Performance Management Officer Manual

U.S. Office of Personnel Management

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Agency Performance Management Officer (PMO) Manual Overview

OPM has designed a chapter-by-chapter manual for agency PMOs and their supporting HR specialists to enable agencies to build upon solid performance management practices and principles. Chapters 1-10 provide the substantive guidance, tools and examples to design an agency's performance management system in alignment with the changes in 5 CFR 430 Subpart B. This first tranche of the Manual will be released in conjunction with the publication of Subpart B. Subsequent chapters will be released with corresponding guidance such as awards, FY 27 performance planning, OPM's performance management certification, etc.

Chapter 1: Governance Framework

The purpose of the Governance Framework is to establish clear accountability, decision authority, oversight mechanisms, and escalation procedures for implementing and administering a standardized distribution of performance ratings.

Agency leadership must ensure that performance ratings continue to be based upon employee performance while also meeting any agencywide distribution requirements established under applicable law, regulation, policy, or OPM guidance.

The governance framework shall:

- Promote consistency across organizational components.
- Ensure compliance with merit system principles.
- Support defensible rating decisions.
- Provide transparency in the calibration process.
- Reduce legal, employee-relations, and operational risk.
- Establish accountability for implementation outcomes.

Chapter 2: Agency Decision Framework

The Agency Decision Framework provides a structured process for selecting and implementing a standardized distribution methodology.

Agency implementation success depends on selecting a distribution model and governance structure appropriate to organizational size, workforce composition, mission complexity, and executive risk tolerance.

While no single model is appropriate for every agency, most large cabinet departments will benefit from a hybrid governance and distribution model, while smaller agencies may achieve effective implementation through centralized enterprise-wide approaches.

This chapter assists agencies in making implementation decisions that:

- Support mission accomplishment.
- Promote consistent application of performance standards.
- Minimize legal and employee-relations risks.
- Enable effective calibration.
- Facilitate OPM certification.
- Align with organizational size and complexity.

Chapter 3: Operating Distribution Plan and Rating Architecture

This chapter provides agencies with a structured methodology for designing a standardized distribution of performance ratings. It explains how agencies should select a rating architecture, determine distribution scenarios, identify exceptions, and implement a defensible model that reflects mission needs, workforce composition, and organizational complexity.

Small agencies will typically benefit from simpler enterprise-wide models. Medium agencies will usually require component-based or hybrid approaches. Large agencies should expect to implement tiered, hybrid models with strong central oversight and component-level calibration.

This chapter is intended to help agencies:

- Translate policy into an operating distribution model.
- Select a rating architecture that is operationally feasible.
- Apply distribution rules consistently and transparently.
- Accommodate occupational and mission-based exceptions where appropriate.
- Document decisions for internal governance and OPM certification.

Chapter 4: Organizational Performance Alignment Framework

The purpose of this chapter is to establish a framework for aligning individual employee performance with organizational performance.

This chapter provides guidance for:

- Executives
- PMOs

- Supervisors
- Calibration Boards
- Performance Management Councils

The objective is to ensure that performance management reinforces mission accomplishment while maintaining merit-based evaluation of individual contributions.

Chapter 5: Calibration Program

This chapter defines how the agency arrives at final ratings in a manner that is consistent, defensible, merit-based, and auditable.

The purpose of the Calibration Program is to ensure that performance ratings are applied consistently, fairly, and in alignment with agency performance management objectives.

Calibration is the structured process through which managers and leadership review preliminary performance ratings and evaluate them against organizational standards, workforce-wide performance outcomes, and applicable distribution requirements.

Calibration exists to:

- Improve consistency.
- Reduce unintended rating inflation.
- Promote equitable treatment of employees.
- Support merit-based decision making.
- Improve confidence in performance ratings.
- Facilitate implementation of a standardized distribution.
- Create an auditable decision process.

Calibration does not replace supervisor judgment; rather, calibration ensures that supervisory judgments are applied consistently across the organization.

Chapter 6: Calibration Case Studies, Facilitator Guides, And Certification Exercises

Chapter 6 should function as both a training chapter and a calibration certification module. The objective is not simply to teach calibration mechanics—it is to teach leaders how to make and defend difficult distinctions among employees in a standardized distribution environment.

This chapter provides structured calibration exercises that agencies may use to:

- Train supervisors
- Train executives

- Certify calibration board members
- Validate agency calibration processes
- Improve consistency in rating decisions

The exercises are designed to simulate realistic Federal workforce situations where rating distinctions are difficult and where organizational calibration must occur.

Each exercise contains:

- Employee rating packages
- Performance evidence
- Preliminary supervisor ratings
- Calibration discussion prompts
- Facilitator notes
- Expected outcomes
- Scoring keys

The exercises should be used during:

- Supervisor certification programs
- Executive calibration workshops
- Annual refresher training
- PMO implementation training
- Calibration board preparation sessions

The purpose of calibration training is not to teach participants how to reduce ratings, but to teach participants how to distinguish performance levels objectively, consistently, and defensibly.

Chapter 7: Supervisor Operating Guide

This chapter should become the most frequently used section of the manual. Unlike previous chapters aimed primarily at PMOs and executives, this chapter should function as a practical operating guide that supervisors can use throughout the performance cycle. It should contain agency-specific operational procedures, examples, scripts, checklists, and documentation standards.

This chapter provides supervisors with day-to-day operational guidance for managing employee performance in a standardized distribution environment.

The purpose of this guide is to help supervisors:

- Establish clear performance expectations.
- Monitor and document performance.

- Conduct effective performance discussions.
- Evaluate self-assessments.
- Develop defensible ratings.
- Participate effectively in calibration sessions.
- Communicate ratings to employees.
- Maintain compliance with agency policy and merit system principles.

This chapter should be used throughout the appraisal cycle, not solely at the end of the rating period. It provides supervisors practical scripts, timelines, documentation requirements, and rating standards they can use throughout the appraisal cycle.

Chapter 8: Employee Relations and Labor Relations Considerations

This chapter provides agencies with guidance on employee relations, labor relations, and change management considerations associated with implementing standardized rating distributions and Operating Distribution Plans (ODPs).

The implementation of standardized rating distributions may represent a significant change for employees, supervisors, labor organizations, and agency leadership. Agencies should proactively address employee concerns, fulfill labor-management obligations, and develop communication strategies that support transparency, trust, and successful implementation.

This chapter is intended to help agencies:

- Identify potential employee and labor relations risks.
- Understand bargaining obligations.
- Develop communication and engagement strategies.
- Address concerns raised by employees and labor organizations.
- Implement changes in a manner consistent with applicable law, regulation, and collective bargaining agreements.
- Reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings, grievances, and disputes.

Chapter 9: PMO Operating Guide

This chapter establishes the operational responsibilities, procedures, controls, and oversight activities required of the agency Performance Management Officer (PMO) and serves as a practical operating manual for the position.

The PMO serves as the agency's principal advisor and operational lead for performance management implementation, governance, compliance, analytics, calibration oversight, certification readiness, and continuous improvement.

The PMO is responsible for ensuring that:

- Performance management policies are implemented consistently.
- Rating distributions comply with agency policy and OPM guidance.
- Calibration processes operate effectively.
- Merit system principles are protected.
- Certification requirements are met.
- Executive leadership receives timely information regarding system performance.

This chapter should be used by:

- Performance Management Officers
- CHCO staff
- Human Capital Directors
- Agency Performance Management Councils

Chapter 10: Communications and Change Management Strategy

This chapter is critical because the success or failure of a standardized distribution implementation will often be determined less by policy design than by how effectively the change is communicated. Agencies that fail to manage communications proactively frequently encounter morale issues, misunderstanding, resistance, labor concerns, and implementation delays.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide agencies with a comprehensive communications and change management framework to support implementation of standardized distribution of performance ratings.

This chapter establishes:

- Communication objectives
- Stakeholder engagement strategies
- Executive communication guidance
- Employee communication tools
- Labor engagement plans
- Frequently asked questions – can be shared separately
- Town hall materials
- Resistance management approaches

- Communication timelines

Each agency should approach implementation as a significant organizational change effort rather than solely a policy initiative.

Chapter 1: Sample Agency Standardized Distribution Governance Framework

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of a Governance Framework is to establish clear accountability, decision authority, oversight mechanisms, and escalation procedures for implementing and administering a standardized distribution of performance ratings.

Agency leadership must ensure that performance ratings continue to be based upon employee performance while also meeting any agencywide distribution requirements established in OPM guidance.

The governance framework should:

- Promote consistency across organizational components.
- Ensure compliance with merit system principles.
- Support defensible rating decisions.
- Provide transparency in the calibration process.
- Reduce legal, employee-relations, and operational risk.
- Establish accountability for implementation outcomes.

1.2 Governance Structure

Each agency should establish a multi-tier governance structure consisting of:

Executive Performance Governance Board

Responsible for:

- Approving agencywide implementation strategy.
- Approving distribution methodology.
- Reviewing enterprise rating outcomes.
- Monitoring workforce impacts.
- Approving corrective actions.

Typical membership:

- Deputy Secretary or equivalent (Chair)
- Chief Human Capital Officer
- Chief Operating Officer
- Chief Financial Officer
- General Counsel representative

- Equal Employment Opportunity Director
- Performance Management Officer

Meeting Frequency:

- Quarterly during implementation
- Semi-annually after stabilization

Performance Management Council

Responsible for:

- Developing implementation procedures.
- Reviewing calibration outcomes.
- Monitoring consistency across components.
- Identifying emerging risks.
- Coordinating training and communications.

Typical membership:

- Performance Management Officer (Chair)
- Component HR Directors
- Employee Relations Director
- Labor Relations Director
- Analytics Lead
- EEO Representative

Meeting Frequency:

- Monthly during implementation
- Quarterly thereafter

Component Calibration Boards

Responsible for:

- Reviewing preliminary rating distributions.
- Conducting calibration discussions.
- Documenting rating decisions.
- Escalating unresolved issues.

Membership:

- Component Leaders
- Component HR representatives
- Business line leaders

Meeting Frequency:

- Annually during rating cycle
- Additional sessions as required

1.3 Governance Principles

All governance bodies should operate under the following principles:

Performance First

Performance evaluation occurs before distribution considerations.

Documentation

All significant decisions shall be documented.

Consistency

Similar performance should receive equitable consideration across organizational units.

Transparency

Decision criteria shall be communicated to stakeholders.

Merit-Based Evaluation

All decisions must align with merit system principles.

