



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

SENIOR LEVEL AND SCIENTIFIC AND PROFESSIONAL

PERFORMANCE AGREEMENT AND APPRAISAL SYSTEM

Table of Contents

		<u>Page</u>
Section I.	Authority and Purpose	1
Section II.	Coverage	2
Section III.	References	2
Section IV.	Definitions	2
Section V.	Policy	3
Section VI.	Basic Responsibilities	4
Section VII.	Performance Appraisal Period	6
Section VIII.	Planning and Communicating Performance	7
Section IX.	Monitoring Performance	8
Section X.	Appraisal/Rating Process	8
Section XI.	Position Changes	13
Section XII.	Pay and Recognition Determinations	13
Section XIII.	Training	16
Section XIV.	Recordkeeping	16
Section XV.	Evaluation	17
	Exhibit A	18

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
SENIOR LEVEL AND SCIENTIFIC AND PROFESSIONAL  
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

SECTION I: AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE

- A. This document constitutes the system for managing the performance of all members of Senior Level and Scientific and Professional Positions (SL/ST).
- B. Chapter 43 of Title 5 United States Code, Section 4302, requires that each agency establish performance appraisal systems for employees.
- C. This SL/ST performance management system is designed to hold senior professionals accountable for individual and organizational performance. The purposes of this system are to:
  - 1. Promote excellence in senior professional positions;
  - 2. Link senior professionals' performance to organizational goals;
  - 3. Hold employees accountable for results, with credible measures, that are expected to be achieved during the rating period;
  - 4. Establish and communicate individual and organizational performance goals, expectations, objectives and document significant accomplishments;
  - 5. Systematically appraise senior professionals' performance using measures that balance individual results and the needs of customers and employees (and other stakeholders) regarding business needs and requirements; and
  - 6. Use performance results as the primary basis for determining SL/ST pay, awards, training, retention, removal, and other employment decisions.

## SECTION II. COVERAGE

This system covers all Department SL/ST employees.

## SECTION III. REFERENCES

5 USC 4302 - Performance appraisal systems (law)  
5 CFR 430.102 through 430.210 (regulation)-appraisals  
5 CFR 451.101 through 451.305 (regulation)-awards  
5 CFR 534.501 through 534.506- Pay Setting and adjusting (regulation)

## SECTION IV. DEFINITIONS

- A. Annual Summary Rating - The official rating level that the Appointing Authority assigns at the end of the appraisal period after considering recommendations made by the appropriate Performance Review Board (PRB).
- B. Appraisal Cycle - The established period of time for which a senior professionals' performance is appraised and rated.
- C. Balanced Measures - A quantifiable approach for evaluating job performance that seeks equilibrium in the achievement of organizational results among:
  - 1. Stated mission objectives;
  - 2. Customer Satisfaction; and
  - 3. Employee and other stakeholder perspectives regarding business needs and requirements (e.g. resource allocation, program planning, management guidance, training and development, etc.).
- D. Performance Element - A key component of an employees' work that contributes to the achievement of organizational goals and objectives and is so important that unsatisfactory performance of the element would result in unsatisfactory job performance.
- E. Senior Professional - An employee in a Senior Level or Scientific and Professional position; also referred to as an "SL/ST employee".

- F. Initial Summary Rating - The summary rating prepared by a senior professional's rating official.
- G. Performance Agreement - The written description of work a senior professional is expected to accomplish during the appraisal cycle and the desired results against which job performance will be evaluated.
- H. Performance Appraisal - The review and evaluation of an employee's job performance against elements established at the beginning of the appraisal period.
- I. Progress Review - A review of the employees' progress in meeting established performance requirements/standards. A progress review generally occurs mid-way through the appraisal cycle.
- J. Rating Official - Generally the employee's immediate supervisor.
- K. Reviewing Official - A higher-level management official, often one level above the rating official, who will review an initial rating at the request of the rated executive.

