

# BPA Human Resources Desk Reference

## Performance Management

HR Desk Reference: 410-08-03

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## INTRODUCTION

This Human Resources (HR) Desk Reference contains implementing guidance for the performance management section of [DOE Order 331.1D](#) and [BPA Supplement](#) for Employee Performance Management and Recognition. The Human Resource Desk Reference Guide (DRG) [410-08-01](#), Employee Recognition contains detailed instructions and procedures for the program and administration of the Employee Recognition program.

This Desk Reference replaces the BPA Supervisory-Non Supervisory Desk Reference for performance management, dated January 25, 2019.

The Department of Energy (DOE) views its performance management programs as strategic tools to increase individual success and accountability, achieve agency and organizational goals, and improve operational efficiency. An effective performance management program not only helps understand and manage individual performance, but also helps ensure individual outcomes and expectations are aligned with work unit goals and the broader organizational performance goals and other strategic objectives. A performance management program that works well helps supervisors to recognize their subordinates' full performance potential, identify high achievers, identify areas requiring improvements, and differentiate between the two, thereby assisting with meeting the Department's mission and goals.

Responses from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Surveys (FEVS) and Human Capital Management Accountability Program (HCMAP) Surveys indicate that both managers and employees desire more consistency in the management and evaluation of employee performance across the Department. To increase the effectiveness of performance management, dialogue should occur continuously throughout the performance appraisal period, as opposed to a perfunctory "check the box" exercise at mid- and year's end. An employee should have a general idea of how well (or poorly) they have performed prior to their year-end review, based on the level of candid employee-supervisory communication that has taken place during the course of the year.

Conducting the processes of performance management provides an excellent opportunity to identify developmental needs. Training can also be the door to new or expanded assignments. During planning and monitoring of work, deficiencies in performance become evident and can be addressed. Areas for improving acceptable performance also stand out, and action can be taken to help successful employees improve even further.

The Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer utilized a collaborative approach in the development of this Operational Plan. Input was obtained from representatives across the agency including human resources offices, headquarters program offices, field sites, and Power Marketing Administrations.

Agency collaborations will continue, and disability employment groups will be engaged in the planning, execution, and integration of individuals with disabilities through the hiring and retention practices of the human capital management processes and systems.

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## PURPOSE

This Desk Reference is designed to be used in conjunction with DOE O 331.1D and BPA Supplement, Employee Performance Management and Recognition. It was developed to provide uniformity to the interpretation of DOE O 331.1D and is intended to serve as a reference for supplemental implementation information for DOE-BPA's Performance Management and Recognition Program.

Each section provides pertinent information addressing the phases of the DOE-BPA performance appraisal process.

PHASE I: Planning Performance  
 PHASE II: Monitoring Performance  
 PHASE III: Developing Performance  
 PHASE IV: Rating Performance  
 PHASE V: Rewarding Performance

To create and maintain a high-performing results-focused culture, both supervisor and non-supervisory employees should become familiar with DOE O 331.1D and the information contained in this Desk Reference. This Desk Reference may **not** answer every question regarding the performance management and recognition program; therefore, the Servicing Human Resources Offices (SHRO), Human Resources Business Partners, and Performance Management Liaisons should be contacted to get questions clarified.

## PHASE I – Planning Performance

BPA plays a valuable role in the Pacific Northwest, serving citizens through a multifaceted public service mission. As a wholesale power marketer and transmission provider, BPA sells its products and services at the cost of production, giving its customers access to 22,000 megawatts of hydropower across 15,000 miles of high-voltage transmission lines. By operating a commercially successful business, we can fulfill our public mission, driving the region's economy and environmental sustainability. The use of work unit goals and individual performance plans that are clearly linked to the BPA's strategic goals and mission are essential for achieving and assessing program results.

For a performance management program to be successful, everyone involved in the performance management process must understand what the process is all about, how the process works, and what is expected of them throughout the process.

During the planning phase, the Rating Official explains the performance management process to the employee, discusses job requirements, and collaborates with the employee to develop their results-focused critical elements. Employee performance expectations are included in the critical elements contained in the employee's performance plan. Developing critical elements that are understandable, measurable, attainable, and fair is vital to the effectiveness of a results-focused performance culture.

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## What are the training requirements?

An employee covered by DOE O 331.1D is required to take training within 45 days of their assignment in DOE; and every 2 years thereafter. The mandatory training, **DOE Employee Performance Program Course** can be accessed through the DOE Learning Nucleus.

## What are the key aspects of a results-focused performance culture?

A Results-Focused Performance Program promotes a corporate understanding and approach to managing performance by:

- Increasing opportunities for employees to participate more in the performance management process;
- Linking individual performance to the BPA mission and strategic goals;
- Providing clearly written goals/objectives that focus on results and outcomes rather than tasks and activities;
- Providing regular feedback to employees to promote self-confidence and pride in achievements, and to increase their willingness to accept future challenges;
- Identifying individual developmental needs and desires to help employees achieve full career potential;
- Providing credible data for making meaningful distinctions in levels of employee performance;
- Promoting the full use of recognition and award or assistance mechanisms; and
- Using performance appraisals to support personnel actions.

## What information is helpful when setting goals?

The following information should be reviewed when setting goals:

- Strategic Plans;
- Organizational/Program Plans and Objectives;
- Position Descriptions;
- Budget Documents; and
- Generic Critical Elements (if applicable).

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## How can the Rating Official begin setting goals?

Rating Officials should start by reviewing and becoming familiar with the DOE-BPA's mission and strategic goals and objectives, as they are fundamental to understanding the "big picture." At a minimum, the Rating Official should gather enough information to answer the following questions:

- **What are the strategic goals?** BPA has identified strategic goals for the organization. Reviewing and understanding these strategic goals will provide managers with the necessary framework within which to develop work unit goals, and create individual performance plans. Each organizational unit of BPA ultimately supports one of the strategic goals, and managers should be able to clearly identify the relationship of the work in their unit, to one of BPA's strategic goals.
- **What are the specific performance goals established for your program area?** These goals describe the incremental progress toward achieving the general goals and objectives in a strategic plan. Performance plan goals are usually more specific, and may be more output- oriented, than the general goals found in a strategic plan. Since performance plan goals should be used by managers as they direct and oversee their programs, these are typically the goals to which employee performance plans should be linked.
- **What performance measures are already in place?** Managers should be aware of the measurement systems (both internal and external) that can be accessed for information on performance, including measures for determining progress toward achieving strategic goals, and customer satisfaction surveys (surveys must be directly linked to the employee's individual performance.)
- **What products or services does the work unit produce or provide to support DOE-BPA in accomplishing its goals?** Clearly tying work unit products and services to organizational goals is a vital part of this process. If a work unit is performing services or generating products that do not affect organizational goals, this situation should be reviewed and analyzed.

Once the Rating Official has answered the questions above, they can begin the process of cascading BPA's goals down to the work unit level, and ultimately into the critical elements that describe specific individual job performance results and expectations, that are linked to the goals of the organization.

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## What is the annual appraisal period?

Normally, the annual appraisal period for BPA annual supervisors is October 1<sup>st</sup> through September 30<sup>th</sup> and for non-supervisory annual employees, hourly employees, and hourly supervisors, the period is November 1<sup>st</sup> through October 31<sup>st</sup> of each calendar year. Employees who start a new position through an appointment, reassignment, reinstatement, or transfer in the last **90 days** of the appraisal period, will have their appraisal period extended to the end of the following appraisal period; **not** to exceed 15 months. For example, a non-supervisory employee who transfers to DOE from another federal agency on September 1, 2022, will have a 14-month appraisal period that will begin on September 1, 2022, and end on October 31, 2023.

## What is the minimum/maximum appraisal period?

The minimum appraisal period required to receive a performance rating (Annual or Advisory) is **90 days** from the effective date that the employee is assigned, detailed, or temporarily promoted to a position. The **maximum** annual appraisal period is **15 months**.

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## Employee Performance Plan

### Should a plan be delayed when the manager's or organization's goals are not available at the beginning of the appraisal period?

No, subordinate plans should be prepared on time-based on current, known goals, objectives, projects, funding, etc. If the finalized manager's plan results in a change needed to subordinates' plans, then the subordinates' plans should be revised as soon thereafter as possible, at least during the next progress review.

### Should a plan be created if the employee is on LWOP at the beginning of the appraisal period?

If the employee is on LWOP, or on a temporary assignment at the beginning of the appraisal period, the Rating Official should create the plan when the employee returns to their official position of record.

### How is the performance plan developed?

The Department's Electronic Performance Management System (ePerformance) is used for all phases of the performance management process, from the creation of the performance plan to submitting the rating of record in the employee's electronic Official Personnel File (eOPF).

### When is the performance plan developed?

- An annual performance plan must be issued to the employee no later than **45 days** from the beginning of the appraisal period or from the effective date of an assignment, detail, or temporary promotion.
- Advisory Plans for employees who are on a temporary assignment, such as a detail or temporary promotion that is expected to last at least **90 days**, must be completed within **30 days** from the effective date of the assignment.

***NOTE: It takes up to 3 weeks for official records to transfer from HRMIS to ePerformance. Rating Officials may begin drafting critical elements outside of ePerformance and cut/paste the content into a new plan once the employee records are officially updated in ePerformance.***

### Who develops the performance plan?

The performance plan is developed jointly by the Rating Official and the employee and may be initiated by either party. For example, some Rating Officials request the employee draft their own critical elements and provide them for their review, whereas other Rating Officials may draft the

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employee's critical elements and provide them to him/her for review. Under either circumstance, sufficient time must be allowed for the Rating Official and the employee to review and discuss performance expectations.

If the employee does not wish to participate in the development of their performance plan, the Rating Official will discuss the critical elements with the employee to ensure they have a clear understanding of what is expected during the appraisal period. If there is a likelihood of substantial changes in the employee's performance plan for the next appraisal period, the Rating Official should discuss the new plan with the employee during the year-end review of the current appraisal period. This often assists in issuing the new performance plan within the 45-day requirement.

Even though there are cases where the performance plan may remain the same year after year, to ensure the employee has a clear understanding of the performance expectations and deliverables for the upcoming appraisal period, a new performance plan with new signatures of the Rating and Reviewing Officials is required to be provided to the employee. The Rating Official must discuss the plan with the employee each year and ensure the employee understands the requirements to meet the Meets Expectations (ME) level.

### Does a Rating Official have to occupy their position for a specific period of time before they can create a performance plan?

No, there is no requirement that a Reviewing or Rating Official occupy their position for a specific length of time before they can create a performance plan, conduct a progress review, or issue a performance rating.

The Reviewing Official has the final decision on the employee's summary rating. Therefore, organizations should require departing Rating Officials to provide information on each employee's performance to assist the new Rating and/or the Reviewing Official in completing the ratings of record for the appraisal period.

***NOTE: When a Rating Official departs during the last 90 days and does not have sufficient time (e.g., short-notice reassignment) to complete a rating of record they must provide information on each employee's performance to assist the new Rating and/or Reviewing Officials in completing the Annual Rating of Record.***

### Can the employee grieve their performance plan?

No, the performance plan is not grievable; therefore, it is to the employee's advantage to participate in developing their performance plan.

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## Who signs the performance plan?

