

General Performance Management Policy and the Performance Rating Tool

Q. What is the deadline for completing a rating of record?

A. In most cases, ratings of record are prepared at the end of the performance year, which is September 30th. Ratings should be completed as soon as possible, but no later than October 30th. When there are extenuating circumstances, such as needing to extend the appraisal period for an employee to have at least 90 days on a performance plan (through no later than November 14th), the ratings must be completed by November 30th. Rating Official must complete the Appraisal Certification Sections in the Performance Rating Tool (PRT). This is done by indicating dates the employee, Rating Official and Reviewing Official signed the performance appraisal. Once this is completed, the Rating Official must upload the entire signed performance appraisal, including the plan signature page into the PRT.

Q. When is the deadline for placing employees on new performance standards?

A. The new performance rating cycle begins October 1st. By October 30, all performance plans should be in the PRT for all employees, to include the required signatures by all parties. Rating Official should be mindful when completing the Plan Certification Sections in the PRT, to ensure the dates the employee, Rating Official and Reviewing Official signed the performance plan are indicated.

Q. Outside of setting the new plan at the beginning of the rating cycle, are there other times when a formal performance plan is required?

A. Yes. A formal performance plan is always mandatory when an employee starts a new position, or when an employee is on a temporary detail or temporary promotion for at least 90 days.

Employees cannot be held accountable for expectations until they are clearly communicated, so performance plans should always be in place as soon as possible. With proper planning, employees should receive their performance plans within the first week of any of the appraisal periods, but under no circumstances should eligible employees receive the plans after more than 15 days from the start of a new position, detail or temporary promotion.

Q. Outside of the end of year rating of record, can any other rating be given?

A. Yes. In most cases, supervisors and employees will remain in place for the entire rating cycle. However, there are special circumstances in which a change occurs that may cause an advisory assessment or an interim rating to be issued prior to the end of the performance year. These circumstances are identified below:

- **Details and Temporary Promotions.** The supervisor responsible for the detail or temporary promotion is to document the employee's accomplishments in an advisory assessment or interim rating at the end of the detail or temporary promotion. It needs to be forwarded to the employee's supervisor of record for appropriate consideration in the final rating of record for the performance year.
- **Position Changes.** If an employee is assigned to a new position through reassignment, transfer, or appointment during the performance year, and the employee served under a performance plan for at least 90 days in the position from which the employee has changed, the former Rating Official is to prepare an interim rating, communicate it to the employee and forward it to the new Rating Official within 15 days for appropriate consideration in the final rating of record.
- **Change in Supervisors.** When an employee has a performance plan in place and works in the same position under different supervisors during the appraisal period, each supervisor of 90 or more days is to prepare an interim rating, communicate it to the employee and forward it to the employee's new Rating Official for appropriate consideration in the final rating of record. .

Q. What are the different types of ratings/assessments that can be given to an employee and what is the deadline for having them completed?

A. There are three types of ratings: Interim Rating, Advisory Assessment and Rating of Record. All interim ratings and advisory assessments are to be completed and communicated to the employee within 15 days, and are to be considered in deriving the employee's rating of record at the end of the appraisal period. Per [DR 40 40-430](#), assessments or ratings of employee's performance are documented through:

- **Interim Rating.** A written appraisal of an employee's performance conducted before the end of the appraisal period. Interim ratings are used to essentially close out logical segments of an employee's performance, and are required for situations such as changes in supervisors; promotions; significant changes in responsibilities; and details and temporary promotions of 90 or more days. Interim ratings are to be based on expectations formally communicated in a performance plan and provided to the new Rating Official in writing.
- **Advisory Assessment.** An informal, unofficial written record of an employee's performance while on assignment to another supervisor or program area for a period of fewer than 90 days. Advisory assessments are to be based on clearly communicated and documented expectations, but not necessarily a formal performance plan. Any information which may be considered in assigning an interim rating or a rating of record is to be provided to the new Rating Official in writing.
- **Rating of Record.** The formal evaluation and final summary rating of an employee's performance as compared to the elements and standards for performance over the entire appraisal period (usually one year, but no fewer than 90 days on a performance plan).

