

Employee Performance Evaluations: A Guide for Supervisors and Managers

INTRODUCTION:

The value of an effective employee performance evaluation system cannot be overemphasized. The mission of each department, and by extension, the mission of all of Metropolitan Government could not be achieved without a competent, motivated workforce. To that end, the employee performance evaluation is the management process developed to help us achieve our long-term goals by building on our collective knowledge, skills, and abilities. Because conducting performance evaluations is one of the primary responsibilities of a supervisor, this guide has been prepared to assist you in carrying out this important assignment. A similar document has been prepared for employees and is available for distribution if desired.

Performance evaluations link employee performance requirements and employee development to the department's overall business plans. The performance evaluation process requires the active participation of every employee. Performance evaluations therefore help ensure employees are given every opportunity to effectively meet the performance requirements of their job.

An annual review also encapsulates many "best practices" of workplace success; it allows an opportunity for you and your employee:

- to establish goals for the future;
- to strengthen the relationship between you and the employee;
- to open up channels of communication;
- to evaluate past performance;
- to identify areas that might require improvement; and
- to assist employees in creating professional development plans that will help them perform at their highest individual potential.

Metro's new performance management system reflects 21st century management practices. In the old model, performance reviews tended to be one-way, adversarial, oriented toward the past, and universally despised. In the new model, performance evaluations:

- involve an ongoing process of planning, goal-setting, feedback, and review
- are comprised of a series of discussions between supervisor and employee (rather than an annual task)
- focus on the future more than on the past
- focus on improving employee performance and career development (rather than on the employee's mistakes)
- are used to build trust, open communication, and better relationships at all level of the organization.

Our goal is to make performance evaluations part of the culture, where you (the supervisor) model the right performance behavior. We must link performance evaluations to the objectives of your department.

The implementation of the new system requires four basic steps:

- **the planning session** – where supervisor and employee mutually agree on job responsibilities, goals, and the measurement criteria.
- **regular performance reviews** – where supervisor and employee meet every couple of months to track progress against the goals.
- **ongoing coaching for improvement** – where supervisor and employee identify areas for improvement and the supervisor provides coaching and needed resources.
- **a formal, year-end performance review** – where supervisor and employee agree on performance versus expectations and plan for the next year.

No effective performance evaluation can be considered complete without some discussion and assessment of the employee's potential for professional and career growth. It is your responsibility to work with your staff to identify those paths, including any appropriate training avenues. Performance Management is an ongoing dialogue between manager and employee—dialogue that identifies expectations, ongoing feedback and coaching, development planning, and follow-up.

The key ingredients in a successful evaluation are: identifying job standards; completing the performance evaluations in a timely manner; being consistent in measuring and communicating the extent to which those standards are being met; and providing opportunities for feedback and clarification.

BENEFITS

- Performance evaluations help you better understand the Business Plan and what role you play in helping to implement it.
- It ensures a concentrated interest is taken in enhancing the development program of every employee.
- Evaluations provide more focused and accurate recognition of your performance as an employee.
- It gives you a better appreciation of your worth as an employee through increased communication with your manager and continual feedback.

PROCEDURES FOR PREPARING THE EMPLOYEE EVALUATION FORM:

The evaluation areas contained in the enclosed form are intended to serve as guidelines for discussion. The completion of the actual form is not as significant as the discussion of performance that will naturally occur, a discussion which should foster timely two-way communication between you and the employee. The evaluation document also becomes a record of that discussion for future reference.

The evaluation review form can be completed in a couple of different ways.

1. You complete the form, which is then reviewed with the employee. This method may be the most familiar approach.
2. The employee completes the form. The employee has the opportunity to provide his/her perspective during the preparation of the evaluation form. This approach frequently generates the most productive discussions, as both of you will have assessed the performance relative to job standards from your own perspectives, prior to the joint discussion.

