

For: RMA Employees

RMA Individual Performance Management Program

Approved by: Acting Administrator, Risk Management Agency



1 Overview

A Coverage

RMA’s performance management program applies to all RMA employees nationwide, except for individuals:

- in the Senior Executive Service (SES) and Senior-Level (SL) employees
- for which employment is not reasonably expected to exceed the minimum appraisal period (90 calendar days) in a consecutive 12-month period

Note: Temporary intermittent employees would only be subject to the performance management program if the employee actually works a continuous 90-calendar day period regardless of the length of their appointment.

- excluded from coverage by statute or by OPM regulation.

B Purpose

This notice provides:

- timeframes for completing FY 2016 summary ratings and ratings of record
- information to facilitate FY 2017 performance plan implementation
- changes to the EmpowHR performance management module.

C Labor-Management Obligations

Where exclusive representation exists, bargaining may be requested to the extent allowed by applicable statutes. Where contract language already addresses these policies and procedures for bargaining unit employees, contract language prevails.

Disposal Date	Distribution
January 1, 2017	All RMA employees

Notice PM-2975

1 Overview (Continued)

D Authorities

RMA's performance management program is based on DR 4040-430, Performance Management, dated September 30, 2013.

E Effective Date

This individual performance management program is effective **October 1, 2016**.

F Action

All supervisors shall ensure that employees' applicable AD-435 comply with the provisions of this notice. Any changes required to bring an employee's AD-435 into compliance with this notice shall be completed no later than **October 30, 2016**, unless otherwise noted.

Performance plans should be documented in EmpowHR. The system administrator (NFC) has advised agencies not to roll over (copy) the FY 16 plans to FY 17, but to create new plans because of modifications in the system that NFC implemented this year.

2 Responsibilities

A Reviewing Officials

Reviewing officials are responsible for the following:

- establishing a performance culture that supports a high performing organization through effective management of individual and organizational performance;
- implementing the principles, policies, procedures and requirements of the Program that are within their span of control;
- ensuring that rating officials carry out their performance management responsibilities within established deadlines, and evaluating the rating officials to ensure accountability for performance management according to their formal performance expectations and standards;
- reviewing and approving the performance plans developed by their subordinate rating officials for consistency, fairness, objectivity, and completeness, and ensuring that plans reflect the overall needs and goals of the organization;
- reviewing and approving the ratings of record proposed by their subordinate rating officials for consistency, fairness, objectivity, and completeness, and ensuring that employee ratings are consistent with the organization's performance; and
- completing required ongoing performance management training.

Notice PM-2975

2 Responsibilities (Continued)

B Rating Officials

Rating officials are responsible for the following:

- establishing individual performance plans, and creating a performance culture and environment that fosters a highly performing work unit;
- ensuring that duties covered by performance elements are included in the respective employee's position description;
- the full performance cycle, including communicating performance expectations clearly, ensuring that employees understand what is expected, and holding employees accountable; monitoring performance during the appraisal period and providing regular and recurring performance feedback to employees; developing employees; making meaningful distinctions for assigned ratings based upon performance; fostering, recognizing, and rewarding excellent performance; and taking appropriate action to address performance not meeting expectations;
- engaging employees in the process of establishing and documenting performance plans. Once approved by the reviewing official, a final written copy of each plan should be provided to the respective employee as soon as is practicable, but no later than 30 days after the beginning of each performance year, no later than 15 days after the assignment of an employee to a different position, or within 30 days of when plans have been revised during the appraisal period;
- ensuring that each employee's performance appraisal plan has at least 1 critical element focused on results and linked to the Department and Agency or Staff Office strategic goals and/or initiatives;
- conducting 1 or more progress reviews, giving feedback on the quality of performance during the appraisal period, and preparing ratings as provided for in this directive.
- preparing ratings of record in a timely manner and recognizing employees who demonstrate noteworthy performance, ensuring equity and consistency in consideration for awards and other recognition within their organization;
- ensuring ratings of record are consistent with organizational performance; and
- completing required ongoing performance management training.

