

**FFAS**  
**HANDBOOK**

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**Performance Management System**

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**For FSA, RMA, and FAS Offices  
(Except Foreign Service)**

SHORT REFERENCE

**5-PM  
(Revision 10)**

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Farm Service Agency  
Washington, DC 20250



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<b>Performance Management System 5-PM (Revision 10)</b>	<b>Amendment 2</b>
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**Approved by:** Deputy Administrator, Management



**Amendment Transmittal**

**A Reason for Amendment**

Paragraph 3 has been amended to identify supervisor and reviewing official for CED's.

<b>Page Control Chart</b>		
<b>TC</b>	<b>Text</b>	<b>Exhibit</b>
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**Part 1 Basic Provisions****1 Overview****A Handbook Purpose**

This handbook:

- applies to all FAS, FSA, and RMA employees

**Exceptions:** See exceptions in subparagraph 2 B.

- prescribes policies, principles, and procedures for FFAS employees under the pass/fail and 4- and 5-tier performance management systems.

**B Objective**

FFAS's objective is to ensure that the Performance Management Systems are used as a tool for executing basic management and supervisory responsibilities by:

- communicating and clarifying goals and objectives
- identifying individual accountability to accomplish organizational goals and objectives
- evaluating and improving individual and organizational performance
- using performance ratings as a basis for:
  - adjusting basic pay
  - awards
  - training
  - promoting
  - reassigning
  - demoting
  - retaining
  - reduction in force
  - removals based on unsatisfactory performance.





## 2 Authority, Coverage, and Related References

### A Sources of Authority

The following contain the regulatory basis for administering the FFAS Performance Management Systems:

- 5 U.S.C. 43
- 5 CFR Part 430
- Pub. L. 103-89
- other provisions of law and executive orders.

### B FFAS Performance Management Systems

All employees in General Manager, General Schedule, and Wage Grade for County Office positions are covered under the following FFAS Performance Management Systems:

- 2-tier, pass/fail
  - FSA National Office and RMA, except KC (Exhibit 4)
  - FSA State and County Offices (Exhibit 6)
- 4-tier (FAS) and 5-tier FSA State Offices, when required by collective bargaining agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Exhibit 8).

2 Authority, Coverage, and Related References (Continued)

B FFAS Performance Management Systems (Continued)

**Exceptions:** The following employees are **not** covered by the FFAS Performance Management Systems in this handbook:

- persons employed without compensation
- persons employed on a fee or contract basis
- employees outside the continental limits of the U.S. who are paid according to local native prevailing wage rates for the area in which employed
- STC members
- temporary employees with appointments of 120 calendar days or less
- Foreign Service employees
- members of the Senior Executive Service.

2 Authority, Coverage, and Related References (Continued)

C Related Handbooks

The following handbooks concern the FFAS Performance Management Systems.

IF the material concerns...	THEN see...
appraisal grievances	any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15-PM for FSA employees, except CO County Office employees</li> <li>• 22-PM, Part 10.5 for CO County Office employees</li> <li>• local bargaining unit agreements for negotiated grievance procedures for bargaining unit employees.</li> </ul>
approved abbreviations	1-CM.
incentive awards	either of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7-PM</li> <li>• local bargaining unit agreements. Contact your union representative or HRD.</li> </ul>



**3 Responsibilities and Redelegations of Authority**

**A Administrator’s Responsibilities**

The Administrator is responsible for:

- ensuring:
  - fair and consistent application of the Performance Management System
  - compliance with governing laws, rules, and regulations
  - that employees are informed of their annual appraisal periods
  - that performance management of employees is conducted according to this handbook and negotiated bargaining unit agreements
  - that equitable and appropriate amounts of funds are provided for performance awards for deserving employees
- developing and communicating organizational objectives and priorities to assist supervisors and managers in developing employee performance plans
- establishing administrative and remedial procedures to be used when performance ratings are not completed in a timely manner.

**B Redelegations of Authority**

The responsibilities in subparagraph A are redelegated as follows.

<b>Redelegating Official</b>	<b>Official Receiving Redelegated Authority</b>
Administrator	DAM
DAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director, HRD</li> <li>• Director, KCAO</li> </ul>
Director, HRD	Chief, Performance Management, Benefits, and Awards Branch
Director, KCAO	Chief, Personnel Division
Chief, Personnel Division	Chief, Employee and Labor Relations Branch

3 Responsibilities and Redelegations of Authority (Continued)

C Servicing Personnel Office’s and State Office’s Responsibilities

Following are responsibilities of the servicing personnel office and the State Office.

IF office is...	THEN the office shall...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• servicing personnel office</li> <li>• State Office</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advice and assistance to supervisors and managers in carrying out their performance management responsibilities</li> <li>• supervisors and managers with adequate performance appraisal training opportunities and technical advice about performance appraisal policies and procedures</li> <li>• notification of annual performance appraisal periods and due dates</li> <li>• necessary assistance to follow up on nonreceipt of overdue performance ratings</li> </ul> </li> <li>• assist supervisors and managers in resolving differences that may arise in carrying out the Performance Management System.</li> </ul>
servicing personnel office	maintain official copies of performance appraisal documents; that is, AD-435’s, AD-435A’s, and AD-435B’s.  <b>Note:</b> Hard copies are <b>not</b> required when using automated system.
State Office	maintain official copies of CED’s AD-435’s, AD-435A’s, and AD-435B’s in EPF.  <b>Note:</b> Official copies of performance appraisal documents for other CO County Office employees are maintained in the County Office.

3 Responsibilities and Redelegations of Authority (Continued)

D County Office’s Responsibilities

Following are County Office responsibilities for CO County Office employees.

Step	Action
1	Create EPF for each CO County Office employee.
2	Maintain official copies of AD-435’s, AD-435A’s, and AD-435B’s.  <b>Note:</b> Hard copies are <b>not</b> required when using automated system.
3	Follow up on nonreceipt of overdue performance ratings.

E Reviewing Official’s Responsibilities

The reviewing official shall:

- when required, review and approve performance plans and performance appraisals that are prepared by subordinate supervisors to ensure consistency and equity throughout the organizations
- when required, review and approve performance appraisals in a timely manner, ensuring accuracy and conformance with this handbook
- ensure that performance appraisals are considered in personnel management decisions and related actions
- resolve disagreements between the supervisor and employee.

**3 Responsibilities and Redelegations of Authority (Continued)**

**F Changes in Positions, Assignments, or Supervisors**

New or amended performance elements and standards must be in place within 30 calendar days after an employee has been given a new position or assignment.

When an employee works under different supervisors during the designated appraisal period, each supervisor of 90 calendar days or more shall document the employee's accomplishments and prepare an interim rating. The interim rating should be forwarded to the employee's current supervisor for appropriate consideration in preparing the employee's **rating of record**.

**G Supervisor's Responsibilities**

The employee's immediate supervisor shall:

- communicate organizational goals, objectives, and priorities to employees
- involve employees in developing and revising their performance plan
- discuss performance plans with employees, and approve and provide employees with a copy of their performance plan:
  - within 30 calendar days of the beginning of each appraisal period
  - when plans are revised during the appraisal period
- evaluate performance by comparing results achieved with performance plans
- counsel employees on their progress and on areas that need improvement
- assist employees in improving job performance, particularly when performance falls below the "Results Achieved" or "Fully Successful" level.



**3 Responsibilities and Redelegations of Authority (Continued)**

**H Employee’s Responsibilities**

The employee shall:

- take part in the development of the employee’s performance plan
- plan and perform duties to the best of the employee’s ability so that the performance plan will be met or exceeded
- recommend to the supervisor needed changes in the performance plan during the appraisal period
- \*--identify work problems, and cooperate with the supervisor and reviewer to resolve the --\* problems and set objectives to improve work performance
- complete assigned training to meet current and future job performance needs.

**I Determining CO County Office Employee’s Supervisor and Reviewer**

Use the following table as a guide to determine the CO County Office employee’s supervisor and reviewer for performance appraisal purposes.

County Office Position	Supervisor	Reviewer
CED  *-- <b>Note:</b> COC may elect to confer with DD before issuing rating.	COC	DD--*
All subordinate positions except PT’s with primary responsibility for FLP	CED	DD
PT’s with primary responsibility for FLP  *-- <b>Note:</b> CED and FLM may confer on the rating when PT performs both Farm Programs and farm loan duties.--*	FLM	DD

**4-19 (Reserved)**





**Part 2 Performance Management Components**

**20 Overview**

**A In This Part**

This part contains procedures about:

- establishing performance elements, standards, and plans
- monitoring performance
- evaluating performance.

**B Introduction**

Writing a performance plan consists of the following 3 steps.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	Identify the performance elements.
2	Determine whether the performance element is critical or noncritical.
3	Write measurable and attainable performance standards.



**21 Establishing Performance Elements**

**A Definition of Performance Elements**

Performance elements are duties and responsibilities for which an employee is accountable and responsible.

**B When to Establish or Revise Performance Elements**

Establish or revise performance elements:

- within 30 calendar days of an employee’s assignment to a position because of 1 of the following:
  - appointment
  - promotion
  - temporary promotion or detail for 120 calendar days or more
  - reassignment
  - change to lower grade
- each time a work assignment changes significantly, whether or not a personnel action is effected.

**C Identifying Performance Elements**

When identifying performance elements, the elements:

- shall be:
  - observable
  - measurable
  - attainable by the employee
  - compatible with results expected of other employees in the unit or in the same position
- should be reflected in the employee’s official position description and encompass the position’s major duties and responsibilities.

**21 Establishing Performance Elements (Continued)**

**D Available Sources to Develop Elements**

Use the following applicable sources to develop performance elements:

- position descriptions
- work plans
- instructions
- project proposals
- organizational goals and objectives
- job analysis
- Affirmative Employment Plan
- Civil Rights Implementation Plan
- Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Plan
- Disabled Veterans Affirmative Employment Plan
- Disability Employment Plan
- individual development plans
- any other source that assigns or fixes responsibility for accomplishment.

**E Number of Elements**

Under pass/fail, establish a minimum of 2 performance elements, but no more than 5 elements.

Under either the 4- or 5-tier systems, establish at least 3 performance elements, but no more than 10 elements.

21 Establishing Performance Elements (Continued)

**F Identifying Critical and Noncritical Elements**

Identify critical and noncritical elements through an analysis of duties and responsibilities and the element's linkage to the mission, functions, goals, and objectives of the organization.

**Under pass/fail, all performance elements are critical.**

Under the 4- and 5-tier system, identify each element as critical or noncritical. **Every plan must have at least 1 critical element.**

Consider the following questions in determining whether an element should be designated critical or noncritical.

- Is the assigned duty so important that, if an employee fails to perform any 1 of the duties in an acceptable manner, the employee could not be retained in the position?
- What amount of time does the employee spend on the assigned duty?
- What impact does the assigned duty have on the organization?



**21 Establishing Performance Elements (Continued)****G Improper Elements**

Do not include the following in performance elements:

- conduct or behavior issues

**Examples:** Examples of these issues include:

- absence
- tardiness
- insubordination.

- personal traits, unless the traits are clearly job-related and capable of being documented and measured

**Examples:** Examples of traits not to include are:

- interpersonal relationships
- resourcefulness
- dependability.

- work assignments that are not expected to be performed during the appraisal period
- "other duties as assigned"
- other activities that are not a major or integral part of the position.

**H Generic Elements**

Supervisors may develop generic performance elements to cover similar jobs or occupations. These elements must be clearly differentiated from other elements on the same performance plan.

## 22 Establishing Performance Standards

### A Definition of Performance Standard

A performance standard is a statement of expectations or requirements that management expects to be achieved for each performance element.

### B When to Establish or Revise Performance Standards

Establish or revise performance standards:

- within 30 calendar days of an employee's assignment to a position because of 1 of the following:
  - appointment
  - promotion
  - temporary promotion or detail for 120 calendar days or more
  - reassignment
  - change to lower grade
- each time a work assignment changes significantly, whether or not a personnel action is effected.

**22 Establishing Performance Standards (Continued)****C Identifying Performance Standards**

When identifying performance standards, the standard must be:

- realistic
- achievable; that is, be based on factors that the employee has authority to control
- at the level of performance expected for the grade held by the employee
- statements of the conditions that will exist when a performance element is accomplished
- defined in terms that measure:
  - quality
  - quantity
  - timeliness
  - economy
  - results
  - effectiveness.

**D Level of Performance and Standards**

Performance standards need only be established at the "Results Achieved" (pass/fail only) and "Fully Successful" level. "Results Achieved" and "Fully Successful" indicate that the work performance is of good quality, with the employee:

- producing the expected quantity of work
- meeting deadlines or schedules for completing the expected quantity of work.

**E Generic Standards**

Supervisors may develop generic performance standards to cover similar jobs or occupations. These standards must be clearly differentiated from other standards on the same performance plan.

**23-43 (Reserved)**

**Part 3 Measuring Performance****Section 1 Progress Reviews****44 Reviewing Employee Progress****A Definition of Progress Review**

A progress review is a review by the supervisor of the employee's progress toward achieving the performance standards and is not in itself a rating.

**B Mandatory Progress Reviews**

The supervisor shall:

- during the regular 12-month appraisal period, conduct at least 1 progress review, which is usually between the sixth and ninth months
- at a minimum, inform the employee of the employee's level of performance compared with the performance elements and standards of the employee's established position.

**C Periodic Optional Progress Reviews**

Even though only a midyear progress review is required, it is in the best interest of the supervisor and employee that periodic progress review discussions be held. An employee may request a meeting for this review. Periodic counseling sessions with the employee will:

- provide regular feedback
- keep the channels of communication open
- assist in identifying strengths and weaknesses
- help avoid giving the employee an unexpected performance rating at the end of the appraisal period.

**45 Documenting Progress Reviews**

**A Optional Documentation**

There is no required format on how to document progress reviews. It is recommended that points of discussion and any strengths or weaknesses be in writing with a copy to the employee.

**B Mandatory Documentation**

The supervisor and employee shall document when the midyear progress review has been completed.

**46-60 (Reserved)**

**Section 2 Performance Evaluation**

**61 Overview**

**A Introduction**

This section contains procedures about:

- the mandatory performance appraisal period
- conditions that need to be met when appraising an employee
- documentation required
- inability to rate.

**62 Performance Appraisal Period**

**A Appraisal Period**

The appraisal period for all covered employees is from October 1 of each year to September 30 of the following year. Check normally with your local human resource office for different cycles.

**63 Performance Appraisals**

**A Policy**

Employees are entitled to the rating that most accurately describes their performance when compared to the performance standard for each performance element.

An employee's performance appraisal consists of:

- element ratings
- summary rating.

**B Evaluation Conditions**

Supervisors must be aware of the following **before** completing the employee's performance appraisal.

- Do not complete unless:
  - elements and standards were established at the "Results Achieved" or "Meets Fully Successful" level and communicated to the employee
  - the employee has served under those elements and standards in the current position for 90 calendar days or more.
- Base ratings on actual employee accomplishments.

**63 Performance Appraisals (Continued)**

**C Inability to Rate**

When a performance appraisal rating of record cannot be prepared at the end of the designated appraisal period, the appraisal period shall be extended to the amount necessary to meet the minimum appraisal period; that is, at least 90 calendar days.

**D Documenting Performance Appraisal**

Where applicable, supervisors shall use either automated systems or AD-435's to document the supervisor's appraisal of the employee.

Access the FFAS intranet for guidance on the FFAS performance policy. The website is <http://dc.ffasintranet.usda.gov/hrd/pmmain.htm>.

If using i\*CAMS to document performance, supervisors must use their i\*CAMS logon ID and password. The i\*CAMS website is <https://icams.usda.gov/>

If an i\*CAMS logon ID and password are needed, consult the Human Resources staff.

On the same i\*CAMS website, click on the link for the i\*CAMS self service manual to view the i\*CAMS web application procedure on how to document the performance appraisal using i\*CAMS.

**64-87 (Reserved)**





**Part 4 Administrative Procedures**

**88 Grievance Procedures**

**A Administrative and Negotiated Grievance Procedures**

Grievance procedures regarding performance appraisals are covered as follows:

- administrative grievance procedures:
  - 15-PM, Exhibit 4, for FFAS Federal employees
  - 22-PM, Part 10.5, for CO County Office employees
- negotiated grievance procedures for FAS, FSA, and RMA bargaining unit employees may be found in their respective bargaining unit agreement.

