

DATE: 10/22/2010

SUBJECT: Guidance for Establishing Performance Plans for the Fiscal Year 2011 Performance Cycle

TO: Administrator's Council
Deputy Area Directors
AFM Division Directors
Area Personnel Assistants

FROM: Mary Oxner
Section Head
Performance and Awards Staff, Human Resources Division (HRD)

The purpose of this memorandum is to introduce the newly revised "Supervision and Human Capital Management" performance element for supervisors and managers (Attachment A) and to define the parameters for establishing employee Performance Plans for Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 cycle, October 1, 2010 – September 30, 2011. This specific guidance applies to all non-Senior Executive Service (SES) ARS employees.

Recently, the Department of Agriculture (USDA) implemented an initiative to standardize hiring and performance accountability measures within **all** USDA supervisory positions. These measures are required to be included in the supervisory and managerial performance plans being established for FY 2011. This Departmental initiative is in response to the Presidential Memorandum on Hiring Reform which requires that managers and supervisors with hiring responsibility are held accountable for recruiting and hiring qualified employees and supporting their successful transition into federal service.

In order to maintain a consistent view of the responsibilities and expectations for all supervisors, USDA agencies are required to reflect these standardized performance measures in a Leadership or Supervisory performance element. Hence, the ARS' Supervision and Human Capital Management performance element has been updated to properly reflect these measures. Upon establishment of FY 2011 performance plans, this revised element must be added to all non-SES official supervisors in ARS. Official supervisors are those whose classification title includes "Supervisory," "Officer," or "Director." This newly revised Supervision and Human Capital element replaces the previous July 21, 2008 version of this element. **You may supplement these standardized measures with additional requirements, but the full text of this document is to remain unchanged.**

Successful supervision and leadership of the ARS workforce is critical to meeting the goals and objectives of our mission. The initial step towards achieving the Agency's goals is the effective establishment of performance plans. Attachment B is a "Checklist for Preparing Performance Plans" that identifies requirements that we hope will aid supervisors and managers in the process.

Performance plans should be established as early in the rating cycle as possible to ensure that employees are clear about expectations. Plans should normally be established and provided to employees within (30) days of the performance cycle. However, due to the recent Departmental initiative to incorporate standardized measures in all supervisory and managerial plans for FY 2011, additional time is necessary. Strive to establish plans within **90 days** of the beginning of the performance cycle.

Performance plans should be established using the official Performance Plan, Progress Review and Appraisal Worksheets (Forms AD-435A/B have been revised into an expandable version combining them into one document named AD-435A/B Revised). This form is available in "e-Forms".

Performance plans are considered established when the Rating and Reviewing Officials have signed and dated the plan; the expectations have been communicated to the employee; the employee has signed and dated the plan; and a copy has been provided to the employee. The original plan should be retained by the supervisor.

As a reminder, the Rating and Reviewing Officials may not be the same person; the Reviewing Official should be at a higher organizational level, normally the Rating Official's supervisor. Additionally, obtaining the employee's signature on the plan does not mean the employee necessarily agrees with the expectations or goals in the plan, only that performance expectations have been communicated to him/her. If an employee chooses not to sign the plan, a note should be written in the employee signature box stating, "Discussion of the Performance plan was held on (date) and the employee declined to sign the plan."

Employee Listings, which identify the employees of various supervisors and managers, will be provided to Area Personnel Assistants no later than one month from the date of this memorandum. The Listings should be forwarded to supervisors and managers to certify that Performance plans were established for employees. The supervisor or manager will notate the Listing with the date the plan was established. Additionally, if no plan was established, the supervisor will document the reason on the Listing. Should an employee not be reflected on the Listing, please add his/her name and the date the plan was established. Completed Listings are due to HRD **no later than January 3, 2010**, and may be faxed or mailed to PAS/HRD. PAS's fax is (301) 504-4435 and the mailing address is: USDA/ARS/Human Resources Division, Performance and Awards Staff, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Room 3-1282D, Beltsville, MD 20705-5107.

Should you have any questions regarding the guidance in this memorandum, please contact Theresa Bailey, theresa.bailey@ars.usda.gov, (301) 504-1452 or me at mary.oxner@ars.usda.gov, of the Human Resources Division.

Attachments (2)

cc:
AC Secretaries
DAD Secretaries
AFM Division Director Secretaries
All HRD Employees

ARS Performance Element and Standard for Supervision and Human Capital Management

Performance Element:

Supervision and Human Capital Management

Performance Standards:

Recruitment and Hiring

Leads by example; promotes an atmosphere of open communication, cooperation and teamwork.

Organizational goals, objectives, priorities, work assignments, and deadlines are clearly communicated to employees. Resources and priorities are adjusted to meet workload demands. Human Capital initiatives and strategies (e.g. performance management system changes, Workforce and Succession Planning) are implemented in accordance with mission area and agency policy. Employees are encouraged to participate in employee surveys to assist ARS in measuring organizational health, morale and satisfaction.

