



Performance Management Policy

GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS

Effective: March 2024

Policy Statement

This Policy establishes a Performance Management System to be uniformly applied across the Public Sector to support the achievement of the National Sustainable Development Agenda 2022+ (NSDA), Agency Strategic and Business Plan (BP) goals.

The Cook Islands Government is committed to building a culture of excellence across the public sector with a skilled, and professional workforce by providing employees opportunities to participate in activities that enhance their leadership skills and grow the ability to function at a high level in a challenging, diverse, and constantly evolving work environment.

Performance Management improves Agency performance by strategically managing employee productivity and performance. It empowers employees to perform through clear expectations on the job role, performance, and conduct.

Scope

This Policy applies to all Public Sector employees.

This Policy does not apply to the following:

- Public Sector Heads of Agencies. (Refer to Heads of Agencies Manual 2018)
- Independent Contractors/Consultants. (Refer to the Contracting for Services Policy 2018)
- Ministers and Members of Parliament.
- Ministerial Support Office employees.
- Island Mayors and Councillors.

Principles

The Public Service Act 2009 (PSA) provides the following values Public Servants must adhere to:

Honesty	Acting honestly, being truthful, and abiding by the laws of the Cook Islands.
Impartiality	Providing impartial advice, acting without fear or favour, and making decisions on their merits.
Service	Serving the people well through faithful service to the Government of the Cook Islands.
Transparency	Taking actions and making decisions in an open and transparent way.
Accountability	Being able to explain the reason for actions taken and taking responsibility for those actions.
Respect	Treating the people, the Government of the Cook Islands, and colleagues with courtesy and respect.
Efficiency and Effectiveness	Achieving good results for the Cook Islands in an economical way.

The duty to act as a good employer (PSA 2009) requires employers to implement and comply with the Cook Islands Government Human Resource policies to ensure the fair and proper treatment of employees during employment, including the impartial recruitment of employees, provide employee capability development opportunities and good and safe working conditions.

The Cook Islands Government Policies and Employment Relations Act 2012 (ERA) prohibit discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic origin, beliefs, religion, gender or sexual preference, maternity status, disability, age, or health status.

Legislation and Regulations

The Public Service Act 2009, Employment Relations Act 2012, Public Service (Identification of Departments) Order 2008 and other relevant legislation.

Definitions

Agency means any Public Service Department, instrument, or agent of the Government and includes a body corporate or organisation that is wholly owned or controlled by the Crown.

Coaching is when an employee's personal and professional development is actively supported to perform well in their job through instruction and/or training.

Competencies are a combination of knowledge, skills and attributes directly related to the job.

Conduct is the way in which an individual behaves and follows Public Service and Agency values.

Direct Reports are those with responsibility for managing employees including but not limited to Managers, Supervisors and Team Leaders.

Employee means any person who is an employee of the Public Sector. It does not include an independent contractor/consultant engaged under a contract for services.

Employer means the Public Service Commissioner or Heads of Public Sector Agencies or their delegated authority.

Job Description (JD) is the document used to describe the job content, responsibilities, organisational context, and specific competencies required to perform the job to the expectations of the Agency.

Key Output Deliverables are the programmes and actions in Agency Annual Business Plans

Key Performance Indicators (KPI) are qualitative or quantitative measures, directly linked to performance targets, to assess performance.

Key Results Areas (KRA) in job descriptions, are used to determine performance targets, linked to the Agency's Annual Business Plan.

Leadership Development involves providing employees with knowledge, skills, experience and coaching to attain key competencies for leadership roles.

Mentoring is when support and/or guidance is provided to an employee's and/or teams personal or professional development regardless of the role or position they hold.

Performance Appraisal refers to a formal step in the Performance Management process that assesses the performance of an employee.

Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) has specific development activities to improve key areas of an employee's performance in their job and aims to improve poor performance.

Performance Management (PM) is an ongoing process of identifying, monitoring, evaluating, and developing the work performance of employees to enable overall achievement of Agency goals and targets.

Performance Targets are outputs or goals to be achieved.

