



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
**DCPAS**  
Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service

# DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND APPRAISAL PROGRAM TOOLKIT

**THIS TOOLKIT SUPPLEMENTS DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE INSTRUCTION 1400.25  
VOLUME 431, "DOD CIVILIAN PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM:  
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND APPRAISAL PROGRAM," BY PROVIDING  
COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION, ADVICE, AND GUIDANCE FOR ADMINISTERING THE  
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND APPRAISAL PROGRAM**

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## INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE

This toolkit supplements Department of Defense Instruction 1400.25-V431, “DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Civilian Performance Management and Appraisal Program,” by providing comprehensive information, advice, and guidance for administering the Performance Management and Appraisal Program. It is designed to inform supervisors, human resources personnel, and employees on the ongoing performance management process, including planning, monitoring, evaluating, and recognizing and rewarding employee performance. It will promote compliance with performance management policy, as well as consistent application of performance culture principles across the Department. This toolkit includes details about procedures of the DoD performance management cycle.

### COVERAGE

The DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program and this Toolkit apply to a majority of DoD appropriated fund civilian employees, except: (1) employees excluded from coverage under applicable laws and (2) employees covered by other performance programs as established through applicable regulations. A complete list is available at Appendix 3A: Exclusions from Coverage in the Department of Defense Instruction 1400.25-V431. The Performance Management and Appraisal Program cultural principles of continuous communication and shared understanding of performance expectations apply to any performance management program.

### FACT SHEETS

A variety of Fact Sheets cover topics such as how to prepare for a performance discussion, how to write goals that are aligned to the organizational mission, and how to write effective employee input and performance ratings are available on the Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service, Labor and Employee Relations Division (DCPAS LERD), Performance Management webpage at <https://dodhrinfo.cpms.osd.mil/Directorates/HROPS/Labor-and-Employee-Relations/Pages/Home1.aspx>.

### ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

If you have questions about the information in this toolkit, contact your servicing Human Resources Office or DCPAS LERD at [dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas.mbx.hrops-lerd-perf-mgmt@mail.mil](mailto:dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas.mbx.hrops-lerd-perf-mgmt@mail.mil).

## **CHAPTER 1 - PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT & APPRAISAL PROGRAM**

### **WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:**

- A culture of high performance focuses on employee engagement, development, and accountability.
- Performance management is one of the most important aspects of Supervisory and Managerial responsibilities.
- Benefits of a successfully implemented Performance Management and Appraisal Program include an organization that is directly aligned with its goals as well as a motivated workforce.
- Performance management is an on-going process that involves continuous feedback and two-way communication between supervisors and employees.

The Department is committed to maintaining a high-performance culture through a fair, credible, and transparent Performance Management and Appraisal Program that fosters timely employee recognition and rewards. Effective efforts of supervisors and employees align with organizational goals, promote consistency in performance review, and motivate employees to perform at their best.

Performance management increases individual success and accountability, achieves agency and organizational goals, and improves operational efficiency. An effective performance management program helps supervisors recognize their employees' full performance potential by differentiating between high achievers and those requiring performance improvements, thereby assisting the Department in meeting its mission and goals. Performance management focuses on a continuous year long process of communication, development, and results rather than waiting until the end of the performance period. The Performance Management and Appraisal Program encourages active two-way communication between the supervisor and the employee throughout the performance appraisal cycle.

Successful employee performance is essential to accomplishing mission goals. A successful Performance Management and Appraisal Program ensures work performed by employees accomplishes the goals and meets the mission of the team, Agency, and Department. Benefits of a successfully implemented Performance Management and Appraisal Program include: an organization that is directly aligned with its goals; a motivated workforce where every employee understands his or her importance to mission success; and employees with a clear understanding of what is expected of them.

The Department's Performance Management and Appraisal Program is intended to:

- Focus on employee engagement, development, performance, and accountability.
- Align individual employee goals with organizational mission goals by supporting alignment and cascading of established organizational goals from executive to employee.
- Create a culture of engagement by fostering ongoing feedback, constructive informal interactions, and continuous learning for supervisors and employees at every level.
- Emphasize the continuous nature of performance management while deemphasizing the final performance appraisal discussion by:
  - Providing continuous dialogue that allows for timely recognition and reward.
  - Addressing technical and interpersonal development early and often.
- Improve supervisory assessment, selection, development, and training.



Supervisors should make adequate time to perform their supervisory duties and carefully consider the time necessary to provide meaningful ongoing performance feedback.

The supervisor and employee are vital members of a continuously evolving process within the Department of performance planning and monitoring to ensure mission accomplishment. The Department and its' leaders are responsible for providing a fair, credible, and transparent Performance Management and Appraisal Program that encourages effective communication between employees and supervisors and ensures that supervisors have the skills and time to manage performance successfully. Supervisors are responsible for developing performance expectations with employee participation; communicating throughout the performance management cycle about employees' goals, performance, and development; recognizing successful performance and coaching for improved performance; and ensuring that employees have the tools, training, and resources needed to perform their duties successfully. Employees at all levels are responsible for actively communicating with their supervisors about their performance; taking an active role in planning their development; being accountable for their actions; and continually striving for excellence in their performance in support of the Department's mission.

Performance management is a continuous process of:

- **planning** work and setting expectations;
- continually **monitoring** performance;
- **evaluating** performance in a summary fashion; and
- **recognizing and rewarding** good performance.

Each step of the process represents a continuum with events that must occur at certain points within the cycle and may occur throughout the cycle. For example, performance plans are always developed at the beginning of the performance period, but may be updated at any point in the cycle to reflect changes in the organizational mission, team priorities, or employee duties. The performance management process is explained in detail later in this Toolkit.

#### **DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program Characteristics**

- The performance appraisal cycle runs from April 1 through March 31 of the following calendar year, and the rating of record will be effective June 1.
- A minimum of three documented performance discussions (performance planning, performance review, final performance appraisal) is required, with emphasis on continuous two-way communication.
- A 3-level rating pattern (Outstanding, Fully Successful, Unacceptable).
- Clearly developed performance elements linked to organizational goals.
- Descriptive performance narratives reflecting distinctions in performance.
- Documented performance that may be linked to other personnel decisions.
- Continuous recognition and reward both monetary and non-monetary.
- Focus on fostering a culture of high performance.
- An automated performance appraisal tool (MyPerformance) to facilitate performance planning, communications, and the appraisal cycle process.

Refer to DoDI 1400.25-V431, “DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Performance Management and Appraisal Program” for further program requirements.



## CHAPTER 2 - PLANNING PERFORMANCE

### What You Should Know:

- Supervisors **and** employees share responsibility for planning performance that is **aligned** with the Department's and organization's mission.
- Performance plans should be established, approved, and communicated to each employee within 30 calendar days of the beginning of the appraisal cycle or within 30 calendar days of employee's assignment to the position or set of duties, whichever occurs later.
- The performance management and appraisal program emphasizes the importance of supervisory responsibilities.
- Performance standards should use SMART criteria: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely.
- All performance elements are critical elements.
- Performance elements tell an employee **what** to do; performance standards tell an employee **how** to accomplish performance elements.

### OVERVIEW

Planning performance is the first step in the performance management process and sets the foundation for successful performance - essential for achieving and sustaining a culture of high-performance. Performance Planning includes establishing performance expectations, two-way communication to achieve mutual understanding of the performance expectations, and aligning performance with organizational goals. Each employee performance plan will identify specific performance expectations using performance standards and elements to which the employee will be held accountable. Supervisors will communicate the final plan to the employee once it has been approved in accordance with Component procedures.

In a performance-based culture where employee engagement and the role of supervisors are emphasized, the value of involving employees in the planning process should not be underestimated. Employees perform best when they feel their work is connected to the accomplishment of the organization's mission. Getting employees involved in the planning process promotes understanding of how their contributions affect the organization's mission accomplishment, and leads to:

- A better understanding of the organization goals and how to accomplish them.
- Increased awareness of individual performance expectations, desired results, and their importance in supporting organizational performance.
- A sense of ownership in their performance plan which leads to improved performance.





Employees are encouraged to actively participate in defining performance expectations and standards. Employee involvement can improve the reliability, validity, fairness, and usefulness of performance expectations and standards because employees have direct, first-hand knowledge of any constraints that may impact their performance. Employee participation is essential for developing realistic expectations and standards.

## PERFORMANCE PLAN

To perform well, employees need to know what is expected of them. Ensuring employee position descriptions (PD) are up-to-date is a great place to start. Position descriptions describe the essential functions, tasks, and responsibilities of the job and outline the general knowledge and skill required of the employee to be successful in the job. When thinking about high quality on-the-job performance, a range of expected job outcomes should be considered, such as:

- What goods and services should the employee produce?
- What impact does the work have on the organization?
- How is the employee expected to interact with customers, colleagues, and leadership?
- What are the organizational goals the employee supports?
- What are the processes, methods, or means the employee is expected to use?
- How will success be measured?

The performance plan consists of performance standards and elements which help employees understand why the job exists, where it fits in the organization, and how the job's responsibilities link to Department and organization goals. Performance standards and elements serve as a foundation for communicating about performance throughout the performance period and the basis for reviewing employee performance. When a supervisor and employee set clear expectations about the results to be achieved and the methods or approaches needed to achieve them, they establish a path for success.

## PLANNING PERFORMANCE

### Employees:

### *Roles & Responsibilities*

As members of a high-performing organization, employees contribute to the overall success of the DoD mission when they:

- Take responsibility to continuously improve individual performance, support mission and organizational goals, engage in professional development, and perform at full potential.
- Set high standards in the pursuit of excellence in carrying out assigned duties.
- Provide input to their performance plan.
- Recommend changes in their performance plan for supervisory consideration.
- Ask questions to clarify their supervisor's expectations.

