



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

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PERSONNEL BULLETIN NO: 19-13

SUBJECT: Changes to Departmental Manual Chapter 370 DM 451.2, Performance Awards

1. Purpose. Effective October 1, 2018, the Department of the Interior (DOI) implemented a four-level performance management system for general workforce employees. This Personnel Bulletin (PB) modifies Departmental policy governing performance rating-based awards under the four-level system and supersedes the existing policy in Department Manual (DM) Chapter 370 DM 451.2, Performance Awards, until corresponding changes in the DM are made.

2. Authorities.

- A. Title 5 of the United States Code (U.S.C.), Chapter 43
- B. Title 5 of the U.S.C., Chapter 45
- C. Title 5 of the U.S.C., Chapter 53
- D. Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 430
- E. Title 5 of the CFR, Part 451
- F. Title 5 of the CFR, Part 530
- G. Title 5 of the CFR, Part 531
- H. 370 DM 430, Performance Management System, dated October 1, 2018

3. Coverage. This policy applies to DOI employees who occupy a position covered by the performance management system established in 370 DM 430 for the general workforce.

4. Policy. DOI is committed to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of Government operations by recognizing and rewarding its employees for results-based performance. Performance-based awards are linked directly to an employee's most recent rating of record and are intended to recognize sustained levels of successful performance over the course of the rating cycle. An employee must be rated Fully Successful (Level 3) or higher to be eligible for a performance rating-based award. Any employee rated Outstanding (Level 5) must be considered for an award as required by 370 DM 430. Consistent with 5 CFR § 451.104(h), performance-based awards must be granted in a manner that makes a meaningful distinction based on levels of performance. In other words, an employee who receives an award based on a performance rating of Outstanding (Level 5) must receive a larger cash award, in terms of percentage of base pay, than an employee at the same grade/pay level who received a rating of Fully Successful (Level 3) or Exceeds Expectations (Level 4).

5. Rating Levels for Recognition. Managers/Supervisors have the flexibility to recognize employees using any of the performance-based awards outlined below, or a combination thereof:

A. Outstanding (Level 5) Performance Rating - Eligible for one or more of the following: a cash award of up to five (5) percent of base pay, a Quality Step Increase (QSI), time-off award, or other appropriate equivalent recognition.

B. Exceeds Expectations (Level 4) Performance Rating - Eligible for a cash award of up to three (3) percent of base pay, time-off award, and/or other appropriate equivalent recognition.

C. Fully Successful (Level 3) Performance Rating - Eligible for a cash award of up to one (1) percent of base pay, time-off award, and/or other appropriate equivalent recognition.

D. Unacceptable (Level 1) Performance Rating – Not eligible for any performance-based award.

6. Performance-based Cash Awards. Consistent with the limitations explained above, a performance-based cash award may be a specific dollar amount or a percentage of the employee's pay. Cash awards based on a specific dollar amount that are in excess of \$5,000 require approval of the Assistant Secretary or equivalent. When performance-based cash awards based on a percentage of the employee's pay are in excess of \$5,000, approval of the Assistant Secretary or equivalent is not required. In accordance with 5 CFR 451.104(g), when awards are computed as a percentage of an employee's rate of base pay, the rate of base pay must include locality payments under 5 CFR part 531, subpart F; special rate supplements under 5 CFR part 530, subpart C; or similar payment or supplement under other legal authority. Such awards are recommended by the immediate supervisor or rating official, and are approved under appropriate bureau delegations.

7. Quality Step Increase (QSI). A QSI is a pay increase that provides faster than normal progression from one step of the grade of an employee's position to the next higher step of that grade for permanent General Schedule employees. To be eligible, the employee must achieve an overall rating of Outstanding (Level 5) as documented on their Employee Performance Appraisal Plan (EPAP) form and display exceptional performance that is expected to continue. In addition, the employee must not have received a QSI within the preceding 52 consecutive calendar weeks.

8. Time-Off Awards. A time-off award is an excused absence awarded to an employee without charge to leave. Bureaus must establish approval authorities, scheduling guidance, and an appropriate number of hours commensurate with employee contributions and supervisory responsibilities. The minimum time-off recognition that can be granted is one hour; the time-off award shall not exceed 40 hours per event or 80 hours total per year. This limit includes performance-based time-off awards. Employees normally have the discretion to determine when they will use a time-off award, subject to supervisory approval. A time-off award must be used while the recipient is employed at the Department; the time-off award cannot be transferred to another agency upon separation of the employee. Further, upon separation from the Department, employees are not entitled to receive payment for any unused time-off award hours. These limits apply to all employees.

9. Nomination Process and Approval Authority for Performance Awards. Performance-based awards may be documented using either the EPAP form (DI-3100 for non-supervisory employees; DI-3100S for supervisory employees) or the DOI Recommendation and Approval of Awards Form, Form DI-451.

A. Processing Timelines. All performance-based awards should be input into the Federal Personnel and Payroll System no later than December 31, or 90 days from the end of the end of the rating cycle for those on other than a fiscal year cycle.

B. Processing Codes. Performance awards must be processed in accordance with the U.S. Office of Personnel Management’s Guide to Processing Personnel Actions. Performance-based cash awards must be input using Nature of Action Code 840, “Individual Cash Award RB.” Performance-based time off awards must be input using Nature of Action Code 846, “Individual Time Off Award.”

C. Delayed Processing of QSIs. Generally, QSIs should be processed no later than December 31, or 90 days from the end of the rating cycle for those on other than a fiscal year cycle. However, when situations preclude timely processing, the QSI can be delayed past the 90 days, but cannot be delayed past the end of the next rating cycle. Whenever processing of the QSI is delayed for more than 90 days, a written request for exception must be submitted to the respective Bureau or Office Head, through the servicing Human Resources Office (HRO) and the Bureau Headquarters Human Resources Office for approval. Since a QSI must be supported by a performance rating of Outstanding (Level 5), which requires the approval of the rating official and reviewing official, signatures from both officials are required for a QSI exception request. Requests should be in the form of a memorandum and include an explanation as to why it was not possible to process the QSI within 90 days from the end of the rating cycle.

D. Internal Processes and Approval Authorities. Bureaus/Offices are responsible for establishing nomination processes and approval authorities necessary for implementing this policy.

10. Inquiries. Any Department employee or employee representative seeking further information concerning this policy may contact the appropriate servicing HRO. Servicing HROs may contact the Department’s Office of Human Resources, Workforce Relations Division concerning questions related to this policy.



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