



MCP/ASR
Performance Excellence Program
Handbook

Department of Human Resources
Chester C. Christie, Director
City Hall, Suite 311
(614) 645-7206

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Mayor's Memo

Background

The MCP/ASR Performance Excellence Program (PEP) is the first step in development of new individual performance management programs that focus on the achievement of the *Columbus Covenant*...

“To be the best city in the nation in which to live, work, and raise a family.”

Program Mission

To promote results and behaviors that ensure the success of the *Columbus Covenant*.

Program Values

- Customer Focus
- Accountability for Results
- Continuous Improvement
- Culture of Occupational Safety

Program Objectives

- Develop and reward behaviors and results as a vehicle to achieve a high-performing city government.
- Establish an effective and efficient pay for performance system to attract and retain a high-quality workforce.
- Provide tools to encourage communication between managers and employees to ensure a clear understanding of the link between their contributions and:
1) The Columbus Covenant, 2) strategic goals, and 3) program goals.
- Provide accurate and reliable performance data for pay decisions.

Who is Covered by the Performance Excellence Program?

All employees whose terms and conditions of employment are governed by the Management Compensation Plan (MCP) or the Columbus Health Department's Administrative Salary Resolution (ASR) are covered by the Performance Excellence Program with a few exceptions.

Exceptions:

- Seasonal Employees
- Employees in bargaining unit classifications working less than 20 hours per week

The Performance Evaluation Form

The performance evaluation form is comprised of three parts:

- Core Competencies
- Leadership Competencies
- Performance Goals Matrix

What is a Competency?

- The combination of skill, knowledge and behavior that builds organizational capability and effectiveness
- The capabilities we want our employees to focus on developing and applying to their jobs

The City competencies serve to identify levels of performance and to identify needs for performance improvement. In addition, the competencies are helpful in the selection process because they identify the specific behaviors necessary for effective job performance, and they can provide criteria to be used in candidate assessment. The competencies also provide an objective review of training and development needs.

Core Competencies *(For all MCP/ASR employees)*

The following four competencies are rooted in the Principles of Progress from the Columbus Covenant. They are the key behaviors that are essential to the success of the goals and objectives of the Columbus Covenant.

Customer Focus

- Greets customers and listens carefully
- Provides requested assistance and/or information in a prompt and courteous manner to satisfy the customer
- Performs with accuracy and thoroughness

Accountability for Results

- Assumes personal responsibility for own actions
- Performs job duties in a manner consistent with time and quality standards
- Identifies work flow obstacles to supervisor
- Finds productive activities to fill idle time

Continuous Improvement

- Demonstrates willingness to do things differently within the context of continuous improvement
- Actively participates in training or on-the-job opportunities to learn new ways of doing things
- Applies those new ways of doing things to everyday work

Culture of Occupational Safety

- Follows all safety rules; proactively works to prevent accidents; complies with occupational safety regulations
- Encourages the use of sound judgment in regard to safety throughout the work environment
- Advocates safety focus by identifying and following through on opportunities to implement, enhance, or update safety rules, practices, procedures and/or standards
- Attends and participates in safety meetings and/or other safety-related activities
- Ensures occupational safety matters are investigated and brought to resolution

Leadership Competencies

One or both of these competencies should be included in the evaluations of those employees who have supervisory responsibility, program management responsibility, or significant responsibility for managing external contractors or service providers.

Managing Performance

- Leads by example; demonstrates high ethical standards
- Sets clear goals and objectives for work area, yet remains flexible to changes in priorities
- Regularly communicates tasks to be achieved to subordinates/others
- Provides regular, constructive feedback and coaching to subordinates/others based on their performance
- Works with subordinates to determine training needs and to complete training objectives
- Participates in the City's performance management process with each subordinate employee, conducting required sessions and submitting completed paperwork in a timely manner
- Uses recognition programs to recognize employees
- Encourages and rewards risk-taking consistent with defined goals
- Fosters a work environment characterized by mutual respect; promotes good labor relations
- Ensures performance measures are in place to monitor progress and assess achievement of strategic goals and objectives; develops initiatives to achieve goals and objectives

Managing Resources

- Maintains appropriate budgetary and asset controls
- Initiates timely and effective corrective action as needed
- Makes effective use of available resources to accomplish goals and meet workload requirements
- Responds to needs for cost containment as required

Performance Goals Matrix

The key results areas are specific objectives and/or key job responsibilities that are emphasized during an evaluation year. They may relate to individual job responsibilities or special projects and emphasize specific expectations as they relate to the above competencies.

