

PIMA COUNTY
**PERFORMANCE
MANAGEMENT
PROGRAM**

PLANS & APPRAISALS

Educational Guide

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM EDUCATIONAL GUIDE

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Section I: Purpose and Applicability

The Performance Management Program is designed to encourage employees to contribute to work results through cooperative endeavors, continuous learning and purposeful action in meeting client/customer needs. The program involves three phases:

1. Performance Plan
2. Progress Review(s)
3. Performance Appraisal

Instructions set forth in this educational guide are intended to provide both consistency in approach throughout the organization and flexibility within departments to tailor employee performance criteria to best reflect mission specific goals and objectives.

Employees covered under this Performance Management Program are those with employment type *Regular Classified (RC)* or *Trainee (TR)*. *Adult Trainees (AT)*, *Intermittent (IT)*, *Per Diem (PD)*, *Temporary (TM)*, and *Unclassified (U)* employees are not evaluated using this system.

Section II: General Definitions

Appraisal Cycle is the time frame during which an employee's performance is either directly observed or verified for the purpose of providing a formal rating of record. It is also the period of time an Appraisal Plan covers and a Performance Appraisal evaluates. The duration of a cycle may vary depending upon the type and scope of appraisal given. **The timely submission of required Performance Appraisals is expected.**

Performance Plan is an individualized written document citing expectations and other job-related goals and objectives to be accomplished during a specified appraisal cycle.

Performance Dimension is a critical work assignment, responsibility or result to be achieved and of such importance that any performance level below the threshold would require improvement.

Standard is a written description of a performance dimension threshold, requirement or expectation used as a measure of successful performance.

Narratives are brief written descriptions supporting performance ratings.

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Section III: Roles and Responsibilities

The (Covered) Employee is an employee covered under this Performance Management Program with an employment type *Regular Classified* (RC) or *Trainee* (TR).

The Employee

1. Participates in the Performance Plan meeting with the Rater and understands performance expectations, or requests clarification as needed.
2. Participates in progress review discussions.
3. Participates in the Performance Appraisal meeting with the Rater.
4. Provides written comments in response to appraisal ratings, if desired.

The Rater should be someone in the employee's chain-of-command with knowledge of his/her performance through direct observation or verification. The Rater is typically the employee's direct supervisor.

The Rater

1. Completes a Performance Plan and obtains verbal approval from the Reviewer prior to issuance.
2. Meets with the employee at the beginning of an appraisal cycle to review and discuss the Performance Plan.
3. Monitors the employee's performance throughout the appraisal cycle and ensures employee performance records are maintained for evaluation purposes.
4. Initiates progress review discussion(s) during the appraisal cycle.
5. Assists the employee during the appraisal cycle to improve aspects of performance.
6. Prepares the Performance Appraisal in accordance with required timelines, incorporating performance feedback, if solicited, acknowledging good performance and identifying areas requiring improvement as appropriate.
7. Obtains the Reviewer's verbal approval of the Appraisal prior to meeting with the employee.

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8. Meets with the employee to review and discuss the completed appraisal for the previous appraisal cycle and the new Performance Plan for the next appraisal cycle.
9. Holds the appraisal and plan until the employee appraisal response period of five (5) calendar days has elapsed, then submits both to the Reviewer for final signatures.
10. Assures plans and appraisals are correctly routed for final processing and filing.

The Reviewer is a top-ranking individual designated by the Appointing Authority to approve Performance Plans and Performance Appraisals for his or her functional area(s) of responsibility.

The Reviewer

1. Reviews and verbally approves Performance Plans to ensure job relatedness and consistency with individual, team or organizational goals and objectives prior to employee issuance.
2. Reviews and verbally approves performance appraisals prior to employee issuance.
3. Resolves disputes between the Rater and employee concerning Performance Appraisal ratings or Performance Plan content.
4. Reviews the final Performance Appraisal and Performance Plan after issuance for compliance purposes and provides final signatures.

The Appointing Authority is an Elected Official or Department Director designated by the County Administrator to take official personnel actions in accordance with Merit System Rules and Personnel Policies.

The Appointing Authority

1. Ensures the Performance Management Program, as administered within the department, conforms to the County's educational guidelines.
2. Ensures employees are informed of the program guidelines and their roles in the process.
3. Ensures management attends the required countywide Performance Management training on administering the program.

