

PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE POLICY

Managing
performance at
Comcare



Australian Government

Comcare

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PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE POLICY

INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with the APS Employment Principles, Comcare requires effective performance from each employee.
2. This policy forms part of our Performance Development Framework (PDF). The PDF is designed to assist our people to achieve effective performance against their work goals and manage performance on an ongoing basis. The PDF provides a fair and equitable way to recognise and reward those who achieve or improve on expected results, to manage performance when expectations are not being met and plan learning and development opportunities.
3. This policy aims to:
 - a) support regular, timely and consistent feedback through conversations about performance
 - b) identify and articulate performance goals and outcomes of people working at Comcare aligned to work level standards
 - c) encourage and identify learning and development opportunities aligned to job requirements and career development within Comcare and the broader APS
 - d) recognise and reward excellent performance including determining salary advancement, within classification levels
 - e) provide a direct link from strategic, corporate, group and team plans, and job descriptions to individual Performance Excellence Plans (PEPs)
 - f) identify and address potential underperformance concerns early.
 - g) incorporate high-performance into our culture.

APPLICATION

4. This policy applies to all employees covered by the Enterprise Agreement (EA). Senior Executive Service (SES) employees, although not covered by our EA are required to participate together with any other performance process detailed in their individual determinations.

DEFINITIONS

5.

Employee	All ongoing and non-ongoing employees who are engaged under our EA and SES employees.
EA	<i>Comcare Enterprise Agreement 2011-14.</i>
Goals	Agreed between a manager and employee, goals or work outcomes are the tasks, activities, behaviours, outcomes and

	learning and development activities the employee will achieve or complete in their role.
Manager once removed	The person to whom the manager reports to on a day-to-day basis. It could be an SES, EL2 or EL1 level employee with people management responsibilities.
Performance Excellence Plans	The plan which the employee develops in conversation and agreement with their manager. The plan articulates agreed goals, behaviours and training and development required to meet a 'performing' or 'excellent' standard. Previously known as Individual Action Plans (IAPs).
Performance Improvement Plan	This plan is agreed between employee and manager and developed when an employee is rated as 'developing'. It is an action plan in outlining additional steps, support and guidance to help the employee reach a rating of 'performing'.
Ratings	The rating is an assessment of your behaviour and work performance during the year.
Underperformance	Underperformance is identified when an employee does not reach the required standard of behavioural and/or work goals set out in a Performance Improvement Plan. Underperformance is addressed using the <i>Managing Underperformance Policy</i> .

ONGOING PERFORMANCE CONVERSATIONS

- Our performance management approach is built on regular, timely and informal conversations about performance with three formal performance conversations per year.
- All managers and employees must actively take part in performance conversations to foster a positive, high-performance culture.

REWARD AND RECOGNITION

- Along with regular performance conversations, rewarding and recognising good performance is an essential part of creating a positive, high performance culture. Managers must consider both informal and formal reward and recognition options throughout the year. Refer to the *Reward and Recognition Policy* for types of informal and formal reward and recognition options.

PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE PLANS

- Performance Excellence Plans are the tool used to assist in documenting in writing the goals an employee is expected to achieve in their role and how they will achieve them.
- PEPs are set on an annual basis from 1 July to 30 June and are completed no later than 31 August of each year allowing work outcomes or goals to be in-line with the business planning cycle and team plans for the financial year.

11. PEPs must be developed and agreed between manager and employee within four weeks if an employee commences at Comcare mid-way through the financial year.

SETTING GOALS

12. Setting clear, measurable actions and outcomes both verbally and in writing is the most critical part of encouraging performance.

13. Employees are strongly encouraged to initiate the development of their PEP, however it is the mutual responsibility of both the employee and the manager to ensure PEPs are developed on time.

14. The employee and manager must refer to the employee's job description and the work area's team plan when developing a PEP. A manager and employee may also refer to:

- a) Group Plan
- b) Comcare People Plan
- c) Comcare Strategic Plan
- d) Comcare Work Level Standards.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

15. Learning and development requirements must be prioritised in the following order:

- i. Gaps identified between the employee's capabilities and the core, technical and/or professional capabilities required for the role.
- ii. The employee's career aspirations within the team or within Comcare.
- iii. The employee's career aspirations in the wider APS.

REVISION OF PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE PLANS

16. PEPs must be revised or a new plan developed and agreed between manager and employee within two weeks if:

- a) an employee's role is substantially revised or the employee is undertaking new duties
- b) an employee commences higher duties
- c) an employee moves to a new role at level
- d) an employee provides evidence that their health is affecting their ability to meet the expectations of their role.

MID AND END-OF-CYCLE ASSESSMENTS

17. Managers and employees must take part in a mid and end-of-cycle formal performance conversation where the manager provides an assessment and rating of the employees performance. At the end of year assessment, managers must also take into account the

employee's performance over the whole 12 months, including in previous roles within Comcare.

18. Mid-cycle assessments are completed and entered into Aurion ESS between 1 November and 24 December.
19. End-of-cycle assessments must be completed and entered into Aurion ESS between 1 May and 30 June to allow salary advancement from 1 August for eligible employees.