## SECTION V. POLICY

It is the policy of the Department:

- that Senior Professional performance plans clearly link to the Department's mission, GPRA strategic goals, program and policy objectives, and/or annual budget priorities;
- that Senior Professionals have performance plans that hold them accountable for aligning the performance plans of their subordinates with organizational goals and for rigorously appraising employee performance using clear, measurable standards and timeframes;
- that performance plans reflect expected results, outcomes and outputs, performance targets or metrics, policy/program objectives and/or milestones, and are stated in terms of observable measurable and/or demonstrable performance;
- that senior professional performance plans contain measurable results that account for at least 60% of the summary rating;
- that performance plans be developed with the input and involvement of the employees, are communicated to them at the beginning of the

- rating period, and at appropriate times thereafter (such as a mid-year progress review);
- that performance plans take into consideration appropriate indicators of employee and/or customer feedback;
  - that oversight be exercised by the Secretary or his/her designee to ensure that meaningful distinctions are made in the levels of performance, results of the appraisal process are based on the Department's assessment of its performance, and rewards accurately reflect individual performance or contribution to the Department's performance;
  - that training and information are provided to senior professionals covered by this system, officials who manage them and officials who assist them on the requirements of the Department's pay-for-performance system, how it operates, the preparation of performance plans, conducting progress reviews and ratings, and using appraisals as a factor in making recognition decisions.

## SECTION VI. BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES

### A. The Executive Resources Board:

1. The Executive Resources Board (ERB) is delegated the authority to perform the functions vested in the head of the agency under title IV of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-454), as amended, and section 506 of the Ethics Reform Act of 1989 (P.L. 101-194) relating to Senior Level and Scientific and Professional positions within the Department.
2. The ERB establishes one or more Performance Review Boards (PRBs) and selects members to serve on the PRB. The PRB will be comprised of Senior Professional or Senior Executive Service (SES) employees. The PRB will consist of at least three individuals.
3. The ERB approves the Department's SL/ST Performance Agreement and Appraisal System, regulations, policies, forms and instructions.
4. The ERB reviews and decides which SL/ST Presidential Rank Award nominations will be forwarded to the agency head, and to the Office of Personnel Management for government-wide competition.

B. The Appointing Authority:

1. The Appointing authority makes the following determinations based on recommendations made by the Performance Review Boards:
  - a) the annual summary ratings for SL/ST members,
  - b) the salary level adjustments for SL/ST members
  - c) the individuals who will receive performance awards
  - d) the amount of any performance award.

C. The Executive Resources Division, Office of Human Resources:

1. Develops policy and procedures governing the SL/ST performance management system established within the Department;
2. Ensures appropriate training and guidance is provided to senior professionals and their supervisors to implement the performance management system; and
3. Periodically monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the performance management system.

D. The Rating Official:

1. Consults with employees at the beginning of the appraisal period and establishes individual performance plans;
2. Monitors performance and provides feedback during the appraisal cycle;
3. Conducts at least one formal progress review for each employee to identify progress and/or performance deficiencies, and maintains the necessary records to document job performance;
4. Appraises the job performance of senior professionals, prepares the initial summary rating, communicates organizational results, and furnishes signed initial summary ratings; and

5. Proposes appropriate actions for employees whose performance is less than Fully Successful.
- E. The Reviewing Official:
1. Upon request of an individual senior professional, reviews an initial summary rating; and
  2. For those employees who indicate disagreement with the initial summary rating, the reviewing official will prepare a written response that will be given to the employee and the PRB.
- F. The Performance Review Boards:
1. Must review all initial summary ratings for reasonableness and equity to ensure that the employees performance merits the initial summary rating given; and
  2. Make recommendations concerning annual summary ratings, pay level adjustments and performance awards to the Agency Head or his/her designee (PRB members may not take part in any deliberations involving their own performance appraisals or those of their immediate supervisors).

## SECTION VII. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PERIOD

- A. The minimum period of performance for which an employee may receive an appraisal is 90 days.
- B. The annual SL/ST performance appraisal cycle is established as October 1 through September 30. A written performance plan is provided at the beginning of the rating cycle and/or upon entry to an SL/ST position.
- C. When there is no adequate basis on which to appraise an employee's job performance (e.g. extended sick leave pending disability retirement), the Executive Resources Division will determine appropriate action and inform agency management officials.