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4. Ensures Raters are provided guidance in developing position-specific dimensions.
5. Ensures Raters and Reviewers comply with the requirements of the program.
6. Provides a reconsideration of Performance Appraisal ratings upon request of the employee.

The Human Resources Director

1. Oversees the creation and implementation of the Performance Management Program.
2. Provides managers and supervisors with required training covering their responsibilities under the Performance Management Program.
3. Assures relevant training, coaching and technical assistance is provided to departments as needed.
4. Maintains official personnel files, which house employee Performance Appraisals.

Section IV: Performance Plan

1. General Provisions
 - a. For newly-hired (or newly promoted, demoted, reappointed, etc.) employees, a Performance Plan will be developed by the Rater, verbally approved by the Reviewer and issued during the employee's first week.
 - b. For established employees, a Performance Plan will be developed by the Rater, verbally approved by the Reviewer and issued, typically, immediately following issuance of a Performance Appraisal during the employee's anniversary month.
 - c. All Covered Employees must work under a Performance Plan for a minimum of ninety (90) calendar days prior to receiving a Performance Appraisal. One exception may be when an employee's annual evaluation is tied to a pay increase approved by the Board of Supervisors during the budget cycle and becomes effective on the employee's anniversary date.
 - d. A copy of the issued and Reviewer signed Performance Plan is given to the employee. The original is maintained in the department personnel file. No copy is sent to the Human Resources Department.

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2. Instructions for Completing a Performance Plan

The Performance Plan document consists of three parts: **Staff Development Opportunities, Performance Improvements** and **Customized Performance Dimensions** (reference Appendix 'A').

Staff-Development Opportunities (Part 1). Employees may receive one or more staff-development opportunities commensurate with needs of the department, service to the public, skill level of the employee and available funding. Such opportunities may include classroom or on-the-job training, job enrichment or cross-training opportunities and other self-paced or group activities (e.g., reading books and journals, self-paced or interactive media training, computer courses, conference attendance, speakers at staff meetings, etc.). If Staff-Development Opportunities are not assigned, indicate "NONE" in the first open field.

Performance Improvements (Part 2). Performance issues cited in the employee's current appraisal should be listed, along with expectations for correction during the next appraisal cycle. If there are no performance issues, indicate "NONE" in the narrative section.

Customized Performance Dimensions (Part 3). All employees receive 3-5 job-related performance dimensions that will be used to evaluate the type of work they are expected to accomplish during a given appraisal cycle. Two types of performance dimensions are described below and can be used alone or in conjunction.

- (a) General Workforce Dimensions are generic in nature and typically describe job-related qualifications used to measure performance (e.g., communication skills, initiative, planning & organization, etc.). A number of these qualifications are listed in Appendix 'B'. Items selected from this list must be used in their entirety with no modifications or substitutions permissible.
- (b) Position-Specific Dimensions are less generic in nature and are tied directly to functional areas of responsibility (record keeping, training, maintenance and repair of equipment, etc.). They are developed by the Rater with approval of the Reviewer and should follow the format used in Appendix 'C'. Technical assistance is available through the County's Training Officer.

For each customized performance dimension selected for the Performance Plan, the appropriate box is marked to indicate whether it is new or a carry over from the previous plan. This helps track changes in job assignments and responsibilities, as well as

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monitor self-development and improvements. There should be 3-5 performance dimensions on every Performance Plan.

3. Amendments

The Performance Plan may be amended by the Rater (with approval of the Reviewer) at any time during the appraisal cycle. This would be especially appropriate during times involving unforeseen circumstances that may significantly alter job duties or responsibilities. Employees must be given a copy of the amended plan along with an opportunity to work under it for a minimum of ninety (90) calendar days whenever new performance dimensions are added.

4. Progress Review Discussions

Progress Review Discussions between the Rater and the employee should occur at least once during the appraisal cycle. The purpose of these discussions is to provide the employee with feedback on the status of his or her performance. It also provides an opportunity to discuss any revisions to the Performance Plan.

5. Disputes

Disputes between the Rater and the employee over the contents of the Performance Plan are referred to the Reviewer as the final decision maker. If an employee refuses to discuss the Performance Plan with the Rater, it should be so noted on the plan.

