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SECTION I

HOW AND WHY THE SYSTEM WAS DEVELOPED

## Background

Over the past several years, GAO has been conducting a thorough reexamination of its entire human resources management system. Such a systematic study is unparalleled anywhere in the government.

A major force behind GAO's commitment to the review of its management system was the realization that the agency had undergone tremendous changes during the early 1970s. This period saw a dramatic increase in the size of the agency and a substantial increase in the number and types of personnel who did not possess the traditional auditing background. These developments occured in response to GAO's rapidly evolving responsibilities in the program evaluation area. This new environment in which GAO was operating necessitated many adjustments to the personnel system.

On June 17, 1975, the Comptroller General appointed a 9-member Career Management Committee (CMC). Their task was to provide top-level policy guidance and help integrate the variety of personnel-related projects that were underway into a cohesive whole.

The main elements of the CMC's work plan, finalized on February 13, 1976, included review of policies, procedures, and objectives concerning personnel management in GAO, and collection and analysis of staff perceptions about career management. It was decided that the most immediate issue requiring attention was the promotion system. In May 1976, the Comptroller General announced that career ladder would be lowered to GS-12. Effective October 1, 1976, the Competitive Selection Process (CSP) was established to govern all selections (usually involving promotions) to positions graded at the GS-13, 14 and 15 levels and all Overseas selections regardless of grade.

After CSP had been in operation for several months, during which it was closely monitored, the CMC again took an inventory of on-going activities. This review revealed that the Office needed more effective performance appraisal and counseling systems. Work was begun on these components in mid-1977.

The counseling component of the Career Management System was implemented in 1979. This involved the presentation of a 4-day workshop entitled "Skills for Performance and Career Development" (SPCD) to all audit staff personnel.

## Constraints and Guidelines

In the Fall of 1977, the Task Force on GAO Effectiveness examined the way in which GAO operated and made a number of far-reaching recommendations. On the basis of their recommendations, GAO moved to implement the project team approach. One governing condition, therefore, was that the system must be capable of operating within teams. In addition to this broad parameter, several other assumptions about the environment in which appraisal would have to function were also identified concerning who is interested in appraisal results and what their interests are.

There are a number of different reasons why an organization needs performance appraisal information. The chart below highlights the main reasons, indicates who is officially responsible for accomplishing them, and who has the best information upon which to base any resulting actions.

| REASONS FOR PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL | WHO IS OFFICIALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR ACCOMPLISHMENT AND MAKES THESE DECISIONS? | WHO HAS THE "BEST" INFORMATION TO PROVIDE INPUT FOR MAKING THESE DECISIONS? |
|---|---|---|
| Performance Coaching/ Counseling | Immediate Supervisor | Immediate Supervisor(s) |
| Pay Increases | Home Unit | Immediate Supervisor(s) |
| Promotions | Home Unit | Immediate Supervisor(s) |
| Awards | Home Unit and Functional Unit | Immediate Supervisor(s) |
| Career Counseling | Home Unit | Individual and Home Unit |
| Training and Development | Home Unit | Immediate Supervisor(s), Individual and Home Unit |
| Assignments | Home Unit | Individual and Home Unit |
| Adverse Actions | Home Unit | Immediate Supervisor(s) |

In addition to having a variety of reasons for conducting performance appraisals, under the teams approach there are at least three separate parties interested in the performance appraisal process and each has several reasons. The chart below shows the parties and their interests. The assumed primary interest(s) is denoted by an asterisk (*).

| WHO IS INTERESTED IN PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL | WHAT ARE THEIR INTERESTS? |
|---|---|
| The Individual Employee | *Performance appraisal is the basis for various personnel actions (especially promotions and pay increases) |
| | .Improve competence |
| | .Move toward career goals |
| | .General interest in feedback ("How Am I Doing?") |
| Team Leader/Immediate Supervisor | *To improve the product or service for which responsible. |
| | *To satisfy agency requirements |
| Home Unit (Resource Management) | *Legal accountability |
| | *Performance appraisal is a basis for improving/developing human resources so that readiness to respond is enhanced. |

This variety of interested parties and their different primary interests sets up the potential for conflicting agendas in the performance appraisal process. The employee will desire an appraisal which enhances, or at the very least does not inhibit, his/her career progression. This means that given the choice between completely honest and accurate feedback (which is necessary for self-development) or feedback which dwells on the more favorable aspects of an individual's performance (which may be seen as necessary to get a rapid promotion), the employee would most likely opt for the second. The team leader will be primarily interested in improving the quality and timeliness of his/her job. Consequently, he/she will take immediate action to correct observed deficiencies or improve present performance, but will not have any natural self-interest in documenting the individual's performance. The home-unit organization will have a strong interest in receiving documented performance appraisal information which is both accurate and in sufficient detail that their accomplishment of the various personnel actions is facilitated.

The situation described above presents a data transmission problem. Performance appraisal data is most needed but least visible to the home unit resource manager. However, that data is most visible but least needed in documented form by the team leader.

The concerns of staff-resource managers will be focused to a great extent in developing and maintaining a cadre of fully qualified staff. Such a staff is necessary in order to be able to respond, in a timely and effective manner, to the rapidly changing priorities and unanticipated additional workload which tend to characterize GAO's work.

In the kind of work GAO does, employee development can occur through two primary means; formal training courses (either internal or external) or through either formal or informal on-the-job coaching. Beyond the basic level of learning appropriate methods, formats, procedures, etc., formal course training tends to be the most expensive and least effective way to develop staff. This leads to the conclusion that staff should be developed primarily through the job itself.

There is a lack of "natural" incentives to develop people. People do not like to appraise or to be appraised. It is a potentially threatening and conflict-inducing process. In addition, it takes time and effort to develop people. Given constraints of a total staff-year allowance and a product delivery date, there will be pressures to avoid or short-cut staff development activities.

Although GAO is no longer under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, GAO must still operate under various legal requirements and constraints. Under the provisions of the GAO Personnel Act of 1980, GAO is obligated to have an appraisal system that is based upon job-related criteria and is used as a basis for important personnel action decisions. In addition, since GAO is subject to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, there is a requirement that any instruments, devices, or processes which are in any way related to selection decisions (this includes promotions and training assignments) be explicitly job-related and capable of being validated in the event of an adverse impact on a protected subgroup.

In view of the foregoing, a number of essential conditions were established to further guide the development of the system. The appraisal system must:

1. Be specifically job-related and reduce subjectivity as much as possible.

2. Allow employees to participate in the establishment of performance standards.

3. Make use of the "best" observation vantage points (i.e., the immediate supervisor(s) and the individual himself/herself)

4. Provide for timely feedback of performance appraisal information.

5. Provide for the utilization of performance appraisal results as a basis for training and development, rewards, assignments, promotions, and other important personnel actions.

6. Provide the information needed by each of the interested parties to satisfy their needs for data without overloading them with information.

7. Provide data in a format and level of detail which facilitates home unit preparation of official personnel action documentation.

8. Be workable in a situation where the rating official is not in the same home unit as the team member(s).

9. Provide incentives and/or reduce disincentives to the development of staff.

10. Be integrated into the ongoing job management process rather than be a system unto itself.

11. Be applicable to audit staff in both headquarters and regional offices.

## How the system was developed

A series of workshops using job incumbents from grade levels GS-7 through 14 were conducted. The task of the workshop participants was to describe auditor/evaluator work in a set of general, yet exhaustive, job elements. This process resulted in the identification of eight broad job dimensions.

The Training Needs Assessment (TNA) project team conducted another set of workshops with actual operating teams. These workshops indentified the specific tasks which audit staff members perform in each of the eight job dimensions.

Several additional workshops were held over a period of months to elicit behavioral anchors, or examples of auditor/evaluator job behavior in each job dimension. These statements illustrate each level of performance (i.e., Exceptional, Borderline, etc.), "anchoring" the scale, hence the term Behaviorally-Anchored Rating Statements or BARS as they are commomly called).

Throughout the development process, several briefings were held with divisional and regional management in order to obtain their input. The following groups were briefed and consulted:

--Samples of GS-7-14 auditor/evaluators,

--the Counseling Subcommittee of the Career Management Committee,

--the Division Directors,

--Steering Committees composed of a cross-section of staff at all grade levels in Norfolk and New York regional offices and from the Community and Economic Development Division,

--Regional Managers and their assistants, and

--the Career Level Council.

Numerous revisions and refinements were made based upon comments from these groups.

Both the appraisal system and the accompanying training program were tested thoroughly in one regional office and one division. Data was gathered regarding general problems as well as such specific issues as accuracy of ratings obtained, effectiveness and clarity of the manuals to accompany training, utility of the system to provide data for career development and counseling, ease of understanding of forms, and time required to complete the forms. Revisions required after the pilot tests were made and the results presented to the Counseling Subcommittee for approval.

## SECTION II

## OVERVIEW OF THE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM

The performance appraisal system consists of forms, standards, and an ongoing process aimed at developing a continuously updated data base of performance information and utilizing that information in the management of jobs and people.

### FORMS

#### End-of Assignment Performance Appraisal (GAO Form 563)

The hub of the performance appraisal system is the end-of-assignment performance appraisal narrative, GAO Form 563. This form includes space for relating narrative details surrounding the specific assignment and the individual's role in it as well as a narrative assessment of performance on each of the applicable job dimensions. Completion of this form calls for citing specific instances or examples which back up the supervisor's assessment. More specific information on how to complete the Form 563 is presented in Section VII.

As Figure 1 shows, this form (or forms if the individual was on more than one job during the relevant time frame) serves as the basis for all of the various personnel action decisions which the home unit must make (i.e., assignments, training, career ladder promotions, determining pay, etc.)

