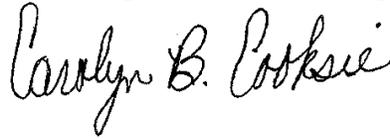


For: FFAS Employees, Except Foreign Service Employees

FY 2012 Mid-Year Performance Reviews

Approved by: Associate Administrator for Operations and Management



1 Mid-Year Performance Reviews

A Purpose

This notice:

- reminds FFAS rating officials (except FAS Foreign Service) to complete an FY 2012 mid-year performance progress review for the following employees:

- **non-Senior Executive Service (SES) employees** no later than **May 15, 2012**
- **SES and Senior Leader Scientific or Professional employees** no later than **May 30, 2012**

Note: The reviews should include evaluating progress toward achieving the Mission Area's and/or Agency's organizational goals, as well as any applicable Secretary's initiatives and/or Civil Rights Performance Plan.

Note: If an employee has **not** been under a performance plan for the minimum 90 calendar days by the dates in this subparagraph, conduct and document the mid-year review once 90 calendar days have elapsed.

- informs rating officials that certification of a 100 percent completion rate of mid-year performance reviews is required by the established deadline.

Disposal Date	Distribution
December 1, 2012	All FSA, RMA, and FAS employees, except Foreign Service employees; State Offices relay to County Offices

1 Mid-Year Performance Reviews (Continued)

B Performance Accountability

Under the Human Capital Accountability Framework, a critical success factor for the result's Oriented Performance Culture is the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process. The effectiveness of the appraisal process relies heavily on the supervisor or manager using performance results to:

- offer feedback
- identify developmental needs to help improve employee performance
- address instances of poor performance.

Supervisory feedback must:

- convey how the employee's performance compares with the expectations expressed in the employee's performance plan
- describe the impact of the employee's performance on achieving work unit, county, State, or Agency goals.

A supervisor's feedback should take into account the feedback received from the employee's internal and external customers.

Note: 100 percent completion rate of mid-year review is required for all eligible employees.

C Submitting Mid-Year Certification Forms (FSA Only)

Each Deputy Administrator and Division Director must certify that the 100 percent completion rate has been achieved. Deputy Administrators and Division Directors should forward the completed Performance Management FY 2012 Mid-Year Review Certification (Exhibit 1) as follows:

- for **FSA**, forward to HRD's Policy and Accountability Branch by either of the following:
 - e-mail at FFASPerformanceManagement@one.usda.gov
 - FAX at 202-205-9068
- for **FAS and RMA**, certification forms are **not** required to be submitted.

DAFO Only: State Offices should monitor the completion of FY 2012 mid-year performance reviews of Federal and county employees. SED's should forward to DAFO certification (Exhibit 1) that they have attained 100 percent compliance. DAFO should then provide HRD a report of State Offices that have attained the 100 percent goal.

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1 Mid-Year Performance Reviews (Continued)

D Forum for Discussion

The mid-year performance progress review provides a forum for rating officials and employees to:

- review and discuss performance elements and standards, and make any necessary changes
- gauge and discuss the employee's progress in meeting the performance expectations needed to achieve or surpass "fully successful" performance
- provide an avenue for employees to understand where and how to improve performance, if needed
- revisit or develop Individual Development Plans (IDP's).

2 Responsibilities

A Rating Official Responsibilities

Rating officials are responsible for the following:

- monitoring performance during the rating period
- providing timely feedback to employees on their performance
- reviewing employee elements/standards and revise, if needed
- providing training and developmental opportunities, if available
- conducting at least 1 progress review at the midpoint of the appraisal cycle
- ensuring that performance plans are established for new or transferred employees and conducting a timely progress review that allows for at minimum 90 calendar days of performance in cases where the plan was established months after the start of the performance cycle
- informing the employee of their level of performance as it relates to their performance elements and standards
- ensuring that 100 percent completion rate of mid-year reviews is achieved for employees
- ensuring adherence to applicable Union Collective Bargaining Agreements.

2 Responsibilities (Continued)

B Reviewing Official Responsibilities

Reviewing officials are responsible for the following:

- ensuring that rating officials carry out their performance management responsibilities
- assessing the rating official's performance in fulfilling these responsibilities
- ensuring that 100 percent completion rate of mid-year reviews is achieved.

C Employee Responsibilities

Employees are responsible for the following:

- participating in discussions and documentation of their progress reviews
- ensuring that they have a clear understanding of their performance expectations and how performance relates to the mission of the organization, and requesting clarification if necessary
- reviewing and concurring mid-year reviews in EmpowHR (FSA and RMA only)
- seeking timely performance feedback from their rating official and internal and external customers, as appropriate
- taking personal responsibility for their own training and development
- reviewing employee responsibilities and conduct requirements at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/hrdapp?area=home&subject=labr&topic=erc>.

