

# Planning for Success Guide

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*Saskatchewan* 

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## Overview

*Performance management is about achieving and sustaining an effective organization.*

Performance management is an integral part of an organization's strategic planning process that engages all employees, managers and executive in to align their efforts towards achieving their organization's goals. Successful organizations recognize that people make the difference in achieving success. They also know that outstanding performance does not 'just happen' – it must be planned for, continuously discussed, and constantly developed.

*Planning for Success* is the process of planning and managing performance for out-of-scope employees in the Saskatchewan provincial government. Achieving desired levels of performance is dependent on the quality of the performance management process and on managers and employees embracing accountability for the process.

## Accountability and Roles

Accountability begins with the *executive manager* who has the following responsibilities:

- To participate in the development and planning of what the organizational goals are for the coming year.
- To communicate the organizational goals and direction to their managers and employees.
- To communicate the results their Branch / Division Heads are expected to achieve in alignment with the organizational goals.
- To review work plans of out-of-scope employees to ensure alignment with organizational goals.
- To review mid-year performance assessments to ensure progress towards goals.
- To review performance documentation and ratings to ensure ratings are not too lenient or too tough and that the normative distribution\* is achieved.
- To ensure outstanding performance is recognized and poor performance is addressed.

\* This process includes alignment of available funding for performance management to rating distribution norms. The norms used are based on research conducted by the Conference Board of Canada. These norms may change from time to time and will be published annually along with the administrative guidelines.

*Managers and executive managers* are ultimately accountable for successfully supporting and managing the performance of their staff. This includes ensuring employees understand the priorities of the government, their respective ministry and how their work contributes. Managers are accountable to provide regular feedback and ensure obstacles in achieving individual priorities are addressed.

*Employees* are accountable for taking an active role in developing their own performance plans, monitoring their performance, gathering feedback to support their achievements, and assessing their achievements. While the employer and managers need to encourage personal and professional growth, employees need to be self-directed and take ownership for their own learning and development.

## Features of an effective performance management system

Various research efforts have been directed at determining what makes an effective performance

management system. The common themes that emerge have been stated in various ways by different organizations. An effective system:

- **Focuses on the relationship** – between employee, manager and executive in terms of quality two-way conversation, coaching and honest feedback.
- **Aligns individual effort with business objectives** – to achieve a single-employer, cohesive organization focused on business results; and, as this is a living process, to re-align the work plan and priorities as changes occur.
- **Establishes accountability** – whether accountable to stakeholders or taxpayers, we have a responsibility to ensure a system of performance accountability.
- **Seeks full employee participation** – ownership for the program at all organizational levels through involvement in all aspects of planning, assessing, and personal growth.
- **Differentiates performance** – of each individual in the organization to an established rating scale. The rating discussion is viewed by employees to be the most valuable aspects of the performance management process. The rating discussion provides an increased focus to open and honest sharing of perceptions regarding how well the employee did. This contributes to more effective succession planning, more focused competency development, and the identification and correction of poor performance.
- **Balances system transparency with personal confidentiality** – includes open, honest discussion between the manager and the employee; executive management awareness of performance achievement as the year progresses; disclosure of ministry-wide rating outcomes at the executive level of the organization to ensure a relatively equitable process.
- **Provides for training and development on how to use the system** – such as how to develop objectives and measures, how to coach, how to conduct a performance interview, and how the performance management cycle works.
- **Enables linkage to pay and/or recognition** – in a public environment, in particular, it is not always possible to link achievement directly to pay. Managers are encouraged to find alternative forms of recognition. Some examples include: financial support for attending a conference, participation in a special project or committee, a supplementary role / project assignment, shadowing or a secondment to another functional area, professional association membership, etc.

## Purposes of an effective performance management system

If used effectively, the performance planning and assessment process can make a discernable difference:

- Performance planning is the means by which individuals in the organization become focused on business results, leading to productive activity.
- The assignment and documentation of objectives and expectations provides the legitimate basis for

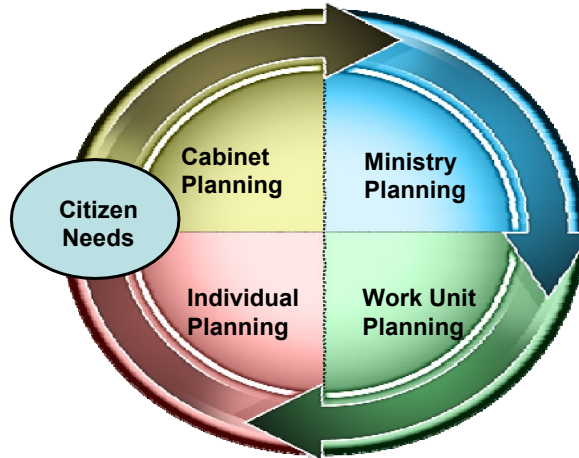
holding employees accountable for results.

- The process of setting objectives and reporting progress enables senior managers to know if alignment with business goals is occurring and that results are being produced at the individual employee level.
- The mid-year review provides an opportunity to realign/adjust work at the individual employee level where necessary and identify and address performance trouble spots before the year is over. It has the added benefit of helping to ensure there are fewer rating surprises at year end.
- Linking competency requirements to the performance plan is the means by which an organization identifies *how* individuals should get the work done, not just what should be done.
- Learning and development objectives help employees to grow within their roles as well as move forward with career aspirations, help the organization achieve their succession planning goals, and contribute to retention and recruitment of employees.
- Performance assessment enables identification of top performers, and identification of poor performance in need of corrective action.
- The performance planning process provides the employee with the answer to several questions:
  - What is expected of me?
  - How am I expected to do it?
  - How am I doing?
- It also provides the manager and employee an opportunity to identify and discuss what the employee needs from the manager or ministry.
- *Planning for Success* provides the opportunity for understanding of organizational direction, a foundation for ongoing dialogue, and monetary or other recognition for achievement.

## Strategic Planning

Performance management is not solely about the relationship between an employee and manager. It is a strategic approach that involves numerous systems and interactions at all levels within an organization to ensure alignment with overall goals and direction. *Planning for Success* is an integral part of the government's overall strategic planning and reporting process.

