

For: FSA and RMA Employees

FY 2018 Mid-Year Performance Progress Reviews and Performance Plans

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Management



1 Mid-Year Performance Progress Reviews

A Purpose

This notice:

- extends the mid-year performance progress review deadline to **May 15, 2018**
- reminds FSA/RMA rating officials to complete the FY 2018 mid-year performance reviews for all employees no later than **May 15, 2018**, or 90-calendar days after initiating a new performance plan

Notes: The review should evaluate progress toward achieving the Mission Area and/or Agency organizational goals, as well as any applicable Secretary’s initiatives and/or Civil Rights Performance Plan.

If an employee has not been under a performance plan for a minimum of 90 calendar days on the issuance date of this notice, the supervisor should conduct and document a mid-year performance progress review after 90 calendar days have elapsed.

- provides replacement of Cultural Transformation Language and Standards by USDA Strategic Goal no. 1
- reminds all supervisors, managers, and rating officials to review FY 2018 performance plans, to ensure that all required features are present on every plan, which includes the new supervisory element, the new FPAC performance standards, Civil Rights and Diversity and Inclusion, Performance Management Accountability, Engagement standards, USDA Strategic Goal no. 1 for all supervisory plans
- provides guidance to supervisors, managers, and rating officials to make any changes and/or corrections to plans before documenting mid-year performance reviews in EmpowHR

Disposal Date	Distribution
July 1, 2018	All FSA and RMA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices

Notice PM-3003

1 Mid-Year Performance Progress Reviews (Continued)

A Purpose (Continued)

- announces FY 2018 Performance Management training requirements
- provides resources to better understand FPAC
- provides EmpowHR guidance for supervisors on revising existing plans (Exhibit 1)
- provides guidance for reviewing officials to modify established plans via EmpowHR Menu options (Exhibit 2).

B Performance Accountability

Under the Human Capital Accountability Framework, a critical success factor for the Results-Oriented Performance Culture is the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process. The effectiveness of the appraisal process relies heavily on supervisors, managers, and rating officials using performance results to:

- offer feedback
- identify developmental needs to help improve employee performance
- address instances of poor performance.

Supervisor feedback **must**:

- convey how the employee's performance compares with the standards expressed in the employee's performance plan
- describe the impact of the employee's performance on achieving work unit, county, state, or agency goals
- communicate how the work unit is progressing in achieving its goals.

A supervisor's, manager's, or rating official's feedback should take into account the observations and input received from internal and external customers.

Note: A 100 percent completion rate of mid-year performance progress reviews is **required** for **all** eligible employees. The performance plans of all SES, managers, and supervisors include standards that hold the supervisors and managers accountable for the performance management of subordinates. Full compliance with the requirements of DR-4040-430, where applicable will be a significant factor in successfully achieving the performance standards, for both first-line supervisors and the managers.

The Performance Management DR-4040-430, located at <http://www.ocio.usda.gov/document/departmental-regulation-4040-430> and effective October 1, 2013, describes the new impact to supervisors' and managers' Leadership and Supervision element rating.

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1 Mid-Year Performance Progress Reviews (Continued)

B Performance Accountability (Continued)

Failure to meet the performance management deadlines established by the Office of Human Resources Management and/or the respective agency or staff office should, at a minimum, preclude an element rating of “Exceeds Fully Successful”, and failure to meet the requirements in the Performance Management category altogether should result in an element rating of “Does Not Meet Fully Successful”.

C Forum for Discussion

The mid-year performance progress review provides an opportunity for employees to:

- review and discuss performance elements and standards, and make any necessary changes
- gauge and discuss the employee’s progress in meeting the performance expectations (standards and elements) needed to achieve or surpass a “Fully Successful” level of performance, which is, “Are we achieving expected results?”
- provide an avenue for employees to understand where and how to improve performance, and to participate in the mid-year discussion
- revisit or develop Individual Development Plans.

Note: See Exhibit 3 for steps to be used in the mid-year progress discussion.

2 Responsibilities

A Supervisors, Managers, and Rating Officials Responsibilities

Supervisors, managers, and rating officials are responsible for:

- monitoring performance during the entire rating period
- providing timely feedback to employees on their performance throughout the cycle
- reviewing employee elements and standards, revising and clarifying, if needed
- providing training and developmental opportunities, if available
- conducting at least one progress review at the midpoint of the appraisal cycle for each employee

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2 Responsibilities (Continued)

A Supervisors, Managers, and Rating Officials Responsibilities (Continued)

- ensuring that performance plans are established for new or transferred employees within 15 days and conducting a progress review once the employee has worked a minimum of 90 calendar days
- informing the employee of his or her level of performance as it relates to their established performance plan's elements and standards
- ensuring that every employee receives a mid-year performance progress review
- ensuring adherence to applicable Union Collective Bargaining Agreements.

B Reviewing Official Responsibilities

Reviewing officials are responsible for the following:

- ensuring that supervisors, managers, and rating officials carry out their performance management responsibilities and meet all compliance deadlines
- assessing the supervisor's, manager's, or rating official's performance in fulfilling these responsibilities.

C Employee Responsibilities

Employees are responsible for the following:

- participating in discussions and documentation of their progress reviews
- ensuring they have a clear understanding of performance expectations and how performance relates to the mission of the organization, and requesting clarification if necessary
- reviewing the mid-year performance rating in EmpowHR and acknowledging completion of mid-year review, electronically in EmpowHR or signing the AD-435, if EmpowHR is not available
- seeking timely performance feedback from their rating official and internal and external customers, when appropriate
- taking personal responsibility for their own training and development
- reviewing employee responsibilities and conduct requirements at http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/empconduct.pdf.

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3 Conducting Performance Reviews

A Mid-Year Performance Progress Reviews

Supervisors, managers, and rating officials shall prepare for the mid-year performance progress review process by preparing talking points that are applicable to each individual employee and gathering any samples or highlighting examples of work products for improvement. Individual meetings shall be scheduled with each employee to conduct mid-year performance progress review discussions. See Exhibits 3 through 5 for additional guidance for supervisors, managers, and rating officials on preparing for and conducting the mid-year performance progress reviews and offering feedback to employees.

All non-SES employee mid-year performance progress reviews shall be completed by, **May 15, 2018**.

Notes: If an employee has not been under a performance plan for the required minimum 90 calendar days on the issuance date of this notice, the supervisor, manager, or rating official must conduct and document the mid-year performance progress review after the required 90 calendar days have elapsed.

HRD will conduct audits to ensure that:

- all mid-year performance progress reviews are completed by the **May 15, 2018**, deadline
- performance plans have required standards
- delinquent compliance is communicated to Agency leadership.

B Review of FY 2018 Performance Plans

It is strongly recommended that supervisors, managers, and rating officials review FY 2018 performance plans and ensure that the following required elements and standards are present:

- Civil Rights, EEO, Diversity and Inclusion
- customer service element (FSA) or customer perspective standard (RMA)
- new supervisory element and standards, if appropriate (Effective October 1, 2017)
- FPAC standards
- one to three additional performance elements, each with a results statement
- cascading alignment statement, for at least one critical element, that shows clear linkage to the strategic plan
- results statement for each element

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3 Conducting Performance Reviews (Continued)

B Review of FY 2018 Performance Plans (Continued)

- PII and safety and health standards
- at least three standards for each element (elements recently introduced by USDA will have more than three standards)
- standards established at the “Fully Successful” level
- inclusion of performance management accountability, and employee engagement standards for all supervisors, managers, and rating officials.

C Replacement of the Cultural Transformation Milestones and Metrics

The mandatory language **for non-executive supervisors** specific to Cultural Transformation has been replaced with the following to reflect the expectations of the new USDA Strategic Goal no. 1.

- Supports the Department’s strategic goal to ensure USDA programs are delivered efficiently, effectively and with integrity. Leadership and programmatic decisions are fact-based and data-driven, and reflect the priorities of improved customer service, employee engagement, cost effectiveness, and accountability.
- Business processes are continually assessed to identify opportunities to increase effectiveness and efficiency. Short-term, low-cost solutions are cleared for immediate implementation, and proposals for longer-term, larger solutions are developed for leadership’s consideration.
- Opportunities to better serve internal and external stakeholders by streamlining procedural requirements are identified, cleared as necessary, and implemented. Staff members are encouraged to identify strategies to improve, consolidate or eliminate duplicative processes that impede excellence in customer service.
- Performance and operational metrics are developed, validated, and tracked to ensure customer satisfaction and operational effectiveness.

Note: These descriptions have been entered into the EmpowHR system under the supervisory element, number 803 for FSA and number 103 for RMA.

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3 Conducting Performance Reviews (Continued)

D Engagement Standard for Supervisory Performance Plans

Engagement is a standard created and required by the Department. Supervisors will be evaluated and rated on the following:

- actively creates an environment that promotes staff engagement, integration, and collaboration
- identifies both strengths and challenges related to employee engagement, development, and satisfaction, based on employee feedback and the data collected with the most recent Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and County Employee Viewpoint Survey
- 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.

Note: Supervisors must be able to document the actions taken to meet these standards.

4 FPAC Information

A The FPAC Business Center

The following are tentatively planned to be housed in the Business Services area of the FPAC Business Center:

- Acquisition/Procurement
- Information Technology
- Financial Management
- Human Resources
- Management Services
- Budget
- Grants and Agreements.

The Business Center is different from the Service Center. The non-business FPAC employees will consist of the employees in FSA, RMA, and NRCS who are not in the Business Center. This would include all of the field office employees.