RATINGS

20. At the mid-year and end of year assessments, employees are rated on their work performance and demonstrated behaviours in accordance with the APS Values, Employment Principles and Code of Conduct using the following ratings:

Excellent

21. This rating is applied where:

- a) an employee has consistently exceeded what is expected of them in terms of both work outcomes and behaviours in accordance with the APS Code of Conduct.

22. This rating must be approved by the manager once removed. For the purposes of the EA, this is the highest rating and eligible employees will advance by two pay points from 1 August following the completed PEP year.

Performing

23. This rating is applied where:

- a) an employee is doing their job well and consistently meeting what is expected of them in both work outcomes and behaviours in accordance with the APS Code of Conduct.

24. This rating is considered the norm. For the purposes of the EA this is a satisfactory rating and eligible employees will advance one pay point from 1 August following the completed PEP year.

Developing

25. This rating is applied where:

- a) an employee has had limited time to meet all their performance expectations because they are new to the role; or
- b) an employee needs more guidance, coaching or training or has failed to meet the expectations of their role in either work outcomes, behaviours or both

26. For both developing ratings, it is expected that the employee's performance will improve to 'performing' within three months. If a rating of 'performing' is not achieved within three months, the employee will be rated as 'underperforming' and managed in accordance with the Managing Underperformance Policy.

27. This rating can be applied at any time throughout the year to address any issues early and ensure the employee is adequately supported.
28. For the purposes of the EA this is an unsatisfactory rating and employees are not eligible for salary advancement until a rating of 'performing' is achieved.

Not rated

29. This rating is applied where:
 - a) An employee is currently being formally managed for underperformance in accordance with the *Managing Underperformance Policy*.

MANAGER SUPPORT AND MODERATION

30. Managers are encouraged to discuss ratings and seek support from the manager once removed in preparing for end-of-cycle discussions.
31. A moderation process may be used to ensure consistency and fairness of the application of ratings.

SALARY ADVANCEMENT

32. To be eligible for salary advancement (increment advancement), employees must meet the eligibility criteria set out in the EA.
33. There are no links between PEPs and pay increases set out in the EA.

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

34. When an employee is rated as 'developing' a performance improvement plan (PIP) must be developed and agreed between the manager and the employee. A PIP clearly articulates how the performance will be improved, including what support and coaching will be provided to the employee.
35. The performance improvement plan is for a three month period with the aim of the employee achieving a rating of 'performing' by completing that plan. Where a performance issue has been previously addressed through this process of support and coaching, the length of time provided to the employee for subsequent performance improvement plan and support and coaching will be determined in consultation with a HR Business Partner on a range of factors including how long ago the previous support and coaching was provided, and the nature of what is impacting the employee's performance. This time frame may be up to three months.
36. Managers and employees need to have a conversation at regular intervals during the performance improvement period to discuss progress against the performance improvement plan, and provide feedback, support and encouragement to assist the employee in achieving a rating of 'performing'.
37. Managers will reassess the employee's performance at the end of the performance improvement period. Where the employee has not met the required expectations of the

PIP, they will be rated as 'underperforming' and must be managed in accordance with the 'Managing Underperformance Policy'.

38. An employee who is subsequently rated 'performing' will then develop a new PEP for the remainder of the financial year. The employee will be eligible for salary advancement from the date at which they are rated as 'performing', but not retrospectively.

TRANSFERS AND MOVEMENTS

39. If a manager moves to a different team, to another organisation or an employee moves in or out of their team, the manager must:

- a) Give feedback to the employee(s) before the change occurs and record any comments on the employee's PEP. This will contribute to the employee's mid and end of year assessments.
- b) Brief the new manager of the employee(s) performance.
- c) Seek a handover from the previous manager of the new employee(s).
- d) Ensure that the new employee(s) have received feedback from their previous manager (where possible).
- e) Review PEPs with the new employee(s), clarify expectations and agree on any amendments or develop a new PEP.
- f) Set up regular catch ups to discuss progress, clarify expectations and provide support and guidance towards achieving goals.

40. If the employee's manager is changing at any time of the year, the employee is expected to take steps to:

- a) Seek feedback from their existing manager before the change occurs.
- b) Clarify expectations of their job with the new manager.
- c) Review their PEP with their new manager and make amendments or develop a new PEP.
- d) Set up regular catch ups to discuss progress, seek clarification, support and guidance towards achieving goals.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

41. To ensure the health and wellbeing of our people, managers should seek support and guidance from their HR Business Partner before holding performance conversations where:

- a) the employee has a psychological illness or injury known to the manager
- b) the employee has recently returned to work following an absence due to a psychological illness or mental stress
- c) the manager is aware the employee has submitted an incident report for mental stress

- d) the manager has observed a shift in the employee's behaviour from what they normally observe
- e) the manager has concerns the employee is not meeting the required standard of performance.

