

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

Foreign Agricultural Service

Washington, DC 20250

**Notice PM-2900**

**For:** FAS Employees

**FAS Civil Service Performance Management Program**

**Approved by:** FAS Administrator



**1 Overview**

**A Background**

The foundation for strategic planning and performance measurement in the Federal Government is the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA), the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, and the Chief Human Capital Officers Act of 2002 (CHCO). A results-oriented performance management system is required in all agencies. The Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework, a derivative of the CHCO Act, calls for a Performance Management Program that aligns employee performance plans with organizational goals, focuses employees on achieving results, and requires employee performance plans (documented on forms AD-435A and AD-435B) to include clear performance elements (expectations) with measurable performance standards.

For bargaining unit members, the negotiated American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) collective bargaining agreement (CBA) governs FAS procedures about performance appraisal (Article 24) and unacceptable performance (Article 26). The articles are available at <http://sharepoint.fas.usda.gov/fasadmin/AFSCME/Collective%20Bargaining%20Agreement/Forms/AllItems.aspx>.

**B Purpose**

This notice announces FY 2014 FAS Civil Service Performance Management Program and introduces modifications to the FAS Civil Service Performance Management Program.

The following are key features revised for the FY 2014 performance cycle:

- time requirements on reviews for employees detailed or temporarily promoted changed from 90 calendar days to 60 calendar days
- new supervisors performance management training requirements

Disposal Date	Distribution
November 1, 2014 11-22-13	All FAS Employees

## 1 Overview (Continued)

### B Purpose (Continued)

- required performance management training to be automatically added to employee course lists in AgLearn
- performance management accountability guidelines
- required data reporting requirements and timeframes.

### C Authorities

The FAS **Civil Service** Performance Management Program is based on the following:

- 5 U.S.C. Chapter 43
- 5 CFR Part 430
- USDA Performance Management Departmental Regulation 4040-430 (rev. 2013)
- CBA between FAS and AFSCME.

### D Coverage

The FAS Civil Service Performance Management Program applies to all FAS employees, including Schedule B employees and re-employed annuitants, **except** for individuals:

- in the Senior Executive Service (SES) or Senior Foreign Service (SFS)
- in the Foreign Service
- for which employment is not reasonably expected to exceed the minimum appraisal period (90 calendar days) in a consecutive 12-month period
- excluded from coverage by statute or by OPM regulation.

**Note:** Contractors are **not** covered.

### E Effective Date

The FY 2014 FAS Performance Management Program was effective **October 1, 2013**.

**1 Overview (Continued)**

**F Action**

All supervisors shall ensure that all of their employees' AD-435A's and AD-435B's comply with the provisions of this notice. Any changes that need to be made to bring an employee's AD-435A and AD-435B into compliance with this notice should be completed **no later than November 30, 2013**.

Nothing in this notice is intended to conflict with terms and conditions contained set forth in applicable CBA's for FAS employees represented by labor organizations. Where the contents of this notice comports with existing language, should a question arise over applying any provision of this notice as it relates to a CBA provision, the supervisor should contact his or her servicing Employee/Labor Relations Specialist for guidance.

**2 Key 2014 Performance Management Program Modifications**

**A Computation of Performance Appraisal Rating**

To place more weight on the actual work that employees are performing, the "**Mission Results**" or "**Execution of Duties**" element shall be worth 4 appraisal points. For supervisors, the "Supervision or Leadership/Management" element shall be also worth 4 appraisal points.

**B Details and Temporary Promotions, Position Changes in Supervisors, Transfers, and Resignations**

Temporary promotions and details of:

- less than 60 calendar days do not require formal plans, but do require informal documented expectations and an informal advisory rating
- more than 60 calendar days require a plan that includes at least 1 results-oriented element (temporary promotions and details of more than 60 calendar days to supervisory positions also requires the "Supervisory Performance" element).

Interim ratings are required when either an employee changes positions or the performance plan is changed, if the employee was under a performance plan in the original assignment for at least 60 calendar days.

When a supervisor changes position, he or she must provide interim ratings for the previous subordinate employees, if they were on performance plans at least 60 calendar days before the change.

## 2 Key 2014 Performance Management Program Modifications (Continued)

### C Performance Management Training

New supervisors must receive Performance Management training within 3 months of entering the new position, and may not prepare ratings of record until the training is completed.

Required training courses for both supervisory and nonsupervisory employees shall be automatically assigned by Human Resources Division (HRD) in AgLearn to the employee's list of courses at the start of the performance management cycle, October 1.

### D Required Data Reporting

During the performance cycle, FAS is required to attain, and report to the Department, 100 percent completion rates on the following for eligible FAS employees. All supervisors/reviewers shall ensure:

- 100 percent completion of all FY 2013 performance appraisals by **November 30, 2013**
- reporting of 100 percent completion of all FY 2014 performance plans by **November 30, 2013**
- that performance plans are provided to the employee (as demonstrated by employee signature) at the beginning of the rating period or **within 30 calendar days**
- reporting of 100 percent completion of all FY 2014 Mid-Year progress reviews by **April 30, 2014**.

**Note:** A change in Departmental regulation requires a formal progress review for the performance period by at least 180 calendar days.

## 3 Responsibilities

### A Administrator Responsibilities

The Administrator is responsible for the following:

- monitoring program compliance with applicable laws and regulations, Department policies, and CBA's
- ensuring program compliance with policy and program direction and administration
- developing and communicating FAS's mission, strategic goals, and objectives to assist supervisors and managers in developing employee AD-435A's and AD-435B's.

