

IPS 2-23 Performance Management Program Procedures

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Responsible Office: Office of Human Resources

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1.0 Timeline of Performance Management Program Activities

Appraisal Period – The Appraisal Period coincides with the calendar year and runs from January 1 through December 31.	January 1 to December 31	<i>Or as otherwise approved by the Director.</i>
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<p>Complete Performance Appraisals – Rating Officials assign ratings and complete Performance Appraisal forms to upload to SharePoint.</p>	<p>Mid-February</p>	<p><i>Or 45 days after the end of the Appraisal Period.</i></p>
<p>Establish New Performance Plans – The 45-day period during which the Rating Official must submit established Performance Plans.</p>	<p>45 Calendar Days*</p>	<p><i>*45 calendar days from the date of hire, the beginning of an Appraisal Period, a change in Rating Official, or the beginning of a temporary assignment of 120 days or more.</i></p>
<p>Minimum Appraisal Period – The 120-day period during which an employee must have performed under an established Performance Plan to receive a performance review.</p>	<p>120 Calendar Days</p>	<p><i>See the definitions in the IPS 2-23 policy.</i></p>
<p>Mid-Year Review – Formal discussion with the employee at least once and generally midway through the Appraisal Period: during which (a) a review of the employee’s progress on Performance Elements as compared to the established Performance Standards is clearly communicated; (b) any recommended revisions to the Performance Plan are made; and (c) any developmental needs or performance improvement requirements are considered and identified.</p>	<p>Midway through Appraisal Period</p>	<p><i>Or approximately midway through the employee’s Appraisal Period.</i></p>
<p>Interim Performance Review – A Performance Appraisal that is issued in specific, limited circumstances prior to the end of the Appraisal Period to an employee who has performed under an established Performance Plan for 120 days or more.</p>	<p>As Required</p>	<p><i>Prepared approximately midway during a rating period when an employee has performed for the minimum appraisal period (120 days) in a covered position and either the Rating Official or employee leaves the agency or changes to another position within the agency. This may happen more than once during the Appraisal Period.</i></p>

<p>Probationary Period – During the probationary period, the Rating Official must work closely with the probationary employee, discussing their work, identifying any performance problems, and offering guidance. Separation may be recommended at any time during the probationary period after the employee has been employed for at least 30 days.</p>	<p>As Required</p>	<p><i>Any performance or conduct problems will be brought to the attention of the employee and OHR/ELR within six months of the conclusion of the employee's probationary period.</i></p>
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2.0 Implementing the Performance Management Program

These procedures implement the agency's Performance Management Program, as set forth in Interim Policy Statement (IPS) 2-23 and provide agency employees with guidance on the administration of the Performance Management Program.

Any agency employee seeking further information or guidance concerning these procedures may contact their office's Employee and Labor Relations (ELR) Specialist in the Office of Human Resources' Employee and Labor Relations Division (OHR/ELR). This information may also be found on the [ELR page on HR Central](#).

3.0 Performance Management Program Processes

3.1 Performance Planning

The Peace Corps' Performance Planning Process:



3.2 Establishment of Employee Performance Plans

Performance plans must be established within 45 days of:

- (a) The beginning of an Appraisal Period;
- (b) When the employee is initially assigned to a job or new position (e.g., due to reassignment, promotion, or change to a lower grade);
- (c) Whenever the employee has a change in Rating Official. The new Rating Official may elect to either retain the Performance Plan or, if any change is required, to establish a new Performance Plan in discussion with the employee. Prior to establishment of a new Performance Plan, the Rating Official must consult with OHR and obtain the approval of the Reviewing Official. In either case, the new Rating Official must clearly communicate performance expectations, goals, and objectives to each employee under their supervision;
- (d) The beginning of a temporary assignment (e.g., detail, temporary promotion, extended training) that is anticipated to last at least 120 days.

