

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

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

Instructions for completing each section of the OPM Form 1631 follow. Detailed guidance on requesting OPM review and approval is contained in "A Guide to Submitting Non-SES Performance Appraisal Systems for OPM Review and Approval," a copy of which can be requested by emailing [performance-management@opm.gov](mailto:performance-management@opm.gov).

## **PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM DESCRIPTION** (name of submitting agency)

Enter the name of the submitting agency (i.e., Executive department or independent establishment).

1. **SYSTEM COVERAGE** defines the employees covered by the system. Check the box that applies. If agency has excepted service employees specifically excluded by OPM or if "Other" is selected, provide a description of the covered employees and the applicable exclusions in an attachment cross-referencing this section of the OPM Form 1631.
2. **APPRAISAL PERIOD** establishes the length of performance cycles as 1 year, for which ratings of record will be prepared. Check this box to indicate that programs under the system will incorporate an automatic exception to accommodate a start-up or close-out cycle when initiating or discontinuing an appraisal program. This could also apply to an individual employee who transitions between programs (e.g., due to reassignment or transfer).
3. **SUMMARY LEVELS** establishes the patterns of summary levels that appraisal programs under the system may use. Additionally, this section establishes any system-wide restrictions or requirements for using particular patterns or methods programs may use for assigning a summary level on the basis of element appraisals (see 4 below). Check the appropriate box to indicate whether the system includes any such restrictions or requirements, and, as needed, attach a description. For maximum flexibility: check each box for patterns A through H and check "none" at **Other restrictions or requirements for using patterns and/or deriving summary levels**.
4. **ELEMENT APPRAISAL** describes system parameters within which appraisal programs will use critical and non-critical elements to establish employee performance plans and appraise performance. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether the system includes any restrictions or requirements about numbers of appraisal levels, how particular elements may or may not be used or appraised, etc., and, as needed, attach a description. Indicate on the form the minimum and maximum number of levels at which elements, both critical and non-critical, may be appraised. The lowest minimum number of appraisal levels is two. For maximum flexibility: check "none" for **Restrictions or requirements**; enter "two" for **Minimum number of appraisal levels**, and "none" for **Maximum number of appraisal levels**.

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

## **6. APPRAISAL PROGRAMS**

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

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

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

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

**7. STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS** Check this box to indicate that the system and the programs established under the system will comply with statutory requirements. Enter the name of the submitting agency.

**OBTAINING OPM APPROVAL** When an agency wishes to establish a new system, make changes to its current appraisal system impacting a regulatory requirement, or change one of the items on the OPM Form 1631, it must submit those changes to OPM for approval prior to their implementation. The agency should alert its designated OPM Agency Operations and Services POC and email the following to [performance-management@opm.gov](mailto:performance-management@opm.gov):

- 1) A copy of the letter requesting approval signed by the agency head or designee addressed to Veronica Hinton, Associate Director, Workforce Policy and Innovation;
- 2) The completed, signed OPM Form 1631 (Obtain a dated, original signature on OPM Form 1631 by the agency head or designee. This will confirm the performance appraisal system, its related programs, and the use of appraisal results will conform to applicable law and regulation, and will serve as the formal request for OPM approval); and
- 3) All appropriate attachments to the OPM Form 1631. When an agency wishes to replace pages for the attachments previously reviewed and approved, it should discuss such changes with OPM staff to determine what is needed and how to proceed.

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