

RATER'S GUIDE

STATE OF ALASKA

**Division of Personnel & Labor Relations
Department of Administration**

October 2014

Limitations on the Use of the *Rater's Guide*

The *Rater's Guide* does not constitute a contract of employment, nor does it modify or alter any contract, collective bargaining agreement or statute that governs an employee's employment with the State. It is subject to change from time to time.

The *Guide* does not alter the employing agency's right to determine, in its sole discretion, whether or not an employee has successfully completed or will successfully complete his or her probationary period. Evaluations provided to a probationary employee are provided for the employee's benefit, not because the employing agency has any obligation to demonstrate that a just cause standard has been met in determining that an employee has not or will not successfully complete the probationary period.

The *Rater's Guide* replaces all previous versions of the *Rater's Guide to Performance Appraisals*.

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Introduction

The performance appraisal process is an effective management tool for establishing and maintaining a vital communication link between you, the supervisor, and employee and for improving employee job performance and behaviors. Performance appraisal is an ongoing process. The *Rater's Guide* contains a general discussion of the process, with primary focus on the steps typically taken by a supervisor, known as the "rater", to analyze performance and to report the evaluation assessment. While this guide makes reference to supervisors, it includes lead positions responsible for writing and/or contributing to performance evaluations.

Authority

AS 39.25.150(14). Scope of the Rules

The Personnel Rules must provide for the development, maintenance, and use of employee performance records.

2 AAC 07.295. Personnel Evaluation

(a) the director [of the Division of Personnel & Labor Relations] shall prescribe the nature, form, and frequency of personnel evaluations and may require a personnel evaluation at any time during an employee's probationary period.

(b) the director [of the Division of Personnel & Labor Relations] may take any action necessary to secure the correction of an evaluation report that is in error.

(c) the standards of performance that are established as a basis for personnel evaluation must relate to the duties of the employee's position and the job class to which it is allocated.

(d) the employee's supervisor shall discuss each personnel evaluation with the employee, with a goal of assisting the employee to understand the degree to which the employee is meeting the requirements of the position.

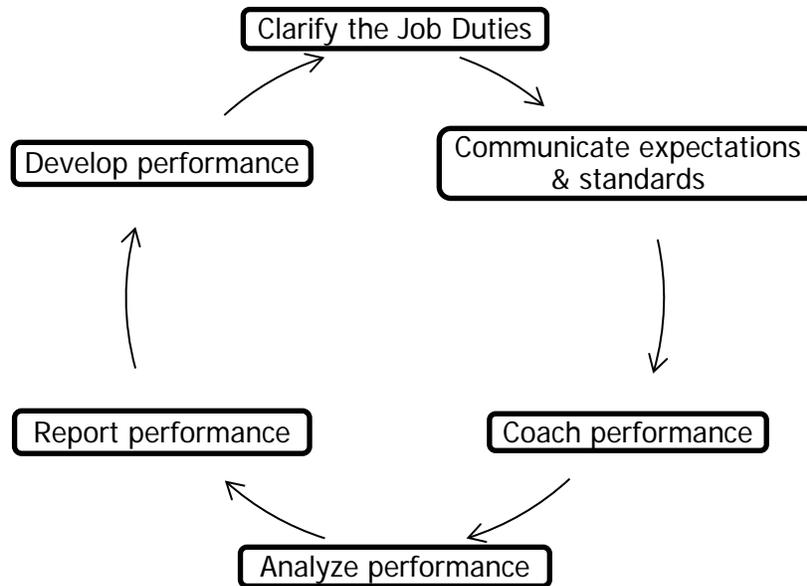
(e) the appointing authority shall file employee evaluations with the director. An employee evaluation is open to inspection by the employee or the employee's designated agent. The evaluations must also be open for inspection, for employment related considerations, by other officers and employees at the discretion of the director [of the Division of Personnel & Labor Relations].

The main purpose of the Rater's Guide is to provide information about the specific provisions regarding personnel evaluations identified in 2 AAC 07.295.

Some collective bargaining agreements make reference to performance evaluations or contain specific terms related to them. Such provisions are subject to change during the negotiation of collective bargaining agreements. It is not the intent of the Rater's Guide to provide up-to-date information on the terms of a particular collective bargaining agreement. Where references are made to collective bargaining agreements, the purpose is to explain the performance evaluation process in the broad context of a human resource system which operates within both merit system rules and collective bargaining.

Overview of the Performance Appraisal Process

Evaluating job performance and filling out a performance evaluation report fit within the larger performance appraisal process. While many different models are used to describe this process, they typically include the following six steps:



The performance appraisal process is cyclical. Supervisors continuously assign work, communicate performance expectations, coach performance, and evaluate how well the work has been done. Change in any one of these steps may trigger change or a need for action in another.

Some steps in the performance appraisal process, such as coaching performance, are often performed ad hoc in the course of daily interactions or the routine review of work products. Other steps, such as reporting performance or clarifying job duties, are more typically done according to a defined process or schedule, such as an evaluation written at an employee's merit anniversary date or a position description (PD) updated in preparation for recruitment.

Roles and Responsibilities

In each of the steps, whenever they may occur in the process, you, the employee and the Division of Personnel & Labor Relations or departmental Human Resource (HR) staff usually have a role. Some typical examples are shown in the following table:

