



PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROGRAM

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

January 2005

PURPOSE OF THE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROGRAM

The purpose of the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority performance appraisal system is to provide a job-related, consistent, and uniform approach to measure an individual's on-the-job performance. The performance appraisal is designed to establish a constructive program to develop each individual's maximum potential toward contributing to the Authority's overall goals and objectives and their individual career development.

The Performance Appraisal Program at the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority is designed to:

Help *individuals*:

- know what is expected for them to be successful in their job
- identify strengths and weaknesses, and to develop a plan of action that enhances growth and productivity
- get the feedback they deserve and need to become the best contributor they can be

and help the *supervisor*:

- set realistic performance expectations and goals
- measure results and job-related behaviors against expectations
- give positive as well as corrective feedback designed to help individuals improve performance
- maintain open lines of communication
- provide a consistent and objective means of evaluating individuals and making decisions regarding promotions and salary changes
- identify areas where more development or experience is needed.

GUIDELINES

The performance appraisal is used to encourage candid discussion between the individual and his/her Supervisor/Manager. Supervisors/Managers are to be objective in reviewing previously established goals and expectations. The appraisal interview is also to be utilized to discuss career development potential and possible career opportunities for the individual.

- Evaluations will be based on the individual's job duties, in addition to mutually established performance goals, plans, and assignments.
- Supervisors must establish, in collaboration with the individual, realistic and attainable performance expectations and work with the individual to reach performance goals.
- Supervisors should relate each individual's program to the Authority's overall goals.
- Supervisors must evaluate each individual utilizing the entire performance appraisal period. When necessary, individuals should have quarterly progress reviews.
- Supervisors must carefully prepare and consider statements on the written evaluation, and thoroughly prepare for discussions with the individual. This will include reviewing the individual's job duties, established goals, and performance expectations.
- The appraisal should be used to encourage candid discussion between a supervisor and an individual.
- The appraisal may be used to determine the career development goals and job training needs of each individual.
- Individuals should be encouraged to use the appraisal as an opportunity to discuss their career and personal goals, and to develop a plan for accomplishing these goals.
- Individuals may examine each written appraisal and add their own comments. Individuals should feel comfortable discussing performance differences with their supervisor in an open and constructive manner.
- Written performance appraisals (and performance improvement plans) become part of each individual's personnel file.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE SYSTEM

1. What Has To Be Done? (Goals and Objectives)

This is the foundation of the entire program. It is a written description of what the job expectations are and is jointly created by both the supervisor and individual, with as much input as possible coming from the individual.

2. What Results are we Seeing? (Accomplishments)

Taking one responsibility at a time, the supervisor and the individual must decide just what results or conditions will be used to determine whether or not a responsibility has been fulfilled. These results measurements can be quantitative, qualitative, or both. The basic question remains the same: "How will we both know that a responsibility has actually been completed?" The more tangible the responsibility, the easier it is to pinpoint results measurements. The criteria to be used in measuring results must be clearly defined.

3. What Is Needed To Get It Done? (Performance Dimensions)

Behavior factors are as important as performance results. An individual who meets expected performance levels but negatively impacts the performance of others would not be rated as "meets expectations". A global perspective of performance includes results, behavior factors, and future growth goals.

Behavior factors must be observable, measurable, and consistent for all individuals within the same work group. Growth and development may modify the application of behavior factors (e.g., a new individual might not be expected to perform at the same productivity rate as a seasoned individual, or a seasoned individual might be asked to accept additional responsibilities as growth goals for possible promotion).

