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SERVICE · SUPPORT · SOLUTIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Performance Management and Development Guide

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A Guide to Planning, Engaging, Evaluating, Coaching, and Developing Employee Performance

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Section I: Introduction to Performance Management and Development

Performance management and development is commonly known as a communication practice by which and leaders are accountable for establishing and adjusting performance expectations and job goals, identifying development opportunities, giving ongoing feedback and coaching regularly, recognizing and evaluating performance results. In other words, it is a continuous practice of planning, coaching, engaging, evaluating, and developing employee performance.

Supervisors most likely conduct these activities on a daily basis for their employees, but common reactions supervisors have to formal performance evaluations include some reluctance, and thoughts that performance evaluation is time consuming and offers minimal value. Fortunately, many of these reactions can be avoided when supervisors know the importance of managing the performance of their employees and utilize the tools to make performance management and development more efficient and easier.

Understanding the State of Ohio's formal performance evaluation cycle and related processes will benefit supervisors and their employees by:

1. Informing employees of the agency mission and strategic goals as well as the performance expectations and goals supervisors establish for employees;
2. Informing employees of their progress toward achieving their performance expectations;
3. Improving employee performance and productivity;
4. Strengthening supervisor and employee work relationships and improving communication with employees;
5. Developing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of employees; and
6. Recognizing the accomplishments and contributions of employees.

By managing employee performance more effectively, supervisors will have more time to accomplish their own work. Note that, while performance documentation is created and maintained within the ePerformance system, most of the activities surrounding performance management and development are completed outside the system. Although the ePerformance system will be referenced throughout this guide, the remainder will provide readers with best practices in performance management and development that are not related to system use, as well as evidence demonstrating why and how effective performance management and development will assist both supervisors and employees.

Section II: Performance Management and Development Cycle

Performance management and development is often illustrated as a cycle, but it is important to understand that most performance management and development practices need to take place daily. The State of Ohio's Performance Management and Development Cycle consists of three major phases that occur in a continuous loop.

1. Plan: During this phase, a collaborative effort between the supervisor and employee occurs which involves reviewing the job description, identifying critical performance objectives, developing goals, setting expectations, explaining how an employee can meet and exceed standards, and discussing training objectives to help the employee develop competencies or identify career development objectives.

2. Engage: Supervisors are expected to engage employees as much as possible in their performance by providing scheduled as well as in-the-moment feedback and recognition to ensure positive behaviors are reinforced and the right skills are acknowledged consistently. When employees are noticed, appreciated, and empowered, they are more likely to become and remain engaged, which results in a higher level of performance. Remember, in-the-moment feedback discussions should be documented by supervisors to support completion of the Evaluate phase. Feedback can be either positive or constructive; both types of feedback should be provided to employees as appropriate. Contrary to popular practice, performance management and development is not just a quarterly or annual evaluation exercise, but rather an ongoing communication practice that occurs throughout the year to ensure employees are engaged and productive.

3. Evaluate: During the year-end evaluation phase, supervisors gather specific examples that support the final evaluation, assessing overall performance observed throughout the entire evaluation period and referring to notes collected on the employee's performance. Also, during the Evaluate phase, the supervisor presents the overall evaluation to the employee during a formal one-on-one meeting.

There are two additional components within the cycle: ***Coach*** and ***Develop***.

Coach: The Coach phase involves observation, feedback, and documentation of each employee's performance. Coaching is an ongoing component of strong performance management and development that addresses concerns and issues so that employees contribute positively to the organization. During this phase, the employee and supervisor meet regularly to assess progress, identify performance barriers that may prevent the employee from achieving a goal, share feedback on goals, discuss changes in expectations and/or goals, and determine if additional support is needed. The ongoing nature of this phase helps engage employees in their performance and development. The greater part of the Performance Management and Development Cycle should be invested in coaching-related discussions and feedback, which should be routinely documented to support and aid in completing the Evaluate phase.

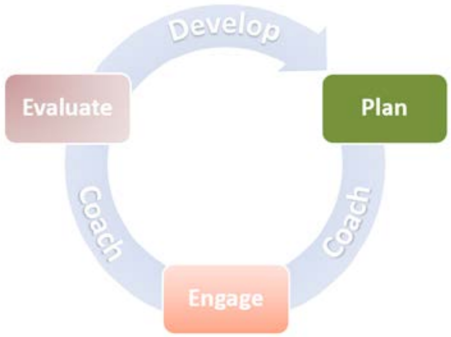
> Keep in mind: coaching and development can occur at any point throughout the entire Performance Management and Development Cycle.

Develop: This phase provides opportunities for supervisors and employees to collaborate in developing new skills or competencies. Development is a critical, yet often-overlooked, part of the cycle that can result in an employee's increased level of engagement and motivation. It is important that supervisors begin to shift from a corrective approach to one that supports the development of employees by creating Performance Improvement Plans or Career Development Plans.

Note that throughout the Performance Management and Development Cycle, the majority of time invested is in coaching. During this phase, supervisors provide feedback, support, and resources to help employees successfully complete their goals and performance expectations while ensuring their ongoing development.

With this in mind, each phase of the cycle is essential to effectively managing performance. While each agency's Performance Evaluation Policy provides the cycle dates for completing evaluations and perhaps for creating initial goals in the ePerformance system, the phases illustrated above should occur on a regular, frequent basis. These regular conversations can be informal; however, frequent meetings are very helpful, but are not required.

