

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

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| Subject: | Performance Management |
| Purpose: | Establishes the Bureau of Reclamation's performance management framework and sets forth the requirements and responsibilities for performance management. The benefits of this Directive and Standard (D&S) are twofold: promotes consistency in implementation and for adherence to performance management requirements and responsibilities; and educates employees and rating officials on the components of performance management. |
| Authority: | 5 U.S.C. 43 – <i>Performance Appraisal</i> ; 5 CFR Part 430 – <i>Performance Management</i> ; Department of the Interior's Departmental Manual (DM), 370 DM 430 , <i>Performance Management System</i> ; and 370 DM 430HB-1 , the <i>Department's Performance Appraisal Handbook</i> , (Revised 09-10). |
| Approving Official: | Director, Policy and Administration |
| Contact: | Human Resources (HR) Policy and Programs Division, 84-58000 |

- 1. Introduction.** This D&S provides Reclamation's supplemental implementation framework for performance management. This D&S must be used in conjunction with 370 DM 430 and the Department's Performance Appraisal Handbook.
- 2. Applicability.** This release applies to all Reclamation employees except Senior Executive Service (SES) members; Senior Level (SL) employees; Presidential appointees; and temporary and/or service employees whose employment is not expected to exceed 120 consecutive calendar days in a 12-month period.
- 3. Definitions.**
 - A. Appraisal Period.** The 12-month period of time, which at the end of the period, employee performance is reviewed and a numerical summary rating is prepared.
 - B. Critical Element.** A work assignment or responsibility of such importance that unsatisfactory performance on the element would result in a determination that an employee's overall performance is Unsatisfactory.
 - C. Employee Performance Appraisal Plan (EPAP) – [Form DI-3100](#).** A written plan consisting of identified critical elements and defined performance standards. The DI-3100 is the Department's and Reclamation's required EPAP form.
 - D. Interim EPAP or Supervisory Performance Appraisal Plan (SPAP).** A written EPAP or SPAP that includes preparing a numerical summary rating when an employee, who has been under a signed EPAP or SPAP for at least 90 calendar days under the same supervisor, changes positions; completes a temporary assignment of more than

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120 calendar days; the employee's rating official leaves the supervisory position more than 90 calendar days before the end of the appraisal period; or the supervisor is prepared to document a level of competence determination for approving a within-grade increase, when the employee's most recent numerical summary rating is not consistent with the defined competency expectations.

- E. **Minimum Rating Period.** Ninety calendar days is the minimum length of time that an employee must be in a position supervised by the rating official and under a signed EPAP or SPAP to receive a numerical summary rating.
- F. **Numerical Summary Rating.** The performance rating prepared at the end of an appraisal period for overall performance evaluated over the entire appraisal period. The numerical summary rating is the average of all rated critical elements and will be one of five available ratings, i.e., Exceptional, Superior, Fully Successful, Minimally Successful, or Unsatisfactory.
- G. **Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).** A written plan that identifies the critical element(s) in which an employee is failing (i.e., Unsatisfactory performance), addresses what is needed for obtaining Minimally Successful performance, identifies assistance that will be provided for improving performance, and specifies the consequences associated with not improving performance within the time period provided.
- H. **Performance Standard.** The expression of the performance threshold(s), requirement(s), or expectation(s) (e.g., expressed measures such as quantity, quality, timeliness, cost effectiveness, and manner of performance) that must be met to be appraised at a particular level of performance.
- I. **Progress Review.** A discussion between a rating official and employee, at least once during the appraisal period, for the purposes of: reviewing the employee's progress and communicating performance on the identified critical elements as compared to the established performance standards, discussing and making revisions to critical elements and/or the defined performance standards, discussing necessary performance improvements, and reviewing and updating Individual Development Plan(s) (if applicable) with identified employee development/training needs.
- J. **Rating Official.** The supervisory official who evaluates the employee's performance and determines the numerical summary rating based on the employee's actual performance.
- K. **Reclamation Leadership Team (RLT).** The RLT is comprised of Reclamation's SES and SL positions.
- L. **Reconsideration Process.** An informal and formal process that an employee enters into for reconsideration of a rating on a particular critical element(s) which, if changed,

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will affect the outcome of the overall numerical summary rating (e.g., Minimally Successful to Fully Successful or Fully Successful to Superior).