Whenever there is a change in Rating Official, less than 120 days remain in the Appraisal Period, and the employee has received a Rating of Record, the new Performance Plan shall add the time remaining under the current Appraisal Period to the next Appraisal Period. For example, if the Interim Performance Review were to cover a period through October 15, the new Appraisal Period would run from October 16 through December 31 of the following year.

Whenever assignments are changed during the Appraisal Period, and those changes significantly impact what is expected in terms of employee performance, the Performance Elements and Performance Standards must be revised accordingly. An employee must have performed under the changed Performance Elements of the Performance Plan for at least 120 days to receive a Performance Appraisal.

3.3 Performance Elements

Performance Elements tell employees what they are expected to do. The agency's policy outlines that employees must have at least three, but not more than five, Performance Elements in their Performance Plans – all of which must be critical. Through these Performance Elements, employees are held accountable for work assignments and the responsibilities of their position.

A critical Performance Element is a work assignment or responsibility of such importance that “Not Successful” performance in that element alone would result in a determination that the employee's overall performance is “Not Successful.”

As provided in federal guidelines, “Not Successful” performance with respect to one or more critical elements can result in an employee's reassignment, removal, or reduction in grade. Consequently, critical Performance Elements must clearly describe work assignments and responsibilities that are significantly influenced by an employee's work effort and within the employee's control. For most employees, this means that critical Performance Elements cannot describe the performance of a group. However, a Rating Official can and should be held accountable for seeing that results measured at the group or team level are achieved. In addition,

critical Performance Elements for assessing group performance may be appropriate to include in the Performance Plans of team leaders.

All Performance Elements are linked to the mission and strategic goals of the agency. Rating Officials should determine which appropriate mission areas, strategic goals, priority performance goals, strategies, or strategic plan performance measures can best be utilized to develop the Performance Elements and Performance Standards in each employee's Performance Plan. Some positions, because of the unique nature of the job responsibilities involved, have specific Performance Elements that must be included in the Performance Plan. Rating Officials should be aware of those requirements and shall ensure that the mandatory criteria are adequately addressed within a Performance Element in the employee's Performance Plan.

Performance Plans for all Rating Officials must include the mandatory supervisory/managerial Performance Element as one of the no-more-than five Performance Elements. The mandatory supervisory/managerial Performance Element addresses the level of performance expected for carrying out supervisory/managerial duties. Rating Officials must use this mandatory Performance Element, as defined in the current manager/supervisor Performance Appraisal form. The description of the mandatory supervisory/managerial Performance Element must be used as defined, without modification.

3.4 Development and Establishment of Performance Standards/Use of SMART Goals

Performance Standards tell employees how well they must perform. They are the expression of the performance thresholds, requirements or expectations that must be met in order to be appraised at a particular level of performance with respect to any Performance Element. Performance Standards must be focused on results and include credible measures for use in performance assessment.

Employee Performance Plans must be focused on achieving results appropriate to the employee's level of responsibility. All employee Performance Plans must include Performance Elements and Performance Standards developed in accordance with the SMART standards methodology. SMART stands for:

- (a) **Specific** – The Performance Standards in the employee's Performance Plan must clearly identify what will be accomplished; that is, the results expected of the employee and for which the employee will be aiming are the central focus of each Performance Element.
- (b) **Measurable** – The Performance Standards in the employee's Performance Plan must have clearly defined measures that allow both the employee and the Rating Official to know that the requirement has been achieved. The supervisor shall clearly communicate to the employee how results will be determined.
- (c) **Attainable** – The Performance Standards in the employee's Performance Plan must be achievable. The supervisor and employee are each responsible for the creation of a work environment wherein the employee has a reasonable expectation of achieving their goal, including because they have the necessary resources (e.g., training, time, support, etc.) to perform at the required level.
- (d) **Relevant** – The Performance Standards in the employee's Performance Plan must be aligned with the goals of the office and the mission of the agency. The supervisor shall clearly

communicate to the employee how their assigned work contributes to those goals and that mission, and how their Performance Elements are expected to reflect that contribution and;

- (e) **Timely** – For each Performance Standard, the employee must be made aware of any deadlines for completion of work, including when the expected results are to be achieved. As appropriate, Performance Standards should include milestones, or a schedule, and all due dates must be clearly communicated so the employee has a clear understanding of the work expected to be completed and the date by which it must be completed.

