



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

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## Memorandum

To: Assistant Secretaries  
Heads of Bureaus and Offices

From: Mark Green  
Deputy Assistant Secretary Human Capital and Diversity  
Chief Human Capital Officer

Subject: Guidance on Closing out FY 2023 Performance Appraisals in DOI Talent and USA Performance Pilot and Establishing FY 2024 Performance Plans for General Workforce Employees

This memorandum provides guidance for accomplishing the closeout of Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 performance appraisals at the Department of the Interior under the DOI Talent system and USA Performance Pilot for all general workforce employees (all non-SES/SL/ST employees) whose appraisal year ends September 30, 2023, as well as general guidance on establishing new performance plans for FY 2024.

In **FY 2020**, the Department transitioned to a paperless performance management system within DOI Talent for many employees, including permanent, General Schedule (GS), non-seasonal employees and their supervisors, and in **FY 2023**, a small group participated in a paperless performance management system pilot, U.S. Office of Personnel Management's (OPM's) USA Performance. This was in addition to those using Hard Copy performance appraisals in FY 2023.

### Key Milestones for Performance Management:

- **FY 2024** rating cycle, it has been determined that all employees currently using DOI Talent for appraisals, will transition to OPM's paperless USA Performance system.
- **FY 2023** appraisals will be **closed out** in DOI Talent's paperless performance management system and in OPM's paperless USA Performance system for those participating in the pilot.
- **FY 2023 Hard Copy** appraisals will be closed out by submission to [Servicing Human Resources Offices](#) (SHROs).
- Supervisors opting to use Hard Copy appraisal forms for FY 2024, may continue to do so in accordance with [370 DM 430](#) (Performance Management System).
- [Performance Management job aids](#) for closing the FY 2023 performance appraisal cycle in DOI Talent Performance Management are now available for each role.

- Training and job aids for opening the FY 2024 appraisal cycle for each role in USA Performance will be available beginning October 1, 2023.

## **Closing out FY 2023 Performance Appraisals**

### **Performance Evaluations**

Supervisors must evaluate each employee's performance against the criteria established in the Employee Performance Appraisal Plan (EPAP), assign a numerical rating for each critical element, and take the average numerical score to determine the overall rating of record. Interim Appraisals and appraisals for employees on Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) assignments, should also be considered in determining the overall rating of record, in accordance with 370 DM 430. Ratings are to be completed by **October 31, 2023**.

The [Departmental Performance Management Policy](#) for the General Workforce requires that there be a clear link between individual performance and organizational results. Therefore, organizational performance should be used as one input into determining the appropriate summary performance ratings and performance recognition for each employee. Supervisors should consider the organizational achievements that they have reported to their Bureau/Office chain of command when rating their employees.

When completing performance appraisals, rating officials shall not assign employee ratings under an arbitrary distribution system (such as a bell curve or quota system). This is contrary to the intent of the appraisal system and would interfere with assigning ratings based on actual performance.

Supervisors, in consultation with SHROs, should move quickly to address situations in which employees are not meeting performance expectations, by clarifying expectations, providing training or other resources or taking formal action to address deficiencies. Corrective actions are required for all employees who are not performing at the Fully Successful level. Appropriate corrective action may include providing training relevant to the specific deficiency; denial of a within-grade-increase; initiating formal performance-based action; or in the case of employees serving a probationary/trial period, initiation of action to remove the individual from their job.

**SHROs must submit** FY 2023 appraisal extension lists for employees whose appraisals are being extended because they are on a demonstration period, or any other reason, **by October 1, 2023** to OHC, Workforce Relations Division (include employee name, title, pay plan, organization, BUS Code, reason for being extended, and extension end date). List of employees requesting reconsideration on their FY 2023 rating of record, must be submitted to OHC, Workforce Relations Division (include employee name, title, pay plan, organization, BUS Code and related CBA provision, if applicable, and reconsideration decision, if available) by **December 1, 2023**.

**Performance-Based Awards.** Awards help reward employee performance excellence and reinforce a high-performing culture that improves organizational effectiveness. When managed

carefully and responsibly, they also have an important role in recognizing and rewarding results and exceptional service to the American people, as well as supporting the retention of high-performing employees. Performance awards are intended to reward employee achievements and should be granted in a manner that differentiates between levels of performance. In other words, Bureaus/Offices should allocate awards in a manner in which higher performers receive larger awards (in terms of percentage of pay) than their peers who receive lower ratings. In accordance with Departmental policy, employees who receive Fully Successful (level 3), Exceeds Expectations (level 4) or Outstanding (level 5) ratings may receive a performance award and/or time-off award for work performed in FY 2023. An employee must receive an Outstanding (level 5) rating to be eligible for a Quality Step Increase (QSI).

