

Workforce Performance Management

Frequently Asked Questions

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1. Q: Why is the program called *workforce* performance management (WPM)?

A: The term *workforce* is used to distinguish individual employee performance from the Library's organizational program performance. Effective WPM is the means by which the Library achieves its organizational goals.

2. Q: What are the main components of WPM?

A: The main components of workforce performance management are: 1. performance planning, 2. performance observation and review, 3. performance appraisal and 4. employee development.

3. Q: Who is available to help with questions related to WPM?

A: Employees should first discuss WPM questions with their supervisors who are trained in the area of performance management. Additionally, each service unit has a WPM point of contact (POC) who can provide service unit-specific guidance to supervisors. The office of Workforce Performance and Development in Human Resources Services provides supervisors, managers and POCs with general guidelines and advice on WPM at the Library.

Performance Planning

4. Q: Why is goal-setting so important in the planning stage of WPM?

A: Goal setting is a key element in planning how employees can successfully support the work and priorities of the unit. Supervisors should establish unit goals and/or priorities and show employees how these goals support the broader service unit goals. This helps employees see their connection to the service unit, clarifies why their jobs exist and why their contributions are critical to the unit's success.

5. Q: What is a performance plan (*written statement of performance requirements for AFSCME Local 2910*)?

A: The performance plan is a written document developed or revised at the beginning of the appraisal period that defines the employee's major areas of responsibility (*Job Elements (JE) for employees in positions represented by the 2910 bargaining unit*), major duties, performance requirements and specific assignments that serve as the basis for the annual performance appraisal. The unit priorities identified in the performance plan are aligned with the Library's Strategic Plan and annual performance goals.

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6. Q: What is a performance requirement?

A: A performance requirement is a standard for quantitatively and qualitatively measuring performance in a major area of responsibility of the performance plan *(or JE of a written statement of performance requirements for AFSCME Local 2910.)* It is developed by the immediate supervisor who may request input from the employee. It states how many times, how well, in what timeframe, in what manner and to what end a duty must be performed to be considered working at each level of performance *(Outstanding, Commendable/Excellent, Successful/Satisfactory, Minimally Successful and Unsatisfactory.)*

7. Q: Can numeric performance requirements be included in a performance plan or written statement of performance requirements?

A: Yes, numeric performance requirements can be established as long as they are attainable by employees and aligned with the unit's goals. Contact Labor Relations (7-2356) to determine whether there is an obligation to bargain the implementation of performance requirements for employees in positions represented by AFSCME Local 2477 and AFSCME Local 2910.

8. Q: What is the lowest percentage weight that can be used for a MAR or JE?

A: HRS recommends that MAR or JE are weighted at least 10% so that the MAR or JE have some impact on the rating.

9. Q: Does changing the percentage weight of a MAR or JE change the percentage of the duties in the position description (PD)?

A: No, official changes to the PD can only be made by the HRS Classification team.

10. Q: When and how do performance requirements get updated?

A: If substantive changes are made to an employee's MAR or JE and performance requirements during the appraisal period, the supervisor must communicate the changes to the employee. For bargaining unit employees, supervisors should work with the Labor Relations team in the Office of Workforce Management to determine whether there is an obligation to bargain the implementation of revised performance requirements. The supervisor and employee should initial and date the changes on the performance plan. The changes become effective immediately or on the date agreed to with the labor organization. Changes should be made at least 90 days prior to the end of the performance period to give staff ample opportunity to perform according to the new performance requirements.

11. Q: Are there pre-determined major areas of responsibility for managers and supervisors?

A: Yes, these are outlined in LCR 2017-2.2, *Workforce Performance Management for Managers and Supervisors, GS-15 and Below*. Manager and supervisor performance plan and performance appraisal forms include the following required major areas of responsibility. The performance plans

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are prepopulated with major duties and performance requirements based on the general description of the MAR. Managers and supervisors should add any technical responsibilities (*listed in the position description (PD) or otherwise assigned*) and requirements under each MAR as appropriate.