Q. In cases where the supervisory position is vacant or is filled by a new or an acting supervisor, who serves as the Rating Official?

A. If a supervisory position is unencumbered at the end of the performance year, the second-level supervisor will serve as the Rating Official, and the third-level supervisor will serve as the Reviewing Official.

In addition, a new supervisor may serve as a Rating Official provided:

- The subordinate employees have been under established performance plans for the minimum appraisal period of 90 days;
- The supervisor has had formal training in assessing and rating performance; and
- If the supervisor has been in the supervisory role for fewer than 90 days, there is at least one interim rating to consider in the rating of record.

Q. Can a supervisor who is serving in an acting role serve as a Rating Official?

A. An acting supervisor may serve as a Rating Official provided:

- The employees have been under established performance plans for the minimum appraisal period of 90 days;
- The acting supervisor is officially designated as acting for a period of at least 60 days, either by detail or temporary promotion;
- The acting supervisor has had formal training in assessing and rating performance; and
- If the acting supervisor has been in the acting supervisory role for fewer than 90 days, there is at least one interim rating to consider in the rating of record.

Q. Can an employee receive a rating of Unacceptable without having failed a PIP?

A. Yes. There is no requirement that an employee complete a PIP before receiving a rating of Unacceptable.

Q. If an employee has not completed the opportunity period before the end of the appraisal period, may the rating of record be delayed until the opportunity period is completed?

A. No. A timely, formal rating of record must be given to an employee after the end of an appraisal period (which in most cases is September 30). The fact that an employee may be currently serving a PIP does not preclude the supervisor from issuing a formal rating of record. This underscores the necessity for addressing performance issues early in the performance year.

Q. If an employee receives a rating of record of less than Fully Successful in the middle of the opportunity period, and subsequently completes the PIP successfully; can the rating of record be changed?

A. No. There is no provision to change a rating of record if the employee successfully completes the PIP after the end of the given appraisal period.

Hypothetical Scenarios

Q. I have an employee that was promoted after August 16th. Is the employee not rated for the year?

A. The employee should receive an interim rating for the previous position at the lower level ending the day before the promotion (i.e., promoted on 09/01/2016, end date of interim rating is 08/31/2016). This will become the final rating for the employee for the rating year. The gaining Rating Official should start the new performance plan for the new position beginning 09/01/2016 through 09/30/2017.

Q. I have an employee that was under relief supervisors (or acting supervisors throughout the year for less than 90 days each time. How is this handled since employees must be under a supervisor for 90 days to be rated?

A. There is no minimum timeframe for an employee to be assigned to a supervisor in order to be rated, so long as the employee was under standards for at least 90 days. The relief or acting supervisors must prepare an advisory assessment (narrative) of the employee's performance for the time period they were supervising. The supervisor of record is responsible for reviewing all advisory assessments and **interim ratings** (if applicable) in consultation with the Reviewing Official, to complete the rating for the entire appraisal period. All interim ratings and advisory assessments should be completed within 15 days, and should be considered in deriving the employee's rating of record at the end of the appraisal period. The Rating Official, in consultation with the Reviewing Official, should consider the nature of assignments and the length of time covered by the interim rating(s) when determining the impact of the interim rating(s) on the element and summary ratings.

Q. My employees rotate from day shift to night shift every 2 months. Who is responsible for completing their rating at the end of the year?

A. The day shift and night shift supervisors will discuss the employee's performance jointly to determine the employee's end of year rating. The supervisor of record on September 30 would complete the rating for the entire year in the PRT using the information gathered from the conversations and any written documentation from the other supervisor. In the general comments section of the appraisal in the PRT, the supervisor should indicate that the rating was collaboration from the 2 supervisors.

Q. Does an employee have to be on a performance plan for 90 days before receiving a mid-year progress review?

A. No. An employee must only be working under a performance plan for 90 days before receiving either an interim rating or a rating of record.

