

RELEVANT LINKS:

[Personnel Policy Template](#)

X. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Overview: Performance evaluations can be a great communication tool between the city management and its employees. Conducting regular performance evaluations provide both supervisor and employee with a structured opportunity to discuss what is going well and not so well.

In addition to being a good communications tool, the performance evaluation is a critical tool for many management personnel decisions. When evaluations are not done regularly, there may be a lack of defensible basis for organization decisions (promotions, terminations, etc.). It is essential to have supporting documentation for these kinds of actions. Performance evaluations are a good source of such documentation.

Even if your city does not have a formal performance evaluation program in place, you may wish to develop a policy identifying those circumstances under which the city or a supervisor may conduct a formal performance evaluation.

A. Purpose

The purpose of the performance evaluation process is to review with employees what is expected of them, what they are doing well, how they are deficient in performance (if at all), how they can improve, and what goals they are expected to achieve over the next performance period. Performance evaluations, if done effectively, are a key component of performance management.

B. Job descriptions

All factors being considered in a performance evaluation must be job related. Each employee's performance evaluation should be based on a clearly defined and up to date job description. The responsibilities set forth in the job description and the expectations of the manager/supervisor for getting these duties accomplished must be clearly communicated to the employee. If these two steps are taken, it is much easier to ensure that the focus of the performance evaluation will be on job content and specific performance criteria.

It may be more difficult to evaluate an employee's performance if your city does not have written job descriptions. The supervisor is put in the position of conducting a review of performance without an accurate description of job duties, responsibilities, and expectations. While performance evaluations should not necessarily be avoided in the absence of job descriptions, a great deal of care must be taken to ensure that only job related factors are evaluated.

The League maintains many sample job descriptions for jobs typically used in cities. Call the League to request copies.

RELEVANT LINKS:

C. City policies

When focusing on the responsibilities outlined in a job description, it is easy to forget that expectations set forth in city policies and department work rules are also conditions of employment with the city. The performance evaluation provides the supervisor with an opportunity to evaluate the employee's compliance with these criteria. It also is a good idea to use some time during the performance evaluation to clarify expectations established in general city policy and department level work rules for any employee struggling in that area.

D. Evaluation form

The performance evaluation form is generally used as a tool to encourage discussion and ensure documentation for the personnel file. The most common formats used include open-ended reviews that require the supervisor to input all information and forced choice reviews that require the supervisor to select from a group of established or "canned" statements about performance. Some cities use a combination of these two formats. Policy language should clarify if a form is required or if it is optional.

The League maintains sample copies of performance evaluation forms. Call the League to request copies.

E. Employee input

The employee's input may help the supervisor better understand why an employee might be struggling or may not be excelling as expected. A self-evaluation that the employee completes and provides to his/her supervisor prior to the formal evaluation is a good way to obtain employee input without the employee feeling as though he/she is being "put on the spot."

Unlike a private employee, a city employee does not have the right to have a "position statement" objecting to a performance evaluation placed in his or her personnel file. However, the city employee can contest the accuracy or completeness of the data contained in a performance evaluation under procedures established in the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act.

[Minnesota Statutes 13.04, Subdivision 4](#)

F. Key items to address

- Accomplishments of the past performance period (could be 6 months or one year)
- Suggestions for improvement/changes based on these accomplishments
- Goals for the next performance period (maximum one year)
- Adherence to organization mission, policies and practices
- Supervisor summary comments
- Up to date job descriptions (on which to base evaluation)
- Employee comments

RELEVANT LINKS:

G. Policy considerations

For those cities that do conduct regularly scheduled performance evaluations, it is important to clearly define the parameters of the program. This can be done in a policy that addresses the following:

- Are performance evaluations going to be conducted on an annual basis or as needed?
- If conducted on an annual basis, may evaluations be conducted in between regular evaluations for performance reasons?
- Who has the authority to conduct a performance evaluation?
- Who is responsible for coordinating the performance evaluation program?
- Will evaluations be conducted of all employees?
- Will performance be tied to compensation?
- What happens to the performance evaluation document after the evaluation?
- Does the employee sign the evaluation?
- Is the employee provided with an opportunity to respond to the evaluation?