Performance Management for Agency Heads Covered by the Agency Head Salary Commission

Frequently Asked Questions

New Process

What is changing?

The Agency Head Salary Commission (AHSC) is implementing a new performance management system to facilitate the collection of consistent information regarding the performance of all agency heads. The new process will be an electronic process. This information will be used, in part, to make salary determinations.

What is the review period?

The process is based on a two-fiscal-year review cycle.

What are the components of the performance management process?

The performance management process has three primary components including: (1) establishing performance expectations; (2) mid-review period assessment; and (3) final performance evaluation.

How will the new performance management system be documented?

The performance management process will be documented using Adobe Sign functionality. This process will allow the necessary performance document to be completed, signed and stored electronically and ensure consistent and complete documentation is retained for each agency head. In addition to the electronic Adobe form a Word document was created to facilitate collaboration in creating the agency head's performance expectations.

Will training on the new system be provided?

Yes, training will be provided detailing how to enter information into the Adobe form and move the form through the electronic signature process.

Establishing Performance Expectations

What are performance expectations?

At the beginning of the review period the agency head and governing authority work together to establish goals that must be accomplished and major projects that must be completed in the applicable review period. This includes defining success criteria which measures the standards by which the goals and projects will be evaluated. In addition, the agency head and governing authority will identify key competencies needed for the agency head to be successful.

What are goals?
Goals are recurring job duties critical to the ability of an agency or institution to achieve its mission. Each agency head should identify three to five goals. *Example: Partner with agencies to create and enhance shared services.*

What are major projects?
Major projects are non-recurring initiatives that have a significant impact on the ability of the agency or institution to achieve its mission. Each agency head should identify three to five major projects. If an agency is unable to identify three projects, the agency head should enter "N/A" in the electronic form to indicate this. *Example: Facilitate the merging of the administrative functions for the new SC Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities.*

What are success criteria?
Success criteria should be established for each goal and each major project. The success criteria for a goal should include a description of the expected results if the goal is executed successfully and a description of how the agency head will achieve these results. The success criteria for a major project should include the reason for the project, the major deliverables of the project, a description of the results if the project is successfully completed and how the agency head will complete the project.

What are competencies?
Competencies are those skills or performance characteristics that are necessary to successfully perform the job responsibilities of an agency head.

The AHSC has identified the following four competencies to be included in every agency head's performance expectations:

- *Leadership* – Can be relied upon to guide others to the accomplishment of objectives and responsibilities, to promote teamwork, and to resolve problems.
- *Strategic Planning* – Develops strategic objectives and action plans, implements plans effectively and determines how to measure and sustain accomplishments.
- *Customer Service* – Effectively and efficiently meet the needs of those served by continually assessing performance based on customer feedback.
- *Financial Management* – Able to manage budgets and determine priorities for expenditure of funds to achieve the agency's short- and long-term goals.

One additional competency will be selected by the agency head and governing authority to be included in the agency head's performance expectations. Options for this additional competency are:

- *Problem Analysis* – Able to identify problems and relevant issues and breaks problem into components. Sees relationships and alternative solutions and arrives at sound conclusions through a logical process.
- *Delegating* – Uses staff members effectively by allocating decisions and other responsibilities to the appropriate employees. Provides clear instructions and leadership so delegated tasks are properly completed. Establishes and empowers teams, where appropriate, to improve work systems and processes.
- *Motivation* – Creates an organizational environment or climate in which employees can perform to the best of their ability. Establishes employee motivation by giving employees timely and regular recognition and feedback for work performed. Ensures that employee is aware of the possibility of advancement and growth. Develops a sense of trust, respect and responsibility.
- *Quality Focus* – Fosters culture of continuous improvement through ongoing assessment of agency processes and systems. Focuses on customer service.
- *Stress Tolerance* – Performs well under pressure. Maintains composure, good judgment and adequate performance level under pressure caused by deadlines, workload, opposition, and other causes.

For competencies, the definitions are the success criteria the agency head will be evaluated against.

What happens if the performance expectations need to be updated?
As part of the mid-review period review the agency head and governing authority will review the established performance expectations to determine if updates or changes are needed. If small changes are needed the existing form will be updated. If new goals or projects need to be added or other significant changes are needed a new performance form will be created.

Mid Review Period Performance Assessment

What happens during the mid-year review?
At the end of the first fiscal year in the review cycle the agency head's performance will be assessed against the established success criteria. The agency head will provide a self-assessment of their performance that will be reviewed by the governing authority who will then complete a performance assessment. A performance review rating will not be assigned during the mid-period review.

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Final Performance Evaluation

What happens during the final review?

Following the end of the second fiscal year of the review cycle the agency heads' performance will be evaluated. The agency head will provide a self-assessment of their performance that will be reviewed by the governing authority who will then complete a performance review. The governing authority will assign a rating to each goal, major project and competency and an overall performance rating. In addition, the governing authority will provide a narrative describing the agency head's performance for each goal, major project and competency and overall performance.

What are the ratings?

The rating options include: (1) substantially exceeds expectations; (2) exceeds expectations; (3) meets expectations; (4) does not fully meet expectations; and (5) needs immediate improvement to meet expectations.

If an agency head receives an assessment of "Substantially Exceeds Expectations" on any single goal, major project or competency or as an overall assessment, the governing authority must provide an explanation identifying the specific achievements beyond those established in the applicable success criteria that warrant this assessment.

