

Public Health Competency Based Employee Performance Management: A Guidebook For Managers and Employees

**Public Health Competency Based Employee Performance Management Toolkit
OPHA & Partners, Version 2 (2010)**



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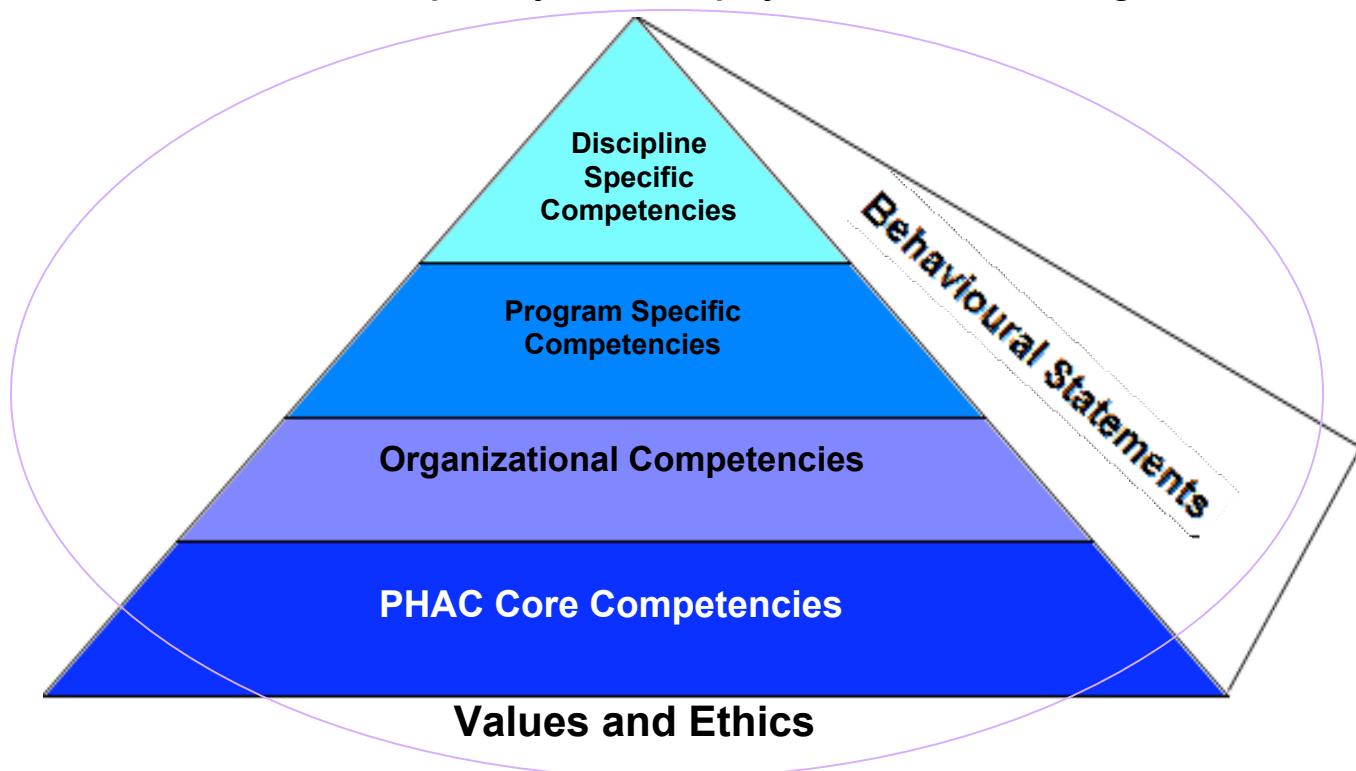
Introduction

The Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada (Release 1.0)(Core Competencies) have been identified for individuals with training in public health including front line providers, consultants/specialists and managers/supervisors. The core competencies describe the essential knowledge, skills or other attitudes necessary for the practice of public health.

The **Public Health Employee Performance Management Competencies**, (Competencies) with associated behavioural statements, have been developed to give specific examples of how an employee can demonstrate the behaviours associated with each of the Core Competencies for the purpose of performance management.

The Competencies are only one component of Public Health Competency Based Employee Performance Management. Other competencies specific to an organization, program or discipline should be considered when assessing performance. For the purpose of this framework and the accompanying tools, the focus will be exclusively on the **Public Health Employee Performance Management Competencies**, with the capacity to include other specific competencies as required on an individual basis.