Step	Supervisor	Employee	DOP&LR Staff
Clarify the job duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read PD and define the roles, responsibilities, and working relationships of the employee's position Update PD when needed to accurately reflect the essential duties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read PD to understand the roles, responsibilities, and working relationships Offer feedback to supervisor if PD appears inaccurate or out-of-date 	Classify position described by new or revised PD
Communicate expectations and standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on the PD and other relevant information, define mid-acceptable performance, i.e. "the standard". This may include either ongoing or specific accomplishments expected during an appraisal period, or both Communicate the expectations and measurable standards to the employee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verify understanding of performance expectations and measurable standards Ask questions if clarification is needed Communicate to supervisor if expectations or standards will not or cannot be met 	Dept. HR Staff
Coach performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observe employee's performance Perform performance gap analysis Provide prompt feedback to employee regarding his/her performance Consistently document feedback and performance observations including commendations Prepare disciplinary action documents when warranted (Note: <i>Disciplinary action for performance problems is related to performance evaluation, but the subject differs in important ways and is outside the scope of the Rater's Guide</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor own performance Act upon feedback from supervisor to improve performance Communicate to supervisor training, development, and environment needs to address knowledge, skill and performance gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Available for supervisor consultation and coaching at any step May inform supervisor when performance evaluation is due
Analyze performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on records and observed performance, determine to what degree expectations and standards were met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide documentation of performance as requested Notify supervisor of any unique or mitigating circumstances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review draft standards and expectations, evaluation or disciplinary documents
Report performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write timely and accurate performance evaluations Discuss evaluation with employee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read performance evaluation or other documentation Ask questions if clarification is needed Discuss performance information with supervisor 	
Develop Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify specific needs for growth and improvement in performance Communicate performance gap analysis to employee Develop goals with the employee Coach employee to goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verify understanding of developmental needs and performance gaps Work with supervisor to set goals and develop plan of action 	

Clarify the Job Duties

Clarifying the job duties helps you and the employee gain a mutual understanding of what the job is, how it fits in with the other jobs in the section, and which job tasks or performance elements (groupings of like tasks) are of particular importance in measuring successful performance of the job.

Collecting information about the job is, of course, an integral part of this step. A good place to begin is with the PD, the purpose of which is to accurately describe the duties of a position.

Another important source of information about a position's duties is the employee who does the work. In discussing job tasks with the employee, you may discover that the employee is doing more or different work than was assigned, may not be doing tasks the supervisor thinks are important or is doing them incorrectly. Discussing job tasks provides the opportunity to reach a mutual understanding about job duties and performance expectations.

Other important sources for job information, particularly for professional and managerial jobs:

1. Budget or operating documents

Budget documents can provide information about whether funds have been allocated for a special purpose connected with work assigned to a position, such as federal funding for a particular project, or whether a specific task or program is targeted for completion in a particular year. Such expectations may be sufficiently important to successful performance that supervisors should write specific performance goals or standards related to this work.

2. Organizational goals or results-based accountability metrics

Some agencies have written goals for a unit, section, division or for the entire department that directly influence the position's essential duties and responsibilities.

Communicate Expectations and Standards

The Personnel Rules (2 AAC 07.295) provide this guidance about evaluating employees:

The standards of performance that are established as a basis for personnel evaluation must relate to the duties of the employee's position and the job class to which it is allocated.

In keeping with this focus on job-related evaluation criteria, the performance evaluation form identifies four specific rating areas as the basis for evaluating employees:

- Performance
- Work Habits
- Interpersonal Relationships
- Supervision

The first three apply to all employees; the fourth, supervision, applies only to those employees who perform supervisory duties. This includes lead as well as full supervisory duties, even though the level of supervisory authority assigned to lead positions is lower than that assigned to full supervisory positions.

The specific rating areas on the evaluation form provide the framework for supervisors in evaluating performance and making an overall rating. The specific rating areas vary in relative importance from position to position and consequently will not usually carry equal weight in rating overall performance.

You have considerable discretion to decide which of a position's ongoing or assigned duties are most important in any given rating period and to select which performance measurements to use in evaluating the work. Factors such as the type of jobs supervised and an individual supervisor's preference for a particular management system will influence what approach the supervisor takes in establishing expectations.

Some positions perform work for which clear and objective measurements of performance can be developed for most duties or groups of related duties. A clerical position, for example, might have this performance standard: "Form XX should be filed no later than two days after completion." For standards such as these to be useful, reporting systems have to exist or be created. In the clerical example, a method of identifying the date each Form XX was completed as well as the date each was filed is required. If an appropriate reporting system does not exist or will not be created, the performance expectation needs to be rewritten.

Other positions, typically management or high-level professional positions have broad responsibilities with substantial freedom to select methods of accomplishing the work. Developing precise performance standards may not be practicable or advisable. Performance may best be measured for these positions against performance goals. These often are developed to define expected accomplishment within a particular timeframe or for a particular action or event. An example of a performance goal is "Project will be completed within six months without overtime." Sometimes performance goals are included in agency budgets, fiscal year objectives or similar sources.

Below are some typical performance measures and examples of standards. The examples are for a position for which the PD states is responsible to "provide interpretative information electronically to clients on the status of cases and the rules and regulations of the program. Interprets statutes, regulations and policies and identifies information which can be released to those inquiring. Communication contacts involve the exchange, collection, furnishing, or interpretation of complex and sensitive information requiring considerable discretion and judgment."

- 1. Method:** the procedures, policies and technical requirements followed in doing something
 - Process flow
 - Independence
 - Safety

- Degree to which work can be duplicated (consistency)

Example: Respond to client email requests after logging, review of client file and relevant agency policy and procedure, and draft response for peer review. Client requests for procedure exceptions must be forwarded to supervisor for response.

2. Quality: how well something is done

- Accuracy
- Error rate
- Neatness of product or service
- Usefulness of product or service
- Complaints and praise from users and clients
- Panel or peer or subordinate judgment
- Degree to which work meets professional standards
- Interest from outside groups

Example: Respond to client email requests by drafting responses that need peer correction only for spelling or grammar errors or irrelevant information. Final responses do not result in client misunderstanding or dissatisfaction.

3. Quantity: how much is done

- Portion of total work load done
- Percent increase or decrease
- Number of units produced

Example: As part of four-person client information unit, respond to 22-25% of client email requests quarterly.

4. Timeliness: how timely something is done

- Turnaround time
- Performance against established deadlines

Example: Respond to client email requests with five work days.

5. Manner:

- Way in which something is done, style
- Communication and other interpersonal behaviors

Example: Respond to client email requests using language that promotes a positive agency image which includes common courtesies, website links or citations, full names for acronyms and appropriate follow-up contact information. Requests containing derogatory or profane comments must be forwarded to supervisor for response.