#### Personel Action Documentation Forms

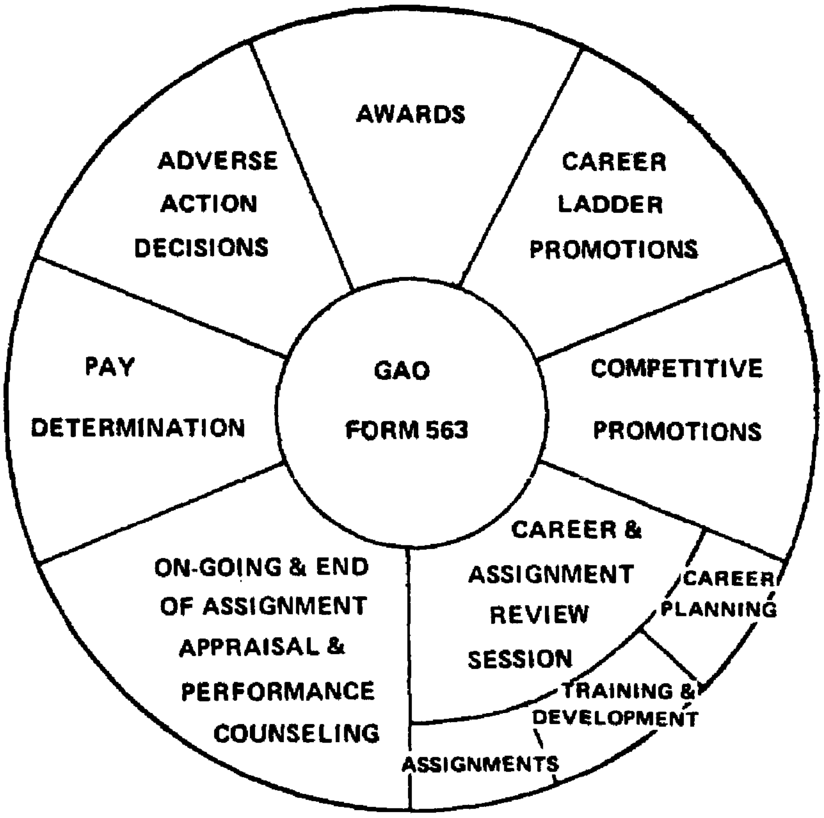
Aside from the regular performance appraisal, GAO Form 563, there are also a variety of special purpose forms. These forms are associated with ancillary uses of performance appraisal data, rather than the process itself. The end-of-assignment performance appraisal form(s) completed during the applicable time period would act as the basis for completing the special-use forms. These forms serve the purpose of documenting various personnel actions.

### STANDARDS

An essential requirement of an effective performance appraisal system is extensive knowledge about what duties are to be performed, what level of performance is expected and what aspects of performance are important. This knowledge is provided by standards. This performance appraisal system includes three kinds of standards:

FIGURE 1

## GAO PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM



--Task Standards,

--BARS Performance Standards, and

--Assessment Guides.

Task Standards

The Task Standards consist of statements of duties or activities performed by job incumbents at each grade level. The activities are grouped into eight broad areas or job dimensions which describe auditor/evaluator work. More detailed information on the Task Standards is presented in Section IV.

BARS Performance Standards

Performance Standards are descriptions of the degree of quality of performance required for each job dimension at each grade level. Five levels of performance have been defined: Exceptional, Superior, Proficient, Borderline, and Unacceptable.

In this system, the Performance Standards are delineated through the use of Behaviorally-Anchored Rating Statements (BARS). Several such anchors appear for each of the five levels of performance for each of the eight job dimensions. Different anchors were written for each grade level. The anchors describe what job incumbents actually do on the job and attempt to sample all substantive areas of job performance. They can thus be used to assist raters in writing narrative ratings, help inform raters and ratees of expectations for job performance, and facilitate performance feedback sessions with ratees.

More detailed information on the BARS Performance Standards is presented in Section V.

Assessment Guides

The major purposes of the Assessment Guides are to assist raters in preparing the final narrative appraisal and to provide ratees with very detailed, specific feedback on a number of substantive areas so that their strengths and weaknesses are made explicit.

The Assessment Guides break each of the eight job dimensions into several areas in which a person can perform. They serve to point out important areas or factors to be observed and possibly commented upon in the narrative appraisal and accompanying couseling session. More detailed information on the Assessment Guides is presented in Section VI.

## PROCESS

The appraisal process is not just an end-of-assignment task. It is a continuous managerial responsibility which begins with job and staff planning, continues through the establishment of expectations and periodic coaching and counseling, to the end-of-assignment appraisal and the eventual use of this information in various personnel actions.

Team leaders and others negotiate staff assignments based on the job's requirements, time exigencies, staff availability, and staff career development needs and desires. The supervisor and team member meet before a job begins (as well as during the job whenever responsibilities change) to discuss the team leader's role and responsibilities, developmental tasks, and performance expectations. On-the-job coaching and counseling are required to develop team members' abilities, provide for feedback, and improve performance. The end-of-assignment rating is thus only one aspect of the total appraisal process. The entire appraisal process is described in detail in the next section.

## SECTION III

## THE APPRAISAL PROCESS

Performance appraisal is an integral part of the job management process. As Figure 2 shows, the ongoing performance appraisal process involves a direct linkage between six somewhat distinct yet interacting processes:

1. Job Planning

2. Job Staffing

3. Performance Planning

4. Performance Monitoring

5. End-of-Assignment Performance Appraisal

6. Career and Assignment Review

### JOB PLANNING

There are two primary ways in which the performance appaisal system interfaces with job planning. One of these ways involves the use of the performance appraisal standards as an input into the determination of the number and types of staff required. The second way involves the use of information on desired characteristics of the products to be produced, such as the type of product, its delivery date, its coverage, etc. This information would then become a part of the criteria against which the results component of the individual's performance will be evaluated.

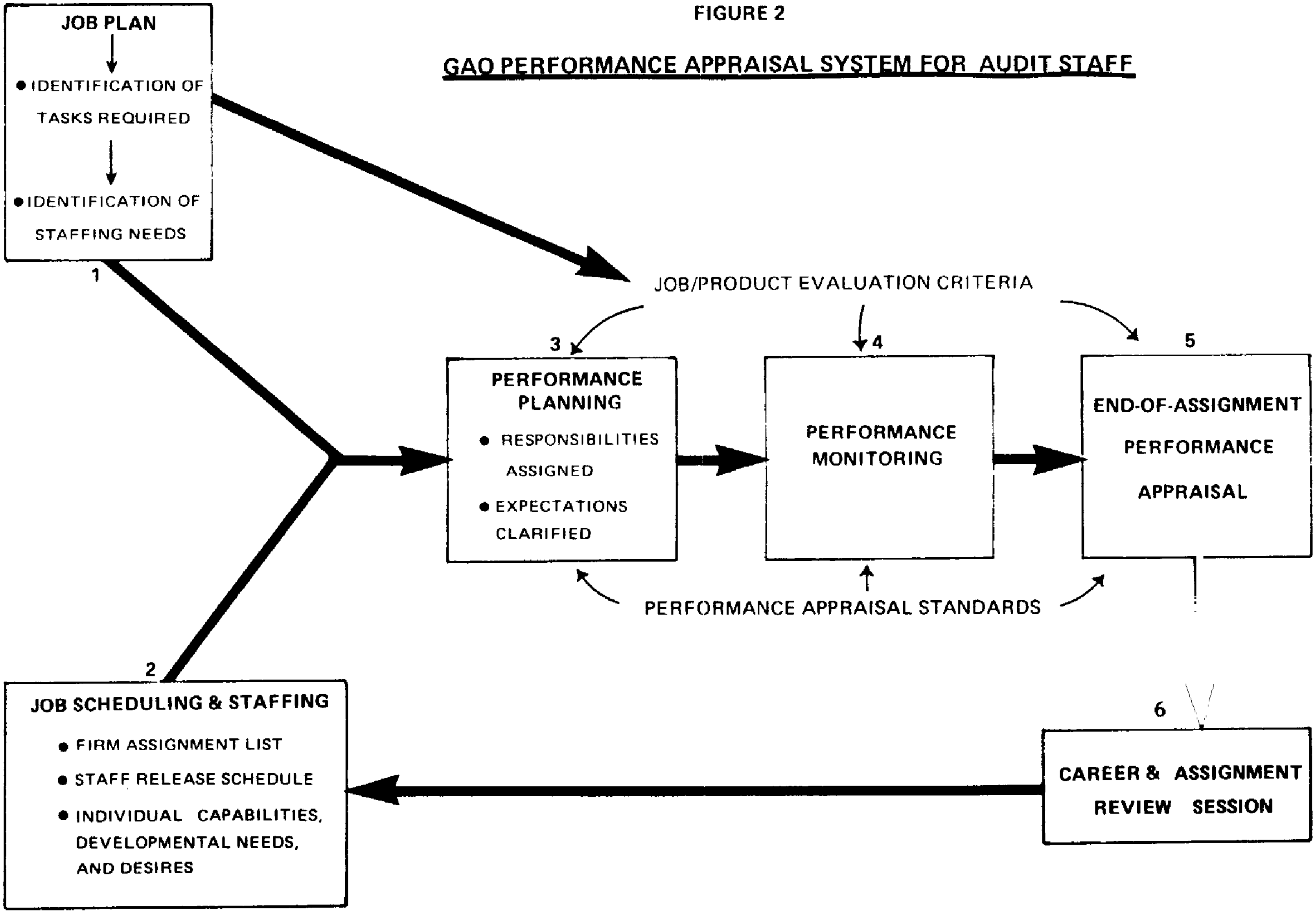
#### Determining Grade Levels of Required Staff

The grade levels of the staff required to perform the work is dependent upon the specific tasks and responsibilities being assigned. The primary types of information which are relevant to identifying appropriate grade levels are the subject matter and scope of the job, the specific tasks which will be required of the staff member, and the degree of supervision.

