END OF THE YEAR PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT INSTRUCTIONS

I. PURPOSE

This notice provides instructions to all FSIS Rating Officials for completing their Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 performance ratings of record, and interim ratings for their employees. Departmental Regulation (DR) 4040-430, Employee Performance and Awards, sets forth the policies for the USDA Performance Management System.

II. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

A. Rating of Record: The formal evaluation and summary rating of an employee’s performance based on the elements and standards for performance over the entire appraisal period. The following applies:

1. The official annual appraisal period is October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021;

2. The rating of record is to be completed at the end of the appraisal period, provided to the employee, signed by the employee (the appraisal is final even if the employee refuses to sign) and rating official, and the entire performance plan including the rating signature page uploaded into the Enterprise Performance Management Application (EPMA) by October 30, 2021;

3. The minimum rating period is 90 non-consecutive or consecutive calendar days on a performance plan within the current appraisal period; and

4. The minimum rating period does not have to be served under the same Rating or Reviewing Official.

B. Interim Rating: A written appraisal of an employee’s performance conducted before the end of the appraisal period. Interim ratings are:

1. Required by supervisors for the following scenarios:

   a. Permanent changes for the employee, including reassignment, promotion, transfer or resignation, if the employee served 90 or more calendar days on a performance plan in the former position;

   b. A detail or temporary promotion of 90 or more calendar days; or

   c. Permanent or temporary changes in supervisors, including details of more than 90 calendar days, reassignments, retirements, and resignations;

2. To be based on expectations formally communicated in a performance plan; and

3. To be entered into EPMA and provided to the employee within 15 calendar days of the position change and considered by the Rating Official of record when they assign a final rating of record.

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C. **Advisory Assessment:** An informal, written record of an employee’s performance while on assignment to another supervisor for a period of at least 60 but fewer than 90 calendar days. Advisory assessments are:

1. Required for situations, such as a promotions or details, or temporary promotions for a period of at least 60 but fewer than 90 calendar days;

2. To be based on clearly communicated and documented expectations, which serve as an addendum to the employee’s formal performance plan;

3. To summarize the employee’s primary responsibilities during the abbreviated performance period (if not already described in a performance plan), the date range of the performance, the employee’s contributions, and a general descriptive assessment of the employee’s performance, but not an actual rating; and

4. To be entered into EPMA and provided to the employee within 15 calendar days of the position change and considered by the Rating Official of record when they assign an interim rating or a final rating of record.

### III. DOCUMENTATION

A. Rating and Reviewing Officials are to ensure that performance management documentation is accurately and properly recorded in EPMA.

B. Determining the Rating of Record.

1. Each performance element is to be evaluated separately based on actual performance, accomplishments, contributions, and results. Accomplishment reports are no longer mandatory for all USDA employees. However, Rating or Reviewing Officials can require them from non-bargaining unit employees. Bargaining unit employees can submit accomplishment reports on their own initiative. Accomplishment reports should detail:
   
   a. Personal performance, contributions, and accomplishments that align with the standards and measures for each element in their performance plan; and
   
   b. Any additional performance, contributions, and accomplishments that are not specific to the expectations documented in the performance plan.

2. Employees can also submit work products and other documentation to support the accomplishment report, as necessary.

3. All performance elements are critical. The expectations articulated at the Fully Successful level of each element’s standards and measures must be entirely met before assigning the rating. No narrative assessment is required for a Fully Successful rating in any element.

4. An element may not be lowered because of work not completed while an employee was on pre-approved leave or due to an abbreviated performance year, or for not meeting a specific standard due solely to factors outside of an employee’s control.

5. The Rating and Reviewing Officials retain discretion in determining whether extenuating circumstances provide a reasonable explanation as to why a performance expectation was not achieved. This determination is to be specifically documented in a narrative assessment for the element.
6. The Rating Official is to prepare a narrative assessment supporting the proposed evaluation of any element falling below the Fully Successful level. The narrative is to specify the factual details regarding any standard elements found to be at the Does Not Meet Fully Successful level and be based on documentation or other evidence that objectively and clearly describes the employee’s performance during the appraisal period.

7. If all elements are rated “Fully Successful,” the summary rating is “Fully Successful.” If any element is rated “Does Not Meet Fully Successful,” the summary rating is “Unsuccessful.”

C. After the appraisal has been approved by the Reviewing Official in EPMA, the Rating Official is required to:

1. Present a copy of the performance appraisal (either electronic or hard copy) to the employee;

2. Meet with the employee either in person or virtually, to discuss the appraisal and obtain the employee’s digital or physical signature;

3. Digitally or physically sign the employee’s appraisal;

4. Complete the performance appraisal certification sections in EPMA by annotating the dates on which the performance appraisal was physically or digitally signed by the employee and Rating Official, in accordance with DR 4040-430; and

5. Upload the entire signed appraisal (Form AD-435) into EPMA. This includes the elements, narratives, addendums to the plan, and complete signatures (including signatures from the quarterly conversations).

IV. INABILITY TO RATE AN EMPLOYEE

A. If a supervisor does not place an employee on a performance plan at any point during the performance year, a rating of record cannot be produced for that year.