- The Reviewing Official signs first to acknowledge that the Rating Official is aware of their performance management responsibilities (e.g., the Rating Official is aware the performance plan must be discussed with the employee). They also review the plan to ensure it is consistent with meeting BPA's overall mission and goals.
- The Rating Official signs prior to the employee to acknowledge that the employee was afforded the opportunity to discuss the performance plan with the Rating Official.
- The employee signs last to acknowledge that the job performance outcomes and expectations of the performance plan were discussed.
- The performance plan is considered official when the plan, signed by at least the Reviewing and Rating Officials, is made available to the employee. If the Rating Official is unavailable for an extended period of time and an Acting Rating Official is **not** designated, the Reviewing Official may discuss, acknowledge, and provide the plan to the employee.

## What if the employee declines or is unavailable to sign the performance plan?

- If an employee declines to sign the plan, the Rating Official will advise the employee that their signature only acknowledges that the plan was discussed; it does **not** indicate the employee agrees with the plan. If the employee does not sign the plan within **seven days** of the first request, the Rating Official will annotate on the form that the employee has declined to sign. The employee's signature does **not** indicate agreement with the performance plan. The employee's failure to sign does **not** nullify the performance plan, or other DOE actions with regard to performance management.
- If the employee is **not** available to sign, the Rating Official will annotate the form that the employee was unable to sign and provide a reason.
- The following shows the two options available when an employee declines or is **not** available to sign their performance plan:

SECTION 2 - PERFORMANCE PLAN CERTIFICATION		
Signatures certify that the critical elements in this plan were discussed with the employee.		
2a. Typed Name John Smith	2b. Reviewing Official Signature: E/S by: John Smith	2c. Date 10/10/17
2d. Typed Name Jim Brown	2e. Rating Official Signature: E/S by: Jim Brown	2f. Date 10/15/17
2g. Typed Name Samuel Lee	2h. Employee's Signature	2i. Date
2j. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employee declined to sign form      Employee not available to sign form Reason: Discussion was held with the employee on 10/15/17. Employee did not wish to sign the form.		

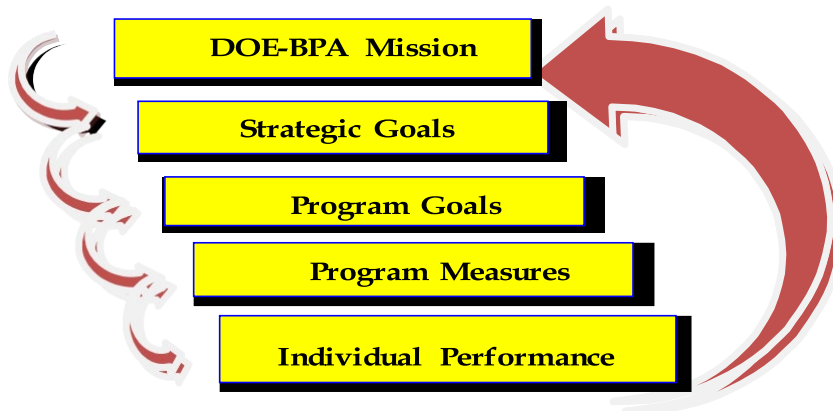
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## Can the plan be changed after it is signed?

Yes, the performance plan should be flexible enough so that it can be adjusted for changing program objectives and work requirements. When used effectively, this plan can be a beneficial working document that is discussed often and **not** merely paperwork that is filed in a drawer and seen only at the progress review and year-end review meetings. The performance plan may be modified anytime during the appraisal period prior to the last **90 days** of the appraisal period. Any changes that are made during the appraisal period must be documented in ePerformance, approved by the Reviewing Official, and communicated to the employee as soon as they occur.

- A performance plan should be **changed** during the appraisal period when one of the following occurs:
  - ✓ The duties and responsibilities of the employee have changed (e.g., new critical elements need to be added or current elements deleted).
  - ✓ The outcomes and expectations of the position change (e.g., current critical elements need to be modified).
- A new performance plan should be **issued** during the appraisal period when one of the following occurs:
  - ✓ The employee is detailed or temporarily promoted for 90 days or longer (e.g., Advisory Plan must be created). **NOTE: An advisory plan does not have to be completed if the Rating Official is the same for both positions. However, the Rating Official must discuss their expectations with the employee.**
  - ✓ The employee changes positions (e.g. employee is reassigned or promoted to another position).

### Cascading Organizational Goals



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## Why are cascading organizational goals important?

The organization drives individual performance and individual performance drives the success of the organization. Cascading organizational goals provide the employee with a direct “line of sight” to DOE-BPA’s mission and goals, which enables the employee to see and understand how the critical elements in their performance plan contribute to the overall success of BPA.

By cascading organizational goals, Rating, and Reviewing Officials are able to:

- Align work unit, manager, and employee objectives to overall BPA objectives;
- Communicate program/BPA element and work unit objectives;
- Provide the link between employee work objectives and BPA’s mission;
- Push goals throughout BPA to keep everyone heading in the same direction;
- Keep employees engaged by providing clear visibility into how their individual goals affect the organization’s objectives;
- Keep employees focused on results; and
- Hold both Rating Officials and employees accountable for achieving results, relative to their levels of responsibility.

Each Rating Official is responsible for aligning their employees’ performance plans to BPA’s strategic goals and objectives, programs goals and measures, and/or goals that have been included in the employee’s supervisor’s performance plan. ***NOTE: The Rating Official should consider both direct reporting and functional accountability that may impact the employee.***

## Critical Elements

The performance plan must only contain critical elements that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant to the work performed, linked to the organizational mission and goals, and are time bound. Dates or milestones for specific deliverables or projects should also be included.

## What is a critical element?

A critical element is an **assignment or responsibility of such importance** that unacceptable performance in a single critical element would constitute an overall Fails to Meet Expectations (FME) summary rating.

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- It identifies specific performance results and expectations that are to be accomplished during the appraisal period, the manner of performance in which they have to be done, how well they have to be done, and how they will be measured;
- It is written at the Meets Expectations (ME) level;
- It is aligned to organizational goals, results-focused, and measurable, and
- It describes work assignments and responsibilities that are within the employee's control.

***NOTE: Except when on a detail or temporary promotion for at least 90 days, employees should not be rated on critical elements that are inconsistent with the assigned duties and responsibilities of the employee's position and grade. If the employee's critical elements differ substantially from the employee's position description, the employee's position description should be reviewed to determine if modifications are needed. If it is apparent that the critical elements are not directly related to the employee's position description, then the employee should have a statement of work (similar to a detail), to support the critical elements. Critical elements are more detail specific than the position description.***

## Why are critical elements important?

Accurate **critical elements are the backbone** of any successful results-focused performance culture because they:

- Provide a clear understanding of outcomes and expectations to be achieved during the appraisal period;
- Link specific performance outcomes and expectations to organizational goals;
- Enable objectivity of performance-based feedback based on previously established outcomes and expectations;
- Ensure consistency when evaluating employees who are assigned the same work (common/generic critical elements); and
- Establish a clear basis for performance monitoring, recognition, and/or corrective action.

## What is included in each critical element?

The following information is included in each critical element:

- Assigned weight;
- Description (a title or phrase that describes the critical element, e.g., Contract Administration);

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- Strategic, program, and/or organizational goal(s) that the critical element supports;
- Job performance outcomes are the intended products, results, or accomplishments for which expectations are established;
- Expectations that are the criteria of measurement for each outcome and that are expressed in terms of quality, quantity, timeliness, cost effectiveness, or manner of accomplishment;
- Specific occupational and/or safety standards when the performance of occupational and/or safety duties are an essential part of the position; and
- Dates, deadlines, or milestones for specific deliverables or projects.

**NOTES: The Supervisory Critical Element in [Appendix A](#) must be included in positions classified as supervisory [i.e., the supervisory code in the Human Resources Information System (HRMIS) is 2 or 4].**

SECTION 4 - CRITICAL ELEMENTS	
Each employee's performance plan must have at least 3, but no more than 6 critical elements. Each critical element can be single, double, or triple weighted for a maximum of 6 <u>weighted</u> critical elements. Critical elements are written at the "Meets Expectations" level.	
<div style="text-align: center;">Critical Element</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>Weight <input type="checkbox"/> Single</span> <span><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Double</span> <span><input type="checkbox"/> Triple</span> </div>	
Description:	
Goal Linkage:	
Job Performance Outcomes/Expectations:	

### How many critical elements are allowed on the performance plan?

A maximum of 6 critical elements are allowed on the Performance Plan. A critical element can be double, or triple weighted for a maximum of 6 weighted elements. Each employee's performance plan must have at least 3, but no more than 6 critical elements. For example, a performance plan could have 3, double-weighted critical elements; or 6 single-weight elements.

**NOTE: The supervisory critical element is always double weighted and may be triple weighted. The weight of the supervisory element is considered as part of the 6 maximum weighted critical elements. For example, a supervisor could have 4 single weighted or 2 double weighted elements in addition to the supervisor element for a total of 6 weighted elements.**

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## How is a weight determined?

The Rating Official will determine the weight of each critical element based on the importance of the outcomes and expectations. Rating Officials should discuss the impact of the assigned weight with the employee when the plan is initiated, at the mid-year review(s), and at the year-end review. The following are some of the factors to consider when assigning weights to critical elements:

- Relative importance of the job responsibility as related to mission objectives;
- Complexity of assignments;
- Costs, both in terms of resources and staff time; and
- Impact on the immediate organization and BPA as a whole.

## Can multiple levels of performance be included in the critical element?

Each critical element must be written only at the Meets Expectation (ME) level, which is also referred to as the Fully Successful level.

## What are some of the common errors to avoid when developing a critical element?

Some common errors to avoid are:

- Absolute measures (i.e., all or 100%);
- Vagueness (e.g., generally, typically, usually);
- List of tasks or activities;
- Unmeasurable or unverifiable intended outcomes;
- Overly complex or lengthy language;
- Outcomes outside the employee's control; and
- Unspecified due dates or timeframes.

## What is an absolute measure?

An absolute measure allows the employee no room for errors. Some questions that might be asked to help determine whether you are writing an absolute measure include:

- How many times may the employee fail this requirement and still meet expectations?
- Does the measure use words such as "all," "never," and "each"?

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- If the measure allows for no errors, is that because an error would result in a risk of death, injury, etc.?

### Can specific requirements such as occupational or safety standards be included in the critical element?

Yes, specific requirements (e.g., occupational and/or safety standards) must be in performance plans when the requirements are intrinsic to the duties of the position by way of the position description, Executive Order, or DOE Order. For example, in accordance with E.O.13526 and DOE O 475.2B, any employee who has access to classified information must have a critical element to evaluate the employee's performance in the management of classified information.

### Is there a tool to help with developing the outcomes and expectations of a critical element?

Yes, the SMART model provides the framework or guidelines for developing effective outcomes, results, and expectations by addressing each of the following SMART components (see [Appendix B](#) for the SMART Template):

- **Specific: Defines what needs to be accomplished:**
  - ✓ What is the bottom-line objective or goal?
  - ✓ Covers "Big Bucket" items.
  - ✓ Conveys a clear understanding of the impact of required actions.
  - ✓ Has a measure for the result.
  - ✓ The result is observable (a method or procedure must be in place that allows tracking, recording, and validation).
- **Measurable: Defines where the Performance target lies by defining measurements:**
  - ✓ Quantity
  - ✓ Quality
  - ✓ Timeliness
  - ✓ Milestones
  - ✓ Cost-Effectiveness
  - ✓ Where does the performance target lie?
  - ✓ Can a qualified observer tell if it is done well?
  - ✓ Are there published standards?
  - ✓ If the measure is more descriptive than numeric, the performance result must include:
    - Person or group that could judge performance (e.g. customers, stakeholders, supervisor).
    - Factors that the judge would expect in performance.
    - What the judge can observe and report to verify the performance level achieved.

