



Revisions to the Employee Performance Communication System (EPCS) and Agencywide Training Effort

Leah Meisel, Office of Human Capital Management
March 2007



Past and Present

Mid 70's – NASA used Governmentwide three-level performance appraisal system.

1978 - Civil Service Reform Act was passed and a more detailed approach to performance management was dictated adding critical and non-critical elements and establishing five performance summary adjective ratings.

1995 – OPM issued revised performance management regulations which allowed for the establishment of a performance appraisal system using one of a number of performance summary rating level schemes, including two levels (i.e., pass/fail).

1996 – Employee Performance Communication System (EPCS) established with two performance summary rating levels and “generic,” critical performance elements.

2003 – Congress passed National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004 which created the Human Capital Performance Fund (Please note monies were never allocated to Fund.). OPM required all government agencies who wished to utilize the fund to move to a multi-level performance appraisal system by September 30, 2004.



Past and Present

2004 – Agencywide team revised and enhanced the EPCS establishing three performance summary rating levels, minimum performance element requirements coming from the Senior Executive Service (SES) performance evaluation factors, an Agencywide performance appraisal period, and modifying awards eligibility.

2005/6 – Legislative proposals (Working for America Act, Federal Workforce Performance Appraisal and Management Improvement Act) viewed as a “heads up” that Government will be moving to a performance management system requiring pay increases that are linked to performance.

2006 – An Agencywide team, led by the Office of Human Capital Management (OHCM), conducted a review of the three-level EPCS to evaluate its effectiveness in defining performance expectations, measuring employee performance, and making distinctions in performance; to gauge employees’ perceptions of fairness and equity; and to ensure that the Agency has a good foundation for a “pay-for-performance” system.



EPCS Review

- **Review process included:**
 - 27 Focus Groups at 8 Centers
 - An Agencywide workshop with a cross section of stakeholders
 - Benchmarking with other Government Agencies
- **Major recommendations from the review included:**
 - Improved alignment of individual performance plans with the goals and objectives of the Agency;
 - Increased transparency, fairness, and equity;
 - Greater accountability and more reliance on outcomes and results;
 - A more direct link between performance ratings and award allocations;
 - A greater emphasis on communication between employee and supervisors; and
 - A consistent Agencywide approach to training and implementation.



Major Revisions

In response to the findings from the review process, the following revisions were made to the performance management system for the appraisal period beginning on May 1, 2007.

- **Three performance summary rating levels were not sufficient to differentiate levels of performance.**

The Agency will move to a five-level performance management system.

- **Difficulty understanding how the Agency's goals and objectives aligned to employees' work;**

Supervisors will identify the specific Agency and/or organizational goal(s) and objectives(s) relative to employee performance on the employee's performance plan.

- **Monetary performance awards did not differentiate levels of performance and employees did not perceive them as fair.**

The Agency has established a requirement to ensure that the amount of performance awards will be linked to performance summary ratings.



Major Revisions (Con.)

- **Ratings were given to employees based on favoritism not performance and employees did not perceive the process as fair and transparent.**

Centers are required to establish a performance review process to ensure fairness and consistency in the appraising and rewarding of employees.

- **Employees wanted to provide feedback that would be included as part of your supervisor's performance assessment.**

The Agency has established a requirement that employee feedback be considered in evaluating supervisory performance.



Overview of Revisions

<p>Current System – Closes April 30, 2007</p>	<p>New System – Implement May 1, 2007</p>
<p><u>Standard Appraisal Cycle</u> May 1 – Apr 30</p>	<p>No change</p>
<p><u>Standard NASA forms</u></p>	<p><u>Standard NASA forms</u> will be revised and available electronically in the near future</p>
<p><u>Elements</u> Standard NASA performance elements must be used, at a minimum. Critical & Non-Critical Elements</p>	<p><u>Elements</u> Standard NASA performance elements must be used, at a minimum. Supervisor – Both elements are critical Employee – Must include standard performance elements (Program/Project/Functional Objective, Communications, Collaboration and Teamwork). Elements may be critical or non-critical; however, Prog./Proj./ Functional Obj. element must be critical. Additional elements and standards may be added.</p>



Overview of Revisions

<p>Current System – Closes April 30, 2007</p>	<p>New System – Implement May 1, 2007</p>
<p>Linkage to SES performance – employees’ accomplishments considered in SES performance evaluation</p>	<p>Link to and support the achievement of the organization’s goals and objectives.</p>
<p><u>Employee becomes a partner with the supervisor</u> and takes a proactive role in the planning, monitoring, developing, and rating phases of the performance management process.</p>	<p><u>Employee becomes a partner with the supervisor</u> and takes a proactive role in the planning, monitoring, developing, and rating phases of the performance management process.</p>
<p><u>3 Rating of Record Levels</u> Distinguished Meets or Exceeds Fails to Meet</p>	<p><u>5 Rating of Record Levels</u> Distinguished Accomplished Fully Successful Needs Improvement Unacceptable</p>



Overview of Revisions

Current System – Closes April 30, 2007	New System – Implement May 1, 2007
<p><u>Element Ratings</u> Significantly Exceeds Meets or Exceeds Fails to Meet</p>	<p><u>Element Ratings</u> Significantly Exceeds Expectations Exceeds Expectations Meets Expectations Needs Improvement Fails to Meet Expectations</p>
<p><u>Level of Approval</u> Two levels of management approve rating of “Fails to Meet” and “Distinguished”</p>	<p><u>Levels of Approval</u> Two levels of management approve rating of “Unacceptable,” “Needs Improvement,” and “Distinguished”</p>
<p><u>Quality Step Increase (QSI)</u> QSIs for “Distinguished” only</p>	<p>No change</p>



Training and Support

In support of this transition, the Agency will utilize an integrated training approach which will include the following:

- An online tutorial in SATERN required for supervisors and strongly encouraged for employees (should be available in April);
- Coaching Skills Training for supervisors and managers; and
- An updated and expanded website to provide written examples of elements and performance standards, helpful hints on having quality conversations, and checklists and worksheets to help both supervisors and employees with the performance management process.

The on-line tutorial and coaching skills training for supervisors and managers is expected to roll-out in April/May 2007.