### **3 Responsibilities (Continued)**

#### **B Rating Official Responsibilities**

Rating officials are responsible for the following:

- determining and communicating the appropriate FAS and USDA mission, goals, objectives, priorities, and relative performance standards and measures to employees
- communicating performance expectations clearly and holding employees responsible by establishing individual AD-435A's and AD-435B's and creating a performance culture and environment that promotes a high performing work unit
- engaging the employee in the process of establishing and documenting AD-435A's and AD-435B's and providing a written copy of AD-435A's and AD-435B's at the beginning of each rating period or no later than 30 calendar days after the beginning of each rating period or assignment of an employee to a position, or when AD-435A's and AD-435B's are revised during the rating period
- ensuring that each employee's AD-435A and AD-435B's have at least 1 critical element that is aligned to the mission, goals, and outcomes of FAS and USDA
- monitoring performance during the rating period, including completing and documenting a Mid-Year performance review that notes any areas for improvement over the remainder of the rating period
- providing feedback to employees on their performance, supporting the development of employees, and conducting 1 or more progress reviews as provided in this notice
- preparing performance ratings in a timely manner, making meaningful distinctions among employees based on performance, fostering and rewarding excellent performance
- addressing poor performance
- documenting completed performance management training courses and dates on AD-435's.

#### **C Reviewing Officials' Responsibilities**

Reviewing officials are responsible for the following:

- managing individual and organizational performance and creating a work culture and environment that promotes a high-performing work unit
- implementing the principles, policies, procedures, and requirements of the Performance Management Program within their span of control

### **3 Responsibilities (Continued)**

#### **C Reviewing Officials' Responsibilities (Continued)**

- ensuring that rating officials carry out their performance management responsibilities and assessing the rating official's performance in fulfilling these responsibilities
- reviewing and approving AD-435A's and AD-435B's and ratings of their subordinate rating officials for consistency, fairness, objectivity, and completeness and ensuring that AD-435A's and AD-435B's reflect the larger organization's overall needs and goals
- ensuring transparency, fairness, and consistency in consideration for awards within their organization.

#### **D Employees' Responsibilities**

Employees are responsible for the following:

- participating in discussions with their rating official about the development of performance elements, standards, and measures; individual development plans (IDP's); progress reviews; summary ratings; and documenting their AD-435A and AD-435B's
- ensuring that they have a clear understanding of their performance expectations, how performance relates to the mission of the organization, and requesting clarification if necessary
- taking responsibility to continuously improve performance, identifying and agreeing with the rating official on appropriate professional development activities, supporting team endeavors, developing professionally, and performing at their full potential
- identifying work problems and cooperating with rating officials to resolve them
- seeking performance feedback from their rating official and internal and external customers, as appropriate.

#### **E FFAS's Human Resources Division (HRD) Responsibilities**

FFAS's HRD Director is responsible for the following:

- overseeing the Performance Management Program and its results
- periodically evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of the Performance Management Program.

### 3 Responsibilities (Continued)

#### F Servicing Personnel Office (SPO)

SPO's are responsible for the following:

- providing technical and operational support and advice to the rating and reviewing officials in administering the Performance Management Program in a manner consistent with applicable laws, rules, and regulations
- ensuring that AD-435A's and AD-435B's and ratings of record are maintained in HRD according to 5 CFR Parts 293 and 297
- providing training on the Performance Management Program to all employees.

### 4 Establishing AD-435A's and AD-435B's

#### A Rating Period and Documentation

The rating period starts October 1 of each year and ends September 30 of the following year. AD-435A's and AD-435B's should be:

- established within 30 calendar days of the start of the rating period or the issuance date of this notice
- established within 30 calendar days of an employee's assignment to a position
- reviewed and, if necessary, amended each time a work assignment changes significantly up to 90 calendar days before the end of the rating period.

Employees must be informed of and are encouraged to provide input when changes are made to their performance plan, documented on AD-435A and AD-435B. Any changes should be initialed on AD-435A by the supervisor and employee.

**Notes:** To obtain fillable AD-435A and AD-435B, go to FFAS Employee Forms/Publications Online Website at <http://fsaintranet.sc.egov.usda.gov/dps/services/downloadhandler.ashx?fileid=632>.

Contact Joseph Migyanka, FAS, by telephone at 202-702-0577, if any difficulties with AD-435's.

**5 FY 2014 Performance Cycle**

**A Required or Mandatory Elements and Standards**

The following subparagraphs provide a summary of the required or mandatory elements and standards for the FY 2014 performance cycle.

**B Element Criteria**

Number of elements in appraisals for nonsupervisory employees is 4 to 7. Rating officials shall establish at least 4, but no more than 7, performance elements.

**Note:** For nonsupervisors, at least 2 elements **must** be critical and 1 element **must** be noncritical.

The number of elements in appraisals for supervisors/managers is 5 to 7.

**Note:** For supervisors/managers, at least 3 elements **must** be critical and 2 elements **must** be noncritical.

Each element must include a minimum of 3 standards.

Exhibit 1 provides a mandatory, noninclusive list of suggested elements.

**C Mandatory and Critical Elements for Supervisors/Managers**

“Mission Results”, or an element aligned with FAS goals, is **mandatory**.

**Mandatory** and **critical** elements include the following:

- “Civil Rights, EEO (CR/EEO), Diversity, and Inclusion” (Department definition)
- “Enhanced Customer Service”
- “Supervision”.

**D Mandatory and Critical Elements for Nonsupervisory Employees**

**Mandatory** and **critical** elements include the following:

- “CR/EEO, Diversity, and Inclusion” (Department definition)
- “Enhanced Customer Service”.



**5 FY 2014 Performance Cycle (Continued)**

**E Mandatory Standards for Supervisors/Managers**

Mandatory standards include the following:

- Diversity Roadmap (under “CR/EEO, Diversity, and Inclusion” element)
- Employee and Customer Perspective (under “Supervision” and “Enhanced Customer Service” element)
- Cultural Transformation standard (under “Supervision” element)
- Recruitment and Hiring (under “Supervision” element)
- Retention and Succession Planning (under “Supervision” element)
- Performance Management (under “Supervision” element)
- Health and Safety (under “Enhanced Customer Service” element)
- Personally Identifiable Information (PII) (under “Enhanced Customer Service” element).

**Note:** Additional guidance will be issued in subsequent notices to ensure alignment with new Department regulations about development and training for supervisors.

