

NOAA Executive Performance Guidelines

1. Performance Planning and Appraisal Forms

Standard Department of Commerce (DOC)-wide SES, ST, SL performance planning and appraisal forms must be used [i.e., *Senior Executive/Professional Performance Agreement (CD-518)* and *Performance Justification Summary*].

2. Performance Planning

2.1 The Rating Official shall establish, in consultation with the senior executive, a written performance plan at the beginning of the appraisal period. Normally, the plan shall be developed with and communicated to the senior executive within 30 days of the beginning of the appraisal period or within 30 days of the executive's assignment to a position.

2.2 A performance plan shall describe the Critical Elements of the senior executive's work and any other relevant performance elements

2.3 An executive's performance plan shall focus on achieving measurable results and:

- a. Reflects both individual and organizational performance expectations; and,
- b. Aligned with Departmental and NOAA strategic goals, objective, outcome, Annual Guidance Memorandum (AGM), the NOAA Balanced Score Card (BSC), Line Office/Staff Office-specific goals such as the Annual Operating Plan (AOP), and/or external commitment within the senior executive's mission-related or functional area of responsibility.

2.4 A performance plan shall describe the expected results and the level of performance expected for fully successful performance against which the senior executive will be appraised.

2.4.1 Performance expectations shall provide for:

- a. Alignment - Clearly linked to an Agency strategic goal, objective, outcome, AGM, and/or other NOAA-specific goal and/or external commitment within the senior executive's mission-related or functional area of responsibility.
- b. Consultation – Performance requirements should be developed with the input and involvement of the senior executive and communicated to him/her at the beginning of the applicable appraisal period, and/or at appropriate times thereafter.
- c. Results - They shall be applicable to the executive's respective areas of responsibility; reflect expected Agency and/or organizational outcomes and outputs, performance targets or metrics, policy/program objectives, and/or milestones; identify specific programmatic crosscutting, external, and partnership-oriented goals or objectives, as applicable; and be stated in terms of observable, measurable, and/or demonstrable performance.
- d. Balance – Expectations must include appropriate measures or indicators of employee and/or customer/stakeholder feedback; quality, quantity, timeliness, and cost effectiveness, as applicable;

and those technical, leadership, and/or managerial competencies or behaviors that contribute to and are necessary to distinguish outstanding performance.

2.4.2 Performance requirements:

a. Shall support the achievement of DOC and NOAA strategic goals, objectives, outcomes, the AGM, the BSC, and/or Line Office/Staff Office-specific goals and/or external commitments within the senior executive's mission-related or functional area of responsibility.

b. Shall be described in terms of clear, credible measures (e.g., quality, quantity, timeliness, and/or cost effectiveness) of performance.

c. Shall be Specific, Measurable, Aggressive yet Achievable, Results-oriented, and Time-based (SMART).

d. May include efficiency measures, programmatic metrics, institutional metrics, external metrics, and/or other metrics as appropriate.

3. Monitoring Performance

3.1 The Rating Official shall monitor the senior executive's performance throughout the appraisal period; October 1st to September 30th of each year.

3.2 The minimum appraisal period is 90 days. Every senior executive who occupies a covered position (i.e., career, general, non-career, ST, and SL) must be covered by performance standards for a minimum of 90 days as of the end of the appraisal cycle (September 30th).

3.3 In accordance with DOC's *Executive Personnel Policy Manual* [Section 12.4(D)] policy, there is no minimum period that the rating official needs to be in place before doing a rating as long as he/she was in place on the last day of the rating period.

3.4 A progress review may be initiated at any time by the Rating Official or the senior executive. However, at a minimum, the Rating Official shall conduct at least one progress review with the executive during the appraisal period.

3.5 Normally, the progress review shall be conducted within 30 days of March 31st (i.e., mid-point of the appraisal period). If at mid-point in the appraisal period a senior executive has been on a performance plan for less than 90 days, a midterm progress review may be conducted or delayed until such time in the appraisal period when a progress review would be more advantageous to the executive; but not later than July 1st.

3.6 Executives that are placed on a plan (e.g. new executives, reassignments, or transferees) or have a plan updated after July 1st of the performance year are not eligible to be rated at the end of the performance year (September 30th).

3.6 The primary purposes of a progress review are to:

a. Discuss the senior executive's level of performance to date; provide feedback on his/her progress in accomplishing the performance expectations described in the performance plan; and provide, when necessary, advice and assistance on how to improve his/her performance.

b. Identify and, if possible, resolve any issues, deficiencies, or problems (e.g., resources) that may be an impediment to the achievement of the individual and/or organizational performance expectations identified in the performance plan.

c. If necessary, revise the performance plan to reflect any new performance expectations or changes to existing performance expectations; changes shall be documented in the performance plan.

3.6 The CD-518 must be initialed and dated by both the Rating Official and the senior executive to document the mid-point progress review.

4. Appraising Performance

4.1 A senior executive shall be given an Annual Summary Rating at the end of the appraisal period (September 30th) on the CD-518. The Annual Summary Rating is not official/final until approved by the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and the Department Executive Resources Board (DERB). Bonus and/or pay increase recommendations are not to be discussed with the executive until approved by the DERB.