**89 Performance Plan and Appraisal Files**

**A Filing Documents**

When applicable, the servicing personnel office and State and County Offices shall:

- file performance work plans and performance appraisals in a separate folder labeled the Employee Performance Folder
- keep performance work plans and performance appraisals for 5 years for SES employees and 4 years for non-SES employees.

**B Purging EPF's**

Offices filing performance appraisal documents shall purge AD-435's, AD-435A's, and AD-435B's that are more than 5 years old from EPF's.

**C Transferring EPF's**

EPF's shall accompany the official personnel folders when these folders are transferred to any of the following locations:

- another FSA servicing personnel office
- another agency
- another department.

**90 Training and Evaluation****A Performance Appraisal Training**

Servicing personnel offices and State Offices shall inform covered employees of the essential provisions in this handbook using any of the following:

- training
- informal discussions between supervisors and employees
- coverage of performance appraisal requirements in:
  - USDA Employee Handbook
  - employee orientation material
  - electronic mail
  - other appropriate sources.

**B Appraisal System Evaluation**

Servicing personnel offices and State Offices shall:

- make periodic evaluations of the Performance Management System:
  - through the regularly scheduled personnel management evaluation process
  - when directed by the Office of Human Resources Management to ensure that:
    - requirements of the law are being effectively implemented
    - improvements are made as needed
- send a copy of the periodic evaluation to the Director, HRD.

**Note:** The KCAO servicing personnel office shall send the evaluation to the Director, HRD, through the Chief, Personnel Division, KCAO.



**Reports, Forms, Abbreviations, and Redelegations of Authority**

**Reports**

None.

**Forms**

This table lists the forms referenced in this handbook.

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Display Reference</b>	<b>Reference</b>
4140	Performance Work Plan	Ex. 6	
4140-A	Opportunity to Improve	Ex. 6	
AD-435	Performance Appraisal	Ex. 8	3, 63, 89, Ex. 2
AD-435A	Performance Plan, Progress Review and Appraisal Worksheet	Ex. 8	3, 89
AD-435B	Performance Plan, Progress Review and Appraisal Worksheet (Continuation)	Ex. 8	3, 89
AD-2000	Performance Plan Agreement and Appraisal	Ex. 4	Ex. 2
AD-2000-A	Opportunity to Improve	Ex. 4	

**Reports, Forms, Abbreviations, and Redelegations of Authority (Continued)**

**Abbreviations Not Listed in 1-CM**

This table lists all abbreviations not listed in 1-CM.

<b>Approved Abbreviation</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Reference</b>
CO	non-Federal County Office employees	Text
EO/CR	Equal Opportunity/Civil Rights	4, 6, 8
EPF	employee performance folder	3, 89 Ex. 4, 6, 8
FLM	Farm Loan Manager	3
i*CAMS	Internet * Combined Administrative Management System	63, Ex. 6
OTI	Opportunity to Improve	Ex. 4, 6
PT	program technician	3
RIF	Reduction-in-Force	Ex. 4, 6, 8
WGI	within-grade increase	Ex. 4, 6, 8

**Reports, Forms, Abbreviations, and Redelegations of Authority (Continued)**

**Redelegations of Authority**

The Administrator is responsible for establishing and directing the FFAS Performance Management System. This responsibility is redelegated as follows.

<b>Redelegating Official</b>	<b>Official Receiving Redelegated Authority</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Administrator	DAM	3
DAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director, HRD</li> <li>• Director, KCAO</li> </ul>	
Director, HRD	Chief, Performance Management, Benefits, and Awards Branch	
Director, KCAO	Chief, Personnel Division	
Chief, Personnel Division	Chief, Employee and Labor Relations Branch	





**Definitions of Terms Used in This Handbook****Additional Performance Element**

An additional performance element is a dimension or aspect of individual, team, or organizational performance that is not a critical or noncritical element. Such elements are not used in assigning a summary level.

**Appraisal**

An appraisal is the act or process of reviewing and evaluating the performance of an employee against the described performance work plan, including oral and/or written progress reviews.

**Appraisal Period**

An appraisal period is the period of time during which an employee's performance will be reviewed and a rating of record will be prepared. The appraisal period generally begins on October 1 of each year and ends on September 30 of the following year.

**Appraisal Unit**

An appraisal unit is a numerical weight given the element rating. Appraisal units are used as the basis for converting the element rating to a narrative summary rating using either of the following:

- the Decision Table on AD-435, for FSA and RMA employees
- the Decision Table in Exhibit 8, for FAS employees.

**Critical Element**

A critical element is:

- a component of a position consisting of 1 or more duties and responsibilities on which the employee is rated and which contributes toward accomplishing the goals and objectives of the organization
- so important that unacceptable performance in the element would result in unacceptable performance in the position.

Performance work plans under the 2-level (pass/fail) program only contain critical elements. This work assignment or responsibility is of such importance that unacceptable performance on the element would result in a determination that the employee's overall performance is at the "Results Not Achieved" level.

## Definitions of Terms Used in This Handbook (Continued)

### Customers

Customers are internal coworkers and/or external members of the public who receive various services and/or products from Agency employees.

### Decision Table

A Decision Table is used in converting the appraisal units for individual elements into a summary rating on AD-435.

### Detail

Detail is the temporary assignment of an employee for either of the following purposes:

- perform services outside the scope of the specific position to which the employee is formally appointed
- perform services for, and under the direction of, an organizational unit that is not the unit in which the employee holds the appointment.

### Departure (or Interim) Rating

A departure (or interim) rating is an appraisal given to employees who have served on a performance plan for at least 90 calendar days and the employee/supervisor relationship changes. The interim rating is not a formal rating of record and is only to be considered when determining the annual rating of record.

### Element Rating

An element rating is the level of performance on an element that is determined by comparing accomplishments to the performance standard.

Element rating levels for 4- and 5-tier systems are:

- “Exceeds Fully Successful”
- “Meets Fully Successful”
- “Does Not Meet Fully Successful.”

Element rating levels for pass/fail are:

- “Results Achieved”
- “Results Not Achieved”.

## Definitions of Terms Used in This Handbook (Continued)

### **“Fully Successful” Rating**

“Fully Successful” is a rating for performance that is of good quality. Employee produces the expected quantity and quality of work and meets deadlines for completing the work.

### **Interim (or Departure) Rating**

An interim (or departure) rating is an appraisal given to employees who have served on a performance plan for at least 90 calendar days and the employee/supervisor relationship changes. The interim rating is not a formal rating of record and is only to be considered when determining the annual rating of record.

### **“Marginal” Rating**

“Marginal” is a rating for performance that needs improvement to achieve the “Fully Successful” level.

### **Minimum Appraisal Period**

A minimum appraisal period is the 90-calendar-day period of time, or such other period of time as established in local negotiated labor-management agreements, during which an employee must have operated under a performance work plan and for which the employee may receive a performance rating.

### **Noncritical Element**

A noncritical element is a component of an employee’s position that does not meet the definition of a critical element, but is of sufficient importance to warrant written appraisal.

### **Opportunity to Improve**

An opportunity to improve is a written plan established at any time during the appraisal period when it is determined by the Rating Official that an employee is performing at the “Results Not Achieved” level in any element(s). It outlines the steps the employee should take to improve performance to an acceptable level and the length of time for which it is in effect.

## Definitions of Terms Used in This Handbook (Continued)

### “Outstanding” Rating

“Outstanding” is a rating” for performance of rare, very high quality.

- Employee produces an exceptional quantity of work significantly ahead of established schedules and with very little supervision.
- Performance for each element consistently exceeds the “Fully Successful” standard.

**Note:** An “Outstanding” rating requires narrative documentation and other evidence.

### Performance

Performance is an employee’s accomplishment of assigned work as specified in the critical and noncritical elements of the employee’s position.

### Performance Appraisal

A performance appraisal lists the performance elements, element ratings, and summary ratings that are used to record the employee’s rating of record.

### Performance Elements

Performance elements are duties and responsibilities for which an employee is accountable and responsible.

### Performance Standard

A performance standard:

- is a statement of expectations or requirements that management expects to be achieved for each performance element
- may include, but is not limited to, factors such as quality, quantity, timeliness, and manner of performance.

### Performance Work Plan

A performance work plan is the written document that identifies the employee’s critical elements and performance standards by which he or she will be rated. It is recorded on AD-2000.

## Definitions of Terms Used in This Handbook (Continued)

### Progress Review

A progress review is a joint discussion between the Rating Official and the employee regarding the employee's progress toward achieving performance standards. It does not involve the issuance of a rating of record.

### Rating Official

A rating official is an employee's first line supervisor or other person designated with responsibility for establishing performance work plans, conducting progress reviews, and issuing final ratings of record.

### Rating of Record

A rating of record is the final summary rating normally issued at the end of the appraisal period which becomes a part of the employee's performance file (EPF) maintained in the servicing personnel office.

### Results Achieved

Results Achieved is an element rating which means performance **meets** expectations. Also, the overall summary rating which equates to the Level 3, "Fully Successful," as specified in 5 CFR 430.208(d)(2)(iii).

### Results Not Achieved

Results Not Achieved is a element rating indicating performance is unacceptable, e.g. **does not meet** expectations. It is also a summary level which equates to the Level 1, "Unacceptable," as specified in 5 CFR 430.208(d)(2)(i).

### Reviewing Official

The reviewing official is an individual at a higher level in the organization than that of the rating official and is responsible for reviewing and concurring in a "Results Not Achieved" rating and resolving differences of opinion between rating officials and employees.

## Definitions of Terms Used in This Handbook (Continued)

### Service Center Agencies

Service Center agencies are the mission areas of the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rural Development.

### Summary Rating

The summary rating is a written record of the appraisal of each critical and noncritical element and the assignment of a summary rating level.

### “Superior” Rating

“Superior” is a rating for performance of unusually good or excellent quality. Employee produces a very high quantity of work ahead of established schedules and with less than normal supervision.

### Team

A team is a cooperative unit designed to accomplish a specified mission, such as those typically found in local offices, within organizational structures, assigned to specific tasks or projects, etc. Team membership is not necessarily limited to a specific agency or functional unit.

### “Unacceptable” Rating

“Unacceptable” is a rating for performance that does not meet established “Fully Successful” standards in 1 or more critical elements.

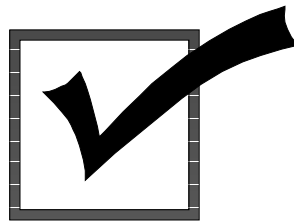
**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC**

**Farm Service Agency/Risk Management Agency**

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT POLICY  
MANUAL**

**October 1, 2000**

**Results Achieved/Results Not Achieved**



**FSA, HRD, Performance Management, Benefits and Awards Branch**

Distribution:  
September 3, 2002



**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)**

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**Performance Management Policy**

**1. Purpose**

The purpose of performance management is to improve individual and organizational performance, program effectiveness, and accountability by focusing on results, service quality, and customer satisfaction, and by aligning standards and elements with organizational goals and strategic plans.

**2. Background**

In September 1995, the Office of Personnel Management deregulated performance management, giving agencies the flexibility to redesign their current programs using summary rating patterns from two to five levels. In order to research, evaluate, and recommend program changes based on the new flexibilities, a project team of employees from all Service Center Agencies, including union representation, was formed in July 1997.

The development team concluded from its research that the two-level summary rating pattern, with the flexibility to add nonrated team performance components as developmental tools, would meet most of the needs for the Service Center Agencies. According to OPM, agencies using the two level pattern report that it decreases favoritism, increases equity and consistency in ratings, eliminates rating inflation, reduces employee complaints and grievances, improves credibility, eliminates automatic connection between ratings and awards, reduces paperwork, and focuses on actual performance and performance improvement.

The March 2000 collective bargaining agreement between FSA/RMA and AFSCME Local 3925 specifically allows for a two-tier rating pattern, and in CY 2000 both FSA and RMA elected to implement the Two-Level Performance Appraisal System for Washington, D.C. headquarters employees.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
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**3. Legal Authorities That Govern Performance Management**

- USDA Performance Management System established on June 12, 1996
- Chapter 43 of Title 5 of the U. S. Code
- Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations , Part 430
- Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 432
- AFSCME Local 3925 Contract, Article 23

**4. Effective Date**

The effective date for this policy is October 1, 2000, for Washington, D.C. headquarters employees; however, implementation began January 1, 1999, in nonunionized field locations.

**5. Definitions**

- a. Additional Performance Element. A dimension or aspect of individual, team, or organizational performance that is not a critical or noncritical element. Such elements are not used in assigning a summary level.
- b. Appraisal. The act or process of reviewing and evaluating the performance of an employee against the described performance work plan, including oral and/or written progress reviews.
- c. Appraisal Period. The period of time during which an employee's performance will be reviewed and a rating of record will be prepared. The appraisal period generally begins on October 1 of each year and ends on September 30 of the following year.
- d. Critical Element. A component of a position consisting of one or more duties and responsibilities on which the employee is rated and which contributes toward accomplishing the goals and objectives of the organization. This work assignment or responsibility is of such importance that unacceptable performance on the element would result in a determination that the employee's overall performance is at the "Results Not Achieved" level. Performance work plans under this two-level program only contain critical elements.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
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**5. Definitions (Continued)**

- e. Customers. Internal coworkers and/or external members of the public who receive various services and/or products from Service Center Agency employees.
- f. Element Rating. The level of performance on a critical element which is determined by comparing accomplishments to the performance standard. Element rating levels are: “Results Achieved” and “Results Not Achieved”.
- g. Minimum Appraisal Period. The 90-calendar-day period of time, or such other period of time as established in local negotiated labor-management agreements, during which an employee must have operated under a performance work plan and for which the employee may receive a performance rating.
- h. Opportunity to Improve. A written plan established at any time during the appraisal period when it is determined by the Rating Official that an employee is performing at the “Results Not Achieved” level in any element(s). It outlines the steps the employee should take to improve performance to an acceptable level and the length of time for which it is in effect.
- i. Performance Standard. The management-approved expression of the performance, threshold(s), requirement(s), or expectation(s) that must be met to be appraised at a particular level of performance. A performance standard may include, but is not limited to, quality, quantity, cost-efficiency, timeliness, and manner of performance.
- j. Performance Work Plan. The written document that identifies the employee’s critical elements and performance standards by which he or she will be rated. It is contained on AD-2000, Performance Plan Agreement and Appraisal. See paragraph 11 of this exhibit for an example of AD-2000.

2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
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5. Definitions (Continued)

- k. Progress Review. A joint discussion between the Rating Official and the employee regarding the employee's progress toward achieving performance standards. It does not involve the issuance of a rating of record.
- l. Rating of Record. The final summary rating normally issued at the end of the appraisal period which becomes a part of the employee's performance file (EPF) maintained in the Servicing Human Resources Office.
- m. Rating Official. An employee's first line supervisor or other person designated with responsibility for establishing performance work plans, conducting progress reviews, and issuing final ratings of record. Typically, the Rating Official resides in the same agency as the employee being rated.
- n. Results Achieved. Element rating which means performance **meets** expectations. Also, the overall summary rating which equates to the Level 3, "Fully Successful," as specified in 5 CFR 430.208(d)(2)(iii).
- o. Results Not Achieved. Element rating indicating performance is unacceptable, e.g., **does not meet** expectations. It is also a summary level which equates to the Level 1, "Unacceptable," as specified in 5 CFR 430.208(d)(2)(i).
- p. Reviewing Official. The individual responsible for reviewing and concurring in a "Results Not Achieved" rating and resolving differences of opinion between rating officials and employees.
- q. Service Center Agencies. The mission areas of the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rural Development.
- r. Team. A cooperative unit designed to accomplish a specified mission, such as those typically found in local offices, within organizational structures, assigned to specific tasks or projects, etc. Team membership is not necessarily limited to a specific agency or functional unit.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
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**6. Acronyms**

**EO/CR** - Equal Opportunity/Civil Rights

**EPF** - Employee Performance Folder

**OTI** - Opportunity to Improve

**RIF** - Reduction-in-Force

**7. Forms and Records**

- a. Appraisal Forms. Performance work plans containing progress reviews and performance ratings conducted under this program must be recorded on AD-2000, Performance Plan Agreement and Appraisal.
- b. Opportunity to Improve (OTI). An OTI is developed and documented on AD-2000-A, Opportunity to Improve. See paragraph 10 b (3) of this exhibit for discussion of performance at the “Results Not Achieved” level and also for the form.
- c. Records. In addition to the procedures set forth in 5 CFR Part 293, the following procedures govern the establishment and maintenance of performance records.
  - (1) All records must meet the requirements of 5 CFR Part 297 as well as any Departmental provisions of the Privacy and Freedom of Information Acts.
  - (2) Additional performance elements that are developed between a supervisor and employee and are not considered part of the rating are not to be submitted to the Human Resources Office, but are to be maintained by the supervisor and employee.
  - (3) Ratings of record and the performance work plans on which the ratings are based must be filed in the Employee Performance Folder (EPF) for the most recent 4 years. Ratings older than 4 years are not retained in the EPF.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)**

**7. Forms and Records (Continued)**

- (4) When the EPF of an employee is sent to another Servicing Human Resources Office in the employing agency, to another agency or department, or to the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), the “losing” Servicing Human Resources Office shall include in the EPF the three most recent ratings of record received during the preceding 4-year period. Also, the “losing” office will purge from the EPF all ratings of record and work plans that are more than 4 years old.