**F Mandatory Standards for Nonsupervisors**

Mandatory standards include the following:

- Health and Safety (under “Enhanced Customer Service” element)
- PII (under “Enhanced Customer Service” element).

**G Mandatory Element: “CR/EEO, Diversity, and Inclusion”**

The following language **must** be built into the **element** description for:

- **supervisors/managers:**  
  
“Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued and leveraged to achieve the vision and mission of the organization through both personal leadership and appropriate managerial action. Performs in a nondiscriminatory manner that demonstrates behaviors that conform to civil rights and EEO laws, regulations, and policies, including fairness, cooperation, and respect towards employees and customers.”

5 FY 2014 Performance Cycle (Continued)

G Mandatory Element: “CR/EEO, Diversity, and Inclusion” (Continued)

- nonsupervisors:

“Performs assignments in a manner that demonstrates fairness, cooperation, and respect toward employees and customers. Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued. Leverages diversity to achieve the vision and mission of the organization. Supports and maintains an environment that is free of unlawful discrimination and reprisal.”

H Mandatory Element: “Enhanced Customer Service”

The following language **must** be built into the **element** description for:

- supervisors/managers

“Conducts on-going reviews and monitors organizational performance to achieve effective customer service results. Actively gathers feedback from customers to identify their needs and expectations. Ensures staff provides responses to organizational leadership, the public, internal and external customers that are prompt, professional, reliable, and address the individual customer’s circumstances. Ensures the delivery of high quality products, services, and solutions. Delegates issues when appropriate and ensures a final response or completion for the customer. Follows up with customers on solutions, products, and services to provide quality service. Recommends ways to improve performance using available customer satisfaction or trend data. Demonstrates the importance of customer service as a critical component of FAS’s mission.”

- nonsupervisors

“Routinely displays courteous and tactful behavior. Projects a positive and professional image of USDA. Provides advice that is timely, responsive, and accurate. Maintains appropriate rapport with internal and external customers. Develops and establishes working relationships with external organizations as required. Keeps supervisor and/or team leader informed of difficult and/or controversial issues and unique problems. Takes action to effectively solve problems before they have an adverse impact on the organization or other employees.”

**5 FY 2014 Performance Cycle (Continued)**

**I Mandatory Element: “Supervision”**

The following language **must** be built into the **element** description for **supervisors/managers**:

“Work is assigned in a fair and effective manner. Technical guidance to subordinate staff is given timely. Performance management is implemented in accordance with procedure. Issues, concerns, or problems are handled promptly and fairly. To the extent possible, staff is properly trained and complies with occupational health and safety programs. Management decisions are supported and implemented within appropriate timeframes.”

**J Mandatory Element: “Mission Results”**

The following language **must** be built into the **element** description for **supervisors/managers**:

“Demonstrates support for FAS strategic goals and initiatives within own organizational unit and contributes to the achievement of overall FAS initiatives. Stresses accountability and continuous improvement to employees/team members, makes timely and effective decisions, and produces results through strategic thinking and decisive action. Ensures a high degree of responsiveness to management, the public, and internal and external customers. Continually reviews, monitors, and strives to improve organizational performance to achieve FAS mission results.”

**6 Standards**

**A Standards Criteria**

For each element, there must be at least 3 written standards for measuring performance of the element. Standards must be observable, measurable, and attainable by the employee. Standards need only be written at the “Meets Fully Successful” level in AD-435A and AD-435B’s. However, rating officials should be prepared to explain performance at the “Does Not Meet Fully Successful” and “Exceeds Fully Successful” levels. Do not include phrases like “other duties as assigned.”

**B Mandatory Standard: CR/EEO, Diversity, and Inclusion**

The following language **must** be included as a **standard** for **supervisors/managers**:

“Supports the Secretary’s initiative for USDA Diversity Recruitment Roadmap by expanding upon mission-specific activities and timelines to ensure diversity recruitment program success and leadership accountability.”

**6 Standards (Continued)**

**C Mandatory Standard: Enhanced Customer Service**

The following language **must** be included as a **standard** for:

- **supervisors/managers:**
  - “Internal and external stakeholder needs and expectations are considered in making decisions, devising solutions, and resolving conflicts. Those consistent with corporate priorities are included in plans and commitments, and are monitored for success in achieving satisfactory results.
  - Feedback from customers indicates satisfaction with the quality of service delivered, including that the service was provided in a collaborative manner and met the customer’s needs; and the quantity and quality of information delivered, including that the information provided increased the customer’s understanding of FAS’s programs.
  - Safety: Adheres to Safety and Occupational Health practices and procedures in order to promote and maintain a safe and healthful work environment for all employees. Upon report of unsafe/unhealthful condition, notifies appropriate office within 48 hours, and follows up and/or takes appropriate action until condition is resolved.
  - PII: Demonstrates an understanding of the Privacy Act and applies the Act correctly when exercising controls and safeguards to preserve the integrity and confidentiality of materials containing Personally Identifiable Information (PII). Ensures that PII is protected at all times, including when being transferred, in accordance with FAS policy. In addition, ensures all employees supervised comply with this standard. Reports any violations to supervisor within 4 hours of becoming aware of a problem.”
- **nonsupervisors:**
  - “Safety: Demonstrates a basic understanding of FAS’s Safety and Health Program. Complies with safety and health rules and regulations that apply to all employees. Ensures all reports of unsafe and unhealthful conditions are reported to supervisor or designated official within 48 hours.
  - PII: Demonstrates an understanding of the Privacy Act and applies the Act correctly when exercising controls and safeguards to preserve the integrity and confidentiality of materials containing Personally Identifiable Information (PII). Ensures that PII is protected at all times, including when being transferred, in accordance with FAS policy. Reports any violations to supervisor within 4 hours of becoming aware of a problem.”