4.2 When an Annual Summary Rating cannot be prepared as of September 30 because the senior executive has not served under a performance plan for the minimum appraisal period (90 days), the executive's appraisal period shall be extended to September 30 of the following year. Although the supervisor may determine a Performance Summary Rating any time after the executive has served 90 days under a performance plan, no performance based pay adjustments or other personnel actions may be effected based on this rating unless approved by the Administrator or designee.

4.3 A senior executive must be appraised on the performance outcomes of the Critical Elements in his/her performance plan.

4.4 The appraisal of a senior executive shall be based on both individual and organizational performance, taking into account such factors as:

a. Results achieved in accordance with an Agency strategic goal, objective, outcome, AGM, and/or Agency-specific goal and/or external commitment within the senior executive's mission-related or functional area of responsibility. The results may be identified, for example, by the completion of the Program Assessment Rating Tool or the annual Performance and Accountability Report, and, when possible, shall be described in terms of clear, credible measures of performance (e.g., quality, quantity, timeliness, and/or cost-effectiveness);

b. Customer satisfaction, to the extent applicable;

c. Employee perspectives (which can include verbal or written input from the individual that is to be rated);

d. Subordinate employees (the effectiveness, productivity, and performance quality of the employees for whom the senior executive is responsible for): and,

e. Meeting equal employment opportunity, diversity, and safety goals and complying with the merit system principles.

4.5 No specific mechanisms are prescribed for considering customer, employee, and other stakeholder perspectives. A Rating Official shall use, at his/her discretion, formal mechanisms such

as surveys (e.g., Federal Human Capital Survey) or less formal mechanisms such as unsolicited customer and employee feedback and/or analysis of personnel data (e.g., employee turnover rates, diversity reports, employee grievances).

5. Rating Performance

5.1 The Rating Official shall assign and document on the CD-518 form: 1) a performance element rating level (1 through 5; using only whole and/or “.5” increments) for each element in the performance plan, 2) indicate specific Results/Accomplishments on the CD-518 pertaining to an executive’s respective elements; and, 3) a Performance Summary Rating level (i.e., Initial Summary Rating) of the senior executive’s performance.

5.1.1 In addition, the Rating Official shall prepare an overall two-page performance assessment narrative (i.e., a Narrative Summary) that describes the specific achievements, respective to each element that describes results, and behaviors relating to program/project/functional capabilities, accomplishments and management competencies that justify the Initial Summary Rating.

5.1.2 When an executive has worked across organizational lines or on programs (e.g., details) the Rating Official will consult with other managers who are knowledgeable of the executive’s performance and consider their input when recommending an Initial Summary Rating.

5.1.3 A completed *Senior Executive/Professional Performance Agreement* (CD-518) signed by the Rating Official, Supervisor’s Initial Rating (i.e., performance score), Summary Rating (i.e., adjective rating), and Narrative Summary must be discussed with the executive and signed by the senior executive and his/her supervisor before the Performance Review Board (PRB) convenes.

5.1.4 Rating Officials must communicate to the executive that initial performance ratings, scores, bonus or pay adjustment recommendation **IS NOT** final until approved by the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and the DERB has reviewed and concurred on all documentation.

6. Appeals/Higher Level Review

6.1 A senior executive may provide a written response to the rating official within 5 calendar days of receipt of an Initial Summary Rating per DOC’s *Executive Personnel Policy Manual* (Section 12.12).

6.2 If, after considering the senior executives response, the rating official does not change the senior executives rating per 5 CFR 430.308(b), the senior executive may request a higher level official to review the initial summary rating before the initial rating is provided to the NOAA PRB.

6.3 The higher level review official shall be an individual who was not involved in the initial summary rating process in accordance with DOC’s *Executive Personnel Policy Manual* (Section 12.12 B). The higher level review official will be appointed by the NOAA Director for Workforce Management (WFMO).

6.4 The reviewing official may not change the Rating Official’s Initial Summary Rating but may recommend a different rating to the NOAA PRB.

6.5 The reviewing official shall provide a copy of his/her findings and recommendations to the senior executive, the Rating Official, WFMO, and the PRB.

6.6 Per 5 *CFR* 430.308(f) a senior executive may not appeal the final rating, and the rating is not grievable to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). An executive, however, may request a higher level review prior to the PRB as explained in section 6.3 above.

7. Performance Review Board (PRB) and Final Ratings

7.1 The PRB shall review and evaluate the Initial Summary Rating and, if applicable, any senior executive's response and the comments and recommendation(s) from the higher level reviewing official on the Initial Summary Rating, and conduct any further review needed to make its recommendation. A recommendation to the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere or designee about each senior executive's Annual Summary Rating shall be in writing, and documented on the CD-518. Prior to determining a rating recommendation, the PRB shall consider the following:

a. The relevant program performance assessments as evidenced by the Balanced Score Card (BSC), results from program assessment, or findings/recommendations from other reviews and evaluations.

b. If the PRB considers making any changes to a senior executives element rating, score, and/or initial summary rating, the PRB should consult with the rating official and/or employee to the extent possible before a final recommendation is made to the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere.

b. For supervisory senior executives, the degree to which:

(i) Performance expectations of subordinate employees clearly link to the DOC and NOAA strategic goals, the AGM, the BSC, or organizational, program, or policy objectives.