**Individual Monetary Awards.** The ongoing use of awards and recognition throughout the year is particularly important as we address workforce challenges and look for opportunities to reward and recognize high performing employees and those with talent critical to mission achievement. For FY 2024 Bureaus/Offices may spend up to **2.5%** of aggregate salaries of all non-SES/SL/ST employees at the end of the previous fiscal year (i.e., aggregate salary as of September 30, 2023) on the combination of both rating-based performance awards and individual contribution awards (e.g., STAR awards). SES/SL/ST salaries are not included in this calculation.

**Political Appointees.** Effective FY 2011, a [Presidential memorandum](#) issued a freeze on discretionary awards, bonuses, and similar payments for political appointees. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management and the Office of Management and Budget guidance regarding this freeze remains in effect for all politically appointed Federal employees, including Schedule C or equivalent appointments to GS and special pay authority. Employees in these positions may not be paid any rating-based performance awards, QSIs, individual or group contribution awards of any type, or recruitment, relocation, or retention incentives. Time-off awards and nonmonetary awards are not subject to the freeze and may be granted to political appointees.

See Attachment for additional guidance on processing ratings and awards.

### **Establishing FY 2024 Performance Plans**

On or about October 1, 2023, FY 2024 performance plans will be activated in USA Performance. Rating Officials must enter these plans manually for all employees. Once entered for the first time in USA Performance, these plans will automatically populate for following FY's. Bureau of Indian Education employees are not required to initiate paperless performance plans.

Hard Copy appraisals will continue to be available for the FY 2024 appraisal cycle, allowing first-level supervisors of career seasonal, temporary, wage grade, and term employees to utilize the [DI-3100](#) for non-supervisory employees, and [DI-3100S](#) for supervisory employees. These are the only Hard Copy EPAP forms authorized for use within DOI. Automated versions of these forms are acceptable. If using Hard Copy appraisals, rating officials will need to carefully and thoughtfully consider which employees to use a Hard Copy appraisal form for. Rating officials should consider the employee's readiness to access USA Performance for the FY 2024 appraisal period, including:

- If the employees have a PIV card;
- If the employees have access to government-furnished equipment on a regular enough basis to sign EPAPs at the performance year start, at progress review time, and at summary rating time; and
- If the employees' duties allow them to have access to a workstation.

Once the decision is made to use a Hard Copy appraisal form, the employee and rating official are exempt from completing the appraisal process in USA Performance, however, the rating official must submit the completed hard copy appraisal to the SHRO, for end of year appraisal closeout.

To ensure supervisors have adequate time to close out and evaluate FY 2023 performance appraisals under the four-level performance management system and establish new FY 2024 performance plans, we are asking all supervisors to adhere to the below time frames:

### Key Performance Dates and Milestones:

Key Dates	Performance Management Activities
Oct 1-October 31	<p>Closeout FY 2023 performance appraisals (Steps 5-8) of the paperless performance plan process in DOI Talent, and Part 3 (Rating) of the USA Performance Pilot, or Parts C and D of the paper appraisal form DI-3100/3100S).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign and secure approval of ratings, complete EPAP forms, and conduct appraisal meetings.</li> <li>• Complete through Step 8 in DOI Talent, complete Part 3 (Rating) in the USA Performance pilot, or submit the completed Hard Copy appraisal to the SHRO by November 1.</li> </ul>
Starting October 1	Begin drafting FY 2024 performance plans in USA Performance or on DI-3100/3100S
On/About October 1	<p>FY 2024 appraisals will be activated in USA Performance. Hard Copy appraisal forms will continue to be available for those supervisors opting to use those, based on the above Hard Copy guidance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FY 2024 performance plans, must be manually drafted and inputted Part 1(Start Plan).</li> <li>• Rating officials opting into a Hard Copy appraisal, must begin drafting a Hard Copy performance plan on DI-3100/ DI-3100S, as appropriate.</li> </ul>
November 15	FY 2024 performance plans must be finalized and issued to employees, Part 1 (Start Plan) in USA Performance, or Parts A-1 through A-4 for the paper appraisal form DI-3100/3100S).
December 1	Date for SHROs to complete Step 9 of FY 2023 EPAPs in DOI Talent, Part 3 (Rating) of FY 2023 USA Performance pilot, and to submit all completed FY 2023 Hard Copy DI-3100/3100S to SHROs.

