



*Performance Matters!*

# ***Management Leadership Services (MLS) & Question A Employees***

## **Performance Management – Planning for Excellence in Performance (PEP)**

Montgomery County Government

Office of Human Resources

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## MLS AND QUESTION A PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Management Leadership Service (MLS) and Question A (Non-Merit, Non-Department Director) employees performance-based pay is the conclusion of a performance management process that has occurred throughout the fiscal year using good performance management practices. This standardized process - PEP or Planning for Excellence in Performance - ensures a high level of consistency for all MLS and Question A employees. The information contained in this booklet will assist managers in making the most of this process. Technical requirements are covered in Section 11, Performance Planning and Evaluation, Montgomery County Personnel Regulations.

The County, through its Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System has moved to an Oracle-based, integrated online human resources information technology application that includes performance management, compensation, and classification modules. The Oracle Workforce Performance Management (WPM) system, will allow the Performance Management process to be started and completed electronically between supervisors\* and employees\*. All MLS and Question A employees are required to use the Oracle WPM system to develop performance plans\* and to complete evaluations.

### Overview

Performance Management is often treated as a single administrative event rather than a continuous process of improvement. Fundamentally, the performance management process is a continuous cycle, comprised of: planning, observation, documentation, feedback, and evaluation. Performance management is an interactive process wherein MLS and Question A employees are expected to actively participate in their personal performance management activities, which may include developing performance expectations\*, maintaining and providing work samples, and providing a record of accomplishments.

### Planning

The performance management process begins with planning. Planning refers to the process of establishing a performance plan which includes establishing clear performance expectations and career development goals for the given review period. All MLS and Question A performance plans are based on a performance review period linked to the Fiscal Year. The planning process should be a two-way dialogue between the MLS and Question A employee and his or her supervising manager. MLS and Question A performance plans\* consist of mandatory goals, position specific performance goals\* and targets\* competencies, and one or more career development goals. The combination of expectations establishes **how** results are to be achieved, as well as **what** results are desired. All performance plans should be clearly aligned with the County and department vision, mission and strategic plan, which support the “**why**” of performance. At a minimum, performance expectations describe performance at the Successful level.

## **Observation, Documentation, and Feedback**

Observation and documentation refers to making note of observable behaviors/results that indicate whether an employee's performance is on track. Feedback refers to the ongoing communication between a supervisor and employee regarding the employee's observed performance or behaviors. The result of providing effective feedback is a clear understanding of an employee's progress toward, or challenges in, meeting established goals.

Where there are significant shifts in departmental and or team objectives, performance plans should be updated to reflect current expectations and initiatives.

## **Evaluation**

Evaluation refers to the formal review and written assessment of an employee's performance in relation to the performance plan. The assessment should be discussed with an employee, and should outline the employee's performance on each performance expectation and/or development goal, as well as provide an overall performance rating. Ideally, this formal evaluation should contain no surprises. It should simply summarize previous feedback given throughout the reviewing period. MLS and Question A employees should follow the Performance Planning and Evaluation Compliance Checklist on page 12 of this publication and abide by the same deadlines for submission of performance appraisal completion.

## **Substance of a Performance Plan**

### Mandatory Performance Competencies

Competencies blend the knowledge, skills, and behaviors demonstrated by the successful employee. They emphasize the "how" in performance. All MLS and Question A performance plans must include the competencies listed on the MLS and Question A forms. MLS and Question A competencies are pre-loaded.

Each manager is accountable for three mandatory performance competencies: 1) compliance with the County's EEO and anti-discrimination policies; and 2) conducting performance planning and evaluation with their subordinate staff; and 3) Safe Work Environment. During performance planning and evaluation, managers should discuss the opportunities and challenges they face in addressing each of these goals.

### EEO

Managers' responsibilities in relation to equal employment opportunity extend beyond hiring/promotional decisions. Managers are also responsible for: providing training to employees on EEO policies, promoting a workplace free of harassment and discrimination through appropriate supervision and management, and responding to employees' complaints of harassment/discrimination. A manager's rating in this area should reflect the level of commitment and thoroughness with which they comply with these responsibilities.