The subject matter of the job affects staffing by virtue of the degree and type of knowledge it requires staff members to possess, the complexity and scope of the job, and the level and purpose of personal contacts. The best source of this type of information is the "GAO Evaluator: Classification and Qualifications Standard and the Criteria for Evaluating

FIGURE 2

GAO PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM FOR AUDIT STAFF



Requirements for Job Assignments - GS-13, 14 and 15 better known as the "Hanlon paper". The material in these documents can be used to ascertain the range of grade levels appropriate to various kinds of jobs.

The other primary determinants of the required grade level are the specific tasks which will have to be performed and the degree of supervision that will be available. The most readily available source of this information is the Task Standards Summary which will be described in more detail in Section IV.

The first step in the process of determining appropriate grades, involves identification of the tasks necessary to accomplish the various segments of the assignment and how those tasks will be distributed across the various locations which will participate. This information, in conjunction with the established timeframes, contributes to determining how many staff members will be needed at each site.

The next step is to determine what the grade levels of those staff members will need to be. This is accomplished by examining those specific tasks which have been identified in relation to the grade level task standards. The Task Standards Summary shows the grade levels which would be fully qualified to perform specific tasks at various levels of supervision. Selection of appropriate grades then involves identifying the minimum grade levels able to perform those aspects of the assignment given the level of supervision which will be available at that site.

The Use of Product Evaluation Criteria

The second connection of performance appraisal with job planning involves the identification of additional evaluative criteria. The project plan (in the Scoping and Planning Phases) will have established certain goals or targets for the job. These criteria are used in the Evaluation Phase to assess the success of the job. To the extent that assignments are segmented into pieces for which responsibility can be assigned to specific individuals, such criteria are also useful in evaluating individual performance. This provides a tangible reference point for reinforcing or improving individual performance. It is important to remember, however, that a person should only be held responsible for results to the extent they had control over the outcomes.

## JOB STAFFING

The performance appraisal system also interrelates with the Job Scheduling and Staffing System (JSSS). In order for resource managers to optimally match individuals to jobs, there is a need for sufficient information on upcoming jobs. This information is provided by the Job Scheduling subsystem. This subsystem calls for each programming division to provide information on prospective assignments. While the divisions cannot always provide great detail on these tentative jobs, they nonetheless will provide some information on the nature of the job and the probable staffing need.

The information from the JSSS enables resource managers to make a better match between the jobs that are coming down the track and the staff members who will be available to work on them. By examining prospective jobs in light of up-to-date individual development plans and recent performance appraisals, staff-resource managers are in a better position to ensure that the staff to be assigned to a particular job are not only capable of performing effectively but will also receive experience in tasks which will enhance their development.

The process of making staff assignments involves matching job requirements with individual capabilities, developmental needs, and desires. The team director, team leader and resource manager have a responsibility to ensure that the job will be adequately staffed. In addition, they are responsible to make sure that the developmental needs of the staff are addressed. Accommodating these dual responsibilities often requires negotiation. This negotiation process consists of adjusting the desired staffing plan to resources available or sometimes adjustment of work objectives. This involves searching for alternate configurations of task assignments which would accomplish the job objectives while also addressing staffing limitations and providing for the further development of the staff.

The output of the staff negotiation process will be a staffing plan. This plan will set forth who will be assigned to the job, when they will be needed, what tasks they will be assigned and other information relevant to supervision and personnel management. Significant departures from this plan should be renegotiated.

## PERFORMANCE PLANNING

One of the most critical points in the performance appraisal process involves the mutual clarification of expectations between the supervisor and the subordinate. Each individual who is assigned to the job should receive an orientation to the job as soon as they report. However, this initial discussion does not necessarily end the performance planning process. At the beginning of the job, roles and assigned tasks may not yet be fully defined. Ideally, therefore, supervisors should repeat this process at any time when the individual's assignment is changed or when additional duties, tasks, or segments are assigned.

The objectives of this part of the process are to:

--familiarize the individual with the job and its objectives,

--inform the individual (as specifically as possible, but at least in general terms) of what he/she will be doing on the job and how this work fits into the total job,

--ensure that both the supervisor and the subordinate have a clear uderstanding about:

-what specific tasks are being assigned,

-what outputs are expected to be produced,

-what the outputs are expected to contain or cover,

-the timeframes in which the outputs are expected to be delivered,

-the standards against which the outputs and the individual's performance will be judged, including which job dimensions are applicable, and

-various administrative and procedural matters.

The effectiveness of this process is dependent upon both the supervisor and the subordinate taking an active part. The role of the supervisor is to inform and clarify. It has been found that people perform better when they know not only "what" they are to do, but also "why" they are to do it and how it will be used. These are important pieces of information for the supervisor to get across. The supervisor is also responsible for making sure that the criteria against which the individual's performance and products will be judged is well understood. Most standards require at least some degree of interpretation. This degree of flexibility inherent in standards allows them to apply to jobs with widely varying requirements. However, this characteristic also opens the door to potential misunderstanding. The only way this can be avoided (or at least minimized) is through direct discussion between the supervisor and the subordinate.

The role of the subordinate is to ensure that he or she has a thorough understanding of what they are being asked to do and how it will be judged. This is specifically a time for questioning. The individual should not feel that asking questions or seeking additional clarification indicates a deficiency on his/her part. It is to everyone's best interest to make sure that such discussions of standards, criteria, objectives and milestones are thorough and complete.

There are a variety of aids which should be referred to in the performance planning process such as assignment planning documents, audit guidelines, team agreement, staffing agreement, and the performance appraisal standards. Each provides useful information for defining responsibilities and evaluation criteria.

The supervisor should go into the session with a clear idea of what tasks the subordinate will be assigned. While it is unlikely that the supervisor would be in a position to detail everything which will be expected of the subordinate, it should still be possible to discuss the individual's involvement in general terms. As mentioned earlier, performance planning is an on-going process and should be repeated whenever there is a change in direction or new tasks or responsibilities added.

The output of the performance planning process should be a mutual understanding of responsibilities and relevant criteria. In conjunction with effective job planning and control, it is useful to have some written record of the specifics of this understanding. In the likely event of changes, this record should be updated.

## PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Performance appraisal is a continuous process, not just a once a year task or an activity performed at the end of a job. Effective management requires that the supervisor continually monitor the performance of subordinates and feedback information to them concerning how well they are doing.

The objectives are to:

--make sure the assignment is successful,

--keep staff members apprised of their performance,

--assist subordinates in developing, maintaining, or improving their skills, and

--gather the performance information which the organization needs in order to make effective personnel action decisions.

While the job is in process the supervisor has the responsibility to continually monitor the performance of subordinates. This should include both ordinary feedback and more elaborate coaching or counseling sessions.

Ordinary feedback refers to the day-in, day-out commentary on performance that the supervisor provides the subordinate. It can range from very brief comments such as "good job" or "excellent summary" to somewhat more detailed evaluations such as "you have to watch the way you handle people at this level of the organization or we'll have difficulty getting access to the information we need" or "I think the briefing ran a little too long, you might try to get through the background information more quickly." The characteristics that distinguish ordinary feedback from other forms of feedback is that:

--it usually occurs very close in time to the performance that is being commented upon, and

--it is usually pretty casual with many of the comments unplanned or spontaneous.

A coaching session is a more elaborate form of feedback. While the setting may still be relatively informal, the discussion itself will be much more systematic and well-planned. To be most effective, this type of feedback also must be timely. Coaching can occur before or after performance. For example:

--Before beginning a particular segment of the audit, the team leader may demonstrate or review a specific set of techniques or methods that will be used. Or,

--After an interview has been conducted, the team leader may review and analyze the way it was conducted to identify why it turned out the way it did and what might be done differently on subsequent interviews.

A counseling session differs from a coaching session primarily in terms of the range and specificity of the items discussed. A counseling session has a broader focus and aims at integration of performance feedback. A counseling session may be conducted at a key juncture in the job such as; the midpoint, after completing work at one site and before moving on to another, before moving on to another phase in the audit process, and at the end of the job.

The subordinate has the responsibility to actively seek and be receptive to feedback on job performance. The supervisor has the responsibility for being timely, frank, and thorough. In the event that the subordinate's performance is not up to expectations, the earlier the person finds out, the greater the likelihood of them being able to correct or overcome the deficiency.

## END-OF-ASSIGNMENT PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

The performance appraisal session at the end of the assignment calls for summarizing and feeding back information on the individual's performance. Since performance feedback during the job should have been a continuous process, the primary task of the end-of-assignment performance appraisal is one of summarization and integration.

The objectives of the end-of-assignment performance appraisal are to:

--give the individual detailed information on how he/she performed and what might be done to improve and develop, and

--give the individual's home unit the information it needs as a basis for various personnel action decisions.

This session differs from ongoing performance feedback in several ways. First, it takes more preparation. Both the supervisor and the subordinate should gather and analyze a lot of information before the appraisal session. Second, the performance appraisal session covers the individual's entire performance while on the job rather than covering only the performance of a particular task or segment. Because it is more inclusive, the performance appraisal session takes more time.

In addition to feeding back information on performance to the individual, the supervisor is also responsible for reporting information on performance to the individual's home unit. Filling out the end-of-assignment appraisal (GAO Form 563) will be covered in Section VII.