Note: For additional information regarding the activities of the FPAC, please visit: myFPAC at <http://myfpac.usda.gov/> you can view centralized FPAC and FPAC Business Center information, leadership blogs, and e-mails. You can also submit comments or questions while also signing up to receive weekly e-mails from FPAC leadership.

4 FPAC Information (Continued)

B FPAC Standards

In addition to USDA priorities, the following **standards** must be included as provided below by the Rating Official under a Critical Performance Element. These additional standards **must** be included in the performance plan as applicable to the employee’s position at mid-year, but **no later than June 30, 2018**, if they weren’t previously added at the beginning of the rating period.

- Rating and Reviewing Officials may define “meets” and “exceeds” levels and appropriate metrics.
- Please note the “[]” following the standard that defines the employees to which a standard applies.

FY 2018 FPAC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE PLAN STANDARDS

- Support customer experience improvements designed to meet or exceed internal and external customer expectations.
- Improve effectiveness and accountability of financial operations by fully supporting and adopting OCFO project plan to adopt FMMI FPAC-wide. [For FSA Headquarters/National Offices].
- Improve effectiveness and accountability by piloting the use of competition for at least 20 percent of the value and number of all agreements not competitively awarded in 2017 and by instituting performance-related deliverables for these same agreements.
- Provide leadership, expertise, and timely support to further the Agency’s mission.
- Provide leadership, expertise, and timely support to further the reorganization of FPAC to create a centralized operations office – the FPAC Business Center – to be fully operational by September 30, 2018.
- Provide leadership, expertise, and timely support to develop and deploy online transactional capability for conservation programs’ customers. [For applicable program and CIO communities].
- Provide leadership, expertise, and timely support to develop online transactional capability for lending programs’ customers. [For applicable program and CIO communities].
- Provide leadership, expertise, and timely support to improve administrative business processes.

4 **FPAC Information (Continued)**

B FPAC Standards (Continued)

FOR FPAC BUSINESS CENTER EMPLOYEES [Acquisition/Procurement, IT, Financial Management, HR, Budget, Grants and Agreements, Accountability and Performance, Economic and Policy Analysis, External Affairs, Legislative Liaison, Public Affairs and Outreach, Management Services, Customer Experience, Emergency Preparedness, Appeals, Environmental Activities]

- Continues to effectively and efficiently perform assigned work functions at source agency (FSA, NRCS, or RMA) while the FPAC Business Center executive team organizes the functions subject to further guidance from the Under Secretary or FPAC Business Center executive team.
- Communication with FPAC's agencies, customers, peers, and staff regarding the purpose, objectives, and expectations for FPAC's centralized operations is supportive, accurate, and consistent with helping to achieve the Secretary's goals of improved customer experience and efficiency.

C Special Note About Changes to Performance Plans

If a manager, supervisor, or rating official makes any changes to a FY 2018 performance plan, the changes **must** be made in EmpowHR **before** initiating the midyear review in EmpowHR. See Exhibits 1 and 2 for instructions.

Note: This sequence of entry prevents EmpowHR from locking down the system for a 90 day period. If the mid-year were entered first, you would not be able to enter additional changes to the plan.

After a mid-year performance review is entered for the FY 2018 performance plan, the manager, supervisor, or rating official will not be able to add or subtract elements for the FY 2018 performance plan. Performance plans in EmpowHR become "locked" after any type of review (progress or summary rating) is approved and concurred. Therefore, make all required revisions to the FY 2018 Performance Plans before saving a mid-year performance progress review in EmpowHR.

A mid-year performance progress review should be conducted for any elements and standards that are currently in place and have not changed or were not added within the past 90 calendar days. If a manager, supervisor, or rating official makes changes to the performance objectives or corresponding standards within an element, employees must be given the opportunity to perform under the modified standards for at least 90 calendar days before being rated against the modification. Changes can be made up to June 30, 2018, 90 days before the end of the performance cycle. The 90 calendar day period does not apply if changes were made in alignment and linkage to enhance the existing performance plan and with no changes to the existing performance elements or standards. The employee **must** be informed of all revisions to their performance plan.

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4 FPAC Information (Continued)

D Other Special Circumstances

- **Change in manager, supervisor, or rating official**

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

Supervisors or managers changing positions or leaving the agency shall conduct a mid-year performance progress review for all of their eligible employees and must document the mid-year performance progress reviews in EmpowHR before departing the agency.

- **New supervisors/managers**

After a previous supervisor/manager has entered a mid-year review, new supervisors or managers shall conduct an additional performance review for eligible employees after the employee has been under their supervision for 90 calendar days. See Exhibit 8 for guidance on entering multiple reviews in EmpowHR.

- **Employee position change**

Employees changing a position should receive an interim rating, which is an appraisal that is completed when an employee has served on a performance plan for at least 90 calendar days and is leaving one permanent position for another. The departing rating may be provided in hard copy to the new supervisor. This is **not** a formal rating of record and is **only** to be considered by the rating official when determining the annual rating of record.

E Documenting Mid-Year Performance Progress Reviews in EmpowHR

Managers, supervisors, or rating officials **must** document in EmpowHR that the FY 2018 mid-year performance progress review was conducted for each employee. Progress reviews are only to be conducted and entered into EmpowHR 90 calendar days after the creation of the performance plan. Although, at the present time, the EmpowHR System will allow managers, supervisors, or rating officials to finalize a plan and then enter a progress review, this sequence should only be followed in instances when a hard copy performance plan has already been established and is in place for the required 90-calendar-day period and the action is being taken to data load the established plan into EmpowHR.


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

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4 FPAC Information (Continued)

E Documenting Mid-Year Performance Progress Reviews in EmpowHR (Continued)

Managers, supervisors, and rating officials shall follow these steps to enter mid-year performance progress reviews into EmpowHR.

Step	Action	
1	Sign into EmpowHR and select: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Manager Self Service” • “Tasks” • “Performance”, or • “Progress Review”. The names of all the managers, supervisor’s, or rating official’s employees will be displayed.	
2	CLICK “ New Review ” next to the employee’s name to enter the FY 2018 mid-year performance review.	
3	CLICK “  4	Select the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Elements and Standards”, • “View All”, to review all elements, and/or enter progress review accomplishments.
5	Enter comments in the “Reviewer Comments” box and CLICK “ Save ”.	

Managers, supervisors, or rating officials may view the step-by-step process on documenting the mid-year performance progress reviews in EmpowHR at http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/supmidyrreview.ppt.

Scroll down to “Performance Mid-Year Review” for an example of how to document a mid-year performance progress review in EmpowHR.

Reminder: After a mid-year performance progress review is entered against the FY 2018 performance plan, managers, supervisors, and rating officials will **not** be able to revise the FY 2018 performance plan. Performance plans in EmpowHR become “locked” after any type of review (progress or summary rating) is approved and concurred. Therefore, all required revisions to the FY 2018 performance plans must be completed **before** saving in EmpowHR.

If there are problems with EmpowHR, contact the EmpowHR help desk at 816-823-3996.

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4 FPAC Information (Continued)

F Periodic Optional Performance Reviews

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

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

5 Poor Performance and Resources for Supervisors and Managers

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

The mid-year performance progress review provides an opportunity for managers, supervisors, and rating officials to heighten employees' awareness of the process and procedures for addressing poor performance, to convey feedback, and have necessary discussions with an employee whose performance is determined to be less than "Fully Successful" or at a "Does Not Meet" level of performance. Managers, supervisors, and rating officials are encouraged to consult with their servicing Employee/Labor Relations (ELRB) and Benefits Branch specialist immediately upon such a determination, particularly if the element is critical. The assistance and guidance provided by the ELRB specialist will be timely and useful in helping to navigate the process of dealing with a poor performer.

Note: If the employee is performing at the "Does Not Meet" level in a critical element, the rating official **must** contact their ELRB specialist for guidance.

B Addressing Marginal or Unacceptable Performance

Any actions taken to address marginal or unacceptable performance **must** be conducted in consultation with servicing personnel offices and/or State Office Administrative Officers.

6 Additional Information and Contacts

A Additional Information

Additional performance management information can be found on the HRD performance management web site at <https://inside.fsa.usda.gov/operations/dam/hrd/performance-management/index>.

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6 Additional Information and Contacts (Continued)

B Performance Management Training

The Performance Management Plus-Engaging for Success course will be added to supervisors' and/or non-supervisors' AgLearn "To-Do List" as indicated. This course can be accessed at <http://www.aglearn.usda.gov/>, and must be completed by **July 30, 2018**.

Following is a description of the course.

Performance Management Plus-Engaging for Success is a web-based training course designed to support Federal employees, HR practitioners, supervisors, managers, and executives in understanding and applying Performance Management Plus (PM+), where the "Plus" is employee engagement. PM+ recognizes that the key to enabling excellence in performance is having genuine and positive working relationships and interactions between supervisors and employees. This interactive and engaging one-hour course consists of two lessons that help learners understand how to establish and maintain such positive working relationships through the application of PM+. Lesson 1 presents the learner with the foundational principles of PM+, while Lesson 2 immerses the learner in a virtual environment that enables them to practice the application of PM+.

C 2019 Performance Cycle

Effective October 1, 2018 all FSA and RMA performance plans must include standards at the "Exceeds Fully Successful" level. The Department will provide all agencies with additional guidance before October 1, 2018. At this time, supervisors who have questions about the "exceeds" standards may contact the performance manager in subparagraph D.

D Contacts

If there are any questions about mid-year performance progress reviews, then managers, supervisors, rating officials, and employees shall contact one of the following.

