Welcome to the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System, or CPARS, Contractor Overview training. This is Lesson 1: Introduction to CPARS.

In this course, we will discuss the policy behind CPARS and a breakdown of the CPARS workflow process. We will take a look at how to effectively respond to an evaluation, with a special emphasis on developing accurate and comprehensive narratives. Additionally, we will discuss how to run reports in the View Performance Records section of CPARS to include responding to Integrity records and important points of contact and reference material available to you.

What is CPARS? CPARS is an online web application that is used to collect and manage Contractor Performance Assessment Reports, which are also known as contractor evaluations or report cards.

When writing contractor evaluations, our goal is to provide source selection officials with the contractor past performance information that they need in order to make best value contract award decisions. CPARS gives us the tool to build the body of report cards that are retrieved for consideration in source selections. Writing and retrieving those evaluations are required by the Federal Acquisition Regulation, or FAR, and Office of Federal Procurement Policy, or OFPP.

Let’s take a look at where to find the FAR requirements for CPARS. FAR 42.1502 requires that contractor past performance evaluations be prepared at least annually and at the time the work under the contract or order is completed. These evaluations must be entered into the automated CPARS system. FAR 42.1503 requires that contractors be evaluated on their performance in the areas of technical, cost control, schedule, management, small business subcontracting, and other areas as applicable.

FAR 42.1503 contains the evaluation grading scale and rating definitions, which we will discuss in detail later in this course. Evaluations are automatically transmitted to the View Performance Records section of CPARS, where they are retained and used for source selection purposes for 3 years following the completion of the contract or order; six years for Architect-Engineer and Construction contracts. FAR 15.304 requires that source selection officials consider past performance as an evaluation factor in all competitive acquisitions expected to exceed the simplified acquisition threshold.

Let’s take a look at the primary objectives of CPARS.

The past performance evaluations written in CPARS provide a robust library of information that source selection officials can use to assist in making best value contract award decisions. By considering past performance information as part of the source selection, the government is better able to award contracts to proven performers. Because evaluations are written on an annual basis, the system provides up to date documentation of a contractor’s performance. Evaluations also serve to motivate good performance under currently active contracts. Contractors take the ratings and narratives they receive on evaluations very seriously as they impact a contractor’s ability to obtain future business. Therefore, contractors are motivated to perform well under current contracts in order to receive a positive evaluation and thus have a better chance of being awarded more government contracts in the future. In addition, the evaluation provides the contractor with valuable feedback as to whether their performance is meeting contract requirements, thus facilitating government-contractor communication. However, it is important to note that the evaluation should not be the sole source by which the government communicates this information to the contractor. The government and contractor should communicate regularly throughout the period of performance rather than waiting to identify issues until the evaluation is written at the end of the year. Finally, evaluations may also be used in responsibility determinations of prospective contractors.

Here are some important points to remember. Evaluations are source selection information, and they must be treated in accordance with FAR 2.101, 3.104, and 42.1503. CPARS evaluations are pre-decisional in nature because they are used to support source selections on an ongoing basis. The only people that can view ratings, narratives, etc., for a specific contract are personnel with a need to know and the contractor who is the subject of the evaluation. In addition, evaluations are not releasable under the Freedom of Information Act, or FOIA. Report cards are retained for three years after contract completion, with the exception of Architect-Engineer and Construction contracts, which remain in the system for six. For example, let’s say we have a five year contract for services, with an annual reporting requirement. That means we are performing an evaluation every twelve months. At the end of our five year contract, we will have five evaluations entered into the system. Those five will remain in the system for three additional years beyond the contract completion date. That means our initial evaluation will be in the system for approximately eight years. In addition, it is now permitted to transmit evaluations and associated documentation via email, provided that the email is encrypted if possible and that the email and any attachments are properly marked as source selection sensitive information.

Let’s move onto the Federal reporting thresholds. FAR 42.1502 requires past performance evaluations for contracts which exceed the simplified acquisition threshold of $250,000, with the exception of Architect-Engineer contracts, which have a threshold of greater than or equal to $35,000, and Construction contracts, which have a threshold of greater than or equal to $700,000. In addition, all Architect-Engineer and Construction contracts which are terminated for default must be evaluated, regardless of their dollar value. CPARS uses data from the Federal Procurement Data System, or FPDS, to identify those contracts which require evaluations. Therefore, it is important to ensure that we use the correct Product or Service Code, or PSC, when entering our contract actions into FPDS, so that the proper dollar threshold is applied to our contract in CPARS. In addition, the government has the option to write an evaluation on contracts lower than the dollar threshold. Now why might we want to do that? Some contracts below the reporting threshold may be for important and critical supplies or services. In such cases, the government may want to ensure that performance is thoroughly documented on these contracts so that these critical items can be purchased from a proven performer in the future. In addition, as with all contracts, performance against a lower dollar value contract may be extremely poor or extremely good. The government may choose to document these performance extremes in order to ensure that source selection officials can consider this information in future award decisions. Further, lower dollar value contracts are often awarded to a small business. Documenting these contracts in CPARS will help to establish a past performance track record for the small business which will be relevant as they go on to compete for additional work.

The Department of Defense, or DoD, has unique CPARS reporting thresholds due to a class deviation to the FAR. DoD considers the business sector for the majority of the work being performed under the contract when determining the reporting threshold. The business sectors are: Systems, Non-Systems, Architect-Engineer, and Construction.

Systems has a DoD threshold of $5,000,000. Non-Systems includes Operations Support, Services, Information Technology, and Ship Repair and Overhaul. The DoD threshold for the Operations Support business sector is $5,000,000. The DoD threshold for the Services business sector is $1,000,000. The DoD threshold for Information Technology is $1,000,000. The DoD threshold for Ship Repair and Overhaul is $500,000.