## Alignment to Government Direction



- A comprehensive planning process starts with the overall vision of government and concludes with budget and resource allocations needed by Ministries to support the vision.
- Ministry budget and resource allocations should support Ministry activities that meet the goals established by Government.
- Unit and individual work plans are based on the Ministry activities.
- Cabinet, Ministry, Work unit and Individual planning are all aspects of a continuous process. Work Unit/Branch priorities are not developed in isolation – they are intrinsically linked to Ministry and Government Planning.
- Needs of Saskatchewan people drive Government's planning process (development of programs, policies, etc.) which, in turn, drives Ministry Planning.
- Individual Planning results in meeting Saskatchewan citizens' needs. Additional needs or newly identified needs by the citizens are then addressed in the next planning cycle.
- Therefore, when a change is made at the cabinet level, changes must cascade down to the individual level.

## Key Phases and When They Occur

The *Planning for Success* process is a continuous cycle.



## Planning: Setting the Direction

### What's Involved

Careful planning is the foundation of the *Planning for Success* process. *The purpose of this process is to achieve organizational effectiveness. Branch and work unit planning emanate from the organizational goals and business plans established by senior executives in each ministry.* Once the strategic plan for the ministry has been established, conversation between the manager and the employee begins in order to set the priorities for the upcoming year or project in alignment with the ministry goals.

### Steps

- 1. Prepare:** Discuss the Ministry / Work Unit Plan and how the employee's work plan can support these plans. This could be done in a team setting or individually as appropriate.
- 2. Identify and set objectives:** The employee work plan process includes setting three types of objectives: work, competencies (behavioural and technical) related to the assigned work, and growth objectives for personal learning and development.
  - a. Work objectives and results expected:** Discuss and identify the primary objectives that will *contribute to* achieving the Ministry/Work Unit Plan. These should not be overly prescriptive to allow for flexibility and creativity in achieving these objectives in different



ways.

- b. Competency objectives:** Discuss and identify the behavioural and technical competencies that are critical to success in achieving the employee's current year's work objectives and how these competencies will be demonstrated during the year. Refer to the **Leadership and Management Competency Framework**.
  - c. Learning and development objectives:** Discuss the employee's desired objectives for their own professional and career growth and development. This includes any learning and development opportunities that will enhance this growth.
- 3. Meet and discuss:** Based on employee / manager discussions, the employee drafts the performance plan and submits it to the manager. Discuss the necessary support needed to achieve the goals and objectives in the performance plan.
  - 4. Sign off:** The employee and manager both sign off the employee's performance plan. The manager submits a copy to the executive manager for signature. Ministry executive will ensure work plans align with the organizational business strategy.

## Objective Setting

The *Planning for Success* process asks employees to complete three objective sections on the form:

- **Work objectives** provide focus for an individual's work and the criteria needed to objectively assess and discuss performance achievement.
- **Competency objectives** describe the critical or primary knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary for achievement of the current year's work objectives. These competencies, both technical and behavioural, are subject to performance assessment and contribute to your year-end performance rating.
- **Learning and development objectives** are more for your professional development to: a) address any competency gaps for your current job; b) enhance knowledge, skills, and abilities to be even better at your job; and c) build knowledge, skills, and abilities for future career planning. Attainment of learning and development objectives **are not** considered in determining your year-end performance rating.

## Work Objectives

Both strategic and operational objectives need to be considered when identifying what the employee's contribution to the accomplishment of the work unit and/or ministry plan.

Clear objectives prevent surprises during the mid-year review and year-end performance review discussions so that managing performance by both the employee and manager can be achieved more effectively on a continuous basis.

To identify work objectives, consideration of the following questions may be helpful:

- What are the main areas of my work responsibilities and what results am I accountable for in these areas? Reference to your job description will be helpful.
- Do I anticipate any significant changes in any of these activities during the next year or so?
- In what areas do I think I could make a significantly greater contribution to team/ministry results?
- Considering the way we do things currently, do I have ideas regarding procedure/process improvements that would make the ministry/work unit/my role run more efficiently and effectively?

It is important that the work objectives and results expected be stated in the most effective possible form. You may find the use of the SMART model, outlined below, helpful in developing the content for these sections on the form.

**Specific:** Work objectives are for the purpose of identifying the specific results for which the individual employee is accountable. Specific, in this case, does not mean detailed. Rather, objectives need to be clear and concise, as opposed to generalized or ambiguous. Whether a job assignment is operational or strategic in nature, objectives need to be directed towards the achievement of the goals of the organization.

**Measurable:** The results should be observable, such that they can be assessed.

The measure and how it is to be assessed are to be described in the Success Measures and Targets section of the performance plan.

Four types of measures to consider when writing a work objective statement:

Qualitative	• how well the result is produced/performed to what standard
Quantitative	• how much/many of the results are produced or performed
Cost-Based	• at what expense the result is produced/performed
Conditions	• what conditions, restrictions or limitations must be met or respected in the achievement of the objective

Measurements can be stated as rates (*90% accuracy*), ranges (*+/- 50%*), or absolute quantities (*5 projects*). Measurements can also be stated to reflect specific requirements; for example, *“to meet written specifications”*, *“according to project guidelines”*, *“within the identified budget”*.

**Achievable:** Objectives should “stretch” the employee’s performance, but must be achievable by the individual employee. It is important that the manager discuss the employee’s perception of control over the outcomes or timelines expected. Consider the employee’s authority, requirement to influence others and resources needed to achieve the desired result.

**Relevant:** Objectives are to align with the ministry’s goals and plans. Work objectives are of greater value to the organization when directly aligned to ministry/work unit goals and plans, otherwise their value is diminished. All employees should be aware of the organizational planning documents.

**Time-Bound:** Each objective should have a specific time frame for accomplishing the objective and/or key

progress points. Timeframes can be specific dates (*August 14*), times of the year (*by the end of June*), tied to significant events (*before the launch of project XYZ*), or ongoing (*daily, weekly*).