Whichever method is used, agreement should be reached in advance on the approach. As you review the actual evaluation form to use as a guideline in assessing your employee's performance, please keep in mind that the **expected** level of performance is a rating of 2 (acceptable) on the rating scale. On this continuum of 1 (unacceptable) to 4 (exemplary), a value of 2 demonstrates that the performance has been judged **acceptable** and consistently meets the position standards. Significant deviations from a 2 rating—either above or below—should be documented specifically on the form.

Please provide your staff member with advance notice of the evaluation process. Each employee should have sufficient time to reflect on his/her performance prior to the actual evaluation meeting.

EMPLOYEE EVALUATION DISCUSSION:

The performance review must include a planned discussion between you and the employee. As the discussion should focus primarily on performance, please make every effort to separate the discussion from mention of salary issues. (Salary discussions during performance reviews have a tendency to skew the results in favor of exaggerated appraisals.) The performance discussion should concentrate on the development of, or clarification of, clear performance criteria: what are the specific job responsibilities and what performance standards will be used to measure the employee's success in achieving them.

When giving feedback, it is useful to focus first on the positive aspects of the employee's performance. To reinforce the two-way communication process of successful evaluations, your employees should be encouraged to identify their most important achievements over the evaluation period.

An employee must also be informed of any incidents of marginal or unsatisfactory performance. When addressing these performance shortfalls, you may find it helpful to seek the employee's input in identifying these deficiencies. Structuring developmental plans and timetables to improve that performance level should be arrived at together. If the employee does not have a clear understanding of where his/her performance falls short, or how he/she can correct any deficient behaviors, the employee will be frustrated, unproductive, and will almost certainly fail to improve.

It is important to allow enough time **and** privacy during the evaluation process to permit ample opportunity for the employee to respond and to contribute. Every attempt should be made to avoid assessments that are based on subjective impressions or in comparison with other employees under your supervision. The most successful evaluations concentrate on **concrete examples** of job performance.

The end result of a successful appraisal process is that you and the employee feel that the outcome has been fairly determined, using objective criteria related to the position requirements, and that you both have had the opportunity to respond to the assessment. While this will not always mean that the employee agrees fully with the results of the performance review, the employee should be able to sign-off on the form with the belief that the evaluation process has been communicated adequately. There is space on the evaluation form for the employee to add any comments.

The completed evaluation form is maintained in the employee's regular file in the department's Human Resources Office, and another copy is sent to Metro HR. The employee should receive a copy of the completed form.



Gather Data

Performance evaluations should not be a one time event. Supervisors are encouraged to gather data regarding employee performance in a systematic manner throughout the year. The performance review is the culmination of the data you have gathered throughout the year.

Performance Evaluation Begins with a Conversation

As a supervisor, your role is to set expectations, gather data, and provide on going feedback to your employees to assist them in utilizing their skills, expertise, and ideas to produce results. To provide this direction, you should communicate to employees what is expected of them, define satisfactory performance for those expectations, and then

monitor and evaluate the performance on an ongoing basis. See the example handout entitled "Conversation # 1."

The annual performance evaluation should provide a comparison of actual on-the-job performance to established performance measurement standards. It is expected that every regular employee be evaluated annually.

Annual performance evaluations are the final phase of an effective performance management system. As a best practice, we recommend that the process start with performance planning between the supervisor and the employee in which they discuss expectations, performance standards, and objectives for the next year. The performance management process both ends and begins anew with the Annual Performance Evaluation.

Feedback

Feedback is a process by which effective performance is reinforced and less-than-desirable performance is corrected. Feedback should be information that highlights the relationship between what is expected and what has been accomplished after the work is performed or the action is taken.

Feedback can take many forms; it can be informal or formal. It can be given as praise in the form of reward and recognition, or it can be corrective in the form of disciplinary or corrective action.

Development Planning

Development planning allows your employee to specify training or other activities that he/she feels would enhance his/her performance or would provide the employee the opportunity for additional responsibilities.

If the employee can identify how the department will benefit from his/her completing the development activities, the supervisor should give those activities additional attention.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Schedule the interview.
- Set consistent follow-up goals between evaluations.
- Keep accurate records on employee performance.
- Plan out the interview with adequate detail and allow plenty of time.
- If you choose to do so, request an annual report of activity and achievement from the employee.

ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITY AND ACHIEVEMENT

WHEN TO PREPARE AN EVALUATION

The performance evaluation process is continuous throughout the career of all professional employees. It should be emphasized that although employees are evaluated at least once a year, a supervisor may initiate a performance evaluation at any time he/she believes it will be helpful, or at reasonable intervals upon a staff member's request.

DEFINITION OF RATINGS

| RATINGS | RELATION TO POSITION REQUIREMENTS |
|--------------------------|--|
| (1) UNACCEPTABLE: | <p>A Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) will be initiated for any individual performance rating of Unacceptable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Performance does not meet minimum acceptable standards, expectations, and requirements of the job, or is below what can be expected of average performance• Employee requires a high level of supervision or assistance to accomplish work results• Improvement is necessary to meet desired level of performance results <p>Staff in this category are performing marginally and are not meeting the requirements of the position. Specific plans should be outlined for correcting areas of below standard performance. Deficiencies should be clearly identified and a timeline for improvement established, including follow-up evaluation(s). Employees in this category should be cautioned about the consequence of continued less than satisfactory work.</p> |
| (2) ACCEPTABLE: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Performance meets acceptable standards, expectations, and requirements• Performance contributes what is expected of a qualified, experienced employee performing in this position• Employee is expected to continue development of new knowledge, skills or abilities |
| (3) COMMENDABLE: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consistently meets standards and expectations, regularly exceeds them, and shows initiative in additional assignments• Successfully completes all responsibilities, even for projects that require versatile skills• Employee strives to grow professionally through development activities |

(4) EXEMPLARY:

- Performance is noticeably superior; outstanding performance is clearly evident; performance is at a level that is a “stretch”
- Performance shows exceptional initiative to plan and anticipate problems, and employee takes appropriate independent action
- Performance requires little or no supervision to produce exceptional work results

(NA) NOT APPLICABLE:

- This rating can be used when the category does not apply to the employee’s job duties or it may be too soon to rate the employee’s performance in this category

It is important for the supervisor to complete a Performance Improvement Plan form when an employee rates an Unacceptable (1) score. Have this form completed and reviewed by the department head prior to presenting it to the employee. This form is used to document performance and behavior problems that need corrective action and that may lead to possible disciplinary action. Documentation is critical for this type of rating.

In the event the employee does not improve within the time specified (typically 30 or 60 days) after having received the Performance Improvement Plan, corrective or disciplinary action may be implemented. The specified timeline does not preclude immediate disciplinary action if the employee’s performance worsens during the rating period.

THE EVALUATION INTERVIEW

The performance appraisal process is continuous throughout the employee's career. All professional employees must see and have the opportunity to comment on their evaluations. The communication should be two-way: the supervisor should use the opportunity to convey his/her assessment of the staff member's work, and encourage the staff member to comment on his/her own work. This is a good time to solicit suggestions for improving how the job is done.

There is space on the form for the employee’s comments and signature. The employee's signature acknowledges that he/she has seen and had an opportunity to discuss the evaluation, not necessarily that he/she agrees with it. After the supervisor and staff member have discussed and signed the evaluation, the supervisor should give a copy to the employee for his/her records. If they wish, employees may append the evaluation. "An employee shall have the right to append to his/her evaluation a written statement presenting his/her concerns as they relate to the evaluation. This will be

attached to the evaluation, become a part of the permanent record, and will be the final documentation associated with the performance evaluation." With an unsatisfactory rating, the supervisor should schedule a follow-up interview within three months to review the employee's progress.

DURING THE EVALUATION INTERVIEW

- Put the employee at ease and establish rapport.
- Structure the interview; inform the employee of the rationale of the evaluation process.
- Do not rush the interview or do all the talking; allow adequate time for interaction with the employee.
- Be as specific as possible about performance activities; explain the "why" of the rating.
- Do not get sidetracked or bogged down in detail.
- Do not over-praise.
- Involve the employee adequately in the planning/goal setting process.
- Listen positively; pursue new information or suggestions the employee offers.
- Do not over-emphasize the negatives. Be positive where possible.
- Write down all the key points, goals, objectives and target dates mutually agreed upon.
- Close with a summary that leaves the employee with a clear understanding of where he/she stands, what is expected to meet performance standards, and how (and when) the supervisor will provide assistance.
- Reassure the employee of your interest in his/her progress and indicate willingness to have continued communication.

