



This Guide provides key information on the performance management of employees across the Public Sector including how to complete the Performance Development Plan. This Guide should not be used as a substitute for the Performance Management Policy. All templates and associated documents are listed in the Performance Management Policy.

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.

Exclusions

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.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

All employees must have a Professional Development Plan (PDP) which should be completed by 31 July annually for existing employees. For new employees, it is recommended that Tables 1 and 2 in the PDP are completed at the end of the first 3 months of employment. If the new employee has a Probationary Period as part of their employment agreement, the Direct Report and employee shall participate in completing a Probation Period Management Plan. Any outstanding targets or training and development is then transferred to the PDP on completion of their Probation Period. (refer to the Recruitment Policy 2023)

A formal performance review must be undertaken twice a year: mid-year (by 31 Dec annually) and at the end of the financial year (by 31 July annually). However, informal performance reviews must take place throughout the year as this allows the Direct Report and employee to monitor progress against agreed performance targets and measures outlined in the PDP, and to assess the impact of training and development activities undertaken to support performance. It also allows the opportunity to address any challenges and mitigate their impact early.

For employees on Secondment for less than 6 months in duration, the Home Agency conducts the formal performance appraisal, with the Host Agency providing input and support where applicable. For Secondments longer than 6 months, the Host Agency conducts the performance appraisal with input from the Home Agency where applicable.

Where possible all staff should endeavour to be paperless and avoid printing and complete all the required PDP Tables electronically or use software programmes such as Google Docs.

PREPARING YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (TABLES 1 & 2)

The Direct Report and employee are to discuss and agree on the Key Result Areas (KRAs), Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) taken from the Job Description and any Professional Development and Training Needs that will be the priority for the financial year. Agreed targets will also include validation against professional standards required for a particular role (i.e. roles in education and health).

Meeting to formalise PDP

- In preparation for the meeting, the Direct Report emails the PDP and the Performance Management Policy Guide to the employee to allow sufficient time for them to complete their sections and prepare for the meeting.

- The email should also include meeting details i.e., time, location and could also include self-assessment questions for the employee to consider as detailed in the Professional Development & Performance Appraisal Planning Guide (Annex 06).
- The employee must email back the completed PDP, to the Direct Report prior to meeting.
- The agreed PDP must be signed by both parties, with the date scheduled for the next formal appraisal meeting noted.

Table 1 - Planning Annual Performance Objectives, Job Description Key Results Areas (KRAs)

- Targets to be reached by the employee that will support the achievement of the Agency goals linked to the Annual Business Plan (based on workload and other priorities, this may not include all KRA’s in the JD).
- Measures on how the employee will reach each of the targets.
- Calculates the weighting or the percentage of time the employee spends on each target (Total weighting should equal 100%). *This is optional and does not have to be used when completing the tables.*
- Notes the evidence required to describe the actions to reach the target.
- Sets the timeline for each target to be achieved.
- Confirms any additional work not included in the Job Description but agreed with the Direct Report as a priority taken from the Agency Business Plan or other National Policy priorities (e.g., Economic Roadmap) for the financial year.

Example for Table 1:

Target KRA	Measures (KPIs)	Evidence	Timeline
<i>Complete a one-year project within schedule and budget</i>	<i>Budget variance, schedule variance, stakeholder acceptance</i>	<i>Project progress reports submitted on time detailing milestones achieved, project schedule and stakeholder feedback</i> <i>Final Report submitted on time at completion of project.</i>	<i>Project initiated and completed by 30 June</i>

Table 2 – Professional Development Plan and Training Development Needs

- Can be for work goals and/or as part of professional or career development.
- This plan feeds into the Training and Development Plans for the Agency each year.
- Direct Report and employee should discuss and agree on the training and development that may be required to enhance performance, improve skills, and career progression.
- Outline the type of training, formal or informal, length of training, any costs to the Agency and how the benefits of the training will be assessed.

Professional Development Leave

An employer can approve professional development leave for employees to attend job related workshops, conferences, or work attachments designed to develop employee capability. Professional development can take place in-country or overseas and should be identified in the Professional Development and Training Needs tables in the Professional Development Plan. Additional development and training can be approved by the employer as opportunities arise. Refer to Leave Policy for more details.

MID-YEAR PROGRESS REVIEW (TABLES 3 & 4) DUE BY 31 DECEMBER

During the Mid-Year review, the Direct Report will formally review progress on Tables 1 and 2 and formally document any necessary adjustments.

Table 3 - Mid-Year Performance Progress Review of Targets from Tables 1 and 2

- Document progress on performance targets from Table 1 and development plans from Table 2.
- Identify any challenges affecting the achievement of the targets (due to changes in the internal or external operating environment).