Plan Phase



At the State, we define **performance expectations** as the requirements for work product quantity, quality, timeliness, and results that apply to regular and routine job duties. Performance expectations are the same for every employee performing the same job, so if multiple supervisors in an agency oversee employees in the same classification performing the same work, all supervisors should agree on the performance expectations for that work.[1] They are included as a way of evaluating how employees perform the main responsibilities of their job.

Performance expectations are not related to following normal work environment guidelines (e.g., locking computer when leaving work area).

Goals

We define **goals** as specific, measurable tasks or actions which drive performance toward achievement. Supporting elements of goals include:

- Agreed-upon goal statements between supervisors and employees;
- Activities and work products that are created by employees to support the agency's purpose or mission; and
- Duties that are to be fulfilled which are reflected by employee behaviors.

Note that goals can be different for different employees.

Performance Expectation:
Process each case within 45 days to comply with Ohio Revised Code.

Return voicemail messages within one business day.

Goal:
Research and summarize the pros and cons of three methods of process improvement within the next six months.

Decrease the average amount of time you take to process a case by 10% while maintaining your current quality ratings within the next 12 months.

Supervisors may ask why they need to set goals if there are clearly outlined performance expectations established for the employees. Fortunately, goal-setting has been thoroughly studied, and studies show that employees tend to perform their job better when they have **specific goals** rather than being told to "do their best".[2] ePerformance has a section entitled *Goals and Performance Expectations*, but there is not a separate section for each, so supervisors will have to explain to employees which items are performance expectations and which items are individual goals.

Goals should always be based on the needs of the agency, not the capabilities of employees.[3] Supervisors can, however, write a goal to improve the capability of their employees. To write an **effective goal**, supervisors need to:[4]

✓ Understand what needs to be achieved, improved, maintained, or discontinued;

✓ Make the goal challenging but not impossible;

✓ Identify measurable outcomes for the goals;

✓ Provide a tight, but still achievable, timeline for goal achievement;

- ✓ Relate the goal to the agency's mission (goals that provide indirect support for the agency's mission may require more explanation to employees); and
- ✓ Avoid setting the goals so narrowly that employees ignore other important aspects of their jobs.

There are several methods of goal-setting, two of which are Cascading Goals and SMART Goals. Supervisors may want to apply each depending on the type of work performed. The following table discusses these two methods of goal-setting and the circumstances in which they are most and least successful.

Method	Method Explanation	Good for:	Does not work well for:
Cascading Goals	Goals are set from the top-down and goals at each subsequent level should link back to the goal at the level above.	The first two or three levels of executive management.	The entire organization. Not every goal needs to tie directly back to a supervisor's goal. Also, cascading through the entire organization takes a long time as each level's goals have to be completed before moving on to the next level.
SMART Goals	A format for writing goals in which the goal must be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.	Most employees. Also used to ensure pertinent information is included in the goal.	Goals that need to be relevant over a long period of time, such as a year, or some tasks that require innovation.

These methods contain elements of what makes goals effective. When supervisors are able to explain to their employees how his or her goal will help the agency achieve its mission, employees will be more committed to achieving the goal.[5] When supervisors create a tight, but still achievable, timeline for the goal, employees will perform their work with more urgency than if the goal had a loose or undefined timeline.[6]

There are also several different types of goals, which are outlined in the following table. Remember that performance expectations are the requirements for work product quantity, quality, timeliness, and results that apply to regular and routine job duties. Goals look at performance that is *beyond* these regular and routine job duties but they are still within the scope of an employee's classification.

Method	Method Explanation	Good for:
Job/Work Goals	Goals that clearly describe tasks that align to the job as outlined in the position description.	Emphasizing or giving focus to specific aspects of a job.
Project Goals	Goals the employee pursues with specific beginning and end dates that may be above and beyond routine duties.	Breaking up work into meaningful milestones based upon a specific timeline.
Development Goals	Goals that specify what employees will learn during a given time period.	Expanding knowledge and skills.
Improvement Goals	Goals designed to change employee behavior and performance outcomes.	Documenting performance deficiencies and measuring against desired outcomes.

Writing goals may seem like a daunting task for supervisors. Therefore, supervisors should begin by considering the agency's purpose (e.g., mission statement). Every goal, directly or indirectly, should help employees achieve the agency's purpose, advancing the strategy set forth by agency leadership. Supervisors can also consider previous goals, their own goals, or the employee's current job performance. These considerations should give supervisors a good idea of what they want their employees to achieve, improve, maintain, or discontinue.

When the supervisor identifies something for an employee to achieve or improve, it is important that what the supervisor has chosen is actually in the employee's control to impact or change. The following examples demonstrate goals that are out of an employee's control and how to alter them to be in the employee's control.

Not in employee's control:
Respond to 10 customer inquiries a week. *The employee is not in control of how many inquiries are submitted each week.*

Improve efficiency of processing requests by using the new software system. *The employee is not in control of the software system. It may malfunction or may not be user-friendly.*

In the employee's control:
Respond to customer inquiries within 24 hours of their submission, either with an answer or with a timeline of when the customer will receive the answer. *The employee can control how quickly he or she responds to the inquiries.*

Improve knowledge of how the new software system works by taking the training class and reviewing the manual within the next 2 months. *The employee can control how familiar he or she is with the system.*

It may initially be difficult to create **measurable outcomes** for the goals. The best methods to measure work products are usually quality, quantity, cost, and/or timeliness. When using quality as a measure of job performance, supervisors can use descriptive measures and examples so the employee will understand the level of performance expected.[7] For example, "Write a user manual for the software that is *easily* understood by our employees" or "Create a safety message that is easy to remember *like stop, drop, and roll*".

