



# Performance Appraisal Guide

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# Performance Appraisal System (PAS) Overview

Marathon County is dedicated to providing employees with prompt and accurate feedback about their performance. The goal of the PAS is to provide guidance and feedback to employees so that they can be as productive and successful on the job as possible in support of the County's strategic plan.

A performance planning meeting will occur at least twice a year and new employees shall have their initial meeting within the first few weeks of their hire date. If an employee changes jobs, a planning meeting should occur within the first weeks of the new job assignment.

This guide has been developed to assist both supervisors and employees (regular full-time and part-time employees) in using the PAS as a tool for improved communication and thus, improved individual and organizational performance.

## Overview: Marathon County and the Performance Appraisal System

### Rationale & Objectives

Specific objectives for the Performance Appraisal System include:

- Making the strategic plan operationally meaningful in guiding the day to day work in the accomplishment of County goals.
- Focus on measurable results.
- Enhancing accountability for achieving County objectives at all levels of the organization.

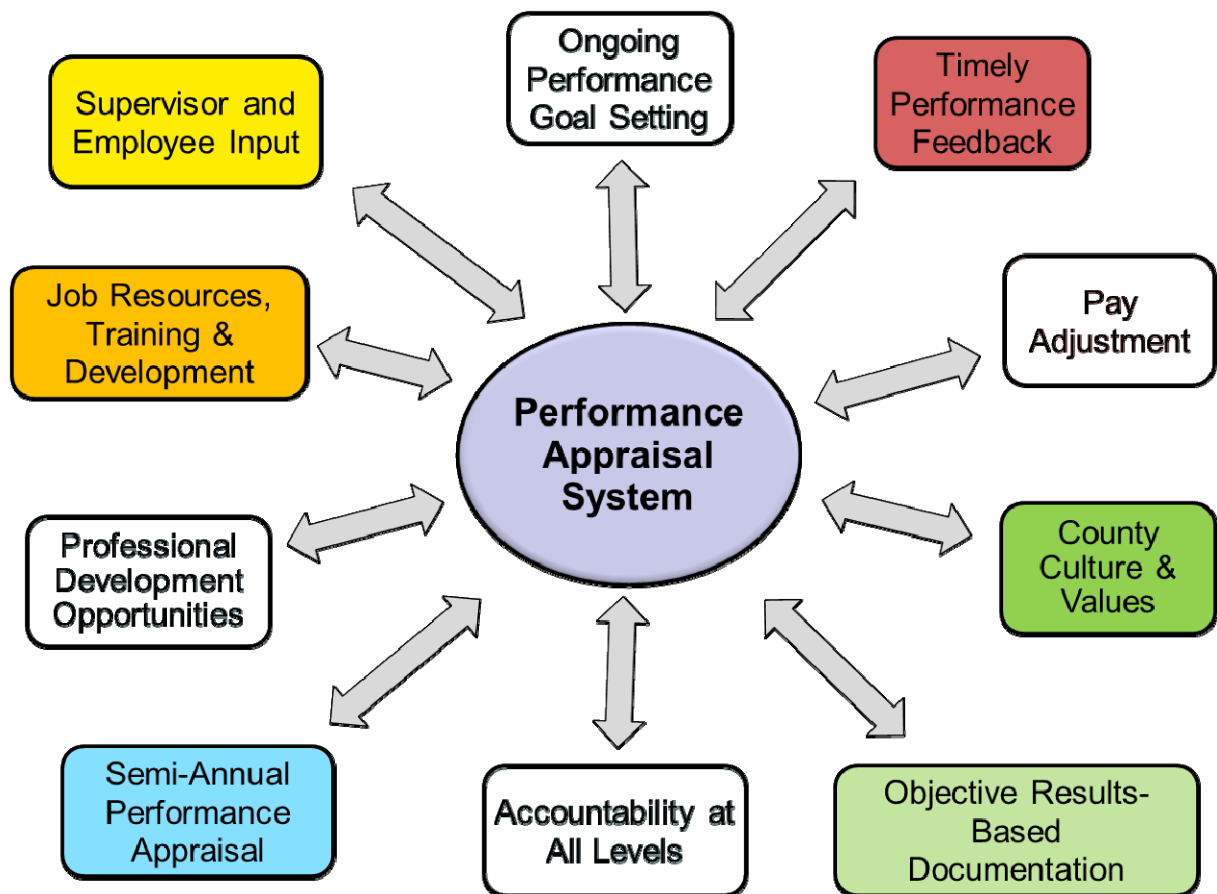
### The Importance of the Performance Appraisal System

- The Performance Appraisal System makes significant demands of all employees. It requires the development and communication of meaningful and measurable individual goals, objectives and projects that are tied to team success and County strategic objectives. It requires timely feedback tied to actual performance data.
- The Performance Appraisal System also presents an opportunity. Employees can feel more confident that some of the discomfort associated with subjective reviews will be significantly reduced by "letting the results speak for themselves."
- The Performance Appraisal System requires all employees to get involved in planning, evaluating and managing their own performance. This is not a program that is "done to" the employees, but rather one that is "done with" employees.
- The Performance Appraisal System creates the structure necessary for a performance-based pay system or Pay for Performance (P4P).
- Finally, the Performance Appraisal System is an integral part of fully integrated employee management and development process. The Performance Appraisal System can enhance employees' performance, contribute to a better managed organization and help contribute to the continuing education and enhancement of each employee as well as the customers they serve.

# Introduction to the Performance Appraisal System

To further the County's mission, among the most fundamental and important of a supervisor's / manager's responsibilities are the planning, observation, appraisal, and development of employee job performance.

As seen in the diagram below, Performance Appraisal is part of a fully integrated employment management and development program. It is designed to improve the performance of the organization as well as each employee.