2 Responsibilities (Continued)

C Employees Responsibilities

Employees are responsible for the following:

- actively providing input to their rating official concerning the development of the performance plan, including performance elements, standards and measures;
- ensuring that there is a clear understanding of their performance expectations and how performance relates to the mission of the organization, and requesting clarification from the rating official, if necessary;
- taking responsibility to improve their own performance, performing at their full potential, supporting team endeavors, and continuing professional development which will support their performance;
- identifying work problems or other obstacles which may hinder the accomplishment of performance expectations, and working with rating officials to resolve them;
- seeking performance feedback from their rating official and, as appropriate, from internal and external customers;
- participating in their progress reviews and performance appraisals, including providing input to their rating official on their accomplishments toward achieving their performance expectations; and
- completing required ongoing performance management training.

3 Completing FY 2016 Summary Ratings and Rating of Record

A Summary Ratings

The 5 possible summary ratings are:

- Outstanding
- Superior
- Fully Successful
- Minimally Satisfactory/Marginal
- Unacceptable.

A summary rating is valid and becomes a rating of record when the rating official and reviewing official sign the rating of record and issue it to the employee.

B Required Timeframes

Ratings of record will be completed and approved as soon as is practicable after the end of the appraisal period, but no later than 30 days after the end of the regular performance year (October 30), and no later than 15 days after the end of an extended appraisal period, whichever is later.

When a rating of record cannot be prepared at the time specified, the appraisal period shall be extended, such as when the employee has not met the 90 day minimum rating period by the end of the performance year, provided the 90 day requirement is met by November 14th.

Performance may not be appraised if the employee has not spent at least 90 days on a performance plan.

Note: The 90 days do not have to be consecutive.

If an employee is not on a plan as of August 16, and was not on a performance plan for 90 days at any point in the performance year, an appraisal cannot be produced for the performance year.

If an employee is not on a plan as of August 16, but was on a plan for 90 days at some point during the performance year, and the plan covered work that is similar to the position of record, an interim rating prepared by the previous or temporary supervisor will serve as the final rating of record for the performance year. If an interim rating was not prepared at any point during the performance year, a rating of record cannot be produced for that performance year.

All ratings of record should be completed in the EmpowHR system and a copy provided to the employee.

4 Establishing FY 2017 Performance Plans

A FY 2017 Performance Plans

Performance plans shall be established:

- within 30 calendar days of the start of the appraisal period, for example October 30, 2016
- no later than 15 days after the assignment of an employee to a different position
- within 30 days of when plans have been revised during the appraisal period
- within 15 days of starting a new position, detail, or the temporary promotion of 90 or more days. Performance plans for newly hired employees shall be completed within 15 days.
- if an employee is detailed into a different position or is temporarily promoted for 90 or more days, the supervisor responsible for overseeing the detail or the temporary promotion **must** establish a formal performance plan.

Note: The expectations must be communicated to the employee in writing, as close to the beginning of the assignment as possible, and no more than 15 days after the start.

B Employee Participation and Engagement

Communication between the supervisor and the employee is an essential element of effective performance management. Establishing meaningful performance plans requires participation of both the supervisor and the employee.

Rating officials are expected to involve employees in the development of their performance plans insofar as is practicable, which means seeking and including employees' ideas and opinions in the development of performance plans. However, the final authority for establishing performance plans rests with the rating official, and with the reviewing official's concurrence.

Notice PM-2975

4 Establishing FY 2017 Performance Plans (Continued)

B Employee Participation and Engagement (Continued)

When jointly developing performance plans, the following techniques may be useful:

- the employee and supervisor discuss and develop the performance plan together
- the employee provides the supervisor with a draft performance plan
- the employee comments on draft performance plan prepared by the supervisor; or
- employees who occupy similar positions prepare draft performance plan(s), with the supervisor's approval
- use AD-435E and AD-435S (electronic fill-in PDF) to draft the performance plan and use it to copy/paste elements and standards into the EmpowHR system.

Note: Employees may access AD-435E and AD-435S at the following web sites:

- AD-435E: <https://www.ocio.usda.gov/document/ad-435e>
- AD-435S: <https://www.ocio.usda.gov/document/ad-435s>.