6. Cost: dollars, staffing, time factors

- Actual or percent of savings

- Percent of overtime

Example: Respond to client email requests using no more than 90% of assigned quarter's overtime allotment.

Using the same examples, measures can be combined:

- Measures with reporting systems: As part of a four-person client information unit, respond to 22-25% of client requests (quantity measure) while using no more than 90% of assigned quarter's overtime allotment (cost measure).
- Measures without reporting systems: Draft responses that need peer correction only for spelling or grammar errors or irrelevant information. Final responses do not result in client misunderstanding or dissatisfaction (quality measure) and must promote a positive agency image which includes common courtesies, website links or citations, full names for acronyms and appropriate follow-up contact information. Client requests for procedure exceptions or those containing derogatory or profane comments must be forwarded to supervisor for response (manner measure).
- Measures with and without reporting systems: Respond to client email requests within five work days (timeliness measure) after logging, review of client file and relevant agency policy and procedure, and draft response peer review. Client requests for procedure exceptions must be forwarded to supervisor for response (method measure).

Standards should be reasonable, attainable and measurable.

Communicating the standards and expectations orally and in writing and allowing the employee the opportunity to ask for clarification or discussion of the standards is important. The greater the mutual understanding about expected job performance between you and your employee, the better. Employees who understand what is expected are more likely able to deliver acceptable performance; the sooner the employee is aware of the standards, the greater chance the employee can perform the work in an acceptable manner from the beginning.

Coach Performance

In an effective organization, job performance is continuously coached. *Coaching simply stated is the process of letting employees know that what they do matters to you.*

Although every supervisor's approach to coaching an employee's performance is unique, the basic method should include these steps:

1. Observe the employee's performance
2. Identify performance gaps
3. Provide timely feedback to the employee
4. Document observations and feedback

1. Observe the employee's performance

Observations can be planned or spontaneous. Communicating with employees ahead of time about the various ways performance is monitored is desirable. The following are some ways to observe performance:

- **Reports:** Establish a performance expectation requiring an employee to provide regular status reports on his or her performance (self-reporting).
- **Meetings:** Schedule regular meetings to stay informed about the employee's performance, such as status meetings on a long-term project.
- **Feedback from third parties:** Lead workers, coworkers and customers may provide feedback about an employee's job performance. The accuracy of this kind of feedback should be verified.
- **Examples:** Collect copies of written documentation or examples of an employee's work product.
- **Audits/sampling:** Review a portion or percentage of an employee's work product.
- **Spot checks:** Routinely review the employee's work or do brief check-ins or phone calls.
- **Management by walking around:** Walk through the employee's work area or schedule "sit-ins" to observe job performance.

2. Identify performance gaps

Performance gaps are defined as deviations from the performance standards or goals, or the difference between actual performance and desired performance.

Once the performance gap(s) is identified, determine the reason(s). Work with the employee whenever possible to identify the reason. The following are examples of reasons that might apply in a situation in which an office assistant meets the typing speed performance standard but demonstrates a performance gap:

- The employee types 60 words per minute but work produced is not in the agency format: Has the employee previously demonstrated the ability to accomplish a task at proficiency level? If not, then the employee most likely lacks **competence**. Typically, probationary employees or employees assigned new tasks lack competence so training to increase their knowledge or skills to become proficient may be necessary. Training can be informal or formal. Informal training is another term for on-the-job training which is provided or coordinated by the supervisor. It can include job aids, desk manuals, role play, supervisory coaching and peer mentoring or training. Formal training is generally defined as classroom instruction or some kind of structured independent study. Seminars, lectures, academic or technical courses, individual reading programs, laboratory training and computer-assisted learning are common types of formal training solutions.
- The employee types 60 words per minute but now produces less work or doesn't want to type for whatever reason: Has the employee previously demonstrated the ability to accomplish a task

proficiently or could perform to standards if they wanted to? If so, then the employee may lack **motivation**. Supervisors affect motivation when undesirable consequences like increased workloads or giving more interesting tasks to others, etc. follow good performance. Good performers deserve immediate positive feedback and positive consequences on a regular basis. Supervisors also affect motivation by ensuring that negative consequences follow poor performance. Poor performers require correcting feedback or other coaching to improve performance.

In some cases, personal problems may hinder an employee from meeting performance standards. Performance problems that seem to stem from personal problems may require special methods of resolution, including referring the employees to professionals for assistance. On the other hand, sometimes care must be taken to treat the problems no differently than any other performance problem. For these situations, consult your departmental HR staff for guidance.

- The employee types 60 words per minute but agency reorganization makes the employee believe they cannot accomplish the task or meet standards: Has an event occurred that has influenced a change in the employee's belief in their ability to perform well? If so, then the employee might lack **confidence**. Typically, probationary employees or employees assigned new tasks also lack confidence so supervisors may increase confidence by encouraging perspective, demonstrating empathy and looking for opportunities to provide reinforcing, positive feedback as performance incrementally improves rather than waiting until the task is accomplished perfectly.
- The employee types 60 words per minute but is expected to use an outdated computer not capable of supporting the demanded workload: If there are obstacles outside of the employee's control, then the **environment** is affecting performance. Some examples of environmental obstacles are lack of proper tools/equipment, equipment failure, lack of materials or supplies, late or incorrect reports or data and conflicting instructions or expectations.

The proper solution to the performance gap depends on the reason(s) for the gap. Once reasons have been identified, feedback to address motivation or confidence gaps can begin.

