### 

**Supervisor’s Guide**

**to**

**Performance Management**

**and**

**Employee Professional**

**Development**

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This guide has been developed to assist supervisors and employees to ensure a meaningful, productive and comprehensive performance management process. These guidelines are not intended to be “all inclusive” and supervisors are encouraged to consult with the Department of Human Resources for questions or additional assistance.

# Performance Management Overview - Performance management refers to a broad systemic process which should encompass the following:

* 1. Provide employees with timely and continuous feedback
  2. Measure actual performance against expected performance standards
  3. Provide an opportunity for the employee and the supervisor to exchange ideas and feelings about job performance
  4. Identify employee training and development needs, and plan for career growth
  5. Support alignment of department / university and employee goals
  6. Provide the basis for determining eligibility for compensation adjustments based on merit (when applicable)
  7. The evaluation form is merely a tool to facilitate dialogue / discussion
  8. Successful evaluations should:
     1. Enhance employee motivation, commitment, and productivity
     2. Identify goals and objectives for the employee
     3. Satisfy the basic human need for recognition
     4. Identify process improvement opportunities
     5. Identify employee development opportunities

1. **Defining performance standards** - Employees should be informed of the performance level needed to successfully perform his or her work. More specifically, supervisors should work collaboratively with employees to develop performance expectations describing the conditions that exist when a job is done well. When developing performance expectations, the following criteria should be employed:
   1. **Specific** – The performance expectation should be one that can be witnessed or observed, defined, and concrete.
   2. **Measurable** – You should be able to assess, evaluate, and distinguish between different performance levels. The end result can be identified in terms of quantity, quality, time lines, acceptable standards, or procedures. Many say the work they do is not measurable. But if it is not measurable, how then do they know if a goal has been met and if their contributions have value? Definitive results can be identified for all work.
   3. **Achievable** – Each performance expectation should be one that can be achieved by the employee without barriers that hinder its completion. However, it should not be so easily achieved that the employee is not challenged nor so difficult that the employee becomes frustrated. It should be reasonable.
   4. **Realistic** – Each expectation should be an actual requirement of the employee’s job and within the parameters of the position description.
   5. **Time Bound** – Each expectation should have a time frame associated with it – daily, weekly, etc.
   6. Some factors for which expectations may be set and measured include:
      1. Job Knowledge
      2. Quality of Work
      3. Quantity of Work
      4. Work Habits
      5. Cooperation or Ability to Work with Others
      6. Oral and Written Communications

# Employee responsibilities / Employee Self Evaluations / Employee Engagement – Effective performance management processes should be a collaborative effort between the employee and the supervisor. The following should be taken into consideration:

* 1. Performance evaluation is most effective when employees are actively involved in open discussion about their own performance expectations and about how they are doing in meeting those expectations.
  2. Employees should be encouraged to conduct a self evaluation, because involving the employee in the performance evaluation process will make it a meaningful, worthwhile experience for the following reasons:
     + employee engagement increases,
     + most employees need and want to have their voices heard,
     + employees are more likely to consider the system as being fair if they have involvement and understand the process, and
     + employees are more likely to demonstrate genuine commitment to goals and performance when they are actively involved in the discussion / process.
  3. Ensure employee has opportunities to offer suggestions, ideas and input. This is a collaborative process and employee should be actively engaged.

