



MARSHALL COUNTY PERSONNEL BOARD

EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION GUIDE

2021

EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

The Employee Performance Evaluation process is expected to be an ongoing dialogue between a supervisor and the employee that links job performance expectations with consistent feedback and coaching, annual performance discussions, and potential learning and development planning. It refers to the collective process of bringing out the best efforts of employees and directing those efforts toward meeting the goals of the County and individual departments. It defines and measures performance as being a combination of both accomplishment of goals (for supervisors and department heads) and the demonstration of desired competencies.

1.1 Performance Evaluation Overview

The County's performance evaluation process is designed to encourage open communication between supervisors and employees regarding job performance and expectations. It provides the basis for the employee and supervisor to formally set job standards and goals. It ensures that employees know exactly what is expected of them and also provides a record of the employee's performance.

The County utilizes a formal system of performance evaluation for all employees that sets job expectations and assesses employee performance. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide feedback to employees about their work performance; identify areas for improvement; assist with employee career development; and achieve overall organization goals. The County's performance evaluation has two major components: achievement of established goals and performance of job duties. Evaluation standards are utilized by supervisors to review and rate employees' performance each review period. An opportunity should be provided to the employee to achieve their highest level of performance. Coaching and feedback are critical tools the supervisor can utilize to assist the employee in this goal.

The performance evaluation process provides employees an opportunity to understand:

- What their goals and job duties are for the review period;
- What level of performance is expected of them;
- The criteria for success and periodic review of their progress/success throughout the review period;
- How their performance helps achieve the County's and the department's goals; and
- How they can improve job performance to the highest level.

Supervisors benefit from the process by:

- Understanding the proficiency with which employees are achieving goals and carrying out their job duties (as defined in the job descriptions);
- Having a basis for coaching employees for performance improvement;
- Identifying training and development needs for employees; and,
- Having a method to support employees' career development growth.

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1.2 Timeline

A timeline for administering the Employee Performance Evaluation process will be established and provided by the County. It is important that this timeline is followed consistently and that the supervisors and employees understand, contribute to, and meet the deadlines established each review (evaluation) period.

Beginning of the Evaluation Period

- The supervisor is expected to meet with the employee to discuss the employee's job description to review the job duties (performance expectations) which will be evaluated during the performance period. A discussion of the competencies that will be evaluated and the performance standards relating to the job duties should be held. The job description should be provided to the employee at this time.
- Employees are expected to establish goals in a meeting with their supervisor at the beginning of the review period and to establish and set measures (metrics) for the goals. These should be documented and provided to the employee for their reference during the review period.

Periodic Check-Ins with Employees

- The supervisor and employee should meet periodically during the review period to conduct "check-ins" regarding the employee's accomplishment of goals (to date) and their performance of the job duties as it relates to the competencies. The supervisor and employee should review and discuss areas in which the employee excels as well as areas the employee could improve prior to the end of the review period. The supervisor should identify areas for possible improvement to provide the employee the opportunity to achieve his or her highest level of performance.
- The supervisor should document the results of these check-in discussions. The results can serve as input for comments needed for the evaluation at the end of the review period. Throughout the performance evaluation period, on-going coaching and feedback is always strongly encouraged.

Review Period Performance Evaluation

- The supervisor should prepare the employee's evaluation and review and gain concurrence with their next level(s) supervisor. The supervisor would then make any necessary changes prior to the review/discussion with the employee.
- The supervisor and employee will then meet to discuss the employee's accomplishment of goals and level of performance of the job duties as defined by the established competencies. The supervisor should provide feedback to the employee related to the evaluation rating and accomplishment of the established goals (supervisors and department heads).
- Utilizing the Performance Evaluation form the supervisor will document the results of the discussion and provide a copy of the signed form to the employee.

