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# Precepts for Performance Pay for Senior Foreign Service Employees

A Mandatory Reference for ADS 463

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## A. PURPOSE

These Precepts prescribe the criteria to be used by the Consolidated Senior Foreign Service Performance Board (C/Board) for determining Performance Pay and Presidential Awards for Senior Foreign Service employees. The Precepts inform the C/Board of the factors to be considered in evaluating employees and describe the performance levels necessary for Performance Pay and Presidential Awards.

Note – These Precepts pertain to the C/Board and to SFS employees who are not part of the Office of the Inspector General.

## B. GENERAL

Performance Pay is conferred by the Agency on the basis of individual performance during the most recent rating period. Performance Pay may not exceed 20 percent of base salary and is subject to the limits on total number of awards established by law.

Presidential Awards are conferred on the basis of recommendations by an interagency Performance Board. Presidential Awards consist of the Distinguished Service Award for sustained extraordinary accomplishment, which carries a payment of 35% of the recipient's basic pay; and the Meritorious Service Award for sustained superior accomplishment, which carries a cash stipend of 20% of the recipient's basic pay. These awards may be conferred on no more than six percent of the members of the Senior Foreign Service, with no more than one percent receiving the Distinguished Service Award.

The Performance Evaluation Files of employees are the sole source of information upon which the C/Board bases its decisions.

## C. EQUALITY OF CONSIDERATION

The C/Board evaluates all employees solely on merit with complete fairness and justice. In this respect, Performance Boards will not discriminate against any employee, directly or indirectly, for reasons of race, color, religion, sex, age, disabling condition, sexual orientation, origin or means of entry into the Agency. In addition, C/Board should be sensitive to discrimination information or the appearance of discrimination in Annual Evaluation Forms and should report such findings to the Director, Office of Human Capital and Talent Management/Center for Performance Excellence (HCTM/CPE). If a Board member believes that another Board member is being unfair or biased in his or her review of an employee's Performance Evaluation File, the member will bring the matter to the attention the Director, HCTM/CPE.

The C/Board is to ignore inadmissible comments made in Annual Evaluation Forms or Employee Statements. Such inadmissible comments are not to be discussed or used as the basis for decision-making. Inadmissible comments include the following:

1. Reference to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, sexual orientation, EEO reprisal, political affiliation, family or marital status;
2. Retirement, resignation or other separation plans;
3. Grievance, Equal Employment Opportunity complaint or other third party adjudicatory proceeding or decision;
4. Method of entry into the Agency (International Development Intern, New Entrant Professional, Development Leadership Initiative, Career Candidate Corps, Conversion from another personnel system);
5. Reference to private U.S. Citizens by name;
6. Participation or non-participation in union activities, either as a representative of the union or as a bargaining unit member;
7. Prior evaluations prepared by other Rating Officials;
8. Reluctance to work voluntary overtime;
9. Leave record, except absence without leave (AWOL);
10. Decisions concerning disciplinary action;
11. Reference to the use of the dissent channel, which results in an adverse evaluation of performance. However, expressions of dissenting views on policy which are outside the dissent channel and which raise substantive questions of judgment relative to the skills matrix may be discussed in an evaluation, with specific instances cited;
12. Negative or pejorative discussion of another employee's performance; and
13. Specific identification of physical or mental disabilities or medical problems including addictions to alcohol and drugs, and any rehabilitation efforts. General reference may be made to confirm knowledge of a medical condition to the extent that it affects job performance or ability to accept overseas assignments. Rated employees, however, may discuss their medical condition in specific terms if such condition affected performance.

#### D. SELECTION CRITERIA

Comparing the performance and accomplishments of employees will require difficult judgments. Outstanding achievement may be found in professional and courageous

handling of emergency situations; significant accomplishments may result from resourceful completion of specific projects or negotiations; major benefits may result from imaginative and sensitive policy initiatives or from thoughtful and efficient management of important programs or missions. There is no formula whereby varying performance records may be measured and weighed with mathematical accuracy. C/Board members must apply the relevant criteria as realistically and fairly as possible, discuss their views where differences exist, and exercise their judgment to the fullest extent of their wisdom and experience.

The C/Board should be alert to evidence, through evaluation reports or letters of criticism, of an employee's indifference or lateness in completing evaluations on subordinates. This represents failure in supervisory responsibilities which may disadvantage the rated employee. The C/Board should give due weight to such failures when comparing that employee's performance against others for performance awards. Similarly, evidence of an employee's failure to support affirmative action goals and equal opportunity requirements also should be given due weight.

Recommendations for **Performance Pay** are based on the following criteria:

1. **SFS Performance Bonuses**
  - a. **Performance during** the current cycle only;
  - b. Relative value of the employee's achievement to the accomplishment of the Agency's mission;
  - c. Degree of difficulty inherent in successful achievement;
  - d. Extent to which achievement was characterized by strong executive leadership and significant contributions in the formulation of Agency policies and programming;
  - e. Extent of demonstrated, highly developed functional, foreign language and area expertise;
  - f. Effective supervision and development of subordinates;
  - g. Achievements in the areas of cost reduction, efficiency, quality of work, productivity and timeliness to the end of improving Foreign Service managerial flexibility and effectiveness;
  - h. Meeting affirmative action goals and achievement of equal opportunity requirements; and
  - i. Achievements in the identification, correction and control of waste, fraud and mismanagement.

## 2. SFS Presidential Award Nominations

- a. In addition to the criteria for SFS Performance Bonuses, employees must have demonstrated sustained superior or outstanding accomplishment as an SFS employee (or equivalent) for at least the last three consecutive rating cycles. Evidence of such sustained accomplishment may be found in, e.g.:
  - i. Significant contributions to the international interest in the area of foreign affairs;
  - ii. Managerial accomplishments in cooperative efforts with other foreign affairs agencies, federal agencies, Government entities and/or the private sector;
  - iii. Achievements of Agency wide importance in policy, technical, program and/or human resource terms.
- b. Nominations for Presidential Awards should recognize the most capable, deserving and accomplished employees of the Service who warrant this singular honor due to exceptional contributions and because their integrity and worthiness of public trust are beyond question.

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