PERFORMANCE PLANNING & EVALUATION PROGRAM (PEP)
GUIDELINES & INSTRUCTIONS

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The PEP is intended to facilitate communication between employees and supervisors regarding expectations and job performance. The process offers employees and supervisors an opportunity to acknowledge the successes achieved over the year, and to openly discuss areas for enhancement and improvement. In cases of poor performance it is meant to compliment the disciplinary process by providing a means to assist employees to improve.

OVERVIEW OF THE PEP PROGRAM

The PEP process involves three distinct phases, requiring employees and their supervisors to meet *at least* two times a year, based on the employee's State entry-on-duty (EOD) date. The meetings occur at the:

Beginning-of-cycle, at which the employee and supervisor meet to discuss the employee's status (*i.e.*, skilled or professional service, management service, executive service, special appointee, or political special appointee), review the Position Description form (MS-22 or PD) for accuracy, make changes to it if necessary, and talk about performance expectations for the coming year;

Mid-cycle, during which the supervisor and employee discuss the employee's performance during the first six months of the PEP Cycle; and

End-of-cycle, during which the employee and supervisor review the employee's performance for the entire rating year, work together to develop tasks to be performed during the next rating cycle, plan for necessary training, and generally review any comments contained on the rating instrument. The Beginning-of-cycle meeting and End-of-Cycle meeting may coincide after the first year of employment.

THE POSITION DESCRIPTION FORM (MS-22)

One key to a successful PEP process is an accurate, detailed job description, which includes written position-specific performance standards that are:

Observable
Measurable
Objective

These position-specific performance standards should place the employee on notice as to what is required to be rated "Outstanding", "Satisfactory", and "Unsatisfactory".

THE PEP INSTRUMENT

The PEP rating instrument contains an automatic tabulation feature, reducing the time spent calculating scores and decreasing the opportunity for errors.

The PEP instrument contains a field for noting the PEP Cycle. The supervisor should enter the beginning and ending dates of that PEP cycle.

The PEP Cycle will begin on either January 1 or July 1, depending on the employee's State EOD date, and end one year later. For employees with an EOD date between January 1 and June 30, the PEP Cycle will begin on January 1. For those whose EOD date is between July 1 and December 31, the PEP Cycle will begin on July 1.

All employees will be evaluated twice annually during two common evaluation periods in June and December. Employees whose PEP Cycles begin on January 1 will receive their Mid-Cycle evaluation during the month of June, and will receive their End-of-Cycle rating during the month of December. Employees whose PEP Cycles begin on July 1 will receive their Mid-Cycle evaluation during the month of December, and will receive their End-of-Cycle rating during the month of June.

The PEP instrument also contains a field for noting the fiscal year (FY). The FY is determined by using the date on which the end-of-cycle rating occurs (*e.g.*, if the end-of-cycle is due between January 1 and June 30, 2010, the FY for the PEP is 2010; if the end-of-cycle is due between July 1 and December 31, 2010, the FY for the PEP is 2011).

There are three (3) versions of the form: one for <u>supervisory</u> employees; one for <u>management</u> employees; and, one for <u>non-supervisory</u> employees.

Each PEP instrument contains an area to rate employees on how they have performed their specific job duties, and a place to indicate tasks to be achieved during the next PEP Cycle, training recommendations, and comments by the supervisor and employee.

In addition, the rating instrument contains a uniform set of behavioral elements. The behavioral elements for supervisors and managers are:

Work ethic
Teamwork
Communication
Customer service
Initiatives
Work performance
Supervision

Non-supervisory employees will be rated on all of these elements **except** Supervision.

The scoring system includes three (3) ratings: Outstanding, Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory, with the following numerical values and meaning:

Rating	Numerical Rating Value	Explanation
Outstanding	3	Exceptional performance. Achievements are clearly superior to the level of performance required for the job.
Satisfactory	2	Met the required and expected results for the job. Good performance, which is expected of a fully experienced or competent employee.
Unsatisfactory	1	Performance is unacceptable and shows no significant progress or improvement. Improvement is critical.

Two added features of the PEP instrument are an employee acknowledgment section for employees in at-will positions and a supervisor's attestation of adherence to the Code of Fair Employment Practices.

