

The objective of any performance appraisal system is to facilitate communication between supervisors and employees. The goal of performance appraisal is to increase employee productivity. Used correctly, a performance appraisal system can increase employee morale and make a unit function more efficiently and effectively.

OVERVIEW OF THE RATING PROCESS

The Civil Service Performance Planning and Review System (PPR) is based on anniversary dates. This ties the performance appraisal more closely to merit increase decisions. The PPR process is broken into two parts: a **performance planning session** and a **performance review session**. Performance planning is done at the **beginning** of the rating period. The performance review is done at the **end** of the rating period. The rating period runs from the employee's anniversary date to their next anniversary date. The process works like this:

1. The Performance Evaluation Form is first used during the planning session at the beginning of the rating period.
 - The supervisor determines the factors applicable to the job and upon which the employee will be rated.
 - Each factor contains a set of pre-written **performance expectations**. The supervisor adds to or changes those as necessary to properly identify expectations for the position including addressing any job specific needs.
 - The employee and supervisor discuss and review these performance expectations.
 - Additional comments may be added to address goals, training, and related matters for the coming year.
 - When this process is complete, the employee, supervisor, and unit head sign the form under the Performance Planning Session section on Page 1.

This step must be accomplished no later than 30 days after the employee's anniversary date or within 30 days of a new employee's appointment or when an employee changes positions if there is also a substantial change in duties. A new performance planning session may also be conducted when an employee gets a new rating supervisor, when performance expectations change, or any other time the rating supervisor deems appropriate. (Note that this refers to holding a new *planning* session, not a new *review*, although the supervisor may hold *unofficial* reviews to provide feedback to the employee or communicate expectations.) A copy of Page 1 is sent to the AgCenter HRM Office and the original maintained in the unit's files.

2. The next formal step is conducting the employee's performance review. This is done at the end of the rating period. More specifically, Civil Service Rules require that the rating be done during the 60-day period immediately preceding and including the employee's next anniversary date.
 - The performance planning form is pulled from the unit's files and the supervisor and employee meet to conduct the actual review.
 - A rating is made for each factor based upon a comparison of the employee's performance and the performance expectations.
 - Specific notes are made on the form to support the rating.
 - The overall rating is calculated and recorded on the form.

- General comments, assessment of strengths and weaknesses, etc., may be noted on the form. Space is also provided for the employee to write comments.

The employee, supervisor, and unit head sign the form under the Overall Performance Rating section on Page 1. If the employee refuses to sign the form, this should be documented on the form along with the date the rating (or planning) session was conducted. An employee's refusal to sign the form does not change the rating. The supervisor has the authority and responsibility to determine the rating.

Although the only *formal* steps required are the two described above - *performance planning* and *performance review* - performance appraisal does not happen just twice a year. Throughout the year there should be regular feedback between the employee and supervisor. Supervisors should document the employee's performance - positive and negative - to have a better basis on which to make the rating. Documenting performance doesn't have to be a time-consuming process. It may be accomplished by dropping notes in a performance appraisal file, jotting down examples of work in a diary, or making notes on a calendar. Employees may also wish to maintain documentation of their performance. Documentation should be representative of the entire rating period and of overall performance, both positive and negative.

THE PLANNING AND REVIEW CYCLE

As mentioned above, the performance planning session must be held no later than 30 days following the anniversary date. The performance review session must be held within the 60-day period immediately preceding and including the employee's next anniversary date. Another performance planning session must then be held no later than 30 days following the anniversary date. In practice, however, for current employees the rating session for one year and planning session for the following year will likely be conducted at the same meeting. A new form will be used for the new planning session. The AgCenter HRM Office sends notices on a monthly basis regarding required planning and review sessions for the following month.

RATING CRITERIA

Employees are rated on how well they fulfill their assigned responsibilities and on compliance with agency policies and procedures. **Rating factors** and corresponding **performance expectations** facilitate this process. Employees are rated on several factors:

A. Factors which are mandatory for all employees include:

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| <u>Factor 1.</u> Work Product/Product | <u>Factor 5.</u> Adaptability |
| <u>Factor 2.</u> Work Product/Quantity | <u>Factor 6.</u> Communication |
| <u>Factor 3.</u> Dependability | <u>Factor 7.</u> Daily Decision-Making and |
| <u>Factor 4.</u> Cooperativeness | Problem-Solving |

2. Employees may be rated on several established optional factors.

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| <u>Factor 8.</u> Service to Clients/Public |
| <u>Factor 9.</u> Project Planning and Implementation |
| <u>Factor 10.</u> Use of Equipment and Materials |

3. Employees who are supervisors must also be rated on the following supervisory factors.

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| <u>Factor 11.</u> Work Group Management and Leadership |
| <u>Factor 12.</u> Performance Planning and Review of Subordinates |

4. There is also an option to develop job-specific factors. Examples include safety program coordinator duties, special certifications, and recruiting of families for EFNEP.