- Adjust targets that need to be changed.
- Adjust development or coaching support required.
- Direct Report and employee separately rate each target, taking into consideration that this is the mid-year review and not all targets will have been met. For example: The target in Table 1 of the PDP for the coming year, is to upskill 6 employees over the next 12 months and by the mid-year review 3 employees have been trained, this is 50% of the annual target so the rating would be 3 performance meets expectations.
- An agreed rating is recorded, with the appropriate level of discussion and consultation.

Table 4 - Mid-Year Review of Standard of Demonstrating Public Service Values

- Separately rates the employees conduct based on how they have demonstrated the Public Service Values with a numerical rating that is then converted to an alphabetical rating (A, B, C).
- Refer to Public Service Values Rating Criteria Pg 6.
- An agreed rating is recorded, with the appropriate level of discussion and consultation.

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL (TABLES 5 & 6)

The Annual Appraisal consolidates formal and informal reviews conducted throughout the year.

Table 5 - Annual Performance Appraisal of Targets from Table 1 and 2

- Identifies what has been observed, discussed, and agreed through informal and formal sessions throughout the year – the notes written, and evidence collected along the way.
- Notes the discussions and agreements on expected achievements during the Mid-Year Review session.
- Confirms evidence for achievement of targets as per the measures that have been agreed during the goal setting stage.
- Rates the achievement of performance targets (KPIs) with numeric ratings (1-5).
- An agreed rating is recorded, with the appropriate level of discussion and consultation.

Table 6 - Annual Review of Standard of Demonstrating Public Service Values

- Separately rates the employees conduct based on how they have demonstrated the Public Service Values with a numerical rating that is then converted to an alphabetical rating (A, B, C).
- Refer to Public Service Values Rating Criteria Pg 6.
- An agreed rating is recorded, with the appropriate level of discussion and consultation.

Final Stage

The final stage of the Performance Appraisal meeting is to reset the targets and training and development needs for the coming year by completing Tables 1 & 2 in a new PDP. (Refer to section Preparing Your Professional Plan (Tables 1 & 2))

FORMAL PERFORMANCE MEETINGS

Formal Performance Appraisal Meetings are conducted by Direct Reports and their staff to:

- Provide the opportunity for the employee to support their self-assessed ratings with evidence and examples.
- Discuss and agree on an overall performance rating (e.g., 3A).
- Confirm a combined rating for the employee using the KRA Targets (numeric rating) and Values (alphabetical ratings) e.g., 5A.
- 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.
- Discuss any future development for career progression or performance improvement.
- Identify future plans or forward planning for the year that will be reviewed at the mid-year and annual appraisals.
- A Summary of Meeting letter is sent to an employee confirming any financial rewards, i.e., bonus or increment, other forms of recognition, or training to be undertaken. This letter can also be used as a supporting document

for any notices to HR/Payroll. Any changes to salary must be processed through the completion of a Notice of Employee Adjustment (NEA), which is to be submitted to OPSC.

INFORMAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW MEETINGS

Informal performance review meetings, or progress meetings are an opportunity for Direct Reports and their staff to discuss:

- Job performance.
- Identify achievements.
- Issues and/or problems.
- Provide feedback on recent events.
- Formulate goals.
- Reset targets and progress.
- Employee health and wellbeing.

They should occur on a regular basis throughout the year and can be conducted in different ways, including but not limited to:

- Online meetings.
- Regular/weekly catch-up meetings.
- One-to-one or group meetings.

An Informal Performance Review 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.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR RECOGNISING PERFORMANCE

The Cook Islands Government (CIGOV) Pay Structure provides for a position to be placed in a Job band (A-K) which is linked to a salary range (minimum – maximum). Job Bands A-E have five incremental steps and job bands F-K have ten.

Placement of a position in a band, results from the job evaluation process (refer Job Evaluation Policy):

- Placement of an individual employee on a step within a band, results from an evaluation of that employee's Job Description. (Refer Remuneration Policy)
- Pay progression is based on competence and performance according to the guidelines in the Performance Management Policy and Remuneration Policy.

Salary Increment

Employees whose performance meets expectations in their roles may be rewarded with a salary increment of one step, while employees who display above average performance may receive a salary increment that moves their salary up more than one step.

Performance Bonus

Where an employee is demonstrating exceptional performance, they may receive both a salary increment and a performance bonus.

An employee that has been on the maximum step of the position band for at least 12 months can be considered for a performance bonus payment. The employee must demonstrate exceptional performance in the role.

Performance Bonuses are regulated by the Ministry of Finance & Economic Management CIGOV Cook Islands Financial Policies and Procedures Manual, Part C, Section 10A and this should be referred to in the first instance. The policy does state that:

- A provision of a minimum of 1% (and up to 2%) of the gross personnel appropriation of a Ministry may be allocated specifically for performance bonus payments in each FY.
- An application for a bonus payment can only be considered when a salary increment is not a suitable method of rewarding the employee as the employee is already at the top of their salary band.