## Performance Management

Each manager is responsible for performance planning and evaluation with the staff they supervise. Their rating in this arena should be based on the extent to which they:

- Comply with established procedures and guidelines
- Set effective goals and expectations
- Provide supervision and guidance
- Manage performance related problems
- Assess progress toward achieving satisfactory performance

Consideration should also be given to the consistency and the accuracy of applying performance management concepts among their team(s).

## Safe Work Environment

Managers and supervisors are accountable for how they exercise their authority and responsibility to maintain a safe work environment. A safe work environment involves taking actions to ensure that employees and citizens are relatively free from safety hazards by proactively identifying and addressing safety issues and concerns. This includes risks arising in the physical environment; arrangement of the work site, equipment and work processes; compliance with Maryland Occupational Safety and Health (MOSH) and applicable regulations and procedures; and, taking appropriate steps to avoid or correct violations of safety procedures and regulations.

Although MLS and Question A competencies are pre-loaded, MLS and Question A employees should select from the competencies below and should limit the number of competencies on a performance plan to about four or five. Additionally, MLS and Question A should indicate not applicable (N/A) for pre-loaded competencies not being rated.

Balanced Risk Taking/Innovation  
Change Management – MLS  
Communication and Persuasion Skills  
Customer Service Orientation  
Developing, Empowering and Supporting Employees  
High Standards of Excellence and Efficiency/Ensures High Value for Tax Dollars  
Interpersonal Awareness  
Organizational Commitment  
Organizational Systems Awareness  
Personal Accountability  
Planning and Organizing  
Problem Solving  
Teamwork  
Cooperation and Collaboration  
Technical Expertise

Click [here](#) for the complete listing of MLS and Question A competencies, definitions and continuum of ratings. Also see Table 2 below.

## Performance Expectations with Targets

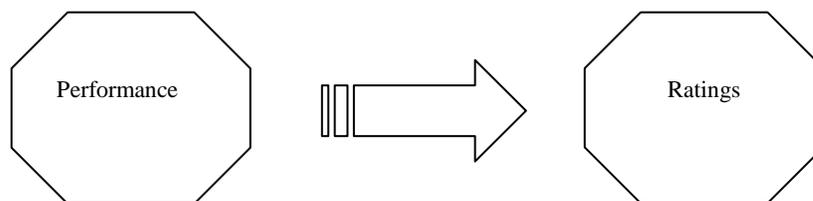
Performance Expectations with targets describe the quality and quantity of performance at the successful level in reasonably objective terms. Goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and track-able (SMART). This goal format outlines the desired results and outcomes expected - the “**what**” of performance.

## Career Development Goals

Employee development is a responsibility shared by the employee, supervisor, and the County. The Question A and MLS employee should assume the primarily responsibility of his or her own development. The Question A and MLS supervisor should provide feedback and support necessary to facilitate attainment of the career development goals and the Question A and MLS development. The County will continue to provide a learning environment and systems to support the development process.

Each performance plan should outline career/professional development goals for the upcoming fiscal year. Goals may include skill development and experiential learning designed to prepare for promotional opportunities or to enhance and enrich current responsibilities.

## **Making Rating Recommendations**



## **Rating Performance**

Selecting an overall performance rating that accurately reflects the demonstrated performance in job specific expectations/goals and competency areas will help to ensure the equity and efficacy of performance accountability within the County. It will also provide Question A and MLS employees with an accurate picture of their performance, and helps to identify areas for continued skill development.

The definitions of each rating category as contained in Section 11, Performance Planning and Evaluation of the Montgomery County Personnel Regulations, are listed in Table 1, Performance Rating Definitions. Use these definitions for determining the rating of each separate goal, competency, and the overall rating.

## Rating Performance Goals with Targets

Prior to rating performance goals, managers rating Question A and MLS employees should review work samples, notes, feedback from all available sources, information provided by the Question A and MLS employees, and the rating category descriptions. The next step is to compare available information with the performance targets established in the plan and provide an appropriate rating.

## Rating Competencies

Employees should be rated on how frequently and successfully they demonstrate the behaviors associated with the competency performance standard. Managers should review notes, feedback from multiple sources, and documentation collected over the entire course of the review period to avoid regency bias or giving undue weight to an isolated event.

