UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Office of the Acting Chief Financial Officer and
Assistant Secretary for Administration
Washington, D.C. 20230

# Fiscal Year 2026 End-of -Year Performance Management
# Fact Sheet of Parameters for Non-Senior Employees

## Covered Employees

Included are employees covered by:

- General Schedule (GS).
- Wage Mariner (WM).
- Employees under the Alternative Personnel Management System (APMS).
- Employees under the Commerce Alternative Personnel System (CAPS).
- Supervisors and leaders in Federal Wage System (FWS, WL and WS) positions.

Excluded are:

- Employees of the Office of Inspector General.
- FWS Wage Grade employees serving in non-supervisory, non-leader positions.
- Schedule C and G appointees.

## Some Changes for FY 2026

- Ratings Caps: OPM sets a governmentwide cap on the combined percentage of Level 4 and Level 5 or equivalent ratings. This cap is a ceiling - not a target.
- Transparency: Bureaus must provide transparency in the end-of-year process, including sharing awards ranges, and ratings distribution targets with all rated employees.
- Calibration Factors: Utilizing the appropriate generic performance standards (GPS) or system-specific Benchmark Performance Standards (BPS), apply these standards to the Bureau's mission to establish specific calibration factors.
- Calibration Panels: Calibration Panels are established at the bureau level. They promote consistency among ratings and adherence to mandated caps across offices through formal reviews of supervisor ratings and supporting evidence before notional ratings are shared.

## FY 2026 Ratings Distribution Caps and Performance Award Allocation Targets

Level 4 and Level 5 ratings—and equivalent scores—must be assigned only to employees whose performance exceeds fully successful or is at the outstanding level, and no more than **forty percent** of employees may receive such ratings. This percentage is a cap and not a target.

Bureaus should target **sixty percent** of their performance award funding for employees rated at Levels 4 and Level 5.

For CAPS pay pools, Pay Pool Managers should target sixty percent of performance awards funding for top performing employees, typically those rated "Eligible" who receive the highest level of RIF credit.

| GS, WM, WL/WS and APMS | | |
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| **Level** | **Award %** | **Award %**<br>**Schedule Policy/Career** |
| 5 | 7 - 10% | 7.5 – 10.5% |
| 4 | 4 – 6% | 4.5 – 6.5% |
| 3 | 0 – 3%<br>Or Time-Off Award | 0.5 – 3.5% |

| CAPS | | |
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| **Level** | **Award %** | **Award %**<br>**Schedule Policy/Career** |
| Eligible: Highest Level of RIF Credit | 4 – 10% | 4.5 – 10.5% |
| Eligible: Lower Level of RIF Credit | 0 – 3%<br>Or Time-Off Award | 0.5 – 3.5% |

Bureaus may request an alternative range for individual performance awards when warranted by budgetary needs or other considerations.

Up to 24 hours of time-off awards may also be leveraged to recognize Level 3 or equivalent performance ratings, consistent with the Performance Management Handbook. Employees cannot receive dual recognition in the form of a monetary performance award and a time-off award for the same end-of-the-year performance achievements.

**Performance Rating Calibration Matrix Examples**

*Note: Bureaus are to reference the Department's Generic Performance Standards (GPS) or the alternative personnel system's Benchmark Performance Standards (BPS) and are welcome to use existing calibration factors if already in place.*

The Rating Calibration Matrix supplements, and does not replace, the Department of Commerce GPS and applicable BPS. Supervisors must evaluate employee performance against the requirements of the approved performance plan and apply the GPS and BPS, as applicable, when determining the appropriate performance rating.

Level 3 or equivalent is the fully successful baseline. Supervisors should begin their assessment by evaluating the Level 3 standards and determining the performance level best describing the employee's overall accomplishments for the applicable element or competency.

Levels 4 and 5 or equivalent require performance exceeding Level 3 expectations. The additional calibration factors provide examples of accomplishments to support a higher rating; they are not intended to replace the applicable GPS or BPS criteria. The number of factors demonstrated should be considered

in conjunction with the significance, quality, quantity, timeliness, complexity, consistency, and impact of the employee's work.