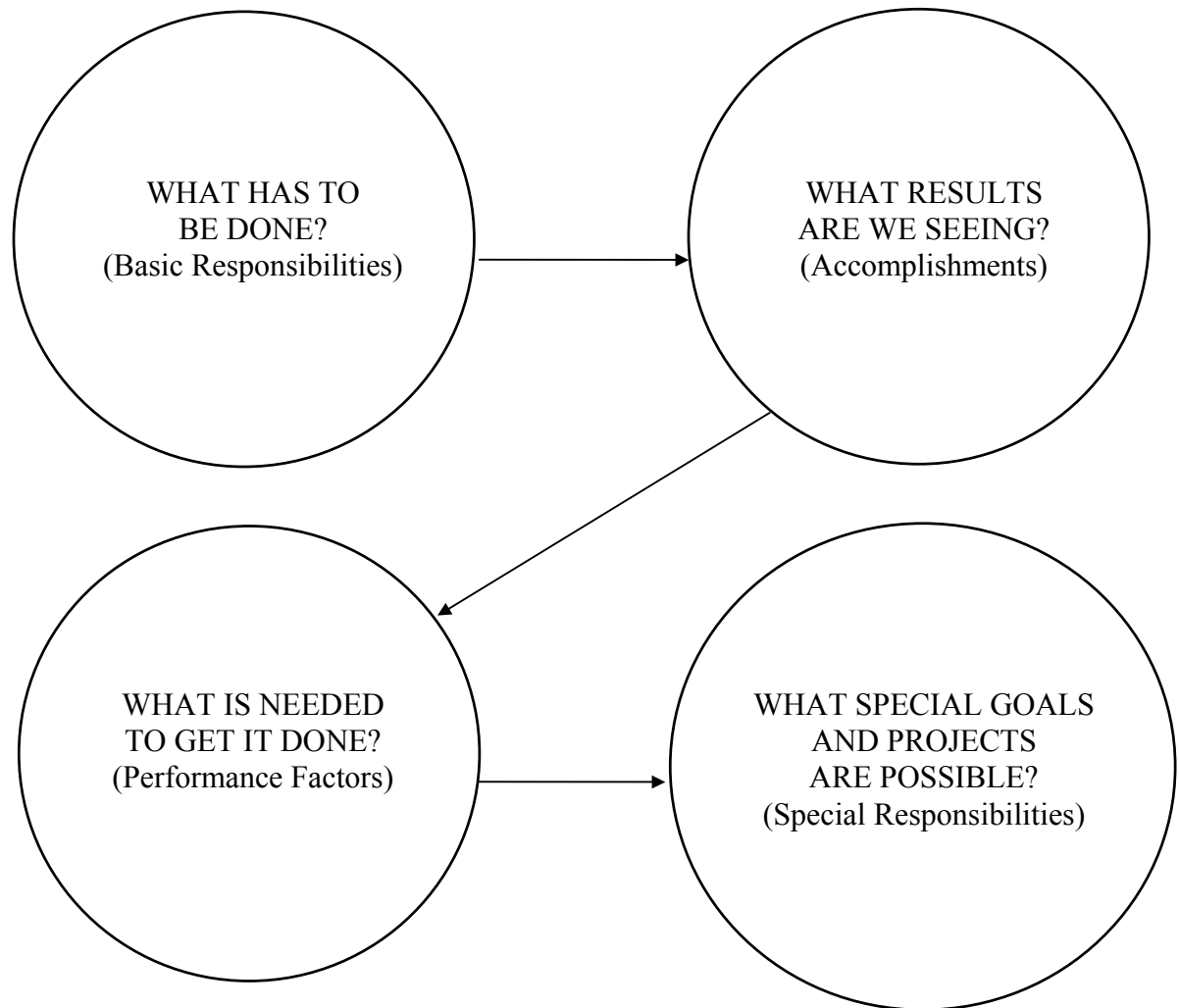
4. What Special Goals And Projects Are Possible? (Special Responsibilities)

These can include both business projects and personal development goals. They can either be extraordinary "extensions" of normal responsibilities, or can be in addition to those responsibilities. They differ from normal responsibilities primarily in the fact that they are transitory - having specific beginning and ending times.

Both VTA and the individual can gain a great deal through the establishment of personal development goals - i.e., goals to acquire certain competencies, to enhance existing skills, or perhaps goals to prepare for promotion.

The addition of such special goals and projects, especially when these have been conceived by the individual, can greatly enhance the individual's overall job performance.

The regular job duties, in addition to special goals and projects, are the basic building blocks of a performance analysis and review system. They are the starting points from which everything else proceeds.



The performance analysis and review may include:

- changes in the description of major responsibilities,
- new or revised results measurements,
- adaptation of performance characteristics, or
- the development of new special goals and projects, both business and personal.

When both the supervisor and the individual examine and analyze what has happened, evaluate the current status of projects, and determine how things will be completed in the future, the outcome will contribute to both the individual's own growth and the overall success of the organization.