Before becoming final, reviewing officials must review and approve all performance plans within their span of control to ensure that consistency among plans is established for similar positions and alignment with organizational goals. Performance plans are not required to be uniform, but must be fair and equitable throughout the reviewing officials' respective organizations.

A performance plan is considered final when the rating official and reviewing official sign the performance plan and issue the plan to the employee.

Employees are requested to sign/date the appropriate AD-435 to certify receipt of their performance plan. In EmpowHR, the employee clicks on the "Viewed/Discussed Plan" button. An employee's signature does not mean that he/she agrees or disagrees with the contents of the plan. However, an employee's failure to sign/accept does not void the contents of the plan or the performance expectations documented within.

If an employee declines to sign the AD-435, the supervisor should document the reasons why on the form and click on the "Refused to Sign" button in EmpowHR.

Note: Employees **must** be informed of and participate in changes made to their performance plans.

Notice PM-2975

4 Establishing FY 2017 Performance Plans (Continued)

C Selecting Elements and Standards

Elements and Standards must be selected according to the following.

- DR 4040-430 specifies mandatory and suggested elements and standards for supervisory and non-supervisory personnel.
- Exhibit 1 is a checklist for preparing performance plans for non-supervisory employees.
- Exhibit 2 is a checklist for preparing performance plans for supervisory employees.
- Exhibit 3 are listings of mandatory and optional/suggested elements and standards.

5 Monitoring Performance

A Guidelines for Monitoring Performance

Monitoring performance includes offering regular and recurring feedback, conducting progress reviews, and providing and/or arranging for training.

For Mid-Year Progress Reviews, at least once, at the midpoint of the performance year, or another appraisal period of at least 180 days, should be conducted by the employee's rating official, who must conduct a formal progress review to ensure that performance elements and standards are appropriate, and to provide the employee with an assessment of current performance.

The progress review does not usually result in either a new appraisal period or a rating. However, any significant changes to an employee's duties, responsibilities or work assignments should be reflected accurately within the critical elements of the position. If revisions to the performance plan are required, implementation must be completed within 15 days of the action.

Progress reviews must be documented on the employee's performance plan, in the EmpowHR system.

If the appraisal period is fewer than 180 days (such as when an employee joins the agency after March 30), a formal mid-year progress review is not required.

Supervisors are expected to provide regular and recurring performance feedback throughout the appraisal period. While the mid-year is the only required formal progress review in a performance year, additional progress reviews are recommended.

Notice PM-2975

5 Monitoring Performance (Continued)

B Employee Accomplishments

Employees are encouraged to maintain a personal record of their accomplishments, achievements and performance throughout the appraisal period.

Rating officials must provide employees with the opportunity to provide feedback or formal documentation on accomplishments covering their performance and contributions to the organization for the current appraisal period.

Accomplishments should be relative to individual performance expectations and performance measures, and Department and Agency or division/office goals. This input will assist the rating official in more fully evaluating the employee's performance and the results of that performance.

6 Key Performance Management Program Modifications in FY 2017

A Key Modification

RMA's Performance Management program is based on guidance issued by DR 4040-430 that may be viewed in its entirety at http://www.ocio.usda.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2012/DR-4040-430_Performance_Mgmt_Final_2013_09_30.pdf.

B Key EmpowHR Modifications Implemented in FY 2017

EmpowHR Performance Management Modifications

- Renumbering all RMA elements in EmpowHR

RMA's elements and standards now function independently of other agencies using EmpowHR. In order to facilitate the use of independent and tailored elements and standards, HRD was required to renumber all RMA elements: all RMA elements now have 100 numbers within EmpowHR.

Note: In creating FY 2017 performance plans, you should not use the copy feature to copy previous performance plans into the 2017 plan. Copying will pull in the incorrect element numbers which are no longer functioning for RMA. To create the FY2017 plan, you will have to select the appropriate elements and standards from the drop down menu in EmpowHR.