## Competency Objectives

**Definition of Competency:** any knowledge, skill or personal attribute which enables a person to be successful.

There are two types of competencies: behavioural and technical. *Behavioural competencies* describe what kinds of behaviours employees need to demonstrate to be successful in accomplishing their work. *Technical competencies* describe the knowledge, skill or expertise employees need to be capable of performing their specific work.

## Developing Competency Objectives

Behavioural competencies are outlined in the **Leadership and Management Competency Framework**.

- Leadership competencies include: Strategic Orientation, Effective Communication, Building Organizational Community, Accountability, and Innovation.
- Management competencies include: Planning and Risk Management, Performance Management and Process Management.

Examples of technical competencies include: project management expertise; knowledge of human resource issues in the public sector; advanced word processing skills, including proof reading and grammar; and a comprehensive knowledge of early childhood and child care theory and practice.

Consideration of the following questions may help identify the most important competencies in your work plan:

- What aspects of my job present the most challenges at present?
- Which competencies would best help me best achieve my work objectives?
- In what ways can I:
  - Meet the challenges of the changes I've identified?
  - Demonstrate specific competencies more often in my role?
  - Make a greater contribution to work unit/ministry performance?

## Learning and Development Objectives

Learning and development objectives are for the purpose of your professional development. These objectives may be geared towards growth in your current role, a more senior assignment, a different type of work, or addressing competency gaps in your current job. These learning objectives are not subject to performance assessment.

Managers need to support, encourage, and fund, if possible, appropriate learning and development

activities. Employees are expected to take some personal initiative for their professional development and discuss their plans with their manager.

Recording and documenting progress on learning and development objectives is an effective means towards intentional growth. Regardless of the method used to record learning and development objectives, your intended learning and development activities and corresponding results must be discussed as a regular part of your individual performance planning and review process.

## Learning and Development Activities

The following resources may be consulted for ideas on development activities:

- Competency development guide
- Internal and external course calendars
- Self-assessment and personal profiling tools
- You may also consider the following options for development activities:
  - On-the-job coaching or training
  - Vocational/topical workshop or seminar
  - Post-secondary education class
  - Conference
  - Self-study (books, other publications, educational/program material, audio-visual resources, resource centre or internet research, interviewing)
  - Participation in special project or committee
  - Cross-functional liaison role
  - Supplementary role/task assignment
  - Secondment or temporary or acting work assignment
  - Shadowing, site visit to “best practice” or other functional area
  - Mentoring relationship
  - Networking/professional association membership
  - Extra-curricular volunteer activities and personal pastimes

From the options, choose activities that you and your manager can commit to carrying out within the next year (considering available time, access, and other resources).

## Evaluating Progress and Realigning

### What’s Involved

On an ongoing basis, it is important to discuss progress and assess if the performance plan and achievement of goals is on track. Since change is prevalent in our working environment today, there is often a need to re-assess the original goals and objectives and realign them to any changes in direction within the ministry or branch.

This should also include discussion between executives and managers on how staff within the division or branch are progressing with set goals. Ongoing support of performance is intended to eliminate surprises, ensure problems are addressed and objectives are realigned as needed during the year.

The *Planning for Success* process includes a minimum of one formal **mid-year** meeting between the manager and the employee, with progress reported to the executive manager.

The purpose of the **mid-year** review is to provide the opportunity for:

- Open and honest dialogue.
- Shared understanding of how changes impact achievement of objectives.
- Realigning the plan to ensure goals and expectations are on target.
- Commitment from manager to provide support where required.

## Steps

1. **Review:** The manager should review the employee's current performance plan prior to the mid-year review meeting. It is helpful if the employee reviews the performance plan on a regular basis to assess progress in meeting the objectives. Employees should keep an ongoing record of their contributions. This can be done in the form of little notes to file, etc.
2. **Meet and discuss:** Regular and intentional dialogue between the manager and employee is important to review progress on objectives. Discussion and feedback should be two-way including the manager asking the employee how the manager is doing in supporting the employee in his/her role. It is expected that the manager will initiate at least one meeting with each employee mid-year to identify and discuss any changes that may be required to the plan and the support required. Have a clear agenda for the meeting.
3. **Update:** Discuss and, as appropriate, agree and note changes to the performance plan.
4. **Sign off (mid-year):** Both the manager and the employee need to ensure relevant comments are reflected and sign off the updated plan. The manager submits this signed plan to the executive manager for review and signature and discusses any exceptional situations.

## Reviewing & Finalizing: Year-End Summary

### What's Involved

The year-end performance evaluation and discussion is for the purpose of reflecting, reviewing and recording achievements and shortfalls over the past year. This may involve gathering information from multiple sources to further support assessment of performance. Based on this information, the manager submits a proposed performance rating for the employee to the ministry executive for review of ministry consistency and alignment with distribution norms. This process also prepares the manager and employee for discussion and sharing of feedback on the successes and challenges in achieving the objectives over the past year, once the performance rating is finalized.

Each ministry's executive manager is responsible for signing off the performance plan and ensuring equity of application across the division with respect to the performance assessment.

There are a number of reasons to review and evaluate individual performance plans:

- To know what has been achieved (public accountability)
- To outline accomplishments towards strategic objectives
- To know what needs to be carried forward into next year's performance plan