**8. Responsibilities**

- a. Agency Heads are responsible for:

- (1) Tailoring Departmental policy to meet the individual needs of the Agency.
- (2) Assisting in resolving concerns at the lowest possible level.

- b. The Servicing Human Resources Office is responsible for:

- (1) Providing technical and operational support and advice to the rating officials to help them administer the performance management program in a manner consistent with applicable laws, rules, and regulations.
- (2) Ensuring that performance work plans and ratings of record are maintained in the Servicing Human Resources Office in accordance with the requirements in 5 CFR Parts 293 and 297.
- (3) Providing training on the performance management program and their responsibilities.
- (4) Assisting in resolving concerns at the lowest possible level.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)**

**8. Responsibilities (Continued)**

c. Reviewing Officials are responsible for:

- (1) Reviewing and concurring in a “results not achieved” rating.
- (2) Resolving differences between employees and rating officials concerning ratings and adjusting ratings when necessary.
- (3) Assisting in resolving concerns at the lowest possible level.

d. Rating Officials are responsible for:

- (1) Timely informing employees of the overall mission, objectives, goals, plans, and activities of the Agency and work unit and the employee’s related duties and responsibilities.
- (2) Providing feedback to the employee through ongoing communication and actively listening and considering feedback from the employee and customers.
- (3) Providing the employee the opportunity to participate in the development of performance work plans.
- (4) Providing employees with written performance work plans which identify the critical elements related to their specific duties, responsibilities, and expected levels of performance.
- (5) Conducting and documenting quarterly but no less than semi-annual reviews.
- (6) Completing performance ratings which include evaluating and documenting employees’ actual accomplishments and determining summary levels.
- (7) Recommending personnel actions and/or training, as necessary, based on the employee’s level of performance in relation to the performance standards and elements.
- (8) Addressing concerns at the lowest possible level.



**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)**

**8. Responsibilities (Continued)**

e. Employees are responsible for:

- (1) Communicating with the supervisor throughout the appraisal period.
- (2) Participating in the development of performance work plans and measurable performance standards.
- (3) Assuring that they have a clear understanding of their rating official's expectations and requesting clarification when necessary.
- (4) Assisting in identifying training needs to enhance performance.
- (5) Managing performance to achieve expectations and bringing to the rating official's attention circumstances that may affect achievement of standards.
- (6) Participating in discussions of individual performance.
- (7) Actively listening and considering feedback with an open mind.
- (8) Providing input on accomplishments.
- (9) Improving those aspects of performance identified as needing improvement.

f. The roles of Union Officials are:

- (1) Assisting management and employees to ensure that the program is administered consistent with negotiated labor-management agreements.
- (2) Assisting in resolving concerns at the lowest possible level.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA, Except KC (Continued)****9. Coverage**

This program covers all headquarters bargaining unit employees of the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Risk Management Agency (RMA). {FSA management has extended this policy to all nonbargaining unit employees in headquarters and RMA management has extended this policy to all nonbargaining unit employees in Washington and at all Compliance and regional offices, except Kansas City. Schedule C employees are covered by this program but are not afforded any rights as established by 5 USC 4303.}

Excluded from coverage are those employees expected to be employed for less than 90 days; non-Federal employees, and those persons employed in the Senior Executive Service.

**10. Policy**

It is the policy of the FSA and RMA that, within the framework provided by this program, individual and organizational goals will be communicated to employees, individual responsibility for accomplishing team and organizational goals will be identified, employees will be provided feedback regarding performance, performance will be evaluated and improved, and performance results will be used as a basis for appropriate personnel actions. All participants in this process should expect to be held accountable for accomplishment of their performance management responsibilities as identified in this directive.

Communication between the rating official and the employee is essential throughout this process. Rating officials and employees should work together to jointly clarify how competencies apply within the work environment so that there is a common understanding about the expectations for performance. In addition, there should be a discussion of the goals of the individual work unit and the employee's involvement/contribution to unit goals for the upcoming year. In developing performance plans, rating officials must seek the input of employees before the plans are implemented. Employees shall be provided a minimum of 5 workdays to submit their comments and recommendations to their supervisors. The Rating Official is ultimately responsible for setting performance elements and standards.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)**

**10. Policy**

a. Planning Performance

Planning performance is the process of developing performance work plans that align individual performance with organizational goals. Focus must be placed on accomplishments (i.e., end results) rather than on activities. The Office of Personnel Management developed an eight-step method to assist organizations in developing performance plans with this emphasis. See the Quick Reference for Developing Employee Performance Plans that Link to Organizational Goals, at <http://dc.ffasintranet.usda.gov/hrd/performa.htm> that outlines this process. This reference may be consulted when developing performance work plans.

- (1) Performance work plans are developed on AD-2000, Performance Plan Agreement and Appraisal. Work plans document progress reviews and specify the elements and the standards on which the employee will be rated.
- (2) Performance work plans under this two-level program only contain critical elements as required by the Office of Personnel Management. A performance work plan must contain at least two but no more than a total of five critical elements. Elements must be rated within the context of an employee's position and grade level.
  - (a) Critical elements are work assignments or responsibilities of such importance that unacceptable performance in the element would result in a determination that the employee's overall performance is unacceptable.
  - (b) The elements should be based on organizational goals, strategic plans, position descriptions, and internal and external customer needs. Whenever possible, similar positions should have like standards.
  - (c) Sources of feedback on employee performance related to a critical element must be substantiated and documented. If such feedback is used in the rating of record, employees shall have an opportunity to review the documentation and comment on all outside feedback provided to the supervisor prior to the rating of record.
  - (d) Critical elements must be based solely on the individual performance of the employee.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)**

**10. Policy (Continued)**

(e) Standardized (generic) performance elements have been established and are available for use in developing performance work plans. The standard elements may be used as is, or with clarification, or up to 3 new elements may be developed, as appropriate.

- i Timeframes and appropriate procedures, when referenced in elements, are derived directly from applicable regulatory guidelines, procedural guides, and/or agency program instructions, etc. This is so that the standard does not become too cumbersome and lengthy as was the case with past performance management programs.
- ii When timeframes, quantity, quality, or cost-effectiveness need to be more specific or expanded from the standards provided, this may be (a) documented on an additional sheet and attached to the performance plan; (b) referenced to one of the blank numbered blocks located after the standardized elements; or, if possible, (c) placed directly in the block with the element.

Any elements needing additional clarification will be further defined in writing by the rating official in one of the manners described in the previous paragraph. A copy must be given to the employee at the beginning of the appraisal period along with a copy of his or her performance work plan.

- iii Employees and rating officials may choose applicable elements by placing a checkmark in the appropriate block.
- iv Rating officials may also write specific performance elements in the blank spaces provided at the end of the standardized elements.
- v All employees must have at least one job-specific performance element which may include supervisory responsibilities, the individual's contributions to team accomplishments, execution of duties, etc., or an element may be specifically written for this purpose in the blank numbered blocks provided at the end of the standardized elements.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)**

**10. Policy (Continued)**

- vi A mandatory EO/CR element, Element 9, is required as a stand-alone element for all rating officials.
  - vii Employees who are not rating officials must also have a stand-alone EO/CR element - Element 10.
- (3) Additional performance elements provide another tool for communicating performance expectations important to the organization. However, they are not appropriate for inclusion in the performance work plan as critical elements and will not be used in assigning a summary level. They allow employee performance plans to communicate a fuller picture of the performance that is expected. Additional elements are to be provided separately in a format best suited for the element. Team performance objectives where overall team accomplishments are being monitored and evaluated is one example. (Remember, only the individual contributions to the team, Element 12, can be evaluated under the performance work plan.)
- (4) Standards should focus on accomplishments -- results, service quality, teamwork, and customer service. Standards should be established:
- (a) within 30 days of the beginning of an appraisal period; or
  - (b) within 30 days of appointment, reassignment, promotion, detail for more than the minimum appraisal period, or when the duties of the position are substantially changed during the established appraisal period.
- (5) The employee and rating official sign and date the performance work plan indicating that it has been discussed and the employee has had the opportunity to obtain a clear understanding of expectations. The employee is provided a copy of AD-2000 and any additional clarifying information.

**Where there is disagreement as to the content of performance elements and standards, the rating official's decision prevails.** If the employee refuses to sign the performance work plan at the beginning of the appraisal period, the supervisor should note this in the employee's signature block. The date the plan was discussed with the employee and implemented should also be noted accordingly. **Lack of the employee's signature and date on the performance work plan does not negate implementation of the plan.**

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)**

**10. Policy (Continued)**

- (6) At the time the performance plan is developed, the employee also indicates knowledge and understanding of the standards of conduct (ethics regulations) and acknowledges that questions have been answered to their satisfaction by initialing the appropriate block.
- (7) The substance of elements and performance standards cannot be grieved.

**b. Monitoring and Appraising Performance**

The employee and rating official will meet periodically throughout the appraisal period to provide feedback relating to performance. This will be accomplished through progress reviews and performance ratings.

**(1) Progress Reviews**

- (a) Regular and open communication between supervisors and employees is vitally important in any performance management system, and particularly in a two-tier performance appraisal system where all elements rated are critical elements.
- (b) Rating officials are responsible for initiating communication with the employee about actual performance and ensuring progress reviews are held. Open dialog between the employee and the rating official is crucial during these discussions.
- (c) Progress reviews should be held quarterly, but no less than semi-annually, and such reviews will be documented in writing.
- (d) The rating official is encouraged to make written comments concerning the employee's performance on AD-2000 at the time of the progress review. The purpose of the written comments is to provide for a more formal identification of the employee's performance in relation to the performance work plan. Employees are encouraged to provide written comments on the form at this time, also. The employee and the rating official initial and date the appropriate blocks to indicate the discussions were held.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)**

**10. Policy (Continued)**

- (e) If a progress review is not conducted, the employee has the option of contacting the rating official to inquire of the status. If the progress review is still not held, the employee may seek assistance from the second level supervisor (usually the reviewing official). Bargaining unit employees may also seek assistance from their exclusive representative. The purpose of this is to encourage resolution at the lowest possible level, make employees more responsible in their own performance, and to encourage employee involvement and participation.
- (f) Failure to conduct a progress review may be grieved; however, the outcome of a progress review may not be grieved as no official rating is given.

**(2) Ratings of Record**

- (a) A rating of record is the final rating issued at the end of the appraisal period and it becomes a part of the employee's performance file (EPF) maintained in the Servicing Human Resources Office. A rating of "Results Achieved" or "Results Not Achieved" is assigned to each element at this time, as well as the overall summary rating.
- (b) A performance work plan must be in place for the minimum appraisal period (a minimum of 90 calendar days) and normally no longer than 15 months for a rating of record to be conducted.
- (c) Normally, the rating of record is issued for the appraisal period ending September 30.
  - i Performance discussions and ratings will occur at the time of each position and/or supervisory change provided the employee has served under standards for the minimum appraisal period. This rating must be provided to the gaining supervisor to be considered at the time the rating of record is issued.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)**

**10. Policy (Continued)**

- Details and Temporary Promotions. At the conclusion of a detail or temporary promotion, the rating official to whom the employee was detailed will document the employee's accomplishments and forward the information to the employee's permanent supervisor. This guidance applies to any employee detailed within USDA. When an employee is detailed outside the Department, the permanent supervisor should make a concerted effort to obtain information regarding the employee's performance prior to completing the annual performance rating of record.
  - Supervisory Change. Each individual who supervised the employee for 90 days or more during the appraisal period should discuss the performance with the employee, prepare feedback comments, and forward them to the current rating official.
  - Position and Supervisory Change. When an employee who has occupied a position for at least 90 days leaves that position, the supervisor or rating official should prepare feedback comments on the employee's performance and forward them to the new supervisor/rating official.
  - Position Change Without a Supervisory Change. When an employee changes position, but retains the same supervisor (e.g., the employee was promoted or reassigned within the same organization), the supervisor should prepare written documentation of the employee's performance. This information must be considered in the employee's rating of record.
- ii All employees must be issued a rating of record annually. Employees who have not served under established standards for the minimum appraisal period must have the timeframe extended to meet this requirement. Once the minimum appraisal period has been completed, a rating of record must be issued.



**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)**

**10. Policy (Continued)**

- (d) An overall summary rating of “Results Achieved” indicates that the employee has met the performance expectations for each element. “Results Achieved” performance equates to the Level 3, “Fully Successful”, as specified in statute.

An overall summary rating of “Results Not Achieved” means that the employee has not met performance expectations for one or more element(s) and constitutes unacceptable performance. “Results Not Achieved” performance has the same meaning and effect as “Unacceptable”, Level 1, as used in law and regulation.

- i “Results Achieved” performance requires no written comments by the rating official. It requires signature by only the rating official and the employee; there is no need for the signature of the reviewing official or anyone above the level of the rating official.
- ii “Results Not Achieved” performance requires mandatory written comments to be attached to the performance work plan and must be signed by the rating official and the reviewing official prior to presenting to the employee for signature. See paragraph 10 b (3) of this exhibit for further guidance on this level of performance.

**The employee’s signature indicates receipt of the rating; it does not represent agreement with the rating.** If the employee refuses to sign the rating of record, the rating official should note this in the appropriate block and indicate the date the rating was issued.

- (e) Ratings of record may be grieved and shall be handled under the administrative grievance procedure or applicable negotiated grievance procedure.

(3) “Results Not Achieved” Performance

- (a) Rating officials shall discuss and consider reasonable means by which to assist employees in improving performance. Such assistance may include training, closer supervision, revision of assignments, coaching, etc.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)**

**10. Policy (Continued)**

- (b) If, however, at anytime during the appraisal period one or more element(s) is found to be at the “Results Not Achieved” level, the employee should be placed under an official opportunity to improve (OTI). The purpose of an OTI is to provide the employee a reasonable opportunity to improve performance to the acceptable “Results Achieved” level before the employee receives an official rating of record. Employees must be given an OTI, and must fail that OTI, before they can receive an official rating of record of “Results Not Achieved”.
- (c) AD-2000-A, Opportunity to Improve, will be completed jointly by the rating official and employee with the technical assistance of the Servicing Human Resources Office. It will be signed by the rating official and the employee indicating receipt and implementation of the plan. The employee’s signature is not required, however, to implement the plan. See paragraph 12 of this exhibit for an example of AD-2000-A.

Components of the plan consist of:

- i The length of time for which it is to be in effect. The duration will be determined by considering:
  - the type of position for which the OTI is being prepared,
  - the types of improvement needed,
  - the amount of reasonable time necessary to demonstrate the acceptable performance (but no less than 60 days), and
  - applicable negotiated labor-management agreements.
- ii The element(s) in which performance is unacceptable, specific deficiencies, and required improvement to raise performance to the “Results Achieved” level.
- iii The support/assistance to be provided to the employee.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)**

**10. Policy (Continued)**

- iv The frequency of follow-up reviews. In determining the frequency of reviews, consideration should be given to the length of the OTI. Upon completion of each follow-up review, the rating official and employee will initial and date in the appropriate block of AD-2000-A.
  - v The final review will state whether performance meets or does not meet expectations. If it does not meet expectations, then the rating official must provide written comments supporting this determination. The rating official will contact the Servicing Human Resources Office to determine further action necessary, i.e., reassignment, demotion, or removal.
- (d) Employees who improve their performance to the acceptable level during the improvement period must sustain acceptable performance.
- i Should the employee's performance return to the unacceptable level in the same element(s) within 12 months from the commencement date of the improvement period, a performance-based adverse action (i.e., demotion or removal) or other alternative action (i.e., reassignment) may be proposed without the benefit of an additional improvement period.
  - ii Should performance fall to the unacceptable level in a different element(s) during this 12-month period, the employee must be given another improvement period for this element(s).
- (e) Prior to the implementation of this policy (October 1, 2000, for FSA (headquarters) and RMA employees), administrative actions initiated against employees whose performance has been determined to be unacceptable as defined under **5 USC 4303** shall continue to be processed under applicable procedures.