3 Conducting Performance Reviews

A Mid-Year Performance Reviews

Rating officials should prepare for the mid-year review process by preparing talking points that are applicable to each individual employee and gathering any samples or highlighting examples of work products in need of improvement. Rating officials shall schedule individual meetings with each employee under his or her supervision to conduct mid-year progress review discussions. Exhibits 2 through 4 provide additional guidance for supervisors on preparing for and conducting the mid-year progress review and offering feedback to employees. All **non-SES employee** mid-year reviews should be completed no later than **May 15, 2012**. All **SES and Senior Leader Scientific or Professional** mid-year reviews should be completed no later than **May 30, 2012**.

Notes: If an employee has **not** been under a performance plan for the minimum 90 calendar days by the date in this subparagraph, conduct and document the mid-year review once 90 calendar days have elapsed.

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3 Conducting Performance Reviews (Continued)

A Mid-Year Performance Reviews (Continued)

HRD will conduct audits to ensure that:

- all mid-year reviews are completed by the established dates
- a 100 percent completion rate has been attained
- all certification forms have been received.

B Special Note About Changes to Performance Plans

If a rating official needs to or plans to make any changes to a 2012 Performance Plan, the changes **must** be made to the Performance Plan in EmpowHR before initiating the progress review in EmpowHR (FSA and RMA only).

Note: For FAS only, any changes to the 2012 Performance Plan must be documented on the original AD-435A and AD-435B.

A mid-year review should be conducted for any elements and standards that are currently in place and did not change or were not added within the past 90 calendar days. If a rating official makes changes to the performance objectives or corresponding standards within an element, employees must be given the opportunity to perform under the modified standards for at least 90 calendar days before they can be rated against the modification. The 90-calendar-day period does **not** apply if changes were made in alignment and linkage to enhance the existing performance plan and with no changes to the existing performance standards. Changes can be made to the performance standards for this performance appraisal period until June 30, 2012, for employees to receive their summary rating for the performance appraisal period ending September 30, 2012. The employee must be informed of all revisions made to the employee's performance plan.

C Other Special Circumstances

If there has been a change in rating official since the performance plan was established, the new rating official shall **not** conduct the performance review until at least 90 calendar days have passed. If there has been no rating official for at least 90 calendar days, the reviewing official shall conduct the mid-year review.

Departing Supervisors or Managers – Supervisors or managers changing positions or leaving the Agency shall conduct mid-year reviews for all of their eligible employees and document the mid-year reviews in EmpowHR before departure.

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3 Conducting Performance Reviews (Continued)

C Other Special Circumstances (Continued)

New Supervisors or Managers (replacing the departing supervisor or manager) – New supervisors or managers shall conduct an additional performance review for eligible employees once the employee has been under their supervision for 90 calendar days. This additional mid-year review is to be documented using the paper process only. EmpowHR does not allow or permit the documentation of 2 mid-year reviews for an employee. The new supervisor or manager shall retain a hard copy of the new mid-year review.

Employees Leaving 1 Permanent Position for Another – Employees changing position should receive a departure rating, which is an appraisal that is completed when an employee has served on a performance plan for at least 90 calendar days and is leaving 1 permanent position for another. This is not a formal rating of record and is only to be considered by the rating official when determining the annual rating of record.

D Documenting Mid-Year Performance Reviews in EmpowHR (FSA and RMA Only)

Rating officials must document in EmpowHR that the FY 2012 performance mid-year progress review was conducted for each employee. Progress reviews are only to be conducted and entered into EmpowHR 90 calendar days after the creation of the performance plan. Although, at the present time, the EmpowHR System will allow supervisors to finalize a plan and then enter a progress review, this should only be done in instances when a hard copy performance plan has already been established and in place for the required 90-calendar-day period and the action is being taken to data load the established plan into EmpowHR.

Note: RMA supervisors who created draft plans in EmpowHR and printed out a hard copy for employees to sign as the official copy should now finalize the draft that has been in place for the required 90 calendar days and enter the final plan and the progress review in the EmpowHR System.

Rating officials shall follow these steps to enter a mid-year progress review into EmpowHR.