42. Managers are encouraged to use the publication *Working Together: A mental health guide for APS managers*.

SUPPORT PERSONS

43. Managers and employees may choose to have a support person accompany them and witness any meetings or conversations relevant to the Performance Excellence process.

DOCUMENTATION

44. All performance expectations must be clearly articulated and recorded in writing in an employee's PEP or PIP. A record of meetings, conversations, support and guidance during the performance improvement process must be recorded and it is strongly recommended to document meetings or conversations relating to performance at other times of the year.

45. Any electronic records relating to an employee's performance must be stored in an appropriate TRIM file and secured by restricting access permissions and classifying the file as 'Unclassified – Sensitive: Personal'.

CODE OF CONDUCT

46. If the employee has been rated as 'developing' because of behaviour which may constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct, the manager must seek advice from their HR Business Partner and refer to the *CEO Direction on Breaches of the Code of Conduct*.

ISSUE RESOLUTION

47. Where conflict or grievance over work expectations or performance occurs, in the first instance employees are encouraged to seek to resolve the workplace issue informally with their manager. Employees should refer to the *Guidelines for Resolving Workplace Issues* if the issue is not able to be resolved informally in the first instance.

RESPONSIBILITIES

48. A Manager's responsibilities are:

- a) Assist employees to set goals and develop Performance Excellence Plans in line with the timeframes of the Performance Excellence process.
- b) Ensure new employees to the team through recruitment, higher duties or temporary transfers have a Performance Excellence Plan in place within six weeks of joining the team.

- c) Have regular conversations with employees on work progress, behaviours, achievements, health and safety.
- d) Monitor performance regularly, identify and address any decline in performance promptly.
- e) Ensure clear expectations for performance and behaviour are reasonable and within the employee's control.
- f) Provide reasonable assistance to support and encourage each employee to meet the expectations set for them.
- g) Obtain evidence of the employee's performance how they've developed skills during the year.
- h) Review the employee's responsibilities and work outcomes for continued relevance and prompt modification of goals when team objectives change.
- i) Prepare preliminary assessments of the employee's performance for moderation.
- j) Consider any work or non-work related constraints that may have impacted on the employee's performance.
- k) Talk to their manager about preliminary assessments of employees and proposed ratings.
- l) For managers with teams reporting to them, ensure fairness, equity and objectivity when moderating performance assessments.
- m) Provide coaching and mentoring to managers of teams who report to on conducting performance assessments.
- n) Conduct assessment review conversations within the timeframes of the Performance Excellence process.
- o) Clearly explain this policy and the consequences that follow if and when underperformance is identified.
- p) Take part in corporate training programs aimed at building and maintaining managers' performance management capabilities.

49. An Employee's responsibilities are:

- a) Participate in all stages of the Performance Excellence process.
- b) Draft a Performance Excellence Plan and prompt your manager for a discussion to agree on a plan.
- c) Make all reasonable effort to achieve work and learning and development goals and demonstrate expected behaviours.
- d) Seek regular feedback on their performance and participate in regular conversations about performance with their manager.
- e) Review their own performance during the year.

- f) Discuss any work or non-work related constraints that may be impacting their performance with their manager.
- g) Ask for a review and/or prepare a new Performance Excellence Plan when your job or focus changes.
- h) Prepare for mid and end-of-cycle assessments.
- i) Provide feedback to their manager on the support and guidance they need.

50. The People team's responsibilities are:

- a) Provide advice, support and coaching on the application of this policy.
- b) Provide guidance materials, templates and tools to support this policy.
- c) Provide advice on reasonable workplace adjustments in the event that illness or injury is affecting an employee's performance.
- d) Review and update this policy in line with the EA.

INDUSTRIAL INSTRUMENT

51. This policy supports the operation of the *Comcare Enterprise Agreement 2011-14*

OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES

52. Other policies which support and/or link to this policy:

- a) Managing Underperformance Policy.
- b) Reward and Recognition Policy.

CONSULTATION

53. In developing this policy the following people were consulted with:

- > Employees.
- > Working Together.
- > Executive Committee.

EVALUATION AND REVIEW

54. The ability of this policy to meet its aims and employee satisfaction with the policy is measured through the annual APSC State of the Service Survey.

55. The effectiveness of this policy will also be evaluated by the number of requests or lack thereof for review from enterprise bargaining representatives during negotiations.

VERSION CONTROL

Version number	Author	Collaborators	Variation
0.1	s47f	s47f	New policy drafted.

		s47f s47f	
0.2	s47f	Working Together Comcare employees	Changes made following consultation process with Comcare employees and Working Together.
0.3	s47f	s47f s47f HBA Consulting	Added paragraph numbering, formatting changes. Inclusion of 'not rated' under the Ratings section and reference to the APS Employment Principles.
0.4	s47f	s47f	Amendment of 'Manager support and moderation' section.
0.5	s47f	s47f	Include reference to using the publication <i>Working Together: A mental health guide for APS managers</i> . Altered the wording of paragraph 41(b).
1.0	s47f		Policy endorsed by s47f , Chief Operating Officer 16 July 2013.