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## Section I: Introduction and the Value of Performance Management

Performance management includes setting expectations for your employees, observing their job performance, providing them feedback, and evaluating how well they meet the performance expectations. You most likely conduct these activities on a daily basis for your employees, but common reactions supervisors have to formal performance evaluations include annoyance, reluctance, and thoughts that performance evaluation is a waste of time. Fortunately, many of these reactions can be avoided when supervisors know the importance of managing the performance of their employees and have the tools to make performance management easier.

A formal performance evaluation cycle will benefit you and your employees by:

1. Informing employees of the agency mission and goals as well as the performance expectations and goals you have for them.
2. Informing your employees of their progress toward achieving their performance expectations.
3. Improving employee performance and productivity.
4. Strengthening your work relationships and improving your communication with your employees.
5. Developing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of your employees.
6. Recognizing the accomplishments and good work of your employees.

By managing the performance of your employees more effectively, you will have more time to accomplish your own work. Note that, while performance documentation is created and maintained within the ePerformance system, most of the activities surrounding performance management are completed outside the system. The ePerformance system will be mentioned throughout this guide.

The remainder of this guide will provide you with best practices in performance management as well as evidence demonstrating why and how effective performance management will help you supervise your employees.

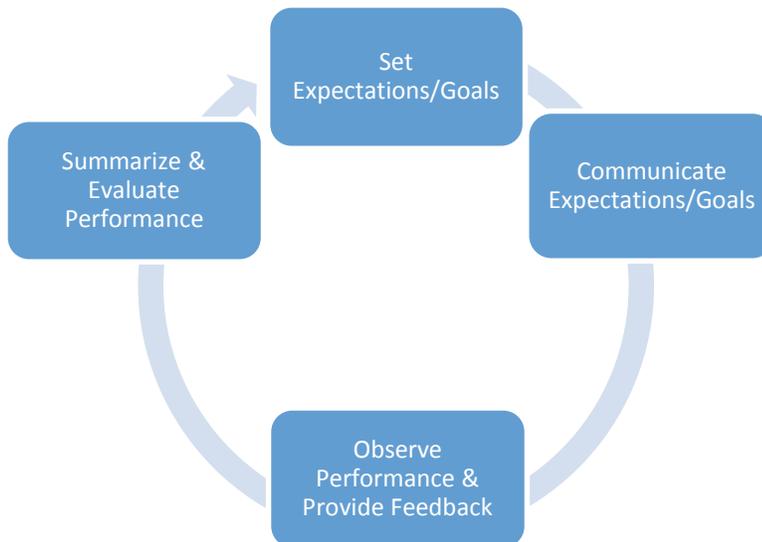
## Section II: Performance Management

Performance Management is often illustrated as a cycle, but it is important to know that most performance management activities need to take place every day. Our State of Ohio performance management cycle consists of four steps that occur in a continuous loop:

1. Setting Expectations/Goals
2. Communicating Expectations/Goals
3. Observing Performance and Providing Feedback
4. Summarizing and Evaluating Performance



While the illustration above clearly outlines the order in which our performance management cycle occurs, it does not illustrate where the hard work of performance management really occurs. The illustration that follows demonstrates what supervisors will be doing for the majority of the performance management cycle: Observing Performance and Providing Feedback.



Even though most of the time during the performance cycle is spent on observing performance and providing feedback, each step of the cycle is essential to effectively managing performance. While your agency’s performance evaluation policy provides the cycle dates for completing evaluations and perhaps for drafting goals in the ePerformance system, the steps of communicating expectations and observing performance and providing feedback should occur on a regular, frequent basis. These regular conversations can be informal, however. Frequent meetings may be helpful, but are not required.

## Setting Expectations and Goals



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 your agency oversee employees in the same classification performing the same work, all supervisors should agree on the performance expectations for that work.<sup>1</sup> Performance expectations are not related to following normal work environment guidelines (e.g., locking computer when leaving work area). They are included as a way of evaluating how employees perform the main responsibilities of their job.

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.

We define **goals** as the improvements employees should make to their work activities or the products they create that could help them make a better or larger contribution toward achieving the agency’s purpose. Improvement 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 1 business day.