Step	Action
1	Supervisor signs into EmpowHR and selects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Manager Self Service” • “Tasks” • “Performance” • “Progress Review”. The names of all the supervisor’s employees will be displayed.
2	CLICK “New Review” next to the employee’s name to enter the FY 2012 mid-year review.
3	CLICK “  <p>4-27-12</p>

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3 Conducting Performance Reviews (Continued)

D Documenting Mid-Year Performance Reviews in EmpowHR (FSA and RMA Only) (Continued)

Step	Action
4	Select the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Elements and Standards” tab• “View All” to review all elements• “Progress Review” tab.
5	Enter comments in the “Reviewer Comments” box and CLICK “Save”.

Rating officials may view the step-by-step process on documenting the mid-year/progress review in EmpowHR by visiting the web site at http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/supmidyrreview.ppt. Scroll down to “Performance Mid-Year Review” for an example of how to document a performance review in EmpowHR.

Reminder: Once a mid-year/progress review is entered against the FY 2012 Performance Plan, rating officials will **not** be able to make any revisions to the FY 2012 Performance Plan. Performance Plans in EmpowHR become “locked” once any type of review (progress or summary rating) is approved/concurred. Therefore, make all required revisions to the FY 2012 Performance Plans **before** saving a mid-year/progress review in EmpowHR.

If there are problems with the EmpowHR System, contact Stephanie Sybil Brown, Branch Chief, HR Information Systems Branch (HRISB) at either of the following:

- e-mail at stephaniesybil.brown@wdc.usda.gov
- telephone at 202-401-0694.

Note: For FAS only, the following are FAS guidelines for completing Mid-Year Performance Reviews using AD-435A and AD-435B.

FAS rating officials are responsible for the following:

- summarizing the employee’s performance in each element of the performance plan
- initialing and dating the appropriate blocks of AD-435A

Note: Obtain the initials and date of the supervisor.

- providing any written comments to the employee
- filing the written comments and initialed AD-435A in the employee’s personnel file.

3 Conducting Performance Reviews (Continued)

D Documenting Mid-Year Performance Reviews in EmpowHR (FSA and RMA Only) (Continued)

FAS employees are responsible for the following:

- seeking feedback or initiating the mid-year review if the supervisor does not schedule one
- actively participating in the review process
- abiding by union collective bargaining agreements, Article 24 in AFSCME 3976
- initialing AD-435A.

E Periodic Optional Performance Reviews

Even though only a mid-year performance review is required, it is in the best interest of the rating official and employee to periodically hold performance discussions. An employee may request a meeting for this review. Periodic performance reviews with the employee will:

- provide regular feedback
- keep the channels of communication open
- assist in identifying strengths and weaknesses
- help avoid an unexpected performance rating at the end of the appraisal period.

Note: Periodic performance reviews are **not** recorded in EmpowHR, but should be documented using AD-435A generated from EmpowHR.

4 Addressing Poor Performance

A Below Fully Successful Level (or Does Not Meet) Mid-Year Reviews

The mid-year performance review provides opportunity for the supervisor to convey feedback and have a necessary discussion with an employee whose performance is determined to be less than fully successful or at a “Does Not Meet” level of performance. Supervisors are encouraged to consult with their SPO, or the Employee/Labor Relations and Benefits Branch (ELRBB), whichever applies, immediately upon such a determination particularly if the element is critical. The assistance and guidance provided by SPO or ELRBB will be timely and useful in helping the rating official navigate the process of dealing with a poor performer. If the employee is performing at the “Does Not Meet” level in a critical element, the rating official **must** contact their SPO for guidance.

Note: Any actions taken to address marginal or unacceptable performance **must** be done in consultation with SPO and/or the State Office Administrative Officer.

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5 Additional Information and Contacts

A Additional Information

Additional performance management information can be found on the Performance Management web page at

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/hrdapp?area=home&subject=erpm&topic=prm>.

B Contacts

If there are any questions about mid-year performance reviews, rating officials and employees may contact the appropriate SPO according to this table.

IF located in...	THEN contact...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FSA Washington, DC• FSA APFO• FSA Kansas City or St. Louis• RMA• FAS	HRD, Policy and Accountability Branch at 1 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Michael Braswell at 202-401-0392• 202-205-9057 (TTY)• e-mail at FFASPerformanceManagement@one.usda.gov.
FSA State or County Office	State Office Administrative Officer.

If there are problems with the EmpowHR System, contact Stephanie Sybil Brown, Branch Chief, HR Information Systems Branch (HRISB) at either of the following:

- e-mail at **stephaniesybil.brown@wdc.usda.gov**
- telephone at 202-401-0694.