Professional Development Plan (PDP) documents an employee's annual performance objectives, focus areas from KRAs and KPIs, professional development plans, progress reviews and performance appraisal outcomes and measures agreed between the employer and employee. It incorporates and encompasses goal setting, training, development, and performance of an employee.

Public Service Commissioner means the Public Service Commissioner appointed under Article 73 of the Constitution and Section 5 of the Public Service Act.

Procedures

Employers are responsible for administering this, Policy. The employer is responsible for ensuring all policies are easily accessible to employees. However, employees are responsible for ensuring they read and understand this Policy and any relevant Government policies. A breach of the Policy may be considered misconduct and may be subject to disciplinary action and/or dismissal.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Office of the Public Service Commissioner (OPSC) must:

- Provide awareness and guidance on performance management.
- Monitor Agency compliance with this Policy.
- Investigate unresolved employment disputes that may arise from this Policy.

Direct Reports must:

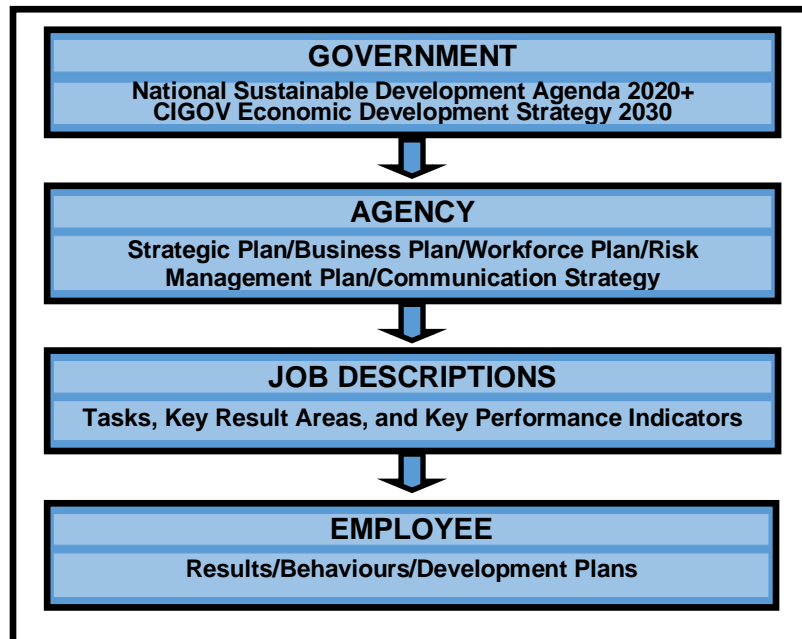
- Ensure staff understand how their performance is assessed and links to salary/allowances and training and development.
- Hold employees accountable for performance and provide regular feedback on their performance.
- Ensure agreed changes to job descriptions are reflected in performance agreements and approved by the Head of Agency.
- Provide coaching and mentoring support to enable the achievement of performance targets.
- Manage and resolve disputes that may arise from this Policy.

Employees must:

- Understand how performance management is applied in their Agency.
- Understand how their performance contributes to the Agency's Business Plan targets.
- Participate fully in the performance management process.
- Be accountable for meeting performance targets and address performance issues.
- Be responsible for self-development and learning.

Performance Management

Performance Management clarifies linkages between National, Agency and Employee strategy and goals.



Performance Management offers the following benefits for:

Agencies

- Produces a highly motivated and productive workforce.
- Supports achievement of the Agency goals and outputs.
- Facilitates a teamwork environment and culture that promotes employee engagement and retention.
- Provides a systematic way of assessing and improving Agency performance.
- Supports performance recognition and informs succession, training, and development plans.