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**NOTE: Job tasks will include at least one and, in many cases, a combination of these types of measures.**

- **Achievable: Defines how can employees attain the goal through specific actions:**
  - ✓ What steps must be taken?
  - ✓ Is the outcome within the control of the employee (dependencies)?
  - ✓ Is there some stretch for the employee?
  - ✓ Goals define how the employee can attain the goal through specific actions.
  - ✓ Goals are challenging, but achievable.
  - ✓ Goals must be within the employee's control.
  
- **Relevant: Explains why the goal is important (alignment):**
  - ✓ Does the result connect to the next higher level (Supervisor performance plan)?
  - ✓ Does it support the achievement of DOE's missions and themes?
  - ✓ Is there a line of sight to DOE's strategic goals?
  - ✓ Does it add value to the organization?
  
- **Time-bound: Defines when the goal must be completed:**
  - ✓ Is there a point in time when the goal must be completed?
  - ✓ Can specific completion or achievement dates be used?
  - ✓ Are there interim milestones dates?

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## PHASE II – Monitoring Performance

In addition to effective planning, **ongoing communication** between the Rating Official and the employee is vital to successfully maintaining a high-performing organization. Employees should receive information about how they are doing as timely as possible. If they need to improve their performance, the sooner they find out about it, the sooner they can correct the problem. If employees have reached or exceeded a goal, the sooner they receive positive feedback, the more rewarding it is to them. Therefore, the Rating Official is expected to monitor and provide feedback to their employees on an ongoing basis.

### Progress Review

#### What is a Progress Review?

A progress review is a meeting in which the Rating Official and the employee discuss the employee's progress toward achieving the job performance expectations/outcomes in the employee's performance plan.

#### Who should be in the Progress Review meeting?

The progress review will be conducted between the Rating Official and the employee only. However, other parties e.g., Team Leader, Reviewing Official, etc., may attend the progress review, if the employee and the Rating Official have agreed to this in advance.

#### When are Progress Reviews conducted?

Each Rating Official must conduct **at least one** progress review during the appraisal period. The review must include a discussion with the employee and must be documented in ePerformance. The progress review usually occurs mid-way through the appraisal period. For example, in a 12-month appraisal period, the mid-year progress review should occur during the month of April. In the event that it is necessary to assess the employee's performance for less than 12 months, the employee shall receive at least one progress review at the mid-point of the appraisal period. For example, in a 90-day appraisal period, the progress review should occur mid-way (approximately 45 days) through the appraisal period.

**NOTE: The signature of the Reviewing Official is required during the progress review only if a critical element(s) is added, or deleted, or the measures or weight of an existing element is modified.**

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## Can a Rating Official ask an employee to provide input for the Progress Review?

Yes, although it is **not** mandatory, employees should be encouraged to provide input. If one employee within the work unit is asked to provide input, all the employees within the work unit must be asked to provide input.

## Why should an employee be encouraged to provide Input?

- This is an opportunity for an employee to provide supplementary information that describes the work performed, any performance goals that have been met, and any accomplishments.
- Most employees' accomplishments are based on their achievement of the results and expectations in their performance plan. However, there may be those "**not** so obvious" contributions that an employee makes during the appraisal period that the Rating Official may **not** be aware of, e.g., helping a peer with a difficult task or chore, working with a customer to resolve a problem, or sharing a newly acquired competency with a fellow employee. These contributions must be related to the critical elements of the plan.
- Supervisors can have as many as 5 to 25 employees (some at alternate sites), so to expect perfect knowledge or memory of each employee's achievements and contributions during the course of the performance period is **not** realistic. For this reason, and for the employee's benefit, they should be encouraged to provide input.

## Are there any helpful hints for employees who wish to provide input for their progress review?

- Keep track of accomplishments during the course of the appraisal period rather than waiting until the week (or day) before the scheduled progress review to try and remember back several months, e.g.:
  - ✓ Keep track of day-to-day tasks and accomplishments;
  - ✓ Keep a separate archive in e-mail to keep track of comments/feedback/thanks, etc., from others during the appraisal period;
  - ✓ Keep track of any verbal "thank you" received during the course of the appraisal period; and
  - ✓ Add notes to your performance plan in ePerformance under the Notes tab (see the [ePerformance job aid](#)).
- Talk to peers. Often, our peers can see accomplishments that we do **not** (these are **not** peer assessments, but rather conversations that may add value or trigger one's memory when preparing input for the Rating Official.)
- Bullets are usually preferred over narratives.

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## What assessment sources can the rating official use to prepare for the Progress Review?

- Besides the Rating Official's observations, the following are suggestions of supplemental sources of input that may be used to prepare for the progress review:
  - ✓ Employee input;
  - ✓ Higher level supervisor's input;
  - ✓ Customer surveys/feedback (e.g., "kudos" received during the appraisal period);
  - ✓ Letters of appreciation; and
  - ✓ Educational/Training Certificates.

**NOTE: The employee shall be provided a copy of any written input or feedback used as part of the progress review.**

## What are some of the topics that should be discussed during the Progress Review?

The following is a recommended structure for two-way dialogue during the progress reviews to create a culture of ongoing, continuous feedback between supervisors and employees to improve communication and alert employees on performance status.

Elements of Review	Explanation	Criteria Assessed	Focus of Review
<b>Accomplishments</b>	<b>What have we achieved:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At agency level...</li> <li>• At organizational level...</li> <li>• At work unit level...</li> <li>• At individual level...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliverables relative to target</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcomes</li> </ul>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Where are we now?</b> What is working well? What are the challenge areas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priorities</li> <li>• Milestone expectations</li> <li>• Vulnerabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Status of employee Performance (pulse check)</li> </ul>
<b>Planning</b>	<b>Where do we want to be?</b> Discussion of Optimal Performance Expectations in what time frame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What results are we looking for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance Expectations</li> </ul>
<b>Inputs</b>	<b>What do we need?</b> Identification of resources/training needed for success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources</li> <li>• Identification of success partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of employee developmental needs (review IDP). Identification of other resources needed for success</li> </ul>
<b>Process</b>	<b>How do we go about it?</b> How will the individual go about getting the work done	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approach to work</li> <li>• Interpersonal feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teamwork, Efficiency and Effectiveness</li> </ul>

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## Can the Rating Official discuss employee conduct-related matters during the progress review?

The progress review meeting is **not** the forum to discuss issues concerning conduct-related matters, (e.g., attendance). When these types of issues are **not** relevant to their performance, they should be discussed in a separate meeting.

## Does the Rating Official Have to wait until the Progress Review to discuss performance?

No, performance discussions can take place anytime during the appraisal period. Ongoing honest and timely feedback should be provided throughout the appraisal period.

- Performance feedback works best when it relates to a specific goal;
- Establishing employee performance expectations and goals before work begins is the key to providing tangible, objective, and powerful feedback;
- Telling employees that they are doing well because they exceeded their goal by “X” percent is more effective than simply saying "you're doing a good job"; and
- Ongoing feedback may take the form of coaching, mentoring, or advice.

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## Addressing Poor Performance

### What action should the Rating Official take if an employee's performance is below the Meets Expectations (ME) level?

Rating Officials must make full use of employee and supervisory trial and/or probationary periods. The trial/probationary periods serve as a key period for addressing and resolving poor or unacceptable job performance. It is the supervisor's responsibility, in consultation with the servicing employee relations specialist, to address any poor or unacceptable performance with the employee. Supervisors shall not wait until the last 90 days of the trial/probationary period and performance cycle to address collectively all of the performance/conduct issues, but rather shall address these issues at the time of occurrence.

***NOTE: An employee who is terminated during this period has limited appeal rights.***

Special Considerations: If an employee identifies an existing medical condition or disability that may inhibit the employee's successful performance, the rating official/supervisor (in consultation with HR) should address it before placing the employee on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). If the employee demonstrates that they are a qualified individual with a disability, the Local Reasonable Accommodation Coordinator will assist in determining if a reasonable accommodation is warranted and whether the accommodation requested will cause an undue hardship to the Agency. Any accommodation should be designed to address limitations so that the employee has the same opportunity to achieve acceptable performance as a non-disabled employee. Rating officials (in consultation with HR) should design the Improvement plan along with the accommodation to resolve the performance problem, not the mental or physical disability.

***NOTE: Requests for accommodation do not preclude Rating Officials from proceeding with performance-based actions. An accommodation can be put in place at the same time the employee is placed on an improvement plan.***

### What action should the Rating Official take if an employee's performance is declining below the Meets Expectations (ME) level?

The Rating Official must contact their servicing Employee Relations Specialist for guidance and:

- If performance begins to decline toward the FME level, the Rating Official may issue the employee a "Performance Counseling and Guidance" memorandum.

NOTE: a Performance Counseling and Guidance Memorandum is discretionary. Rating Officials are not required to provide counseling memoranda to employees.

- If performance is at the FME level, the Rating Official must issue the employee a PIP.

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## **Performance Counseling and Guidance**

### **What is a Performance Counseling and Guidance (PCG) Memorandum?**

A PCG is an informal, yet optional counseling memorandum issued to an employee to bring their attention to the fact that a decline is noted in performance. It identifies deficiencies and describes the actions needed to improve performance and informs him/her that if performance declines to the FME performance level, they will be placed on a PIP which could result in a possible removal from the federal service. For example, if an employee begins to miss established deadlines, the Rating Official should discuss the issue with the employee. If the employee continues with the same performance, the Rating Official should issue the employee a PCG. See [Appendix C](#) for a sample memorandum.

### **Is it required that an employee first receive a PCG before they can be placed on a PIP?**

No, based on the employee's performance, the Rating Official will determine if a PCG should be issued prior to providing an opportunity to improve performance. However, it is always good management practice to inform an employee when their performance begins to slip below the ME level. Hopefully, early counseling efforts will be successful and there would be no need for a formal opportunity plan.

### **What is the minimum/maximum period for a PCG?**

There is no minimum or maximum period for a PCG. The Rating Official will determine the length of the PCG based on the deficiencies identified.

### **What should be included in the PCG?**

- The period that performance will be evaluated;
- The specific critical element(s) for which performance is beginning to decline toward the FME level;
- The performance requirement(s) and, if applicable, standard(s) that must be attained in order to meet the ME level; and
- The type(s) of assistance that will be offered to the employee to improve performance that is beginning to decline towards the FME level. This assistance may include, but is **not** limited to, formal training, on-the-job training, counseling, and coaching.

### **What happens if the employee's performance does not improve?**

If the employee's performance is below the ME level the Rating Official must issue the employee a PIP within **30 days**. If at any time during the appraisal period, an employee demonstrates that they are

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performing at least one critical element at the FME (unacceptable) level, the supervisor must contact their servicing Employee Relations Specialist for guidance. The supervisor will issue corrective action which may include issuing the employee a PIP memorandum identifying the critical element(s) and actions needed to demonstrate performance at the ME level.

## Does an employee have to have a rating of record of fails to meet expectations (FME) before a performance-based action can be taken?