### Continuum of Ratings



<b>Does not Meet Expectations</b>	<b>Below Expectations</b>	<b>Successful</b>	<b>Highly Successful</b>	<b>Exceptional</b>
<i>Rarely demonstrates behaviors consistent with this competency. Performance of this competency frequently results in inadequate or unintended outcomes.</i>	<i>Demonstrates some behaviors consistent with this competency but needs improvement in other job required competencies. Performance of this competency results in inconsistent outcomes.</i>	<i>Usually demonstrates most of the behaviors consistent with this competency. Performance of this competency usually results in positive outcomes. Represents a "typical" employee.</i>	<i>Always demonstrates the behaviors associated with this competency. Performance frequently results in very positive outcomes. Occasionally serves as a coach to others for this competency.</i>	<i>Consistently goes beyond the behaviors associated with this competency. Performance overwhelmingly results in outstanding outcomes. Routinely serves as a "role model" and contributes to other's success. Is often sought out by others for their skill and abilities.</i>

See Table 2, Performance Rating Definitions, for complete definitions.

## Career Development Goals

As part of the performance evaluation, note the MLS employee's progress toward achievement of these goals. Career Development goals may not be rated.

## Comments

Comments on performance expectations, performance targets, competencies, and career development goals are strongly encouraged. Comments can be focused on a specific goal or expectation or can be more general in nature. Including comments as part of a performance evaluation offers an opportunity to more fully explain observations, insights and/or concerns relative to a specific element or expectation of performance.

## **Overall Rating**

Prior to determining the overall rating, re-read the rating category descriptions and look at the distribution of ratings for the individual elements. Also review the list of potential rating errors (Table 4, Common Rating Errors) which lists a variety of bias factors which may impact objectivity. The overall rating should reflect the employee's performance and be consistent with the ratings on individual elements.

## **Employee Comments**

Question A and MLS staff must be given an opportunity to add comments. While no time limit is specified for providing comments, 7- 15 days is reasonable. An employee's request for re-consideration of an evaluation must be submitted within 15 calendar days after it is finalized with Question A or MLS supervisor and Reviewing Official\* signatures noted by electronic date stamp.

## **Reviewing Official**

Prior to meeting with the employee, a manager should forward the draft of the evaluation document to the Reviewing Official—usually the next higher level of management or department head. The role of the Reviewing Official is to review for procedural compliance and seek to resolve disagreements between the employee and immediate supervisor. The Reviewing Official may not change any rating, but should discuss concerns with the rating supervisor while the document is in draft form prior to employee review. No modifications may be made to the form or attachments after the employee has signed the form unless the employee is notified and given an opportunity to comment. (This step is not applicable where the rater or Reviewing Official is the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO).

Reviewing Officials play an important role in promoting rating consistency and fairness across the organizational unit. In addition to reviewing ratings across supervisors for consistent application of the rating categories, they can conduct discussions with their management team to develop consensus understanding of each rating level. The Office of Human Resources (OHR) recommends that Reviewing Officials use a technique called calibration. Calibration involves comparing ratings across employees in the department or agency. A checklist has been provided on page 10 to facilitate this process.

## **Administrative Requirements**

Once an evaluation is completed, the appraisal is moved to the completed section. To facilitate compliance with Section 11 of the personnel regulations, a Compliance Checklist has been included for your convenience.

## **Continuous Improvement**

Overall effectiveness of PEP is enhanced when managers practice good performance management practices. A *Performance Management Guide for Supervisors* is posted in the Performance Management section on the OHR website. This guide provides an overview of the entire performance management cycle. .(<http://cmsinternet.mcgov.org/ohr/index.html>).

A variety of training classes and opportunities are also available to Question A and MLS employees, who should also participate in all of the following mandatory classes:

- Planning for Excellence: Performance Management Basics
- EEO/Diversity Management
- Maintaining a Safe Work Environment
- Oracle Training

Additional resources and class schedules are posted on the OHR website or can be obtained by calling 240.777.5116.

