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Employee Evaluation Program (EEP) Guidebook

A Mandatory Reference for ADS 461

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EMPLOYEE EVALUATION PROGRAM (EEP) GUIDEBOOK

PART 1 Foreign Service

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I. Introduction

The ability of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to achieve its mission depends on its employees. The skills and abilities they use in carrying out their responsibilities will determine how successfully the Agency performs its overall mission. The Employee Evaluation Program (EEP) provides a linkage between an employee's performance and achievement of the Agency's mission and goals. The performance plan provides a framework to establish accountability for achieving results within an individual Operating Unit and its strategic objectives.

The EEP applies to all Civil Service (CS), Foreign Service (FS), Senior Foreign Service (SFS), Schedule C employees, and all employees whose salaries are Administratively Determined. It does not apply to Senior Executive Service (SES) employees, Presidential Appointees, consultants, or experts.

The EEP Guidebook covers two different personnel systems -- FS (Part 1), and CS (Part 2) – which are governed by different statutory requirements and ADS chapters. Each system has its own policies and procedures to evaluate and measure employee performance. Although the systems have some similarities, the EEP Guidebook provides a structure to highlight the different processes for the CS and FS evaluation programs. Furthermore, the Guidebook provides CS and FS employees, Rating Officials, and Appraisal Committee members with an overview of the program's policies and procedures, and detailed instructions on completing the Annual Evaluation Form (AEF). The EEP Guidebook Part 1 is a Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 461.

Snapshot of the EEP Process

The EEP has a number of steps, starting with the development of individual performance plans and concluding with the completion of the final written evaluation for each employee.

- Start of the evaluation period
 - ❖ Rating Official and employee discuss new performance plan (work objectives and performance measures) and professional development opportunities (work assignments, career and personal goals, and training).
 - ❖ Rating Official establishes performance plan with optional Appraisal Committee (AC) input.
 - ❖ Rating Official presents final performance plan to employee for signature.
- Throughout the evaluation period
 - ❖ Rating Official provides employee feedback and communication on performance progress.
 - ❖ Rating Official makes written adjustments to performance plan, as appropriate.
- Middle of the evaluation period
 - ❖ Rating Official conducts a mandatory mid-cycle review with employee to discuss performance progress, 360 degree input and, as appropriate, makes written adjustments to the performance plan.
- Completion of the evaluation period
 - ❖ Upon request, employee submits self-assessment and 360 degree sources to Rating Official.
 - ❖ Rating Official uses 360 degree input and employee's self-assessment to draft evaluation.
 - ❖ Rating Official shares draft evaluation with the employee and makes any mutually agreed changes.
 - ❖ AC Review – Rating Official submits all evaluations and **Skills Assessments** to AC for review.
 - ❖ Rating Official finalizes AEF and provides it to the employee with performance feedback.
 - ❖ Employee submits optional Employee Statement in response to final AEF.

Roles and Responsibilities

In order for the EEP to be successful, a number of different parties must participate and share responsibilities on an annual basis. The roles and responsibilities of these parties are as follows:

USAID Principal Officer

- Manage the Operating Unit's performance evaluation program by adhering to Agency EEP policies, procedures, and schedules.
- Disseminate information on the EEP to Rating Officials and employees in the Operating Unit.
- Establish Operating Unit AC membership, standard procedures, and internal deadlines.
- Designate Rating Officials, who in most situations will be the employee's supervisor.

Responsibility and Accountability

- Ensure the timely submission of AEFs to the Office of Human Resources (HR).
- Ensure that all Operating Unit employees have written performance plans.
- Resolve differences when AC and Rating Official have not agreed on appropriate language.

The Employee

Achieving Results

- Participate in developing work objectives and performance measures with Rating Official.
- Self-monitor progress towards achieving work objectives and performance measures.
- Participate constructively in performance feedback sessions and mid-cycle review.
- Submit a written self-assessment and identify 360 degree input sources.
- After reviewing the final AEF with the Rating Official, prepare and submit optional Employee Statement.

Rating Official

Evaluation and Feedback

- Develop work objectives and performance measures with each employee.
- Observe and evaluate employee performance, providing constructive and supportive feedback to employees throughout the entire evaluation period.
- Conduct a formal, face-to-face mid-cycle review.
- Gather performance information from the employee's self-assessment, 360 degree sources, direct observation of performance, etc.
- Draft the AEF and Skills Assessment and present them to employee for review.
- Make revisions as appropriate and present AEF to AC.
- Revise and finalize AEF with AC recommendations as appropriate.
- Discuss final evaluation results and the Skills Assessment with the employee.
- At the end of the rating cycle prepare the final AEF, regardless of how long he/she has been the supervisor of the rated employee.

Appraisal Committee

Organizational Perspective – Review

- Adhere to the EEP policies and procedures to ensure fair treatment of evaluated employees.
- Upon request, conduct optional review of performance plans and mid-cycle adjustments.
- Review, discuss, and recommend changes to the content of FS AEFs as appropriate.
- Unilaterally remove inadmissible comments from appraisal.
- Document recommended changes to the AEF if not accepted by the Rating Official.
- Ensure timely, accurate, fair, and objective evaluations for all employee AEFs reviewed.
- Make recommendations concerning employee requests for any AEF revisions.

