



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Monday, July 10, 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR: HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

FROM: KATHLEEN M. McGETTIGAN, ACTING DIRECTOR

Subject: Senior Executive Service (SES) and Senior Level (SL) and Scientific and Professional (ST) Performance Appraisal System Certification Reference Guide

To support agencies in designing, implementing and applying Senior Executive Service (SES) and Senior Level (SL) and Scientific and Professional (ST) performance appraisal systems that hold SES members and SL/ST employees (collectively referred to as senior employees) accountable for their individual and organizational performance, attached to this memorandum is a Performance Appraisal System Certification Reference Guide containing—

- A checklist to effectively lead and monitor an agency’s performance appraisal cycle, and
- A fact sheet with a detailed description of performance appraisal system certification requirements.

Appraisal System Certification

The U.S. Office of Performance Management (OPM), with the concurrence of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, will certify an agency appraisal system when a review of that system

- demonstrates the system makes meaningful distinctions based on relative performance,
- conforms to statutory and regulatory requirements regarding performance appraisal, pay, and awards, and
- complies with required certification criteria.

The benefit to certification is clear in that agencies with a certified SES or SL/ST appraisal system may apply a higher maximum rate of basic pay (equal to level II of the Executive Schedule) and higher aggregate limit on pay (equal to the Vice President’s salary).

Following an agency’s request for certification, the Director of OPM will grant

- full certification (continuing for 24 months) when an agency independently and fully meets each certification criterion upon initial submission of its request, or
- provisional certification (continuing for 12 months) when an agency at least minimally meets each certification criterion.

Certification cannot be granted if an agency does not meet any single certification criterion.

Certification Criteria

The recommendation to grant certification is based on an agency's documentation of compliance with the following requirements (see the fact sheet in the attached guide for detailed information regarding these certification criteria):

- Aligned Results, to include quality indicators in each performance requirement under the results-oriented critical element in compliance with 5 CFR 430.305(a)(1)
- Performance Distinctions
- Pay Differentiation
- Agency Verification of Organizational Assessment and Guidelines, Oversight, and Communication of System Application Results

OPM is committed to providing agency partners with a valid and reliable process to determine performance appraisal system certification eligibility. Since the issuance of interim regulations specifying the requirements and procedures for agencies to request certification of their SES and SL/ST performance appraisal systems in July 2004, OPM has collaborated with agency partners to issue iterative improvements to SES and SL/ST performance management and performance appraisal certification and will continue to do so.

Additional Information

I encourage agency senior leaders to review the attached Performance Appraisal System Certification Reference Guide to gain an understanding of the criteria with which an agency appraisal system must demonstrate compliance to be eligible for certification and how the certification process supports agencies in establishing and maintaining effective performance appraisal systems for their senior leaders. If you should have questions regarding required performance management activities and/or the SES and SL/ST performance appraisal system certification process, please contact OPM Executive Resources and Performance Management, at (202) 606-2720, or performance-management@opm.gov.

Attachment (see 508-compliant PDF below)

cc: Chief Human Capital Officers, Human Resources Directors, and the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency