



Natural Resources Conservation Service
6200 Jefferson NE, Room 305
Albuquerque, NM 87109
Phone: (505) 761-4402 Fax: (505) 761-4463
Web site: www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov

September 22, 2009

NEW MEXICO BULLETIN 360-9-11

SUBJECT: PER –PROCESSING ANNUAL PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS AND AWARDS

TO: All NRCS Supervisors

ACTION REQUIRED BY: OCTOBER 30, 2009

Purpose: To provide Supervisors guidance on completing annual Performance Appraisals and Awards.

Expiration Date: December 31, 2009

The rating period for all employees is October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009. Performance standards must have been effective for at least 90 days in order for employees to be rated against the standards

To close out the 2009 Performance Appraisal Cycle, rating officials will need to **process performance appraisals by entering results into EmpowHR no later than October 31, 2009**. Summary ratings must be entered into the EmpowHR system by rating officials and approved by reviewing officials. Ratings may not be communicated to employees prior to approval by the reviewing official. As a reminder, save your comments in Word, then cut and paste into EmpowHR. If you take too long, EmpowHR will time you out. See attachments F and F-1 for tips on processing performance appraisals using EmpowHR. Employees must review the summary rating, add comments, if desired, and check the Viewed/Discussed box in EmpowHR.

Funds will be allocated to each Area and State Office section for award purposes. Please be sure to coordinate award amounts with your respective Area Conservationist or State Office Leadership Team member prior to entering the award in EmpowHR. If you are nominating someone from another section for an award, it will be deducted from your allocation. As a courtesy, please let their supervisor know.

Once summary ratings are entered into EmpowHR for each employee, supervisors may initiate awards for employees under their direct supervision through EmpowHR. To ensure timely processing, supervisors must **submit all award nominations via Empowhr no later than October 30, 2009**. This is to avoid potential tax reporting problems. There will be no exceptions to this date.

Employees who have one or more elements rated at “marginal” or lower are not eligible for any performance bonus awards. Employees who have all elements rated at “fully successful” or higher may be eligible for a performance bonus award, but are not automatically entitled to awards. Rating Officials are responsible for requesting bonus awards for staff.

The following ranges may be used as a guide when deciding potential bonus awards. When granting an award paid as a percentage of basic pay, the rate of basic pay must include any applicable locality payment.

- **Performance Awards for Employees Rated Outstanding** will range from a minimum of 3 percent of the employee's base pay (inclusive of applicable locality pay) up to a maximum of 10 percent.
- **Performance Awards for Employees Rated Superior** will range from a minimum of 1.1 percent of the employee's base pay (inclusive of applicable locality pay) up to a maximum of 2.9 percent.
- **Performance Awards for Employees Rated Fully Successful** will range from no bonus amount up to a maximum of 1 percent of base pay (inclusive of applicable locality pay).

When determining the amount of a bonus award, consider the employee's rating for each element, consistency of awards given to other employees with similar ratings, and the scope and complexity of the position. Employees who have exceeded the standards for all elements (critical and non-critical) should receive a larger bonus than employees who have exceeded the standards for several of their elements. Another factor to consider is the inherent difficulty of the position. If two employees are rated the same and one employee occupies a position that is inherently more difficult and complex than the position occupied by the second employee, then the employee with the more complex position should receive a larger bonus award. Quality Step Increase (QSI) Awards may be granted when an employee's final adjective rating is "outstanding". Rating Officials should consider whether a QSI is appropriate or advantageous to the employee. A QSI may not be appropriate or advantageous to an employee if the employee is about to receive a promotion or vacate his or her position. Employees may receive only one QSI during a 52-week period, and not in conjunction with a Performance Bonus Award.

Attached is National Bulletin 360-9-57, which provides detailed information regarding various performance issues.

If you have any questions concerning this guidance, contact Rose Navarrete, Human Resources Specialist, at (505) 761-4410 or at email rose.navarrete@nm.usda.gov

Rosabeth L. Garcia - Sr., Acting

for DENNIS L. ALEXANDER
State Conservationist

Attachments:

National Bulletin 360-9-57 PER-Processing Performance Appraisals and Awards for Fiscal Year 2009
Attachment A - Steps for Preparing the Year-End Appraisal
Attachment B - Steps for Conducting the Year-End Appraisal
Attachment C - Tips for Writing Performance Narratives
Attachment D - Tips for Giving Effective Feedback
Attachment E - Tips for Recognizing Rater Bias
Attachment F - Tips for Processing Performance Appraisals in EmpowHR
Attachment F-1 - FY-2009 EmpowHR Performance Summary Process