Office of Human Capital and Talent Management

Guidance and Support

- Formulate and oversee implementation of the EEP policies, guidance, and training.
- Work closely with managers/supervisors in each Operating Unit to implement the EEP.
- Establish procedures, precepts, and membership of the FS Performance Boards.
- Take appropriate action when Rating Officials, AC members, or employees fail to follow EEP policies, procedures, or schedule.

II. Evaluation Period

The Agency's evaluation cycle is one year. For the FS, the annual evaluation cycle runs from April 1 through March 31. All FS employees who are on an active performance plan of 120 days or more will receive an AEF at the end of their evaluation period.

At the end of each annual evaluation cycle, the Rating Official of Record will prepare the AEF. There is no minimum time period a Rating Official must serve as the employee's Rating Official. The key issue is whether the employee has been on a performance plan for 120 days or more.

If the employee has had one or more duty assignments during the course of an evaluation period, the Rating Official will coordinate the AEF input from prior supervisors or Rating Officials (see Section V - Preparing & Completing the AEF and information on the Appraisal Input Form).

Annual Evaluation Period

Employment Category	Annual Evaluation Period Starts	Annual Evaluation Period Ends
Foreign Service	April 1	March 31

III. Performance Plans

Performance plans (AEF FS – Section 5) establish work objectives, performance measures, and standards that link an individual employee’s accomplishments to the achievement of organizational goals. A Rating Official develops the performance plan in direct collaboration with the employee. For FS, the Rating Official has 45 calendar days from the start of the evaluation period to finalize the plan with the employee. For employees who are reassigned during an annual evaluation period, Rating Officials must develop performance plans within 45 days of the employee’s reassignment arrival. For example, if an FS employee is reassigned to a new Mission midway through the annual evaluation period, the new Rating Official has 45 days from the employee’s arrival to finalize the performance plan. A performance plan is officially in effect when the Rating Official and employee sign the AEF (FS – Section 5b). If an employee declines to sign the AEF, the Rating Official will annotate the AEF with an “x” in the employee signature block. If this is the case, the Rating Official and an AC Representative will also sign. The date the Rating Official and AC Representative annotate the AEF is the date the performance plan becomes official.

Work objectives are results-oriented accomplishments. They describe “what” the employee is expected to accomplish during the evaluation period. Work objectives are not activities. They are results or outputs of an employee’s daily activities. Employees must have reasonable control over the output of an activity to identify it as a work objective. Work objectives must be commensurate with the employee’s personal grade, not the position grade. No more than three work objectives may be established.

Performance measures are objective, quantifiable statements that communicate to the employee the acceptable performance level of a given work objective. Performance measures address quantity, quality, timeliness, or the most cost-effective way of accomplishing the work objective. For FS, Rating Officials establish performance measures at the “Met” level. In other words, performance measures describe the acceptable levels of performance on a work objective an employee must achieve to receive a “Met”. Each work objective may have no more than two performance measures.

Appraisal Committee review of the performance plan is optional. An employee or Rating Official may request AC involvement in the performance planning process. Upon request for involvement, the AC will assist with the establishment of the work objectives and performance measures and will sign the AEF. To request AC involvement, the employee must send a written request (e-mail is sufficient) to the Rating Official, who will obtain the AC’s involvement. If the Rating Official requests AC involvement, the Rating Official must send the request to the AC Chairperson and a copy to the employee.

Performance Planning Steps

Follow these steps to develop a performance plan:

- Step 1 – Look at the Overall Picture
 - ❖ Begin the process by looking at the Agency/Bureau/Mission’s goals and strategic objectives.
- Step 2 – Determine Operating Unit Accomplishments
 - ❖ Determine which Agency/Bureau/Mission goals and strategic objectives affect the Operating Unit and how the Operating Unit’s accomplishments (outputs/results) help the Agency/Bureau/Mission reach its goals and strategic objectives.
- Step 3 - Determine Individual Accomplishments that Support Operating Unit’s Goals and Strategic Objectives
 - ❖ What must the employee accomplish, produce, or perform (outputs/results) to support or link to the Operating Unit’s goals and strategic objectives?
- Step 4 – Convert Expected Accomplishments into Performance Elements
 - ❖ Identify which individual accomplishments should be included as work objectives in the performance plan.

- Step 5 – Develop Individual Work Objectives
 - ❖ Write the work objective(s) with specific, quantifiable performance measures.
 - ❖ Communicate through the performance measure the acceptable level of performance the employee must achieve to receive a “Met.”

- Step 6 – Determine Performance Measures
 - ❖ Determine how to measure the performance level for each accomplishment; use the general measures of quality, quantity, timeliness, or cost-effectiveness to develop specific measures for the work objectives.

- Step 7 – Determine How to Monitor Performance
 - ❖ Determine how to monitor the performance, e.g., what data to collect, data sources, when to collect the data and how to collect it.
 - ❖ Determine how to provide the employee with on-going performance feedback.

- Step 8 – Check the Performance Plan
 - ❖ Review the plan to ensure work objectives are attainable, fair, applicable, clear, within the employee’s control, and challenging.
 - ❖ Ensure that the performance measures are observable, quantifiable, clear, avoid negative standards (describe negative performance), and avoid absolutes (no room for errors).