IF located in...	THEN contact HRD, Policy and Accountability Branch by any of the following...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FSA APFO• FSA Kansas City or St. Louis• FSA Washington, DC• RMA	Michael Braswell by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• telephone at:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 202-401-0392• 202-205-9057 (TTY), or• e-mail at michael.braswell@wdc.usda.gov.
FSA State or County Office	State Office Administrative Officer.

Note: If there are problems with the EmpowHR System, contact the EmpowHR Help Desk at 816-823-3996.

EmpowHR “Guidance for supervisors on Revising Existing Plans”

The following provides instructions for revising existing Performance Plans in EmpowHR.

**Supervisor Revises an Existing Performance Plan
VIA EmpowHR 9.0 Manager Self Service**



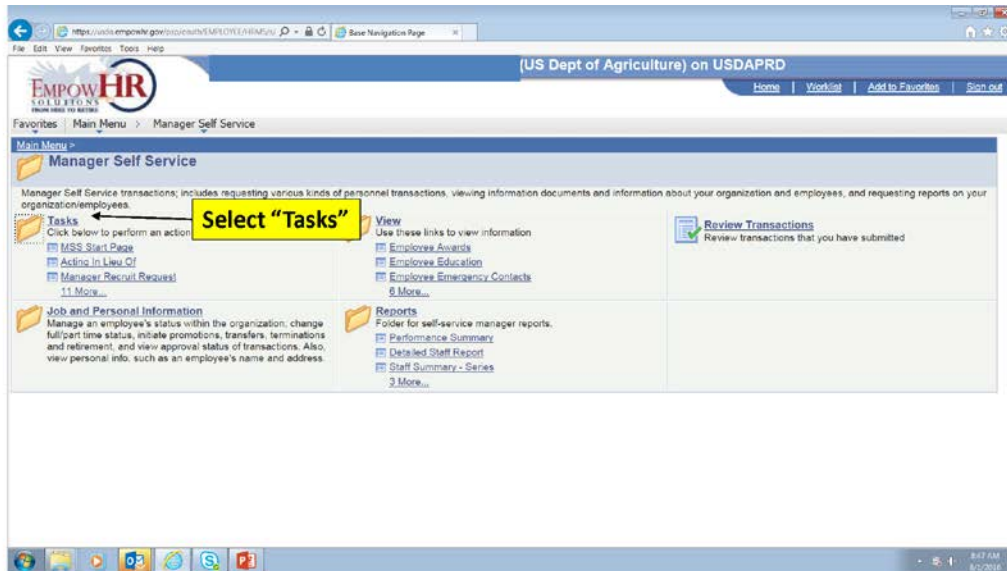
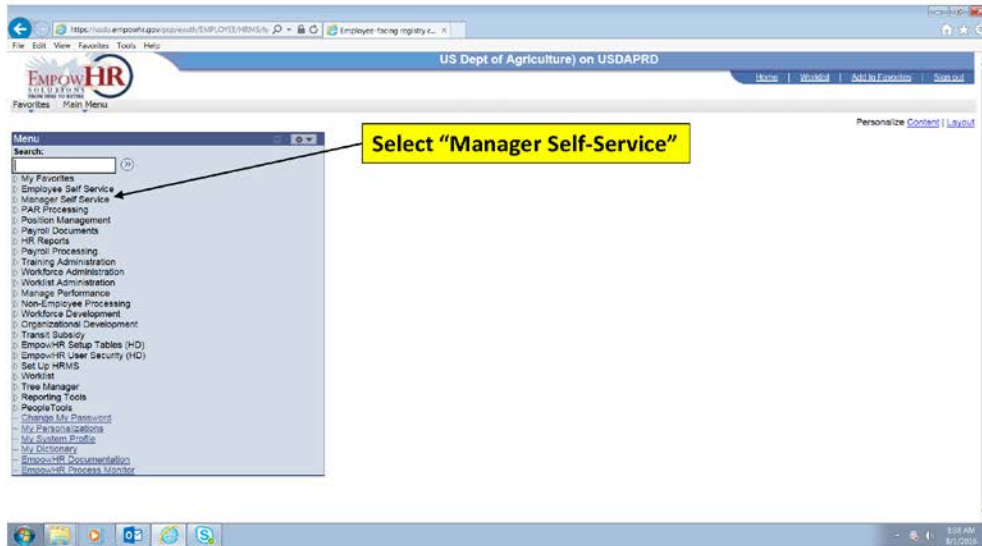
EmpowHR “Guidance for supervisors on Revising Existing Plans” (Continued)

A Performance Plan Can Be Revised in EmpowHR At Any Time up until a Progress Review is Entered.

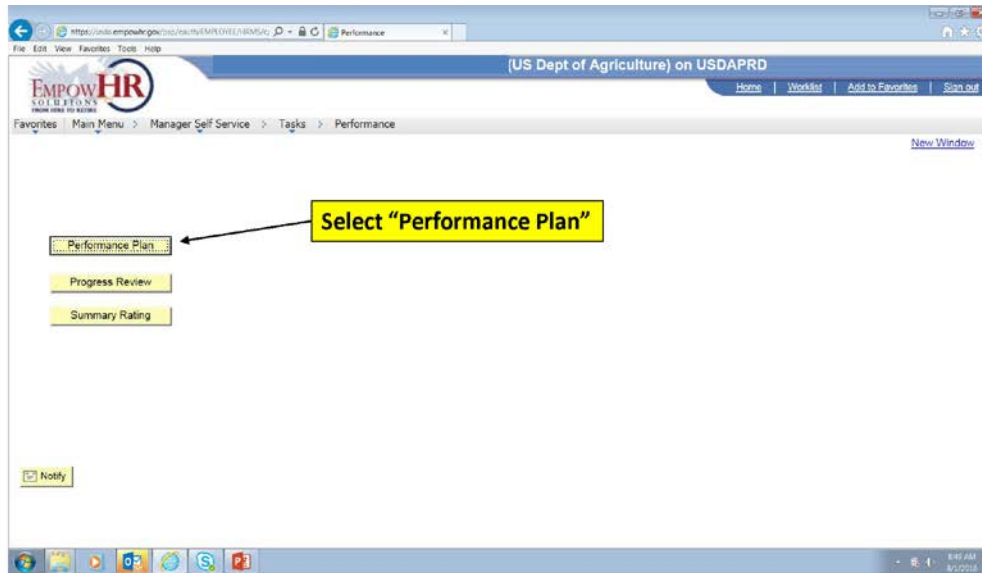
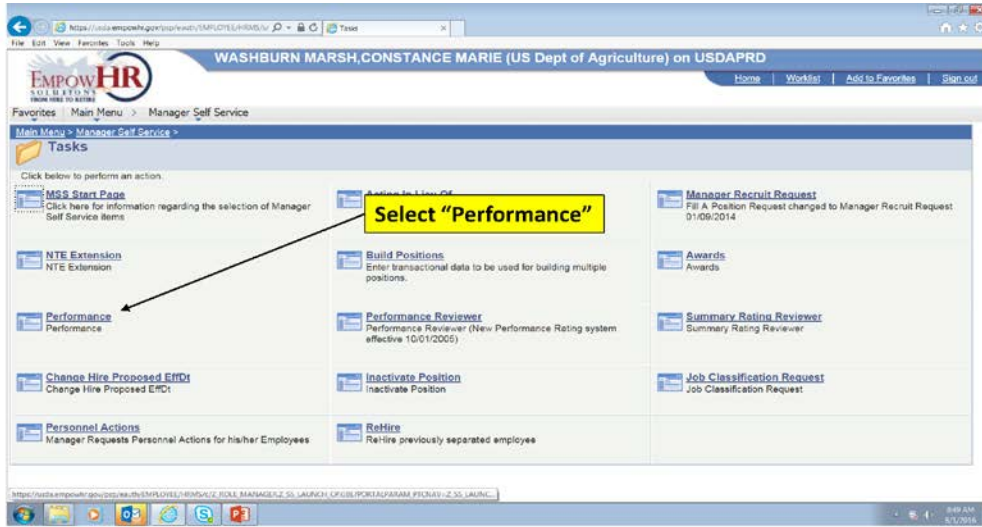
Revised Plans do not flow back to the Reviewer and there are no email notifications.

All accesses related to revised plans including review by the reviewer are via the EmpowHR menu options and not the Worklist.

EmpowHR “Guidance for supervisors on Revising Existing Plans” (Continued)



EmpowHR “Guidance for supervisors on Revising Existing Plans” (Continued)



EmpowHR “Guidance for supervisors on Revising Existing Plans” (Continued)

Click on “Existing Plan” for the applicable employee.