Objectives will typically apply to higher-level professional and managerial positions. They will be derived from the strategic and program goals for the evaluation year. Key job responsibilities will apply to jobs which are routine in nature and for which objectives are not appropriate. Both will come from job descriptions.

Each individual should have three to five key results areas defined in an evaluation year. Each key result area should have a defined result with a targeted completion date and a measurable result. Performance goals should follow the *SMART* approach to goal-setting.

S*pecific:* Goals must be clear and unambiguous; broad and fuzzy thinking has no place in goal setting. When goals are specific, they tell us exactly what is expected, when, and how much. Because they are specific, you can easily measure your employee's progress toward their completion.

M*easurable:* If your goals are not measurable, you never know whether your employees are making progress toward their successful completion. Include milestones to indicate progress and help keep employees motivated.

A*ttainable:* Goals must be realistic and attainable by average employees. The best goals require employees to stretch a bit to achieve them but they are not extreme.

R*elevant:* Goals must be an important tool in the grand scheme of reaching your organization's vision and mission.

T*ime-Bound:* Goals must have starting points, ending points, and fixed durations. Commitment to deadlines helps employees to focus their efforts on completion of the goals on or before the due date. Goals without deadlines or schedules for completion tend to be overtaken by the day-to-day crises that invariably arise in an organization.

Performance Cycle

Step #1: Performance Planning

Dialogue between a manager and employee to establish clear, specific performance expectations at the beginning of the performance cycle

Definition and Expectations

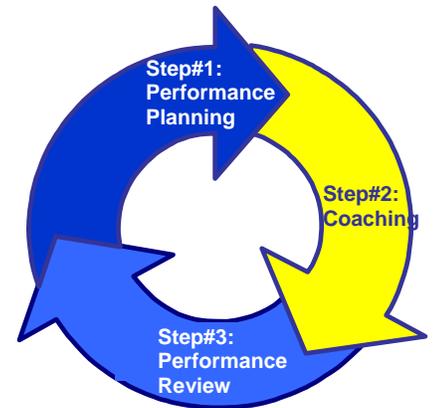
Performance Planning is the first step in the Performance Management process. It is a dialogue between a manager and an employee to:

- Establish and agree upon performance expectations
- Clarify what the employee will be evaluated on, and
- Set the stage for ongoing feedback and coaching throughout the year

It is expected that the manager and employee will engage in a performance planning discussion at least once annually; ideally, the performance planning should occur at any point in which performance expectations change. It is suggested that the supervisor document the agreed-upon expectations and make a copy for the employee.

Manager Role

- Have a thorough understanding of the work involved---the critical functions and key tasks
- Review the job description to ensure that information is accurate and up to date
- Know what constitutes "successful performance" of the competencies and objectives matrix and effectively communicate this
- Identify priority areas, if appropriate, among the competencies that will be emphasized in the evaluation
- Establish objectives and/or key responsibilities for the evaluation period; identify how they will be measured
- Communicate how the results of the employee's work contribute to the department/division goals
- Ask the employee what information, resources, tools, training and supervision is needed



Employee Role

- Have a thorough understanding of the work involved---the critical functions, key tasks
- Review the job description to ensure that information is accurate and up to date
- Understand what constitutes “successful performance” of the competencies and objectives matrix
- Understand how the results of this position contribute to the department/division/program goals
- Communicate what information, resources, tools, training and supervision is needed
- Ask questions to clarify information

Guidelines for Performance Planning Meeting

Performance planning establishes expectations for performance and is the foundation upon which the rest of performance management lies. The performance planning process may vary, depending on the length of the time the employee and manager have worked together, the degree of experience of both individuals, the quality of past performance, etc. On the following page is a sample agenda that includes several important issues to address during a performance planning session.