This guide begins with a discussion of the purpose, objectives and phases of the Performance Appraisal System. To help in the learning process, there are special sections labeled "Tips" and "Key Steps".

## Purpose of the Performance Appraisal System

The Performance Appraisal System is a system that can enhance the productivity and motivation of employees.

- Performance objectives and job deliverables are established in relation to organizational goals and objectives

- Continuous feedback is provided to improve communication between employees and supervisors
- The Performance Appraisal System documents and evaluates performance in relation to an employee's contribution to organizational culture: adherence to core values, job deliverables, and professional development

## Objectives of Performance Appraisal System

### Fair, Consistent Treatment of All Employees

- Job performance expectations are clearly defined and effectively communicated with employees
- Job performance expectations are documented

### Improved Communication Between Supervisor And Employee

- Employees and supervisors work together to reach a mutual understanding of job performance expectations
- Frequent and constructive communication about job performance takes place between the supervisor and the employee

### Improved Job Performance And Day-To-Day Performance Management

- Individual behaviors are aligned with the organization's mission, goals and objectives
- Employees are recognized for a job well done and are provided constructive feedback to pinpoint areas for development and improvement

### Employee Growth And Development

- We encourage our employees to continue to learn and grow professionally, while also working to ensure that other employees develop the skills and knowledge necessary to excel
- Employee development and training needs are identified within the context of job results and organizational goals

### Adaptability And Flexibility

- The Performance Appraisal System is tailored to the specific goals, objectives, projects and responsibilities associated with each particular employee
- No two appraisals will be the same

## Components of the Performance Appraisal System (PAS)

The key components of the PAS are as follows:

- The informal ongoing performance discussions which may be documented
- A mid-year performance feedback meeting with comments is required
- The employee's annual self-appraisal
- An annual performance appraisal completed that will establish and evaluate: contribution core values, job deliverables, professional development plan, SMART goals

## Roles in the PAS

For the PAS to be successful and beneficial to the County, everyone involved must play a role in the success of the system. Supervisors, employees, and the County all play a role in effective in this process. The following is a brief description of the roles each party is expected to play.

### Supervisor's Role

Supervisors are expected to:

- Use the County's strategic plan as a guide for developing individual performance goals
- Clearly communicate expectations for performance to the employee
- With the employee, set realistic performance goals
- Support employees' pursuit of their performance and professional development goals
- Meet at least twice per year with the employee to update, revise, and/or document progress toward the completion of the goals
- Adjust goals throughout the year as appropriate and when necessary
- Objectively assess the employee's performance
- Solicit the employee's feedback and input
- Prepare the mid-year and annual performance appraisal using accurate and objective data with employee input
- Conduct an open and honest discussion about the appraisal
- Listen attentively to the employee's ideas and concerns

- Be open to changes based on input from employee
- Refrain from discussing salary increases with employees during the appraisal meetings
- Encourage employees to maintain a personal file of their own achievements

### Department Head's Role

Department heads are expected to:

- Keep their supervisors informed of departmental goals and initiatives
- Monitor department appraisals for consistency of ratings, completeness and pay decisions
- Meet the timeframes established for the appraisal process

### Employee's Role

Employees also play a role in making the PAS process successful and rewarding. To get maximum benefit from the performance appraisal process, employees should:

- Actively participate in the initial goal setting, mid-year, and annual performance meetings with their supervisor by offering ideas and suggestions for including SMART goals
- Keep their supervisor informed of any problems they have reaching the supervisor's expectations or the established performance goals
- Maintain accurate documentation of their own performance achievements
- Clearly and accurately complete the Employee Self-Appraisal and give it to the supervisor prior to the year-end performance appraisal
- Complete the employee comments section with honest feedback
- Identify professional development opportunities to enhance job performance and career goals

### The Employee Resources Department's Role

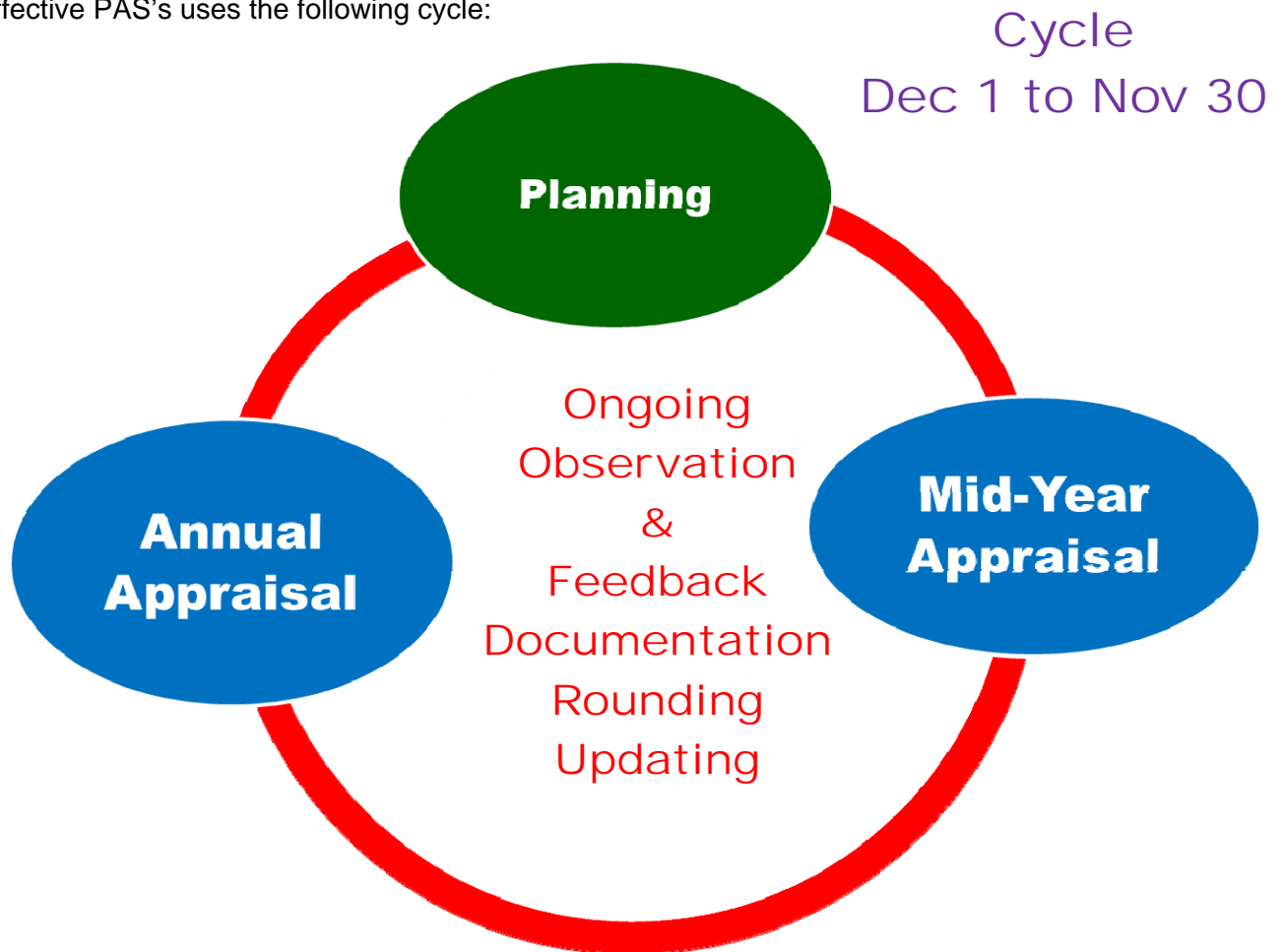
Under the direction of the County Administrator, the Employee Resources Department will:

