Instructions for Completing the Employee Performance Appraisal Plan

Establishing Critical elements and Performance standards

Critical elements (at least one, but not more than five) must be established for each employee at the start of the performance year. Through these elements, employees are held accountable for work assignments and responsibilities of their position. A Critical element is an assignment or responsibility of such importance that Unsatisfactory performance in that element alone would result in a determination that the employee's overall performance is Unsatisfactory. Please see the Performance Appraisal Handbook for more detailed information.

Performance standards are expressions of the performance threshold(s), requirement(s), or expectation(s) that must be met for each element at a particular level of performance. They must be focused on results and include credible measures. You may use the attached Benchmark Performance standards to describe general parameters of the standards, but must augment those benchmarks with specific, measurable criteria such as quality, quantity, timeliness and/or cost effectiveness, for the "Fully Successful" level for each element. Rating officials are strongly encouraged to develop specific performance standards at additional levels to ensure that the employee has a clear understanding of the levels of performance expected. *At least one, and preferably all, Critical elements must show how the element is linked to strategic goals, such as Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) or mission related goals of the organization. These goals should be aligned throughout the organization (i.e., show how the strategic goal cascades from the SES down to the lowest non-supervisory levels.) The employee should be able to clearly understand how the results they are held responsible for are linked to the results that those in their supervisory/managerial chain are held responsible for.*

Part A of the eForm requires employee and supervisor to certify by their signature that critical elements were reviewed and discussed.

Employee Involvement

Employees must be involved in the development of their performance plans.

Part A of the eForm requires employee and supervisor to certify by their signature that there was employee involvement in the development of the plan.

Progress Reviews

A progress review is required approximately mid-way through the rating period. The Employee and Supervisor should acknowledge completion of the progress review on Part B of the eForm. Any written feedback or recommended training can be noted on a separate sheet and attached to the employee performance appraisal plan. (EPAP)

Assigning the Summary Rating

A specific rating is required for each Critical element to reflect the level of performance demonstrated by the employee throughout the rating period. Only one numerical rating level is assigned for each Critical element. Before the rating official assigns a summary rating, he/she should consider all interim summary ratings received for the employee during the annual appraisal period. The summary rating is assigned as follows:

A. Assess how the employee performed relative to the described performance standards.

B. Document the employee's performance with a narrative that describes the achievements for the Critical elements as compared to the performance standards. A narrative must be written for each Critical element assigned a rating of Exceptional, Minimally Successful, or Unsatisfactory, to provide examples of the employee's performance that substantiate and explain how the performance falls within the level assigned. There is a block provided for the narrative for each Critical element.

C. In Part C of this form, assign one of the numerical rating levels that accurately reflects the employee's performance for each of the Critical elements (Use only whole numbers: Exceptional = 5 points, Superior= 4 points, Fully Successful = 3 points, Minimally Successful = 2 points, and Unsatisfactory = 0 points).

D. Add up the numerical rating levels to get a total, and then divide the total by the number of Critical elements to get an average. (Elements that are "not rated" because an employee has not had a chance to perform them during the rating year are not assigned any points and should not be used to determine the average rating.)

E. Assign a summary rating based on the table in Part D of this form. Employee and supervisor sign the form certifying that the rating was discussed. Reviewing Official's signature is required for Exceptional, Minimally Successful and Unsatisfactory ratings.

Note: Whenever an employee is rated **"Unsatisfactory"** on one or more critical elements, the overall rating **must** be **"Unsatisfactory"** (regardless of total points). **The rating official should immediately contact the servicing Human Resources Office.** Whenever an employee is rated **"Minimally Successful"** on one or more Critical elements, the overall rating may not be higher than **"Minimally Successful"** (regardless of total points).

Refusal to sign

In cases where the employee refuses to sign the EPAP, the supervisor has the authority to implement the performance standards and rating without employee agreement. Supervisor's should identify in the employee's signature block that the "Employee Refused to sign."

Privacy Act Notice

Chapter 43 of Title 5, U.S.C., authorizes collection of this information. The primary use of this information is by management and your servicing human resources office to issue and record your performance rating. Additional disclosures of this information may be: To MSPB, Office of Special Counsel, EEOC, the FLRA, or an arbitrator in connection with administrative proceedings; to the Department of Justice or other Federal agency, courts, or party to litigation when the Government is a party to or has an interest in the judicial or administrative proceeding; to a congressional office in response to an inquiry made on behalf of an individual; to the appropriate Federal, State, or local government agency investigating potential violations of civil or criminal law or regulation; and to Federal State, local and professional licensing boards in determining qualifications of individuals seeking to be licensed.

Collection of your Social Security Number is authorized by Executive Order 9397. Furnishing your Social Security Number is mandatory, failure to provide this information will prohibit data collection required by the Office of Personnel Management.

If your agency used the information furnished on this form for purposes other than those indicated above, it may provide you with an additional statement reflecting those purposes.

Understanding Performance Management

Part A of the eForm requires employee and supervisor to certify by their signature that the employee was provided training in the Performance Management System.

An Employee's Duties – Your supervisor should provide you with a copy of the position description for your job. Your position description is the official record of your main duties and responsibilities and is used in developing performance appraisal criteria. Take some time to read through your position description. Ask your supervisor about anything that is not clear to you. Your supervisor should review your position description with you at least once a year to ensure that it accurately reflects your main duties and responsibilities. Keep a copy of your position description and refer to it from time to time. You may want to make notes on your copy when your job changes, so that you can discuss the changes with your supervisor.

