



## **NSPS Performance Management Bulletin: Guest Participants and Trusted Agents**

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Guest participants and trusted agents are new functions in the Performance Appraisal Application (PAA) that can be used to improve the NSPS performance management process. This bulletin provides Army guidance on the use of these functions and includes links to more detailed “how to” information. The parties to whom NSPS authorities have been delegated, as listed in Army NSPS Policy AP-SC 1910.4.3, may further delineate responsibilities, roles and requirements regarding the use of these functions.

### **Guest Participants**

The “guest participant” function gives rating officials the ability to invite guest raters and / or guest reviewers to provide recommended ratings or feedback relating to an employee’s performance. The rating official uses this feedback when reviewing an employee’s accomplishments during the rating cycle. Guest participants are identified as either guest raters or guest reviewers, and the term “guest participant” describes and applies to both functions. Either of these functions could be used assigned to someone designated as a “contributing official” as defined in Army NSPS Policy AP-SC 1940.3.3.

In using these functions the rating official is required to adhere to the performance management requirements described in 5 CFR, Part 9901, Subpart D, Performance Management. Rating officials are required to involve employees and advise them of performance expectations, in writing, prior to holding the employee accountable for them. Therefore, it is imperative that rating officials advise employees of the guest rater or reviewer designation prior to assigning the role within the PAA. Additionally, guest participants are encouraged to discuss goals, objectives, specific project requirements or performance expectations with employees that are assigned to them in their role as a guest participant.

Guest rater or guest reviewer? Guest raters provide actual recommended job objective ratings and assessments for the employee. Guest reviewers provide a text assessment of the employee’s overall performance; this is in the form of one text block of up to 4000 characters.

Appropriate use of guest reviewer function. Civilian employees are often required to assume short term assignments for which guest reviewer functionality is more appropriate than the guest rater designation. Generally such employee assignments are for less than 90 days.

The guest reviewer’s feedback is considered by the rating official when assessing the employee’s performance during the appraisal period. For example, if the short term assignment ended before or during the interim review period, the rating official may use the feedback while conducting the interim review assessment. Below are examples of situations that may benefit from the use of the guest reviewer function:

- When an employee is detailed to a position for a short period of time
- When an employee is assigned to a short term project or short term deployment

- When an employee is temporarily assigned to different division or organization

Appropriate use of guest rater function. The guest rater function allows rating officials to invite a guest rater to provide recommended ratings and assessments, usually in longer-term situations of 90 days or more. The guest rater only provides a recommendation to the rating official. The rating official considers the guest rater recommendations when assessing the employee's performance at the end of the performance cycle, but the assigned rating official is still responsible for the final recommended ratings. Below are examples of situations that may merit use of a guest rater:

- When an employee is detailed to a position for 90 days or longer
- Long term deployments (the guest rater function is particularly appropriate for a deployed civilian for whom a "deployment objective" has been established; see [NSPS PEO Guidance on Deployed Civilians, Attachment 1](#), May 2009)
- Long term projects

Guest raters must meet the same training requirements as those required for NSPS supervisors (Army NSPS Policy AP-SC 1940.4.4.2). Rating officials are encouraged to communicate with designated guest raters in evaluating guest rater recommended ratings and assessments.

Inappropriate use of guest participants. Use of guest participants is not appropriate in situations when employees or rating officials permanently move to new positions, or when a temporary assignment is long enough to warrant a new performance plan.

Requirements for guest participants. An invitation to be a guest rater or guest reviewer should only be made to those who are responsible for the oversight and direction of the affected employees. As evidence of this, the guest participant may be responsible for such things as:

- Distributing workload among employees or team members
- Establishing priorities, monitoring work load status, or reviewing completed work
- Resolving work related issues
- Leave approval

Use of guest participant information during the rating and pay pool processes. Though guest participant functionality may prove useful in several work-related instances, it does not relieve the rating official of the responsibilities outlined in the NSPS Implementing Issuances (DoD 1400.25-M). The guest reviewer or guest rater provides feedback and/or recommended ratings only. This should supplement, not replace, the rating official's assessment and professional judgment. Guest participant input shall not be made available to the pay pool panel. Rather, the rating official's assessment and recommended rating should incorporate guest participant input as appropriate. For this reason, it is incumbent upon the rating official to engage in active dialogue with the guest participant, and to ensure that the guest participant feedback / assessment is clearly understood, since the rating official may be called upon by the pay pool panel to provide clarifying / supporting information during pay pool panel deliberations.

***For more information:***

[How-To Guide: Managing Guest Participants](#)  
[How-To Guide: Serving as a Guest Participant](#)

## Trusted Agents

A trusted agent is an employee who has been given the ability to document performance management events in the PAA, such as entering dates on performance plans, documenting interim reviews or closeout assessments, or entering recommended ratings and assessments for the annual appraisal.

Trusted agents input information on behalf of the rating official and are not responsible for conducting performance management counseling, recommending ratings, or writing closeout assessments, interim assessments or annual assessments. This is an administrative function only; the trusted agent merely documents the decisions and assessments of the rating official or higher level reviewer in the PAA. Specific, written delegations to trusted agents, and execution of non-disclosure agreements by trusted agents, are required.

The assignment of a trusted agent begins with either a rating official or higher level reviewer identifying a person to be his or her trusted agent. Next a role is assigned to the trusted agent. The role will be in support of either the rating official or higher level reviewer (or both). The role assigned determines what actions on behalf of the rating official or higher level reviewer the trusted agent can take in the employee's PAA record.

A trusted agent has the same read and write privileges as the individual who assigned the role. The trusted agent will not be able to access his or her own appraisal for these purposes. Trusted agents can be assigned for multiple rating officials or higher level reviewers and for multiple subordinate employees at the same time.

### ***For more information:***

[Advisory: Introductory information on the trusted agent function](#)

[Need Help guide: How to delegate trusted agent authority](#)

[Need Help guide: How to manage trusted agent delegations](#)

[Need Help guide: How to view your trusted agent authorizations](#)

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