



Extension Performance Appraisal Tool (EPAT) Instructions and Guidelines

August 2008

Introduction

North Carolina Cooperative Extension appraises performance because it provides a fair and consistent review of each employee's performance strengths and areas for development. Appraisal of work aligns individual performance with the mission and goals of NC Cooperative Extension. At its highest level, performance appraisal is the organization's systematic process to assure that its people and work are accountable to its publics. The performance appraisal system assures that meaningful and open communication between employees and supervisors is held to provide the employee with specific performance feedback on his or her competencies and skill areas that are expected in the position. The process is intended to focus on what is done well and what work needs to improve. It is also intended that the process be beneficial and positive for the employee and the organization. The appraisal process supports and fosters the capabilities of extension professionals to use University resources to meet priority needs. The appraisal instrument provides the vehicle for performance feedback on capabilities, competencies and skill areas. The instrument also provides performance documentation necessary to support promotion, employee professional growth, compensation changes and other personnel decisions. The appraisal process includes requirements for planning, interim and final appraisal sessions with the supervisor and employee in addition to periodic observation of work and informal coaching and feedback communication throughout the performance period.

Extension agent and program assistant/associate/technician competencies include Programming, Professional and Human Relations, Marketing and Communications, Professional Development, Volunteer and Resource Management, and Leadership and Supervision (if applicable).

Expanded Food and Nutrition Program Assistants/Associates competencies include Achieve Excellence in Teaching, Maintain Accurate Records and Reports, Program Outreach and Impact, and Program Management.

County Extension Director competencies include Administrative Supervision and Management, Leadership, Resource Development and Management, Public Relations and Marketing, and Programming.

The Appraisal Process

Performance appraisal periods normally follow the calendar year (except EFNEP), during which two performance sessions or conferences will be held.

The **Final Review** is held in conjunction with the **Planning Session**. For Agents, PA's and Ag Technicians the **Final Review/Planning Session** is held during the month of February; EFNEP between November 15 and December 15; and, CED's between March 1 and April 15. **Final Review** is a time to discuss performance levels and to identify strengths and areas for growth or improvement. At least two weeks prior to the review, the employee is required to provide the supervisor with a self-rating of performance and documentation to illustrate or demonstrate the level of work and professional performance to meet the competencies and skills identified on the appraisal instrument. The previous year's work performance is rated by the supervisor on each competency and skill area which is then converted to a weighted numerical score on the Ratings Summary page. Comments must be written by the supervisor on the Competency Comment Page if performance was less than a three (3) in any skill area. Finally, after the supervisor shares and discusses the final ratings with the employee, the completed Appraisal Ratings Form, Competency Comments Page, Performance Page, and Ratings Summary is to be printed, signed, dated and a copy sent to the DED. (EFNEP Final Reviews: CED leads the evaluation and planning process and enters ratings with involvement and feedback from the Extension Associate (EA)-EFNEP. CED sends completed, signed forms to DED)

Upon completing the **Final Review** (printing and signing) the CED and employee will begin the **Planning Session** for the next years appraisal. They are to establish specific weights for each competency area. Total weights must equal 100. The CED will go into "One Stop Shop" and enter the agreed upon weighted percentages which will close out the previous year EPAT and create the next year or new EPAT. These weights are listed on the Ratings Summary document and signature page. (Weights are assigned for EFNEP.)

Discussion may also be held at this time on specific performance goals that are needed for satisfactory or improving performance. *Goals for strengthening job performance (D)* on the Performance Page will become *Progress toward meeting last year's goals for strengthening job performance (A)* for the new EPAT. The Planning Session is also a time to review how the employee's individual programming plan of action contributes to the County Extension Center's plan of work.

The County Extension Director will meet with the District Extension Director to appraise his/her work performance level following the same process as describe above. **Final Review/Planning Session** for CEDs is conducted between March 1 and April 15. CEDs are expected to have completed all final reviews with the county team prior to their review. The CED completes and submits the self assessment to the DED by March 1.

A **Mid Year Review** is held to review performance to date. For agents, PA's and Ag Technicians this session is to be completed between the period of June 15 and July 15.