The Federal and DoD threshold for Architect-Engineer contracts is greater than or equal to $35,000 as well as all terminations for default.

The Federal and DoD threshold for Construction contracts is greater than or equal to $700,000 as well as all terminations for default.

It is important to note that when the government is writing evaluations, only the prime contractor’s performance is evaluated. The reason for this is privity of contract. The prime contractor has privity between their company and the subcontractor. Because of this, the government cannot write a separate evaluation on the subcontractor. They can, however, acknowledge a subcontractor’s efforts on a contract by noting the subcontractor’s name and Unique Entity ID on the prime’s evaluation. This is especially important if the subcontractor is performing 25% or more of the work or performing a critical aspect of the contract. The government can also rate the prime contractor’s ability to manage their subcontractor. This would be included under the Management rating area.

Let’s take a look at the past performance process.

CPARS is the automated tool that is used to draft the contractor performance evaluation. The evaluation contains ratings and narratives to address the contractor’s performance in accordance with the requirements in the contract. The evaluation is written by government officials such as Program Managers, Contracting Officers, and Contracting Officer’s Representatives. The contractor may also provide comments on the government’s evaluation using the CPARS system. It is important to provide the contractor with an opportunity to comment in order to ensure that both the government and contractor perspectives are available to source selection officials reviewing the evaluation. A source selection official may view evaluations from any government agency. Contractor senior management may also view their own company’s performance evaluations under government contracts, but may not view those of any other company.

Let’s discuss the user roles in CPARS. The Focal Point or Alternate Focal Point assigns the workflow users in CPARS by creating user accounts for each contract or order. In addition, the Focal Point or Alternate Focal Point registers contracts in CPARS, by ensuring that the basic information for each contract or order is entered in the system. The Focal Point or Alternate Focal Point is also available to provide support and assistance as the workflow users navigate through the CPARS process.

Next, let’s discuss the workflow roles that a Focal Point or Alternate Focal Point may assign.

First is the Assessing Official Representative. This is the role that is assigned to a government employee who will be assisting in preparation of the evaluation. The Assessing Official Representative can draft the ratings and narratives on the evaluation, but has no signature authority and may not release the evaluation to the contractor. Once the Assessing Official Representative has drafted the evaluation, they provide it to the Assessing Official for further processing. Not all organizations use an Assessing Official Representative when writing the evaluation, so this role is optional.

Next we have the Assessing Official. This is the role that is assigned to the government employee who has overall responsibility for contracting or execution of the program or project for which performance is being evaluated. The Assessing Official writes the evaluation ratings and narratives and has authority to sign and release the evaluation to the Contractor Representative. In addition, once the Contractor Representative has provided comments on the evaluation and returned it to the government, the Assessing Official may close the evaluation in CPARS if the contractor concurred with the evaluation.

If the Contractor Representative did not concur with the evaluation, the Assessing Official has the option to modify the evaluation, and must forward the evaluation to the Reviewing Official for further processing. The Assessing Official is a required role in the CPARS workflow.

The next role is the Contractor Representative. The Contractor Representative is the contractor employee that has been designated to provide comments on the evaluation. It is recommended that the Contractor Representative be someone who is very familiar with contract performance on a day to day basis. The Contractor Representative may provide comments on the evaluation and may indicate if they concur or do not concur with the ratings and narratives. Once the Contractor Representative has done this, they sign the evaluation and return it to the government Assessing Official. The Contractor Representative is a required role in the CPARS workflow, although the Contractor Representative has the option to decline to provide comments on the evaluation.

The final role in the CPARS workflow is the Reviewing Official. Reviewing Official is the role that is assigned to a government employee who is at least one level above the Assessing Official and who will review all contentious evaluations. In the event that a Contractor Representative does not concur with the evaluation, the Reviewing Official provides an independent review of the evaluation. The Reviewing Official enters comments on the evaluation, signs it, and then closes it. The Reviewing Official is an optional role in the CPARS workflow and is only required in the event that the Contractor Representative disagrees with the evaluation.

The first step in the CPARS workflow is contract registration by the government. Contract registration is the entry of the basic administrative information for the contract or order into CPARS, such as contractor name, award value, date of award, etc. All contracts and/or orders eligible for CPARS reporting must be registered within 30 days of award of the contract or order.

Contract registration is almost always performed by the Focal Point or Alternate Focal Point. At 365 days after contract award, it is the responsibility of the Assessing Official Representative or the Assessing Official to log into CPARS and enter the proposed ratings and narratives. If the evaluation is started by the Assessing Official Representative, they will need to send the evaluation to the Assessing Official once the ratings and narratives have been entered. The evaluation writing process should be started in adequate time to ensure that it is completed by the 120 day deadline, which includes a 60 day contractor comment period. The Assessing Official should review the proposed ratings and narratives, make any changes necessary, and send the evaluation to the Contractor Representative. There are several significant dates of particular interest to the Contractor Representative once the Assessing Official has sent them the evaluation. The first set of significant dates includes days 1 through 14 following the Assessing Official signature date on the evaluation. During days 1 through 14, the Contractor Representative may provide comments and will receive a daily automatic email notification reminding them to provide comments. If the Contractor Representative provides comments during those first 14 days and the Assessing Official or Reviewing Official closes the evaluation, the evaluation will be available for source selection within 1 day. The second significant date to the Contractor Representative is day 15 following the Assessing Official signature date on the evaluation. On day 15, the evaluation is available for source selection, with or without contractor comments and whether or not it has been closed by the Assessing Official or Reviewing Official. If the evaluation has not been closed by the Assessing Official or Reviewing Official by day 15, it is marked as “Pending”. The third set of significant dates is days 15 through 60 following the Assessing Official signature date on the evaluation. During days 15 through 60, the Contractor Representative will receive a weekly automatic email reminder to submit comments if they have not already done so. The contractor may submit comments during this time, and those comments will be available for source selection within one day. It is important to note that, once the Contractor Representative has submitted comments, they will not be able to view the evaluation again until it has been closed by the Assessing Official or Reviewing Official. Therefore, it is advisable for the Contractor Representative to download or print a copy of the evaluation prior to returning it to the Assessing Official if they would like to have a copy available for reference before the evaluation is closed. The contractor’s comments will be marked as “Pending” until the Assessing Official or Reviewing Official has closed the evaluation. The final significant date to the contractor is day 61 following the Assessing Official’s signature date on the evaluation. On day 61, the contractor comment period expires. At this time, the Contractor Representative is locked out of the evaluation and may no longer provide comments. Once the contractor comment period has expired, the evaluation is updated to reflect the fact that the contractor did not submit comments. The evaluation will still be marked as “Pending” until it has been closed by the government. At this point in the CPARS workflow, either one of two things has occurred. First, the Contractor Representative may have provided comments on the evaluation. Second, the contractor comment period may have expired on day 61 following the Assessing Official’s evaluation signature date.

