

Example: FY 2010 State Conservationist Performance Plan

Performance Standards/Measures:

- Establish and maintain a management process for increasing staff productivity and satisfaction during the fiscal year that includes the following:
 - Clearly define roles and expectations, set priorities and goals, periodically review progress against goals, and make adjustments to ensure that progress is sufficient to meet goals.
- Provide regular communication with staff and customers to establish an environment that encourages open communication and supports both teamwork and individual effort.
- Assess skills and needs of staff by developing and reviewing Individual Development Plans (IDP) Staff within 30-45 days after completing the performance plans; ensures progress is reviewed at least two (2) times during the rating period and appropriate adjustments are made.
- 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 review and a rating of record during the established time frames. Ensures subordinate managers and supervisors adhere to the Agency performance management policy with regard to performance appraisal and employee recognition.
- Staff feedback indicates the following:
 - They understand the Agency's strategic direction, goals, and their role in achieving these goals,
 - They understand of how well they are performing and where they need to improve,
 - They have performance plans that accurately reflect their performance,
 - They have the resources and guidance they need to do their jobs, or a plan to obtain them,
 - They are acknowledged and appreciated for good performance.
- Customer (e.g., partners, stakeholders, constituents, general public) feedback indicates the following:
 - Requirements, needs, and expectations are sought out and listened to.
 - Responses are provided in a timely manner.
 - Clear action is taken in accordance with law, regulation, and Department policy, and met mutual understanding of requirements, needs, and expectations.
- Promote awareness and enforce strict adherence to ethics and standards of statutes, regulations, policies, and procedures.
 - Process is in place and ensures 95-97 percent of required staff and contractors file appropriate disclosures within established timelines.
 - Contract awards are completed in a manner consistent with appropriate Agency policies and procedures.
 - Ensures workforce have successfully completed appropriate training (e.g., Security Awareness, Privacy Refresher) by established timelines.
- Ensure that personally identifiable information (PII) (i.e., financial transactions, medical history, criminal history, name, Social Security number, date/place of birth) is maintained in a confidential and secure manner that protects from unauthorized access.

Element 3 – Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights (Mandatory/Critical). Performs all duties in a manner which consistently demonstrates fairness, cooperation, and respect towards coworkers, office visitors, and all others in the performance of official business. Demonstrates an awareness of EO/CR policies and responsibilities of Agency and Departmental goals of valuing a diverse, yet unified workforce.

Performance Objective 6:

Outcome: Provide leadership and foster a workplace environment that supports EEO/CR (free of discriminatory bias and reprisals), resulting in moving NRCS closer towards a Civilian Labor Force (CLF).

Performance Standards/Measures:

- Actively initiate, support, and/or contribute to diversity programs and initiatives.
 - Develop and implement (or continue to implement) at least one value-added initiative/plan to increase participation of historically underserved populations in conservation programs. Initiative/plan includes the following:
 - Buy-in from staff and line officers,
 - Flexibility based on demographics of State's population, and
 - Clear guidance, ideas, tips, and encouragement to facilitate effective implementation.
 - Recruitment strategies include key actions to reach diverse populations at colleges/universities, minority-focused professional organizations, and other organizations representing women, veterans, people with disabilities, and other groups.
- Assign functions or provide assistance to individuals, groups, and the general public without regard to race, sex, religion, national origin, physical or mental disability, or age.
 - Communicate importance of EEO/CR to employees throughout rating period.

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- Respond to EEO counselors, mediators, investigators, and adjudicators in a timely manner and promptly implement settlement agreements.
- Make good faith efforts to resolve employment complaints and workforce disputes, early in the process, by offering alternative dispute resolution, training, and alternative assignments.
- Feedback from staff, customers, and business partners indicate that they are treated with fairness, cooperation, respect, and in compliance with EEO/CR laws.

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Element 1 - Mission Results (Mandatory/Critical). Demonstrates support for Agency strategic goals and initiatives within own organizational unit and contributes to the achievement of overall Agency initiatives. Stresses accountability and continuous improvement to employees/team members, makes timely and effective decisions, and produces results through strategic thinking and decisive action.

Alignment: The Mission Results objectives align with **USDA Priority 2:** Ensure our national forests and private working lands enhance our water resources and are conserved, restored, and made more resilient to climate change; and the following NRCS Priorities: **NRCS Priority 1:** Ensure conservation gets on the ground by improving conservation program/initiative implementation (i.e., Farm Bill, Strategic Initiatives), developing innovative, field-focused tools to meet current/future environmental demands, and providing reliable science-based data to customers. **NRCS Priority 2:** Improve Agency internal controls and increase accountability by reforming financial processes, streamlining business processes, enhancing the workforce, and increasing information quality. **NRCS Priority 3:** Create a climate where the Agency can succeed by strengthening a culture of innovation and performance and enhancing relationships, resulting in better positioning the Agency for the future.

Performance Objective 1:

Outcome: Effectively address strategic conservation initiatives in watersheds and other geographic areas, across or between States, to achieve a more focused approach to conservation planning activities and implementation.

