

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Farm Service Agency
Washington, DC 20250

Notice PM-3076

For: FSA Employees

FY 2024 Performance Plans

Approved by: Administrator



1 Overview

A Background

Departmental Regulation **4040-430** (issued June 24, 2020) set forth a two-tier (Fully Successful/Unacceptable) performance management system for USDA employees. All performance plan elements must be critical and written at the “Fully Successful” level. If any element is rated “Does Not Meet,” the summary rating is “Unacceptable.”

FY 2024 plans will be entered into Enterprise Performance Management Application (EPMA) at <https://ehrapps.usda.gov/systems/epma/>.

Note: This notice does not apply to employees appointed to excepted service positions who are not reasonably expected to be employed longer than the 90-day minimum appraisal period in a consecutive 12-month period.

B Purpose

This notice provides:

- guidance on the deadline for completing FY 2024 performance plans
- information on and instructions for template plans available in EPMA
- guidance on copying FY 2023 performance plans over to FY 2024.

Disposal Date	Distribution
October 1, 2024	All FSA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices
10-27-23	

2 Required Performance Elements

A Overview

Template plans that contain all mandatory performance elements for FSA positions have been created in EPMA. All elements are critical and contain the necessary alignment with USDA, Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC), and Agency goals. No elements should be added to the template plans.

B Supervisory Employees

The following elements are **mandatory** for all **supervisory** employees:

- Leadership and Supervision
- Program Delivery
- Customer Experience
- Mission Results.

Note: The FSA HQ Outreach Director also has “Communications” as a mandatory element.

C Non-Supervisory Employees

The following elements are **mandatory** for all **non-supervisory field office** employees:

- Program Delivery
- Customer Experience
- Individual Contributions to the Team
- Mission Results.

The following elements are **mandatory** for all **non-supervisory HQ** employees:

- Customer Experience
- Individual Contributions to the Team
- Mission Results
- one of the following based on position according to Exhibit 1:
 - Program Delivery
 - Communications
 - Research and Analysis.

3 Required Performance Standards

A Required Standards in Template Plans

EPMA template plans include the following **required** performance plan standards which **may not be modified or deleted**.

- Any of the standards under the General Supervision and Leadership Element (unless deletion of an inapplicable standard for Headquarter (HQ) supervisors is permitted under subparagraph 4).
- EEO/Civil Rights.
- Accountability and Integrity.
- DEIA/Outreach.
- Personally Identifiable Information (PII).
- Safety and Health.
- Loan approval and servicing standards, when included in the template plan (unless deletion of these standards is permitted under subparagraph 4).

Exception: If a DD does not yet have loan approval authority, the standard under Program Delivery must be modified to read “Acquires and meets FSA’s standards for maintaining loan approval authority and loan servicing authority”

- Receipt for Service.

B Additional Mandatory Standards

The following additional standards will be mandatory for certain positions and may not be modified:

- CED’s with loan approval authority (the following standard must be added to the Program Delivery element):
 - meets FSA’s standards necessary for maintaining loan approval authority and loan servicing authority
- FLOT Trainer (the following standard must be added to the Leadership & Supervision element, under the “General” subtab in the “Goal Initiative Description” box):
 - gives clear directions; lays out assignments in a well-planned and organized manner with no more than 2 exceptions as determined by FLOT coordinator and FLC

3 Required Performance Standards (Continued)

B Additional Mandatory Standards (Continued)

- provides timely feedback and coaching for improvement with no more than 2 legitimate complaints, as determined by FLOT coordinator and FLC, received from the trainee that feedback is **not** provided
- maintains two-way dialogue with trainee on work and results with no more than 2 legitimate complaints as determined by FLOT coordinator and FLC with any communications problems brought to FLOT coordinator's attention within 24 to 30 hours
- ensures that monthly, quarterly, or interim reports are submitted within established deadlines with no more than 1 exception.

4 Modifying Performance Standards

A Deleting Inapplicable Standards

Supervisors **must not** delete any required standards listed in subparagraph 3. Supervisors **must**:

- delete inapplicable entry, developmental, or advanced FPAC proficiency level standards in nonsupervisory plans

Note: See Exhibit 2 for a description of the proficiency levels.

- for FLPT's and Key GS FLPT's, delete standard 7 in the Program Delivery element, "Acquires and meets FSA's standards for maintaining loan approval authority and loan servicing authority"
- delete **only** the inapplicable Deputy Administrators' accountability sections within the following FSA HQ templates:
 - Leadership & Supervision
 - Mission Results (Supervisory)
 - Mission Results (Non-Supervisory)
- delete the inapplicable Deputy Administrators' sections within the following FSA HQ templates:
 - Program Delivery (Supervisory)
 - Program Delivery (Non-Supervisory).

4 Modifying Performance Standards (Continued)

B Modifying Optional Standards

Supervisors may modify or delete any standards not listed in paragraph 3. Supervisors may also add additional standards to the performance plan templates.