2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)

10. Policy (Continued)

c. Linkage of Ratings of Record to Other Personnel Actions

Personnel decisions are made on the basis of merit with appropriate consideration of employee performance. All judgments about performance must be fair and equitable and may not be based upon nonmerit factors such as sex, race, color, national origin, religion, personal favoritism, age, marital status, political affiliation, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, or other nonmerit reasons.

- (1) Within-Grade Increases (WGI). Employees may be granted WGI's when the current level of performance and most recent rating of record are "Results Achieved". When a WGI decision is not consistent with the employee's most recent rating of record, the rating official should contact the Servicing Human Resources Office to determine what further action is necessary.
- (2) Promotions. No employee shall receive a promotion unless the most current rating of record is "Results Achieved". Rating officials and employees should be aware, however, that a "Results Achieved" rating is not the only criteria for promotion.
- (3) Training and Development. The performance appraisal process may be used as a basis for identifying the training needs of employees. **Additional performance elements are particularly useful for this purpose.**
- (4) Reduction-in-Force (RIF). Annual ratings of record are used to establish service credit and retention standing for RIF purposes. An employee will not be assigned a new rating of record for the sole purpose of affecting retention standing. To provide adequate time to properly determine an employee's retention standing prior to a RIF, a general or specific RIF notice will specify the date after which no new rating of record will be given that could be used to determine retention standing.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA, Except KC (Continued)**

**10. Policy (Continued)**

(5) Retention Standing. According to Departmental policy (as contained in Personnel Bulletin No. 351-1, Reduction in Force) the crediting of performance ratings issued on or after October 1, 1997, is subject to Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations on whether all the ratings within the competitive area were issued under a single rating pattern.

(a) Ratings issued under multiple (or different) rating patterns. Where these ratings do not conform to a single rating pattern, the following crediting plan will be used to determine the years to be credited. The following table uses the years to be credited for RIF purposes, unless otherwise negotiated by a union.

<b>Rating Pattern</b>	<b>No. of Summary Rating Levels</b>	<b>Level 1 (Unacceptable or equiv.)</b>	<b>Level 2 (Marginal or equiv.)</b>	<b>Level 3 (Fully Successful or equiv.)</b>	<b>Level 4 (Superior or equiv.)</b>	<b>Level 5 (Outstanding or equiv.)</b>
A	2 levels	0	N/A	16	N/A	N/A
B	3 levels	0	N/A	13	N/A	17
C	3 levels	0	N/A	13	17	N/A
D	3 levels	0	0	17	N/A	N/A
E	4 levels	0	N/A	12	15	18
F	4 levels	0	0	14	N/A	18
G	4 levels	0	0	14	17	N/A
H	5 levels	0	0	14	16	18

**Note:** N/A means “not applicable” to this rating pattern, i.e., this level is not used in this pattern.

The numbers represent the number of years to be credited for a rating at that level and under that pattern.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)**

**10. Policy (Continued)**

(b) Ratings within the same pattern. Where all ratings within the specified 4-year period and competitive area are in the same rating pattern, the OPM provision for using the pattern of crediting 20 years of service for a level 5 rating (Outstanding), 16 years service credit for a level 4 rating (Superior), and 12 years for a level 3 rating (Fully Successful) will be used. **This provision is also used for all ratings issued before October 1, 1997**, regardless of the rating pattern used. For complete guidance on RIF procedures, contact HRD or KCAO, PD.

(6) Quality Step Increases (QSI's). QSI's may be granted to employees who demonstrate sustained performance of high quality significantly above that expected at the "Results Achieved" level. Procedures and criteria for nominating and approving QSI's are covered in the Employee Recognition Policy website <http://dc.ffasintranet.usda.gov/hrd/EMPRECFN2.pdf>.

(7) Other Employee Recognition. Work accomplishments may be recognized under the Employee Recognition Policy and in Article 26: Employee Recognition and Awards in the March 8, 2000, union contract.)

d. Program Evaluation

Ongoing evaluation of the performance management program will be conducted by FSA and RMA in order to identify continuous improvement opportunities and to make adjustments in overall policy. Evaluation of overall organizational results, employee satisfaction, and consistency with mission objectives will promote the continued enhancement of a performance management program supportive of critical organizational results.

The two-level summary rating system will be reviewed annually by a written survey (to include web-based means) of all FSA/RMA headquarters personnel during its first two years of operation. Survey questions will be developed jointly by a labor/management committee, and will give employees the opportunity to comment on the two-tier appraisal system and recommend improvements. A comprehensive evaluation of the two-level program, including focus groups as well as a written survey (to include web-based means), will be made by the end of its third year of operation.

2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA, Except KC (Continued)

11. AD-2000, Performance Plan Agreement and Appraisal

The following is an example of AD-2000.

REPRODUCE LOCALLY. Include form number and date on all reproductions.

<b>AD-2000</b> (09-27-00)		United States Department of Agriculture	
<b>Performance Plan Agreement and Appraisal</b>			
<i>Privacy Act Notice: Submission of information is mandatory. Failure to provide information will prohibit data collection required by the Office of Personnel Management.</i>			
1. EMPLOYEE'S NAME		2. RATING PERIOD FROM: TO:	
3. TITLE/SERIES/GRADE	4. AGENCY/DIVISION	5. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER	
<b>PART I - PERFORMANCE PLAN</b>			
6. CRITICAL RESULTS (Check (✓) a minimum of 2/ maximum of 5 applicable elements)			
<p>Note: The narrative statements describe the "Results Achieved" level of performance. Where applicable, quantity, quality, and timeliness are derived directly from appropriate agency regulations, policies, instructions, work plans or other guidelines. If no guidelines exist, further clarification will be provided by the rating official. These elements are to be used by employees and supervisors to develop performance plans. They may be used as is, with further clarification, or up to three new elements may be developed, as appropriate. All employees must have at least one job specific element (see two-level performance appraisal system policy part 10 A (2) (e) (v)).</p>			
		Results Achieved	Results Not Achieved
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Element #1 - Execution of Duties:</b> Completed work assignments are performed in a timely manner, assuring a quality of work that meets the needs of the organization. Appropriate work methods are selected for the development of work products. Work products do not require substantive revisions. Assignments are completed in accordance with applicable agency guidelines, including time-frames. <u>Further clarification, as needed:</u>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Element #2 - Communications:</b> Oral and written communications are clear, correct, timely, and presented in an understandable manner. Supervisor and coworkers are informed of issues and problems when necessary. Information and guidance provided is timely and correct. <u>Further clarification, as needed:</u>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Element #3 - Supervision:</b> Work is assigned in a fair and effective manner. Technical guidance to subordinate staff is given in a timely manner. Performance management is implemented in accordance with procedure. Issues, concerns, or problems are handled promptly and fairly. To the extent possible, staff is properly trained and complies with occupational health and safety programs. Management decisions are supported and implemented within appropriate time-frames. <u>Further clarification, as needed:</u>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Element #4 - Team Leadership:</b> Routinely leads individuals and team members toward specific goals and accomplishments. Provides encouragement, guidance, and direction as needed. Adjusts style to fit situation. Delegates appropriate authority in an effective manner. Coordinates functions of the team members. Demonstrates a sincere interest in employees' activities, abilities, etc. <u>Further clarification, as needed:</u>		
<small>The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, ancestry, or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 725-2900 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-B, White House Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 725-5864 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.</small>			

2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA, Except KC (Continued)

11. AD-2000, Performance Plan Agreement and Appraisal (Continued)

AD-2000 (09-27-00)		Page 2 of 4	
Elements		Results Achieved	Results Not Achieved
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Element #5 - Program Management:</b> Manages program(s), resolving issues and problems within the employee's control. Monitors all aspects of program(s) for quality, effectiveness, and consistency. Program plans and guidance are responsive to objectives and requirements of the Agency. Policy instructions are appropriately issued and are accurate. Evaluates effectiveness of work and adjusts plans accordingly. <u>Further clarification, as needed.</u>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Element #6 - Special Projects:</b> Special projects are regularly completed on time in a competent, accurate, and thorough manner. Completed projects comply with regulations and procedures. Special projects are completed independently, or reflect research and collaboration with others as required. <u>Further clarification, as needed.</u>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Element #7 - Research and Analysis:</b> Thoroughly and accurately researches issues in a timely manner, using available reference sources (e.g., USDA manuals, or applicable law or regulations). Makes reasonable recommendations or decisions based on available guidance. <u>Further clarification, as needed.</u>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Element #8 - Customer Service:</b> Routinely displays courteous and tactful behavior. Projects a positive and professional image of USDA. Provides advice that is timely, responsive and accurate. Maintains appropriate rapport with internal and external customers. Develops and establishes working relationships with external organizations as required. Keeps supervisor and/or team leader informed of difficult and/or controversial issues and unique problems. Takes action to effectively solve problems before they have an adverse impact on the organization or other employees. <u>Further clarification, as needed.</u>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Element #9 - Equal Opportunity &amp; Civil Rights: (Mandatory for all supervisors and managers).</b> Performs all duties in a manner which consistently demonstrates fairness, cooperation, and respect toward coworkers, office visitors, and all others in the performance of official business. Demonstrates an awareness of EO/CR policies and responsibilities of Agency and Departmental goals of working to employ and develop a diverse, yet unified workforce. <u>Further clarification, as needed.</u>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Element #10 - Equal Opportunity &amp; Civil Rights: (Mandatory for all non-supervisory employees).</b> Performs all duties in a manner which consistently demonstrates fairness, cooperation, and respect toward coworkers, office visitors, and all others in the performance of official business. Demonstrates an awareness of EO/CR policies and responsibilities of Agency and Departmental goals of valuing a diverse, yet unified workforce. <u>Further clarification, as needed.</u>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Element #11 - Resource Management:</b> Monitors allocated funds and maintains complete and accurate records of expenditures. Routinely utilizes resources in an efficient and effective manner. Ensures that funds, property and other resources are guarded against waste, loss, unauthorized use, and misappropriation. <u>Further clarification, as needed.</u>		



2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA, Except KC (Continued)

11. AD-2000, Performance Plan Agreement and Appraisal (Continued)

AD-2000 (09-27-00) Page 3 of 4

Elements	Results Achieved	Results Not Achieved
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Element #12 - Individual Contributions to the Team:</b> Ordinarily displays dependability and reliability. Promotes open communication. Contributes creative ideas and actively participates in team meetings resulting in added value to the team's products and services. When problems arise, explores causes and assists in resolving them. Works with team members to appropriately implement decisions. Is usually open-minded to new ideas and approaches in implementing the team's goals. Willing accepts and acts on constructive criticism. <u>Further clarification, as needed:</u>		
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Element #13 -</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Element #14 -</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Element #15 -</b>		

**FART II - PROGRESS REVIEWS**

**Note:** Regular and open communication between supervisors and employees is vitally important in any performance management system, and particularly in a two-tier system where all elements rated are critical elements. **Progress reviews should be held quarterly, but no less than semi-annually, and such reviews will be documented in writing.** Date of reviews, initials of employee and rating official and comments must be provided for each review. *(Provide any additional comments as an attachment).*

**DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR USE IN PLANNING PERFORMANCE AND CONDUCTING PROGRESS REVIEWS**

- Employee's performance on primary responsibilities/priorities in the past year.
  - ▶ revise performance work plan for the coming year, as necessary
  - ▶ relationship to overall work unit objectives
- Employee's strengths and areas for growth
- Barriers to effective work performance and job satisfaction
- Employee's development *(over the past year; future needs for current job; long-term career goals and developmental needs to achieve them)*
- Possible work process improvements
- Whether employee continues to grow to meet future needs and demands of the changing environment
- Employee's feedback/constructive suggestions for supervisor
- Anything else the employee or supervisor would like to address

2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)

11. AD-2000, Performance Plan Agreement and Appraisal (Continued)

<b>AD-2000</b> (09-27-00)		Page 4 of 4			
<b>7. RATING OFFICIAL'S COMMENTS</b>					
1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter					
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter					
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter					
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter					
<b>8. EMPLOYEE'S COMMENTS</b>					
1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter					
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter					
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter					
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter					
	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Quarter</b>	
Meeting Date					
Employee's Initials					
Rating Official's Initials					
<b>PART III - SUMMARY RATING</b>					
<input type="checkbox"/> RESULTS ACHIEVED			<input type="checkbox"/> RESULTS NOT ACHIEVED.*		
<small>* A "Results not Achieved" rating requires explanation. Provide additional comments as an attachment.</small>					
<b>PART IV - CERTIFICATION</b>					
<small>Note: Employee's signature certifies review and discussion with the Rating Official. It does not necessarily mean that the employee concurs with the information on this form.</small>					
<b>9. PERFORMANCE PLAN</b> <i>(Sign when plan is established)</i>			<b>10. SUMMARY RATING</b> <i>(Sign when rating is completed)</i>		
9 a. Employee's Signature	9 b. Date	10 a. Employee's Signature		10 b. Date	
9 c. Print Name of Rating Official		10 c. Print Name of Rating Official			
9 d. Signature of Rating Official	9 e. Date	10 d. Signature of Rating Official		10 e. Date	
9 f. I have reviewed the standards of conduct and have had any questions answered by my satisfaction. <i>(Employee initial appropriate block below.)</i> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>			10 f. Name of Reviewing Official <i>(required for summary rating of "Results Not Achieved")</i> _____ 10 g. Date _____		

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)**

**12. AD-2000-A, Opportunity to Improve**

The following is an example of AD-2000-A.

REPRODUCE LOCALLY. Include form number and date on all reproductions.