The Contractor Representative reviews the evaluation, provides comments if desired, indicates whether or not they concur with the evaluation, signs the evaluation, and then returns it to the Assessing Official.

If the Contractor Representative concurred with the evaluation or did not provide comments, the Assessing Official has four options available. The first option is to make no changes to the evaluation and to close it. In this case, the evaluation would be updated when closed and the “Pending” marking will be removed. The second option is for the Assessing Official to modify the evaluation and close it. It is generally not normal to modify an evaluation with which the Contractor Representative concurred, but modification may be necessary if the Assessing Official needs to correct an error on the evaluation or add an additional clarification. Once the Assessing Official closes the evaluation, it will be updated and the “Pending” marking will be removed. The third option is to make no changes to the evaluation and send it to the Reviewing Official. While a Reviewing Official is not required, they may be included in the process if required by local policy or in the event of a high visibility program. When the Assessing Official sends the evaluation to the Reviewing Official, it will be updated and the evaluation will remain marked as “Pending”. The fourth option is to modify the evaluation and send it to the Reviewing Official. In this case, the evaluation will be updated with the modifications and will still be marked as “Pending” until it is closed by the Reviewing Official.

In the event that the Contractor Representative did not concur with the evaluation, the Assessing Official has two options. First, the Assessing Official can make no changes to the evaluation and send it to the Reviewing Official as is. In this case, the evaluation will be updated and will retain the “Pending” marking. The second option is to modify the evaluation and send it to the Reviewing Official. In this instance, the evaluation will be updated to reflect the modifications and the “Pending” marking will remain on the evaluation until it is closed by the Reviewing Official. It’s important to note that, if the contractor did not concur with the evaluation, a Reviewing Official will always be required in order to close the evaluation. At this point in the CPARS workflow, the Reviewing Official provides comments and closes the evaluation. The evaluation must be closed within 120 days of the end of the evaluation period of performance. Once the evaluation is closed, it will be updated and the “Pending” marking will be removed.

Congratulations! You have completed Lesson 1: Introduction to CPARS! In this lesson, you have learned about the purpose of CPARS, the associated regulatory requirements, and the CPARS workflow process. You are now ready to move onto Lesson 2: Ratings and Narratives.

Welcome to Lesson 2: Ratings and Narratives. In this lesson, we will discuss the grading scale used to evaluate performance and the principles for creating a quality narrative.

Now that we know the evaluation areas, let’s take a look at the rating scale that we use to evaluate performance in each of these areas. The grading scale, or ratings, come from FAR 42.1503, Table 42-1.Before choosing a rating for an evaluation area, it is important that we thoroughly review the rating definitions in the FAR so that we can choose the rating which accurately reflects the contractor’s performance. Let’s review the rating scale.

Starting in the middle of the scale, we have the Satisfactory rating. A rating of Satisfactory indicates that the contractor’s performance met the contract requirements. Performance neither exceeded the requirements nor was less than required by the contract. However, in order to achieve a Satisfactory rating, the problems and issues must have been minor and the contractor must have been able to respond to those problems and issues with acceptable, satisfactory corrective actions.

The next level up the scale is the Very Good rating. A rating of Very Good indicates that the contractor has exceeded a contract requirement, which has resulted in a benefit to the government. It is important to remember that, in order to achieve a Very Good rating, when writing the narrative the rating official must be able to identify the benefit to the government. A contractor can still receive a Very Good rating even if there are some minor performance problems. In order to receive that rating, the contractor must have implemented effective corrective actions.

At the top of the scale is the Exceptional rating. An Exceptional rating indicates that the contractor exceeded a major contract requirement or many requirements, resulting in a benefit to the government. Once again, the government is not necessarily expecting perfect contractor performance. However, in order to achieve an Exceptional rating, problems should have been few and minor and the contractor should have implemented highly effective corrective actions. It is important to remember that the decision of whether to exceed a contract requirement in order to achieve a Very Good or Exceptional rating is the contractor’s choice. At no time should the government be requesting out of scope work or asking the contractor to perform additional tasking without payment. Doing so is a serious violation of contracting regulations and could result in a contract claim. The government is only allowed to require performance in accordance with those requirements stated in the contract.