- M. **Reviewing Official.** The individual, generally the second-level supervisor, with authority to review and approve numerical summary rating(s) at the Exceptional, Minimally Successful, and Unsatisfactory levels, prior to the rating official discussing the rating with the employee. Additionally, the individual who reviews and decides on formal reconsideration requests submitted by employees.
- N. **SPAP – [Form DI-3100S](#).** A written plan consisting of identified critical elements and defined performance standards. The DI-3100S is the Department's and Reclamation's required SPAP form.

4. Responsibilities.

A. **RLT.** The RLT is responsible for:

- (1) implementing and communicating performance management requirements;
- (2) establishing and approving additional resources, as necessary, for the effective administration of performance management;
- (3) ensuring training is provided to rating officials and employees for effectively carrying out their responsibilities;
- (4) integrating performance management into identifying performance skill gaps and training that is needed to accomplish employee job duties and responsibilities and submitting this information with the annual training needs survey;
- (5) ensuring the method for deriving numerical summary ratings occurs consistently within individual office organizations;
- (6) implementing internal office procedures to review EPAPs and SPAPs periodically during the appraisal period to ensure accuracy and completeness; and
- (7) initiating appropriate management action(s) to ensure that subordinate rating officials are fulfilling their performance management responsibilities.

B. **Director, Policy and Administration.** The Director, Policy and Administration (Human Capital Officer) is responsible for:

- (1) administering an effective performance management framework;
- (2) approving Reclamation's performance management requirements;

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- (3) monitoring and evaluating compliance of the performance management requirements and taking necessary actions to improve or modify requirements as necessary; and
- (4) approving or denying requests for variations from the performance management requirements.

C. Manager, HR Policy and Programs Division. The Manager, HR Policy and Programs Division is responsible for:

- (1) collecting and analyzing data and making recommendations to the RLT for managing and improving performance management requirements;
- (2) ensuring performance management requirements are current and appropriate, and if not, updated accordingly by staff;
- (3) reviewing the quality and consistency of EPAP and SPAP preparation across organizations through periodic reviews, analysis of Human Capital Accountability Review report data, and other review methods, as appropriate; and
- (4) acting as a liaison between the Department and Reclamation on policy interpretation and requests for performance management information.

D. Servicing HR Offices. Servicing HR offices are responsible for:

- (1) providing assistance to rating officials and employees for identifying critical elements and developing measurable, results-oriented performance standards that describe expected results and are unique for each critical element;
- (2) providing necessary training to rating officials so they can effectively carry out their responsibilities for identifying critical elements, developing performance standards, appraising employee performance, and relating the performance management requirements to HR decisions, i.e., rewarding noteworthy performance and/or taking action to improve performance;
- (3) educating employees of their roles and responsibilities associated with performance management requirements;
- (4) providing assistance to rating officials and employees for holding discussions about information contained within the established EPAPs or SPAPs;
- (5) providing assistance to rating officials in working through the informal and formal reconsideration processes;

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- (6) monitoring the submission of and compliance with interim appraisals, progress review discussions, and annual performance appraisals, to ensure components of performance management are met; and
- (7) providing assistance to rating officials for addressing employee performance that falls below the Fully Successful level.

E. Reviewing Officials. Reviewing officials are responsible for:

- (1) reviewing and approving numerical summary ratings of Exceptional, Minimally Successful, and Unsatisfactory;
- (2) reviewing and deciding on formal reconsideration requests submitted by employees;
- (3) in the absence of the rating official or because a rating official has not served in this capacity for at least 90 calendar days, preparing the numerical summary rating and meeting with the employee to discuss the rating and any identified employee development needs; and
- (4) initiating appropriate management action(s) to ensure that subordinate rating officials are fulfilling their performance management responsibilities.