C Supervisor Responsibilities

When making modifications to standards in the template plans, supervisors must ensure that modified or added standards meet the following guidance.

- Are specific and describe results, outcomes, goals, and expected accomplishments, rather than lists of duties and responsibilities. Standards are the performance thresholds, requirements, and expectations an employee must meet for an element to be appraised at the Fully Successful level of performance.
- Are measurable. Performance measures are the defined indicators within the standards used to determine how well the employee produced or provided products or services. They are criteria that are observable and/or demonstrable, and may gauge quality, quantity, timeliness, cost effectiveness, and/or manner of performance.
- Are commensurate with the position's series and grade level.
- Are not absolute. Absolute standards allowing for no errors are prohibited unless a single failure could result in loss of life, injury, breach of national security, or great monetary loss.
- Are not backward standards that describe unacceptable performance. (For example, that employee completes work accurately with at least 3 exceptions rather than with no more than 3 exceptions.)
- Are not made more or less rigorous, based on a particular employee's perceived strengths or weaknesses or based on past performance.
- Do not result in fewer than 3 standards for the element.

5 Recording Plans in EPMA

A Overview

FY 2024 performance plan templates have been loaded into EPMA. FY 2024 templates in EPMA streamline the development time for supervisors as they include all required elements for the position.

Supervisors **may copy** single or multiple plans from FY 2023 to FY 2024.

Exception: Template plans for DD's and HQ employees have changed. Supervisors and reviewing officials must ensure that the correct template plan is being used for the employee.

B Action

Supervisors will access EPMA to record FY 2024 performance plans.

Instructions for entering a new performance plan, including instructions on which template plan to use for particular positions such as Pathways Interns, can be found on the DAFO **PPOD SharePoint site** for Field Office employees. Job aids are also available in EPMA, <https://ehrapps.usda.gov/epma-wiki/>, covering performance plans and the entire performance management cycle.

Plans must be recorded, and signatures logged in EPMA according to the instructions in this notice **no later than December 29, 2023**. Supervisors are encouraged to complete plans as soon as possible. Until the performance plan is developed and implemented, the elements and standards in an employee's approved FY 2023 performance plan will remain in effect.

Additional Performance Element Matrix for FSA HQ Non-Supervisory Employees

The following table provides additional performance element matrix for FSA HQ non-supervisory employees.

Position	Communications	Research and Analysis	Program Delivery
Chief of Staff			MC
Executive Assistant	MC		
Secretary	MC		
Confidential Assistant	MC		
Administrative Support Specialist	MC		
Administrative Assistant	MC		
Mgmt and Program Analysis Officer		MC	
Field Operations Data Analyst		MC	
Correspondence Analyst		MC	
Program Analyst		MC	
Appraiser		MC	
Management Analyst	MC		
Technology Specialist	MC		
Outreach Specialist	MC		
Field Operations Manager	MC		
Field Operations Specialist	MC		
Program Assistant	MC		
Assistant to Deputy Director			MC
Program Specialist			MC
Program Manager			MC
Assistant to Branch Chief			MC
Assistant to Director			MC
Team Lead			MC
Loan Officer			MC
Loan Specialist			MC
National BFR Coordinator			MC

FPAC Proficiency Levels

The following table provides FPAC Proficiency levels.

Entry Level	
1 - Fundamental Awareness (basic knowledge)	Has a common knowledge or an understanding of basic techniques and concepts.
2 Novice (limited experience)	Has the level of experience gained in a classroom and/or experimental scenarios or as a trainee on-the-job. You are expected to need help when performing this skill:
Developmental	
3 - Intermediate (practical application)	<p>Successful completion of tasks in this competency as requested. Help from an expert may be required from time to time, but the task is usually performed independently:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus is on applying and enhancing knowledge or skill • this competency has been applied to situations occasionally with minimal guidance to perform successfully • the application is understood and can be discussed and implications of changes to processes, policies, and procedures in this area.

FPAC Proficiency Levels (Continued)

Advanced	
4 - Advanced (applied theory)	<p>Can perform the actions associated with this skill without assistance. Recognized within immediate organization as “a person to ask” when difficult questions arise regarding this skill:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus is on broad organizational/professional issues • consistently provides practical/relevant ideas and perspectives on process or practice improvements which may easily be implemented • is capable of coaching others in the application of this competency by translating complex nuances relating to this competency into easily understood terms • participates in senior level discussions regarding this competency • assists in the development of reference and resource materials in this competency.
5 - Expert (recognized authority)	<p>Known as an expert in this area. Can provide guidance, troubleshoot, and answer questions related to this area of expertise and the field where the skill is used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus is strategic • demonstrates consistent excellence in applying this competency across multiple projects and/or organizations • is considered the “go to” person in this area within the Agency and/or outside organizations • creates new applications for and/or leads the development of reference and resource materials for this competency • can diagram or explain the relevant process elements and issues in relation to organizational issues and trends in sufficient detail during discussions and presentations, to foster a greater understanding among internal and external colleagues and constituents.