

# SUPERVISOR'S GUIDE FOR EFFECTIVE INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

All credit for this document is given to the University of California Riverside as this is an excerpt from a larger document developed by their Human Resources section. It has been adapted to make it applicable to state VR agencies.

1. Ensure that the position description is current.

A review of the position description should be done every year.

2. Identify the essential job functions.

This refers to the duties that must be carried out by the position – basically the reason the position exists. Have the essential functions changed? Do some need to be added? These essential functions can be used as a guide to setting performance expectations.

3. Develop performance expectations.
4. Develop goals and objectives.
5. Identify applicable performance factors.

## Planning for Performance — Setting Expectations and Goals

Understanding the mission and goals of your organization provides a context in which to develop performance standards and goals. It gives you a framework and a direction. Of primary importance, is the employee's ability to see how their performance expectations and goals are linked to the mission of the agency.

### Setting Expectations

#### What is a Performance Expectation?

- A description of the results expected for the fully satisfied performance of a job function/task.
- Defines “how well” each function or task must be performed.
- Provides a benchmark against which to evaluate work performance.

#### When Should Performance Expectations be Set?

- When an employee is hired
- When responsibilities are changed or added

- When clarification of responsibilities is needed

### **A performance expectation should**

**be:**

- Derived from mission, goals and values
- Mutually understood
- Developed collaboratively, if appropriate
- Descriptive of how a job is to be performed
- Descriptive of fully satisfactory performance Expressed in measurable/observable terms
- Reasonable and attainable

## **Setting Goals**

In setting goals, use the **S.M.A.R.T.** formula:

### ***Specific***

- Precise terms
- Targeted

### ***Measurable***

- Means for tracking
- How much of what & by when

### ***Attainable***

- Assess the stretch
- Evaluate the growth for the employee

### ***Relevant***

- Links to results
- Links to higher-level goals (dept.)

### ***Trackable***

- Timeframe for actions
- Completion dates

In performance planning, there are typically three types of goals that may be incorporated into the review:

**Development goals** — goals established for personal/professional growth

**Innovation goals** — goals established for creating a new process, function or program; higher level of service

**Improvement goals** — goals established to correct performance that is below standards and requirements.

Goals should be defined when:

- Preparing the annual performance appraisal
- When performance needs improvement

## Managing and Coaching Performance

Performance management is a year round process which means meetings should be held with employees throughout the year to discuss and reassess the employees' progress toward achieving goals and performance objectives.

Listed below are some of the tools that can be used to capture performance.

### Observation

It is recommended that managers observe their employees with the intent of documenting behaviors related to performance. Look for:

- **Trends in performance**
  - > Is it steadily improving or declining?
  - > Does the individual have “peaks and valleys” – spurts of excellent performance followed by extended periods of mediocre performance?
- **Critical incidents**
  - > Outstanding successes or failures
  - > Performance events that stand out from typical behavior

### Documentation

#### Structured Diary

Experts in performance management recommend that managers spend 30 minutes a week documenting employee performance. Document performance in behavioral terms, rather than inferential or judgmental.

List the performance expectations and goals for the appraisal cycle and space to document date, skills exhibited results of behavior and other comments.

#### As an example:

Performance Expectation/Goal	Date	Comment
Demonstrate team work	10/05/07	Accepted additional assignment due to a co-worker being out ill.
Produce quality work	2/04/08	Monthly report contained 5 typos and was missing two pages.

Remember .... provide feedback on performance events that you document.

#### Unstructured Diary

Informal documentation of performance events. For example, jot down notes about employee behavior in your calendar.

### **Work Samples**

Maintain copies of work that illustrate the performance dimensions being measured.

### **Employee Fact File**

A file where notes about performance events and work samples can be maintained. Remember, this file could be viewed by others if necessary.

## **Appraising Performance**

### **The Performance Appraisal Process**

1. The employee will complete the self-appraisal.
2. Gather the documentation you have regarding performance.
3. Write the appraisal.

To prepare for writing the performance appraisal, gather the following information:

- Self-appraisal information
- The employee's job description
- The goals and objectives from the previous performance appraisal (if available)
- Agreed upon expectations for performance
- Your structured or unstructured diaries of employee performance events

Solicit information from others that know the employee's work such as a co-supervisor or Department Head. The primary rater should be the employee's primary supervisor.

### **Appraising Poor Performance**

While most of us think of the performance appraisal as an annual event, there are other times when it is appropriate to conduct a performance appraisal session. Primarily, this is when an employee is exhibiting poor performance or training/coaching is needed.

When completing the annual performance review, if an employee is receiving a rating of "needs improvement" or "unacceptable" on a particular performance factor, it is important to insure that it is truly the performance of the employee that is causing the less than satisfactory results. Be sure to examine the job itself and the context in which the job is being performed. Contact Human Resources if you need assistance in documenting "needs improvement" or "unacceptable" behavior.

## Writing the Appraisal

Write supporting comments for performance factors using third person statements.

### Example:

**Instead of:** You have increased your knowledge of fund accounting.

**Write:** Carl has increased his knowledge of fund accounting.

Use behavioral feedback to support your ratings for performance factors.

- Focus on behaviors rather than judgments to support performance factor ratings.
- Use specific examples.
- Use specific facts.

Verifiable (Specific)	Evaluative (Fuzzy)
Observable	Judgments
Measurable	Assumptions
Accessible to the senses	Interpretations
Actionable	Non-actionable

### Examples:

<b>Fuzzy:</b>	This was not your best work.
<b>Specific:</b>	Carl, the project was completed three weeks later than you originally estimated and contained at least five major errors, such as spelling and incorrect calculations.