Sample Agenda for a Planning Meeting

Introduction

The introduction sets the tone of the discussion and presents the focus of performance planning:

- Establish and agree upon performance expectations
- Clarify what the employee will be evaluated on, and
- Set the stage for ongoing feedback and coaching throughout the year

Review position description

The performance planning meeting is a good opportunity to review the position description and determine if it is still accurate. Reviewing the position description:

- Clarifies duties and responsibilities that are unclear to the employee
- Helps the manager know what the employee does on a daily basis, and
- Highlights areas of the job that need special attention

Discuss competencies

The manager and employee should discuss each of the competencies (including the two leadership competencies, if applicable), and then work together to create standards related to each competency.

Establish objectives and key responsibilities

Select the right goals and the right number of goals:

- Pick 2-3 goals on which to focus. You cannot do everything at once; picking too many goals dilutes your effort and process breaks down.
- Pick goals with the greatest relevance. Concentrate your efforts on a few goals with the biggest payoffs.
- Focus on goals that tie most closely to your organization's mission.
- Periodically revisit the goals to update them as necessary.

Discuss preferences for feedback and coaching throughout the year

Performance planning presents an opportunity for the manager and employee to discuss how they will communicate about performance:

- The manager and employee can discuss how the employee likes to be recognized for good performance and how they prefer to receive feedback when there is a performance problem
- Managers and employees can also discuss how the supervisor prefers to receive feedback from the employee

Discuss needed training and development necessary to attain the performance standards

Identify what knowledge and skills the employee will need to learn or improve to meet performance standards.

Closing

Check in with each other about how the process went. Review any next steps that have been agreed upon (e.g., making sure employee and manager both have a copy of what has been agreed upon).

Step #2: Coaching

Two-way discussions which focus on recognizing employee excellence and areas for improvement and learning as well as identifying barriers to performance

Definitions and Expectations

Coaching is an ongoing process of communication between the manager and the employee focused on improving current performance and building capabilities for the future. It involves informal conversation or notes, as well as more formal coaching meetings and written documentation. Coaching includes a variety of activities, such as:

<i>Observing performance</i>	<i>Correcting poor performance</i>
<i>Providing instruction</i>	<i>Recognizing excellent performance</i>
<i>Directing employee's efforts</i>	<i>Listening to employee's concerns and ideas</i>
<i>Providing encouragement</i>	<i>Removing barriers to performance</i>

In the Performance Excellence Program, it is expected that coaching will occur on an as-needed basis throughout the year and may be initiated by either the manager or the employee. Managers and employees are encouraged to document these discussions as appropriate.

Manager Role

- Provide ongoing performance feedback to employees to recognize excellent performance
- Provide feedback to correct performance that does not meet established expectations
- Solicit ideas and suggestions from the employee for improving work processes
- Work with the employee to identify barriers to success and strategies for removing or minimizing the barriers
- Discuss employee's learning and professional development needs
- Solicit employee feedback on supervisory coaching effectiveness

Below are general guidelines for the manager to keep in mind when coaching an employee:

- **Do** allow time for coaching. Even on an informal basis, it takes time to do it well.
- **Do** ask how you can be of help to your employees.
- **Do** ask the employee what prevents him/her from performing, if the coaching is about not meeting expectations.
- **Do** ask the employee for solutions to the problem.
- **Do** describe the employee's performance as specifically as possible. Describe what impact it has on others or on the work area.
- **Do** write down what you and the employee have agreed to.
- **Do** talk about follow up. Will you meet again to discuss the issue? When?

- **Don't** be distracted by interruptions.
- **Don't** assume your employee knows what you are thinking.
- **Don't** assume the performance problem is because the employee has a bad attitude.
- **Don't** end on a threatening or negative note. Re-state your support for your employee and your willingness to help them to succeed.

Questions for Managers

1. What have I observed about this employee that I can compliment?
2. In what ways does this person like to be recognized for excellent performance?
3. How could this staff member improve his/her performance? What is the difference between "actual" and "desired" performance?
4. Do I know what this employee is working on? And the project status?
5. How well is this employee doing in meeting his/her goals? What can be done to facilitate goal progress?
6. Have I checked to see if there are any barriers this employee might be experiencing in performing his/her duties, such as:
 - a. Getting needed information?
 - b. Having appropriate equipment?
 - c. Having adequate supplies?
 - d. Working under a reasonable deadline?
 - e. Having well-defined priorities?
 - f. Receiving needed feedback on performance?
 - g. Having a reasonable workload?
7. Have I provided or made available the training this staff member needs to do the job?
8. Have I asked this staff member how I can help him/her succeed?
9. Do I know what this employee's career goals are?
10. What have I done to develop myself as a coach?
11. Have I asked this employee for feedback about how I am doing as his/her coach?