1.4 Decision Authorities

Decision	Authority
Distribution Model Selection	Executive Governance Board
Calibration Methodology	Performance Management Council
Component Rating Validation	Component Calibration Boards
Awards Alignment Strategy	Executive Governance Board
Certification Readiness Approval	CHCO
Corrective Action Approval	Executive Governance Board

1.5 Escalation Framework

Issues shall be escalated when:

- Distribution targets cannot be achieved.
- Significant workforce impacts are identified.
- EEO concerns emerge.

- Components apply inconsistent standards.
- Legal or labor-relations concerns arise.

Escalation Path: Supervisor → Component Calibration Board → Performance Management Council → Executive Governance Board

1.6 Governance Deliverables

Required governance products should include:

- Governance Charter
- Annual Implementation Plan
- Calibration Procedures
- Executive Dashboards
- Risk Register
- Certification Readiness Assessment
- Corrective Action Plans
- Annual Lessons Learned Report

1.7 Governance Effectiveness Measures

The agency should evaluate governance effectiveness through:

- Distribution compliance rates
- Calibration consistency
- Employee understanding metrics
- EEO trend analysis
- Employee relations indicators
- Certification outcomes
- Leadership satisfaction

Governance reviews should occur annually and include recommendations for continuous improvement.

Chapter 2: Sample Agency Decision Framework

2.1 Purpose

An Agency Decision Framework provides a structured process for selecting and implementing a standardized distribution methodology.

This chapter assists agencies in making implementation decisions that:

- Support mission accomplishment.
- Promote consistent application of performance standards.
- Minimize legal and employee-relations risks.
- Enable effective calibration.
- Facilitate OPM certification.
- Align with organizational size and complexity.

This chapter is intended to be used by:

- Agency Heads
- Deputy Secretaries
- Chief Human Capital Officers
- Performance Management Officers
- Human Resources Directors
- Executive Governance Boards

Note that the examples provided are not the only available options. Agencies are encouraged to design a framework that suits their size and mission. All samples and examples are provided only for consideration.

2.2 Core Agency Decisions

Each agency must make decisions in four major areas:

Decision Area	Required Outcome
Distribution Structure	How ratings will be distributed
Calibration Structure	How ratings will be reviewed
Governance Structure	Who will make decisions
Analytics and Oversight	How outcomes will be monitored

These decisions should be made sequentially.

2.3 Decision Tree #1 – Agency Complexity Assessment

Before selecting a distribution model, agencies should evaluate organizational complexity.

Question: What is your agency size?

Small Agency

Characteristics:

- Fewer than 5,000 employees
- Limited organizational layers
- Centralized HR operations
- Small executive cadre

Medium Agency

Characteristics:

- 5,000–25,000 employees
- Multiple components or regions
- Moderate workforce diversity
- Combination of centralized and decentralized operations

Large Agency

Characteristics:

- More than 25,000 employees
- Multiple bureaus or administrations
- Diverse occupational populations
- Significant geographic dispersion

2.4 Decision Tree #2 – Workforce Homogeneity

Determine whether the workforce performs substantially similar work.

Question: Can employees reasonably be compared across the organization?

If YES

Consider:

- Enterprise-wide distribution
- Grade-band distribution

If NO

Consider:

- Component-based distribution
- Occupational distribution
- Hybrid distribution

2.5 Distribution Model Selection Guide

Model A: Enterprise-Wide Distribution

Description

The same rating distribution is applied across the entire agency.

Advantages

- Maximum consistency
- Easier certification oversight
- Simplified reporting
- Strong executive control

Risks

- Occupational inequities
- Mission differences may be overlooked
- Employee perception challenges

Best For

- Small agencies
- Highly centralized organizations

Model B: Component-Based Distribution

Description

Each bureau, administration, or major component maintains its own distribution, that in the aggregate meet the agency’s distribution caps.

Advantages

- Better mission alignment
- Easier local calibration
- Stronger executive ownership

Risks

- Inconsistent standards

- Difficult agencywide comparisons

Best For

- Medium-sized agencies

Model C: Occupational Distribution

Description

Employees are calibrated within occupational groups.

Advantages

- Similar work evaluated together
- Improved technical credibility

Risks

- Administrative complexity
- Large data requirements

Best For

- Technical organizations

Model D: Grade-Band Distribution

Description

Distribution is applied within grade clusters.

Examples:

- GS-5 through GS-9
- GS-11 through GS-13
- GS-14 through GS-15

Advantages

- Similar expectations
- Improved comparability

Risks

- Additional calibration layers

Best For

- Organizations with broad grade structures

Model E: Hybrid Distribution

Description

Agencywide standards are established, but calibration occurs at lower organizational levels.

Advantages

- Balances consistency and flexibility
- Accommodates workforce diversity
- Supports mission variation

Risks

- Most complex governance model
- Requires mature analytics

Best For

- Large cabinet departments

2.6 Decision Tree #3 – Calibration Structure

Question: At what level should calibration occur?

Option A: Agencywide Calibration

Advantages:

- Maximum consistency
- Strong executive visibility

Disadvantages:

- Difficult for large agencies

Recommended For:

- Small agencies

Option B: Component Calibration

Advantages:

- Better mission understanding
- More manageable

Disadvantages:

- Less enterprise consistency

Recommended For:

- Medium agencies

Option C: Multi-Level Calibration

Structure:

Supervisor → Component Board → Agency Board

Advantages:

- Strong quality control
- Enterprise alignment

Disadvantages:

- Resource intensive

Recommended For:

- Large agencies

2.7 Decision Tree #4 – Governance Structure

Centralized Governance

Decision authority remains at headquarters.

Best for:

- Small agencies
- Highly centralized organizations

Decentralized Governance

Components make most implementation decisions.

Best for:

- Autonomous bureaus
- Distinct mission organizations

Hybrid Governance

Agency establishes standards while components execute implementation.

Best for:

- Large departments

Recommended approach for most cabinet agencies.

2.8 Executive Decision Matrix

Before implementation, leadership should formally approve:

- Distribution model
- Calibration structure

- Governance structure
- Analytics strategy
- Certification readiness framework

2.9 PMO Decision Checklist

The Performance Management Officer should verify that:

- Workforce analysis completed
- Agency complexity assessed
- Distribution model selected
- Governance structure approved
- Calibration process documented
- Analytics framework established
- Communications plan approved
- Training plan approved
- Certification readiness plan established

No agency should proceed to implementation until all checklist items have been completed.

2.10 Chapter Summary

Agency implementation success depends on selecting a distribution model and governance structure appropriate to organizational size, workforce composition, mission complexity, and executive risk tolerance.

While no single model is appropriate for every agency, most large cabinet departments will benefit from a hybrid governance and distribution model, while smaller agencies may achieve effective implementation through centralized enterprise-wide approaches.

The decisions documented in this chapter establish the foundation for all subsequent implementation activities, including calibration, communications, analytics, and certification readiness.

Chapter 3: Operating Distribution Plan and Rating Architecture

3.1 Purpose

This chapter provides agencies with a structured methodology for designing and implementing an Operating Distribution Plan (ODP) that supports agency-wide compliance with OPM-approved rating distribution requirements while allowing appropriate flexibility across organizational units.

This chapter is intended to help agencies:

- Translate OPM distribution requirements into an operational implementation strategy.
- Allow appropriate variation across bureaus, components, occupations, geographic regions, and organizational levels.
- Create governance processes that support fairness and consistency.
- Monitor and reconcile organizational rating distributions.
- Document decisions for internal governance and OPM certification.

3.2 Core Principle

An Operating Distribution Plan does not replace performance evaluations.

Employees must first be evaluated based on actual performance against established performance standards.

Distribution management occurs only after performance evaluations have been completed and calibrated.

Accordingly:

1. Evaluate performance.
2. Document performance outcomes.
3. Conduct calibration.
4. Monitor organizational rating distributions.
5. Validate agency-wide compliance.
6. Finalize and certify ratings.

The approved distribution requirement applies to the covered agency population in the aggregate.

Agencies are not required to achieve identical rating distributions within every bureau, office, occupation, geographic region, or organizational unit.

Variation may occur at subordinate levels provided that the final agency-wide distribution complies with OPM-approved requirements.

3.3 Operating Distribution Plan Concepts

An Operating Distribution Plan (ODP) defines how the agency will achieve required agency-wide rating distributions while preserving mission flexibility.

Agencies should determine:

- Organizational units subject to monitoring.
- Allowable operating ranges.
- Governance responsibilities.
- Reconciliation procedures.
- Documentation requirements.

The selected architecture should be:

- Defensible
- Consistent
- Transparent
- Operationally manageable
- Aligned with mission requirements
- Supported by data
- Auditable

3.4 Components of an Operating Distribution Plan

Every ODP should contain four core elements.

3.4.1 Agency-Wide Distribution Targets

The agency should establish the rating distribution required by OPM. OPM will publish annual guidance with governmentwide rating distribution caps.

Example:

- Level 5 – 10%
- Level 4 – 20%

These targets apply to the aggregate agency population.

3.4.2 Operating Ranges

Agencies may establish operating ranges for subordinate organizations.

Example:

- Level 5 – 5% to 15%
- Level 4 – 15% to 25%

Operating ranges permit organizational flexibility while maintaining enterprise accountability.

3.4.3 Monitoring and Reconciliation

Agencies should monitor rating distributions throughout the appraisal cycle and identify significant variances before final ratings are approved.

3.4.4 Certification

Prior to finalizing ratings, agencies should validate that aggregate rating distributions satisfy OPM-approved requirements.

3.5 Organizational Flexibility Options

Agencies may implement operating distribution plans using one or more organizational approaches.

Option A: Bureau-Based Flexibility

Each bureau or major component calibrates independently within approved operating ranges.

Appropriate for:

- Cabinet departments
- Multi-bureau organizations
- Diverse mission environments

Option B: Occupational Flexibility

Separate calibration pools may be established for occupations requiring specialized comparisons.

Examples:

- Scientists
- Engineers
- Attorneys

- Medical professionals
- Cybersecurity specialists

Option C: Geographic Flexibility

Agencies with substantial field operations may establish regional calibration structures.

Option D: Organizational-Level Flexibility

Agencies may establish calibration pools based on divisions, offices, directorates, or programs.

Option E: Hybrid Flexibility

Many agencies will benefit from combining multiple approaches.

Example:

Agency-wide targets

↓

Component calibration

↓

Occupational review

↓

Agency-wide reconciliation

3.6 Selection Decision Framework

Agencies should use the following sequence when designing an Operating Distribution Plan.

1. Identify the agency-wide distribution requirement.
2. Determine which organizational units require independent calibration.
3. Establish operating ranges.
4. Determine monitoring and reporting requirements.
5. Establish reconciliation procedures.
6. Validate that aggregate agency outcomes satisfy distribution requirements.