AFTER THE EVALUATION INTERVIEW

- Reinforce the interview with on-going contact on the job.
- Take notes on the outcome; track follow-up agreements and commitments.
- Concentrate equal attention on all employees; show adequate concern for average and better employees as well as marginal or problem individuals.
- Follow up on training and development commitments.
- At the beginning of the next discussion, review progress made toward improvement and how effective the employee's efforts have been.

EVALUATION ROUTING PROCEDURE

Please send a complete copy of all evaluations to the Department of Human Resources, including probationary employees' evaluations. A copy of the evaluation must also be placed in the employee's personnel file.

IMPORTANT: Supervisors must contact Human Resources and/or the Appointing Authority or his designee, before meeting with employees whose evaluations result in an overall unsatisfactory rating.

Reasons for Doing Effective Employee Performance Management

- Employees want to know from their supervisors where they stand. They value knowing what is expected of them, especially in today's ever-changing work environment. Honest and consistent feedback about individual job performance helps the employee know the performance that is being done well, what needs to be changed or corrected, and results or consequences of his/her performance.
- Employees who are self-motivated achievers and consistent performers will succumb to frustration and disillusionment if there is no distinction between their performance and the performance of the mediocre or poor performer. Hence, the four-point scale is a more effective instrument by which to rank order your employees.
- The performance evaluation meeting provides the employee and the supervisor with an opportunity to have a conversation about performance goals and objectives, and to explore objectives for the next evaluation cycle.
- Honest and accurate performance feedback provides managers, supervisors and employees with an opportunity to set performance goals for individual employees and the team.
- Performance evaluations are a critical tool in assessing the organization's training and staffing development needs.
- Performance evaluations serve as the first step in addressing problematic performance.

Supervisor's Performance Evaluation Checklist

- Keep a file on all employees that work in your workgroup and include information about things that occurred throughout the evaluation cycle, such as work on a special project, citizen commendations, training, citizen complaints, performance discussions, excessive tardiness or excessive use of sick leave, etc. This file should be purged annually.
- Provide feedback to your employees, throughout the evaluation cycle, not just at evaluation time. Timely and consistent performance feedback is essential in detecting and correcting poor performance early in the evaluation cycle. Early detection will help the employee redirect his/her performance to a more suitable level. The annual performance evaluation meeting should not be the first time the supervisor has discussed performance with the employee.
- Review the job description to see if there are any changes in the work being performed by the employee. All employees should have a job description that specifically details the essential functions of their position. In addition to providing the basis for analyzing potential disability accommodations, job descriptions play an important role in the performance evaluation process because they provide the basic understanding of what the employee's job duties are.
- Using the job description as a springboard, the supervisor should have a set of performance expectations or performance goals for each employee. These expectations should include basic standards of performance related to job duties, but also should contain elements such as teamwork and communications.

- Consider what changes may have occurred in the organization and/or in the daily operations during the evaluation cycle. Organizational or operational changes may have directly impacted the employee's performance, i.e., introduction of new technology, new procedures, and staff shortages.
- The supervisor's rating and remarks should reflect the actual performance, i.e., exceptional or exceeds standards, or below standard.
- Do not let recent events dominate the evaluation. Doing so leads to frustration in the strong performer who wonders if you were paying attention the rest of the year, and gives the message to the problematic performer that he/she only has to perform right before evaluation time.
- Evaluate each performance element individually. Do not let the deficient or excellent performance in one element determine the tone of the entire evaluation.
- Remember that the discussion about the employee's performance does not always have to result in agreement between the supervisor and the employee, but it does mean there has to be an understanding. In other words, the employee may not like the standard or performance expectations, but when he/she leaves the performance evaluation meeting, the employee understands what is expected.