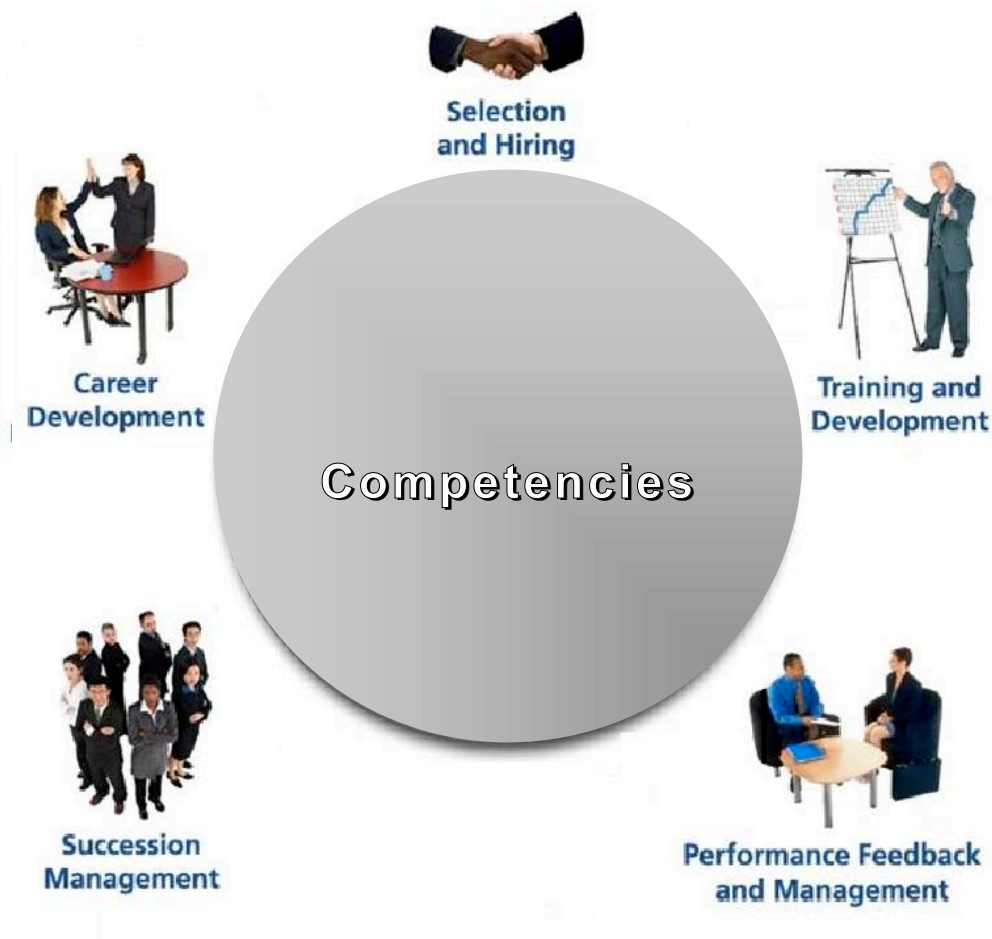
Public Health Competency Based Employee Performance Management



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Framework

The objective of the framework is to provide a clear, efficient, flexible, public health competency based employee performance management model for assessing employees against the **Public Health Employee Performance Management Competencies**. This framework can be adopted as is, or customized to meet the unique needs of the various public health units that have not yet developed their own model. In addition to this framework, several tools have been developed to facilitate the performance management process and are described further on.

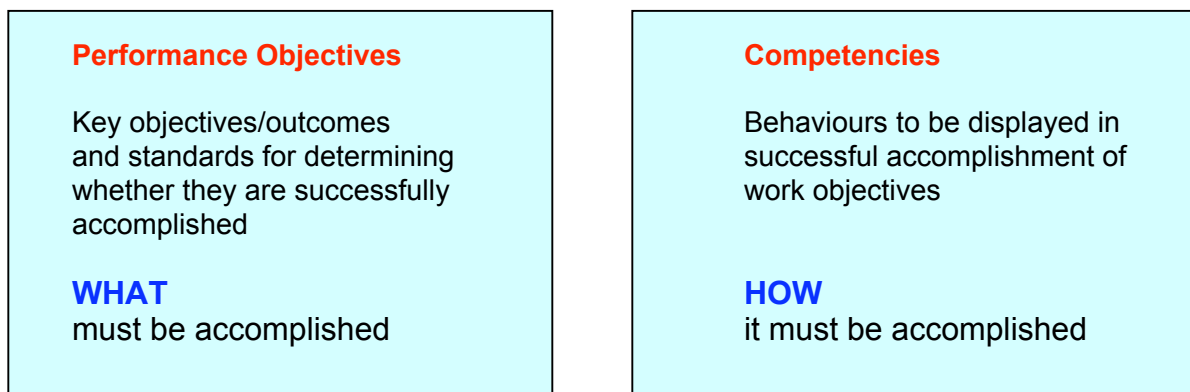


Competency based employee performance management is a cycle of managing employee performance for success where objectives are developed, competencies are incorporated and constructive feedback is provided for continuous improvement.

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Integrating competencies

Integrating competencies within the performance management process provides feedback not only on “WHAT” was accomplished (i.e., performance objectives within the scope of any given job), but also “HOW” the work was performed, using behavioural statements as a basis for providing feedback. Assessing competencies as a part of the performance management process is an important means of helping people understand performance expectations. A competency based performance management process includes both performance objectives and competencies.



Benefits of a competency based performance management process

An effective competency based performance management process:

- creates a high performance organization and profession
- establishes a clear link between organizational and individual objectives
- encourages ongoing communication through coaching and meaningful feedback to employees
- encourages discussion and development of competencies through learning
- recognizes exemplary performance and accomplishments

Competencies are defined as observable knowledge, skills, abilities, motivations or traits defined in terms of the behaviours needed for successful practice of public health.