No. A rating of record involves the evaluation of an employee's performance against all the elements in their performance plan. At any time during the appraisal period, the Rating Official can make the determination that an employee's performance is unacceptable on one or more critical elements. This determination is sufficient to begin the process that could lead to a performance-based action if the employee's performance fails to improve to the Meets Expectations level.

## Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)

### What is a PIP?

A PIP is a formal memorandum notifying an employee that their performance of at least one critical element is at the FME (unacceptable) level and contains a plan to assist the employee toward improving performance. This plan is designed to give the employee an opportunity to bring their performance up to the ME (acceptable) level. See [Appendix D](#) for a sample memorandum.

- All PIP memorandums must be tracked and compiled in an annual report and submitted to the SHRO/SSC.
- Absent extraordinary circumstances, a PIP must be issued within **30 days** of any finding (rating or informal review) that an employee is performing at the FME level. All extensions beyond the initial **30 days** require consultation with the servicing Employee Relations Specialist and general counsel; and require concurrence by the Office of Policy, Labor and Employee Relations, Policy Division at PerformanceManagement@hq.doe.gov.
- Employees who have been given a notice of unacceptable performance and who are on a PIP on the last day of the appraisal period will have their appraisal period extended until the completion of the PIP. The appraisal period, including the extension, may **not** exceed 15 months in total time for the appraisal period.
- Employees who receive a ME or higher rating after completing the PIP will be eligible to receive a performance award for the appraisal period.

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## What must be included in the PIP?

- The PIP must identify the duration of the improvement plan. An improvement plan period of no less than **30 days** and no more than **45 days** must be provided for each critical element in which the employee's performance is at FME. The PIP may be extended not to exceed **90 days** (total) if the Rating Official feels additional time is needed to allow the employee to demonstrate performance at the ME level. However, extensions beyond the initial 45 days require approval from the Office of Policy, Labor and Employee Relations, Policy Division (OPLER) along with the Office of General Counsel.
- The PIP must state the specific critical element(s) for which performance is at the FME level and describe the specific actions needed to improve performance to the ME level. These actions must be specifically linked to the element for which performance was determined to be at FME.
- It must include the performance requirement(s) and, if applicable, standard(s) that must be attained in order to meet the ME level, and the consequences of failing to improve during the improvement plan period.
- It must include the type(s) of assistance that will be offered to the employee to improve performance that is currently at the FME level. This assistance may include, but is not limited to, formal training, on-the-job training, counseling, and coaching. It is imperative that the Rating Official ensures that the assistance promised to the employee is delivered.
- It must include a statement that if the employee's performance improves but lapses again to the FME level on the same critical element(s) within 1 year from the start of the PIP, the Rating Official may propose a performance-based action, (i.e., reduction in grade, reassignment, or removal) without placing the employee on an additional PIP.

## What happens at the conclusion of the PIP?

- At the conclusion of the PIP, the Rating Official, in consultation with their Employee Relations Specialist and servicing legal office, must take appropriate action based on the results of the employee's performance while on the PIP. For example, if the employee's performance does **not** rise to the ME level, the Rating Official must propose a performance-based action. Conversely, if the employee's performance improves, the employee should be advised of such. See [Appendix E](#) for a sample memorandum.
- The supervisor's options for addressing failed improvement periods include reassigning the employee, or proposing the employee's demotion or removal (under [5 U.S.C. Chapter 43](#) procedures or [5 U.S.C. Chapter 75](#) procedures). Refer to the Department's Workforce Discipline Order for more information on taking performance-based actions under [5 U.S.C. Chapter 43](#) or [5 U.S.C. Chapter 75](#) procedures.

**NOTE: Reassignment to a position at the same grade is a management right distinct from**

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***adverse and performance-based actions and can be accomplished with a simple notification and personnel action, after consultation with the servicing Employee Relations Specialist.***

- When a supervisor intends to reassign a bargaining unit employee, they should confirm with the servicing Employee Relations Specialist if there are collective bargaining obligations prior to informing the employee of the reassignment.

### Can an employee Telework while they are on a PIP?

No, an employee's performance must be at or above the ME level to be eligible for telework. However, if the employee is improving while on the PIP, the employee may be approved to telework during an emergency situation. Approval will be made on a case-by-case basis.

### Can an employee be detailed or reassigned while they are on a PIP?

For the duration of the PIP, employees should **not** be detailed or reassigned to another position. Allowing an employee to be detailed or reassigned while on a PIP, removes the capability for the employee to raise their performance as required by the PIP.

### Should the Rating Official meet with the employee during the PIP?

During the course of the PIP, the Rating Official should meet with the employee on a regular basis, such as every week, to advise the employee of their performance progress.

### What happens if an employee's performance falls to the FME level on another critical element while they are on a PIP?

The Rating Official should follow the steps above and issue the employee a separate PIP for the critical element(s) in which their performance is at the FME level. An employee must be provided an "opportunity period to improve" for each element in which performance is at the FME level.

### What type of training must be provided to the employee during the PIP?

There is no requirement for formal training to be provided during a PIP. However, Rating Officials need to remember that they must provide all of the assistance that was promised to the employee at the beginning of the PIP. As an alternative to traditional classroom training, on-the-job training is the most common form of training provided during an opportunity period. Self-instructional manuals, videos, or agency-funded training programs may also be offered as assistance during a PIP.

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## Is a union representative's presence required in a meeting when a PIP is being issued?

No, because the meeting is **not** disciplinary or investigatory in nature, and because it is not a formal discussion of general conditions of employment, there is no requirement to have a union representative present. The purpose of the meeting is to allow the Rating Official to explain their expectations of the employee and describe any specific efforts that will be made to assist the employee in improving their performance. Although any employee who is being told that their work is unacceptable will view this as a negative process, it is a meeting to discuss methods of assisting an employee and is not disciplinary or punitive in nature.

**NOTE: Contact BPA Labor Relations for guidance on collective bargaining agreement requirements regarding attendance at PIP meetings.**

## If an employee's leave has been approved while on a performance improvement plan, what happens to the deadlines that have been established during this period?

Once leave has been approved, an employee cannot be held accountable for work that does not get done during the absence. In terms of short absences, the deadlines or requirements may not need to be adjusted at all. However, if the employee is out for an extended time during the improvement plan period, the improvement plan period may have to be extended to ensure that the employee has a chance to perform acceptably. Depending on the nature of the work, a previously determined improvement plan period shortened by approved absence may still be appropriate if the work assignments and expectations were such that the employee had a reasonable amount of time to demonstrate improved performance.

**NOTE: The “opportunity period” is the length of the PIP. Under [Part 432 of Title 5](#), an employee must be provided with a formal opportunity to improve before a removal or demotion action can be taken based on unacceptable performance.**

## May a conduct-related performance problem be taken under 5 CFR Part 432-performance based reduction in grade and removal actions?

Despite distinguishing between misconduct and poor performance issues, it is **not** always easy to decide how to address certain behaviors on the job. While [Part 432](#) is **not** designed to deal with misconduct issues, there are times when some types of misconduct lead to unacceptable performance. e.g., the employee who never refuses an assignment, but doesn't indicate it is **not** going well, is responsive to supervisory inquiries, but doesn't get the job done on time. This could be a case of unacceptable performance that can be addressed through a PIP, and if necessary, by action under [Part 432](#) or it could be that the employee is acting deliberately and the supervisor may need to

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consider taking action for failure to carry out assignments under [5 CFR Part 752 – Adverse Actions](#).

### Tips for Preventing Poor Performance

The best way for Rating Officials to manage unacceptable performance is to take action to avoid performance problems before they occur. Such preventive actions include the following:

- **Communicate clear performance outcomes and expectations to employees.** If an employee does not understand what is expected, it will be very hard, if **not** impossible, for him/her to meet those expectations. Providing clear expectations doesn't necessarily require precisely written, detailed instructions to be laid out on every performance component. Generally, the question one should ask is: "Would a reasonable person understand what is expected?"
- **Provide regular and frequent feedback on performance.** Such feedback, both positive and negative, whether given in regularly scheduled meetings or unscheduled discussions, is crucial to ensuring that expectations are understood. Frequent feedback lessens the likelihood that an employee will be surprised if it becomes necessary to take formal steps to resolve poor performance. Confirm that employees understand what is expected.
- **Reward and recognize good performance formally and informally.** Recognizing good performance is simply another way of clarifying expectations. Recognizing good performance also increases the likelihood that good performance will continue.
- **Make full use of the probationary periods.** Performance problems often show up during the initial period of government employment. Generally, a probationary period is 1 year for competitive service employees and for new supervisors, and 1 to 2 years for excepted service employees depending on their appointment authority. The probationary period is designed to give supervisors the opportunity to assess how well an employee can perform the duties of a job. Employees' performance during this time period usually serves as a good indication of how well they will perform throughout their careers. During this period supervisors should provide assistance to help new employees improve their performance while at the same time determining whether or not the employee is suited for a position.
  - Supervisors shall **not** wait until the last **90 days** of the trial/probationary period and performance cycle to address collectively all of the performance/conduct issues but rather shall address these issues at the time of occurrence.
  - If a performance-based action is warranted against a probationary employee, they can appeal their termination to the Merit Systems Protection Board only if the termination is based on marital status or partisan political affiliation. An employee is generally not covered by [5 CFR Parts 432](#) or [752](#) during their probationary period. This exemption is due in part to the very nature of this period which provides supervisors the opportunity

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to determine whether a new employee will be an asset rather than a liability to the organization.

- The lapse of a probationary period without a proper assessment of a new employee's performance may result in future performance problems. The probationary period should always be considered a key period for addressing and resolving poor performance.
- In addition, an employee who is terminated during this period is **not** entitled to most of the procedures and appeal rights granted to employees who have completed probationary periods.

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## PHASE III - Developing Performance

At BPA, one of the Fundamental Competencies is Continual Learning which is defined as “*assesses and recognizes own strengths and weaknesses and pursues self-development.*” We value learning and development that never stops. Continual Learning is expected of each BPA employee.

### Continual Learning

***It's up to you to LEARN at BPA...***

- **Recognize opportunities for self-development**
- **Create an IDP**
- **Solicit periodic feedback to continually improve the quality of own work**
- **Be creative...*Seek low & no-cost activities***

**Grow your strengths  
& develop areas for  
improvement**

### Should employees discuss training with their supervisors?

Yes, having discussions with the supervisor is another way to assess where the employee is in terms of current and desired levels of knowledge, skills, competencies, and experience. In addition, supervisors can give their assessment of the employee's strengths and developmental areas in relation to organizational requirements. Supervisor discussions can open communication lines to ensure career goals align with work unit goals and objectives as well as help identify appropriate developmental activities.

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## What is an Individual Development Plan (IDP)?

An IDP is a tool for employees to plan, guide, and document self-development.

## Who should have an IDP?

All BPA employees must have individual development plans (IDPs) initiated and approved, within **60 days** of joining BPA, being reassigned, or at the beginning of a new appraisal period.

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## PHASE IV – Rating Performance

Rating Officials should plan and prepare for the appraisal (rating) process throughout the appraisal period, **not** just at the end of the appraisal period. Providing continuous, constructive communication throughout the appraisal period helps to establish a positive relationship and keeps the employee informed about their work, so there should **not** be any information that is new or surprising to the employee.