4.0 Monitoring Employee Performance

Employees are retained on the basis of the adequacy of their results-oriented performance. “Not Successful” performance is to be corrected, and employees who do not improve their performance to meet required standards should be separated. At any time during the Appraisal Period, when an employee's performance is found to be “Minimally Successful” or below, the Rating Official must take necessary remedial steps. Appropriate action may include oral and/or written counseling, formal and/or informal training, or putting into place a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).

4.1 Position and Rating Official Changes during the Appraisal Period

At the beginning of the Appraisal Period, or when a Rating or Reviewing Official leaves, the Rating and Reviewing Officials must be designated and the employees informed.

Unless otherwise determined by the Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO), the Rating Official will be the rated employee's supervisor and the Reviewing Official will be the Rating Official's supervisor.

Generally, the Reviewing Official becomes both the Rating and Reviewing Official if the Rating Official position is vacant. If unusual circumstances or questions arise, such as when both Rating and Reviewing Official positions are vacant, the CHCO shall decide who will perform the functions of the Rating and Reviewing Officials. The circumstances will be documented on the Performance Appraisal form, the Rating and Reviewing Officials will be clearly identified, and the employee will be informed.

A person must occupy a position that is classified as supervisory to be designated as a Rating or Reviewing Official. Team leaders and Experts, because they do not meet the supervisory criteria, may not perform the functions of a Rating Official or Reviewing Official. They may, however, provide performance information to supervisors.

4.2 Temporary Assignments

When an employee is assigned to a new work unit, the employee's new supervisor may elect either to retain the Performance Plan with no changes or to establish a new Performance Plan in consultation with the employee. If a new Performance Plan is established, the supervisor must obtain approval from the Reviewing Official. In either case, the new supervisor must clearly communicate performance expectations that must be achieved for the employee to be appraised at the “Successful” level.

Whenever there is a change in a supervisor, and fewer than 120 days remain in the Appraisal Period, the new Performance Plan will add the time remaining in that Appraisal Period to the next rating period. The employee should still receive a Performance Appraisal for any period under a previous supervisor of 120 days or more.

4.3 Mid-Year Reviews

A Mid-Year Review should occur mid-way through the Appraisal Period, usually between mid-June and mid-July.

Rating Officials must use the agency approved Mid-Year Review form for the Mid-Year Review. Written comments are not required to be included on the form; however, the agency strongly recommends that supervisors provide verbal comments to the employee and summarize that discussion in writing.

The Rating and Reviewing Officials must each sign the form to confirm that a Mid-Year Review has been completed for the employee. The employee should sign the form to confirm the Mid-Year Review has been conducted. If the employee does not sign the form upon completion of the Mid-Year Review, a copy of the form, signed by the Rating and Reviewing Officials, will be provided to the employee and OHR.

4.4 Process for Preparing a Performance Appraisal

Rating Officials should maintain performance documentation from various sources as a part of the rating process.

As they deem appropriate, Rating Officials should also consult employees' customers and colleagues, review employees' self-assessments (if they choose to provide them) and other relevant performance documentation, and seek out available Performance Feedback to ensure they have an accurate and complete picture of the employee's performance for the entire Appraisal Period. For employees on details/temporary assignments/extended trainings of under 120 days, the Rating Official must make a reasonable effort to obtain performance information from the detail or temporary assignment supervisor.