**6 Standards (Continued)**

**D Mandatory Standard: Supervision**

The following language **must** be included as a **standard** for **supervisors/managers**:

- Performance Management standard:

“The supervisor establishes subordinate employee AD-435A’s and AD-435B’s within established timeframes and that align with FAS and Departmental goals and objectives. Communicates to employees how their work supports FAS’s mission and strategic plan/initiatives. Employee AD-435A’s and AD-435B’s contain clear, results-focused measures, and the supervisor provides accurate and timely feedback to determine progress and success in meeting expectations:

- The supervisor completes AD-435A’s and AD-435B’s, progress reviews, and appraisals of subordinate employees by the due dates established by the Department or FAS. AD-435A’s and AD-435B’s for each employee must include at least 1 element that is traceable to FAS’s goals and objectives (that is, “Mission Results” performance element).
- Provides ongoing feedback and coaching as demonstrated through performance feedback sessions as evidenced by 100 percent of employees receiving at least 1 feedback session at the midpoint of the rating period.
- Ensures appropriate action is taken to address performance problems in a manner that supports organizational goals and objectives.
- Ensures subordinate managers and supervisors adhere to FAS’s performance management policy with regard to performance appraisal and employee recognition.
- Performance and employee feedback data is used as an indicator of compliance and general satisfaction or needed improvement with regard to the planning, developing, monitoring, rating, and rewarding of performance. AD-435A’s and AD-435B’s shall be in place within 30 calendar days of the beginning of the appraisal period. Mid-Year reviews are conducted according to FAS guidelines. Ratings are accurate and issued within 30 calendar days of the end of the appraisal period.”

**6 Standards (Continued)**

**D Mandatory Standard: Supervision (Continued)**

- Employee and Customer Perspective standard:
  - “Supports the Secretary’s initiative for Cultural Transformation by continually examining program delivery and surveying the workforce and/or stakeholders/customers. Creates an environment for inclusion, exceptional performance, effective leadership, and works to eliminate any barriers to operational and service excellence. Examines workforce and workplace processes and flexibilities and implements improvements where needed.
  - Seeks employee feedback to identify needs and expectations and considers employee perspective when making decisions affecting employees to develop a well-informed staff who are effective and efficient implementers of management decisions.
  - Feedback from staff indicates that they understand FAS’s direction, the goals and their role in achieving these goals; understand what is expected of them; were involved in developing their AD-435A’s and AD-435B’s; understand how well they are performing and where they need to improve; have AD-435A’s and AD-435B’s that accurately reflect their performance measures; have the necessary tools and resources to accomplish their work; where they do not have what they need, they understand why; have the skills and knowledge they need to do their jobs, or a plan to obtain them; are acknowledged and appreciated for good performance.”

**6 Standards (Continued)**

**D Mandatory Standard: Supervision (Continued)**

- Workforce Recruitment, Hiring, Retention, and Succession Planning standards:
  - Recruitment and Hiring standard (applies to supervisors with hiring authority).
    - “Recruits and selects new employees based on organizational goals, budget considerations, and staffing needs. When filling a position, the supervisor engages and collaborates with HRD to ensure skills required for the job are identified, posting of the job vacancy is accurate, and assists in identifying contacts for diverse locations or organizations for recruiting purposes. Participates as needed with HRD in the proper screening of applications and appropriate categorization of applicants based on qualifications.
    - Utilizes flexible hiring authorities when filling a vacancy (for example: targeted disabilities, student employment, direct hire, appointing veterans, etc.) to ensure diversity in recruitment and hiring.”
  - Retention and Succession Planning standard (applies to all supervisors).
    - “Successfully transitions new hires into the position by promptly providing an orientation into the workforce and establishing performance elements and standards. Supervisor provides ongoing feedback and coaching, and makes appropriate use of the probationary period to assess the new hire’s ability to perform in the position.
    - Implements retention strategies that focus on key internal processes (for example: work environment, employee orientation, executing Individual Development Plans for all employees--subject to bargaining obligations, coaching, development, and mentoring, etc.) that promotes employee growth, supports the health of the workforce, and drive the future success of the organization’s people and infrastructure.
    - Assesses current workforce plans to ensure they are up-to-date in order to meet Performance Management Program/FAS goals and objectives. Works with senior management officials and HRD to comply with the workforce planning process as described in the Department’s position management policy.”

## 7 Cascading Alignment and Performance

### A AD-435A and AD-435B Alignment

AD-435A and AD-435B alignment is an ongoing process, and offices **must** continue this process into FY 2014 and beyond. Supervisors must develop AD-435A's and AD-435B's for their employees that identify clear and measurable tasks and results that are aligned to organizational goals. Supervisors and managers are encouraged to align more than 1 element, where possible. Alignment should be clear and transparent so that employees can see how their AD-435A's and AD-435B's support organizational goal achievement. Merely including a generic statement in AD-435A's and AD-435B's that employees support organizational goals is **not** adequate for communicating alignment. Simply restating organizational goals without also 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 AD-435A's and AD-435B's of the chain of responsibility (SES/SFS member, to manager, to supervisor) to the front-line employee.

In developing AD-435A's and AD-435B's, supervisors shall:

- ensure that all employees are aware of FAS's and USDA's current Strategic Plan or organizational goals
- communicate how organizational goals are linked and cascaded to individual performance, and how the employee's accomplishments support organizational goals within their organizations, through:
  - staff meetings
  - individual or team meetings
  - electronic and internal correspondence
- develop AD-435A's and AD-435B's that include at least 2 critical elements each with 3 standards that identify clear and measurable (quality, quantity, cost, and/or timely) tasks and expected results that are aligned to organizational goals.

Aligned standards should indicate the USDA and FAS goal and objective title or number. The language in the element should explain which **organizational goal and objective** the element aligns with. For example, "For the Agency to achieve its goal of completing X during FY 2014, the employee must complete an average of Y each month, with Y meeting the requirements outlined in the Agency operating Procedures."



## 7 Cascading Alignment and Performance (Continued)

### B Results

Each element in AD-435A's and AD-435B's must include language that holds the employee accountable for achieving expected results. This must be shown by explaining the results gained by the employee achieving his or her standards.