The primary aim of the end-of-assignment performance appraisal session is to give the individual accurate, reliable information on his/her performance which will contribute toward performance improvement and development. To be truely effective, performance feedback should serve two purposes: to both motivate and direct future behavior. That is, the information should impress upon the individual the need for change, development or maintenance and it ought to point out the things that need to be changed, developed, or maintained.

Subordinates want and need feddback in several areas. They want to know:

- --where they stand relative to their present grade requirements,
- --their strengths,
- --their weaknesses,
- --what they could do to improve their performance, and
- --what they can do to become more competitive for advancement.

In order to provide this kind of information, the supervisor calls upon all the information connected with the individual's participation in the job such as; the staffing agreement, updated notation of assignment, copies of products produced, etc., as well as the relevant task and performance standards and assessment guides. These materials are utilized to prepare the GAO Form 563 and conduct the end-of-assignment performance appraisal session.

The task of the supervisor is to analyze, integrate and report on the subordinate's performance for the period involved. The individual needs to be advised of both positive and negative aspects of their performance. They also need to discuss ways in which they can improve and develop. It is recognized that feeding back performance information is not enjoyable when deficiencies exist. There is a need to be open, candid and as straight-forward as possible. Unless the individual is made aware of problems, it is unlikely that improvement will take place.

The subordinate also must be open and straightforward. While receiving criticism is always uncomfortable, the individual should recognize the benefits which can accrue.

The supervisor should draft the GAO Form 563 in advance. If feasible, the appraisal session should be conducted face-to-face. However, in situations involving remote supervision this may not be practical. In these cases it may be possible to conduct the session at an exit conference or, at last resort, over the phone.

The manual used in the counseling skills (SPCD) program provides a number of suggestions for conducting effective appraisal sessions. Some general principles are:

--agree on the time for the session a number of days in advance so that each party has time to review and prepare,

--be prepared to discuss specific incidents, circumstances, etc. that are relevant to the appraisal, and

--make sure enough time has been allotted to allow a complete and thorough discussion.

## CAREER & ASSIGNMENT REVIEW SESSION

Although the immediate supervisor can and will provide some information regarding career progression, he or she in reality has a limited plane of sight. That is, while the team leader may have an excellent opportunity to view the individual's performance first hand, he or she has only the one job to go by. Also the immediate supervisor does not ordinarily have sufficient knowledge about upcoming jobs, alternative assignments, and organizational prospects in order to completely satisfy the individual's career counseling needs. These needs are satisfied in a Career and Assignment Review Session held with a resource manager from the individual's home unit. This session consists of; an in-depth review of the individual's last assignment, a discussion of developmental needs and career plans, and a review of upcoming assignment possibilities.

The objectives of the Career and Assignment Review Session are to:

--assist the individual in assessing career development to date and exploring various career development opportunities and strategies,

--develop information necessary to feed into the Job Staffing system to allow for optimal matching of job and organizational needs with employee capabilities, developmental needs, and desires, and

--provide a channel for information from the perspective of the individual on their experiences on the past job; problems, good points, etc.

The home unit resource manager should be familiar with the individual's recent assignments, the performance appraisals which were received, and any training the individual has taken or is scheduled to take. The resource manager should also have information on what jobs are scheduled to be staffed by that unit around the time that the individual will be released. The task of the resource manager is to make sure the organization has adequate information upon which to base staffing decisions and to assist the individual with career planning. The role is similar in may respects to that played by the individual's direct supervisor in that it requires open, candid and thorough discussion of all aspects of performance. The role does, however, require explicit attention to the details surrounding how various remedial or developmental needs will be addressed.

The responsibility of the individual involves playing an active role in this process of short-range and long-range career planning. The individual should exercise considerable initiative in making sure that information relative to their capabilities, needs, and desires are accurately input into the staffing decisions process. It is important to note that while the organization has an obligation to assist the individual in career planning, the primary responsibility for career planning and development lies with the individual.

## RELATIONSHIP OF APPRAISAL TO OTHER HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

In addition to the steps described above, performance appraisal is also very closely related to two other important human resource management activities; counseling and training and development.

### Relationship with the Counseling System

Performance appraisal is very closely linked to the counseling system. Performance appraisal involves making judgments about the effectiveness of an individual's performance. Such judgments are not useful for performance improvement unless they are effectively transmitted to the individual. This performance feedback process is a primary focus of coaching and counseling.

Coaching and counseling may occur at numerous points throughout the job: at orientation to the assignment; at the time a product is handed in; prior to or following a site visit; before starting or after completing a new job segment; when an individual has performed either very well or poorly; in addition to the more formal End-of-Assignment Performance

Appraisal and Career and Assignment Review sessions. For such coaching and counseling to be effective it is important that the individual be well trained both in how to observe, judge, and record performance and how to feed that information back to the individual in a helpful and constructive manner. This latter set of skills is the focus of the "Skills for Performance and Career Development" (SPCD) program.

## Relationship with the Training and Development System

Performance appraisal is also very closely linked to training and development. Both systems are keyed directly to the list of tasks and related knowledges, skills, and abilities (KSAs) required for successful accomplishment of audit/evaluation work. Through the performance appraisal process, the individual's remedial and developmental needs are identified. This information (which can be specified down to the task and KSA levels) is used to determine what formal training courses and/or what kind of jobs the individual should be assigned. This information also allows for closer monitoring of progress.

## SECTION IV

## TASK STANDARDS

### What are the Task Standards?

The Task Standards provide a description of the past, present, and future responsibilities for each grade within a job dimension. These responsibilities are specified in the form of the major tasks which are involved in each dimension.

### How were the Task Standards Developed?

The Task Standards were developed through an extensive job/task analysis. Groups of auditors were brought together in workshops to identify the tasks which they perform in each area. These auditors were drawn from several on-going teams from both headquarters and the field. Once a comprehensive task list was developed, it was incorporated into a questionaire (the Training Needs Survey) that was sent out to a stratified sample of auditors in grades GS-7 through GS-14, team leaders and ARMs/ADs. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of involvement with each task. The data they provided was analyzed and consolidated into a set of standards which represent the modal involvement which job incumbents indicate is typical of their grade level.

### How are the Task Standards Used?

The Task Standards appear in two formats to facilitate their use at different stages of the staff and job management process. The Task Standards Summary is intended as an aid in identifying the type of staff that will be needed on a job. The other format lists the task standards for each grade level, identifying critical tasks, maintenance tasks, and developmental tasks.

### Task Standards Summary

The Task Standards Summary can assist in the process of determining the grade levels of the staff members who are needed to perform the work. This document shows which grade levels could be expected to be fully qualified and able to perform a given task at various degrees of involvement.

In order to identify the type of staff needed, the tasks specified in the job plan should be examined in relation to the tasks listed under the relevant job dimensions in the task summary. After having determined the degree of supervision that will be available, the minimum grade level of the required staff can be determined.

The end result of the process would be an "ideal" staffing plan. This ideal plan would then need to be considered in relation to any staffing constraints which may exist in a given region or division. In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that the task standards are only a guide. But, while the demands of a particular situation may dictate that some degree of underutilization or stretching of the individual exist, the use of the Task Standards as a staffing guide will help assure that such conditions are kept to a minimum and that management is explicitly aware of it when it occurs.

Exhibit 1 shows a sample portion of the Task Standards Summary. It shows the tasks and the grade level(s) associated with various degrees of involvement. Where more than one grade level is listed, the higher grade would normally be involved in performing the task on an audit of greater scope or complexity. The four levels of involvement are:

(A) maintaining an awareness and/or understanding of the task although not directly involved.

(B) being capable of performing the task under close supervision.

(C) being capable of performing the task under minimal supervision.

(D) being capable of teaching or coaching others on the performance of this task.

For example, on this sample page it can be seen that for Job Planning task #1 ("identification of potential areas of review..."), GS-7s and 9s must be aware of the process, GS-11s and GS-12s should be able to perform it under the direct oversight of a more experienced person, and GS-13s and GS-14s should be able to perform it largely on their own. If the work on this task would have to be performed at a site which was remote from the supervisor, it could call for a more senior grade staff member. If direct supervision were available, it could be possible to utilize lower graded staff.

## Grade Level Task Standards

The second format in which the Task Standards exist is a description of the past, present, and future responsibilities of a person at a given grade level. A sample page is shown in Exhibit 2.

There are three symbols on the Grade Level Task List: M, C, and D.