The supervisor is responsible for preparing the performance plan; however, performance plans are more effective when accomplished as a joint effort between the supervisor and employee. This should be accomplished by the employee and supervisor discussing and establishing performance expectations and creating an individualized performance plan for the upcoming performance period together (the employee may also provide comments on a draft performance plan prepared by the supervisor) which includes:

- Writing effective performance standards and elements clearly aligned to the organization mission.
- Developing performance elements and associated performance standards.
- Defining roles, responsibilities, and establishing timelines.

Performance plans should be established, approved in accordance with organizational procedures, and communicated to each employee within 30 calendar days of the beginning of the appraisal cycle *OR* within 30 calendar days of employee's assignment to the position or set of duties, whichever occurs later.

Once the performance plan is approved, the supervisor is responsible for communicating its contents to the employee to ensure a shared understanding of the employee's expected contributions towards mission accomplishment. The performance plan must contain a minimum of one element (maximum of 10, though three to five are usually adequate) and associated standard(s) that set forth expectations for the element(s).

## PLANNING PERFORMANCE

### Supervisors:

### *Roles & Responsibilities*

- Identify organizational goals to which the employee will contribute.
- Determine appropriate performance elements for each employee.
- Identify measureable performance standards for each element.
- Conduct a planning discussion with each employee and offer the employee an opportunity to provide input into his or her plan.
- Develop and clarify performance expectations with the employee.
- Establish a coaching and mentoring relationship with employees.
- Communicate the plan to the employee.
- Provide a copy of the approved performance plan to the employee.

## LINKING PERFORMANCE PLANS TO DoD CORE VALUES AND ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

Core values are foundational principles that guide business strategies of an organization, inform employees of what activities are important to achieve mission success, and provide a framework for accountability. In order to develop common awareness of the DoD Core Values and to reinforce a culture of high performance, DoD Core Values should be discussed with each employee at the beginning of each appraisal cycle and will be annotated on all performance plans. The DoD Core Values of **Leadership, Professionalism, and Technical Knowledge** form

the foundation of the DoD performance culture. When supervisors and employees discuss these values as they relate to their work, it creates an increased awareness of the common ground shared by all individuals within the DoD.

Strategic management is most effective when performance management programs link individual and team performance to organizational goals for desired results. The Performance Management and Appraisal Program encourages a close review of every job to align the work with the strategies, goals, vision, and values of the Department. Helping employees understand the link between their performance elements, organizational goals, and the Department's strategic priorities is essential to focusing employee efforts on the greatest contributions to mission accomplishment. Thus, supervisors should become familiar with the Department's strategic goals to understand the "big picture." At a minimum, this requires that supervisors gather enough information to answer the following questions:

- **What are the strategic goals outlined in the Department's Strategic Plan?** To achieve its mission, the DoD identifies several strategic goals. Each of these goals is supported by objective, quantifiable, and measurable organizational performance goals, as required by the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010. Reviewing and understanding these strategic goals will provide managers the necessary framework to develop work unit goals and create individual performance plans. Ultimately, each organizational unit within the Department support one of the strategic goals, and managers should be able to clearly identify the relationship of the work in their unit to one of the Department's strategic goals.
- **What is the specific performance goal(s) established for your program area as outlined in the Department's annual performance plan?** Department's annual performance plan defines what will be accomplished and the goals within it describe the desired incremental progress toward accomplishing the annual plan. These goals are usually more specific and may be more output-oriented than the general goals found in the strategic plan. Since performance plan goals should be used by managers as they direct and oversee their programs, these are the goals to which employee performance plans should be linked.
- **What performance measures are already in place?** Managers should be aware of the measurement systems (both internal and external) that can be accessed for information on performance, including measures for determining progress toward achieving goals such as customer feedback surveys.

[Appendix A: Aligning Employee Performance Plans with Organizational Goals](#) provides an effective approach for developing performance plans linked to the organizational mission. DoD performance documents can be found at <https://www.performance.gov/agency/departments-defense#overview>

## PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS AND STANDARDS – UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE

Expectations of employee performance are established through the performance elements and standards contained in employee performance plans. Performance elements tell employees *what* to do; standards tell employees *how* to accomplish performance elements. Elements and standards identify baselines for measuring performance results. Supervisors can provide specific feedback to describe any gap between expected and actual performance based on established performance elements and standards. Since performance elements are direct links between an employee’s work, organization goals, and Department mission; elements force the supervisor and employee to plan for results, not just activities. It is important to note that performance elements must address work performance, not behavioral matters or use of sick or family medical leave.

**Table 1. Characteristics of Elements and Standards**

ELEMENT	STANDARD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad scope that goes beyond day-to-day measures.</li> <li>• Clearly linked to helping the Department &amp; organization meet its goals.</li> <li>• Expresses results an employee is expected to produce during the appraisal cycle.</li> <li>• Future state of achievement that help the organization succeed and create value.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directly linked to daily responsibilities contributing to job-task completion.</li> <li>• Details how to accomplish elements at the “Fully Successful” level.</li> <li>• Differentiates between acceptable and “Unacceptable” results.</li> <li>• Informs characteristics of performance such as quality, quantity, and timeliness.</li> </ul>

## PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS

Performance elements tell employees *what* to do. Performance elements describe the required duties and responsibilities and should be clearly defined, stand-alone segments of an employee’s responsibilities. All performance elements in the Performance Management and Appraisal Program are critical elements and align with organizational goals. For tip sheets on developing performance elements aligned with organizational goals visit the DoD Performance Management webpage at <https://dodhrinfo.cpms.osd.mil/Directorates/HROPS/Labor-and-Employee-Relations/Pages/Home1.aspx>.

**A performance element:**

- Is an assignment or responsibility of such importance that “Unacceptable” performance in that element would result in a determination that the employee's overall performance is “Unacceptable”.
- Is required for every performance plan; between three and five elements are appropriate for most work situations.
- Describes individual work assignments and responsibilities that are within the employee's control. Elements for team performance will not be established.

### Supervisory Elements

To reinforce the importance of supervisor roles and responsibilities, the number of supervisory performance elements will equal or exceed the number of non-supervisory performance elements in the performance plan. Whereby, reinforcing the importance of supervisory duties.

### SMART PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Performance standards tell employees *how* to accomplish performance elements. Performance standards are the requirements or expectations provided for each performance element and express the expected performance at the “Fully Successful” level. Supervisors may also describe measures of success for the “Outstanding” level. Encourage employee participation in developing standards, as with elements, and discuss the criteria for achieving and associated method for evaluating performance at the “Fully Successful” level. Establish performance standards for each key area of responsibility.

Performance standards should be written using the SMART criteria, which provides a framework for developing effective expectations and results. Start by answering the following:

- **Specific** – What needs to be accomplished? The performance standard should be stated as simply, concisely, and explicitly as possible to answer questions such as how much, for whom, for what, and how often?
- **Measurable** – Where is the performance target? This is the gauge for quantifying the accomplishment of the performance element and calls for criteria to measure progress toward the goal. Writing measurable performance standards delivers an objective evaluation.
- **Achievable** – Can the element be accomplished with the resources, personnel, and time available, and is it sufficiently challenging but not so complex as to be unrealistic?
- **Relevant** – Why is the element important? This links the element to the organization and Department mission.

- **Timely** – When will the element start, or be completed? If a multiple process project is being evaluated, name the specific outcome expected for the current appraisal cycle.

Supervisors should strive to include all five of the SMART criterion as often as possible. For tips on how to write SMART performance standards refer to the Performance Management webpage at: <https://dodhrinfo.cpms.osd.mil/Directorates/HROPS/Labor-and-Employee-Relations/Pages/Home1.aspx>.

**Absolute Standard:** An absolute standard requires employees to perform work without error. In some cases, absolute standards are appropriate. A single failure to perform under an element could result in serious injury, loss of life, breach of national security, or great monetary loss. To determine whether a standard is absolute, ask:

- How many times may the employee fail the standard and still be “Fully Successful”?
- If the standard allows for no errors, is it valid according to the criteria listed above (*i.e.*, serious injury, loss of life, breach of national security, or great monetary loss)?

**Backward Standard:** A backward standard tells the employee what *not* to do rather than what *to* do, therefore, should not be used. Performance elements and SMART standards within the performance plan inform employees of **what** and **how** to achieve “Fully Successful” performance. To avoid drafting backward standards, ask yourself “Does the standard express the level of work necessary to accomplish the mission?”

When putting it all together, performance elements and standards should clearly describe specific expectations of job performance required to achieve mission success. For tip sheets on writing performance plans visit the DoD Performance Management webpage at

#### **Absolute Standard Examples:**

- Respond to all emergency calls within 7 minutes.
- Administer appropriate emergency medical care based on assessing the patient’s condition; lift, move, position, and otherwise handle the patient to minimize discomfort and prevent further injury.

The examples above are among the very limited circumstances in which an absolute standard is appropriate.

#### **Backward Standard:**

“Employee should not perform work inaccurately.”

*Under this backward standard, an employee could potentially meet the standard while producing low-quality work or even no work at all, so long as it did not contain inaccuracies.*

#### **SMART Standard:**

“By the end of this quarter, decrease the time to respond to customer queries to 24 hours.”

*This SMART standard specifically addresses customer queries and sets both measurable and timely parameters employee must meet in order to be considered “Fully Successful.”*



<https://dodhrinfo.cpms.osd.mil/Directorates/HROPS/Labor-and-Employee-Relations/Pages/Home1.aspx>.

## COMMUNICATING PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

At the beginning of the appraisal cycle or the employee's assignment to a new position, normally within 30 calendar days, the supervisor and the employee meet to discuss performance expectations for the coming appraisal cycle and how they link to organizational goals. This meeting provides an opportunity for the supervisor and employee to achieve a common understanding of the performance required for mission success. By proactively communicating with employees, supervisors:

- **Reduce uncertainty and confusion** – Open dialogue regarding the performance appraisal program increases the employee's understanding of the program and what it means to work in a high-performing organization. Making time to explain how the performance appraisal program benefits employees and helping them become familiar with its characteristics can raise employee comfort level.
- **Provide Transparency** – By openly communicating with employees and soliciting feedback, supervisors have the opportunity to address employee concerns and provide fact-based information that dispels any rumors and clarifies any misconceptions about the Performance Management and Appraisal Program.
- **Increase confidence** – Employees who understand where they fit in the big picture and what they need to do to succeed are going to be more open to the process and are better engaged in mission accomplishment. A common understanding and shared vision contribute to a more efficient and effective work environment.