THE RATING PROCESS

Beginning-of-Cycle Evaluation

The employee's first **beginning-of-cycle** meeting should take place as soon as possible after the employee begins working in a new position. This meeting provides an opportunity for the supervisor to notify the employee of his or her employment status, and to review with the employee his or her job duties, as described in the Position Description. During subsequent beginning-of-cycle meetings, the supervisor and employee will review the PD to ensure that it accurately reflects the employee's actual duties, and to make any necessary

changes. During this meeting, the employee and supervisor will also discuss performance expectations for the coming year. The supervisor should document in a working file the date that this meeting occurs.

Mid-Cycle Evaluation

The employee's **mid-cycle** evaluation must occur during the next evaluation period. At that time, the supervisor and employee should meet to discuss the employee's performance during the first half of the PEP Cycle. The primary goal of this meeting is to provide feedback on the employee's performance and suggestions for improvement in areas where improvement might be needed.

If, in the supervisor's opinion, the employee's overall performance during this time has been Satisfactory or better, the supervisor need not complete a full evaluation using the PEP Instrument, but need only document in writing (*i.e.*: e-mail or memo to the employee with a copy to the personnel file) that the mid-cycle meeting occurred, and that the employee's overall performance was Satisfactory or better.

However, if, in the supervisor's opinion, the employee's overall performance during this time was less than Satisfactory, the supervisor shall complete the entire PEP Instrument, noting the rating for each Performance Standard and Behavioral Element, and explaining the reasons for any ratings other than Satisfactory in each category. During the discussion with the employee, particular attention should be paid to those areas of the employee's performance that could be improved or are unsatisfactory. A performance improvement plan should be created to address areas of deficiency.

No disciplinary action is attached to the mid-cycle rating itself, and the mid-cycle rating is therefore not grievable; however, if the employee disagrees with the supervisor's mid-cycle rating, the employee may, within five (5) days of receipt of the mid-cycle evaluation, submit to the employee's appointing authority a written response to the rating, which shall be attached to the written mid-cycle evaluation. If for good cause the employee requests an extension within the first five (5) days, the supervisor may extend the response period for up to fifteen (15) days from the employee's receipt of the mid-cycle evaluation.

End-of-Cycle Evaluation

The employee's **end-of-cycle** evaluation must take place during the next evaluation period. The employee may, but is not required to, complete a self-assessment prior to the evaluation meeting for use in discussing the employee's performance. If the employee completes a self-assessment, it should be discussed along with the supervisor's assessment of the employee's performance during the meeting. The supervisor must complete a full PEP instrument for each employee's end-of-cycle evaluation, and submit it to the Agency's

personnel office once finalized. The Agency personnel office must report the final rating to DBM.

When evaluating the employee's Performance of Job Duties, the supervisor should first assess the employee's overall work quality; that is, taking into account the employee's work in the area of each of the Performance Standards outlined in the Position Description, how would the supervisor rate the employee's work overall? If that rating is Satisfactory or better, the supervisor need only enter that rating in the space for "Overall Work Quality." In such cases, no further ratings should be made in the "Performance of Job Duties" section, and the supervisor should proceed with rating the employee in the Behavioral Elements.

If, however, after taking into account the employee's work in the area of each of the Performance Standards outlined in the Position Description, the supervisor would rate the employee's overall work quality as below Satisfactory, the supervisor should **not** enter that rating into the "Overall Work Quality" space. Instead, the supervisor should rate the employee on each of the position-specific Performance Standards in the PD by entering a descriptive title for each in the spaces provided below the "Overall Work Quality" space and assigning a rating for each in the column titled "End Cycle Rating." The supervisor should then proceed to rate the employee on the Behavioral Elements.

At the rater's discretion, an end-of-cycle evaluation of a supervisor or manager with more than five (5) assigned employees may include the results of an anonymous survey of those employees. Employees of supervisors with less than five (5) assigned employees shall be able to express their opinions and/or concerns regarding their supervisor by using the form designated for this purpose.

COMMON RATING ERRORS

When formulating your ratings, keep in mind some common errors that raters make:

Halo effect - This occurs when the rater allows one or more positive aspects of an employee's performance to influence the overall evaluation so that the employee's ratings in each category generally are unjustifiably inflated.

Horn effect - When a rater allows a negative aspect of an employee's performance to influence the overall evaluation so that the employee's ratings in each category generally are underrated, the horn effect has impacted the rating process.