EXHIBIT 1

Sample Page from Task Standards Summary

TASK SUMMARY

| | Level of Involvement | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | AWARENESS | PERFORM UNDER DIRECT SUPERVISION | PERFORM UNDER MINIMUM SUPERVISION | TEACH OR COACH OTHERS |
| 1. JOB PLANNING | | | | |
| 1. Identify potential areas of review to assure coverage in major issue areas using available GAO information and agency records. | GS-7, 9 | GS-11, 12 | GS-13, 14 | |
| 2. Project potential impact and findings of the audit to assess viability and probability of effecting a change and its likelihood of potential acceptance using discussion from GAO management, legislative hearings, and correspondence and pending bills, brainstorming, and previously collected information. | GS-7, 9 | GS-11, 12 | GS-13, 14 | |
| 3. Identify audit scope and objective in order to specify particular areas of inquiry and provide direction to accomplish the audit objective using initial request (letter, congressional request, Form 100) and information from requesting personnel (congressional staff, audit program AD, etc.). | GS-7, 9 | GS-11, 12 | GS-13, 14 | |
| 4. Coordinate work efforts, both external (CTA, CPS, CBO, etc.) and internal, to identify prior positions and issues to avoid conflicts and duplication. | GS-7, 9, 11 | GS-12 | GS-13, 14 | |
| 5. Identify, evaluate, and select alternative audit approaches in order to devise a plan which will meet the audit objectives. | GS-7, 9 | GS-11 | GS-12, 13 | GS-14 |
| 6. Determine amount, extent, and location of work to be performed in order to define resources needed to accomplish the audit objective. | GS-7, 9 | GS-11, 12 | GS-13 | GS-14 |

**EXHIBIT 2**

**Sample Page from Grade Level Task Standards**

**12**

**GRADE LEVEL TASK STANDARDS**

| | Level of Involvement | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | PERFORM UNDER DIRECT SUPERVISION | PERFORM UNDER MINIMUM SUPERVISION | TEACH OR COACH OTHERS |
| 1. <u>JOB PLANNING</u> | | | |
| 1. Identify potential areas of review to assure coverage in major issue areas using available GAO information and agency records. | M | D | |
| 2. Project potential impact and findings of the audit to assess viability and probability of effecting a change and its likelihood of potential acceptance using discussion from GAO management, legislative hearings, and correspondence and pending bills, brainstorming, and previously collected information. | M | D | |
| 3. Identify audit scope and objective in order to specify particular areas of inquiry and provide direction to accomplish the audit objective using initial request (letter, congressional request, Form 100) and information from requesting personnel (congressional staff, audit program AD, etc.). | M | D | |
| 4. Coordinate work efforts, both external (OTA, CRS, CBO, etc.) and internal, to identify prior positions and issues to avoid conflicts and duplication. | C | D | |
| 5. Identify, evaluate, and select alternative audit approaches in order to devise a plan which will meet the audit objectives. | | C | |
| 6. Determine amount, extent, and location of work to be performed in order to define resources needed to accomplish the audit objective. | M | D | |

The symbol "M" stands for "maintenance". It indicates a task in which the required level of competency should have been established at the previous grade level.

The symbol "C" stands for "critical task". It signifies a task which has increased in expected level of involvement over the previous grade level. That is, it is used to designate a task competency which distinguishes one grade level from the one immediately below it, and is thus "critical" in determining success at the higher level position.

The symbol "D" is the "developmental task" indicator. It identifies those tasks which differentiate the next higher grade from the present grade in terms of level of involvement on the task.

These symbols have certain implications for the supervisor. For a task, designated "M", the supervisor should take steps to insure that the capability is firmly established and that competency in this area is kept up. Also, for a "maintenance" task one would expect the individual to be able to perform at the designated level on more difficult and complex issues and jobs.

Tasks marked with "C" should be monitored to make sure the capability is being fully developed. These critical tasks also serve as the basis for promotion into grades 9, 11, and 12 as well as the basis for corrective action if an individual continues to perform below par for his or her grade level.

The developmental task indicator "D" identifies aspects of the job which the staffmember should begin to develop skill in performing in order to move to or become competitive for the next higher grade. Supervisors and subordinates should continually look for opportunities to provide and assess experiences which will foster career advancement.

## SECTION V

## BARS PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

### What are "BARS"?

The term "BARS" is an acronym which stands for "Behaviorally Anchored Rating Statements." As the name implies, BARS are oriented toward describing behavior as opposed to traits. Throughout the process of development of BARS there is a constant emphasis on making them observable, measurable and relevant. The BARS standards take the form of "examples" of behavior which would typify the performance of an individual who would merit various adjective descriptors.

Each performance level is "anchored" by several BARS statements. These statements act as a dictionary or thesaurus. That is, they serve to define the various levels of performance in more readily observable terms. Each BARS statement is essentially a synonym for the corresponding adjective performance level. That is, they describe typical behaviors which an individual would have to routinely exhibit in order to warrant being rated at the level.

One of the problems in establishing performance standards revolves around the issues of perspective and visibility. Typically, individual supervisors have not supervised enough employees of a given grade level to develop a reliable picture of what organizational consequences correspond to various kinds of job behavior. On the other hand, the behavior of the individual on a particular assignment is not visible to enough different supervisors to allow for the application of an institutional perspective by consensus. The BARS technology allows this gap to be bridged.

Figure 3 depicts the BARS approach. By soliciting the views of many supervisors, a modal correspondence can be drawn between specific behaviors and the kind of consequence it deserves. Once this is done, the individual supervisor can use that information as a yardstick in comparison with the behavior of a specific subordinate. The process therefore allows for a bridge between those things which are within the field of vision of the organization and those which are within the field of vision of the supervisor.

### How were the BARS Standards Developed?

The BARS standards were developed through a series of workshops held with auditors and supervisors at each grade

FIGURE 3

THE "BARS" APPROACH

| ORGANIZATIONAL CONSEQUENCES | PERFORMANCE STANDARDS | IND PERF |
|---|---|---|
| **EXCEPTIONAL:** EXCEEDS POSITION REQUIREMENTS AT A HIGH ENOUGH LEVEL TO NOT ONLY BE HIGHLY COMPETITIVE FOR GREATER RESPONSIBILITY BUT ALSO WARRANT SPECIAL COMMENDATION. | BARS STANDARDS | "JOB F |
| **SUPERIOR:** CONSISTENTLY ABOVE POSITION DESCRIPTION STANDARDS FOR PRESENT GRADE, WARRANTS CONSIDERATION FOR GREATER RESPONSIBILITY | | |
| **PROFICIENT:** ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF COMPETENCE, GENERALLY EQUAL TO THE POSITION DESCRIPTION STANDARDS EXPECTED OF A FULLY-QUALIFIED INCUMBENT. | | |
| **BORDERLINE:** BORDERLINE LEVEL OF COMPETENCE, WARRANTS CLOSE MONITORING, SPECIAL COUNSELING AND COACHING. PROLONGED OPERATION AT THIS LEVEL WARRANTS POSSIBLE PROBATION AND/OR NOT GRANTING A WITHIN-GRADE INCREASE. | | |
| **UNACCEPTABLE:** UNSATISFACTORY, SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR REASSIGNMENT, REMOVAL, REDUCTION IN GRADE, OR OUTPLACEMENT. | | |

WITHIN THE FIELD OF VISION OF THE ORGANIZATION

WITHIN THE FIELD OF
OF THE SUPERVISC

level. The workshop participants were asked to write behavioral statements describing instances of high, average, and low performance in each of the eight job dimensions. The pool of draft BARS statements were then put through a process called "retranslation". This was done by preparing a questionnaire for each grade level which asked respondents to examine the appropriateness of each statement to the specific job dimension and to rate the performance level the statement represented on a scale from 1 to 7. The questionnaires were sent to a representative sample of 50 auditors in each grade level (7-14).

The first analysis performed on the questionnaire data dealt with the issue of applicability of the statements to a particular dimension. Any statement which was confirmed as belonging under its target dimension by less than 90% of the respondents was discarded.

The second analysis was aimed at establishing the performance level which the statements represented. While respondents were asked to rate the statements from 1 to 7, their ratings seemed to cluster into only 5 levels of performance, Therefore it was decided that asking supervisors to distinguish seven levels of performance was not realistic and that the final set of standards should utilize only five levels.

The narrative definitions of those levels are as follows:

<u>EXCEPTIONAL</u>: Continuously exceeds position requirements at a high enough level to not only be highly competitive for greater responsibility but also warrant special commendation.

<u>SUPERIOR</u>: Consistently above position description standards for present grade, warrants consideration for greater responsibility.

<u>PROFICIENT</u>: Acceptable level of competence, generally equal to the position description standards expected of a fully-qualified incumbent.

<u>BORDERLINE</u>: Borderline level of competence, warrants close monitoring, special counseling and/or coaching. Prolonged operation at this level warrants possible probation and/or not granting a within-grade increase.

<u>UNACCEPTABLE</u>: Unsatisfactory, should be considered for reassignment, removal, reduction in grade or outplacement.

Selection of statements was done empirically. The two criteria for selection were:

--a mean rating close to a cluster midpoint, and

--a standard deviation of less than 1 (i.e. low scatter around the mean).

Finally, the BARS statements were edited to eliminate those which appeared redundent with other statements at that level and those which conflicted within or across grades.

How to Use the BARS Performance Standards?

The Performance Standards are used to access the individual's performance against standards applicable to his/her current grade level. These standards are descriptions of the quality of performance defined for auditors of different grade levels within each of the eight job dimensions.

As mentioned above, five levels of performance have been defined; Exceptional, Superior, Proficient, Borderline and Unacceptable. By themselves, however, such terms as "Exceptional", "Superior", "Borderline" etc. have very little meaning. They are all relative terms. Each individual will tend to have his/her own subjective definitions. Identical performance might be rated "Exceptional" by one person and "Superior" or "Proficient" by another person. In order to avoid such inequities, there is a need for standards which represent uniform, agreed upon definitions for the various performance levels. In this system these standards are the BARS. A sample set of BARS appears in Exhibit 3.

To use the BARS, the rater would examine each performance level. After reading the anchoring statements for that level, the rater will mentally pose the question of whether the person being evaluated normally exhibits the kinds of behaviors which are represented by the BARS examples for that level. This is explicitly a process of extrapolation. The individual will rarely mirror the exact behaviors referred to in the anchoring statements. Therefore the BARS statements serve as "examples" or "benchmarks" of behavior not as standards which allow a direct, one-to-one comparison to be made.

If the rater determines that the ratee has exhibited the kind of behavior described in the anchoring statements for that level, the next task is to make a judgment concerning the approximate percent of time they performed at that level. These proportional time designations can be made in 5% increments, for example, 0%, 5%, 10% etc., up to 100%.

Gathering data on the distribution of performance rather than just the modal category offers the advantages of; alleviating the rater's problem in describing "mixed" performance,

EXHIBIT 3

Sample Page from BARS Performance Standards

## BARS PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

GS-12
Data Analysis

Exceptional

Secondary issues are tied in so that a complete picture of the topic is given.

Important areas not covered by audit guidelines are included and recommendations are made to include the area in the final product.

Develops unique and resourceful ways of analyzing data which help speed up the job.

Quickly and accurately identifies weaknesses in the data analysis and is able to take corrective action.

Superior

Audit guidelines are satisfied and issues not specified by them are brought out and identified for further work. Agency attitude and anticipated responses are assessed.

Identifies areas where FGMS or other specialized analysis or aid would be beneficial to the job.

Integrates several sources of information into a cohesive overall analysis in a complex multi-region job.

Proficient

Produces summaries identifying weaknesses and problems in data to determine the necessity of additional data or appropriate cautionary statements.

Data collection results are accurate. Analysis identifies areas needing more work but audit guidelines are satisfied by the product.

Develops logical conclusions from available data. Identifies unsubstantiated statements.

Requires minimal length of time to get "up to speed" on data collected by other people.

Borderline

Analysis must be checked and recomputed. Under close supervison the individual produces a minimally acceptable product.

Has difficulty in identifying reportable findings.

Applies inappropriate standards or criteria to the data.

Unacceptable

Accepts agency comments at face value and does not follow through even on most obvious inconsistencies.

Unable to analyze simple data without constant supervision. Workproduct is typically in error and must be redone by supervisor or reassigned to other personnel.

Stretches the evidence beyond what is justifiable to support a conclusion.

Ignores or throws out data which does not support a predetermined conclusion.

allowing for more finite distinctions in performance (e.g., "consistent superior", "high proficient", etc.), and offering some information on developmental needs without distorting the overall assessment.

Raters would go through this process for each of the five performance levels for each job dimension relevant to the individual's assessment. They should make sure that the sum of the percentages indicated for each job dimension total to 100%.

Remember, it is not necessary to perform the exact activities described in the BARS statements of a given level in order to be rated at that level. The listed BARS statements are only examples. They are neither exhaustive nor all inclusive. They are meant to serve as a basis for the rater to extrapolate the "meaning" of each level for comparison with the actual performance he or she observed. If the ratee has not performed the activities cited in the anchoring statements for the "Exceptional" level, he or she could still be rated at that level if the rater feels they have performed activities of equivalent difficulty and quality.

## SECTION VI

## ASSESSMENT GUIDES

### What are the Assessment Guides?

To tell an individual that you see them performing between the "Proficient" and "Borderline" levels on any given dimension of the job, in and of itself, does not give them enough information that they can improve their performance. In order for performance improvement to occur, more specific feedback is necessary. This function is facilitated by the use of Assessment Guides.

Close examination of the BARS statements within any of the eight job dimensions will reveal certain important themes which are incorporated into the statements. These themes or sub-elements are the underpinning of each dimension. They refer to factors which differentiate between effective and ineffective performance and gradations between these levels.

The Assessment Guides are used to provide the individual with more explicit direction on how to improve performance. These criteria also act as a checklist to insure that supervisors pay attention to and provide feedback on the most important aspects of the job.

### How were the Assessment Guides Developed?

The Assessment Guides are a derivative of the BARS standards. A group of subject matter experts examined the pool of BARS items produced by the various workshops in order to determine what aspects of the dimensions the author of a particular item was trying to tap. This process of extrapolation identified from four to ten criteria within each dimension which the authors of the BARS statements appeared to be using as focal points.

### How to Use the Assessment Guides?

The Assessment Guides appear on the Form 563 along with a brief definition. Provided below them is space for writing the narrative to be used in feeding back information to the subordinate and the organization. It is not necessary, however, to address each of the Assessment Guides in the narrative. Only those which the rater considers important and relevant to the specific situation he or she is rating should be addressed.

The Assessment Guides come into play at several points in the performance appraisal process. When orienting the individual to the job, the supervisor and subordinate should discuss the guides and interpret them in relation to the specific job at hand. This allows them to add some specificity to what might otherwise be relatively abstract and subjective criteria. In this way, the Assessment Guides are made job-specific and provide a more concrete reference point for the end-of-assignment appraisal.

## SECTION VII

## PREPARATION OF THE END-OF-ASSIGNMENT PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL (GAO FORM 563)

The End-of-Assignment Performance Appraisal (GAO Form 563) is the central instrument for gathering performance data. It is the key document which provides the information necessary for the various uses of performance appraisal results. Its prominant position in the performance appraisal process requires that it be complete, informative, and accurate.

The form (see Appendix A) consists of five parts. Section I involves a description of the job with special emphasis on the individual's specific role and responsibilities and any special circumstances or conditions. Section II involves a narrative assessment of the individual's particular accomplishments and contributions. Section III requires a narrative assessment of the individual's performance on the various job dimensions which correspond to his or her assigned tasks. This part also calls for an overall assessment using the BARS performance standards. Section IV provides a space for rater and ratee comments. The fifth part is the Development Suggestions Sheet where the rater can indicate the kinds of training or future assignments which are recommended to further develop the individual's capabilities.

### Cover Page

The first page of the form asks for certain administrative information about the rating. Spaces are provided for the name of the ratee, the period covered by the rating, the number of staff days involved, the individual's position on the team and the date and method of counseling. There are also spaces provided for the signatures of the ratee, the rater, the team leader if he or she was not the rater, and a reviewer from the ratee's home unit.

### Section 1

The purpose of Section I of the form is to provide information regarding the type and quality of experience which the individual received on this assignment. This information is necessary in order to place the individual's performance in the proper context and to maintain a record of the kinds of jobs the person has had experience in:

Item 1: Title and job code.

Item 2: A brief summary of the objectives of the assignment.

Item 3: A brief description of how the ratee's home unit was involved as well as any unusual circumstances, problems, constraints, etc. which would be useful in interpreting the appraisal.

Item 4: A detailed description of the specific tasks and/or responsibilities which were assigned to the individual. This item provides the home unit with important information on the tasks in which the individual has had experience and gives them valuable data for comparing different ratees on different jobs.

Item 5: A description of the individual's supervisory responsibilities (if any).

Item 6: Information on the extent to which the rater had the opportunity to observe the performance of the ratee first-hand.

Section II

The purpose of this section is to provide information on the results achieved by the ratee. Raters are to describe the accomplishments or results directly attributable to the individual. This information on the results component of an individual's performance will be used to determine whether the individual merits special commendation or award and as an input into other reward systems, particularly pay and promotions. Outstanding contribution to a group or team product is also relevant and should be noted.

Since accomplishment, in terms of quality, quantity, timeliness, etc., plays an important role in reward and other personnel action decisions, there is a need to get sufficient information on these aspects of a person's performance. However, in assessing individual accomplishments it is essential to keep in mind the limits of the indvidual's responsibility and authority. It is quite conceivable that an individual could have produced high quality results and yet the job failed for reasons beyond their control. The converse is also true, the total job being a success while the individual's portion of that job was not.

What is being sought in this section is an assessment of the results of those segments, issues, products, etc. for which the individual had primary responsibility. Furthermore, the rater should provide comments on the degree to which the various assignment plan decision areas such as issues, customer timing, cost and communication method were satisfied.

Section III

The purpose of Section III is to provide information on how well the ratee performed the work processes through which the results were accomplished. This information is essential for development and improvement of performance.

This part of the Form 563 contains a separate page for each of the eight job dimensions. Each page has three sections. Listed at the top are the Assessment Guides which are relevant to that job dimension. Next, there is a space for the rater to use for writing the narrative appraisal. At the bottom is the overall assessment section where the BARS appraisal is recorded.

Filling out each page of Section III is basically a four-step process. Each step should be performed sequentially on a dimension-by-dimension basis. Going through all the steps for each dimension before moving on to the next helps assure that each dimension will be evaluated independently.

(1) The first step involves the determination of the relevance of the particular dimension to the individual's involvement on the job. Any dimensions which are not relevant should have been noted during performance planning. The individual should only be rated on those areas which are applicable to their specific responsibilities. If an individual was not involved in this dimension, this would be noted and the rater would proceed to the next dimension.

In order to determine the relevance of the dimension to the individual, the rater should be thoroughly familiar with the kinds of activities included under the dimension. A review of the Task Standards will not only serve this purpose, but also re-familiarize the rater with the kinds of activities a staff member of that grade should be able to perform.

Once it has beed determined that the dimension is relevant, the rater should have in mind the specific tasks or aspects of the individual's assignment that will be evaluated under this dimension. This will facilitate focusing the appraisal on the individual's behavior and outputs.

(2) The second step involves examination of the Assessment Guides which underlie that particular dimension. In addition, any criteria established for evaluating the product or segments for which the individual was responsible should also be reviewed.

(3) The third step involves consideration of the individual's behaviors and outputs relative to the criteria identified in Step 2. The rater should carefully prepare a narrative appraisal capable of informing both the individual and the home unit of the individual's performance. Particular attention should be paid to recalling events, circumstances, situations, etc. which could be used to describe the individual's performance or represent it as examples.

(4) The fourth step involves making an overall assessment for the dimension. In order to gain greater uniformity and equity across different supervisors and different organizational units, the BARS Performance Standards are used as the basis for the overall assessment. As described earlier, the BARS appraisal is made by allocating percentages, in 5% increments, across the five performance levels.

Section IV

The fourth part of the Form 563 provides space for any general comments which the rater may have as well as space for comments which the ratee may wish to provide. Completion of these parts of the form is optional.

Section V

The fifth part of the Form 563 is the Development Suggestions Sheet. Its purpose is to identify the individual's developmental needs and suggest appropriate strategies for satisfying those needs.

