformation and Diversity Roadmap according to Notice PM-2796, for supervisory positions).

B Forum for Discussion

The mid-year performance progress review provides a forum for rating officials and employees to:

- review and discuss performance elements and standards, and make any necessary changes
- gauge and discuss the employee's progress in meeting the performance expectations needed to achieve or surpass fully successful performance
- provide an avenue for employees to understand where and how to improve performance, if needed
- revisit or develop Individual Development Plans (IDP's).

Disposal Date December 1, 2011	Distribution All FSA, RMA, and FAS employees, except Foreign Service employees; State Offices relay to County Offices
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2 Responsibilities

A Rating Official Responsibilities

Rating officials are responsible for the following:

- monitoring performance during the rating period
- providing feedback to employees on their performance
- reviewing employee elements/standards and revise, if needed
- providing training and developmental opportunities, if available
- conducting at least 1 progress review at the midpoint of the appraisal cycle
- ensuring performance plans are established for new or transferred employees and conducting a timely progress review that allows for at minimum 90 calendar days of performance in cases where the plan was established months after the start of the performance cycle
- informing the employee of their level of performance as it relates to their performance elements and standards.

B Reviewing Official Responsibilities

Reviewing officials are responsible for the following:

- ensuring that rating officials carry out their performance management responsibilities
- assessing the rating official's performance in fulfilling these responsibilities.

C Employee Responsibilities

Employees are responsible for the following:

- participating in discussions and documentation of their progress reviews
- ensuring that they have a clear understanding of their performance expectations and how performance relates to the mission of the organization, and requesting clarification if necessary
- seeking performance feedback from their rating official and internal and external customers, as appropriate
- taking personal responsibility for their training and development.

Notice PM-2804

3 Conducting Performance Reviews

A Mid-Year Performance Reviews

Rating officials should prepare for the mid-year review process by preparing talking points that are applicable to each individual employee and gathering any samples or highlighting examples of work products in need of improvement. Rating officials shall schedule individual meetings with each employee under his or her supervision to conduct mid-year progress review discussions. Exhibits 1 through 3 provide additional guidance for supervisors on preparing for and conducting the midyear progress review and offering feedback to employees. All mid-year reviews should be completed between the 5th and 8th month of a 12-month performance cycle. Accordingly, by no later than **June 9, 2011**, supervisors are required to conduct a mid-year progress review with each of their employees.

B Special Note About Changes to Performance Plans

If a rating official needs to or plans to make any changes to a 2011 Performance Plan, the change(s) **must** be made to the Performance Plan in EmpowHR before initiating the progress review in EmpowHR. This guidance is particularly relevant for rating officials of supervisory employees who were required to include the Cultural Transformation and Workforce Diversity Road Map standards under the critical "Mission Results" performance element as mandated by Notice PM-2796.

A mid-year review should be conducted for any elements and standards that are currently in place and did not change or were not added within the past 90 calendar days. If a rating official makes changes to the performance objectives or corresponding standards within an element, employees must be given the opportunity to perform under the modified standards for at least 90 calendar days before they can be rated against the modification. The 90-calendar-day period does not apply if changes were made in alignment and linkage to enhance the existing performance plan and with no changes to the existing performance standards. Changes can be made to the performance standards for this performance appraisal period until June 30, 2011, for employees to receive their summary rating for the performance appraisal period ending on September 30, 2011. The employee must be informed of all revisions made to the employee's performance plan.

C Other Special Circumstances

If there has been a change in rating official since the performance plan was established, the new rating official shall not conduct the performance review until at least 90 calendar days has passed. If there has been no rating official of at least 90 calendar days, the reviewing official shall conduct the review.

Notice PM-2804

3 Conducting Performance Reviews (Continued)

D Documenting Mid-Year Performance Reviews in EmpowHR

Rating officials must document in EmpowHR that the FY 2011 performance mid-year progress review was conducted for each employee. Progress reviews are only to be conducted and entered into EmpowHR 90 calendar days after the creation of the performance plan. Although, at the present time, the EmpowHR system will allow supervisors to finalize a plan and then enter a progress review, this should only be done in instances when a hard copy performance plan has already been established and in place for the required 90 calendar day period and the action is being taken to data load the established plan into EmpowHR.