\*See Table 1 - County verses Oracle Terminologies

**TABLE 1, WPM TERMINOLOGIES**

<b>WORKFORCE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT (WPM) &amp; APPRAISAL STATUS REPORT TERMINOLOGY</b>	
<b>COUNTY TERMS vs. WPM TERMS</b>	
Performance Planning and Evaluation (PPE) Plan	Performance Plan (three plans) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MCG Executive Branch Performance Plan</li> <li>- MCG Legislative Branch Performance Plan</li> <li>- MCG Sheriff Office Performance Plan</li> </ul>
Performance Plan/Form	Appraisal
Direct Reports/Employee	Appraisee
Manager/Supervisor	Main Appraiser
Reviewing Official/2 <sup>nd</sup> Level Supervisor	Approver
Expectations /Specific Expectations	Objectives
Performance Targets	Success Criteria
Another supervisor or project lead who may have valuable input on an employee's performance	Reviewer Participant or Approver Participant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reviewer Participant may add only comments on an employees' performance</li> <li>- Approver Participant may add ratings and comments on an employees' performance</li> </ul>
<b>APPRAISAL STATUS REPORT TERMINOLOGY</b>	
<b>APPRAISAL STATUS LABELS</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
Planned	Appraisal has not been created
Saved	Appraisal is in the first stages (similar to Planned). The appraisal is in the supervisor's possession
Transferred to Appraisee	Main Appraiser (supervisor) transferred the appraisal to the appraisee (employee). Appraisal is in the employee's possession
Ongoing with Main Appraiser	Main Appraiser clicked the 'Apply' button in the appraisal at least once. The appraisal is in the supervisor's possession
Pending Approval	Main Appraiser submitted the appraisal to the Approver (reviewing official) for final approval. Appraisal is in the reviewing official possession. Once approved, the appraisal cannot be edited
Pending Appraisee Feedback	The approved appraisal has been transferred to the appraisee and is pending the appraisee's overall rating feedback, if any
Complete	Employee enters overall rating feedback (optional). Employees <u>must</u> click the SUMBIT button to move the appraisal to completion
Transferred from Plan	Employee is no longer in the former performance plan
<b>NOTE:</b> Only one person can update an appraisal at a time. The appraisal cannot be updated unless it is in the possession of the person updating it. If the update pencil icon is grayed out, you do not have possession of the appraisal.	

**TABLE 2, PERFORMANCE RATINGS DEFINITIONS**

Section 11, Performance Planning and Evaluation, Montgomery County Personnel Regulations

Rating Label	Definition
<b>Exceptional Performance</b> Section 11-7i(1)A-C	This rating indicates that the employee: consistently achieved additional, significant results beyond established targets; achieved a higher level of quality than required; <u>was a role model in the demonstration of competencies</u> ; and was rated “Exceptional Performance” on the majority of performance expectations and standards. Performance at this level is clearly unique and rarely attained. A supervisor must use this rating only if the employee performed at a higher level relative to most other employees performing comparable work. A supervisor must not give an overall rating of “Exceptional Performance” to an employee who received a rating of “Does Not Meet Expectations” on any single expectation.
<b>Highly Successful</b> Section 11-7i(2)A-B	This overall rating category indicates that the employee: achieved all critical results at or beyond established targets, achieved a high level of quality, consistently and effectively demonstrated the competencies, and was rated as having “Highly Successful Performance” on the majority of performance expectations and standards. A supervisor must not give an overall rating of “Highly Successful” to an employee who received a rating of “Does Not Meet Expectations” on any single expectation.
<b>Successful</b> Section 11-7i(3)A-B	This overall rating category indicates that the employee: met the majority of performance standards and expectations; achieved a majority of results and demonstrated most competencies successfully; and may occasionally exceed expectations. A Supervisor must give an overall rating of “Successful Performance” to an employee with good solid performance. This rating is appropriate for most employees.
<b>Below Expectations</b> Section 11-7i(4)A-D	This overall rating category indicates that the employee has met some job requirements but needs improvement in other job requirements listed in the performance plan. The performance of an employee who receives this rating is below the level of “Successful Performance: but above that of “Does Not Meet Expectations.” An employee who receives a rating of “Below Expectations” may request that the supervisor provide the employee with a written work improvement plan.
<b>Does Not Meet Expectations</b> Section 11-7i(5)A-C	This overall rating category indicates that the employee has not met the basic requirements of the job as evidenced by: receiving a rating of “Does Not Meet Expectations” on a majority of the performance expectations and standards listed in the performance plan; or failing to produce one or more key results, demonstrating competencies infrequently or ineffectively, or both. An employee who receives this rating has failed to perform the assigned duties on an on-going basis in an acceptable and competent manner. If the supervisor gives an employee this rating, the supervisor must counsel the employee on what corrective action to take, and allow the employee adequate time to improve or correct performance.