Many supervisors need to know **how many goals and performance expectations** they should establish for their employees. While there is no universal number of goals that should be established for every job, supervisors do need to consider how many factors an employee can realistically improve in one year. Since the goals on the performance evaluation should only reflect the most critical aspects of job performance,[8] limiting goals and performance expectations to five or fewer would likely work for many jobs.[9]

The content of employees' goals does not have to be permanent. Many issues may come up during the performance evaluation period that would change the employee's ability to achieve the goal, such as:

- new legislation;
- process changes;
- resource availability; or
- adjustment of administrative priorities.

It is each supervisor's role to make sure employees have the resources to meet their goals and to take the necessary steps to remove obstacles that prevent employees from accomplishing their goals.[10] If these things cannot be done, then supervisors will need to revise employees' goals. When supervisors enter goals into ePerformance, it is recommended to not mark the *Establish Evaluation Criteria* step as "Complete" until it is time to start the Evaluate phase of the cycle. This way, goals can be updated in the system if they need to be changed throughout the evaluation period. Of course, supervisors should discuss any changes with employees when they are making any changes to the goals.

In the past, supervisors may have heard that goals have to be set collaboratively with employees in order to be effective. When this issue was studied, however, goals were found to be effective as long as employees understood what the goal was and why the goal was important. This means **goal-setting can be a collaborative effort *or* and independent one**. As long as the goals are communicated to and understood by the employee, either option can result in effective goals.[11]

In ePerformance, expectations and goals are set at the beginning of the process within the *Establish Evaluation Criteria* step. Related job aids can be found on the Department of Administrative Service's website in the ePerformance Toolkit section.

Goal Examples

Now that the best practices for writing goals have been discussed, it is time to put these practices into action. The following examples demonstrate what effective goals could look like for a procurement unit.

Administrator:
Reduce the unit's budget by 10% by Fiscal Year 2019 without compromising the quality of services and goods that the unit purchases for the agency.

Supervisor:
Identify one program area where we can reduce costs without compromising the quality of services and goods purchased for the program within the next two months.

Analyst 1:

1. Identify three new suppliers and their prices for office supplies by the end of the month.
2. Respond to procurement requests within 24 hours by providing the timeframe for approval and ordering.

Analyst 2:

1. Identify how many supplies are being used, regularity of orders, and how much inventory is necessary to have on-hand by the end of the month.
2. Respond to procurement requests within 24 hours by providing the timeframe for approval and ordering.

In these examples, all of the goals contain specific outcomes, include a timeline, and are somewhat challenging. The goals contain more specific details for the analyst level, but all of them allow the employees to determine the best way to approach the goal. Also, the analysts have performance expectation goals that do not tie directly back to the supervisor's goal. This is because the regular work of the procurement unit must still be conducted in addition to the special project of reducing the budget. When the supervisor discusses the goals with the analysts, he or she should discuss the unit's goal of reducing the budget and how the analysts' activities will help achieve that goal.

Competencies

The State of Ohio's performance evaluation system also uses **competencies** as a way to describe and evaluate the behaviors employees exhibit as they perform their job. Essentially, a competency is the observable and measurable knowledge, skills, and abilities required for successful job performance. The State of Ohio utilizes 42 competencies that supervisors use to evaluate their employees. These competencies were carefully selected to be applicable to many classifications across the State.

ePerformance has three groups of competencies: **Statewide**, **Agency-wide**, and **Classification-specific**. There is one statewide competency, **Customer Focus**. All employees in the state are evaluated on their customer focus behaviors, which has been defined as "Focuses on the customer, whether internal or external, by understanding the needs of the customer and responding in a timely fashion, responding to customer feedback, and seeking out help and information when needed."

Agency-wide competencies apply to every employee of a given agency. Those competencies will likely be identified by agency executive leaders. Each agency's Performance Evaluation Policy will state whether the agency will use agency-wide competencies. Supervisors should consult with their respective Human Resources representative for a copy of the agency's policy.

Finally, classification-specific competencies apply to every employee in a classification. In 2016, the State assigned three competencies to all classifications, which automatically populate in all ePerformance-based evaluation documents.

Overall, the total number of competencies that should be evaluated, including statewide, agency-wide, and classification competencies, should be fewer than five if possible[12]. The list of the State's ePerformance competencies can be found in the ePerformance Toolkit.

The following example is the competency list for a Deputy Director at an agency that uses both Agency-wide and Classification-specific competencies.

Statewide Competency:
Customer Focus

Agency-wide Competency:
Communicating with Supervisors, Peers, and Subordinates

Classification-specific Competencies:
Developing Objectives and Strategies
Making Decisions and Solving Problems
Monitoring and Controlling Resources

Communicating Expectations and Goals

Within the first few weeks of the evaluation cycle, supervisors should relay their expectations and goals to each employee (e.g., by January 15 for January's annual cycle). When possible, it is best to provide this information during a one-on-one meeting with each employee to encourage open discussion and allow for clarification if necessary.

When supervisors communicate to employees what their goals are and explain how the goals relate to the agency's purpose, it is also important to explain what specific actions and behaviors will be **required for the employees to receive a "Meets Expectations" rating as well as an "Exceeds Expectations" rating** on their performance evaluations. Once again, if multiple supervisors oversee employees in the same classification with the same goals and competencies, the actions and behaviors required to earn the "Meets Expectations" rating should be consistent for all of those employees.