The MAR for all Managers are:

- Mission Effectiveness
- Program Management
- Leveraging Diversity
- Individual Work and Special Assignments

The MAR for all Supervisors are:

- Workload Management
- Employee Management
- Leveraging Diversity
- Individual Work and Special Assignments

12. Q: What is a specific assignment?

A: A specific assignment is a project or deliverable with a due date that may be included in the performance plan for each MAR. Specific assignments are normally tied to unit priorities and goals that must be achieved during the appraisal period.

13. Q: How are different grade levels reflected in the performance plans for a career ladder position?

A: It is important for the performance requirements to match the grade levels and there are several ways to show differences between or among performance plans in a career ladder:

Change the requirements: Look at the position descriptions and highlight the main differences. Frequently words like "independently" or "with minimal supervision" or major duties like "providing training" or "giving presentations" make the difference in grade.

Add some major duties: Add some duties to the higher level performance plan that the lower grade performance plan does not contain.

Change the MAR or JE weights: The higher level performance plan may require spending more time doing work in a MAR or JE which is usually more complex and requires a greater level of proficiency.

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Employee Development

14. Q: What is an individual development plan (IDP)?

A: An IDP is a written document describing an employee's professional development goals created by the employee in consultation with the supervisor and others who can advise on existing gaps in skills and competencies required for success in the current position and/or advancement toward career goals. IDPs are not required for employees in positions represented by AFSCME Local 2910. Instead, consistent with Article 27 of 2910's Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), supervisors should document training and development activities with a training and development memo which employees are not required to sign.

15. Q: What is the benefit of employee development?

A: The IDP is designed to help employees reach short and long-term career goals, as well as improve current job performance. The Library aims to be a high performing organization that attracts, develops, motivates and retains talent. Employees who develop relevant skills are more likely to produce the most effective results that benefit the individual, the service unit, and the Library. Supervisors should discuss with employees their training needs and opportunities that would help the employee improve performance in his or her current position, normally at the time of the performance appraisal.

16. Q: How do supervisors engage and motivate employees?

A: Supervisors should recognize their employees' achievements on a regular basis. They should talk to them about how they can grow, learn and develop their personal and professional goals. They should challenge them by setting "stretch" goals and projects. Supervisors should share information, keep employees informed and involve them in decision-making so that they can contribute more effectively to achieving the results they need to meet unit goals.

Performance Appraisal

17. Q: How often is a performance appraisal conducted at the Library?

A: A performance appraisal should be conducted annually. A partial appraisal should also be held when there is a change in supervision, a reassignment or promotion.

18. Q: Why should all employees be encouraged to complete a list of accomplishments?

A: The performance appraisal should reflect the work the employee has accomplished during the entire year. The list provides the employee the opportunity to review his or her accomplishments and to actively participate in the appraisal process. This reinforces the concept of performance management as a shared responsibility. This also serves as a reminder to the supervisor of accomplishments he or she may have forgotten and helps him or her to determine if they are both

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on the same page regarding performance, and if not, enables them to prepare to address the differences. It is important for the supervisor to write a few paragraphs about the employee's accomplishments, and cite examples that will provide feedback that will help the employee achieve strong results during the next appraisal period.

19. Q: Does the supervisor need to comment on all major areas of responsibility and goals?

A: Yes, supervisors should provide employees with a written narrative for each major area of responsibility and goal. A few well-chosen sentences that recognize accomplishments provide employees with the constructive feedback that they want and deserve. The feedback provided should be honest, accurate, timely and based on requirements and specific assignments listed in the performance plan.

20. Q: Do supervisors receive any guidance on assigning performance ratings?

A: Yes, supervisors receive guidelines for assigning performance ratings from several sources. The performance plan and performance appraisal forms contain general definitions of each level of performance. Each rating is assigned a point value and the overall rating is calculated using a simple formula. Point values are: Outstanding (5), Commendable (4), Successful (3), Minimally Successful (2) and Unsatisfactory (0). The overall rating corresponds to a rating range table that helps to ensure the ratings are equitable and fair. Supervisors also are required to take a two-day course, *Planning and Appraising Performance*, that includes practice and discussion on distinguishing levels of performance based on the performance requirements.