During Mid Year Reviews for EFNEP, the CED reviews performance with the PA that includes feedback obtained from EA-EFNEP and are to be held May 15-June 15. CED Mid Year Reviews are held between July 1 and September 1. During Mid Year Reviews the employee should provide evidence or documentation to the supervisor to show the level of performance that is illustrative of the work being done. During this session it is not necessary to rate employees, however, written comments must be recorded on the Competency Comment Page and the Performance Page if performance is less than expected in any skill area. Once complete, the signature page should be printed, signed, and dated by the employee and supervisor and filed.

Description Performance Level

Performance levels are a concept and management tool that describes the scope, quality and execution of individual performance with a rating or number. A performance level rating scale of 1 (low-level performance) to 5 (high-level performance) will be used for each skill area to express the appraised performance. Once converted to a number, performance levels can be analyzed to express the overall performance score. Overall performance scores may be used to analyze county, district or state levels and for calculating individual salary changes.

The general concepts that describe each performance level for each skill follows:

5. Exceptional Performance: Exceptional performer. Demonstrates exceptional performance for the skill area being evaluated. Demonstrates a leadership role for the specific skill and serves the organization as a role model. Is respected by peers and external stakeholders for achieving the highest standards of work. Has demonstrated and documented evidence of superlative efforts, results, impacts and accomplishments.

4. Exceeds Performance: Outstanding performer. Meets and consistently exceeds a standard of performance for the skill area being evaluated. Takes initiative. Consistently uses motivation and creativity to enhance program. Clearly exceeds a performance expectation on some of the most difficult and complex facets of the job. Has demonstrated and documented evidence of significant efforts, results, impacts and accomplishments.

3. Meets Performance: Good performer. Meets expected standards of performance. Completes projects and tasks thoroughly and has consistent output of work. Manages responsibilities of the position in an effective manner. Provides satisfactory evidence and documentation of results, impacts and accomplishments.

2. Not All Performance Expectations Met: Less than adequate performer. This rating will be assigned if the individual's performance does not meet performance expectations or has weak or undocumented evidence of efforts, results, impacts and accomplishments. Employee may need additional professional development or growth. An action plan for improvement in performance must be included in future individual Plan of Action and described in part (D) on the Performance Page.

1. Unsatisfactory and Unacceptable Performance: A poor performer. Has shown little effort or no evidence of achieving results, impacts and accomplishments. Significant gaps in expected performance standards. An Individual Improvement Plan must be initiated.

Instructions for Supervisors

As you appraise each skill area within each competency, select a performance level that best describes the employee's overall work within each skill area. Keep in mind the various descriptions are examples of performance levels at escalating levels from lowest to highest. It is necessary for the employee and supervisor to use some interpretation in comparing the actual work within the skill area to the performance description.

A "3" is an expected level of performance. If all skill area performance was at level 3, the total weighted score will be 100. Level 3 performance is a standard expectation and is demonstrated by a conscientious, dedicated, skilled and hard-working good performer.

"While it is unlikely that a skill area will not apply to almost all employees, there is a provision to remove a skill area from consideration. If any skill area is justifiably not applicable, mark as Not Applicable ("NA"). The system will recalculate the Desired Score for that competency by multiplying the remaining number of skill areas times 3 and inserting that product into the Desired Score column. All other parts of the formula are completed and calculated as described in the instrument instructions. If more than 3 skill areas are to be marked "NA", contact your DED to discuss the rationale.

The instrument is not a contract; it is a holistic, behaviorally-anchored performance appraisal and management system.

The competencies of the instrument are not independent, e.g., all of the competencies work together to reflect a comprehensive effort that yields visible and documented results.

The appraisal instrument format promotes a custom designed appraisal for each employee by noting what skills are performed above or below the articulated examples for the skill areas. The instrument also provides customization by allowing employee and supervisors to choose within limits the weight each competency will have on the total performance score. Because of funding and programmatic mandates, weights are assigned for EFNEP.

Competency Based Performance Appraisal

The competencies established by the Blue Ribbon Commission are the basis for developing this performance appraisal instrument. For more information on this report, see http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/pods/brc_report/index.html.

Signatures

Signature confirms the employees have been advised of their performance status and does not necessarily imply they agree with the evaluation.

EPAT timeline

Final Review/Planning Session

EFNEP PA's -- November 15 - December 15

Agent, PA and Ag Technicians -- February 1 - February 28

CED -- March 1 – April 15

Mid Year Review

EFNEP -- May 15 - June 15

Agent, PA and Ag Technicians -- June 15 - July 15

CED -- July 15 - September 1