

Instructions for Submitting a Non-SES/SL/ST Performance Appraisal System for OPM Review and Approval – OPM Form 1631

Agencies must use the OPM Form 1631, Performance Appraisal System Description, to provide OPM with the information it needs to fulfill its statutory responsibility under 5 U.S.C. 4304(b)(1) for reviewing agency performance appraisal systems to ensure they comply with law and regulation. Provided all requirements are met, OPM will approve a system based on the information included on the OPM Form 1631 and any necessary attachments. We encourage agencies to develop systems with maximum flexibility. A system with maximum flexibility gives program designers the ability to tailor programs that can support the organization's strategic goals, culture, and type of work.

1. **System Coverage:** Defines the employees covered by the system. Check the box that applies. If your agency is establishing a system for other than all agency non-SES/SL/ST employees, "Other" is selected and a description of the covered employees is attached cross-referencing this section of the OPM Form 1631.
2. **Appraisal Period:** Establishes the length of performance cycles as 1 year, for which ratings of record will be prepared. Check this box to indicate that programs under the system will incorporate an automatic exception to accommodate a start-up or close-out cycle when initiating or discontinuing an appraisal program. This could also apply to an individual employee who transitions between programs (e.g., due to reassignment or transfer).
3. **Summary Levels:** Establishes the patterns of summary levels that appraisal programs under the system may use. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether the system includes any such restrictions or requirements, and, as needed, attach a description. For maximum flexibility: check each box for patterns A through C and check "none" at Other restrictions or requirements for using patterns and/or deriving summary levels. Note that the use of Pattern A is limited to seasonal employees, teachers, General Schedule grades 1-4, and Federal Wage System employees.
4. **Element Appraisal:** Describes system parameters within which appraisal programs will use critical and non-critical elements to establish employee performance plans and appraise performance. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether the system includes any restrictions or requirements about numbers of appraisal levels, how particular elements may or may not be used or appraised, etc., and, as needed, attach a description. Indicate on the form the minimum and maximum number of levels at which elements, both critical and non-critical, may be appraised. The lowest minimum number of appraisal levels is two. For maximum flexibility: check "none" for Restrictions or requirements; enter "two" for Minimum number of appraisal levels, and "none" for Maximum number of appraisal levels.
5. **Minimum Period:** Establishes the range for the length of time programs under the system may use as the period of performance that must be completed before a performance rating can be

prepared. If these numbers are to be left entirely to the discretion of program designers (e.g., to accommodate minimum periods that may be negotiated as part of a collective bargaining agreement), enter “*none*” for both the minimum and the maximum number of days. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether the system includes any other restrictions or requirements for setting minimum periods, and, as needed, attach a description. If the program establishes a single minimum period, such as 90 days, fill in “*90 days*” for both minimum and maximum number of days.

6. Appraisal Programs

A: Check this box to indicate that programs under the system will comply with regulations.

B: Establishing separate appraisal programs under this system. Check the box that applies. As needed, attach a description of criteria and procedures required when components or organizations want to establish different appraisal programs under the system.

C: Additional appraisal program restrictions or requirements beyond the regulatory requirements in 6A and 6B above. Check the box that applies. As needed, attach a description of any additional restrictions, requirements, criteria, or procedures programs established under the system must address.

D: Check this box to indicate the agency assures the continued coverage of employees by an appraisal program while the agency establishes a new or revised system or program. Enter the name of the submitting agency and date in the transition statement.

7. Statutory Requirements: Enter the name of the submitting agency.

Obtaining OPM Approval

To establish a new system, make changes to a current appraisal system impacting a regulatory requirement, or change one of the items on OPM Form 1631, an agency must submit those changes to OPM for approval prior to their implementation.

The following documents are required for an approval request:

1. A letter requesting approval, signed by the agency head or designee, addressed to Veronica Hinton, Associate Director, Workforce Policy and Innovation;
2. The completed, signed OPM Form 1631; and
3. All appropriate attachments to the OPM Form 1631.

OPM will review the system and consult with the agency as needed until the system can be approved. Once approved, OPM will return a copy of OPM Form 1631 and a letter indicating the date upon which the system was approved by OPM.