### Goal:

Research and summarize the pros and cons of 3 methods of process improvement within the next 6 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.

You may wonder why you need to set goals if you have clearly outlined the performance expectations to your employees. Fortunately, goal-setting has been thoroughly studied, and employees will perform their job better when they have **specific goals** rather than being told to “do their best”.<sup>2</sup> ePerformance has a section titled *Goals and Performance Expectations*, but there is not a specific section for each, so you will have to explain to your employees which items are performance expectations and which items are their individual goals.

Goals should always be based on the needs of your agency, not the capabilities of your employees.<sup>3</sup> You can, however, write a goal to improve the capability of your employees. To write an **effective goal**, you need to:<sup>4</sup>

- ✓ Understand what you want to achieve, improve, maintain, or discontinue.
- ✓ 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 you to give more explanation to your employees.
- ✓ Avoid setting the goals so narrowly that employees ignore other important aspects of their jobs.

There are many methods of goal-setting, two of which are SMART Goals and Cascading Goals. You might 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:
<b>Cascading Goals</b>	Goals are set from the top-down and goals at each subsequent level should tie 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.
<b>SMART Goals</b>	A format for writing goals in which the goal must be Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.	Most employees. Also used to ensure you have included pertinent information in the goal.	Goals that need to be relevant over a long time, such as a year, or some tasks that require innovation.

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

There are also several different types of goals as 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 routing job duties but still lie within a classification's scope.

Method	Method Explanation	Good for:
<b>Project Goals</b>	A series of goals within a project that has a defined beginning and ending.	Breaking up work into meaningful milestones.
<b>Career Development Goals</b>	Specify what employees will learn during a given time period.	Expanding knowledge and skills.
<b>Performance Improvement Goals</b>	Designed to change employee behavior.	Documenting performance deficiencies and measuring against desired outcomes.

**Writing goals** may feel like a daunting task. Begin by considering your agency's purpose. Every goal, directly or indirectly, should help your employees achieve the agency's purpose. You can also consider previous goals, the goals you have, or the employee's current job performance. These considerations should give you a good idea of what you want your employee to achieve, improve, maintain, or discontinue.

When you choose something for your employee to achieve or improve, it is important that what you have chosen is actually in the employee's control to 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.*

You may initially find it difficult to create **measurable outcomes** for the goals. The best methods to measure work products are usually quality, quantity, cost, and/or timeliness. When you use quality as a measure of job performance, you can use descriptive measures and examples so the employee will understand the level of performance you are expecting.<sup>7</sup> 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 want to know **how many goals and performance expectations** they should set for their employees. While there is no universal number of goals that should be set for every job, you 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,<sup>8</sup> limiting goals and performance expectations to 5 or fewer would likely work for many jobs.<sup>9</sup>

The content of your employees' goals does not have to be permanent. Many issues can 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 your role to make sure employees have the resources to meet their goals and to take the necessary steps to remove obstacles in the way of your employees accomplishing their goals.<sup>10</sup> If you cannot do these things, then you will need to revise your employees' goals. When you are entering the goals into ePerformance, we recommend not "completing" the *Establish Evaluation Criteria* step until it is time for you to start the evaluation portion of the cycle. This way, you can update the goals in the system if they need to change throughout the evaluation period. Of course, you should discuss the changes with your employees when you make them.

You may have heard in the past 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 understand what the goal is and

why the goal is important. This means **goal-setting can be a collaborative effort or you can set the goals for your employees**. As long as the goals are communicated to and understood by the employee, either option can result in effective goals.<sup>11</sup>

### Goal Examples

Now that we have discussed the best practices for writing goals, 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 2016 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 two months.