Corrective Action

In some situations, coaching may not result in improved performance. When that occurs, managers may need to use informal and/or formal corrective action procedures to address performance issues. Managers have responsibility for understanding and implementing appropriate corrective action. Please contact your department HR staff for advice.

Employee Role

Employees are encouraged to be active participants in their own coaching by:

- Asking their managers for coaching when they need it
- Listening and responding to feedback from coaches, and
- Providing feedback to their coaches about what they need

Questions for Employees

1. Am I clear on what is expected of me?
2. In what areas do I believe that I am exceeding expectations? How do I share this with my manager? Are there examples of my successes that I want to share?
3. In what areas do I believe I am meeting expectations? Is there anything I need in order to do better in these areas, e.g., equipment, resources, training, etc.?
4. In what areas do I believe my performance is below expectations? Why am I not meeting expectations? What do I need to improve my performance?
5. Do I know the extent to which my manager is satisfied with my job performance?
6. How can I share with my manager what I am working on? Project updates?
7. How well am I meeting my goals? What help do I need to assure my goals are met?
8. Is there information I need to share with my manager about barriers to my job performance, such as:
 - a. Inadequate information?
 - b. Having appropriate equipment?
 - c. Unclear directions?
 - d. Inadequate supplies?
 - e. Lack of skill or knowledge?
 - f. Difficulty in meeting deadlines?
 - g. Workload?
9. Is there training that would help me improve my performance?
10. Are there additional tasks or responsibilities that I would like to learn?
11. Do I have suggestions to improve the way my work is done? (e.g., better procedures, updated forms, etc.)
12. Is there anything I need from my manager to do a better job?
13. What feedback do I want to give my manager about his/her coaching?
14. Are there concerns that I have that I should share with my manager?

Mid-year Review (Optional)

The mid-year review is intended to ensure that the manager and employee meet halfway through the evaluation year to determine whether or not any changes need to be made to the performance plan. While it is expected that any changes would be noted in ongoing communication, the mid-year review offers a more formal step to the process. This review is an optional step.

Step #3: Performance Review

Summary two-way discussion and written documentation focusing on employee performance: areas of excellence, goals for improvement, and development needs

Definitions and Expectations

Performance Review is an extremely important component of the performance management process. It is the culminating discussion between the manager and employee regarding:

- Where performance exceeded, met, or fell below expectations
- The learning and development needed and received
- Goals that were set and achieved by the employee, and
- Feedback from others affected by the employee's performance

Information from the performance review is critical not just for performance improvement, but for other human resource decisions, including compensation.

In the Performance Excellence Program, it is an expectation that every employee will receive, at minimum, an annual review that will be discussed, documented, and filed.

Manager Role

Before the Performance Review

- Schedule ample time and a private place for the review discussion
- Notify the employee in advance
- Arrange for work coverage for the employee; reviews should be conducted during regular work hours, not during break, lunch or after the workday is over
- Review the employee's job description and the expectations that were set during the performance planning discussion
- Review the employee's self evaluation
- Review the documentation you have collected throughout the year (letters, files, etc.)
- Plan for two-way communication during the review meeting; think of questions that you can use to help the employee "open up"
- Remind your employee to bring appropriate materials (self-evaluation, copies of letters, etc.)
- **Ensure that the evaluation has been reviewed and revised, as necessary, by management including the Appointing Authority, as well as by your departmental human resources.**

During the Performance Review

- Provide specific feedback on the employee's performance, including priority areas targeted during Performance Planning. Include performance that exceeded, met, or fell below expectations.
- Offer the employee an opportunity to share his/her self-evaluation
- Discuss learning and development needs of the employee
- Set targets for improvement
- Answer employee questions with regard to the performance review
- Get employee's signature and comments

After the Performance Review

- Make a copy of the review for the employee and yourself
- Get appropriate final approvals