3. Provide prompt feedback to the employee

- Feedback is a valuable tool that supervisors can use to ensure clear, consistent communication about an employee's performance. It is most effective when given promptly after an occasion arises that warrants it.
- Feedback is an essential component of coaching, and can be even more effective when the feedback is expressed in a positive manner and specific to particular performance expectations or standards. When giving feedback, avoid being vague or subjective. Show the employee how the employee's performance is or is not meeting the expectations and standards. **Make it individualized—do not compare to other staff but to the standard.**
- When praise is warranted for improvement, prompt feedback means the sooner it is more rewarding to the employee; the sooner the good work is repeated. You **encourage** good work by

not letting it go unnoticed and being specific. For example, rather than telling the employee vaguely that s/he "did a great job with the year-end order", provide objective, factual job-related feedback and/or examples; such as, "I liked your assistance in helping me with our year-end orders by coming up with that spreadsheet to track the orders and taking the lead in coordinating with the vendors and our accounting staff."

- When correction in performance is warranted, prompt feedback means the sooner the employee can **correct** it. Correcting feedback should be given in private. Start by telling the employee what you've observed and then asking how they could have done better. If the employee identifies a better way to perform, provide positive feedback to encourage them. If the employee is unable to identify a better way, make your feedback positive and your solution practical.
- When an employee gets off-track in meeting standards or expectations, **challenge** their behavior. Like correcting feedback, challenging feedback should be given in private. Start by stating what poor performance you have observed and listen to their response. Remind them of the performance standard or expectation. Ask the employee for a specific solution and then agree together on the solution. Ensure the employee has implemented the solution by follow-up observation.
- Asking employees to evaluate their own performance regularly can be useful in determining how well you communicate and coach the employee.

Informal review

Performance can be reported informally throughout the performance appraisal cycle. This method helps the supervisor and employee to be aware of whether or not performance expectations are being met and how well.

The informal review is based on day-to-day contacts between supervisors and employees in which employee progress is checked and performance is discussed with the employee as contrasted with a formal review involving the preparation, presentation and discussion of a performance evaluation. During these informal reviews, plans for correcting performance deficiencies or for developing performance may be made and performance may be monitored for progress in meeting the plans. Inaccurate or inadequate performance expectations may be identified and corrected.

The ongoing informal review is an important part of the performance appraisal process. When these informal reviews are documented and relied upon in preparation of the formal evaluation report, the latter evaluation report is much like a summary of the informal reviews.

Throughout the entire appraisal period, show the employee how the employee's performance is or is not meeting the expectations and standards. Discuss the results and work with the employee to identify solutions, if needed. If the employee's performance is still not meeting expectations and standards after implementing solutions and/or feedback and a short-term period to improve, contact your departmental HR office for assistance with a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) or other coaching tools. **There should be no surprises to the employee in the performance**

evaluation report as it should never be the first time the employee learns s/he is not meeting expectations and standards.

4. Document observations and feedback

Keeping notes about performance and collecting other documentation throughout the rating period is a good habit for supervisors. All coaching and informal review activities should be documented and kept in a secure location. They must be available for the employee's review upon request although you may also copy the employee when you place it in your file. Some collective bargaining agreements require them to be provided to the employee at the time it is originated.

Documentation may include:

- Performance planning documentation including performance gap identification
- Notes on feedback and informal performance reviews
- Records of discussions related to work performance
- Activity, audit reports
- Specific instances of work that falls short of the standard or exceeds the standard (redact confidential information such as client names, SSN, etc., OR if the document is protected by law or policy, reference document but do not maintain in file)
- Commendations (e.g., letters of appreciation, customer feedback) or substantiated (not hearsay or supposition) critical comments received about an employee's work
- Special activities or awards the employee received that reflect on their or the organization's performance
- Training records
- Appropriate attendance reports (without medical info)
- Letters of Instruction or Expectations (LOI/E), Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)
- Records of any disciplinary action

Failure to document may result in an evaluation being overturned in whole or in part through appeal under a collective bargaining agreement or to an enforcement agency. Documentation should be kept for **a minimum of two years after the evaluation has been finalized** in the event of an appeal. Follow your department's policies and procedures if further retention is required.

Analyze Performance

A performance evaluation process that involves consistent and frequent observation, feedback and analysis allows for timely changes to unrealistic expectations or problematic performance.

Employee performance must be analyzed before writing a performance evaluation. Typically, this analysis requires a review of overall performance during a pre-determined period, often a year. Effective supervisors do not wait for this annual occasion to analyze performance, however; they do it continuously as part of an ongoing effort to improve the work processes and products of individual employees and of the unit. This process is typically less formal than the annual review and does not usually involve a review of all areas of responsibility.

In order to determine the level of performance an employee has achieved, performance documentation should be compared against the standards and expectations for the position. The following steps may be used when analyzing an employee's performance:

1. Compare records and observations to the expectations and standards

- Were the expectations and standards achieved, partially achieved, or not achieved?
- You may request an employee to also provide information and/or documentation on their performance during the rating period. Your departmental HR staff can provide a self-appraisal form to help in gathering this information.

2. Determine at what level of performance the employee has met, is meeting or exceeding the expectations and standards

- Standards that are reasonable for one position (or group of like positions) may not be reasonable for a position with similar duties in another organization context. Also, even though standards may be written for most duties of some positions, supervisors and employees need to understand that the supervisor's decision about how to rate performance in total is a judgment involving the relative importance of job performance in various areas over a period of time. It is not an arithmetic problem that requires various ratings to be added up and then divided to get an average rating.
- Determine if special circumstances—for example, a new system implementation that caused errors-- existed during the rating period that affected the employee's ability to meet standards, negatively or positively.
- The State of Alaska uses a standard performance evaluation form with five possible performance ratings:

The mid acceptable rating is where the supervisor should start the analysis and then adjust up or down based on the employee's performance



Mid Acceptable: This rating is given when an employee is meeting the State expectations or standards. The employee is not required to improve her/his performance; however, the supervisor may motivate the employee to perform duties to a higher level of performance through goal-setting and coaching.

Outstanding: This rating is given to an employee working consistently at the highest level of performance in all performance areas, leaving little or nothing to be desired or for those who have successfully completed unusually demanding special assignments in addition to performing their own duties. Any performance not consistently exceeding expectations is minor or due to events not under the control of the employee. The contributions which result from performance at this level constitute a standard of excellence that may well serve as an example or role model. Just like an employee performing at a high-acceptable level, the supervisor should provide positive feedback.