Note: RMA supervisors who created draft plans in EmpowHR and printed out a hard copy for employees to sign as the official copy should now finalize the draft that has been in place for the required 90 calendar days and enter the final plan and the progress review in the EmpowHR system.

Rating officials shall follow these steps to enter a mid-year progress review into EmpowHR.

Step	Action
1	Supervisor signs onto EmpowHR and selects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Manager Self Service" • "Tasks" • "Performance" • "Progress Review". <p>The names of all of the supervisor's employees will be displayed.</p>
2	Click on "New Review" next to the employee's name to enter the FY 2011 mid-year review.
3	Click "Q" next to the "Review Period From" box to select a value. After selecting the beginning date of the current rating period, click the "Add" button. The employee's "Progress Review" tab will be displayed.
4	Select the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Elements and Standards" tab • "View All" to review all elements • "Progress Review" tab.
5	Enter comments in the "Reviewer Comments" box and click "Save".

Rating officials may view the step-by-step process for documenting the mid-year/progress review in EmpowHR by visiting the website <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/hrdapp?area=hrdwebapp&subject=landing&topic=emp> and scroll down to Mid-Year Review for an example of how to document a performance review in EmpowHR.

Reminder: Once a mid-year/progress review is entered against the FY 2011 Performance Plan, rating officials will not be able to make any revisions to the FY 2011 Performance Plan. Performance Plans in EmpowHR become "locked" once any type of review (progress or summary rating) is approved/concurred. Therefore, make all required revisions to the FY 2011 Performance Plans, as stated in Notice PM-2796, **before** saving a mid-year/progress review in EmpowHR.

Notice PM-2804

3 Conducting Performance Reviews (Continued)

E Periodic Optional Performance Reviews

Even though only a mid-year performance review is required, it is in the best interest of the rating official and employee to periodically hold performance discussions. An employee may request a meeting for this review. Periodic performance reviews with the employee will:

- provide regular feedback
- keep the channels of communication open
- assist in identifying strengths and weaknesses
- help avoid an unexpected performance rating at the end of the appraisal period.

4 Addressing Poor Performance

A Below Fully Successful Level (or Does Not Meet) Mid Year Reviews

The mid-year performance review provides opportunity for the supervisor to convey feedback and have a necessary discussion with an employee whose performance is determined to be less than fully successful or at a “Does Not Meet” level of performance. Supervisors are encouraged to consult with their Servicing Personnel Office (or the Employee/Labor Relations and Benefits Branch (ELRBB), which ever applies) immediately upon such a determination particularly if the element is critical. The assistance and guidance provided by SPO or ELRBB will be timely and useful in helping the rating official navigate the process of dealing with a poor performer. If the employee is performing at the "Does Not Meet" level in a critical element, the rating official **must** contact their SPO for guidance.

Note: Any actions taken to address marginal or unacceptable performance **must** be done in consultation with the SPO and/or the State Office Administrative Officer.

5 Additional Information and Contacts

A Additional Information

Additional performance management information can be found on the performance management web page at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/hrdapp?area=home&subject=erpm&topic=prm>.

In addition, an 18-minute video is available from the Department, produced by the USDA, Food Safety and Inspection Service, on how to and how not to conduct a performance review. This video can be found at http://www.da.usda.gov/hrsd/perform_mgmt.htm; scroll down to “Great Reviews - How to Conduct Effective Mid-Year Reviews”.

Notice PM-2804

5 Additional Information and Contacts (Continued)

B Contacts

If there are any questions about mid-year performance reviews, rating officials and employees may contact the appropriate SPO according to this table.

IF located in...	THEN contact...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FSA Washington, DC• FSA APFO• FSA Kansas City or St. Louis• RMA• FAS	HRD, Employee Labor Relations and Benefits Branch at the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 202-401-0687• 202-205-9057 (TTY).
FSA State or County Office	State Office Administrative Officer.

Steps for Preparing Mid-Year Progress Reviews

1. Review documentation you have about the employee's performance.

You should have been keeping good documentation (e.g., work samples, logs, records, customer praises or complaints and other documentation) throughout the performance period. Now look at it to assess how the employee is performing and meeting expectations. Follow these simple guidelines:

- Keep your observations of performance objective (focused on behavior), not subjective.
- Have concrete examples to support your assessment.
- Don't hold the employee accountable for factors beyond his or her control; for example, changes in workload, priorities, duties, and opportunities may affect employee performance.