Section V: Performance Appraisal

1. Appraisal Cycles

- *Annual Performance Appraisals* are typically required by the end of the month in which the employee's anniversary falls unless an adjustment has been made to accommodate the minimum 90-day Performance Plan requirement.
- *Mid-Probation Performance Appraisals* are required at the mid-point of the probationary period.
- *Trainee Program Performance Appraisals* are required at the mid-point of the training period.

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- *Optional Performance Appraisals* are permissible with Appointing Authority approval. For example, various closeout appraisals may be desired (i.e., at the end of a long-term detail or successful completion of a probationary period, when a Rating Official leaves, when an employee accepts another position within the County system, etc.). It is not recommended that an employee receive a Performance Appraisal upon leaving County employment for any reason.

2. Documents

Documents that may be utilized and/or considered during appraisal preparation are:

- Performance Plan (required)
- Performance related documents for evaluation purposes, including but not limited to:
 - Disciplinary Actions
 - Letters of Commendation

3. General Provisions

- a. Employees must work under a Performance Plan for a minimum of ninety (90) calendar days and as a result their typical appraisal dates may have to be adjusted to meet this requirement. This includes an employee on an approved leave of absence. (If the employee is serving any type of probation while on leave, the probationary period shall also be adjusted to coincide with the number of hours of leave used pursuant to Merit System Rule 10.1.B.). One exception to the 90-day minimum may be when an employee's annual evaluation is tied to a pay increase approved by the Board of Supervisors during the budget process and effective on the employee's anniversary date.
- b. The Rater will consider the employee's performance during the entire appraisal cycle, including feedback solicited from appropriate sources (e.g., customer surveys, etc.).
- c. When an employee changes positions during the appraisal cycle, the Rater for the new position shall prepare the upcoming Performance Appraisal after the employee has been on his/her Performance Plan for the new position a minimum of ninety (90) calendar days.
- d. If the Rater is new and has not observed an employee's performance for more than ninety (90) calendar days, the Rater's supervisor shall prepare the

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Performance Appraisal. If that individual normally acts in the capacity of Reviewer, he or she will fulfill both roles in this instance.

- e. All ratings and narratives must have prior verbal approval of the Reviewer before the Performance Appraisal is discussed with the employee. If the Rater and Reviewer do not agree, the Reviewer will make the final determination.
- f. A copy of the signed Performance Appraisal is given to the employee with a second copy placed in the department personnel file. The original appraisal is sent to Human Resources for inclusion in the employee's official personnel file. Written employee comments not submitted within five (5) calendar days of issuance of the Performance Appraisal and attached to the appraisal at the time of submission will be returned to the employee.

4. Instructions for Completing a Performance Appraisal

The appraisal form contains three performance categories: **Organizational Conduct**, **Customized Performance** and **Leadership** (see Appendix 'D').

- a. **Organizational Conduct** (Part 1). All employees are rated on three (3) standardized performance dimensions listed in this section of the appraisal.
- b. **Customized Performance** (Part 2). All employees are rated on the 3-5 performance dimensions listed in Part 3 of their current Performance Plan that are transferred into this section of the appraisal.
- c. **Leadership** (Part 3). Only Managers and Supervisors are rated on three (3) standardized leadership dimensions listed in this category. Indicate "NOT RATED" in the narrative section for all other employees.
- d. A four-tiered system is utilized to rate performance in the various dimensions listed within each performance category. Rating levels are 'Surpasses,' 'Successful,' 'Inconsistent' and 'Unacceptable.'
 - **Surpasses** is a non-numerical rating that reflects exceptional performance.
 - **Successful** is a non-numerical rating that signifies thoroughly acceptable performance.
 - **Inconsistent** is a non-numerical rating that signifies marginal performance.

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- **Unacceptable** is a non-numerical rating that signifies undesirable performance requiring improvement.
- e. To determine the appropriate rating level for a performance dimension, the Rater should weigh how well the employee's performance aligns with the standards listed.
- (1) Consider that every standard does not have to be met by the employee in absolute terms. The overall contribution of the employee's performance should, in the Rater's judgment (through direct observation or verification), carry greater weight if the desired outcome for that specific performance dimension was achieved.
 - (2) Occasionally, a Rater may determine that the employee's performance is marginal or inconsistent and more difficult to weigh. For example, the employee may have performed well on some standards and seriously below expectations on others. In such cases, the Rater should consider how frequently the marginal performance occurred and its impact on the successful achievement of that dimension.
- f. Brief narratives are required for each of the performance categories rated. They should be clearly written and supported by examples. An area for optional Rater summary comments is provided on the signature page (Part 4) of the appraisal.