21. Q: What is the minimum appraisal period for an employee?

A: The minimum appraisal period for an employee is 90 days. If an employee has not been performing in the same position with the same supervisor for 90 days, contact HRS/WPD for specific guidance.

22. Q: How does the performance appraisal impact promotions?

A: The most recent rating of record and performance awards may be considered in the final evaluation of applicants in any hiring or promotion action. To receive a career ladder promotion the employee must have a current performance rating of at least Successful or Satisfactory and demonstrate the ability to perform at the next higher grade.

Administrative WPM

23. Q: What are the benefits of a common appraisal period (CAP)?

A: When a CAP is implemented all employees in a service unit or other designated group are evaluated at the same time. The other components of WPM follow the same rule. Management must work with the appropriate labor organizations on agreement to move to a CAP.

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The benefits of a CAP include:

Business Planning:

Allows for Library and individual goals to align

Access to overall workforce data as soon as the performance process is complete, making business planning much easier

Equity and Fairness of Rating/Awards:

Typically higher on-time completion rates

Able to assess employee performance in light of business results

Ratings and feedback are fair and consistent

Training:

Easier to arrange and offer training on tools, processes and management skills needed to conduct effective employee performance appraisals

Employees and supervisors can apply learning immediately

Administration:

If any changes to evaluation criteria have to be made, new forms or processes can be distributed to everyone at the same time

Less individual administration time throughout the year

24. Q: What are some good tips on managing the year-end performance management process?

A: The Library encourages employees and supervisors to be diligent about planning, discussing, monitoring and documenting progress throughout the year, rather than emphasizing the annual performance appraisal. Supervisors and employees should prepare mid-year reviews or periodic progress reviews so that they have the opportunity to discuss year-to-date accomplishments, progress on goals, modify goals if necessary and clarify performance expectations for year-end. Early and on-going planning are key factors for a successful performance management cycle. For example, the supervisor should ask for accomplishments one month prior to the end of a performance period; schedule one-on-one meetings in place of some standing meetings; create a unit work plan with all designated responsibilities listed for each employee to facilitate the performance plan review and ask employees to review and update the IDP immediately after the appraisal meeting.

25. Q: Why must the performance plan, IDP, mid-year review, and appraisal be signed?

A: The employee's and supervisor's signatures indicate that they have discussed the content of the documents. This is an important step in finalizing the documents. Supervisors should provide employees up to 5 work days to sign the documents and add comments as desired. If the employee refuses to sign after that, the supervisor should indicate "Employee refused to sign" on the document and finalize the document with his or her own signature. IDPs are not required for employees represented by AFSCME Local 2910. Instead, consistent with Article 27 of 2910's Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), supervisors should document training and development activities with a training and development memo which employees are not required to sign.

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26. Q: What is the process for completing performance documentation for a new employee in his or her probationary period?

A: New employees to the Library are subject to a one-year probationary period under LCR 2010-11, *Probationary Periods for New Employees*. The new employee should be given a performance plan and complete an IDP (or receive a memorandum detailing a training and development conversation) within 30 days of starting at the Library. During this time the supervisor should immediately engage the employee in the work, providing him or her with appropriate and frequent guidance, instruction and counseling. This includes closely observing conduct, general character and performance. Midway through the probationary period, supervisors should complete Form 108, [Six Months Qualifying Period Performance and Conduct Evaluation](#). If the employee successfully completes his or her probationary period, the employee should receive an appraisal within 30 days after the end of the probationary period. If the unit has a common appraisal period the supervisor should seek the advice of his or her WPM point of contact to determine how to align the employee's appraisal period with that CAP.

Employees newly hired or promoted to a supervisory or managerial position are subject to LCR 2010-12, *Probationary Period for New Supervisors and Managers*. The new supervisor should be given a performance plan and complete an IDP, within 30 days of starting, to cover the one-year probationary period. By the end of the probationary period, the new supervisor should receive a Library of Congress Supervisory/Managerial Probation Evaluation. They should also receive a performance appraisal within 30 days after the end of the probationary period.