**Analyst 1:**

1. Identify 3 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, & 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 this example, 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. The analysts also 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

Our performance evaluation system also uses **competencies** as one way to describe and evaluate how employees perform their job. Essentially, a competency is the combination of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for successful job performance summarized into categories (e.g., the competency "Coaching and Developing Others" combines identifying development needs and taking actions to help others improve their skills). The ePerformance system has 42 competencies from which supervisors can choose for the evaluation of 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**. We have one statewide competency, **Customer Focus**. All employees in the state are evaluated on their customer focus behaviors, which we have 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 will apply to every employee of a given agency. Those competencies will likely be chosen by agency executives. Your agency's Performance Evaluation policy will state whether your agency will use agency-wide competencies. Check with your HR staff for a copy of your 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 appear 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 5 if possible<sup>12</sup>. 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:**  
Making Decisions and Solving Problems  
Developing Objectives and Strategies  
Monitoring and Controlling Resources

## Communicating Expectations and Goals



Within the first few weeks of the evaluation cycle, you should relay your expectations and goals to each of your employees (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 individual employee to encourage open discussion and allow for clarification if necessary.

When you tell your 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”** 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 the same for all of those employees. The table below outlines the generic rating definitions that you can use to help define each item’s expected actions and behaviors.

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, you 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 way, your employees will be informed of all of your expectations for their performance.<sup>13</sup>

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

## Observing Performance



Observing your employees' performance and providing them with feedback about their performance is the part of the performance management cycle that you will conduct every day. Many supervisors are unaware, however, that their observational skills may need some improvement. Multiple studies have demonstrated that our brains excel at finding patterns in the information that we receive. Unfortunately, our brains are also very good at dismissing inconsistent details or even inventing details in order to make that information fit into a pattern.<sup>14</sup> We also tend to categorize and evaluate behaviors when we see them rather than remembering what the behavior actually was.<sup>15</sup> What this means for you, as a supervisor, is that

when you observe the performance of an employee you already consider a good employee, you may see, but not remember, a mistake in his or her work. However, when you observe the performance of an employee whom you already consider a poor performer, you may see and remember a similar mistake and rate that employee lower. We also tend to remember negative behavior better than positive behavior<sup>16</sup> and we 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.<sup>17</sup>

All of this means that you need to train your brain to **be a better observer of employee job performance**. When you observe your employees' job performance, you should:<sup>18</sup>

- ✓ 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 or customers, 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.
- ✓ Avoid evaluating the performance while you are observing it.

Since your employees may perform differently at different times, especially if they are aware that you are observing them, it is important to make many observations of job performance over a long period of time.<sup>19</sup> One of the best ways to track and remember employee behaviors is to keep a **performance log** for each of your employees.<sup>20</sup> Your performance log could be a Word 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 you recall their actual behaviors when you are ready to evaluate their overall performance.

Since it can be difficult to realize when you 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 you to miss important performance details.

**Evaluative observation:**

2/5/2015 - 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:**

2/5/2015 - 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 the code required the agency to respond by. 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



You probably think that you give your employees enough feedback. Most employees, however, do not think they receive enough feedback from their supervisors.<sup>21</sup> While there is a limit on how much feedback a supervisor should provide to his or her employees, most supervisors never come near that limit.<sup>22</sup>

You may be wondering **why you need to provide feedback** about an employee's performance if you have already set and clearly explained your performance expectations. Firstly, employees need regular feedback so they can adjust their performance to meet the goals and performance expectations you have set.<sup>23</sup> Secondly, providing feedback to your

employees will result in them putting more time and effort into the tasks you commented on, which usually leads to improving their performance on those tasks.<sup>24</sup> Finally, if you do not provide enough feedback to your 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 your employees to put more effort into the tasks they can get the most feedback from rather than the tasks you think are most critical.<sup>25</sup> Employees may also interpret the lack of feedback as unspoken approval of their job performance, even if they are performing poorly.<sup>26</sup>

When you want to provide feedback to employees, you should:<sup>27</sup>

- ✓ Make it timely. Provide feedback as close to when you observed their performance as possible.
- ✓ Make it specific. Detailed examples are more likely to be accepted by employees.
- ✓ Make it a regular occurrence. You do not have to hold a formal meeting to provide performance feedback, but you 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. Feedback about strengths may improve performance more than feedback about weaknesses.<sup>28</sup>

## Providing Negative Feedback

Providing negative feedback may be one of your least favorite tasks to perform as a supervisor. It is usually an uncomfortable experience for everyone involved. Unfortunately, delaying or avoiding negative feedback will cause more harm than good. **Consequences of delaying or avoiding negative feedback** include:<sup>29</sup>

- Letting the problem last for so long that you only address it in anger rather than with constructive feedback.
- Providing too much negative feedback at one time, causing the employee to escalate his or her defensive behaviors.
- Increasing the employee's perception of unfairness when you rate the employee lower than he or she expects to be rated.
- Lowering your 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.<sup>30</sup> 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 10 years without ever having one of his designs continue to the construction stage. Once new leadership determined that negative 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 negative feedback meant the termination took over two years to finalize including the performance improvement process, termination, and subsequent appeals.