Employee Performance Appraisal Plan (EPAP) – The Employee Performance Appraisal Plan (EPAP) is the form used by the Department to evaluate the work performance of its employees under the 5-level appraisal system. When used effectively, the EPAP is a valuable communication tool for both employee development and organizational accomplishments.

Managers and supervisors are responsible for the following:

1. Complying with provisions of the U.S. Department of the Interior's Performance Appraisal Departmental Manual and Handbook (370 DM 430).
2. Establishing performance elements and performance standards that are linked to organizational goals and position descriptions.
3. Monitoring employee performance, communicating with employees about their performance and resolving performance problems.
4. Approving or reviewing ratings recommended by supervisors or rating officials.

The EPAP has several important goals:

1. Clarifying how the employee's performance requirements link to the strategic mission of their organization;
2. Increasing individual productivity by giving employees the information they need to do their jobs effectively;
3. Improving individual/organizational productivity by promoting communication between employees and supervisors about job-related matters, so that better and more efficient methods of operation can be developed; and,
4. Providing a process to recognize employees for good performance and their contributions to the organization.

Appraisal Period – The appraisal period begins October 1 and ends September 30 of each year, except where specific exceptions have been granted. The minimum period on which an appraisal may be based is 90 calendar days. During the appraisal period, your supervisor may periodically discuss your work with you and let you know how you are doing. In addition, before the end of the appraisal period, the supervisor will conduct one formal progress review with you. This progress review is another opportunity for you and your supervisor to discuss your

progress, review your position description, identify any training needs or improvements, or to revise your critical performance elements and performance standards.

Performance Elements and Performance Standards – Your supervisor will explain your duties and responsibilities to you and discuss what is expected of you in order to achieve satisfactory performance. To further define your performance expectations, your supervisor will establish performance elements and performance standards for your job. Employee input into this process is required.

Performance elements tell you what work assignments and responsibilities need to be accomplished during the appraisal period. All employees must have one performance element that is linked to the strategic mission or Government Performance Results Act goals of the organization. Between one and five performance elements can be established for a position. These elements are all considered critical elements. They are of such importance to the position that unsatisfactory performance in one element alone would result in a determination that the employee's overall performance is Unsatisfactory.

Performance standards tell employees how well performance elements must be done by defining achievable rating levels for: Exceptional, Superior, Fully Successful, Minimally Successful, and Unsatisfactory performance. These five rating levels focus on results and include credible measures such as quality, quantity, timeliness, cost effectiveness, etc.

Your overall performance is evaluated by your supervisor or rating official using these performance standards. A determination that an employee's overall performance is Unsatisfactory could result in remedial action and unsatisfactory performance may be the basis for removal or reduction in grade. Minimally Successful performance may result in the denial of a within-grade increase.

The Rating Process – At the end of the appraisal period, your supervisor will carefully review the performance elements and standards for your position. Based on your actual performance, one of five rating levels may be assigned. The rating will be presented to you during the formal performance discussion between you and your supervisor. The appraisal will be completed with your signature and a copy provided to you. This rating is documented on the EPAP form and is considered as your Rating of Record. Your rating of record is directly linked to your eligibility for certain types of pay increases and awards.

Rewarding Performance – Rewarding performance means recognizing good performance and providing incentives to employees for their work efforts and contributions to the organization. At the end of the appraisal period, your supervisor may consider you for an award based on your performance and rating of record as follows:

- Exceptional – Eligible for an individual cash award up to 5% of base pay; a Quality Step Increase; Time-Off Award; or other appropriate equivalent recognition.
- Superior – Eligible for an individual cash award up to 3% of base pay; Time-Off Award, non-monetary award, or other appropriate equivalent recognition.
- Fully Successful – Not eligible for any performance award, but may receive monetary, non-monetary, Time-off, or other appropriate incentive awards for specific accomplishments throughout the year.
- Minimally Successful and Unsatisfactory – Ineligible for any performance recognition.

How to get the most out of your Employee Performance Appraisal Plan

1. Ask for Feedback throughout the appraisal period.

How do you know if you are learning how to do your job and meeting your performance expectations? Talk to your supervisor throughout the appraisal period. Your supervisor wants you to succeed and is available to provide guidance to help you learn how to effectively do your job. Communicating regularly with your supervisor gives you the opportunity to understand the job expectations. It also lets your supervisor know what type of assistance or resources you need to perform your work, and it is a good way to get feedback.

Feedback is information that helps you know how you are progressing in learning the duties and responsibilities of your job. Employees who seek feedback from their supervisors learn their jobs more quickly and with fewer wrong turns than employees who shy away from feedback. Employees who seek feedback spend less time redoing work and turn in work with fewer mistakes. As a result, they improve their work performance.

Getting and using feedback is one of the most important keys to learning your job. As you do your work, ask for feedback from your supervisor to see if you are on track. At first you may feel uncomfortable asking for feedback. But, remember that your supervisor wants you to succeed. As you master your job and get to know your supervisor, you will soon feel more comfortable asking for and receiving feedback.

2. Preparation

a. Before your supervisor prepares your appraisal:

1. Prepare a list of key work accomplishments and give it to your supervisor for consideration in preparing your rating.
2. If you have specific issues come prepared to discuss them. Give your supervisor a "heads up" so that they can also prepare to discuss the issues.
3. Write down any key points and questions you may have.

b. During your performance discussion:

1. Don't be shy about asking for clarification, especially about your supervisor's expectations.
2. Refer to your notes, so that you don't overlook any points that are important to you.
3. Tell your supervisor how you feel things are progressing and if you need any additional information or materials.
4. Let your supervisor know what your short/long-term career goals are.
5. Ask for feedback.

If you still have questions about the Employee Performance Appraisal Plan please consult with your supervisor.