

CPARS Assessing Official
Talking Paper

Purpose: To provide guidance of Reviewing Official's Roles & Responsibilities to newly assigned Assessing Officials (AOs)

References:

1. Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR 42.15- Contractor Performance Information
2. Agriculture Acquisition Regulation (AGAR) 48 CFR 442.1502
3. Procurement Advisory No. 96A- Contractor Performance and Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS Evaluations - Issued: September 17, 2010 and Revised: May 6, 2016
4. Guidance for the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) – November 2016

Assessing Official (Contracting Officer) responsibilities

Overview: The AO is responsible for evaluating contractor performance and for validating the proposed ratings and remarks entered by the AOR, if assigned. Within the CPARS portal, the AO has "signature" authority and is allowed to forward assessments to the Contractor Representative for review and comment.

The following are responsibilities of the AO within CPARS. The AO shall:

- a) Ensure each applicable contract action is registered **within 30 days** after contract award.
- b) Ensure Contract Access Matrix is created via the Agency Focal Point **within 14 days** after registration of the contract, task order or delivery order in CPARS. Required Matrix information shall include at a minimum:
 - i. Contract number;
 - ii. Contractor Representative(s) name(s), email(s), phone(s);
 - iii. RO name, email, phone;
 - iv. AOR (i.e. CS, COR/COTR), if assigned, name(s), email(s), phone(s);
 - v. AO (i.e. CO) name, email, phone;
 - vi. Period of performance; and
 - vii. Contract action award amount.

NOTE: It is the AO's responsibility to request the Access Matrix be updated by the Agency Focal Point should any contact information (i.e. AO, AOR, RO, and Contract Representative) change during the period of performance.

- a) Ensure meaningful communication and feedback on performance is exchanged between the AO, AOR and Contractor Representative throughout contract performance; obtain documentation for contract file and for use in CPARS evaluations.
- b) Ensure an evaluation is initiated in CPARS within **14 days** of Contract completion (or of annual interim anniversary). If the contract action was properly registered (and an Access Matrix created) upon award, CPARS will automatically notify the AO and AOR via email when an evaluation is due.
- c) Submit the evaluation in CPARS to the Contractor's point of contact for review/comment within **30 days** of Contract completion (or annual interim anniversary).

NOTE: The Contractor shall have 60 days to review and submit comments on any evaluation; however, the evaluation will upload to the Past Performance Information Retrieval System – Report Card (PPIRS-RC) within 14 days following the AO's signature on the initial evaluation.

- a) Respond to any Contractor rebuttal comments that are received within **30 days** of receipt; elevate to Reviewing Official if required. Ensure Contract file includes documentation as to final rating determination,
- b) Finalize all evaluations in CPARS **not later than 120 days** after Contract completion (or annual interim anniversary) date.
- c) Review Compliance Assessment Reports, initiate required actions for his/her contract actions, and provide status updates to Agency Focal Point(s) (see Paragraph 6).

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FINAL EVALUATION PROCESS

Evaluation Initiation, Rating Assessment & Review Process:

- a. The AO shall submit a request for the Agency Focal Point(s) to create an Access Matrix for registered contract actions within **14 days** of registration.
- b. The AO shall ensure the Agency Focal Point(s) registers all applicable contract actions into CPARS within **30 days** of award.
- c. The AOR (or AO if no AOR is assigned) shall initiate a “Final” evaluation in CPARS **within 14 days** of contract completion upon receipt of system-generated email notification indicating evaluation is due.
- d. The AO shall review evaluation ratings and comments and discuss with the AOR, if needed, for clarification or in the event of discrepancies.
- e. The AO shall forward the evaluation to the Contractor in the CPARS portal **not later than 30 days** after contract completion date.
- f. The system will notify the Contractor via email to review the evaluation information. As a best practice, it shall be the policy of USDA that the AO shall also follow up with an email message or phone call to confirm that the Contractor received the evaluation information.

Contractor’s Review & Rebuttal Submission Process:

Concurrence:

- a. The Contractor has **60 days** to submit comments, rebutting statements, or additional information to the AO.
- b. If no comments are received by 61 days after the date CPARS provided notification to the Contractor that the evaluation was available for review, the evaluation will be locked by the system and no longer available for comment to the Contractor.

Comments or Rebutting Statements:

- a. If the Contractor provides a rebutting statement prior to Day 61, the AO will discuss the Contractor’s comments with the AOR (if applicable) within **14 days** after receipt from the Contractor.
- b. The AO shall notify the AOR of any changes made or information added to the evaluation.
- c. Disagreements in the evaluation between the parties shall be resolved by the AOR at a level above the AO in accordance with FAR 42.1503(d).
- d. The AO shall finalize the evaluation into CPARS within **30 days** of receipt of the Contractor’s statements, or not later than 120 days from contract completion (or annual anniversary date for interim evaluations).

