

Performance management

Preparing for and conducting performance review discussions

Formal review discussions can be productive and pleasant for both parties if the focus remains on developing the capabilities required to meet performance expectations at the staff member's job level.



Tips

Use the **Workforce Capability Framework** as a foundation for the performance review discussion. The framework provides a 'whole of job' review of performance as well as guidance for both parties. The discussion can focus on areas of capability that are being demonstrated on the job, and on capability areas in which further development is needed.

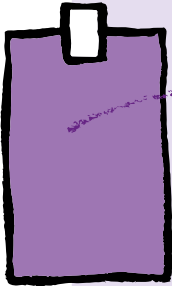
Ensure the conversations are consistent with the staff member's job level. Look at the capability descriptions for the job level in the Workforce Capability Framework, ensuring that both the **strategic core requirements** and **functional requirements** are considered. You can disregard any of the functional requirements that are not relevant to the role. The position description should reflect the strategic core requirement and relevant functional requirement areas for the job level.

Use an appropriately structured approach to the discussion/s, guided by any relevant organisational policy. This means having a planned approach, ensuring that the staff member's performance in all the capability areas required by the role can be discussed. If the organisation uses a performance review template or format, follow it and any associated policy or procedure document. Typically a manager or supervisor and staff member would:

- * Both prepare for the review discussion.
- * Participate in a structured review discussion or discussions.
- * Undertake any follow-up or documentation required.
- * Prepare for the next review period.

Schedule the review meeting well in advance. Good practice for formal or milestone discussions is no less than annually, and can be six-monthly. In the event of annual reviews, six-monthly or quarterly formal progress reviews are also good practice.

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Tips

Tailor your approach to the staff member's needs. Individual staff members will respond differently to discussions held at different times of the day and in different locations (i.e. in an office, coffee shop, etc.). Some will prefer to use prepared drafts, dot points, whiteboard, etc.

Approach the review meeting itself with a degree of flexibility. Many managers and supervisors find holding several discussions is more useful. It is better to hold at least one face-to-face meeting or Skype session than to do it all by phone. Managers or supervisors with staff in regional areas often try and schedule key review meetings as part of their regular visits to those locations.

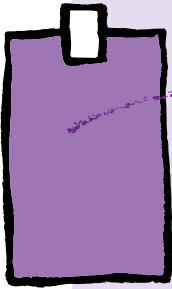
- * The first discussion can be for setting expectations for the review and having a fact-finding talk.
- * The second discussion can be to finalise the review, which may include assigning performance ratings to different aspects of the job and overall, depending on organisational policy, and to agree on development plan priorities and actions.

The gap between meetings allows both parties to reflect on the results and performance discussed.

Only undertake a formal performance review as the direct supervisor with line management responsibility for the staff member concerned. The direct supervisor can seek input from other relevant managers or stakeholders to contribute to the review as appropriate. This includes relevant input and feedback elicited in an appropriate manner from customers of the staff member.

Schedule the meeting/discussion. Allow ample time in advance for both the manager or supervisor and the staff member to get ready. Plan how to communicate with the staff member about the meeting/discussion and when. Be prepared to answer any questions and provide reassurance about the purpose of the meeting/discussion and the process that will be followed. Take into account any organisational policy or procedures about the conduct of a performance review discussion.

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Prepare! Get ready for the meeting/discussion by reviewing in advance the staff member's position description and performance measures. Use records kept from supervision discussions and milestone reviews during the year. Collate notes of examples from the review period that substantiate the performance achieved in the job.

Use the staff member's position description and agreed performance measures to ensure relevance. If the position description has not been drafted on the basis of the capability requirements for the staff member's job level in the Workforce Capability Framework and/or performance measures have not been properly put in place, you can still use the framework as a checklist to run through all the capability requirements for the relevant job level. This ensures that your review discussion is not just focused on 'top of mind' areas such as compliance or customer service.

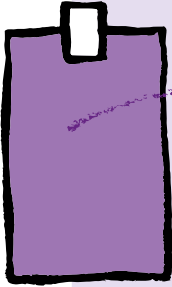
Use the **what's working/not working** tool to gather feedback from others to use in the review. This can include customers, family members, other staff, etc. However, it is appropriate to ensure any approach is consistent with organisational policy and practices.

Get the facts straight. Nothing will derail the discussion faster than a manager or supervisor expressing a view about the staff member's performance in the review period that is based on poor or inaccurate information or understanding of what occurred or has been achieved.

Conduct the review meeting/s or discussion/s using the process that will work best for both parties. Deal with any anxiety or worry. Share the responsibility to move from this to a combined sense of achievement in conducting the review in a mutually beneficial way.

This could entail the staff member running through each performance area and giving a self-evaluation, the manager or supervisor working through each area and seeking comments or a perspective from the staff member, or a combination of both.