**Example:** Review 90 percent to 100 percent of SPS/TBT notifications to ensure foreign regulations comply with World Trade Organization agreements and, if appropriate, coordinate official U.S. comments within prescribed timeframe. **The result is** U.S. producers, exporters, and consumers receive the full economic benefit of international trade agreements and rules.

Results must be appropriate to the employee's level of responsibility.

### C Balanced, Credible Measures

All AD-435A's and AD-435B's must include balanced, credible measures.

In addition to measuring expected results, AD-435A's and AD-435B's must include appropriate measures, such as:

- quality, quantity, timeliness, and/or cost-effectiveness
- 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
- foster continual improvement in productivity.

## 8 Performance Management Training

### A Training

Training is critical to an effective performance management program. New supervisors must receive Performance Management training within 3 months of entering the new position and may not prepare ratings of record until after the training. Required training courses for both supervisory and nonsupervisory employees shall be automatically assigned by HRD in AgLearn to the employee's list of courses at the start of the performance management cycle. All supervisors, managers, and employees must know how the performance management program operates. Training courses are available for both supervisory and nonsupervisory employees in AgLearn.

## 8 Performance Management Training (Continued)

### B Available Training

The following are **required** performance management training courses for managers/supervisors and nonsupervisory employees in AgLearn.

Type	AgLearn Title
Supervisors	Performance Management Overview
	Performance Management in USDA
	Performance management: Key Strategies and Practical Guidelines
Nonsupervisors	Performance Management Overview
	Performance Management in USDA

For more information on the many performance management training courses available, access AgLearn at [www.aglearn.usda.gov](http://www.aglearn.usda.gov).

Additional training resources are available on HRD's web site located at [www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/hrdapp?area=home&subject=erpm&topic=prm](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/hrdapp?area=home&subject=erpm&topic=prm).

## 9 IDP's

### A Short- and Long-Term Goals

As part of the performance planning process, supervisors and their employees should discuss employee skills and identify short- and medium-term learning and developmental goals and develop an IDP.

### B Rating Official Approval

IDP's contain elective training, education, and developmental activities in which employees may engage to acquire the competencies to meet IDP goals. Rating officials retain sole discretion to determine the extent of implementation for IDP's and will do so after considering operational requirements and budgetary limitations.

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### 10 Processing AD-435A's and AD-435B's Responsibilities

#### A Rating Official Responsibilities

Rating officials shall process AD-435A's and AD-435B's according to the following.

Step	Action
1	Establish employees' AD-435A's and AD-435B's. For each element, there must be at least 3 standards for measuring performance.
2	Review AD-435A and AD-435B for accuracy.
3	Give AD-435A and AD-435B to the reviewing official for signature.
4	Sign and date AD-435A.
5	<p>Give AD-435A and AD-435B to the employee.</p> <p>After discussing the elements and standards with the employee, request that the employee sign and date AD-435A.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Rating officials should attempt to resolve concerns the employee may have about his or her AD-435A and AD-435B. If the employee refuses to sign his or her AD-435A, the employee shall be advised that he or she will still be placed under the plan and be held accountable for the elements and standards, as described on AD-435A and AD-435B. If the employee refuses to sign AD-435A, annotate AD-435A as follows:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“The performance plan was presented to, and discussed with, the employee. The employee refused to sign it.”</p>
6	Give a copy of AD-435A and AD-435B, signed or unsigned, to the employee.

#### B Reviewing Official Responsibilities

Reviewing officials shall process AD-435A's and AD-435B's according to the following.

Step	Action
1	<p>Review employee's elements and standards, as submitted by the rating official, to ensure that AD-435A and AD-435B are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• in conformance with FAS policy and guidelines</li><li>• consistent with other AD-435A's and AD-435B's in the work unit.</li></ul>
2	Sign and date AD-435A.

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### 10 Processing AD-435A's and AD-435B's Responsibilities (Continued)

#### C Employee Responsibilities

Employees shall process AD-435A's and AD-435B's according to the following.

Step	Action
1	Review presented AD-435A and AD-435B with the rating official.
2	Discuss elements and standards needing clarification.
3	<p>Sign and date AD-435A. The employee's signature certifies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a discussion took place with the supervisor about AD-435A's and AD-435B's</li><li>• the employee has seen AD-435A and AD-435B</li><li>• the employee has reviewed the standards of conduct and has had any questions answered to his or her satisfaction.</li></ul> <p><b>Note:</b> If the employee refuses to sign AD-435A, the employee will still be held accountable for the elements and standards on AD-435A and AD-435B.</p>

### 11 Performance Reviews

#### A Mandatory Performance Reviews

Supervisors should conduct a formal progress review for the performance period of at least 180 calendar days (by April 30<sup>th</sup>).

Supervisors should request from employees a list of their accomplishments during the current rating period for each of their established performance standards and elements. Supervisors should also ask employees to think about areas they would like to focus on for career development purposes.

In a one-on-one session with the employee, supervisors should inform the employee verbally and in writing of the employee's level of performance as it relates to the employee's performance elements and standards, including areas for improvement for the remainder of the rating period.

Within 30 calendar days of the performance review, supervisors should document on the employee's AD-435A that the performance review took place and include in the employee's file the results of the Mid-Year review. The employee should initial and date a copy of the written Mid-Year review to acknowledge receipt.

If formal or informal training or other career development activities are recommended during the Mid-Year review, supervisors should ensure that the employee includes those activities in their IDP.

## 10 Performance Reviews (Continued)

### B Periodic Optional Performance Reviews

Even though only 1 Mid-Year performance review is required, the rating official and employee should periodically hold performance discussions. 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 rating period.

## 12 Documenting Performance

### A Rating of Record

The Rating of Record is the performance appraisal (AD-435) that is issued at the end of the rating period and becomes part of the employee's performance file. Rating officials and reviewing officials will be held accountable for rating appropriately against the standards in the employee's AD-435A and AD-435B and making distinctions in levels of performance. The rating shall be based only on actual employee accomplishments. Presumptive ratings (that is, ratings that are not based on actual accomplishments) are **prohibited**.