5. Performance Appraisal Discussion

- a. The Rater shall discuss the verbally pre-approved appraisal with the employee. Following the discussion, the Rater and the employee sign the appraisal to indicate it was reviewed. The employee may elect, if planning to submit a written response to the appraisal, to take up to five (5) calendar days to sign the appraisal. If the employee declines to sign, a third party should witness the refusal and indicate so on the form.
- b. Employees may submit a written response to the appraisal within five (5) calendar days of issuance. The response is made either in the space provided on the appraisal form or on a separate, attached sheet, so long as it is typewritten or legibly handwritten. No other documentation will be accepted. No other attachments are permitted. Comments submitted after the five (5) calendar day period has elapsed will be returned to the employee. It is advisable to wait until the five (5) calendar day employee response period has elapsed to proceed to the next item (V.5.c).

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- c. The signed appraisal and accompanying Performance Plan for the next appraisal cycle are submitted to the Reviewer for final review and signatures.

6. Reconsideration

An employee may request a reconsideration of appraisal ratings from the Appointing Authority within the same five (5) calendar days cited in item V.5.b above, using their written response as justification. The Appointing Authority should provide the employee with a final decision within five (5) calendar days of receipt of the request. Neither the Performance Plan nor the Performance Appraisal may be grieved.

Section VI: Relationship of Performance Appraisal to Personnel Actions

1. Legal Considerations

- a. *Discrimination Laws* (both federal and state) require that all employment actions, including Performance Appraisals, be non-discriminatory. Language in the appraisal that suggests the performance of an employee is the direct result of that individual's membership in, or affiliation with, a protected group (e.g., race, color, creed, religion, national origin, age, disability, gender or sexual orientation) or a protected activity (e.g., approved leaves of absence, etc.) is prohibited.
- b. *Job Duty Relationship* falls under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which prohibits an employer from discriminating against a qualified person with a recognized disability who can perform the essential duties of the job with or without accommodation. No reference to an employee's known or perceived disability in the Performance Appraisal is allowed.
- c. *Employment-At-Will* related to employees serving initial probation or new-hire trainees means that they may be terminated at any time without the right of appeal. Since these employees receive mid-point Performance Appraisals, the Rater should refrain from using statements that either suggest or imply continued employment.
- d. *Fair Labor Standards Act* (FLSA) is a set of federal guidelines that governs compensation issues for eligible employees, including overtime pay. Any reference to volunteer work as a means of correcting poor performance is prohibited.
- e. *Defamation* can occur if the language used in the Performance Appraisal includes personal opinions about an individual's beliefs or lifestyle. Written narratives should be job-related, objectively stated and avoid subjective or hearsay comments.

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2. Disciplinary Actions

The Performance Management Program is not part of the County's disciplinary process and shall not be used as a substitute for it. However, the Rater should not ignore serious disciplinary problems that occurred during the appraisal cycle. Such issues should be documented by identifying the inappropriate performance that occurred (i.e., failure to wear safety shoes) without referencing the actual discipline taken (i.e., a Letter of Counseling). The descriptions provide the necessary link between past performance and possible future actions requiring more stringent discipline, without causing duplicity of purpose.

Employees may receive a Performance Appraisal and be placed on Special Observation simultaneously. The Special Observation period is a non-disciplinary action that offers an opportunity for the department to closely monitor the employee's performance, providing guidance and feedback as needed. At the end of the Special Observation period the Rater is required to complete an appraisal addressing only the employee's progress in those areas outlined in the official Notice of Special Observation.

3. Recognition

Recognition is used to acknowledge employees for their achievements and contributions. Although it should not be the sole means used, the Performance Appraisal provides one method for conveying appreciation and recognition. Monetary recognition granted for this purpose and related criteria used to determine employee eligibility are set by the Board of Supervisors at the time the funding is approved.