

For: FFAS Managers and Supervisors, except FSA County Offices

**Adding the New “Employee Engagement” Standard to
FY 2014 Supervisory Performance Plans for GS Employees**

Approved by: Associate Administrator for Operations and Management



1 New “Employee Engagement” Standard

A Background

Secretary Vilsack has communicated his commitment to “Making USDA a Great Place to Work”, including maintaining our focus on the Cultural Transformation initiatives which have increased employee engagement, as reflected in the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) scores. Employee engagement is a critical component to achieving USDA’s mission, and encompasses such things as clarity around expectations of the job, commitment to the Department or agency, opportunities to learn and develop, regular quality feedback, and a culture of recognition for good work.

It is important to remember that while employees are responsible for their individual engagement, the first-line supervisor has the greatest individual influence on what it’s like for employees to come to work. To that end, we are adding some structure around supervisors’ responsibilities for setting the tone for their respective work units, as well as partnering with their staffs to ensure employee engagement is a conscious priority.

Managers and supervisors are responsible for positively influencing their employees to enhance and improve the workplace environment. As such, the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) on Wednesday, April 2, 2014, informed the Human Resources Divisions (HRD’s) that new standards had been established to be integrated into all non-Senior Executive Service (non-SES) official supervisors’ performance plans for FY 2014.

B Labor Management Obligations

Where contract language addresses the policies and procedures for bargaining unit employees, contract language prevails.

Disposal Date	Distribution
November 1, 2014	All FAS, FSA, and RMA managers and supervisors

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1 New “Employee Engagement” Standard (Continued)

C Purpose

This notice:

- provides additional guidance on the new “Employee Engagement” standard announced by HRD by e-mail on May 12, 2014, and corrects the Performance Management inbox e-mail address to **FFASPerformanceManagement@one.usda.gov**
- provides guidance on adding performance measures
- provides the revised “Employee Engagement” standard certification statement.

D Authorities

Authorities for the “Employee Engagement” standard are as follows:

- Agency guidelines (FFAS performance management guidelines are available in 5-PM at **<http://intranet.fsa.usda.gov/dam/handbooks/handbooks.asp>**)
- Department Regulations (DR’s)
- OPM regulations.

E Adding the New “Employee Engagement” Standard to GS Supervisory Performance Plans

The following standard **must** be added to GS supervisor and manager performance plans, under “General Supervision” in every non-SES supervisor and manager “Leadership/Supervision” performance element:

“Actively creates an environment that promotes staff engagement, integration and collaboration. Based on employee feedback and the data collected with the most recent FEVS, identifies both strengths and challenges related to employee engagement, development and satisfaction. Works proactively and inclusively with staff members to develop and implement strategies to maintain areas of strength and improve engagement and satisfaction in the organizational unit. Promotes open, candid, and ongoing dialogue with and among the staff to develop more comprehensive and innovative insights to manage obstacles to engagement.”

1 New “Employee Engagement” Standard (Continued)

E Adding the New “Employee Engagement” Standard to GS Supervisory Performance Plans (Continued)

Managers shall use one of the following options to add the “employee engagement” standard to GS supervisory performance plans.

Option 1: If a mid-year review **has not** been completed in EmpowHR, then add the standard according to this table.

Step	Action
1	Access EmpowHR; go to “ Manager Self Service ”, “ Tasks ”, “ Performance ”, and “ Performance Plan ”. A list of your employees will be displayed.
2	Click on “ Existing Plan ”. This will either take you directly into the plan or a list of all the plans in the system will be displayed.
3	If a list is displayed, then click on the top link. This will always be the latest plan.
4	Click the “ Elements and Standards ” tab and find the “ Supervision Element ”.
5	Add the new employee engagement language and click “ Save ”.

Option 2: If a mid-year review **has** been completed in EmpowHR, then the original plan cannot be edited. The manager will need to enter another mid-year review according to this table.