Public Health Employee Performance Management Competencies

The Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) and its project partners developed competencies with behavioural statements that enable the Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada (Release 1.0) to be used in employee performance management. (Visit: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ccph-cesp/pdfs/cc-manual-eng090407.pdf> for more information on these core competencies.) The result of this work is a set of eight **Public Health Employee Performance Management Competencies**, adapted from the Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada, (Release 1.0) as follows:

1. Public Health Sciences
2. Assessment and Analysis
3. Policy and Program Planning, Implementation and Evaluation
4. Partnerships, Collaboration and Advocacy
5. Diversity and Inclusiveness
6. Communication
7. Leadership
8. Ethics and Professionalism

The **Public Health Employee Performance Management Competencies** are only one component of Competency Based Performance Management. Other competencies specific to an organization, program or discipline should be considered when assessing performance.

Competency structure

Competencies include the following information:

- **A competency name:** Is the same as the Public Health Agency of Canada with the exception of an additional competency called Ethics and Professionalism
- **A definition:** Provides a general understanding of the type of behaviour addressed using the Public Health Agency of Canada's definitions
- **A proficiency scale:** Defines the standards of performance for the competency at four proficiency levels. Proficiency levels are incremental and cumulative.

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- **A behavioural statement:** Illustrates the expected behaviours for each proficiency level that describe examples of successful performance indicators. They are examples only, not an exhaustive or mandatory list and are meant to provide guidance in determining the expected level of successful job performance. The behavioural statements give you an understanding of the differences in expected behaviours as proficiency levels increase in complexity and scope.

An example competency is shown below.

Competency Name

Definition

Policy and Program Planning, Implementation and Evaluation This category describes the core competencies needed to effectively choose options, and to plan, implement and evaluate policies and/or programs in public health. This includes the management of incidents such as outbreaks and emergencies.				
	Level 1: Demonstrates introductory understanding of public health policies and programs	Level 2: Conducts basic program planning and evaluation with assistance	Level 3: Independently designs programs and policies, identifying necessary actions and resources required for implementation	Level 4: Guides other professionals in policy and program development and conducts risk assessments
INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates awareness of key public health policies and programs in legislation, regulations, and risk management frameworks, • Demonstrates general understanding of how policies and programs are developed, implemented and evaluated • Monitors the quality and timeliness of ones own work in line with program goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies knowledge and evidence in public health sciences to assist with program design and development • Follows the action steps and standards • Suggests amendments to improve the effectiveness of programs and policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans and designs programs and develops policies to address specific public health issues • Develops implementation plans that take into account relevant legislation, risk management frameworks, and policies • Secures and allocates program resources and ensures coordination of resources during program implementation • Establishes procedures and standards for evaluating the effectiveness of programs and policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversees multiple program or policy implementation initiatives in the public health domain • Conducts comprehensive risk assessments for program or policy implementation and develops a contingency plan to mitigate the risk identified • Supervises other involved in planning, implementing and evaluating policies or programs

Proficiency Scale

Behavioural Statement

The following **Public Health Employee Performance Management Competency Summary Chart** provides a short summary of the eight Competencies and their proficiency level descriptors.

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Public Health Employee Performance Management Competency Summary Chart

The following chart is a summary of the eight Public Health Employee Performance Management Competencies and their proficiency level descriptors.

Competency	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<p>Public Health Sciences and Professional and/or Technical Knowledge</p> <p>This category includes key knowledge and critical thinking skills related to the public health sciences and technical knowledge: behavioural and social sciences, biostatistics, epidemiology, environmental public health, demography, workplace health, and the prevention of chronic diseases, infectious diseases, psychosocial problems and injuries. Competency in this category requires the ability to apply knowledge in practice.</p>	Demonstrates introductory understanding and ability and, with guidance, applies public health sciences and/or other technical knowledge in a few, simple situations.	Demonstrates basic knowledge and ability and, with guidance, can apply public health sciences and/or other technical knowledge in common situations that present limited difficulties.	Demonstrates advanced knowledge and ability, and can apply public health science and/or other technical knowledge in new or complex situations. Guides other professionals.	Is recognised as an expert and develops new approaches, methods or policies in relation to developing knowledge of public health sciences and other technical knowledge.
<p>Assessment and Analysis</p> <p>This category describes the core competencies needed to collect, assess, analyze and apply information (including data, facts, concepts and theories). This competency requires that a person make evidence-based decisions, prepare budgets and reports, conduct investigations and make recommendations for policy and program development.</p>	Processes complex information.	Integrates and interprets broad and complex information.	Identifies and handles ambiguity.	Formulates broad strategies on multi-dimensional strategic issues.
<p>Policy and Program Planning, Implementation and Evaluation</p> <p>This category describes the core competencies needed to effectively choose options, and to plan, implement and evaluate policies, programs and/or process systems in public health and other professional areas. This includes the management of incidents such as outbreaks, emergencies and other process systems.</p>	Demonstrates introductory understanding of public health and other policies and programs	Conducts basic program planning and evaluation with assistance	Independently designs programs and policies, identifying necessary actions and resources required for implementation	Guides other professionals in policy and program development and conducts risk assessments