F. Rating Officials. Rating officials are responsible for:

- (1) engaging the employee in the process of identifying critical elements and defining measurable, results-oriented performance standards that describe expected results and are unique for each critical element;
- (2) developing at least one critical performance element, that is linked to the strategic mission and/or Government Performance Results Act goals of the Department, Reclamation, office, and/or work unit;
- (3) ensuring consistency of critical elements and performance standards for employees with similar positions working under similar position descriptions (PDs);
- (4) ensuring proper EPAP or SPAP development by reviewing and updating the employee PDs and discussing with employee(s), at least once a year, any changes to the PD;
- (5) monitoring employee performance during the appraisal period and communicating with employees on an on-going basis the status of their performance as compared to the defined performance standards;

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- (6) conducting at least one progress review for each employee at approximately the mid-point of the appraisal period;
- (7) preparing interim EPAP or SPAP numerical summary ratings, as necessary, before leaving the rating official supervisory position and/or if an employee under their supervision leaves their position after an EPAP or SPAP has been in place for 90 calendar days;
- (8) preparing the numerical summary rating and discussing with the employee the rating and any identified employee development needs;
- (9) discussing with the employee and working to resolve any submitted informal reconsideration request(s);
- (10) recognizing, when possible, employees who demonstrate Superior or Exceptional performance and ensure equity and consistency in consideration for awards within their organization(s);
- (11) assisting the employee throughout the appraisal period in improving aspects of their individual performance identified as needing improvement; and
- (12) advising the reviewing official and seeking advice from the servicing HR office, as soon as it is determined that employee performance has dropped below the Fully Successful level.

G. Employees. Employees are responsible for:

- (1) participating with their rating official, in identifying critical elements and defining measurable, results-oriented performance standards that describe expected results and are unique for each critical element;
- (2) discussing with the rating official changes to the current duties and responsibilities of their PD;
- (3) seeking performance feedback from their rating official, as appropriate;
- (4) inquiring with their rating official on performance management topics to ensure that there is a clear understanding of their job duties and responsibilities associated with the defined measurable, results-oriented performance standards;
- (5) taking necessary action(s) to improve aspects of performance identified as needing improvement; and
- (6) preparing in advance, for both the progress review and end of year annual performance rating discussions with their rating official.

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5. Requirements.

A. General.

- (1) The annual appraisal period is 12 months in length and based on the fiscal year (FY); October 1 to September 30, with transition in FY 2015 to the first, full FY appraisal period.
- (2) On the front page of the EPAP, DI-3100 and the SPAP, DI-3100S forms, the appraisal period will be identified as the FY appraisal period, with the “from” and “to” dates of October 1 to September 30 of the FY.
- (3) Appendix A, Timeline and Process for Performance Management, identifies the required time frames and processes of performance management.

B. Establishing Critical Elements and Performance Standards.

- (1) The rating official, in collaboration with the employee, will develop measurable, results-oriented performance standards at both the Fully Successful and Minimally Successful levels for all employees. The use of the Department’s EPAP or SPAP benchmark performance standards solely by themselves, to define performance standards at the Fully Successful and Minimally Successful levels, is not allowed. EPAP and SPAP performance standards will be augmented with measurable, results-oriented performance standards that describe expected results and are unique for each critical element. If the employee and the rating official are unable to agree on performance standards, the rating official has the final decision as to how the performance standards will be written.
- (2) In defining the Unsatisfactory performance standard for EPAPs and SPAPs, the following performance standard definition will be used for all employees: “Any performance that falls below that which is described as Minimally Successful.”
- (3) Standardized performance standards for certain like positions (i.e., same title, series, grade level, and similarly described duties and responsibilities) are permissible. Critical elements and performance standards will be standardized for positions in which there are a number of employees performing the same duties and responsibilities. In determining whether standardized performance criteria is appropriate for any single occupation or group of positions, consideration must be given to the following: (a) whether the work performed is reasonably identical in terms of required knowledge, skills, and abilities, and (b) whether job conditions or work environments are sufficiently similar so as to preclude any substantial difference in performance expectations. Particular precaution must be taken to ensure that employees are treated equitably in each organization or unit with standardized performance criteria and that actual employee performance is the sole contributing factor for any derived numerical summary rating differences.

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- (4) At the time the EPAP or SPAP is prepared, the rating official will compare the employee's PD with the described critical elements to ensure that each of the critical elements relates to one or more of the major duties and responsibilities assigned in the employee's PD. If they do, the rating official certifies anywhere on the front page of the EPAP or SPAP that the EPAP or SPAP is consistent with the employee's PD. If the EPAP or SPAP does not correspond to the major duties and responsibilities described in the PD, the rating official will contact the servicing HR office within 30 days to discuss revision of the PD. This shall not delay the communication of the EPAP or SPAP with the employee.