- A bonus is a one-off payment which is not consolidated into basic pay and cannot be made more than once during a financial year.
- A bonus cannot be made for work which has already been rewarded in other ways.
- It cannot be used to reward those employees on a probationary basis.
- Performance must be rated at the 'exceptional' level to qualify.
- The amount of the bonus paid is at the discretion of the HoA however it is recommended that it is no more than 5% of the employees' annual base salary in any financial year.
- To promote consistency in the timing of processing performance bonus payments, requests for the payment of performance bonuses shall be lodged with MFEM in the first quarter of the financial year.
- HOA's have the authority to reward staff with bonuses, however all performance bonuses should be transparent with performance measures and the value placed against those measures.
- Employees on a market premium already sit on the top step of the relevant band, therefore do not qualify for a salary increment but can be rewarded with a performance bonus for exceptional performance.
- Salary increments and performance bonuses must be managed within the Agency's budget.

Other Forms of Recognition

Agencies that are constrained by fiscal restrictions should consider other affordable options such as additional leave which must be taken within a defined period and detailed in writing in the PDP Meeting Summary Letter. If this option is chosen, it should be managed through the TOIL process. There may be other forms of recognition relevant to the Agency or role, however it is important to note that this should be an alternative form of valuing the competent and exceptional performance of employees and should not be an automatic default. Whenever possible, increments and/or bonus payments should be made in the first instance.

MANAGING POOR PERFORMANCE (PIP)

A Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) aims to improve poor performance resulting from several factors which may include but are not limited to low productivity, insufficient knowledge or skills, poor behaviour, poor accountability, or poor time management.

A PIP meeting must be arranged by the Direct Report with the employee to discuss their performance with the intention that a PIP may be implemented. The purpose of the discussion between the employee and Direct Report is to resolve and improve poor performance that includes training and coaching activities, timeframe for improvements and expected performance achievements. In preparation for the meeting, the Direct Report emails the employee with meeting details including, outlining the purpose of the meeting, the meeting date, time and location and any preparations for the employee to prepare for the meeting.

The Performance Improvement process is outlined below:

Table 1 - Agreement on areas for improvement and development actions to be undertaken

- Use the recommended template (Annex 03) and record the areas that require improvement and the impact the performance gap has on the Agency operations e.g., lost revenue, wasted materials, low quality of work etc.
- Describe the actions or activities that need to be undertaken to meet the performance expectations.
- Identify or list the specific result to be achieved and/or observable behaviour to be noted, and clear criteria for measuring performance.
- The PIP should include any resources that are required and support to be provided.
- The Direct Report must ensure that the employee is given time to give their own feedback on their performance and be provided the opportunity to explain any reasons for their underperformance.

Consequences/Next Steps - Direct Reports to specify any consequences that will result if the Employee:

- Does not meet the PIP expectations satisfactorily as outlined, then if demotion or termination is a possibility that should be stated here.
- Does not meet the PIP expectations satisfactorily, but the employee shows improvements but needs more time to embed the changes, then the timeframe can be extended.

- Satisfactorily meets the expectations as outlined in the PIP, the PIP will be signed and filled in the employee's personnel file. No further action needs to be taken.

Progress Review Sessions

Progress Review sessions are scheduled during the initial PIP meeting and are used as 'check in' points to assess progress on the agreed actions and/or activities to be undertaken by the employee and on their performance since the last meeting.

Table 2 – Reviewing the Results of Development Activities/Actions that have been Agreed

- Review progress on overall performance expectations and training and support being provided.
- Review progress/impact of actions and/or activities the employee has undertaken.
- A discussion with the employee as to whether their performance has been satisfactory or non-satisfactory and outlining any consequences. The Direct Report must ensure that the employee is given time to give their feedback on their progress and any reasons why improvements have been slower than expected or not been made.
- If an agreement cannot be reached regarding the PIP 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.
- A copy of the PIP must be sent to the employee.

Termination Process

In accordance with the Individual Employment Agreement (Section 11) and under the Public Service Act (2009) (Part 4, Clause 21) Duty to Act as a good employer, employees can be dismissed based on poor performance. It is strongly advised that this is a 'last resort' option and all reasonable measures have been taken by the employer to allow for improvement in performance by the employee. I.e.PIP, training and development opportunities, coaching and mentoring etc.

If the employer has exhausted all options available and the employee's performance has not improved, the employer is obligated to provide the employee with four weeks' notice in writing to the employer. (Refer to the Individual Employment Agreement template)

Performance Appraisal Ratings Descriptors for Achievement of Targets

An achievement rating scale is provided to help assess the progress of employees' performance in implementing their Job Description work programmes. The rating helps the employee to clarify their relative strengths (or developing strengths), highlight the priority areas on which to focus to lift performance, and prepare to meet their future challenges.