Well-developed performance plans let employees know what they need to accomplish and the standards that will be used to evaluate their performance. To ensure a more robust performance management program and to increase accountability throughout the process, performance plans must display the following characteristics:

*Rigorous performance standards:* Government-wide regulations require, at a minimum, that a specific performance standard be established for each critical element at the Fully Successful level, within DOI, all elements are critical. Supervisors are strongly encouraged to develop standards at additional levels as well so that employees clearly understand their performance expectations. Performance standards may be more or less objective depending on the job but must be sufficiently specific to provide a firm benchmark toward which employees must aim their performance. The Fully Successful level must be written to represent what is normally expected of an employee to contribute meaningfully to an organization's success in meeting its mission and goals. The Fully Successful level should never be characterized as a low level of performance or be phrased in such a way as to define unacceptable performance.

*Strategic Alignment:* At least one critical element, and preferably all elements, should align with and support organizational goals and targets that are established in an organization's annual performance/strategic plan and/or that have been included in the SES members' performance plans. The Department's [FY 2022 – FY 2026 Strategic Plan](#) is a helpful guide in determining appropriate strategic connection. Alignment should be clear so that employees can see how their performance plans support achievement of organizational goals. Merely including a generic statement in performance plans that employees' performance requirements support organizational goals is not adequate for communicating alignment. Similarly, simply restating organizational goals without also including the metrics for determining performance against those goals is not adequate.

*Results Focused:* Critical elements and standards should be written in terms of expected results. While plans may include critical elements that focus on competencies such as teamwork or customer service, at least one critical element must hold an employee accountable for achieving a result that directly supports organizational goal achievement.

*Mandatory Performance Management Training:* All supervisors and employees must be provided training in performance management. The [training tool](#) is linked or included in Appendix 1 of each EPAP form and meets this requirement. Employees should be directed to this section when plans are established. The employee must acknowledge that the training information was provided by signing the EPAP form.

*Employee Involvement:* Employees should be engaged in the process of determining critical elements and performance standards. The EPAP requires supervisors and employees to sign the EPAP form to verify that employee involvement was solicited. Performance information and guidance are in the [Non-SES Performance Management Toolbox](#).

Questions regarding this guidance can be directed to Jennifer Argüello, Director Workforce Relations Division, Office of Human Capital, at [jennifer\\_arguello@ios.doi.gov](mailto:jennifer_arguello@ios.doi.gov) or at (202) 577-

4137. Requests for assistance with year-end performance management and awards procedures should be directed to the SHROs.

Attachment(s):

1. Guidance on Processing Ratings and Awards

CC: Bureaus/Office Human Capital Officers

## Attachment 1

### Guidance on Processing Ratings and Awards

Ratings of record completed on paper should be submitted to SHROs for input into the Federal Personnel and Payroll System (FPPS) no later than **November 30, 2023**.

SHROs must follow the below procedures:

- *DOI Talent and the USA Performance Pilot* will automatically transmit the rating of record, rating of record date, and rating pattern to FPPS on a nightly basis, beginning on October 1, for those FY 2023 appraisals completed in *DOI Talent* and the USA Performance Pilot. Ratings will transmit once Step 9 of the DOI Talent appraisal is completed, and once Part 3 (Rating), of the USA Performance Pilot appraisal is completed. For hard copy appraisals, the rating of record, rating of record date, and rating pattern must be entered manually in FPPS. Care must be taken to **record the rating pattern as “E” in FPPS**, as this is the only approved rating pattern for General Workforce throughout the Department for ratings assigned based on FY 2023 performance.
- All performance awards should be processed in FPPS no later than December 31, 2023. However, performance awards can only be processed after the performance rating of record has been entered in FPPS.
- Time-off awards that are given as performance awards are processed in FPPS using Nature of Action code 846, with award type A2.
- Quality Step Increases (QSIs) should be processed no later than December 31, 2023, or 90 days after the end of the performance cycle. However, when situations preclude timely processing, the QSI can be delayed up to 90 days after the end of the performance cycle but **cannot be delayed past the end of the next performance year**. Whenever processing of the QSI is delayed for more than 90 days, a request for exception approval should be submitted to the respective Bureau or Office Head, through the servicing Human Resources Office and the Bureau Headquarters Human Resources Office. Requests should be in the form of a memorandum and include an explanation as to why it was not possible to process the rating and the QSI within 90 days.