- Provide a useful and easy to understand performance appraisal system and solicit input for improving the PAS
- Clearly communicate expectations about the system through training and supplementary materials
- Monitor appraisals for consistency
- Give feedback and guidance to supervisors and employees as they use the system
- Maintain appraisal documents in the employee's personnel file

## Performance Appraisal Cycle

The PAS is designed to assist management with a consistent tool to enhance employee, team, and organizational performance. It encourages ongoing communication allowing employees and supervisors to maintain an open dialogue about performance.

Effective PAS's uses the following cycle:



### Performance Planning

The supervisor and the employee meet to discuss desired behaviors related to organizational culture: core values, job deliverables, and professional development. Remember to review departmental core value behavioral examples. This meeting will give the employee a clear understanding of his or her job and the supervisor's expectations for performance and what "Exceptional", "Highly Successful" and "Successful" performance will look like. It will also identify any impediments that may interfere with the accomplishment of the performance expectations. A performance planning meeting will occur at least twice a year and new employees shall have their initial meeting within the first few weeks of their hire date. If an employee changes jobs, a planning meeting should occur within the first weeks of the new job assignment.



## Ongoing Observation & Feedback

- Begins immediately after performance expectations are established in the performance-planning phase. During continual processes of performance observation and feedback, employee performance is observed and documented by the supervisor using the informal ongoing performance discussions.
- Observations are then clearly and regularly communicated to the employee and formalized with a midyear and annual performance appraisal. Regular communication will help to recognize where performance expectations are being met; provide an opportunity to recognize successful performance; provide coaching in areas of performance channelings; and to provide opportunities to improve performance.

Performance observation and feedback involves the following processes:

- Observing, gathering, and documenting performance
- Providing performance feedback on a regular basis
- Modifying the performance plan when necessary

### Observation and Documentation

Observing and documenting employee performance is an integral part of this phase. It is important for supervisors to observe and document outcomes of the employee's work, as well as how the work is performed. This process does require effort, but regularly observing and documenting performance is critical to the effectiveness of the PAS. Memory alone **is not** reliable enough to serve as a basis for a fair and objective evaluation over the course of a year.

### TIPS - Observing and Documenting Employee Performance

There are several direct ways to observe employee performance, including:

- Oral and written progress reports submitted by employees;
- Observing employee work activities;
- Completing "One-time" items/events such as project milestones, specific deliverables, strategic plan action items, or important recurring items such as job duties that are performed on a regular basis with either significant proficiency or deficiency, etc. (Milestones or sub-tasks are useful to tracking progress on items whose deadline extends well into the appraisal period or even into the next review period.)
- Reviewing work outputs, reports, and/or charts;
- Feedback from internal and external customers;
- Noting and investigating commendations and/or complaints;
- Examining absenteeism records.

Document work performance and behaviors rather than personality traits or characteristics. Documented observations of performance and behaviors provide the most objective information for the performance review. This method encourages fairness and consistency and helps reduce the chances of employees reacting defensively. Rather than stating that an employee "shows a lot of initiative," record the

specific work-related behaviors that lead you to draw that inference: "Employee has frequently composed written responses to routine inquiries for the supervisor's signature without being requested to do so."

Be consistent in documentation. Keep documentation on all employees. Employees will be more willing to accept the system if they believe it is fair and consistent.

Document all levels of performance for a complete picture of the employee's performance. Do not fall into the trap of trying to build a case one way or another.

## Providing Feedback on a Regular Basis

Feedback guidelines:

- Information should be **specific** and convey concise explanations to the employee. Specific comments increase employee understanding because they are supported by verifiable data and direct observations, and are more effective than feedback that is based on generalizations or assumptions.
- Feedback should be given frequently in a **timely** fashion so that immediate action can be taken to encourage and maintain good performance and improve areas of performance deficiencies. Frequent, timely and constructive feedback also gives employees the opportunity to improve performance at an early stage. Employees are also more likely to accept constructive criticism with frequent, timely feedback.
- Feedback should be objective, descriptive and **work-related**. It should focus on the employee's job performance and observed behaviors. Avoid addressing personality traits, which encourages defensiveness. Putting labels on the behavior like "Bob you're just not motivated" only personalizes the issue and may simply prompt the employee to be defensive. Defensiveness inhibits future communication or could further deteriorate performance.