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Summary Chart (continued)

<p>Partnerships, Collaboration and Advocacy</p> <p>This category captures the competencies required to influence and work with others to improve the health and well-being of the public through the pursuit of a common goal. Partnership and collaboration optimizes performance through shared resources and responsibilities. Advocacy (speaking, writing or acting in favour of a particular cause, policy or group of people) often aims to reduce inequities in health status or access to health services.</p>	Operates effectively within partnerships	Manages existing partnerships	Seeks partnership opportunities	Facilitates partnerships
<p>Diversity and Inclusiveness</p> <p>This category identifies the socio-cultural competencies required to interact effectively with diverse individuals, groups and communities. It is the personification of attitudes and practices that result in inclusive behaviours, practices, programs and policies.</p>	Respects Diversity	Creates an Inclusive environment	Embraces diversity and builds needs of others into plans	Drives diversity within the organization and surrounding community
<p>Communication</p> <p>Involves an interchange of ideas, opinions and information. This category addresses numerous dimensions of communication including internal and external exchanges; written, verbal, non-verbal and listening skills; computer literacy; providing appropriate information to different audiences; working with the media and social marketing techniques.</p>	Listens and clearly presents information	Fosters two-way communication	Adapts communication	Communicates complex messages
<p>Leadership</p> <p>This category focuses on leadership competencies that build capacity, improve performance and enhance the quality of the working environment. They also enable organizations and communities to create, communicate and apply shared visions, missions and values.</p>	Meets organization's fundamental needs	Facilitates achievement of results	Builds strong teams	Empowers team members
<p>Ethics and Professionalism</p> <p>Is the ability to demonstrate and support organizational ethics and values and adhere to professional codes of conduct to manage self, others, information and resources.</p>	Demonstrates the organization's ethics and values.	Proactively identifies ethical implications	Promotes the organization's ethics and values	Inspires others through ethical leadership

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Main Roles in Public Health

In addition to the Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada (Release 1.0), the Public Health Agency of Canada identified three main roles to which they would apply:

Front line provider: Public health staff who have post-secondary education and/or experience in the field of public health. Front line providers have sufficient relevant experience to work independently, with minimal supervision. Front line providers carry out the bulk of day-to-day tasks in the public health sector. They work directly with clients, including individuals, families, groups and communities. Responsibilities may include information collection and analysis, fieldwork, program planning, outreach activities, program and service delivery, and other organizational tasks. Examples of front line providers are public health nurses, public health/environmental health inspectors, public health dietitians, dental hygienists and health promoters.

Consultant/specialist: Consultants/specialists are public health staff who are likely to have advanced preparation in a special content area or a specific set of skills. They provide expert advice and support to front line providers and managers although they may also work directly with clients. Examples of consultants/specialists include epidemiologists, community medicine specialists, environmental health scientists, evaluators, nurse practitioners and advanced practice nurses.

Manager/supervisor: Public health staff who are responsible for major programs or functions. Typically, they have staff who report to them. Sometimes senior managers come from sectors other than public health and therefore rely heavily on consultants/specialists and other public health professionals for content expertise and advice. In other situations, managers with public health experience and qualifications are expected to bring more content knowledge.

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Competency Profiles

To enable organizations to use the adapted competencies for performance management, **Public Health Employee Performance Management Competency Profiles** (Competency Profiles) were developed for the three Main Roles in Public Health through a review of representative job descriptions and input from subject matter experts. The Competency Profiles aim to identify the relevant proficiency levels required for successful performance in the role for each of the competencies listed.

It is important to note that the profiles are generic examples to be used as guidelines when determining the competency profile for a specific job in a given organization. The profiles do not reflect the differences between jobs within each role, or the variances found in organizations, programs or disciplines. Therefore the profiles should be reviewed and adapted as necessary before use.

The numbers in the following profile grid represent the proficiency levels identified for each of the **Public Health Employee Performance Management Competencies**. Some competencies have been identified as needing a range of proficiency in that role. The relevant level for the job should be selected by reviewing the job requirements in the job description.

Refer to Step 7 of the Implementation Strategy, “**Validate Competency Profiles**”, found in the Leaders’ Guide for more detailed information on competency profiling.

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Competency Profiles Chart

Competencies	Front Line Provider	Consultant / Specialist	Manager / Supervisor
Public Health Sciences	3	3	3-4
Assessment and Analysis	2-3	3-4	3-4
Policy and Program Planning, Implementation and Evaluation	2	2-3	4
Partnerships, Collaboration and Advocacy	2-3	4	3-4
Diversity and Inclusiveness	3	3	3-4
Communication	3-4	3-4	3-4
Leadership	2	3	3-4
Ethics and Professionalism	3	3	3-4

