



**USDA Performance Management System Fact Sheet
DM/SO/OSEC**

Coverage	General Schedule Federal Wage Grade Employees Schedule C (political appointees)
Authorities	Title 5, U.S. Code, Chapter 43 – Performance Appraisal; 5 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 430 – Performance Management; Departmental Regulation 4040-430 – Performance Management
Appraisal Cycle	October 1 - September 30
Number and Name of Rating Levels	Level 5 (Outstanding), Level 4 (Superior), Level 3 (Fully Successful), Level 2 (Minimally Successful) and Level 1 (Unacceptable)
Minimum Appraisal Period	90 days
Performance Plans	Established, approved and signed by October 30 for each appraisal cycle
Forms	AD-435, Performance Appraisal; AD-435A, Performance Plan, Progress Review and Appraisal Worksheet; AD-435B, Performance Plan, Progress Review and Appraisal Worksheet Continuation Sheet
Mandatory Performance Element: All Employees	All performance plans must contain at least one results-oriented critical element linked to the strategic goals and objectives of the organization (i.e., Mission Results, Mission Support; Execution of Duties; Program Management)
Mandatory Performance Elements: Supervisors/Managers	1) Critical element for leadership/management or supervision which includes a standard addressing accountability for performance management duties and 2) critical element for equal opportunity/civil rights. Appropriate measures of employee and customer/stakeholder feedback should also be included, as appropriate
Mandatory Performance Elements: Nonsupervisors	Performance standards that address civil rights awareness and interpersonal skills in either an existing or newly established critical element
Mandatory Performance Elements/Standards: Certain Employees	Performance elements and/or standards for safety and health, and the protection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) where warranted by the employee's position
Critical Elements	All elements may be critical; however, noncritical elements may also be used
Number of Elements	Minimum of three, maximum of seven; each plan must contain at least one critical element
Weighting Elements	Critical elements are assigned two appraisal units; non-critical elements are assigned one appraisal unit (See AD-435)
Progress Review	One mandatory progress review at midpoint of cycle. Additional reviews optional. Document date of progress review meeting on AD-435A
Generic Performance Elements/Standards	Plans may contain generic performance elements and accompanying generic standards for similar positions (i.e., information technology specialists, budget analysts, public affairs officers, attorneys). Supplemental standards specific to the position are encouraged
Eligibility for a Rating	Employees are ratable if they occupy a covered position on the last day of the appraisal cycle and have served the minimum appraisal period
Written Documentation for Summary Rating	Rating official can prepare overall narrative justification of the summary rating or a written justification for each element, or both
Performance Rating	Ratings prepared, reviewed, signed and submitted to DHRD for entry into the National Finance Center personnel data base by November 30 for the appraisal cycle that ended on September 30

Performance Award	Discretionary and must be linked to rating of record. Employees rated Outstanding, Superior and Fully Successful are eligible; employees rated below Fully Successful are not eligible for performance-based awards
Disagreement with Rating	Employees are encouraged to discuss disagreements with the supervisor/rating official and reviewing official to informally resolve the situation. If, after these discussions, the employee still disagrees with the rating, the employee may submit a written response to the rating, however, the rating of record will not be changed. Bargaining unit employees may file a grievance using the negotiated grievance procedure; other employees may use the administrative grievance procedure. An employee may file an equal employment opportunity complaint if the employee believes the rating was based on prohibited discrimination
Service Credit for Reduction in Force (RIF)	Level 5 (Outstanding) - 20 years Level 4 (Superior) - 16 years Level 3 (Fully Successful) - 12 years Level 2 (Minimally Successful) - 0 years Level 1 (Unacceptable) - 0 years