3.7 Operating Distribution Architecture by Agency Type

A. Small Agencies

Recommended architecture:

- Agency-wide distribution targets
- Centralized calibration
- Single governance body
- Limited organizational segmentation

B. Medium-Sized Agencies

Recommended architecture:

- Agency-wide targets
- Component-level calibration
- Central oversight
- Moderate operating flexibility

C. Large Agencies

Recommended architecture:

- Agency-wide targets
- Multiple calibration levels
- Component and occupational flexibility
- Formal reconciliation process
- Enterprise-wide analytics and monitoring

3.8 Variance Management and Exceptions

3.8.1 Variance Management

Agencies should establish acceptable operating ranges before ratings are finalized.

Variance controls may include:

- Percentage ranges
- Population thresholds
- Statistical tolerances
- Governance review triggers

3.8.2 Occupational Exceptions

Agencies may establish separate review structures for specialized occupations where direct comparison may not be appropriate.

3.8.3 Mission-Based Exceptions

Exceptions may be appropriate for:

- Small organizations
- Emergency operations
- Temporary project teams
- Seasonal workforces
- Unique mission environments

3.8.4 Principles for Exceptions

Exceptions should:

- Be narrowly defined
- Be documented in advance
- Be approved through governance processes
- Be reviewed periodically
- Remain consistent with OPM guidance

Exceptions should not be used to circumvent agency-wide distribution requirements.

3.9 Sample Implementation Models – Suggested Architecture

Example 1

- Department-wide target distribution
- Administration-level calibration
- Occupational review for clinical populations
- Department-wide reconciliation

Example 2

- Department-wide targets
- Component-level calibration
- Headquarters oversight
- Enterprise reconciliation process

Example 3

- Department-wide targets
- Bureau-level flexibility
- Occupational segmentation
- Centralized analytics

Example 4

- Agency-wide targets
- Center-level calibration
- Occupational review for technical populations
- Agency-wide validation

Example 5

- Agency-wide targets

- Office-level calibration
- Strong central governance
- Enterprise monitoring and certification

3.10 Operating Distribution Plan Design Requirements

Every agency should document:

- Agency-wide distribution targets
- Organizational units covered
- Operating ranges
- Monitoring methodology
- Reconciliation procedures
- Governance structure
- Exception processes
- Data reporting plan
- Certification methodology
- Risk mitigation strategy

The design package should be approved before implementation.

3.11 Required Documentation for Governance Review

The agency should retain:

- Operating Distribution Plan.
- Agency-wide distribution targets.
- Organizational mapping.
- Approved operating ranges.
- Exception documentation.
- Calibration workflow.
- Monitoring reports.
- Governance decisions.
- Certification documentation.
- Communications and training materials.

3.12 PMO Guidance for Choosing a Starting Point

Agencies should begin with the simplest model that satisfies mission and governance needs.

Recommended starting point:

- Small agencies: Agency-wide model.
- Medium agencies: Component-based flexibility.

- Large agencies: Hybrid model with reconciliation.

Agencies should avoid unnecessary complexity during initial implementation.

3.13 Common Implementation Pitfalls

Pitfall 1: Treating Variance as Noncompliance

Some organizational variation is expected and may be appropriate.

Pitfall 2: Applying Identical Distributions Everywhere

Organizations with different missions may legitimately produce different rating patterns.

Pitfall 3: Failing to Monitor Aggregate Outcomes

Agency-wide compliance remains the governing requirement.

Pitfall 4: Insufficient Governance

Operating flexibility requires strong oversight and accountability.

Pitfall 5: Inadequate Documentation

Agencies should document decisions, variances, and exceptions throughout implementation.

3.14 Chapter Summary

Operating Distribution Plans provide agencies with a framework for achieving OPM-approved rating distributions while recognizing mission diversity, workforce complexity, and organizational differences.

Agencies may allow rating distributions to vary across bureaus, components, occupations, geographic regions, and organizational levels provided that the aggregate agency-wide distribution complies with approved requirements.

The goal is not identical outcomes across every organizational unit. The goal is fair evaluation of employee performance, supported by calibration, governance, monitoring, and agency-wide accountability.

Chapter 4: Organizational Performance Alignment Framework

4.1 Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to establish a framework for aligning individual employee performance with organizational performance.

This chapter provides guidance for:

- Executives
- PMOs
- Supervisors
- Calibration Boards
- Performance Management Councils

The objective is to ensure that performance management reinforces mission accomplishment while maintaining merit-based evaluation of individual contributions.

4.2 Why Organizational Performance Matters

Federal employees do not work in isolation.

Employees contribute to:

- Agency strategic goals
- Department priorities
- Organizational objectives
- Mission outcomes

Accordingly, performance management should recognize not only what employees accomplish individually but also how their contributions support organizational success.

The objective is not to hold employees accountable for factors beyond their control.

The objective is to evaluate the degree to which employee contributions advance organizational priorities.

4.3 Guiding Principle

Individual performance remains the primary basis for performance ratings.

Organizational performance serves as a critical factor to help distinguish relative impact among employees who are otherwise performing at similar levels.

Organizational performance should never replace evaluation of individual performance.

4.4 Organizational Performance Hierarchy

Performance should be evaluated across four levels.

Level 1: Agency Strategic Goals

Examples:

- Successful contribution to the President’s Management Agenda
- Strengthen border security
- Direct achievement of goal(s) within an agency’s Strategic Plan
- Increase program integrity

Level 2: Organizational Objectives

Examples:

- Reduce processing times
- Improve inspection completion rates
- Increase grant oversight effectiveness

Level 3: Team Objectives

Examples:

- Complete project milestones
- Meet operational targets
- Improve service delivery

Level 4: Individual Objectives

Examples:

- Complete assignments
- Produce work products
- Deliver project outcomes

4.5 Performance Alignment Model

Employees should understand how their work supports organizational success.

Executive Responsibility

Translate agency goals into organizational priorities.

Supervisor Responsibility

Translate organizational priorities into employee expectations.

Employee Responsibility

Execute work supporting organizational objectives.

Example

Agency Goal:

Improve customer experience.

↓

Office Goal:

Reduce processing time by 20%.

↓

Team Goal:

Improve workflow efficiency.

↓

Employee Goal:

Develop automation tools.

4.6 Organizational Performance Categories

When evaluating organizational impact, agencies should assess:

Category 1: Mission Impact

Question: Did the work contribute significantly to mission success?

Category 2: Strategic Alignment

Question: Did the work support agency priorities included in the agency's Strategic Plan?

Category 3: Organizational Value

Question: Did the work improve organizational effectiveness?

Category 4: Enterprise Impact

Question: Did the work influence outcomes beyond the immediate work unit?

4.7 Individual vs Organizational Contribution Matrix

Supervisors should consider both dimensions.

Individual Performance	Organizational Impact	Assessment
High	High	Strong candidate for highest ratings
High	Moderate	Strong performer
High	Low	Successful but limited enterprise impact
Effective	High	Important contributor
Effective	Moderate	Fully Successful

This matrix should inform discussions but should not mechanically determine ratings.

4.8 Evaluating Organizational Impact

Supervisors should ask:

Question 1

What organizational objective was supported?

Question 2

How significant was the contribution?

Question 3

What measurable outcome resulted?

Question 4

Did the work affect organizational performance?

Question 5

Would the organization have achieved the same outcome without the employee's contribution?

4.9 Mission Impact Scale

Agencies may use a mission impact scale.

Level 1: Work Unit Impact

Benefits primarily local.

Level 2: Organizational Impact

Benefits extend across the organization.

Level 3: Agency Impact

Benefits influence agency outcomes.

Level 4: Governmentwide Impact

Benefits extend beyond the agency.

Example

Employee develops new reporting process.

- Work Unit Impact: Used only by one team.
- Organizational Impact: Used throughout the office.
- Agency Impact: Used across multiple components.
- Governmentwide Impact: Adopted by multiple agencies.

4.10 Organizational Performance During Calibration

Calibration boards should discuss:

- Mission contribution
- Strategic alignment
- Organizational value
- Enterprise impact
- Sustainability of results

These discussions help distinguish employees with similar individual accomplishments.

Calibration Example

Employee A

- Exceeded individual goals.
- Supported routine operations.

Employee B

- Exceeded individual goals.
- Led initiative supporting a Secretary priority.

Discussion:

Both employees performed well.

Employee B’s work had greater organizational impact.

4.11 Organizational Performance Scorecard

Organizations should establish scorecards.

Examples:

- Customer Service
- Productivity
- Financial Management
- Program Outcomes
- Workforce Indicators
- Strategic Objectives

These scorecards provide objective evidence for evaluating organizational impact.

4.12 Executive Alignment Reviews

Executives should periodically review:

- Strategic priorities
- Organizational goals
- Performance measures
- Workforce objectives
- Rating outcomes

The goal is to ensure alignment between organizational success and employee recognition.

4.13 PMO Responsibilities

The PMO should:

- Develop organizational performance guidance
- Monitor alignment practices
- Train supervisors
- Support calibration boards
- Evaluate organizational performance metrics
- Report alignment outcomes

4.14 Supervisor Discussion Guide

Suggested Questions:

- “What organizational objective did this employee support?”
- “What measurable value was created?”
- “How did the employee contribute to mission success?”
- “What impact did the contribution have beyond the work unit?”

Agencies should ensure that impact beyond the work unit is assessed relative to the unit's position in the organization. For example, a GS-5 employee working within a smaller unit in a component should be assessed in accordance with the impact possible for the position. Organizational impact must be relative and adjusted based on the position's responsibilities and level within the organization.

These questions help distinguish performance in a standardized distribution environment.

4.15 Organizational Alignment Maturity Model

Level 1

Individual goals disconnected from agency goals.

Level 2

Goals loosely aligned.

Level 3

Organizational goals routinely incorporated.

Level 4

Strong alignment between ratings and mission outcomes.

Level 5

Enterprise-wide integration of organizational and individual performance.

4.16 Chapter Summary

Performance management should reinforce mission accomplishment.

Individual performance remains the foundation of employee ratings, but organizational performance helps agencies distinguish among employees who are performing at similar levels.

Organizations that successfully align individual and organizational performance create stronger accountability, improve mission execution, and ensure that recognition systems reward the contributions that matter most to agency success.

This chapter should be used alongside the Calibration Program and Awards Alignment Framework to ensure that mission impact, organizational priorities, and employee contributions are evaluated consistently and transparently.

Chapter 5: Calibration Program

5.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Calibration Program is to ensure that performance ratings are applied consistently, fairly, and in alignment with agency performance management objectives.

