



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Tuesday, August 9, 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR: HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

FROM: BETH F. COBERT, ACTING DIRECTOR

Subject: Senior-Level and Scientific and Professional Performance Appraisal System/Program and Streamlined Certification Process

I am pleased to announce the design and issuance of a standard Senior-Level (SL) and Scientific and Professional (ST) performance appraisal system and program (referred to as the Basic SL/ST System/Program) available now for voluntary agency adoption. This uniform system/program was designed by an interagency working group of 18 agency subject matter experts convened for 6 months to respond to Federal agency recommendations to develop a standard SL/ST performance appraisal system tailored to the diverse and complex responsibilities completed by SL/ST employees in agencies across Government.

The Basic SL/ST System/Program complies with system approval and certification requirements, and provides for a consistent framework to communicate expectations and evaluate the performance of renowned scientists, engineers and technical/program experts serving in SL/ST positions. With the introduction of this new system/program and the Basic Senior Executive Service (SES) Performance Appraisal System (referred to as the "Basic SES System") [announced on January 4, 2012](#), agencies across Government have the ability to manage the performance of the Federal Government's senior leaders through model appraisal systems incorporating best practices from agencies across Government.

In addition to promoting greater consistency, the new system/program encourages the implementation of engagement practices where supervisors and employees hold frequent, meaningful discussions about performance toward clearly established goals, contributing to enhanced ability for the agency to achieve its mission. The new system/program also promotes greater transparency of agency performance management practices, transferability of a standard performance appraisal form, and equity in the assignment of critical elements, delivery of feedback, derivation of ratings of record, and link to compensation. Given the system/program's coverage of a diverse group of SL/ST positions in agencies across Government, the Basic SL/ST System/Program provides flexibility for appropriate modification to better meet the needs of all Federal agencies and organizations. Once they have obtained OPM approval, agencies may voluntarily adopt the new system/program prior to the beginning of their upcoming performance appraisal cycle or as determined by the agency.

Similar to the Basic SES System, the design of the Basic SL/ST System/Program demonstrates compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements for system approval and certification, and qualifies for the streamlined certification process originally introduced for SES certification on

October 7, 2015. Since the design of the Basic SL/ST System/Program meets all certification criteria, OPM and the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) only need to review the implementation and application of the system, reducing the amount of documentation required to be submitted to OPM for certification. This decrease in the amount of documentation required provides for a reduction in the time required to review the documentation, allowing for a shortened timeline upon which agencies are to submit certification requests to OPM – 3 months prior to certification expiration (in comparison to the 6-month requirement when using the SL/ST Performance Accountability Assessment Tool).

Under the streamlined SL/ST performance appraisal system certification process, available beginning October 1, 2016, to agencies that have adopted and implemented the Basic SL/ST Performance Appraisal System/Program, agencies will partner with OPM and OMB to share responsibilities and provide their agency-specific expertise for the certification review, as follows:

- OPM/OMB will continue to review compliance with the certification criteria for Performance Distinctions, Pay Differentiation, and Aligned Results (merges the Alignment and Results criteria);
- Agencies will verify compliance with the certification criteria for Organizational Performance and Guidelines, Oversight, and Communication of System Application Results – all reviewed by OPM as an initial spot check with an agency’s first submission under the streamlined process, and thereafter, subject to a spot check upon request by OPM; and
- The criteria for Consultation, Accountability, Balance, and Training will no longer be subject to additional verification since they are built into the Basic SL/ST System/Program. Agencies will continue to be responsible for ensuring these critical performance management practices are properly applied.

OPM staff soon will be scheduling workshops with agency performance management staff to provide guidance on agency adoption of and transition to the Basic SL/ST System/Program and the implementation of the streamlined SL/ST performance appraisal system certification process, and to review products and tools developed by the interagency working group.

We extend special thanks to your agencies’ representatives who helped design this system/program. If you have questions regarding the Basic SL/ST System/Program, please contact Stephen T. Shih, Deputy Associate Director, SES and Performance Management, or his staff members in OPM Executive Resources and Performance Management, at (202) 606-2720, or performance-management@opm.gov

Cc: Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, Small Agency Council, President’s Management Council, Chief Human Capital Officers, Human Resources Directors, and Executive Resources Directors

Attachment: Senior-Level and Scientific or Professional Performance Appraisal Program (See PDF below)