## MODIFYING THE PLAN DURING THE APPRAISAL CYCLE

Although performance plans are initiated at the beginning of the appraisal cycle, they are flexible, living documents and can be updated to meet the organizational needs. Any number of events can take place during an appraisal cycle that would warrant changing a plan. For example, plans may be changed to reflect:

- New organizational goals or changes in mission requirements;
- Change in assignment(s), position, or duties;
- Employee requested, agency approved reasonable accommodation; example light duty in accordance with applicable regulations.



- Updated goals when outside influences beyond an employee's control make the original goals unachievable; or
- A change in assumptions about what can reasonably be achieved.



As a general rule, changes to performance plans should not be made during the last 90 calendar days of the appraisal cycle. However, if necessary, the supervisor may:

- (1) Extend the appraisal cycle so the employee has an opportunity to work under the changed performance plan for at least 90 calendar days;
- (2) Delay the change until the next performance appraisal cycle begins; or
- (3) Update the plan, and if the employee does not have an opportunity to perform the new element(s) for the minimum 90 calendar-day period, do not rate the revised element(s).

When necessary, the affected performance plans should be modified and annotated to reflect the new goals and priorities, and communicated to employees. Just as with establishing performance plans, changes should also be done with employee input. For those employees requesting reasonable accommodation or light duty, check with your local Equal Employment Opportunity and Human Resources Office.

As part of the performance planning process, supervisors should discuss employees' short- and long-term learning and developmental goals and may assist employees in creating an Individual Development Plan (IDP). An IDP is a tool to assist employees in career and personal development. Its primary purpose is to help employees reach short and long-term career goals, as well as improve current job performance. An IDP is not a performance evaluation tool or a one-time activity. It should be looked at as a partnership between the employee and the supervisor. For more information on IDPs, contact your servicing Human Resources Office.

## CHAPTER 3 - MONITORING PERFORMANCE

### WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:

**Monitoring performance** means measuring performance and providing **ongoing, timely, and constructive feedback** to employees to:

- Foster communication through open exchanges between the supervisor and employee;
- Further enhance the employee's understanding of the organization's expectations regarding his or her performance, including emphasis on the Department's and organization's core values;
- Discuss progress on performance goals and address employee strengths or weaknesses;
- Provide an opportunity for the employee to convey his or her career goals and identify tools, resources, and support he or she may need from the rater; and
- Provide timely recognition and reward for excellent performance.

### OVERVIEW

To foster a culture of high performance, the performance management process focuses on employee engagement, development, performance, and accountability at all levels. In a high-performing organization, supervisors continually monitor assignments and projects consistently to measure performance and provide ongoing feedback to employees and work groups on progress toward reaching their goals. In addition to providing feedback whenever exceptional or ineffective performance is observed, supervisors should provide periodic feedback about day-to-day accomplishments and contributions, as this is very valuable. Feedback is essential in gaining the maximum benefits from goal setting because timely feedback allows employees the opportunity to adjust accordingly.

## MONITORING PERFORMANCE

### Supervisors:

### *Roles & Responsibilities*

- Continuously communicate with and provide encouragement, constructive feedback, and recognition to employees.
- Provide employees an opportunity to highlight their accomplishments.
- Review IDPs to identify training, on-the-job training, counseling, coaching, and mentoring opportunities.
- Be knowledgeable regarding each employee's skills and abilities and look for opportunities to help employees further develop their skills.
- Document performance discussions and progress reviews completed.
- Recognize and reward performance throughout the performance appraisal cycle rather than waiting until the end of the appraisal cycle.

During the *Monitoring* process, communication is the most important determinant of success of the employee and supervisor. A two-way communication process and joint responsibility of both supervisors and employees is necessary for the feedback process to work well. Either the supervisor or employee can initiate a progress review at any time during the appraisal cycle.

Although supervisors are required to hold three documented performance discussions, including at least one formal progress review, (communicating the performance plan, progress review, and the annual appraisal) during the appraisal cycle, engaging employees in continuous and timely performance feedback throughout the appraisal cycle is important. Continuous two-way communication between supervisors and employees fosters strong working relationships. This continuous engagement emphasizes the ongoing nature of performance management while de-emphasizing performance management all at once at the end of the performance period.

Meaningful employee participation in the performance management process increases the quality and quantity of performance information shared, which leads to a more accurate performance appraisal. Time spent focusing on employee engagement, actively managing performance, and providing feedback will pay off for supervisors, employees, and the organization as a whole.

## MONITORING PERFORMANCE

### Employees:

### *Roles & Responsibilities*

- Ask questions.
- Remain engaged in self-development.
- Keep their supervisor informed on the outcomes of their work.
- Provide input about their accomplishments, relative to the performance elements and standards, during the progress reviews.
- Identify work problems or circumstances which may affect accomplishment of performance expectations and cooperate with their supervisor to resolve them.
- Complete training and developmental assignments to meet current or future job performance needs.

Effective and timely feedback during the performance appraisal cycle provides employees with an understanding of how well they are performing, what they are doing well, and if there are areas which need improvement. Feedback can come from many different sources, such as observation, measurement systems, peers, and input from customers. Feedback should be specific, descriptive, timely, focused on results, and limited to one or two pieces of feedback.

## HOW TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK

- **Provide timely feedback.**

To be effective, feedback should be given as soon after an event as possible. This enables employees to act on feedback immediately. If employees need to improve their performance, the sooner they find out about their deficiencies, the sooner they can correct them. If employees have reached or exceeded a goal, the sooner they receive positive feedback, the more motivating and rewarding the feedback would be.

- **Share both positive and constructive feedback.**

Feedback should be given when performance fails to meet expectations and when performance exceeds expectations.

- **Provide feedback that is constructive and substantive.**

Without feedback, employees cannot make adjustments in job performance, nor do they receive positive reinforcement for effective job performance. State factual observations, not assumptions or interpretations.

- **Maintain a positive focus.**

If an employee's performance is "Fully Successful" or above, focus on the factors that lead to success. If an employee's performance is less than "Fully Successful," focus on problem solving rather than faultfinding.

- **Give balanced feedback.**

Do not make the common error of glossing over an employee's deficiencies and focusing only on strengths. It is by understanding their weaknesses that employees can take ownership of their performance and their role in the organization. When given the support they need to make improvements in these areas, employees learn to take pride in their work and are willing to take on new challenges with confidence.

- **Discuss performance on an ongoing basis.**

When feedback is provided on a continual basis, it can be an effective tool for engaging performance and avoiding potential performance issues. This is particularly serious in the case of an employee who is performing below the "Fully Successful" level. In this case, it may be necessary to provide additional written criteria on performance expectations and/or schedule recurring performance discussions with the employee. (For more information on dealing with performance issues, see Chapter 8.)

- **Document performance discussions and progress reviews.**

Summarize performance discussions and progress reviews in writing and provide a copy to the employee with the performance plan, both of which serve as valuable points of reference for the supervisor's expectations and the employee's responsibilities.

## PROGRESS DISCUSSIONS AND REVIEWS

Ongoing communication and feedback are essential to a successful performance management program. Progress reviews are initiated by the supervisor and provide an opportunity for a constructive dialogue between supervisors and employees that focuses on performance – what is working well and what are the opportunities for improvement. The goal of progress reviews and other feedback is to ensure that employees understand the importance of their performance goals and are aware of their progress. Without accurate feedback, it is virtually impossible for the employee to know if he or she is meeting job expectations. Multiple progress reviews throughout the appraisal cycle provide opportunities for supervisors and employees to discuss and document any needed adjustments to performance plans.

**At the end of the Progress Review, both supervisor and employee should be clear about:**



- The employee's current performance;
- Performance expectations for the remainder of the appraisal cycle; and
- How the employee's performance will be evaluated.

Understanding how to prepare for and conduct performance discussions leads to productive outcomes. For tip sheets on performance discussions and reviews visit the DoD Performance Management webpage at <https://dodhrinfo.cpms.osd.mil/Directorates/HROPS/Labor-and-Employee-Relations/Pages/Home1.aspx>.

## PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION AND PROGRESS REVIEW PREPARATION FOR EMPLOYEES

Performance discussions are an opportunity for two-way communication between a supervisor and an employee. Employees are encouraged to proactively engage with their supervisor and participate in meaningful performance discussions to foster positive and beneficial outcomes. Following are tips for employees to consider in preparation for progress reviews:

- Review the DoD Core Values: **Leadership, Professionalism, and Technical Knowledge.**
- Periodically review your organizational mission and organization's goals.
- Remain familiar with your performance plan to ensure expectations are being met and progress toward goals is being made.
- Take the opportunity to provide your performance input. The employee input process provides the chance to review and consider accomplishments, challenges, and performance throughout the appraisal cycle from an employee's perspective. Remain positive and open.

- Give constructive suggestions to your supervisor when it applies. When citing an area that needs attention, offer suggestions for improvement. Identify barriers to meeting goals outlined in the performance plan.
- Make sufficient time to prepare for performance discussions and progress reviews. These are your best opportunities to freely discuss your performance and your personal career goals with your supervisor.
- Consider the following questions:
  - What is going well in the job? What do you feel needs more attention?
  - Have any of your key responsibilities changed due to schedule, budget, or other resource changes?
  - What concerns should be addressed with your supervisor?
  - Are there barriers that impede accomplishment of your work?

#### **Listening To and Receiving Feedback - Tips for Supervisors and Employees:**



- Recognize that feedback can be difficult to receive, but be open to what you are hearing.
- Actively listen without comment until the speaker is finished and focus on the words being used.
- Feel free to take notes so you can capture what is being said and refer to them later.
- Ask for specific examples if you want clarification about a specific critique or comment.
- Allow yourself time to process the information and schedule a follow-up meeting if necessary.

**Taking these steps will assist both supervisors and employees to be more prepared for the *Monitoring process* of the appraisal cycle.**

### **PERFORMANCE DISCUSSIONS RELATED TO LESS THAN “FULLY SUCCESSFUL” PERFORMANCE**

The best way for a supervisor to handle less than “Fully Successful” performance is to address issues in a timely manner. If at any time during the appraisal cycle an employee's performance is found to be less than “Fully Successful,” the supervisor must take the necessary steps to remedy the problem. During the *Monitoring* process, performance discussions, progress reviews, and continuous two-way communication are essential to achieving a mutual understanding of performance expectations and to addressing performance issues early. Appropriate actions include formal or informal training, coaching or mentoring, and timely recognition of desired performance levels.



Prior to holding a discussion with an employee regarding less than “Fully Successful” performance, a supervisor should ask:

- What aspects of the employee’s performance are unsatisfactory?
- Does the employee understand performance expectations?
- What obstacles are there to meeting those expectations? Are extenuating circumstances preventing the employee from doing his or her best?

Supervisors should address performance issues by:

- Describing the performance problem(s) observed by comparing the employee’s current performance to expectations.
- Focusing on specific issues that need to be changed and provide specific examples to the employee.
- Keeping track of what the employee is doing right so you can build on their strengths during performance discussions and progress reviews.

More guidance on improving deficient performance is outlined in [Chapter 8](#) of this guide. For tip sheets on how to prepare for and conduct performance discussions and reviews to address deficient performance visit the DoD Performance Management webpage at <https://dodhrinfo.cpms.osd.mil/Directorates/HROPS/Labor-and-Employee-Relations/Pages/Home1.aspx>.

## **TRAINING OR DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Supervisors are responsible for helping their employees succeed. During the *Monitoring* process, coaching and mentoring are both important activities to undertake to help employees maximize their performance, productivity, and growth. Effective coaching and mentoring can improve job effectiveness and efficiency.

Coaching is a one-on-one relationship between the supervisor and an employee in which the supervisor provides specific feedback to maximize the employee’s job performance. Coaching is a short-term engagement primarily focused on helping employees achieve their performance goals during the current performance appraisal cycle. As a coach, supervisors are responsible for identifying any training or resources employees need. Supervisors should also let employees know how they are performing throughout the performance period so employees can adjust their performance as necessary, without having to wait for the final performance appraisal discussion. Coaching is an opportunity to create positive, lasting change.



What is the difference between supervisors who gain their employees' commitment to high performance and those who only settle for compliance with the minimum requirements? Often, the answer is *coaching*. The most effective leaders are not just managers or supervisors – they are coaches who motivate employees to gain new skills, achieve higher levels of performance, improve productivity, and overcome performance difficulties.



Coaching and mentoring should continue throughout all process of the appraisal cycle, not just the *Monitoring* process. Effective supervisors continually review each employee's performance, give ongoing constructive feedback, and encourage dialogue. By doing so, **coaching and mentoring, become a routine part of effective performance management practices.**

Mentoring is a relationship between two employees, who may be inside or outside the Department or organization, in which the mentor focuses on supporting and guiding the mentee throughout his or her career, not just during a specific performance appraisal cycle. Mentors can help mentees identify the training, resources, and relationships they need in the short, intermediate, and long-term to further their careers. A mentoring relationship provides both the mentor and mentee with an opportunity to learn and grow personally and professionally. Mentoring is a positive way of helping newer employees settle in, navigate their way, and understand the organization's culture and professional expectations. Mentoring can foster organizational development and cultural change by communicating the organization's values, vision, and mission. It is also valuable in developing leaders and supervisors because guided practice with an experienced mentor is an effective way to acquire needed skills and competencies.

Another way supervisors may encourage their employees to develop to their maximum potential is by encouraging employees to take advantage of training opportunities. While supervisors have significant influence over formal training, they have even greater impact on informal employee development. Both formal and informal development can take a wide variety of forms:

- On-the-job training provides individualized advice and instruction.
- Mentoring helps employees clarify career goals, understand the organization, analyze strengths and developmental needs, build support networks, and deal with roadblocks.
- Regular team meetings can help focus on sharing knowledge.
- Job rotations and special assignments can challenge employees and broaden their understanding of the organization.

## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Engaged employees provide information and feedback to supervisors whenever possible. Engaged employees are part of a team and are motivated to share responsibility for organizational success.

- Employees share a responsibility for mission accomplishment with the supervisor by:
  - Supporting team cohesion.
  - Understanding the responsibilities of each team member and sharing this understanding amongst the team.
  - Identifying barriers to mission success.
  - Providing a perspective on the team's strengths, weaknesses, and the team's most difficult challenges.
- Engaged employees provide input into how the work gets done and perceptions about the organization's performance through upward feedback by:
  - Understanding the team's long-term work goals.
  - Understanding how the team carries out their shared responsibilities.
  - Sharing in the discovery of strategies to find the best ways to achieve organizational success.
  - Teaching new skills, concepts, processes, or procedures to others.
  - Providing supervisors with constructive feedback.
  - Providing a perspective on organizational strengths and weaknesses in a productive manner.

This collaborative engagement by employees has the potential to increase the effectiveness of the supervisor and the productivity of the work unit. Supervisors who encourage and engage in open feedback and discuss with employees how they plan to use this feedback can increase engagement and team productivity, as employees will feel a sense of ownership in the organization when they see that their input is valued and included in decision-making.

Coaching, mentoring, and engagement involve continuous and meaningful two-way communication, and when used effectively and routinely, these strategies provide the employee with clear performance feedback on his or her strengths and areas requiring development. This means that the annual performance review is not a surprise, but rather a summary of the discussions throughout the performance period.

## CHAPTER 4 - EVALUATING PERFORMANCE

### WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:

- Supervisors are required to provide a record of rating for each employee who has been under an approved and communicated performance plan for at least 90 calendar days during the appraisal cycle.
- Rate employee performance against the elements and standards established in the performance plan.
- Objectively assess employees using fair, credible, and transparent measures.
- Employee input is encouraged as a means for employees to document their accomplishments and demonstrate their contributions to mission success.

### OVERVIEW

Within the context of formal performance appraisal requirements, evaluating performance means rating employee performance against the elements and standards in an employee's performance plan and assigning a rating of record. The rating of record is based on work performed during the appraisal cycle, and has a bearing on various other personnel actions, including performance-based awards, within-grade pay increases, and determining additional retention service credit in a reduction in force (RIF).

A written rating of record must be given to each employee in the final performance appraisal discussion that occurs at the end of the performance period; the final rating of record effective date is June 1. Supervisors are required to rate each performance element based on an approved plan and provide a rating of record for each employee who has been under an approved performance plan for at least 90 calendar days during the appraisal cycle.

## EVALUATING PERFORMANCE

### *Roles & Responsibilities*

#### Supervisors:

- Request and consider employee input as provided.
- Consider obstacles encountered and overcome by the employee.
- Prepare a written narrative and a rating on each performance element on which the employee has had an opportunity to perform.
- Make meaningful distinctions among employees based on performance; foster and reward excellent performance; and timely address performance issues.
- Once the ratings have been approved and finalized, clearly communicate to the employee each performance element rating that has been assigned, the reasons behind each performance rating and the overall rating of record.

## EMPLOYEE INPUT

Employee input provides an employee with an opportunity to submit a written account of their major accomplishments related to the performance elements and associated performance standards provided in their performance plan. The employee can describe how their contributions enabled mission accomplishment. Another element of employee input may be achievements or recognition achieved during the performance period as well as training and developmental courses completed. Employee input does not relieve the supervisor of the responsibility for writing a performance narrative of their employees' contributions. It should serve as a reminder to supervisors about significant accomplishments of their employees and can provide an opportunity for further discussion between the employee and supervisor and about employee performance. In order to effectively portray his or her accomplishments, an employee should:

- Review the organizational mission statement, along with the organization's goals.
- Review the PD and performance plan to examine how elements and standards were met.
- Take the opportunity to review the IDP, if applicable, assess any progress, and consider updating the IDP, as appropriate.
- Highlight contributions and significant achievements accomplished during the appraisal cycle.

## NARRATIVE STATEMENT

A narrative statement is a written appraisal or summary by the supervisor that accurately details the employee's significant performance achievement(s) or result(s) and observable behaviors relative to the performance elements and standards for the appraisal cycle. It provides the supervisor an opportunity to fully state the employee's achievements and abilities

## EVALUATING PERFORMANCE

### EMPLOYEES

### *Roles & Responsibilities*

**Participation in the *Evaluating Performance* process is strongly encouraged by:**

- Providing employee input.
- Addressing each performance element.
- Restating the understanding of their performance elements.
- Highlighting all of the most significant achievements for the appraisal cycle by including those related directly and indirectly to the performance elements.
- Making the connection between what was accomplished, what the result was, and how it impacted the organization.
- Annotating what challenges were faced, how they were resolved, and how one might approach similar issues in the future.

or address specific performance deficiencies. The narrative statement justifies how an employee's ratings are achieved.

Each performance element that is evaluated at the "Outstanding" or "Unacceptable" level must be accompanied by a narrative justification as to the employee's accomplishment or lack of accomplishment. While a narrative statement is not required for elements rated at the "Fully Successful" level, supervisors are highly encouraged to use the narrative statement as another means of providing feedback, to provide a written record of the employee's accomplishments, and to develop and motivate employees. Additionally, narrative statements may be utilized in local awards programs, thereby increasing their value as a mechanism for recognizing employee accomplishments.

