

For: FSA Employees

Performance Management: Closing Out FY 2014 and Preparing for FY 2015

Approved by: Associate Administrator for Operations and Management



1 Overview

A Background

The FY 2014 performance cycle ends September 30, 2014. FSA is preparing for:

- closing out the FY 2014 performance appraisals
- the FY 2015 performance appraisals.

B Purpose

This notice:

- highlights key features (due dates, responsibilities, and training) related to closing out the FY 2014 performance appraisal period and preparing for the FY 2015 appraisal period
- reiterates key 2014 modifications to the FSA Performance Management System as mandated by DR 4040-430.

Disposal Date	Distribution
October 1, 2015	All FSA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices

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1 Overview (Continued)

C Accessing 5-PM

5-PM:

- may be accessed at <http://fsaintranet.sc.egov.usda.gov/dam/handbooks/handbooks.asp>
- covers the awards program and performance management.

Note: Guidance for RMA will be issued in a separate notice.

D Labor-Management Obligations

Where exclusive representation exists, bargaining may be requested to the extent allowed by applicable statutes and according to contract language.

2 Closing Out FY 2014 Performance Appraisals

A Due Dates and EmpowHR Processing

The FY 2014 appraisal period ends **September 30, 2014**.

Normally, performance appraisals must be completed within 30 calendar days of the end of the appraisal period. However, for FY 2014 appraisals, the deadline has been extended an additional month to ensure that the modifications to the new appraisal calculation in EmpowHR is functioning. Supervisors should only finalize employee appraisals in EmpowHR after pay period 20, October 17, 2014. EmpowHR processing (input of performance plans, reviewer, and employee concurrence) must be completed by COB **November 30, 2014**. Managers should **only** enter FY 2015 performance plans in EmpowHR 2 workdays **after** they have verified that the reviewer concurs with the FY 2014 ratings. This will allow the rating to complete the process cycle in the EmpowHR system.

B Performance Appraisal Requirements

To rate an employee, **both** of the following **must** have occurred:

- a performance plan **must** have been established
- 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 reach the 90-calendar-day period.

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2 Closing Out FY 2014 Performance Appraisals (Continued)

C Properly Rating Employees

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

- use the standards in the employee's performance plan to establish a rating and make distinctions in levels of performance (Exhibits 2 and 3)

Note: Click on the following link to view Exhibits 2 through 6, referenced in this notice:
http://intranet.fsa.usda.gov/fsa/operations/hrd/workforce_succession/Performance%20Management1/Articles_and_Exhibits.htm.

- document/record prove-up. If the employee is rated at the "Exceeds" level for any element, a write-up of the employee's accomplishments (documentation) is required.

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 preset 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 (Exhibit 4).

Before any documentation relating to the employee's performance appraisal is put into EmpowHR, the performance appraisal **must** be discussed by the rating and reviewing officials, and by the rating official and the employee. It is strongly recommended that these discussions are conducted face-to-face.

D Appraising Elements and Preparing the Summary Rating

For details on appraising elements and preparing the summary rating, see 5-PM, Part 5.

E Rating-Based Performance Awards

Because of the uncertainty about the final FY 2015 funding levels, USDA has limited awards spending to the FY 2012 spending levels. Because of the Federal budgetary constraints, monetary awards will **not** be provided for performance bonuses, or any form of rating-based award, including quality and step increases. If there are changes in these Federal constraints during FY 2015, OMB will issue new guidance so that the updated policy and procedures may be issued and implemented. However, FSA will grant time off awards (TOA's) for employees who have received "Outstanding" and "Superior" performance ratings during FY 2014, October 1, 2013, through September 30, 2014.

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3 FY 2015 Performance Cycle

A Coverage

All FSA employees nationwide are required to have a performance plan established according to 5-PM, Part 1, **except**:

- individuals in the Senior Executive Service
- STC and COC members
- individuals excluded from coverage by statute or by OPM regulation
- individuals for whom employment is not reasonably expected to exceed the minimum appraisal period (90 calendar days) in a consecutive 12-month period.

Note: Temporary intermittent employees would only be subject to the Performance Management System if they actually work a continuous 90-calendar-day period, regardless of the length of their appointment.

B Employee Participation

Employee participation is **required** in establishing or revising performance plans. This may be accomplished by whatever method works best for the parties concerned.