We have so far seen the ratings for when the contractor meets or exceeds contract requirements. Next, let’s take a look at the ratings we use in cases where the contractor fails to fulfill the requirements in the contract. Just below the Satisfactory rating is the rating of Marginal. A Marginal rating indicates that the contractor did not meet some of the contract requirements, resulting in a negative impact to the government. Occurrences such as late deliveries, cost over-runs, and quality control issues could all result in a rating of Marginal. In the case of Marginal performance, there may have been major problems, but recovery is still possible.

The lowest rating on the scale is Unsatisfactory. An Unsatisfactory rating indicates that the contractor did not meet most contract requirements, resulting in a serious impact to the government. When there are serious performance problems on a contract and recovery from those problems is not likely, we would assign a rating of Unsatisfactory. It is important to remember that whenever the government rates an evaluation area as Marginal or Unsatisfactory, it must justify that rating in the narrative by specifically describing which requirements were not met and the associated impacts to the government. In such cases, it is particularly important to have supporting documentation, such as cure notices, show cause notices, and written communications with the contractor, in order to provide solid justification for the rating.

The rating scale that was just described provides the criteria for rating each of the evaluation areas, with the exception of Small Business Subcontracting. The Small Business Subcontracting evaluation area is rated using its own scale, which is contained in FAR 42.1503, Table 42-2.This scale assesses the contractor’s effectiveness at meeting or exceeding the small business subcontracting goals, its good faith efforts to achieve those goals, its ability to achieve the key elements of the subcontracting plan, and the accuracy and timeliness of Individual Subcontracting Report, or ISR, and Summary Subcontracting Report, or SSR, submissions. When rating this evaluation area, it is important to review these definitions and to seek input from the Contracting Officer and Small Business Specialist as appropriate.

Small Business Subcontracting should be evaluated whenever there is a small business subcontracting plan in our contract or order. This includes orders against BOAs, BPAs, GWACs and MACs, as well as single agency task and delivery orders when the Contracting Officer deems it appropriate. In the case of multi-agency indefinite delivery vehicles, Small Business Subcontracting is evaluated by the agency that awarded the contract unless there are separate small business subcontracting goals in each individual order.

The keys to a good narrative are that it is accurate, fair, and comprehensive. Also, the performance addressed in the ratings and narrative must be recent, meaning that it occurred during the evaluation’s period of performance. The government should not include information that occurred prior to or subsequent to the evaluation period. However, if an issue was identified during the last evaluation period that is still unresolved at the time that the most current evaluation is being written, the government can certainly address any resolutions or corrective actions that took place during the current evaluation period. A good narrative will also be comprehensive, meaning that all facts relevant to the evaluation of performance are presented. For example, if the contractor delivered on schedule in spite of a late provision of government-furnished information, the government should present and consider that fact when writing the evaluation. In this case, inclusion of the fact that the government-furnished information was late would demonstrate that the contractor was successful in spite of having to overcome a significant obstacle to successful performance, and will provide source selection officials with much more relevant information than would a simple statement that the contractor met the schedule requirement.

In addition, it is important to remember that the narratives should include contributions from the entire government team working on the contract, as opposed to just one individual. Important perspectives to consider include technical, such as the Program Manager or Contracting Officer’s Representative; contracting, such as the Contract Specialist or Contracting Officer; financial, such as the Business Financial Manager or Program Budget Officer; quality, such as the program’s Quality Assurance Specialist; security, such as the program’s Security Specialist or Security Officer; safety, such as the program’s Occupational Safety and Health Representative; as well as the perspective of the End User, or ultimate recipient of the goods or services provided under the contract. A thorough narrative will provide the reader with a complete understanding of the contractor’s performance. The evaluation ratings alone are not enough information to enable the source selection officials reading the evaluation to make an effective award decision. The narratives are used to tell the story behind the ratings.

When the government writes the evaluation, they will be rating the contractor’s performance in a number of areas, such as Quality, Schedule, and Cost Control. For each area that is graded, a narrative must be provided to describe the contractor’s efforts in that area and to indicate why the rating that was chosen was assigned. Factual information should be included and stated accurately, with objective evidence cited wherever possible. The narrative should also be fair in considering both the government and the contractor perspectives on the performance. If the government was at fault in a situation and thus negatively impacted a contractor’s ability to perform, that fact should be acknowledged in the evaluation. For instance, government furnished information may have been inaccurate or provided late, thus preventing the contractor from successfully meeting some of the contract requirements. The government should consider the circumstances surrounding the contractor’s inability to meet requirements. A contractor’s performance cannot be downgraded if their failure to meet requirements was caused by the government.

If a rating for an evaluation area has changed since the last evaluation, the reason for the change should be addressed within the context of the narratives. For instance, let’s say that last year the contractor received a rating of Marginal in the Quality evaluation area due to the fact that the contract deliverables were failing inspection. If the government rated the contractor differently this year, the narratives should explain what happened to cause the difference. In this case, let’s say that this year the contractor was rated as Satisfactory in the Quality evaluation area. The narrative could explain that the change is due to the fact that the contractor implemented a new quality control system and deliverables are thus no longer failing inspection. Narratives should always address the way in which the contractor’s performance has benefitted or impacted the government. An example of a positive benefit would be a case where the government provided a contractor with the plans to construct a building. The contractor examined the plans closely and noticed a mistake in them prior to beginning construction. The contractor noted the error and returned the plans to the government for correction prior to construction, thus saving the government the costs of having to correct problems with the building following construction. In this case, the money saved by correcting the problems with the plans up front is an obvious benefit to the government. An example of a negative impact to the government due to the contractor’s actions would be a case where the contractor constructed a building using substandard materials that were not in accordance with those that were called for in the architect’s plans. In this case, the government would experience the negative impacts of having to replace the substandard materials with the proper ones, with impacts to both the cost of the project and the schedule for completion.