Recruits and selects new employees based on organizational goals, budget considerations, and staffing needs. When filling a position, the supervisor engages and collaborates with HR to ensure skills required for the job are identified, posting of the job vacancy is accurate, and assists in identifying contacts for diverse locations or organizations for recruiting purposes. Participates as needed with HR in the proper screening of applications, and appropriate categorization of applicants based on qualifications.

Utilizes flexible hiring authorities when filling a vacancy (e.g., targeted disabilities, student employment, direct hire, appointing veterans, etc.) to ensure diversity in recruitment and hiring.

Recruitment plans reflect assessment of potential candidate pools and diversity goals. Hiring selections are made within 45 business days of receiving selection certificates absent extenuating circumstances.

Retention and Succession Planning

Successfully transitions new hires into the position by promptly providing an orientation into the workforce and establishing performance elements and standards. Supervisor provides ongoing feedback and coaching, and makes appropriate use of the probationary period to assess the new hire's ability to perform in the position.

Implements retention strategies that focus on key internal processes (e.g., work environment, employee orientation, executing Individual Development Plans for all employees--subject to bargaining obligations, coaching, development, and mentoring, etc.) and that promote employee growth, support the health of the workforce and drive the future success of the organization's people and infrastructure.

Assesses current workforce plans to ensure they are up-to-date in order to meet Program/Agency goals and objectives. Works with senior management officials and HR to comply with the workforce planning process as described in the Department's position management policy.

Performance Management

The supervisor establishes subordinate employee performance plans within established timeframes and that align with Agency and Departmental goals and objectives. Communicates to employees how their work supports the Agency mission and strategic plan/initiatives. Employee performance plans contain clear, results-focused measures and the supervisor provides accurate and timely feedback to determine progress and success in meeting expectations:

- The supervisor completes performance plans, progress reviews, and appraisals of subordinate employees by the due dates established by the Department or Agency. Performance plans for each employee must include at least one critical element that is traceable to the agency's goals and objectives (e.g., Mission Results critical performance element).
- Provides ongoing feedback and coaching as demonstrated through performance feedback sessions as evidenced by 100% of employees receiving at least one feedback session at the midpoint of the rating period.
- Ensures appropriate action is taken to address performance problems in a manner that supports organizational goals and objectives.
- Ensures subordinate managers and supervisors adhere to the Agency performance management policy with regard to performance appraisal and employee recognition.

Performance and employee feedback data is used as an indicator of compliance and general satisfaction or needed improvement with regard to the planning, developing, monitoring, rating and rewarding of performance.

Performance and accomplishments are recognized in a timely manner, utilizing various methods (monetary, non-monetary, and time-off awards).

Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are established and reviewed/updated annually. Within available funding, provides developmental opportunities to ensure that employees possess appropriate competencies for work assignments; utilizes no cost options in employee development including AgLearn and mentoring. IDPs reflect assessment of current employee skills and future skill needs of the unit.

CHECKLIST FOR PREPARING PERFORMANCE PLANS

The following are some reminders for establishing a Performance Plan.

- ↑1. Check the employee's position description for accuracy. The major duties in the position description should be included in the Performance Plan as critical elements. Accomplishment of organizational objectives and goals can be included in Performance Plans.
- ↑2. Employee participation in developing the plan is desirable. However, the Rating and Reviewing Officials have the final authority for establishing the Performance Plan.
- ↑3. All plans must be documented, in writing, on Form AD435A/B Revised, Performance Plan, Progress Review and Appraisal Worksheet.
- ↑4. The plan must align with Agency and/or organizational goals. At least one performance element must link to the strategic goals and objectives of the organization.
- ↑5. Include results-focused performance measures for each performance element. Elements and standards should be accurate, objective, measurable, attainable, and understandable.
- ↑6. Performance Plans should contain a minimum of three but not more than seven critical performance elements. Each Performance Plan must contain at least one non-critical element.
- ↑7. Performance Plans for non-supervisory employees must include in at least one of the critical elements the responsibility for demonstrating a commitment to EEO/CR.
- ↑8. Performance Plans must contain a critical performance element for safety and health, when warranted by the employee's position.
- ↑9. Performance Plans may contain generic elements and standards for similar occupations.
- ↑10. An employee officially designated as a supervisor must have a separate critical performance element for Supervision and/or Leadership/Management, which includes a performance standard that addresses accountability for performance management of others including preparation of Performance Plans, progress reviews, annual appraisals, and other related duties.
- ↑11. An employee officially designated as a supervisor must contain employee and customer/stakeholder perspectives in their Performance Plans.
- ↑12. An employee officially designated as a supervisor must have a separate critical performance element that addresses Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights.
- ↑13. The Performance Plan must be signed by the supervisor, reviewing official (normally the second-level supervisor) and employee. The employee should then receive a copy of the approved plan.