Example: The supervisor could ask the employee to develop a draft performance plan for discussion or the supervisor could develop a draft performance plan for discussion.

Note: The sample elements and standards found in Exhibit 2 and 5-PM should be used as starting points for draft plans.

C Required Features To Be Included in Every Employee Performance Plan

In addition to the required elements and standards, every plan should clearly demonstrate all of the following:

- cascading alignment
- results-focused elements
- at least 1 noncritical element.

3 FY 2015 Performance Cycle (Continued)

D Cascading Alignment

Supervisors should ensure that the performance plan for their employees includes at least **1** critical element with at least 3 standards that identify clear and measurable tasks and results that are aligned to organizational goals. Alignment should be clear and transparent so that employees can see how their performance plan supports the achievement of organizational goals. Including a generic statement on AD-435A and AD-435B that employees support organizational goals is **not** adequate for communicating alignment. Simply restating organizational goals without including the metrics for determining performance against those goals is also **not** adequate. It should be possible to map the responsibility for specific organizational goals through the performance plan, through the chain of responsibility (SES member, to manager, to supervisor), to the front-line employee.

In developing the performance plan with employees, supervisors shall:

- ensure that all employees are aware of the:
 - FSA Strategic Plan or organizational goals at http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/fsa-strategic_plan_12-16.pdf
 - current USDA Strategic Plan at www.ocfo.usda.gov/usdasp/sp2010/sp2010.pdf
- communicate how FSA/USDA goals are linked and cascaded to Division and individual performance, and how the employee's accomplishments support FSA/USDA goals within his or her organizations through:
 - staff meetings
 - individual or team meetings
 - electronic and internal correspondence
- develop performance plans (AD-435A's and AD-435B's) that include at least 1 critical element with at least 3 standards that identify clear and measurable (quality, quantity, cost, and/or timely) tasks and results that are aligned to organizational goals for each individual.

3 FY 2015 Performance Cycle (Continued)

D Cascading Alignment (Continued)

Either of the following may apply:

- aligned standards may be preceded by the following paragraph, modified as applicable, based on the part of the strategic plan the alignment standard is addressing.

“The following results-focused measures align with USDA Strategic Goal (# __), “(title of goal),” Strategic objective (# __. __), “(title of goal),” Strategic Objective (# __. __), “(title of objective)” in the FSA Strategic Plan.”

- the language in the element can explain with which **organizational goal and objective** the element aligns. For example, “In order for the Agency to achieve its goal of completing X during FY 2015, the employee must complete an average of Y each month, with Y meeting the requirements outlined in the Agency operating procedures.”

Note: The alignment statement is prepopulated in the FSA FY 2015 Performance Management element definitions along with a results statement that **must** be completed by the reviewer.

E Results-Focused Elements

Each element in the performance plan must include language that will hold the employee accountable for achieving the expected results. This must be shown by explaining the results gained by the employee achieving his or her standards.

Example: “Expanded 15 county crop programs in areas where none existed. *The result is* an increase in the number and efficiency of risk management opportunities through county crop program expansion.”

The results must be appropriate to the employee’s level of responsibility. **A results-focused statement must be included for every element within a performance plan.**

F Balanced and Credible Measures

All performance plans must include balanced and credible measures. Balanced so that in addition to measuring expected results, plans include appropriate measures, such as:

- quality, quantity, timeliness, and/or cost-effectiveness
- indicators of competencies.

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3 FY 2015 Performance Cycle (Continued)

F Balanced and Credible Measures (Continued)

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.

4 Elements and Standards

A Element Criteria

The number of elements in performance plans for nonsupervisory employees is 3 to 5. Rating officials shall establish at least 3, but no more than 5, performance elements.

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

Each element must include a minimum of 3 standards. Standards must be observable, measurable, and attainable by the employee. Standards need only be written at the “Meets Fully Successful” level. 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.”

Note: Managers and supervisors of bargaining unit employees are encouraged to see their respective collective bargaining agreement to ensure that all performance management planning requirements are satisfied.

B Required Elements and Standards

The following is a summary of the required or mandatory elements and standards for the FY 2015 performance cycle. The “Mission Results” element, or at least 1 other critical element, **must** be clearly aligned with FSA’s goals.