A good narrative will also address the risk inherent in the contract effort. For instance, there may be a technical risk such as the contractor using cutting edge technology or applying existing technology to a new purpose for which it has not previously been used. There may also be risk in terms of an extremely tight delivery schedule or an extremely tight budget. A good evaluator will consider these risks when choosing a performance rating and writing a narrative, and may choose to raise the rating when the contractor has taken on an exorbitant amount of risk. As an example, consider a contract for the production of military uniforms. Due to an emergent military operation, the contractor is requested to take on an inordinate amount of schedule risk by providing a large quantity of desert camouflage uniforms in a very short period of time due to the fact that many troops are being rapidly deployed to a desert region. If the contractor takes on this risk and accomplishes the work successfully, the evaluator may choose to raise the contractor’s Schedule rating in order to reflect the exorbitant risk. The key is for the evaluator to thoroughly explain the circumstances and nature of the risk in the evaluation’s narrative in order to thoroughly justify the higher rating.

A fair narrative will also indicate which of the contractor’s strengths and weaknesses were major, and which were minor. Let’s consider a contract with separate delivery dates for the critical and non-critical deliverables. Let’s say that the contractor demonstrated a strength in terms of schedule by delivering the critical items early, but also demonstrated a weakness by delivering the non-critical items a few days late. From a government perspective, we would likely consider delivery of the critical items as the most important part of the contract, and thus the early delivery would represent a major strength in terms of the Schedule evaluation. While the non-critical items were a few days late, we would likely consider this a minor weakness in the overall perspective of the entire contract, meaning that the lateness would not result in a significant downgrade of the contractor’s Schedule rating. In the narratives to support the Schedule rating, the government should address the priority of the various deliverables under the contract so that the reader can develop a thorough understanding of the background surrounding the rating. For instance, suppose we are a source selection official responsible for procuring similar critical items. It would be important for us to know that the contractor has a successful history of delivering such items and we would likely tend to weigh that strength more heavily in our source selection decision, as opposed to being overly concerned with the contractor’s performance history in terms of the non-critical items.

Another key characteristic of a good narrative is consistency. Narratives should be consistent with program metrics, the rating definitions, and the contract objectives. Let’s first look at some metrics that can be considered when writing narratives in order to make it more objective. The government collects many different metrics, or measures of performance, throughout the life of a contract. Some measures of performance include Earned Value Management, or EVM data, contract award fees, earned contract incentives, cost performance reports, and inspection reports. Sources of documentation such as program reviews, status reports, and schedule reports also provide great objective information that can be included in the narratives. The government should be sure that the grades they choose and the narratives written are consistent with these objective metrics. For instance, if our EVM data tells us that the contractor is not performing well in terms of schedule, we would expect to see a lower grade in the Schedule evaluation area along with a narrative which cites the EVM Schedule Performance Index, or SPI, which indicates that the project is behind schedule. Of course, a good narrative writer will also consider any mitigating circumstances that impacted the contractor’s ability to deliver on schedule, such as the late provision of government-furnished equipment or information, and will adjust the rating and narrative accordingly. Another example of consistency with program metrics is considering the percentage of award fee which has been earned by the contractor when evaluating performance. For example, if the contractor earned 90% of the award fee pool, we would expect to see higher grades on the evaluation than if the contractor had only earned 50% of the award fee pool. We would expect to see that the evaluation narratives address the percentage of earned award fee.

A thorough narrative will also document both the contractor’s problems and their solutions to those problems. For example, consider the case of a contractor managing a computer network that is plagued by viruses. While it is certainly relevant to document the problem with the viruses, it is also equally relevant to document the contractor’s efforts to prevent the viruses, such as through the implementation of new antivirus software, firewalls, and other security measures. The contractor’s history of success or failure relative to these attempted solutions is important to source selection officials who are considering the contractor to provide network support at their own organizations. Good narratives should also be as objective as possible and should be free of personal statements. For instance, statements such as “I believe” and “I think” are personal in nature and do not represent an objective measure of performance.

Prior to the performance or evaluation period, it is important for the government to be up front with the contractor in identifying performance expectations. Both the government and the contractor should have a copy of the Guidance for CPARS document and should discuss the rating definitions to be sure that both sides have a thorough understanding of the scale that will be used for evaluating contractor performance. An excellent time to do this is at the initial post award conference and annually, throughout the life of the contract.

During the performance period, communication and documentation are key. We should remember that problems, questions, and concerns should be communicated at the time that they occur; we should not wait until the end of the performance period to address an issue that could have been resolved today. It is always important to remember that the evaluation should never be a surprise to the contractor! Contractor performance should be documented on a regular basis, throughout the life of the contract. Status reports, earned value management data, award fee evaluations, program reviews, and earned contract incentives are all excellent sources of documentation that can be used when writing narratives.

Following the end of the performance period, it is a best practice to for the government to provide the contractor with a draft copy of the evaluation ratings and narratives. Doing so opens the lines of communication and may enable issues and differences of opinion to be worked out before the formal evaluation is entered into the system. Some contractors also find it helpful to provide a self-assessment to the government in order to facilitate communication. If the contractor expresses concerns regarding the report card, it is important for the government to take the time to acknowledge those concerns. It is often helpful to have a government-contractor meeting to discuss the ratings and narratives. Finally, it is a best practice not to rely on the automatic email notifications in CPARS as the sole way for the government to notify the contractor that the evaluation is available for comment. The government should make a concerted outreach to the contractor to be sure that they understand that the evaluation is available and to answer any questions that the contractor may have.

Congratulations! You have completed Lesson 2: Ratings and Narratives! In this lesson, you have learned the rating definitions and the principles for creating a quality narrative. You are now ready to move on to Lesson 3: Contractor Comments.