## SECTION VIII. PLANNING AND COMMUNICATING PERFORMANCE

- A. SL/ST performance agreements are developed through consultations between the rating officer and the employee at the beginning of the annual appraisal cycle and/or upon entry to an SL/ST position. Each agreement will consist of 1) a Department-wide element and 2) at least two position-specific elements. The Department-wide element reflects the core values of the Department and is shared by all senior professionals. It includes employee, customer and/or citizen feedback, ethics and conduct; and if position is supervisory, internal controls and strategic management of human capital. Position-specific commitments can be broadly or narrowly defined. Position-specific commitments:
1. must be derived from and directly contribute to the program priorities and objectives established by the Strategic Plan, GPRA goals, the program assessment tools, a Presidential or Secretary's initiative, or other strategic planning document;
  2. are to be written with the focus on the measurable results expected to be achieved by the senior professional;
  3. must be clear as to what constitutes success;
  4. must be consistent with the duties described in the senior professional's position description for which the employee will be accountable;
  5. are written to describe performance at the Fully Successful level;
  6. are based on objective, measurable, observable and/or demonstrable criteria.
- B. Both the rating official and the employee will sign and maintain a copy of the performance agreement.

## SECTION IX. MONITORING PERFORMANCE

The rating official must conduct at least one progress review during the appraisal cycle, providing feedback about how well the senior professional is performing against the established performance

agreement. Frequent informal performance discussions are strongly encouraged to provide feedback on the employee's progress in accomplishing the job elements and to provide advice and assistance on performance improvement as needed. In addition, the rating official will:

1. Provide written documentation if progress on a job element is less than Fully Successful. This documentation must include a review of progress, deficiencies, and any steps taken or needed to reach the Fully Successful level; and
2. Discuss/communicate any and all changes to established performance requirements with the employee.

Both the rating official and the employee will sign the appraisal form to indicate the date the progress review occurred.

#### SECTION X. APPRAISAL/RATING PROCESS

- A. At the end of the appraisal cycle, each senior professional provides his/her written accomplishments to the rating official. These accomplishments address the performance elements established in the performance agreement.
- B. The rating official will appraise an employee's job performance based on the performance requirements established at the beginning of the appraisal period. The rating levels assigned by the rating official to the performance elements will be based on the extent to which the employee's performance met the rating level definitions described on form DI-2002. Appraisals of employee's must be based on both individual and organizational performance, taking into account such factors as:
  1. Results achieved in accordance with the Department's strategic planning initiatives;
  2. Customer satisfaction;
  3. Employee and other stakeholder perspectives regarding business needs and requirements (e.g. resource allocation,

program planning, management guidance, training and development, etc.);

4. The effectiveness, productivity and performance of the employees for whom the senior professional is responsible;
5. Contributions to the achievement of equal employment opportunity and diversity goals if the position is supervisory; and
6. Compliance with merit system principles if the position is supervisory.

### C. Element Rating Definitions

Each element has five rating levels, defined as follows:

1. Unsatisfactory: Performance fails to demonstrate the Fully Successful level of accomplishment or progress toward the agreed-upon critical action, objective and/or desired result to such an extent that it results in demonstrable negative consequences for the organization.
2. 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.
3. 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 executive regularly demonstrated the ability to meet the difficult and complex requirements inherent in SL/ST positions, while consistently demonstrating the highest level of integrity and

accountability in achieving all program objectives and management goals. No areas of performance are deficient.

4. Superior: Performance is between the levels described for Exceptional and Fully Successful. Performance outcomes and/or 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 executive'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 all program objectives and management goals. Served as a source of leadership and motivation for peers and subordinates.
5. Exceptional: Consistently delivered on assignments and commitments; displayed outstanding leadership in promoting the organization's strategic goals and initiatives; demonstrated the highest levels of integrity and accountability in achieving program and management goals. Contributions had an impact beyond the executive's immediate purview. 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.