# Steps of Effective Performance Evaluation

* 1. Review - Look at the previous evaluation for:
     1. Previous deficiencies in performance; Have they been corrected or do they continue to be a problem? If deficiencies continue, note them in the evaluation. Omitting a continued deficiency in subsequent evaluations can be interpreted as a sign that the deficiency has been corrected.
     2. Dramatic change in performance; Determine whether your rating of the employee is consistent or whether the performance actually has changed. When there is a significant negative change in performance, the supervisor should give the employee notice, prior to the annual evaluation, that the next evaluation will be significantly lower unless substantial improvement is made.
  2. Analysis - Analyze performance to identify gaps between expected performance and actual performance
  3. Analyze the causes of gaps - Management often assumes that where actual performance falls short of expected performance, employees must try harder. However, it is very important to analyze why a gap exists between expected performance and actual performance to determine if there is a cause other than inadequate employee efforts. Most causes will fall into three categories:
     + Organization or Environment-Related – These gaps can stem from the organizational culture, leadership style or management practices, organizational structure, reporting relationships or chain of command, inadequate resources (funds, staff, equipment, training, information, etc.) and so forth. Some examples: employee reports to more than one supervisor, performance expectations were not communicated, or expectations were not met because the employee was overburdened due to staff cuts.
     + System or Process-Related – System or process-related causes can relate to any process within an organization that becomes a roadblock to an employee meeting performance expectations. Some examples: time frames or procedures are burdensome, procedures conflict, someone else didn’t meet their time frames, or the information reporting system is inadequate.
     + Personal – These are gaps that are within the employee’s realm of control. They can, for example, deal with situations that are going on in home life that affect work performance or depend on the employee’s physical or emotional abilities. Lack of effort, motivation, or concern for the agency’s efficiency can also fall under this category. Exercise caution when dealing with personal issues – remember to keep it job related, focusing on how job performance is affected. If an employee alleges that a medical condition is the cause of poor performance, contact your human resource officer or legal counsel at once. Do not attempt to resolve employees’ personal problems.
     + The cause of a performance gap may overlap a couple categories. It is imperative that you and your employee communicate to identify the cause of the gap and arrive at solutions to eliminate or minimize the gap.
  4. Select and design an action plan to close the gaps – a plan that meets business needs, performance needs, training needs, or work environment needs
  5. Implement the plan
  6. Follow up - Measure and evaluate the impact of the plan on the performance

# Meeting / Setting logistics

* 1. At least one week in advance, schedule a meeting with the employee and inform him or her of what to prepare for, i.e. self-evaluation, etc.
  2. Complete your review and documentation of the employee’s performance, considering observations, records, and feedback from others. Focus on what the employee did and didn’t do, not the employee’s character or personality, unless the character or personality affects job performance and the employee’s effectiveness to the organization.
  3. Arrange for a private office or room free of distractions for the meeting.
  4. During the meeting:
     + Put the employee at ease as much as possible.
     + Discuss the purpose of the meeting and what you hope to accomplish.
     + Go through your evaluation. Be specific and candid in presenting your evaluation. Listen to employee feedback, take notes, and ask questions.
     + If employee has completed a self evaluation, their ratings can be compared and discussed during this time as well.
     + Share feedback received from others (if applicable or appropriate).
     + Discuss areas of disagreement and attempt to reach consensus when possible and/or where appropriate.
     + Discuss areas for improvement and set performance expectations for the next evaluation period.
     + Establish a realistic and appropriate improvement plan if performance is below expectations.
     + Encourage the employee to record his/her comments about the evaluation, and have the employee sign the copy to be filed. If the employee refuses to sign, supervisors should, in the presence of the employee and a witness, indicate on the copy that the employee was shown the material, was requested to sign acknowledging that the material was read, and that the employee refused to sign. It should be emphasized that by signing the copy, the employee does not indicate agreement – only that the material has been read.
     + Provide the employee with a copy and forward original copy to Human Resources for placement in the employee’s official personnel file.