Note: No new required elements are being introduced for the FY 2015 performance cycle at this time. Additional guidance will be provided to ensure that supervisors and employees are compliant with forthcoming DR’s about training and development for supervisors.

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4 Elements and Standards (Continued)

B Required Elements and Standards (Continued)

Mandatory:

- elements for nonsupervisory employees:
 - Civil Rights EEO (CR/EEO) and Diversity (Department definition)
 - Enhanced Customer Service (users may access EmpowHR for a menu of the suggested standards)
- standards for nonsupervisory employees:
 - Health and Safety (under any element that the supervisor deems appropriate)
 - PII (under any element that the supervisor deems appropriate)
- elements for supervisors/managers:
 - Civil Rights EEO (CR/EEO) and Diversity (Department definition)
 - Enhanced Customer Service (user may access EmpowHR for a menu of suggested standards)
 - Mission Results
 - Supervision
- standards for supervisors/managers:
 - Engagement Standard (under “Supervision”)
 - Cultural Transformation Standard (under “Mission Results” element)
 - Diversity Roadmap (under “Supervision” element)
 - Recruitment and Hiring (under “Supervision” element)
 - Retention and Succession Planning (under “Supervision” element)
 - Performance Management (under “Supervision” element)
 - Health and Safety (required for all employees, under any element)
 - PII (required for all employees, under any element).

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4 Elements and Standards (Continued)

C Mandatory Elements for Nonsupervisory Employees

The following 2 elements are mandatory for nonsupervisory employees:

- **CR/EEO, Diversity:**

“Performs assignments in a manner that demonstrates fairness, cooperation, and respect towards 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.”

A results statement must be included.

- **Enhanced Customer Service:**

“Actively gathers feedback from customers to identify their needs and expectations. Provides responses to the customer that are prompt, consistent, professional, and address the individual customer’s circumstances. Exercises sound judgment. Identifies information to be shared with customers. Refers issues when appropriate and ensures a final response or completion for the customer. Follows up with customers on 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 the Agency’s mission.”

To receive an “Exceeds” element rating, an employee’s performance accomplishments **must** be written up and documented (“proved up”) in **both** components of the “Customer Service” element (that is, “Customer Relations Management” and “Consulting and Service”).

D Mandatory Standards for Nonsupervisory Employees

The following 2 standards are mandatory for nonsupervisory employees:

- **Health and Safety** (under any element):

“Demonstrates a basic understanding of FSA’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 the supervisor or designated official within 48 hours.”

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4 Elements and Standards (Continued)

D Mandatory Standards for Nonsupervisory Employees (Continued)

- **PII** (under any element):

“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 PII. Ensures that PII is protected at all times, including when being transferred, in accordance with FSA policy. Reports any violations to the supervisor within four hours of becoming aware of a problem.”

E Mandatory Elements for Supervisors/Managers

The following 4 elements are mandatory for supervisors/managers:

- **CR/EEO, Diversity:**

The following language **must** be built into the “**CR/EEO, Diversity**” element description:

“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.”

- **Enhanced Customer Service:**

The following language **must** be built into the **Enhanced “Customer Service”** element description.

“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 FSA’s mission.”

A results statement must be included.

4 Elements and Standards (Continued)

E Mandatory Elements for Supervisors/Managers (Continued)

- **Mission Results:**

The following language **must** be built into the “**Mission Results**” element description:

“Demonstrates support for FSA strategic goals and initiatives within his or her own organizational unit and contributes to the achievement of overall FSA initiatives. Stresses accountability and continuous improvement to employees and 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 FSA mission results.”

A results statement must be included.

- **Supervision:**

The following language **must** be built into the “**Supervision**” element description:

“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.”

A results statement must be included.

F Mandatory Standards for Supervisors/Managers

The following 8 standards are mandatory for supervisors/managers:

- **Engagement Standard** (under “Supervision” 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.”

4 Elements and Standards (Continued)

F Mandatory Standards for Supervisors/Managers (Continued)

- **Cultural Transformation Standard** (under “Mission Results” element):

“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.”

- **Diversity Roadmap** (under “Supervision” element):

“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.”

- **Recruitment and Hiring** (under “Supervision” element):

The Recruitment and Hiring standard applies to supervisors with hiring authority, as follows:

- “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.”