27. Q: How does the supervisor complete a performance appraisal for an employee who has been reassigned to his or her unit?

A: If the employee has been reassigned from one unit to another unit during the appraisal period, the performance appraisal should reflect the employee's performance during the entire year. The previous supervisor should provide written feedback on the employee's performance of their prior major responsibilities and goals and/or provide a rated close-out review for the portion of the appraisal period that the employee was under his or her supervision.

28. Q. How long should copies of performance plans or requirements, mid-year reviews, and IDPs or training and development memos be kept?

A. All performance plans or requirements, mid-year reviews and IDPs or training and development memos are Library records, under record series #304. Non-Senior Level (SL) employees would fall under #304a4 and be sent to the Records Management Section (RMS) every 4 years, while SL employees would fall under #304b3 and be sent to RMS every 5 years.

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29. Q: How long should performance management files for a former employee be kept?

A: Follow the Library of Congress Records Schedule to determine how long to keep files for GS-15 and below employees:

Latest rating of record 3 years old or less, performance plan upon which it is based, and any summary rating	TEMPORARY. Place records on left side of the OPF and forward to gaining Federal agency upon transfer or to NPRC if employee separates (see Item 301b of this schedule). An agency retrieving an OPF from NPRC will dispose of these documents in accordance with Item 304a(3)(b) of this schedule. GRS 1, Item 23a3a.
All other performance plans and ratings	TEMPORARY. RETAIN in office. DESTROY when 4 years old. GRS 1, Item 23a3b.
All other summary performance appraisal records, including performance appraisals and standards upon which they are based, and supporting documents	TEMPORARY. RETAIN in office. DESTROY 4 years after date of appraisal. GRS 1, Items 23a4-23a5.
Appraisals of unacceptable performance, where a notice of proposed demotion or removal is issued but not effected and all related documents	TEMPORARY. RETAIN in office. DESTROY after the employee completes 1 year of acceptable performance from the date of the written advance notice of proposed removal or reduction-in-grade notice. GRS 1, Item 23a1
All records relating to instruction from a court or settlement	TEMPORARY. RETAIN in office. DESTROY when superseded. GRS 1, Item 23a2.

Visit the Records Management website for more information on the Library of Congress Records Schedule: <http://staff.loc.gov/sites/iss/records-management-unit/>.

30. Q: If the employees’ work is production-focused how does a supervisor balance time for development when they are trying to keep their production on target?

A: Development is intended to improve performance which yields results. It does not have to take a lot of time but can be done in small increments during the workday as long as the work is getting done. Employees may complete development activities like meeting with a mentor, using SkillPort resources, learning from a co-worker or reading relevant books. The supervisor may also encourage employees to select development activities that are directly tied to supporting job performance and

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organizational goals. If a certain skill gap is causing a performance issue, identify development activities that would improve it. For employees who are performing well, suggest activities that would enhance their skills or develop new skills.

31. Q: How is the performance appraisal related to a Quality Step Increase (QSI)?

A: As per LCR 2013, *Pay Administration*, and [5 U.S.C. Section 531.501 through 531.506](#), to be eligible for a QSI, employees must:

- be below step 10 of their grade level
- have received an overall Outstanding rating on his or her appraisal in the last appraisal period
- have demonstrated sustained performance of high quality
- have not received a QSI within the preceding 52 consecutive calendar weeks

32. Q: Has the Guild agreed to the Written Statement of Performance Requirements or the training and development conversation memo?

A: The Written Statement of Performance Requirements is consistent with Article 15 of 2910's Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) and was designed by the Library as a management tool based on best practices for performance management. The Guild has the opportunity to make recommendations to the format as part of bargaining the implementation of performance requirements (when supervisors send the requirements documents to Labor Relations).

Article 27, section 3 of the 2910 CBA requires that "Supervisors shall discuss with employees training needs and opportunities that would help the employee to improve performance in his or her current position, normally at the time of the performance evaluation." In order to demonstrate that supervisors are doing this, HRS recommends the memo format included on its website because the Library needs to show the date of the conversation and training opportunities that were suggested. This does not require the employee to sign the memo.