Employers/Direct Reports

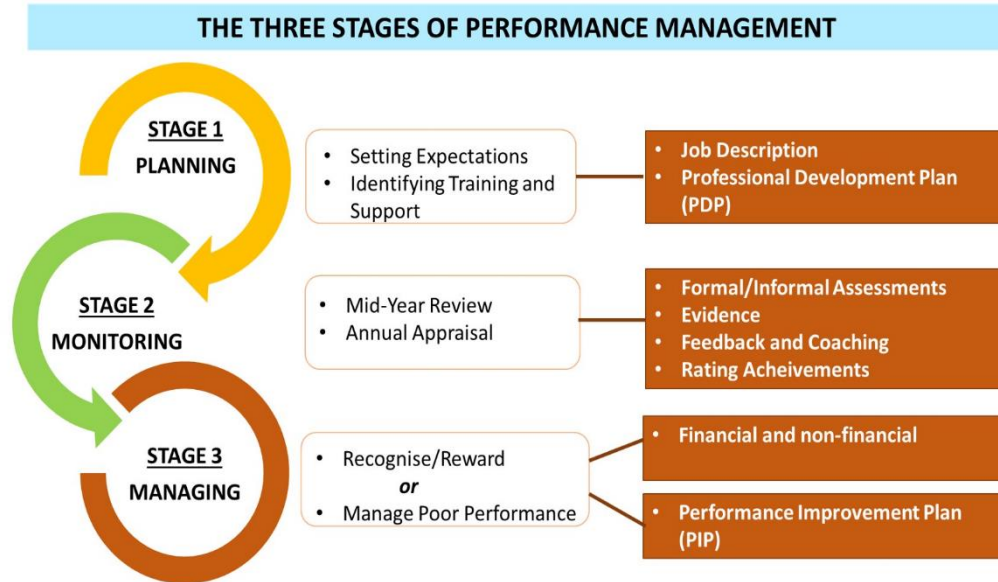
- Facilitates transparent and consistent performance management practices.
- Provides a systematic way of assessing and managing employee performance.
- Enables professional development of employees for career progression.

Employees

- Clarifies job and performance expectations linked to the Agency's goals.
- Promotes job satisfaction and engagement in the performance of the Agency.
- Provides clear linkages between performance, salary/allowances and training and development.
- Enables feedback, recognition, and career planning.

Stages of the Performance Management System

The Performance Management System is comprised of three key stages which are managed using the support documents provided. (Refer to Associated Documents Section) Alongside the policy, these documents will assist employers and Direct Reports in delivering a high-quality Performance Management System.



Stage 1: Planning for Performance Management

Planning is the first step in performance management, and this starts with identifying the strengths and capabilities of each employee. The Agencies objectives and performance goals should be communicated to the employee and aligned to their job descriptions. The employee's job description should be referred to in setting both long and short term targets (KRAs and KPIs) that the employee will need to focus on delivering and to ensure alignment with the Agency business deliverables relevant to the role. Clear measures for how those targets and goals will be assessed need to be set and any training, resources and support should also be provided.

The following should be noted for the planning stage:

- With the exception to those Agencies that work on a calendar year, the Direct Report and employee complete the relevant Tables in the Professional Development Plan for the coming fiscal year in May to July. For new employees this step should be completed at the end of the employee's first three months of employment.
- Direct Reports and employees jointly agree on performance targets and measures, identified as focus areas from KRAs and KPIs for the financial year. Where annual validation against professional standards is required for a particular role, these standards will be included in the Performance Development Plan.

Stage 2: Monitoring Performance - Performance Review and Appraisal

While formal performance reviews must be undertaken twice a year, informal performance reviews, which can include regular progress meetings, must take place throughout the year. The purpose of both formal and informal meetings is to monitor progress against agreed performance targets and measures outlined in the Professional Development Plan, to assess the impact of training and development activities undertaken on performance, provide coaching/mentoring, discuss achievements and areas for improvement and changes that may be required to be made to the PDP. An Informal Performance Meeting Record (Annex 07) is recommended to be used to record details that may be relevant for the Mid-Year Progress Review and Annual Performance Appraisal.

Mid-Year Progress Review and Annual Appraisal

Mid-year progress review and Annual Performance Appraisal should formally document:

- Progress to date on performance targets.
- Any challenges affecting the achievement of the targets (due to changes in the internal or external operating environment).
- Any modifications or changes that may need to be made to the targets.
- Any formal and informal reviews conducted throughout the year
- The rating achieved against performance targets (KRAs & KPIs).