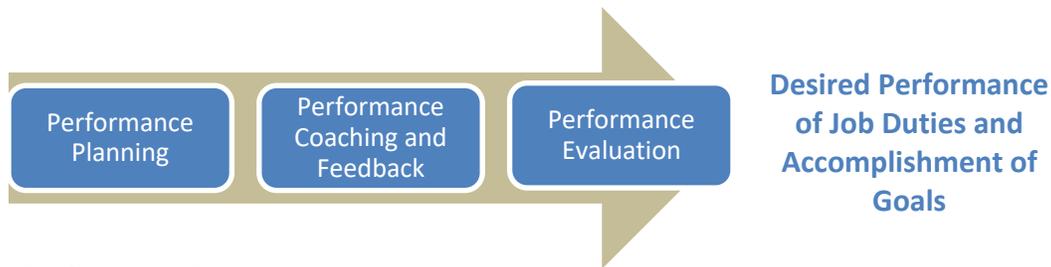
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PROCESS AND EVALUATION STANDARDS

The County administers the performance evaluation process with focus on instructing employees on what work they should be doing, how well they are performing the work, and how they can improve their performance. Supervisors and employees have active roles in the process, and Human Resources has an administrative and support role. Established evaluation standards (ratings) are utilized in the process to evaluate employee performance in the accomplishment of goals, and the performance of job duties. The standards provide definitions of the expected results for each rating level.

2.1 Process

The employee performance evaluation process has several components which can be summarized in three key interrelated steps.



Step 1 – Performance Planning

The supervisor and each employee, including probationary employees, should spend time at the beginning of the review period discussing and defining the job duties (and minimum acceptable levels of performance) and department and individual goal, to ensure the employee clearly understands the supervisor’s expectations. Also, during this period, the supervisor and employee may discuss and develop an individual career growth plan for the employee for the upcoming year. Employees are responsible for actively participating in the performance evaluation process and understanding the performance expectations of their supervisors and managers.

Step 2 – Performance Coaching and Feedback during Check-Ins

The supervisor and employee should review and discuss the employee’s significant accomplishments and/or shortfalls during periodic performance check-ins. Generally, these coaching and feedback sessions will be informal and may be initiated by either the supervisor or employee. The goal of these sessions is to encourage open, direct communication between supervisors and employees and ensure that there are “no surprises” during the end of review period performance evaluation session.

Step 3 – Performance Evaluation

The supervisor and employee will prepare for and hold an evaluation session. Prior to the meeting, the supervisor will evaluate the employee’s performance against all criteria. The two-way performance discussion should focus on the accomplishment of goals (supervisors and department heads), and the performance of the job duties based on the established competencies.

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2.2 Major Roles and Responsibilities

Supervisor – The supervisor’s role is to carry out the steps in the performance evaluation process in a fair, accurate, consistent, and timely manner. This includes monitoring and recording employee accomplishments with regard to goals and performance of job duties based on the relevant competencies, providing timely coaching and feedback, conducting accurate performance evaluations, and ensuring that the employee has the opportunity to participate at critical points.

Employee – The employee’s role is to actively contribute in the process of setting goals; understand the expectations of performance of the job standards; initiate feedback sessions as needed; record their accomplishments; and participate in the review of their performance during the review period and at the evaluation session.

Personnel – The role of Personnel is to administer and monitor the activities of the process; ensure compliance with the County’s processes and procedures; and ensure that employees receive fair, accurate, and timely evaluations.

2.3 Evaluation Standards

The County has established performance evaluation standards for the evaluation of the employee’s accomplishment of goals and performance of job duties based on competencies. Each has established thresholds for meaningful distinctions in performance. Supervisors will utilize the following standards when evaluating employee performance:

Goals

Goals will be evaluated utilizing the ratings below based on achievement of each goal:

Below Expectations	Meets/Exceeds Expectations
0	1
<i>Result did not meet expectations, no or some level of effort was made and little or no level of accomplishment was achieved.</i>	<i>Result met or exceeded expectation defined by metric; accomplished goal on time or ahead of time.</i>

Performance of Job Duties

The evaluation standards below will be utilized to evaluate the employee’s performance of job duties:

Does Not Meet Expectations	Needs Improvement	Meets Expectations	Significantly Exceeds Expectations
1	2	3	4
<i>Performance is below requirements; does not meet expectations; significant improvement is required.</i>	<i>Performance meets some but not all expectations for the job; improvement is needed.</i>	<i>Performance meets expectations for the job; performs the job standard proficiently and satisfactorily.</i>	<i>Performance exceeds expectations; performs significantly above the job standard.</i>

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GOALS AND GOAL SETTING

A component of the performance evaluation process is the establishment of measurable goals for supervisors and department heads for each evaluation period. Goals are typically aligned with key County or Department goals, though may be independent and individual to the employee and his/her supervisor.