Approximately **30 days** before the end of the performance appraisal period, Rating Officials and employees should begin to prepare to close out the appraisal period and to have a year-end review meeting. Although **not** a requirement, Rating Officials should ask employees to voluntarily submit input on their accomplishments during the appraisal period to be considered when determining the employee's rating level for each critical element.

### Year-End Review

#### What is a year-end review?

The year-end review is a meeting that is normally held within **30 days** after the end of the appraisal period. Although the Rating Official conducts the year-end review, the employee should have considerable involvement in it. The year-end review meeting provides:

- At least the second time in the appraisal period that the Rating Official and employee formally meet to discuss the employee's performance;
- A discussion of the employee's summary rating and acknowledgement of the employee's accomplishments and effectiveness throughout the appraisal period;
- An assessment of areas in which the Rating Official expects the employee to strengthen during the upcoming appraisal period; and
- A starting point for the next appraisal period.

***NOTE: The performance rating summary for one year and the performance plan for the upcoming year can be discussed in the same meeting.***

#### Who should be in the year-end review meeting?

The year-end review will be conducted between the Rating Official and the employee only. However, other parties e.g., Team Leader, Reviewing Official, etc., may attend the year-end review if the employee and the Rating Official have mutually agreed in advance.

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## What can the employee do to prepare for the year-end review?

Identify any specific issues that they will want to discuss with their Rating Official and give the Rating Official a “heads up” so that they can be prepared to discuss the issues clearly and concisely. Jot down key points, important thoughts, and questions to make sure that they are not forgotten during the meeting.

- In preparation for the year-end review, an employee should think about the following:
  - ✓ What they want to get out of the meeting;
  - ✓ What’s most important for them to learn/find out about how they are doing;
  - ✓ What have they done/accomplished/learned during the year (make a list of key items, to be addressed with the Rating Official in order to get feedback on specific projects or assignments, or training desired);
  - ✓ What has been done particularly well and what have been disappointments; and
  - ✓ What kind of feedback would they like to give to their Rating Official, e.g., “I really like it when you review and edit my drafts before they’re put in final form so that we don’t waste a lot of time and paper revising documents at the last minute”. “I really need to hear from you about how I’m doing when I’m working on a project, rather than assuming that your silence means I’m doing okay”, etc.

## What can the Rating Official do to prepare for the year-end review?

Documenting performance throughout the year helps conduct an accurate and effective year-end review. Rating Officials should maintain ongoing documentation of the results of an employee’s achievements. Without such documentation, many Rating Officials tend to emphasize just one example of employee performance during the appraisal period. It is better to have too much detail than too little.

- In preparation for the year-end review, the Rating Official should think about the following:
  - ✓ Supplemental sources of input since the last progress review which may be used when assessing each critical element (refer to the Progress Review section for suggestions);
  - ✓ Completing the appraisal process in a timely manner; although the appraisal process requires time, the results are worthwhile;
  - ✓ Setting a specific date, time, and place after checking with the employee to find out if they will be available;
  - ✓ Helping the employee understand the performance appraisal process and benefit from the discussion;
  - ✓ Giving the employee the opportunity to ask questions; and
  - ✓ Being prepared to defend the rating levels and summary rating.

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## Summary Rating

### What is a Summary Rating?

A summary rating describes an employee's performance throughout the appraisal period. The summary rating is included in the Annual Rating of Record and the Special Rating of Record which are used to support most performance-based personnel actions.

### Is performance while on a temporary assignment included in the annual rating of record?

- When an employee is detailed or temporarily promoted within DOE for **90 days** or more, the Rating Official of the temporary assignment must create an Advisory Plan in ePerformance that contains the critical elements the employee will be rated on during the temporary assignment. At the end of the assignment, the temporary Rating Official will evaluate and rate each critical element to complete the Advisory Rating. The Rating Official of the permanent position will then consider the Advisory Rating when preparing the employee's Annual Rating of Record.

***NOTE: The Advisory Rating is not considered a Rating of Record and does not go in the employee's eOPF.***

- When an employee is temporarily detailed outside of DOE for 90 days or more, the Rating Official will make every attempt to contact the employee's temporary supervisor and request a narrative performance appraisal based on the performance-related criteria that were communicated in writing to the detailed employee at the beginning of the temporary assignment; this should be a requirement in the Interagency Agreement. The Rating Official will consider any feedback provided on the temporary assignment when preparing the employee's Annual Rating of Record.

### Can a Rating Official elect not to provide an employee a rating of record?

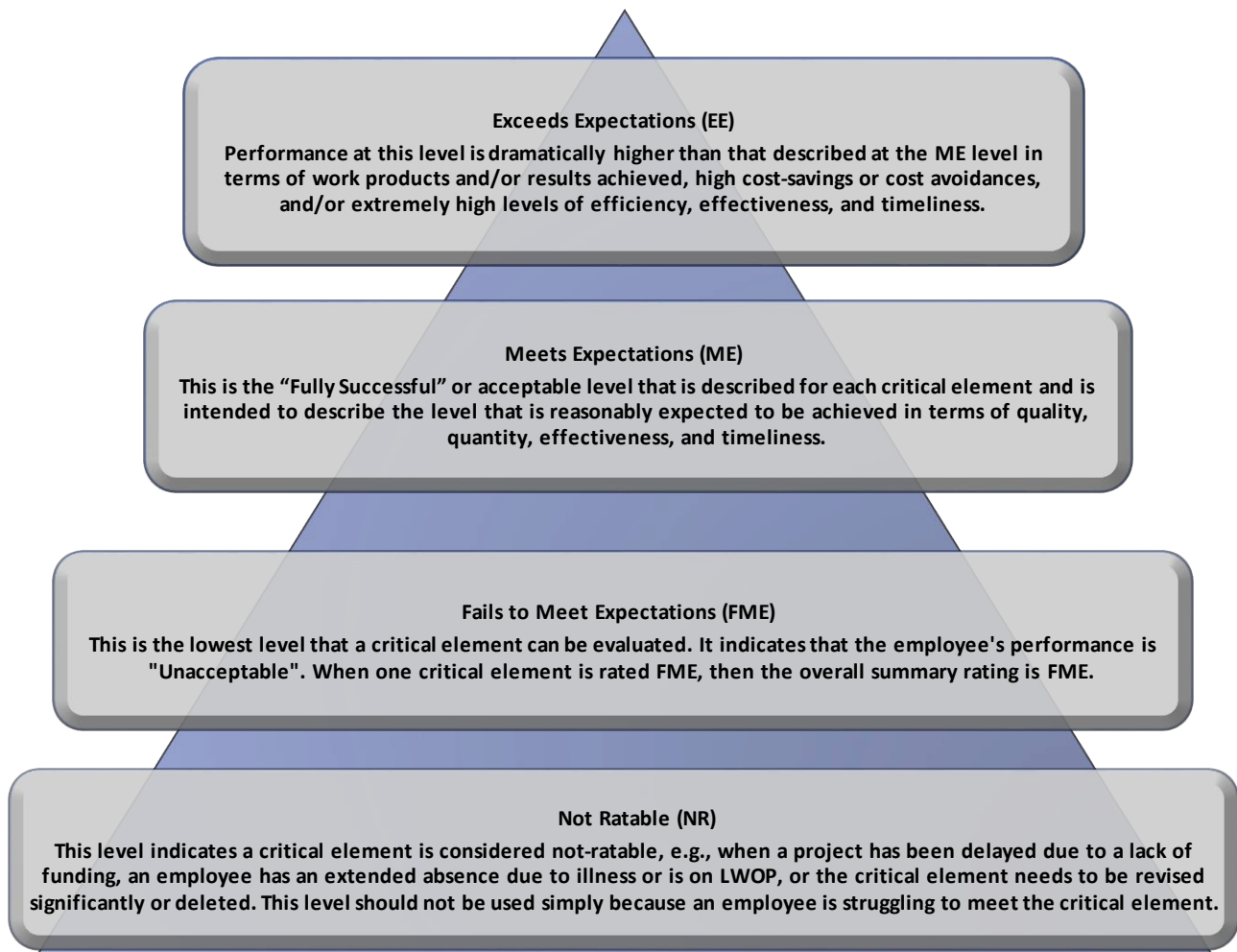
No, providing an eligible employee a rating of record is **not** optional.

### What is the process for determining the summary rating?

The first step in the rating process is to determine the rating level for each weighted critical element. The Rating Official will use their own observation, supplemental sources, and input from the employee and/or customers, to objectively evaluate the employee's performance. The Rating Official will then assign each critical element one of the following four critical element rating levels.

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## CRITICAL ELEMENT RATING LEVELS



The second step is to count the number of rating levels based on the assigned weight for each critical element, for example, a critical element that is rated EE with a weight of 2 is counted as 2 EE ratings. The maximum count is 6.

The final step is determined by the ePerformance system which calculates the summary level using the following Summary Rating Determination Chart. The Significantly Exceeds Expectations (SE) rating represents the highest level obtainable under this system.

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### Summary Rating Determination Chart

Total Weighted Critical Elements	Summary Rating
All rated EE	SE
Majority rated EE	EE
Majority rated ME, equally divided between ME and EE, or all rated ME	ME
At least one rated FME	FME

**NOTE:** A rating of NR in a critical element has no effect on the overall performance rating, it does not change the overall rating positively or negatively. For example, a rating of all EEs equates to an overall rating of SE. If an employee has 4 critical elements with 3 elements rated at EE and 1 element rated at NR, the summary rating will still equate to SE.

### How do DOE summary rating levels compare to the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) summary levels that are specified in [5 CFR 430.208\(d\)](#)?

The table below shows the DOE Summary Levels compared to OPM's Pattern E.

DOE Summary Levels	OPM Summary Levels
Significantly Exceeds Expectations (SE)	Level 5 - Outstanding
Exceeds Expectations (EE)	Level 4
Meets Expectations (ME)	Level 3- Fully Successful
Fails to Meet Expectations (FME)	Level 1- Unacceptable

**NOTE:** Only OPM's numerical summary levels are captured in HRMIS, provided to OPM electronically, and used to compare ratings of record from other agencies.

### Can all of the elements on a performance plan be rated NR?

No, NR indicates that the employee did **not** have an opportunity to perform the critical element due to reasons beyond the employee's control (e.g., when a project has been delayed due to a lack of funding, an employee has an extended absence due to Workers' Compensation or is on Leave Without Pay, or the critical element needs to be revised significantly or deleted).

Any critical element considered to be NR will be noted as NR on the appraisal form and will **not** be considered when determining the employee's summary rating. NR is **not** a summary rating level, therefore, an employee must be rated in at least two critical elements.

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## Who approves the Summary Rating?

Summary Ratings are assigned by the Rating Official and approved by the Reviewing Official. If there is disagreement, the two officials will resolve the issue(s), if an agreement is **not** reached the Reviewing Official has final authority over the summary rating issued as the rating of record.

In cases where the Rating Official occupies a key position (e.g., Site Office Manager, Service Center Director, Principal Deputy, etc.), it may be more appropriate for the Rating Official to also serve as the Reviewing Official.

In the event that the Rating Official is unavailable for an extended period of time and an Acting Rating Official is not designated, the Reviewing Official may also discuss, sign, and provide the rating of record to the employee.

***NOTE: When a rating of record is prepared at the FME level, the Rating and Reviewing Officials may not be the same individual. A higher-level management official, in the employee's supervisory chain, if applicable, will serve as the Reviewing Official for ratings prepared at the FME level.***

## Who signs the Summary Rating?

The performance appraisal is considered official when the appraisal, signed by at least the Reviewing and Rating Officials, is made available to the employee.

