

**United States Department of Agriculture  
Senior Executive Service Performance Plan and Appraisal Record**

Employee Name (Last, First, MI):	Position Title:	Series:	Salary:
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Agency:	Appraisal Period Dates (From/To):
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**Plan Development - Consultation and Certification**

*Signatures below certify that the rating official has developed the performance plan in consultation with the employee and has discussed the final plan with the employee. The discussion occurs at the beginning of the performance period. The rating official provides the employee a copy of the plan.*

Employee Signature:	Date:
Rating Official's Signature:	Date:
Reviewing Official's Signature:	Date:

**Progress Reviews**

*Initials below certify the performance discussions occurring within the appraisal period. A minimum of one progress review is required.*

Employee's Initials and Date:	Employee's Initials and Date:	Employee's Initials and Date:
Rating Official's Signature and Date:	Rating Official's Signature and Date:	Rating Official's Signature and Date:

**Initial Summary Rating (Check One)**

Rating Official: *Check the initial summary rating level determined using the attached Element and Summary Rating Guide.*

Outstanding     Superior     Fully Successful     Minimally Satisfactory     Unsatisfactory

Rating Official's Signature:	Date:
Reviewing Official's Signature:	Date:

*This evaluation has been discussed with me and I have been given a copy. I am aware that if I disagree with my rating and decide to submit a narrative response indicating so, it must be submitted in writing within 5 calendar days of receipt of my evaluation. Signature does not constitute agreement or disagreement with the rating.*

Employee's Signature:	Date:
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**Performance Review Board Recommendation (Check One)**

Performance Review Board Recommendation: *Indicate the summary rating recommendation resulting from the PRB.*

Outstanding     Superior     Fully Successful     Minimally Satisfactory     Unsatisfactory

*If PRB recommended rating differs from initial summary rating, the Board must identify specific elements where there is disagreement and rationale for recommendation.*

Retain     Reassign     Remove     Bonus     Distinguished Rank Award     Meritorious Rank Award  
 Base Salary Increase To \$ \_\_\_\_\_ - Indicate Total Percentage \_\_\_\_\_ %

PRB Chairperson's Signature:	Date:
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**Secretary's Office or Agency Head Recommendations (More than one block may apply)**

Retain     Reassign     Remove\*     Bonus\*     Distinguished Rank Award     Meritorious Rank Award  
 Base Salary Increase To \$ \_\_\_\_\_ \*- Indicate Total Percentage \_\_\_\_\_ %

\*Attach written justification for recommended actions based on appraisal, summarizing briefly managerial and program accomplishments and impact on Department or Agency.

Secretary's Office or Agency Head Signature:	Date:
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**Secretary's Approval - Final Rating**

Secretary's Signature	Date	Final Rating	Salary Increase	Bonus Amount	Rank Award Type
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## ELEMENT AND INITIAL SUMMARY RATING GUIDE

### **Performance Element Rating Level Descriptions:**

Element ratings are to be based on observable performance and behaviors during the appraisal period. The following five level element rating scale is to be applied to the appraisal of each individual performance element at the end of the appraisal period.

**Outstanding:** At the outstanding level of performance, the Senior Executive achieves and completes all critical element requirements in an exemplary manner. An outstanding rating exemplifies the highest level of performance possible, and is characterized by both organizational accomplishment and personal achievement. The outstanding level is representative of the executive's influence on the organization through innovative and effective management practices and procedures, noteworthy program implementation, success in building partnerships and coalitions, demonstrative responsiveness to internal and external customers, and outstanding management of resources. The Senior Executive's performance reflects measurable and lasting improvements in organizational performance.

**Superior:** At the superior level of performance, the Senior Executive demonstrates consistently excellent performance, where the majority of element requirements exceed the fully successful level. The Senior Executive has demonstrated more than effective performance of essential requirements, has had a positive impact on mission accomplishment, and has enhanced the performance of self and others.

**Fully Successful:** At the fully successful level of performance, the Senior Executive meets expectations and demonstrates sound and solid performance, where all critical element requirements are completed in a satisfactory manner and the executive has performed effectively. The Senior Executive has contributed to organizational goals and achieved meaningful results.

**Minimally Satisfactory:** At the minimally satisfactory level of performance, the Senior Executive only partially meets element requirements for the fully successful level, and has been marginally effective. This level of performance, while demonstrating some positive contributions to the organization, shows notable deficiencies.