Adapted from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), A Handbook for Measuring Employee Performance.

Summary of Performance Planning

The following table summarizes the evaluation period and performance planning:

Performance Planning	FS
Annual evaluation period	April 1 – March 31
Establishment of performance plan at beginning of annual evaluation period	Within first 45 calendar days
Performance plan is officially in effect	Date employee signs AEF ¹
Work objectives are commensurate with employee’s	Personal grade, not position grade
Number of individual work objectives	Not to exceed three work objectives
Number of performance measures per work objective	Not to exceed two performance measures per work objective
Performance measures written to performance level	“Met” level
AC review of performance plan	Optional
Rating Official, AC (if requested), and employee sign AEF	Section 5b

¹If the employee declines to sign the AEF (FS – Section 5e), the Rating Official will annotate the AEF with an “x” and date it. If this is the case, an AC Representative will also sign. The date the Rating Official and AC annotate the AEF is the date the performance plan is officially in effect.

Remember this wise performance planning adage:

“An ounce of performance planning is worth a pound of performance counseling.”

Keep this adage in mind when developing a performance plan. A well-written, communicated, and monitored performance plan with attainable work objectives and quantifiable performance measures will assist employees in meeting, or even exceeding, their annual evaluation standards. Then, the Rating Official will not have to be concerned with addressing poor performance issues during the evaluation period!

IV. Progress Reviews and Employee Feedback

Progress reviews and employee feedback offer the Rating Official an opportunity to discuss an employee's progress toward accomplishing work objectives and performance measures. There is one mandatory progress review at the mid-cycle of the evaluation period. However, to make progress reviews and feedback effective, the Rating Official must conduct feedback sessions on a periodic and regular basis. Rating Officials are advised to conduct employee feedback sessions throughout the evaluation period, as appropriate:

- Start of Annual Evaluation Period - Rating Official and employee discuss the annual work objectives, performance measures, and standards;
- Mid-Cycle – mandatory, documented progress review; and
- End of Annual Evaluation Period - Rating Official presents employee with final AEF.

Question: What is the true test of an effective employee progress review and feedback program?

Answer: When an employee is not surprised by the final AEF.

Formal Mid-Cycle Progress Review

- **Preparing for Progress Review (See page 10 for 360 degree Assessment Procedures and Tips)**
 - ❖ Rating Official requests 360 degree sources from employee.
 - ❖ Employee provides 360 degree sources to Rating Official, e.g., names of customers, peers, etc.
 - ❖ Prior to the meeting, Rating Official and employee, individually, review work objectives and performance measures, and make notes to prepare for the meeting.
 - ❖ Rating Official gathers 360 degree input and creates an outline to guide progress review.
- **Conducting the Progress Review**
 - ❖ To foster an environment for open, frank discussion, the Rating Official will -
 - Conduct the review privately with the employee.
 - Encourage the employee to ask questions and discuss performance successes, impediments and concerns, and career aspirations.
 - ❖ To objectively review the employee's job performance, the Rating Official will focus on -
 - Comparing performance to work objectives and performance measures for the entire evaluation period, not just the employee's most recent performance.
 - Isolating one-time mistakes and seeing the overall pattern of performance.
 - Identifying any unforeseen impediments to performance and making adjustments to the work objectives and performance measures, as appropriate.
 - Assessing progress towards achieving work objectives, performance measures, and standards, and determining any performance gaps.
 - Discussing performance gaps and the means to overcome them.
 - If performance is at the "not met" level, consult with Labor and Employee Relations (HCTM/LER).
- **Complete Mid-Cycle Progress Review (Section 6 of the AEF)**
 - ❖ Rating Official documents mid-cycle progress with assessment of progress to date.
 - ❖ Notify employee in writing of perceived deficiencies and means of improving to an acceptable level of performance.
 - ❖ When comments are made in Section 6, the comments must be shared with employee.
 - ❖ Rating Official, AC (if requested), and employee sign and date the AEF.
 - ❖ If an employee declines to sign the mid-cycle review, the Rating Official will annotate the AEF with an "x" and date it. If this is the case, an AC Representative will also sign. The review then becomes part of the official rating of record.

Tips for a Successful Progress Review

- Hold the progress review in person.
- Use two-way communication and active listening skills.
- Ensure that employees understand performance expectations.

- Give specific examples when there is a performance problem.
- Listen to and directly address employee performance concerns.
- Determine if performance gaps are within the employee's control.
- Recognize employees for good performance.
- Document the progress review and give a copy to the employee.