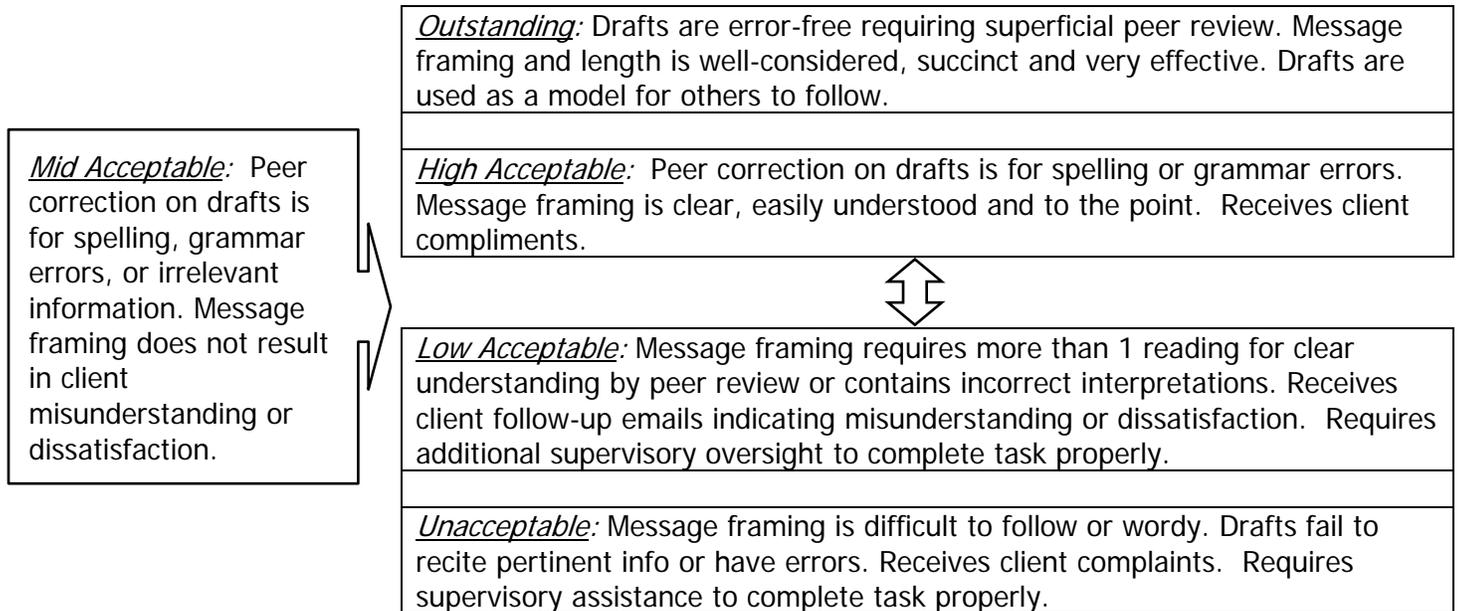
High Acceptable: This rating is given when an employee is exceeding performance standards and excelling in their job performance. Their performance is marked by initiative, a high quality and quantity of work and they regularly make valuable contributions to the organization. Their judgment is sound and they demonstrate mastery of their position. The supervisor should provide positive feedback to the employee performing at this level to encourage her/him to continue at this rating or use goal-setting and coaching if the employee chooses to exceed this level of performance.



Low Acceptable: This rating is given when an employee is inconsistent in meeting standards and expectations or when some performance areas are unacceptable but critical areas of performance are minimally meeting standards or expectations. It is marginal work performance and it is intended that an employee should not remain at this level indefinitely but must improve. Management is required to provide short-term coaching efforts to the employee to improve his/her performance to a mid acceptable level. Failure to improve and sustain performance may result in extending probation or a non-retention decision for probationary employees. For permanent employees, it may result in withholding a merit increase or withdrawing a previously granted merit increase. Employees with this rating are not eligible for a pay increment.

Unacceptable: This rating is given when an employee is not meeting the expectations or standards or requires frequent, close supervision and/or redoing of work. Employees cannot continue to perform at this level and must improve. If the rating is due to poor performance, the supervisor typically has already contacted departmental HR staff for assistance with additional short-term coaching often in the form of a PIP. If this rating is due to disciplinary action for misconduct, no PIP is needed. Failure to improve and sustain performance and/or behavior from an unacceptable rating may result in a non-retention decision for a probationary employee. For a permanent employee, it may result in disciplinary action, withholding a merit increase or withdrawing a previously granted merit increase. Employees with this rating are not eligible for a pay increment.

In determining whether an employee is or is not achieving or exceeding standards and expectations, it can be useful to list the typical job performance representative of a particular rating to assist with writing the performance evaluation. Following is an example for the quality measure discussed on page 9 of this Guide.



Report Performance

The formal performance evaluation review process enables the supervisor and employee to discuss where performance was strong and where it could have been stronger, to identify factors or circumstances that may have affected performance to make changes in job duties and performance standards, and to look for ways to improve performance in the future. The formal review allows the supervisor and employee to step back for a moment to put performance into perspective, to summarize what has happened in the past, and to plan for the future.

1. Determine the type of performance evaluation to be written

Some performance evaluations are required and some are discretionary. Below are the most common reasons for preparing a performance evaluation for a State of Alaska classified employee (Note: Specific requirements are subject to the applicable collective bargaining agreement provisions).