1. **Giving Constructive Performance Feedback / Discussing Unsatisfactory Performance** - It is very difficult for a supervisor to address a performance issue with an employee without arousing some defensiveness. How then can you call attention to a performance deficiency in a way that is constructive?
   1. **Express your concern** – Communicate openly and clearly. Use "I-messages" such as "I’ve noticed a backlog in unprocessed applications." Avoid beginning with a question or a tone that appears you are judgemental and accusatory. Be tactful and direct – not so subtle that you create misunderstanding.
   2. **Understand the whole story** – Follow up your concern with a question that invites communication about the situation. For example, "What do you think is contributing to the backlog?" Listen carefully, ask questions, and confirm your understanding. Before you can solve the problem, you need to thoroughly understand the situation.
   3. **Reinforce correct performance or behavior** – Sometimes you may discover that poor performance is a result of good intentions. For example, suppose that the backlog of unprocessed applications is due to the fact that the employee reviews each application twice to ensure accuracy. Reinforce the concern for accuracy, while attempting to seek solutions to remedy the backlog.
   4. **Discuss alternatives** – Now you can discuss ways to rectify the situation. Draw out the employee’s ideas. If you have a suggestion or if there is only one course of action, state it. Openly discuss the pros and cons of any alternative(s).
   5. **Develop a written plan of action** – Agreeing on a workable solution leads both the employee and you to commit to resolving the problem. Putting the plan in writing ensures commitment to action.
   6. **Follow up** – Monitor progress and periodically provide feedback. This reinforces for the employee your commitment in resolving the situation.
2. **Mistakes to avoid** - There are many errors that supervisors unconsciously make during performance evaluation. A few of the most common are:
   1. Central Tendency – Rating everyone at or near the middle of the scale to avoid the need to justify extreme positions.
   2. Positive/Negative Leniency – Rating higher or lower than the employee deserves because you want to motivate them to do better or because you think there is always room for improvement.
   3. Halo (or Horns) Effect – A single favorable or unfavorable incident colors the evaluator’s judgment of the employee’s overall performance.
   4. Recency Effect – A recent event colors the perception of the employee’s performance for the entire period.
   5. Similar to Me – The tendency to rate employees similar to yourself higher and those not similar lower.

# Supervisor Responsibility

* 1. At the core of all successful evaluation formats are clearly defined and explicitly communicated standards or expectations of employee performance. Employees must understand what is expected of them.
  2. Focus on quality and quantity of feedback
  3. Be objective and non-threatening and avoid using inflammatory and emotional language
  4. Listen and ensure a two way communication process
  5. Make it meaningful
  6. Provide guidance
  7. Performance feedback should be regular and continuous. Not just once a year. Evaluations are not a “gotcha” time nor should issues or performance shortcomings be a surprise to the employee
  8. Performance feedback should be balanced, capturing not only performance deficiencies and issues, but should also reflect accomplishments and acknowledgment for what has been done well.

1. **Professional Development Plan -** Having a professional development plan is an important part of career development. A development plan should lay out an employee’s career objectives and the path required towards achieving them. It will also set up clear expectations between the employee and their supervisor. Notable components for a professional development plan should include:
   1. Identify career or professional development goals
   2. Identify resources that support goal
      1. Training
      2. Leadership development opportunities
      3. Committee / Board / Professional Association involvement
      4. Mentoring relationships
   3. Support should be provided which facilitates pursuit of those goals or involvement in goal related activities
   4. Where practical and appropriate incorporate professional development as part of performance standard.

# Legal considerations – Both employers and employees need to be aware and understand the legal issues involved in performance management. While negative evaluations and/or addressing performance deficiencies may not, in and of themselves, be cause for legal action, it is imperative to ensure the process is objective, accurate and supported by evidence and examples.

* 1. Ensure that the evaluation is accurate and truly reflective of the employee’s actual level of performance.
  2. Ensure that the evaluation encompasses the entire review period and reflects performance variations during the period.
  3. Ensure that evaluations are based on what employees are actually required to do as stated on job description as otherwise assigned.
  4. Be cautious in making subjective judgments.
  5. Stick to facts that can be documented. Keep a record or notes in a working file, if need be, of occurrences that might be disputed.
  6. Avoid the appearance of prejudice or discrimination. Never say anything that could be interpreted as meaning that the evaluation was based on a favorable or unfavorable reaction to the employee’s race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, veterans status, marital status, etc.
  7. Avoid evaluation of personality traits and attitude. Focus on job expectations, i.e. behavioral, quantity, quality, etc.
  8. Make certain evaluations are consistent with other disciplinary or performance records.

# Seeking additional assistance --

# For questions or any assistance, feel free to contact the Department of Human Resources at 501-569-3180.

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