Notice PM-2975

6 Key Performance Management Program Modifications in FY 2017 (Continued)

B Key EmpowHR Modifications Implemented in FY 2017 (Continued)

- 90 Day Waiver Check Box

Previously, EmpowHR functionality required a 90 day wait period from the time the manager indicated concurrence on the Performance Plan until that employee's plan could be updated to include ratings. Now, if the manager **cannot** indicate concurrence within the 90 day wait period, the added check box on the Performance Review page can indicate waiver of this 90 day period. When checked, all coding that enforces the 90 day wait will be bypassed, enabling updates to the performance plan to be accomplished. The default for this new field should be set to "Unchecked".

- Eligibility Indicator

The new indicator identifies an employee that is not eligible for a performance plan/rating. This "Eligibility" Indicator is visible and selectable from the Performance Plan page. The default for this new field will be checked, indicating the employee is eligible for a plan/rating. The supervisor or Users with the HR Admin Role will be able to check or uncheck this field.

- Auto-populated Elements

When a manager initiated a new plan for an employee, specific elements were auto-populated on the page and the plan could not be saved unless three elements were present. HRD has removed the auto-population feature to allow a new plan to be initiated without the presence of these pre-populated elements—a blank slate. However, notification is retained that the plan must contain a minimum of 3 elements (1 must be mandatory) to save the performance plan.

Note: While OPM requires that an Employee's Performance Plan exist for at least 90 days before being rated, the requested capability to intervene by choosing to use the 90 Day Bypass function only exposes slight risks when compared to risks associated with not completing the performance plans.

Notice PM-2975

6 Key Performance Management Program Modifications in FY 2017 (Continued)

C Performance Management Program Evaluation and Additional Information

- Evaluation

The performance management program will be evaluated for its effectiveness on an annual basis within 90 calendar days of the end of each appraisal period.

This evaluation will include issues as the correlation between the:

- performance management program and any improvement of organizational performance
- employee and managerial satisfaction with the performance management program.

- Additional Information

If there are any policy related questions about this notice, contact Michael Braswell by telephone at 202-401-0392. If there are any questions about rating employees, supervisors may contact the appropriate SPO according to the following.

IF any RMA Office for...	THEN contact HRD at...
performance management processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 202-205-9057• TTY at 202 205-9057.
SPO specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 202-401-0694• TTY at 800-735-2966.

Nonsupervisory AD-435 Checklist**1 Mandatory Elements:**

- Mission Results-Oriented, Critical Element (MROCE - 4 appraisal points):
 - Suggested MROCE - Mission Results, Mission Support, Execution of Duties, Program Management
 - Must include an alignment statement that shows clear linkage to a strategic goal e.g. from the USDA Strategic Plan, RMA Strategic Plan or other plans containing strategic goals.
 - EEO/CR Diversity and Inclusion, Critical Element. (2 appraisal points). Support and participate in Special Emphasis Program (SEP) Observance at USDA or Agency level.

2 Mandatory Standards:

- Attend 3 different EEO/CR activities during the rating period. Attendance at multiple observances of the same SEP will count only as 1 EEO/CR Observance.
- Comply with EEO Investigators and EEOC Orders, when requested.
- Completes annual civil rights training on the required due date as established by the office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, or the Agency.
- Incorporate customer perspectives in at least 1 Critical Element. Suggested wording:
 - Internal and external stakeholder needs and expectations are considered in making decisions, devising solutions, and resolving conflicts. Those consistent with corporate priorities are included in plans and commitments, and are monitored for success in achieving satisfactory results.
 - Feedback from customers indicating satisfaction with the quality of service delivered, including that the service was provided in a collaborative manner and met the customers' needs, and the quantity and quality of information delivered, including that the information provided increased the customers' understanding of the Agency's programs".

2 Mandatory Standards: (Continued)

- Performance plans must contain performance elements and/or standards for safety and health, handling of classified material, and the protection of PII where warranted by the employee's position.
 - Safety and Health: “Demonstrates a basic understanding of the Agency’s Safety and Health Program. Complies with safety and health rules and regulations that apply to all employees. Ensures all reports of unsafe and unhealthful conditions are reported to the supervisor or designated official within 48 hours.”
 - PII: “Demonstrates an understanding of the Privacy Act and applies the Act correctly when exercising controls and safeguards to preserve the integrity and confidentiality of materials containing Personally Identifiable Information (PII). Ensures that PII is protected at all times, including when being transferred, in accordance with Agency policy. Reports any violations to the supervisor immediately.”