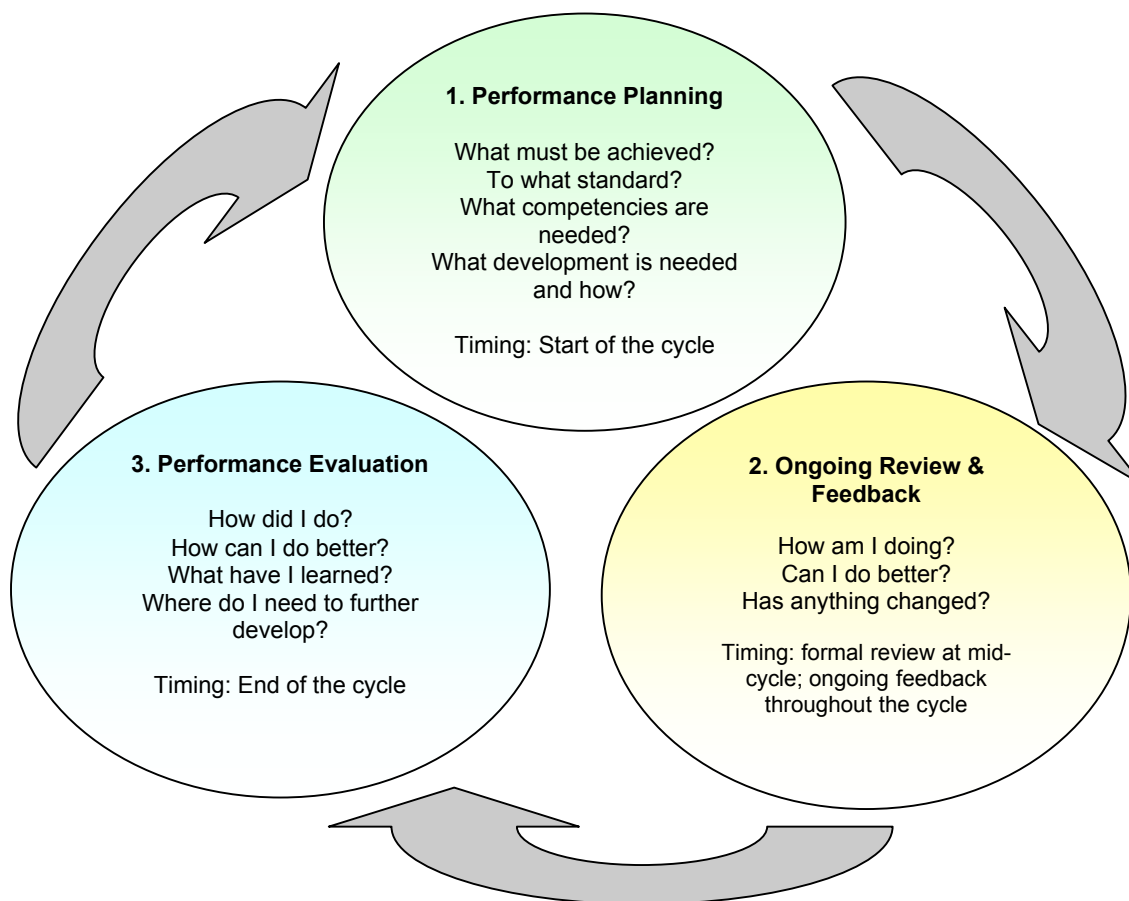
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Performance Management Process

The profiles for the three Main Roles in Public Health and their competencies are considered throughout the performance management process, which generally includes the following three stages during a one-year cycle:

1. **Performance Planning:** where objectives for performance and competencies are set for individual employees and plans for learning and development are identified;
2. **On-going Review and Feedback:** where the manager monitors performance and provides ongoing feedback to ensure that the individual is on track and to adjust plans as required; and
3. **Performance Evaluation:** where the individual is assessed on how well they have done relative to the objectives and competencies.

These elements of performance management form a cycle of ongoing planning, review and evaluation. The following diagram shows the types of questions an organization and/or an employee would ask at each of the stages:



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The Public Health Competency Based Employee Performance Management Checklist (Checklist) is a tool developed to assist in the process. It provides a step-by-step guide including reference to the various other tools to be used throughout the cycle. Refer to the Checklist at each stage for instructions for both the manager and employee, including how to complete the **Public Health Competency Based Employee Performance Management Planning and Evaluation Tool** (Planning and Evaluation Tool).

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Stage 1: Planning for Performance

At the performance planning stage, the manager and employee will agree upon the competency profile for the employee's position, set key performance objectives and create a learning and development plan.

Competency profile review

It is important to understand that the suggested competency profile for a given role is useful as a starting point but may not accurately represent the competencies required for the position being evaluated. In some cases, the competencies in the proposed profiles have a range of proficiency levels per competency. The manager and employee are encouraged to review the competency profile during the planning stage to determine which of the competencies and proficiency levels are relevant. In addition, other competencies may be added to the profile. These may include competencies specific to the organization, program or discipline.

Keep in mind that a competency profile would only include the critical competencies required to perform the job successfully.

At the planning stage, the expected proficiency level for each of the eight Competencies will be agreed upon.

Setting performance objectives

The performance planning stage offers an opportunity for one on one objective setting between the manager and employee, based on work objectives that are aligned with organizational goals. **A performance objective is an indicator of effective work performance i.e. what is expected to be achieved on the job.** It identifies the knowledge, skill, specific task, or attitude the employee should demonstrate over the course of the performance cycle. In addition to establishing a clear link between organizational goals and individual action plans, this fosters ongoing, open communication concerning expectations and employee needs.