NOTE: The AO must “finalize” the evaluation in the CPARS system or it will remain “Due” (or “Overdue”) in the system.

INTERIM ANNUAL EVALUATIONS

In accordance with FAR 42.1502(a), if the performance period of the applicable contract action exceeds one year, interim CPARS assessments shall be prepared at least annually **once every 12 months from date of award**. Contracting Officers may also initiate other interim evaluations as they determine necessary during the period of performance. The same timeframes and procedures for final evaluations as described above shall be followed for all interim evaluations.

NOTE: The AOR and AO shall utilize the “Interim Evaluation” designation and identify which period of performance the evaluation covers when initiating interim annual evaluations in CPARS.

INTERIM CONTRACT OPTION EVALUATIONS

Interim CPARS assessments shall also be prepared no later than **30 days** prior to the exercise of any contract or order option. The same timeframes and procedures for final evaluations as described above shall be followed for interim option evaluations.

NOTE: The AOR and AO shall utilize the “Interim Evaluation” designation and identify which period of performance the interim evaluation covers when initiating interim option evaluations in CPARS.

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CONTRACT FILE DOCUMENTATION

Copies of all evaluations (e.g. final and interim evaluations, including evaluations for contract options), as well as rebuttal statements from the Contractor, and any supporting documentation pertaining to one level above reviews and final assessment determinations, shall be maintained in the Contract file.

As a best practice, the AO is encouraged to keep copies of all CPARS system-generated email notifications, registration confirmations, and Access Matrix screenshots in the official contract file for documentation of CPARS compliance. The contract file should also contain evidence any reports or requests for performance evaluation sent to/received from the AOR/COR.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

CPARS Website, Report and Guides:

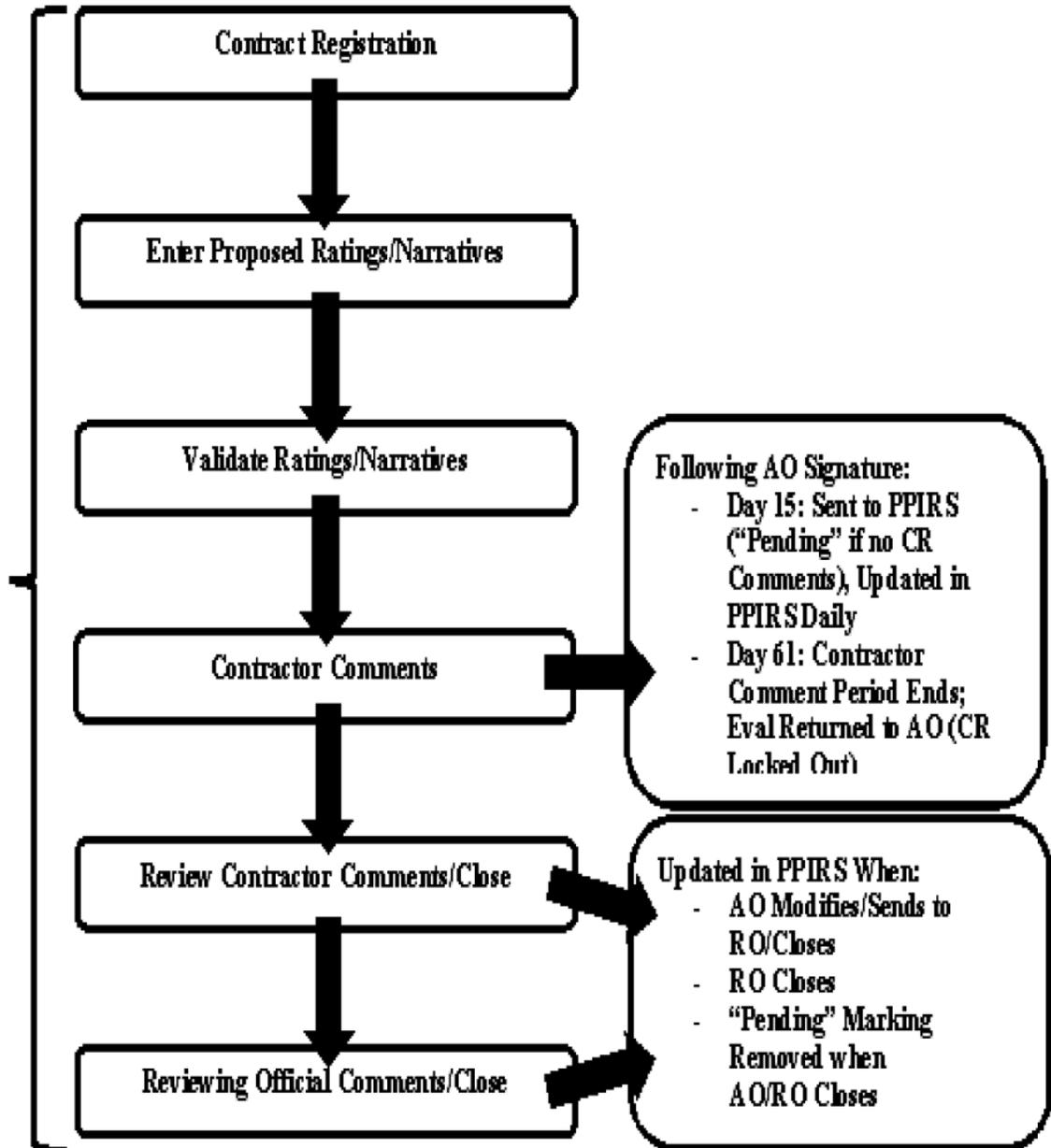
- a. CPARS Website: <https://www.cpars.gov/>
- b. Access to the CPARS website is also available through the USDA Acquisition Toolkit: <http://www.usda.gov/procurement/toolkit>. (Under “Contracting and Purchasing E-Tools,” go to “Past Performance Systems” and select “Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS).”)
- c. CPARS Manuals: https://www.cpars.gov/pdfs/CPARS_User_Manual.pdf
- d. CPARS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): <https://www.cpars.gov/faqs.htm>
- e. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) Contractor Performance Information webpage: https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/procurement_index_contract_perf/

