** Employee Performance Appraisal System   
Frequently Asked Questions**

1. ***What is the purpose of the Employee Performance Appraisal System (EPAS)?***

The employee performance management system promotes regular communication about work performance between supervisors and employees. It also promotes ongoing employee growth and development.

EPAS helps employees develop their goals for the year. It also helps them understand their supervisor’s expectations. It further helps to develop their skills for career growth.

1. ***Are annual performance reviews required for all employees?***

No; however reviews are required for those employees participating in the County’s merit pay plan and under the terms of some [collective bargaining agreements](http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/executive/labor-relations/contracts.aspx). Regardless of whether an employee receives a performance evaluation, it is important that every staff member receive timely performance feedback.

Performance reviews provide an opportunity to receive written feedback, assess training and development needs, clarify expectations, discuss progress toward previously determined goals and set new goals for the next review period. The review process can help improve efficiency and effectiveness and contribute to personal growth and job satisfaction.

1. ***How do supervisors, HR representatives and department merit coordinators use employee ratings on performance reviews?***

Ratings on performance reviews are indicators of overall performance and may, when applicable, be used to determine merit increases as outlined in [labor contracts](http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/executive/labor-relations/contracts.aspx) or for non-represented employees, in the [King County Code](http://www.kingcounty.gov/council/legislation/kc_code.aspx) and in the [*Executive Branch Performance Appraisal and Merit Pay System Guidelines*](http://www.kingcounty.gov/~/media/depts/human-resources/EPAS/2017PerfAppMeritSchedule.ashx).

1. ***What is the process and what form should be used?***

Supervisors should meet with their human resource service delivery manager to review the process used within their own agency. While all supervisors do not conduct reviews the same, the Human Resources Division suggests the following process:

* Evaluation of performance should be based on the employee’s performance during the entire review period.
* Supervisors may use a [Supervisor Performance Log](http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/human-resources/for-employees/epas/tools.aspx) to track and document employee performance throughout the year for use during performance discussions.
* Employees may be asked to reflect on their own performance, and may even complete a self-evaluation using an [Employee Performance Log](http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/human-resources/for-employees/epas/tools.aspx)
* Supervisors complete a written performance review, which may be a department-specific form or the standard EPAS Year-in-Review Form available on the [Human Resources Division website](http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/human-resources/for-employees/epas/tools.aspx). Which form the agency uses to capture and communicate this performance feedback is less critical than the communication of information and feedback to the employee.
* To ensure consistency and accuracy, the supervisor should meet with their immediate supervisor to discuss the employee’s performance reviews prior to meeting with each individual employee.
* The supervisor schedules a meeting with the employee to discuss the written performance review which has been provided to the employee prior to the meeting.
* The supervisor and employee meet to discuss the employee’s performance during the previous review period, job duties, goals, performance expectations, and any specific objectives to be achieved including the employee’s professional development goals.
* Following the meeting, the supervisor makes any necessary adjustments to the written review, signs the document and presents it to the employee for signature. After the employee has signed the review, the supervisor submits it to the supervisor’s immediate supervisor for signature (unless other specific rules indicate differently.) After obtaining all required signatures, the supervisor provides a copy of the fully signed performance review to the employee and submits the original to their department’s human resources service delivery manager for review, entry into the payroll system and for retention in the employee’s personnel file.

1. ***Am I required to use the EPAS Form?***

No, the department may create and use its own evaluation form provided it is in writing; clearly indicates overall performance; and provides for employee feedback. Central HR strongly recommends the evaluation include goal setting and evaluation for the employee with goals on Equity and Social Justice, continuous improvement, and personal or professional development.

1. ***When should reviews be conducted?***

Most departments evaluate performance based on the review period (September 1 to August 31) and conduct and submit reviews during September. Contact your human resources service delivery manager and/or department merit coordinator for the exact time schedule.

Although the process results in a final review “year-end” report, the expectation is that managers and supervisors will have at least periodic check-ins with their employees to assess their development and performance. It is recommended that check-ins or interim reviews be **held at least** **quarterly**. Supervisors are encouraged to monitor performance, provide feedback, reward and recognize excellent performance, discuss goals and communicate about issues throughout the year. Employees also are encouraged to initiate conversations with supervisors as often as needed.

1. ***If an employee transfers to a new workgroup or department in between reviews, are both supervisors required to conduct a review?***

Central HR recommends only one performance review be submitted per employee. The person who supervised the employee for the greatest period during the year should complete the review. The current supervisor should ask for comments and input from the former supervisor. If this is not possible, the new supervisor can complete the review, focusing on the employee’s work to date.

1. ***What if an employee has multiple supervisors/reviewers in their current department?***

Central HR recommends only one performance review be submitted per employee. If an employee is evaluated by more than one supervisor, the supervisors must come to agreement on one overall score, comments, etc.

1. ***If a supervisor is new to a department or supervisory role in the department and has little experience working with existing staff members, how should the review process be handled?***

The new supervisor should work with their department’s human resources service delivery manager and their senior staff in determining a review process.

1. ***Is training available for supervisors?***

Yes. All supervisors should attend training on how to properly conduct a performance review. Contact your department’s human resources manager or HRD’s training section at [KCTraining@kingcounty.gov](mailto:KCTraining@kingcounty.gov).