- To identify areas for improvement at an individual and organizational level

## Steps

1. **Review:** The manager and the employee individually review the employee's performance plan to assess progress. Prior to meeting, both need to prepare and capture important points and key results related to accomplishments or shortfalls regarding the employee's performance against the objectives.
2. **Meet for initial discussion:** Open discussion about the employee's work plan objectives and performance occurs at this time encouraging full dialogue about how the year went. **NOTE: A specific performance rating is not shared at this time.**
3. **Submit proposed ratings:** Prior to sharing the final rating with the employee, the manager needs to submit a proposed rating to the executive management team to confirm:
  - The ministry's executive committee is charged with the responsibility to ensure the criteria are being applied in a relatively equitable manner across the ministry.
  - The performance plan is not solely between the manager and the employee. The *Planning for Success* process requires an executive manager to sign off the performance plan at the beginning of the year, the mid-year and year-end rating.
  - The overall assessment is to take into consideration the executive manager's opinion of the employee's performance. As such, the executive manager needs to be aware of the immediate manager's opinion of each employee in his purview, prior to the performance discussion.
  - Objectives and work plans were to be established at the beginning of the fiscal year. By March, managers have been working with their staff for a full year. If they are managing well, they have been having regular discussions with their staff and have been providing feedback on an ongoing basis.
  - By the time performance ratings are due, managers should know how things have gone and should be able to have a reasonable conversation with their executive manager about the performance level of their staff and how they are likely to agree with the employee on assessment. By this time of the year, there should be no surprises.
4. **Alignment of funding to distribution norms:** PSC provides the administrative guidelines for the current year dollar allocation available to each ministry, and the normative distribution of ratings to be achieved. This process includes alignment of available funding for performance management to rating distribution norms. The norms used are based on research conducted by the Conference Board of Canada. These norms may change from time to time and will be published annually along with the administrative guidelines.
5. **Review by executive team:** The executive management team will review the tentative ratings to ensure consistency and that a normative distribution has been achieved for the ministry. This should occur by April 30<sup>th</sup>. This is to ensure that managers within the ministry and ministries across the services are applying the ratings in a relatively consistent manner. This is a check and balance process that can best be effective if it occurs prior to sharing ratings with employees.
6. **Meet and discuss results:** Once dollar allocation and the distribution norm align with corporate expectations, the executive manager will advise that performance / rating discussions may

proceed with individual employees. This review typically occurs between May 1 and June 15.

**Manager:** Set up a meeting to discuss results with each employee. Listen to the employee's summary of the year's accomplishments and provide useful, constructive input. Celebrate the year's successes. Discuss areas where performance is not meeting expectations and develop plans to strengthen performance.

**Employee:** Present your results for the year. Discuss the key things you did well and the key areas you could improve. Take time to discuss your career aspirations. This is an opportune time to recognize and celebrate your own achievements, and to discuss areas where performance is not meeting expectations. Discuss key points from the multi-source feedback, if used.

Begin discussing the next planning cycle.

7. **Sign off (year-end):** Upon discussing the final rating assessment and performance, both the manager and employee sign the individual performance plan. A copy is submitted to the executive manager for signature, and then forwarded to the Human Resource Service Team.
8. **Ministry submits ratings:** Performance ratings are submitted to the Compensation Branch, PSC by mid-June to ensure approval and implementation of pay increases in a timely fashion.

# Employee Resources

Last revised: October 2009  
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# Tips for Completing a Performance Plan

## Setting the Direction

Step	Tips
<b>1. Prepare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure you understand the direction of the government, the Department, your work unit, your role and how you contribute</li> </ul>
<b>2. Identify Work Objectives</b> - Top 3 to 6 <i>*see Planning for Success Guide for more information</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be Realistic. Ensure the objectives reflect priorities and align with the direction of your ministry. Objectives can be strategic or day-to-day.</li> <li>• Apply SMART criteria to develop work objectives.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Specific – Clear, Concise and add value</li> <li>○ Measurable – Results that are observable and can be assessed</li> <li>○ Achievable – Challenging but not impossible</li> <li>○ Relevant – Aligned with government &amp; ministry goals</li> <li>○ Time Bound – have a specific time frame</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Describe results expected and how they will be assessed.</b> - For each work objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measures should be specific and outcome-oriented</li> <li>• Types of measures include: Qualitative (how well something is done), Quantitative (how much is accomplished), Cost-based (how much it costs) or Conditions (conditions, restrictions, limitations to be met).</li> </ul>
<b>3. Identify competency objectives</b> - Top 2 to 4 <i>*See Planning for Success Guide and Leadership and Management Competency Development Activity Guide</i>	<b>Behavioural Competencies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the kinds of behaviours that must be demonstrated to achieve your work objectives (eg. Accountability; Innovation)</li> <li>• Refer to the <i>Leadership and Management Competency Model</i> to help you identify these competencies. Consult with your manager.</li> </ul> <b>Technical Competencies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure technical objectives reflect work priorities and objectives.</li> <li>• Consider knowledge, skills and technical expertise required to perform your work. (eg. Project management; word processing skills; knowledge of human resource issues in the public service)</li> </ul>
<b>4. Identify learning and development objectives</b> <i>*See Planning for Success Guide and Tips for Learning and Development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify activities that are geared towards professional development to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Address and competency gaps (aligned with the competencies you have identified in the previous step)</li> <li>○ Enhance knowledge skill, and abilities in your current role; or</li> <li>○ Build future capacity in a more senior position, or a different type of work</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Activities can include self-learning; on-the-job; stretch assignments; mentoring, working with other employees; planned increases in job responsibilities; and internal and external learning programs, workshops, professional meetings, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Meet to discuss the performance plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare your performance plan before meeting with your manager</li> <li>• As a Manager, your objectives should be set before assisting direct reports with their performance planning, thereby ensuring alignment</li> </ul>
<b>6. Sign off plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure documentation of key points, signature, and date on the plan</li> </ul>

## Evaluating Progress and Realigning: Mid-year Review

Step	Tips
<b>1. Review our performance plan often and seek regular feedback</b> <i>*see Tips for receiving Feedback</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep your performance plan visible and accessible for regular reference. Be honest in assessing your performance and progress against the plan.</li> <li>• If objectives are not proceeding on track, meet to discuss with your manager as soon as possible (Prior to mid-year review)</li> <li>• Regularly ask for feedback throughout the year. Asking for feedback is most useful as soon as possible after completing an activity or work project. Seek feedback from clients as appropriate</li> </ul>
<b>2. Meet mid-year to discuss the performance plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare your thoughts and make notes regarding important points.</li> <li>• Reviewing progress should be a constructive process. The intent is to discuss strengths and areas for improvement specific to work activities and behaviours</li> <li>• Listen to what is being said by your manager and actively discuss issues related to your performance plan</li> </ul>
<b>3. Update the performance plan as appropriate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated your plan with critical changes as soon as possible, including the rationale for change. Be sure you understand the agreed upon results and how they will be measured</li> </ul>
<b>4. Sign off updated performance plan (mid-year)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure documentation of key points, signature, and date on the plan.</li> <li>• Continue to seek feedback as appropriate</li> </ul>