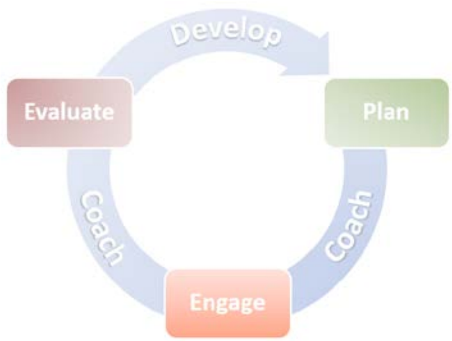
The table below outlines the basic rating definitions that can be used to help define each item's expected actions and behaviors. It is alright not to have exact definitions of what behaviors and results would earn an "Exceeds Expectations;" however, supervisors need to communicate that fact, why that is, and be very specific about what actions will earn a "Meets Expectations," so that it is clear to both them and the employee when he or she exceeds those expectations.[13]

Rating	Definition
1. Does Not Meet	Fails to meet standards (e.g., employees with this rating fail to satisfactorily perform most aspects of the position; performance levels are below established requirements for the job; employee requires close guidance and direction in order to complete routine assignments).
2. Meets Expectations	Fully meets standards (e.g., achieves acceptable standards of performance, expectations and requirements; results can be expected which are timely and accurate; performance constitutes what is expected of a qualified, experienced employee performing in this position).
3. Exceeds Expectations	Exceeds standards (e.g., consistently goes above the communicated expectations for the job responsibility or goal; demonstrates a unique understanding of work beyond assigned area of responsibility; achievements are obvious to subordinates, peers, managers and customers).

During this conversation, supervisors should also discuss all other performance expectations, whether they are included on the performance evaluation or not, and any competencies that will be evaluated. This ensures that employees will be given a complete picture of all of their respective supervisor's expectations for their performance.[14]

As mentioned before, anytime performance expectations or goals for employees change, supervisors should discuss those changes with each employee as soon as possible.

Coach



Supervisors should identify ways for employees to develop their knowledge, skills, or abilities on a regular basis. While training classes and seminars are good tools to use in the developmental process, most employees will develop the majority of their knowledge, skills, or abilities through on-the-job experiences. When supervisors invest time in developing their employees, they are providing a specific kind of feedback called **coaching**. Regular communication around development — having *coaching conversations* — is essential. In fact, according to research, the single most important supervisor competency that separates highly effective supervisors from average ones is coaching.[15]

When supervisors coach employees, their conversations should focus on what employees could change in the future, rather than focusing on what was ineffective in the past.[16] For example, when coaching an employee, a supervisor would ask, "What techniques could you use to keep the meeting on track with the agenda?" rather than telling the employee, "We did not meet the objectives of the agenda in the meeting because you let everyone get off track."

Coaching can be used to reinforce effective behavior as well as to correct ineffective behavior. When coaching employees, supervisors should:[17]

- ✓ Give advice based on past experiences;
- ✓ Provide guidance about how employees can develop their knowledge, skills, and abilities;
- ✓ Provide support when employees need help;
- ✓ Provide confidence that employees can accomplish their goals or that their actions are on the right course; and
- ✓ Steer employees toward the competencies they should develop for future roles.

Additionally, coaching helps the supervisor to have the following positive impacts on their employees.

Motivate	Includes internal or external factors that stimulate desire and energy in people to be engaged, interested and committed to their job.
Empower	Enables someone to do more; empowers the employee; provides additional opportunity for independent action.
Support	Provides assistance to help your employees perform or function at a higher level. This can be done via feedback, encouragement, listening, providing additional training, tools and resources.
Develop	Encourages and builds increased capabilities or higher level of contribution from the employee; helps the employee to be more effective by expanding their skills.

The State follows a question-based coaching model. This means that, instead of telling employees what they should do, supervisors should try asking them targeted questions to help them discover their next steps, solution alternatives, or final decision. At its most basic, the State's coaching model is outlined below. Additional information, including sample questions, may be found by visiting the supervisor toolkit.

Component	Definition
Current	Assist employee in reviewing current performance behaviors
Opportunities	Help the employee explore possibilities to identify new performance behaviors
Action	Set expectations and supporting steps to be taken – agree to start/end dates supported by an action plan
Change	Support new behaviors with defined measures and recognize achievement; or identify additional improvement areas
Hold Accountable	Hold the employee responsible and accountable by setting start/end dates to move forward and provide an action plan

Engage Phase

Supervisors should be engaging employees as much as possible in their performance by providing scheduled as well as in-the-moment feedback and recognition to ensure positive behaviors are reinforced and the right skills are acknowledged consistently. When employees are noticed, appreciated, and empowered, they are more likely to become and remain engaged, which results in a higher level of performance.

Engaging employees in their performance and providing them with feedback is the part of the Performance Management and Development Cycle that supervisors will conduct daily. Many supervisors are unaware, however, that their observational skills may need some improvement.

Multiple studies have demonstrated that human brains excel at finding patterns in the information it receives. Unfortunately, the brain is also very good at dismissing inconsistent details or even inventing details in order to make that information fit into a pattern.[18] We also tend to categorize and evaluate behaviors when we see them rather than remembering the actual behavior.[19]

What this means as supervisors is that when performance is observed of an employee already considered to be a good performer, a supervisor may see, but not remember, a mistake in the employee's work. However, when the supervisor observes the performance of an employee already considered to be a poor performer, he or she may see and remember a similar mistake and rate that employee lower. People also tend to remember negative behavior better than positive behavior[20] and may look at the results of an employee's behavior and make up what their actions were from those results, rather than observing the actions themselves.[21]

All of this means that supervisors need to train their brain to **be a better observer of employee job performance**. When observing employees' job performance, supervisors should:[22]

- Look and listen for specific actions and words that demonstrate something about an employee's performance;
- Observe as many details as possible;
- Get information from multiple sources if possible (e.g., direct observation, reports from coworkers, inspection of work products);
- Avoid comparing the employee's past job performance when observing current performance;
- Avoid allowing the situation or setting to influence your observations; and
- Avoid evaluating the performance while observing it.