The following supplements the GPS and applicable BPS by providing examples and may be customized for the Bureau-specific mission and performance expectations. It is not meant to be prescriptive or the only method employed for making distinctions in performance. This example does not replace, modify, or supersede GPS and BPS, an approved performance plan, or applicable law, regulation, or policy.

| Competency Category | Level 3 or Equivalent Rating (Fully Successful) | Level 4 or Equivalent Rating | Level 5 or Equivalent Rating (Outstanding) |
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| ***Mission Results/ Support***<br><br>***Focus:*** Contribution to mission accomplishment and organizational results. | The employee demonstrates good, sound performance and fully meets the requirements of the position and performance plan. Work products and assignments support mission requirements, Bureau priorities, and organizational objectives.<br><br>***Meets the following:***<br>• Completes assignments accurately, thoroughly, and within established deadlines, with major revisions rarely necessary.<br>• Applies technical knowledge, sound judgment, and established procedures effectively to accomplish assigned responsibilities.<br>• Plans and prioritizes work realistically, manages competing priorities, and uses resources responsibly. | In addition to fully meeting Level 3 standards, the employee demonstrates unusually good performance. The quality, quantity, accuracy, and timeliness of work are consistently above expectations. Work products rarely require even minor revision, and the employee demonstrates above-average problem-solving skills and insight into work methods.<br><br>***Level 3, + at least 3 of the following:***<br>• Proactively identifies and implements improvements to processes, services, or resource utilization enhancing mission accomplishments.<br>• Anticipates potential barriers to mission objectives and develops solutions to prevent delays or improve outcomes.<br>• Successfully manages complex assignments or competing priorities while maintaining high-quality work and meeting established deadlines.<br>• Uses data, analysis, and stakeholder input to develop | In addition to meeting Level 4 standards, the employee demonstrates rare, high-quality performance substantially exceeding Level 4 expectations. The employee's contributions have a significant impact on organizational results, including accomplishing objectives that otherwise may not have been achieved. Work is exceptionally reliable, and the employee significantly improves the processes or products for in their area of responsibility.<br><br>***Level 4, + at least 3 of the following:***<br>• Anticipates emerging mission needs and develops innovative approaches to materially improve organizational performance.<br>• Produces significant and sustained improvements in mission outcomes, operational effectiveness, productivity, or achievement of strategic objectives. |

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| | • Demonstrates accountability for commitments and resolves routine problems with minimal supervision.<br>• Communicates effectively and works<br>• cooperatively with customers, coworkers, and stakeholders to accomplish work objectives.<br>• Identifies and raises issues affecting mission accomplishment and seeks guidance when appropriate. | recommendations producing measurable improvements in efficiency, productivity, service delivery, or mission results.<br>• Builds effective partnerships across programs or organizational units improving coordination and advancing shared objectives.<br>• Completes assignments with limited need for supervisory intervention and independently resolves problems within established authorities. | • Plays a critical role in high-impact initiatives, special projects to achieve exceptional results beyond normal position expectations.<br>• Develops innovative solutions to organizational challenges producing substantial results or demonstrable cost savings.<br>• Coordinates complex efforts across programs, work units, or stakeholders to critical that otherwise may not have been achieved.<br>• Demonstrates exceptional planning and adaptability, develops effective contingency plans, and successfully adjusts to changing priorities while maintaining mission focus.<br>• Serves as an exceptional resource whose expertise, initiative, and process improvements substantially increase organizational effectiveness. |
| ***Customer Service***<br><br>***Focus:*** Quality, responsiveness, and effectiveness of service provided to customers and stakeholders. | The employee provides good, sound customer service to fully meet established requirements. Responses and work products are accurate, thorough, timely, and appropriate to customer needs. | In addition to fully meeting Level 3 standards, the employee consistently provides service that exceeds established expectations. Responses and work products demonstrate above-average accuracy, effectiveness, and insight, and rarely require revision. The employee anticipates | In addition to meeting Level 4 standards, the employee demonstrates rare, high-quality customer service to substantially exceed normal expectations. The employee's communication, judgment, and initiative produce significant |