5 COMMON ADMINISTRATIVE OVERSIGHTS

- a. CPARS generated reports should be read and filed with the applicable contract, assists with admin or reports.
- b. Contracting officers are not providing the Contractor/Vendor Representative within 30 days, causing the registrations timeline to be overdue.
- c. The CPARS To-Do list provides the 120 day expiration date of each report assigned to each role.
- d. Upon initial contract assignment the Assessing Official should ensure the Period of Performance is correct, the date that transfers from FPDS-NG to CPARS is based upon the date the award is physically signed and doesn't transfer the dates from IAS section of period of performance. *i.e. Award signed 1/15/2017 contract begins 2/1/2017. The date that will show in CPARS is 1/15/2017 to 1/14/2018 this date should be changed to 2/1/2017 to 1/31/2018.*
- e. The Ultimate Completion dates for BPA and IDIQ contracts should not be placed in calls or delivery orders. Ensure the Ultimate completion dates are correct on FPDS at time of award. This will result in COs/AOs completing unnecessary reports in CPARS.

4.9 CPARS Workflow

Process must be completed within 120 days after end of period of performance.



Evaluation Ratings Definitions¹⁷

Rating	Definition	Note
Exceptional	Performance meets contractual requirements and exceeds many to the Government's benefit. The contractual performance of the element or sub-element being evaluated was accomplished with few minor problems for which corrective actions taken by the contractor were highly effective.	To justify an Exceptional rating, identify multiple significant events and state how they were of benefit to the Government. A singular benefit, however, could be of such magnitude that it alone constitutes an Exceptional rating. Also, there should have been NO significant weaknesses identified.
Very Good	Performance meets contractual requirements and exceeds some to the Government's benefit. The contractual performance of the element or sub-element being evaluated was accomplished with some minor problems for which corrective actions taken by the contractor was effective.	To justify a Very Good rating, identify a significant event and state how it was a benefit to the Government. There should have been no significant weaknesses identified.
Satisfactory	Performance meets contractual requirements. The contractual performance of the element or sub-element contains some minor problems for which corrective actions taken by the contractor appear or were satisfactory.	To justify a Satisfactory rating, there should have been only minor problems, or major problems the contractor recovered from without impact to the contract/order. There should have been NO significant weaknesses identified. A fundamental principle of assigning ratings is that contractors will not be evaluated with a rating lower than Satisfactory solely for not performing beyond the requirements of the contract/order.
Marginal	Performance does not meet some contractual requirements. The contractual performance of the element or sub-element being evaluated reflects a serious problem for which the contractor has not yet identified corrective actions. The contractor's proposed actions appear only marginally effective or were not fully implemented.	To justify Marginal performance, identify a significant event in each category that the contractor had trouble overcoming and state how it impacted the Government. A Marginal rating should be supported by referencing the management tool that notified the contractor of the contractual deficiency (e.g., management, quality, safety, or environmental deficiency report or letter).
Unsatisfactory	Performance does not meet most contractual requirements and recovery is not likely in a timely manner. The contractual performance of the element or sub-element contains a serious problem(s) for which the contractor's corrective actions appear or were ineffective.	To justify an Unsatisfactory rating, identify multiple significant events in each category that the contractor had trouble overcoming and state how it impacted the Government. A singular problem, however, could be of such serious magnitude that it alone constitutes an unsatisfactory rating. An Unsatisfactory rating should be supported by referencing the management tools used to notify the contractor of the contractual deficiencies (e.g., management, quality, safety, or environmental deficiency reports, or letters).

NOTE 1: N/A (not applicable) should be used if the ratings are not going to be applied to a particular area for evaluation.

¹⁷ Reference FAR 42.1503, Table 42-1