<b>AD-2000-A</b> (06-06-01)		United States Department of Agriculture	
<b>OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE (OTI)</b>			
<i>This form documents a plan for required performance improvement when performance does not meet expectations (i.e., the "Results Achieved" level). It lists specific examples of the specific deficiencies and the required improvements to bring performance to the "Results Achieved" level. Additional clarifying information, if provided, must be specified in, or attached to, this plan.</i>			
1. EMPLOYEE'S NAME	2. POSITION	3. AGENCY/DIVISION	
4. COMMENCING DATE	5. ENDING DATE	6. PLAN DURATION (No. of Days)	
<b>PART A - IMPROVEMENT PLAN</b>			
<b>7. Elements</b>	<b>8. Deficiency (ies) (Cite specifics)</b>	<b>9. Required Improvement</b>	

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 328-W, Western Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5953 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)

12. AD-2000-A, Opportunity to Improve (Continued)

AD-2000-A (06-06-01) <span style="float: right;">Page 2 of 4</span>		
PART A - IMPROVEMENT PLAN, <i>Continued</i>		
7. Elements	8. Deficiency (ies) (Cite specifics)	9. Required Improvement

2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA, Except KC (Continued)

12. AD-2000-A, Opportunity to Improve (Continued)

AD-2000-A (08-06-01)		Page 3 of 4	
<b>PART A - IMPROVEMENT PLAN, Continued</b>			
10. SUPPORT TO BE PROVIDED EMPLOYEE (Indicate the support to be provided by the Supervisor or Rating Official (e.g., training, equipment, etc.) and the frequency of discussion.)			
11. REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During this opportunity to improve (OTI), you will be expected to perform all the elements of the performance work plan. You must independently perform these duties at least at the "Results Achieved" level.</li> <li>• Upon completion of the OTI, you will be re-evaluated on the element(s) identified in this plan and informed of your performance in relation to your performance work plan.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* If you have achieved the results expected/required, the OTI is concluded and you must maintain this level of performance for one year commencing from the date of the OTI.</li> <li>* If at any time during this one-year period your performance falls below the "Results Achieved" level in any of the elements specified in this plan, appropriate remedial action will be proposed. This may include, but is not limited to, a downgrade to a different position or removal from your position.</li> <li>* If at the end of this OTI you have not achieved the results expected/required, it will be necessary to determine an appropriate remedial action to propose as mentioned above.</li> <li>* If a definite decision cannot be made at the end of this OTI regarding your progress, the OTI may be extended. If this occurs, you will be notified in writing.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Areas in which you think you need additional training will be considered. The scope and level of such training provided will be determined based on how much and what kind of training has already been provided and what is customary for your position duties and grade level. If you believe additional training is needed, submit a written request to me within ten (10) days listing specific training needs.</li> <li>• Questions regarding this improvement plan, your work assignments, or the level of performance expected from you, should be directed to me.</li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> Experience indicates that, at times, performance problems can be the result of personal situations. While this may not be the case, it may be helpful to consider all the factors contributing to your performance problems. If you feel this maybe the case, we encourage you to contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 1-800-222-0384 (Voice) or 1-888-262-7848 (TTY). You may contact the program personally, or if you prefer, an appointment can be made for you. All information you provide is strictly confidential, unless you specifically authorize its release.</p>			
<b>12. PLAN ESTABLISHMENT SIGNATURES (Sign when improvement plan is established)</b>			
Employee Signature		Date	
Print Name of Supervisor/Rating Official	Signature of Supervisor/Rating Official	Date	
<b>DISTRIBUTION (Plan Establishment)</b>			
Original - Rating Official	Copy - Employee	Copy - Reviewing Official	Copy - Human Resources

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Procedures for FSA National Office and RMA,  
Except KC (Continued)**

**12. AD-2000-A, Opportunity to Improve (Continued)**

<b>AD-2000-A</b> (06-06-01)						Page 4 of 4					
<b>PART B - FOLLOW-UP REVIEW AND DISCUSSION</b>											
Follow-up No.	1	2	3	4	5						
Meeting Date											
Employee Initials											
Supervisor Initials											
<b>PART C - FINAL REVIEW</b>											
<input type="checkbox"/> Employee has achieved the required improvement(s) described in this OTI, <b>OR</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Employee has not achieved the required improvement(s) described in this OTI. The employee continues to have problems in the areas described below:  <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; width: 100%;"></div>											
<b>13. REVIEW CERTIFICATION</b>											
Employee Signature						Date					
Print Name of Supervisor/Rating Official				Signature of Supervisor/Rating Official				Date			
Print Name of Reviewing Official				Signature of Reviewing Official				Date			
<b>DISTRIBUTION (Plan Completion)</b>											
Original - Human Resources			Copy - Employee			Copy - Supervisor/Rating Official			Copy - Review Official		



**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices****Performance Management****1. Purpose**

The purpose of performance management is to improve individual and organizational performance, program effectiveness, and accountability by focusing on results, service quality, and customer satisfaction, and by aligning standards and elements with organizational goals and strategic plans.

**2. Background**

In September 1995, the Office of Personnel Management deregulated performance management, giving agencies the flexibility to redesign their current programs using summary rating patterns from two to five levels. In order to research, evaluate, and recommend program changes based on the new flexibilities, a project team of employees from all Service Center Agencies, including union representation, was formed in July 1997.

The development team concluded from its research that the two-level summary rating pattern, with the flexibility to add nonrated team performance components as developmental tools, would meet most of the needs for the Service Center Agencies. The two-level pattern decreases favoritism, increases equity and consistency in ratings, eliminates rating inflation, reduces employee complaints and grievances, improves credibility, eliminates automatic connection between ratings and awards, reduces paperwork, and focuses on actual performance and performance improvement.

**3. Legal Authorities That Govern Performance Management**

- USDA Performance Management System established on June 12, 1996
- Chapter 43 of Title 5 of the U. S. Code
- Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 430
- Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 432

Distribution:

March 30, 1999



**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)****4. Effective Date**

The effective date for this policy is October 1, 1998; however, implementation began January 1, 1999.

**5. Definitions**

- a. Additional Performance Element. A dimension or aspect of individual, team, or organizational performance that is not a critical or noncritical element. Such elements are not used in assigning a summary level.
- b. Appraisal. The act or process of reviewing and evaluating the performance of an employee against the described performance work plan, including oral and/or written progress reviews.
- c. Appraisal Period. The period of time during which an employee's performance will be reviewed and a rating of record will be prepared. The appraisal period generally begins on October 1 of each year and ends on September 30 of the following year.
- d. Critical Element. A component of a position consisting of one or more duties and responsibilities on which the employee is rated and which contributes toward accomplishing the goals and objectives of the organization. This work assignment or responsibility is of such importance that unacceptable performance on the element would result in a determination that the employee's overall performance is at the "Results Not Achieved" level. Performance work plans under this two-level program only contain critical elements.
- e. Customers. Internal coworkers and/or external members of the public who receive various services and/or products from Service Center Agency employees.
- f. Element Rating. The level of performance on a critical element which is determined by comparing accomplishments to the performance standard. Element rating levels are: "Results Achieved" and "Results Not Achieved".
- g. Minimum Appraisal Period. The 90-calendar-day period of time, or such other period of time as established in local negotiated labor-management agreements, during which an employee must have operated under a performance work plan and for which the employee may receive a performance rating.

## 2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices (Continued)

### 5. Definitions (Continued)

- h. Opportunity to Improve. A written plan established at any time during the appraisal period when it is determined by the Rating Official that an employee is performing at the "Results Not Achieved" level in any element(s). It outlines the steps the employee should take to improve performance to an acceptable level and the length of time for which it is in effect. See paragraph 11 of this exhibit for an example of Form 4140-A.
- i. Performance Standard. The management-approved expression of the performance threshold(s), requirement(s), or expectation(s) that must be met to be appraised at a particular level of performance. A performance standard may include, but is not limited to, quality, quantity, cost-efficiency, timeliness, and manner of performance.
- j. Performance Work Plan. The written document that identifies the employee's critical elements and performance standards by which he or she will be rated. It is contained on Form 4140, Performance Work Plan. See paragraph 12 of this exhibit.
- k. Progress Review. A joint discussion between the Rating Official and the employee regarding the employee's progress toward achieving performance standards. It does not involve the issuance of a rating of record.
- l. Rating of Record. The final summary rating normally issued at the end of the appraisal period which becomes a part of the employee's performance file (EPF) maintained in the Servicing Human Resources Office.
- m. Rating Official. An employee's first line supervisor or other person designated with responsibility for establishing performance work plans, conducting progress reviews, and issuing final ratings of record. Typically, the Rating Official resides in the same agency as the employee being rated.
- n. Results Achieved. Element rating which means performance **meets** expectations. Also, the overall summary rating which equates to the Level 3, "Fully Successful," as specified in 5 CFR 430.208(d)(2)(iii).

## 2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices (Continued)

### 5. Definitions (Continued)

- o. Results Not Achieved. Element rating indicating performance is unacceptable, e.g., **does not meet** expectations. It is also a summary level which equates to the Level 1, "Unacceptable," as specified in 5 CFR 430.208(d)(2)(i).
- p. Reviewing Official. The individual responsible for reviewing and concurring in a "Results Not Achieved" rating and resolving differences of opinion between rating officials and employees.
- q. Service Center Agencies. The mission areas of the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rural Development.
- r. Team. A cooperative unit designed to accomplish a specified mission, such as those typically found in local offices, within organizational structures, assigned to specific tasks or projects, etc. Team membership is not necessarily limited to a specific agency or functional unit.

### 6. Acronyms

- EO/CR - Equal Opportunity/Civil Rights
- EPF - Employee Performance Folder
- OTI - Opportunity to Improve
- RIF - Reduction-in-Force

### 7. Forms and Records

- a. Appraisal Forms. Performance work plans containing progress reviews and performance ratings conducted under this program must be recorded on Form 4140, Performance Work Plan.
- b. Opportunity to Improve (OTI). An OTI is developed and documented on Form 4140-A, Opportunity to Improve. See section 10B(3) of this exhibit for discussion of performance at the "Results Not Achieved" level.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)**

**7. Forms and Records (Continued)**

- c. Records. In addition to the procedures set forth in 5 CFR Part 293, the following procedures govern the establishment and maintenance of performance records.
  - (1) All records maintained must meet the requirements of 5 CFR Part 297 as well as any Departmental provisions of the Privacy and Freedom of Information Acts.
  - (2) Additional performance elements that are developed between a supervisor and employee and are not considered part of the rating are not to be submitted to the Human Resource Office, but are to be maintained by the supervisor and employee.
  - (3) Ratings of record and the performance work plans on which the ratings are based must be filed in the Employee Performance Folder (EPF) for the most recent 4 years. Ratings older than 4 years are not retained in the EPF.
  - (4) When the EPF of an employee is sent to another Servicing Human Resources Office in the employing agency, to another agency or department, or to the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), the "losing" Servicing Human Resources Office shall include in the EPF the three most recent ratings of record received during the preceding 4-year period. Also, the "losing" office will purge from the EPF all ratings of record and work plans that are more than 4 years old.

**8. Responsibilities**

- a. Agency Heads are responsible for:
  - (1) Tailoring Departmental policy to meet the individual needs of the Agency.
  - (2) Assisting in resolving concerns at the lowest possible level.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)**

**8. Responsibilities (Continued)**

- b. The Servicing Human Resources Office is responsible for:
  - (1) Providing technical and operational support and advice to the rating officials to help them administer the performance management program in a manner consistent with applicable laws, rules, and regulations.
  - (2) Ensuring that performance work plans and ratings of record are maintained in the Servicing Human Resources Office in accordance with the requirements in 5 CFR Parts 293 and 297.
  - (3) Providing training on the performance management program and their responsibilities.
  - (4) Assisting in resolving concerns at the lowest possible level.
- c. Reviewing Officials are responsible for:
  - (1) Reviewing and concurring in a "Results Not Achieved" rating.
  - (2) Resolving differences between employees and rating officials concerning ratings and adjusting ratings when necessary.
  - (3) Assisting in resolving concerns at the lowest possible level.
- d. Rating Officials are responsible for:
  - (1) Informing employees of the overall mission, objectives, goals, plans, and activities of the Agency and work unit and the employee's related duties and responsibilities.
  - (2) Providing feedback to the employee through ongoing communication and actively listening and considering feedback from the employee and customers.
  - (3) Providing the employee the opportunity to participate in the development of performance work plans.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)**

**8. Responsibilities (Continued)**

- (4) Providing employees with written performance work plans which identify the critical elements related to their specific duties, responsibilities, and expected levels of performance.
  - (5) Conducting and documenting at least one formal progress review around the midpoint of the appraisal period and additional reviews as necessary.
  - (6) Completing performance ratings which include evaluating and documenting employees' actual accomplishments and determining summary levels.
  - (7) Recommending personnel actions and/or training, as necessary, based on the employee's level of performance in relation to the performance standards and elements.
  - (8) Addressing concerns at the lowest possible level.
- e. Employees are responsible for:
- (1) Communicating with the supervisor throughout the appraisal period.
  - (2) Participating in the development of performance work plans and measurable performance standards.
  - (3) Assuring that they have a clear understanding of their rating official's expectations and requesting clarification when necessary.
  - (4) Assisting in identifying training needs to enhance performance.
  - (5) Managing performance to achieve expectations and bringing to the rating official's attention circumstances that may affect achievement of standards.
  - (6) Participating in discussions of individual performance.
  - (7) Actively listening and considering feedback with an open mind.
  - (8) Providing input on accomplishments.
  - (9) Improving those aspects of performance identified as needing improvement.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)**

**8. Responsibilities (Continued)**

f. The roles of Union Officials are:

- (1) Assisting management and employees to ensure that the program is administered consistent with negotiated labor-management agreements.
- (2) Assisting in resolving concerns at the lowest possible level.

**9. Coverage**

This program covers all Federal USDA employees of the Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), and Rural Development (RD) mission areas, and FSA CO employees, who are reasonably expected to be employed for more than 90 days. Schedule C employees are covered by this program but are not afforded any rights as established by 5 USC 4303.

Excluded from coverage are those employees expected to be employed for less than 90 days; CO employees, such as Conservation District employees; and those persons employed in the Senior Executive Service.

**10. Policy**

It is the policy of the Service Center Agencies that, within the framework provided by this program, individual and organizational goals will be communicated to employees, individual responsibility for accomplishing team and organizational goals will be identified, employees will be provided feedback regarding performance, performance will be evaluated and improved, and performance results will be used as a basis for appropriate personnel actions. All participants in this process should expect to be held accountable for accomplishment of their performance management responsibilities as identified in this directive.

Communication between the rating official and the employee is essential throughout this process. Rating officials and employees should work together to jointly clarify how competencies apply within the work environment so that there is a common understanding about the expectations for performance. In addition, there should be a discussion of the goals of the individual work unit and the employee's involvement/contribution to unit goals for the upcoming year. The Rating Official is ultimately responsible for setting performance elements and standards.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)****10. Policy (Continued)**

## a. Planning Performance

Planning performance is the process of developing performance work plans that align individual performance with organizational goals. Focus must be placed on accomplishments (i.e., end results) rather than on activities.

- (1) Performance work plans are developed on Form 4140, Performance Work Plan, or through i\*CAMS. Work plans document progress reviews and specify the elements and the standards on which the employee will be rated.
- (2) Performance work plans under this two-level program only contain critical elements as required by the Office of Personnel Management. A performance work plan must contain at least two but no more than a total of five critical elements.
  - (a) Critical elements are work assignments or responsibilities of such importance that unacceptable performance in the element would result in a determination that the employee's overall performance is unacceptable.
  - (b) The elements should be based on organizational goals, strategic plans, position descriptions, and internal and external customer needs. Whenever possible, similar positions should have like standards.
  - (c) Sources of feedback on employee performance related to a critical element must be substantiated and documented.
  - (d) Critical elements must be based solely on the individual performance of the employee.
  - (e) Standardized (generic) performance elements have been established and are available for use in developing performance work plans.



**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)****10. Policy (Continued)**

- i Timeframes and appropriate procedures, when referenced in elements, are derived directly from applicable regulatory guidelines, procedural guides, and/or agency program instructions, etc. This is so that the standard does not become too cumbersome and lengthy as was the case with past performance management programs.
- ii When timeframes, quantity, quality, or cost-effectiveness need to be more specific or expanded from the standards provided, this may be (a) documented on an additional sheet and attached to the performance plan; (b) referenced to one of the blank numbered blocks located after the standardized elements; or, if possible, (c) placed directly in the block with the element.

Any elements needing additional clarification will be further defined in writing by the rating official in one of the manners described in the previous paragraph. A copy must be given to the employee at the beginning of the appraisal period along with a copy of his or her performance work plan.

- iii Employees and rating officials may choose applicable elements by placing a checkmark in the appropriate block.
- iv Rating officials may also write specific performance elements in the blank spaces provided at the end of the standardized elements.
- v All employees must have at least one job-specific performance element which may include supervisory responsibilities, the individual's contributions to team accomplishments, execution of duties, etc., or an element may be specifically written for this purpose in the blank numbered blocks provided at the end of the standardized elements.
- vi A mandatory EO/CR element, Element 9, is required as a stand-alone element for all rating officials.
- vii Employees who are not rating officials must also have an EO/CR standard and this has been included with Element 10.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)****10. Policy (Continued)**

- (3) Additional performance elements provide another tool for communicating performance expectations important to the organization. However, they are not appropriate for inclusion in the performance work plan as critical elements and will not be used in assigning a summary level. They allow employee performance plans to communicate a fuller picture of the performance that is expected. Additional elements are to be provided separately in a format best suited for the element. Team performance objectives where overall team accomplishments are being monitored and evaluated is one example. (Remember, only the individual contributions to the team, Element 12, can be evaluated under the performance work plan.)
- (4) Standards should focus on accomplishments -- results, service quality, teamwork, and customer service. Standards should be established:
  - (a) within 30 days of the beginning of an appraisal cycle; or
  - (b) within 30 days of appointment, reassignment, promotion, detail for more than the minimum appraisal period, or when the duties of the position are substantially changed during the established appraisal period.
- (5) The employee and rating official sign and date the performance work plan indicating that it has been discussed and the employee has had the opportunity to obtain a clear understanding of expectations. The employee is provided a copy of **Form 4140**, or through i\*CAMS, and any additional clarifying information.

Where there is disagreement as to the content of performance elements and standards, the rating official's decision prevails. If the employee refuses to sign the performance work plan at the beginning of the appraisal cycle, the supervisor should note this in the employee's signature block. The date the plan was discussed with the employee and implemented should also be noted accordingly. Lack of the employee's signature and date on the performance work plan does not negate implementation of the plan.