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4 Elements and Standards (Continued)

F Mandatory Standards for Supervisors/Managers (Continued)

- **Retention and Succession Planning** (under “Supervision” element):

The Retention and Succession Planning standard applies to all supervisors, as follows:

- “Successfully transitions new hires into the position by promptly providing an orientation into the workforce and establishing performance elements and standards. The 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 drives 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/FSA 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.”

4 Elements and Standards (Continued)

F Mandatory Standards for Supervisors/Managers (Continued)

- **Performance Management** (under “Supervision” element):

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

- The supervisor completes performance plans, progress reviews, and appraisals of subordinate employees by the due dates established by the Department or FSA. Performance Plans for each employee must include at least 1 element that is aligned with FSA’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 FSA’s performance management policy with regard to performance appraisals 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. Performance plans shall be in place within 30 calendar days of the beginning of the appraisal period. Mid-year reviews are conducted according to FSA guidelines. Ratings are accurate and issued within 30 calendar days of the end of the appraisal period.”
- **Health and Safety** (required for all employees, under any element):

“Demonstrates a basic understanding of FSA’s Safety and Health Program. Complies with safety and health rules and regulations that apply to all employees. Ensures all reports of unsafe and unhealthy conditions are reported to supervisor or designated official within 48 hours.”

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4 Elements and Standards (Continued)

F Mandatory Standards for Supervisors/Managers (Continued)

- **PII** (required for all employees, under any element):

“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 PII. Ensures that PII is protected at all times, including when being transferred, in accordance with FSA policy. Reports any violations to the supervisor within 4 hours of becoming aware of a problem.”

G Required Outreach Standards for Field Office Employees

For FY 2014, DAFO introduced new performance standards for all Service Center employees and Outreach Coordinators in Notice PM-2905. See Exhibit 1 to review these standards.

5 Key Performance Management Program Modifications Introduced in FY 2014

A Computation of Performance Appraisal Rating

To place more weight on the actual work that employees perform, the “Mission Results or (Execution of Duties)” element shall be worth 4 appraisal points. For supervisors, the “Supervision” element shall also be worth 4 appraisal points.

Note: The new weighting of the appraisals will take effect once the EmpowHR system has been modified to perform the new computations.

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.

Temporary promotions and details of 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 require the “Supervision” 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.

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5 Key Performance Management Program Modifications Introduced in FY 2014 (Continued)

C Assessing Supervisory Performance

A supervisor's failure to meet the performance management requirements and compliance deadlines established by OHRM or FSA (subparagraph D) 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."

D Required Data Reporting

During the performance cycle, FSA is required to attain and report to the Department 100 percent completion rates on the following for eligible FSA employees.

All supervisors/reviewers shall ensure:

- 100 percent completion of all FY 2014 performance appraisals by **October 30, 2014**
- reporting of 100 percent completion of all FY 2015 performance plans by **November 15, 2014**
- that performance plans are provided to the employee (as demonstrated by employee signature or EmpowHR system date stamp) at the beginning of the rating period or **within 30 calendar days**
- reporting of 100 percent completion of all FY 2015 mid-year progress reviews by **April 30, 2015**.

Note: Because of a change in Departmental reporting requirements, FY 2015 mid-year progress review is 30 calendar days earlier than stated in 5-PM.

6 Required Documentation

A Required Documentation by Manager/Supervisor

"Exceeds" element ratings or a summary performance rating above "Fully Successful" **must** be supported by written "Prove-up" documentation.

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6 Required Documentation (Continued)

B Required Employee Write-Up of Accomplishments and Contributions

Employee Write-Up of Accomplishments and Contributions – Employees are required to provide their supervisor/manager with a narrative/list of contributions and accomplishments achieved during the performance cycle. The write-up will assist supervisors/managers in accurately assessing the employee’s performance. If supervisors and employees are relying mostly on memory to evaluate employee performance, this renders the appraisal process far more difficult than necessary. For this reason, it is best for supervisors and employees to institute a simple recording system to document performance and achievements. The employee write-up of accomplishments can be an effective tool in that it assists the employee in honestly assessing strengths and weaknesses during the performance of job functions. The write-up can be very useful in facilitating feedback between manager and employee during the performance cycle and in developing the required IDP’s.

7 Other Resources, Guidance, Tools, and Training on Performance Management

A Resources, Guidance, and Tools

See the following exhibits for additional guidance:

- “Distinguishing Levels of Performance” (Exhibit 2)
- “Competencies for Selected FSA Occupations” (Exhibit 3)

Note: Competencies may be used as a reference tool by supervisors and employees to assist in distinguishing performance levels.