- The Reviewing Official signs first to acknowledge that the Rating Official is aware of their performance management responsibilities (e.g., the Rating Official is aware the summary rating must be discussed with the employee). They also approve the summary rating to ensure consistency in the application of the performance management program among subordinates.
- The Rating Official signs prior to the employee to acknowledge that the employee was afforded the opportunity to discuss the summary rating with the Rating Official. If the employee declines to sign, the Rating Official will advise the employee that their signature only acknowledges receipt of the rating of record; it does **not** indicate agreement with the rating. If the employee does **not** sign within **seven days** of the first request, the Rating Official will annotate on the form that the employee declined to sign and acknowledge the summary rating as the employee's rating of record for the appraisal period. If the employee is not available to sign, the Rating Official will annotate the form and provide a reason why the employee is unable to sign.
- The employee signs last to acknowledge that the summary rating was discussed with him/her. The employee's signature does **not** indicate agreement with the rating. The employee's failure to sign does **not** nullify the rating of record or other DOE actions with regard to performance management.

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## When is the rating of record issued to the employee?

The rating of record containing the summary rating is issued to the employee within **45 days** following the end of the appraisal period.

## Is there a “forced” distribution of ratings?

Performance ratings are based on individual performance, no bell curve or quota should be implemented. Both Rating Officials and employees are held accountable for achieving results relative to their levels of responsibility. The Department monitors BPA’s ratings by sampling plans and conducting on-site Human Capital Management Accountability Program and Departmental program reviews in conjunction with OPM program reviews.

## Can an employee request reconsideration of their Summary Rating?

Yes. However, there may be limitations and restrictions for reconsideration. An employee should contact HR Help (hrhelp@BPA.gov) to obtain the applicable procedures for requesting reconsideration of their summary rating.

- 5 CFR 430-208 (i) states, “When either a regular appraisal period or an extended appraisal period ends and any agency-established deadline for providing ratings of record passes or a subsequent rating of record is issued, an agency shall not produce or change retroactively a rating of record that covers an earlier appraisal period except that a rating of record may be changed—
  - Within 60 days of issuance based upon an informal request by the employee;
  - As a result of a grievance, complaint, or other formal proceeding permitted by law, such as the DOE Performance Rating Reconsideration Procedures or regulation that results in a final determination by the appropriate authority that the rating of record must be changed or as part of a bona fide settlement of a formal proceeding. (Note that a request for reconsideration of the summary rating through the DOE Performance Reconsideration Procedures must be submitted **within seven days** after receipt of the rating.); and
  - When the agency determines that a rating of record was incorrectly recorded or calculated.”

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## **Performance Ratings Outside the Normal Appraisal Period**

**Does an employee receive a performance rating if they are reassigned or promoted during the last 90 days of the appraisal period (i.e., July 4 – September 30 for supervisors and managers, August 4 – October 31 for all other employees)?**

When an employee has been covered by a performance plan for **90 days** or more, and is reassigned or promoted within DOE after July 3/August 3, the employee's Rating Official will prepare a performance rating that will serve as the rating of record for the appraisal period preceding the change in position. See [Appendix F](#) for a sample memorandum.

***Note: An employee who is reassigned or promoted prior to the last 90 days (on or before July 3/August 3) of the performance period will have their plan "closed" in ePerformance. The employee will receive a performance plan and a final rating of record based on their new position.***

**Does an employee receive a performance rating when the Rating Official changes during the last 90 days of the appraisal period?**

When the Rating Official changes (e.g., reassignment, detail, retirement) within the last 90 days of the appraisal period, the departing Rating Official will complete a performance rating that will serve as the rating of record for the appraisal period for all employees who have been covered by performance plans for at least 90 days. The ending date of the employee's annual appraisal period will be changed from September 30 to the date the Rating Official leaves their position. Exception: When the Rating Official does not have enough time (e.g., short-notice reassignment) to complete a rating of record for each eligible employee, they should provide sufficient information on each employee's performance to assist the new Rating Official and/or the Reviewing Official in completing the ratings of record for the appraisal period. In this situation, the ending date of the employee's appraisal period remains September 30. ***NOTE: When the Rating Official changes prior to the last 90 days (on or before July 3/August 3), they do not prepare a performance rating prior to leaving the position.***

**Does an employee receive a performance rating when the Reviewing Official changes during the last 90 days of the appraisal period?**

No, a departing Reviewing Official does **not** affect when an employee receives their Annual Rating of Record.

**Does an employee receive a performance rating when they transfer to another government agency during the last 90 days of the appraisal period?**

When an employee transfers out of DOE and **90 days** or fewer are remaining in the appraisal period,

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the losing organization must complete a performance rating that will serve as the employee's rating of record for the appraisal period if the employee was covered by a performance plan for at least **90 days** in the losing organization. ***NOTE: When an employee transfers out of DOE prior to July 4/August 4, they do not receive a performance rating for the current appraisal period.***

### Does an employee in the pathways program receive a performance rating prior to conversion to a permanent appointment?

When an employee is covered by a program (e.g., Pathways Programs, Schedule A-Disability, etc.), that requires an acceptable level of performance prior to conversion from a temporary to a permanent position, and the employee's performance has changed from ME or above to FME, a new rating of record must be prepared to document the employee's current performance level.

### Does an employee have to receive a rating of record to be eligible for a Within-Grade Increase (WGI)?

When an employee's performance has changed from ME or above to FME, a new rating of record must be prepared to document a decision to deny a Within Grade Increase (WGI). For example, an employee's WGI is due in three weeks, the employee's last rating of record was FME and the employee was issued a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) that began last month. The Rating Official must decide whether the employee's current performance has increased to ME, and if so, approve the WGI. If the current performance is still below ME, a new rating must be prepared to document the employee's current performance level to support the denial of the WGI. See [Appendix G](#) for a sample.

### Does a detailed or temporarily promoted employee receive a performance rating?

When an employee is detailed or temporarily promoted to another position within DOE for **90 days** or more, the temporary supervisor will complete an Advisory Rating. The employee's permanent supervisor will consider the rating when determining the employee's rating of record for the appraisal period.

When an employee is temporarily detailed outside of DOE for **90 days** or more, the Rating Official will make every attempt to contact the employee's temporary supervisor and request a narrative performance appraisal based on the performance-related criteria that was communicated in writing to the borrowed employee at the beginning of the temporary assignment; this should be a requirement in the Interagency Agreement.

### Must an employee have a rating of record in order to receive a Within-Grade Increase (WGI)?

Yes, the approval of a WGI is based on an employee's most recent rating of record. A rating outside

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the normal appraisal period will need to be completed if one of the following occurs:

- If the end of the WGI waiting period is approaching and the employee was **not** issued a rating of record within the preceding 52 consecutive calendar weeks prior to the employee's WGI anniversary date, and the employee has been on a performance plan for more than **90 days**, the Rating Official must issue a rating of record to reflect the employee's current performance; this rating will be issued to support a denial or approval of the WGI.
- If the end of the WGI waiting period is approaching and the employee's most recent rating of record is FME, then the Rating Official must determine if the employee's performance has improved to at least the ME level. If the employee's performance has improved, the Rating Official will prepare a new rating of record that reflects the employee's current level of performance, thus justifying the acceptable level of competence determination (ALOC) and the WGI.
- If the end of the WGI waiting period is approaching and the employee's most recent rating of record is ME but the employee is on a PIP, then the Rating Official must decide if the employee's current performance has increased to the ME level and if so approve the WGI. If **not**, the Rating Official must issue a new performance rating to support the denial of the WGI and provide the employee with a notice denying the increase.

### Under what circumstances can a rating be delayed for the purposes of granting a WGI?

There are only two circumstances in which a rating can be delayed for the purposes of a WGI. These circumstances are as follows:

- When an employee has **not** had the minimum period of time to demonstrate acceptable performance on their critical elements (i.e., **90 days**); in which case it should be prepared as soon as possible after the **90 days** are completed; or
- When an employee is reduced in grade because of unacceptable performance to a position in which they are eligible for a WGI or will become eligible within the next **90 days**.

***NOTE: The determination regarding a WGI may not be postponed in order for an employee to complete a PIP. Therefore, it is important that the Rating and Reviewing Officials keep careful track of within-grade waiting periods, especially for employees who have begun to demonstrate performance below the ME level.***

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## Does an employee who resigns or retires during the appraisal period get a rating of record?

Only employees who resign or retire effective September 30 / October 31 or later are issued a performance appraisal.

***Note: employees must be on a DOE payroll on September 30 / October 31, as applicable, to be eligible for a performance award. Employees who resign or retire prior to September 30 / October 31, as applicable, are ineligible for a performance rating/performance award.***

## Does an employee who transfers to an international office anytime during the appraisal period get a rating of record?

No, employees who transfer to an international office anytime during the appraisal period are not issued a rating of record.

## Does an employee on active duty for the entire appraisal period receive a rating of record?

Yes. Periods of LWOP for employees performing military duty are in a pay status for pro-rating purposes. The employee's most recent rating of record is duplicated when the employee is away on active duty for the entire performance year.

If the employee returns from military duty during the final 90 days of the performance period but does not have 90 total days performing under a plan during the performance period, the performance period shall be extended to meet the 90-day threshold.

## Does an employee receive a rating of record when a Reduction-In-Force (RIF) is administered?

When an employee's performance has changed from ME or above to FME, a new rating of record must be prepared to capture the employee's current performance level when administering a RIF. For example, if the employee's last rating of record was ME and the employee's performance has dropped to the FME level, the employee must be issued a new rating of record at the FME level. The last rating of record will be used when determining the employee's length of service.

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## Implications of a Rating of Record

The rating of record has a bearing on various personnel actions, such as the following:

### Probationary Periods

A new employee must receive an ME level or higher rating of record in order to be retained after their first year (and second year for certain types of excepted service appointments) in the federal government. Rating Officials must continually evaluate and document the employee's job performance throughout the probationary period. After being under a performance plan for at least **90 days**, a probationary employee whose performance is less than ME may be removed.

New supervisors must receive a ME or EE on the mandatory supervisory critical element when evaluated at the end of their initial probationary period in order to be considered as having the ability to perform the functions of the position successfully. An employee who, for reasons of supervisory or managerial performance, does **not** satisfactorily complete the probationary period is entitled to be assigned to a position of no lower grade and pay than the one the employee vacated to accept the supervisory or managerial position.

### Within-Grade Increase (WGI) for (GS and AD)

The decision to approve or deny a WGI for GS and AD employees is based on the employee's most recent rating of record issued within the WGI waiting period. If the employee's most recent rating of record does not accurately reflect the employee's current performance, a new rating must be issued to support an approval or denial of the WGI. An employee who has a current rating of record of FME is **not** eligible for a WGI.

### Career Ladder Promotion

A rating of record may be used as a basis for determining whether an employee has demonstrated the capability to perform at the next higher level in a career ladder position. Performance in the present position must be rated at the ME level or higher in order for an employee to receive a career ladder promotion. Career ladder promotions are not mandatory or automatic, as the employee must first demonstrate the ability to perform the duties of the higher grade level.