Since employees may perform differently at different times, especially if they are aware that they are being observed, it is important to make many observations of job performance over a long period of time.[23] One of the best ways to track and remember employee behaviors is to keep a **performance log** for each employee.[24] The performance log could be an electronic document, an email folder, or a paper file. The logs should include descriptions of employees' actions and words, not evaluations of their performance. This will help the supervisor recall employees' actual behaviors when they are ready to evaluate their overall performance. Examples of performance may be found by visiting the supervisor toolkit.

Since it can be difficult for supervisors to realize when they are evaluating or categorizing an employee's performance rather than observing his or her behaviors, the following example demonstrates how remembering an evaluation of performance can cause a supervisor to miss important performance details.

Evaluative observation:
5/5/2018 - Observed Paul provide great customer service today when he was interacting with an angry customer at the customer service desk. Paul listened well and provided the information the customer needed. The customer left calmer than he had arrived.

Behavioral observation:
5/5/2018 - Observed Paul interacting with an angry customer at the customer service desk. The customer was using an agitated tone of voice when asking why his claim hadn't been processed yet, even though it had passed the 45 days by which the Ohio Revised Code required the agency to respond. Paul listened to the customer, responded in a calm voice, and explained that the Code required 45 days from a certain point in the submission process, not from the submission itself, and told the customer that he, too, had trouble understanding that part of the Code when he first read it. Paul then provided the date when the 45-day count started and said the customer would receive notice when his claim had been processed. The customer left the office calmer than when he arrived. Paul did not provide the exact date the 45-day count would be up, nor did he provide the customer service number that the customer could have called instead of coming to the office.

Both examples describe Paul performing his job well; however, the evaluative observation missed the details that would allow Paul to improve his performance in the future. Also, the evaluative observation will not help the supervisor remember all of the behaviors that led to Paul performing well, such as empathizing with the customer.

Providing Feedback

Supervisors probably think that they give their employees enough feedback. Most employees, however, do not think they receive enough feedback from their supervisors.[25] While there is a limit on how much feedback a supervisor should provide to his or her employees, most supervisors never come close to reaching that limit.[26]

Supervisors may be wondering **why they need to provide feedback** about an employee's performance if they have already set and clearly explained the performance expectations. First, employees need regular feedback so they can adjust their performance to meet the goals and performance expectations their respective supervisor has set.[27] Second, providing feedback to employees will result in them putting more time and effort into the tasks the supervisor has commented on, which usually leads to improving their performance on those tasks.[28] Finally, if a supervisor does not provide enough feedback to his or her employees, they will try to get feedback from other sources such as their coworkers, other supervisors, or even as a result of the tasks themselves. This may lead employees to put more effort into the tasks they can get the most feedback from rather than the tasks their respective supervisor thinks are most critical.[29] Employees may also interpret the lack of feedback as unspoken approval of their job performance, even if they are performing poorly.[30]

When supervisors want to provide feedback to employees, they should follow the guidelines listed below.[31]

- Make it timely. Provide feedback as close to when employees' performance was observed as possible.
- Make it specific. Detailed examples are more likely to be accepted by employees.
- Make it a regular occurrence. Supervisors do not have to hold a formal meeting to provide performance feedback, but they should provide some form of feedback at least a few times a month.

- Ensure the focus is on aspects of job performance that are in the employee's control to change.
- Recognize and respect individual employee preferences in receiving feedback (e.g., face-to-face or written; group setting or privately).
- Ensure the feedback is about tasks that are critical to performance, not just the tasks for which feedback is easy to provide.
- Remember to provide feedback about an employee's strengths. Research has revealed that feedback about strengths may improve performance more than feedback about weaknesses.[32]

Providing Constructive Feedback

Providing constructive feedback may be one of supervisors' least favorite tasks to perform. It is usually an uncomfortable experience for everyone involved. Unfortunately, delaying or avoiding constructive feedback will cause more harm than good. **Consequences of delaying or avoiding constructive feedback** include:[33]

- Letting the problem last for so long that it is only addressed in anger rather than with constructive feedback;
- Providing too much constructive feedback at one time, causing the employee to escalate his or her defensive behaviors;
- Increasing the employee's perception of unfairness when the supervisor rates him or her lower than he or she expects to be rated; and
- Lowering the work unit/department/division/agency's productivity.

An example of the last two points can be found in *Liner v. Montgomery County Engineer*, a 2014 appeal to the State Personnel Board of Review.[34] In this case, a culture of rating everyone's work as acceptable in order for everyone to receive an annual pay increase led to an engineer working for <u>10 years</u> without ever having one of his designs continue to the construction stage. Once new leadership determined that constructive feedback should not be avoided any longer, the employee felt strongly enough about the disconnect between his previous feedback and the new, more accurate feedback to appeal his termination. Even though the termination was upheld, the old culture of avoiding constructive feedback meant that the termination took over two years to finalize, including the performance improvement process, termination, and subsequent appeals.

The most important best practices around **providing constructive feedback** are outlined below.[35]

- Deliver it in private. Never provide constructive feedback publicly.
- Make it specific. Include details about what behaviors are causing the poor performance and a specific plan for improving performance. Employees are likely to perceive constructive feedback as inaccurate, so providing specific details can help employees accept the feedback.
- Deliver it soon after you observed the unsatisfactory performance. If there are many things to improve, however, spread the constructive feedback out over a few conversations.