B. An employee cannot be rated for the performance year when the employee has been on an established plan for fewer than 90 non-consecutive calendar days at the end of the performance appraisal period (September 30).

C. When an employee’s standards are set with fewer than 75 calendar days before the end of a performance year, the standards will carry through to the next appraisal period and they will be rated at the end of the next performance year.

D. If an employee is not eligible to receive a final rating of record, the Rating Official is to follow the instructions in the “Bypass Final Rating” guide in EPMA.

V. FINAL RATING OF RECORD FOR AN EMPLOYEE ON A DEMONSTRATION OPPORTUNITY (DO) PERIOD

A. Rating Officials are to issue a final rating of record for any employee who is on a DO period at the end of the appraisal period. Employees can be placed on a DO at any point during the appraisal period up to, and including, September 30. It should be rare for a DO to extend beyond the end of the performance year, as performance that falls below the Fully Successful level must be identified and addressed immediately.

B. If an employee is on a DO with a scheduled duration beyond the end of the performance year, the appraisal period will not be extended for the purpose of permitting an employee to demonstrate acceptable performance. The rating of record is to be completed by the deadline and the rating of record for that performance period is “Unacceptable.”
VI. SCENARIOS FOR COMPLETING INTERIM RATINGS AND FINAL RATINGS OF RECORD

A. A Consumer Safety Inspector (CSI) served under the same performance plan from October 1, 2020, to September 30, 2021, but under different supervisors throughout the year. Frontline Supervisor (FLS) #1 supervised the CSI from October 1 – November 30 (2 months); FLS #2 supervised the CSI from December 1 – August 31 (9 months); and FLS #3 supervised the CSI from September 1 - 30 (1 month). FLS #1 is to prepare an advisory assessment in EPMA. FLS #2 is to prepare an interim rating in EPMA. Since FLS #3 is the supervisor of record on September 30, FLS #3 serves as the Rating Official for the entire appraisal period and is to complete the rating of record. FLS #3 is to incorporate the advisory rating from FLS #1, the interim rating from FLS #2, and accomplishments from September 1-30 to create the rating of record in EPMA. The Rating Official (FLS #3) is to consider the nature of assignments and the length of time covered by the interim rating and advisory assessment to determine the final rating.

B. A Public Health Veterinarian (PHV) served under the same performance plan and FLS in the Atlanta District from October 1, 2020 to August 1, 2021 (10 months) prior to reassigning to the Springdale District. FLS #1 is to prepare an interim rating in EPMA for the 10-month appraisal period. FLS #2 in the Springdale District inherited the PHV performance plan and is to communicate expectations with the employee covering the appraisal period from August 2, 2021 – September 30, 2021 (2 months). FLS #2 serves as the Rating Official for the entire appraisal period and is to complete the rating of record. FLS #2 is to incorporate the interim rating from FLS #1 and accomplishments from August 2 – September 30 to create the rating of record in EPMA. The Rating Official (FLS #2) is to consider the nature of assignments and the length of time covered by the interim rating to determine the final rating.

C. A GS-7 Food Inspector (FI) was placed on a performance plan on October 1, 2020. The employee was promoted to a CSI on June 30, 2021. FLS #1, who served as the supervisor for the GS-7 FI, is to provide an interim rating in EPMA for the previous position at the lower grade level ending the day before the promotion (i.e., promoted on June 30, end date of interim rating is June 29). FLS #2 is to provide the employee with the CSI performance plan to cover June 30 – September 30. Since FLS #2 is the supervisor of record on September 30, FLS #2 serves as the Rating Official for the entire appraisal period and is to complete the rating of record. FLS #2 is to incorporate the interim rating from FLS #1 and accomplishments from June 30 – September 30 to create the rating of record in EPMA. The Rating Official (FLS #2) is to consider the nature of assignments and the length of time covered by the interim rating to determine the final rating.

D. The following two scenarios cover employees who left the Agency prior to October 30:

1. An FI was hired and placed on a performance plan on June 20, 2021. Four months later, the employee was offered another position in a different agency. The employee’s official last day on the job was October 15, 2021. Given the employee was on standards for more than 90 days during the rating period ending on September 30, the Rating Official is to provide the final rating of record in EPMA by October 15.

2. An employee was hired and placed on a performance plan on August 1, 2021. Two months later, the employee was offered another position in a different agency. The employee’s official last day on the job was October 1. Given the employee was under a performance plan for fewer than 90 days, no rating can be given to the employee. The supervisor is to log ‘bypass rating’ in EPMA. This can be accomplished by locating the employee on their EPMA Dashboard and taking the steps outlined in EPMA Guides, EPMA Performance Appraisals, Bypassing a Final Rating.
VII. QUESTIONS

A. Refer questions regarding this notice or performance management policy to the Office of Human Resources, Human Resources Business Systems Division, Program Management and Information Systems Branch at FSISHR1@usda.gov with the subject line “Performance Management,” or consult your next line supervisor.

B. Refer questions regarding EPMA to the designated Program Area or District EPMA Data Administrators.

[Signature]

Assistant Administrator
Office of Policy and Program Development