To be eligible for career ladder promotions, employees must meet the following criteria:

- Have completed at least one year in the current grade in order to meet time-in-grade requirements.
- Have a current rating of "Meets Expectations" or higher.
- Have no rating below "Meets Expectations" on a critical element that's also critical to the higher grade.
- Be able to demonstrate the ability to perform the duties of the higher grade level.
- There is sufficient work at the higher grade level.

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## Reduction in Force (RIF)

An employee's rating of record is used to determine the employee's assignment rights during a RIF. Employees are given credit for RIF retention purposes by adjusting the employee's service date. The employee receives additional service credit based on the average of the three most recent ratings of record received during the 4-year period prior to the issuance of the RIF notice. Service credit is provided as follows: a) SE (Level 5) - 20 years; b) EE (Level 4) - 16 years; and c) ME (Level 3) - 12 years

If an employee received a rating of record other than a 4-level system during the timeframe used to determine the average years of service to be credited, a separate determination will be made at that time which will provide the most equitable treatment for affected employees.

## PHASE V – Rewarding Performance

The Department and BPA's Employee Recognition Program is two-tiered. It includes: 1) the use of an annual performance award to take into account an employee's contributions to the accomplishment of organizational goals and objectives; and 2) the use of other awards available to recognize and reward individuals and/or teams for specific achievements at any time during the appraisal period. This balanced approach provides a comprehensive set of tools to motivate employees to sustain a high level of performance and service.

BPA's supplemental implementation guidance is contained in a separate [Recognition Desk Reference](#).

It is important that recognition be given in a fair and consistent manner. Favorable recognition when it is **not** earned may reduce an employee's pride in his or her work. On the other hand, when recognition is **not** given where it is deserved, employees become discouraged and lose their incentive to do a better job.

## Annual Performance Awards

Performance awards are linked directly to the summary rating on the employee's rating of record for the appraisal period for which the award is granted. When determining the appropriate performance award, the Rating Official should consider the employee's contributions to the achievement of the organization's mission and goals, as well as any budget constraints and/or union agreements, etc. This does **not** preclude management from giving other recognition whenever warranted.

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## Definitions

**Absolute Measure:** A measurement that allows the employee no room for error.

**Acceptable Level of Performance:** Performance that meets the requirements of an employee's critical elements, which are written at a ME level.

**Advisory Rating:** An unscheduled performance rating that is prepared for an employee who is detailed or temporarily promoted to another position or a specific set of duties for 90 days or more and consists of a rating of each critical element and does not include a summary rating; the advisory rating is completed by the Rating Official to whom the detailed or temporarily promoted employee reports.

**Appraisal Period:** The established period of time for which performance will be reviewed and a rating of record will be prepared: normally the fiscal year (October 1 to September 30) for supervisors and managers (October 1 to September 30) and November 1 to October 31 for non-supervisory annual employees and hourly supervisors): unless special circumstances exist as described in paragraphs 4.c.(13)-(19).

**Critical Element:** An assignment or responsibility of such importance that unacceptable performance in a single critical element would constitute an overall FME summary rating; it identifies specific performance outcomes and expectations that are to be accomplished during the appraisal period, the manner of performance in which they must be done, how well they have to be done, and how they will be measured.

**Days:** Means calendar days.

**Minimum Appraisal Period:** The minimum appraisal period is 90 days from the effective date that the employee is assigned, detailed, or temporarily promoted to a position; in no case shall an appraisal period be less than 90 days.

**Not Ratable (NR):** NR indicates that the employee did not have an opportunity to perform the critical element due to reasons beyond the employee's control; any critical element considered to be NR will not be considered when determining the employee's summary rating.

**Pay Pool:** The funding allocated to pay performance and non-performance awards.

**Performance Award:** A monetary or non-monetary award based on a rating of record of Meets Expectations or higher.

**Performance Counseling and Guidance (PCG) Memorandum:** A memorandum that identifies the performance issue(s) and identifies the assistance to be provided.

**Performance Improvement Plan (PIP):** A formal memorandum notifying an employee that their performance of at least one critical element is at the FME level, and contains a plan to assist the employee toward improving performance; the PIP is a mechanism that meets the requirements of 5 CFR Part 432, to provide an employee with a formal opportunity period to improve performance before a removal or demotion action can be taken based on unacceptable performance.

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**Performance Plan:** A written or otherwise recorded document that contains critical elements that specify the expected performance outcomes and expectations upon which an employee's performance is evaluated; the performance plan is expected to be developed jointly by the Rating Official and the employee; and it becomes official when signed by both the Rating and Reviewing Officials and is issued to the employee.

**Performance Rating:** A written or otherwise recorded appraisal of performance based on the outcomes and expectations for each critical element, on which there has been an opportunity to perform for at least 90 days; a performance rating is also referred to as a summary rating and rating of record.

**Performance Standard:** Specific occupational and/or safety standards when the performance of occupational and/or safety duties are an essential part of the position.

**Position Description:** A description of the major duties and responsibilities required by the incumbent of a position.

**Progress Review:** A meeting in which the Rating Official and the employee discuss the employee's progress towards meeting the job performance expectations in the employee's performance plan; at least one progress review is required each appraisal period.

**Quality Step Increase (QSI):** An increase in an employee's rate of basic pay from one step or rate of the grade of his or her position to the next higher step of that grade or subsequent higher rate within the pay band. An employee must receive a summary rating of Significantly Exceeds Expectations (SE) on their most recent rating of record to be eligible.

**Rating Levels:** Levels of performance Rating Officials use to evaluate individual critical elements and derive a final summary rating. DOE's rating levels for critical elements are Exceeds Expectations (EE), Meets Expectations (ME), and Fails to Meet Expectations (FME).

**Rating Official:** Normally, the immediate supervisor of an employee is responsible for developing performance plans, monitoring performance, and rating performance of the employees under their supervision. Rating Officials must evaluate an employee's performance fairly and accurately against the performance plan.

**Rating of Record:** The summary appraisal prepared at the end of the appraisal period for the performance of duties over the entire appraisal period and the assignment of a summary level; an employee's rating of record can be used as a basis for pay, awards, development, retention, removal, and other personnel decisions.

**Recognition:** Acknowledging contributions through monetary and non-monetary means.

**Reviewing Official:** The person with full supervisory authority who is responsible for approving performance plans and summary ratings of record prior to their transmittal to employees; the Reviewing Official is normally the Rating Official's immediate supervisor.

**Share:** A numerical value assigned to each summary level to determine the employee's cash performance award; the share value is determined by dividing the Awards Pool (a percentage of all employee base salaries within a pay pool) by the sum of the employees' aggregate salaries (sum of all

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employees' salaries within a pay pool).

Summary Level: The numerical value in [5 CFR 430.208](#) that corresponds to DOE's summary levels: Significantly Exceeds Expectations (Level 5), Exceeds Expectations (Level 4), Meet Expectations (Level 3), and Fails to Meet Expectations (Level 1).

Summary Rating: An overall rating based on the rating for the critical elements that describe an employee's overall performance throughout the appraisal period; this rating is considered the rating of record and is described using summary levels.

Within-Grade Increase (WGI): A periodic increase in an employee's rate of basic pay from one step of the grade of their position to the next higher step of that grade or equivalent pay adjustment.

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## Revision History

- A. This HR Desk Reference will be maintained on the [BPA Internal Policy Library](#) website and updated as program elements change.
- B. Revisions are documented as follows:

Version Number	Issue Date	Description of Change or Review
1.0	01/25/2019	Initial issuance. DRG replaces BPA Employee Performance Management Desk Reference, dated October 1, 2017 (Note: the DRG, dated 10/1/17 was published and maintained by HCM with no internal policy governance number assigned).
2.0	06/10/2024	Updated PIP length; updated minimum number of critical elements needed to be rated other than NR to be a valid rating; other formatting changes.
3.0	01/07/2025	Provided clarifying language on Career Ladder Promotions.
3.1	2/26/2025	Updated to ensure alignment with DEI E.O. dated 1/21/2025.

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## APPENDIX A: Supervisory Critical Element

The incumbent is expected to: Cultivate an environment where staff are accountable for organizational goals, engaged, and supported in the accomplishment of their work. Lead by example including implementing a variety of leadership techniques and maintaining high standards of professional conduct and integrity consistent with DOE expectations and laws, regulations, and policies. Comply with Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and anti-harassment policies and programs. The performance standards are:

- Exercises sound judgment and critical thinking to perform supervisory duties, including any required supervisory training in accordance with federal laws, regulations, and DOE policies.
- Systematically monitors quality, delivery, timeliness, and customer satisfaction levels and adjusts or reprioritizes to ensure fulfillment of organizational objectives.
- Regularly collaborates with staff to proactively identify project or customer concerns and to devise and implement solutions to meet deadlines.
- Ensures quality and timely deliverables are provided to meet customer expectations within established deadlines.
- Consistently demonstrates and ensures supervisors exhibit effective communication including conflict resolution and problem-solving.
- Solicits and considers stakeholder feedback to improve organizational performance on a regular basis.
- Promptly and fairly holds staff accountable for organizational conduct, addresses misconduct consistent with laws, DOE Orders, and HC guidance. Responds to employee concerns and engages on issues quickly and directly.
- Timely, fairly, and accurately completes performance-related actions, addresses unacceptable performance consistent with laws, DOE Orders, and HC guidance.
- Timely plans for future workforce requirements by identifying skills required for staff positions. Meets recruitment and hiring objectives and requirements by active participation in the process including in efforts to recruit a highly skilled workforce.
- Supports employee development through mentorship, training, job details, and other means. Ensures staff completes DOE directed mandatory training by established dates in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

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- Fosters trust and respect and communicates expectations effectively.
- Establishes and maintains structured and regular communication with staff using a variety of modes.
- Ensures organizational alignment with DOE’s strategic goals and principles, and communicates these with staff regularly.
- Ensures and promotes a workplace free of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, where employees feel comfortable making protected disclosures. Identifies and works to remove barriers to equal opportunity.
- Proactively investigates and resolves complaints, conflicts, and concerns, which may include participating in Alternative Dispute Resolution proceedings, as appropriate.
- Timely takes steps to resolve complaints by correcting deficiencies and harassing conduct, cooperating with investigators and EEO counselors, and ensuring subordinate employees’ cooperation.
- Complies with all applicable laws such as Merit Systems Principles, Whistleblower Protection Act, etc., and DOE orders, policies, and appropriate settlement agreements.
- Promotes workplace accessibility and provides appropriate reasonable accommodations in accordance with DOE policies, and when such accommodations do not cause undue hardship.