- The rating achieved against the Public Service values.
- Any discussion on the overall performance rating.
- Any development or coaching/mentoring support required.
- Any discussion on future training and development needs (i.e., career progression or performance improvement).
- Any discussion on the employee's health and mental wellbeing and any support required i.e. referral to relevant support services.

The following should be noted for this stage:

- The Mid-Year Progress Review starts in November and must be completed by 31 December.
- The Annual Performance Appraisal starts in May and must be completed by 31 July.
- The final stage of the Performance Appraisal meeting is to reset the targets and training and development needs for the coming year by completing the relevant sections in a new PDP. (Refer to the section Preparing Your Professional Plan in the Performance Management Policy Guide)
- If an agreement cannot be reached regarding the overall performance rating the final decision rests with the Direct Report in the first instance, but if required it can be raised with a higher-level Manager or HoA who will then make a final binding decision.

Stage Three: Managing Performance – Recognition and Performance Improvement

The Annual Performance Appraisal confirms the employee's performance and conduct ratings and enables employers to recognise performance or address poor performance.

Possible management actions that Agencies can consider according to the performance ratings, can include:

- Recognition – this involves acknowledging employee performance through formal or informal means. For example: a letter or an email to an employee recognising good performance and acknowledging a 'job well done', or recognition of an achievement or goal reached at a staff meeting.
- Rewards – can be directly financial with like a bonus and/or increment salary increases. Or indirectly financial like awarding Time in Lieu (TOIL), leadership and management development, coaching and/or mentoring or career progression.
- Performance Improvement Plan – this would be considered by an employer if the staff performance rating achieved was low and could include, coaching and/or mentoring, or termination.

Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)

A Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) aims to improve poor performance or conduct resulting from several factors which may include, but not limited to low productivity, insufficient knowledge, or skills, poor accountability, or poor time management and behavioural concerns. It should be noted that a PIP can be implemented at any time during an employee's employment including outside the Performance Appraisal process as a means of improving poor performance.

The PIP has one key area of focus: training .

a) Training may involve:

- Development to address gaps in performance.
- Job rotation or secondment.
- Counselling for behavioural issues inconsistent with the Agency or Public Service values.
- Regular monitoring, support, coaching/mentoring, and feedback.

The PIP timeframe can be anywhere between one to six months with the following options available at the end of this period:

1. If the employee shows acceptable performance - No PIP required.
2. If the employee shows improvements but needs more time to embed the changes - PIP extended.
3. If the employee shows a lack of improvement or motivation to improve according to the PIP – termination.

Other Provisions

All records relating to the administration of this Policy must be kept for at least seven years for audit purposes and are only accessible by the employer and/or authorised staff. After the required seven-year period, the Agency may destroy the documentation in adherence with Government official information management policies.

The Office of the Public Service Commissioner is responsible for reviewing and/or updating this Policy and associated documents as the need arises or at a minimum once every three years.

Other Information

For policy queries contact the Office of the Public Service Commissioner on phone (682) 29 421 or email: opsc.policy@cookislands.gov.ck

This Policy, associated documents and templates can be found on the Public Service Shared Drive and on the OPSC website www.psc.gov.ck.

Associated Documents

Remuneration Policy

Training and Development Policy

Code of Conduct Policy

Employment Disputes Policy

Secondment Policy

Recruitment Policy

Job Evaluation Policy

Cook Islands Government Financial Policies and Procedures Manual (CIGFPPM)

Annex 01 Performance Management Process Map

Annex 02 Performance Management Guide

Annex 03 Professional Development Plan

Annex 05 PDP Planning Guide

Annex 06 Performance Improvement Plan

Annex 07 Informal Performance Review Meeting Form

Template Documents

The templates set the minimum standards based on CIGOV Policies, ERA, and PSA. They can be edited to suit individual Agency requirements as long as the minimum standards are not removed.

Annex 04 PDP Summary Letter Template