## Reviewing and Finalizing: Year-End Summary

Steps	Tips
<b>1. Review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare your thoughts and make notes regarding important points</li> <li>• Consider the following questions: What are my top 3 accomplishments? What were some gaps in my performance? Where were the key challenges?</li> <li>• Identify and include other feedback sources as appropriate</li> </ul>
<b>2. Meet to discuss results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess your performance against the five point scale</li> <li>• Reviewing progress should be a constructive process. The intent is to discuss both strengths and areas for improvement</li> <li>• Listen to what is being said by your manager and actively discuss issues related to your performance plan</li> </ul>
<b>3. Sign off year end performance review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure documentation of important comments, signature and date on the plan</li> </ul>

## Tips for Learning and Development

Development planning involves:

- Identifying competency areas that need development to better meet the requirements of a current work role (*which you can explore by talking with your manager*),
- Identifying opportunities for further growth (*which you can explore by thinking about your personal/career aspirations*), and
- Committing to actions that address these needs and building the relevant knowledge, skills or other qualities.

Planning and working toward personal and professional development should be an ongoing process of learning (acquiring knowledge or skills) and experiencing (developing through day to day work.)

### Steps to a Learning and Development Plan:

#### 1. Take Stock. (where are you now?)

The starting point for development planning is a review of the current state of your competencies. A review will help you identify your stronger and weaker areas – so that your planning can focus on the areas for development.

Development areas should be limited to 1 or 2 maximum at any given time. Identify where you need to focus. You should choose at least one area where you are weaker and would like to improve. But you may also identify an area of relative strength which you may wish to enhance. Be as objective as you can. You will also identify competencies to be developed from your *Planning For Success* work objectives.

#### 2. Seek Feedback. (what do others see?)

Make a vow to become more proactive in seeking feedback in targeted areas from those around you. Your manager is an important source of feedback. Other resources could include assessment tools, client feedback or feedback from your colleagues.

#### 3. Know Yourself. (skills, talents & “sparks”)

What gives you the greatest satisfaction on the job? Learning and development plans will find a place “on the shelf” if they cannot excite you to build on the strengths and interests that foster your passions. There is a “spark” in each of us. Do you know what yours is? Do you love to organize events or meetings? Do you love to coach or mentor others? Give presentations? Plan and analyze? Do research? Write down your thoughts. Share them with your manager and have discussion about how you can link these passions to goals or projects that would benefit the organization.

#### 4. Identify objectives (what you hope to achieve in terms of growth).

For each competency identified for development, establish some descriptive target for growth (i.e., desired difference in behaviour).

A clear objective statement helps to:

- a) keep you focused through the development activities,

b) keep you accountable for achieving and demonstrating the growth, and

c) keep you motivated. (important to your manager if organizational resources are involved). You can make this target part of your Learning and Development Objectives in *Planning for Success*.

### 3. Think Creatively. (identifying actions)

The next challenge is figuring out how to choose activities you (and your manager) can commit to in the upcoming year (considering available time, access and other resources).

Often we automatically assume that a workshop or course is the answer to most of our needs.

However, the *Centre for Creative Leadership* has found through research how professionals learn best and what stimulates their learning. The results may surprise you:

- **Hardships. 34%** of learning actually takes place through hardships: business or project failures, missed promotions, employee problems or downsizing.
- **Challenging Assignments: 27%** of learning takes place through challenging assignments, changes in scope of your job, participating in project teams or working on a special task force that “fixes” an old problem.
- **Learning from Others: 22%** of learning comes through others: having good role models, coaching and mentoring from leaders and peers.
- **Other Events: only 17%** of learning comes from other events such as taking a course, getting feedback, having a business or career success or personal experiences.

Although none of us would deliberately go looking for a failure opportunity, it may be helpful to know that when we experience unforeseen occurrences in our careers it truly accelerates our learning.

In addition to the usual internal and external course calendars, consider the following options:

- A project team or task force
- Cross-functional work team role
- Committee work
- Term assignments and secondments
- Switch some duties with a co-worker
- Find a mentor or coach

Outside of the organization, or on your own time, there are many additional ways to seek out resources:

- Join a professional group that is most relevant to your career – or one that also will help you develop your passions. (eg. a financial analyst who is interested in teaching others may choose to join a training and development group.)
- Self-study (books, other publications, educational/program material, audio-visual resources, resource centre or internet research, interviewing)
- Explore volunteer work as a way to develop leadership and team skills.

### 5. Set deadlines. (starting and completing.)

Start and completion dates help us to follow through on action commitments.

Determine when first steps can be taken and when activities can realistically be completed.

This may depend on workload as well as scheduling of training events. Record the anticipated start and completion dates in your learning a development plan.

## Tips for Receiving Feedback

Requesting and receiving feedback throughout the year helps you and your manager to evaluate progress and improve performance. Ongoing dialogue between the employee and manager/supervisor will eliminate surprises, ensure problems are addressed, and create opportunity for objectives to be realigned as needed during the year.

To maximize the opportunity for good discussion and building on the feedback you receive, be sure to consider the following steps:

- 1. Be open to feedback.**
- 2. Try to control your defensiveness.**
- 3. Listen to understand.**
- 4. Ask questions to clarify.**
- 5. Assess your own performance.**
- 6. Evaluate feedback before responding.**

- 1. Be open to feedback.**

Get in the habit of asking for feedback regularly. We are often unable to see ourselves as others do and therefore another perspective on our actions and behaviours can help us identify both strengths and areas for improvement. Your openness to feedback is obvious through your body language, facial expressions, and welcoming manner.

- 2. Try to control your defensiveness.**

It is hard to accept negative feedback; but it is also hard to give it. Don't argue with the person giving the feedback. You may not agree with what they say, and that's ok. Justifying your position or denying actions may make the conversation more difficult for both of you than it needs to be. Defensiveness may discourage future feedback.