Welcome to Lesson 3: Contractor Comments! In this lesson, we will log in as the Contractor Representative and provide comments.

The Contractor Representative has 60 days to provide comments on the evaluation, if desired. If the Contractor Representative desires a meeting with the government to discuss the contents of the evaluation, they should request that meeting within 7 calendar days after receiving the transmittal email notification. However, if the Contractor Representative does not request the meeting until after the 7 day window has passed, the government is still strongly encouraged to consider holding that meeting if at all feasible. The Contractor Representative will review the administrative information in the evaluation to ensure that it is correct. They will also review the ratings, Assessing Official narratives, and recommendation statement, and may provide comments if desired. The guidelines and best practices that apply to the Assessing Official’s narratives also apply to the Contractor Representative’s comments. Comments should be detailed, descriptive, and supported by objective evidence wherever possible. The Contractor Representative’s comments are limited to 24,000 characters for each evaluation area as well as 24,000 characters for general comments. The Contractor Representative will also indicate if they concur or do not concur with the evaluation. It is important to note that the decision of whether to concur or non-concur drives the need for a Reviewing Official. If the Contractor concurs with the evaluation, no Reviewing Official is required and the Assessing Official may close the evaluation once it is returned. If the Contractor Representative indicates that they do not concur with the evaluation, they are ensured an additional level of government review because, in that case, only a Reviewing Official can close the evaluation. Finally, the Contractor Representative will complete their signature blocks and send the evaluation back to the Assessing Official.

Contractor Representatives should carefully note the CPARS use and handling instructions that are included in the transmittal notification email. Evaluations are considered source selection sensitive information. Disclosure of CPARS information to individuals without an official need to know may negatively impact a contractor’s competitive position. Therefore, Contractor Representatives are advised to limit access to their CPARS information to within their company and to only those employees with a valid need to know. In addition, the use of CPARS information is limited to source selections and responsibility determinations. Contractors should not include CPARS information in their advertising and promotional materials, but may include or reference an evaluation in future proposals submitted to the U.S. Government. Further, CPARS information should not be used to support pre-award surveys or production readiness reviews. While Contractor Representatives are not required to provide comments on the evaluation, it is a best practice to acknowledge receipt of the evaluation and provide any comments within 60 calendar days. Contractor Representatives should remember that the evaluation will be available for source selection on day 15 following the Assessing Official signature date, with or without contractor comments and whether or not is has been closed by the government.

Let’s take a look at the options for logging in to CPARS.

When our CPARS account is created by the Focal Point or Alternate Focal Point, we will receive an email notification with instructions for obtaining a temporary password. Once we have obtained the temporary password, we will be able to log in to the system. As a contractor user, we have two options for logging in to CPARS. We may use our email address and a password to log in, or may purchase a DoD PKI certificate to use in conjunction with the email address for accessing CPARS. It is recommended that contractor users purchase a PKI certificate, as this login method is more secure and does not require a password. A list of vendors offering DoD PKI certificates is available on the CPARS website. However, it is important to note that purchasing a DoD PKI certificate is optional, contractor users may still access CPARS without one by using a password. Furthermore, to help prevent unauthorized access, CPARS requires a one-time access code when logging in to the system with a password. The one-time access code is good for 24 hours and will be automatically emailed to the user when logging in.

When the Assessing Official forwarded the evaluation to us as the Contractor Representative, we received an email notification letting us know that the evaluation was ready for our review and action. Let’s log in as the Contractor Representative and perform the Contractor Comments step.

We can access the CPARS website at <https://www.cpars.gov>. The CPARS website contains lots of useful information that will assist us as we prepare the evaluation. The bottom of every page of the website provides the CPARS Customer Service Desk contact information. The CPARS Customer Service Desk is an excellent resource to assist us when we have questions regarding CPARS guidance, the workflow process, and how the automated system operates. At the top of the page there are options to view Help which includes the Federal Guidance for CPARS document as well as the software user manual*.* There is also an option to access the Learning Center which has links to available tutorials and training. Now, let’s log in to CPARS by clicking the Sign In link.

Next we are presented with the Notice and Consent Banner. After reading the banner, we must choose if we wish to log in with PKI or log in with a password. Let’s select Accept/Login with PKI.

Next, let’s log in as the Contractor Representative. The first time we log in to CPARS, we will use the Forgot/ Reset Password link to obtain a temporary password, which will be provided to us via email. Once we have received the temporary password, we can enter our email address and the temporary password at the log in screen.We should remember that, if we are using a PKI certificate, we will only need a password for our initial log in. Once we have logged in for the first time, we will be able to use our email address and our PKI certificate to log in in the future. Therefore, the Password field will no longer be displayed. Let’s log in by clicking the Login With PKI button.

The first time that we log in, we will prompted to enter our user profile information and change our temporary password*.* We will enter our Title and Organization. We will select our Citizenship from the dropdown list. We will enter our Phone Number. Next, we will enter our current temporary password then enter a New Password. We should refer to the password specifications on the screen to assist us in creating our new password. Next we will confirm our new password*.* We will receive a notification that our password and information have been changed and click OK.

When we have completed the information on this screen, we will click the Save User Password and Information button.

Next we will read the Rules of Behavior and click Accept.

Each screen of the CPARS application contains links to the Customer Service Desk, Guidance for CPARS document, and training opportunities.

We will select Pending Actions in order to see a list of evaluations on our To-Do List that are awaiting our action. We will find the evaluation on our To-Do List and notice that we have an action to Input Comments. We will open our evaluation by clicking on the Contract Number.

