



## Department of the Interior Senior Professionals (SL/ST)

### Performance Agreement and Appraisal Instructions

#### Introduction

The Senior Professionals Performance Agreement contains two categories of performance elements: 1) the Departmentwide element, and 2) Position-specific elements. These categories focus on different aspects of a senior professional's performance. Taken together, the categories reflect a balance between how a senior professional employee performs and what is accomplished during the performance cycle.

#### Performance Elements (Part V)

*The Departmentwide Element:* Element 1 is a mandatory element that includes the responsibilities all senior professional employees must demonstrate. It has been written at the Fully Successful level. Space is provided for additional organizational performance standards to clarify or tailor the Departmentwide standards to meet specific bureau needs. To be included, additional organizational standards must stay within the scope outlined in the Departmentwide element.

*Position-Specific Elements:* Elements 2 through 7 are reserved for the supervisor to document position-specific commitments for each senior professional employee. These are individual goals that are specific to each employee's position and are derived from the mission and strategic goals of the organization. Each senior professional employee is required to have at least two, but no more than six separate position-specific commitments for the rating period. The elements can be broadly or narrowly defined, but must be derived from and directly contribute to the program priorities and objectives established by the Strategic Plan, GPRA goals, the Program Assessment and Reporting Tool (PART), the President's Management Agenda, or other strategic planning document. The same organizational goal/objective may be cited in more than one element.

Position-specific commitments are to be written at the Fully Successful level for each of the elements. They must be based on input and consultation with the employee being evaluated and identify results that are demonstrable, measurable and observable with tangible outputs, outcomes, milestones, etc. Once developed, position-specific commitments may be modified at any time during the rating period as circumstances warrant. Changes must be made at least 90 days before the end of the evaluation period to prevent having to extend the evaluation period.

#### **Benchmarks for the Elements**

The ratings for elements are to be based on observable performance/behaviors during the rating period using the following five-point rating scale:

- **Exceptional:** Consistently delivered on assignments and commitments; displayed outstanding leadership in promoting the organization's strategic goals and initiatives; demonstrated the highest level of integrity and accountability in achieving program and management goals. Contributions had an impact beyond his or her immediate purview. Employee exerted a major positive influence on management practices, operating procedures or program implementation, which contributed substantially to organizational change, growth and recognition. This employee's expertise, advice and opinions are sought and respected by peers.
- **Superior:** Performance is between the levels described for Exceptional and Fully Successful. Performance outcomes and results of the employee's leadership surpassed expectations by exceeding the majority of performance requirements. Effectiveness and contributions may have had an impact beyond the employee's purview and performance is well beyond what is expected or required for the position. Consistently demonstrated the highest level of integrity and accountability in achieving program and management goals. Served as a source of leadership and motivation for peers and subordinates.
- **Fully Successful:** Performance demonstrates the fully successful level of accomplishment through observable outcomes or achievement of or substantial progress toward agreed-upon critical actions, objectives, and/or

desired results. Expectations were consistently met with solid, dependable performance. Performance reflects notable achievements and the employee regularly demonstrated the ability to meet the difficult and complex requirements inherent in senior professional positions, while consistently demonstrating the highest levels of integrity and accountability in achieving all program objectives and management goals; *no areas of performance are deficient*.

- ***Minimally Successful:*** Performance is between the levels described for Fully Successful and Unsatisfactory. Overall performance was marginally acceptable and occasionally less than Fully Successful. The employee had difficulties in meeting performance expectations. Actions taken by the employee were sometimes inappropriate or marginally effective. Immediate improvement in performance is essential.
- ***Unsatisfactory:*** Performance fails to demonstrate achievement of or progress toward agreed-upon critical action, objective and/or desired result to such an extent that it results in demonstrable negative consequences for the organization. Removal from the position is required.

The benchmarks provided above are not the only examples indicative of performance at this level. These examples are instead intended as a guide for consistent application of the standards in determining the level of performance exhibited during the rating period.