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCESS

1. Supervisor requests written input regarding performance during prior year and goals for coming year.
2. Supervisor completes draft appraisal forms.
3. Supervisor reviews draft forms with his/her Supervisor/Manager.
4. Supervisor/Manager reviews draft forms with Division Chief Officer.
5. Division Chief Officers forward ratings to Chief Administrative Officer for review.
6. Chief Administrative Officer discusses ratings with Division Chief Officers.
7. Division Chief Officers advise Supervisors/Managers of any adjustments needed.
8. Supervisors/Managers hold performance review discussions.
9. Individuals review and provide written comments.
10. Supervisors/Manager consider comments made and review any recommended changes with Division Chief Officer.
11. Supervisors and individuals meet, discuss, review, develop performance improvement plan, if needed, and sign off.
12. Signed reviews are forwarded to the Chief Administrative Officer.
13. Supervisor provides ongoing verbal feedback to individual regarding performance.

PERFORMANCE DIMENSIONS

Management/Supervisory Employee	Non- Supervisory Employee
• Job Knowledge	• Job Knowledge
• Job Quality	• Job Quality
• Work Habits/Dependability/Work Quantity	• Work Habits/Dependability/Work Quantity
• Interpersonal Relationships	• Interpersonal Relationships
• Initiative and Personal Development	• Initiative and Personal Development
• Supervision/ Team Leadership	
• Management/ Program Leadership	

THE RATING SYSTEM

The rating categories are defined as follows:

F = Far Exceeds Expectations	The <i>far exceeds expectations</i> performer not only exceeds the normal scope of the job requirements but has also assumed unique responsibilities and/or special projects, which are above and beyond the normal job duties and projects/assignments during the period of this appraisal. Score: 4.0 - 3.1 points
E = Exceeds Expectations	The <i>exceeds expectations</i> performer not only consistently fulfills the expectations for the position, but also more often exceeds these expectations within the assigned areas of responsibility. Score: 3.0 – 2.1
M = Meets Expectations	The <i>meets expectations</i> performer consistently fulfills the expectations for the position. Score: - 2.0 – 1.1 points
I = Improvement Required	The <i>improvement required</i> performer is not meeting all the job requirements, and/or may require more supervision than expected. A performance improvement plan must be attached. Two or more I ratings require an overall rating of I. Score: 1.0 - 0 points

Ratings of Far Exceeds Expectations shall be given only in the Overall Performance Summary section. To receive an overall rating of F, the individual shall be rated as E on each of the individual performance factors. It is expected that few, if any, individuals will receive an overall rating of Far Exceeds Expectations. A description of the unique responsibilities and/or special projects, which are above and beyond the normal job duties and projects/assignments shall be provided in the Overall Performance Summary section.

DESCRIPTIVE RATING WORDS

EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS	MEETS EXPECTATIONS	IMPROVEMENT REQUIRED
higher	consistent	occasionally
extended	credible	now and then
increasingly	satisfactory	once in a while
further	expected	infrequently
auxiliary	reliable	sporadic
volunteers	responsible	irregular
beyond	typical	erratic
more than	usual	unreliable
frequently	regularly	irresponsible
additional	on target	sometimes
supplementary	customary	intermittently
above average	appropriate	deficient
superior	suitable	lacking
outstanding	standard	marginal
exemplary	normal	insufficient
		barely

IMPROVEMENT REQUIRED RATINGS AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLANS

The majority of individuals are expected to be rated as “meets expectations”. However, there will be individuals whose performance does not match this level. Any performance deficiencies must be clearly described. Should an individual be rated “improvement required” in one category, the highest overall rating the individual can receive is “meets expectations”. Should they be rated “improvement required” in more than one category, the overall rating must be “*improvement required*”. If an individual is given an “improvement required” rating (even in just one category), a performance improvement plan must be completed and attached to the appraisal form. Work together with the individual to develop specific definitions for the areas of improvement, clearly indicating the desired outcomes and the appropriate timelines for accomplishment of these goals. Performance must be brought up to a satisfactory level within the timeframes specified. Performance discussions must be held on at least a quarterly basis until the rating improves to “meets expectations”.

GOAL SETTING

To help provide employees with encouragement and direction for effective performance and career growth, the job duties will be used as a basic reference in addition to considering the personal development needs of the individual.

Remember that employee performance and growth goals are not "written in stone," they may be changed as either circumstances or job duties modifications occur. Performance and growth goals should be used to help employees determine the most appropriate ways to improve performance and enhance promotability, and they should contribute towards the overall goals of the Authority.