Required: *The following evaluations are required by statute, regulation, contract or other authority and must be completed.*

Interim	Probationary employees are due an interim performance evaluation completed halfway through their probationary period. Failure to provide the interim performance evaluation may affect a department's decision to separate a probationary employee. See the applicable collective bargaining agreement as well as the February 28, 2005, Division of Labor Relations memorandum (http://doa.alaska.gov/dop/fileadmin/lr/pdf/nonretentionerrata.pdf) regarding the non-retention of initial hire probationary employees.
Completion of probation	Employees are due a performance evaluation documenting successful completion of the probationary period. This applies specifically to the General Government, Supervisory, Correctional Officer, Public Safety, AVTEC and Confidential bargaining units.
Annual	Permanent employees are due a written performance evaluation annually. This applies specifically to the General Government, Supervisory, Correctional Officer, Public Safety, LTC, AVTEC and Confidential bargaining units. Pay increments are paid only when an annual evaluation recommending such is finalized by the Department HR Approver.
Separation from state service	An employee, including a nonpermanent one, is due a written performance evaluation when he or she leaves state service.

Recommended: *Evaluation types described in this section are not required. They do serve useful performance management purposes; therefore, the Division of Personnel & Labor Relations recommends that they be completed in accordance with department policy and procedure.*

Change of supervisor	A performance evaluation may be written when there is a change of supervisor.
Transfer	A performance evaluation may be written when an employee transfers to another department or position.
Performance Driven	A performance evaluation may be written when an employee's performance becomes less than mid acceptable or when performance improves to mid acceptable. The departmental HR staff can provide agency guidelines.

Discretionary: *Evaluation types described in this section are not required by statute, regulation, contract or other authority. They may be completed at the discretion of the supervisor and are recommended by the Division of Personnel & Labor Relations as good management practice.*

Requested by the employee	Employees in some bargaining units may request a written performance evaluation at reasonable intervals.
Promotion	A performance evaluation may be written when an employee promotes to another position.
Demotion	A performance evaluation may be written when an employee demotes to another position, voluntarily or involuntarily.
Seasonal	A performance evaluation may be written when an employee goes on seasonal leave without pay after seasonal employment of more than 30 days.

Supervisors should contact their departmental HR staff to ensure all evaluations are in accordance with state and department policy and procedure.

2. Write the performance evaluation

The performance evaluation form is on the Division of Personnel & Labor Relations forms page at <http://doa.alaska.gov/dop/resources/hrforms/>. Variations of this form will not be accepted.

The departmental HR office will supply most of the needed information to be inserted in the form's header. For the following fields:

- **Reporting Coverage** – For an interim evaluation, the beginning date is the date the employee was hired into the position. For all other evaluations, the beginning date is the next day after the end date of the previous evaluation. For annual evaluations, several collective bargaining agreements limit the beginning date to no more than one year back from the date the evaluation is being written. The end date is typically provided by your departmental HR office; consult with them before adjusting any of these dates outside of these parameters.
- **Position Description Reviewed by Rater for accuracy?** – This question is to ensure the supervisor reviews the position description at least annually for changes. If not, the supervisor is asked to explain. The question prompts you to consider the degree to which an understanding of the job duties should be a factor in the rating process and also is a reminder that PDs require regular review and maintenance. Will the program or mission change? Will the job's primary, essential duties or work demands change? Will the duties need to have a higher level of responsibility? Will the supervisor or lead duties be changed or modified? If yes to any of these questions, the PD must be updated and submitted for proper classification.

The six key sections of the evaluation form are the prior goals, specific rating areas, the comments/narrative sections, the overall rating, the rater's recommended action, and new goals.

Considerations and Cautions

There are many pitfalls to avoid in reviewing performance. A supervisor may inadvertently distort the employee's rating or comments/narrative through one or more of the following:

Nature of Error	Definition
Central tendency	Almost always rating performance as mid acceptable, refusal to rate outstanding or tendency to rate all employees the same. Often most common error.
Unclear standards	Standards are not clearly understood and agreed upon at the beginning of the evaluation period.
Insufficient evidence	Basing judgment of an employee on inadequate, inaccurate or incomplete information.
Recency	Recently achieved results are weighted more heavily than those achieved earlier in the rating period.

Halo or Bias	When very good performance in one aspect of the job is carried over into evaluating other aspects, resulting in a higher rating than is warranted. The Bias effect is just the opposite.
Similar-to-me	The tendency to rate people who are like you more favorably.
Personality bias	When a supervisor's personal liking for or dislike of an employee influences the rating.
Leniency and strictness	In any population of raters, some are more lenient or strict than others. If there are extreme variations between supervisors, employee morale suffers.
Position	When a rating is influenced by the perceived importance or lack of importance of a position.

For the first five key sections on the form:

(1) Prior Goals

- This section may not apply to interim evaluations; however, this is where the supervisor articulates what previous goals were set or negotiated.

(2) Specific Rating Areas

- Check the appropriate box in each of the applicable rating areas. These ratings must be consistent with the applicable comments/narrative section.
- The specific rating area of Performance is judged on the basis of the particular requirements of a position and the performance expectations for a particular rating period. The items listed are suggestions of performance areas that apply generally, but they do not each have to be discussed in the narrative. Performance areas that are considered in determining the rating usually does need to be mentioned though, particularly those for which performance is less than mid acceptable or is outstanding.
- The specific rating areas of Work Habits and Interpersonal Relationships are listed and rated separately, but their importance is tied to the rating area of Performance. A position assigned to serve the public at a counter might be weighted more heavily for attendance and punctuality than a position that primarily processes documents with no public contact. If the overall rating is most heavily weighted by the categories of Work Habits or Interpersonal Relationships, you need to explain specifically in the comments/narrative how these relate to job performance and why they are particularly important for the position to which the employee is assigned.
- The Supervisory rating area is for employees who have supervisory (including lead) responsibilities as outlined on the form, regardless of the bargaining unit to which that employee belongs.