#### D. Converting Element Ratings to an Annual Summary Rating

The formula established to convert the individual element ratings into the appropriate Annual Summary rating levels is as follows:

1. Unsatisfactory: Rated Unsatisfactory on any element.
2. Minimally Successful: Rated Minimally Successful on any element; no elements are rated Unsatisfactory.
3. Fully Successful: Rated Fully Successful or higher on all elements.
4. Superior: Rated Superior on 75% or more of the elements; no elements rated below Fully Successful.
5. Exceptional: Rated Exceptional on 75% or more of the

elements; no elements rated below Superior.

These definitions 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.

- E. Both the rating official and senior professional will sign and maintain a copy of the initial summary rating.
- F. An senior professional who disagrees with the initial summary rating may request a higher level review as follows:
  - 1. The employee must request a higher level review in writing within ten days of receipt of the initial summary rating.
  - 2. The higher level review must occur prior to submitting the rating to the Performance Review Board.
  - 3. The reviewing official will review the initial summary rating, the employee's written request, and any other pertinent materials.
  - 4. The reviewing official must prepare a separate written finding and recommendation to the PRB. The reviewing official may not change the initial summary rating but may recommend a rating other than that assigned by the rating official. A copy of the reviewing official's finding must be provided to the employee, the rating official and the PRB.
  - 5. The Performance Review Board will consider the initial summary rating, the employee's request and the reviewing official's written findings and recommendations and whatever other input the Board believes would be beneficial to full understanding of relevant issues. The PRB will provide a written recommendation reflecting a majority opinion to the Agency Head or his/her designee regarding the annual summary rating.
- G. When there is no request by an employee for a higher level review, the PRB will review the appraisal to determine whether the initial summary rating is supported by examples provided in the narrative

section (Part V) of the appraisal. The PRB will then provide a written recommendation that reflects the majority opinion concerning the annual summary rating level. The PRB also may use additional criteria in making these recommendations, such as:

- the relative value of the employee's achievement to the accomplishment of organizational goals;
- the degree of difficulty inherent in successful achievement by the individual;
- the extent to which the achievement was characterized by strong leadership and/or significant contributions in the formulation of agency policies and programming;
- effective supervision and development of subordinates if this is a supervisory position;
- the extent of demonstrated, highly developed expertise;
- achievements in cost reduction, efficiency, quality of work, productivity, and timeliness to the end of improving managerial flexibility and effectiveness;
- meeting EEO/affirmative employment goal if the position is supervisory;
- achievements in identifying and correcting problems of waste, fraud, abuse, or mismanagement; and
- evidence of effective performance management and evaluation of subordinates as demonstrated by timely submission of subordinates' appraisals and their clear linkage to organizational goals if the position is supervisory.

- H. The Appointing Authority will consider the recommendation of the PRB in assigning the annual summary rating for each employee.
- I. Employees may appeal appraisal decisions to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB).

## SECTION XI. POSITION CHANGES

Exhibit A addresses situations where employees have been reassigned, transferred, appointed, converted, detailed, or whose supervisor has changed during the performance appraisal period.

## SECTION XII. PAY AND RECOGNITION DETERMINATIONS

### A. Actions Based on Performance

#### 1. Awards

- a. A Senior Professional, whose annual summary rating is at least Fully Successful at the end of the performance cycle is eligible for recognition under 5 CFR 451 Subpart A. When recommending performance awards, the following factors may be considered: 1) the complexity of the position occupied, 2) the extent to which the senior professional's contributions met organizational goals and objectives, 3) criteria listed in Section IX, item F, 4) other performance-related criteria deemed appropriate by the PRB or the Appointing Authority or his/her designee.

#### 2. Pay Adjustments

Increases or decreases in SL/ST pay rates will be based on annual summary performance ratings.

#### 3. Presidential Rank Award

The selection of SL/ST nominees for Presidential Rank Awards is based on a record of sustained exceptional performance over multiple annual performance cycles.