C. Progress Reviews.

- (1) The rating official will conduct at least one progress review discussion with each employee during the appraisal period. This review will be completed at approximately the mid-point of the appraisal period, but if not possible at the mid-point, no-later-than 90 calendar days before the end of the appraisal period. Employees covered by the Federal Information Security Management Act require at least two progress reviews during the appraisal period.
- (2) The rating official will discuss the employee's accomplishments and progress toward meeting the performance standards, any necessary revisions to the performance standards due to changes in programs, priorities, or resources, and any performance improvement or training needs. No individual critical element rating or overall numerical summary rating is assigned during, or as a result of, the progress review.
- (3) At the conclusion of the progress review, the rating official and employee will sign and date, Part B of the EPAP or SPAP front page in the spaces provided, to indicate that the progress review has taken place. Any changes to the EPAP or SPAP resulting from the progress review discussion must be noted on the EPAP or SPAP and initialed by both the rating official and employee.
- (4) Progress review documentation is mandatory for employees who are performing at less than Fully Successful. Rating officials will contact the servicing HR office immediately for assistance concerning appropriate documentation, at any time during the appraisal period, for employee(s) performance determined at less than Fully Successful.

D. Rating Employee Performance.

- (1) The rating official will normally be the employee's immediate supervisor. In the event the rating official is not available, the reviewing official will fulfill this responsibility.

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- (2) A narrative summary must be written for each individual critical element rating, except those assigned at the Fully Successful level. The summary will contain examples of the performance that substantiates and explains how the employee's performance achieved the assigned rating. The narrative summaries are recorded on the EPAP or SPAP forms or on an attachment there to.
- (3) In situations where an employee(s) has had a change in a rating official during the last 90 calendar days of the appraisal period and the previous rating official did not prepare an interim EPAP or SPAP before leaving, the new rating official must consult with the reviewing official in deriving employee numerical summary rating(s).

E. Less Than Fully Successful Performance.

(1) Unsatisfactory Performance.

- (a) Whenever a rating official observes employee performance that is Unsatisfactory on any critical element, any time after the minimum rating period (90 calendar days), s/he must promptly initiate special efforts to bring about performance improvements by issuing a PIP. The PIP will afford the employee a reasonable opportunity to improve, with the time period for improving commensurate with the assigned duties and responsibilities. This action must not be postponed until the end of the appraisal period.
- (b) The PIP must include the critical elements and standards that were determined to be rated Unsatisfactory from the original EPAP or SPAP and any written notices/documentation that is in effect at the time of the determination of the Unsatisfactory rating. The PIP must also address what is needed for obtaining Minimally Successful performance, identify assistance that will be provided for improving performance, and the consequences for failing to improve. In all instances, rating officials must seek the advice and assistance of their servicing HR office when putting a PIP in place for an employee.

(2) Minimally Successful Performance.

- (a) Whenever a rating official observes employee performance that is Minimally Successful on any critical element(s), any time after the minimum rating period (90 calendar days), s/he must promptly initiate special efforts to bring about performance improvements and help the employee raise their performance. This action must not be postponed until the end of the appraisal period.
- (b) Although putting a PIP in place for an employee is not mandatory as a result of Minimally Successful performance, a rating official will document efforts

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taken to bring about performance improvements and help the employee raise their performance. In all instances, rating officials must seek the advice and assistance of their servicing HR office when working with employees with Minimally Successful performance.

F. Reconsideration Process.

(1) General.

- (a) An employee may request reconsideration of the critical element rating(s) only if the outcome of the numerical summary rating is affected by changing the disputed critical element rating(s) (e.g., Minimally Successful to Fully Successful or Fully Successful to Superior).
- (b) An employee cannot dispute the number or type of critical elements identified for his/her position or the content of performance standards.

(2) Special Considerations.