(3) Comments/Narrative Sections

- The most important section of the performance evaluation is the comments/narrative. Your comments here will give employees information and feedback for improvement and provide valuable documentation for making future personnel decisions.
- The comments/narrative must support the respective specific area ratings as well as the overall rating.
- In preparation to write these sections, review documentation kept throughout the rating period to ensure performance is reported accurately. Explain performance in terms of specific, measurable and attainable performance standards and expectations in place during the rating period and/or prior goals. Avoid the use of unsupported qualifiers such as, "usually, very, often, most of the time, occasionally."
- If an area for improvement or performance issue was mentioned on the previous evaluation, it should be mentioned again if it has not improved or is ongoing. Omitting mention may lead to the assumption that the problem has been resolved. Conversely, if there has been improvement since the last evaluation, it should be acknowledged. Disciplinary action and/or PIPs during the rating period must be mentioned and ratings must reflect the impact of the performance or behavior that prompted them. LOI/E are not discipline, however if mentioned, whether or not improvement has occurred also should be noted.
- Comments/narratives should focus on performance and behavior and must conform to current regulations and policies. Mention of personal items such as age, gender, marital or parental status, physical condition, medical information, other employee or client names, number of approved leave hours used, use of complaint or grievance procedures, religious affiliation, race, color and national origin must be avoided. Mention of the use of leave for sick reasons, or for the federal/state family, medical and military leave acts as well as their unintended impact on the work unit is also prohibited. In the event of extended absences for these reasons, state the employee was on an approved leave of absence during specific dates. Your departmental HR Staff should be contacted for additional guidance on what information may further be prohibited and therefore may not be included in a performance evaluation.
- If you are using an approved performance grid as part of the performance evaluation, the comments/narrative section is used to discuss exceptions or areas not covered by the performance grid. A performance grid does not replace the State of Alaska's official performance evaluation form and use of a grid must be preapproved by the Director of the Division of Personnel & Labor Relations. Consult with your departmental HR staff prior to submitting a grid for approval.

(4) Overall Rating

- The overall rating is more than an average of the boxes in the Specific Rating Areas. It is a summary of the employee's total job performance. For example, an employee's performance is rated acceptable in the Performance and Work Habits specific rating areas and unacceptable in the Interpersonal Relationships area. A critical performance standard for the position is interpersonal relations with the public. The employee's overall rating could be low acceptable or

even unacceptable, based on the position's performance standards. Such cases must be fully explained in this section of the report.

- Departments have different requirements for processing an overall rating of Outstanding or Unacceptable on performance evaluations. Consult with your departmental HR staff for department specific requirements.

(5) Rater's Recommended Action

- The rater's recommended action has an impact on an employee's career. When an employee is not recommended for rehire, under 2 AAC 07.112 he or she may:
 - 1) Lose noncompetitive rehire rights in the job class for which they were not recommended for rehire, and/or
 - 2) Be temporarily or permanently disqualified and removed from all classified position applicant lists.
- Your departmental HR staff should always be consulted prior to giving an individual an evaluation that does not recommend the person for rehire.
- The following table summarizes the types of actions that can be recommended for each type of performance evaluation.

Reason For Evaluation Report	Possible Recommended Action
Interim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued employment • Recommend early permanent status (check appropriate contract and department policy for this)
Annual/pay increment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merit increase • Pay Increment (applies to GGU, SU, CO, PSEA, CEA, PX) • Service Step (applies to LTC) • Continued employment • Merit increase/pay increment not recommended • Withdrawal of a merit increase
Resignation/separation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended for rehire • Not recommended for rehire
Other:	
Completion of probation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent status • Permanent status and merit increase
Extension of probation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension of probation through ... (date)
Non-retention of an initial hire probationary employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non retention in probationary position • Not recommended for rehire
Change of supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued employment
Transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued employment
Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended for rehire. Promotion to ... (use for flexibly staffed classes)
Voluntary demotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended for rehire

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not recommended for rehire
Involuntary demotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not recommended for rehire (you may use qualifiers)
Dismissal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dismissal • Not recommended for rehire

3. Review of the Performance Evaluation

The State of Alaska performance evaluation system provides managers with the opportunity to review evaluations before they are presented to and discussed with the employee being evaluated. Supervisors should follow their department or division guidelines on the evaluation review process. The reviewer may be the commissioner, division director or section or unit manager.

The function of the reviewer is not to redo the evaluation but rather to ensure the rating procedure used by the supervisor is fair and conforms to the guidelines outlined in this publication and in department policies and procedures. Any disagreements between rater and reviewer should be resolved and changes resulting from management review should be incorporated into the evaluation prior to the evaluation being seen by the employee. Your departmental HR Staff is always available for consultation.

Develop Performance

The purpose of this step in the cycle is to help supervisors and employees decide how they can work together to maintain or increase employee performance and to more fully develop the employee's potential value. The development process consists of four basic activities: determining if change is needed, planning, implementation and assessment.

1. Determining if change is needed

The purpose of this step is to decide if and how employee performance could be developed. You should answer these questions:

- What does the position need to accomplish during the next rating period? Will the program or mission change?
- Is it necessary to improve performance, or is maintaining performance the appropriate thing to do?
- What is the employee's potential for growth?
- How can that potential be developed to be consistent with agency goals?

2. Planning

If it is necessary to improve performance, the proper solution to the performance gap depends on the reason(s) for the gap. Once needs have been identified, planning to meet those needs can begin. Successful planning is a joint effort between you and the employee. It helps to clarify and prioritize the needs and to choose an appropriate technique to meet those needs.

Improvement needs are easily identified by comparing the performance standard objectives with the results achieved. Identify the needs associated with the performance gap analysis (using the analysis on pages 11 and 12 of this Guide) and establish priorities.

Improve performance: Respond to these needs first so the employee can reach the desired or required level of performance.

- If the performance analysis reveals a competence performance gap, again focus in the planning stage on finding training and/or proficiency development solutions.
- If the performance analysis reveals a motivation performance gap that has not improved with coaching, consult with your departmental HR staff for assistance with identifying appropriate goals and consequences if the employee does not change their performance.

Develop performance: If the gap is how to develop an employee who is consistently at or above standards, focus on how to develop that person's potential for advancement or job expansion consistent with agency goals.