Artificial targets for AD-435's, such as quotas, should never be used to evaluate employee performance. AD-435's must be based on the individual accomplishments of the employee being rated.

### B 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.

### C Minimum Rating Period

To rate an employee, the employee must be under AD-435A and AD-435B for at least 90 calendar days.

**Note:** If it has not been 90 calendar days by the end of the rating period, the period may be extended to allow for a rating to be given. If no AD-435A and AD-435B have been put into place by the end of the rating period, or an employee is new to FAS, then no rating can be given until the new rating cycle.

## 12 Documenting Performance (Continued)

### D Obtaining and Completing AD-435

Rating officials shall complete AD-435 according to the instructions on AD-435 that is available in a Microsoft Word version from the FFAS Employee Forms Online web site at <http://fsaintranet.sc.egov.usda.gov/dps/services/downloadhandler.ashx?fileid=632>.

**Note:** Contact Joseph Migyanka, FAS, by telephone at 202-702-0577 if you have any difficulties with AD-435's.

### E Appraising Elements

The rating official will 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:** With assistance from HRD's, Employee and Labor Relations Branch (ELRB), the rating official must prepare a comprehensive written statement describing the employee's deficiencies for all elements rated at this level. Early identification and correction of poor performance is strongly recommended.

## 12 Documenting Performance (Continued)

### F Summary Ratings

A following 5-level summary rating system summarizes the employee's overall performance and is calculated using the description on AD-435.

- **“Outstanding”**. All elements are rated “Exceeds Fully Successful.”
- **“Superior”**. No element is rated “Does Not Meet Fully Successful.” At least 1 element is rated “Meets Fully Successful.” There are more rating “points” in the “Exceeds Fully Successful” column than there are in the “Meets Fully Successful” column.
- **“Fully Successful”**. There are as many or more rating “points” in the “Meets Fully Successful” column as there are in the “Exceeds Fully Successful” column.
- **“Marginal”**. There are more rating “points” in the “Does Not Meet Fully Successful” column than there are in the “Exceeds Fully Successful” column. No critical element is rated “Does Not Meet Fully Successful.”
- **“Unacceptable”**. One or more critical elements are rated “Does Not Meet Fully Successful.”

**Note:** If the “Unacceptable” level occurs, see AFSCME CBA 3976, Article 26.

### G Due Date

AD-435's shall be completed and distributed:

- by November 30th
- according to paragraph 13.

### H Marginal Performance

If the employee's summary rating is “Marginal,” the rating official must contact HRD, ELRB for guidance (AFSCME CBA 3976, Article 26). The rating official shall:

- 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

## **12 Documenting Performance (Continued)**

### **H Marginal Performance (Continued)**

- assist the employee in improving less than “Fully Successful” performance in a noncritical element 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 and promotion, if applicable.

### **I Unacceptable Performance**

If the employee’s summary rating is “Unacceptable,” the rating official must contact HRD, ELRB, for guidance (AFSCME CBA 3976, Article 26). Rating officials shall, before initiating an action to involuntarily reassign, remove, or downgrade an employee, give the employee a written notice of unacceptable performance in 1 or more critical elements and an Opportunity to Improve (OTI) period of at least 90 calendar days to bring performance to the acceptable level.

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.

Notice to the affected employee will include:

- specific information as to how the supervisor will assist the employee in that effort
- specific information as to what the employee must do to bring performance to an acceptable level during that period
- a statement that an employee will not necessarily be reassigned during OTI and that he or she should not expect a reassignment at the conclusion of OTI
- a statement that every effort will be made to re-evaluate the employee’s performance regularly, preferably on a bi-weekly basis, but at least monthly.



## 12 Documenting Performance (Continued)

### I Unacceptable Performance (Continued)

If the determination is that the employee's performance remains unacceptable, FAS may reassign, remove, or demote the employee on written notice. If the bargaining unit employee has been given a reasonable opportunity to demonstrate acceptable performance on 1 or more critical elements during an OTI period and performance continues to be rated as unacceptable, the employee is **not** entitled to a second OTI within the rating year.

An "Unacceptable" rating will result in the denial of a Within-Grade Increase and promotion, if applicable.

### J Prior Administrative Actions

Administrative actions initiated against employees whose performance is "Unacceptable" under 5 U.S.C. 4303 or 5 U.S.C. 752 involving a Performance Management Program in existence before the effective date of this Performance Management Program, shall continue to be processed consistent with that pre-established set of procedures and requirements (AFSCME CBA 3976, Article 26).

## 13 Appraising Performance

### A Rating Official Responsibilities

Rating officials shall appraise the performance of their employees according to the following.

Step	Action
1	Compare the employee's performance of each element with the standards established on AD-435A and AD-435B.
2	Document the employee's accomplishments on AD-435A, item 10, and AD-435B, item 10 or supplemental attachments to AD-435A's/AD-435B's.
3	If necessary, obtain interim ratings from the employee's prior supervisors.
4	Check the appropriate rating level for each element on AD-435A and AD-435B.

