



EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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I. PURPOSE

The Employee Performance Management System (EPMS) is designed to communicate to employees expected performance levels, performance feedback and evaluation. The intent is to provide employees with enough information to know what performance is required to be successful in their positions and sufficient feedback to know how their performance compares to these expectations. While not the primary purpose, the EPMS also provides a mechanism to help employees improve performance that does not meet expectations and, if necessary, remove employees from positions in which their performance is not meeting minimum requirements. The provisions of this policy address the appraisal process of both probationary and covered employees. Although not mentioned specifically in this policy, employees exempt from coverage under the State Employee Grievance Procedure Act may also be given annual performance appraisals.

II. DEFINITIONS

Established Review Date – The employee’s review date as established in accordance with State Human Resources Regulations.

Universal Review Date – The date prior to which all employee’s performance reviews are due. December 1 is the universal review date for the agency. (Exceptions: probationary employees.)

Planning Stage – A planning document presented to an employee at the beginning of a rating period that documents the performance expectations for the review period.

Short Year Review – Any performance review that evaluates an employee’s performance for a period of time less than 12 months. (Exception: “Performance Improvement Plan” reviews.)

Short Year Planning Stage – Any Employee Performance Plan covering a period of time less than 12 months.

III. GENERAL INFORMATION

All performance appraisals will be made in writing by the employee’s supervisor (the rater) who has direct experience or knowledge of the work performed. The appraisal will be reviewed by the next level supervisor (the reviewer) prior to the appraisal being discussed with the employee (unless the rater is the agency head). The reviewer may attach additional comments to the appraisal, and in the attachment may take exception to the rater’s appraisal. In addition, the reviewer has the authority to change the appraisal completed by the rater. If the reviewer elects to change the rating, the change and associated justification should be noted on the appraisal document. Whenever an employee’s job responsibilities change significantly, the appraisal document should be revised to reflect that change. The final appraisal must bear the signature of the rater, the reviewer, and the employee, if possible. If any party refuses to sign the appraisal, a notation shall be made on the performance appraisal of this. If possible, a witness should sign to acknowledge that the party refused to sign the appraisal.

All performance appraisals will become a permanent part of the employee’s official personnel file. Upon request, the agency will furnish the employee with a copy of the performance appraisal with copies of all pertinent attachments.

The provisions of this policy address the appraisal process of both probationary and covered employees. Although not mentioned specifically in this policy, employees exempt from coverage under the State Employee Grievance Procedure Act may also receive routine feedback on their performance.

IV. TRAINING

Employees receive an introduction to the Employee Performance Management System through new employee orientation, general information sessions, and communication from their supervisor.

V. LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE

There will be five levels of performance to rate each job function and requirement and to rate overall performance:

A. Outstanding

Work that is characterized by exemplary accomplishments throughout the rating period; performance that is considerably and consistently above the requirements of the job duties and objectives.

B. Exceeds Expectations

Work performance that is above the job duties and objectives throughout the rating period.

C. Meets Expectations

Work that meets the requirements of the job duties and objectives.

D. Needs Improvement

Work that meets some, but not all, of the requirements of the job duties and objectives.

E. Unsuccessful

Work that fails to meet the requirements of the job duties and objectives.

Performance characteristics shall not be rated by the three levels of performance but shall be given a rating of pass or fail.

Pass – Meets requirements.

Fail– Fails to meet requirements.

The Agency will convert its five levels of performance ratings to the three levels of performance ratings prior to entering into SCEIS as follows:

AGENCY PERFORMANCE LEVEL	OVERALL RATING	PERFORMANCE LEVEL ENTERED INTO SCEIS
Outstanding	4.50 and above	Exceptional
Exceeds Expectations	3.5 to 4.49	
Meets Expectations	2.5 to 3.49	Successful
Needs Improvement	1.5 to 2.49	
Unsuccessful	0.00 to 1.49	Unsuccessful

VI. PLANNING STAGE

The EPMS begins with the creation of the Planning Stage. The Planning Stage must be documented in writing and sets the expectations for the applicable performance review period and provides a guide for the discussion of performance expectations between the employee and their manager. The creation of a Planning Stage could be a collaborative process between the employee and their manager. In those instances where the manager and employee cannot agree upon the content of the Planning Stage the manager's decision shall be final. The Planning Stage should be reviewed by the next higher-level manager unless the manager is the agency head. For current employees, the Planning Stage should be completed prior to the start of the new review period. For new employees, the Employee Performance Plan should be completed no later than 30 calendar days from the employee's start date.