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| | | problems, uses sound judgment, and resolves issues with minimal supervisory intervention. | improvements in customer outcomes, organizational effectiveness, or service delivery. |
| | ***Meets the following:***<br>• Provides courteous, professional, and accurate responses consistent with Department guidance, policies, and program requirements.<br>• Responds to inquiries and completes follow-up within established.<br>• Communicates information clearly and effectively, ensuring customers understand relevant requirements, decisions, and next steps.<br>• Listens to customer concerns and responds appropriately to questions, feedback, and requests.<br>• Resolves routine customer issues using established procedures and escalates complex matters when necessary.<br>• Maintains effective working relationships with colleagues, customers, and stakeholders to support | ***Level 3, + at least 3 of the following:***<br>• Anticipates customer needs and proactively provides relevant information, resources, or solutions before issues affect service delivery.<br>• Independently resolves complex customer issues through effective research, analysis, and application of applicable guidance.<br>• Identifies recurring customer concerns and recommends or implements improvements to service processes.<br>• Consistently completes responses ahead of established deadlines without compromising quality or accuracy.<br>• Uses customer feedback, trends, or data to improve service delivery and customer outcomes.<br>• Builds strong partnerships across organizational units or with external stakeholders to improve coordination and responsiveness. | ***Level 4, + at least 3 of the following:***<br>• Anticipates emerging or complex customer needs and develops innovative solutions that prevent significant problems or improve service outcomes.<br>• Consistently delivers exceptionally accurate, thorough, and effective responses that achieve results beyond established service expectations.<br>• Resolves highly complex or sensitive customer matters with exceptional judgment, diplomacy, and effectiveness preventing significant adverse consequences.<br>• Develops or leads service improvements that produce significant and sustained gains in responsiveness, efficiency, service quality, or customer satisfaction.<br>• Establishes and strengthens partnerships that materially improve coordination, trust, and organizational effectiveness.<br>• Communicates complicated or controversial |

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| | organizational objectives. | | information with exceptional clarity, adapting effectively to diverse audiences and achieving desired outcomes.<br>• Serves as an exemplary role model whose practices substantially improve the quality and effectiveness of customer service. |
| ***Technical Position/ Job Specific Function*** (Insert your own)<br><br>***Focus:*** Mastery and application of the knowledge, skills, and capabilities required for the position. | The employee demonstrates the technical knowledge and skills expected of a fully competent employee. Work products fully meet the requirements of the position and performance plan, and assigned responsibilities are completed accurately, thoroughly, and timely.<br><br>***Meets the following:***<br>• Applies required technical knowledge, policies, procedures, and accepted practices effectively.<br>• Produces accurate, complete, and usable technical work products that meet established requirements.<br>• Communicates technical information clearly and in a format appropriate to the intended audience.<br>• Conducts appropriate | In addition to fully meeting Level 3 standards, the employee demonstrates unusually good technical performance. Knowledge, analytical ability, and problem-solving skills are consistently above expectations. Work products rarely require even minor revision, and the employee identifies practical improvements to work methods and processes.<br><br>***Level 3, + at least 3 of the following:***<br>• Independently addresses complex technical assignments and develops well-supported recommendations within applicable authorities.<br>• Identifies and implements improvements to technical processes, procedures, or tools that enhance accuracy, efficiency, or service delivery.<br>• Conducts comprehensive analysis that informs management decisions and provides actionable | In addition to meeting Level 4 standards, the employee demonstrates rare, high-quality technical performance. Technical expertise and application of skills substantially exceed position expectations and produce significant improvements in work products, processes, or organizational outcomes.<br><br>***Level 4, + at least 3 of the following:***<br>• Applies exceptional technical expertise to resolve highly complex or novel problems that materially advance organizational objectives.<br>• Develops innovative methods, tools, or technical solutions that produce significant and sustained improvements in quality, efficiency, accuracy, or effectiveness.<br>• Produces exceptionally reliable technical analyses or |