Effective Employee Feedback

Consistent, timely, and effective feedback from the Rating Official can help employees reach their highest performance potential. Feedback can focus on performance or conduct issues. The following are some examples of effective feedback:

Suggestion	Effective Examples	Ineffective Examples
Focus feedback on behavioral, not personal, characteristics.	“You tend to raise your voice with other team members during everyday discussions. This behavior is inappropriate.”	“You have an abrasive personality.”
Give specific statements when possible and support general statements with specific examples.	“Your presentation on the Hill demonstrated exceptional communication skills in describing how USAID coordinated with the State Department in the design of our democracy strategy.”	“You are a very good speaker.”
Use descriptive rather than judgmental language.	“When you leave your office door closed most of the day, your coworkers see you as inaccessible and unfriendly.”	“You are lousy at interacting with your coworkers.”
Make feedback clear, direct, and to the point.	“You need to reduce the use of informal language in your writing. For example, in this memo...”	“You need to work on your writing skills.”
Direct feedback toward actions within the employee's control.	“Your presentations would be more effective if you establish eye contact with the audience.”	“You would be a more effective if you had a Ph.D. in economics.”
Conduct feedback immediately.	“Yesterday, you missed the reporting deadline. This has happened four times since last fall, and each time I brought it to your attention.”	“Last May you missed a reporting deadline and four others before that.”
Plan feedback carefully.	“I have carefully reviewed your objectives and performance to date and I would like to discuss my observations and the 360 feedback with you.”	“I guess it's time to have a mid-period review. What shall we talk about?”
Avoid interpreting the employee's actions. Summarize behaviors.	“I noticed that recently you missed the filing deadline on several reports.”	“You must hate writing those reports since you skip them all the time.”

V. Preparing and Completing the AEF

To prepare the final AEF, the Rating Official must gather and synthesize information from a variety of sources to evaluate an employee's performance against the established work objectives and performance measures. A cornerstone of the AEF process is the 360 degree assessment, which provides multi-source feedback on an employee's performance and accomplishments. Typically, 360 degree assessments come from supervisors, peers, customers, managers, subordinates, and other stakeholders in the employee's performance. An equally significant part of the 360 degree assessment is the employee's self-assessment of his/her own performance and accomplishments. Rating Officials annotate the final AEF to indicate the 360 degree sources received (FS – Section 7 b and 7c).

The AEF (AID Form 461-1) is used to evaluate the performance of all Foreign Service and Senior Foreign Service employees. All AEFs must be prepared, approved, and signed by the Rating Official and AC.

The following are the steps to be followed in the annual evaluation process:

1. The Rating Official prepares work objectives and performance measures in collaboration with the employee within 45 days of the beginning of the rating cycle.
2. The Rating Official and the employee sign section 5b of the AEF to authenticate the performance plan. AC involvement at this stage is optional unless the employee declines to sign. If this is the case, the Rating Official annotates the AEF with an "x" and dates it, and an AC Representative also signs. The date the Rating Official and AC annotate the AEF is the date the AEF becomes official.
3. The Rating Official asks the employee to provide at least three 360 sources, which will be used for the mid-cycle review. If the employee is a supervisor, the Rating Official also requests the name of at least two subordinates for 360 degree-input.
4. At the mandatory mid-cycle review the Rating Official discusses with the employee the progress made or any deficiency shown. The mid-cycle review includes comments from 360 degree sources. Other feedback sessions should also be held, as appropriate.
5. If the employee shows a shortfall in achieving a work objective or is falling below the skills standards of his/her grade level, the Rating Official outlines the deficiency in writing and counsels the employee.
6. The Rating Official annotates comments from the mid-cycle review in section 6, which will include any revisions to work objectives and performance measures. The Rating Official provides a copy of the comments in this section to the employee.
7. The Rating Official and the employee sign section 6b to authenticate the mid-cycle review. AC involvement is optional at this stage unless the employee declines to sign. If this is the case, the Rating Official annotates the AEF with an "x" and dates it, and an AC Representative also signs. The date the Rating Official and AC Representative annotate the AEF is the date the AEF becomes official.
8. In preparation of the final AEF, the Rating Official again requests 360 degree sources, including mandatory 360 degree comments from at least two subordinates if the employee is a supervisor, as well as the employee self-assessment.
9. The Rating Official writes the draft AEF and **completes the Skills Assessment** using 360 degree-input sources, AIF information, and the employee self-assessment and shares the draft AEF **and Skills Assessment** with the employee. Sharing the draft AEF with the employee is mandatory.
10. The Rating Official discusses the draft AEF with the employee.

11. The employee has five working days to review the draft AEF for inconsistencies, factual errors, and gross omissions or provide any type of beneficial input.
12. The Rating Official has two days to revise the AEF, if appropriate.
13. The Rating Official gives the AEF and **Skills Assessment (if requested)** in hard copy to the AC.
14. The AC may recommend changes, but has no authority to revise the AEF.
15. If the AC and Rating Official cannot agree on appropriate language, the Principal Officer will attempt to resolve any differences. If the Rating Official and AC still do not agree, the AC will document its recommendations on the AEF, Section 8b. The Rating Official and the AC sign section 2 to authenticate the final AEF.
16. The Rating Official discusses the final AEF with the employee and gives the employee a copy.
17. The employee has five days to review the final AEF, sign the original, and write an optional Employee Statement.
18. The Rating Official does not have a right to see the Employee Statement, unless the employee desires to share it.
19. The employee submits the Employee Statement to the appropriate Administrative Management Services, Executive Officer, or the Principal Officer's designee.
20. If an employee declines to sign, the Rating Official annotates the AEF with an "x" and dates it, and notifies the AC. An AC Representative will initial the employee signature box. The date the Rating Official and AC Representative annotate the AEF is the date the AEF becomes final.

