Background	USDA is establishing a two-tier performance management system. This document provides an overview of the major policy differences between the old rating system and the new.		
	2019 DR 5-Tier Rating System	**New 2-Tier Rating System**	**What This Means**
Summary Rating Pattern	- Outstanding - Superior - Fully Successful - Minimally Satisfactory - Unacceptable	- Fully Successful - Unacceptable	An employee who is Fully Successful in all elements will be rated Fully Successful. All performance below the Fully Successful level will be rated Unacceptable.
Element Designations	At least one element must be critical; non-critical are optional	All elements are critical	Performance expectations that were formerly designated non-critical will not automatically become critical. They will have to be examined to determine whether they are such a core expectation of the position as to be considered critical.
Performance Plans	Define all elements at both Fully Successful and Exceeds Fully Successful levels	- Define all elements at Fully Successful level - Specifically prohibits defining elements at the Does Not Meet Fully Successful level	- Plans will no longer need to have "exceeds fully successful" standards. - Anything that falls below Fully Successful is automatically "Does Not Meet". See the downloadable reference "Meaningful Performance Plans".

Determining the Summary Rating	• If any critical element rated Does Not Meet, summary rating is Unacceptable • If any non-critical element rated Does Not Meet, summary rating is Minimally Satisfactory • If all elements rated Exceeds, summary rating is Outstanding • Superior/Fully Successful based on formula	• If every element is rated Fully Successful, summary rating is Fully Successful • If any element is rated Does Not Meet, summary rating is Unacceptable	• The vast majority of summary ratings (also known as "ratings of record") will be Fully Successful. • Because all elements will be designated "critical", there is no longer a summary rating of "Minimally Satisfactory" for unsatisfactory performance on a non-critical element.
Accomplishment Reports	Required of all employees by October 1st	Not mandatory Department-wide	• It's still a good practice to use accomplishment reports to document what employees achieved throughout the year, but they are not required across the board. • Supervisors may require them of employees. • Employees may submit them if their supervisor doesn't require them.
Quarterly Conversations	Identified as "quarterly progress reviews"	Identified as "quarterly conversations" to underscore the objective of keeping the communication between the Rating Official and employee frequent and ongoing, but not necessarily as formal as some believed it was required to be	The purpose of managing employee performance is to ensure employees know what's expected, and to ensure it's actually getting done. Keeping these conversations happening at least quarterly supports that. See the downloadable reference "Performance-Based Conversations".