Setting objectives the SMART way

Setting objectives the **SMART** way means writing them so that they are:

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Specific: Specific objectives are clear to both employee and manager. Clarity has been achieved when both share the same understanding of what is to be achieved and what standards will be used to evaluate performance.

Measurable: The objectives and standards must be able to be objectively observed and measured.

Achievable: The objectives are attainable and still provide a stimulating challenge to the employee.

Realistic: The objectives are within the realm of control (both in terms of authority and resources) of the employee to perform and the manager to observe.

Time Specific: Objectives with a deadline are much more likely to be accomplished than objectives without a clearly defined timeline.

Beyond SMART: Other criteria for setting performance objectives

Relevancy: The objectives are relevant to the job in question. An objective could be SMART without necessarily addressing the contribution that a job should or could bring to the business.

Acceptance: The objectives need to be acceptable to the manager and, especially, to the employee. In determining if an objective is acceptable, the manager needs to evaluate how a particular objective will assist him/her in reaching team goals, how the objective will affect the manager's performance, and how it will impact with the employee's confidence and/or perceptions.

Other considerations when planning performance

Setting performance objectives can be difficult especially when there is no precedent and/or the job or position is new to either the manager or employee. To get started, imagine how a fully functional employee would operate. Try to think about how this employee would behave in a particular situation. Concentrate on the job itself and the desired results. Finally, develop the objectives together.

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Although there is no magic formula to increase the acceptability of objectives, employee participation at every phase of the performance management process is helpful.

Key indicators: Incorporating competencies

Incorporating both competencies and objectives into performance management may be a new approach for the manager and employee or the organization; therefore it is important to understand how the two integrate. As mentioned at the beginning of this guidebook, performance objectives are typically considered to be the “WHAT” of the job, e.g. the tasks that must be accomplished. Competencies on the other hand, are the “HOW” of the job and describe the behaviours that should be demonstrated in order to achieve the work objectives. Key indicators for each performance objective should be included to describe how competencies will be demonstrated.

There may not be a unique competency associated with each objective. Many competencies can be required to achieve just one objective, or vice versa; one competency may apply to many objectives. Therefore, you should consider the application of competencies to performance management as a holistic approach, where the competencies included in the evaluation are those behaviours that are needed to perform the duties of the job and achieve the objectives identified overall.

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Creating a learning plan

Investing in employees by fine tuning their competencies and actively addressing problem areas is a good management practice. It would be counterproductive to have hired quality, skilled employees, without developing their skills to improve their performance on the job. Learning not only contributes to individual employee development and job satisfaction, but also ensures that work product is of the highest quality and that the organization remains a stimulating and creative place to work.

A personal learning plan is an agreement between a manager and an employee that enables the employee to acquire or develop the skills and competencies needed for the job. It is a commitment to carry out specific actions in support of employee learning and is a key component of the performance management process including career development and succession planning.

If this is the first year a performance review has been conducted, the manager and the employee may not yet be able to identify any learning and development needs at this stage. They may have an initial discussion about what these needs might be based on and/or the employee's own developmental concerns.

If this is not the first year a performance review has been conducted, the manager and the employee will confirm the learning and development needs identified at the end of the previous cycle.

Completing the learning and development plan

A learning and development plan includes the following elements:

Learning Objective: What is required or desired to be learned, or what competencies are needed or desired to be developed by the employee. **A learning objective is a specific, measurable statement of the skill or action the employee will be able to perform as a result of the learning activity.** The objective should be expressed using action words such as “explain”, “describe”, “conduct”, or “negotiate”. Write SMART objectives. Describe how this objective will relate to the employee's current job, competency development or career aspirations.

Action plan/development activities: The steps to be taken to achieve the objectives. Each activity should have an expected completion date.

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Types of developmental activities or actions that can be used include:

- Practical on-the-job experience (joining a committee or project team)
- Coaching/mentoring sessions
- Special assignments (cross-functional team, task-force)
- Increased responsibility
- Self-directed study or reading
- Training
- Job transitions – change in work, people, location, scope

Rationale: Why develop this skill, ability or knowledge? Look at past performance to identify strengths and areas for development.

Resource strategies: A list of resources required to meet the objective and include how they will be obtained.

Barriers: A list of barriers that may interfere in the achievement of the learning objectives and how they will be addressed.

Useful documents for performance planning

- Strategic and business plans
- Organization/program objectives
- Employee job description
- Previous year's performance evaluation and learning plan
- Organizational guidelines/policies for learning and development

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Stage 2: Providing Ongoing Feedback

Throughout the performance management cycle, the manager and employee will meet to review progress in achieving performance objectives.

Performance management is a dynamic process. Progress on objectives must be monitored formally at specific times of the year and with informal continual, appropriate feedback, and discussion throughout the year. When providing ongoing feedback, the manager reviews employee strengths and weaknesses, and provides feedback and coaching on ways to improve performance. The manager and the employee review objectives and modify them as necessary.