360 degree Assessment Procedures and Tips

- **Rating Official Requests 360 Degree Information**
 - ❖ Rating Official requests from the employee a list of any additional 360 degree sources (done both at the mid-cycle progress review and at the end of the evaluation period).
 - ❖ Employee submits a list of potential 360 degree sources.
- **Rating Official Contacts 360 Degree Sources**
 - ❖ 360 degree interviews can be done through personal interview, telephone call, or e-mail.
 - ❖ Conduct interviews in a private setting to protect confidentiality.
 - ❖ If appropriate, provide 360 degree sources with work objectives of employee.
 - ❖ Note-taking is advisable during the 360 degree interviews.
 - ❖ Focus on getting specific examples of performance and accomplishments.
 - ❖ Rating Officials must contact a minimum of three individuals from the employee's list.
 - ❖ Rating Officials can, and should, contact more than three individuals to get a well-rounded 360 degree picture of the employee's performance from the employee's list or elsewhere.
 - ❖ Rating Officials of supervisors must contact at least two subordinates for 360 degree input.
- **Rating Official Interprets 360 Degree Information**
 - ❖ Rating Officials are responsible for ensuring that 360 degree information relates to the employee's job performance and accomplishment of work objectives and performance measures.
 - ❖ Rating Officials must be alert for inaccurate, unfair, or biased sources.
 - ❖ Rating Officials must balance 360 degree input on both outstanding and poor performance.
- **Additional 360 Degree Requirements for Controllers, Contract Officers, and Legal Advisors**
 - ❖ Rating Officials must request 360 degree-feedback from the respective USAID/Washington Offices of Financial Management, Procurement, or General Counsel regarding the employee's job knowledge and performance for Controllers, Contracting Officers, and Legal Advisors respectively.

- ❖ Rating Officials must not draw a negative inference if a USAID/W office does not submit a 360 degree statement for Controllers, Contracting Officers, or Legal Advisors.
 - ❖ Statements must not contain recommendations or references to promotion potential.
 - ❖ Statements are retained by the Rating Official and available to the respective AC for review.
 - ❖ The AC and Rating Official are not authorized to change or request changes in statements.
 - ❖ Rating Officials must use the 360 degree input in the final AEF.
- **360 degree Information – Comparing Mid-Cycle and End of Evaluation 360 Degree Sources**
- ❖ At the end of the evaluation period, Rating Officials are empowered to check with some of the same 360 degree sources used during the mid-cycle review to offer the 360 degree sources an opportunity to comment on any changes in the employee's performance from the mid-cycle review.
 - ❖ Rating Officials may also contact new 360 degree sources.

Employee Self-Assessment

Another piece of valuable information for the Rating Official to consider is the employee's self-assessment. The self-assessment gives the employee the opportunity to provide input on his or her evaluation and job performance. It is the employee's responsibility to provide the Rating Official with a written self-assessment. The Rating Official must give the employee adequate notice, in writing, to submit the self-assessment. Employees who do not submit the assessment within the established timeframe will forfeit their right to request reconsideration of the final AEF unless extenuating circumstances are documented by the Rating Official or AC that merit an exception, e.g., long- term illness.

Tips for the Employee on Preparing the Self-Assessment

- Keep a record of accomplishments and potential 360 degree sources throughout the evaluation period.
- Review work objectives, performance measures, and skill standards periodically to monitor progress.
- Provide a list of 360 degree sources with contact information to the Rating Official.
- Use specific examples to address how you accomplished the work objectives or performance measures.
- Explain what you did, how well you performed, what results you achieved, and what differences you made for the Operating Unit, Office, or Mission, etc.
- Explain any barriers that may have affected your performance.
- Acknowledge weaknesses and discuss what you are doing to enhance your job knowledge and performance.
- Keep the self-assessment short; be thorough and factual, but concise - do not lose the Rating Official with an overly long self-assessment.
- Don't be shy; it is ok to brag about your accomplishments!
- Proofread your self-assessment before submitting it.

Appraisal Input Form

The Appraisal Input Form (AIF), AID 400-1B (02/03), is used whenever an employee or Rating Official changes jobs within an annual evaluation period. The AIF documents a specific period of performance that will be incorporated into the employee's final AEF. The AIF is not part of the final AEF. It is not filed with the final AEF or reviewed by the AC.

➤ **Guidelines for completing the AIF**

- ❖ Rating Official must have supervised the employee for at least 30 calendar days.
- ❖ Rating Official completes AIF at least two weeks before either the employee or the Rating Official changes jobs.
- ❖ AIF records performance for not to exceed three work objectives with performance measures.
- ❖ Rating Official provides employee with AIF at least five work days prior to performance feedback meeting.
- ❖ Rating Official holds mandatory meeting with employee to review and discuss AIF.
- ❖ Employee may provide a written response to the AIF.
- ❖ Rating Official forwards AIF, with optional employee response, to employee's next Rating Official (or Administrative Officer or Executive Officer) of employee's new Operating Unit within two work days after completion.

The AIF is also used for employees who go on extended TDY (more than 30 calendar days) as a means to record performance in a temporary assignment. The TDY supervisor must complete the AIF and follow all the applicable EEP rules and guidelines.

Employees who spend the majority of the rating cycle in language training and less than 120 days at any assigned post are not required to have an AEF. Employees who do not have a current AEF will receive an automatic “B” from the Performance Boards.