3 Are there at least three critical elements?**4 Is there at least one non-critical element?****5 Are there no more than seven total elements?****6 Does each element include standards with credible measures?****7 At least 3 standards for each element.****8 All standards established at the “Meets Fully Successful” level.****9 Does the performance plan cover the preponderance of the employee’s responsibilities?****10 EmpowHR uses AD-435A. Either AD-435A or AD-435E should be completed and discussed with the employee at the beginning of the rating period (within 30 calendar days) for the current rating cycle as demonstrated in the EmpowHR system.**

Supervisory AD-435 Checklist

1 Mandatory Elements:

- Mission Results-Oriented Critical Element (MROCE -- 4 appraisal points).
- Suggested MROCE: Mission Results, Mission Support, Execution of Duties, Program Management
- Must include an alignment statement that shows clear linkage to a strategic goal e.g. from the USDA Strategic Plan, RMA Strategic Plan or other plans containing strategic goals.
- RMA's Strategic Plan can be found at:
<http://www.rma.usda.gov/aboutrma/what/2015-18strategicplan.pdf>
- USDA's Strategic Plan can be found at <http://www.ocfo.usda.gov/usdasp/usdasp.htm>
- Leadership/Management or Supervision – Critical Element (4 appraisal points). Include performance standards that address accountability for the following responsibilities:

2 Mandatory Standards:

- Employee Engagement Actively creates an environment that promotes staff engagement, integration, and collaboration. Based on employee feedback and the data collected with the most recent Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, identifies both strengths and challenges related to employee engagement, development, and satisfaction. Works proactively and inclusively with staff members to develop and implement strategies to maintain areas of strength and improve engagement and satisfaction in the organizational unit. Promotes open, candid, and ongoing dialog with and among staff to develop more comprehensive and innovative insights to manage obstacles to engagement.
- Performance Management. The supervisor establishes subordinate employee performance plans within established timeframes that align with Agency and Departmental goals and objectives and communicates to employees how their work supports the Agency mission and strategic plan and/or initiatives. Employee performance plans contain clear, results-focused measures, and the supervisor provides accurate and timely feedback to determine progress and success in meeting expectations as follows:
 - Performance plans, progress reviews, and appraisals of subordinate employees are completed by the due dates established by the Department or Agency. Performance plans for each employee must include at least 1 critical element that is traceable to the Agency's goals and objectives (e.g. Mission Results critical performance element).
 - Ongoing feedback and coaching as demonstrated through performance feedback sessions is provided as evidenced by 100 percent of employees receiving at least 1 feedback session documented on AD-435A at the midpoint (April) of the rating period.

Supervisory AD-435 Checklist (Continued)

- Ensures that appropriate action is taken to address performance problems in a manner that supports organizational goals and objectives; subordinate managers and supervisors adhere to the Agency performance management policy for performance appraisal and employee recognition.
- Performance and employee feedback data is used as an indicator of compliance and general satisfaction or needed improvement for planning, developing, monitoring, rating, and rewarding performance. AD-435A shall be in place within 30 calendar days of the beginning of the appraisal period. Mid-year reviews are conducted according to Agency guidelines. Ratings are accurate and issued within 30 calendar days of the end of the appraisal period.

3 Retention and Succession Planning:

- Successfully transitions new hires into the position by promptly providing an orientation into the workforce and establishing performance elements and standards. Supervisor provides ongoing feedback and coaching, and makes appropriate usage of the probationary period to assess the new hires' ability to perform in the position.
- Implements retention strategies that focus on key internal processes (e.g., work environment, employee orientation, executing Individual Development Plans for all employees, subject to bargaining obligations, coaching, development, and mentoring, etc.) that promote employee growth, supports the health of the workforce, and drive the future success of the organization's people and infrastructure. Assesses current workforce plans to ensure they are up-to-date in order to meet Program/Agency goals and objectives. Works with senior management officials and HR to comply with the workforce planning process as described in the Department's position management policy."