The Development Suggestions Sheet has two sections. The first, asks the rater to identify by number any tasks from the Task Standards which the individual should further develop. It also asks the rater to identify, if possible, specific knowledges, skills, or abilities or KSAs which the ratee could improve on. The numbers for these KSAs come from the list of Audit/Evaluation Tasks and Related Competencies (see Exhibit 4 for a sample page). The other part asks the rater to indicate what type of developmental experiences such as training, assignments to certain kinds of jobs, practice on particular activities or functions, assignment of greater responsibility, etc. would benefit the individual and the Office.

Filling out the Development Suggestions Sheet involves four steps.

## EXHIBIT 4

### Sample Page from Competencies Manual



11 - Ability to estimate how long it will take to accomplish given tasks

16 - Knowledge of budgeting procedures

40 - Knowledge of skills to be expected from a given grade level employee

41 - Knowledge of cost of various standard items (travel, personnel, ADP)

32 - Ability to adjust scope to available resources

44 - Knowledge consulting sevices market

11. Write audit program and guidelines in order to define the specific audit steps which will accomplish the audit objectives using CAM, experience from prior audits, and available information regarding the project under investigation.

20 - Knowledge of program evaluation procedures

23 - Ability to adapt data-gathering analysis approaches to best fit situation

24 - Knowledge of the limitations of different data-gathering/analysis methods (reliability, resources required, etc.)

25 - Ability to apply CAM to specific job situation

26 - Ability to sequence tasks and steps in audit

27 - Ability to develop guidances in understandable terms

28 - Ability to formulate clear objectives

29 - Ability to foresee potential data-gathering problems

34 - Ability to define performance criteria

88 - Ability to construct a logical outline

89 - Knowledge of GAO procedures and standards for written formats (Report Manual)

12. Establish milestones and other criteria in order to monitor and assess job progress using the audit program and knowledge of time and resource constraints.

4 - Knowledge of GAO constraints

10 - Ability to break job into discrete tasks

1. First, you would consider each job dimension with a view toward identifying any dimension where the indi-dual has either a remedial or a developmental need.

2. Next, using the Grade Level Task Standards you would try to pinpoint any specific tasks which you feel developmental efforts should be concentrated upon.

3. Then using the Audit/Evaluation Tasks and Related Competencies, you would try to pinpoint particular KSAs which warrant developmental effort.

4. Finally, you would indicate any suggestions you may have concerning appropriate assignments or courses which might address the developmental need.

For example, assume that you are supervising a GS-11. This individual was assigned, among other tasks to scope out a particular segment of the job. According to the Task Standards, this is a task which he should be capable of performing under your direct supervision. After several weeks, it became obvious that he was having substantial problems in completing this task, despite extensive guidance. Eventually, you had to scope the segment yourself.

While the subordinate was attempting to perform the task, you gave specific feedback and guidance on the particular job at hand. In recalling these events in preparation for the end-of-assignment performance appraisal you concluded that the individual's problem on this task was probably not peculiar to this job. In hopes of being able to provide more specific feedback, you consult the Audit/Evaluation Tasks and Related Competencies. Upon reviewing the KSAs listed under Planning task #11, you concluded that the individual needs further development on competencies #28 (which is "ability to formulate clear objectives") and #26 ("ability to sequence tasks and steps in the audit").

Finally, you may feel that on the next assignment this person receives he should again be given the task of developing a small segment of the job while receiving some step-by-step coaching from their supervisor. These comments would be noted in the space provided.

The Development Suggestion Sheet information should be useful to staff managers in matching individuals to job which enhance their development as well as in programing staff members for training courses. In addition, this data can be useful to the Employee Development group's efforts to keep the training program up-to-date and effective.

The success of this part of the form in accomplishing these objectives is highly dependent upon forthright information. Identifying developmental needs will not penalize the ratee or be used as an offset to the assessment of performance. It must be recognized that it is legitimate, even for very high performers, to have areas where performance could be improved or additional skills developed.

## SECTION VIII

## HOW TO PREPARE AN EFFECTIVE APPRAISAL

Writing effective, informative appraisals is not easy. Often mentioned problems are poor, uninformative, "boiler plate" narratives. Managers frequently indicate that such appraisals are not very useful in helping them make meaningful distinctions between staff members since they are often strewn with impressive sounding adjectives and adverbs but contain little concrete information to back up the evaluation. Another problem stems from raters describing what an individual did but not how well it was done. To alleviate these kinds of problems it is important that raters improve their skills in observing and recording job performance.

### Observing Performance

The most objective and accurate appraisal comes from a rater who has ample information about the ratee's job performance. The information should be gathered from representative observation throughout the appraisal period.

When observing ratee performance, try to remember the following hints.

1. Observe on as many occasions as possible in order to get a representative sample of performance over the appraisal period.

2. Note typical, as well as extraordinary performance. It is as important to note how a ratee performs day-in and day-out as it is when a deadline has been moved up drastically to add urgency to the work.

3. Try not to be overly influenced by negative, as opposed to positive, behavior; or by first impressions; or by behavior exhibited right before you complete the appraisal.

4. Be sensitive to your own biases and feelings and how they may influence a rating. Attacking a problem in a manner different than you would may not automatically signal less than effective performance. It is a natural tendency to be a bit more suspect of those who do not look, act or think like ourselves. The rater must attempt to preclude such bias from his or her rating.

5. Try to identify the degree to which the performance is within the control and responsibility of the ratee.

6. Observe the ratee on all major job tasks and activities.

7. Observation and recording of behavior and the judgment of that behavior should be separate activities for raters. During the appraisal period try to concentrate primarily on observation. Add the judgment as the forms are to be completed or as information is fed back to ratees about their performance.

Recording Performance

If the supervisor waits until the end of the individual's involvement on the job before preparing for the performance appraisal session, he or she faces a monumental task. The longer the individual has been assigned to the job, the more difficult it will be to prepare a thorough and accurate appraisal. Our minds function in such a way that significant information is apt to be lost. Research studies have found that ratings tend to systematically exclude certain information if they cover too long a time period. People's recall of events tends to be greater for more recent events. As we go further back in time, events are likely to be recalled only if they had a highly significant effect and the details of performance will tend to be lost or distorted. For these reasons, ratings covering too long a time span are likely to be uneven, inaccurate and less informative.

In order to minimize these problems, it is necessary to develop a method of periodically noting information about the individual's performance. In addition, keeping a running record on an individual's performance helps spread out the task of performance appraisal so that completion of the form at the end of the period is less time consuming.

Such a journal or anecdotal record system can be as simple or complex as the supervisor likes. Each individual should develop a system that they are comfortable with in terms of its form, level of detail, frequency of entries, etc. To the extent that the supervisor has maintained a good running account of the subordinate's performance, the end-of-assignment appraisal will be much easier to prepare, more thorough and more accurate. It is also a good idea for subordinates to maintain such a record.

Jotting down a few notes about ratee's performance can be extremely useful when; ratees can only be observed infrequently or for a short duration; the ratee's job tasks and activities shift frequently; or the rating period is lengthy. Some supervisors have found it convenient to make such notes on a regular, routine basis such as the time when progress reports are prepared or time sheets submitted. Other supervisors have found it effective to make appraisal notes as tasks are accomplished or as products are turned in. Some supervisors use a notebook, some use index cards and others use any piece of paper which may be available and collect them in an envelope. Whatever form or frequency is selected, the supervisor will find that such a procedure spreads out the burden of appraisal and greatly facilitates the preparation of appraisal documents at the finish of the job.

Examples:

| | |
|---|---|
| November 17 | Tom turned in his chapter outline 3 days earlier than expected. It was generally good but needed to be revised to include information on cost overruns. |
| December 3 | Mary Ann's use of unanticipated leave has been increasing which resulted in some delays in our progress. I spoke with her on this and we established a goal of no further leave usage until her chapter is drafted. |
| March 14 | Jim blew up in meeting causing agency official to terminate the interview. |
| September 21 | Carol identified new area where it appears there is significant waste. We requested and received approval to expand our scope to include this area. |

Aside from performance information, this kind of journal can also be used to make notations about specific tasks or products which the individual was assigned along with any relevant information on time frames, evaluation criteria, etc. That is, it can also serve as a mechanism for maintaining an updated record of the individual's assigned responsibilities.

The purpose of anecdotal records is to augment the rater's memory and provide data which will facilitate the performance feedback session and filling out the appraisal narrative. When making anecdotal records try to remember the following:

1. Anything worth making a note of is also worth immediate verbal feedback to the ratee. You shouldn't wait until the end of the period to discuss it.

2. Such records, or supervisor's notes, are legal provided you do not show them to others and destroy them after you have completed the written appraisal.

3. Notes should be brief, yet contain all pertinent information such as date, performance observed and its consequences.

4. Notes should attempt to reflect <u>both</u> positive and negative performance.

5. For equity's sake, notes should be kept on all subordinates.

6. Notes should be kept in a safe place where they are readily retrievable, yet not visible to ratees or others.

7. Notes should describe factual information, not just summary judgements.

<u>Writing Effective Narratives</u>

The key to an informative and effective performance appraisal using GAO Form 563 is the narrative assessment of each applicable job dimension. It is this part of the appraisal that is particularly useful to the individual's home unit. It gives them the specifics they need to substantiate the decisions they must make regarding pay, promotions, retention, etc.

Remember that the information contained in the narrative is very important for both feedback and documentation purposes. It must be very specific and behaviorally-based in order to assist improving future performance and give home units the information they need to document personnel actions. Statements describing actual behavior, using action verbs, and in the language of the job incumbents are most useful.