Skills Assessment The **Skills Assessment** is a tool that guides the Rating Official during the employee feedback session. It is mandatory to use at the end of the FS evaluation period. The Rating Official uses the **Skills Assessment** to provide performance feedback to the employee on the subskills in the **Skills Framework**. The AC reviews the **Skills Assessment** only when requested by the Rating Official or employee. However, it is not part of the official rating of record.

Drafting the AEF

The Rating Official prepares the AEF by gathering the employee’s self-assessment, 360 degree information, and AIFs (when applicable). The Rating Official must use that written and verbal input, along with his/her own direct observations, to evaluate the employee’s performance against the current work objectives, performance measures, and skill standards within his or her grade.

Tips on Writing the AEF

➤ **General Tips**

- ❖ AEFs are about performance, not misconduct.
- ❖ Report only accomplishments within the evaluation period.
- ❖ Proofread draft AEFs to eliminate typos, grammar, and editing errors.
- ❖ Do not rush the AEF process; stick to the established schedule.

➤ **Inadmissible Comments**

- ❖ Are not allowed on the AEF.
- ❖ AC has the authority to strike out any inadmissible comments.
- ❖ Examples of inadmissible comments include reference to an employee’s race, religion, sex, national origin, political affiliation, age, sexual orientation, method of entry into the Agency, retirement plans, or medical condition (including pregnancy) or disability.
- ❖ Do not refer to a grievance, equal employment opportunity complaint, or other adversarial proceedings.
- ❖ Do not refer to conduct issues unless they directly affect performance.
- ❖ Reference to an employee’s leave record is only admissible in cases of unauthorized absences that affect performance.

➤ **Work Objectives and Performance Measures**

- ❖ Describe what the employee did, how he/she did it, and what difference it made.
- ❖ If the work objective is a Mission or unit-wide objective, clearly articulate the employee’s individual contributions to the unit’s strategic objectives.
- ❖ State the employee’s accomplishment on the work objectives in terms of the performance measures -- as a rule of thumb, if the employee achieved the performance measures, he/she “met” the work objective.
- ❖ Remember, employees are ranked against their peers; specify the employee’s accomplishments and performance that distinguishes him/her from his/her peers.

➤ **Role in the Organization – (Section 4)**

- ❖ Describe the employee’s role in the organization by specifying unique features of the organizational setting, resources managed, e.g., personnel, financial, budgets, acquisition and assistance instruments, or physical assets and continuing responsibilities within the Operating Unit.
- ❖ Specify dollar amounts of any resources managed and number of any personnel managed.

➤ **FS Skill Standards and Potential**

- ❖ Do not make recommendations for promotion or tenure.
- ❖ Read the FS/**SFS Skills Framework** to be aware of skill areas in relation to an employee’s rank/grade.
- ❖ Address all four FS skill areas in relation to the employee’s rank/grade; the specific skill area needs to be clearly stated and not left up to the AC or FS Performance Boards to infer.
- ❖ Address at least one sub-skill in each of the four skill areas in the AEF.

- ❖ Use 360 degree quotes effectively; quotes are to add credibility, not substitute for content; when using quotes in the AEF, indicate the quoted person's role within the Operating Unit without naming the individual.
- ❖ Highlight the employee's abilities to make an impact broader than the unit's strategic objectives.
- ❖ Capture an employee's willingness to be innovative, take on non-traditional or hardship assignments, or to take calculated risks.
- ❖ Highlight one sub-skill area from the next higher level for the employee to develop further. This will include areas of excellence or potential for developing specific FS competencies that might positively affect career development.

Check List – Is the AEF Complete?

Before proceeding, it is recommended that the Rating Official answer the following questions:

- ⇒ Has the employee's effort on achieving the work objectives been documented? (Section 7a)
- ⇒ Is there an assessment of the employee's overall performance of his/her on-going responsibilities within the organization? (Section 7a)
- ⇒ Are all four skill areas and the employee's potential discussed? (Section 7a)
- ⇒ Has the box indicating whether the employee met each of his/her individual work objectives been checked? (Section 7d)
- ⇒ Has the box indicating whether the employee met all the skill standards for the class and met all the work objectives been checked? (Section 3a and b)

Completing the AEF – (Section 7)

Once the Rating Official completes the draft AEF, the Rating Official must review the draft with the employee. This is the employee's opportunity to point out any discrepancies, inconsistencies, omissions, or other concerns about the draft AEF. The Rating Official may change the draft AEF based on the employee's comments. Next, the Rating Official submits the draft AEF to the AC for review and signature. The AC may meet with and ask the Rating Official to revise the AEF. The Rating Official is not required to make the requested changes. However, if the Rating Official disagrees with the recommended changes, the Principal Officer will attempt to resolve differences. If agreement is not achieved, the AC may use Section 8b to describe the recommendations. Once the AC Chairperson signs the AEF, the Rating Official must meet with the employee to review the final AEF.

The employee has five working days from date of discussion of his or her AEF in which to submit documentation, etc., regarding this matter. The Rating Official has two working days to revise the AEF, as appropriate.

Signing and Dating the AEF

- The Rating Official, AC Chairperson, and employee sign and date AEF, Section 2.
- The employee's signature acknowledges receipt of the AEF, not necessarily concurrence.
- The employee may decline to sign the AEF; however, the AEF will still remain the Rating of Record.