If an agency head receives an assessment of "Does Not Fully Meet Expectations" or "Needs Immediate Improvement to Meet Expectations" on any single goal, major project or competency or as an overall assessment, the governing authority must provide an explanation of the reason for the assessment and must work with the agency head to create a plan to immediately correct the identified deficiencies.

Timeline

When will each agency head review occur?

Agencies are assigned to one of two groups, each undergoing reviews with staggered timeframes. For the initial implementation, Group One will complete a full two-fiscal-year review period. Group Two will initially complete a single fiscal year review period and, thereafter, be on a two-fiscal year review period.

1. Group One includes all technical colleges and non-cabinet agencies and the initial review period will be the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 fiscal years.

2. Group Two includes all higher education institutions and cabinet agencies and the initial review period will be the 2025-2026 fiscal year. This group will not have a mid-review period assessment during the initial implementation.

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When will performance expectations for new agency heads be established?
Performance expectations must be established for new agency heads no later than 30 days following their confirmation or official appointment using the process described previously. The agency head will then be evaluated on the schedule assigned to the agency. This may require a short review period to move them to the applicable schedule.

What are the important dates for this process?
Below are the milestone dates for both the initial implementation phase and subsequent following fiscal years for each of the two groups.

Group One - All technical colleges and non-cabinet agencies.

Review Period Fiscal Years 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 (Initial Implementation)	
July 1, 2025	The review period begins.
No later than Oct. 31, 2025	Performance expectations are finalized and entered into the Word document.
On or around Nov. 1, 2025	Agency heads and governing authorities receive notification that the electronic form is available to enter the performance expectations.
No later than Nov. 30, 2025	Performance expectations are entered into the electronic form.
On or around July 1, 2026	Agency heads and governing authorities receive notification that the electronic form is available to enter the mid-review period assessment.
No later than Sept. 15, 2026	Mid-review period assessment completed, entered into the electronic form and submitted to Blythe Littlefield.
On or around Sept. 15, 2026	Agency heads and governing authorities receive notification that the electronic form is available to review and update performance expectations if needed.
No later than Oct. 1, 2026	Performance expectations are updated if needed, entered into the electronic form and submitted to Blythe Littlefield.
On or around July 1, 2027	Agency heads and governing authorities receive notification that the electronic form is available to enter the final performance evaluation.
No later than Sept. 15, 2027	Final evaluation completed, entered into the electronic form and submitted to Blythe Littlefield.

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Review Period Fiscal Years 2027-2028 and 2028-2029	
July 1, 2027	The review period begins.
On or around July 1, 2027	Agency heads and governing authorities receive notification that the electronic form is available to enter the performance expectations.
No later than Sept. 15, 2027	Performance expectations are finalized, entered into the electronic form and submitted to Blythe Littlefield.
On or around July 1, 2028	Agency heads and governing authorities receive notification that the electronic form is available to enter the mid-review period assessment.
No later than Sept. 15, 2028	Mid-review period assessment completed, entered into the electronic form and submitted to Blythe Littlefield.
On or around Sept. 15, 2028	Agency heads and governing authorities receive notification that the electronic form is available to review and update performance expectations if needed.
No later than Oct. 1, 2028	Performance expectations are updated if needed, entered into the electronic form and submitted to Blythe Littlefield.
On or around July 1, 2029	Agency heads and governing authorities receive notification the electronic form is available to enter the final performance evaluation.
No later than Sept. 15, 2029	Final evaluation completed, entered into the electronic form and submitted to Blythe Littlefield.

Group Two - All institutions of higher learning and cabinet agencies.

Review Period Fiscal Years 2025-2026 (Initial Implementation)	
July 1, 2025	The review period begins.
No later than Oct. 31, 2025	Performance expectations are finalized and entered into the Word document.
On or around Nov. 1, 2025	Agency heads and governing authorities receive notification that the electronic form is available to enter the performance expectations.
No later than Nov. 30, 2025	Performance expectations are entered into the electronic form and submitted to Blythe Littlefield.
On or around July 1, 2026	Agency heads and governing authorities receive notification the electronic form is available to enter the final performance evaluation.

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Review Period Fiscal Years 2025-2026 (Initial Implementation)	
No later than Sept. 15, 2026	Final performance review complete, entered into the electronic form and submitted to Blythe Littlefield.

Review Period Fiscal Years 2026-2027 and 2027-2028	
July 1, 2026	The review period begins.
On or around July 1, 2026	Agency heads and governing authorities receive notification that the electronic form is available to enter the performance expectations.
No later than Sept. 15, 2026	Performance expectations are finalized, entered into the electronic form and submitted to Blythe Littlefield.
On or around July 1, 2027	Agency heads and governing authorities receive notification that the electronic form is available to enter the mid-review period assessment.
No later than Sept. 15, 2027	Mid-review period assessment completed, entered into the electronic form and submitted to Blythe Littlefield.
On or around Sept. 15, 2027	Agency heads and governing authorities receive notification that the electronic form is available to review and update performance expectations if needed.
No later than Oct. 1, 2027	Performance expectations are updated if needed, entered into the electronic form and submitted to Blythe Littlefield.
On or around July 1, 2028	Agency heads and governing authorities receive notification the electronic form is available to enter the final performance evaluation.
No later than Sept. 15, 2028	Final evaluation completed, entered into the electronic form and submitted to Blythe Littlefield.