### TABLE 3, COMMON RATING ERRORS

Awareness of possible bias factors improves objectivity. Commonly reported rating errors are listed below.

#### 1. Errors related to employee characteristics:

- **Stereotyping errors:** allowing the employee's personal views, personality, appearance, race, religion, age, handicap, sex, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood or any other non-merit factor to influence the rating.
- **High potential effect:** translating an employee's abilities or attitudes that are not related to his/her present job into a higher or lower evaluation rating than actual performance justifies.
- **Mentor effect:** overestimating the quality of performance of employees who were trained by the supervisor, and underestimating the performance of those who were not.
- **Maverick effect:** giving a lower rating because the individual is a nonconformist or frequently disagrees with the supervisor.
- **Guilt by association error:** giving a lower or higher rating because the employee associates with a particular group or works with others with less satisfactory performance.
- **Compatibility effect:** rating an employee higher because of similar age, background, education, attitude, etc.
- **No news is good news error:** rating an employee higher just because no one has complained about him or her (recently).

#### 2. Errors related to supervisor characteristics:

- **Blind spot error:** ignoring a particular deficiency because it mirrors a weakness of the supervisor.
- **Self-comparison error:** rating an employee who holds the supervisor's previous job lower because he or she does the job differently.
- **No conflict error:** giving a high rating because of reluctance to provide frank and honest performance feedback or to avoid follow through with appropriate personnel actions.
- **Appearance worry:** giving high ratings because of a desire to "look good" or avoid looking like a bad supervisor.
- **Unrealistic expectations:** Rating employee against personal standards and not requirements of the job.

#### 3. Errors in the assignment of rating categories:

- **Leniency/stringency effect:** giving an extreme rating to all performance guidelines because of failure to differentiate levels of performance for each performance guideline.
- **Central tendency error:** rating all individuals in the middle of the scale. It adversely affects the particularly good performers while being overly generous to the poor performers.
- **Situational error:** over or under-compensating for extenuating circumstances.
- **"Company policy" effect:** allowing perceived pressure from higher management to control rating distributions.
- **Recency effect:** allowing a recent incident to unduly influence ratings.
- **"Not my job" error:** holding the employee accountable in the ratings for results beyond his or her control.
- **Halo effect:** rating an employee excellent on one quality, which in turn influences other ratings.
- **Inadequate information:** performance guidelines too general, did not accurately reflect the successful level of performance, or did not accurately fit the responsibilities. Error may also include inaccurate or insufficient information and/or documentation.
- **Assumption errors:** confusing facts with inferences and making erroneous assumptions.

## CALIBRATION CHECK LIST FOR REVIEWING OFFICIALS

The role of a Reviewing Official is to review the draft written performance evaluation before the supervisor shares it with the employee. Reviewing Officials cannot change the rating. Any concerns should be addressed in discussions with the immediate supervisor during this step. Reviewing Officials should ensure that:

- Each individual overall rating is consistent with the ratings for individual elements of the plan as well as the rating justification descriptions.
- Overall ratings are consistent with the measures being used across the department or agency.
- The supervisor has complied with the Personnel Regulations and any department procedures.

OHR recommends that Reviewing Officials use a technique called calibration to ensure managers and supervisors are applying measures consistently, and in a fair and equitable manner across the organizational unit. Calibration involves comparing ratings across employees in the department or agency. The checklist below will assist you in using the calibration technique effectively.

1. Identify the measure being used by asking the following questions:

- Is the measurement clear and focused to avoid misinterpretation?
- Can the measure be quantified and compared to other data?
- Is the measure achievable, reasonable, and credible under conditions expected?
- Does the measure fit into the organization's constraints? Is it cost-effective?
- Is the measurement do-able within the time frame given?