***11. What if an employee disagrees with or does not understand ratings given by their supervisor?***

The employee should first speak with their supervisor for clarification. For represented employees, be certain to check the [collective bargaining agreement](http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/executive/labor-relations/contracts.aspx) for proper steps and procedures. Otherwise, if an understanding is not reached, the employee may submit a written rebuttal to their human resources service delivery manager for inclusion in their personnel file.

1. ***What if the employee refuses to sign?***

The employee's signature does not indicate agreement but acknowledgement that they received an evaluation. If an employee refuses to sign, indicate so on the evaluation, sign it, have your supervisor sign it and submit it to your human resources service delivery manager. If an employee refuses to submit an evaluation for completion, contact your human resources service delivery manager for guidance.

1. ***Who should an employee call with questions about the performance review process?***

They should contact their department’s human resources manager.

1. ***How should employees prepare to participate in a review?***

Basic tips for preparation:

* Keep notes of accomplishments, interim review feedback, training and any other issues throughout the review period using the [Employee Performance Log](http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/human-resources/for-employees/epas/tools.aspx).
* Prepare discussion points for the review.

1. ***What can an employee who receives a low overall performance rating do to improve the next year?***

Above all, employees need to understand why they received a low rating. First, employees should discuss this with their supervisor to be clear of their perspective and to set goals for the next year. Second, employees might want to consider requesting a Performance Improvement Plan so they can focus on the areas in need of improvement.

1. ***What happens if a staff member receives a rating below 3.00 (Satisfactory, or EPAS = Meets Expectations) on the overall performance review summary form?***

Overall performance ratings below 3.00 (Satisfactory, or EPAS = Meets Expectations) are considered unsatisfactory and mean work performance for the previous year fell below expectations. Employees receiving unsatisfactory overall performance ratings below 3.00 may not be eligible for pay increases. For represented employees, check the appropriate [collective bargaining agreement](http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/executive/labor-relations/contracts.aspx) and for non-represented employees check the [*Executive Branch Performance Appraisal and Merit Pay System Guidelines*](http://www.kingcounty.gov/~/media/depts/human-resources/EPAS/2017PerfAppMeritSchedule.ashx) or contact your human resources manager.

1. ***What about part time and TLT employees?***

Short-term temporary employees are not required to receive documented performance reviews. However, every employee appreciates at least verbal feedback on how they’re doing. Observations on performance may be shared at any time.

TLTs are at-will employees who serve at the pleasure of the hiring authority and do not serve a probationary period.

* TLTs are ineligible for an increase in salary after six months except where required by [collective bargaining agreement](http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/executive/labor-relations/contracts.aspx).
* TLTs should receive written feedback and expectations at their anniversary date to promote engagement and performance management. Informal quarterly reviews are recommended.
* Though not eligible for merit pay as set forth in the [*Executive Branch Performance Appraisal and Merit Pay System Guidelines*](http://www.kingcounty.gov/~/media/depts/human-resources/EPAS/2017PerfAppMeritSchedule.ashx) an annual written review is a requirement for the employee to receive a step increase, *reference:* [*Contingent Worker Manual*](http://www.kingcounty.gov/audience/employees/policy-forms/contingent-worker-manual.aspx).
* Only one step increase may be given annually. Step increases are not required but may be given at the hiring authority’s discretion. Use the TLT Performance Evaluation Template in the [*Contingent Worker Manual*](http://www.kingcounty.gov/audience/employees/policy-forms/contingent-worker-manual.aspx) for providing performance feedback and an annual step increase.

1. ***Is the reviewer signature required?***

Yes. It is critical someone attest to reviewing the performance evaluation. This is usually the responsibility of the hiring authority for your workgroup or department, or their designee.

1. ***What if the employee will be on FMLA/vacation/military leave or otherwise not available to sign until after April 30?***

Contact your human resources service delivery manager for advice. Central HR recommends completing a review for the time the employee worked.

1. ***What if the employee is terminated prior to the completion of the evaluation period?***

Contact your human resources service delivery manager for advice. Central HR recommends you still complete an evaluation for the employee. Be sure all supporting documentation is accurate and in order as this evaluation may impact the eligibility for recall/rehire of the employee.

1. ***Should I save a copy of the employee’s appraisal?***

Yes, save signed paper and electronic copies (where appropriate) and be sure to provide the employee with a copy signed by both you and your supervisor. A completed copy must be retained in the employee’s regular personnel file.

1. ***My employee is still completing their probationary period. Must I complete a Performance Evaluation?***

Read rules regarding performance evaluations and restrictions on merit increases for probationary employees in Section 11.3 of the [*Personnel Guidelines*](http://www.kingcounty.gov/employees/HumanResources/policies.aspx).

1. ***Am I required to hold more than one evaluation meeting with each employee?***

Central HR highly recommends supervisors hold less formal quarterly documented feedback sessions with each of their direct reports. Holding informal sessions eliminates any surprises during the annual review and makes the process much easier for both parties.

1. ***Who should set the goals, the supervisor or the employee?***

The intent is to be flexible by setting goals together. Each department should articulate overarching department goals to the managers and supervisors so they might help employees develop individual goals that are based on department goals. Goals should be [SMART](http://edit.kingcounty.gov/depts/human-resources/for-employees/epas/tools.aspx).

1. ***What if an employee’s performance declines between the time of the annual performance review and the time they would receive a merit increase?***

If an employee’s performance declines towards the end of the calendar year before merit increases are issued, this performance would be appropriately indicated on their next year’s performance review.