Effective performance appraisal is an ongoing communication and feedback process. There should be no surprises for the employee. While performance feedback is an everyday, ongoing process and occasional feedback helps in the overall appraisal. Periodic progress discussion allows for recognition of performance that meets or exceeds expectations of performance, coaching in areas of performance deficiencies, or to discuss changes in priorities of major job duties, responsibilities, and behavioral dimensions of performance.

These progress discussions should occur as frequently as necessary to ensure successful performance. A mid-year performance feedback meeting is required.

## Modifying the Performance Appraisal Document/Plan

As priorities and circumstances change (including changes in strategic direction, new initiatives, resource availability, unknown emergencies, etc.), there may be legitimate reasons to modify a responsibility, objective, project or other performance expectation. If modification is necessary, the supervisor and employee should meet to establish a new or modified version of the performance expectation. **NOTE:** The performance plan for a

new employee may need to recognize performance objectives “off-cycle” until the next full performance cycle.

### Mid-Year Performance Appraisal Meeting

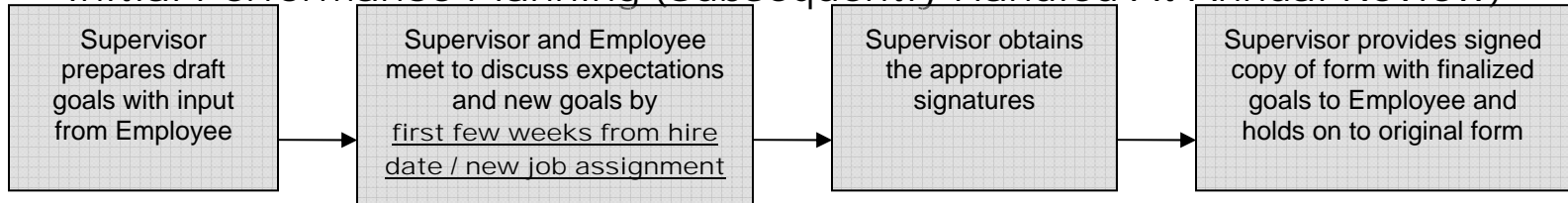
- Documents the progress made towards performance factors during the first half of the appraisal period and may modify and/or set new goals for the remainder of the appraisal period. Discuss how employee is performing. Comments and signature required, but no ratings assigned for mid-year appraisal.

### Annual Performance Appraisal Meeting

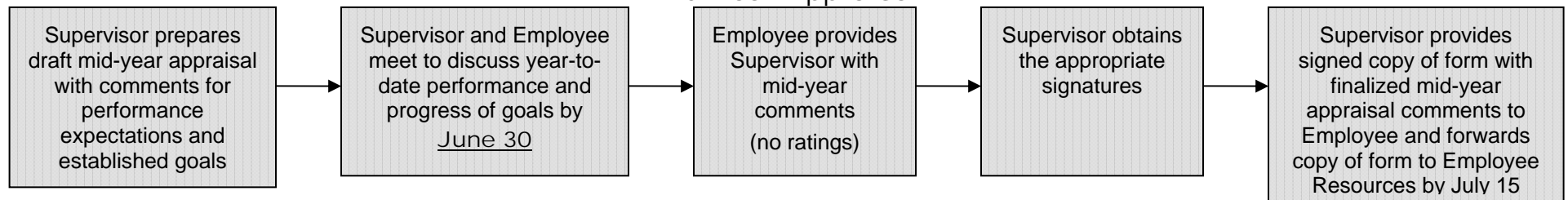
- Documents the performance during the appraisal period and set goals for the next appraisal period. You may want to have two meetings. One evaluating the current appraisal period and one focusing on the goals for the next appraisal period. The supervisor may want to discuss employee performance with the Department Director prior to any meetings.
- This meeting should be an interactive process where the supervisor and employee discuss performance and goals. The supervisor should be opened to making changes to the official performance appraisal document based on employee input. Also, the employee may wish to add their comments on the form.
- The focus of this meeting should be performance feedback and professional development. This is not the time to discuss wage increases. Department managers should inform employees of their wage increase after receiving approval from the Employee Resources Director.

# PAS Timeline

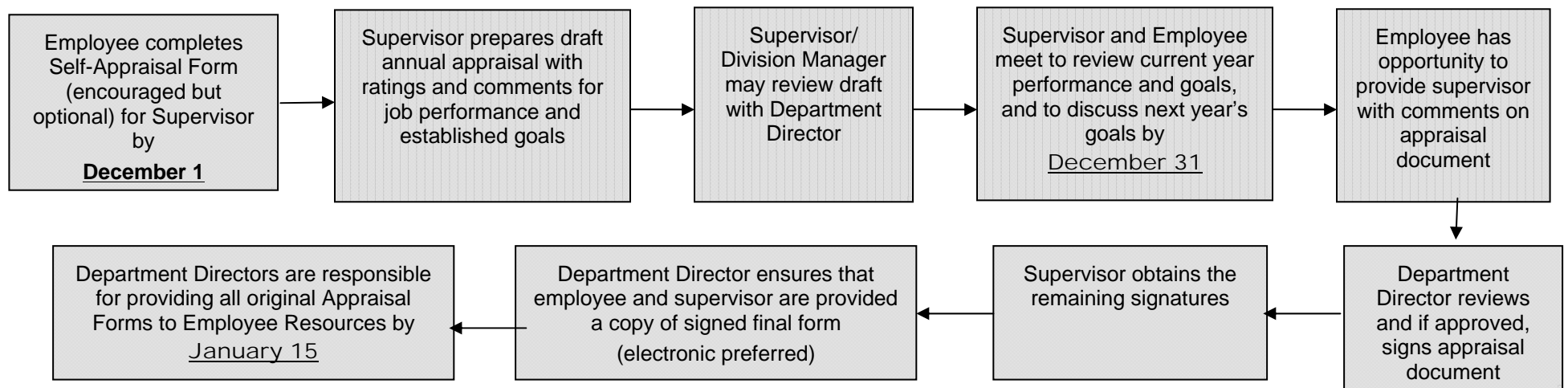
## Initial Performance Planning (Subsequently Handled At Annual Review)