(ii) Employees' performance is fairly and consistently appraised based on individual and organizational performance results.

(iii) Employees' performance ratings and awards reflect meaningful performance distinctions commensurate with the level of individual performance, responsibility, and progress towards the achievement of the organization's goals and objectives.

7.2 The Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere or designee shall determine the final Annual Summary Rating for each senior executive. In making this determination, the Administrator or designee shall consider the recommendation of the PRB and the overall performance of the organization. Each senior executive shall be provided a copy of his/her Annual Summary Rating once the CD-518 is completed and signed off by the Under Secretary.

8. Preparing for the Next Appraisal Period

8.1 During the appraisal discussion, the Rating Official and senior executive must begin performance planning for the next appraisal period. Normally, a written performance plan shall be provided to the executive within 30 days after the beginning of the new appraisal period.

8.2 At the time of establishing the performance plan for the next performance period managers should work with executives to develop and/or update the Executive Development Plan (EDP) in

accordance with 5 C.F.R. 412.402. EDPs help to enhance existing executive competencies and such other competencies that will strengthen the executive's performance.

9. Details and Position Changes

9.1 The appraisal of a senior executive's performance and the assignment of an Initial Summary Rating at the end of an appraisal period is the responsibility of the Rating Official (i.e., supervisor of record) on that date (September 30th).

9.2 When a senior executive is detailed or temporarily reassigned for 90 days or longer to another position during the appraisal period, the supervisor to whom the executive is detailed or temporarily assigned shall establish performance expectations for the executive and shall appraise the executive's performance in writing. This appraisal shall be considered by the Rating Official when assigning an Initial Summary Rating at the end of the appraisal period.

9.3 When a senior executive changes jobs or transfers to another agency after completing the minimum appraisal period, the Rating Official shall appraise the executive's performance in writing before the executive leaves. This appraisal shall be considered by the gaining supervisor of record when assigning an Initial Summary Rating at the end of the appraisal period.

10. Termination of Appraisal Period

10.1 An appraisal period may be terminated and a Performance Summary Rating assigned if a senior executive has served for at least the minimum appraisal period (90 days) under a performance plan provided that the Rating Official can determine that an adequate basis exists on which to appraise the executive's performance, and there is a need to do so. No pay adjustments or other personnel actions may be effected based on this rating unless approved by the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere or designee. An appraisal period for a career appointee [as defined in 5 U.S.C. 3132(a)(4)] cannot be terminated within 120 days after the beginning of a new Presidential administration.

11. Failure to Meet Performance Expectations

11.1 A supervisor should take appropriate action to address less than Fully Successful performance at any time during the appraisal period. When it is determined that a senior executive's performance is less than Fully Successful, the Rating Official shall develop a plan to assist the executive in improving his/her performance and shall evaluate the executive's performance before an appraisal period can be terminated. The plan may include, but is not limited to, formal training, on-the-job training, counseling, and closer supervision.

12. Using Performance Results

12.1 The results of performance appraisals and ratings shall be used as a basis for adjusting pay, granting awards, making other personnel decisions, and assessing a senior executive's development needs.

11.2 A senior executive with an Annual Summary Rating of Fully Successful or above is eligible to be considered for an SES Performance Award (bonus), an increase in pay, a Presidential Rank Award (after a minimum of three years of "Outstanding" service), and nonmonetary recognition. Non-career SES members are not eligible for bonuses or rank awards.

11.3 A senior executive with an Annual Summary Rating of less than Fully Successful may be considered for a reduction in pay or reassigned to another position [5 U.S.C. 4314(b)].

11.3.1 An agency may reduce a career senior executive's SES rate of basic pay by not more than 10 percent for performance or disciplinary reasons. However, an agency may not reduce a senior executive's rate of basic pay below the rate that was in effect on November 24, 2003 (including any applicable locality payment), for 12 months following the effective date of the new SES pay system (not earlier than January 12, 2005)

11.4 A senior executive who receives an Annual Summary Rating of Unsatisfactory shall be reassigned or transferred to another SES position or removed from the SES.

11.5 A senior executive who receives two Unsatisfactory Annual Summary Ratings in any five-year period or two less than Fully Successful Annual Summary Ratings in any three-year period shall be removed from the SES.

11.6 A senior executive who is removed from the SES for performance and who is eligible under OPM regulations shall be entitled to placement in a position at GS-15 or above (or an equivalent position). An otherwise eligible executive removed from the SES for performance may elect discontinued service retirement or fall back to a GS-15 position. An SES member may not appeal this removal to the MSPB, but may request an informal hearing. For more details on poor performance ratings, consult with the Workforce Management Office.

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