For information on completing narrative statements within the DoD automated performance appraisal tool (MyPerformance), please refer to the *MyPerformance User Guide* at <https://dodhrinfo.cpms.osd.mil/Directorates/HROPS/Labor-and-Employee-Relations/Pages/Home1.aspx>.

## PERFORMANCE SUMMARY LEVELS

The DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program applies the following performance summary levels: "Outstanding" – 5, "Fully Successful" – 3, and "Unacceptable" – 1.

### ***"Outstanding"***

- The quality and quantity of the employee's work ***substantially*** exceeds the standard with minimal room for improvement.
- The accuracy, thoroughness, and timeliness of the employee's work on this element are exceptionally reliable.
- Application of technical knowledge and skills goes well beyond that expected for the position.
- The employee consistently and significantly improves the work processes and products for which he or she is responsible.
- The employee's adherence to procedures and formats, as well as suggestions provided for improvement in these areas increases the employee's value to the organization and overall mission accomplishment.
- Work products rarely require even minor revisions.
- The employee seeks additional work or special assignments at increasing levels of difficulty.

***“Fully Successful”***

- The quality and quantity of the employee’s work fully meets the requirements of the performance element.
- Major revisions are normally not necessary; most work only requires minor revision.
- Projects are completed accurately, thoroughly, and timely.
- Technical skills and knowledge are applied effectively to specific job tasks.
- The employee adheres to procedures and format requirements.
- Routine problems associated with completing assignments are resolved with minimum supervision.

***“Unacceptable”***

- The quality, quantity, and timeliness of the work are unsatisfactory.
- Work products must be continually revised and edited; instructions must be reiterated.
- The employee is unable to work reliably and independently without ongoing supervision.
- Projects are incomplete or “Unacceptable”.
- The employee fails to prioritize and apply routine knowledge and skills expected for this position, contributing to inadequate work products.
- Work is incomplete or unacceptably late because of the employee’s lack of realistic or logical planning, compounded by their lack of attention to basic priorities or details.
- The employee fails or is unable to adapt to changes in priorities, procedures, or program directions.

**DERIVING AND ASSIGNING A RATING OF RECORD**

The supervisor appraises each employee’s performance based on a comparison of actual performance with the established elements and standards in the employee’s performance plan. The overall rating of record is derived from averaging the ratings of the employee’s performance elements.

**Table 2. Deriving the Rating of Record**

Summary Level	Summary Level Criteria
Outstanding	The average score of all element ratings is 4.3 or greater, resulting in a rating of record that is a '5' – "Outstanding"
Fully Successful	The average score of all element ratings is less than 4.3, with no element rated a '1' - "Unacceptable", resulting in a rating of record that is a '3' – "Fully Successful"
Unacceptable	Any element rated '1' - "Unacceptable"

It is important to note:

- Failure ("Unacceptable") on any one element results in an overall rating of "Unacceptable".
- An "Unacceptable" rating of record must be reviewed and approved by a higher-level reviewer (HLR).
- An overall rating of record can only be calculated using performance elements that have been rated.

## FINAL PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL DISCUSSION

The final performance appraisal discussion should be a culmination of the continuous feedback that occurred throughout the performance period. In other words, there should be no surprises in the final performance appraisal discussion. During this meeting, supervisors should discuss with employees their employee input, supervisor's performance narrative, and rationale for the evaluation given. If a higher level review of final ratings is required, the final rating can be communicated to the employee after the HLR. If an HLR is not required, the supervisor may still take time to establish the final performance rating and communicate it to the employee in a follow on discussion.



Each employee should receive a meaningful and accurate appraisal. The success of the performance appraisal process depends on the supervisor's willingness to complete a constructive and objective appraisal and on the employee's willingness to respond to constructive suggestions and to work with the supervisor to reach future goals.



## COMMUNICATING THE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

All ratings of record must be reviewed, and where required, approved by the HLR, prior to communicating the final appraisal to the employee. The supervisor should schedule the meeting; inform the employee of the purpose, time, and location; and allow sufficient, uninterrupted time for each employee. Supervisors and employees should discuss the following when communicating the performance appraisal:

- The employee's input as it relates to the performance elements and standards;
- The challenges the employee faced and how external factors may have impacted performance;
- The performance plan and compare the employee's accomplishments and contributions as they relate to organizational goals and mission; and
- Any needed developmental opportunities or training programs that may assist the employee with short- or long-term goals.

## RESOLVING DISAGREEMENTS OVER THE RATING OF RECORD

An employee may not necessarily agree with the rating of record, but supervisors should strive to help the employee understand how the rating was determined. Additionally, an employee's acknowledgment or signature on the final appraisal does not indicate agreement with the rating of record, and the rating of record is official even if the employee does not acknowledge it in the MyPerformance automated tool or sign it.

When possible, the employee and supervisor should informally attempt to resolve any disagreements about the rating of record. If they cannot, non-bargaining unit employees may raise issues related to the performance appraisal process through the administrative grievance system (AGS) while bargaining unit employees must use the negotiated grievance procedure (NGP) unless performance appraisals have been excluded from the NGP. Employees may also have the right to appeal performance-based actions under Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §432 and §752 to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). Bargaining unit employees may use the NGP or the statutory procedures, but not both.

## CHAPTER 5 - RECOGNIZING AND REWARDING PERFORMANCE

### WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:

- Recognizing and rewarding employees should occur throughout the performance appraisal cycle for their performance and to acknowledge contributions to the agency's mission.
- Recognition and rewards programs should be fair, credible, and transparent.
- Recognition and rewards motivate employee performance and lead to organizational mission success.
- Achievements or contributions should be significant in nature, related to organizational mission and goals, and exceed expectations to qualify for formal recognition.
- Supervisors and employees should be aware of the types of recognition and rewards available.

### OVERVIEW

Supervisors influence employee engagement and strengthen performance by recognizing and rewarding employees for their contributions. Employees who understand the connection between effort and outcomes are more likely to perform at a higher level than employees for whom the connection is unclear. Awards acknowledge, motivate, and reward achievements or contributions, and are an integral part of performance management. It is important to recognize good performance and achievements throughout the appraisal cycle as they occur, preferably, as closely as possible to the act(s) being recognized. Detailed information and guidance on rewarding performance may be found in [DoDI 1400.25-V451, "DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Awards"](#) and Component specific policy and guidance.

### DoD RECOGNITION AND REWARD PROGRAM

The DoD recognition and rewards program allows the flexibility to create Component-level programs to suit the organizational differences across the Department. The following principles embody the DoD Component recognition and reward programs:

- The granting of awards is based on merit and contribution to the mission accomplishment, is significant in nature, and goes above and beyond expectations.
- Clear distinctions are made for different levels of performance and contribution.
- Supervisors recognize similarly-situated employees with like performance and contribution and reward them in a consistent manner.

- Programs are routinely assessed to ensure achievement of organizational goals are aligned with business-based criteria and are modified as necessary.
- Transparency is built into all steps of the process by communicating the clearly defined procedures and criteria for the available forms of recognition and rewards.



Executives, managers, supervisors, human resources professionals, and employees should receive training and resources on recognition and reward programs, including available forms of recognition and an understanding of how to use recognition to acknowledge and motivate employees.

### **ACHIEVABLE RECOGNITION AND REWARD**

Being recognized and rewarded should be achievable for all employees—not just the very top performers and not just for the most visible contributions. If all employees believe they are capable of receiving some type of recognition or reward, and the process is fair, credible, and transparent, the program will meet its goals of motivating performance. Additionally, supervisors should be trained in how to use the recognition and rewards program in accordance with procedures in place to grant recognition and rewards. It is important that recognition and rewards be granted in a timely manner—ideally, immediately after the recognizable action. Otherwise, the reward can lose its relevance, and employees will not have a clear sense of what behavior or accomplishment is rewarded. Honorary awards and time-off awards should be used throughout the appraisal cycle.



Non-monetary forms of recognition have been shown to be highly effective. Current DoD policy allows supervisors the flexibility and freedom to recognize employees using a variety of non-monetary forms of recognition. Recognition, honorary awards, and time off awards should be used throughout the appraisal cycle.

Supervisors are encouraged to use non-monetary awards, especially when funds for monetary awards are limited and restricted. Examples of non-monetary awards include time off, tokens of appreciation (such as plaques), acknowledgement at staff meeting, or a certificate of appreciation, etc. These should be administered in accordance with legal authorities and Department and Component regulations.

## CHAPTER 6 - PERSONNEL ACTIONS

### WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:

- Employee performance can have either positive or negative impact.
- Effective performance management practices build on the understanding that behavior is influenced by both positive and negative outcomes.
- Positive results for high performance include recognition and rewards, promotions, within-grade-increases, and other performance-based actions.
- Effects of performance issues include counseling, reassignment, reduction in grade, or removal of the employee.

### OVERVIEW

The DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program links employee recognition and rewards with other performance-based actions to performance appraisals for employees. The rating of record has a bearing on various other personnel actions, such as promotions, granting within-grade pay increases, quality step increases and determining additional retention service credit in a RIF. This chapter covers the link between ratings of record and how they may be used as a basis for certain other personnel actions. One of the basic concepts of Federal employment is that personnel decisions are based on merit. Appropriate consideration must be given to each employee's performance when making decisions on personnel actions.

### PROMOTION

In considering an employee for promotion under competitive procedures, due weight will be given to past performance appraisals and present performance. In order to be noncompetitively promoted to a higher grade in a career ladder or equivalent program, an employee must have a current rating of record of "Fully Successful" or better, in addition to meeting other prescribed requirements. However, the fact that an employee is rated as "Fully Successful" or higher at the time they are eligible for a promotion does not mean a promotion is automatic.