<b>Fuzzy:</b>	You do a good job running meetings.
<b>Specific:</b>	Sally, everyone on the team appreciates the way you facilitate meetings. You identify the areas in which we are confused, you summarize to help us stay on track, and you maintain your neutrality.

## Conducting the Performance Appraisal Meeting

Performance appraisals are most productive when they are collaborative, both people are prepared ahead of time and there have been discussions about performance throughout the year. The performance appraisal meeting should be a two-way conversation.

### Setting the Tone

**Be prepared** – know the objectives and goals of the meeting.

**Time and place** – choose a quiet, private spot limited interruptions.

Put the employee at ease by acknowledging that these sessions can cause anxiety but the purpose is to improve performance and to gather information on how you can

help in these efforts. Approach the employee you are appraising as a partner rather than a judge. Tell the employee that the performance appraisal meeting is a two-way discussion, not one-way.

Maintain a positive focus. If an employee's overall performance is satisfactory, focus on the factors that led to that success. If an employee's overall performance is not satisfactory, focus on problem-solving rather than fault finding.

## Structure of the Meeting

<p><b>1. Explain the purpose for the meeting.</b></p>	<p>To discuss the employee's performance over the past year, the job expectations and the organization's expectations.</p>
<p><b>2. Explain the process of the meeting.</b></p>	<p>a. Review past performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow employee to share how they view their performance over the past year.</li> <li>• Allow employee to share ideas they have for strengthening their performance.</li> <li>• Supervisor shares their evaluation.</li> <li>• Discuss difference and come to a common understanding.</li> </ul> <p>b. Set performance expectations for the next appraisal period.</p> <p>c. When appropriate, discuss developmental plans and activities that should be conducted during the next appraisal</p>
<p><b>3. Ask if the employee has any questions about how the meeting will proceed</b></p>	
<p><b>4. Allow the employee to share their assessment of their performance.</b></p>	<p>a. Listen carefully to the employee's self-assessment.</p> <p>b. Focus the employee on specific behaviors, actions and results related to his/her performance.</p>

<p><b>5. Share your appraisal and overall rating.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Provide effective performance feedback.</li> <li>b. Focus on behaviors, actions, and results.</li> <li>c. Reinforce positive performance results.</li> <li>d. Direct critical performance feedback toward performance improvement.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Guide the discussion of similarities and differences in the performance appraisal.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Show interest in what the employee has to contribute.</li> <li>b. Ask questions to clarify and to gather information.</li> <li>c. Focus the conversation on performance improvement.</li> <li>d. Seek to understand why the employee chose the behaviors he/she did.</li> <li>e. Arrive at a common understanding on how you and the employee view his/her performance.</li> <li>f. When disagreements occur, ask questions to uncover the underlying reasons for this difference of opinion.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Receive feedback and suggestions from the employee.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Focus on the performance issues reported, not the person or personality.</li> <li>b. Carefully listen; take notes.</li> <li>c. Acknowledge the employee's concern.</li> <li>d. Welcome suggestions.</li> <li>e. Remain open to feedback on your own behavior as a manager.</li> <li>f. Clarify any feedback that you receive from the employee on your own leadership.</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Set performance expectations for the next appraisal period.</b></p>	
<p><b>9. Discuss development activities for the next appraisal period.</b></p>	
<p><b>10. Close the meeting.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Acknowledge your appreciation of the employee's efforts.</li> <li>b. Review the performance expectations and developmental activities.</li> <li>c. Clarify the roles that you and the employee will take in regard to performance expectations and developmental activities and determine the next steps.</li> </ul>
<p><b>11. Allow the employee to make written comments on the appraisal. Insure they receive a copy of the completed appraisal.</b></p>	

## Suggested Readings

*Analyzing Performance Problems or You Really Oughta Wanna*, second edition by Robert F. Mager and Peter Pipe. Published by Pittman Management and Training of Belmont, CA in 1984.

*The Business of Listening* by Diane Bone. Published by Crisp Publications of Los Altos, CA in 1988.

“Choosing Performance Management: A Holistic Approach,” *CUPA Journal*, Summer 1995, v.46, no.2, pp.13 -18 by Rogers Davis, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Human Resources, UCSD.

*Coaching and Counseling* by Marianne Minor. Published by Crisp Publications of Los Altos, CA in 1989.

*The Empowered Manager* by Peter Block. Published by Jossey-Bass Publishers in San Francisco in 1987.

*First Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently* by Marcus Buckingham, Curt Coffman. Published by Simon and Schuster of New York in 1999.

*Giving and Receiving Criticism* by Patti Hathaway. Published by Crisp Publications of Los Altos, CA in 1990.

*Masterful Coaching* by Robert Hargrove. Published by Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer of San Francisco in 2002.

*Maximum Performance Management: How to manage and compensate people to meet world competition* 2nd ed. by Joseph H. Boyett, Ph.D. et al. Published by Glenbridge Publishing Ltd. of Lakewood, Colorado in 1993.

*Measurement of Work Performance: Methods, Theory and Application* by Frank J. Landy and James L. Farr. Published by Academic Press of New York in 1983.

*Perfect Phrases for Performance Reviews: Hundreds of Ready-to-Use Phrases That Describe Your Employees' Performance* by Douglas Max, Robert Bacal. Published by McGraw-Hill in 2002.

*A Supervisor's Guide for Performance Management* by the U.S. Department of Labor. Published by U.S. Department of Labor of Washington, D.C. in 1989.