Calibration is the structured process through which managers and leadership review preliminary performance ratings and evaluate them against organizational standards, workforce-wide performance outcomes, and applicable distribution requirements.

Calibration exists to:

- Improve consistency.
- Reduce unintended rating inflation.
- Promote equitable treatment of employees.
- Support merit-based decision making.
- Improve confidence in performance ratings.
- Facilitate implementation of a standardized distribution.
- Create an auditable decision process.

Calibration does not replace supervisor judgment.

Rather, calibration ensures that supervisory judgments are applied consistently across the organization.

5.2 Guiding Principles

All calibration activities shall adhere to the following principles:

Principle 1: Performance First

Employees are evaluated against established performance standards before calibration begins.

Calibration should never substitute for performance evaluation.

Principle 2: Evidence-Based Decisions

All calibration discussions must be supported by documented evidence.

Examples include:

- Accomplishments
- Performance narratives
- Performance metrics

- Mission outcomes
- Customer feedback
- Awards documentation
- Project results

Unsupported assertions should not influence calibration outcomes.

Principle 3: Merit-Based Evaluation

Calibration decisions must align with merit system principles.

Ratings must not be influenced by:

- Personal relationships
- Political affiliation
- Protected characteristics
- Retaliation concerns
- Non-performance factors

Principle 4: Transparency

The calibration process should be documented and communicated clearly.

Employees do not need to participate directly in calibration sessions, but agencies should be able to explain:

- How calibration occurs
- Why calibration occurs
- What standards are applied

Principle 5: Consistency

Employees performing at comparable levels should be evaluated consistently regardless of:

- Organizational location
- Supervisory chain
- Occupational group
- Geographic location

5.3 Calibration Governance Structure

Agencies should establish a multi-level calibration process.

Level 1: Supervisor Assessment

Responsibilities:

- Evaluate employee performance

- Assign preliminary rating
- Document justification
- Submit supporting evidence

Output:

Preliminary Rating Package

Level 2: Organizational Calibration

Responsibilities:

- Compare ratings across work units
- Review distinctions between employees
- Identify rating inconsistencies
- Ensure standards are applied consistently

Output:

Calibrated Organizational Ratings

Level 3: Executive Validation

Responsibilities:

- Review organizational outcomes
- Assess compliance with distribution requirements
- Resolve unresolved issues
- Validate enterprise consistency

Output:

Final Rating Distribution

5.3A Component-Level Calibration

Component-level calibration occurs before enterprise review.

Purpose:

- Compare ratings across divisions.
- Eliminate local rating inflation.
- Improve consistency among supervisors.

Typical Questions:

- Are similar accomplishments receiving similar ratings?
- Are some organizations rating significantly higher than others?
- Are distinctions documented consistently?

Outputs:

- Component distribution analysis
- Proposed adjustments
- Calibration findings report

5.3B Agency-Level Calibration

Agency-level calibration serves as the final consistency review.

Purpose:

- Evaluate enterprise-wide rating patterns.
- Compare outcomes across components.
- Validate application of agency standards.
- Ensure compliance with distribution requirements.

Agency-level calibration should focus on trends rather than individual employees except for:

- Exceptional performance cases
- Executive review cases
- Borderline distinctions
- Distribution exceptions

Agency-level reviewers should ask:

- Are component outcomes comparable?
- Are mission differences being evaluated consistently?
- Are rating distributions defensible?
- Are workforce demographics showing unusual patterns?

Outputs:

- Agency-wide calibration report
- Distribution certification
- Executive validation memorandum

5.4 Calibration Cycle

A standard annual calibration cycle consists of five phases.

Phase 1: Preparation

Activities:

- Gather performance documentation.
- Complete supervisor narratives.
- Conduct preliminary assessments.
- Train participants.

Deliverables:

- Rating packages
- Employee accomplishment summaries
- Calibration roster

Phase 2: Preliminary Review

Activities:

- Review proposed ratings.
- Assess evidence quality.
- Identify potential inconsistencies.

Questions:

- Is documentation sufficient?
- Is the rating supported?
- Are distinctions clearly explained?

Phase 3: Calibration Session

Activities:

- Review employee populations.
- Discuss distinctions.
- Evaluate mission impact.
- Compare outcomes.

Questions:

- Who delivered the strongest results?
- Which accomplishments had the greatest organizational impact?
- What distinguishes top performers?

Phase 4: Executive Review

Activities:

- Review distribution outcomes.
- Validate consistency.
- Resolve disagreements.

Questions:

- Does the distribution align with agency policy?
- Are outcomes defensible?
- Have risks been identified?

Phase 5: Finalization

Activities:

- Approve ratings.
- Document decisions.
- Archive records.

Deliverables:

- Final ratings
- Calibration report
- Executive certification memorandum

5.5 Calibration Participants

Supervisors

Responsibilities:

- Present employee performance
- Provide evidence
- Explain rating rationale

Human Resources

Responsibilities:

- Facilitate process
- Ensure procedural compliance
- Monitor consistency

HR should not assign ratings.

PMO

Responsibilities:

- Monitor calibration outcomes
- Conduct analytics
- Identify trends
- Prepare certification documentation

Executives

Responsibilities:

- Validate outcomes
- Review distribution compliance
- Resolve disputes

5.6 Calibration Session Format

Recommended session length: 2-4 hours

Recommended participants: 6-12 individuals

Recommended employee population: 25-100 employees

Agenda

1. Opening Remarks
2. Review Calibration Rules
3. Review Distribution Targets
4. Discuss Proposed Ratings
5. Review Outstanding Candidates
6. Review Borderline Cases
7. Resolve Disagreements
8. Finalize Recommendations

5.6A Calibration Panel Operating Model

Purpose

A calibration panel is not a rating board that re-rates employees independently. The panel evaluates whether proposed ratings are supported by evidence, applied consistently across organizations, and aligned with agency performance standards.

Panel Responsibilities

The calibration panel should:

- Review proposed ratings for consistency.
- Compare performance outcomes across employees and work units.
- Validate distinctions between rating levels.
- Ensure organizational standards are applied consistently.
- Identify unsupported ratings.
- Recommend adjustments when evidence does not support distinctions.
- Document rationale for calibration decisions.

Panel Composition

Recommended membership:

- Component executives
- Senior managers

- Human Resources advisors
- PMO representatives
- Labor Relations advisors (as appropriate)
- Equal Employment Opportunity advisors (as observers when needed)

The panel should include leaders from multiple organizational units to avoid narrow organizational perspectives.

Panel Decision Rules

Calibration decisions should be based on:

- Documented accomplishments
- Measurable results
- Demonstrated mission impact
- Sustained performance
- Leadership contributions
- Organizational outcomes

Calibration decisions should never be based on:

- Popularity
- Length of service
- Position grade
- Prior ratings
- Personal relationships
- Awards alone
- Budget availability

5.7 Calibration Discussion Framework

Each employee discussion should address:

Performance

What did the employee accomplish?

Impact

What effect did those accomplishments have?

Difficulty

How challenging was the work?

Sustainability

Was performance sustained?

Organizational Contribution

How did the employee contribute to mission success?

5.7A Objective Calibration Factors

Factor 1: Achievement of Performance Standards

Questions:

- Were all critical elements achieved?
- Were performance expectations exceeded?
- Were outcomes delivered consistently?

Evidence:

- Performance plans
- Accomplishment reports
- Supervisor documentation

Factor 2: Mission Impact

Questions:

- Did the work significantly advance agency objectives?
- Were outcomes enterprise-wide or localized?
- Did performance affect mission delivery?

Evidence:

- Strategic plan outcomes
- Program results
- Operational metrics

Factor 3: Quality of Results

Questions:

- Were products technically accurate?
- Did work require rework?
- Did outputs exceed quality expectations?

Evidence:

- Quality reviews
- Audit results

- Error rates

Factor 4: Quantity and Productivity

Questions:

- How much work was completed?
- Did productivity exceed expectations?
- Was workload complexity considered?

Evidence:

- Production metrics
- Case counts
- Timeliness reports

Factor 5: Timeliness

Questions:

- Were deadlines met?
- Were priorities delivered early?
- Was responsiveness demonstrated?

Evidence:

- Project schedules
- Milestone reports
- Completion data

Factor 6: Complexity and Difficulty

Questions:

- How challenging was the work?
- Did the employee resolve novel issues?
- Were assignments unusually complex?

Evidence:

- Project complexity assessments
- Scope documentation
- Leadership assignments

Factor 7: Organizational Contribution

Questions:

- Did performance improve team outcomes?
- Did the employee support organizational priorities?
- Did the employee improve collaboration?

Evidence:

- Team results
- Cross-functional initiatives
- Organizational objectives

Factor 8: Sustained Performance

Questions:

- Was high performance maintained throughout the cycle?
- Was performance concentrated in a single period?
- Were results consistently demonstrated?

Evidence:

- Quarterly reviews
- Mid-year assessments
- Performance trend data

5.7B Calibration Comparison Matrix

Calibration panels should compare employees using a common framework.

Factor	Employee A	Employee B	Employee C
Mission Impact	High	Effective	High
Quality	Exceptional	Strong	Exceptional
Productivity	Strong	Strong	Moderate
Complexity	High	Effective	High
Sustained Performance	Yes	Yes	Partial
Proposed Rating	5	5	5

The panel should then determine whether distinctions are sufficiently supported.

5.8 Calibration Worksheet

Employee Name:

Position:

Organization:

Supervisor:

Proposed Rating:

Evidence Summary

Major Accomplishments:

____

____

____

____

Mission Impact

□ High

□ Moderate

□ Limited

Distinguishing Characteristics

____

____

____

____

Calibration Outcome

□ Retain Rating

□ Adjust Rating

□ Further Review Required

5.9 Calibration Exercise #1

High-Performing Team Scenario

A supervisor proposes:

- 8 employees rated Outstanding
- 2 employees rated Level 4

The organization must fit within a distribution that permits only 2 Outstanding ratings.

Discussion Questions:

1. What evidence distinguishes the top performers?
2. Which accomplishments produced the greatest mission impact?
3. Were achievements sustained?

4. Can distinctions be documented objectively?

Objective:

Develop defensible distinctions among high performers.

5.10 Calibration Exercise #2

Technical Workforce Scenario

Population:

- Engineers
- Scientists
- Program Managers

Challenge:

Different work products and performance indicators.

Discussion Questions:

1. How should comparability be established?
2. Are occupational comparison pools needed?
3. What measures indicate superior performance?

Objective:

Ensure fair comparisons across occupations.

5.11 Calibration Exercise #3

Component Comparison Scenario

Component A:

Primarily policy work.