Both the manager and employee need to keep track of the objectives and verify whether expectations are being met. Two-way communication ensures that there are no surprises at the formal evaluation stage and contributes to making the management of performance a positive and enriching experience.

Throughout the year, feedback on performance can come from many sources, such as the work itself, the employee, the manager, clients, as well as other employees involved in the same work. Regular discussions on the employee's progress are vital to keeping the work on track. These discussions are a systematic way to determine whether the plans and methods to achieve objectives are working as intended. They are also required because changes may have occurred that affect the employee's ability to achieve the original objectives, possibly resulting in an adjustment to the employee's plan (e.g. budget changes, a change in organizational priorities, etc.).

A formal progress review is scheduled mid-cycle to determine:

- The status of the work in progress
- What needs revision
- What should be maintained
- What can be improved and how to improve it
- The employee's performance to date

A formal review may also be conducted as required throughout the cycle, for example when the manager or employee changes jobs or at the end of a key milestone.

Informal feedback is not necessarily planned, is more spontaneous, and occurs preferably right after the manager makes an observation or becomes aware of an action deserving feedback. It is meant to reinforce desirable behaviours, and to modify unwanted behaviours or to provide pointers on how to improve performance.

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How and when to document performance feedback

Throughout the year, whenever the manager gives formal or informal feedback, they are wise to take notes on the observations leading to the performance feedback, the feedback itself, and the employee's input or reactions to the feedback. This feedback will be related to the performance objectives and competency proficiencies agreed to and identified by the manager and employee. This will enhance the employee's confidence in the accuracy of the performance evaluation and will foster trust in the performance management process.

The manager should keep a log for each employee, documenting notes as soon as possible following the observation (from the manager or others) of good or poor performance. When taking performance notes, it is important to identify the date, situation, the behaviour and the consequence or result of the behaviour. The manager should avoid writing about feelings that the behaviour invoked, attributing intentions that have not been validated with the employee, or labelling, characterizing or categorizing the employee in any way. With these notes in hand, the formal process of performance review and evaluation will become much less of a guessing game and more of a review of performance information sampled throughout the year.

Although rigorous, this process need not and should not lead to an unduly onerous administrative chore. Concise sentences in bullet point format often suffice in accurately describing a situation, the behaviour and its result.

Providing effective feedback

There are several keys to providing effective performance feedback. Effective feedback is immediate, specific and positive and is aimed at improving performance. Effective feedback occurs on a continual basis to ensure that the lines of communication between the manager and employee are always open.

- **Immediate:** Employees receive timely recognition for work well done and suggestions for improvement for performance that does not meet expectations. Above and beyond the formal reviews and the final evaluation meeting, the manager regularly feeds back performance information.
- **Positive and constructive:** Positive feedback is given for significant accomplishments and work well done. Constructive feedback is provided for performance that does not meet expectations. This feedback is delivered in a direct and non-judgmental way, suggesting ways the employee can improve their performance.

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- **Specific:** Employees receive specific information about how they are or are not meeting expectations. The feedback pinpoints behaviours for commendation or needing improvement so that the employee knows exactly what to do to enhance performance.

Often, the very fact that the manager is spending time with the employee to discuss their work is encouraging in itself. Employees generally like to know how they are doing and that their manager is observing their work. Most employees will also be motivated by a sense of autonomy that comes when they feel responsible for achieving a result rather than just carrying out a task. In addition, the manager can build trust by keeping their commitments and helping the employee reach their objectives. This effort can go a long way in bolstering the reputation of the performance management process as a real and effective HR tool. While these principles hold true for most, it stands to reason that different employees have different needs.

Stage 3: Evaluating Performance

At the end of the performance management cycle the employee and the manager meet to discuss the results achieved by the employee. While it is clear that the manager is responsible for conducting the final review, the process should be a collaborative effort. A performance evaluation is a common understanding of the quality and level of employee performance and competencies over the review period – representing both WHAT tasks were performed and HOW. The performance evaluation involves a discussion between the manager and employee.

Self assessment

In preparation for the performance evaluation, employees will be asked to complete the appropriate Public Health Competency Based Employee Performance Management Self Assessment Tool prior to the performance evaluation meeting. This will help them assess their competency level against the **Public Health Employee Performance Management Competency Profile** for their specific role. They will be asked to reflect on specific behaviours that they have demonstrated at work. They may consider consulting others as an option that can provide valuable information. Completing this self assessment takes time and it is suggested that they schedule a few short sessions to complete it.

The self assessment, which has a unique rating scale, is a self evaluation of behaviours, namely, what behaviours are being demonstrated and at what frequency and under what types of situations. This represents HOW an employee believes his or her tasks were performed.

The results of the self assessment will be used during the performance evaluation meeting to identify competency development areas and to assist in planning learning and development for the next performance management cycle.

Outcomes and results

At the performance review meeting, the manager and employee will discuss the extent to which the performance objectives were achieved, based on the drafted outcomes and results that were prepared by each prior to the meeting.

Together they will reach agreement on the rating of the employee's performance, based on the expectations that were determined at the planning stage.

