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E:Alert – Management to Implement ePerformance Agency-Wide FY'08

As part of a Presidential Initiative, Management is fully implementing ePerformance in FY'08. Management began training in Headquarters in September, and is planning training in the field in October 2007. ePerformance includes both the automation of EPPES into HIHRTS, and the re-drafting of performance elements and standards to meet new guidelines known as SMART. ePerformance is currently being used in CPD, FHEO, the Office of Administration, and several smaller units.

Because of wide employee dissatisfaction with the current performance evaluation process, the Union has looked carefully at the possibility that ePerformance could be better. If fully implemented in accordance with the ePerformance guidebook and Management training, ePerformance can be a better process. But if not implemented properly, it is no better than the current process.

This e:Alert is intended to do three things: 1) help you identify if your managers are serious about implementing a new and better performance evaluation process; 2) provide the background on implementation of ePerformance and results from two surveys the Union conducted of employees already in ePerformance; and 3) introduce you to Supplement 91, the negotiated agreement for implementation agency-wide. (Supplement 81 and 91 are on the Council Contract Supplements page. [Click here to go to the Contract Supplements page.](#))

1) Did you get a new car, or is it the same old clunker with the hubcaps spiffed up?

ePerformance, done right, is a real change from what we currently do. In the first years, it takes a commitment of time and effort. During initial implementation in FHEO, et al, the Deputy Secretary issued a memorandum requiring managers to engage in this process and to include employees. Our surveys revealed that most managers did not meet this standard.

You will be able to tell if your managers are serious about implementing the system based upon the time and effort they put into it. We recommend collaborative meetings between groups of employees and their supervisors. At these meetings, you should be able to discuss departmental goals, and your supervisor's and your role in the accomplishment of these goals. Based upon these discussions, you can work together to determine your elements. You'll then work together to develop standards for the accomplishment of the elements. The standards should be SMART—Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound. These may be further changed in individual meetings with your supervisor to take into account individual circumstances, such as collateral duties or differences in work assignments.

When starting the ePerformance process, you should receive a copy of a new handbook entitled "[Performance Management: an Information Guidebook for HUD Employees \(September 2006\).](#)" This handbook states that you are to have control and ownership over your performance standards.

Be wary of whether management is actually handing you an owner's manual to a new high-performance system, or merely ripping out a few pages to clean the windshield and shine the hubcaps of the same old vehicle.

2) What employees in CPD, Admin, FHEO, and the other areas have told us about implementation of ePerformance.

Management implemented this system in CPD and the Office of Administration without Union input in 2005. The Union provided Management with survey data from affected employees showing problems with implementation. Before extending the program to an additional six components in 2006, Management agreed to negotiate Supplement 81 with the Union. During negotiations, the Union advocated for collaborative meetings and more employee input into the development of the SMART elements and standards. Management declined to accept the Union's proposals, but did agree to go back and redo the process for CPD and Admin employees, as well as roll out the process to the new areas.

In preparation for the extension of ePerformance to the whole agency, the Union surveyed employees involved in ePerformance to determine if Management's plan met their stated goals for the process. One survey was conducted after the EPPES development process, and the other after the Progress Review.

The surveys showed that Management failed to meet their goals for implementation. Although Management's handbooks state that ePerformance "only works if you – the employee – understand and actively participate in all stages of the process," our surveys revealed that more often than not, employees were not provided the training needed to understand, or allowed to participate actively. Rather than provide hands-on orientation and training to all employees as promised, only 81% of employees received any kind of training.

Further, the survey showed that employees were often not given the opportunity to actively participate, or their participation was very limited. 46% reported that they had no involvement in the creation of their EPPES, and 21% had minimal involvement. In other words, Management failed to meet their goal of providing active participation for employees 67% of the time.

We provided Management with a power point presentation of our survey findings. We asked if a 67% failure rate was "fully successful."

Management representatives from the Office of Administration agreed that initial implementation was less than fully successful. To their credit, they worked hard to reach a negotiated agreement that is much stronger and provides employees much more leverage to secure a better performance management system. To go to the ePerformance page on our website and view the powerpoint presentation and cover memos, [click here](#).

3) The new performance management system and Supplement 91.

The law requires that Management create and administer a performance evaluation system. The law further gives Management the right to determine elements and standards. Employees may not file a grievance regarding the elements and standards themselves, but they may grieve the application of the elements and standards. Nothing in the Supplement has changed these fundamental rights and restrictions.

Nonetheless, a lot has changed—from training to development to content to application of standards and elements. The Office of Administration came to the table ready to establish a new process not only for employees, but for managers and supervisors, too. Don't take this new system lightly. Your participation will be important to your success.

Training and Orientation: We believe that the Office of Administration is taking their obligations to provide you with training seriously. This includes providing opportunities for you to ask questions about ePerformance. See paragraph 2 of Supplement 91.

Development of SMART Elements and Standards: HQ and Hubs may provide draft standards, but you and your supervisor have the right to modify them. Prior to communicating new elements and standards, your supervisor must hold a performance planning meeting and provide you with information about “performance parameters,” such as department goals, travel funding, staffing plans and other things that will impact your performance plan. At two stages in the development process, supervisors must consider your input in the development of your performance plan. See paragraph 3 of Supplement 91.

Application of SMART Standards: To be applied, a SMART standard must meet the SMART standard methodology. The Supplement provides details on what it means for a standard to be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound. You may not be given higher goals than your supervisor or your non-bargaining unit peers. And you have the right to know which supervisors and managers are permitted to contribute to your rating. See paragraphs 5, 7 and 11 of Supplement 91.

Conduct of Progress Reviews and Final Reviews: Where possible, Progress Reviews must be conducted face-to-face—not left on work desks or dropped in inboxes. Further, there are only six acceptable reasons for the delay of performance ratings—“I haven’t gotten to it,” isn’t an acceptable reason. And the HIHRTS system will be modified to allow for employee comments within three days after receipt of the final review. See paragraphs 12, 13 and 15 of Supplement 91.

Notification to the Local Union: Management must notify your Local Union of all ePerformance training and performance plan meetings scheduled. If requested, Management must provide the Union with the information necessary for the Union to fully participate, such as travel and training budgets, staffing plans, departmental goals, etc. The Union may receive copies of the performance plans, including elements and standards. And the conduct of these matters in your office is subject to local bargaining. See paragraphs 2(h), 3(b)(3), 18, 19 and 23 of Supplement 91.

ePerformance can result in a better, more interactive, performance evaluation process. Our goal in Supplement 91 is to provide a framework for you to insist on a better process.

For more information on Supplement 91, talk with your Local Union representative. For more information on ePerformance, ask your Administrative Officer about the ePerformance training schedule and resources.

We want to thank the many people who made Supplement 91 possible. We relied on: volunteers who created, administered, and analyzed the surveys; employees in FHEO, CPD and the other cylinders who responded to the surveys; Union bargaining team members for Supplements 91 and 81 who researched performance management systems and pressed for quality changes; and management and staff in the Office of Administration who seek to be accountable for implementation of a new and better performance management system. We hope that the managers and supervisors implementing the new system hold themselves to the same standard of accountability.

In solidarity,

Carolyn Federoff,
President, AFGE Council 222