Next we will review the sections of the evaluation by working top to bottom. We’ll start with Contractor Information. We will review the information to ensure that it is correct. This information is pulled from your System for Award Management, or SAM, profile. If any of this information is incorrect, please update your SAM profile and notify your government point of contact. We’ll also review the Contract Information to ensure that the administrative contract information is accurate. We’ll move on to Miscellaneous Information, where we’ll review the Contract Effort Description to ensure that it fully covers the work we are contracted to perform as well as the Key Subcontractors and Effort Performed to ensure that the information is accurate. We can open the attachment by clicking the view button. We’ll take a look at Small Business Subcontracting then move to Ratings.

Once we have clicked on Ratings, we can click on each of the evaluation areas to review the Assessing Official’s ratings and narratives for that rating area. We can tell which evaluation areas have been rated because they are indicated by a red check mark. Let’s say we have a particular interest in the Management evaluation area. We will click on Management where we can review the rating and narrative we have received for the Management evaluation area. In this case, we will notice that we have received a rating of Marginal in Management. Let’s say that we do not agree with this rating and the Assessing Official’s supporting narrative; we would like to provide comments and request that the rating and narrative be changed. We can enter comments in the Contractor Representative Comments block below the Assessing Official Comments block. It is important to remember that our comments should be descriptive and should reference documentation and objective facts and measures of performance wherever possible. We have a total of 24,000 characters available for comments in each evaluation area and another 24,000 characters available for general comments. There is a character counter above the Contractor Representative Comments block to show how many characters we have entered in our comments so far.

Let’s move on to Assessor. Here, we can review any additional Assessing Official comments on the evaluation, as well as the Assessing Official’s recommendation statement and signature block information.

Next, we’ll move on to Contractor Rep. Here, we have the option to enter general comments on the evaluation. We must next indicate if we concur or do not concur with the government’s evaluation. We will remember that if we concur, the Assessing Official may close out the evaluation with no additional government review. If we do not concur, the Assessing Official must forward the evaluation to the Reviewing Official for a second level of review before it is closed. Since we did not concur with the rating and narrative we received for the Management evaluation area, we will select the “I do not concur with this evaluation and request that it be reevaluated” choice. Finally, we will complete the signature block by clicking Sign Now,and then we will return the evaluation to the Assessing Official by clicking the Validate and Send to the Assessing Official button.

Once we have sent the evaluation to the Assessing Official, the Assessing Official will be sent an email notification that the evaluation is ready for their review. At this point, the evaluation is no longer available on our To-Do List; and is now available on the Assessing Official's To-Do List for their action. We will receive a pop up message. The pop up message gives us the option to view the evaluation. It is important to note that this is our last opportunity to view and obtain a copy of the evaluation until the evaluation is completed Let’s click OK to view the evaluation. We can scroll through the evaluation and view our comments and concurrence or non-concurrence statement. We’ll also notice that the Contractor Representative signature blocks have now been completed. When we are finished viewing the evaluation, we’ll click the Home button at the top of the screen.

Next, let’s take a look at the Update Profile option. We can use Update Profile to update our user information such as our name, email address, and phone number. We will be prompted to review and update our information on an annual basis. It is important to make sure our email address is correct, as it is critical to the CPARS automated workflow. Once we had made any necessary changes, we would click Save User Information. Next, let's click Change Password. We can use Change Password to update our login password. Users with a PKI certificate will not have to update their password. If we do not have a PKI certificate, we will be required to change our password every 60 days. If we need to change our password, we would enter our current password and our new password, then confirm our new password. The specifications for passwords are noted at the bottom of the screen. Once we had made our changes, we would click Save Password.

Since we have completed the Contractor Comments step, we are ready to exit CPARS. We will do this by clicking Log Out.

Congratulations! You have completed Lesson 3: Contractor Comments. In this lesson, we logged in to CPARS as the Contractor Representative, reviewed the evaluation, provided comments, indicated concurrence or non-concurrence with the evaluation, signed the evaluation, and returned it to the Assessing Official within 60 days. You are now ready to move on to Lesson 4: Corporate Senior Contractor Access.

Welcome to Lesson 4: Corporate Senior Contractor Access! In this lesson, we will learn how to create Corporate Senior Contractor account and how to use the account to manage CPARS, review completed evaluations, and comment on Integrity records.

Corporate Senior Contractor access allows a designated corporate official to view in-process evaluations, when statused at the Contractor Representative level, and all completed evaluations. This allows the Corporate Senior Contractor to quickly identify evaluations that have been sent to the company for comment. Corporate Senior Contractors have the ability to run various reports such as status reports and ratings metrics reports. Additional features of this access allow the Senior Contractor to view past performance and respond to Integrity Records. Corporate Senior Contractor access is provided by submitting a request from the Access Info section on the CPARS website. If you need help with the various reports, please take the automated available reports tutorials available at [www. cpars.gov](http://www.alpha.cpars.gov/lc.htm) under the Training Center option.

Let’s take a look at how to obtain Corporate Senior Contractor Representative access. We will go to [www.cpars.gov](http://www.cpars.gov), we’ll select the hamburger menu at the top. We will then select Access Info. Under the
I am an Entity User and I am...” option, we will select the Reviewing Records and Managing Users option. Now let’s select Request Corporate Senior Contractor Representative Access. We will be presented with a screen to get a verification code. We will enter our email address and click Send Code. Once we have received our code via email, we will enter it in the Verification Code field and click Confirm Code. Let’s complete our Corporate Senior Contractor access request. We’ll enter our first name in the First Name block and our last name in the Last Name block. When entering our Name, we’ll be sure to enter only our first and last name excluding any prefixes or suffixes. We’ll enter our Title, select our country of citizenship show animation, Phone Number*,* and our Organization. Finally, we must enter our Unique Entity ID and click Add. In order to be added to the account, the requesting user’s email address and Unique Entity ID must match the email address and Unique Entity ID of their Data Entry or Administrator role in their System for Award Management (SAM.gov) profile. More than one Unique Entity ID can be added.