3.1 Goal Setting

At the beginning of the review period, the supervisor will meet with the employee to establish the goals for the employee for the upcoming evaluation period. As a form of review or explanation to employees, the supervisor should review the evaluation standards that will be utilized at the end of the review period to evaluate the level of achievement of the established goals. Goals should be written to the “Meets Expectations” evaluation standard – the level of work the supervisor would expect from an employee achieving the goal at this level. Goals should be related to a critical or significant component of the employee’s job and the needs of the County, or the department. Following the meeting, the supervisor will provide a copy of the established goals to the employee.

3.2 SMART Goals

Goals should be related to a critical or significant component of the employee’s job and the goals of the County or department. However, with everything that needs to be accomplished, deciding on which goals to set for employees can be challenging.

The supervisor and employee can be guided in developing goals by asking the following questions:

- Is it action oriented (as in ‘to make’, ‘to complete’, ‘to adjust’); and
- Does it specify a measurable indicator (quantity, rate, expense, quality, degree of accuracy, due date, or the like)?

The **SMART** acronym can be helpful when developing measurable goals:

Specific	Goals should express the action and results required so that both the employee and supervisor can see clearly whether or not the goal has been achieved. What is the achievement or result that is expected?
Measurable	When setting goals, there must be some way of measuring and verifying whether the goal has been achieved and to what level. How will the employee and supervisor know if the goal has been met?
Achievable	Although they should provide challenge and development for the employee, goals also must be achievable. Is the goal reasonable, even if it is a stretch?
Relevant	The goals must be relevant to the level at which the employee is at their career and to the priorities and workload of their particular area. Does the goal contribute to the department, or the County’s overall success?
Time-Bound	Goals need to have clear time frames attached to them. What is the completion date or milestone? A week? Month? Year? Ongoing?

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PERFORMANCE OF JOB DUTIES AND COMPETENCIES

A critical component of the performance evaluation process is the establishment and documentation of the job duties to be performed by the employees for each evaluation period. The employee should have a full understanding of the job duties and the competencies they are expected to demonstrate.

4.1 Establishing Expectations – Defining Job Duties

At the beginning of the review period, the supervisor will discuss with their employees the work expectations for the next review period. These are based on the defined job duties in the job descriptions for each employee's classification. The supervisor will provide and review with the employee the job description to be utilized as the basis for the evaluation of performance for the specified competencies. The job description will establish the expectations of what job duties the employee is expected to perform during the performance review period.

If there are discrepancies in the duties described in the job description and the expectations of the employee and supervisor, they should bring these to the attention of Human Resources. At that time, a determination will be made if a revised job description should be prepared and utilized as the basis for job duties/expectations.

4.2 Competencies

The County utilizes competencies to evaluate employees' performance of job duties. The competency approach focuses on the employees' skills, knowledge, and behaviors as the basis for evaluating the level of performance of the identified job duties. As noted in the table below, several competencies are expected of all (categories of) employees, and some are identified specifically for a particular group of employees. All competencies have been defined and the four rating levels for each have been described in the content of the performance evaluations. The "standard" level of performance has been described for all competencies as the "Meets Expectations" rating.

At the beginning of the review period, the supervisor should review with the employee the competencies and the evaluation rating standards. The supervisor and employee should discuss several examples of job duties and the expectation of performance of the competencies. Specific examples of how the employee can achieve the highest rating should be discussed for several of the competencies.