2. Use the quality, alignment, and reality tests to find out if the measurement is being evaluated consistently across the department or agency:

### The **Quality** Test

- Were there objective measures for the specific expectations or competencies?
- Does the measurement include a clear statement of the end results expected?
- Are the measures challenging, but at the same time, attainable?
- Have those whose performance is being measured had the opportunity to be fully involved in the development of the measurements?
- Was performance evaluated against specific expectations or behavioral indicators, which target desired level of performance?
- Were evaluations held at the end of the performance cycle?

### The **Alignment** Test

- Do the measures align behavior and specific expectations with strategy and or mission, and focus the department or agency on its priorities?
- Do the measures identify gaps between current status and performance aspirations, thereby highlighting performance opportunities?
- Are the major programs and major components of the program covered?
- Are there comparisons of employees who are performing the same or similar work?
- Is the pay recommendation consistent with the overall rating, and is the overall rating consistent with the evaluation?
- Do all direct reports have a plan?

### The **Reality** Test

- Reviewing Officials should meet with their managers and supervisors annually in order to gain a common understanding of how performance is being measured and evaluated. Managers and supervisors should bring a sampling of PPE forms representative of the total group of employees they supervise. Discussions during the meetings should be treated as confidential.

## PERFORMANCE PLANNING AND EVALUATION COMPLIANCE CHECK LIST

Use the items below to ensure that all mandatory requirements have been satisfied prior the completion of appraisals.

### PLANNING ACTIVITIES

- Plan established within the first 45 days of the new review period for existing employees (or) was established within 45 days of new hire MLS placement (determined by signature dates)
- Performance expectations describe performance at the successful level
- Requirement to conduct subordinates' performance plans/evaluations is included as a mandatory performance expectation
- Requirement to comply with anti-discrimination and other EEO requirements is included as a mandatory performance expectation
- At least one career development goal was established
- Plan establishment documented with manager and employee signatures

### MID-YEAR PROGRESS DISCUSSION (optional)

- Progress discussion documented with manager and employee signatures
- Substantive discussion items documented
- Substantive changes to plan and expectations documented

### EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

- Overall rating indicated on cover page
- All performance expectations with targets were rated (N/A may also be indicated)
- All competencies were rated
- Written comments by manager included
- Progress toward achievement(s) on career development goal noted
- Final Evaluation documented with Manager signature and date
- Final Evaluation documented with Employee signature and date
- Final Evaluation reviewed by Reviewing Official (as applicable)
- Employee included comments on the evaluation (optional)

**Note:** In WPM, employee, supervisor, reviewing official signatures and dates are captured by system-assigned electronic date stamps

## **APPENDIX 1. PERFORMANCE PLAN TYPE CHART (TYPES of Performance Plans, WHO to create them for and WHERE to find them)**

A copy of the form is available at the OHR website:

<http://cmsinternet.mcgov.org/ohr/index.html>

This form has been created to assist MLS, Question A and supervisory employees in identifying what PPE form is needed for various types of positions and where to find the form and instructions for completing it.

The following Performance Plan Form Types are listed including:

- MCGEO
- Uniformed Correctional Officer
- Deputy Sheriff
- IAFF
- FOP
- Medical Doctor
- Fire Management
- Uniformed Corrections Management
- Police Management
- The following three electronic performance appraisals are currently in Oracle WPM
  - Management Leadership Service
  - Non-merit, non-department head (Question A)
  - General Salary Schedule

## WHO TO CALL?

Resource Person	Questions Related to:	Contact Info
Kavyonne (Kaye) Beckley Manager Business Operations and Performance Division	Compensation Issues	<a href="mailto:kaye.beckley@montgomerycountymd.gov">kaye.beckley@montgomerycountymd.gov</a> 240.777.5041 240.777.5130 (fax)
Lystra Baird Human Resources Specialist Classification and Compensation Team	Performance Management Training  Performance Management Issues  Workforce Performance Management (WPM)  Performance- Based Pay	<a href="mailto:lystra.baird@montgomerycountymd.gov">lystra.baird@montgomerycountymd.gov</a> 240.777.5038 240.777.5130 (fax)