Your role during the appraisal is not just to discuss the past, but also to show the way ahead and indicate how you are going to support your employee. It is worth remembering that the person under review probably "shines" in certain parts of their work, and needs some "polishing" in others.

When discussing goals, it is useful to get the individual to volunteer what he/she thinks is needed to be done, and then get joint agreement on these points. With this method, their plans will be more realistic and likely to be carried out since the individual has concurred. The following questions should be addressed in the goal planning:

What Help is Needed?

Some employees may be reluctant to ask for assistance, and therefore supervisors face the problem of providing too little or too much direction. A solution to this dilemma is to ask the individual to specify in writing exactly what help he/she will need, and from whom (including yourself).

How Will Progress be Measured?

Results, performance characteristics, and goals occur at differing rates. Both you and the individual should determine the timeline for progress on these items. This will involve specifying as accurately as possible, and in measurable terms, the rate of progress toward a particular result or goal.

When Will Progress Be Reviewed?

At the time plans are approved, they should include specific milestones which delineate the timeline for accomplishment of the individual's goals and objectives for the year.

In developing the plan of action, encourage the individual to volunteer what he/she thinks needs to be done and devise a plan together, specifying what each of you will do to implement it. *Be as specific as possible.* State exactly what should be achieved and by when. Clearly indicate when and how you will be apprised of the ongoing progress toward the accomplishment of the individual's goals and objectives for the year.

THINGS TO ASK YOURSELF

- What is it that I want the individual to do? (GOALS)
- What specifically is the individual doing? (ACTUAL PERFORMANCE)
- Have I been specific and objective as opposed to being general or judgmental about exactly what I expect? (CLARITY OF DIRECTION)

CONDUCTING A PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL MEETING

Setting:

- Conduct the meeting in a *quiet comfortable* setting.
- Avoid *interruption - forward* phone calls.
- Remove *physical barriers* - don't have a desk between you and the individual.
- Be receptive to both the individual's *feelings* and *comments*.
- Use "*ice breaker*" conversation, if appropriate, to set a *relaxed tone* to the meeting.
- Be natural, don't try to "*play a role*".

Opening:

- Let the individual know in advance if you plan to take notes.
- Review position *expectations*.
- Advise the individual that discussions will be a comparison between *expectations* and *actual performance* (not a comparison with other employees).
- Review the individual's plan for *career growth*.

Discussion:

The key to conducting a positive and effective performance appraisal meeting is to use the classic interview technique of open-ended questions combined with three main principles:

- Maintain or enhance self-esteem
- Listen and respond with empathy
- Ask for help in solving any related problems.

TIPS ON GIVING FEEDBACK

BE POSITIVE

Cultivate an atmosphere of trust.

If the receiver doesn't trust the "messenger", the "message" will be discredited.

Consider the receiver's needs and receptiveness.

Everyone has a need to feel appreciated. Begin with positive feedback. Support what the receiver has done well, and then move to improvement areas if necessary. Choose the right time and approach so that the receiver will be as receptive as possible. Take into account the receiver's feelings when giving feedback.

Deal with behaviors that can be changed.

Frustration is increased when people are reminded of shortcomings they have no control over.

Be specific. Relate feedback directly to performance.

Describe behavior by quoting the receiver's words or describing actions, voice tone and body language.

Don't be judgmental. Describe behavior; do not judge it.

Feedback should be based on what you observed, not how you interpret or react to this behavior. You should be able to cite specific observed behaviors when delivering feedback.

Use "I" statements which describe how behaviors affect you.

By describing your own feelings or reactions, rather than using evaluative language, (i.e. wrong, right, good, bad) the receiver is not forced to react defensively.

<p><i>Focus on the here and now, not old feelings or events.</i></p> <p><i>Resist the temptation to bring up old baggage.</i></p>

Check for understanding.

Receivers often internalize feedback and react emotionally. Make sure your messages are not being misinterpreted. One way of doing this is to have the receiver try to rephrase the feedback to see if it corresponds to what you meant.

Aim to help, not hurt or punish.

When giving "negative" information, suggest ways that the receiver could perform better.

The performance appraisal dialogue process is a developmental one. Both parties should use the process to help them establish and achieve mutually rewarding goals.

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

Describing behaviors objectively can be difficult. One must separate one's opinions, hunches, judgments and feelings from the process of observing behavior. The giver of feedback must collect **objective, observable** behavior which must be separated from **judging** that behavior.