The rating form includes a definition for each factor and a set of pre-written performance expectations intended to communicate to employees the kinds of performance that are desirable and undesirable.

PERFORMANCE PLANNING AND PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

During the performance planning session, performance expectations are developed and discussed to define more specifically what is expected of employees. Each factor contains a set of pre-written performance expectations. Supervisors should, however, review these expectations and change or supplement them when any of the following apply.

- When there is a need to call attention to a specific performance problem.
- When you want to set a specific goal – e.g., learn a new computer program by March.
- When you want to establish specific procedures for accomplishing one or more tasks – e.g., travel vouchers should be processed within X days of receipt.
- When a factor is not adequately covered by the expectations already given on the PPR form.
- When the pre-written expectation does not apply to or contradicts the requirements for the position in question.

Performance expectations should be specific. They should convey to the employee specific requirements or concerns. To do this, consider the standard questions: *Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?* Expectations are specific, individual goals for the employee to accomplish during the rating period.

The PPR system and the process of establishing performance expectations are both flexible. For employees who are not performing as well as the job requires, the supervisor might call attention to the minimum requirements for the job by writing this as an expectation. For employees who are performing up to or beyond the requirements of the job, the supervisor might take the opportunity to help those employees work toward even higher goals. In fact, it is good for the employee to suggest goals he would like to work on for the coming rating period.

The following are examples of expectations for each of the required factors. These illustrate the proper way to write expectations.

WORK PRODUCT	Demonstrate understanding of the impact of your work on others. Complete nearly every project on the due date.
DEPENDABILITY	Man duty station throughout shift except during official breaks times. Comply with department attendance policy at all times.
COOPERATIVENESS	Attempt to get along better with co-workers. Do not be surly or abrupt with others.
ADAPTABILITY	Expect changes in the job and accept them without many complaints. Effectively adapt work habits to new or unexpected circumstances.
COMMUNICATION	Listen carefully to others. Do not ignore them. Make sure telephone messages you take are correct.

Choose words carefully and speak clearly and respectfully to others so they can understand you the first time.
Avoid over-reacting when calm communication with another person can solve a problem.

**DAILY DECISION-
MAKING**

Solve travel expense reimbursement problems independently.
Look for better ways of monitoring policy changes.

ASSIGNING RATINGS

Civil Service Rules require that a rating supervisor be designated for each employee. That individual has the responsibility for making the official rating. The AgCenter has designated unit heads as the official rating supervisors. If there is an immediate supervisor, however, it is important that this individual be fully included in the process. Therefore, AgCenter policy states that there may be a second supervisor involved in the review process when appropriate. The policy further states that for EFNEP assistants, the supervising agent *must* be included in the review process. Refer to AgCenter PS-10 for details.

The PPR system uses a five level rating structure to assign individual factor ratings from which an overall rating is derived. For each factor, an employee is assigned one of five ratings.

5 = Outstanding

4 = Exceeds Requirements

3 = Meets Requirements

2 = Needs Improvement

1 = Poor

The rating assigned should be based on a comparison of the employee's work performance against the performance expectations established for the job. The rating should reflect the overall work performance during the rating period and may not take into consideration performance which occurred outside of the rating period. It should refer to objective work duties.

The PPR includes space for the rater to include specific notes about the employee's performance. These notes are used to support the rating given. If the rating given for a specific factor is a 1" (Poor) or 2" (Needs Improvement), the rater *must* include notes to support the rating given. If the rating given for a specific factor is a 4" (Exceeds Requirements) or 5" (Outstanding), the rater should include notes to support the rating.

When the rater has assigned a rating number for each factor, those numbers are summed and divided by the total number of factors used. This becomes the employee's overall numeric rating which corresponds to an overall rating level.

4.50 - 5.00	Outstanding
3.50 - 4.49	Exceeds Requirements
2.50 - 3.49	Meets Requirements
1.50 - 2.49	Needs Improvement
1.00 - 1.49	Poor

The overall numeric rating and overall rating level are entered on Page 1 of the PPR form.

RATING CERTIFICATIONS

The PPR form must be signed by the supervisor and unit head. In many cases, this will be the same individual. The employee must also be given the form to sign. The employee's signature only indicates that he/she received a copy of the form and it was discussed. It in no way indicates agreement with the rating on the employee's part. An employee's refusal to sign the form does not change or otherwise invalidate a rating. Simply note the employee's refusal to sign on the form and the date of the rating session.