Performance Ratings reflect the level of the employee's performance for each Performance Element as compared to the Performance Standards established in the employee's Performance Plan. If an employee has not had an opportunity to demonstrate performance of a Performance Element during the Appraisal Period, no rating will be assigned, and the words "Not Rated" should be written on the Performance Appraisal form for that Performance Element. A Performance Element marked as "Not Rated" will not be considered when calculating the Summary Rating.

4.4.1 Rating Performance Elements

An employee's performance of each Performance Element within their Performance Plan will be appraised and rated. These ratings are then combined to produce a Summary Rating.

4.4.2 Performance Element Comments

Written comments shall be provided by the Rating Official with respect to each element rated in the Performance Appraisal as above or below "Successful."

4.4.3 Written Narrative Summaries

Rating Officials must provide a written narrative Summary Rating. The narrative should contain examples of the employee's performance which substantiate how the employee's performance falls within the levels assigned. Narratives are recorded on the Performance Plan.

4.4.4 Written Interim Performance Reviews

Interim Performance Reviews may be written to include a Summary Rating issued under specific, limited circumstances. OHR must be consulted for guidance prior to the end of the Appraisal Period, for an employee who has been under a Performance Plan for 120 days or more for the following circumstances:

- (a) The employee completes a detail or temporary promotion longer than 120 days;
- (b) The employee changes positions due to reassignment, promotion, or change to lower grade during the annual Appraisal Period;
- (c) The Rating Official leaves their position during the annual Appraisal Period; or
- (d) The need arises to document a level of performance for the purpose of effecting or withholding a within-grade increase (WGI). A copy of any Interim Performance Review must be provided to the employee and, if applicable, to the new Rating Official who shall take them into account when making an annual Summary Rating.

In determining the proportional weight that the interim rating should have, the Rating Official should take into account not only time spent in each position, but also other factors, such as the amount and complexity of the work throughout the year.

4.4.5 Discussion with the Employee

After the Summary Rating is completed and approved/signed by the Reviewing Official, the Rating Official is responsible for conducting a meeting on the employee's performance and to present and discuss the employee's Summary Rating.

The Rating Official should be prepared to have a thorough performance review discussion. The meeting must occur online with the employee or in a private location, and adequate time must be set aside to meet with the employee, including time for the employee to provide input (generally, 30 minutes to one hour per employee).

In preparation for the discussion, the Rating Official should ensure that the performance review discussions held at either the mid-year or at the conclusion of the Appraisal Period cover, as appropriate:

- (a) Employee's Performance Elements and Performance Standards;
- (b) Employee's progress toward accomplishing those Performance Elements;
- (c) Any need for changes to the Performance Plan;
- (d) Employee's strengths and weaknesses;
- (e) Performance deficiencies and supervisor's recommendations on how to improve them;
- (f) Developmental training and assignments;
- (g) Status of pending career ladder promotion and or within-grade promotion; and

(h) Supervisor and employee expectations for the remainder of the Appraisal Period.

Once the discussion is concluded, the Rating Official and Reviewing Official must sign the appropriate form, documenting that the performance review has taken place. The employee must also be afforded an opportunity to sign the form to indicate that the performance review has taken place and been discussed with them. Rating Officials should provide the employee with a copy and submit the signed copy to the servicing Human Resources Office to be filed in SharePoint and in the employee's electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF).

The final Performance Appraisal must be completed within 60 calendar days following the end of the Appraisal Period.

In the event the employee does not sign the Performance Appraisal form, the Rating Official has the authority to implement the Performance Rating. The Rating Official should annotate "Employee refused or was unable to sign," whichever the case may be, on the employee's signature block on the Performance Appraisal form and forward the completed form to the servicing OHR Office for filing in OHR's electronic filing system and in the employee's eOPF.

5.0 Rewarding Performance

The policy and procedures with respect to the Peace Corps' Incentive Awards program are found at MS 662 *Peace Corps Incentive Awards Program*.