4 Recruitment and Hiring. (For supervisors with hiring authority)

Recruits and selects new employees based on organizational goals, budget considerations, and staffing needs. When filling a position, the supervisor engages and collaborates with HRD to ensure that skills required for the job are identified, posting of the job vacancy is accurate and assists in identifying contacts for diverse locations or organizations for recruiting purposes. Participates as needed with HRD in the proper screening of applications and appropriate categorization of applicants based on qualifications. Uses flexible hiring authorities when possible in filling a vacancy (such as targeted disabilities, student employment, direct hire, appointing veterans, etc.) to ensure diversity in recruitment and hiring."

Supervisory AD-435 Checklist (Continued)

5 EEO/CR Diversity and Inclusion. Critical Element (2 appraisal points).

- **Mandatory Standards:**

- Attend 3 different EEO/CR activities during the rating period. Attendance at multiple observances of the same SEP will count only as 1 EEO/CR Observance.
- Comply with EEO Investigators and EEOC Orders, when requested.
- Completes annual civil rights training on the required due date as established by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, or the Agency.

- **Cultural Transformation** - (Mandatory under the Leadership/Management, Supervision or appropriate mission-results element).

“Supports the Secretary’s initiative for Cultural Transformation by continually examining program delivery and surveying the workforce and/or stakeholders and/or customers. Creates an environment of inclusion, exceptional performance, effective leadership, and works to eliminate any barriers to operational and service excellence. Examines workforce and workplace processes and flexibilities and implements improvements where needed. Supports the Secretary’s initiative for USDA Diversity Recruitment Roadmap by expanding on mission-specific activities and timelines to ensure diversity recruitment program success and leadership accountability.”

- **Employee & Customer Perspective** - The supervisory plan must include appropriate measures or indicators of employee and/or customer/stakeholder feedback.

Suggested wording:

- Seeks employee feedback to identify needs and expectations and considers employee perspective when making decisions affecting employees to develop a well-informed staff who are effective and efficient implementers of management decisions.
- Feedback from staff indicates that they understand the Agency’s direction, the goals and their role in achieving these goals; understand what is expected of them; were involved in developing their performance plans; understand how well they are performing and where they need to improve; have performance plans that accurately reflect their performance measures; have the necessary tools and resources to accomplish their work; where they do not have what they need, they understand why; have the skills and knowledge they need to do their jobs, or a plan to obtain them; and are acknowledged and appreciated for good performance.

Supervisory AD-435 Checklist (Continued)

5 EEO/CR Diversity and Inclusion. Critical Element (2 appraisal points) (Continued)

Suggested wording (Continued):

- Internal and external stakeholder needs and expectations are considered in making decisions, devising solutions, and resolving conflicts. Internal and external stakeholder needs and expectations consistent with corporate priorities are included in plans and commitments and are monitored for success in achieving satisfactory results.
- Feedback from customers indicates satisfaction with the quality of service delivered, including that the service was provided in a collaborative manner and met the customers' needs, and the quantity and quality of information delivered, including that the information provided increased the customers' understanding of the Agency's programs.

- **Health and Safety**

Adheres to Safety and Occupational Health practices and procedures to promote and maintain a safe and healthful work environment for all employees. On report of an unsafe and/or unhealthful condition, notifies appropriate office within 48 hours, and follows up and/or takes appropriate action until the condition is resolved.

- **Personally Identifiable Information**

“Demonstrates an understanding of the Privacy Act and applies the Privacy Act correctly when exercising controls and safeguards to preserve the integrity and confidentiality of materials containing Personally Identifiable Information (PII). Ensures that PII is protected at all times, including when being transferred, according to Agency policy. Reports any violations to appropriate Agency officials (security officer, privacy officer) immediately on becoming aware of a problem. Sends detailed status update to Agency officials within 1 hour of initial notification.”