Many supervisors have heard of or learned about a constructive feedback technique called the feedback sandwich in which a supervisor surrounds constructive feedback with positive feedback in order to spare the employee's feelings. While this method is well-intentioned, supervisors should absolutely **AVOID the feedback sandwich** when providing constructive feedback to an employee. Not only do employees typically figure out this pattern quickly, it demotivates good employees by diminishing their good work and weakens the message for poorly performing employees, who will only focus on the positive feedback you provided.[36]

Feedback Examples

Throughout many sections of this Performance Management Guide, the solution to improve the process has often been to include specific, detailed information. The following examples will demonstrate how to change vague feedback into the specific, detailed feedback that will help employees improve their performance.

Performance meets expectations:
Vague
"Your report was well received at the meeting today. Good job." *While it is a good idea to praise satisfactory work, no details are included as to why the report was well received.*

Specific
"Your report was well received at the meeting today. The graphs you included illustrated the data clearly, and when I read the rest of the report, I noticed that the executive summary captured all of the important details. Good job." *The supervisor specifically described what he or she liked about the report, making it likely that the employee will continue to use appropriate graphs and pay close attention to what information should be included in the executive summary in the future.*

Performance exceeds expectations:
Vague
"This project had a great outcome. You really exceeded my expectations this time." *The employee will not know exactly what actions he or she took that the supervisor thought affected the outcome.*

Specific
"The process you implemented decreased the timeline to complete this project by so much that we saved 15% of our budget. You really exceeded my expectations for this project." *The supervisor included the actions the employee took and what he or she thought was great about the outcome.*

Performance does not meet expectations:
Vague
"This report isn't good enough to present to our leaders. You need to fix this by Monday." *While the employee will know the work doesn't meet expectations, he or she will not know whether it is the format of the report, the content, or both that should be improved.*

Specific
"I saw statistical errors in section two and the graphs in section three were confusing. We cannot present this to our leaders. You need to correct the report by Monday." *The employee will know what to fix and what details to pay attention to in the future.*

Remember that, contrary to popular practice, performance management and development is not just a quarterly or annual evaluation event, but rather an ongoing communication practice that occurs throughout the year to ensure employees are engaged and productive.

Evaluate Phase

If supervisors have followed the previous sections of this guide, compiling the summary evaluation reflecting on the employees' performance should prove to be relatively easy. The most important step supervisors should take for performance evaluations is to make sure that supervisors and employees have the same expectations of how the evaluation scales will be used. The State has two evaluation scales:

1 – Individual Goal and Competency Ratings:

- Exceeds Expectations
- Meets Expectations
- Does Not Meet

2 – Summary and Overall Performance Ratings:

- Outstanding
- Exceeds Expectations
- Meets Expectations
- Needs Improvement
- Does Not Meet

In both scales, "Meets Expectations" is the middle rating, and that is the rating that most employees will achieve. Some employees equate a "Meets Expectations" to a "C", "70%", or "Average", since that is how the typical grading scales worked in school. Supervisors need to explain to employees that **performance evaluations are different from grades received in school**. A rating of "Meets Expectations" means that the employee performed his or her job *successfully*. His or her job performance was not average, mediocre, or inadequate; rather, it met expectations, and the expectations should have been set so that employees performing at that level support the agency in meeting its mission.

Remember that before a supervisor begins rating, and as early as when he or she told employees what their expectations were, the supervisor should have defined what behaviors and/or results will earn a "Meets Expectations" rating. If more than one supervisor at an agency supervises the same classification, **all of those supervisors should agree on what "Meets Expectations" consists of for common goals and competencies**. It may be helpful for the supervisors to meet during the rating process so that they can discuss how they are rating performance and adjust their ratings if they are considerably different from the rest of the group. This process is called **rating calibration**. Anything discussed about specific employees' performance during these rating calibration sessions must remain confidential among the supervisors involved.[37]

Remember that, during the Plan phase, behaviors and results were defined that would earn a rating of "Exceeds Expectations" or "Outstanding." It is now time to revisit these definitions during the Evaluate phase. Supervisors may find that the definitions were too relaxed or too difficult to achieve; if this is the case, redefine expectations and clearly communicate the changes along with the reasoning to the impacted employees. The more clearly a supervisor defines his or her expectations, the easier the Evaluate phase will be.

When evaluating employees on their goals and competencies in the ePerformance system, there is space for supervisors to provide comments after each rating. **Providing comments with ratings will be beneficial to the employees and the performance management and development process.** Since performance evaluation ratings are a form of feedback about employees' performance, the same guidelines of providing feedback apply. Using detailed comments will demonstrate to employees that the supervisor assigned the ratings as objectively as possible. Supervisors keeping behavioral observations in their performance log provides sufficient material for rating comments.

While performance evaluations will always be somewhat subjective in nature, supervisors can make their observations and comments as objective as possible. The following examples demonstrate **how to alter comments about attitudes to contain more objective and actionable information**.