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| | research and analysis to support sound, defensible decisions consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and guidance.<br>• Develops realistic work plans and meets established milestones and deadlines.<br>• Resolves routine technical problems with minimal supervision and elevates issues when appropriate. | recommendations supported by relevant data.<br>• Anticipates technical or operational challenges and presents practical options for resolution before they adversely affect results.<br>• Applies advanced knowledge and sound judgment to resolve difficult issues with limited supervisory intervention.<br>• Identifies opportunities to improve methods, address customer needs, or strengthen the quality and usability of technical products.<br>• Contributes technical expertise to special assignments or cross-functional initiatives to improve organizational results. | recommendations that enable critical decisions or achieve objectives that otherwise may not have been accomplished.<br>• Anticipates emerging technical requirements and develops effective solutions before significant operational problems arise.<br>• Leads or plays a critical role in high-impact technical projects that substantially improve organizational capabilities or outcomes.<br>• Demonstrates exceptional adaptability and judgment when addressing changing priorities, complex requirements, or controversial technical issues.<br>• Serves as an exceptional technical resource whose expertise and process improvements significantly strengthen organizational performance. |
| ***Leadership/ Management (as applicable)***<br><br>***Focus:*** Organizational leadership, workforce management, | The employee demonstrates capable, effective leadership and fulfills the management and supervisory responsibilities of the position. Performance meets established | In addition to fully meeting Level 3 standards, the employee demonstrates unusually effective leadership and management. The employee consistently exercises sound judgment, anticipates operational and workforce needs, and | In addition to meeting Level 4 standards, the employee demonstrates exceptional leadership and management that substantially exceed normal expectations. Leadership effectiveness produces significant and |

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| accountability, talent development, and achievement of organizational objectives. | requirements and supports organizational goals and objectives.<br><br>***Meets the following:***<br>• Plans, organizes, and completes critical operational and administrative responsibilities accurately and timely.<br>• Communicates organizational priorities, provides clear direction, and manages resources consistent with Department and Bureau objectives.<br>• Establishes performance plans, conducts required performance discussions, and completes performance management responsibilities in accordance with applicable policy.<br>• Provides appropriate coaching, feedback, training, recognition, and career development opportunities.<br>• Supports recruitment, staffing, employee development, and other personnel actions consistent with organizational needs and applicable requirements.<br>• Fosters professionalism, | improves team performance. Management practices contribute significantly to organizational objectives, and supervisory intervention to correct problems is rarely necessary.<br><br>***Level 3, + at least 3 of the following***:<br>• Anticipates workforce, resource, or operational challenges and implements effective solutions before they materially affect organizational performance.<br>• Develops employees through targeted coaching, mentoring, training, and developmental assignments that improve capabilities and performance.<br>• Establishes effective succession and workforce development practices that prepare employees for increased responsibilities.<br>• Uses performance information, employee feedback, or organizational data to improve management decisions and workplace outcomes.<br>• Builds a high-performing team environment characterized by accountability, collaboration, engagement, and responsible innovation.<br>• Resolves complex employee or operational issues with sound judgment, fairness, | sustained organizational improvements, and the employee serves as an exemplary role model for accountability, collaboration, and fair treatment.<br><br>***Level 4, + at least 3 of the following:***<br>• Anticipates emerging organizational and workforce needs and develops innovative strategies that significantly advance mission accomplishment.<br>• Develops and retains highly capable employees and future leaders whose contributions materially strengthen organizational effectiveness.<br>• Creates a high-performing organizational culture characterized by exceptional accountability, engagement, collaboration, innovation, and commitment to mission.<br>• Resolves highly complex or sensitive personnel matters with exceptional judgment, dignity, fairness, and effectiveness while minimizing adverse organizational consequences.<br>• Leads initiatives that produce significant and sustained improvements in employee |

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| | respect, cooperation, and open communication while addressing employee concerns appropriately.<br>• Applies sound judgment, listens to employee input, recognizes good performance, and addresses performance deficiencies through appropriate procedures.<br>• Demonstrates a commitment to fair treatment, equal opportunity, and applicable merit system and EEO requirements. | dignity, and effectiveness.<br>• Implements management practices that produce measurable improvements in productivity, employee development, resource utilization, or organizational performance. | engagement, workforce capability, retention, productivity, or organizational performance.<br>• Demonstrates exceptional adaptability and resource management, successfully navigating changing priorities while maintaining critical organizational outcomes. Exemplifies and promotes fair treatment, equal opportunity, respect, and compliance with applicable requirements while strengthening trust and cooperation across the organization. |

October 16, 2026