Name	New Plan	Existing Plan	Plan Effective
BLACK	New Plan	Existing Plan	Yes
CARIC	New Plan	Existing Plan	Yes
CRIGG	New Plan	Existing Plan	Yes
ELSEA	New Plan	Existing Plan	Yes
GOOD	New Plan	Existing Plan	Yes
HALE,I	New Plan	Existing Plan	Yes
HAZLE	New Plan	Existing Plan	Yes
INGRA	New Plan	Existing Plan	Yes
JOHNÉ	New Plan	Existing Plan	Yes
KELLE	New Plan	Existing Plan	Yes
KRASZ	New Plan	Existing Plan	Yes
NOELL	New Plan	Existing Plan	Yes
TRAIL,	New Plan	Existing Plan	Yes
WASH	New Plan	Existing Plan	Yes

Find an Existing Value

Search Criteria

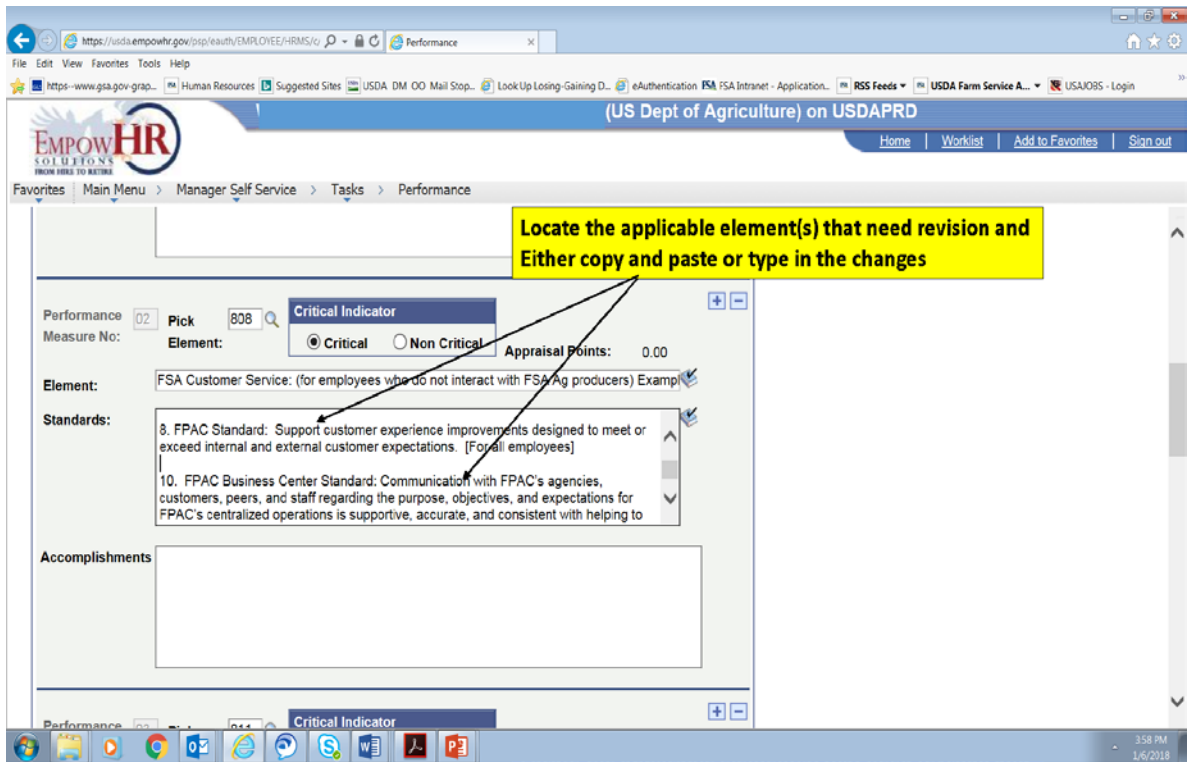
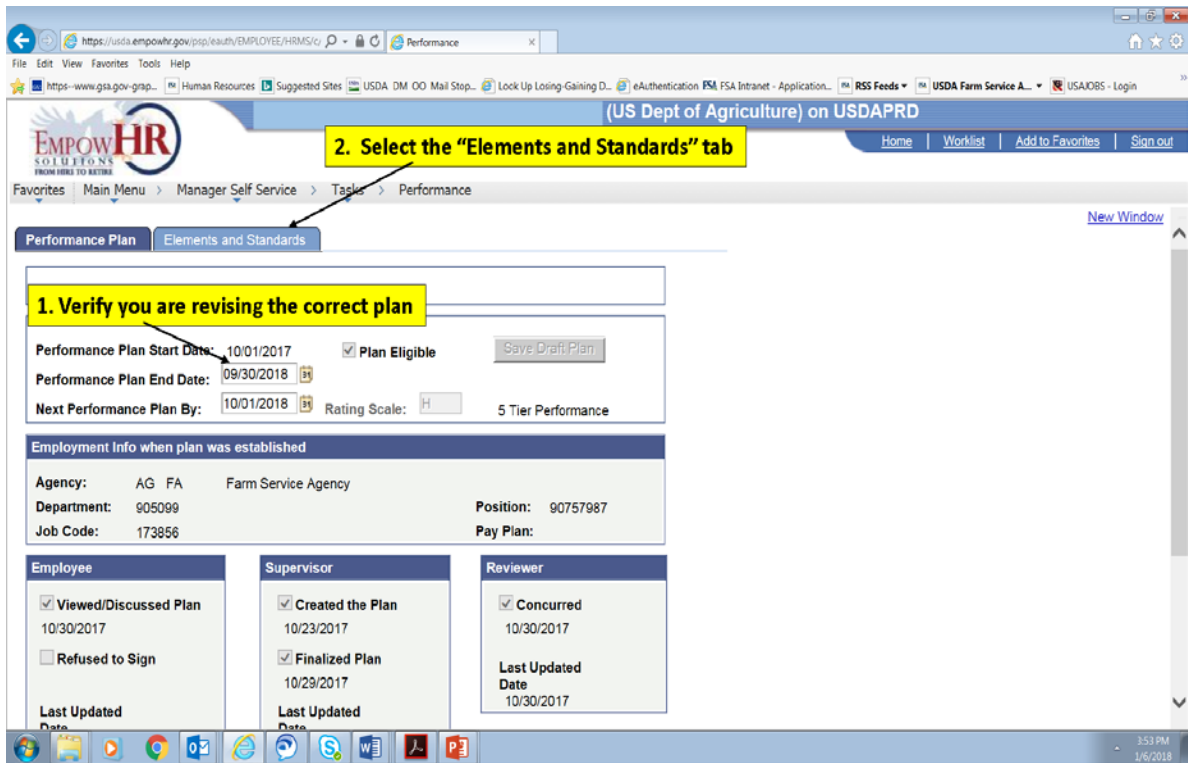
Search Clear Basic Search Save Search Criteria

Search Results

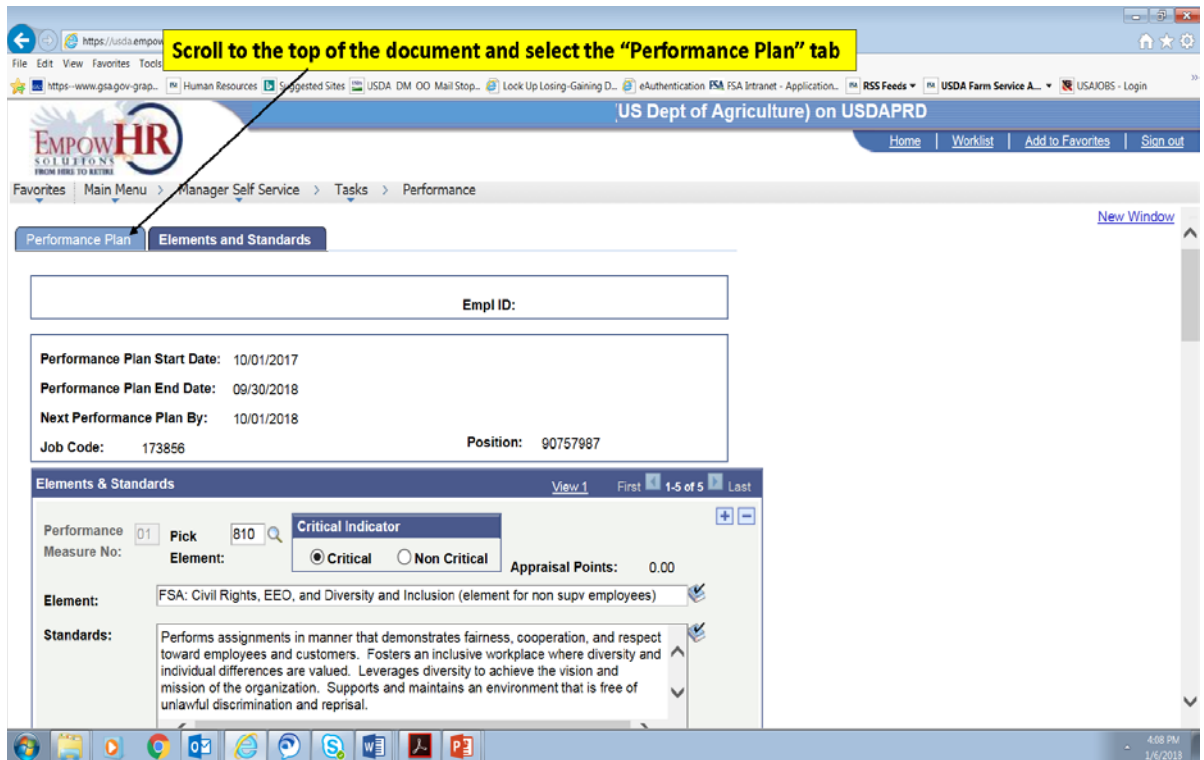
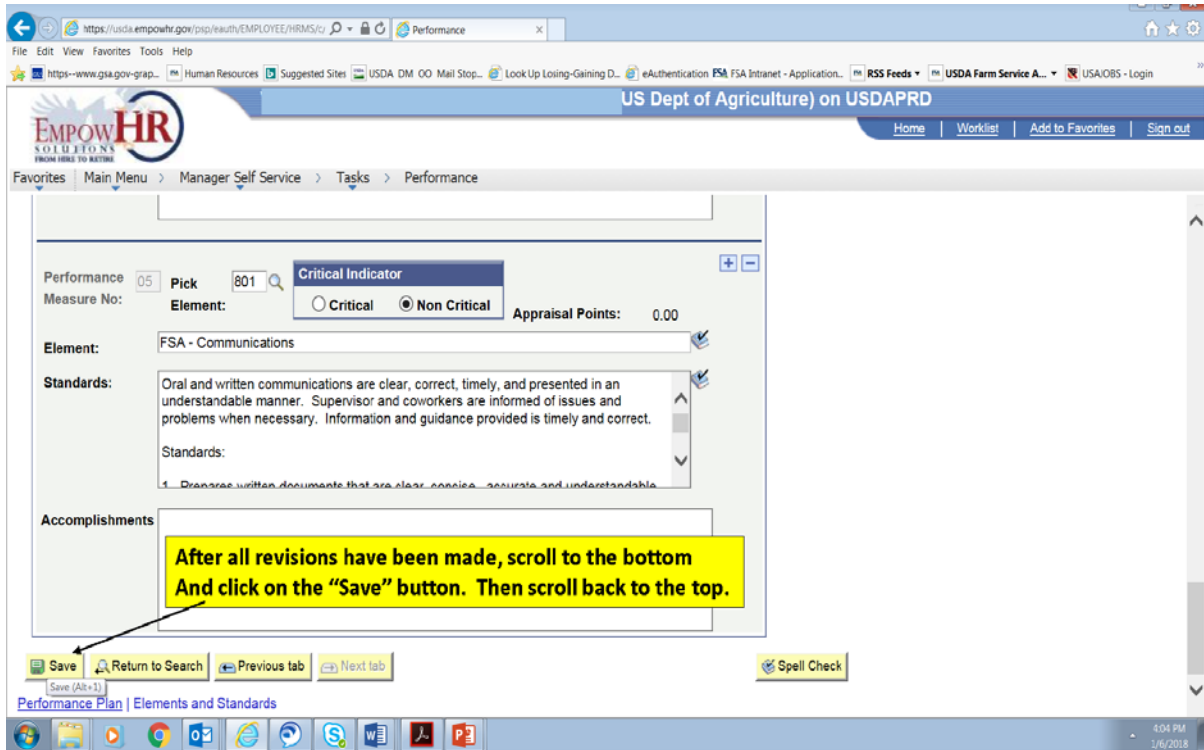
Empl ID	Personnel Office	Name	Review Period From	Reviewed Date
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161230	4866	M	10/01/2016	10/01/2016
161230	4866	M	10/01/2015	10/01/2015
161230	4866	M	10/01/2014	10/01/2014
161230	4866	M	10/01/2013	10/01/2013
161230	4866	M	10/01/2012	10/01/2012
161230	4866	M	10/01/2011	10/01/2011
161230	4866	M	10/01/2010	10/01/2010
161230	4866	M	10/01/2009	10/01/2009
161230	4866	M	10/01/2008	10/01/2008
161230	4866	M	08/08/2008	08/08/2008