## Mid-Year Appraisal



## Annual Appraisal



## Understanding The PAS Rating Scale

Throughout the form, ratings of *Exceptional*, *Highly Successful*, *Successful*, *Needs Improvement* and are used to rate Contribution to Core Values, Job Deliverables, Performance Development, SMART goals, and overall annual performance rating. **Progress ore Performance Ratings are not required or recommended at the mid-year appraisal. Supervisors are expected to provide mid-year comments for each section and forward to the Employee Resources Department.**

The rating scale is defined as:

Exceptional (E): Typically about 10% of the County workforce would fall into this category.

The employee's performance consistently exceeds expectations and role requirements by producing a high quality of work on a consistent basis.

- anticipates and proactively addresses departmental needs
- demonstrates leadership by managing projects and mentoring others
- quality of work produced continually exceeds expectations, rework is rarely required
- provides exceptional customer service
- achieves objectives and tasks before the deadline with minimal supervision
- influences others in a positive manner, even in stressful situations
- fosters teamwork and positive relationships with everyone they come in contact with
- accepts and helps to implement change
- viewed as a role model to others by consistently contributing to a strong organizational culture and demonstrating exceptional core value behaviors
- routinely volunteering for extra work/responsibilities while maintaining strong job performance

Highly Successful (H)

The employee's performance consistently meets and generally exceeds expectations and role requirements by producing a high quality of work on a consistent basis.

- highly knowledgeable of their job functions/duties, as well as other related aspects of the department, division, and organization, with the ability to explain and articulate such aspects clearly to others
- dependable, reliable and follows through on all assignments
- recognized by peers, managers, and other customers/personnel as collaborative, skilled, and reliable
- effectively interacts with peers, managers, colleagues, other staff, and the public when representing the department, division or organization
- consistently exhibits model behavior that exemplifies the values and qualities of Marathon County
- exhibits teamwork or is a team player in varied settings without prompting and can work collaboratively with others
- demonstrates the ability to take on progressive responsibility with a high level of success

Successful (S): The majority of the County workforce will fall into this category.

The employee's performance generally and consistently meets the standards and expectations for the job.

- recognizes that change is part of job and attempts to help foster changes in the workplace
- conveys opinions in a respectful manner
- clearly expresses ideas verbally and in writing
- cooperative and gets along with others
- makes a strong contribution to the success of the work unit
- completes assignments correctly and on-time
- has one or more identified opportunities for improvement
- actively makes own decisions that impact his or her work; not overly dependent on supervision

Needs Improvement (N)

The employee's performance is below expectations or standards.

- inflexible to changing circumstances
- demonstrates negativity towards work group or County goals
- written material and/or oral presentations are confusing and difficult to follow or understand
- frequently complains and not a team player
- may possess some of the necessary knowledge and skills essential for the job, but requires additional training or commitment in order to perform the work at a level that is successful
- looks for reasons why assignments cannot be accomplished rather than figuring out how to complete their work
- requires considerable supervisory monitoring to implement goals and priorities in a timely manner

The employee's performance might be improved through development, experience, and/or behavior. This rating requires the development of a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) within 30 days.

## Using The Performance Appraisal Forms

The PAS for Marathon County consists of four forms. Not every form is used with every employee.

- Employee Self-Appraisal
- Annual/Midyear Appraisal Form
- Performance Improvement Plan
- Performance Log

### Employee Self-Appraisal

The purpose of the Employee Self-Appraisal is to give the employee an opportunity to provide input to the supervisor prior to the supervisor completing the employee's year-end performance appraisal. Employees are encouraged to use the Employee Self-Appraisal as an opportunity to share the highlights of their accomplishments and performance since the last appraisal. The Employee Self-Appraisal can also be used to convey challenges they have faced during the appraisal period or new goals they would like to propose for the next year. The Employee Self-Appraisal should be attached to the Annual Appraisal Form as record of the employee's input.

When completing the Employee Self-Appraisal, employees should keep in mind the following:

- Completing the Employee Self-Appraisal is an opportunity to remind the supervisor of accomplishments achieved throughout the year.
- The Employee Self-Appraisal is a tool for sharing expectations and thoughts, prior to the year-end appraisal.
- Providing specific examples of projects and accomplishments will make the Employee Self-Appraisal more valuable to the supervisor.
- The Employee Self-Appraisal is a great place to offer suggestions for making the job more efficient or customer-friendly.
- Supervisors should not tell employees how to complete the Employee Self-Appraisal, nor should they complete the form for employees. Employees are encouraged to provide input through the form in their own words.
- The Employee Self-Appraisal may be required by your department and is highly recommended.

# Performance Appraisal Form

Marathon County's PAS has been designed to meet the needs of employees at all levels within the organization.

The appraisal form includes the following sections: Signatures, Contribution to Core Values, Job Deliverables, Professional Development, SMART Goals, Year-End Performance Rating, and Comments.

This form is used for mid-year and annual appraisal.

## Signatures

Signatures are required for mid-year and annual appraisal. Electronic signature may be used.