Component B:

Primarily operational work.

Challenge:

Different definitions of impact.

Discussion Questions:

1. How should mission impact be evaluated?
2. What enterprise standards apply?
3. How should executive leadership compare outcomes?

Objective:

Promote consistency across missions.

5.12 Common Calibration Errors

Error 1: Popularity Contests

Focus on evidence, not personalities.

Error 2: Recency Bias

Evaluate the full appraisal period.

Error 3: Halo Effect

One accomplishment should not drive the entire rating.

Error 4: Inflation Preservation

Calibration is not intended to preserve historical rating patterns.

Error 5: Unsupported Claims

All assertions should be documented.

5.13 Documentation Requirements

Agencies should retain:

- Calibration agendas
- Attendance records
- Rating summaries
- Distribution reports
- Executive decisions
- Analytics reports

Retention should follow agency records schedules.

5.14 Calibration Metrics

PMOs should monitor:

Distribution Metrics

- Rating allocations
- Component variations

- Occupational variations

Process Metrics

- Completion rates
- Documentation quality
- Calibration participation

Outcome Metrics

- Employee engagement
- Awards allocations
- Attrition rates
- Certification results

5.14A Agency Calibration Analytics

PMOs are recommended to provide calibration panels with data packages. Some data that can be included are:

Distribution Analysis

- Ratings by component
- Ratings by occupation
- Ratings by grade
- Ratings by geographic location

Trend Analysis

- Three-year rating trends
- Supervisor rating patterns
- Organizational variances

Workforce Analysis

- Awards correlation
- Promotion correlation
- Employee engagement indicators
- Retention indicators

Risk Indicators

- Rating inflation
- Rating compression
- Outlier organizations

- Documentation deficiencies

5.15 PMO Calibration Checklist

Before Session

□ Participants trained

□ Materials prepared

□ Analytics completed

□ Distribution targets available

During Session

□ Evidence reviewed

□ Discussions documented

□ Decisions recorded

□ Risks identified

After Session

□ Ratings finalized

□ Reports completed

□ Executive approval(s) obtained

□ Records archived

5.16 Chapter Summary

Calibration is the mechanism that transforms individual supervisory assessments into a consistent organizational performance management system.

A successful calibration program:

- Improves consistency.
- Supports distribution requirements.
- Reinforces merit principles.
- Produces defensible ratings.
- Provides transparency and accountability.

The next chapter focuses on Calibration Case Studies and Facilitation Guides, providing detailed examples, completed exercises, discussion scripts, and answer keys that agencies can use to train supervisors, managers, executives, and calibration boards.

Chapter 6: Calibration Case Studies, Facilitator Guides, and Certification Exercises

6.1 Purpose

This chapter provides structured calibration exercises that agencies may use to:

- Train supervisors
- Train executives
- Certify calibration board members
- Validate agency calibration processes
- Improve consistency in rating decisions

The exercises are designed to simulate realistic Federal workforce situations where rating distinctions are difficult and where organizational calibration must occur.

Each exercise contains:

- Employee rating packages
- Performance evidence
- Preliminary supervisor ratings
- Calibration discussion prompts
- Facilitator notes
- Expected outcomes
- Scoring keys

The exercises should be used during:

- Supervisor certification programs
- Executive calibration workshops
- Annual refresher training
- PMO implementation training
- Calibration board preparation sessions

6.2 Case Study 1: The High-Performing Team

Scenario

A division has ten employees.

All employees received strong performance evaluations.

The organization may assign only:

- Two Level 5 ratings

- Three Level 4 ratings
- Five Level 3 ratings

Supervisors have proposed:

- Eight Level 5 ratings
- Two Level 4 ratings

The calibration board must determine final ratings.

Employee Profiles

Employee A

Position:
Senior Program Analyst

Accomplishments:

- Led enterprise reporting initiative.
- Reduced processing time by 40%.
- Developed agencywide dashboard.
- Briefed Deputy Secretary.

Supervisor Rating:
Level 5

Employee B

Position:
Program Analyst

Accomplishments:

- Exceeded production goals by 25%.
- Trained three new employees.
- Received strong customer feedback.

Supervisor Rating:
Level 5

Employee C

Position:
Program Analyst

Accomplishments:

- Met all production goals.
- Delivered several process improvements.
- Served on special project team.

Supervisor Rating:
Level 5

Employees D–J

Each exceeded performance standards.

None led agencywide initiatives.

All received supervisor-proposed Level 5 ratings.

Calibration Discussion

Facilitator Questions

1. Which accomplishments had enterprise impact?
2. Which accomplishments affected mission outcomes?
3. Which accomplishments were unique?
4. Which employees demonstrated sustained exceptional performance?
5. Which accomplishments exceed expectations versus transform outcomes?

Example Calibration Dialogue

Manager 1:
“Employee B exceeded production goals and trained employees.”

Manager 2:
“Agreed. However, Employee A fundamentally changed how the organization operates through the reporting initiative.”

HR Advisor:
“Let’s focus on measurable mission impact rather than effort.”

Executive:
“If only two employees can be distinguished as Level 5, which accomplishments would leadership most likely identify as having the greatest organizational value?”

Expected Outcome

Level 5

- Employee A
- Employee B

Level 4

- Employees C, D, E

Level 3

- Remaining employees

Scoring Key

Participants receive full credit when:

- They identify mission impact.
- They distinguish exceptional outcomes from strong performance.
- They document rationale.
- They avoid rewarding effort alone.

6.3 Case Study 2: The Technical Expert Dilemma

Scenario

An engineering office contains:

- Engineers
- Scientists
- Project Managers

The agency is using a hybrid distribution model.

Calibration participants must compare unlike occupations.

Employee Profiles

Employee K

Position:
Engineer

Accomplishments:

- Designed critical system improvement.
- Reduced operational failures by 50%.

Supervisor Rating:
Level 5

Employee L

Position:
Scientist

Accomplishments:

- Published groundbreaking research.
- Improved agency credibility.

Supervisor Rating:
Level 5

Employee M

Position:
Project Manager

Accomplishments:

- Delivered major project on schedule.
- Maintained budget compliance.

Supervisor Rating:
Level 5

Calibration Challenge

How should unlike work be compared?

Facilitator Guidance

Do not compare occupations directly.

Instead compare:

- Mission impact
- Organizational value
- Scope of contribution
- Complexity
- Sustainability

Expected Discussion

Weak Response:
“The engineer saved more money.”

Strong Response:
“The engineer reduced operational failures by 50 percent while the scientist created long-term strategic value. We must evaluate organizational impact, not occupational title.”

Expected Outcome

Participants document distinctions based on impact rather than profession.

6.4 Case Study 3: The High-Performing Office

Scenario

Every employee in the office performs above expectations.

The office has historically awarded:

- 90% Level 5 ratings

A new distribution requires:

- 10% Level 5
- 20% Level 4
- 70% Level 3

Challenge

How do leaders distinguish among employees who are all successful?

Facilitator Notes

This exercise is designed to teach:

- Differentiation
- Calibration discipline
- Distribution implementation

Discussion Questions

1. Is everyone truly Outstanding?
2. What distinguishes superior impact?
3. Can Level 3 still represent success?

Expected Learning Point

Fully Successful is not a negative rating.

Participants should learn:

Outstanding should be reserved for exceptional contributions.

6.5 Case Study 4: Mission Impact vs. Workload

Employee Profiles

Employee N

Worked 60-hour weeks.

Completed assigned tasks.

Received praise from coworkers.

Supervisor Rating:
Level 5

Employee O

Worked normal hours.

Developed automation process.

Eliminated 500 staff hours annually.

Supervisor Rating:
Level 4

Calibration Challenge

Which employee had greater mission impact?

Facilitator Notes

Many participants initially reward effort.

The objective is to shift discussion toward outcomes.

Expected Outcome

Employee O receives higher consideration because mission impact exceeded Employee N’s workload contribution.

6.6 Case Study 5: Executive Review Board Exercise

Scenario

A component reports:

- 25% Level 5
- 35% Level 4
- 40% Level 3

The agency target is:

- 10% Level 5
- 20% Level 4

Executive Board Questions

1. Were standards applied consistently?
2. Are distinctions supported?
3. Is additional calibration required?
4. What evidence exists?

Expected Outcome

Board requires recalibration.

Component must provide additional documentation.

6.7 Certification Exercise

Participants receive:

- Employee summaries
- Performance narratives
- Rating recommendations

Participants must:

1. Assign preliminary ratings.
2. Conduct calibration.
3. Document rationale.
4. Present recommendations.

6.8 Certification Standards

Successful participants demonstrate:

- Merit-based evaluation
- Evidence-based decisions
- Documentation discipline
- Understanding of mission impact
- Ability to defend distinctions

6.9 Facilitator Evaluation Rubric

Competency	Weight
Evidence Analysis	25%
Mission Impact Assessment	25%
Calibration Participation	20%
Documentation Quality	15%
Merit Principles Application	15%

Passing Score:
80%

Recommended Certification Validity:
Three years

6.10 Chapter Summary

The purpose of calibration training is not to teach participants how to reduce ratings.

The purpose is to teach participants how to distinguish performance levels objectively, consistently, and defensibly.

The strongest calibration participants focus on:

- Evidence
- Outcomes
- Mission impact
- Merit principles
- Documentation

The next chapter will transition from training scenarios to operational procedures and establish the Supervisor Operating Guide, including rating preparation procedures, documentation requirements, communication expectations, and annual rating workflows.

Chapter 7: Supervisor Operating Guide

7.1 Purpose

This chapter provides supervisors with day-to-day operational guidance for managing employee performance in a standardized distribution environment.

The purpose of this guide is to help supervisors:

- Establish clear performance expectations
- Monitor and document performance
- Conduct effective performance discussions
- Evaluate self-assessments
- Develop defensible ratings
- Participate effectively in calibration sessions
- Communicate ratings to employees
- Maintain compliance with agency policy and merit system principles

This chapter should be used throughout the appraisal cycle, not solely at the end of the rating period.

7.2 Supervisor Responsibilities

Supervisors are responsible for:

Performance Planning

- Establishing performance expectations
- Communicating critical elements
- Explaining performance standards
- Ensuring employee understanding

Performance Monitoring

- Providing feedback
- Conducting progress reviews
- Identifying performance issues
- Recognizing accomplishments

Performance Evaluation

- Reviewing evidence
- Evaluating accomplishments
- Preparing narratives

- Assigning preliminary ratings

Calibration Participation

- Presenting employee accomplishments
- Supporting proposed ratings
- Participating in discussions
- Accepting calibrated outcomes

Performance Communication

- Delivering ratings
- Explaining decisions
- Supporting employee development

7.3 Annual Performance Cycle

The following model assumes a one-year appraisal cycle.