A. JOB FUNCTIONS

The rater and the employee shall determine the job functions (which include job duties and success criteria) by reviewing the employee's position description. If the position description is not up-to-date, or if there is no position description, one should be prepared and submitted for approval. In those instances where the rater and employee cannot agree upon the job functions, the rater's decision shall be final. The statement outlining the job function should include descriptive information about the performance expectations (success criteria) of the rater. The descriptive statement should specify the expectations of the rater for the employee to meet performance requirements. Each job function shall be rated in the evaluation stage based on the five levels of performance. It shall be mandatory for all raters to be evaluated on the timely completion of each employee's performance appraisal.

B. OBJECTIVES

Objectives shall be optional for all employees. An objective should be included when the employee is assigned a special, non-recurring project or assignment that is not included in the employee's position description. The statement outlining the objective(s) should also include descriptive information about the performance expectations (success criteria) of the rater. The descriptive statement should specify the expectations of the rater for the employee to be successful. Each objective shall be rated in the evaluation stage based on the five levels of performance.

C. PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS

The Division of State Human Resources provides agencies with a list of suggested performance characteristics and their definitions. Each performance characteristic shall be defined in the planning stage and rated as “pass” or “fail” in the evaluation stage. The performance characteristics section shall be used as a communication tool to emphasize those performance characteristics that are important to success in performing the job functions and objectives included in the planning document. The performance characteristics are not weighted in determination of the overall performance rating.

Whenever an employee’s job responsibilities change significantly, or changes to job functions, success criteria, and/or special assignments are needed, the Planning Stage should be revised to reflect that change.

The Planning Stage must be acknowledged by the employee, the manager and the next higher-level manager. If any party refuses to acknowledge the Planning Stage, this refusal should be documented and attached to the Planning Stage. If possible, a witness should sign to acknowledge that the party refused to sign the Planning Stage. An electronic signature or similar documentation is acceptable.

VII. CHANGE IN SUPERVISOR DURING RATING PERIOD

If an employee moves from one supervisor to another within the agency, the supervisor should forward copies of any documentation completed during the period of assignment and forward it to the new supervisor. The new supervisor will complete the performance feedback process for the remaining period and will incorporate the previous supervisor’s comments in the overall review.

VIII. ONGOING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

A rater should continue to provide performance feedback to employees throughout the review period. An unofficial mid-year review is encouraged to facilitate this communication between raters and employees. In addition, various options are available to the rater in conducting performance management. A rater may gather feedback to prepare the appraisal document and/or conduct unofficial appraisals more frequently than required in this policy.

IX. ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING REVIEW DATES

All employees will be given a performance review no more than 60 days prior to the employee’s performance review date. An employee on approved leave with or without pay for more than 30 consecutive workdays may have the performance review date advanced up to 60 days. An employee whose performance review date is advanced in accordance with the Division of State Human Resources Regulations may receive a short-year planning stage and review. This will be done to bring the employee back to the Universal Review Date of December 1st.

A covered employee who transfers from one agency to another shall have the performance review date adjusted to the new agency’s universal review date, if necessary. This may require a short year performance plan and review.

An employee who receives any in-grade increase or decrease within the current class will maintain the review date.

A list of the performance review dates presently established in accordance with the Division of State Human Resources Regulations will be maintained so that they may be reinstated, if necessary. Any personnel action that requires the establishment of an employee’s review date will follow the provisions of this policy.

X. ABBREVIATED REVIEW

An abbreviated process may be used for any “short-year” review period that occurs within two months prior to the “Universal Review Date” (October and November). If the job duties have not changed, the supervisor may complete the Short-Year Performance Review Form documenting that the supervisor and subordinate have reviewed the Planning Stage and that performance of the duties has not changed since the last Performance Feedback Session. If the job duties have changed since the last review, the employee should receive an updated Planning Stage for the short year review period. The revised Planning Stage should be used to evaluate the employee’s performance prior to the end of the short-year review period. Any review period of more than two months must be a full review.

XI. PROBATIONARY PERIOD

Each new employee in probationary status will be rated prior to the completion of a twelve-month probationary period. If that employee does not receive a performance appraisal prior to the performance review date, the employee will receive a

“successful” rating by default and obtain covered status as a State employee and permanent status in the class. The probationary period may not be extended. The performance review date marks the beginning of a new review period. In order to bring the employee back to the December 1st Universal Review Date after completion of the twelve-month probationary period, it may be necessary for the employee to receive an abbreviated review.

A probationary employee who receives a promotion, demotion, reclassification, transfer or is reassigned to a position in a different class is given a new original appointment in the new class and the twelve-month probationary period begins again from the date of the promotion, demotion, reclassification, transfer, or reassignment to a position in a different class. A probationary employee who transfers from another state agency to a position in a different class will be required to serve twelve (12) months with SCDA prior to attaining permanent status. An employee who is reassigned or transferred to a position in the same class or who receives any in-grade increase or decrease within the current class will not have the review date re-established.