## Part I: Evaluation Of Performance Based On Employee Contribution To Core Values

Marathon County's overall attitude and approach to business, ethics and morality. Value-based behaviors create a positive work environment and strong organizational culture. It's how and why we do things. Core values guide us on how we are to conduct ourselves. Your commitment to our core values will promote an environment in which you and your coworkers can thrive and contribute to making Marathon County a preferred place to live, work and conduct business. For these reasons, a significant portion of our appraisal focuses on employees' behavior in light of our core values.

Supervisors are encouraged to provide specific, meaningful feedback to employees via the comments during the mid-year and annual review to illustrate how the employee supports the Core Values. Core Values are rated collectively on the standard PAS rating scale.

## Part 2: Evaluation Of Performance Based On Job Deliverables

Job deliverables are the essential job duties and competencies that are inherent in your position. They are the things that your supervisor and the community we serve expect you to be able to perform well in your job. Identify the three most important job deliverables and focus the appraisal on those three. If needed, additional sections can be added.

## Part 3: Professional Development Plan (PDP)

We recognize that our employees are our greatest asset in serving the community. For that reason, we encourage our employees to continue to learn and grow professionally, while also working to ensure that other employees develop the skills and knowledge necessary to excel.

Refer to "Tool To Support Growth And Development" to help you make an assessment of "where you are" and "where you would like to be in the future," as well as providing a roadmap for your career journey Professional Development Plan (PDP) Toolkit for more comprehensive planning and discussion on the Employee Resources Department Website, Under Performance Appraisal.



## Part 4: SMART Goals

The setting of specific goals and frequently assessing your progress toward accomplishing them, are essential to improving performance. For that reason, our appraisal both looks back to our past goals to see what progress we have made and looks forward to set new goals for the future.

A SMART goal may include all areas of performance appraisal: core values, job deliverables and/or professional development.

Typically the performance appraisal should include one to five SMART goals for employees. These goals should support the County's strategic plan and department's mission.

Goals should be developed consistent with a position's responsibilities and written using the SMART format. This means that goals should be:

- **Specific:** The goal should define specific results and provide concrete details on what is to be achieved. For example, "Start writing a monthly department newsletter" is more specific than "Improve inter-department communication."  
*What will you accomplish with your goal?*
- **Measurable:** When writing the goal, define how the employee and supervisor can measure its success. There are several ways to measure goals:
  1. Behavior: An observable change in an employee's actions
  2. Quantity: A numerical increase or decrease
  3. Quality: How well the result meets the criteria set in a goal
  4. Cycle time: Time from request to completion; processing time
  5. Efficiency: Resources (time, budget, people) applied to achieve the result*How will you measure the progress of your goal? Will you have people holding you accountable to your progress?*
- **Attainable:** The goal should be within the employee's reach in terms of time and resources. *Is your goal attainable and do you have the time and resources to achieve it?*
- **Relevant:** The goal should be related to the County's mission, vision, and core strategies. *How and why is this goal important?*
- **Time Oriented:** The goal should have a deadline or frequency attached. State the date by which results must happen, or, for ongoing expectations, specify how often the goal or expectation must be met as well as how often it will be reviewed. *When will your goal be complete?*

For example, if the supervisor and employee agree that the employee wants to learn more about using Microsoft Excel to track project files, they might agree on a goal like this:

Not SMART: Attend a class on Microsoft Excel.

| SMART Goal – Specific  | Measurable  | Attainable   | Relevant   | Time Oriented |
|--|---|--|--|---------------|
| Example: Demonstrate proficiency in tracking and sorting employee training information | Microsoft Excel class completion<br><br>Completion of spreadsheet | Evaluate in house training, webinar or other resources | Ensure accuracy of training records to ensure compliance | 3/1/20XX      |

Refer to “Examples of SMART Goals” on the Employee Resources Department Website, Under Performance Appraisal.

The supervisor is expected to determine the annual rating based on the end results achieved, considering any relevant information or extenuating circumstances.

For example, if a goal is partially completed, but circumstances beyond the employee’s control prevented the goal from being fully accomplished, the supervisor may still choose the appropriate rating, depending on the employee’s efforts. Just because a goal is not fully completed as initially agreed upon does not mean the annual rating must be a *Needs Improvement*. Supervisors are expected to explain and justify each rating in the comments section for each goal.

#### Part 5: Overall Performance Rating:

Job performance is measured not only in what we do (results), but in how we do it. The “Annual Overall” rating indicates the level of the employee’s total performance, taking into account accomplishment of job deliverables, the ratings on the core value and their performance development over the previous 12 months. This rating is not completed during the mid-year.

The overall performance rating section is used at the end of the performance cycle to summarize the employee's collective performance and to assign an annual rating. The annual performance rating is intended to serve as a review section of the employee’s performance for the rating period. As such, the final rating should not include issues or concerns that have not been previously discussed with the employee.

#### Comments

The comments section provides an opportunity for employees and supervisors to express themselves in an unstructured way. Comments should be related to the employee’s job performance and should be written in narrative form.

Supervisors are required to provide comments that summarize the overall performance on an annual basis. Examples of specific accomplishments or job activities should be included to illustrate the employee's behaviors. Supervisors are encouraged to write their comments in an informal way, as if they were writing to the employee. Comments should be conversational in tone and specific and objective in nature. When possible, the supervisor should refer to pre-determined standards or expectations.

Employees are encouraged to provide comments throughout the process on the last page of the annual appraisal form, but are not required to do so. Employee comments should include mention of any work-related accomplishments that were not mentioned by the supervisor.

The supervisor and/or the employee may attach additional pages in order to have room to provide sufficient comments.