- (a) Bargaining unit employees covered by a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) will be governed by the process or procedures outlined in the CBA in the Negotiated Grievance Process.
- (b) In accordance with 370 DM 771 – Administrative Grievance Procedures, 1.7 - Matters Excluded (G), employees cannot grieve numerical summary ratings or individual critical element ratings through the Department's administrative grievance system. All non-bargaining unit employees will use the reconsideration process described in this D&S.

(3) Informal Reconsideration Process.

- (a) An employee is required to discuss the reasons for his/her belief that the individual critical element rating(s) is incorrect with the rating official prior to requesting a formal reconsideration. The informal discussion will take place within 7 calendar days of the employee's receipt of the performance appraisal. The employee will provide the rating official with facts, documents, and rationale supporting his/her belief that a critical element rating(s) is incorrect. If the rating official or the employee is not available to conduct the informal discussion, the employee will request an extension from the servicing HR officer or designee.¹ The rating official must provide a written decision regarding the employee's informal reconsideration request within 7 calendar days of the informal reconsideration discussion.

¹If the servicing HR officer is the employee requesting an extension or the supervisor of an employee requesting an extension, the extension request will be made to the reviewing official.

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- (b) If discussion with the rating official does not resolve the employee's belief that the rating(s) is incorrect, the employee will request a formal reconsideration.

(4) **Formal Reconsideration Process.**

- (a) A formal reconsideration request must be submitted by the employee in writing to the servicing HR officer or designee, within 7 calendar days of receipt of the written informal reconsideration decision from the rating official.² At the time of submission, the request must include the following:
 - (i) a copy of the rating official's written decision on the informal reconsideration request;
 - (ii) the employee's organization, duty station, and telephone number;
 - (iii) a copy of the annual completed performance appraisal for which reconsideration is being requested;
 - (iv) identification of the specific critical element rating(s) for which reconsideration is being requested;
 - (v) an explanation of why the critical element rating(s) is believed to be in error, with supporting documentation and rationale;
 - (vi) the specific action requested of the reviewing official; and
 - (vii) the identity of the employee's designated representative (name, title, address, and telephone number), if applicable.
- (b) The servicing HR officer or designee will review the content of the formal reconsideration request to determine if it is complete and appropriate for acceptance under these procedures.
 - (i) If the servicing HR officer or designee denies the request for reconsideration, s/he will return the request to the employee with a written explanation of the reason(s) for the denial within 7 calendar days of receipt [e.g., the request was not received in the servicing HR office within the 7 calendar day timeframe or changing the rating(s) in question would not impact the overall numerical summary rating].

²When the servicing HR officer is submitting the formal reconsideration request or is the supervisor of an employee submitting the formal reconsideration request, the request will be submitted within 7 calendar days of receipt of the written informal reconsideration decision to the reviewing official. In these circumstances, the reviewing official will follow Paragraphs 5.F.(4)(a) and (b), with the exception of (b)(ii), in acting upon this request.

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- (ii) If the servicing HR officer or designee accepts the request, the servicing HR officer or designee will refer the request for reconsideration to the employee's reviewing official.
- (iii) The reviewing official will have 21 calendar days from receipt of the formal reconsideration request, in which to render a final, written decision.
- (iv) The decision rendered by the reviewing official is final and binding.

(5) **Representation During the Formal Reconsideration Process.**

- (a) If desired by the employee, s/he will be represented during the formal reconsideration process. The servicing HR officer or designee will disallow an employee's choice of a representative if there is a conflict of interest or of position, if the representative's participation would result in unreasonable costs, or if high impact work assignments would be negatively impacted.
- (b) The right to formal reconsideration representation does not include the right to a formal hearing and the appearance of witnesses will not be permitted.

G. **Recordkeeping.** Each servicing HR office is responsible for retaining EPAP and SPAP completed forms for employees of their servicing organizations. The four most current EPAP and SPAP completed appraisals will be filed electronically in the electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF), in the employee performance file. Full implementation of electronic filing of EPAP and SPAP forms in eOPF will occur no later than the end of FY 2016.

H. **Accountability.** Review of the performance management requirements outlined within this D&S will occur during servicing HR Office Accountability Reviews.

Reclamation Manual Transmittal Sheet

Effective Date: _____

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Please ensure that all employees who need this information are forwarded a copy of this release.

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Summary of Changes

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