Restriction of range - This error occurs when the rater fails to use the entire range of scores on the rating scale. For example, the rater may consistently

give "Outstanding" ratings regardless of actual performance (this is known as a "leniency" restriction of range error). A "severity" restriction of range error may occur when a rater commonly rates employees as needing improvement because of unrealistic standards. Another restriction of range error, known as a "central tendency" error, may occur when a rater gives all employees an average rating, due to a fear of singling out an outstanding or poor performer.

Contrast error - When the rater compares employees to one another, instead of applying the performance standards to the employee, a contrast error has occurred.

Frame of reference error - This error occurs when the rater compares the employee's performance to the supervisor's own personal standards for the job, instead of applying the actual performance standards to the employee.

First impression error - The rater permits an initial favorable or unfavorable judgment about the employee to color the rater's perception about the employee's performance, creating a first impression rating error.

Recency error - The supervisor evaluates the employee's performance based on events that are close in time to the rating, rather than conducting an assessment that takes into account the events that occurred throughout the PEP Cycle.

MONITORING PERFORMANCE AND GIVING FEEDBACK

The formal PEP process is not the only means for addressing performance deficiencies. The performance evaluation process is meant to provide employees with specific times for feedback as to their performance and guidance in improving it, but poor work performance should also be addressed as soon as it is noticed, both with feedback and assistance and through appropriate progressive discipline.

Deficiencies in performance should **not** be allowed to linger until the next formal PEP evaluation period. Instead, the supervisor should strive to provide periodic feedback and assistance to the employee **throughout** the rating cycle. This will increase the likelihood that the employee will be able to improve to a Satisfactory level prior to the conclusion of the PEP Cycle. If the employee's performance shows no improvement, or remains inadequate after improvement, it should also be addressed through appropriate progressive discipline. In no event should an employee's performance-related problems be a "surprise" to the employee, either at the mid-cycle or end-of-cycle meetings.

All feedback and assistance should be documented, as appropriate, in written form to the employee or, at a minimum, in the supervisor's working file. Communication, both oral and written, should be handled in a manner that

emphasizes the positive, whenever possible.

Feedback should be given as close in time as possible to the relevant event, and should include disciplinary action when appropriate. In order to be effective, the feedback should identify the specific action or behavior that you are recognizing or trying to change and the means for improvement. The more detailed the feedback, the more likely that it will be effective.

CONSEQUENCES OF POOR PERFORMANCE

Discipline for performance-related reasons may be imposed after the appointing authority or designee has:

> Investigated the employee's performance (including reviewing the employee's most recent PEPs);
>
> Notified the employee of the deficiency in writing of the specific instances of unacceptable performance including the position-specific performance standards or behavioral elements involved in each specific instance of unacceptable performance; and
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> Provided a description of the efforts made by the employer to assist the employee in improving performance.

The appointing authority or designee must meet with the employee to hear the employee's explanation unless the employee is unwilling or unable to meet, and, after determining the appropriate discipline, give the employee written notice of the action being taken, the effective date of the action, and the employee's appeal rights.

Remember: the appropriate time frames for imposing disciplinary action must be followed.

Overall "Unsatisfactory" End-of-Cycle Rating

If an employee is given an overall "Unsatisfactory" rating on an end-of-cycle appraisal, the employee's supervisor shall inform the employee that the employee has 180 days to improve to the level of "Satisfactory."

If an employee is rated overall "Unsatisfactory" on the end-of-cycle rating, the supervisor and employee must complete a Performance Improvement Plan to:

> (1) identify the aspects of the employee's performance

which are unacceptable (whether it is a **position-specific performance element or a behavioral element**);

(2) describe what the employer will do to assist the employee and a description of what the employee must do to improve during the 180-day improvement period; and

(3) provide the date upon which the employer and employee will meet to evaluate the employee's performance at the close of the 180-day improvement period.

Remember to "check in" with the employee throughout this period, providing feedback on performance. Ideally, the supervisor should set a schedule for periodic meetings with the employee. Most importantly, the supervisor **must** meet with the employee 90 days into this 180-day improvement period. This is an opportunity to assess where the employee is in the process of improvement and to document deficiencies.

Failure to meet standards at the end of the 180-day period shall result in the employee's termination from State service.

REMEMBER: IF TERMINATION IS NECESSARY, YOU MUST IMPOSE THE TERMINATION WITHIN 30 DAYS OF THE DATE THAT THE RATING HAS BEEN ISSUED.