### WITHIN-GRADE INCREASES (WGI)

A Within Grade Increase (WGI) – also referred to as a periodic step increase or within range increase - is intended to recognize "Fully Successful" job performance by advancing employees to the next step in their grade. Whereby increasing their value in the organization and their

salary. A WGI is not an entitlement; a supervisor may approve, delay or deny a WGI based on employee performance. When considering delaying or denying a WGI based on poor performance, supervisors should contact their servicing Human Resources or Labor and Employee Relations Office. Additional information and guidance on WGI Delay or Denial procedures is outlined in [Chapter 8](#).

### **QUALITY STEP INCREASES (QSI)**

A Quality Step Increase (QSI) is intended to provide appropriate incentive and recognition for demonstrated excellence in performance by granting an accelerated periodic step increase with the expectation that the exceptional performance will continue into the future. QSIs are based on a level of exceptional, high-quality, sustained performance, examples include:

- The quality and quantity of the employee's work substantially exceed the "Fully Successful" standard with minimal room for improvement.
- The accuracy and thoroughness of the employee's work on his or her elements are consistent and exceptionally reliable. Work products rarely require even minor corrections.
- Application of technical knowledge and skills goes beyond that expected for the position.
- The employee significantly improves work processes and products for which they are responsible.
- The employee's adherence to procedures and formats, as well as suggestions made for improvement in these areas, increases the employee's value to the organization.
- The employee's performance demonstrates that he or she understands the organization's overall mission as it relates to his or her individual work.
- The employee develops contingency plans to handle potential problems and quickly adapts to new priorities and changes in procedures without losing sight of long-term work goals.
- The employee's planning and adaptability result in early or timely completion of work under all but the most extraordinary circumstances.
- Complex issues are brought to the supervisor's attention; however, the employee handles most problems routinely and with exceptional skill.
- The employee's oral and written expression is exceptionally clear and effective, improves cooperation among participants in the workplace, and prevents misunderstandings.
- Complicated or controversial subjects are presented or explained effectively to a variety of audiences so that desired outcomes are achieved.

**To be eligible for a QSI, an employee must:**

- Currently be paid below step 10 of his or her grade;
- Have been rated “Outstanding” (or the highest level available if covered by another performance program) on their most recent rating of record;
- Have demonstrated sustained performance of exceptional, high quality; and
- Have not received a QSI (or QSI-equivalent under a personnel system other than the General Schedule) within the preceding 52 consecutive calendar weeks.

**PROBATIONARY/TRIAL PERIOD**

New employees are carefully observed during the probationary/trial period to determine whether their conduct and performance on the job is as expected to become career Federal employees. These performance discussions with employees should take place at strategic points of their probationary period so that employees understand what performance standards are required for retention in the Agency. Supervisors should provide at least one progress review to ensure that these individuals have adequately demonstrated their qualifications and fitness for the position, the Department, and the civil service. The effectiveness of the probationary/trial period is enhanced when action is taken to prevent employees who perform below the “Fully Successful” level from becoming career Federal employees. Without proper use of the probationary/trial period to make such an appraisal, the probationary period becomes meaningless.

If it is determined that a probationary employee is “Unacceptable” in either performance or conduct, he or she may be terminated at any time during the probationary period, which must be effective prior to the end of the probationary period. For supervisors, the probationary/trial period should always be considered a key period for addressing and resolving performance issues. The lapse of a probationary/trial period without proper appraisal of a new employee’s performance may result in future performance problems. Employees should take every opportunity to communicate to their supervisor any barriers to “Fully Successful” performance during the probationary/trial period.



Employees’ performance during the probationary/trial period usually serves as a good indicator of how well they will perform throughout their career. Supervisors should provide periodic progress discussions and at least one progress review to ensure probationers have adequately demonstrated their qualifications and fitness for the position, the Department, and the civil service. The probationary/trial period should always be considered a key period for addressing and resolving performance issues.

## **PROBATIONARY PERIOD FOR SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS**

Individuals serving a supervisory or managerial probationary period should be observed to determine whether they perform supervisory or managerial duties in a “Fully Successful” manner. New supervisors and managers who do not successfully complete the probationary period may be returned to a position of the same grade and pay as previously held. Proper use of coaching and mentoring during this period can ensure the supervisory employee has fully demonstrated the qualifications and skills necessary for the supervisory or managerial position. Emphasis on the importance of supervisory duties is reflected by the DoDI V431 requirement for supervisory performance elements to equal or exceed non-supervisory performance elements. Support should be provided to new supervisors in order to fulfill their supervisory role during the probationary period and beyond.

The New Beginnings CAC enabled webpage (<https://dodhrinfo.cpms.osd.mil/New-Beginnings/Pages/Home1.aspx>) offers additional tools and resources such as: the Hiring Managers Toolkit and the DoD new Supervisor Training requirements Memorandum.



## CHAPTER 7 - SPECIALLY-SITUATED EMPLOYEES

### WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:

- Employees performing under an approved plan for 90 calendar days are eligible for a rating of record.
- Supervisors of record for detailed and matrixed employees should coordinate and continuously communicate with the supervisor of the detail or the on-site supervisor.

### OVERVIEW

There are a number of special circumstances that may affect an employee's eligibility for a performance rating. However, all employees who perform work under an approved performance plan for at least 90 calendar days will be rated based on the period of **demonstrated** performance and must receive a rating of record. This chapter outlines procedures for addressing employee performance for employees who are detailed, matrixed, on leave without pay (LWOP), transferred, and for other specially-situated employees. If unsure of the appropriate course of action for any specially-situated employee, contact the servicing Human Resources Office for further guidance and assistance.

### EMPLOYEES ON DETAIL

A detailed employee is an employee on a temporary assignment to a different position or set of duties for a specified period and is expected to return to his or her permanent position of record at the end of the assignment. When employees are detailed to another supervisor for less than 90 calendar days, it remains the responsibility of the supervisor of record (home supervisor) to develop and discuss a performance plan for that employee and complete the rating of record under the normal appraisal cycle. The supervisor of record is responsible for conferring with the supervisor of the detail to obtain any input necessary to assess the employee's performance. It is important that every employee's performance plan accurately represents the work that is expected of that employee during the appraisal cycle.

Employees who are detailed for 90 calendar days or more must have a written performance plan, which includes written narrative statements (not a numerical rating) of the employee's performance on the elements and standards from the supervisor of the detail, which reflects work assignments and goals for the detailed position.

## MATRIXED EMPLOYEES

A matrixed employee is an employee assigned to an organization or location apart from his or her permanent supervisor/organization of record and provides support to the on-site organization. The matrixed employee generally reports to the on-site manager/supervisor for day-to-day operations, but remains assigned to his or her permanent position of record and reports to his or her permanent supervisor of record for functional responsibilities.

When employees are matrixed to another organization, it remains the responsibility of the permanent supervisor of record to develop and discuss a performance plan for that employee and complete the rating of record. It is important that every employee's performance plan accurately represents the work that is expected of that employee during the appraisal cycle. The supervisor of record is responsible for conferring with the supervisor of the detail or on-site supervisor of the matrix assignment to determine if any additional performance elements or standards need to be included in the performance plan and to obtain any input necessary to assess the employee's performance.

Supervisors of Record (*i.e.*, Rating Officials) for detailed or matrixed employees are responsible for:

- Conferring with the detail or matrix on-site supervisor to determine if any additional performance elements and standards, related to the duties of the position, need to be added to the employee's performance plan.
- Offering the employee an opportunity to provide input to any additional performance elements or standards.
- Requesting written narrative statements (not a numerical rating) of the employee's performance on the elements and standards relative to the detail or matrix assignment from the supervisor of the detail or on-site supervisor.
- Retaining employee input received for a detailed or matrixed employee as part of the appraisal documentation in the Employee Performance File.
- Completing the steps in the performance appraisal cycle to include progress reviews and final rating of record.
- Consulting with the detail or on-site matrix supervisor or others, as appropriate, for feedback to be considered in appraising the employee's performance on the elements and standards relative to the position to which the employee was detailed or matrixed.

Supervisors of detailed or matrixed employees are responsible for:

- Conferring with the supervisor of record to provide input on any additional performance elements or standards related to the project(s) that need to be added to the employee's performance plan.
- Providing a written narrative summary (not a numerical rating) to the supervisor of record to be considered in evaluating the employee's performance.
- Keeping the supervisor of record aware of any performance issues and providing input to use during performance discussions.
- Providing continuous feedback and encouraging two-way communication with the detailed or matrixed employee.

### **EMPLOYEES PERFORMING REPRESENTATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

When an employee is engaged in union representation, time spent performing union representation does not constitute 'work of the agency', and does not count toward the minimum period of performance of 90 calendar days under an approved performance plan. If an employee performs agency work to meet the 90 calendar day requirement under an approved performance plan, employee is eligible to receive a rating.

### **EXTENDED ABSENCE**

The length and dates of a period of LWOP, extended paid leave, or sabbatical, are significant when determining employee eligibility for a rating of record. If an employee on LWOP or extended absence worked under an approved performance plan for at least 90 calendar days during the appraisal cycle, the employee is eligible for a rating. However, if an employee does not meet the 90 calendar day requirement, then he or she is not eligible to receive a rating. This guidance should be applied to any employee on extended absence for reasons including, but not limited to, workers' compensation, LWOP to follow Head of Household (Permanent Change of Station), Long-term training, or LWOP as would be appropriate under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

### **OUT-OF-CYCLE APPRAISALS**

Ratings are normally given at the end of the appraisal cycle. However, there are instances when a rating must be given outside of the normal appraisal cycle. Out-of-cycle ratings are used when:

- A supervisor has addressed performance problems with the employee, and the employee's performance has further deteriorated to "Unacceptable;"

- An employee's performance improves for a minimum of 90 calendar days following the employee's receipt of an "Unacceptable" performance rating;
- The current rating of record (e.g., "Fully Successful" or higher) does not support the personnel action under consideration (e.g., WGI denial/delay); or
- A supervisor has denied a WGI, and the employee has performed at an acceptable level of competence for a minimum of 90 calendar days.