Performance Standards/Measures:

- Work with partners to identify the best way to achieve results and efficiently use resources.
 - Partner feedback suggests initiatives are working to get conservation on the ground and outreach encourages more producers to support related strategic efforts.
- Provide consistent follow-up with Assistant State Conservationists for Field Operations and quality guidance to State employees.
 - Ensure 80-90 percent of planned initiative activities within the State are achieved in an efficient and timely manner.
- Complete activities according to schedule to ensure that 95-97 percent of final allowance financial assistance funds are obligated for AMA, AWEP, CBWI, Conservation Security Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, CCPI, EQIP, and WHIP.
- 80-90 percent of ARRA (Recovery Act) project activities within the State Conservationist's control are on schedule or accelerated and adhere to established Agency timelines.
- Return funds not obligated by the established timelines in accordance with Agency guidance and policy.
- Efficiently balance the use of resources applied to these efforts based on the size of the State and its type of land use without excluding other programs or initiatives by NRCS.
- Feedback from long-standing partners remains positive and indicates satisfaction with services and guidance.
- Project implementation plans are transparent such that involved parties (i.e. contractors, partners, State employees) understand what needs to be done by when, and who is responsible for various tasks and activities.
- Use data and reports to identify trends and issues.
 - Effective, data-driven decisions are made to direct corrective actions and mitigating strategies when necessary.
 - Necessary corrective actions are made in a timely manner to continuously accelerate progress.

Performance Objective 2:

Outcome: Improve water quality and promote a healthy habitat by accelerating acreage enrollment/enrollment readiness under the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) meeting at least 75 percent of the national target of 270,000 acres enrolled and at least 75 percent of the national target of 125,000 acres restored from prior-year easements enrolled, assuming full apportionment for FY 2010.

Performance Standards/Measures:

- Provide leadership to State employees to facilitate the implementation of WRP.
 - Programs are implemented effectively, uniformly, and in a timely manner.
- Develop and carry out an effective WRP Action Plan by established deadlines.
 - The State WRP Action Plan directs employees to take on the challenges involved, helps them understand the environmental benefits of WRP, contains realistic timelines, and specifies a plan for promotional efforts and outreach.
- Direct additional resources to WRP implementation to ensure its success.
- Track results and provide consistent and accurate guidance to the Assistant State Conservationists for Field Operations.
 - Efforts result in a 20-30 percent gain in acreage enrolled/or enrollment ready from the 2002-2007 average acreage enrollment covered by WRP nationally.

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- Pursue and leverage resources to get partners and other technical service providers to help implement WRP.
- Customer/partner feedback (e.g., partner organizations, ASTC-FOs and DCs) indicates that they are excited and engaged, they have regained some confidence/trust in NRCS, and they believe WRP is working and meeting the objectives.

Performance Objective 3:

Outcome: Improve the State's internal controls (i.e., accountability, audit readiness, quality assurance), resulting in more efficient and effective use of the State's resources (i.e., time, money, staff) during FY2010:

Performance Standards/Measures:

- Promote the consistency of EQIP implementation across the State by providing vision and leadership to achieve the Ensure 90 percent compliance with EQIP policy for funding and ranking pools, including approved waivers.
 - Ensure payments for prior year contracts are disbursed at a rate of at least 15-25 percent over the previous year's disbursement rate or reaching or exceeding the target of 80-90 percent disbursement.
 - Achieve a 10-15 percent disbursement rate for first-year contracts.
 - Complete a review of 90-95 percent of contracts, ensuring contract actions are implemented or the contracts are modified, if appropriate.
 - Report errors in tracking system to Regional Conservationists in a timely manner.
- Initiate and follow through on completing State deficiencies, resulting in moving towards audit readiness.
 - Correct at least 80-90 percent of State deficiencies as identified in audits and pertinent reviews (i.e., OIG and GAO audits, State Quality Assurance Plan reviews, NRCS Oversight and Evaluation reports) by established Agency deadlines.
 - Provide data-driven feedback and consistently follow-up on problem areas until most deficiencies are addressed.

Performance Objective 4:

Outcome: Develop and leverage additional relationships with a broader base of partners while maintaining current relationships, resulting in optimizing environmental outcomes and increasing conservation efforts throughout FY2010.

Performance Standards/Measures:

- Attend organizational meetings to highlight NRCS' efforts and role in conservation to increase the general visibility of NRCS.
 - NRCS is visible and involved in the majority of State conservation activities.
 - Customer/partner feedback indicates an awareness of NRCS initiatives and an understanding of what conservation initiatives NRCS sponsors.
- Manage relationships with existing partners ensuring relationships remain productive by establishing credibility, creating trust, and taking risks when appropriate to promote conservation efforts.
 - Partner feedback indicates that the State Conservationist is engaged with them in conservation activities and partner needs are being met and on-time.
- Create new relationships with non-traditional partners to implement the agency's strategic initiatives, including climate change adaptation and mitigation and energy conservation and sustainable production.
- Develop and implement partnership action plans to address State needs.
- Provide quality mentoring to ASTC-FOs and other State employees to enhance State-level partnerships and encouraging the development of new partnerships.
- State employee feedback indicates the State Conservationist promotes partnerships, guides them on how to establish and maintain partnerships, and provides appropriate resources to maintain partnership efforts, and empowers them without overtaking the partner relationship.

Element 2 – Supervision/Leadership/Management (Mandatory/Critical). Work is assigned in a fair and effective manner. Technical guidance to subordinate staff is ordinarily provided in a timely manner. Performance management is implemented in accordance with procedure. Issues, concerns, or problems are handled promptly and fairly. To the extent possible, staff is properly trained and complies with occupational health and safety programs. Management decisions are supported and implemented within appropriate timeframes.

Performance Objective 5:

Outcome: Provide leadership, guidance, and direction to assigned staff that effectively allocates workload, identifies and addresses personnel issues, supports a performance culture, and motivates and rewards employees, resulting in an increase in employee satisfaction as measured through productivity and feedback from employees and customers.