- (6) At the time the performance plan is developed, the employee also indicates knowledge and understanding of the standards of conduct (ethics regulations) and acknowledges that questions have been answered to their satisfaction by initialing the appropriate block.
- (7) The contents of performance work plans cannot be grieved.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)****10. Policy (Continued)****b. Monitoring and Appraising Performance.**

The employee and rating official will meet periodically throughout the appraisal period to provide feedback relating to performance. This will be accomplished through progress reviews and performance ratings.

**(1) Progress Reviews**

- (a) A progress review is a joint discussion between the rating official and the employee regarding specific strengths and weaknesses in relation to the employee's performance work plan, as well as any areas of performance which are central to the employee's position. It does not involve the issuance of a rating of record.
- (b) Rating officials are responsible for initiating communication with the employee about actual performance and ensuring progress reviews are held. Open dialog between the employee and the rating official is crucial during these discussions.
- (c) Progress reviews are conducted one or more times during a full appraisal period. Normally, these required reviews will be accomplished during the midpoint of the appraisal cycle.
- (d) The rating official is encouraged to make written comments concerning the employee's performance on Form 4140 at the time of the progress review. The purpose of the written comments is to provide for a more formal identification of the employee's performance in relation to the performance work plan. Employees are encouraged to provide written comments on the form at this time also. The employee and the rating official initial and date the appropriate blocks to indicate the discussions were held.
- (e) If a progress review is not conducted, the employee has the option of contacting the rating official to inquire of the status. If the progress review is still not held, the employee may seek assistance from the second level supervisor (usually the reviewing official). Bargaining unit employees may also seek assistance from their exclusive representative. The purpose of this is to encourage resolution at the lowest possible level, make employees more responsible in their own performance, and to encourage employee involvement and participation.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)**

**10. Policy (Continued)**

- (f) Failure to conduct a progress review may be grieved; however, the outcome of a progress review may not be grieved as no official rating has been given.

(2) Ratings of Record

- (a) A rating of record is the final rating issued at the end of the appraisal period and it becomes a part of the employee's performance file (EPF) maintained in the Servicing Human Resources Office. A rating of "Results Achieved" or "Results Not Achieved" is assigned to each element at this time, as well as the overall summary rating.
- (b) A performance work plan must be in place for the minimum appraisal period (minimum 90 calendar days) and normally no longer than 15 months for a rating of record to be conducted.
- (c) Normally, the rating of record is issued for the appraisal cycle ending September 30.
  - i Performance discussions and ratings will occur at the time of each position and/or supervisory change provided the employee has served under standards for the minimum appraisal period. This rating must be provided to the gaining supervisor to be considered at the time the rating of record is issued.
    - Details and Temporary Promotions. At the conclusion of a detail or temporary promotion, the rating official to whom the employee was detailed will document the employee's accomplishments and forward the information to the employee's permanent supervisor. This guidance applies to any employee detailed within USDA. When an employee is detailed outside the Department, the permanent supervisor should make a concerted effort to obtain information regarding the employee's performance prior to completing the annual performance rating of record.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)**

**10. Policy (Continued)**

- Supervisory Change. Each individual who supervised the employee for 90 days or more during the appraisal period should discuss the performance with the employee, prepare feedback comments, and forward them to the current rating official.
  - Position and Supervisory Change. When an employee who has occupied a position for at least 90 days leaves that position, the supervisor or rating official should prepare feedback comments on the employee's performance and forward them to the new supervisor/rating official.
  - Position Change Without a Supervisory Change. When an employee changes position, but retains the same supervisor (e.g., the employee was promoted or reassigned within the same organization), the supervisor should prepare written documentation of the employee's performance. This information must be considered in the employee's rating of record.
- ii All employees must be issued a rating of record annually. Employees who have not served under established standards for the minimum appraisal period must have the timeframe extended to meet this requirement. Once the minimum appraisal period has been completed, a rating of record must be issued.
- (d) An overall summary rating of "Results Achieved" indicates that the employee has met the performance expectations for each element. "Results Achieved" performance equates to the Level 3, "Fully Successful," as specified in statute.

An overall summary rating of "Results Not Achieved" means that the employee has not met performance expectations for one or more element(s) and constitutes unacceptable performance. "Results Not Achieved" performance has the same meaning and effect as "Unacceptable," Level 1, as used in law and regulation.

- i "Results Achieved" performance requires no written comments by the rating official. It requires signature by only the rating official and the employee; there is no need for the signature of the reviewing official or anyone above the level of the rating official.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)**

**10. Policy (Continued)**

- ii "Results Not Achieved" performance requires mandatory written comments to be attached to the performance work plan and must be signed by the rating official and the reviewing official prior to presenting to the employee for signature. See section 10B(3) for further guidance on this level of performance.

The employee's signature indicates receipt of the rating; it does not represent agreement with the rating. If the employee refuses to sign the rating of record, the rating official should note this in the appropriate block and indicate the date the rating was issued.

- (e) Ratings of record may be grieved and shall be handled using the administrative grievance procedure or applicable negotiated grievance procedure.

(3) "Results Not Achieved" performance

- (a) Rating officials shall discuss and consider reasonable means by which to assist employees in improving performance. Such assistance may include training, closer supervision, revision of assignments, coaching, etc.
- (b) If, however, at anytime during the appraisal cycle one or more element(s) is found to be at the "Results Not Achieved" level, the employee should be placed under an official opportunity to improve (OTI). The purpose of an OTI is to provide the employee a reasonable opportunity to improve performance to the acceptable "Results Achieved" level.
- (c) Form 4140-A, Opportunity to Improve, will be completed jointly by the rating official and employee with technical assistance of the servicing human resources office. It will be signed by the rating official and the employee indicating receipt and implementation of the plan. The employee's signature is not required, however, to implement the plan.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)**

**10. Policy (Continued)**

Components of the plan consist of the following:

- i Length of time for which it is to be in effect. The duration will be determined by considering:
  - the type of position for which the OTI is being prepared,
  - the types of improvement needed,
  - the amount of reasonable time necessary to demonstrate the acceptable performance (but no less than 60 days), and
  - applicable negotiated labor-management agreements.
- ii The element(s) in which performance is unacceptable, specific deficiencies, and required improvement to raise performance to the "Results Achieved" level.
- iii The support/assistance to be provided to the employee.
- iv The frequency of follow-up reviews. In determining the frequency of reviews, consideration should be given to the length of the OTI. Upon completion of each follow-up review, the rating official and employee will initial and date in the appropriate block of Form 4140-A.
- v The final review will state whether performance meets or does not meet expectations. If it does not meet expectations, then the rating official must provide written comments supporting this determination. The rating official will contact the Servicing Human Resources Office to determine further action necessary, i.e., reassignment, demotion, or removal.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)**

**10. Policy (Continued)**

(d) Employees who improve their performance to the acceptable level during the improvement period must sustain acceptable performance.

- i Should the employee's performance return to the unacceptable level in the same element(s) within 12 months from the commencement date of the improvement period, a performance-based adverse action (i.e., demotion or removal) or other alternative action (i.e., reassignment) may be proposed without the benefit of an additional improvement period.
- ii Should performance fall to the unacceptable level in a different element(s) during this 12-month period, the employee must be given another improvement period for this element(s).

(e) Prior to the implementation date of this policy (January 1, 1999), administrative actions initiated against employees whose performance has been determined to be Unacceptable as defined under 5 USC 4303, shall continue to be processed under applicable procedures.

c. Linkage of Ratings of Record to Other Personnel Actions

Personnel decisions are made on the basis of merit with appropriate consideration of employee performance. All judgments about performance must be fair and equitable and may not be based upon nonmerit factors such as sex, race, color, national origin, religion, personal favoritism, age, marital status, political affiliation, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, or other nonmerit reasons.

(1) Within-Grade Increases (WGI). Employees may be granted WGI's when the employee's current level of performance and most recent rating of record is "Results Achieved". When a WGI decision is not consistent with the employee's most recent rating of record, the rating official should contact the Servicing Human Resources Office to determine what further action is necessary.



**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)**

**10. Policy (Continued)**

- (2) Promotions. No employee shall receive a promotion unless the current rating of record is "Results Achieved". Rating officials and employees should be aware, however, that a "Results Achieved" rating is not the only criteria for promotion.
- (3) Training and development. The performance appraisal process may be used as a basis for identifying the training needs of employees. Additional performance elements are particularly useful for this purpose.
- (4) Reduction-in-force (RIF). Annual ratings of record are used to establish service credit and retention standing for RIF purposes, except for CO employees. An employee will not be assigned a new rating of record for the sole purpose of affecting retention standing. To provide adequate time to properly determine an employee's retention standing prior to a RIF, a general or specific RIF notice will specify the date after which no new rating of record will be given that could be used to determine retention standing.

Retention Standing. According to Departmental policy (as contained in Personnel Bulletin No. 351-1, Reduction in Force), the crediting of performance ratings issued **on or after October 1, 1997**, is subject to Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations on whether all the ratings within the competitive area were issued under a single rating pattern.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices (Continued)**

**10. Policy (Continued)**

- (a) Ratings issued under multiple (or different) rating patterns. Where these ratings do not conform to a single rating pattern, the following crediting plan will be used to determine the years to be credited.

Rating Pattern	Number of Summary Rating Levels	Level 1 (Unacceptable or equivalent)	Level 2 (Marginal or equiv.)	Level 3 (Fully Successful or equiv.)	Level 4 (Superior or equiv.)	Level 5 (Outstanding or equiv.)
A	2 levels	0	N/A	16	N/A	N/A
B	3 levels	0	N/A	13	N/A	17
C	3 levels	0	N/A	13	17	N/A
D	3 levels	0	0	17	N/A	N/A
E	4 levels	0	N/A	12	15	18
F	4 levels	0	0	14	N/A	18
G	4 levels	0	0	14	17	N/A
H	5 levels	0	0	14	16	18

**Note:** N/A means "not applicable" to this rating pattern, i.e., this level is not used in this pattern.

The numbers represent the number of years to be credited for a rating at that level and under that pattern.

- (b) Ratings within the same pattern. Where all ratings within the specified period and competitive area are in the same pattern, the OPM provision for using the pattern of crediting 20 years of service for a level 5 rating, 16 years service credit for a level 4 rating, and 12 years for a level 3 rating will be used. **This provision is also used for all ratings issued before October 1, 1997.** In addition, this regulation for crediting service applies to all ratings issued before October 1, 1997, regardless of the rating pattern being used.

For complete guidance on RIF procedures, see 29-PM which discusses this topic.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)**

**10. Policy (Continued)**

(5) Quality Step Increases (QSI's). QSI's may be granted to employees who demonstrate sustained performance of high quality significantly above that expected at the "Results Achieved" level. Procedures for nominating and approving QSI's are covered in the Employee Recognition Policy.

(6) Other Employee Recognition. Work accomplishments may be recognized under the Employee Recognition Policy.

d. Program Evaluation

Ongoing evaluation of the performance management program will be conducted by the Performance Management, Benefits, and Awards Branch, HRD in order to identify continuous improvement opportunities and to make adjustments to the overall policy. Evaluation of overall organizational results, employee satisfaction, and consistency with mission objectives will promote the continued enhancement of a performance management program supportive of critical organizational results.

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)**

**11. Form 4140-A, Opportunity to Improve**

The following is an example of Form 4140-A.

**REPRODUCE LOCALLY.** include form number and date on all reproductions.

United States Department of Agriculture Service Center Agencies		
<b>OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE</b>		
<i>This form documents a plan for required performance improvement when performance does not meet expectations (i.e. the "Results Achieved" level). It lists specific examples of the specific deficiencies and the required improvements to bring performance to the "Results Achieved" level. Additional clarifying information, if provided, must be specified in, or attached to, this plan.</i>		
1. EMPLOYEE'S NAME	2. POSITION	3. ORGANIZATION
4. COMMENCING DATE	5. ENDING DATE	6. PLAN DURATION (No. of Days)
<b>PART I - IMPROVEMENT PLAN</b>		
<b>7. Elements</b>	<b>8. Deficiency(ies) (Cite specifics)</b>	<b>9. Required Improvement</b>

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-A, Written Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)

11. Form 4140-A, Opportunity to Improve (Continued)

(01-28-09)		Page 2 of 3
<b>PART I - IMPROVEMENT PLAN, Continued</b>		
10. SUPPORT TO BE PROVIDED EMPLOYEE (Indicate the support to be provided by the Supervisor or Rating Official (e.g., training, equipment, etc.) and the frequency of discussion.)		
11. REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During this opportunity to improve (OTI) you will be expected to perform all the elements of the performance work plan. You must independently perform these duties at least at the "Results Achieved" level.</li> <li>• Upon completion of the OTI you will be re-evaluated on the elements identified in this plan and informed of your performance in relation to your performance work plan.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have achieved the results expected/required, the OTI is concluded and you must maintain this level of performance for one year commencing from the date of the OTI.</li> <li>• If at any time during this one-year period your performance falls below the "Results Achieved" level in any of the elements specified in this plan, appropriate remedial action will be proposed. This may include, but is not limited to, a downgrade to a different position or removal from your position.</li> <li>• If at the end of this OTI you have not achieved the results expected/required, it will be necessary to determine an appropriate remedial action to propose as mentioned above.</li> <li>• If a definite decision cannot be made at the end of this OTI regarding your progress, the OTI may be extended. If this occurs, you will be notified in writing.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Areas in which you think you need additional training will be considered. The scope and level of such training provided will be determined based on how much and what kind of training has already been provided and what is customary for your position, duties and grade level. If you believe additional training is needed, submit a written request to me within ten (10) days listing specific training needs.</li> <li>• Questions regarding this improvement plan, your work assignments, or the level of performance expected from you, should be directed to me.</li> </ul> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin-top: 10px;"><b>NOTE:</b> Experience indicates that, at times, performance problems can be the result of personal situations. While this may not be the case, it may be helpful to consider all the factors contributing to your performance problems. If you feel this may be the case, we encourage you to contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at _____. You may contact the program personally, or if you prefer, an appointment can be made for you. All information you provide is strictly confidential, unless you specifically authorize its release.</p>		
12. PLAN ESTABLISHMENT SIGNATURES (Sign when improvement plan is established)		
Employee Signature	Date	Supervisor/Rating Official Signature
<b>DISTRIBUTION (Plan Establishment)</b>		
Original - Rating Official	Copy - Employee	Copy - Reviewing Official
		Copy - Human Resources

**2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)**

**11. Form 4140-A, Opportunity to Improve (Continued)**

(01-28-99)					Page 3 of 3
<b>PART II - FOLLOW-UP REVIEW AND DISCUSSION</b>					
Follow-up No.	1	2	3	4	5
Meeting Date					
Employee Initials					
Supervisor Initials					
<b>PART III - FINAL REVIEW</b>					
<input type="checkbox"/> Employee has achieved the required improvement(s) described in this OTI. <b>OR</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Employee has not achieved the required improvement(s) described in this OTI. The employee continues to have problems in the areas described below:					
13. REVIEW CERTIFICATION:					
Employee Signature				Date	
Supervisor/Rating Official Signature				Date	
Reviewing Official Signature				Date	
DISTRIBUTION (Plan Completion)					
Original - Human Resources		Copy - Employee		Copy - Supervisor/Rating Official	
Copy - Reviewing Official					

2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)

12. Form 4140, Performance Work Plan

The following is an example of Form 4140.