After we have read the User Responsibilities, let’s click the Agree and Submit Request button*.* As we can see, our Corporate Senior Contractor Representative access has been created. We will click OK.

Let’s log in as a Senior Contractor Representative and take a look at some of the options available to us.

Here we are at the Home screen. Our first option is To-Do List. This option allows the Senior Contractor Representative to identify all evaluations that have been forwarded to the corporation, its divisions, or its subsidiaries, for contractor review and comment. Here we have the option to filter our To-Do List. We can include all, filter by a Document Number, User, or Unique Entity ID. Let’s leave the default of Include All selected and click Show To-Do List.The To Do List displays the Document Number, Record Type, Unique Entity ID, Period of Performance/Action Date, Role, Action Required, Assigned Date, Due Date, and the contractor User assigned. The evaluations identified on this list require contractor review and comment and should be returned to the Government by the required due date or they will be closed by the Government without contractor review and comment. It is important to remember that Senior Contractor Representative access is read only access to the system. This access will not allow you to respond to an evaluation. If the incorrect contractor is assigned, you will need to contact your government point of contact to have the access changed. The Customer Service Desk cannot make this change.

Let’s move on. The next option we’ll look at is View Performance Records. This option allows the Senior Contractor Representative to view their organization’s past performance evaluations and Integrity Reports available for source selection purposes*.* Our two options are Assessment Reports and Integrity Reports. Let’s click on Assessment Reports. Assessment Reports are essential to Senior Contractor Representatives as they allow them to view their organization’s past performance evaluations available for source selection. We can choose to enter specific qualifiers or retrieve all reports by clicking the Show Report button. It is best to enter as few qualifiers as possible, therefore we will not enter any qualifiers and click the Show Report button. Here is the list of our evaluations that are available for source selection. If we want to view the individual evaluation we can click the View option to view the evaluation as an HTML or the XML option to view the evaluation as an XML document.

Now, let’s take a look at the Integrity Reports option. We’ll do this by clicking on Integrity Reports. Integrity Reports allows Corporate Senior Contractor users to view Integrity data, provide comments on Integrity records, view proceedings information, and System for Award Management (SAM) exclusion data.

Let’s take a look at our Integrity Report in detail.

At the top of the screen we can see our entity name, Unique Entity ID, and CAGE displayed. Next we can see the list of record types. All Integrity record types will display in this table regardless of whether we have that record type or not. Next to the record types we can see a column called Records. If we have that record type, a Yes will display in this column. If we do not have that record type, a No will be displayed. The next column over is the Count column. This column tells us how many of that record type we have.

If we wish to look at the individual records that make up the count column, we click on the Yes. Let’s say that we want to see the individual records for the Termination for Cause record type. We will click the Yes next to Termination for Cause. As we can see, the report has now expanded to include a Details of Selected Report section. This lists all the Termination for Cause records that we have. We can see the Report Date, the Report Type, and, where applicable for other record types, the Contract/Grant Funding Number.

Let’s click on the first Termination for Cause with a Report Date of 06/12/2015.

Now, let’s take a look at our Termination for Cause. We can use the Click Here option to open the attachment that was uploaded when the Termination for Cause was created.Next, we can see the basic Document Information and the Awardee Information. If we scroll down, we can see the contractor comments section. Here we can see any comments that were previously entered, to include the date the comments were entered, the name of the contractor that entered them, and the comments. We also have the ability to enter comments here using the Enter Optional Comments Section. Let’s enter a comment. We will start by entering our name in the Name field. Next we will enter our email address and phone number. Finally, we will enter our comments. We can enter up to 2000 characters at one time. There is a character counter below the Comments block to show how many characters we have entered in our comments so far. Once we have finished entering our comments we will click Save Comments*.* We can provide an unlimited number of comments.

Let’s move on. Next, we have the Proceedings Information as entered by us in SAM. This section will only contain information if we have entered any Proceedings Information into SAM.

Next, we have the Performance Evaluations section. This section displays how many evaluations are available for source selection for our Unique Entity ID.

Finally, we have the SAM Exclusion Data section. This section will only contain information if we have SAM Exclusion Data, indicating that we are disqualified from receiving any federal government contracts.

The last thing we will cover is the Update profile option. This option can be used if we need to add additional Unique Entity IDs to our user profile. We would enter the Unique Entity ID and click Add. We then need to click Save User Information to ensure the new Unique Entity ID gets added to our profile. It’s important to remember that in order to obtain access to a Unique Entity ID, the requesting user’s email address and Unique Entity ID must match the email address and Unique Entity ID of their Data Entry or Administrator role in their System for Award Management (SAM.gov) profile, or the Corporate Senior Contractor Representative access to that Unique Entity ID will be denied.

Since we have are done looking at the Corporate Senior Contractor Representative options, we are ready to exit CPARS. We will do this by clicking Log Out.

If we have questions regarding CPARS, the Customer Service Desk is a ready resource to assist us. The Customer Service Desk can be reached at phone number 207-438-1690 or email cpars-helpdesk@us.navy.mil. Customer service is available Monday through Friday, from 6:30 am through 6:00 pm, Eastern Time. The CPARS website also contains much information to assist us including the CPARS Guidance document, the CPARS User Manual, and information on additional training. The CPARS website is located at https://www.cpars.gov.

Congratulations! You have completed Lesson 4: Corporate Senior Contractor Access! In this lesson, we learned how to apply for and use a Corporate Senior Contractor Representative account. You have now completed Contractor Overview training.