### **Accomplishments and Element Rating Justifications**

Part VI provides space for 1) the employee to summarize accomplishments for each performance element and 2) the supervisor to rate performance on each element and provide a supporting justification for that rating. The supervisor's justification need not address every performance standard for a given element, but must explain the basis for rating the employee at a particular level. The narrative should include examples that demonstrate how the performance compared to the performance standards and rating level definitions. As appropriate, the narrative may also address opportunities for personal and professional development.

### **Summary Rating Levels**

The initial summary rating (Part IV) and the annual summary rating (Part III) are based on the employee's performance on the elements in the two categories. The definitions below describe the *minimums* for each rating level. If the individual ratings on the elements meet the definition for a higher summary rating level, the higher summary rating level applies.

- ***Exceptional:*** A rating of Exceptional on 75 percent or more of the elements, no element rating below Superior.
- ***Superior:*** A rating of Superior or higher on 75 percent or more of the elements, no element rating below Fully Successful.
- ***Fully Successful:*** A rating of Fully Successful or higher on all elements.
- ***Minimally Successful:*** A rating of Minimally Successful on 1 or more of the elements, no element rating of Unsatisfactory.
- ***Unsatisfactory:*** A rating of Unsatisfactory on any of the elements.

(Key: if a plan has seven elements total, 75% = six elements. If a plan has six elements total, 75% = five elements. If a plan has five elements total, 75% = four elements. If a plan has four elements total, 75% = three elements. If a plan has three elements, 75% = three elements.)

### **Steps in Rating Senior Professional Employee Performance**

Form is color-coded as follows: Yellow sections represent the performance planning process—these are to be completed within 60 days of the beginning of the rating period. The Lavender section represents the progress

review, which takes place between the supervisor and employee mid-way through the appraisal period. The Blue sections are completed by the supervisor and employee at the end of the appraisal period.

***Step 1: Establishing Performance Elements and Standards (yellow sections on form)***

Supervisors and employees must develop performance elements and standards in consultation at the beginning of the rating cycle. Part I of the form provides space for the supervisor and the employee to certify that the required discussion and consultation took place. Although review of performance agreements by a reviewing official to ensure appropriate levels of quality and difficulty of performance requirements is encouraged, it is not required.

***Step 2: Progress Review (lavender section on form)***

The supervisor must hold a progress review with the employee at least once during the rating cycle. At a minimum, employees must be informed about how well they are performing against the standards contained in the performance agreement. Part II of the form provides space for the supervisor and the employee to certify that the progress review was conducted.

***Step 3: Appraising Performance (blue section on form)***

The rating period begins October 1 and ends September 30. At the end of the rating period, employees must provide their accomplishments in the appropriate space and supervisors must appraise the performance of employees who have served under their performance agreements for at least 90 days. If an employee has not had at least 90 days under the agreement, the rating period must be extended to give the employee the full 90 days to perform.

The supervisor reviews the employee's accomplishments for each element and assigns element ratings based on the employee's performance against the established performance standards using the appropriate rating definitions. The supervisor also assigns an initial summary rating (Part IV) based on the individual element ratings. The supervisor discusses the ratings with the employee's and provides the employee with a copy. Part III of the form provides space for the supervisor and the employee to certify that the required discussion took place and that the employee received a copy. Although review of the rating by a reviewing official is encouraged, it is not required.

At the time of rating, the supervisor must advise the employee of his or her right to respond in writing to any aspect of the rating and/or request higher level review. The employee must submit any response and/or request for higher level review to the supervisor within 10 working days. Any response by the employee or any request for a higher level review *may not exceed two typewritten pages including attachments ( if any).*

***Step 4: Performance Review Board (PRB)***

The PRB must review the employee's accomplishments, the supervisor's rating, and any documentation representing comments from the employee and/or the higher level reviewing official, and make written recommendations on the final rating to the appropriate appointing authority. Part III of the form provides space for the PRB to record their recommendations to the Appointing Authority or his/her designee.

***Step 5: Final Summary Rating***

The Appointing Authority or his/her designee makes the final decision in writing regarding the annual summary rating to be assigned after considering any PRB recommendations. Part III for the form provides space for the Appointing Authority to record the final summary rating. A copy of the final, approved rating must be provided to the employee.