2. Compare current performance with expectations.

Compare your observations about the employee's current performance with the measurable standards in his or her performance plan. Identify areas of success and areas of concern.

3. Assess developmental opportunities.

Has the employee completed developmental opportunities that have affected performance? Determine if additional opportunities are needed, based on your concerns.

4. Help the employee prepare for the meeting.

- Agree on a specific time and place for the discussion.
- Explain the purpose of the meeting and what will be discussed.
- Make sure the employee has a copy of his or her performance plan.
- Suggest that the employee bring additional work samples that highlight his or her performance.
- Ask the employee to think about his or her areas of strength and areas for development.

5. Document the employee's accomplishments in a written narrative.

The narrative should describe the employee's accomplishments for each element. The narrative should be brief and specific and address the breadth, score, and/or impact of the employee's achievements.

Steps for Conducting Mid-Year Progress Reviews

1. Open the meeting.

- Establish a relaxed, non-threatening environment in which the employee feels secure and respected.
- Hold the meeting in "neutral territory" and provide a comfortable environment.
- Eliminate distractions, such as ringing phones, email, pagers, etc.
- Establish a positive tone when you greet the employee and welcome him or her to the discussion.
- Review the meeting's goal and in general what you will discuss.

2. Discuss accomplishments and expectations.

- Provide a general summary of the employee's performance.
- Discuss areas of success and areas of concern, in light of expectations.
- Suggest further developmental opportunities.
- Note changes to the performance plan.

3. Close the meeting.

- Summarize what has been discussed and agreed on: ask the employee for input.
- Confirm any follow-up actions.
- Express commitment to the employee's growth and success.
- Ensure that all the employee's concerns have been addressed.
- Ask the employee to acknowledge in EmpowHR that the mid-year review discussion occurred.

4. Complete any follow-up activities.

Tips for Giving Effective Feedback

√ Effective feedback meets the following four characteristics:

- Descriptive - Feedback should be specific, not general, and provide measurable and observable details.
- Objective - Feedback should be based on facts, not your beliefs, assumptions, or hearsay. It should be provided in accordance with a known standard, criterion, or performance expectation.
- Timely - Feedback should be given as close to the performance as possible so that it is meaningful and can be integrated into future performance.
- Professionally delivered - Feedback should be delivered in a manner where both the words you say and the way you say them (tone of voice, body language) are professional.

√ Involve the employee in the feedback process and ask the employee to prepare a list of accomplishments.

√ Request feedback from the employee's customers, coworkers, colleagues or other managers.

√ Feedback should be a combination of both positive and constructive feedback. Start the conversation stating something the employee does well.

- Positive feedback involves telling your employee about good performance. Be descriptive and objective in describing the behavior. Tell the employee why you liked it and why it is important. When possible, tie the performance to the Agency's goals. *Example: "You solved that database migration problem very quickly this morning. That really got prevented disruptions to the system's operations."*
- Constructive feedback alerts an employee to an area in which his performance could improve. When providing constructive feedback, be sure to describe the following:
 - Situation - Describe the situation in which the performance occurred. Give your perspective on where and when the performance occurred. *Example: "This morning at the meeting when we were discussing the new project..."*
 - Behavior - Describe the behavior that you observed or heard. Focus on the employee's actions, not the person. *Example: "This morning at the meeting when we were discussing the new project, you may not have realized it, but you interrupted me several times..."*
 - Impact - Describe the impact the performance had on you, others and/or the Agency. Be specific and objective about the impact by providing your actual observations. Link the impact of the employee's performance to expected standards. *Example: "This morning at the meeting when we were discussing the new project, you may not have realized it, but you interrupted me several times. These interruptions confused the staff and required numerous clarifications which took away time slated to address additional key items of concern."*

Tips for Giving Effective Feedback (Continued)

- Next Steps - Describe specific changes in behavior that you expect in a specific period of time and follow up as scheduled. Ask the employee's help in solving the problem.
Example: "While your participation is important, I'd like for you to refrain from interrupting speakers. When others are speaking, you should indicate to the speaker that you have something to say and wait until the speaker acknowledges you. Let's schedule a time to get back together next Tuesday to see how this process works."

√ **Check to make sure the employee understood by asking a question or observing changed behavior.**

√ **End the meeting on a positive note.**