Select the FY18 plan. Note: The plan should have a review Period date of 10-1-2017 or later.

EmpowHR “Guidance for supervisors on Revising Existing Plans” (Continued)



EmpowHR “Guidance for supervisors on Revising Existing Plans” (Continued)



EmpowHR “Guidance for supervisors on Revising Existing Plans” (Continued)

The screenshot shows the EmpowHR Performance Plan interface. At the top, the browser address bar displays <https://usda.empowhr.gov/psp/esauth/EMPLOYEE/HRMS/cv>. The page header includes the EmpowHR logo and navigation links: Home, Worklist, Add to Favorites, and Sign out. The breadcrumb trail is: Favorites | Main Menu > Manager Self Service > Tasks > Performance. The main content area includes a form for plan details: Performance Plan Start Date (10/01/2017), Performance Plan End Date (09/30/2018), Next Performance Plan By (10/01/2018), Rating Scale (H), and 5 Tier Performance. Below this are three columns: Supervisor (with checkboxes for Created the Plan and Finalized Plan), Reviewer (with a checked Concurrred checkbox), and a Refused to Sign section. A yellow callout box on the left says: "If you need a hard copy plan, click on 'create printable form' and then click on the resulting blue link to open and print the document." Another yellow callout box in the center says: "This date should update to show the date the latest revision was made to the plan", with an arrow pointing to the 'Last Updated Date' field in the Supervisor column. A third yellow callout box on the right says: "Select 'return to employee list' to select other employee plans for revision", with an arrow pointing to the "Return to Employee List" link. The bottom of the page shows a Windows taskbar with various application icons and a system tray showing 4:10 PM on 1/6/2018.

This screenshot shows the same EmpowHR Performance Plan interface as the previous one, but with additional information. The "Employment Info when plan was established" section is expanded, showing: Agency: AG FA Farm Service Agency, Department: 905099, Position: 90757987, Job Code: 173856, and Pay Plan. The Supervisor and Reviewer columns are also visible. A yellow callout box on the right says: "When finished with all the revisions, Select 'Sign Out' to exit EmpowHR", with an arrow pointing to the "Sign out" link in the top right navigation bar. The rest of the page layout, including the breadcrumb trail and form fields, is identical to the previous screenshot.

EmpowHR “Guidance for supervisors on Revising Existing Plans” (Continued)

Since there are no email notifications, the Supervisor should notify the Reviewer that Revisions are complete.

Remember to discuss the revised performance Plans with the employee.

Guidance for reviewers for modifying established plans via EmpowHR Menu options

The following provides instructions for the reviewer to modify established plans in EmpowHR.

Reviewer can Access 5 tier performance plans to conduct reviews following revisions of existing plans that have previously been concurred by the reviewer via EmpowHR MSS menu options



Guidance for reviewers for modifying established plans via EmpowHR Menu options (Continued)

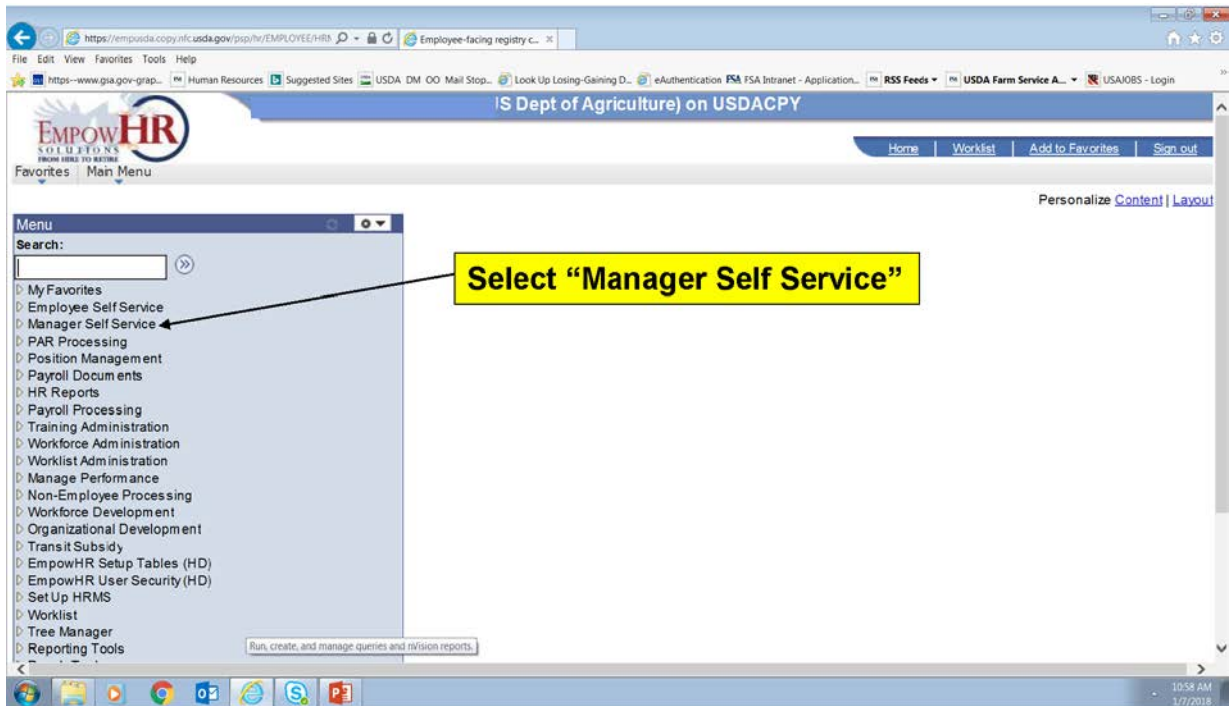
A Performance Plan Can Be Revised in EmpowHR at any time up until a Progress Review is Entered.

Revised Plans do not flow back to the Reviewer and there are no email notifications.