6.0 Other Performance-Related Personnel Actions

The policy and procedures with respect to Career Ladder Promotions and Within Grade Increases (WGIs) may be found at MS 620 *Direct Hire Merit Selection and Promotion* and MS 622 *Direct Hire Within-Grade Salary Increases*. For an employee to be eligible for a WGI, they must have performance at "Minimally Successful" or above for all elements on their Performance Plan.

Employees retain the right to use procedures related to MS 655 *Direct Hire Employee Grievances*, MS 653 *Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Employment*, or MS 861 *Office of Inspector General* as they relate to the Performance Management Program.

7.0 Poor Performance

7.1 Performance Management of Probationary Employees

During the probationary period, the Rating Official must work closely with the probationary employee, discussing their work, identifying any performance problems, and offering guidance.

Separation may be recommended at any time during the probationary period after the employee has been employed for at least 30 days. The Rating Official is encouraged to engage early with the employee if there is a performance or conduct issue. Early intervention is more likely to lead to a positive outcome. The Rating Official will coordinate with the OHR/ELR team.

7.2 Performance Management of Non-Probationary Employees

(a) An employee performing at the "Not Successful" level with respect to one or more Performance Element(s) at any time during the performance Appraisal Period must be notified of the Performance Element(s) for which performance is "Not Successful" and be afforded an opportunity to improve. The employee must be placed on a Performance

Improvement Plan (PIP) for at least 60 calendar days. Notification of “Not Successful” performance may occur at any time during the Appraisal Period, including at the end of the Appraisal Period.

- (b) At the conclusion of the period during which the employee had an opportunity to improve, if the employee’s performance continues to be “Not Successful,” action must be initiated to reduce their grade or remove the employee.

7.3 The Performance Improvement Plan

Once it has been determined that a PIP is required due to “Not Successful” performance of a Performance Element, the supervisor must provide the employee with a copy of the PIP. To help Rating Officials navigate the process, it is strongly recommended that the ELR team be consulted before the PIP process is commenced.

The PIP must:

- (a) Identify the element(s) for which performance is “Not Successful;”
- (b) Provide specific examples of the performance deficiencies for each Performance Element with respect to which performance of the Performance Element does not meet the Performance Standard and has been deemed “Not Successful;”
- (c) Clarify performance expectations;
- (d) Indicate the length of the PIP and include the beginning and ending date. The supervisor shall afford a reasonable opportunity for improvement during a period of at least 60 calendar days which may be extended at the discretion of the Rating Official; and
- (e) Identify what the employee must do to achieve a rating at the “Minimally Successful” level for each Performance Element to successfully complete the PIP;
- (f) Identify the efforts the Rating Official will make to help the employee to overcome performance deficiencies and meet the expectations of the Performance Plan.

7.4 Termination of the PIP

If the employee’s performance has reached at least the “Minimally Successful” level upon completion of the PIP, the employee will resume their duties and responsibilities as assigned with normal supervision. The employee will receive a performance appraisal reflective of the employee’s Summary Rating at the conclusion of the PIP.

7.4.1 Successful Performance at the End of the PIP Followed by Not Successful Performance Within 12 Months

If the employee has performed at least at a “Minimally Successful” level for 12 months following the issuance of the PIP, and the employee’s performance again becomes “Not Successful” in a Performance Element not covered by the PIP, the supervisor must afford the employee a new opportunity to demonstrate acceptable performance. Only if performance becomes “Not Successful” within 12 months from the issuance of the PIP for any Performance Element for which a PIP was provided, may a performance-based adverse action be proposed without

providing a new period within which the employee has the opportunity to demonstrate acceptable performance.

7.4.2 Not Successful at the End of the PIP or Within 12 Months

If at any time during 12 months from the issuance of the PIP, the employee fails to perform at least at the “Minimally Successful” level in a Performance Element(s) for which the employee was given an opportunity to improve, the supervisor must take action to remove the employee from their position. The employee may be reassigned to another position or issued a proposed reduction in grade/pay or removed from Federal service, without an additional opportunity to demonstrate acceptable performance.