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### 13 Appraising Performance (Continued)

#### A Rating Official Responsibilities (Continued)

Step	Action
5	<p>Complete AD-435 by transferring the performance elements and appropriate rating level information from AD-435A and AD-435B.</p> <p>To obtain fillable AD-435, AD-435A, and AD-435B, go to FFAS Employee Forms/Publications Online Website at <a href="http://fsaintranet.sc.egov.usda.gov/dps/services/downloadhandler.ashx?fileid=632">http://fsaintranet.sc.egov.usda.gov/dps/services/downloadhandler.ashx?fileid=632</a>. CLICK “<b>Find Current Form Using Our Form Number Search</b>,” and in the “Form Number” block, ENTER “<b>AD435</b>,” and CLICK “<b>Submit</b>.” Contact Joseph Migyanka, FAS, by telephone at 202-702-0577 if you have any difficulties with AD-435’s.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Rating officials shall ensure that AD-435:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contains all elements</li> <li>• designates critical and noncritical elements</li> <li>• assigns points properly, that is 2 rating “points” for critical elements and 1 rating “point” for noncritical elements</li> <li>• contains totals that are added correctly</li> <li>• designates proper summary rating</li> <li>• has item 17 checked (✓) “Yes” or “No” by the employee</li> <li>• contains the required signatures.</li> </ul>
6	Obtain the reviewing official’s approval on AD-435.
7	Discuss the approved rating and basis for the rating with the employee.
8	<p>Have the employee sign and date.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> If the employee refuses to sign/accept the rating, rating officials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shall indicate the refusal on AD-435, item 18</li> <li>• forward the rating to HRD according to paragraph 13.</li> </ul>
9	Sign and date AD-435, item 19.
10	Forward AD-435, AD-435A, and AD-435B’s to HRD according to paragraph 13.

## Notice PM-2900

### 13 Appraising Performance (Continued)

#### B Reviewing Official Responsibilities

Reviewing officials shall process ratings according to the following.

Step	Action
1	Review the performance and rating of employees with rating officials.
2	Discuss and modify the ratings, if appropriate.
3	Sign and date AD-435, item 20, certifying approval of original or revised ratings.
4	Return rating to the rating official for distribution according to paragraph 13.

#### C Employee Responsibilities

Employees shall do the following.

Step	Action
1	Complete AD-435, item 17.
2	Sign and date AD-435, item 18.

### 14 Multiple AD-435's for An Employee

#### A Employees With Multiple AD-435's

The following provides instructions for AD-435A's and AD-435B's for employees detailed or temporarily promoted.

IF the employee...	THEN...
is detailed or has a temporary promotion to other positions in FAS or USDA for 120 calendar days or more	<p>AD-435A and AD-435B shall be established. The supervisor responsible for the detail or temporary promotion shall prepare AD-435A and AD-435B and communicate AD-435A and AD-435B, in writing, to the employee within 30 calendar days of the start of the assignment. At the end of the assignment, an interim rating shall be prepared detailing the employee's accomplishments, and forwarded to the supervisor of record. This interim rating shall be considered in deriving the employee's annual rating of record.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> When employees are detailed outside USDA, FAS must make a reasonable effort to obtain information on the employee's accomplishments from the outside organization.</p>

## 14 Multiple AD-435's for an Employee (Continued)

### A Employees With Multiple AD-435's (Continued)

IF the employee...	THEN...
is detailed or has a temporary promotion to another position in FAS or USDA for less than 60 calendar days	AD-435A and AD-435B are <b>not</b> required. However, a brief narrative <u>1/</u> 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.  <b>Note:</b> When employees are detailed outside USDA, FAS must make a reasonable effort to obtain information on the employee's accomplishments from the outside organization.
has a change in supervisors during the rating period, including while on detail	each supervisor of 60 calendar days or more shall prepare an interim assessment <u>1/</u> detailing the employee's accomplishments and forward to the supervisor of record. The interim assessments <u>1/</u> shall be considered in deriving the employee's annual rating of record.
has position changes during the rating period and has served for 60 calendar days or more in the position	the supervisor shall prepare an interim assessment <u>1/</u> detailing the employee's accomplishments. This shall be considered in deriving the employee's annual rating of record.
transfers (moves to another agency or Department) and has served for 60 calendar days or more in the former position	the supervisor shall prepare an interim assessment <u>1/</u> detailing the employee's accomplishments. This shall be sent to the gaining organization to be considered in deriving the employee's annual rating of record.

1/ An "interim assessment" and "a brief narrative ... detailing the employee's accomplishments" are the same in substance. They are both ways to capture performance occurring over a specific period in the rating cycle. An "interim assessment" is simply the formal name given to a document of performance when the employee has been under AD-435A and AD-435B for 60 calendar days or more.

## 15 Distributing AD-435's

### A Supervisory AD-435 Distribution

The completed AD-435A, AD-435B, and AD-435 shall be forwarded to HRD, ELRB, by November 30. Supervisors shall distribute completed AD-435 according to the following.

Step	Action
1	Forward the original, completed AD-435, AD-435A, and AD-435B to HRD, ELRB, by November 30.
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.

## **16 Performance**

### **A Organizational Performance Assessment**

Organizational unit performance will be assessed and communicated throughout the organization. Rating officials will be provided guidance on how unit performance should be considered when deciding ratings and awards.

### **B Performance Management Program Training**

Each year, supervisors, managers, and employees will receive mandatory training and retraining on the requirements and operation of the Performance Management Program. All supervisors, managers, and employees must know how the Performance Management Program operates. New supervisors must receive performance management training within 3 months of entering the new position and may not prepare ratings of record until after the training has been completed.

Required training courses for both supervisory and nonsupervisory employees shall be automatically assigned by HRD in AgLearn to the employee's list of courses at the start of the performance management cycle.

### **C Performance Management Accountability**

According to paragraphs 8 and 10, managers and supervisors will be held accountable for the performance management of their subordinates and must communicate with their employees continuously from the beginning to the end of the rating cycle, not just at certain times within the rating cycle. At the end of the rating cycle, they must accurately rate their employee's performance. Corrective action will be taken against supervisors who fail to address performance deficiencies or fulfill performance management responsibilities.

Supervisors' failure to meet the Performance Management requirements and compliance deadlines established by OHRM or FAS (see Required Data Reporting section) shall, at a minimum, preclude an element rating of "Exceeds Fully Successful," and failure to meet the requirements in the Performance Management category altogether shall result in an element rating of "Does Not Meet Fully Successful."

## **17 Evaluation and Additional Information**

### **A Evaluating the Performance Management Program**

The Performance Management Program will be evaluated for its effectiveness on an annual basis within 90 calendar days of the end of each rating period. This evaluation will include such issues as the correlation between the Performance Management Program and any improvement of organizational performance, and employee/managerial satisfaction with the Performance Management Program.