GAO Form 563 (1-80)
(Supersedes WRO-30)

# U.S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
# END-Of-ASSIGNMENT PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

Ratee: ______________________________

Grade: __________ Division/Region/Office ______________________________

Rating Period: From ______________________________ To ______________________________

Total Staff Days: ______________________________ Team Position: ______________________________

Date of Counseling Session: ______________________________

Method of Counseling: Face-to-face ______________________________ Telephone ______________________________

| SIGNATURES | | DIV/REG | DATE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rater (if other than the team leader) | ______________ | ________ | ________ |
| Team Leader | ______________ | ________ | ________ |
| Ratee | ______________ | ________ | ________ |
| Reviewer | ______________ | ________ | ________ |

The signatures of the ratee and the rater indicate that the appraisal has been discussed and the ratee was counseled on his/her performance. By signing, the ratee does not necessarily indicate agreement with the performance appraisal. Space is provided in Section IV for ratee comments, which are optional.

## PART I. ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND

1. Job Title and Job Code:

2. Summary of assignment objectives:

3. Describe the ratee's home unit's role in the assignment, the type of final product he/she was responsible for, and any unusual job features (e.g., an atypical job environment or staffing pattern, access to records problems, etc.), or other constraints or enhancements.

4. Describe any audit segments, issues, or other responsibilities *specifically assigned to the ratee.* Also, indicate any *unusual* circumstances bearing on the difficulty or complexity of the work this person was accountable for.

5. Describe the number of staff (if any) that this person supervised, their grades, the length of supervision, and the extent of supervisory responsibilities.

6. How often did you have an opportunity to directly observe the ratee's performance?

____________ Daily or several times a week
____________ About once a week to several times a month
____________ About once a month
____________ Once every several months or only at kickoff, midpoint, or exit conferences
____________ Never

## PART II. ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Discuss assignment results in terms of accomplishments which *the ratee achieved* (either personally or by direction) or made *a substantial contribution* toward. Provide comments on the degree to which the objectives, with regard to the various job decision areas (issues, customer, timing, cost, and communication method), were satisfied.

## PART III. JOB PLANNING

### ASSESSMENT GUIDES:

A. Completeness—plans include all the necessary steps and thoroughly address all job objectives.

B. Logical/Orderly—plans flow in a logical orderly pattern which makes it easy to follow.

C. Practicality—plans consider practical limitations and constraints

D. Fexibility—plans are flexible to allow for changes.

E. Timeliness—plans are prepared well enough in advance to allow sufficient time for review.

F. Sense of Priorities—takes into account differences in priorites of tasks to be performed.

G. Anticipation of Contingencies—plans take into account events which are likely to occur and identify alternatives.

H. Sufficient Detail—plans include enough specifics and details to give a complete and informative picture.

I. Adherence to Policy and Procedures—planning process is conducted in accordance with office-wide policies and procedures

J. Creativeness—conceives of new ideas of approaches.

### NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT WITH SUPPORTING EXAMPLES:

### OVERALL ASSESSMENT:

| Unacceptable | Borderline | Proficient | Superior | Exceptional |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| % | % | % | % | % |

# DATA GATHERING AND DOCUMENTATION

## ASSESSMENT GUIDES:

A. Completeness—gathers *all* data necessary and does not have to go back later.

B. Accuracy—gathers data in an accurate, reliable fashion.

C. Probing—alert to new or additional areas of questioning, follows up on questions, etc.

D. Discriminating—able to discriminate relevant from irrelevant and reliable from unreliable.

E. Data Gathering Techniques—Knowledge of and skill in using a variety of data gathering methods (i.e., records, search, interview, questionnaire, structured observation, experiment, etc.).

F. Sources of Data—Knowledge of a variety of sources of data and information.

G. Organized/Orderly—assembles data and workpapers in an orderly, organized way.

H. Adherence to Procedures—data, workpapers, and summaries are prepared in accordance with Office procedures and formats.

I. Facilitates Reporting—data assembled and organized in such a way that reporting the data orally or in written form is facilitated.

J. Data Display and Presentation—knowledge and appropriate use of a variety of methods of displaying or presenting data.

## NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT WITH SUPPORTING EXAMPLES:

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT:

| Unacceptable | Borderline | Proficient | Superior | Exceptional |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| % | % | % | % | % |

# DATA ANALYSIS

**ASSESSMENT GUIDES:**

A. Timeliness—the data analysis is completed early or at the right time.

B. Completeness—the data analysis includes all the necessary steps and thoroughly addresses the audit subject matter.

C. Conciseness—the data analysis is presented efficiently and without elaboration or superfluous details.

D. Logic—the data analysis is performed in a reasonable manner and can be demonstrated to be valid or relevant.

E. Application of Analytical Techniques—the most appropriate method of analyzing the data is selected.

F. Development of Conclusions—the data analysis is structured and performed such that the conclusions are well-supported.

**NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT WITH SUPPORTING EXAMPLES:**

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT:**

| Unacceptable | Borderline | Proficient | Superior | Exceptional |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| % | % | % | % | % |

# WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

**ASSESSMENT GUIDES:**

A. Technical Aspects—uses correct grammar, sentence structure, style, etc.

B. Organization—written material is well organized and appears in a logical order.

C. Clarity—the meaning and message of written material is clear.

D. Completeness/Conciseness—written material is complete and yet does not have additional, unnecessary verbage.

E. Convincingness—written material is authoritative and convincing

F. Considers Audience—written material is tailored to the intended audience.

G. Timeliness—does not take an inordinate amount of time to produce a decent written product.

**NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT WITH SUPPORTING EXAMPLES:**

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT:**

| Unacceptable | Borderline | Proficient | Superior | Exceptional |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| % | % | % | % | % |

# ORAL COMMUNICATION

**ASSESSMENT GUIDES:**

A. Visual Presentation—self-confident appearance, speaks at ease, without distracting motions or movement, etc.

B. Oral Presentation—speaks clearly, at a good pace, in an even tone, etc.

C. Organization/Clarity—presentations are clear, well organized, and flow in a smooth logical order.

D. Considers Situation—varies presentation according to audience, time available, setting, etc.

E. Thinks on Feet—not easily shaken by unanticipated question or interruption, is responsive to questions.

F. Active Listening—listens and comprehends oral presentation.

**NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT WITH SUPPORTING EXAMPLES:**

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT:**

| Unacceptable | Borderline | Proficient | Superior | Exceptional |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| % | % | % | % | % |

## ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES

### ASSESSMENT GUIDES:

A. Accuracy—administrative reports are prepared in an accurate reliable manner.

B. Timeliness—administrative reports and duties are performed on time and without an excessive amount of effort.

C. Knowledgeable about Requirements—has knowledge about the requirements and procedures for accomplishing various administrative functions.

D. Perspective—gives administrative duties the appropriate amount of emphasis and effort.

### NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT WITH SUPPORTING EXAMPLES:

### OVERALL ASSESSMENT:

| Unacceptable | Borderline | Proficient | Superior | Exceptional |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| % | % | % | % | % |

## MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS AND AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ENVIRONMENT

### ASSESSMENT GUIDES:

A. Fair/Equitable—treats others in a fair and equitable manner.

B. Cooperative—gets along well with others, not overly competitive, etc.

C. Tactful—deals tactfully with others, especially when interacting with hostile or sensitive people.

D. Courteous—treats others in a courteous and polite manner.

E. Open—shares information as appropriate with others.

F. Motivating—has a beneficial influence on the morale and motivation of others.

### NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT WITH SUPPORTING EXAMPLES:

### OVERALL ASSESSMENT:

| Unacceptable | Borderline | Proficient | Superior | Exceptional |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| % | % | % | % | % |

## SUPERVISION

**ASSESSMENT GUIDES:**

A. Fair/Equitable—treats all subordinates in an equitable and fair manner.

B. Supportive—maintains the kind of environment where subordinates feel free to approach with problem or questions.

C. Openness—open to ideas or suggestions from below.

D. Facilitative—actively assists subordinates in their tasks and helps them learn or figure out new tasks.

E. Develops Staff—identifies staff developmental needs and uses the job to improve the skills of subordinates.

F. Goal Oriented—keeps the objective in mind and continually moves the group toward its accomplishment.

G. Assertive/Authoritative—leaves no doubt concerning who is in charge and yet does not overdominate.

H. Appropriate Delegation—distributes work among subordinates rather than trying to do it all but avoids overtaxing subordinates.

**NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT WITH SUPPORTING EXAMPLES:**

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT:**

| Unacceptable | Borderline | Proficient | Superior | Exceptional |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| % | % | % | % | % |

## PART IV.

A. Other rater comments (optional):

B. Ratee comments (optional):

## PART V. DEVELOPMENT SUGGESTIONS SHEET

A. Identify (*by number*) within the appropriate job dimension any specific tasks or activities *and* any specific knowledges, skills, or abilities which you feel the ratee should concentrate developmental efforts upon.

| DIMENSION # | | TASK(S) # | SPECIFIC KSA(S) # |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Job Planning | | |
| 2 | Data Gathering & Documentation | | |
| 3 | Data Analysis | | |
| 4 | Written Communication | | |
| 5 | Oral Communication | | |
| 6 | Administrative Duties | | |
| 7 | Maintaining Effective Working Relationships and Equal Opportunity | | |
| 8 | Supervision | | |

B. Identify any kinds of training, experiences, or assignments you feel would benefit the ratee's development.

NOTE: This information is intended to be used in the assignment of staff members to upcoming jobs and training. It will also be used by the Training Branch of Personnel to update the training and employee development program.

Indicate the ratee's . . . grade level ______________________ home unit ______________________



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