



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the
Assistant Secretary
for Administration

Office of
Human Resources
Management

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TO: Subcabinet Officials
Agency Heads and Staff Office Directors

FROM: Roberta Jeanquart *Roberta Jeanquart*
Chief Human Capital Officer
Office of Human Resources Management

OCT 12 2016

SUBJECT: Establishing Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Senior Executive Service (SES), Senior Level and Scientific or Professional (SL/ST), and Senior Science and Technology Service (SSTS) Performance Plans

The FY 2017 performance appraisal period is from October 1, 2016 to September 30, 2017. This memorandum is a reminder that performance plans must be established for all eligible SES, SL/ST, and SSTS employees **no later than October 31, 2016**. Agencies must upload established plans to the Executive Resources Management Division (ERMD) Performance Management SharePoint site by **December 2, 2016**. To ensure compliance, ERMD will begin reporting missing performance plans on **December 9, 2016**.

Digital Signatures: We now permit using digital signatures or wet signatures for performance plans. Remember that ongoing communication is essential in effective performance management and the use of digital signatures does not replace any consultation or meetings required to discuss an employee's performance. Please review **Attachment 1** for guidelines on using the digital signature feature.

SES Performance: The SES Performance Plan template was revised by the OPM to reflect changes to 5 CFR 430 Subpart C, Managing SES Performance. These changes only improve consistent performance management of SES members and does not affect our current performance management process. See **Attachment 2** for the SES Performance Plan template that includes the FY 2017 critical element weights, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR) performance requirements for all five critical elements, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary's Initiatives – additional mandatory performance requirements for Cultural Transformation, Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, and Acquisition and Strategic Sourcing (located in Part 8 – Agency Use). Additional performance requirements related to the Federal Information Technology and Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA) will be issued by the Department's Chief Information Officer (CIO) for Agency SES CIO's. Please take note that for certification purposes each performance requirement in Critical Element 5. Results Driven must contain results and quality indicators. **Attachment 3** contains examples of quality, quantity, timeliness, and cost effective measures and an example of performance requirements written for the Results Driven element.

SL/ST Performance: The SL/ST Performance Plan template dated 10/2016 (**Attachment 4**) must be used for both supervisory and non-supervisory SL/ST positions. Please note that "Element 4 – Supervision and Human Resources

Management” is required only for positions designated as “supervisory.” On the performance plan, the position title should indicate whether it is a supervisory position, e.g. Research Scientist (Supvy) or Supervisory Research Scientist. Performance language for employee engagement is required only for supervisory SL/ST employees and also included as part of the performance plan template.

SSTS Performance: The previous version of the SSTS performance plan template is now obsolete. To meet the Department-wide requirement for accountability in the area of civil rights, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights is requiring a separate civil rights element for SSTS employees. This new element has been added to the SSTS Performance Plan template as Critical Element 5. Civil Rights (**Attachment 5**). It encompasses the criteria for ensuring that SSTS employees carry out civil rights responsibilities in accordance with civil rights laws and responsibilities. Questions or concerns regarding the criteria should be directed to your Agency’s civil rights director.

Certification of Appraisal Systems: OPM and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) granted full certification of USDA’s SES (expires April 28, 2018) and SL/ST (expires October 27, 2017) performance appraisal systems that permits USDA to maintain a higher pay level for recruitment and retention purposes. USDA may pay SES and SL/ST employees above the pay rate for level III of the Executive Schedule, up to level II, and apply the higher aggregate limitation on pay. Pay is set and adjusted in accordance with USDA’s SES and SL/ST pay and performance policies.

SL/ST Performance Appraisal System and Streamlined Certification Process: On August 16, 2016, OPM issued a memorandum announcing a new SL/ST performance appraisal system and streamlined certification process. This system provides a consistent framework to communicate expectations and evaluate SL/ST performance. It also meets the criteria for the streamlined certification process which reduces the amount of time required for OPM and OMB review from 6-months to 3-months. Based on feedback received from a representative ST population, ERMD will present options to the Secretary’s Executive Resources Board to consider implementing the new system in USDA for FY 2018.

If you have questions regarding this memorandum, please contact Patricia Moore, Director, Executive Resources Management Division, at (202) 720-8629, or via e-mail at Patty.Moore@dm.usda.gov. You may also contact Kimm Hobbs at (202) 690-3238, Executive Resources Policy, or via e-mail at Kimm.Hobbs@dm.usda.gov.

Attachment 1 – Guidelines for Digital Signatures
Attachment 2 – SES Performance Plan template
Attachment 3 – Results Driven Element – Measures for Performance Requirements
Attachment 4 – SL/ST Performance Plan template
Attachment 5 – SSTS Performance Plan template

cc: Deputy Administrators for Management
Mission Area Human Resources Directors