To ensure that performance feedback is truly an honest reflection of the individual's contribution, it is important to be aware of some barriers to effective feedback that could influence performance evaluations and hopefully avoid them.

Leniency

Leniency is a tendency to consistently rate employees using the high end of the rating scale, whether or not behavior and performance support such a rating.

Strictness

The opposite of leniency, strictness is the tendency to consistently rate employees using the low end of the rating scale/ or being too hard, with unrealistic standards.

Central Tendency

Central tendency is an inclination to consistently use the middle of the rating scale, or "play it safe."

Fixed Impressions

Acting on "fixed impressions" means retaining an early impression of the individual and evaluating the person based on prior feelings rather than present behaviors.

Inference

Inference is drawing conclusions about someone which are not based on actual observations, then evaluating the individual based on these conclusions rather than on observed behaviors.

Contrast/Similarity

Contrast/similarity is favoring employees who are similar to ourselves, giving a disadvantage to those who are different from us.

Primacy/Recency

Primacy/recency is basing your rating on only a few behaviors or events that happen at the beginning or the end of the performance feedback cycle, and not looking at the entire time period.

Stereotyping

Stereotyping is a tendency to let untested assumptions, hunches, and theories about people and personalities influence your ratings.

COMMON ERRORS TO AVOID

Some common errors committed during the performance appraisal review process are:

Sins of Commission

Sins of commission are committed by the:

- manager who uses data collected during preparation as if they were counsel for the prosecution.
- manager who sees the appraisal as a chance to settle points of discipline, not dealt with when they occurred. They see the meeting as the official opportunity to assert some discipline under the guise of appraisal.
- manager hell-bent on character assassination. The sort of manager who attacks personality rather than reviewing performance.

Sins of Omission

Sins of omission are committed by the:

- unprepared manager who hasn't done his/her homework and is therefore not in a position to effectively praise or comment on their employee's performance.
- unassertive managers who are not prepared to face up to problem areas with the individual.
- manager who doesn't allow the individual his/her chance to say anything.

During a Performance Appraisal Meeting Remember To:

Be Honest

Whether it means giving praise, constructive feedback, or documenting areas for improvement. The purpose of the appraisal is to encourage, motivate, build better skill levels, and improve employee's overall performance.

Be Thorough

Review each performance factor with the individual and ask him/her to explain their thoughts about their own performance in each area.

Listen Effectively

Summarize periodically. Ask clarifying questions and require feedback to assure understanding.

Highlight Agreement

Confirm points of agreement and discuss areas where disagreements exist using a performance, not personal, perspective.

DEALING WITH DIFFERENCES IN OPINION

You may occasionally encounter an employee who is displeased with or argumentative regarding their performance appraisal, process, or ratings. Two key elements for dealing with a difficult employee appraisal are:

1. The more argumentative the individual is likely to be, the more necessary it is:
 - A. to *prepare*
 - B. to *speak about the job, not him/her personally*
 - C. to *stick to the facts*
2. Don't disagree with their disagreement. It has all the makings of an argument. It is extremely important that:
 - A. they should understand the reason behind your view.
 - B. they should be given the opportunity to explain their *disagreement* (listen and respond with empathy).
 - C. they be *reassured* that the issue can be *resolved*, if they disagree.
 - D. your *viewpoint may change* if it appears to be unfounded.
 - E. your *assessment will stick* if it is *valid*.
 - F. they may *record disagreement* on their *appraisal form*.
 - G. they can then take up their *case* through *normal procedures*.

CONCLUSION OF THE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW

- Summarize what you have discussed and what steps have been mutually agreed upon.
- Reinforce the praise for work well done.
- Invite the individual to make any comments in the section provided. Both you and the individual should sign the appraisal form.
- If the individual disagrees with the appraisal and does not wish to sign it, advise him/her that their signature does not indicate agreement with the content, merely that they have reviewed it.
- Conclude the interview on a positive note.

CONDUCTING PROGRESS MEETINGS

- Meet periodically with the individual to review progress that has been made.

Discuss:

- ◆ changes in the description of major responsibilities
 - ◆ new or revised results measurements
 - ◆ adaptation of performance factors, or
 - ◆ the development of new special goals and projects
- Take notes at the progress review meeting, and file them in the departmental file. You may wish to give a copy of these notes to the individual to assure he/she feels they reflect what has been achieved; make revisions if necessary.