Phase 1: Performance Planning

Timing

Beginning of appraisal cycle

Supervisor Actions

- Review performance plan
- Establish objectives
- Explain critical elements
- Discuss organizational priorities
- Explain performance standards
- Discuss expected outcomes
- Confirm employee understanding

Performance Planning Meeting Script

Suggested Opening:
"Today's discussion is focused on performance expectations for the coming year. We will review your performance plan, discuss priorities, and establish a shared understanding of what successful performance looks like."

Suggested Questions:

- What questions do you have about your performance plan?
- What resources do you need to succeed?

- Are expectations clear?

Phase 2: Ongoing Performance Monitoring

Timing

Throughout appraisal cycle

Recommended Frequency

Monthly or quarterly check-ins

Supervisor Responsibilities

Discuss:

- Accomplishments
- Challenges
- Priorities
- Development opportunities
- Emerging performance concerns

Monthly Check-In Script

Suggested Opening:
“What accomplishments are you most proud of since our last discussion?”

Suggested Follow-Up Questions:

- What obstacles have you encountered?
- What support do you need?
- Are priorities changing?
- Are there opportunities for greater contribution?

Phase 3: Midyear Review

Timing

Approximately six months into appraisal cycle

Objectives

- Assess progress
- Identify risks
- Provide developmental feedback
- Adjust expectations if necessary

Midyear Review Documentation

Document:

- Major accomplishments
- Areas of strength
- Areas needing improvement
- Updated priorities
- Development plans

Midyear Discussion Script

Suggested Opening:
"The purpose of today's discussion is to review your performance to date and identify opportunities for success during the remainder of the appraisal period."

Discussion Areas:

- Progress toward goals
- Quality of work
- Organizational impact
- Development opportunities

Phase 4: End-of-Year Assessment

Timing

End of appraisal cycle

Supervisor Responsibilities

Review:

- Performance plan
- Accomplishments
- Metrics
- Feedback
- Self-assessment
- Mission outcomes

Prepare:

- Performance narrative
- Preliminary rating
- Supporting documentation

7.4 Required Documentation

Supervisors should maintain documentation throughout the appraisal cycle.

Documentation should include:

Performance Notes

Examples:

- Significant accomplishments
- Project outcomes
- Customer feedback
- Awards received
- Development activities

Performance Discussions

Document:

- Date
- Topics discussed
- Action items
- Follow-up commitments

Performance Concerns

Document:

- Issue identified
- Employee notification
- Assistance provided
- Follow-up actions

7.5 Evaluating Employee Self-Assessments

Self-assessments should be considered but should not determine ratings.

What Supervisors Should Evaluate

Accuracy

Are accomplishments factual?

Relevance

Are accomplishments tied to performance objectives?

Results

Were outcomes achieved?

Impact

What organizational value was created?

Sustainability

Was performance sustained?

Self-Assessment Evaluation Checklist

- Accomplishments verified
- Outcomes identified
- Evidence available
- Mission impact described
- Contributions aligned with objectives

7.6 Rating Justification Standards

All ratings should be supported by documented evidence.

Level 3 (Fully Successful)

Documentation should demonstrate:

- Performance standards met
- Objectives achieved
- Work completed successfully
- Expected contributions delivered

Example Narrative

"The employee successfully achieved all critical performance objectives during the appraisal period. Work products met quality standards and supported organizational goals."

Level 4 (Exceeds Fully Successful)

Documentation should demonstrate:

- Performance exceeded expectations
- Significant contributions occurred
- Additional value was delivered

Example Narrative

"The employee consistently exceeded performance expectations through process improvements, mentoring, and delivery of high-quality work products that enhanced organizational effectiveness."

Level 5 (Outstanding)

Documentation should demonstrate:

- Exceptional performance
- Significant mission impact
- Sustained superior contributions

Example Narrative

"The employee delivered exceptional results that substantially improved organizational performance. Contributions had significant mission impact and exceeded expectations throughout the appraisal period."

7.7 Rating Development Process

Step 1

Review evidence.

Step 2

Review accomplishments.

Step 3

Review mission impact.

Step 4

Prepare narrative.

Step 5

Assign preliminary rating.

Step 6

Prepare calibration package.

7.8 Preparing for Calibration

Supervisors should prepare:

Employee Summary

Include:

- Position
- Accomplishments
- Mission impact
- Proposed rating

Supporting Evidence

Include:

- Metrics
- Performance examples
- Feedback
- Project outcomes

Calibration Preparation Checklist

- Narrative completed
- Evidence organized
- Rating justified
- Accomplishments summarized
- Questions anticipated

7.9 Participating in Calibration Sessions

During calibration:

Present Evidence

Focus on:

- Outcomes
- Impact
- Contributions

Avoid

- Personal opinions
- Unsupported claims
- Popularity arguments
- Effort without results

Effective Statement

“The employee reduced processing time by 40 percent, improved customer satisfaction, and led implementation of an agencywide reporting process.”

Ineffective Statement

“The employee works harder than everyone else.”

7.10 Communicating Final Ratings

Preparation

Review:

- Final rating
- Narrative
- Calibration outcomes

Suggested Opening

“I want to discuss your performance during this appraisal period, review accomplishments, explain your rating, and discuss future development opportunities.”

If Employee Receives Level 3

Suggested Message:
“This rating reflects successful performance and achievement of performance expectations and [Name] was a valuable contributor to the organization’s mission.”

If Employee Receives Level 4

Suggested Message:
“This rating reflects performance that exceeded expectations and contributed significantly to organizational success.”

If Employee Receives Level 5

Suggested Message:
“This rating reflects exceptional performance and sustained contributions that had significant mission impact.”

7.11 Difficult Rating Conversations

Employee Disagrees with Rating

Recommended Response:
"I understand your perspective. Let me explain the evidence and rationale used to support the rating decision."

Employee References Another Employee

Recommended Response:
"I cannot discuss another employee's performance. I can explain how your performance was evaluated."

Employee Becomes Emotional

Recommended Response:
"I understand this conversation may be difficult. Let's focus on the performance evidence and discuss any questions you have."

7.12 Common Supervisor Errors

Error 1

Waiting until year-end to discuss performance.

Error 2

Failing to document accomplishments.

Error 3

Relying solely on self-assessments.

Error 4

Using effort as the primary rating factor.

Error 5

Preparing weak narratives.

Error 6

Entering calibration without evidence.

7.13 Supervisor Quick Reference Checklist

Performance Planning

- Expectations established
- Objectives reviewed

Performance Monitoring

- Feedback provided
- Discussions documented

Midyear Review

- Progress reviewed
- Documentation completed

End-of-Year Assessment

- Evidence reviewed
- Narrative completed
- Rating justified

Calibration

- Package prepared
- Evidence available

Final Rating

- Communicated
- Development discussed

7.14 Chapter Summary

Supervisors are the foundation of an effective performance management system.

Successful supervisors:

- Establish clear expectations
- Provide regular feedback
- Document performance consistently
- Evaluate evidence objectively
- Participate effectively in calibration
- Communicate ratings professionally

The next chapter transitions from supervisor responsibilities to agencywide implementation by establishing the PMO Operating Guide, which provides operational procedures, governance responsibilities, analytics requirements, certification preparation activities, and oversight responsibilities for Performance Management Officers.

Chapter 8: Employee Relations, Labor Relations, And Change Management Considerations

8.1 Purpose

This chapter provides agencies with guidance on employee relations, labor relations, and change management considerations associated with implementing standardized rating distributions and Operating Distribution Plans (ODPs).

The implementation of standardized rating distributions may represent a significant change for employees, supervisors, labor organizations, and agency leadership. Agencies should proactively address employee concerns, fulfill labor-management obligations, and develop communication strategies that support transparency, trust, and successful implementation.

This chapter is intended to help agencies:

- Identify potential employee and labor relations risks.
- Understand bargaining obligations.
- Develop communication and engagement strategies.
- Address concerns raised by employees and labor organizations.
- Implement changes in a manner consistent with applicable law, regulation, and collective bargaining agreements.
- Reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings, grievances, and disputes.

Note: While this chapter provides generic considerations and recommendations, agencies should refer to any official OPM memoranda on employee relations or labor relations when developing or amending official agency policy.

8.2 Core Principle

Standardized rating distributions do not replace performance management.

Employees continue to be evaluated against established performance standards and critical elements.

Implementation of an Operating Distribution Plan does not eliminate supervisory responsibility for evaluating employee performance, documenting accomplishments, conducting performance discussions, or providing meaningful feedback.

Agencies should consistently reinforce the following message:

Employees are evaluated based on their actual performance. Standardized distribution requirements govern aggregate rating outcomes and organizational accountability; they do not eliminate the requirement to assess individual performance fairly and objectively.

8.3 Common Employee Concerns

Agencies should anticipate employee questions and concerns regarding standardized distributions.

Common concerns include:

- “Will my performance matter?”
- “Is this a quota system?”
- “Will top ratings become unattainable?”
- “Will supervisors be forced to lower ratings?”
- “Will awards be reduced?”
- “Will my organization be compared unfairly to others?”
- “How will specialized occupations be treated?”
- “Will performance expectations change?”
- “Will prior ratings affect future ratings?”

Agencies should prepare consistent responses and frequently asked questions before implementation.

8.4 Recommended Employee Messaging

The following principles should guide employee communications.

Message 1: Performance Comes First

Employees are evaluated against established performance standards before any distribution review occurs.

Message 2: Ratings Are Not Predetermined

Supervisors continue to assess actual employee performance.

No employee receives a predetermined rating before performance is evaluated.

Message 3: Distribution Requirements Apply at the Aggregate Level

The agency’s objective is to achieve approved agency-wide rating distributions, not to impose identical outcomes within every office or work unit.

Message 4: Calibration Supports Consistency

Calibration is intended to improve consistency and fairness across organizations and reduce unintended rating inflation or inconsistencies.

Message 5: Employee Rights Remain Unchanged

Employees retain all rights provided under applicable law, regulation, agency policy, and collective bargaining agreements.

8.5 Common Labor Organization Concerns

Labor organizations may raise concerns regarding:

- Fairness of rating distributions.
- Potential quotas or caps.
- Changes to performance management procedures.
- Effects on awards and recognition programs.
- Effects on promotion opportunities.
- Changes in performance expectations.
- Transparency of calibration processes.
- Employee due process rights.
- Potential disparate impacts on bargaining-unit employees.
- Impact on existing collective bargaining agreements.