Q. How do I certify that a mid-year progress review was completed in the PRT?

A. All supervisors are required to certify that progress reviews were completed for their employees. The PRT is used to track the status of mid-year progress reviews. Once supervisors have completed reviews and initialed/dated the AD-435 with their employees, they need to log into the PRT to certify for each of their employees. Below are step by step instructions for completing this process as a Rating Official:

1. The Rating Official should log into the PRT using their E-Authentication credentials.
2. Next, click on the "Mid-Year Status" link in the left hand navigation bar.
3. The Rating Official will see a list of their employees. For each of their employees, they should click on the calendar icon in the right hand column.
4. If the progress review has been completed, the Rating Official should select the "Review Complete" box.
5. The system will pre-populate the current date in "Date Complete". If the progress review was conducted prior to the current date, the Rating Official will need to change the date appropriately by either, manually entering or by selecting a date on the calendar.
6. Finally, the Rating Official must click the **Save** button and return to the main page to select the next employee.
7. Note: If an employee progress review has not been completed within the prescribed time frames, the Rating Official must select the "Review Not Complete" box, the "Reason Incomplete" from the drop down list and provide a short "Explanation" as to why.

Q. I have a Pathways Student Interns who was under standards from Oct 1st to the end of July. In July, the student was transferred to another program area. Who is responsible for completing the end of the year rating, since the student wasn't under standards for 90 days (prior to the end of the rating cycle) with the new program area?

The Rating Official whom had the employee from Oct 1st through July is required to provide the student with an interim rating because she served under standards for more than 90 days. When preparing the student's interim appraisal, the date will need to be modify to reflect the day the student left the program area in July.

The gaining supervisor should have placed the employee on standards within 15 days. Per DR 4040-430, August 16th is the last day to set standards for new, reassigned or promoted employees; resulting in an extended rating period of no later than November 14th. Assuming the employee is performing new work and has different responsibilities and new standards set before the cutoff date, the gaining supervisor is responsible for completing the final rating of record.

Q. I have several employees that will need a performance appraisal completed; however, the Rating and Reviewing Officials who the employees served under from Oct1st through September are unable to conduct the end of the year ratings.

A. This is a very unique situation, given that both officials are not present to complete the ratings. Per the DR 4040.430, there is no longer a requirement for the supervisor to be in place for 90 days before the employees can be rated so long as the employees were on performance standards for at least 90 days. However, there is a requirement that the supervisor must have received performance management training. If the acting Rating Official has not completed the required training, he/she must take training as soon as possible and cannot provide ratings without having the training.

It is recommended that the employees provide accomplishment reports to the acting Rating Official. The acting Rating Official and acting Reviewing Official should review the accomplishment reports together to complete the ratings for each employee. While reviewing the accomplishment reports, please be sure to:

- Review the 2016 performance standards to ensure all goals are met and addressed in the report.
- Be specific on what was accomplished, focusing on the results/outcomes.
- Use statistics whenever possible to provide measurable results/outcomes that are supportable.

- Address each element/standard separately and keep the accomplishments to 1 page or less per element/standard.

It is also recommended that both officials be transparent with the employees to inform them that both acting officials are working together to complete the ratings and to ensure that the process is fair. Please encourage the employees to submit their accomplishment reports to ensure employees received consideration for all the achievements he/she made throughout the year. Finally, if the year-round Rating or Reviewing Official kept performance files on every employee, the acting officials should review those files for any information that would be helpful in completing the ratings.

Q. I have a CSI that transferred from another district. His official start date is September 9th. The employee's previous position of record was a relief CSI 10; however, their new position that he has under my supervision is a CSI 9. If his supervisor did an interim rating on him before he left on 9/2, as a CSI 10, do I need to do a rating on him at all or do I do the final rating or an advisory rating. I set new standards with him on 9/9. What would be the PRT procedure for this scenario?

A. Since there was a change of position and standards, and the supervisor does not have enough time to extend the FY16 rating cycle (the last day to beginning an extended rating cycle is August 16th), then the employee's final rating would be that of the previous rating official. The gaining rating official should however set CSI 9 standards in the PRT with the dates 9/9/16 – 10/1/17 for their new employee.

Q. What is the expectation for evaluating the performance of employees that retire? Should a performance appraisal be completed for retiring employees and entered into the PRT? Should the appraisal be discussed with the employee, and their signature obtained? What if circumstances do not allow the supervisor an opportunity to meet with the employee to discuss the appraisal before he or she leaves?