Steps for Preparing Mid-Year Progress Reviews

1. Review documentation you have about the employee's performance.

You should have been keeping good documentation (such as work samples, logs, records, customer praises or complaints, and other documentation) throughout the performance period. Now look at it to assess how the employee is performing and meeting expectations. Follow these simple guidelines:

- keep your observations of performance objective (focused on behavior), not subjective
- have concrete examples to support your assessment
- do not hold the employee accountable for factors beyond his or her control; for example, changes in workload, priorities, duties, and opportunities may affect employee performance.

2. Compare current performance with expectations.

Compare your observations about the employee's current performance with the measurable standards in his or her performance plan. Identify areas of success and areas of concern.

3. Assess developmental opportunities.

Has the employee completed developmental opportunities that have affected performance? Determine whether additional opportunities are needed, based on your concerns.

4. Help the employee prepare for the meeting.

- Agree on a specific time and place for the discussion.
- Explain the purpose of the meeting and what will be discussed.
- Make sure the employee has a copy of his or her performance plan.
- Suggest that the employee bring additional work samples that highlight his or her performance.
- Ask the employee to think about his or her areas of strength and areas for development.

5. Document the employee's accomplishments in a written narrative.

The narrative should describe the employee's accomplishments for each element. The narrative should be brief and specific and address the breadth, score, and/or impact of the employee's achievements.

Steps for Conducting Mid-Year Progress Reviews

1. Open the meeting.

- Establish a relaxed, nonthreatening environment in which the employee feels secure and respected.
- Hold the meeting in “neutral territory” and provide a comfortable environment.
- Eliminate distractions, such as ringing phones, e-mail, pagers, etc.
- Establish a positive tone when you greet the employee and welcome him or her to the discussion.
- Review the meeting’s goal and in general what you will discuss.

2. Discuss accomplishments and expectations.

- Provide a general summary of the employee’s performance.
- Discuss areas of success and areas of concern, in light of expectations.
- Suggest further developmental opportunities.
- Note changes to the performance plan.

3. Close the meeting.

- Summarize what has been discussed and agreed on: ask the employee for input.
- Confirm any follow-up actions.
- Express commitment to the employee’s growth and success.
- Ensure that all the employee’s concerns have been addressed.
- Ask the employee to acknowledge in EmpowHR that the mid-year review discussion occurred.

4. Complete any follow-up activities.

Tips for Giving Effective Feedback

- √ **Effective feedback meets the following four characteristics:**
 - Descriptive - Feedback should be specific, not general, and provide measurable and observable details.
 - Objective - Feedback should be based on facts, not your beliefs, assumptions, or hearsay. It should be provided according to a known standard, criterion, or performance expectation.
 - Timely - Feedback should be given as close to the performance as possible so that it is meaningful and can be integrated into future performance.
 - Professionally Delivered - Feedback should be delivered in a manner where both the words you say and the way you say them (tone of voice, body language) are professional.
- √ **Involve the employee in the feedback process and ask the employee to prepare a list of accomplishments.**
- √ **Request feedback from the employee's customers, coworkers, colleagues, or other managers.**
- √ **Feedback should be a combination of both positive and constructive feedback. Start the conversation stating something the employee does well.**
 - Positive feedback involves telling your employee about good performance. Be descriptive and objective in describing the behavior. Tell the employee why you liked it and why it is important. When possible, tie the performance to the Agency's goals. Example: "You solved that database migration problem very quickly this morning. That really got prevented disruptions to the system's operations."
 - Constructive feedback alerts an employee to an area in which his or her performance could improve. When providing constructive feedback, be sure to describe the following:
 - Situation - Describe the situation in which the performance occurred. Give your perspective on where and when the performance occurred. Example: "This morning at the meeting when we were discussing the new project..."
 - Behavior - Describe the behavior that you observed or heard. Focus on the employee's actions, not the person. Example: "This morning at the meeting when we were discussing the new project, you may not have realized it, but you interrupted me several times..."

Tips for Giving Effective Feedback (Continued)

- **Impact** - Describe the impact the performance had on you, others, and/or the Agency. Be specific and objective about the impact by providing your actual observations. Link the impact of the employee's performance to expected standards. Example: "This morning at the meeting when we were discussing the new project, you may not have realized it, but you interrupted me several times. These interruptions confused the staff and required numerous clarifications that took away time slated to address additional key items of concern."
 - **Next Steps** - Describe specific changes in behavior that you expect in a specific period of time and follow up as scheduled. Ask the employee's help in solving the problem. Example: "While your participation is important, I'd like for you to refrain from interrupting speakers. When others are speaking, you should indicate to the speaker that you have something to say and wait until the speaker acknowledges you. Let's schedule a time to get back together next Tuesday to see how this process works."
- √ **Check to make sure the employee understood by asking a question or observing changed behavior.**
- √ **End the meeting on a positive note.**