- 3. Listen to understand.**

Set aside your fear, worry and anger and try to listen closely to what is actually being said. Use body language and facial expressions that encourage the other person to talk. Summarize what you have heard. Your feedback provider will appreciate that you are really hearing what they are saying. Even feedback that is delivered in a less than ideal way will likely contain information that is useful.

- 4. Ask questions to clarify.**

Actively listen and ask questions to clarify. Be sure you understand the feedback you are receiving. If you have questions, now is the time to ask them. It's often helpful to ask for specific examples that illustrate the feedback.

- 5. Assess your own performance.**

Take time to reflect honestly on the job you've done. Interpret the feedback you have received. Ask other sources for their feedback. High performing individuals are very self-aware. Identify the behaviors you

demonstrate and identify those you may want to change.

## **6. Evaluate feedback before responding.**

If you disagree with the feedback you received, wait. Take some time to consider the feedback from their perspective. When your emotions are under control, reopen the discussion. There may be information you didn't hear or there may be a misunderstanding that needs to be clarified.

When you do respond, focus on working toward learning points and an action plan (as appropriate).

# Manager Resources

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Government  
— of —  
Saskatchewan



## Tips for Coaching

Managing performance effectively requires regular, face-to-face communication and dialogue between managers and employees. Coaching and giving feedback are essential elements of this communication process.

Coaching and giving feedback requires patience, planning and a willingness to help employees develop their own solutions and methods.

## Coaching vs. Feedback

Coaching is part of an overall philosophy and approach. The coaching process can occur at a variety of different levels in organizations. Although coaching can include many different types of activities and skills, giving effective feedback is one of the most important elements of coaching.

## Why Coach?

The overall focus of coaching is to help employees improve their performance, grow in their jobs and develop their skills. Effective leaders and managers coach employees to:

- Help them maintain good performance;
- Motivate or help foster their growth when they are performing well; or
- Work with them when they are not performing well.

## Being a Coach

As coaches, leaders and managers are motivators, trainers, coordinators, supporters and partners. A coach looks at the big picture and balances the needs of the individual employee with the needs of the work team and the organization.

A coach establishes a partnership with employees through supportive and action-oriented behaviours.

An effective coach will:

- Listen to employees to learn their viewpoints, perspectives, ideas and motivators.
- Create a supportive climate;
- Effectively paint the “big picture” with realistic descriptions of business goals, financial objectives, opportunities and directions.
- Provide tangible and appropriate support (training, resources) for improvement of development;
- Clarify expectations;
- Encourage mutual discussion and problem-solving
- Focus on action plans to achieve solutions or changes;
- Discuss changing organizational priorities; and
- Explore potential areas of growth and development for employees.

## Coaching Situations:

### Positive Coaching

You may use this approach when you want to:

- continue to motivate an employee that is performing well,
- add new responsibilities to an employee’s job,
- help an employee develop or enhance a key skill, or
- prepare an employee for a new assignment, project or promotion.

Key Actions for this approach:

- Clarify your expectations for development of the employee;
- Define the behaviours and activities desired as a result of the development;
- Help the employee identify steps to develop and grow; and
- Provide support and resources as needed.

## Corrective Coaching

You may use this approach when you want to:

- Help an employee change or improve performance;
- Have an employee take responsibility for change,
- Establish required actions, consequences and time limits.

Key Actions for this approach:

- Focus on the situation, issue or behaviour rather than the person.
- Identify the unsatisfactory behaviour. Be specific. (Refer to facts, results, and observations you have made.)
- Describe the impact of the behaviour on others and the organization.
- Repeat the good and be firm about unacceptable behaviours.
- Acknowledge the other person's position, but refrain from arguing.
- Discuss ways to improve the performance.
- Set an action plan, and clarify accountability and consequences.
- Set a time limit for improvement and when you will meet again.

Although this situation may be challenging, remember that if you ignore poor performance, you may deprive the employee of the chance to improve and you may negatively affect the productivity of others. However, if your efforts to correct behaviour are unsuccessful, your coaching may need move into disciplinary action.

## Coaching to Solve Problems

You may use this approach when:

- Work bogs down or tasks become blocked;
- You want to encourage the employee to take ownership for identifying problems and solutions;
- You want to facilitate a process for working jointly on a problem where the employee takes the initiative and you act as a resource.

Key Actions for this approach:

- 1. Define.** Assess the problem objectively. Try to identify the real issue. Focus on defining the actual problem rather than the symptoms.
- 2. Explore.** Brainstorm ideas and look for creative solutions to the problem.
- 3. Test.** Test the feasibility of all possible solutions. For each solution ask, *Does it solve the problem? Is it reasonable? Do we have resources to support this? How can we change the solutions to fit the resources available?*
- 4. Decide.** Select the best solution for the problem.
- 5. Implement.** Agree on actions, responsibilities and completion times.
- 6. Follow-up.** Monitor progress, activities and results. Provide specific feedback when needed. Evaluate activities to see if the problem has been solved.

## Coaching to Guide Development

You can use this approach when you want to:

- Guide an employee's long term growth and development on the job;
- Plan and provide for growth opportunities;
- Share knowledge and experience with employees.

### Key Actions for this approach:

- Work with the employee to identify specific leadership and management competencies that you would like to see developed;
- Provide training for the employee through organization-sponsored courses, outside seminars or on-the-job experience.
- Assign the employee to special projects or committees to enhance knowledge and skills;
- Serve as a resource to the employee for ideas, connections within the organization and for problem-solving.
- Look for potential strengths and skills of employees and identify creative ways to enhance and develop them.

**For additional information about Coaching, contact your HR Client Service team representative.**

## Tips for Providing Feedback

Part of the coaching role is giving effective feedback to employees.

Many managers find it difficult to give honest, useful feedback – whether negative or positive.

Giving feedback on negative behaviours may feel uncomfortable, but it is essential to letting employees know where they stand, empowering them to change and grow, and creating the organizational culture that we wish to see.