Performance measures are rated numerically, while the **Conduct** of the employee is rated alphabetically.

Ratings are on a Likert type scale from 1-5 (with 1 being the lowest). You cannot rate an employee with a fractional rating, i.e. 1.5 or 4.25. Ratings must be whole numbers. The ratings can be rounded up or down to the nearest decimal point for the final rating. These need to be applied consistently and referenced in the Report. For example, if an employee received 3.5, you would round that up to 4. If an employee received 3.3, you would round that down to 3. If the score is above 0.5 you round up and below 0.5, you round it down.

The **Overall performance rating** is a combination of a numeric for performance (1-5) and alphabetical rating for conduct (A/B/C) e.g.3B.

5	4	3	2	1
Exceptional Performance	Above average performance	Performance meets expectations	In development or needs improvement	Unsatisfactory performance, requires support
Ratings Performance Criteria for Ratings				
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consistently works at a superior exemplary level in all aspects of the job. - Exceeds in all individual and divisional performance targets. - Consistently makes exceptional contributions to achievement of the job or divisional goals. - Continually demonstrates exceptional people and performance management skills. 			
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performs beyond expectations in most aspects of the job. - Exceeds most performance targets. - Makes exceptional or significant contributions to achievement of the Divisional goals. 			
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fulfils all job requirements. - Achieves agreed performance targets. - Performance results in expected contributions to Divisional or Agency goals. 			
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fulfils most of all job requirements. - Requires improvements in areas noted. - Performance improvement plan (PIP) may be required. 			
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does not fulfil most job requirements. - Requires significant improvements in job performance. - PIP is compulsory. - The possibility of termination is considered in extreme cases. 			

Public Service Values Rating Criteria

The Public Service Values are Honesty, Impartiality, Service, Transparency, Accountability, Respect, Effective & Efficiency. Employees must maintain high standards of ethical behaviour and represents Cook Islands Government and Public Sector act as good ambassadors.

A Score out of 5, using the numerical rating table above, is selected for each value, with the overall average score converted into an alphabetical rating. (See table below)

Values Ratings Conversion Table

Numerical Rating	Alphabetical Rating	
4 or 5	A	You are a role model and embody the Public Service Values
3	B	You demonstrate the Public Service Values
2 or 1	C	You do not demonstrate all of the Public Service Values

HONESTY - Acting honestly, being truthful, and abiding by the laws of the Cook Islands.

- Acts with integrity.
- Maintains professionalism.
- Admits when mistakes have been made.
- Recognised as someone who is honest.

IMPARTIALITY - Providing impartial advice, acting without fear or favour, and making decisions on their merits.

- Does not favour one person over another or give preferential treatment to family or friends.
- Treats all people fairly.
- Provides equal opportunities.
- Declares a conflicts of interest.

SERVICE - Serving the people well through faithful service to the government of the Cook Islands.

- Values diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives.
- Committed to providing Excellent Customer Service.
- Promotes the good reputation of the Public Sector.
- Serves the public interest.
- Supports the Government and upholds political neutrality.

TRANSPARENCY - Taking actions and making decisions in an open way.

- Is open and honest about actions and decisions.
- Reports relevant information.
- Does not talk about others behind their back.
- Processes and systems are followed.
- Promotes transparency.

ACCOUNTABILITY - Being able to explain the reason for actions taken and taking responsibility for those actions.

- Is able to account for actions.
- Exercises due diligence.
- Sets high standards in all areas of work.
- Actions achieve organisation outcomes.
- Able to stand up to public scrutiny.

RESPECT - Treating the people, the Government of the Cook Islands, and colleagues with courtesy and respect.

- Collaborate with others and value everyone's contribution.
- Listen to others and responds respectfully.
- Works as part of the team.
- Is non-discriminatory.
- Is polite and courteous.

EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS - Achieving good results for the Cook Islands in an economical way.

- Communicates effectively.
- Is punctual and meets deadlines.
- Does not waste time or resources.
- Gives their very best all the time.

Final Rating Scale

Rating	Interpretation	Possible Management Actions
5A 5B	Exceptional performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bonus and/or Increment - Leadership/Talent development - Career progression/promotion - Other forms of recognition
4A 4B	Performance exceeds expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bonus and/or Increment - Leadership/Talent development - Other forms of recognition
3A 3B	Performance meets expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increment - Leadership development - Other forms of recognition
2A 2B	Performance improvement required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performance Improvement Plan
1A 1B	Major performance improvement required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performance Improvement Plan - Coach and/or Mentor, Terminate
5C 4C 3C	Employee performing but conduct requires improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performance Improvement Plan to address the conduct issues identified
2C 1C	Major performance and conduct improvement required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performance Improvement Plan - Resignation - Termination