## Performance Improvement Plan

The purpose of the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) is to assist employees who are not meeting the standards and/or expectations of performance for the job. The goal of the PIP is to provide a specific plan for the employee so that they can improve their performance and succeed as an employee. The PIP is to be completed in conjunction with the mid-year appraisal or the annual appraisal, and should include a timeline for when the employee is expected to improve performance. Should an employee not meet the criteria established in the PIP, other actions which may include discipline could occur. Departments are encouraged to work with Employee Resources during the PIP process.

A PIP is required when an employee's overall annual performance rating is *Needs Improvement*. The PIP should be forwarded to the Employee Resources Department within 30 days after the appraisal is completed. The document may also be used, but is not required, when the rating of *Needs Improvement* is identified in a particular performance area.

## Performance Log

The Performance Log is a tool to be used by both employees and supervisors. This optional form can be used to capture details related to the employee's performance. These notes can then be used to prepare the annual appraisal with specific, meaningful details.

The Performance Log is the centralized location for recording all things related to the employee's performance. The log may include specific examples of performance, both positive and negative, summaries of conversations you have had with the employee, and agreements that have been reached about the work.

Tips for using the Performance Log:

- For ease of access, supervisors could establish two logs for each employee: one electronic log and one hard-copy log. Supervisors can enter performance notes in the most convenient form, depending on where they are when they need to make the note.
- At least once per week, supervisors should write something about the employee's performance in the log. The comment can be a note about a successful citizen interaction, about an error that was made, or about a work-related conversation they had with the employee. One note per week is easy to do and will add up to a lot of specific information that can be used at performance appraisal time.
- Supervisors should not put anything in the log that the employee would be surprised to see. The log is not a place to record observations that have not been discussed with the employee. It is not a place to make judgments. The log should be used to record factual, specific details about the work that has been discussed with the employee.
- The performance log is maintained by the supervisor as a working file, and its contents are to be used to prepare the annual performance appraisal. The performance log is not a part of the permanent personnel record maintained by Employee Resources.

- Employees can also use the performance log to track their own accomplishments, ideas, and concerns.

### Sample Performance Log

Employee Name: Jeremy Jones, Maintenance Technician

Supervisor Name: Paul Pryant, Maintenance Supervisor

| Date     | Details of the Situation  | Outcome, Results, or Agreement   | Contributes To Core Values, Job Deliverables, and/or Professional Development |
|----------|---|--|---|
| March 1  | As part of Jeremy's orientation, I reviewed the Department's expectations for attendance and breaks. Today, Jeremy arrived 15 minutes later than expected and took a 25-minute break from 10:00 to 10:25. Citizen calls were not returned during that time. | Jeremy said his car wouldn't start today and will arrive on time from now on. He also agreed to limit break time to 15 minutes.  | Core Values   |
| March 8  | Jack Rockefeller, County Supervisor, told me he was very impressed with Jeremy's quick response to his request for information about the remodel.   | Passed the compliment on to Jeremy.  | Core Values   |
| April 10 | Jeremy is responsible for preparing end-of-month reports. Today George Johnson of the Public Works Department called to say that he received the report for the wrong department.   | Talked with Jeremy about the importance of paying attention while stuffing the monthly reports envelopes. He said he got distracted and made the error. He'll be more careful next time. | Job Deliverable   |
| April 28 | At our monthly one-on-one, Jeremy agreed to a revised objective. Instead of revising the new project binder format, he will focus on consolidating plat information into the County's new database by June 30.  | We modified the goal on his PAS form.  | Job Deliverable   |

## Appeal Process

To facilitate consistent and fair treatment of employees, Marathon County has instituted an appeal process for employees who disagree with their annual performance appraisal rating.

For this appeal process, the only reason an employee may file an appeal is if there are errors of fact that may impact the rating. If the disagreement cannot be resolved during the Performance Appraisal meeting and an employee wants to appeal the rating, they may choose the following option:

### If there are “errors of fact”

- If there are errors of fact (e.g. the employee failed to provide information or it is incorrectly entered), the employee may provide the information or correct the errors within one week of the appraisal and forward the appeal information to their Department Head.
- The Department Head will review the additional information and make a judgment.
- The Department Head’s judgment will represent the final appraisal and will be completed within two weeks of receipt of the employee’s appeal.
- If the employee still disagrees with the appraisal, the employee should indicate the desire to appeal by writing a letter indicating the reasons for their appeal to the County Administrator and copying in the Employee Resources Director, within one week of the Department Head’s decision.
- The County Administrator will designate a “Performance Appraisal Appeal Committee”

### What happens next?

- The County Administrator will convene the Performance Appraisal Appeal Committee within two weeks of receiving the employee’s appeal letter. The Human Resources Committee (HRC) will be notified of the appeal and up to two members may attend as approved by the Chair of the HRC. If members of the appeal committee or the employee have a conflict of interest, alternate members will be asked to serve.
- The committee will meet with the employee, the department head, and other approved parties. They will review the documentation provided by the employee and the department head. No new documentation can be provided at this point in the process.
- The County Administrator, or his/her designee, will convey the result of the appeal to the employee and the department head within one week after the committee meeting. The decision of the Performance Appraisal Appeal Committee is final.