### **B Additional Information**

If there are any policy related questions about rating employees, supervisors may contact HRD, Policy and Accountability Branch, by telephone at 202-401-0244 or 202-401-0392.

## Mandatory and Suggested Elements

The following table provides a quick reference list of some, but **not** all, mandatory and suggested elements. The notice provides additional required element language.

Mandatory and Suggested Element	Element Description
CR/EEO, Diversity, and Inclusion  <b>Important: Mandatory for all supervisors and managers</b>	Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued and leveraged to achieve the vision and mission of the organization through both personal leadership and appropriate managerial action. Performs in a nondiscriminatory manner that demonstrates behaviors that conform to civil rights and EEO laws, regulations, and policies, including fairness, cooperation, and respect towards employees and customers.
CR/EEO, Diversity, and Inclusion  <b>Important: Mandatory for nonsupervisors</b>	Performs assignments in a manner that demonstrates fairness, cooperation, and respect toward employees and customers. Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued. Leverages diversity to achieve the vision and mission of the organization. Supports and maintains an environment that is free of unlawful discrimination and reprisal.
Enhanced Customer Service  <b>Important: Mandatory for all supervisors and managers</b>	Conducts on-going reviews and monitors organizational performance to achieve effective customer service results. Actively gathers feedback from customers to identify their needs and expectations. Ensures staff provides responses to organizational leadership, the public, internal and external customers that are prompt, professional, reliable, and address the individual customer's circumstances. Ensures the delivery of high quality products, services, and solutions. Delegates issues when appropriate and ensures a final response or completion for the customer. Follows up with customers on solutions, products, and services to provide quality service. Recommends ways to improve performance using available customer satisfaction or trend data. Demonstrates the importance of customer service as a critical component of FAS's mission.
Enhanced Customer Service  <b>Important: Mandatory for nonsupervisor.</b>	Routinely displays courteous and tactful behavior. Projects a positive and professional image of USDA. Provides advice that is timely, responsive, and accurate. Maintains appropriate rapport with internal and external customers. Develops and establishes working relationships with external organizations as required. Keeps supervisor and/or team leader informed of difficult and/or controversial issues and unique problems. Takes action to effectively solve problems before they have an adverse impact on the organization or other employees.

## Mandatory and Suggested Elements (Continued)

Mandatory and Suggested Element	Element Description
<p>Supervision</p> <p><b>Important: Mandatory for all supervisors and managers</b></p>	<p>Work is assigned in a fair and effective manner. Technical guidance to subordinate staff is given timely. Performance management is implemented in accordance with procedure. Issues, concerns, or problems are handled promptly and fairly. To the extent possible, staff is properly trained and complies with occupational health and safety programs. Management decisions are supported and implemented within appropriate timeframes.</p>
Mission Results	<p>Demonstrates support for FAS strategic goals and initiatives within own organizational unit and contributes to the achievement of overall FAS initiatives. Stresses accountability and continuous improvement to employees/team members, makes timely and effective decisions, and produces results through strategic thinking and decisive action. Ensures a high degree of responsiveness to management, the public, and internal and external customers. Continually reviews, monitors, and strives to improve organizational performance to achieve FAS mission results.</p>
Execution of Duties/Technical Knowledge and Skill	<p>Demonstrates technical competence and/or knowledge of his or her work. Work assignments are routinely performed in a timely manner, assuring a quality of work that meets the needs of the organization with the appropriate level of supervision. Appropriate work methods are selected for the development of work products. Work products do not require substantive revisions. Assignments are completed in accordance with applicable FAS guidelines.</p>
Team Leadership	<p>Routinely leads individuals and team members toward specific goals and accomplishments. Provides encouragement, guidance, and direction as needed. Adjusts style to fit situation. Delegates appropriate authority in an effective manner. Coordinates functions of the team members. Demonstrates a sincere interest in employees' activities, abilities, etc.</p>
Program Management	<p>Manages programs, resolving issues and problems within the employee's control. Monitors all aspects of programs for quality, effectiveness, and consistency. Program plans and guidance are responsive to objectives and requirements of FAS. Policy instructions are appropriately issued and are accurate. Evaluates effectiveness of work and adjusts plans accordingly.</p>
Special Projects	<p>Special projects are regularly completed on time in a competent, accurate, and thorough manner. Completed projects comply with regulations and procedures. Special projects are completed independently, or reflect research and collaboration with others as required.</p>

**Mandatory and Suggested Elements (Continued)**

<b>Mandatory and Suggested Element</b>	<b>Element Description</b>
Research and Analysis	Thoroughly and accurately researches issues in a timely manner, using available reference sources (for example: USDA manuals, or applicable law or regulations. Makes reasonable recommendations or decisions based on available guidance.
Resource Management	Monitors allocated funds and maintains complete and accurate records of expenditures. Routinely utilizes resources in an efficient and effective manner. Ensures that funds, property, and other resources are guarded against waste, loss, unauthorized use, and misappropriation.
Leading Change	Provides leadership in garnering support for FAS's vision and strategic goals among work groups; communicates change in a positive and effective manner; engages staff in discussion of new strategic priorities and metrics to ensure an understanding of their role in supporting key objectives; supports flexible organizational structures to address policy issues.
Individual Contributions to the Team	Ordinarily displays dependability and reliability. Promotes open communication. Contributes creative ideas and actively participates in team meetings resulting in added value to the team's products and services. When problems arise, explore causes and assists in resolving them. Works with team members to appropriately implement decisions. Is usually open-minded to new ideas and approaches in implementing the team's goals. Willingly accepts and acts on constructive criticism.
Communications	Oral and written communications are clear, correct, timely, and presented in an understandable manner. Supervisor and coworkers are informed of issues and problems when necessary.
Teamwork and Partnerships	Develops and maintains effective working relationships with internal and/or external stakeholders/customers that foster a positive atmosphere of cooperation, trust, creativity, and group unity.