Performance meets expectations:
Subjective attitude
"You are a good team player." *While it is important to identify that the employee works well with others, there is no information to indicate why the employee works well with others.*

Objective behavior and results
"I saw you consistently demonstrate good teamwork skills when you listened patiently to your coworkers and helped them find solutions during the rollout of the new software." *The supervisor specifically described what behaviors he or she observed, making it likely that the employee will continue to conduct him or herself that way in the future.*

Performance exceeds expectations:
Subjective attitude
"You bring great professionalism to the office." *The employee will not know exactly what actions he or she took that the supervisor thought were great.*

Objective behavior and results
"I frequently hear you praise the efforts of your coworkers and you always take time to find an answer or the correct person to ask when your coworkers ask you a question." *The supervisor included the actions the employee took that make him or her great to work with.*

Performance does not meet expectations:
Subjective attitude
"You display a bad attitude during meetings." *While the employee will know his or her behavior doesn't meet expectations, he or she will not know what actions could be improved.*

Objective behavior and results
"You are not supporting your coworkers when you roll your eyes when you hear an idea with which you don't agree during meetings. I have also heard you cut the other person off to say what you think is wrong with the idea in multiple instances." *The employee will know what behaviors to fix in the future.*

The ePerformance system contains a feature called *Writing Tools* to help supervisors write comments or provide developmental suggestions for specific competencies. These suggestions will not be replacements for the job observations supervisors recorded in their log, but they may help summarize those observations. More information about how to use the Writing Tools can be found in the *Manager (Rater) Evaluates Employee* job aid in the ePerformance Toolkit.

Avoiding Rater Bias

Supervisors' judgments about many things are affected by perception. When a person evaluates someone else, his or her evaluation reflects not only the person being assessed but also his or her own built-in biases. Supervisors should be aware of their possible evaluation biases so they can work to eliminate them from the assessment process. Some common biases include the following.[38] [39]

Bias	Description
Lack of Differentiation	The supervisor lacks confidence to defend his/her rating – or is reluctant to pass judgment – and compensates by providing a similar rating to everyone on the team. Examples of how this may look include: • Leniency – everyone gets high ratings; • Severity – everyone gets low ratings; and • Central tendency – everyone gets a safe rating at the mid-point of the scale.
Recency Effect	The rating represents performance seen at the end of the evaluation period.
Halo/Horns Effect	The employee is highly competent (or incompetent) in one area, and the supervisor extends that rating to all areas being reviewed.
Personal Bias (Favoritism)	This occurs when a supervisor allows his or her impressions or personal feelings about an employee to impact the rating(s).
Same-as-me	The supervisor views an employee as being similar to self and provides a rating more favorable to the employee than to others who are seen as dissimilar.

If a supervisor is experiencing any of the above biases, he or she might seek out a trusted supervisory peer or a Human Resources representative to confidentially review the observations and comments prior to presenting them to the employee. This will not only give the supervisor an outside opinion, but it may also help uncover and work toward correcting his or her biases.

Performance Evaluation Meetings

After an employee's performance evaluation has been fully approved within the ePerformance system, it is time for the supervisor to meet with the employee to discuss the evaluation (more information on the ePerformance approval process can be found in the ePerformance Toolkit). The **goal of the supervisor's meeting with the employee is understanding**.[40] At the end of the meeting, the employee should understand what his or her ratings are and why the supervisor provided the ratings. The employee does not need to agree with the ratings, but he or she does need to understand them. Understanding is an easy goal to achieve if the supervisor has been providing feedback about the employee's performance and goal progress throughout the year. The performance evaluation meeting offers supervisors the chance to discuss performance as a whole and repeat any important feedback.

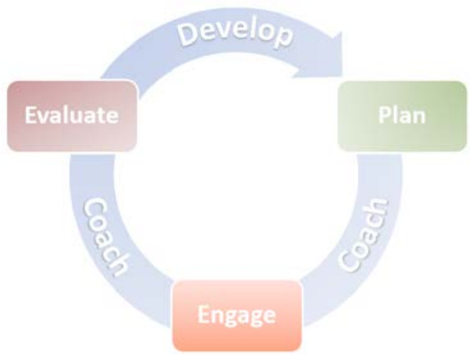
Supervisors should **encourage their employees to read their performance evaluations before the meeting**. This way, employees can take the time to understand and react to the ratings in private.[41] In the ePerformance system, employees are able to view the evaluation criteria as soon as it is created, but supervisors have to take a step to make the ratings and comments available to employees after the evaluation has been fully approved. More information about these steps can be found in the *Manager (Rater) Completes a Performance Review* job aid in the ePerformance Toolkit.

Even though the Performance Management and Development Cycle encourages regular coaching, the Evaluate phase may have led to the supervisor identifying a pattern, or better understanding the magnitude of a performance issue. If the employee's performance evaluation contains information or recommendations that the supervisor has not shared with the employee before, the supervisor should discuss why that is and what the expectations are going forward.[42]

Some aspects of the performance evaluation meeting will be different for those employees who meet expectations versus those employees who do not meet expectations. **Valued performers** will benefit the most from a meeting focused on their strengths and achievements. These employees are likely to initiate conversations about what they can do to improve their future performance, and if they do not, supervisors can provide suggestions for improvement at a later time. **Poor performers** will benefit the most from a meeting focused on the steps they need to take for immediate improvement. As mentioned earlier, supervisors should avoid the feedback sandwich technique when providing constructive feedback. A tactful, professional tone should be used when discussing the needed steps for improvement.[43]

Other aspects of the performance evaluation meetings will be the same for every employee. Supervisors should have materials such as the performance evaluation and supporting documentation available during the meeting. Any agency-specific guidelines for the performance evaluation meeting should also be followed as discussed in the agency's Performance Evaluation Policy.

Develop



Supervisors may not always see the need to develop employees' performance, but this is something they should strive for. Not only does developing employees' performance deepen their knowledge, skills, and abilities, but it also shows them that supervisors are engaged and interested in their improvement. Supervisors have some key responsibilities in supporting performance development within their respective team, as outlined below.