- “Common Rating Errors Supervisors Should Avoid” (Exhibit 4)
- “Writing Your Accomplishments” (Exhibit 5)
- “Supervisor’s Checklist for Preparing for Employee Performance Reviews” (Exhibit 6).

Notes: Click on the following link to view Exhibits 2 through 6:

http://intranet.fsa.usda.gov/fsa/operations/hrd/workforce_succession/Performance%20Management1/Articles_and_Exhibits.htm

5-PM will be amended to include all previously issued performance management guidance and policy changes.

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7 Other Resources, Guidance, Tools, and Training on Performance Management (Continued)

B Performance Management Training

Training is critical to an effective performance management program. Each year, supervisors and nonsupervisors should receive training and continuous retraining on the requirements and operation of the 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
- 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.

DD's shall ensure that each COC chairperson receives a hard copy of the Supervisory and Nonsupervisory Performance Management Desk Guides. DD's and CED's shall continue to educate and involve COC in discussions involving the performance appraisal and in performance plan development.

For the FY 2014 performance cycle, completed employee performance management training should be documented on AD-435's.

C Available AgLearn Performance Management Training

For information on the performance management training courses available, access AgLearn at 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.

Note: This includes a link to the training provided at the 2008 AO/SED National Training Conference that State Offices have been providing to their employees and is available for all employees to view.

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8 Contacts

A Contact Information

Supervisors may contact the appropriate SPO as follows.

IF located in...	THEN contact...
Washington, DC, National Office for the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• awards and processing• performance management processing• servicing personnel specialist	Kedra Watts, HRD, by telephone at 202-401-0678. Note: TTY is 202-205-9057.
a branch at any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kansas City, Missouri• St. Louis, Missouri• Salt Lake City, Utah	
any location for EmpowHR assistance	EmpowHR Help Desk by telephone at 816-823-3996.
State or County Office	State Office Administrative Officer.

If there are any policy-related questions about this notice, contact Michael Braswell by either of the following:

- e-mail to **Michael.Braswell@wdc.usda.gov**
- telephone at 202-401-0392.

Required Outreach Standards for Service Center Employees and Outreach Coordinators for FY 2014 and 2015 Performance Plans

FSA supervisors are **required** to insert the following alignment statement and 2 Outreach standards for **all Service Center employees** under the “Enhanced Customer Service” element.

Alignment Statement for All Service Center Employees:

The following results-focused measures align with USDA Strategic Management Initiatives, and FSA **Goal 4: Transform and Modernize the Farm Service Agency**, Strategic Objectives:

- 4.1 - Advance a Culture of Accountability
- 4.2 - Promote Diversity
- 4.4 - Improve Customer Service in FSA Strategic Plan.

Outreach Standards for All Service Center Employees:

- Provides timely and reliable FSA program information and assistance to all potential/new and existing customers
- Annually identifies and provides general information to internal or external customers of USDA programs/services/initiatives that may be of interest to customer or producer’s operation.

FSA supervisors are **required** to insert the following alignment statement and 2 Outreach standards under the “Enhanced Customer Service” element for all **State Outreach Coordinators (SOC’s) and County Office Outreach Coordinators (COOC’s)**.

Alignment Statement for All SOC’s and COOC’s:

The following results-focused measures align with USDA Strategic Management Initiatives and FSA **Goal 4: Transform and Modernize the Farm Service Agency**, Strategic Objectives:

- 4.1 - Advance a Culture of Accountability
- 4.2 - Promote Diversity
- 4.4 - Improve Customer Service.

Required Outreach Standards for Service Center Employees and Outreach Coordinators for FY 2014 and FY 2015 Performance Plans (Continued)

Outreach Standards for All SOC's and COOC's.

- Provides supervisor with a quarterly outreach report update with recommendations, activities, and accomplishments, within 4 workdays of the end of the quarter with no more than 1 exception.
- Plans and/or participates in 1-2 activities targeted at beginning farmers/ranchers and potential producers located in county (including persistent poverty counties). Ensures the Outreach activity results are recorded within 2 workdays into the Outreach Tracking Information System (OTIS), with no more than 2 exceptions.