<b>REPRODUCE LOCALLY.</b> Include form number and date on all reproductions.		
(01-28-99)	United States Department of Agriculture Service Center Agencies	
<b>PERFORMANCE WORK PLAN</b>		
<i>Privacy Act Notice: Submission of information is mandatory. Failure to provide information will prohibit data collection required by the Office of Personnel Management.</i>		
1. EMPLOYEE'S NAME Peter Scott	2. RATING PERIOD 10/01/XX through 9/30/XX	
3. TITLE/SERIES/GRADE Ag. Program Specialist, GS-XXX-9	4. ORGANIZATION FSA/XXXXXX	
5. DUTY LOCATION Boise, Idaho	6. SOCIAL SECURITY NO. 123-456-7890	
<b>PART I - PERFORMANCE PLAN</b>		
7. CRITICAL RESULTS (Check a Minimum of 2 Maximum of 5 Applicable Elements)		
<p><b>Note:</b> The narrative statement describes the "Results Achieved" level of performance. Where applicable, quantity, quality, and timeliness are derived directly from appropriate agency regulations, policies, instructions, work plans, etc. If no agency or regulatory guidelines exist, further clarification will be provided by the rating official.</p>		
<b>Element</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Not Achieved</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Element #1 - Execution of Duties</b> Completed work assignments are routinely performed in a timely manner, assuring a quality of work that meets the needs of the organization. Solutions developed demonstrate improvements in work methods. Work products do not require substantive revisions. Assignments are completed in accordance with applicable agency guidelines, including timeframes. Further clarification, as needed:		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Element #2 - Communications</b> As a rule, oral and written communications are clear, correct, timely, and presented in an understandable manner. Supervisor and coworkers are informed of issues and problems when necessary. Information and guidance provided is timely and accurate. Further clarification, as needed:		
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Element #3 - Supervision</b> Work is assigned in a fair and effective manner. Technical guidance to subordinate staff is ordinarily provided in a timely manner. Performance management is implemented in accordance with procedure. Issues, concerns, or problems are handled promptly and fairly. To the extent possible, staff is properly trained and complies with occupational health and safety programs. Management decisions are supported and implemented within appropriate timeframes. Further clarification, as needed:		
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Element #4 - Team Leadership</b> Routinely leads individuals and team members toward specific goals and accomplishments. Provides encouragement, guidance, and direction as needed. Adjusts style to fit situation. Delegates appropriate authority in an effective manner. Coordinates functions of the team members. Demonstrates a sincere interest in employees' activities, abilities, etc. Further clarification, as needed:		
<small>The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D. C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.</small>		

2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)

12. Form 4140, Performance Work Plan (Continued)

(01-28-99)		Page 2 of 4	
Element		Achieved	Not Achieved
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Element #5 - Program Management</b>                      Manages program(s) resolving issues and problems within the employee's control. Monitors all aspects of program(s) for quality, effectiveness, and consistency. Program plans and guidance are responsive to objectives and requirements of the Agency. Policy instructions are appropriately issued and are accurate. Evaluates effectiveness of work and adjusts plans accordingly. Further clarification, as needed.</p>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Element #6 - Special Projects</b>                      Special projects are regularly completed on time in a competent, accurate, and thorough manner. Completed projects comply with regulations and procedures. Special projects are completed independently, or reflect research and collaboration with others as required. Further clarification, as needed.</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Element #7 - Research and Analysis</b>                      Thoroughly and accurately researches issues in a timely manner, using available reference sources (e.g. USDA manuals, or applicable law or regulations). Makes reasonable recommendations or decisions based on available guidance. Further clarification, as needed.</p>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Element #8 - Customer Service</b>                      Provides advice that is timely, responsive, and accurate. Maintains appropriate rapport with internal and external customers. Develops and establishes working relationships with external organizations as required. Keeps supervisor and/or team leader informed of difficult and/or controversial issues and unique problems. Takes action to effectively solve problems before they have an adverse impact on the organization or other employees. Further clarification, as needed.</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Element #9 - Equal Opportunity &amp; Civil Rights [Mandatory for supervisors and managers]</b>                      Performs all duties in a manner which consistently demonstrates fairness, cooperation, and respect toward coworkers, office visitors, and all others in the performance of official business. Demonstrates an awareness of EO/CR policies and responsibilities of Agency and Departmental goals of valuing a diverse, yet unified workforce. Further clarification, as needed.</p>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Element #10 - Personal Contacts - EO/CR [Mandatory for all non-supervisory employees]</b>                      Routinely displays courteous and tactful behavior towards internal and external customers, supervisors, coworkers, and/or team members. Projects a positive and professional image of USDA. Performs all duties in a manner which consistently demonstrates fairness, cooperation, and respect toward coworkers, office visitors, and all others in the performance of official business. Demonstrates an awareness of EO/CR policies and responsibilities of Agency and Departmental goals of valuing a diverse, yet unified workforce. Further clarification, as needed.</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Element #11 - Resource Management</b>                      Monitors allocated funds and maintains complete and accurate records of expenditures. Routinely utilizes resources in an efficient and effective manner. Ensures that funds, property and other resources are guarded against waste, loss, unauthorized use, and misappropriation. Further clarification, as needed.</p>		



2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)

12. Form 4140, Performance Work Plan (Continued)

(01-28-99)	Page 3 of 4	
Element	Achieved	Not Achieved
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Element #12 - Individual Contributions to the Team</b> Ordinarily displays dependability and reliability. Promotes open communication. Contributes creative ideas and actively participates in team meetings resulting in added value to the team's products and services. When problems arise, explores causes and assists in resolving them. Works with team members to appropriately implement decisions. Is usually open-minded to new ideas and approaches in implementing the team's goals. Willingly accepts and acts on constructive criticism. Further clarification, as needed.		
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Element #13 -</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Element #14 -</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Element #15 -</b>		
<b>PART 11 - PROGRESS REVIEW</b>		
<p><b>Note:</b> One progress review is required; however, frequent communication between the employee and rating official regarding performance is encouraged and recommended. Date of review, initials of employee (Emp), and initials of Rating Official (R.O.) must be provided for each review. Employee and Rating Official are encouraged to provide written comments.</p>		
<p><b>8. RATING OFFICIAL'S COMMENTS</b></p> <p>Shows dedication to job and co-workers. Demonstrates an eagerness to learn. Recommend that a time management course in lieu of coaching class be taken this fiscal year.</p>		
<p><b>9. EMPLOYEE'S COMMENTS</b></p> <p>Appreciate supervisor's willingness to answer my questions. Complimented my progress and we agreed on changing training plans.</p>		
10A. Emp. Initials:	Date:	10B. R.O. Initials:                      Date:

2-Tier (Pass/Fail) Performance Management Common Policies for FSA State and County Offices  
(Continued)

12. Form 4140, Performance Work Plan (Continued)

(01-28-99) Page 4 of 4

**DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR USE IN PLANNING PERFORMANCE AND CONDUCTING PROGRESS REVIEWS**

- Employee's performance on primary responsibilities/priorities in the past year.
  - revise performance work plan for the coming year, as necessary
  - relationship to overall work unit objectives
- Employee's strengths and areas for growth
- Barriers to effective work performance and job satisfaction
- Employee's development (*over the past year; future needs for current job; long-term career goals and developmental needs to achieve them*)
- Possible work process improvements
- Whether employee continues to grow to meet future needs and demands of the changing environment
- Employee's feedback/constructive suggestions for supervisor
- Anything else the employee or supervisor would like to address

**PART III - SUMMARY RATING**

RESULTS ACHIEVED
  RESULTS NOT ACHIEVED\*

\* A "Results not Achieved" rating requires explanation. Provide additional comments as an attachment.

**PART IV - CERTIFICATION**

Note: Employee's signature certifies review and discussion with the Rating Official. It does not necessarily mean that the employee concurs with the information on this form.

11. PERFORMANCE PLAN ( <i>Sign when plan is established</i> )		12. SUMMARY RATING ( <i>Sign when rating is completed</i> )	
Employee Signature	Date	Employee Signature	Date
Rating Official Signature	Date	Rating Official Signature	Date
<small>I have reviewed the standards of conduct and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction. (Employee initial appropriate block below.)</small> YES <input style="width: 50px;" type="text"/>		<small>Reviewing Official (required for summary rating of "Results Not Achieved")</small>	
NO <input style="width: 50px;" type="text"/>		Date <input style="width: 50px;" type="text"/>	



**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices**

**1 Mandatory Performance Elements and Standards**

**A Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights (EO and CR) Statements**

Furthering EO and CR are important FFAS goals. Include EO and CR statements as follows.

<b>IF the employee is...</b>	<b>THEN include...</b>
nonsupervisory	<p>EO and CR statements into an existing critical or newly established critical performance element or elements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing elements considered as inclusive of EO and CR requirements should address issues, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• customer service</li> <li>• effectiveness of program delivery</li> <li>• employee relationships</li> <li>• other interpersonal relationships.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A new critical element to address these same issues may be established.</li> <li>• When the determination is made that the EO and CR principles are reflected in more than 1 element, <b>at least 1</b> of the elements must be critical.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> EO and CR principles reflect the effectiveness of "how" services and program delivery are provided.</p>

**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**1 Mandatory Performance Elements and Standards (Continued)**

**B Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights (EO and CR) Statements (Continued)**

<b>IF the employee is...</b>	<b>THEN include...</b>
supervisory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the critical element, "Practices and Implements Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights Principles in All Aspects of Employment Activities and Program Delivery"</li> <li>• as appropriate, any of the following within the EO and CR element for the "Fully Successful" level.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assures that all employees are informed of USDA and FFAS policies on the prevention of sexual harassment, affirmative employment, and the discrimination complaint processes and program delivery.</li> <li>• Maintains an open channel of communication with employees and discusses EO and CR issues at supervisory and employee meetings.</li> <li>• Supports, participates, attends, and encourages employees to participate in special emphasis program activities or training to increase cultural awareness and valuing of differences.</li> <li>• Maintains contacts with organizations and media that represent women and minorities to inform them of FFAS programs and employment opportunities.</li> <li>• Makes reasonable accommodation in programs, facilities, and employment activities for individuals with disabilities.</li> <li>• Takes corrective action at the informal level to resolve internal EO and CR problems, grievances, complaints of sexual harassment, or other discriminatory treatment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**2 Writing Performance Plans**

**A Definition of Performance Plan**

A performance plan is the written record of the employee's performance elements and standards.

**B Communication and Participation**

Employee participation is recommended in establishing or revising performance plans. The final decision, however, shall be made by the employee's supervisor.

Employee participation may include any of the following:

- employee and supervisor discuss and jointly develop performance plan
- employee provides a draft plan to supervisor
- employee comments on draft performance plan prepared by supervisor
- a group of employees occupying similar positions prepare a proposed plan for the supervisor's approval.

The supervisor should consider the employee's comments to ensure:

- consistency
- objectivity
- equity.

**C Forms for Documenting Performance Plan**

Prepare the performance plan by documenting the employee's performance elements and standards on AD-435A and AD-435B.

**Examples:** See paragraph 3 of this exhibit for examples of AD-435A and AD-435B.

**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**3 Examples of AD-435A and AD-435B**

**A Example of AD-435A**

Following is a completed example of AD-435A.

Page 1 of 10

<b>AD-435A</b> (12-86)		UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE							
<b>PERFORMANCE PLAN, PROGRESS REVIEW AND APPRAISAL WORKSHEET</b>									
1. NAME (Last, First, M.I.) SMITH, JANE NMN		2. POSITION TITLE SECRETARY (OA)							
3. AGENCY/DIVISION FSA/ABC Division		4. PAY PLAN, SERIES, GRADE GS-318-07	APPRaisal PERIOD						
		5. START DATE 10/1/XX	6. END DATE 9/30/XX						
7. PERFORMANCE ELEMENT									
No. <b>1</b> (Describe below the duty or responsibility for which the employee is accountable and responsible. Indicate if the element is critical or noncritical.)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CRITICAL <input type="checkbox"/> NONCRITICAL							
CORRESPONDENCE									
8. STANDARD (Describe the level expected for "Fully Successful" performance. Include appropriate indicators of quality, quantity, cost efficiency, or timeliness, where applicable.)									
Prepares an array of drafts, reports, and final correspondence according to established guidelines, procedures, and policies. Draft correspondence requires minimal corrections. Final correspondence is rarely returned because of errors; i.e., grammar, spelling, format, sentence structure.									
Composes routine, noncomplex correspondence in connection with various office activities requiring the exercise of initiative and independence of action. All correspondence is generally completed within required or specified timeframe.									
Reviews incoming and outgoing correspondence for conformance with established policies. Errors are almost always noted. Reviews general information and material directed to the office and exercises judgment on deciding whether or not material is of interest to supervisor and staff. Rarely makes errors or cannot locate requested materials.									
9. ELEMENT RATING (At the end of the rating period, compare the employee's performance with standard and assign an element rating. Refer to documentation, as necessary.)									
<table style="display: inline-table; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="border: none;">Exceeds</td> <td style="border: none;">Fully Successful</td> <td style="border: none;">Does Not Meet</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border: none; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="border: none; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="border: none; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>				Exceeds	Fully Successful	Does Not Meet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exceeds	Fully Successful	Does Not Meet							
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>							
10. ACCOMPLISHMENTS (Must be completed if employee receives a summary rating of Outstanding. Attach additional sheets if more space required.)									
11. CERTIFICATION OF DEVELOPMENT AND RECEIPT OF PLAN (Signatures certify discussion with the employee and receipt of plan which reflects current position description.)									
Employee's Signature (signed)		Date 10/1/XX							
Supervisor's Signature (signed)		Date 9/25/XX							
Reviewer's Signature (signed)		Date 9/27/XX							
12. PROGRESS REVIEWS (at least one must be completed)									
Employee's Initials and Date		Supervisor's Initials and Date							
Check appropriate copy designation below.									
<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL-OFFICIAL PERSONNEL FOLDER/EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE FILE COPY <input type="checkbox"/> EMPLOYEE COPY <input type="checkbox"/> SUPERVISOR'S COPY <input type="checkbox"/> AGENCY USE									

**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**3 Examples of AD-435A and AD-435B (Continued)**

**B Example of AD-435B**

Following is a completed example of AD-435B.

Page 2 of 10

<b>AD-435B (Continuation Sheet)</b>		UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE							
(12-88)		<b>PERFORMANCE PLAN, PROGRESS REVIEW AND APPRAISAL WORKSHEET</b>							
1. NAME (Last, First, M.I.)		2. POSITION TITLE							
SMITH, JANE NMN		SECRETARY (OA)							
3. AGENCY/DIVISION		4. PAY PLAN, SERIES, GRADE							
FSA/ABC Division		GS-318-07							
		APPRAISAL PERIOD							
		5. START DATE	6. END DATE						
		10/1/XX	9/30/XX						
7. PERFORMANCE ELEMENT									
No.	2 (Describe below the duty or responsibility for which the employee is accountable and responsible. Indicate if the element is critical or noncritical.)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CRITICAL <input type="checkbox"/> NONCRITICAL						
MAINTAINING SUPERVISOR'S CALENDAR/SCHEDULING MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES									
8. STANDARD (Describe the level expected for "Fully Successful" performance. Include appropriate indicators of quality, quantity, cost efficiency, or timeliness, where applicable.)									
Maintains supervisors calendar and makes or rejects appointments or invitations to meetings based on existing commitments with minimal supervision. Appointments and meetings are arranged so that there are rarely any conflicting meetings and appointments; i.e., causing the supervisor to be delayed or miss other scheduled appointments. Alerts supervisor of his daily schedule. Maintains calendar for control of ABC Division and branch staff so that all parties involved are usually informed of their commitments.									
Arranges conferences and meetings which include preparing agendas and reports; notifying participants; and obtaining space, equipment, and supplies. Rarely makes errors in scheduling activities.									
9. ELEMENT RATING (At the end of the rating period, compare the employee's performance with standard and assign an element rating. Refer to documentation, as necessary.)			<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Exceeds</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Fully Successful</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Does Not Meet</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>	Exceeds	Fully Successful	Does Not Meet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exceeds	Fully Successful	Does Not Meet							
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>							
10. ACCOMPLISHMENTS (Must be completed if employee receives a summary rating of Outstanding. Attach additional sheets if more space required.)									



**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**4 Processing Performance Plans**

**A Supervisor's Action**

The supervisor shall take the following actions to process a performance plan.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	Review performance plan for accuracy.
2	Give performance plan to reviewing official for signature.
3	<p>Present performance plan to employee.</p> <p>After discussing each element and standard, request that the employee sign and date AD-435A, item 11.</p> <p><b>Notes:</b> Supervisors should attempt to resolve any differences. If the employee refuses to sign the performance plan, the employee will still be held accountable for the elements and standards as presented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annotate the performance plan, as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the performance plan was presented to, and discussed with, the employee</li> <li>• the employee refused to sign</li> <li>• the date the plan was presented to the employee.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Advise the employee of available options or avenues of redress.</li> </ul>
4	Give a copy of the signed performance plan to the employee.
5	Keep the original (EPF) and supervisor copies of AD-435A and AD-435B.

**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**4 Processing Performance Plans (Continued)**

**B Reviewing Official’s Action**

The reviewing official shall take the following actions to process a performance plan.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	Review employee’s elements and standards, as submitted by the supervisor, to ensure that the performance plan is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in conformance with FFAS policy and guidelines</li> <li>• consistent with other performance plans in the work unit.</li> </ul>
2	Sign and date on AD-435A, item 11.