*(Type organizational deliverables or due dates here)*

*Updated for Performance Year 2024.*

*Current year DOE and BPA Supervisory element language is maintained on the BPA Performance page: [Current Year Supervisory Critical Element.docx \(bpa.gov\)](#)*

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## APPENDIX B: SMART Template

	
The <b>SMART</b> Template	
<b>Specific:</b> <u>What</u> results are needed?  	Critical Element Outcomes/ Expectations
<b>Measurable:</b> <u>Where</u> does the performance target lie? Is there a quantitative or qualitative measure?  	Critical Element Outcomes/ Expectations
<b>Achievable:</b> <u>How</u> can the employee attain the goal through specific actions? What steps must be taken?  	Critical Element Outcomes/ Expectations
<b>Relevant:</b> <u>Why</u> is the goal important (alignment)?  	Goal Linkage
<b>Timed:</b> <u>When</u> will the goal start, or when will it be completed?  	Critical Element Outcomes/ Expectations

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## APPENDIX C: Sample Performance Counseling & Guidance Memorandum

MEMORANDUM FOR: ***(Employee's Name)***

FROM: ***(Supervisor's Name & Title)***

SUBJECT: Performance Guidance and Counseling

This memorandum is being issued to document your performance for the period ***(insert date)*** through ***(insert date)***. In my judgment, your performance is on track to fall short of the outcomes and expectations described at the Meets Expectations (ME) level for the following critical element(s):

***[List the element(s) and performance requirements, including standards, if applicable, and provide details explaining why the employee did not achieve an ME for each element.]***

In order to improve to the ME level, the following assistance will be provided ***(if applicable, along with the action that you must do)***:

***(Provide an explanation of the assistance that will be provided to the employee (e.g., work as an understudy with a colleague, identify a mentor, or meet with an EAP counselor if the employee has a problem completing assignments on time), and any action that the employee is to take (e.g., a prescribed training course), and how the assistance or action is linked to the requirements.)***

To help you improve your performance, I will be available to answer any questions you may have with regard to your work and what is expected of you. If you need assistance organizing or prioritizing your work in a more efficient manner, please talk with me. Please inform me if there is any assistance that I can provide that is not mentioned above that you believe will help to improve your performance.

Your performance will be closely monitored, and I will meet with you periodically concerning your performance. At the end of this period, you and I will meet to discuss the next step. If your performance has not improved to be on track to the ME level, you will be placed on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).

Please acknowledge receipt of this memorandum by signing and dating below.

Receipt Acknowledged: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## APPENDIX D: Sample Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) Memorandum

(NOTE: This memorandum is issued when an employee is initially put on a PIP. There are other informational “NOTES” throughout this sample that must be deleted prior to issuing to the employee.)

MEMORANDUM FOR: ***(Employee’s Name)***

FROM: ***(Supervisor’s Name and Title)***  
***(Organization)***

SUBJECT: Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)

This is to notify you that your performance does not meet an acceptable level of performance for the duties of your position of ***Employee’s Position Title (Occupational Series & Grade)***. Your performance plan was put in place on ***XX/XX/XXXX*** and you signed your performance plan on ***XX/XX/XXXX***. Starting today, I am placing you on a 30-day Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) to allow you an opportunity to demonstrate whether you can perform at a meets expectation level. Over the next thirty (30) days you are expected to demonstrate that you can perform at the ME level of the following critical element(s):

**Critical Element** ***(insert appropriate number)***:

### **Standards/Measures:**

- ***[Insert from Performance Plan]***

**Actual Performance:** Your performance is unacceptable in this area. ***[Insert Performance Deficiency Examples]***

**Expectation** – To achieve a fully successful in this area you are expected to...

***Repeat as Necessary for Additional Critical Elements***

To help you improve your performance of the above critical element(s), ***(describe assistance efforts)***.

Your performance will be monitored closely over the next 30 days. I will meet with you ***[weekly]*** on ***[Monday/ Tuesday/ Wednesday/ Thursday/ Friday]*** at ***[time and location of your meeting]***. If for any reason we are unable to attend a scheduled meeting, we will need to contact each other prior to our meeting to make alternative arrangements. At any time during your performance demonstration period should you have a

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question or require additional assistance please *[describe how the supervisor would like to be contacted. i.e. "ask me", "call me at Number" or "send me an email"]*.

At the end of this period, your performance will again be evaluated. If your performance, under any part of the critical elements listed in this document fails to meet the prescribed standard(s); an action will be taken to initiate your reassignment, demotion, or removal from employment.

I am confident that you have the ability to raise your performance to the meets expectation (ME) level. However, failure to demonstrate performance at the ME during this opportunity period, or failure to maintain performance at or above the ME level in the critical element(s) at issue for a one-year period from the beginning date of this memorandum will result in a performance-based action, (i.e., reassignment, demotion, or removal from federal service) without the benefit of an additional PIP.

The ultimate responsibility for meeting the established expectations is yours. However, if there is anything else I can do to assist you in achieving acceptable performance, please inform me immediately.

The Department of Energy provides employees and their family members with a comprehensive Employee Assistance Plan (EAP). The EAP offers an array of services and resources aimed at supporting and enhancing personal well-being and work-life balance. Services are free and confidential, within the bounds of the law. You may contact FOH EAP and Work-Life program to make a confidential appointment with a licensed counselor by calling 1-800-222-0364 (or 888-262-7848 if you are hearing-impaired). When contacting the FOH EAP, please use Department of Energy/DOE to identify the agency. To access EAP information and resources, self-help assessments, webinars, podcasts, and more, please visit: [FOH4You](#).

If you have any questions regarding the processes outlined above, please contact *[name of ERS]*, Employee Relations Specialist, at *[phone number]* or *[email]*.

Receipt Acknowledged: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

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## APPENDIX E: Sample Conclusion of a PIP Memorandum

***(NOTE: This memorandum is issued at the conclusion of a PIP when performance has improved to at least the ME level. A new rating of record is required only when the PIP is issued as a result of the employee receiving a FME rating of record. If the PIP is issued during the appraisal period based on the supervisor's observation, a new rating of record is not required. If there is no change in performance, contact your servicing Human Resources Office for assistance.)***

MEMORANDUM FOR: ***(Employee's Name)***

FROM: ***(Supervisor's Name and Title)***

SUBJECT: Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) Update

By letter dated **XXXXX XX, XXXX**, you were notified in writing of the critical element(s) for which your performance was unsuccessful and you were placed on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) for a period of 30 of days. You were further notified of the performance standards which must be attained to demonstrate acceptable performance.

During your opportunity period, you demonstrated acceptable performance. As a result, I have determined that you now meet expected performance standards and that you are at a performance level of Meets Expectations (ME).

Should your performance become unacceptable in this same critical element at any time within one (1) year following the issuance of your PIP, an action will be initiated to reassign, demote, or remove you from federal service without any further opportunity to demonstrate acceptable performance. A copy of this letter will be retained in a confidential, non-permanent supervisory file for a period of one (1) year from the date of issuance. This letter will not be placed in your Official Personnel File (OPF). However, a copy will be filed with Employee Relations in accordance with the Agency's records retention policy.

The Department of Energy provides employees and their family members with a comprehensive Employee Assistance Plan (EAP). The EAP offers an array of services and resources aimed at supporting and enhancing personal well-being and work-life balance. Services are free and confidential, within the bounds of the law. You may contact FOH EAP and Work-Life program to make a confidential appointment with a licensed counselor by calling 1-800-222-0364 (or 888-262-7848 if you are hearing-impaired). When contacting the FOH EAP, please use Department of Energy/DOE to identify the agency. To access EAP information and resources, self-help assessments, webinars, podcasts, and more, please visit: [FOH4You](#).

If you have any questions regarding the processes outlined above, please contact the **Specialist's Name**, Employee Relations Specialist, at (503) 230-XXXX or [XXXXX@bpa.gov](mailto:XXXXX@bpa.gov).

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Receipt Acknowledged: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

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## APPENDIX F: Sample Rating of Record - Reassignment/Promotion

### RATING OF RECORD ISSUED FOR REASSIGNMENT OR PROMOTION ON/AFTER JULY 4/AUGUST 4

Mr. Smith is promoted from BPA to the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) effective Sunday, August 28, 2022. Mr. Smith is moving within DOE during the last 90 days of the appraisal period, therefore, his Rating Official is responsible for preparing his annual rating of record, which will end on August 27, 2022, rather than the end of the normal appraisal period (September 30).

Reminder: Mr. Smith is issued a summary rating of Exceeds Expectations (EE), and therefore is entitled to a cash award of 4 shares or up to 40 hours of time-off.

The BPA Rating Official will:

- Provide the NNSA HR Advisory Office with a copy of Mr. Smith's rating of record for inclusion in his eOPF.
- Determine the award Mr. Smith will receive. If Mr. Smith receives a cash award, his salary at the time of his promotion (August 27, 2022), will be used in the calculation process.
- Provide the NNSA HR Advisory Office with the award amount or number for hours and the funding citation needed to process Mr. Smith's performance award.

The following is an example of sections 1 and 6 of Mr. Smith's performance plan.

SECTION 1 - EMPLOYEE DATA		
Name: (Last, First MI): Smith, Charles D.		Position Title/ Pay Plan/Series/Grade: HR Specialist, GS/201/11
Organization: Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer		Duty Station: Portland, OR
Appraisal Period Dates: Beginning: 10/1/2021 Ending: 08/27/2022	Appraisal Type: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Annual Rating of Record <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Explain) <input type="checkbox"/> Advisory Rating (Detail /Temporary Promotion)	
SECTION 5d – SUMMARY RATING (from summary rating determination chart)		
Signatures certify that the employee's summary rating has been discussed. The employee's signature does not necessarily indicate agreement with the rating.		
SE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EE	ME    FME
Reviewing Official Signature: John White	Typed Name John White	Date: October 5, 2022
Rating Official Signature: Jim Stone	Typed Name Jim Stone	Date: October 6, 2022
Employee's Signature	Typed Name Charles Smith	Date:
Employee declined to sign form. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employee not available to sign form Reason: Employee reassigned to NNSA on August 28, 2022.		

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## APPENDIX G: Sample Rating of Record - Within-Grade Increase

### RATING OF RECORD ISSUED FOR WITHIN-GRADE INCREASE JUSTIFICATION

Prior to transferring to DOE on November 6, 2022, Mr. Brown was issued a rating of record from another government agency whose appraisal period ended on September 30, 2022. The rating of record issued to Mr. Brown was **below** the Meets Expectations (ME) level. The waiting period for his next within-grade increase is over on May 15, 2023, and the Rating Official has determined that Mr. Brown is currently performing **at** the ME level.

Although Mr. Brown's current performance is at the ME level, his most recent rating of record (issued by a previous agency), is below the ME level, therefore, Mr. Brown is ineligible to receive a within-grade increase.

The Rating Official must issue Mr. Brown a rating of record reflecting his current performance at the ME level, thus justifying the within-in grade increase.

The following is an example of sections 1 and 5 of Mr. Brown's performance plan.

SECTION 1 - EMPLOYEE DATA			
Name: (Last, First MI): Brown, Raymond J.		Position Title/ Pay Plan/Series/Grade: HR Specialist, GS/201/11	
1 c. Organization: Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer		1 d. Duty Station: Portland, OR	
Appraisal Period Dates: Beginning: 11/1/2022 Ending: 05/1/2023		Appraisal Type: Annual Rating of Record Special Rating of Record (WGI Justification) Advisory Rating (Detail/Temporary Promotion)	
SECTION 5 – SUMMARY RATING (from summary rating determination chart)			
Signatures certify that the employee's summary rating has been discussed. The employee's signature does not necessarily indicate agreement with the rating.			
SE		EE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ME
FME			
Reviewing Official Signature: Joan White		Typed Name Joan White	Date: May 3, 2023
Rating Official Signature: Jim stone		Typed Name Jim Stone	Date: May 4, 2023
Employee's Signature Raymond Brown		Typed Name Raymond Brown	Date: May 4, 2023
Employee declined to sign form. Reason:		Employee not available to sign form	
Rating and/or Reviewing Official's Comments: <i>(Optional)</i> Mr. Brown is doing a good job and is performing his critical elements at the meets expectations level.			
Employee's Comments: <i>(Optional)</i>			

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