- **Expand performance:** Change in the agency programs, staff, laws, policies or rules may lead to a change in the employee's responsibilities. This may mean that developing the employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities will be necessary to effectively respond to such changes and to maintain quality of job performance.
- **Future career performance:** You can guide and assist employees in preparing for their career advancement by listening, asking good questions, giving realistic information, and challenging the individual. Responsibility for career advancement rests with the employee, but a supervisor can make an enormous difference in the success of the development by providing a supporting and trusting climate and assisting the employee with seeking developmental opportunities.

Priority of needs: You and the employee may identify several developmental needs to work on, but there may not be adequate time to respond to all of them. Identify the needs most important to you and the agency in terms of overall job performance.

Consider potential development solutions: Your departmental HR Staff can help you and employees select the most appropriate training and proficiency development needs whether formal or informal.

Some common types of informal job assistance not previously mentioned are:

- ***Supervisory coaching:*** The supervisor can help the employee recognize and correct mistakes, learn to apply special talents to the job, and solve or overcome specific work-related problems.
- ***Special work assignments:*** This gives the employee an opportunity to use and develop special talents in responsibility areas that are not part of the regular job. Generally speaking, special work assignments are closely supervised, short-term experiences.

- ***Add new and challenging responsibilities to the regular job:*** This is another way to develop an employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities. It is a more sophisticated technique than special work assignments because the new responsibilities become a part of the employee's ongoing workload. Such added duties must be consistent with the job class of the position and the position description must be updated to reflect these new duties, or the updated position description should be submitted for proper classification.

After identifying employee development needs, assigning priorities to them, considering which potential development solution or activity will best meet the most important needs, it is time to meet with the employee to discuss the evaluation report, new goals, development needs, priorities and solutions.

Appraisal Meeting

For interim, completion or extension of probation and annual evaluations, the appraisal meeting is how supervisors meet the requirement in the Personnel Rules to "*discuss each personnel evaluation with the employee, with a goal of assisting the employee to understand the degree to which the employee is meeting the requirements of the position*".

You should set up the discussion for a mutually convenient date and time about a week in advance. Set aside about an hour with no ringing phones or interruptions and if meeting in person, locate a private room for the discussion. Provide a draft of the performance evaluation to the employee a day or two in advance of the meeting so s/he has time to review it.

- At the meeting, begin by putting the employee at ease by creating a sincere and open atmosphere for joint discussion.
- Review the responsibilities in the Introduction section of the form. The review will indicate if the employee is in agreement about daily tasks and the relative importance of each task to the job. If there is any disagreement, this is the opportunity to either clarify responsibilities for the employee or consider if this section needs to be revised before finalization.
- If applicable, review the goals that were established in the last performance evaluation and discuss those that have been reached and how they improved the employee's skills and performance. If goals were not established, discuss the employee's strengths and what they have done right in meeting the standards and expectations. Provide positive feedback for all rating areas mid acceptable and above.
- Then discuss goals that were not reached or need further work. If goals were not established, outline the most significant areas needing improvement to meet expectations and standards. Discuss if any obstacles prevented the employee from reaching goals or meeting the expectations and standards. Decide if time frames set for goals that weren't reached from last rating period need to be adjusted. For employees with low acceptable or unacceptable ratings

in any area, have documentation available of the problems the employee has had and be prepared to assign goals and discuss consequences if performance does not improve.

- For employees with mid acceptable or higher ratings in all areas, discuss goals or career objectives the employee is interested in. Negotiate new goals taking into account the agency's goals, priorities and potential development solutions you have already identified. Goals should be specific, motivational, attainable, reasonable and trackable. They must also be work-oriented. Personal goals such as gaining skills or taking a test to be promoted, involvement in extra-curricular activities outside of work assignments or participation in professional or community organizations must not be a part of the evaluation unless they are official duties (e.g., community outreach).
- Be prepared from time to time to encounter an employee who is meeting or exceeding standards in the present job and simply does not want to improve his or her performance, skills and abilities for whatever reason. If the job will not change in the foreseeable future, respect the employee's wishes until that person is ready for further development.
- Listen to employee's input or request for changes or additions to the performance evaluation and thank them for their input.
- Make necessary adjustments by negotiating goals that are acceptable to you and the employee to keep things running smoothly and avoid foreseeable problems in the future.

After the meeting, consider the employee's input in whether or not to revise the evaluation. Document the new goals and if appropriate for any low acceptable or unacceptable ratings, the consequences for not meeting goals in the appropriate section. Whether you revise or not, sign and date the evaluation, retain a copy and promptly provide the original to the employee for his or her final review and signature.

If an employee does not concur with the evaluation, they may attach written comments, typically known as a "rebuttal", which becomes a permanent part of the evaluation. Most collective bargaining agreements have timelines to submit rebuttals which begin when the signed evaluation is provided to the employee. **Rebuttals containing medical information or other employee or client names must have that information redacted before forwarding for final processing.**

If the employee declines to sign the evaluation, note that in the employee signature block before forwarding the original copy for final processing. The original, signed copy must be processed and placed in the employee's permanent record.

3. Implementation

After identifying employee development needs, assigning priorities to them, and deciding which development solution or activity will best meet the most important needs, it is time to carry out the development plan. Ongoing open communication between you and your employee will allow you to ensure the development plan is being implemented appropriately.

4. Assessment

Determine whether the development solutions did what they were supposed to do. Did the employee's participation in the development solution bring about the desired change in job performance? Have you given timely coaching and feedback with a reasonable amount of time for the employee to demonstrate improvement?

Even the best-laid plans occasionally go awry. Re-enter the performance analysis step to see if something was overlooked or misinterpreted whenever the development plan does not have the desired impact.

Summary

A supervisor who skillfully uses the performance appraisal process clearly defines the job to be done, establishes acceptable performance expectations, carefully reviews and reports performance, and provides the developmental guides necessary to improve future performance. The supervisor gives the employee the assistance and tools necessary for his or her success on the job. The supervisor also carefully lays the groundwork for job accountability and provides much of the documentation necessary should an employee's inability to do the job necessitate disciplinary action.

The key performance appraisal resource for supervisors is your departmental HR Staff. Use them.