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They will also discuss behavioural examples of each competency to determine whether the employee has met the expected proficiency level. The self assessment tool as well as the manager's observations will be used. Together they will reach an agreement on the ratings of the employee's competencies.

The employee and manager will review the outcomes and results of the learning and development plan, and will decide whether the learning objectives were met. They will discuss the application of the learnings and use the results to begin the process for the next cycle.

Performance evaluation ratings

The profiled proficiency levels of the competencies and the 'Meets Expectations' rating represent the performance expected of a fully-functional individual who is experienced in his or her role. An individual who is new to his or her role, who is performing at an acceptable level, may receive an evaluation that reflects their development towards an expected proficiency level. They may receive a competency rating or an overall rating of 'Progressing' as a reflection of their continued growth and development in the role – this is normal and expected.

Employees should be prepared by having reviewed their accomplishments from their perspective, noting in particular where they feel they exceeded the performance expectations and where there may have been challenges or shortfalls in performance. They should be ready to discuss these challenges and to explore how these may be mitigated, for example through a change to the environment or through self-improvement in the next performance cycle.

Managing the dialogue

If progress review meetings have been conducted periodically throughout the year, there should be few surprises for either employee or manager. It should be remembered, however, that the evaluation meeting could still be emotionally charged for both employee and manager. The employee should be made to feel comfortable and encouraged to share their appreciation of achievements over the year and to suggest ways in which their work effort could be facilitated through changes in work procedures, introduction of new methods, equipment or tools, or even a change in the management style of the manager. This will assist the manager in better understanding how they can help their employees do a better job.

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The environment

- Prepare a quiet and private room, arranging the furniture so that there are few barriers between you and the employee.
- Focus exclusively on the review and avoid discussing other projects or operational issues. If you need to, set up a different time after the evaluation meeting to handle other issues.
- Allow sufficient time to discuss all issues needing coverage.
- Eliminate distractions caused by telephone, emails, staff meetings, tasks etc.
- Maintain an open posture and avoid crossing your arms.

Starting the evaluation meeting:

- Communicate what will be kept confidential and what will be shared with whom.
- Start the meeting positively with key employee strengths and/or relatively easy questions to answer.
- Inform the employee that they are welcome to keep notes in the session.
- Proceed methodically through each objective.

Communication during the meeting:

- Learn to monitor and handle your own and the employee's emotions.
- Learn to listen actively, and do not interrupt. Employees have a much better evaluation review experience if they believe their manager is empathetic and understands them.
- Refrain from asking questions that are leading, irrelevant, excessive or poorly timed.
- Use open concrete questions that begin with "what, how, when, where, who".
- "Why" questions should be used cautiously, as they tend to be more threatening to people because they ask for justification. Their tone suggests judgment, disapproval or embedded advice.
- Tailor your language to the receiver.
- Avoid jargon as it can mean different things to different people.
- Be assertive - communicate openly and unambiguously.
- Focus on the problem, and do not personalize the issue. Behaviours are not attitudes. You need to describe the behaviours, their impact (on you, the team, the project, the work environment, the clients etc.), and your expectations.
- Maintain the employee's self esteem by making them accountable for their actions and for resolving issues.
- Refrain from jumping to conclusions or pushing for an immediate solution. Allow the employee to explain or express their viewpoint.

Closing the meeting:

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- Summarize the performance review conversation to recap what was discussed.
- Allow the employee the opportunity to ask any other questions and check they are satisfied they have been able to air any issues. It is important that they feel they have been listened to.
- Thank the employee for their performance efforts (reiterate their strengths) and encourage them to keep up the good work, emphasising their value to the organization.
- Schedule the next review meeting and let the employee know that you are available to provide support and feedback at any time.

Errors in evaluating employees

- Not periodically recording performance information so that it remains fresh and timely at evaluation time.
- Using your global evaluation or impression of an employee to make objective specific ratings for that employee.
- Giving more weight to events that occur closer to the evaluation period. This is why it is important to record performance information throughout the year
- Being too lenient when evaluating an employee. Managers may be lenient because they like an employee or want to be liked.
- Giving an average rating to all or most employees. This tendency often stems from lack of time or uncertainty about an employee's performance.
- Relying too heavily on the first impression they made of an employee, especially when contacts are few and far between. Regular and constructive feedback help fight this tendency.
- Giving more favourable ratings to employees they deem similar to themselves.

Communication pitfalls

Performance evaluations can be stressful for both the manager and the employee. It is important to recognize this and to avoid the escalation of occasionally tense situations by listening attentively, showing empathy, and maintaining a genuine interest in employee development.

If an employee becomes upset, allow them to recover their composure and continue when you can. Be sympathetic if tears are genuine, but be wary of tears designed to detract you from your feedback. If the employee has stopped listening, stop the meeting and set a date to finish the review as soon as

Summary and overall rating

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After the meeting, an overall rating of the employee will be agreed upon. The manager will prepare summary comments on the employee's performance over the review period. The employee will also provide comments on their own performance over the review cycle. This can be done at the meeting or the employee may take the evaluation away to complete their section, and then return the evaluation to the manager.

In the event of a disagreement of any of the ratings, the manager shall record their perceived rating and the employee can address the rating in the employee comments.