CREATING AN OFFICIAL RATING

According to Civil Service Rules, to create an official rating, the Rating Supervisor must accomplish all of the following within the specified timeframes.

1. Sign and date the completed document.
2. Discuss the rating with the employee.
3. Provide documentation to support any factor rated "Needs Improvement" or "Poor."
4. Present the form to the employee to be signed and dated.
5. Give the employee a copy of the completed form with his or her official overall rating noted.

If all of the above steps are not completed on or before the employee's anniversary date (or re-rating due date), but no earlier than 60 days prior to the employee's anniversary date (or re-rating due date), then the official rating becomes "unrated" and can only be changed to one of the regular ratings if the employee goes through the appeal process described below.

IMPACT OF RATINGS

An employee who receives a rating of Needs Improvement or Poor is ineligible for merit increase, promotion, or detail to special duty to a higher position as long as he/she has that rating. (Under justifiable circumstances and with advance approval from the Director of Civil Service, a detail to special duty may be allowed.) A probational employee is ineligible for permanent status. Ratings of Needs Improvement and Poor are not disciplinary actions but they are a formal record of performance deficiencies.

An employee with a Needs Improvement or Poor rating must be re-rated and such re-rating is due no later than six month from the employee's anniversary date and no sooner than 60 calendar days prior to or on the re-rating due date. Employees who are re-rated as "Meets Requirements" or better may be considered for a merit increase, promotion, upward detail, or permanent status as of the date of the official re-rating.

Ratings of Meets Requirements, Exceeds Requirements, and Outstanding demonstrate that the employee's *overall* performance meets performance requirements. However, they do not automatically confer a merit increase upon an employee. It may still be necessary to withhold a merit increase if there is a specific, serious performance problem involving one or more factors or involving violation of an agency policy.

Failure to complete the review process properly within the required timeframe automatically results in an overall rating of **Unrated**. This is a violation of Civil Service Rules which deprives the employee of valuable feedback, leaves an inaccurate rating in his/her file, and raises the AgCenter's overall percentage of employees with an unrated PPR rating. Agencies with too high a percentage are subject to sanctions by the Department of Civil Service, as are individual employees

who fail to

meet their supervisory responsibility of conducting PPR ratings. There is a process whereby an employee's unrated rating may be changed to the correct rating, but it involves the filing of an official appeal, as described below, and is a time-consuming, multi-step process. It is far easier for all concerned, including the supervisor, when PPR's are planned ahead and conducted properly and on time.

Employees may receive official ratings only in accordance with the review process described above. Supervisors may, however, give an employee an *unofficial* rating at any time in order to provide feedback or communicate changes in expectations.

EMPLOYEE APPEALS - Internal

A permanent employee who disagrees with any official rating or re-rating has a right to have the rating reviewed internally by the AgCenter. AgCenter PS-10 describes the review process in detail including the timeframe for review. This review process is also the mechanism that must be used to address official ratings of "unrated" which resulted from failure to rate or failure to rate in accordance with the timeframes of the Civil Service Rules. The following is quoted from AgCenter PS-10 regarding the requirements for filing an appeal.

Under Civil Service Rules, ratings and re-ratings are subject to review only as described below. Only permanent employees have the right to review. Civil Service has established the review process as the mechanism for addressing procedural issues, policy issues, and disagreements over the assessment and rating of performance. A permanent employee who disagrees with any official rating or re-rating has a right to have the rating reviewed by a designated reviewer, as provided for below. A written request for review must be postmarked or received in the AgCenter Human Resource Office (HRM) no later than 15 calendar days after the employee's anniversary date or, for a re-rating, no later than 15 calendar days after the day that falls six months after the employee's anniversary date. In the request for review, the employee must explain why he/she believes a higher rating is warranted and must attach whatever supporting documentation he/she wants the reviewer to consider.

Once the internal review is complete, if the employee disagrees with the Reviewer's decision, he/she has a right to have his/her PPR file reviewed by the Director of the Department of Civil Service or the Director's designee. Employees should refer to Chapter 10 of the Civil Service Rules at <http://www.civilservice.louisiana.gov/> for the time limits and procedures for filing appeals to the Civil Service Director.

RECORD-KEEPING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

A copy of each completed PPR form will be kept in the AgCenter HRM Office and in the unit's files. These must be maintained in a secure location, not accessible to the public. Completed forms may be made available to other agencies of the State of Louisiana for purposes of checking employment references and to the employee upon request.

For each employee with an official overall rating or re-rating of "Needs Improvement" or "Poor" the AgCenter must provide a copy of page one of the PPR form to the Director of Civil Service in accordance with Civil Service Rules.