Collaborate to establish clear, measurable expectations and goals.	Prepare for development discussions.
Guide performance to ensure work is consistently high quality.	Give constructive examples for improvements and celebrate accomplishments.
Ensure that individual tasks contribute to department goals.	Hold employees accountable for meeting performance development goals that have been clearly communicated.
Identify performance issues and set a clear course for correcting them.	Document issues and monitor performance development progress.

Similarly, employees have their own responsibilities within performance development, too.

Collaborate to set expectations and specific goals.	Prepare for related discussions.
Help obtain feedback and resources to meet performance goals.	Know the priorities for the position and department.
Assist in sharing professional development goals and understand how they relate to department goals.	Record instances of extra effort exerted that led to a positive impact.
Identify performance issues and set a clear course for correcting or improving the issues.	Initiate the Career Development Plan.
Provide the opportunity to discuss difficulties in performing work and/or meeting goals.	Come to career development coaching sessions with a focused agenda.

The ePerformance system has two methods for documenting performance development. The **Career Development Plan (CDP)** should be used when an employee would like to voluntarily improve some aspect of his or her performance. Supervisors should encourage employees to use the self-evaluation feature in ePerformance when they are working on a CDP. Developmental self-evaluations tend to increase an employee's perceived fairness of the evaluation process as well as motivate them to continue the development process.[44] Because the CDP is a voluntary process, there should not be punishment or other consequences for not meeting expectations.

The **Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)** should be used when performance is not meeting expectations or when the behavior demonstrated needs corrected. Its purpose is to document the issue, what steps will be taken to correct the issue, how performance improvement will be measured, and what the timeline for improvement is. Historically, the State's view on performance improvement has been negative, with extremely dire consequences for non-compliance. Rather, the PIP should be viewed as a tool to help employees fill a performance gap. Supervisors should use the PIP as an opportunity to provide in-depth, targeted coaching for employees who are not meeting their overall performance expectations.

Both the CDP and the PIP can work with or be independent of another performance document, such as an annual or ad hoc evaluation. If a supervisor rates an employee overall as anything below "Meets Expectations," he or she will need to create a PIP for that employee. More information about how these documents work in the system can be found in the ePerformance Toolkit. Each agency's Performance Evaluation Policy has specific information about how the agency uses these features.

Section III: Key Considerations

There are many overarching considerations supervisors will need to think through while progressing through the phases within the Performance Management and Development Cycle. The below items may be used to ensure supervisors are maximizing the performance management and development experience for both themselves and their employees.

- If a supervisor is within a cabinet agency, he or she must use the ePerformance system to evaluate employee performance.
- Supervisors are considered the owner of their employees' evaluation documents. Responsibilities include creation, documentation, and presentation of the evaluation document to the employee.
- Supervisors must conduct a performance evaluation for every bargaining unit and classified exempt employee. If direct reports include individuals who are unclassified, supervisors should contact their respective agency's Human Resources office for specific details.
- Supervisors must perform evaluations annually based on a 12-month evaluation period, or cycle. More frequent evaluations are allowed, but an evaluation period longer than 12 months may be an exception that is approved by their respective Human Resources office.
- Supervisors must identify accountabilities, goals and performance expectations, and behaviors applicable to each employee and communicate them to the employee.
- Supervisors must hold regular meetings with each employee to review goals and performance expectations, identifying performance strengths and areas for development in the final evaluation.
- Supervisors must conduct a meeting with each employee to review and discuss the final evaluation. Each employee must be provided with a copy of the evaluation.
- When evaluating performance, supervisors must not consider leave taken in accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Additionally, FMLA taken must not influence any ratings given.
- Employees must be given the opportunity to provide written comments and feedback regarding their annual evaluations.
- Classified employees who are in a probationary status must receive an evaluation prior to both the midpoint and end of the probationary period.

Section IV: Other Resources

The State offers performance management and development tools in many forms. The ePerformance Toolkit contains system job aids, quick reference guides, a list of available competencies, and the Statewide Performance Evaluation Policy.

Another tool is the State's Competency Development Guide which is a resource to assist all employees in understanding, developing, and demonstrating the competencies required for individual and organizational success. A related resource is the Competency Assessment Tools, which are designed as a way for both supervisors and employees to collaborate on current competency demonstration while establishing an action plan to expand competency demonstration.

The DAS Human Resources Division (HRD), Office of Talent Management (OTM), Office of Learning and Professional Development also offers several performance management and development courses to supervisors through the Lead Ohio: Foundations of Supervision program (a mandatory training program for new supervisors). These courses include:

- Effective Goal Setting;
- Coaching and Developing Others; and
- Evaluating Your Employees.

As a complement to these Lead Ohio: Foundations of Supervision courses, Office of Talent Management offers a six-workshop series entitled Roadmap for Managing and Developing Performance. This workshop series is designed to ensure that supervisors understand the performance management and development process, as well as the tools and resources available, and become more aware of their contributions to organizational goals. Five of these workshops align to each phase within the Performance Management and Development Cycle with a sixth workshop available online as an introduction.

Exempt as well as Information Technology employees can also take advantage of the Performance Management and Development learning program as well as the State of Ohio Competency Clusters learning program available in Learning on Demand.

Finally, the State Library of Ohio offers many resources regarding performance management and development. A librarian can help you locate resources that directly address your performance management and development questions.

Section V: Summary

Performance management and development is something supervisors practice every day, not just when it is time for an annual or probationary evaluation. The best practices and resources outlined in this guide will help supervisors improve their skills every time they are applied. By planning for performance expectations and goals, engaging employees in their performance, accurately evaluating employee performance, and providing ongoing coaching with periodic development conversations, supervisors will create a more productive work environment for both themselves and their employees.

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