**Unsatisfactory:** At the unsatisfactory level of performance, the Senior Executive does not meet performance requirements, and performance deficiencies resulted in demonstrable negative consequences for the organization. The executive is not willing or not able to perform the essential performance requirements.

### **Assignment of Element Ratings:**

Element 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding	<input type="checkbox"/> Superior	<input type="checkbox"/> Fully Successful	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimally Satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory
Element 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding	<input type="checkbox"/> Superior	<input type="checkbox"/> Fully Successful	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimally Satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory
Element 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Fully Successful	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory			
Element 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding	<input type="checkbox"/> Superior	<input type="checkbox"/> Fully Successful	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimally Satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Element 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding	<input type="checkbox"/> Superior	<input type="checkbox"/> Fully Successful	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimally Satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

### **Converting Element Ratings to Initial Summary Rating and Rating of Record:**

The Executive's initial summary rating and rating of record is determined using the table below. The Mission Results element has the greatest emphasis for measurable results. After each element rating level has been determined, the supervisor will assign the initial summary rating by applying the following descriptions.

<input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Outstanding</u></b> All performance elements rated outstanding and the Civil Rights element is rated fully successful.	<input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Superior</u></b> Mission Results is rated superior or above and other elements are rated fully successful or above, and the Civil Rights element is rated fully successful.	<input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Fully Successful</u></b> Mission Results and Civil Rights elements are rated fully successful and other elements are rated fully successful or above.	<input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Minimally Satisfactory</u></b> One or more elements rated minimally satisfactory. No elements rated unsatisfactory.	<input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Unsatisfactory</u></b> One or more elements rated unsatisfactory.
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## Strategic Alignment

Executives in the U. S. Department of Agriculture are accountable for supporting the mission of the Department and their Agency in providing leadership in food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development and related issues based on sound public policy, the best available science, and efficient management. This plan identifies the critical performance elements and establishes performance requirements for each element which align with the mission, goals, and organizational objectives. These critical performance elements include three mandatory Departmentwide critical elements – Mission Results, Leadership/Management, and Civil Rights, and up to two additional Program/position-specific elements. The Mission Results element has the greatest degree of value and drives the summary rating above the fully successful level.

The Department’s Strategic Goals and Management Initiatives are stated below. Agencies may indicate their relevant Strategic Goals and Management Initiatives in the space provided below.

### Departmental Strategic Goals and Management Initiatives

#### Strategic Goals:

1. Assist rural communities to create prosperity so they are self-sustaining, repopulating, and economically thriving.
2. Ensure our national forests and private working lands are conserved, restored, and made more resilient to climate change, while enhancing our water resources.
3. Help America promote sustainable agricultural production and biotechnology exports as America works to increase food security.
4. Ensure that all of America’s children have access to safe, nutritious, and balanced meals.

#### Management Initiatives:

- Engage USDA employees to transform USDA into a model agency.
- Provide civil rights services to Agriculture employees and customers.
- Coordinate outreach and improve consultation and collaboration efforts to increase access to USDA programs and services.
- Leverage USDA Departmental Management to increase performance, efficiency, and alignment.
- Optimize Information Technology (IT) policy and applications.
- Optimize USDA “green” or sustainable operations.
- Enhance USDA homeland security and emergency preparedness to protect USDA employees and the public.
- Enhance the USDA Human Resources process to recruit and hire skilled, diverse individuals to meet the program needs of USDA.

### Agency Strategic Goals and Management Initiatives

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**USDA Mandatory Department-Wide Senior Executive Service  
Critical Performance Elements and Requirements**

**Element 1 - Mission Results (Mandatory/Critical).** This element measures an executive’s contribution to strategic goals and objectives through timely and effective planning, implementation, decision making, evaluation and accountability.

**Performance Requirements:**

This is the one mandatory critical SES performance element that measures results, specifically results contributing to the mission or the organization. Performance requirements in the element are expressed in terms of measurable results that directly link to and meet the organizational goals and objectives required of the executive during the appraisal period. Measurable results in this element account for more than 60% of the performance plan and drive the summary rating above “Fully Successful” level.

**Instructions:**

In the table below, describe the applicable goal or strategy the work aligns to and the results-focused measures. The executive will be accountable for accomplishing these measures during the appraisal period and will be expected to address completion of them in their annual accomplishment report. Accomplishing the results-focused performance measures described below constitute meeting the “Fully Successful” element level. There is no minimum number of performance requirements. Requirements are determined by the rating official in consultation with the employee.