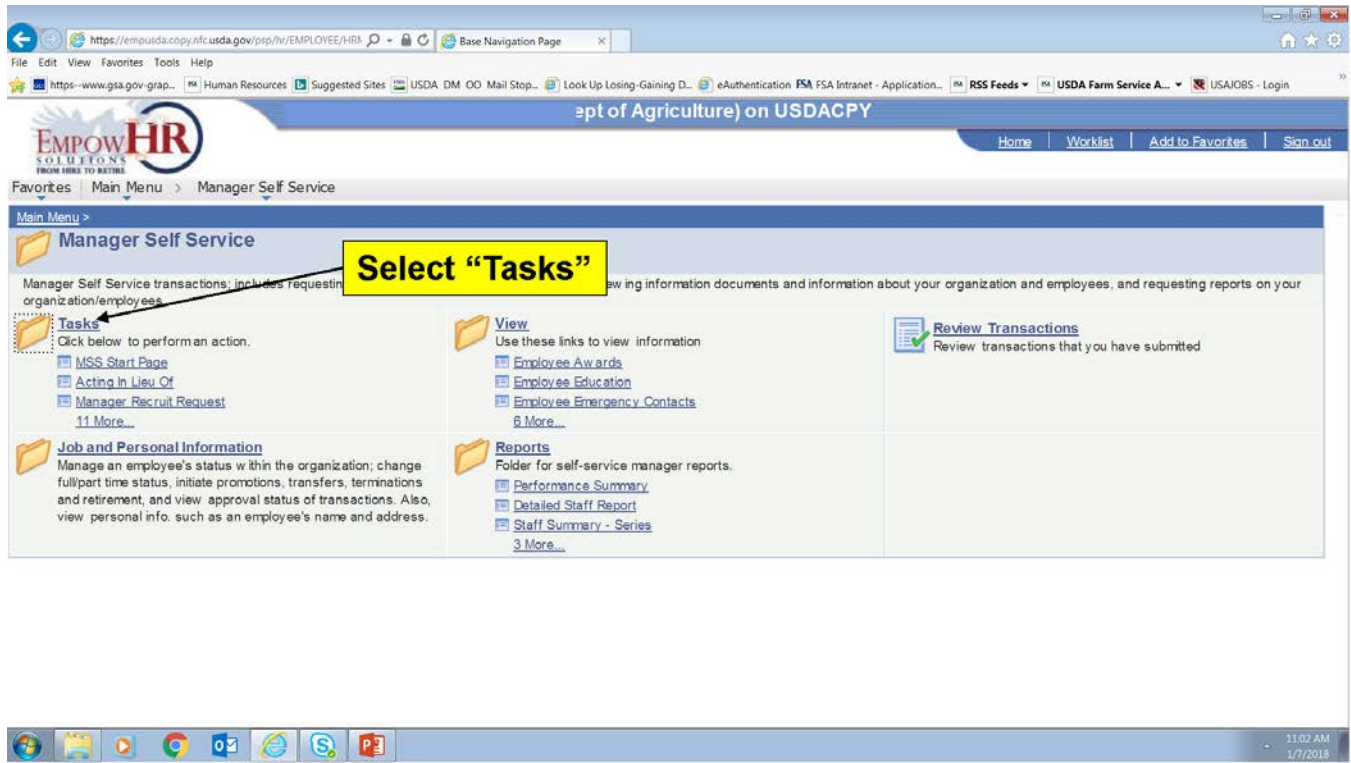
All accesses related to revised plans including review by the reviewer are via the EmpowHR menu options and not the Worklist.

The reviewer is to review revised plans to ensure that plans as filed are correct.

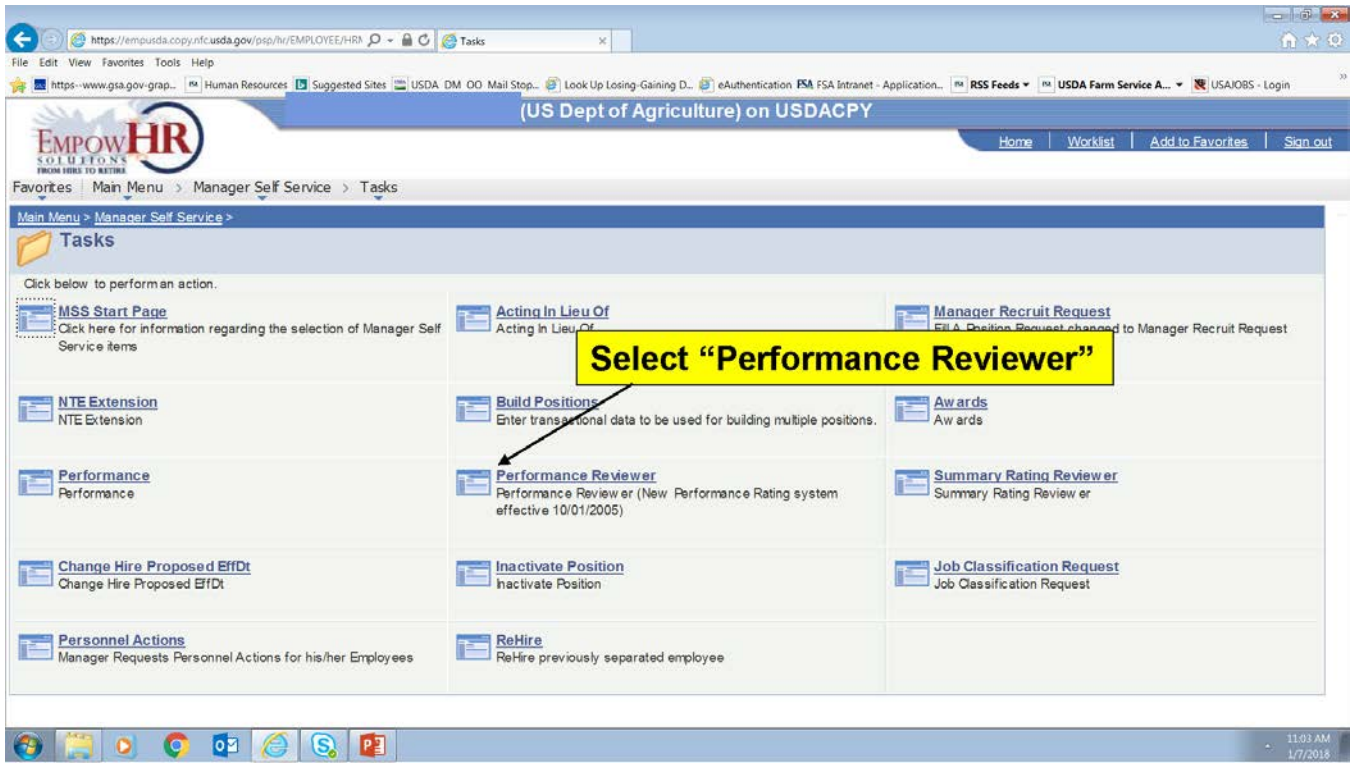
Guidance for reviewers for modifying established plans via EmpowHR Menu options (Continued)



Guidance for reviewers for modifying established plans via EmpowHR Menu options (Continued)



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Guidance for reviewers for modifying established plans via EmpowHR Menu options (Continued)

Reports To

JS Dept of Agriculture) on USDACPY

Home | Worklist | Add to Favorites | Sign out

Favorites | Main Menu > Manager Self Service > Tasks > Performance Reviewer

Personalize | End | First 1 of 15 Last

Name	Direct Reports with Perf Concurred Employees
1 BRICKHOUSE, DONALD LOUIS	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 BROWN, HERBERT ALLEN	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 DALTON, ASHLEE WASHBURN	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 DAVIS, JEFF STEPHENSON	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 DAWLEY, DANIEL MARVIN	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 HILL, MELVIN ELLSWORTH	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 HOLLOWAY, DAVID COLLINS	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 KELLAM JR, HAYWOOD LEE	<input type="checkbox"/>

11:06 AM 1/7/2018

Guidance for reviewers for modifying established plans via EmpowHR Menu options (Continued)

The screenshot shows the EmpowHR web application interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the EmpowHR logo and the text "(US Dept of Agriculture) on USDACPY". Below this is a breadcrumb trail: "Favorites | Main Menu > Manager Self Service > Tasks > Performance Reviewer". A "Reports To" button is visible on the left. The main content area displays an "Employee List" table with the following data:

Name	Review Period From	Select to Edit
1 AMES,SUZANNE WHITTINGTON	10/01/2017	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 BEASLEY,WILLIAM HYSLOP	10/01/2017	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 HARMON,WILLIAM		<input type="checkbox"/>
4 HOLLAND JR,FREDERICK W		<input type="checkbox"/>
5 LONG,RUTH ANN		<input type="checkbox"/>
6 RILEY,ARLINE PITT	10/01/2017	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 SHOCKLEY,THOMAS HARPER		<input type="checkbox"/>
8 WHITE,SHERYL L		<input type="checkbox"/>

A yellow callout box with the text "2. Select the applicable employee whose plan is to be reviewed by clicking in the box under the heading 'select to edit'." has an arrow pointing to the checkbox in the row for RILEY,ARLINE PITT.

1. Verify the correct "review period from" date is showing. Note: For FY18 plans, the "review period from" date should be 10-1-17 or later . If you need to find a different plan, click on the Search icon next to the date that is shown.

Guidance for reviewers for modifying established plans via EmpowHR Menu options (Continued)

Click on the "element and standards" tab to review the Elements and measures.