6 Are there at least three critical elements?

7 Is there at least one non critical element?

8 Are there no more than seven total elements?

9 Does each element include standards with credible measures?

10 At least 3 standards for each element.

11 All standards established at the “Meets Fully Successful” level.

12 Was the employee invited to participate in developing the performance plan?

Elements and Descriptions

Following are mandatory and optional/suggested elements and standards.

Elements	Description
Execution of Duties	Completed work assignments are performed in a timely manner, assuring a quality of work that meets the needs of the organization. Appropriate work methods are selected for the development of work products. Work products do not require substantive revisions. Assignments are completed in accordance with applicable RMA guidelines, including timeframes.
Communications	Oral and written communications are clear, correct, timely, and presented in an understandable manner. Supervisor and coworkers are informed of issues and problems when necessary. Information and guidance provided is timely and correct.
Leadership/Management or Supervision Important: Mandatory for all supervisors and managers	Work is assigned in a fair and effective manner. Technical guidance to subordinate staff is given in a timely manner. Performance management is implemented in accordance with procedure. Issues, concerns, or problems are handled promptly and fairly. To the extent possible, staff is properly trained and complies with occupational health and safety programs. Management decisions are supported and implemented within appropriate timeframes.
Team Leadership	Routinely leads individuals and team members toward specific goals and accomplishments. Provides encouragement, guidance, and direction as needed. Adjusts style to fit situation. Delegates appropriate authority in an effective manner. Coordinates functions of the team members. Demonstrates a sincere interest in employees' activities, abilities, etc.
Program Management Mission-Results	Manages program(s), resolving issues and problems within the employee's control. Monitors all aspects of program(s) for quality, effectiveness, and consistency. Program plans and guidance are responsive to objectives and requirements of RMA. Policy instructions are appropriately issued and are accurate. Evaluates effectiveness of work and adjusts plans accordingly.
Special Projects	Special projects are regularly completed on time in a competent, accurate, and thorough manner. Completed projects comply with regulations and procedures. Special projects are completed independently, or reflect research and collaboration with others as required.
Research and Analysis	Thoroughly and accurately researches issues in a timely manner, using available reference sources (such as USDA manuals, or applicable law or regulations. Makes reasonable recommendations or decisions based on available guidance.

Elements and Descriptions (Continued)

Elements	Description
Customer Service	Routinely displays courteous and tactful behavior. Projects a positive and professional image of USDA. Provides advice that is timely, responsive, and accurate. Maintains appropriate rapport with internal and external customers. Develops and establishes working relationships with external organizations as required. Keeps supervisor and/or team leader informed of difficult and/or controversial issues and unique problems. Takes action to effectively solve problems before they have an adverse impact on the organization or other employees.
Supervisory Civil Rights, Equal Opportunity and Diversity and Inclusion Important: Mandatory for all supervisors and managers.	Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued and leveraged to achieve the vision and mission of the organization through both personal leadership and appropriate managerial action. Performs in a nondiscriminatory manner that demonstrates behaviors that conform to civil rights and EEO laws, regulations, and policies, including fairness, cooperation, and respect towards employees and customers.
Nonsupervisory Civil Rights, Equal Opportunity and Diversity and Inclusion Important: Mandatory for all nonsupervisors.	Performs assignments in a manner that demonstrates fairness, cooperation, and respect toward employees and customers. Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued. Leverages diversity to achieve the vision and mission of the organization. Supports and maintains an environment that is free of unlawful discrimination and reprisal.
Resource Management	Monitors allocated funds and maintains complete and accurate records of expenditures. Routinely utilizes resources in an efficient and effective manner. Ensures that funds, property and other resources are guarded against waste, loss, unauthorized use, and misappropriation.
Individual Contributions to the Team	Ordinarily displays dependability and reliability. Promotes open communication. Contributes creative ideas and actively participates in team meetings resulting in added value to the team’s products and services. When problems arise, explores causes and assists in resolving them. Works with team members to appropriately implement decisions. Is usually open-minded to new ideas and approaches in implementing the team's goals. Willingly accepts and acts on constructive criticism.

Note: Additional elements and standards are available in USDA’s “**Guide for Writing USDA Performance Plans, Performance Elements and Measureable Standards**”. These elements and/or standards can be copied into EmpowHR.