Specific competencies for each employee group are identified in the following table :

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PERFORMANCE EVALUATION COMPETENCIES

COMPETENCIES	EMPLOYEE	SUPERVISOR	DEPARTMENT HEAD
Communication: Demonstrates skill and ability to communicate, convey, and deliver information to coworkers, leaders, customers, and citizens in a manner that is understood.	X	X	X
Teamwork and Collaboration: Demonstrates skill and ability to work effectively as part of a team/work group and across the organization; promotes cooperation and commitment.	X	X	X
Dependability/Reliability/Accountability: Demonstrates dependability, fulfills commitments, follows through and is accountable; performs work to expected standards; accepts responsibility for own actions/decisions and demonstrates commitment to accomplish work in ethical, efficient and cost-effective manner.	X	X	
Customer Focus: Demonstrates commitment to delivery of work products/services; builds and maintains customer satisfaction.	X	X	X
Productivity/Work Output: Utilizes time appropriately to successfully accomplish tasks; produces expected quantity of work and/or provides services in a timely manner; meets deadlines.	X	X	
Quality of Work: Demonstrates skill and ability to produce quality work (thorough, accurate, neat, etc.)	X	X	
Job Knowledge and Continuous Learning: Demonstrates applied knowledge of job; displays ongoing commitment to learning and self-improvement.	X		
Initiative: Does more than required or expected; plans ahead and takes appropriate action; recognizes and capitalizes on opportunities for improvement.	X	X	
Job Proficiency: Demonstrates proficiency in area of responsibility; focuses on continuous improvement, including understanding and application of tools/technology; applies critical thinking and responds to changing environment.			X
Accountability: Accepts responsibility for own actions and decisions and demonstrates commitment to accomplish work in ethical, efficient and cost-effective manner.			X
Organization/Prioritization/Job Proficiency: Establishes a systematic course of action; sets appropriate priorities, goals and timelines; keeps track of progress; focuses on continuous improvement, including application of tools/technology; applies critical thinking to a changing environment.		X	
Leads, Develops, and Recognizes Staff (Staff Leadership): Promotes the County's goals and demonstrates ways to achieve them; encourages growth and development of employees; respects and appreciates staff.		X	X

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PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND SELF-EVALUATION

At the review period end, the supervisor will complete the appropriate evaluation form for the purpose of providing feedback to the employee about his or her achievement of the goals and performance of the job duties as specified by the competencies for that employee group. Throughout the performance evaluation period, on-going coaching and feedback is always encouraged and should be utilized so as to accomplish the goals and purpose of employee performance review: bringing out the best efforts of employees and directing those efforts toward meeting the goals of the County and individual departments.

5.1 Coaching and Feedback – Periodic Check-Ins

Providing on-going feedback to employees about their performance is very important for maintaining productive working relationships, for accomplishing goals (supervisors and department heads), and for general work performance reinforcement or redirection. Reinforcement occurs when a supervisor wants an employee to continue performing as they have been performing. Redirection however occurs when the employee needs to change what or how they've been performing.

Supervisors should take time to “check-in” with each employee. This check-in time will foster clear and on-going communication between the supervisor and employees. To start the conversation, supervisors could ask each employee the following three questions and document the conversation:

- How are you doing?
- How can things be improved?

While it is not required that each supervisor do this, a “check-in” can serve as a method of achieving regular and on-going conversations with employees. Good coaching and feedback should be on-going and not an isolated event.

If in the event an employee identifies a concern, or the supervisor observes such, the supervisor should set a time to briefly discuss the concern to identify it and provide the employee feedback as to how he/she should improve. It is important that the supervisor remain focused on the concern/issue and avoid being sidetracked by unrelated issues. It is also important that the recommended solution/action be specific and time-bound, and that the employee takes ownership of the issue. The employee is responsible for changing his/her behavior/action/performance accordingly.

Good coaching and feedback can make the difference between successful performance reviews and employees being “surprised” by the annual review. Again, the County’s goal is to assist employees with achieving their highest level of performance.