Employee Statement

Employees are highly encouraged to complete an Employee Statement. The Employee Statement gives the employee an opportunity to respond to the final AEF. The employee has five working days to complete the statement and submit it to the appropriate Administrative Management Services or Executive Officer.

Tips to Assist Employees on Completing the Employee Statement

- Specify how you made a contribution to the Mission or Operating Unit instead of how good you are.
- Highlight accomplishments that the Rating Official may not have covered.
- A certain degree of modesty is important, but do not be shy about your contributions.
- Stick to the facts of your performance for the evaluation period.
- Address any areas of improvement that the Rating Official may have addressed in the AEF.
- Make the statement constructive; this is not the place to air grievances, discrimination complaints, etc. – there are formal processes to present grievances and complaints.
- Proofread the statement before submitting it.

Tips to Successfully Complete the AEF

- Gather the Employee Self-Assessment and 360 degree information, and use the **Skills Assessment**.

- Get an AIF if the employee was on TDY for at least 30 calendar days or there was a change of Rating Official during the evaluation period, e.g., if the employee or Rating Official moved.
- Adhere to the tips on writing the AEF on page 11 of the EEP Guidebook.
- Make timely revisions based on AC input.
- Give employees at least the mandatory period of five working days to complete the Employee Statement.

Timeframes

Each year, M/HR sets, in writing, the actual due dates for FS AEFs prior to the end of the evaluation period. Normally, Rating Officials can expect AEFs to be due between 30 to 45 calendar days after the end of the annual evaluation period. Rating Officials are responsible for submitting all AEFs within the established timeframes.

Waiver of the AEF

If the effective date of an employee's separation date from USAID is before the date the Performance Boards convene, the employee may waive a final AEF. However, the employee must first speak to the HCTM/CPE staff to see if he/she qualifies for a waiver of the final AEF. If approved, the employee must fill out a waiver statement. The waiver statement states the following:

I, _____ would like to waive my final Annual Evaluation Form (AEF) for the _____ rating cycle. I understand that by waiving my final AEF for the _____ rating cycle, I am waiving my right to be reviewed by a performance board, including any performance-based bonus. I am waiving my right to grieve any possible outcome which might have risen from my not having an AEF prepared for the _____ rating cycle.

VI. Appraisal Committee (AC)

The AC is a mechanism within the FS AEF process. The AC provides an organizational perspective to the AEF process and ensures accuracy and objectivity for reviewed AEFs. The AC can recommend changes to the AEF. When the AC and Rating Official cannot agree on appropriate language, the Principal Officer must attempt to resolve differences. If the Rating Official and AC still do not agree, the AC may document its recommendations on the AEF, Section 8b.

The Principal Officer of the Operating Unit is responsible for establishing and determining the number of ACs for the Operating Unit and the members (and Chairpersons) of each AC. The Principal Officer is accountable for ensuring that the Operating Unit adheres to the EEP policies, procedures, and schedules. Ideally, all AC members will have first-hand knowledge of the performance of every employee being reviewed by the committee, but at least one member must be directly familiar with the work of the employee.

Establishing Appraisal Committees

The Principal Officer of the Operating Unit appoints the AC Representative and the AC membership, which will be comprised of no fewer than three members. Principal Officers are encouraged to name alternate members to ACs. The AC should consist of knowledgeable career U.S. direct-hire (USDH) staff from the Operating Unit who are familiar with the unit's strategic objectives and have knowledge of the performance of the employees being evaluated. USAID/W ACs may consist of both CS and FS employees to the extent that the Operating Unit has both categories of employees. If there is more than one AC in an Operating Unit, the Principal Officer must ensure consistency among the ACs. For this reason, the Operating Unit Principal Officer should appoint an AC Coordinator to facilitate all activities with each AC Chairperson.

In a typical Mission, the AC might consist of the Mission Director as Chairperson, the Deputy Mission Director, and Office Directors. For a small Mission, where there are fewer than three U.S. direct-hire staff, a Bureau AC will be formed in USAID/W and should consist of members who know the post's program. On occasion, it may be necessary for a USAID employee in another location to be asked to serve as an AC member.

Multiple ACs

USAID/W Bureaus and large Missions must form more than one AC to adequately deal with the employee evaluation workload. When multiple ACs are established, the Principal Officer, or designee, must decide which employees will be reviewed by each AC.

Deputy Assistant Administrators

For Deputy Assistant Administrators, the AC must consist of the Agency Counselor, Assistant Administrators, Deputy Assistant Administrators, and/or, as appropriate, the Deputy Administrator.

Mission Directors

Mission Directors are generally evaluated by the cognizant Ambassador and Assistant Administrator (or Independent Office Head). Exceptions may include USAID Principal Officers in such posts as Tokyo, Paris, Brussels, etc., and in some cases the directors of regional Missions. Ambassadors must complete an AEF and submit it to the Assistant Administrator.