Opportunities for feedback can be:

- Quick and informal (stepping into the employee's office or stopping them for a short chat.
- Formal and more detailed (a series of one-to-one meetings to discuss an ongoing project or challenge.)

### Tips for Effective Feedback:

- **Be specific.** Use facts to clearly identify what behaviour you are giving feedback on. (e.g., results, observations or results.)
- **Be immediate.** Give feedback as close to the time of performance as possible.
- **Focus on behaviour.** Focus on quantity, quality and results, not on the person.
- **Link feedback to impact and desired organizational performance.** Relate the impact of the behaviour to its effect on clients, the team or the organization.
- **Respect the individual.** Be considerate. Avoid use of negative words that put people on the defensive. (e.g., "always", "never", "neglect", "ignored" etc.)
  - **Use positive non-verbal feedback.** Maintain eye contact, nod, smile, lean forward to encourage employee participation.
  - **Reinforce productive behaviour with positive feedback.** Link praise to specific behaviours and outcomes. Always recognize improved performance and how you will support it.
  - **Allow the employee to respond.** Listen closely to the response. Ask questions to clarify reactions that are unclear to you.

- **Give balanced feedback.** Consider just how much you need to tell an employee at once to be honest about behaviour and yet maintain the motivation to improve. Avoid misrepresenting the quantity or quality of the person’s work.
- **Call for action if required.** Identify ways to improve or build upon good performance.
  - Agree on an appropriate timeline.
  - Schedule a follow-up date if needed.
  - Summarize points and confirm actions.
  - Express your support as appropriate.
  - **Minimize interruptions.** Choose a location that is private and where you can avoid interruptions.
  - **Take enough time.** Set aside enough time to deal with the issue at hand. If the issue is complex, you may need to schedule some more formal time later.
  - **Seek to enhance your skills.** Contact your HR Client service team or refer to the Leadership and Management Competency Model Development Activity

## Summary

- Coaching and giving and receiving feedback are essential tools of ongoing performance for successful leaders and managers.
- When coaching and giving feedback are done well, and on an ongoing basis, the formal performance evaluation will hold no surprises for the employee or manager. It should summarize discussions that have been held throughout the year.
- Coaching touches all aspects of an employee’s performance – immediate, daily tasks are recognized through giving feedback; the ongoing activities and challenges are handled through problem-solving and planning; and the longterm responsibilities are shaped through positive coaching and guided development of the employee.
- Performed with skill, patience and consistency, coaching and feedback can help make employees more productive and engaged and make a manager’s job more satisfying and rewarding.

## Tips for Conducting Performance Meetings

### I. Planning: Setting the Direction

Branch and work unit planning should align with and flow from government goals and ministry strategic plans. Once a strategic plan for the ministry has been established, conversation between the manager and the employee will set work priorities that align with government and ministry goals.

#### **To prepare:**

- Discuss Ministry/Work Unit plan and how employee plans will support it (Team setting or individually)
- Have employee prepare a performance plan for an individual meeting

#### **At initial meeting:**

- Ensure alignment of performance plan with government, ministry and work unit priorities.
- Ensure results expected and how they will be assessed are clearly stated.
- Validate key competencies for focus.
- Establish a clear learning and development plan.
- Sign off the finalized plan.

#### **Tips for conducting the initial meeting:**

- Have the employee present his/her plan.
- Ask questions for clarification.

- Clarify/confirm how plan supports ministry and work unit goals.
- Share ideas for additions, changes or edits.
- Ensure clear objectives (Work, Competency and Learning & Development)
- Ensure clear description of expected results and how they will be assessed.
- Set a date for the mid-year review meeting.

## II. Evaluating Progress and Realigning

Discussing progress and assessing whether goals are on track is critical to organizational and individual success. Often there is a need to reassess original goals and objectives and realign them to any changes in direction within the ministry or government.

A formal mid-year review between manager and employee is **required** as part of the *Planning for Success* process. Additional meetings can occur both formally and informally throughout the year.

### **To prepare:**

- Review the employee's current performance plan prior to the meeting.
- Include any notes you have kept of ongoing performance and contributions.

### **At mid-year meeting:**

- Review and assess progress on the employee's performance plan.
- Identify what is going well and what can be improved.
- Realign any objectives as appropriate.
- Discuss 'how' the employee is performing (competencies).
- Discuss employee's personal development and career goals.
- Sign off the mid-year updated plan.

### **Tips for conducting the mid-year meeting:**

- Have employee review progress on his/her plan.
- Ask questions for clarification.
- Ask for key accomplishments and any challenges to date.
- Share your feedback on progress – successes and challenges.
- Discuss action plan for any objectives not on track.
- Discuss whether objectives may need to be realigned/revised.
- Commit to provide support where required in achieving the objectives.
- Provide time for employee to discuss personal development plan and career aspirations.
- (Re)Confirm what ongoing success will look like.
- Set the date for the year-end reviewing meeting.

## III. Reviewing and Finalizing

Year end discussion is for reflecting, reviewing and recording achievements and shortfalls over the past year. It may mean gathering information from multiple sources to support assessment of performance.

Each ministry's executive manager is responsible for ensuring equity of application across the division with respect to the performance assessment.

### **To prepare:**

- Review key results from the employee's performance plan – specific accomplishments and any shortfalls.
- Consider 'how' the employee performed (competencies).

- Review personal learning and development results.
- Review feedback from multi sources in relation to results – if using. Summarize key aspects of feedback and prepare thoughts to share with the employee.
- Provide written comments on the employee’s plan and performance.
- Ask the employee to prepare for the meeting by reviewing their plan for:
  1. Their top three accomplishments,
  2. Any gaps in performance, and
  3. Key challenges.

***At the year-end meeting:***

- Have employee review his/her plan including accomplishments, gaps and challenges.
- Ask questions for clarification.
- Validate summary and share any additional feedback you may have – recognize successes and identify areas for future improvement.
- Provide summary of written comments, provide and discuss overall assessment, and jointly sign off on plan.
- Discuss expectations for next year.
- Set the date for the planning meeting.