A. An employee's retirement should not prevent a supervisor from completing their performance management responsibilities, including providing an interim or final rating. All ratings should be completed and certified in the PRT. The employee should be fairly and objectively evaluated based on their performance plan, and there should be no restrictions or limitations on the rating levels. The appraisal should be shared with the employee and signatures should be obtained, if at all possible.

Q. In situations, where a Rating Official will be on leave during the end of the rating cycle, can he/she complete the ratings early? Or, would the ratings need to be completed on behalf of the Rating Official after 9/30?

A. The current Rating Official can proceed with entering their employees' performance appraisal into the PRT. However, supervisors should give employees an opportunity to provide input (usually through an accomplishment report) through September 30th, end of the performance rating cycle.

The Reviewing Official can add to the appraisal to ensure all accomplishments are considered, especially if the achievements alter the rating. If no additional input is given, then the PRT system will automatically default to the last rating entered into the system as the final rating of record.

Q. I have several large 2 shift beef slaughter/processing plants in my circuit with about 40 inspectors at each that rotate shifts every 4 weeks. The current procedure for performance appraisals is that each SCSi takes half of the inspector as their direct supervisor. The two SCSi correlate each year at the end rating cycle and come up with a rating that is issued by the particular SCIS the inspector was assigned to. The SPHV's on each shift attend these correlation sessions and also provide input and feedback for each inspector being discussed. If the SCSi that is not doing the rating were to provide a written advisory rating to the SCSi that is doing the rating, would this be an acceptable procedure. The inspectors rotate every 4 weeks so officially switching supervisor every 4 weeks would be very cumbersome and time consuming. What would be the PRT procedure for this scenario?

A. Yes, this would be an acceptable procedure. The SCSi that is the official supervisors of record would be responsible for issuing the employee's final rating and completing this in the PRT. The other SCSi or shift supervisors should also provide their advisor assessment(s) or interim rating(s) for consideration. The supervisor of record would complete the rating for the entire year in the PRT

using the information gathered from the conversations and any written documentation from the other supervisor(s). In the general comments section of the PRT appraisal, the supervisor should indicate that the rating was collaboration from the 2 or more supervisors.

Q. The former supervisor for my employees retired and did not complete interim ratings. How do I rate the employees for that time period?

A. If a supervisor leaves his/her position without completing interim ratings for the employees, it is the Reviewing Official's responsibility to complete the interim ratings. The Reviewing Official should gather information on the employees' performance for that time period and complete the rating in the PRT. The Reviewing Official should enter the interim ratings for the time period in the PRT. The supervisor will use the information from the interim rating to complete the rating for the entire year.

All interim ratings and advisory assessments should be completed within 15 days, and should be considered in deriving the employee's rating of record at the end of the appraisal period. The Rating Official, in consultation with the Reviewing Official, should consider the nature of assignments and the length of time covered by the interim rating(s) when determining the impact of the interim rating(s) on the element and summary ratings.

Q. I have an employee that was recently promoted to a GS-8, but is still performing duties at the GS-7 level until they have completed and passed NPIS training. When do I set standards and how do I rate them for duties they are not performing?

A. Understanding that training is a condition of employment for the promotion, the employee cannot be put on standards for the new position until they have completed and passed the required training. The employee will continue to be evaluated on the duties being performed at the GS-7 until training ends. Once the employee reports to the new GS-8 position the standards for that position must be set within 15 days.

Q. I completed an interim rating for my employee that was reassigned to me in June, but the PRT did not combine the rating with the previous interim rating and shows that the rating is from October 1 to September 30. How do I combine the ratings?

Effective for the 2016 rating cycle, FSIS can no longer use mathematical computations for combining ratings as we have done in the past. This feature was discontinued in the PRT. It is the end of year rating supervisor's responsibility to review any interim ratings or advisory assessments in the PRT and use their best judgement to rate the employee for the entire year. The rating supervisor can cut and paste information from the interim rating and advisory assessment that are in the PRT into the write-ups for each element and consider the information to complete the rating for the year. The rating supervisor should consider the nature of assignments and length of time covered by the interim rating(s) when determining the impact of the interim ratings on the element and summary rating.

