



United States Department of Agriculture

Research, Education, and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

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SUBJECT: New Performance Requirements for Supervisory Employees

TO: Administrator's Council

FROM: Edward B. Knippling
Administrator

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) is implementing a variety of initiatives and requirements in the performance management arena as a result of the 'Strategic Management of Human Capital' pillar of the President's Management Agenda. Among these is implementation of a fiscal year (FY) performance appraisal cycle which the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) will effect October 1, 2008. USDA, in its updated Departmental Regulation on performance management, is also requiring that the performance plans of all supervisory employees contain a performance element and standard that specifically addresses supervisory responsibilities. In addition, we must also incorporate customer/stakeholder perspectives regarding work activities and decisions into supervisory performance plans.

Successful supervision and leadership of the ARS workforce is critical to meeting the goals and objectives of our mission. With flat budgets and ever-rising expectations regarding the research and services we perform, it is more important than ever to clarify and formalize the performance goals of supervisors in the Agency. High quality supervision and leadership enable employees to be creative and innovative, perform with a clear sense of purpose, address the needs and interests of customers and stakeholders, and contribute to the superior reputation ARS enjoys.

In order to foster a consistent view of the responsibilities and expectations for all supervisors, ARS is implementing a new performance element and standard for "Supervision and Human Capital Management" (Attachment 1). This element and standard is to be added to the performance plans of all non-Senior Executive Service official supervisors in ARS beginning with the FY 2009 performance appraisal cycle. Official supervisors are those whose classification title includes "Supervisory," "Officer," or "Director." This new performance element and standard are to replace any similar elements and standards you are currently using. You may supplement the standard with additional requirements, but the full text of the attached element and standard are to be used.



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In addition to the "Supervision and Human Capital Management" performance element, language regarding customer and stakeholder perspectives of our programs and services is to be added to the performance plans of ARS official supervisors. It is critically important that the needs and interests of our various customers and stakeholders -- internal and/or external ones -- be considered in assessing how well our supervisors and managers are performing. To this end, Attachment 2 provides further information regarding customer and stakeholder perspectives as well as samples and recommendations for incorporating these into supervisory performance plans.

These two new requirements regarding supervisory and leadership performance will help ensure the future of ARS as a science leader in the world community and will meet the USDA requirements addressed above.

Questions regarding the implementation of these requirements may be directed to Theresa Bailey, theresa.bailey@ars.usda.gov, (301) 504-1452, or Casandra Butler, casandra.butler@ars.usda.gov, (301) 504-1470, of the Human Resources Division.

Attachment 1
Performance Element and Standard for
Supervision and Human Capital Management

Performance Element:

Supervision and Human Capital Management

Performance Standard:

Leads by example; promotes an atmosphere of open communication, cooperation and teamwork.

Organizational goals, objectives, priorities, work assignments, and deadlines are clearly communicated to employees. Resources and priorities are adjusted to meet workload demands. Human Capital initiatives and strategies (e.g., performance management system changes, Workforce and Succession Planning) are implemented in accordance with mission area and Agency policy. Employees are encouraged to participate in employee surveys to assist ARS in measuring organizational health, morale, and satisfaction.

Performance plans are aligned with organizational goals, focus on expected results, are equitable, and are established and communicated in a timely manner in accordance with Agency policy. It involves employees in the development of performance plans and/or specific performance goals. Mid-year/progress reviews and annual performance appraisals are completed in a timely manner and are objective. Performance and accomplishments are recognized in a timely manner, utilizing various methods (monetary, non-monetary, time-off). Poor performance, improper conduct and issues of ethical conduct or compliance are identified early and appropriate action is taken promptly.

Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are established and reviewed/updated annually. Within available funding, provides developmental opportunities to ensure that employees possess appropriate competencies for work assignments; utilizes no cost options in employee development including AgLearn and mentoring. IDPs reflect assessment of current employee skills and future skill needs of the unit.

Recruitment plans reflect assessment of potential candidate pools and diversity goals. Hiring selections are made within 45 business days of receiving selection certificates absent extenuating circumstances.

Attachment 2
Guidance on 'Customer/Stakeholder Perspectives'

Every employee in ARS, regardless of position, grade level or location, is responsible for work in which one or more customers or stakeholders have an interest. Customers and stakeholders may be internal (other ARS employees/offices) or external (other USDA agencies, colleges/universities, farmers/producers, industry/commodity groups, the American public, etc). Supervisory employees set expectations for customer and stakeholder interactions and hold their employees accountable for delivering quality products and services. As such, for supervisors the needs, interests and perspectives of customers and stakeholders are critical.

A recent audit of a random sample of ARS performance plans showed that some supervisory plans reflect the importance of providing quality services and products to customer and stakeholder perspectives. Beginning with FY 2009, the performance plans of **all** official supervisors must incorporate expectations about customer and stakeholder perspectives. To this end, the following process should be followed:

1. Review the performance elements and standards for supervisory employees to determine whether at least one element/standard addresses or incorporates customer and/or stakeholder perspectives.
2. Review the sample language below to determine whether existing elements/standards could be improved by modifying the element/standard.
3. Where customer/stakeholder perspective is missing from existing plans, select from the statements below and/or develop other appropriate language to incorporate into an existing performance element and standard.

Elements/standards that are good candidates for including customer and/or stakeholder perspectives include elements that address program planning; technology transfer; accomplishment of mission goals or objectives; and/or, customer service or communications.

Sample Language for Customer/Stakeholder Perspectives

You may select one or more of the following statements to incorporate into an appropriate existing performance standard or you may develop a statement that is in keeping with the concept of customer/stakeholder perspectives.

- Customer/stakeholder feedback was analyzed and needs/concerns identified.
- The mission area and Agency's mission, core values, strategic goals and priorities were effectively communicated to customers and other critical stakeholders who were involved in the development of objectives to accomplish those goals.

- Stakeholders are engaged in program priorities; problems and issues of mutual concern are identified and resolved collaboratively.
- Internal and external stakeholder needs and expectations are considered in making decisions, devising solutions, and determining success of work activities.
- Feedback from customers indicates satisfaction with the quality of service delivered, including that the service was provided in a collaborative manner and met the customers' needs; and the quantity and quality of information delivered, including that the information provided increased the customers' understanding of the Agency's programs.