Employee Role

Before the Performance Review

- Confirm the meeting with your manager
- Gather any documentation regarding your performance that you have collected throughout the year (letters, notes, etc.)
- Review your job description and expectations that were set during the performance planning discussion
- Complete your self-evaluation; make a copy and give it to your manager in advance of the meeting
- Write down questions that you want to ask your manager
- Be prepared to talk about your performance---what you do well, how you could improve, what you would like to learn

During the Performance Review

- Listen to feedback from your manager and ask questions to clarify information
- Share information from the self-evaluation
- Offer suggestions and ideas for improving performance, if needed
- Identify areas for learning and development
- Identify obstacles to performance and suggest solutions
- Sign the performance review form, and include comments if desired

After the Performance Review

- Keep a copy of the performance review for future reference
- Use the information gained in the performance review to build on strengths and improve areas for growth

Guidelines for Conducting a Performance Review

1. Make it "priority time".
 - a. Create an agenda for the meeting
 - b. Minimize interruptions
2. Set a tone of collaboration
 - a. Start the discussion on a positive note
 - b. Encourage the employee's participation
3. Be clear about your purpose
 - a. Reinforce that the discussion will address strengths and areas for improvement
4. Review performance expectations
 - a. Discuss the job description, position objectives, goals, and key responsibilities
 - b. Be clear about performance standards within your unit
5. Discuss performance that is below, meets, and exceeds expectations
 - a. Use language that is clear and specific; use examples
 - b. Describe performance, not personality
6. Ask the employee what he/she thinks
 - a. Allow the employee to speak freely before responding to his/her comments
 - b. Actively listen to the employee
 - c. Clarify the employee's concerns, then address them
7. Set goals to:
 - a. Improve performance in targeted areas
 - b. Build on strengths
 - c. Develop the employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities
 - d. Align the employee's work with the needs of the department/division
8. Agree to follow up
 - a. Schedule at least one interim check-in on performance during the year
 - b. Ask how the employee prefers to receive feedback (written, verbal)
 - c. Discuss how the employee likes to be recognized for good work
9. Close with encouragement
 - a. Offer your help and support
 - b. End on a positive note by summarizing the employee's strengths and contributions

Probationary Evaluation

All City employees appointed to classified positions serve a probationary period that is established by the Civil Service Commission (CSC). Probationary periods are 180, 270, or 365 days in length. Specific information regarding the classification type and applicable probationary period can be found on the class specification or by referring to Civil Service Rule XI and Appendices A, B, and C.

The probationary evaluation process follows the regular performance cycle described in this handbook. The same form is used. Be sure to mark the box indicating that the type of evaluation is probationary.

A mid-year review is required during the probationary period. For probationary periods of less than one year, the mid-year review should be conducted halfway through the evaluation period. Additional discussions should be conducted as necessary to address performance issues that may arise.

Civil Service Rule XI provides that the service of any employee may be terminated by the appointing authority at any time during the probationary period by submitting a written report to the Civil Service Commission and the employee specifying the reason the employee is found unsatisfactory and such removal shall be final. **Failure to make such a report at least ten days prior to the expiration of the probationary period shall automatically make the appointment permanent.** Therefore, it is critical that any probationary evaluation that is anticipated to result in a probationary termination be conducted in sufficient time before the end of the employee's probationary period to allow for departmental review of the action and timely submission of the report to the Civil Service Commission in accordance with CSC Rule XI.

Once the employee has successfully completed the probationary period, the evaluation cycle should be adjusted to an annual cycle that aligns with the City's fiscal year. This realignment will result in the first annual evaluation cycle being for a period of less than 12 months. After that, the employee will be on a regular 12-month evaluation cycle.

Common Causes of Bias in Performance Ratings

Halo/Horns Effect - The tendency to let one observation affect all others.

- Rating an employee high in all categories just because the employee receives a high rating in one or two categories.
- Rating an employee low in all categories just because the employee is rated low in one or two categories.
- Allowing the fact that the employee is related to someone important to influence the performance evaluation.

Halo effect is prevented by relying on predetermined performance criteria when evaluating an employee.

Stereotypes - Basing performance evaluation ratings on inappropriate expectations instead of job performance.

- Often indicates favoritism, prejudice and/or a closed mind
- A manager guilty of stereotyping usually ignores or distorts information on performance. A close review of objective performance criteria will expose stereotyping.