The **best way to provide negative feedback** is to:<sup>31</sup>

- ✓ Deliver it in private. Never provide negative feedback publicly.
- ✓ Make it specific. Include details about what behaviors are causing the poor performance and a specific plan for improving their performance. Employees are likely to perceive negative 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 negative feedback over a few conversations.

Many supervisors have heard or learned about a negative feedback technique called the feedback sandwich in which a supervisor surrounds negative feedback with positive feedback in order to spare the employee's feelings. While the intentions of this method are nice, you should absolutely **AVOID the feedback sandwich** when you are providing negative 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.<sup>32</sup>

### 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 your 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:

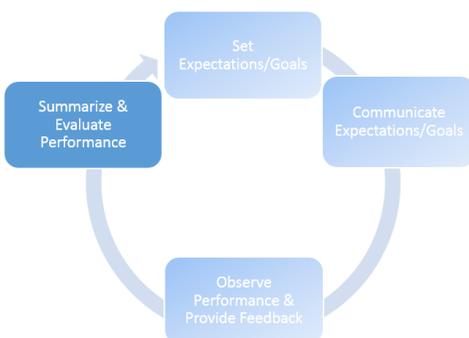
#### Vague

“This report isn’t good enough to present to our managers. 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 2 and the graphs in section 3 were confusing. We cannot present this to our managers. 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.*

## Summarizing and Evaluating Performance



If you have followed the advice in the rest of this guide, summarizing and evaluating your employees’ performance should be easier than in the past. The most important step to take for performance evaluations is to make sure that you and your employees have the same expectations of how the evaluation scales will be used. At the State, we have two evaluation scales:

### Individual Goal and Competency Ratings

- Does Not Meet
- Meets Expectations
- Exceeds Expectations

### Summary and Overall Performance Ratings

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

In both scales, the “Meets Expectations” is the middle rating, and that is the rating that most of your employees will earn. Some employees equate a “Meets Expectations” to a “C”, “70%”, or “Average,” since that is how the typical grading scales worked in school. You need to explain to your 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. The job performance was not average, mediocre, or inadequate. It met your expectations, and your expectations should have been set so that employees performing at that level allow the agency to meet its mission.

Remember that before you begin rating, and as early as when you told your employees what your expectations were, you should have defined what behaviors and/or results will earn a “Meets Expectations” rating. If more than one supervisor at your agency supervises the same classification, **all of those managers should agree on what “Meets Expectations” consists of for common goals and competencies**. It may be helpful for the managers 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 employee performance during these rating calibration sessions must remain confidential among the managers involved.<sup>33</sup>

Some employees, especially your top performers, may want you to define what behaviors and results would earn an “Exceeds Expectations” or an “Outstanding.” For some tasks, this may be easy to define. If the expectation is that an employee processes 10 cases a week, and the employee consistently processes 15 cases a week, that employee is exceeding expectations. For other tasks, **“Exceeds Expectations” may be hard to define**. If the expectation is that a project is completed with satisfied customers, you may not know exactly what behavior or result would make the customers extra satisfied. It is alright for you not to have exact definitions of what behaviors and results would earn an “Exceeds Expectations;” however, you 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 you and the employee when your employee exceeds those expectations.<sup>34</sup>

When you evaluate your employees on their goals and competencies in the ePerformance system, there is space for comments after each rating. **Providing comments with your ratings will be beneficial to your employee and the performance management process**. Since performance evaluation ratings are a form of feedback about your employees’ performance, the same guidelines of providing feedback apply. Using detailed comments will demonstrate to your employees that you made the ratings on as much of an objective basis as possible. If you keep behavioral observations in your performance log, you will have plenty of material for rating comments.