## Tips for Supervisors

The supervisor's role in managing performance goes beyond writing the annual appraisal. Below are some tips to consider in making this process easier and more beneficial for the supervisor and the employee:

- Set realistic and mutually agreed upon goals at the beginning of the rating period.
- Meet with each employee regularly to discuss their progress toward meeting the expectations for performance on the job. The County expects that the supervisor and employee will meet at least initially, mid-year and annual to discuss and document progress towards the accomplishment of goals, core values, and competencies.
- Regularly document the performance issues you have discussed with the employee.
- Keep a performance log in a file that includes letters of commendation, discipline, and other performance-related notes for each employee.
- Address concerns about an employee's performance immediately. Don't wait until the last minute to convey your concerns to an employee about their behavior.
- Follow this rule: No surprises!! Regular communication with each employee will ensure that the annual performance appraisal is only a review of your previous conversations.
- When an employee is reassigned to a new supervisor mid-way through the rating period, the previous supervisor should pass any performance-related notes and files to the new supervisor.
- When a new supervisor is assigned to a group of employees, they should obtain the previous supervisor's performance-related notes and files for each of the employees they will now be supervising.
- Begin preparing the annual appraisal at least three weeks before it is due to ensure a timely submission of the appraisal.
- Use the employee's input from the Employee Self-Appraisal.
- Gather additional data relative to the employee's performance. Such information may come from other supervisors, employees, or customers of the employee. Other data may come from quantitative performance records and your supervisor's file.
- Conduct the initial goal-setting, mid-year appraisal and annual appraisal meetings in private and ensure that there will be no interruptions. Schedule adequate time to have a thorough discussion. Use open-ended questions to solicit the employee's input into the discussion. Listen more than you talk.
- Have a plan for performance-related discussions. Discussions without a plan are doomed to wander off the subject.
- Avoid subjective opinions or personality judgments; base your comments on facts and use specific examples to qualify your ratings.

- During the discussion about areas where improvement is needed, give the employee a chance to reveal any problems or obstacles that may keep him/her from performing at their highest level. Discuss expectations and how they can be achieved.
- Encourage employees to provide written comments, including relevant information and achievements based on performance expectations and established goals.

In addition to these tips, supervisors should be aware that there are common errors made during the rating of employees' performance. These errors are natural and part of human nature, but can be avoided by being aware of them. The following are the most common errors supervisors make when rating their employees' performance:

### The Leniency Error

The leniency error means that the rater evaluates everyone too easily or too high. When the leniency error is being committed, everyone rated gets a high rating. In this case, the rater is unjustifiably lenient by assigning similar ratings to an individual or to the group.

How to avoid the leniency error: Clearly justify every rating with performance examples that show why the employee deserves the higher rating. Without specific examples of exceptional performance, the employee may not deserve the high rating.

### The Severity Error

The severity error means that the rater evaluates everyone too critically or too low. When the severity error is being committed, everyone gets a low rating. In this case, the rater is unjustifiably strict in assigning all ratings to an individual or a group.

How to avoid the severity error: Ensure that performance standards are realistic and comparable with those of other supervisors in the same line of work.

### The Central Tendency Error

The central tendency error means that the supervisor does not rate anyone exceptionally high or low. All employees rated get a middle rating. In this case, the rater is unable or unwilling to assign high or low ratings to an individual who deserves such ratings. Instead, the rater "plays it safe" by using mid-scale ratings even when not justifiable by the facts.

How to avoid the central tendency error: Set clear performance standards and apply those standards to everyone being rated. If an employee exceeds the standards, reward them with higher ratings. If an employee does not meet the standards, a lower rating should reflect this performance.

### The Recency Error

The recency error, the most common rater error, occurs when the rater places too much emphasis on recent events, and does not consider the employee's performance for the entire rating period.

How to avoid the recency error: Maintain accurate and clear performance notes throughout the rating period. Frequent employee communication that is documented will help to prevent the recency error.

## The “Halo” Effect Error

The “halo” effect error occurs when the rater lets one favorable factor or incident distort the overall appraisal. A rater commits the “halo” effect error when they form a generally favorable impression of the employee and assigns ratings to that individual’s performance based on their general impression, rather than on specific job-related behaviors.

How to avoid the “halo” effect error: By considering the full range of possible ratings, the rater can avoid the “halo” effect. Also, if the rater identifies the most prominent factor that they associate with the employee they can more easily set that factor aside and then consider other issues more fairly.

## The “Pitchfork” Effect Error

The “pitchfork” effect error occurs when the rater lets one unfavorable factor influence their overall rating of the employee. A rater commits the “pitchfork” effect error when they form a generally unfavorable impression of the employee and allow this impression to affect their overall rating of the employee.

How to avoid the “pitchfork” effect error: By considering the full range of possible ratings, the rater can avoid the “pitchfork” effect. Also, the rater should document individual performance examples to support their overall rating, rather than letting one overall impression determine the rating.

## Tips for Employees

Employees play a critical role in the PAS process. Here are some tips to make goal setting and the annual appraisal process more productive:

- Offer ideas for strategic goals you would like to pursue in the coming year.
- Take the Employee Self-Appraisal seriously and contribute as much specific and detailed information about your performance as possible. Include examples of your work and reminders about projects you completed throughout the year.
- Be honest in your Self-Appraisal. Note the highlights and the lowlights of the current year.
- Keep your own performance file. Record examples of tough projects you’ve completed and goals you’ve achieved.
- Come to the performance appraisal meetings prepared to discuss your ideas in a productive way.
- Accept positive criticism that will help you to be more effective on the job. If the supervisor does not provide specific examples of how you can improve, ask for help in a productive manner.
- Take time to write complete and thoughtful comments on the appraisal. Comments are your opportunity to have your perspectives documented. Use comments to your fullest advantage.

Writing comments related to the performance rating is sometimes challenging. Learn to respond to your review by considering these tips:



- Read the review very carefully. Don't respond immediately, but give yourself at least a day to think about the comments and ratings before you write your own comments. Nothing gets handled well in the heat of the moment.
- Acknowledge any points that you agree with.
- Use clear examples to contradict those points that you feel are not justified. Without specific and clear examples it is hard to prove your point.
- Keep a file of everything you do so that you can come up with the specific examples you'll need to discuss your performance with facts. Use the performance log to keep your notes.
- Acknowledge your supervisor, co-workers or any other people that gave you support or guidance throughout the rating period.
- Balance your comments with positive and constructive ideas.
- Keep an open mind. The employee's annual appraisal is an opportunity to reflect on the past and plan for the future. Use to your benefit.