Step	Action
1	Access EmpowHR; go to “ Manager Self Service ”, “ Tasks ”, “ Performance ”, and “ Progress Review ”. A list of your employees will be displayed.
2	Click on “ New Review ”.
3	Click on the magnifying glass to select the current year’s plan.
4	Click the “ Elements and Standards ” tab and find the “ Supervision Element ”.
5	Add the new employee engagement language and click “ Save ”.

This option will make the progress review the “official” version of the employee’s FY 2014 plan.

Note: The mid-year review notice instructed supervisors to only complete one review, but the system will allow an additional review to be entered.

1 New “Employee Engagement” Standard (Continued)

F Measures

The standard detailed in subparagraph E includes “manner of performance” measures. If Agencies choose to add measures, it is extremely important to **not** include reference to improved FEVS scores, for the following reasons:

- there are numerous factors that go into employee responses to the survey that are **not** necessarily in the direct control of the first-line supervisor
- the survey has **not** been validated as a performance measure
- the data for a given year’s survey are published after that year’s performance ratings **must** be completed
- the data does **not** drill far enough down in most organizations to be individualized to a particular work unit.

G Resources

Supervisors and managers who want to increase their understanding of the factors that go into engagement, and how to set the desired tone with their staff, have a variety of resources available to them. A few examples from AgLearn Books 24x7 include the following:

- First, Break All the Rules: What the World’s Greatest Managers Do Differently by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffin
- 12: The Elements of Great Managing by Rodd Wagner and James K. Harter
- Manager’s Guide to Employee Engagement by Scott Carbonara
- Employee Engagement: Tools for Analysis, Practice, and Competitive Advantage by William H. Macey, Benjamin Schneider, Karen M. Barbera and Scott A. Young
- The CEO: Chief Engagement Officer: Turning Hierarchy Upside Down to Drive Performance by John Smythe.

H Compliance Reporting

The new “Employee Engagement” standard language should be added to the “General Supervision” standard in all GS supervisor performance plans. The Department **required** that this standard be added to supervisor and manager plans by May 15, 2014. Since this timeframe has passed, please add the standard as soon as possible.

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1 New “Employee Engagement” Standard (Continued)

H Compliance Reporting (Continued)

HRD will track the addition of the new language and the completion of progress reviews for all eligible employees. Agency Mission Area compliance for both the “Employee Engagement” standard language and mid-year reviews, including the number of completed and overdue actions, must be submitted by HRD to the Department. If the level of compliance is less than 100 percent for a Division, an explanation as to why full compliance has not yet been achieved **must** be provided to HRD, and continued bi-weekly updates **must** be submitted, until 100 percent compliance is reached using the format in subparagraph I.

I Compliance Requirement Reporting Certification Requirement

It is **mandatory** that **all** supervisory employees copy and paste the following language into an e-mail and submit to the Performance Management inbox at **FFASPerformanceManagement@one.usda.gov**:

“I [*Insert supervisory employee’s name and office*] hereby certify that I have received and reviewed the new “Employee Engagement” standard under the “Leadership-Supervision” element required by OHRM. I understand that the new “Employee Engagement” standard is an addition to my FY 2014 plan, although it may not currently appear in my FY 2014 plan residing in EmpowHR. However, I am aware that I am accountable for performance under this Standard and Element for the remainder of FY 2014.”

Note: If you have previously submitted a certification you do **not** have to resubmit.

J Contacts

The following table provides contacts for additional information.

IF there are questions about mid-year performance progress reviews and manager or supervisor is located in...	THEN manager or supervisor may contact the appropriate SPO, as follows...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FAS• FSA APFO, Kansas City, St. Louis, or Washington, DC• RMA	Michael Braswell by either of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• e-mail to the Performance Management inbox at FFASPerformanceManagement@one.usda.gov• telephone at 202-401-0392.
FSA State or County Office	State Office Administrative Officer.