Performance Plan | **Element and Standards**

Empl ID:

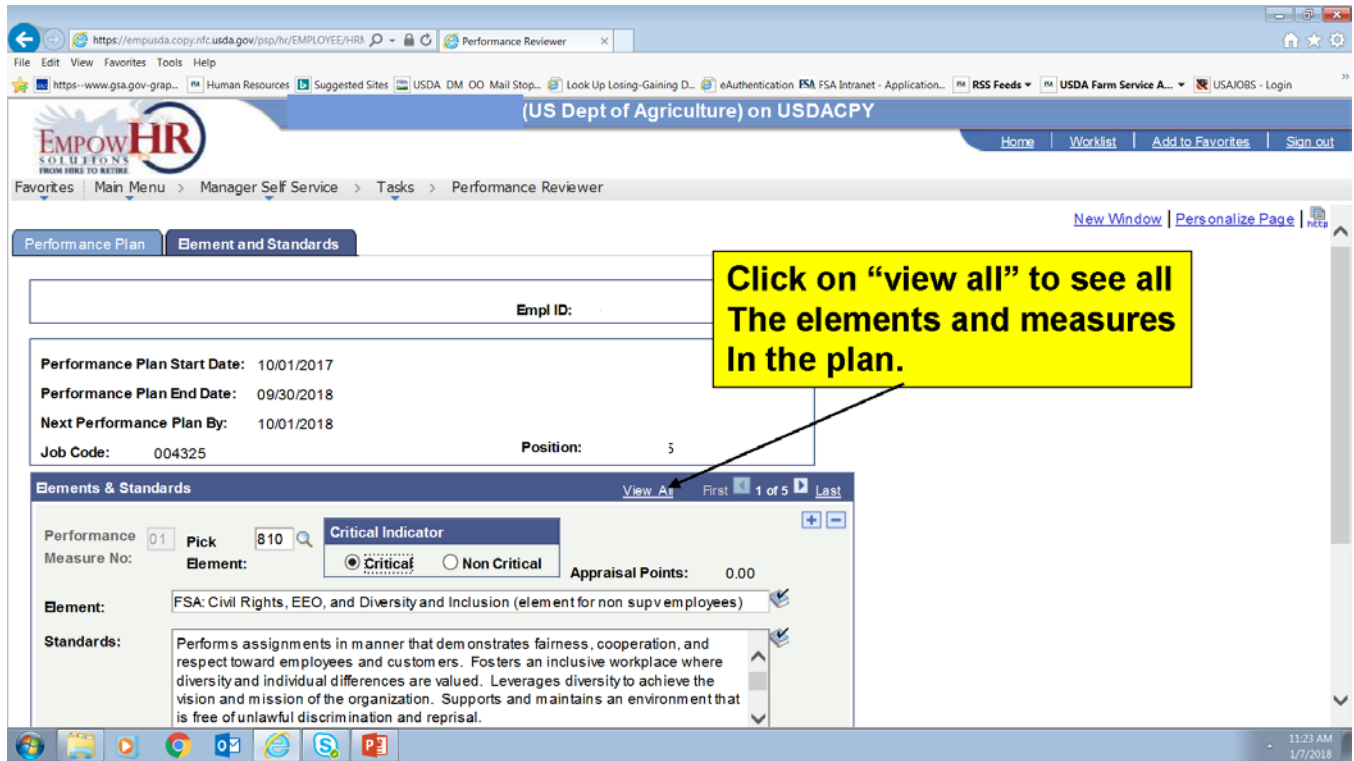
Performance Plan Start Date: 10/01/2017 Plan Eligible
Performance Plan End Date: 09/30/2018
Next Performance Plan By: 10/01/2018 Rating Scale: H 5 Tier Performance

Employment Info when plan was established

Agency: XC CE Farm Services Agency-County Offices
Department: 902947 Position: 90013055
Job Code: 004325 Pay Plan:

Employee	Supervisor	Reviewer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Viewed/Discussed Plan 12/05/2017 <input type="checkbox"/> Refused to Sign	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Created the Plan 11/30/2017 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Finalized Plan 12/04/2017	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concurred 12/05/2017 Last Updated Date 12/05/2017
Last Updated	Last Updated Date	

Guidance for reviewers for modifying established plans via EmpowHR Menu options (Continued)



Guidance for reviewers for modifying established plans via EmpowHR Menu options (Continued)

The screenshot displays the EmpowHR web application interface for a performance review. The browser address bar shows the URL: <https://empusda.copy.nrc.usda.gov/psp/hr/EMPLOYEE/HRA>. The page title is "Performance Reviewer". The navigation bar includes "Home", "Worklist", "Add to Favorites", and "Sign out". The breadcrumb trail is "Favourites | Main Menu > Manager Self Service > Tasks > Performance Reviewer".

The main form area contains the following fields and options:

- Performance Measure No.: 01
- Pick: 810
- Element: FSA: Civil Rights, EEO, and Diversity and Inclusion (element for non sup employees)
- Critical Indicator: Critical Non Critical
- Appraisal Points: 0.00
- Standards: Performs assignments in 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. Cascading Alignment: The following results-focused standards align with USDA-
- Accomplishments: (empty text area)

A yellow callout box with black text is overlaid on the form, containing the following text:

Reviewers are responsible to ensure that all elements and measures are entered and are accurate. Reviewers can make corrections/revisions in the plans during the review and discuss changes made with the applicable supervisor.

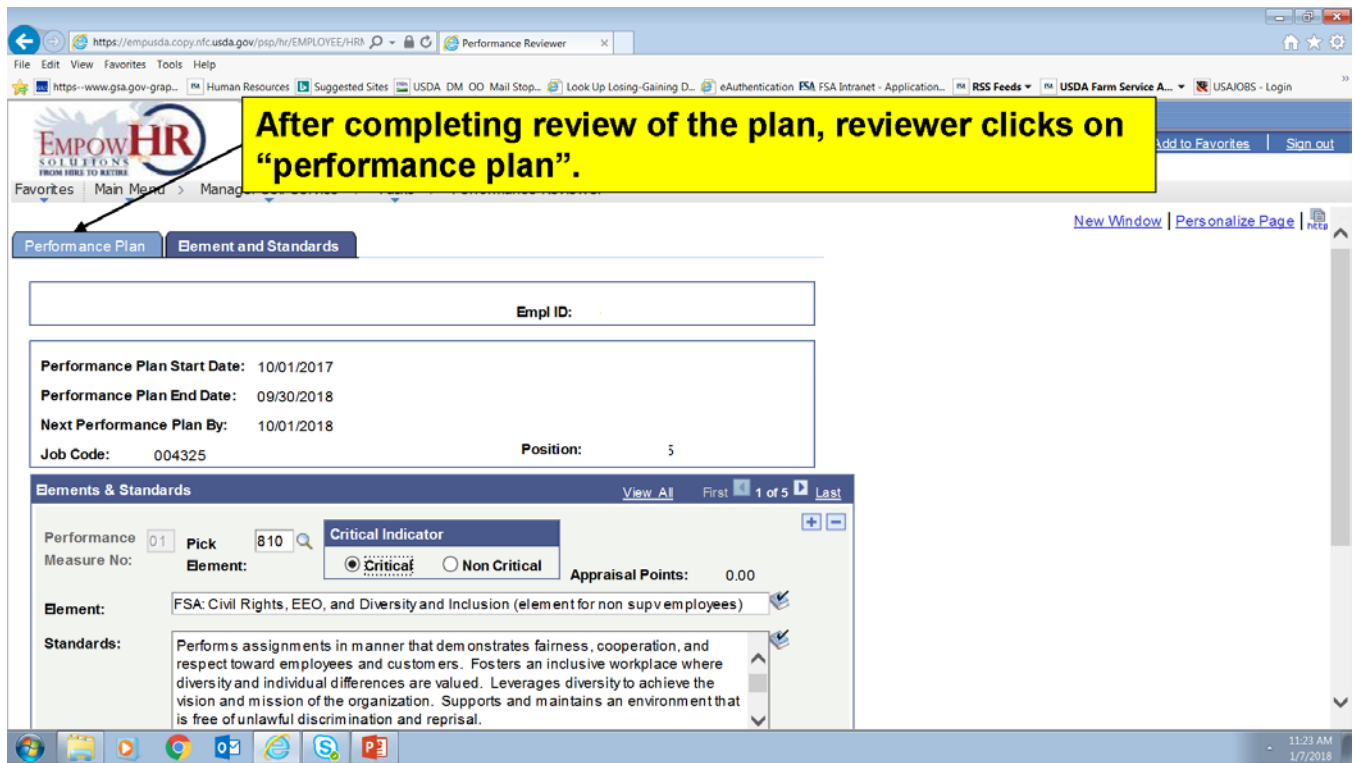
An arrow points from the callout box to the 'Standards' field.

At the bottom of the form, there are additional fields:

- Measure no.: (empty)
- Element: Critical Non Critical
- Appraisal Points: 4.00
- Element: FSA - Execution of Duties/Technical Knowledge and Skill

The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the system clock as 11:28 AM 1/7/2018.

Guidance for reviewers for modifying established plans via EmpowHR Menu options (Continued)



Guidance for reviewers for modifying established plans via EmpowHR Menu options (Continued)

In this example, the plan has already been previously Created, Reviewed and Concurred. If the reviewer Makes changes/corrections during the review of an existing plan, don't forget to take "SAVE" in order to hold the revisions.

Employment Info when plan was established	
Agency:	XC CE Farm Services Agency-County Offices
Department:	902947
Job Code:	004325
Position:	90013055
Pay Plan:	

Employee	Supervisor	Reviewer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Viewed/Discussed Plan 12/05/2017 <input type="checkbox"/> Refused to Sign Last Updated Date 12/05/2017	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Created the Plan 11/30/2017 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Finalized Plan 12/04/2017 Last Updated Date 12/04/2017	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concurred 12/05/2017 Last Updated Date 12/05/2017

[Create Printable Form](#)
[Return to Employee List](#)

Error completing report. Try Again.

If any revisions were made by the reviewer during the review, select "SAVE".
Note: If no changes/revisions were made by the reviewer, no action is needed.