Agencies should engage labor organizations early and provide clear explanations regarding implementation requirements and expected impacts.

8.6 Labor Relations Planning

Agencies should involve labor relations professionals at the earliest stages of implementation.

Labor relations offices should:

- Review existing collective bargaining agreements.
- Identify provisions related to performance management.
- Assess bargaining obligations.
- Develop implementation timelines.
- Coordinate communication strategies.
- Support management officials during negotiations.

Early planning may significantly reduce implementation delays and disputes.

8.7 Review of Collective Bargaining Agreements

Before implementing standardized distributions, agencies should conduct a comprehensive review of applicable collective bargaining agreements.

Particular attention should be given to provisions addressing:

- Performance appraisal systems.
- Rating procedures.
- Rating levels and patterns.
- Awards programs.
- Calibration processes.
- Performance discussions.
- Employee participation rights.
- Grievance procedures.
- Mid-year and annual reviews.

Agencies should identify provisions that may conflict with implementation requirements.

8.8 Existing Contract Provisions That May Conflict with Standardized Distribution

Examples may include provisions that:

- Require ratings to be based solely on individual performance without calibration.
- Prohibit ranking or comparative assessment.
- Require unrestricted assignment of summary ratings.
- Establish specific rating patterns.
- Prescribe award eligibility criteria linked to ratings.
- Limit management review of ratings.
- Restrict calibration activities.

Agencies should consult legal counsel and labor relations specialists regarding the effect of such provisions on implementation.

8.9 Bargaining Obligations

Agencies should determine whether implementation triggers bargaining obligations under applicable labor-management relations statutes.

Potential bargaining topics may include:

- Procedures used to implement changes.
- Appropriate arrangements for affected employees.
- Changes to performance appraisal processes.
- Award program modifications.
- Communication and training plans.
- Calibration procedures.

The existence and scope of bargaining obligations may vary depending on agency circumstances and applicable legal authorities.

8.10 Agencies with Existing Agreements That Do Not Permit Standardized Distribution

Some agencies may have collective bargaining agreements that contain provisions inconsistent with standardized distribution requirements.

In these situations, agencies should:

Step 1 - Identify conflicting provisions.

Step 2 - Consult agency labor relations staff and legal counsel.

Step 3 - Determine whether bargaining is required.

Step 4 - Provide required notice to labor organizations.

Step 5 - Negotiate as appropriate.

Step 6 - Develop implementation plans that account for negotiation timelines.

Agencies should avoid assuming that implementation can occur immediately where bargaining obligations exist.

8.11 Separate Appraisal Programs for Bargaining-Unit and Non-Bargaining-Unit Employees

Agencies may need to consider whether separate appraisal programs are appropriate during transition periods.

Factors to consider include:

- Existing contract requirements.
- Implementation timing.
- Negotiation status.
- Operational feasibility.
- Administrative burden.

Agencies should carefully evaluate the costs and benefits of maintaining separate programs.

Separate systems should generally be viewed as transitional solutions rather than permanent approaches unless otherwise required.

8.12 Recommended Union Messaging

When communicating with labor organizations, agencies should emphasize:

- Employees will continue to be evaluated based on actual performance.
- Performance standards remain important.
- Calibration promotes consistency and fairness.
- Employee rights remain protected.
- The agency intends to meet all bargaining obligations.
- The agency seeks collaborative implementation where possible.

Recommended message:

“The agency remains committed to evaluating employees based on documented performance standards and individual accomplishments. Standardized distribution requirements are intended to improve consistency and accountability at the organizational level and are not intended to diminish employee rights, reduce due process protections, or predetermine individual outcomes.”

8.13 Communication Strategy

Agencies should develop a communication strategy that includes:

Leadership Communications

- Executive messages
- Town halls
- Video messages

Supervisor Communications

- Supervisor guides
- Frequently asked questions
- Training sessions

Employee Communications

- Fact sheets
- FAQs
- Intranet resources
- Office hours

Labor Relations Communications

- Formal notices
- Briefings
- Consultation meetings
- Negotiation support materials

8.14 Change Management Considerations

Agencies should recognize that implementation may represent a significant cultural change.

Change management efforts should focus on:

- Building understanding.
- Explaining the purpose of the change.
- Addressing misconceptions.
- Training supervisors.
- Supporting managers during implementation.
- Monitoring employee sentiment.

Successful implementation requires ongoing communication rather than one-time announcements.

8.15 Risk Mitigation Strategies

Agencies should monitor:

- Grievance activity.
- Unfair labor practice allegations.
- Employee survey results.
- Reconsideration requests.
- Appeals and complaints.
- Organizational distribution outcomes.
- Awards impacts.
- Employee retention indicators.

Early identification of concerns may allow agencies to address issues before they become significant employee relations challenges.

8.16 Common Implementation Pitfalls

Pitfall 1: Treating Distribution as a Quota System

Employees may perceive standardized distributions as predetermined outcomes if communications are not clear.

Pitfall 2: Delaying Labor Relations Engagement

Failure to engage labor relations offices early may delay implementation.

Pitfall 3: Ignoring Existing Contract Language

Collective bargaining agreements should be reviewed before implementation decisions are finalized.

Pitfall 4: Overreliance on Technical Explanations

Employees often respond better to practical examples and plain-language explanations.

Pitfall 5: Inadequate Supervisor Preparation

Supervisors should be equipped to answer employee questions and explain rating decisions effectively.

8.17 Chapter Summary

Implementation of standardized rating distributions requires careful attention to employee relations, labor relations, and change management considerations. Agencies should proactively engage employees, supervisors, labor organizations, legal counsel, and labor relations professionals to support successful implementation.

Employees should continue to be evaluated based on actual performance, and agencies should communicate clearly that standardized distributions govern aggregate organizational outcomes rather than predetermined individual ratings. Agencies should review collective bargaining agreements, satisfy bargaining obligations, and develop implementation strategies that support transparency, fairness, and workforce trust.

Chapter 9: Performance Management Officer (PMO) Operating Guide

9.1 Purpose

This chapter establishes the operational responsibilities, procedures, controls, and oversight activities required of the agency Performance Management Officer (PMO). This chapter serves as a template for an agency to build the PMO role and define its responsibilities. Any actions that are required by an agency PMO for governmentwide compliance will be communicated via official OPM correspondence.

The PMO serves as the agency's principal advisor and operational lead for performance management implementation, governance, compliance, analytics, calibration oversight, certification readiness, and continuous improvement.

The PMO is responsible for ensuring that:

- Performance management policies are implemented consistently.
- Rating distributions comply with agency policy and OPM guidance.
- Calibration processes operate effectively.
- Merit system principles are protected.
- Certification requirements are met.
- Executive leadership receives timely information regarding system performance.

This chapter should be used by:

- Performance Management Officers
- CHCO staff
- Human Capital Directors
- Human Resource Specialists

9.2 PMO Mission Statement

The PMO exists to ensure that the agency's performance management system:

- Supports mission accomplishment.
- Produces meaningful performance distinctions.
- Promotes accountability.
- Complies with law and regulation.
- Maintains employee confidence.
- Supports agency certification requirements.

9.3 PMO Functional Responsibilities

The PMO operates across six major functional areas.

Functional Area 1: Policy and Governance

Responsibilities:

- Develop performance management policies.
- Maintain implementation guidance.
- Manage governance structures.
- Coordinate executive decision-making.
- Review policy compliance.

Deliverables:

- Agency performance management policy
- Governance charter
- Executive guidance memoranda
- Annual implementation plan

Functional Area 2: Calibration Oversight

Responsibilities:

- Design calibration processes.
- Train calibration participants.
- Monitor calibration outcomes.
- Identify rating anomalies.
- Ensure documentation quality.

Deliverables:

- Calibration procedures
- Calibration schedules
- Calibration reports
- Executive summaries

Functional Area 3: Analytics and Reporting

Responsibilities:

- Monitor rating distributions.
- Analyze workforce trends.
- Assess implementation outcomes.
- Produce executive dashboards.

Deliverables:

- Distribution reports
- Executive dashboards
- Workforce analytics reports
- Certification metrics

Functional Area 4: Certification Readiness

Responsibilities:

- Coordinate certification preparation.
- Assemble evidence packages.
- Monitor compliance indicators.
- Track corrective actions.

Deliverables:

- Certification readiness assessment
- Evidence repository
- Corrective action tracker
- Certification scorecard

Functional Area 5: Training and Communications

Responsibilities:

- Develop training programs.
- Support supervisor certification.
- Coordinate employee communications.
- Manage stakeholder engagement.

Deliverables:

- Training curriculum
- Communication plans
- FAQ documents
- Town hall materials

Functional Area 6: Continuous Improvement

Responsibilities:

- Conduct annual reviews.
- Analyze lessons learned.
- Recommend improvements.
- Monitor implementation risks.

Deliverables:

- Annual assessment report
- Lessons learned report
- Improvement plan
- Risk register updates

9.4 Annual PMO Operating Calendar

The PMO should operate on a structured annual cycle.

Quarter 1

Activities:

- Review prior-year results.
- Conduct lessons learned assessment.
- Update implementation guidance.
- Update training materials.

Deliverables:

- Annual implementation plan
- Governance review report
- Risk assessment

Quarter 2

Activities:

- Conduct supervisor training.
- Conduct calibration training.
- Review policy compliance.
- Monitor performance planning completion.

Deliverables:

- Training completion report
- Policy compliance assessment

Quarter 3

Activities:

- Conduct midyear analytics review.
- Assess emerging risks.
- Review workforce metrics.

Deliverables:

- Midyear performance management dashboard
- Risk briefing

Quarter 4

Activities:

- Support rating cycle.
- Monitor calibration.
- Conduct certification readiness review.

Deliverables:

- Rating distribution report
- Calibration assessment
- Certification package

9.5 PMO Governance Procedures

The PMO serves as the operational coordinator for governance bodies.

Executive Governance Board Support

Responsibilities:

- Develop agendas
- Prepare decision materials
- Present analytics
- Track decisions
- Monitor implementation

9.6 PMO Decision Escalation Process

Issues requiring escalation include:

Rating Distribution Concerns

Examples:

- Significant deviations from distribution targets
- Unusual concentration of ratings

Calibration Concerns

Examples:

- Inconsistent calibration outcomes
- Poor documentation quality

Employee Relations Concerns

Examples:

- Significant employee dissatisfaction
- Labor-management disputes

Legal Concerns

Examples:

- EEO trends
- PPP allegations
- Merit principle concerns

Escalation Path

Supervisor → Component HR → PMO → Performance Management Council → Executive Governance Board

9.7 PMO Analytics Framework

The PMO should establish enterprise performance management metrics.