**C Employee’s Action**

The employee shall take the following action to process a performance plan.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	Review presented performance plan with supervisor.
2	Discuss elements and standards needing clarification.
3	Sign and date AD-435A, item 11. The employee’s signature certifies that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a discussion took place with the supervisor regarding the performance plan</li> <li>• the employee received a copy of the performance plan, which reflects the current position description.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Failure to sign a performance plan does not invalidate the plan. The employee shall be held accountable for performing duties at the "Fully Successful" level as listed in the performance plan.</p>

**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**5 Using AD-435, Performance Appraisal**

**A Servicing Personnel Office's and State Office's Responsibility**

At the end of the appraisal period, the servicing personnel office and the State Office shall send instructions for completing AD-435 to supervisors.

**B Supervisor's Responsibility**

The supervisor shall:

- compare the employee's work performance with performance elements and standards that were established according to Part 2

**Note:** The supervisor may request the employee to submit a list of accomplishments.

- document the appraisal on AD-435.

**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**5 Using AD-435, Performance Appraisal (Continued)**

**C Example of AD-435**

Following is an example of AD-435.

<b>United States Department of Agriculture</b>		<b>1 Social Security No.</b> 123-45-6789	<b>2 Position Number</b> 00000	<b>3 Pay Plan</b> GS	<b>4 Occup. Series</b> 318
<b>Performance Appraisal</b>					
<b>5 Name (Last, first, Middle Initial)</b> SMITH, JANE NMN		<b>6 Grade/Step or Pay Level</b> 07/01		<b>7 Appraisal Period</b> From 10/1/XX To 9/30/XX	
<b>8 Official Position Title</b> SECRETARY (OFFICE AUTOMATION)		<b>9 Organization Structure Code</b> 00000000000000			
<b>10 Duty Station</b> WASHINGTON, D.C.		<b>11 Funding Unit</b> 00000		<b>12 Agency Use</b> 00000	
				<b>13 NFC Use</b> 00000	
<b>Instructions</b> Blocks 1 through 10, completed by NFC. should be reviewed and, if necessary, corrected. Block 11, enter funding unit number. Block 14, Enter brief description of performance elements. Block 15A, Check performance elements identified as critical			Blocks 15B, 15C, 15D. Rate actual performance by entering 2 for critical elements and 1 for non-critical elements in appropriate column. Blocks 15E, 15F, 15G. Enter total of each column. Block 15H, Enter total from 15E, 15F and 15G. Block 16A, Check off the correct summary rating described in decision table (16B). Blocks 17 through 22, Self-explanatory.		
<b>14 Performance Elements</b>			<b>15A Critical Element (V)</b>	<b>15B Exceeds Fully Successful</b>	<b>15C Meets Fully Successful</b>
1) CORRESPONDENCE			X	2	
2) MAINTAINING SUPERVISOR'S CALENDAR/SCHEDULING MTG.			X	2	
3) TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS					1
4) SUPPORTS EQUAL OPPORTUNITY & CIVIL RIGHTS			X	2	
5) PUBLIC RELATIONS				1	
6) OFFICE MANAGEMENT			X	2	
7)					
8)					
9)					
10)					
<b>16B Decision Table (check off Summary Rating in block 16A)</b> Rating of Outstanding if 15E equals 15H. Rating of Unacceptable <sup>1</sup> if any critical element is rated in 15D. Rating of Superior if no element is rated in 15D; 15F is greater than zero; and 15E is greater than 15F. Rating of Marginal <sup>2</sup> if 15G is greater than 15E, and no critical element is rated in 15D. Rating of Fully Successful if none of the above apply.  <sup>1</sup> Unsatisfactory for SES <sup>2</sup> Minimally Satisfactory for SES			<b>15E Exceeds</b> 9	<b>15F Meets</b> 1	<b>15G Does Not Meet</b>
			<b>15H Enter total</b> 15E + 15F + 15G=15H		<b>15H</b> 10
<b>17. Employee (Check off appropriate box)</b>			<b>16A Summary rating (See Decision table in 16B)</b>		
I have a copy of USDA and Agency regulations on employee responsibilities and conduct; I have discussed them with my supervisor and questions have been answered to my satisfaction.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Superior <input type="checkbox"/> Fully successful <input type="checkbox"/> Marginal <sup>2</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable <sup>1</sup>
<b>18 Employee's Signature</b> _____ <b>Date</b> 10/31/XX (SIGNED)			If employee did not sign, state reason.  <sup>1</sup> Unsatisfactory for SES <sup>2</sup> Minimally Satisfactory for SES 17 Employee (Check off appropriate box)		
<b>(Instructions for resolutions of disputes are on the reverse of employee copy.)</b>					
<b>19 Supervisor's Signature</b> _____ <b>Date</b> 10/20/XX (SIGNED)		<b>20 Reviewer's Signature</b> _____ <b>Date</b> _____			
<b>21 Approving Official's or Funding Unit Manager's Signature (optional)</b> _____ <b>Date</b> _____		<b>22 FOR SES ONLY</b>  PLA to ES _____ Bonus Amount _____			
Check appropriate copy designation. <input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL <input type="checkbox"/> PERSONNEL <input type="checkbox"/> EMPLOYEE <input type="checkbox"/> SUPERVISOR <b>Form AD-435(10/94)</b>					

**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**6 Processing Performance Appraisals**

**A Supervisor Action**

The supervisor shall take the following action to process a performance appraisal.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	Review instructions provided by the servicing personnel office or State Office.
2	Complete AD-435 according to the instructions on AD-435.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss AD-435's with the reviewing official.</li> <li>• Obtain reviewer's signature and date on AD-435, item 20.</li> </ul>
4	<p>Present and discuss AD-435 with the employee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee shall check the appropriate box in item 17.</li> <li>• Obtain employee's signature, and date discussion took place, in item 18.</li> </ul> <p><b>Notes:</b> If employee refuses to sign, annotate reason and date in item 18.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">It is recommended that next year's performance plan be reviewed, discussed, and signatures obtained.</p>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide the employee with a signed copy of AD-435.</li> <li>• Keep the supervisor's copy of AD-435.</li> </ul>
6	<p>Send the following employee appraisal documents to the appropriate office for filing within 30 calendar days after the end of the rating period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• copy 1 of AD-435</li> <li>• originals of AD-435A and AD-435B.</li> </ul> <p><b>Reminder:</b> See subparagraphs 3 C and 3 D for the appropriate filing office, which is 1 of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• servicing personnel office</li> <li>• State Office</li> <li>• County Office.</li> </ul>

**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**6 Processing Performance Appraisals (Continued)**

**B Reviewing Official Action**

The reviewing official shall take the following action to process a performance appraisal.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	Review employee's performance plan and appraisal to ensure that it is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in conformance with FFAS policy and guidelines</li> <li>• consistent throughout the organization.</li> </ul>
2	As reviewing official of the employee's performance appraisal, sign and date AD-435, item 20.  <b>Note:</b> The reviewing official has the authority to change element and summary ratings. This should be done in consultation with the first level supervisor.

**C Employee Action**

The employee shall take the following action to process the employee's performance appraisal.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	Review and discuss the performance appraisal.
2	Check the appropriate box on AD-435, item 17, concerning employee responsibilities and conduct.
3	Sign and date AD-435, item 18.  <b>Notes:</b> If the employee does not sign, state the reason.  Refusal to sign the performance appraisal does not invalidate the element and summary ratings given. An employee may contact an employee relations specialist for guidance.

**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**6 Processing Performance Appraisals (Continued)**

**D Servicing Personnel Office and State Office Action**

The servicing personnel office and State Office shall take the following action.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	Send reminder and instructions for completing AD-435 to supervisors.
2	When received, record AD-435's, AD-435A's, and AD-435B's.
3	Review each form to ensure that all items were completed.
4	Enter ratings into NFC data base.  <b>Exception:</b> This step is not for State Offices.
5	File forms in the employee's EPF.

**E County Office Action**

The County Office shall take the following action for processing performance appraisals for all CO County Office employees, except CED.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	When received, record AD-435's, AD-435A's, and AD-435B's.
2	Review each form to ensure that all items were completed.
3	File forms in the employee's EPF.

**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**7 Completing Performance Appraisals**

**A Element Ratings**

Following are the 3 element rating levels:

- "Exceeds Fully Successful"
- "Meets Fully Successful"
- "Does Not Meet Fully Successful."

An explanation of the "Exceeds Fully Successful" and "Meets Fully Successful" level ratings are optional when the summary rating is "Superior" or "Fully Successful" on AD-435.

On AD-435A and AD-435B, complete item 10, Accomplishments, for each element when the summary rating is "Outstanding".

Elements rated "Does Not Meet Fully Successful" must be supported with narrative documentation and other evidence. See subparagraph 10 D of this exhibit.



**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**7 Completing Performance Appraisals (Continued)**

**B Summary Ratings**

Summary ratings shall be:

- calculated by using the information in subparagraph D and the Decision Table on AD-435
- consistent with the following definitions.

<b>Summary Rating</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Unacceptable	Performance that does not meet established "Fully Successful" standards in 1 or more critical elements.
Marginal	Performance that needs improvement to achieve the "Fully Successful" level.
Fully Successful	Performance that is of good quality. Employee produces the expected quantity of work and meets deadlines for completing the work.
Superior	Performance of unusually good or excellent quality. Employee produces a very high quantity of work ahead of established schedules and with less than normal supervision.
Outstanding	<p>Performance of rare, very high quality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee produces an exceptional quantity of work significantly ahead of established schedules and with very little supervision.</li> <li>• Performance for each element consistently exceeds the "Fully Successful" standard.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Support an "Outstanding" rating with narrative documentation and other evidence.</p>

**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**7 Completing Performance Appraisals (Continued)**

**C FAS Summary Ratings**

Summary ratings for FAS employees shall be:

- based on the following Decision Table, instead of the Decision Table on AD-435, item 16B:
  - rating of "Outstanding" if item 15E equals item 15H
  - rating of "Superior" if no element is rated in item 15D, item 15E is more than item 15F, and item 15F is more than zero
  - rating of "Unacceptable" if any **critical** element is rated in item 15D
  - rating of "Fully Successful" if an "Outstanding", "Superior", or "Unacceptable" rating does not apply
- calculated by using the information in subparagraph D and the Decision Table in this subparagraph
- consistent with the following definitions.

<b>Summary Rating</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Unacceptable	Performance that does not meet established "Fully Successful" standards in 1 or more critical elements.
Fully Successful	Performance that is of good quality. Employee produces the expected quantity of work and meets deadlines for completing the work.
Superior	Performance of unusually good or excellent quality. Employee produces a very high quantity of work ahead of established schedules and with less than normal supervision.
Outstanding	<p>Performance of rare, very high quality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee produces an exceptional quantity of work significantly ahead of established schedules and with very little supervision.</li> <li>• Performance for each element consistently exceeds the "Fully Successful" standard.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Support an "Outstanding" rating with narrative documentation and other evidence.</p>

**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**7 Completing Performance Appraisals (Continued)**

**D Weight of Element Units**

Each critical and noncritical element is assigned a specific number of appraisal units, as follows:

- critical elements are assigned 2 appraisal units
- noncritical elements are assigned 1 appraisal unit.

The weighing of each element automatically occurs when the element ratings are converted to the summary rating.

**E Multiple Appraisals**

Combine or consider multiple appraisals in deriving the employee's next rating.

Prepare AD-435 to document the employee's accomplishments and summary rating if:

- the employee is on detail for 120 calendar days or more
- a change in supervisors occurs and the employee works under a new supervisor for 90 calendar days or more
- the employee changes positions and serves in the new position for 90 calendar days or more
- the employee transfers outside of his or her Agency

**Note:** The former supervisor should provide a copy of this AD-435 to the employee's new supervisor.

- the employee performs collateral duties. The rating shall reflect both of the following:
  - primary duties of the position
  - primary collateral duty.

**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**7 Completing Performance Appraisals (Continued)**

**F Communicating Rating**

A performance appraisal rating of record shall not be communicated to the employee before the reviewing official's approval. This does not preclude discussing performance accomplishments between supervisor and employee before the final determination of the rating of record.

**G Minimum Appraisal Period**

The minimum appraisal period that an employee is to be rated by using an approved performance plan is 90 calendar days.

**H Forced Distribution**

A prescribed distribution of levels of ratings for employees, that is, forced distribution of rating levels, is not permitted.

**I Inability to Rate**

When a performance appraisal rating of record cannot be prepared at the end of the designated appraisal period, the appraisal period shall be extended to the amount necessary to meet the minimum appraisal period; that is, at least 90 calendar days.

**Note:** If an employee is to be nominated for a performance award or quality step increase, the appraisal period must end before the end of the awards nomination period to be considered for an award nomination based on performance.

**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**8 Linkage to Personnel Actions**

**A Impact of Performance Appraisals**

Performance appraisal ratings are used as a basis for:

- adjusting basic pay
- determining awards
- training
- promoting
- reassigning
- demoting
- retaining
- reduction in force
- removal.

**B Examples of Importance of Performance Appraisals**

Following are examples that illustrate the importance of performance appraisals:

- an employee must receive at least a "Fully Successful" summary rating to be given WGI
- in reduction in force, additional service credit is given for a "Fully Successful" or higher summary rating for the last 3 ratings of record
- an employee receiving a "Fully Successful" or higher summary rating may be eligible for a performance-based award, such as a lump-sum monetary award.

**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**9 Impact of Acceptable Performance Appraisals**

**A Within-Grade Increases**

An employee will receive a WGI, when the:

- employee's current performance rating of record is "Fully Successful" or higher
- employee completes the required waiting period for advancement to the next higher step of the grade of his or her position
- employee has not received an equivalent increase during the waiting period.

**B Performance-Based Awards**

An employee's rating of record may be used to grant monetary performance awards and quality step increases.

**C Promotions and Reassignments**

Consider performance ratings to evaluate employees for promotion and reassignments to positions with greater promotion potential.

No employee shall receive a career promotion, unless the current rating of record is "Fully Successful" or higher.

**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**9 Impact of Acceptable Performance Appraisals (Continued)**

**D Training**

Supervisors shall use the performance appraisal process to determine an employee's training needs.

**E Reduction in Force (RIF)**

Performance ratings of record are used to establish service credit for RIF purposes. For RIF purposes, a rating of record means an annual summary rating according to the time period in subparagraph 62 A.

To determine additional service credit, use performance ratings that are:

- completed before the date of the specific notice
- officially approved
- a matter of official record.

**Note:** An employee must **not** be assigned a new rating of record only to affect retention standing.

**Exclusion:** This subparagraph does **not** apply to CO County Office employees.

**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**10 Impact of Unacceptable Performance Appraisals**

**A Denying WGI**

If an employee is not performing at an acceptable level of competence, that is, a summary rating of "Fully Successful," the supervisor may withhold the employee's WGI.

Before the WGI due date, the servicing personnel office shall forward the notification of WGI to the supervisor for a decision to approve or disapprove. The supervisor may obtain guidance on appropriate procedures to be followed by contacting the appropriate office as follows:

- County Office supervisors shall contact the State Office
- all other supervisors shall contact his or her servicing personnel office, as follows:
  - Employee and Labor Relations Branch, HRD
  - Employee and Labor Relations Branch, Personnel Division, KCAO.

**Note:** If WGI decision is not consistent with the employee's most recent performance appraisal rating, prepare a new AD-435.

**B Training**

The performance appraisal process is used to determine an employee's training needs. Supervisors shall assist employees in improving performance if an element is rated at the "Does Not Meet Fully Successful" level.

This assistance may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- formal training
- on-the-job training
- counseling
- closer supervision.



**4-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FAS; 5-Tier Performance Management Procedures for FSA State Offices When Required by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and RMA KC Offices (Continued)**

**10 Impact of Unacceptable Performance Appraisals (Continued)**

**C Reassignments**

Management may reassign an employee with an "Unacceptable" performance appraisal to a position where the employee can perform at an acceptable level.

**D Unacceptable Performance**

If the employee performs at the "Does Not Meet Fully Successful" level in 1 or more critical elements, the supervisor may take the following actions at any time without waiting for the end of the rating period:

- provide the employee with an opportunity to improve

**Note:** This shall be done in conjunction with an employee relations specialist.

- except for Schedule C employees, management may do 1 of the following for employees whose performance continues to be "Unacceptable" after the opportunity to improve has ended:
  - reassign the employee to a position that the employee can perform
  - reduce the grade of the employee to a level that the employee can perform
  - remove the employee from Federal service.