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Tips

Create a worthwhile and positive environment. Managers or supervisors will build up an understanding of what is going to work best for each individual staff member on the team. There is no requirement that performance review meetings are conducted identically for all staff members. Be clear on the goal of the meeting but flexible on the approach. What is important is that the conversation is positive and productive.

When it is necessary to provide feedback on poor performance in a particular aspect of the job, balance this with feedback about things that have gone well. Be just as specific about the things that have gone well rather than making vague generalisations about 'everything else is OK'. The Workforce Capability Framework can help keep positive and negative feedback in perspective by highlighting all the different areas of capability relevant to the role.

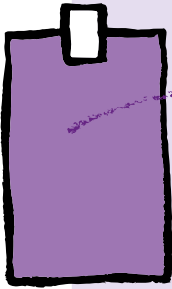
Listen. Many managers or supervisors feel that they need to have all the answers in the review meeting but it is more important to use the opportunity to listen and appreciate how the staff member is understanding the requirements of their role and the level of their performance. The staff member also needs an understanding of how performance can or needs to be improved in certain areas. The job of the manager or supervisor is to nurture this understanding in the staff member.

Use the staff member's **one-page profile** to ensure their needs are being met. Ask questions such as 'Do you have **what's important to you at work?**' and 'Am I supporting you in the right way?' This provides an opportunity for the staff member to give you feedback and also to update their one-page profile as a follow-up to the discussion.

Reflect. In most cases it will be more effective for the manager or supervisor to conduct an initial discussion with the staff member to review and discuss their performance over the period. This can include taking into account feedback from, or the changing requirements of, customers and other stakeholders.

Any organisational requirement for the manager to rate or rank the staff member's performance is best done after all the review meetings have been held. A second discussion can then be held with each staff member to discuss the review outcome, agree on development needs, review and develop performance measures for the next review period, etc.

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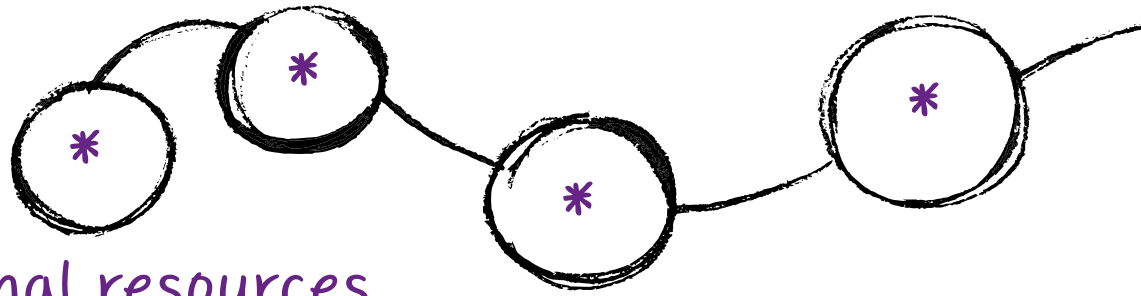
Follow up the review discussion by completing the relevant documentation, any salary review process where applicable, and the staff member's learning and development goals or plan.

Review the existing position description to see if any adjustments are required.

- * Has the work changed over the period?
- * Is the position description reflecting priorities and performance expectations that are going to be relevant in the next review period?

Put in place updated performance measures for the coming review period, using the review discussion. The role may have changed, requiring an adjustment to the performance measures. There may have been a performance measure that lacked some clarity, making it difficult to decide or agree whether the required level of performance had been achieved. The manager or supervisor and staff member can re-draft and then agree on any revised measures as soon as possible in the new review period so that sign-off on the new performance measures can be achieved.

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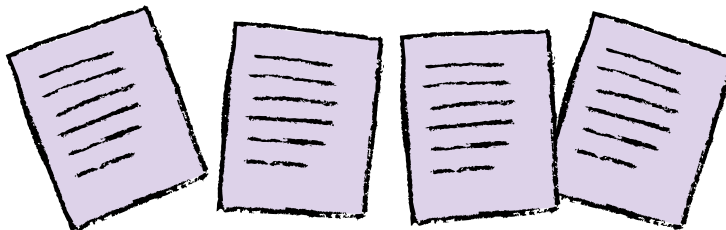
Additional resources

- * The Workforce Capability Framework
- * The disability career planner and capability framework implementation guide
- * Tips – agreeing performance expectations
- * Technique, tips and template – writing position descriptions
- * Tips – keeping performance on track
- * Technique – using ‘what’s working/not working’ in performance planning, support and supervision
- * Tips – building on a one-page profile through performance planning, support and supervision
- * Template – performance review

Definitions

The term **individual(s)** refers to an individual with a disability and their family and/or circle of support.

The terms **staff/employee(s)** refer to paid or unpaid members of the workforce regardless of their employment relationship with their employer i.e. permanent, casual, full-time, volunteer, etc.



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