**Note:** Although Element 3 is a separate, pass/fail critical element for Civil Rights, this element primarily measures compliance to civil rights laws, policies, and requirements. Any specific goals or targets for civil rights to include those pertaining to the mission or the workforce, i.e., diversity, inclusion or outreach, must be defined below.

Linkage (List the Goal and/or Strategy and Objective): <i>Note: The following examples show various options that reflect linkage.</i>	Performance Measures (List the specific accomplishments, outcomes, deliverables, and/or target dates):

Element Rating: *Instructions: Assign an element rating based on the descriptions in the Element and Initial Summary Rating Guide.*

- Outstanding
- Superior
- Fully Successful
- Minimally Satisfactory
- Unsatisfactory

**ELEMENT 2 - Leadership/Management (Mandatory/Critical).** This element measures an Executive’s success in leading and managing their organization in the accomplishment of organizational goals through leading change; managing resources; addressing programmatic and organizational requirements; incorporating vision, strategic planning and results-driven

**management into the full range of organization activities; and being held accountable through customer/stakeholder and employee feedback.**

**Performance Requirements:**

This is a mandatory critical SES performance element. The performance requirements in this element are expressed in terms of narrative expectations. Meeting the requirements described below constitute meeting the “Fully Successful” element level.

Leads organizational change and motivates managers to incorporate vision, strategic planning and results-driven management in the full range of the organization’s activities. Addresses programmatic requirements as necessary to motivate and lead the organization. Strategies are designed and implemented to improve organizational effectiveness and efficiency, and to meet program goals. Program goals are aligned to agency strategic plans and accomplished within specified timeframes. Interests of the organization, employee, and customer/stakeholder are well balanced and priorities are adjusted in response to changing demands. Meets management initiative goals as imposed by regulatory/oversight agencies (e.g. Office of Management and Budget and Office of Personnel Management), and the Department or agency.

Human, financial, material and informational resources are effectively acquired and managed to achieve performance goals. Needs assessments are based on organizational goals and budget realities, and opportunities to reduce program and administrative costs are sought. Management control systems are established/maintained to monitor activities, identify problem areas, and initiate timely corrective action.

Accountability: Agency strategic/performance plans, corporate priorities, and other management systems are used to ensure subordinate employee’s performance plans are linked to outcomes and to overall organizational performance goals/objectives, and focus on results achieved. Ensures all ratable employees receive a progress (mid-year) review and a rating of record during the appraisal period, and that all employees are appraised realistically against clear, measurable standards of performance and within established time frames. Ensures subordinate managers and supervisors adhere to the Agency performance management policy with regard to performance appraisal and employee recognition. Data from employee feedback is used as an indicator of general satisfaction or needed improvement with regard to the planning, developing, monitoring, rating and rewarding of performance.

Maintains a positive organizational environment that fosters diversity, inclusion, innovation, initiative, open and honest communication, and teamwork among employees and peers. Within available resources, ensures employees have the tools and training to do their jobs.

Employee Perspective: Seeks employee feedback to identify needs and expectations and considers employee perspective when making decisions affecting workforce or programs.

Customer Perspective: Ensures a high degree of responsiveness to organizational leadership, the public, and internal and external customers. Continuously reviews and monitors organizational performance to achieve agency mission results and considers the customer’s point of view. Consults and collaborates and builds partnerships with agencies and other stakeholders, and takes decisive actions in accordance with law, regulation, and Department policy. Continuously seeks to improve business processes, sharing those efforts with other units to improve overall Department performance. Systematically listens to customers and gathers their feedback, actively seeking to identify their needs and expectations, and effectively communicating those needs and expectations to employees. Ensures employees are prompt, professional, fair and responsible to the circumstances of individual customers to the extent permitted by law and regulation.

**Element Rating:** *Instructions: Assign an element rating based on the descriptions in the Element and Initial Summary Rating Guide.*

- Outstanding
- Superior
- Fully Successful
- Minimally Satisfactory
- Unsatisfactory

**Element 3 - Civil Rights (Mandatory/Critical).** This element measures an Executive’s leadership in the implementation and meeting of civil rights strategic goals; enforcement of civil rights laws, rules, regulations; and holding subordinate supervisors accountable for achieving civil rights goals and objectives in all employment, program delivery, and other administrative activity.