Stereotyping can be discouraged by requiring supervisors to evaluate employees objectively.

Subjective Criteria - Evaluation terms or criteria whose meanings vary between individual users.

- Phrases such as good, adequate, satisfactory, and excellent can be interpreted differently.
- Average is generally misunderstood
- Expectations based on another person's undefined feeling of satisfaction are essentially subjective

Subjective Criteria can be avoided by making clear that the employee knows the expected performance criteria in advance of the performance evaluation interview.

Central Tendency - Giving all employees within the work unit the same ratings.

- Observed when a supervisor cannot notice variations in job performance from employee to employee or when obvious differences are ignored because of an inability or unwillingness to take the time to explain/defend different ratings for different employees.
- Denying the existence of significant differences between employees

Central tendency problems can be prevented by better performance standards training.

Recency - *Overemphasizing the most recent behavior while forgetting consistent past problems or important earlier accomplishments.*

- Letting the most proximate action overwhelm or outweigh previous ones.
- Generally found when the manager does not conduct or record behaviors and accomplishments during the year.

Documenting the results of periodic reviews allows managers to refresh their memories about major performance results at year-end.

Leniency Bias - *The rater gives the employee the benefit of the doubt to an extreme, exaggerating the positives and minimizing the defects and improvement needs.*

- A lenient manager may anticipate a negative employee reaction to a low rating or critical comment and therefore inflate the rating higher than deserved. Or the evaluation is softened to avoid conflict or hurt feelings that might damage the working relationship.
- Sometimes, the manager merely lacks confidence to fairly rate performance, or does not feel that the organization's expectations are fair. In a few cases, the bias is a conscious decision to give them a break to compensate for something else or to express favoritism.

Leniency bias, like excessive harshness, can only exist to the extent that the evaluation criteria allows.

Opportunity Bias - *An employee receives an inappropriate rating because of circumstances that have nothing to do with actual performance.*

- The manager who received promotion may wish to leave a parting gift to the old crew.
- The boss whose automobile was just dented may take his/her annoyance out on innocent subordinates.
- Evaluation ratings and conclusions that do not match reality will show up as unsupported by specific performance result criteria.

Correctable by closer management reviews of evaluations and remedial training.

Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)

Employees are expected to be fully competent in the performance of their jobs. The PIP is intended to assist the employee in understanding and overcoming any performance shortcomings. The Performance Improvement Plan form is to be used at any time that an employee is rated as *Needs Improvement* or *Unsatisfactory* on any individual competency, or is rated as *Did Not Meet* on a performance objective or key job responsibility. X.

Pay Delivery

Annual procedures for making pay increase decisions will be determined by the Director of Human Resources, and will be communicated to all Appointing Authorities.

Performance Excellence Program Manager's Checklist

The following are the key steps for the manager to take during the annual performance cycle. More detail is contained elsewhere in this handbook.

Performance Planning

January – February

1. Identify department, division, and/or program goals for upcoming performance cycle.
2. Review the employee's job description and determine performance expectations required to meet the above goals.
3. Meet with the employee to discuss the performance plan and to get the employee's input in the process.
4. Discuss with the employee what "Successful" performance would be on each competency including the Leadership competencies if applicable.
5. Discuss with employee and identify Objectives/Key Job Responsibilities and Measurements for upcoming performance cycle.
6. Give a copy of the performance plan to the employee.

Mid-year Review (Optional Except For Probationary Evaluations)

June – July

1. Meet with the employee to review progress on the performance plan. Is everything on target? Should any Objectives/Key Job Responsibilities be changed?
2. Document the meeting and any changes on the evaluation form.
3. Give a copy of the performance plan to the employee.

Performance Review

December - January

1. Employee is required to complete a self-evaluation and submit it to the manager.
2. Review employee's self-evaluation, job description, performance plan, and performance documentation gathered throughout the year.
3. Complete the evaluation form.
4. Have the completed form reviewed and signed off on by the departmental hierarchy including the Appointing Authority. Any issues or discrepancies in the evaluation should be resolved before signatures are obtained.
5. Meet with employee to discuss performance evaluation. Listen to the employee's input.
6. Give a copy of the evaluation to the employee.
7. Begin performance planning process for the upcoming year.

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