Distribution Metrics

Monitor:

- Level 5 ratings
- Level 4 ratings
- Level 3 ratings
- Component distributions
- Occupational distributions

Workforce Metrics

Monitor:

- Retention
- Attrition
- Promotions
- Awards

Employee Experience Metrics

Monitor:

- Employee feedback
- Complaint trends

Certification Metrics

Monitor:

- Documentation quality
- Calibration completion
- Training completion
- Governance compliance

9.8 Executive Dashboard Requirements

The PMO should provide quarterly executive dashboards.

Dashboard Section 1

Rating Distribution

Measures:

- Current year distribution
- Historical comparison
- Component comparison

Dashboard Section 2

Workforce Impact

Measures:

- Attrition
- Promotions
- Awards

Dashboard Section 3

Risk Indicators

Measures:

- Complaints
- EEO activity
- Labor relations concerns

Dashboard Section 4

Certification Readiness

Measures:

- Evidence completion
- Training completion
- Governance compliance

9.9 PMO Certification Readiness Process

Certification readiness should be reviewed continuously.

Step 1

Establish evidence repository.

Step 2

Collect governance records.

Step 3

Collect calibration documentation.

Step 4

Collect workforce analytics.

Step 5

Validate evidence.

Step 6

Prepare certification package.

9.10 Certification Evidence Requirements

The PMO should maintain:

Governance Documents

- Charters
- Meeting minutes
- Decision memoranda

Calibration Records

- Agendas
- Attendance records
- Reports

Analytics

- Distribution reports
- Dashboard reports
- Trend analyses

Training Records

- Completion reports
- Certification records

9.11 PMO Risk Management Framework

The PMO is responsible for maintaining a performance management risk register.

High Risks

Examples:

- Certification failure
- Significant EEO concerns
- Major labor disputes

Medium Risks

Examples:

- Calibration inconsistencies
- Documentation deficiencies

Low Risks

Examples:

- Administrative delays
- Reporting issues

9.12 Corrective Action Process

When deficiencies are identified:

Step 1

Identify root cause.

Step 2

Develop corrective action.

Step 3

Assign ownership.

Step 4

Track progress.

Step 5

Validate effectiveness.

9.13 PMO Annual Self-Assessment

The PMO should conduct an annual assessment covering:

Governance

Were governance structures effective?

Calibration

Were calibration outcomes consistent?

Analytics

Were metrics useful?

Training

Was training effective?

Certification

Is the agency certification-ready?

9.14 PMO Operating Checklists

Monthly Checklist

- Review dashboards
- Review risk register

- Track action items
- Monitor implementation

Quarterly Checklist

- Brief executives
- Review analytics
- Update risk assessment
- Review governance actions

Annual Checklist

- Conduct lessons learned review
- Update guidance
- Conduct readiness assessment
- Prepare certification package

9.15 PMO Maturity Model

Level 1 – Initial

Minimal governance.

Reactive implementation.

Level 2 – Developing

Basic processes established.

Limited analytics.

Level 3 – Managed

Structured governance.

Regular analytics.

Consistent calibration.

Level 4 – Optimized

Enterprise integration.

Advanced analytics.

Continuous improvement.

Certification-ready environment.

9.16 PMO Success Indicators

Successful PMOs demonstrate:

- Consistent calibration outcomes
- Effective governance
- Strong documentation
- Executive confidence
- Certification readiness
- Positive workforce outcomes
- Continuous improvement

9.17 Chapter Summary

The PMO serves as the operational backbone of the agency's performance management system.

While supervisors manage employee performance and executives establish strategic direction, the PMO ensures the system functions effectively, consistently, and in compliance with applicable requirements.

The PMO's success is measured not by the number of reports produced, but by the agency's ability to:

- Differentiate performance accurately.
- Maintain employee confidence.
- Protect merit principles.
- Support mission accomplishment.
- Demonstrate certification readiness.

The next chapter transitions from PMO operations to the agency's broader communications and change management strategy and provides a complete implementation communications toolkit for executives, supervisors, employees, and labor organizations.

Chapter 10: Communications And Change Management Strategy

10.1 Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to provide agencies with comprehensive communications and change management framework to support implementation of standardized distribution of performance ratings.

This chapter establishes:

- Communication objectives
- Stakeholder engagement strategies
- Executive communication guidance
- Employee communication tools
- Labor engagement plans
- Frequently asked questions
- Town hall materials
- Resistance management approaches
- Communication timelines

The agency should approach implementation as a significant organizational change effort rather than solely a policy initiative.

10.2 Communications Objectives

The agency's communications strategy should seek to accomplish five objectives.

Objective 1

Build understanding.

Employees should understand:

- What is changing
- Why changes are occurring
- How decisions will be made

Objective 2

Reduce uncertainty.

Employees should understand:

- What remains unchanged

- What protections remain in place
- What expectations apply moving forward

Objective 3

Promote confidence.

Employees should understand:

- Ratings remain performance-based
- Merit system principles remain in effect
- Decisions will be documented and reviewed

Objective 4

Support supervisors.

Supervisors should understand:

- Their responsibilities
- Available resources
- How to explain changes

Objective 5

Prepare stakeholders.

Executives, labor organizations, HR staff, and employees should receive information before implementation milestones occur.

10.3 Stakeholder Analysis

The PMO should identify key stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder Group 1 - Agency Executives

Primary Concern:

Agency performance and implementation risk.

Key Message:

The new system strengthens accountability and improves differentiation.

Stakeholder Group 2 - Supervisors

Primary Concern:

How ratings will be assigned and defended.

Key Message:

Performance remains the foundation of all rating decisions.

Stakeholder Group 3 - Employees

Primary Concern:

How ratings and awards may change.

Key Message:

Successful performance remains valued and recognized.

Stakeholder Group 4 - Labor Organizations

Primary Concern:

Fairness, consistency, and employee treatment.

Key Message:

Implementation will be transparent, documented, and consistent with applicable law and agreements.

Stakeholder Group 5 - HR Professionals

Primary Concern:

Operational implementation.

Key Message:

HR plays a critical role in training, governance, and oversight.

10.4 Change Management Strategy

The agency should manage implementation using four phases.

Phase 1: Awareness

Goal:

Inform stakeholders.

Key Activities:

- Leadership announcements
- Initial FAQs
- Executive messages

Phase 2: Understanding

Goal:

Build knowledge.

Key Activities:

- Training sessions
- Supervisor workshops
- Employee briefings

Phase 3: Adoption

Goal:

Support implementation.

Key Activities:

- Calibration support
- Guidance materials
- Office hours

Phase 4: Reinforcement

Goal:

Sustain implementation.

Key Activities:

- Success stories
- Lessons learned
- Ongoing communication

10.5 Executive Talking Points

Agency leaders should communicate consistent messages.

Talking Point 1 - Performance matters.

Suggested Language:

“Our goal is to ensure that performance ratings accurately reflect employee contributions and organizational impact.”

Talking Point 2 - The system remains merit-based.

Suggested Language:

"Ratings will continue to be based on performance, evidence, and mission contribution."

Talking Point 3 - Fully Successful remains successful.

Suggested Language:

"A Fully Successful rating reflects successful achievement of performance expectations."

Talking Point 4 - Outstanding performance remains recognized.

Suggested Language:

"The new process is intended to better distinguish exceptional performance and recognize significant contributions."

Talking Point 5 - Employees remain protected.

Suggested Language:

"Merit system principles, EEO protections, and applicable employee rights remain in place."

10.6 Supervisor Communication Guidance

Supervisors are the most trusted source of information during organizational change.

Supervisors should:

- Communicate early
- Communicate often
- Focus on facts
- Avoid speculation
- Reinforce agency messages

Recommended Response

Employee:

"Does this mean I can't receive an Outstanding rating anymore?"

Supervisor:

"No. Outstanding ratings remain available. The agency is implementing a process to ensure ratings are applied consistently and reflect demonstrated performance."

10.7 Town Hall Facilitation Guide

Recommended Format

Length:

60-100 minutes

Participants:

Employees, supervisors, executives, HR

Agenda

1. Executive Opening
2. Overview of Changes
3. Implementation Timeline
4. Employee Impact
5. Question and Answer Session
6. Closing Remarks

Sample Opening Script

“Thank you for attending today’s session. We are implementing changes to our performance management process to strengthen accountability, improve consistency, and better recognize employee contributions. Today’s discussion is intended to explain the changes, answer questions, and outline next steps.”

10.8 Labor Engagement Strategy

The PMO should coordinate closely with labor relations officials.

Objectives

- Promote transparency
- Reduce misunderstandings
- Identify concerns early
- Support implementation

Recommended Activities

Before Implementation

- Brief labor officials
- Share implementation timelines
- Discuss training plans

During Implementation

- Provide status updates
- Address concerns promptly
- Maintain communication channels

After Implementation

- Review lessons learned

- Assess impacts
- Discuss improvements

10.9 Managing Employee Concerns

Concerns about change and individual impact should be expected.

The goal is not to eliminate concerns but to manage them effectively.

Common Employee Concern Theme 1

Fear of lower ratings.

Response:

Explain that Fully Successful remains successful performance.

Common Employee Concern Theme 2

Fear of reduced awards.

Response:

Explain how awards programs will continue to recognize contributions.

Common Employee Concern Theme 3

Misconceptions about fairness.

Response:

Describe calibration, governance, and oversight mechanisms.

Common Employee Concern Theme 4

Distrust of organizational motives.

Response:

Provide transparent information and data.

10.10 Resistance Escalation Matrix

Issue	Responsible Party
Employee Questions	Supervisor
Policy Questions	HR
Implementation Concerns	PMO
Labor Issues	Labor Relations

Issue	Responsible Party
Legal Concerns	General Counsel

10.11 Communications Metrics

The PMO should monitor:

Awareness

- Communication reach
- Attendance rates

Understanding

- Training completion
- Knowledge assessments

Engagement

- Questions submitted
- Town hall participation

Sentiment

- Survey responses
- Employee feedback

Adoption

- Calibration participation
- Compliance rates

10.12 Communication Deliverables

Materials should include:

- Executive briefing
- Employee FAQ
- Supervisor guide
- Town hall presentation
- Labor engagement plan
- Training materials
- Communication calendar
- Feedback mechanism

10.13 Chapter Summary

Successful implementation depends on effective communication and change management.

Employees should understand:

- Why changes are occurring
- How ratings will be determined
- What remains unchanged
- What support is available

The agency's communications strategy should focus on transparency, consistency, and trust while preparing leaders, supervisors, employees, and labor organizations for implementation.

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