### **EMPLOYEES WHO TRANSFER OR SUPERVISORS WHO LEAVE DURING THE APPRAISAL CYCLE**

The length of time employees serve under an approved performance plan determines whether a narrative statement or rating of record is required when an employee transfers or a supervisor leaves the organization.

- A narrative statement is required when an employee has performed under an approved performance plan for at least 90 calendar days and there are more than 90 calendar days left in the appraisal cycle. This narrative statement will be considered by the incoming supervisor.
- A rating of record is required when an employee has performed under an approved performance plan for 90 calendar days or more and the employee or supervisor leaves the organization with fewer than 90 calendar days remaining in the appraisal cycle. If circumstances preclude the departing supervisor from carrying out this responsibility, the HLR may serve as the rating official, subject to local policy.

## CHAPTER 8 - ADDRESSING PERFORMANCE ISSUES

### WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:

- Most performance problems can be resolved through effective communication between supervisors and their employees.
- Addressing performance issues early has a positive effect throughout the organizational unit.
- Employees have primary responsibility for improving performance.
- Supervisors play an essential role in improving deficient performance.
- Supervisors should not wait until repeated failures before taking remedial action. It is easier to rectify one error than the accumulated effect of many mistakes.
- Encourage employee input in performance discussions. Obtain employee recommendations for improvements to ensure a similar problem does not occur again.

### OVERVIEW

Dealing with performance issues is a challenge for any supervisor, yet it is a key supervisory responsibility. Effective and engaged supervisors keep employees informed of their performance on a continuous basis in order to minimize instances where deficiencies become serious performance problems. This chapter covers courses of action that may be taken at any time during the appraisal cycle when deficiencies do occur.

Dealing with performance issues effectively means, recognizing employees' training needs early, identifying deficiencies that can be corrected, and providing the most effective assistance. Although informal developmental strategies may cost very little, they have potentially big payoffs in terms of improved individual performance and organizational productivity.

### IMPROVING DEFICIENT PERFORMANCE

#### Supervisors:

#### *Roles & Responsibilities*

- Communicate clear performance standards and expectations to employees early and often.
- Provide constructive feedback on performance.
- Provide effective assistance, applicable training, and coaching and mentoring.
- Engaging in the above key strategies early in the process can prevent a small issue from snowballing into a performance deficiency that negatively impacts organizational performance.

## COMMUNICATING EXPECTATIONS AND PERFORMANCE DEFICIENCIES

Through continuous monitoring and feedback, supervisors may identify work that does not meet performance expectations. In these instances, the supervisor should engage the employee to ensure both parties have a shared understanding of the performance expectations. Continuous constructive, timely, and meaningful dialogue assists in identifying and reducing instances of performance deficiencies and prevents issues from becoming serious performance problems.

Although most employees work hard and do their jobs well, there may be times when supervisors must counsel an employee whose job performance is “Unacceptable”. Supervisors should address performance issues as soon as there is a problem; do not wait until a scheduled progress review or the final performance appraisal discussion. Performance issues rarely correct themselves without action.

When counseling or feedback do not resolve the performance deficiencies, contact your servicing Human Resources Office for further assistance and specific guidance on how to address deficient performance.

## IMPROVING DEFICIENT PERFORMANCE

### *Roles & Responsibilities*

#### Employees:

- Ask clarifying questions.
- Ask for specific examples of “Fully Successful” performance.
- Request additional job-related training or assistance.
- Adhere to responsibilities outlined in the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) document; actively seek assistance when needed.



The purpose of counseling is to let employees with performance issues know that their performance is not meeting expectations and to help them raise their performance to the expected level. Counseling aims to assist, not punish, the employee.

## ADDRESSING AND RESOLVING PERFORMANCE DEFICIENCIES

If, during the appraisal cycle, a supervisor becomes aware that an employee is performing at a less than “Fully Successful” level, which means the employee is at risk of being assessed at an “Unacceptable” level in one or more elements, there are several actions a supervisor should take to address the deficiency as soon as it is noted:



- Make it clear to the employee that his or her current performance is “Unacceptable” and provide specific examples of work that has not met expectations, as well as examples of work that the employee has produced that does meet expectations.
- Provide clear guidance as to what is needed in order for the employee to improve performance and provide ideas of where the employee may go to obtain additional assistance or training, if applicable.
- Tell the employee what type(s) of assistance is available to help the employee meet expectations.
- More than one progress review may be necessary before the employee is able to demonstrate “Fully Successful” performance.

### **PROVIDING AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE**

If, despite the preventive steps taken, an employee’s performance is “Unacceptable” in one or more elements, the supervisor should provide the employee with a formal opportunity to demonstrate “Fully Successful” performance. As part of the performance improvement plan (PIP), training and development may also become an essential component of demonstrating assistance to employees who are not meeting performance requirements. Supervisors should contact the servicing Human Resources Office for assistance as soon as problems with an employee’s performance develop.

The PIP is a tool to provide struggling employees the opportunity to succeed while still holding them accountable for past performance. The PIP clarifies the work performance that needs improvement and how to improve. This opportunity period should represent a genuine effort on management’s part to assist an employee based on that employee’s deficiencies. In the PIP document, the supervisor must provide a written description of the deficient performance and specific instances of “Unacceptable” performance. The PIP should:

- Identify the element(s) in which performance is deficient and provide a description of the “Unacceptable” performance.
- Specify what the employee must do in order to demonstrate “Fully Successful” performance (i.e., clear detail of what is expected from the employee and how management will measure performance).
- Indicate to the employee the time allowed for the opportunity to improve.
- Explain what management will provide to assist the employee; such as indicating the point of contact who will be responsible for helping the employee through the performance

improvement period; and indicate how often the point of contact will meet with the employee. (The point of contact tasked with guiding the employee is often the supervisor, but it could be a team leader, co-worker, or other appropriate person.)

- Explain to the employee that if he or she has questions or does not understand something, the employee has the responsibility to notify the supervisor, team leader, or other appropriate person and proactively ask for help.
- Offer assistance to the employee to improve performance. Assistance may include but is not limited to closer supervision and counseling, personal demonstration, supervisory or peer coaching, frequent reporting, special assignments, and on-the-job training, if applicable.
- Specify the possible consequences of failure to raise performance to the “Fully Successful” level during the opportunity period.

It is vital that supervisors not only follow the PIP, but also continuously evaluate other opportunities to assist and support the employee. Look for opportunities throughout the improvement period to help the employee succeed and achieve mission goals rather than passively monitor employee performance. Document the actions management has taken to comply with the PIP, the employee’s performance, his or her progress, and continued deficiencies, if applicable. The PIP is a formal commitment from the supervisor to help the employee improve his or her performance. Once an employee has been afforded a reasonable opportunity to demonstrate performance at the “Fully Successful” level, the supervisor may propose an adverse action if the employee’s performance during or following the opportunity to demonstrate “Fully Successful” performance remains “Unacceptable” in one or more of the elements for which the employee was afforded opportunity to demonstrate “Fully Successful” performance.

### **WITHIN GRADE INCREASE (WGI) DELAY OR DENIAL**

A Within Grade Increase (WGI) – also referred to as a periodic step increase or within range increase - is intended to recognize “Fully Successful” job performance by advancing employees to the next step in their grade. Whereby increasing their value in the organization and their salary. Supervisors often deal with delaying or denying a WGI while assisting an employee in improving performance or in the process of taking a performance-based action. Supervisors should be aware of the process required to delay or deny a WGI when an employee's performance is not at the “Fully Successful” or “Outstanding” level. The situations in which this applies include:

- When the rating of record is "Unacceptable";

- When the employee failed to demonstrate “Fully Successful” performance during the PIP; or
- When the most recent rating of record was “Fully Successful”, but performance has since deteriorated to less than “Fully Successful” (Note: The supervisor must first issue an out-of-cycle rating to formally reflect the “Unacceptable” rating of record to support withholding or denying the WGI).

After a WGI has been withheld, if the supervisor determines the employee has demonstrated sustained “Fully Successful” performance for a minimum of 90 calendar days, the supervisor may prepare a new rating of record for the employee and grant the WGI in accordance with 5 CFR §531.411. When considering delaying or denying a WGI based on poor performance, supervisors should contact their servicing Human Resources or Labor and Employee Relations Office.

### **REASSIGNMENT, DEMOTION, OR REMOVAL BASED ON “UNACCEPTABLE” PERFORMANCE**

The culture of a high-performing organization is one that fosters employee engagement and personal accountability in maintaining high performance. However, there are times when employee performance falls below the “Fully Successful” level. Supervisors should address declining performance as it occurs to prevent performance problems from worsening. Some performance issues cannot be avoided and where the employee’s performance is at an “Unacceptable” level and the employee has been provided an opportunity to demonstrate “Fully Successful” performance ([Performance Improvement Period \(PIP\)](#)), the employee may be reassigned, reduced in grade, or removed from Federal service. **Chapter 8, [Improving Deficient Performance](#)**, of this guide prescribes procedures for taking actions based on “Unacceptable” performance.

## CHAPTER 9 - MyPERFORMANCE

MyPerformance is the only automated appraisal tool authorized for use in administering and documenting activities under the Performance Management and Appraisal Program. The tool provides a comprehensive automated platform to create, review, and approve performance plans, assign ratings, as well as document changes to: performance plans, progress reviews, employee input, and performance narratives. Information housed in MyPerformance will populate the Department of Defense Performance Plan, Progress Review and Rating Form, *DD Form 2906*. Supervisors and employees have important roles throughout the performance period facilitated by MyPerformance as summarized in the chart below.