## Multi-Source Feedback Form

### Employee Information

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Employee being assessed

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Supervisor/manager

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Evaluation Period

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Individual Providing Feedback

### Feedback Information

**What is the Nature of your work with the employee?**

**What were your expectations of the employee's work?**

**How well did the employee meet your expectations? Please cite specific examples of what you have observed**

**What are the employee's developmental needs? Please include any ideas for an action plan.**

## Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why do we have a rating scale?

A. While ratings enable linkage to pay and/or recognition, the purpose of the rating scale is to differentiate levels of performance. The rating scale identifies top performers and poor performers and enables managers and executives to assess how to increase the effectiveness of the organization. The performance assessment process and rating for an individual should hold the same value and importance whether the employee is at the maximum of the salary range or not.

Q. What is a normative performance distribution?

A. A normative performance distribution is the average performance rating outcomes for similar type organizations. It is NOT a bell curve, which would be a statistically produced rating distribution.

The Conference Board of Canada, Compensation Research Centre (CRC) annually surveys a number of private and public sector organizations on a number of practices, including performance distribution. 168 of these organizations also use a 5 level rating scale and we use the average of these performance rating outcomes (norms) from the CRC surveys as a guideline.

Q. Why do we have a normative distribution?

A. The majority of large organizations have either a forced distribution or a distribution guideline for differentiating performance in their organizations. A normative distribution is important for a number of reasons:

- 1) To combat artificially inflated ratings: A study by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) found that managers, in the absence of a forced distribution system, will artificially rate employees high. Other studies support that most employees tend to believe their performance is better than others perceive it to be and will put pressure on their manager to increase the rating.
- 2) To ensure public accountability: The public sector is often criticized for being too lenient with respect to performance management. Aligning our rating outcomes to the distribution norm established through multiple public and private organizations helps to establish it as defensible and accountable.
- 3) To ensure effective distribution: It is important that a performance management system identify top performers for decisions related succession planning, training and development, and promotion. Further, if a large number of employees are rated as exceeding, to the degree results are transparent, it implies to those rated fully achieves that they aren't doing very well relative to their peers, and erodes the value of the rating level.
- 4) To ensure equitable application: A normative distribution helps senior managers identify where their managers are either too lenient or too hard. It contributes to a more equitable application from one division to another within a ministry and from one ministry to another.

Q. How do I distinguish between the competency objectives geared toward my performance rating and those



that do not?

A. An employee is hired into a particular job based on having the established set of competencies necessary to perform that job effectively. As such, employees who have successfully passed probation are deemed to already have the required competencies to perform the job. Learning and development is then primarily geared to building future potential and capacity that is not required for the current year's work objectives. These learning and development activities should not be part the current year's performance assessment.

As priorities change and work objectives evolve, there will be competencies that the employee needs to develop to achieve those objectives. Based on discussion, the employee and manager need to determine the technical and behavioural competencies that are clearly aligned with the current year's work objectives and those that are geared to building future potential and capacity.

Those competencies that are required for the current year's work are identified on Competency Objectives page, page 2 on the Individual Performance Plan form, and are subject to performance assessment. On page 3, you will also need to list any Learning and Development Objectives that align with competency gaps for your current role.

Learning and development objectives that are geared to enhance your knowledge, skills, and abilities to be even better at your job, or build knowledge, skills and abilities for future roles and capacity should also be listed on the Learning and Development Objectives page.

Q. How can a performance rating be applied when my work priorities and objectives continually change throughout the year?

A. Shift in individual work plans and objectives will continue to occur as we face change on a regular basis in our environment. In these situations it will be helpful to bring out your work plans on a regular basis, some employees review on a quarterly basis, to assess where priorities have changed and then modify objectives and required results. Through discussion with your manager and ensuring alignment with the priorities of your branch or ministry these changes should make their way into your performance plan. The ongoing, two-way dialogue with your manager is intended to bring clarity on what outcomes are being assessed leaving no surprises at the year-end for your final performance rating.

Q. I was never informed of my final performance rating. What should I do?

A. Again, one of the fundamental purposes of a performance evaluation system is for quality two-way conversation between the manager and employee about work objectives, outcomes, and performance.

Prior to receiving your final performance rating, however, your manager needs to submit his/her recommended rating to your ministry's executive management to ensure the overall ministry performance ratings fall within the normative distribution guidelines (see question 1). Once this has occurred, your manager can inform you of your rating.

If you have not been apprised of your rating subsequent to your ministry's executive management review, you need to take the initiative to follow up with your manager or executive manager to obtain your final performance rating. If you need further feedback, whether it is at year-end or throughout the course of the year, it is important that you initiate conversation with your manager.

Responsibility for two-way dialogue rests with both the manager and the employee. The extent of dialogue

and feedback desired differs with each employee and you need to make sure that you obtain the information and feedback necessary in order to do your job effectively. Similarly, your manager needs to offer specific feedback on your work performance, clarify expectations and listen to your perspectives and ideas.

Q. Why have a Planning for Success program linked to pay when so many employees are at the top of their salary range?

A. An effective performance management system does link performance to pay and/or recognition. However, particularly in a public environment, it is not always possible to link achievement directly to pay. Further, pay is not the only motivator for all employees. In this regard, managers are encouraged to find alternative forms of recognition. As a start, verbal or written acknowledgement of a job well done can go a long way and is a simple approach that is perhaps not utilized to the fullest extent possible. Other forms of recognition may include: participation in a special project or committee, a supplementary role / project assignment, shadowing or a secondment to another functional area, professional association membership, etc.

Q. How is the level 2 definition of “Meets Some Requirements” applied?

A. This rating can be applied in two different situations:

- a) Where an employee has the ability to fully achieve, but is under performing in certain areas of the job.
- b) Where an employee has recently been hired into a position but has not had the time to gain the experience or expertise necessary to “fully achieve” the objectives necessary for the job.

A newly hired employee may already come to the position with the ability to rate at the “Fully Achieves”, for others, it may be the stretch necessary to obtain over the course of the probationary period.

In the case of b, ‘Meets Some Requirements’ should not be viewed as a negative. Further, it is important that the manager and the employee have candid conversation up front so there are no surprises when it comes time to deliver the final performance rating.