If an employee is not performing satisfactorily during the probationary period, the employee will be terminated before becoming a covered employee. Until an employee has completed the probationary period and has a “Meets Expectations” or higher rating on the employee’s evaluation, the employee has no grievance rights under the State Employee Grievance Procedure Act; therefore, an agency is not required to follow the “Substandard Performance Process” to terminate a probationary employee. The “Meets Expectations” rating is the equivalent of the “meets” performance rating referenced in the State Employee Grievance Procedure Act.

XII. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

All employees will be given an annual appraisal no more than 60 calendar days prior to the employee’s performance review date. An employee on approved leave with or without pay for more than 30 consecutive workdays may have the performance review date advanced up to 60 days. A covered employee who receives a “Warning Notice of Substandard Performance” shall have the performance review date advanced to coincide with the “Warning Notice of Substandard Performance” dates.

The performance review date marks the beginning of a new review period. If an employee does not receive an appraisal prior to the performance review date, the employee shall receive a “Meets Expectations” rating by default. A covered employee may not be issued either an overall “unsuccessful” appraisal or an “unsuccessful” rating on any essential job func-

tion or objective which significantly impacts performance, without following the “Substandard Performance Process.”

XIII. SUBSTANDARD PERFORMANCE PROCESS FOR COVERED EMPLOYEES

A covered employee is entitled to adequate notice of substandard performance and the opportunity to improve the substandard performance before receiving an “unsuccessful” rating and being removed from the position. To ensure this occurs, the following procedures will be followed:

- A. A rater shall issue a “Warning Notice of Substandard Performance” prior to issuing an “unsuccessful” rating to a covered employee. If during the performance period, an employee is considered “unsuccessful,” in any essential job duty which significantly impacts performance, the rater will provide the employee with a written “Warning Notice of Substandard Performance.” The warning notice will provide for an improvement period of no less than 30 days and no more than 120 days. The warning notice may be issued at any time during the review period. Ordinarily, the warning period may not extend beyond the employee’s review date. However, the review date may be advanced to coincide with the “Warning Notice of Substandard Performance” dates. Should the review date be advanced, and the employee receives a “Meets Expectations” or above rating on all essential functions/objectives, which significantly impacts performance, as noted in the warning notice, the employee may require a short-year review in order to bring the employee back to the Universal Review Date.
- B. The rater will prepare a Warning of Substandard Performance Notice. The rater and the employee should participate in drafting a work improvement plan which includes a list of ways to improve the deficiencies and other appropriate performance-related recommendations. In those instances where the rater and employee cannot agree upon the content of the work improvement plan, the rater’s decision will be final.
- C. During the warning period, the employee, the rater, and a Human Resources representative will have regularly scheduled meetings during which they will discuss the employee’s progress. Documentation is required to verify that these counseling sessions were held. Copies of this documentation will be placed in the employee’s official personnel file and given to the employee upon request.
- D. If the employee’s performance is rated “Meets Expectations” or above, on all essential job functions/objectives, which significantly impact performance, noted in

the warning notice by the end of the warning period, employment shall continue. If the employee is rated “unsuccessful,” on any job duty which significantly impacts performance as noted in the warning notice by the end of the warning period, the employee will be removed from the position immediately (i.e., terminated, reassigned, demoted).

- E. Once a time frame for improving substandard performance has been given, the employee must receive a written appraisal prior to the end of the warning period, or the employee will receive a “Meets Expectations” rating by default.
- F. If an employee has been issued two warning notices within a 365-day period and performance drops to a substandard level on any essential job duty which significantly impacts performance for a third time within a 365-day period, the employee will be removed from the position upon the third recurrence of such substandard performance by issuing the “unsuccessful” rating. A warning notice is not required on the third occurrence.

XIV. WARNING NOTICE OF SUBSTANDARD PERFORMANCE

The requirements of a “Warning Notice of Substandard Performance” are:

- A. The warning notice must be in writing, addressed to the employee, labeled as a “Warning Notice of Substandard Performance,” and signed by the employee (witnessed, if the employee will not sign).
- B. The warning notice must list the job function(s) and/or objectives included in the employee’s Planning Stage that are considered “unsuccessful,” with an explanation of the deficiencies for each job function and/or objective.
- C. The notice shall include the time period for improvement and the consequences if no improvement is noted (i.e., termination, demotion, reassignment).
- D. The notice shall include a plan for meetings to discuss employee progress during the warning period.
- E. The warning notice must be approved by Human Resources.
- F. A copy of the warning notice must be given to the employee and placed in the employee’s official personnel file.