## SECTION XIII. TRAINING

Training and information on the requirements of the Department's pay-for-performance system, how it operates, the preparation of performance plans, conducting progress reviews, rating employees and using appraisal

information as a factor in making recognition decisions will be provided to senior professionals covered by this performance management system and to officials who manage and assist them. Such information and program guidance is designed to ensure that the performance management system is clearly understood and operates effectively.

#### SECTION XIV. RECORDKEEPING AND RECORD USES

- A. Performance records for SL/ST members are retained for five consecutive years. When an SL/ST transfers to another agency, the Employee Performance Folder containing all pertinent performance records is forwarded to the gaining agency.
  
- B. When performance-related documents are needed in connection with ongoing, quasi-judicial or judicial proceeding, they may be retained for as long as necessary beyond the established retention schedule.

#### SECTION XV: EVALUATION

Periodically the effectiveness of the SL/ST Personnel Management System will be assessed. Improvements will be implemented as appropriate.

EXHIBIT A – PROCEDURES FOR CERTAIN SITUATIONS

Requirements for Performance Agreements, Initial Summary Ratings and Annual Summary Ratings of Record

<b>Event</b>	<b>Performance Plan for New Position</b>	<b>Performance Rating(s)</b>
<p>The appraisal cycle begins (October 1)</p>	<p>Establish SL/ST performance agreement immediately.</p>	<p>At the end of the appraisal cycle (September 30), provide a rating. This is the initial summary rating.</p>
<p>An individual is appointed as an SL/ST, converted to an SL/ST position, or is reinstated from outside the government into an SL/ST position.</p>	<p>Establish performance agreement immediately.</p>	<p>Provide a rating at the end of the appraisal cycle (September 30). If less than 90 days remain in the cycle, extend the appraisal period until at least 90 days are reached then provide a rating. This is the initial summary rating.</p>
<p>Employee changes SL/ST positions within the Department during the appraisal cycle.</p>	<p>Establish an agreement for the new position provided there are at least 90 days left in the appraisal cycle.</p>	<p>Provide a departure rating at the time of position change if senior professional was under a SL/ST plan for at least 90 days in the former position. This is used as input for the initial summary rating of record at the end of the appraisal cycle.</p>
<p>The employee transfers from an SL/ST position in another agency to an SL/ST position in the Department.</p>	<p>Establish performance agreement immediately</p>	<p>Obtain departure rating from former agency. At the end of the appraisal cycle, rating official considers all departure ratings when preparing the initial summary rating. If departure rating from former agency is a current annual summary rating, it can be referred to the PRB.</p>

<p>The employee is detailed or temporarily assigned to another SL/ST position within the Department, and the duration of that assignment is expected to be at least 90 days within the appraisal cycle.</p>	<p>Establish performance agreement for the detail/temporary assignment.</p>	<p>a. Prepare a departure rating at the expiration of the detail (or at the end of the rating cycle) if the senior professional served under a plan for at least 90 days.</p> <p>b. At the end of the appraisal cycle, rating official considers all departure ratings for the appraisal cycle when preparing the initial summary rating.</p>
<p>The employee is detailed or assigned outside the Department and the duration of that assignment is expected to be at least 90 days.</p>	<p>Every reasonable effort must be made to ensure that a performance agreement is established while on detail outside the Department.</p>	<p>a. Rating official of record in the Department provides a departure rating at the time of position change if the senior professional served under a plan for at least 90 days.</p> <p>b. Rating official of record in the Department should make reasonable efforts to obtain departure rating from the supervisor of the detail when the detail ends, especially if the employee did not serve under a Department plan for at least 90 days during the appraisal cycle.</p> <p>c. Rating official of record considers all relevant departure ratings for the appraisal cycle in preparing the initial summary rating.</p>
<p>Before the end of the appraisal cycle, the employee embarks on long-term training and does not return by the end of the appraisal cycle.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Provide a departure rating at the time the employee embarks on training if they served under a performance plan for at least 90 days. This becomes the initial summary rating.</p>
<p>The employee transfers to a new agency after serving under a performance plan for at least 90 days</p> <p>For other situations, contact the Executive Resources Division, Office of Human Resources.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Provide a departure rating and forward it to the new agency.</p>