Criteria and Attributes for AC Membership:

- Only U.S. Direct Hires – only FS tenured and CS employees; no probationary CS employees; no untenured FS employees. Approved by the Principal Officer.
- The AC must consist of no fewer than three members.
- At least one AC member must be directly familiar with the work of the employee and Operating Unit and how it relates to overall Agency functions.
- Members must have demonstrated ability to exercise judgment and discretion.
- Members must be trustworthy, responsible, fair, and objective.
- Members must enjoy the confidence and respect of their peers.
- The composition of the AC must reflect the Agency's commitment to diversity.

The AC's Duties and Responsibilities

The following are the most significant periods for AC involvement:

Period	AC Duty	FS
Beginning of the Evaluation Period	Reviews and signs performance plans. Ensures that work objectives and performance measures are reasonable and attainable.	AC reviews and signs performance plans when requested by either the Rating Official or employee. AC ensures plan is consistent with employee's grade.
Middle of the Evaluation Period	Reviews substantive changes to performance plans and mid-evaluation progress. Works with Rating Official on performance problems.	AC reviews and signs mid-point review when requested by Rating Official or employee. Works with Rating Official on performance problems when requested.
End of the Evaluation Period	Mandatory. Reviews and discusses draft AEF with Rating Official. Strikes out inadmissible comments. Documents recommended changes to AEF when not accepted by Rating Official. Signs final AEF.	AC review is mandatory.

Confidentiality

AC deliberations are strictly confidential and governed by the Privacy Act. Thus AC members, including Rating Officials and ratees, must not discuss the AC proceedings with anyone other than AC members or the Rating Official of the employee being reviewed. It is a violation of the EEP confidentiality and Privacy Act rules to reveal AC discussions to those not authorized to receive such information. Disciplinary action will be initiated when a violation of confidentiality or privacy is confirmed.

Recusal of AC Members

Raters must recuse themselves as AC members, and leave the room, when a draft AEF that they prepared as a Rating Official is being reviewed. They may respond to questions from the AC, but they must not participate in or influence the AC's deliberations. Additionally, AC members must recuse and absent themselves if their own AEF is being reviewed by the AC.

Absences from the AC

AC members may not delegate their AC responsibilities during absences. If an AC member anticipates a prolonged absence, the Principal Officer or Deputy will replace the AC member.

VII. Managing Performance

For most employees, their performance is rated as “met”. However, what happens when an employee’s performance is rated at the “not met” level? What does the Rating Official do to help the employee overcome the performance problem?

Tips for addressing performance problems are listed below. But first, the Rating Official must answer this question, “Is this poor performance or misconduct?” OPM states:

“Misconduct is generally a failure to follow a workplace rule (whether written or unwritten). Examples of misconduct include tardiness and absenteeism, insubordination, and falsification. Poor performance, on the other hand, is simply the failure of an employee to do the job at an acceptable level. The “met” level is usually, but not always, documented in written performance standards and is typically defined in terms of quality, quantity, or timeliness. Although it is normal for performance and misconduct to be interrelated, it is important to recognize the difference between the two.”

On issues of misconduct, the Rating Official must seek guidance from the HCTM/ELR staff. When the issue is primarily a performance problem, the Rating Official must do the following:

Communicate Expectations and Performance Problems

Consistent performance feedback is the best way to prevent performance problems from developing. In most cases, an open line of communication between the Rating Official and employee can resolve or improve performance problems. When the Rating Official determines that there is a performance problem, the Rating Official must conduct a counseling session with the employee. The counseling session will

- Specify which work objective(s) or performance measure(s) the employee is performing poorly,
- Communicate what the acceptable level of performance is for the objective or measure, and
- Specify, in writing, how the employee can improve to the “Met” level of performance.

Helpful Tips for the Rating Official

- ❖ Review the performance problem with the HCTM/ELR staff.
- ❖ Begin the counseling process early, when performance starts to decline.
- ❖ Conduct the counseling session in a private place.
- ❖ Focus on poor performance, not personalities.
- ❖ Consider whether additional training can help the employee improve.
- ❖ Seek confirmation from the employee that he/she understands the situation, the steps to improve performance, and what the “Met” level of performance is.
- ❖ Focus the session on assisting and helping the employee to improve his/her performance.

Remember: Do not wait until the end of the evaluation period to address performance issues. Start the process when a performance problem is identified. Early intervention -- counseling and/or training -- can often resolve or improve an employee’s performance.

VIII. Resources

The following is a list of various resources and reference materials for the EEP:

- ADS Series 400, Chapters 461 and 463, at <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/400/>
- OPM has an excellent web site on Addressing and Resolving Poor Performance. Go to <http://www.opm.gov/perform/poor/index.html-ssi>
- Another OPM web site that helps with overall CS performance management, but also has helpful information for FS, is <http://www.opm.gov/perform/index.asp>

IX. Forms and AEF and AIF Instructions

List of forms used in the EEP:

1. **Annual Evaluation Form – Foreign Service (AID Form 461-1)**
2. **Appraisal Input Form – Foreign Service (AID Form 400-1B)**
[Used for all Foreign Service employees who are reassigned to a new job, traveling on extended TDY, or when there is a change in their Rating Official]
3. **Employee Statement – Foreign Service (AID Form 461-2)**
[All employees are highly encouraged to complete this]
4. **Foreign Service/Senior Foreign Service Skills Framework**
5. **FS Instructions for AEF**
6. **Skills Assessment – Foreign Service (AID Form 461-3)**
7. **Waiver Statement**

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