PRT Administration

Q. Who can assist with inheriting a performance plan within the PRT?

A. The Program Area Data Administrator can assist Rating Officials with inheriting a plan.

Q. Data Administrators can assist with technical issues and PRT system related questions. How can I find my Data Administrator's contact information?

A. Data Administrators have been designated throughout each program area as a first-level resource for Rating and Reviewing Officials. They can assist with day to day PRT related questions, system actions, and technical issues. A complete list of the designated Data Administrators can be found on the FSIS Intranet site, under Performance Management Resources.

<https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=phhrsPmresources1234&checkin=pass>

Q. Who should new supervisors contact to gain access to the PRT system?

A. Gaining access to the PRT is a two-step process. In order to grant new supervisors access to the PRT, the Performance Management team will need the supervisor's E-Auth ID number in order to enter it into the PRT. This request can be sent directly to the performancemanagement@fsis.usda.gov inbox. The E-Auth ID # is a 16-20 digit number. Below is the link where supervisors can retrieve their E-Auth number <http://dchqe4pweb1.fsis.usda.gov/eAuthIDRetriver/eAuthRetriver.aspx>

Once completed, the second step is to have the supervisor contact their assigned District Data Administrator notifying them to enable the Rating Official role through the "Authorize PRT Roles".

Q. Would the PRT system allow Rating Officials or Data Administrator's to reset the planning status to "Not Started?" if it was inadvertently started for an employee?

A. Unfortunately, once the plan has been initiated as "In Progress", the system does not allow for the status to be moved back to "Not Started". However, the Data Administrator can modify the current year Rating Official through the "Assign Interim Roles" function. At that point the new Rating Official can create or modify the existing performance plan.

Q. For new employees that just came onboard to the Agency, when are they added into the PRT? Also, when are transferred employees added into the PRT?

A. New FSIS employees are automatically added after their first pay run through NFC. The PRT is updated biweekly after payroll runs. Once the employee is in the system, the PRT Data Administrator can move the employee under the appropriate Rating and Reviewing Official in the system.

For employees who recently transferred to a Rating Official from another part of the organization, the PRT Data Administrator can move the employee under the appropriate rating and Reviewing Official in the system.

Q. I entered the employee's rating for the end of the year, but the PRT shows "Interim Rating Approved". This should be the final rating, so why does it say "interim"?

A. The PRT recognizes ratings that begin that are for part of the year as "interim ratings" because they are not the full 12 months. The rating marked "interim" is appropriate and valid.

Performance Management Training

Q. I am a new supervisor and have not been scheduled for New Supervisors Training. Where can I find Performance Management training so I can set standards and evaluate my employees for the rating year?

A. There are a number of courses in AgLearn that meet the training requirements to set standards and evaluate employees. In accordance with the DR 4040-430, all employees and supervisors are required to receive Performance Management training within the first 3 months of entering on duty or assuming a supervisory position and refresher training at least every 2 years. Completion of any of these courses meets the training requirement: *FSIS-Performance Management- Planning; FSIS- Performance Management- Monitoring and Developing; FSIS- Performance Management- Evaluating; FSIS-Performance Management- Recognizing & Rewarding Emp.*

Courses can be accessed through the AgLearn catalog. Employees who complete the training in AgLearn will automatically receive credit. To obtain a printable version of the trainings supervisors should email the request to PerformanceManagement@fsis.usda.gov and include course title(s). Employees who complete the hard copy training will receive credit once the Training Affirmation form is completed and submitted to their supervisor who will email it to the Performance Management mailbox.

Additionally, you can review the Performance Management Handbook for Supervisors and Managers located on the FSIS intranet site and certify completion of this training.

Q. What training is available for employees to gain tips on writing accomplishment reports?

A. New training for employees is available in AgLearn titled *FSIS-Performance Management- Writing Effective Accomplishment Reports*. Completion of this training course is not mandatory and it does **not** meet the 2 year Performance Management training requirement, however it provides information that employees will find useful. Employees who complete the training in AgLearn will automatically receive credit. To obtain a printable version of the trainings supervisors should email the request to PerformanceManagement@fsis.usda.gov. Employees who complete the hard copy training will receive credit once the Training Affirmation form is completed and submitted to their supervisor who will email it to the Performance Management mailbox.