**Table 3. MyPerformance Roles for Supervisors and Employees**

Phase	Manager/Supervisor	Employee
<b>Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document employee and position information.</li> <li>• Initiate the performance plan process.</li> <li>• Set expectations by documenting performance elements and associated standards for employee and supervisor.</li> <li>• Coordinate the performance plan for approval.</li> <li>• Verify accuracy of the PD.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verify employee and position information.</li> <li>• May initiate the performance plan process.</li> <li>• Participate in establishing the performance plan, setting performance elements, and associated standards.</li> <li>• Acknowledge receipt of the performance plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document observed employee accomplishments during progress reviews.</li> <li>• Update, add, or delete performance elements, as required.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document accomplishments for each performance element via employee input.</li> <li>• Suggest changes to performance elements as appropriate.</li> <li>• Acknowledge progress reviews.</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document employee performance appraisal.</li> <li>• Coordinate the approved final rating.</li> <li>• Document the communication of the rating to the employee.</li> <li>• Request employee input.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete and submits input.</li> <li>• Document performance discussion with manager/supervisor.</li> <li>• Acknowledge receipt of performance appraisal.</li> </ul>

The DoD Components will develop processes for completing appraisals, using DD Form 2906, where supervisors or employees do not have computer access. Please refer to the *MyPerformance User Guide* for further instructions on the use of the automated tool.

## **APPENDIX A: ALIGNING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE PLANS WITH ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS**

### **STEP 1 - Look at the Overall Picture**

Review organizational goals and performance measures already available. Determine which goals and measures the employee's work unit can affect.

### **STEP 2 - Determine Work Unit Accomplishments Using Any or All of the Following Methods**

- **METHOD A: A Goal Cascading Method.** Cascade the agency's goals to the work unit level. Determine the work unit's accomplishment(s) that directly affect the organization's goals.
- **METHOD B: A Customer-Focused Method.** Determine the product(s) or service(s) that the work unit provides to its customers.
- **METHOD C: A Work Flow Charting Method.** Develop a work flow chart for the work unit, establishing key steps(s) in the work process.

### **STEP 3 - Determine Individual Accomplishments That Support Work Unit Goals**

Elements that address individual performance can be identified using a role-results matrix. List the work unit accomplishments across the top of the matrix. List each member of the work unit or each job position down the left side of the matrix. In each cell, list the accomplishment (*i.e.*, performance element) that the member must produce or perform to support the work unit accomplishment. All performance elements should be either quantifiable or verifiable.

### **STEP 4 - Convert Expected Accomplishments into Performance Elements, Indicating Type and Priority**

All employees must have at least one critical element. Critical elements must address individual performance only.

### **STEP 5 - Determine Work Unit and Individual Measures**

For each element, determine which general measures (*i.e.*, quantity, quality, timeliness, or cost-effectiveness) are important. Determine how to measure the quantity, quality, timeliness, and/or cost-effectiveness for the element. If an accomplishment can be measured with numbers, determine the unit of measurement to be used. If performance can only be described (*i.e.*, observed and verified), clarify who would appraise the work and what factors to identify.

### **STEP 6 - Develop Work Unit and Individual Standards**

A "Fully Successful" standard must be established for each performance element. If the measure for the element is numeric, determine the range of numbers that would represent "Fully Successful" performance. Establish a range of performance above which special recognition may be warranted and below which a performance problem exists.



If the measure for the element is descriptive, determine what the appraiser would see or report that would verify that performance is “Fully Successful.” Determine what exceeding expectations would look like for each performance element. Describe what the appraiser would see happening when expectations are exceeded.

### **STEP 7 - Determine How to Monitor Performance**

Determine what data to collect for each performance element, which source the data should come from, and whether to collect all the data or just a sample. Determine when to collect the data, who should collect it, and who should receive it. Review existing reports for possible use as feedback reports. Create feedback tables or graphs where appropriate or necessary. Try to design feedback processes that give employees feedback automatically.

### **STEP 8 - Check the Performance Plan Using the Following Guidelines**

- Are the critical elements truly critical? Failure on a critical element results in a determination that the employee’s overall performance is “Unacceptable”.
- Is the range of “Fully Successful” performance clear? Performance expectations should be quantifiable, observable, and/or verifiable.
- Are the standards attainable and expectations reasonable? Do the standards allow for some margin of error?
- Are the standards challenging? Does the work unit or employee need to exert a reasonable amount of effort to reach a “Fully Successful” performance level?
- Are the standards fair? Are they comparable to expectations for other employees in similar positions?
- Are the standards applicable? Can the appraiser(s) use the standards to appraise performance? Can the appraiser(s) manage the data collected through the measurement process?
- Are the elements and standards flexible? Elements and standards should be able to be adapted readily to changes in resources or mission.
- Is the “Fully Successful” standard surpassable? Is it possible for a work unit’s or an employee’s performance to exceed it?
- Work units and employees should understand what is required.

The Office of Personnel Management’s handbook, “A Handbook for Measuring Employee Performance: Aligning Employee Performance Plans with Organizational Goals,” is available at [https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/performance-management/measuring/employee\\_performance\\_handbook.pdf](https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/performance-management/measuring/employee_performance_handbook.pdf).

## **GLOSSARY: DEFINITIONS.**

These terms and their definitions are for the purposes of this toolkit.

**appraisal.** The process by which performance is reviewed and evaluated.

**appraisal cycle.** A 1-year period (April 1 – March 31) established by the DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program in which an employee's performance will normally be reviewed, and a rating of record will be assigned.

**approved performance plan.** A performance plan written, reviewed, and approved in accordance with DoD Component procedures, which communicates expectations and requirements of employee performance for the appraisal cycle.

**detail.** A temporary assignment to a different position or a set of duties for a specified period. The employee is expected to return to his or her permanent position of record at the end of the assignment.

**element.** A type of performance element in which a 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 "Unacceptable". All elements are critical and only used to measure individual performance.

**employee performance file.** A record containing copies of employees' performance ratings of record, including the performance plans on which the ratings are based. It also includes all performance-related records, such as forms or other documents, maintained as a system of records within the meaning Section 552a of Title 5, U.S.C., also known as the "Privacy Act of 1974."

**HLR.** A senior-level management official, normally above the level of a rating official.

**matrixed employee.** An employee hosted by an organization at a location apart from his or her permanent supervisor or organization of record and who is performing work for his or her organization of record. The employee may receive taskings from the host organization but he or she remains under the authority, direction, and control of his or her organization of record.

**minimum period of performance.** The minimum appraisal cycle for the DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program is 90 calendar days on an approved performance plan.

**MyPerformance.** The DoD automated appraisal tool authorized for use by both supervisors and employees to document the performance management process of the DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program.

**opportunity period to demonstrate acceptable performance.** A reasonable period for the employee whose performance has been determined to be “Unacceptable” in one or more elements to demonstrate acceptable performance in the element(s) at issue.

**performance.** Accomplishment of work assignments or responsibilities.

**performance discussion.** Joint communication between the supervisor and employee about the employee’s work performance and its link to organizational effectiveness. The discussions may consist of verbal feedback sessions or formal progress reviews.

**performance element rating.** The written, or otherwise recorded, appraisal of performance compared to the performance standards for each element on which there has been an opportunity to perform for the minimum period of performance.

**performance management.** The integrated process by which an agency involves its employees in improving organizational effectiveness in the accomplishment of agency mission and strategic goals. Performance management consists of: performance planning, monitoring employee performance, evaluating employee performance, and recognizing and rewarding employee performance.

**performance plan.** All of the written, or otherwise recorded, performance elements and standards that set expected performance. A plan must include performance elements and standards.

**performance rating level (also known as “summary level”).** An ordered category of performance from Level 1 through Level 5, with Level 1 as the lowest and Level 5 as the highest. Level 1 is “Unacceptable”; Level 3 is “Fully Successful”; and Level 5 is “Outstanding”.

**performance standard.** The management-approved expression of the performance threshold, requirement, and expectations 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, timeliness, and manner of performance.

**PIP.** A strategy developed for an employee at any point in the appraisal cycle when performance becomes “Unacceptable” in one or more elements. This plan affords an employee

the opportunity to demonstrate acceptable performance and is developed with specific guidance provided by the servicing human resources office.

**progress review.** A type of formal performance discussion in which the supervisor communicates with the employee about the employee's performance compared to his or her performance standards. Supervisors are required to conduct at least one formal progress review during the appraisal cycle.

**promotion.** A change of an employee, while serving continuously within the same agency, either to a higher grade when both the old and the new positions are under the General Schedule or under the same type graded wage schedule, or to a position with a higher rate of pay when both the old and the new positions are under the same type of ungraded wage schedule, or are in different pay method categories.

**QSI.** An increase in an employee's rate of basic pay from one step or rate of the grade of his or her position to the next higher step of that grade or next higher rate within the grade (as defined in Section 531.403 of Title 5, CFR). Only an employee who receives a rating of record of "Outstanding" or equivalent is eligible.

**rating of record.** The performance rating level assigned at the end of an appraisal cycle for performance of agency-assigned duties over the entire cycle.

**rating official.** The person responsible for informing the employee of the duties of his or her position, establishing performance standards, providing feedback, appraising performance, and assigning the performance rating. Normally, this is the employees' immediate supervisor.

**reassignment.** The change of an employee, while serving continuously within the same agency, from one position to another without promotion or demotion.

**reduction in grade.** The involuntary assignment of an employee to a position at a lower classification or job grading level. A reduction in grade is also referred to as a demotion.

**removal.** The involuntary separation of an employee from federal service.

**SMART.** An acronym for criteria that can be used in writing and evaluating performance standards: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely.

**supervisor (Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA)).** Position meets the definition of "supervisor" in Section 7103(a)(10) of Title 5, U.S.C., but does not meet the minimum requirements for application of the General Schedule Supervisory Guide.



**unacceptable performance.** Performance that fails to meet the established performance standards in one or more elements of an employee's position. It is referred to as a Level 1 rating under the DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program.

**WGI.** A periodic step increase in an employee's rate of basic pay from one-step of the grade of his or her position to the next higher step within that grade. The employee's rating of record must be at the "Fully Successful" level to be eligible for a WGI.