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PRECEPTS FOR PERFORMANCE STANDARDS BOARDS

A. PURPOSE

These Precepts prescribe the criteria to be used by the Performance Standards Boards (PSBs) for determining whether an employee is meeting the standards of his/her class.

B. GENERAL

The current Annual Evaluation Form shall be the sole source of information upon which the Performance Standards Board shall base its decision. The Performance Standards Board shall consider a Performance Board's reasons for the referral, but shall independently assess whether the employee is meeting the standards of his/her class. To determine whether the employee is meeting the standards of his/her class, the Performance Standards Board shall make two determinations. It shall find whether the employee met his/her work objectives and whether the employee is meeting the skills standards for his/her class. The Performance Standards Board shall use the Skills Matrix to determine whether the employee is meeting the skills standards.

C. EQUALITY OF CONSIDERATION

The Performance Standards Board shall evaluate all employees solely on merit with complete fairness and justice. In this respect, the Performance Standards Board shall not discriminate against any employee, directly or indirectly, for reasons of race, color, religion, sex, age, disabling condition, sexual orientation, origin or means of entry into the Agency. In addition, the Performance Standards Board should be sensitive to discrimination information or the appearance of discrimination in Annual Evaluation Forms and to report such findings to either the Chief, M/HR/LERPM or the IG/RM. If a Board member believes that another Board member is being unfair or biased in his or her review of an employee's Performance Evaluation File, the member shall bring the matter to either the Chief, M/HR/LERPM or the IG/RM for appropriate action.

The Performance Standards Board is to ignore inadmissible comments made in the Annual Evaluation Forms or Employee Statements. Such inadmissible comments are not to be discussed nor used as the basis for decision-making. Inadmissible comments include the following:

1. Reference to race, religion, sex, national origin, political affiliation, age, family or marital status, or sexual orientation;
2. Retirement, resignation or other separation plans;
3. Grievance, Equal Employment Opportunity complaint or other third party adjudicatory proceeding or decision;
4. Method of entry into the Agency (International Development Intern, New Entrant Professional, conversion from another personnel system);
5. Reference to private U.S. Citizens by name;
6. Participation or non-participation in union activities, either as a representative of the union or as a bargaining unit member;
7. Prior evaluations prepared by other Rating Officials;
8. Reluctance to work voluntary overtime;
9. Leave record, except absence without leave (AWOL);
10. Decisions concerning disciplinary action;
11. Reference to the use of the dissent channel, which results in an adverse evaluation of performance. However, expressions of dissenting views on policy which are outside the dissent channel and which raise substantive questions of judgment relative to the skills matrix may be discussed in an evaluation, with specific instances cited;
12. Negative or pejorative discussion of another employee's performance; and
13. Specific identification of physical disabilities or medical problems including addictions to alcohol or

drugs, and any rehabilitation efforts. General reference may be made to confirm knowledge of a medical condition to the extent that it affects job performance or ability to accept overseas assignments. Rated employees, however, may discuss their medical condition in specific terms if such condition affected performance.

D. Guidance for Performance Standards Board Review of Annual Evaluation Forms

Successful demonstration of the Foreign Service skill standards and the fulfillment of annual work objectives are the keys to retention and advancement. Failure to achieve work objectives and/or skill standards is evidence that an employee is failing to meet the standards of his/her class.

1. Achievement of Work Objectives

When reviewing an employee's Performance Evaluation File, the Performance Standards Board is to review only the employee's current Annual Evaluation Form. The Performance Standards Board must determine whether the employee met, exceeded or did not meet the work objectives. In performing this task, the Performance Standards Board shall determine whether the work objectives established in the Annual Evaluation Form were within the control of the employee and whether they were commensurate with the employee's personal grade. The Performance Standards Board shall not use as a basis for determining that an employee did not meet the standards of his/her class if an employee's failure to meet a work objective was based on work objectives which were beyond the employee's control or if the work objectives were not commensurate with the employee's personal grade.

2. Foreign Service Skills Matrix

After determining that an employee has met his or her work objectives, the Performance Standards Board shall review an employee's current Annual Evaluation Form and determine whether the employee met, exceeded or did not meet the skill standards of the class. In performing this task, the Performance Standards Board shall refer to the Skills Matrix. (Attachment A)

The Skills Matrix establishes the skill standards for all grade levels, including the Senior Foreign Service, by which all employees are expected to perform. All employees shall be evaluated on each of the six skill areas. The six skill areas are further defined in terms of key characteristics, into which the Agency's core values of customer focus, managing for results, teamwork, empowerment and accountability, and diversity, have been integrated.

The skill areas and sub-skills are as follows:

1. Quality of Work
 - a. Development Assistance Knowledge
 - b. Knowledge of USAID Values and Systems
 - c. Data Gathering, Analysis and Evaluation
 - d. Written Communication
 - e. Technical Skills
2. Leadership
 - a. Direction and Vision
 - b. Initiative, Creativity and Risk-taking
 - c. Motivating
 - d. Problem-solving and Decision-making
3. Resource Management
 - a. Strategy Development and Implementation
 - b. Results Achievement, Program Monitoring and Evaluation
 - c. Budgeting and Financial Management
4. Staff Development
 - a. Enhancement of Subordinate Growth
 - b. Diversity, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Knowledge and Implementation
 - c. Performance Management
5. Professionalism
 - a. Customer Service
 - b. Professional Conduct
6. Teamwork/Interpersonal Skills
 - a. Sensitivity and Respect for Diversity
 - b. Consensus Building
 - c. Adaptability and Flexibility
 - d. Collaboration and Empowerment
 - e. Oral Communication

After reviewing an employee's Annual Evaluation Form, the Performance Standards Board is to determine whether the employee is performing to the sub-skill standards established in the Skills Matrix, which are discussed in the evaluation.

E. Decision Rule

The decisions of the Board will be by majority vote. These decisions shall be communicated in writing, along with statements justifying such Board decisions, to the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Human Resources, DAA/M/HR.