5.2 Self-Evaluation

The County’s performance evaluation process is and should be focused on the employee; therefore, it is very important for employees to be engaged in the entire process. Employees can begin the process by preparing for the review by conducting a self-evaluation. This self-evaluation provides employees with an opportunity to showcase their accomplishments and have their opinions heard. All employees should be afforded the opportunity to self-assess, and supervisors should strongly recommend they take advantage of the opportunity.

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A self-evaluation is a great opportunity for employees to honestly and objectively consider and document their performance. Having said that, employees should also know how to complete a self-evaluation and be comfortable with the process. Properly preparing a self-evaluation can make the difference between a meaningful evaluation and one that is less effective. Supervisors can assist their employees by providing coaching in the manner in which to complete a self-evaluation.

At the end of the review period, the supervisor will complete the evaluation, and may offer that the employee complete a self-evaluation prior to the review meeting. The employee, for this self-evaluation, may be asked to complete self-evaluation form, or utilize another designated method, and give a copy of it to the supervisor at an agreed upon date prior to the review meeting. The supervisor may request to have a meeting with the employee prior to the evaluation meeting to clarify points in the employee's self-evaluation. The supervisor will utilize the evaluation standards for goals and performance of job duties to perform the assessment of the employee's performance for the evaluation period.

5.3 Evaluating Employee Performance

The goal of conducting and documenting the review is provide a formal opportunity for the employee and supervisor to review, discuss, and document the employee's performance since the beginning of the review period. As with check-ins, focus should be placed on providing the employee feedback regarding observable behaviors related to the performance of goals (supervisors and department heads) and job duties.

To prepare for this review, the supervisor should:

- Compare observed behaviors/actions/performance to the specified competency, or established goal, not to other employees or the employee's performance in previous years;
- Consider factors which may have changed the nature or scope of the job duties, including circumstances beyond the employee's control and/or the supervisor's role in the employee's performance;
- Ask for input from other supervisors who have had direct interactions with the employee;
- Focus on employee's work and not on personal matters that are tangential; and
- Check their observations of the employee's behaviors/actions/performance for accuracy, fairness, balance, reasonableness, and consistency.

Utilizing the evaluation standards, the supervisor will evaluate the employee's achievement of established goals and performance of job duties based on the identified competencies. All ratings must be supported with a comment which provides a specific example of the observed behavior/action/performance which substantiates the assigned rating. The supervisor will utilize the results of the performance of established goals and job duties to determine an overall rating of performance for the employee.

The performance evaluation process requires the supervisor to gain concurrence with his/her evaluation of the employee from his/her next level supervisor(s). This step must be followed prior to any review or discussion of the performance evaluation with the employee.

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Following concurrence of the employee's evaluation with the next level of supervision, the supervisor will schedule a meeting with the employee to discuss the results of the performance review. Adequate time and a quiet meeting place should be considerations when scheduling the meeting.

Following the meeting, the supervisor will provide the employee the opportunity to provide his/her comments regarding the review. The supervisor will also require the employee to sign the form indicating his/her acknowledgement that the review (meeting) has occurred. The employee's signature does not indicate that he/she concurs with the evaluation. After all signatures are obtained, a signed copy of the evaluation will be provided by the supervisor to the employee, and the original should be forwarded to Personnel.

While the performance review provides a formal discussion and review of employees' performance, the process itself is intended to be collaborative and on-going. Administering a fair, consistent Employee Performance Evaluation process is a key element of the County's total compensation philosophy. It supports the County's commitment to recruit, develop, and competitively compensate its' outstanding, diverse workforce for the services they provide.

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SUPERVISOR BIASES

To meet the objectives of the Employee Performance Appraisal system and to ensure that performance appraisals are fair, supervisors must avoid biases. The element of subjectivity cannot be completely eliminated from the process. Human judgment is far from perfect, and this weakness is an important factor behind the controversies associated with performance appraisals.