**Performance Requirements:**

This is the one mandatory critical SES performance element that is a pass/fail element. Being pass/fail, an executive is rated at either the “Fully Successful” level or the “Unsatisfactory” level. The performance requirements in this element are expressed in terms of narrative expectations. Meeting the requirements described below constitutes meeting the “Fully Successful” element level.

**Note:** This pass/fail element primarily measures compliance to civil rights laws, policies, and requirements. USDA recognizes that there may be specific civil rights goals or targets to include those pertaining to mission or workforce diversity, inclusion, outreach, etc. for which the executive is to be held accountable during the appraisal period. These specific goals and targets are appropriately measured under Element 1, Mission Results.

Applicable milestones from the USDA Civil Rights Plan and Strategic Plan are incorporated into the agency or staff office strategic and annual performance plans. Applicable goals and objectives related to accountability, program delivery, outreach, workforce diversity, employment practices, resources and structure, performance, administrative activities, communications and reporting are met in accordance with Department and agency policy.

Develops and implements outreach strategies that enhance the delivery of agricultural services and assistance to underserved populations. Demonstrates an understanding of and commitment to equal employment opportunity and ensures fair and equitable program delivery.

Ensures subordinate supervisors exercise effective managerial, communication and interpersonal skills to supervise and develop a diverse workforce.

The importance of Civil Rights and Equal Employment is communicated to unit employees at least once during the rating cycle, and other Civil Rights and Equal Employment topics are routinely addressed at staff meetings.

Executive completes and ensures all subordinate employees complete annual civil rights training within identified timeframes and agency and departmental requirements.

Makes good faith efforts to resolve employment complaints and workforce disputes at all times, particularly early in the process, by offering alternative dispute resolution, training, and alternative assignments; by timely response to requests for information from EEO counselors, mediators, investigators, and adjudicators; and by prompt implementation of settlement agreements.

Element Rating: *Instructions: Assign an element rating based on the descriptions in the Element and Initial Summary Rating Guide.*

Fully Successful

Unsatisfactory

**USDA Optional Program/Position-Specific Senior Executive Service  
Critical Performance Elements and Requirements**

In the space below, rating officials and the executive may add up to two program/position-specific critical elements that the executive is expected to accomplish during the appraisal period. The total number of elements assigned should not exceed five elements, including the three mandatory elements stated in the performance plan. USDA policy recommends that any executive responsible for homeland security functions have a separate homeland security element designated as a program/position-specific critical element. Homeland security is defined as the functions related to continuity of operations, continuity of government, facility, or information technology security, or those related to safety of food and agricultural products. Performance requirements should be described in terms of specific results(s) with metrics, in terms of clear, credible measures (e.g., quality, timeliness and/or cost-effectiveness) of performance.

**Element 4** – Name of Program/Position Specific (Optional/Critical)

**Definition:** (Briefly define what the element measures.)

**Performance Requirements:**

This is one of two optional critical SES performance elements. It is important to note that the element is critical, which means that an executive's "Unsatisfactory" performance in the element, would result in an overall "Unsatisfactory" rating. Therefore, if a program/position-specific element is used, the duties and responsibilities should be important to the position. The performance requirements in this element are expressed in terms of narrative expectations. Meeting the requirements below constitute meeting the "Fully Successful" element level.

(Indicate performance requirements here.)

Element Rating: *Instructions: Assign an element rating based on the descriptions in the Element and Initial Summary Rating Guide.*

- Outstanding
- Superior
- Fully Successful
- Minimally Satisfactory
- Unsatisfactory

**Element 5** – Name of Program/Position Specific (Optional/Critical)

**Definition:** (Briefly define what the element measures.)

**Performance Requirements:**

This is one of two optional critical SES performance elements. It is important to note that the element is critical, which means that an executive's "Unsatisfactory" performance in the element, would result in an overall "Unsatisfactory" rating. Therefore, if a program/position-specific element is used, the duties and responsibilities should be important to the position. The performance requirements in this element are expressed in terms of narrative expectations. Meeting the requirements below constitute meeting the "Fully Successful" element level.

(Indicate performance requirements here.)

Element Rating: *Instructions: Assign an element rating based on the descriptions in the Element and Initial Summary Rating Guide.*

- Outstanding
- Superior
- Fully Successful
- Minimally Satisfactory
- Unsatisfactory