Guidance for reviewers for modifying established plans via EmpowHR Menu options (Continued)

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the EmpowHR interface. The browser's address bar shows the URL: <https://empusda.copy.nrc.usda.gov/psp/hr/EMPLOYEE/HRA>. The page title is "Performance Reviewer". The navigation bar includes "Home", "Worklist", "Add to Favorites", and "Sign out". The main content area is titled "Performance Reviewer" and contains the following sections:

- Employment Info when plan was established:**
 - Agency: XC CE Farm Services Agency-County Offices
 - Department: 902947
 - Job Code: 004325
 - Position: 90013055
 - Pay Plan:
- Employee:**
 - Viewed/Discussed Plan (12/05/2017)
 - Refused to Sign
 - Last Updated Date: 12/05/2017
- Supervisor:**
 - Created the Plan (11/30/2017)
 - Finalized Plan (12/04/2017)
 - Last Updated Date: 12/04/2017
- Reviewer:**
 - Concurred (12/05/2017)
 - Last Updated Date: 12/05/2017

Below these sections, there is a "Create Printable Form" button, an error message "Error completing report. Try Again.", and "Save" and "Notify" buttons. A blue link "Return to Employee List" is visible. A yellow callout box with black text points to this link, containing the instruction: "Click on 'return to employee list' to select another employee's plan for review."

Steps for Preparing Mid-Year Performance Reviews

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

Maintain a record of good performance documentation (such as work samples, logs, records, customer praises or complaints, and other documentation) throughout the performance period. Review the documentation to assess how the employee is performing and meeting expectations. Follow these simple guidelines:

- keep observations of performance objective, and not subjective
- have concrete examples to support assessments
- do not hold the employee accountable for factors beyond their control; for example, changes in workload, priorities, duties, and opportunities that may impact employee performance.

2. Compare current performance with expectations.

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

3. Assess developmental opportunities.

Has the employee completed developmental opportunities that have impacted/improved performance? Determine whether additional opportunities are needed.

4. Help the employee prepare for the meeting.

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

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

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

Questions to Prepare for the Review

Use the following 10 questions to prepare for productive and meaningful **mid-year reviews** with your direct reports. Think through these questions in advance and use them as an agenda for your discussion.

1. What goals (standards) and objectives have been accomplished so far?
2. How have performance related to goals and objectives measured up against the success criteria agreed upon at the start of the year? (Example, fully successful, exceeds.)
3. What challenges emerged that had an impact on performance or goal accomplishment? (Example, budget reduction, furlough, etc.)
4. What goals and projects still need to be accomplished?
5. Which goals are no longer relevant or high priority? Should they be revised or removed from the priority list?
6. What new priorities or projects have surfaced that should be included as new goals?
7. What resources and support will be required to accomplish the goals that remain for the rest of the year?
8. What obstacles or challenges might hamper performance going forward?
9. What new knowledge, skills and capabilities will be required?
10. How can I be of assistance to ensure success?

HRD recommends sharing these questions with your direct reports in advance of the mid-year review meeting, and thinking through your answers to these questions. The list of questions can serve as your meeting agenda.

Conducting Mid-Year Progress Reviews

1. Open the meeting.

- Establish a relaxed, nonthreatening environment in which the employee feels secure and respected.
- Hold the meeting in “neutral territory” and provide a comfortable environment.
- Eliminate distractions, such as ringing phones, e-mail, etc.
- Establish a positive tone when you greet the employee and welcome them to the discussion.
- Review the meeting’s goal and what will be discussed.

2. Discuss accomplishments and expectations.

- Provide a general summary of the employee’s performance.
- Discuss areas of success and areas of concern, according to expectations (standards).
- Suggest further developmental opportunities.
- Identify any changes to the performance plan.

3. Close the meeting.

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

4. Complete any follow-up activities.

- Verify employee has acknowledged review in the EmpowHR system.
- Provide updated performance plan (if standards and elements have been modified) before verification in EmpowHR.

Tips for Giving Effective Feedback

Effective feedback meets the following four characteristics.

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

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

- √ Request feedback from the employee's customers, coworkers, colleagues, or other managers.
- √ Feedback should be a combination of both positive and constructive feedback. Start the conversation stating something the employee does well.
 - Positive feedback involves telling your employee about good performance. Be descriptive and objective in describing the behavior. Tell the employee why you liked it and why it is important. When possible, tie the performance to the agency's goals.
Example: "You solved that database migration problem very quickly this morning. That really prevented disruptions to the system's operations."
 - Constructive feedback alerts an employee to an area in which their performance could improve. When providing constructive feedback, be sure to describe the following:
 - Situation - Describe the situation in which the performance occurred. Give your perspective on where and when the performance occurred.
Example: "This morning at the meeting when we were discussing the new project..."
 - Behavior - Describe the behavior that you observed or heard. Focus on the employee's actions, not the person.
Example: "This morning at the meeting when we were discussing the new project, you may not have realized it, but you interrupted me several times..."

Tips for Giving Effective Feedback (Continued)

- **Impact** - Describe the impact the performance had on you, others, and/or the agency. Be specific and objective about the impact by providing your actual observations. Link the impact of the employee's performance to expected standards.

Example: "This morning at the meeting when we were discussing the new project, you may not have realized it, but you interrupted me several times. These interruptions confused the staff and required numerous clarifications that took away time slated to address additional key items of concern".

- **Next Steps** - Describe specific changes in behavior that you expect in a specific period of time and follow up as scheduled. Ask the employee's help in solving the problem.

Example: "While your participation is important, I'd like for you to refrain from interrupting speakers. When others are speaking, you should indicate to the speaker that you have something to say and wait until the speaker acknowledges you. Let's schedule a time to get back together next Tuesday to see how this process works".

- √ Check to make sure the employee understands by asking a question or observing changed behavior.
- √ End the meeting on a positive note.

USDA Strategic Plan FY 2018 – 2022

The USDA strategic plan is to be used to ensure cascading alignment of goals and objectives from supervisors/managers to non-supervisor employees.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: Ensure USDA programs are Delivered Efficiently, Effectively, with Integrity and a Focus on Customer Service

Objective 1.1: Modernize information technology infrastructure, facilities, and support services to improve the customer experience

Objective 1.2: Maintain a High Performing Workforce through Employee Engagement and Empowerment

Objective 1.3: Remove obstacles in USDA programs by reducing regulatory burden and streamlining processes

Objective 1.4: Improve stewardship of resources and utilize data-driven analyses to maximize the return on investment

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: Maximize the Ability of American Agricultural Producers to Prosper by Feeding and Clothing the World

Objective 2.1: Provide an effective financial safety net for farmers and ranchers to sustain economically viable agricultural production and support rural jobs and economic growth

Objective 2.2: Increase agricultural opportunities and support economic growth by creating new markets and supporting a competitive agricultural system

Objective 2.3: Protect agricultural health by preventing and mitigating the spread of agricultural pests and diseases

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: Promote American Agricultural Products and Exports

Objective 3.1: Expand International Marketing Opportunities

Objective 3.2: Prevent or resolve barriers to trade that hinder U.S. food and agricultural exports

Objective 3.3: Build demand in developing countries through trade capacity building

STRATEGIC GOAL 4: Facilitate Rural Prosperity and Economic Development

Objective 4.1: Expand rural business opportunity and rural quality of life with access to capital; improved infrastructure, broadband access and connectivity; and support for workforce availability

USDA Strategic Plan FY 2018 – 2022 (Continued)

STRATEGIC GOAL 5: Strengthen the Stewardship of Private Lands through Technology and Research

Objective 5.1: Enhance conservation planning with science-based tools and information

Objective 5.2: Promote productive working lands

Objective 5.3: Enhance productive agricultural landscapes

STRATEGIC GOAL 6: Ensure Productive and Sustainable Use of our National Forest System Lands

Objective 6.1: Contribute to the Economic Health of Rural Communities through Use and Access Opportunities

Objective 6.2: Ensure Lands and Watersheds are Sustainable, Healthy, and Productive

Objective 6.3: Mitigate Wildfire Risk

STRATEGIC GOAL 7: Provide all Americans access to a safe, nutritious, and secure food supply

Objective 7.1: Prevent Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health

Objective 7.2: Provide access to safe and nutritious food for low-income people while supporting a pathway to self-sufficiency

Objective 7.3: Support and encourage healthy dietary choices through data driven, flexible, and customer-focused approaches

Entering Multiple Progress Reviews

Enter quarterly progress reviews into EmpowHR as well as the mid-year progress review. The system will allow multiple reviews as long as the review dates are different.

Entering multiple progress reviews for the same Employee. You can enter more than one progress review for the same employee in empowHR as long as the review dates are different. We entered 3 with different review dates.

Emp ID	Personnel Office ID	Name	Review Period From	Reviewed Date
012067	4866	CRAFT, LAURA ANN	10/01/2017	02/28/2018
012067	4866	CRAFT, LAURA ANN	10/01/2017	02/24/2018
012067	4866	CRAFT, LAURA ANN	10/01/2017	02/23/2018
012067	4866	CRAFT, LAURA ANN	10/01/2016	04/06/2017
012067	4866	CRAFT, LAURA ANN	10/01/2015	03/28/2016
012067	4866	CRAFT, LAURA ANN	10/01/2014	05/07/2015
012067	4866	CRAFT, LAURA ANN	10/01/2013	04/13/2014
012067	4866	CRAFT, LAURA ANN	10/01/2012	04/19/2013
012067	4866	CRAFT, LAURA ANN	10/01/2011	04/30/2012