Human performance is largely a qualitative phenomenon and cannot be precisely measured quantitatively. Apart from the inexactness of measurement, a few cognitive and perceptive problems often cause supervisors/raters to make significant errors in judgment. Being aware of these pitfalls can make the process more objective and could also reduce the unpleasantness that is caused as a consequence of a poorly administered performance appraisal. These common rating errors are summarized below:

A. Strictness, Leniency and Central Tendency

People differ in their tendency to evaluate people or performance. Some supervisors are very strict or conservative in their ratings and generally give low scores in their evaluations. This tendency may make high performers attain somewhat average ranking and average performers appear as poor performers. Raters with such tendency are known to have a strictness bias.

On the other hand, some supervisors demonstrate a leniency bias and rate their subordinates very liberally which may make even average performers seem like star performers, attaining very high-performance scores.

And yet, others “play safe” by rating around the golden mean – the average. This may be done to avoid the necessity to justify scoring across the two extremes as some systems expect supervisors to specify additional comments if they give too high or too low ratings to employees. This rating error is known as the central tendency bias.

B. Halo Effect

Halo effect occurs when a rater attaches too much significance to a single factor of performance and gives similar ratings on other performance elements. Thus, overall evaluation is significantly influenced by a single factor. Such a perception undermines the importance of other elements and leads to an unbalanced performance appraisal of the employee.

For example, a supervisor rates an employee very high on quality because of her immaculate attention to details and lack of defects in her work. Then assuming the individual to be an overall high performer based on the quality of her work output, the supervisor rates her very high on efficiency, responsibility, punctuality, etc. without taking an objective look at her performance in these areas.

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C. Recency

Performance appraisal involves assessment of employee performance for a specific period – quarterly, annually, etc. People may not perform uniformly throughout that period. We all face high and lows and demonstrate variance in performance due to numerous factors. It is therefore very important to review performance demonstrated throughout the period under consideration.

Often, however, recent events tend to overshadow the overall performance. People do have “short memories”. Thus, an employee who has worked very hard and excelled throughout the year, but for some inadvertent reason has faced performance issues in the last weeks or months, may at times, get a poor appraisal from the supervisor, showing a recency bias.

D. Contrast Effect

When supervisors rate employees one after another, rating of an exceptional performer, or a very poor performer could affect the subsequent ratings of other individuals. This phenomenon is known as the contrast effect. For example, let's suppose that a supervisor has just rated an outstanding performer and is now evaluating an employee who is also a good performer, but there seems to be a contrasting difference between the abilities and output of the two employees. This significant difference in performance or employee competencies could lead the supervisor to rating the second individual as an average performer.

E. Personal Bias

Personal beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, experiences, preferences, and lack of understanding about a person, class or a phenomenon can lead to an unfair evaluation which is off from reality. We all suffer from these shortcomings, consciously or unconsciously, while making everyday judgments about people, things, events, etc.

It is especially important to be aware of and sensitive to possible biases, prejudices and stereotypes while making judgments about employee performance. While many of the prejudices operate covertly and unconsciously, others strike us through conscious thoughts and feelings. Understanding common biases and being on guard while appraising can significantly raise the objectivity of the evaluation process.

Examples of personal bias include a bias against a race, ethnicity, religion, age, sex, or assuming that a certain type or class of people are not suitable to perform a specific job or function, etc. If a supervisor believes for instance, that women are emotional and men are rational, then chances are that they would not employ a female worker for a role that involves making objective decisions. Similarly, an assumption that young workers are faster and more efficient than old workers would make it more probable to give a higher efficiency rating to a younger worker than an older worker.

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F. Length of Service

Giving higher ratings to those employees who have been in the department the longest period of time.

G. Previous Ratings Influence

Repeating the last rating, instead of looking at the actual performance during the current rating period.

H. Personal Relationship Conflict

Letting a personal relationship with a subordinate influence the appraisal.

To overcome the errors, follow the system recommend in this guide, use concrete performance standards to measure performance, and use interviews to manage performance.

REFERENCE TOOLS (Forms)

The following list provides the tools (forms) utilized throughout the performance review process:

- Employee Evaluation
- Supervisor Evaluation
- Department Head Evaluation

Examples of the tools (forms) are provided in the following pages.