While performance evaluations will always be somewhat subjective in nature, you can make your observations and comments as objective as possible. The following examples demonstrate **how to alter your 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 makes 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 you don't agree with 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 has a few writing tools to help you write comments or provide developmental suggestions for specific competencies. These suggestions will not be replacements for the job observations you have recorded in your log, but they may help you 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](#).

## **Performance Evaluation Meetings**

After the performance evaluation for an employee has been fully approved within the ePerformance system, it is time to meet with your employee to discuss the evaluation (more information on the ePerformance approval process can be found in the [ePerformance Toolkit](#)). The **goal of your meeting with your employee is understanding**.<sup>35</sup> At the end of the meeting, your employee should understand what his/her ratings are and why you provided the ratings you did. Your employee does not need to agree with your ratings, but he/she does need to understand them. Understanding is an easy goal to achieve if you have been providing feedback about your employee's performance and goal progress throughout the year. The performance evaluation meeting offers you the chance to discuss performance as a whole and repeat any important feedback.

You should **encourage your 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.<sup>36</sup> In the ePerformance system, employees are able to view the evaluation criteria as soon as you create it, but you have to take a step to make the

ratings and comments available to them after the evaluation has been 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 cycle encourages regular feedback, the evaluation stage may have led to you identifying a pattern, or better understanding the magnitude of a performance issue. If your performance evaluation contains information or recommendations that you have not shared with your employee before, you should discuss why that is and what your expectations are going forward.<sup>37</sup>

Some aspects of the performance evaluation meeting will be different for those employees who meet expectations verses those employees who do not meet expectations. **Good 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, you 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, you should avoid the feedback sandwich technique when you are providing negative feedback. You should use a tactful, professional tone when you are discussing the need and steps for improvement.<sup>38</sup>

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

### Developing Employee Performance

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 you spend the time to develop your employees, you are providing a specific kind of feedback called **coaching**. When you coach your employees, your conversations should focus on what your employees could change in the future, rather than focusing on what was ineffective in the past.<sup>39</sup> For example, when you coach your employee, you would ask "what techniques could you use to keep the meeting on track with the agenda?" rather than telling your 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 enforce effective behavior as well as correct ineffective behavior. When you coach your employees, you should:<sup>40</sup>

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

The ePerformance system has two methods for documenting performance improvement. The **Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)** should be used when performance is not meeting expectations. Its purpose is to document the issue, what steps will be taken to correct the issue, how the 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. You should use the PIP as an opportunity to provide in-depth, targeted coaching for employees who are not meeting your overall performance expectations.

The **Career Development Plan (CDP)** should be used when an employee would like to voluntarily improve some aspect of his or her performance. You should encourage your 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.<sup>41</sup> Because the CDP is a voluntary process, there should not be punishment or other consequences for not meeting expectations.

Both the PIP and the CDP go through the same approval process as any other performance evaluation document in the system. They can work with or be independent of another performance document, such as an annual or ad hoc evaluation. If you rate an employee overall as anything below “Meets Expectations,” you 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](#). Your agency’s Performance Evaluation policy has specific information about how your agency uses these features.

### Section III: Other Resources

The State offers performance management 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.

The DAS Office of Learning and Professional Development also offers several performance management courses to supervisors through the LEAD Ohio program (a mandatory training program for new supervisors) include:

- Coaching
- Communicating for Results
- Evaluating Your Employees
- Goal Setting

Exempt employees can also take advantage of the Performance Management Learning Program available in [Learn It Ohio](#).

Finally, the [State Library of Ohio](#) offers many resources about Performance Management. A librarian will help you locate resources that directly address your performance management questions.

### Section IV: Summary

Performance management is something you practice every day, not just when it is time for an annual or probationary evaluation. The best practices and resources that are found in this guide will help you improve your supervisory skills every time you use them. By setting clear expectations, communicating those expectations with your employees, observing actions and outcomes, and providing feedback to your employees, you will create a more productive work environment for both you and your employees.

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