



# IDAHO FALLS

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USER'S  
GUIDE

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PERFORMANCE  
AWARENESS  
CONVERSATION  
USER'S GUIDE

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November 2019



**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**What Is the Performance Awareness Conversation?** **Page 1**

The City formed a Task Force in February 2017 that was charged with developing a system of communication and improvement to help supervisors and employees understand and meet work expectations.

**What Are the Four Parts of the PAC Cycle?** **Page 3**

The Performance Awareness Conversation (PAC) is the result of the Task Force’s diligent efforts to design a system that is tailored to the unique needs and culture of the City of Idaho Falls. The project’s vision is focused on on-going communication, improvement, creativity and motivation. It’s a tool for managers and supervisors to give employees meaningful information to improve and/or sustain good performance. “Good performance” is defined through Core Expectations and Job Specific Expectations. The Task Force has designed the PAC meeting all tenets of research that says an effective approach has to contain defined expectations for all employees, job-specific expectations, and individualized goals.

**How Will Specific Issues Be Handled?** **Page 5**

**What Are the PAC Performance Levels?** **Page 6**

**PAC Forms** **Page 7**

PAC’s purpose is to establish written performance expectations, emphasize ongoing communication, utilize constructive feedback, reinforce performance improvement, reduce subjectivity and implement a consistent, City-wide approach to performance management. The system is designed to:

Communication  
- the human  
connection -  
is the key to  
personal and  
career success

- Empower everyone to excel
- Hold people accountable and challenge them to meet or exceed established standards
- Create a more open environment that reinforces improvement
- Motivate under-performers to meet standards
- Provide individualized coaching
- Enable supervisors to use consistent expectations of performance

PAC is multi-faceted, with employees and supervisors actively involved in the planning, directing, documenting and evaluating performance efforts. It includes:

- Written Expectations and Performance Measurements - tied to the City’s goals, the performance measurements are mostly based on observations and feedback. As a manager or supervisor, your own performance appraisal will be partly based on how you support and implement PAC.

--Paul J. Meyer

- Individual Goals - job-related and include improving performance, career advancement or cross-training.
- Continuous Communication, Feedback and Documentation – continuous communication between employees and supervisors is the foundation of PAC. This is an ongoing process of communication and performance enhancement. Managers and supervisors will meet with employees at least semi-annually to review performance.

PAC is first and foremost a communications tool dependent on consistency, discussion, and documentation. Performance feedback is based on defined expectations, continuous communication, feedback, and documentation, NOT on favoritism.

### REMEMBER...

- Performance ratings are based on defined expectations, communication and documentation, not favoritism
- Expectations are linked to the City's operating goals and the employee's role in providing services to meet those goals
- Employees are involved in the development of performance expectations and measurements. Employees will have the opportunity to discuss each expectation to ensure they thoroughly understand it, and discuss with their supervisor possibly adding to or revising some of the expectations
- Employees' performance is evaluated in three ways:
  1. Core Expectations that apply to every City employee in every job
  2. Job-specific expectations focusing on employee's unique responsibilities in their job and their individual contributions
  3. Individual performance goals (at least two per year)
- Managers and supervisors will set the example, lead the effort, and support the system. Their performance review is partly dependent on how well they implement and support the performance program

# PAC'S Overall Purpose:

Foster ongoing communications to develop and improve employees' performance and reward employees for their outstanding contributions.

# WHAT ARE THE FOUR PARTS OF THE PAC CYCLE?

**1. Performance Planning** – Refers to a semi-annual discussion between the manager and an individual employee about job responsibilities, goals and any other expectations the manager has for him or her. The performance expectations and goals are focused on face-to-face communication, with the employee and are documented.

## Employee Responsibilities

- Help establish expectations
- Help establish measurements
- Develop individual goals
- Commit to continuous improvement

## Manager/Supervisor Responsibilities

- Establish and define expectations & goals
- Review & affirm measurements
- Discuss resources & challenges
- Affirm goals

**2. Ongoing Communication, Feedback and Documentation** – A two-way process to track progress, identify any barriers to performance, and to provide feedback to employees. Appraising performance is not an event but a continual dialogue between and employee and his/her supervisor. It's also a way for manager and employee to stay informed about what's going on. **This component is key to the success of the performance system.** Feedback is given consistently in small doses about how the employee is measuring up to performance expectations. Information is exchanged to figure out where a problem lies, why the problem occurs, and the best alternative to resolving the problem. Documentation of these discussions is required.

## Employee Responsibilities

- Work consistently to meet expectations
- Provide feedback and ideas
- Solicit feedback and coaching
- Communicate openly & respectfully
- Accept and act on improvement areas
- Be informed

## Manager/Supervisor Responsibilities

- Provide regular, honest feedback
- Create conditions that motivate
- Reinforce desired actions and behavior
- Address concerns professionally and creatively
- Engage employee in addressing performance concerns
- Maintain record of performance discussions

3. **Interim Review Meetings** – The supervisor and employee meet at **least semi-annually to review** performance, identify challenges, determine ways to overcome the challenges, and discuss potential improvements and other issues.

4. **Annual Summary of Performance Review** – A meeting to formalize and record the ongoing communications between the employee and manager about how the employee has done during a performance period. Some form of documentation of the discussion is produced which both manager and employee sign. The cardinal rule: **NO SURPRISES!** At the annual summary meeting, the employee should already know where he or she stands before walking into the meeting.



## HOW WILL SPECIFIC ISSUES BE HANDLED?

### A. What happens when there is more than one supervisor?

If an employee has more than one supervisor during a review period, the supervisors will meet to reach agreement on job expectations and performance measurements prior to scheduling a Performance Planning meeting with the employee. Similarly, the supervisors will meet prior to the Annual Performance Review Meeting to review their notes, reach consensus on an overall rating for the employee, and prepare examples and comments to explain ratings on the core expectations and position specific expectations.

### B. What happens if there is a performance problem that needs an improvement plan?

For remedial and/or developmental actions, arising when an employee is not meeting job expectations, the supervisor will meet with the employee as soon as possible to address the problem issue. An improvement plan may be used to document steps to meeting performance expectations. The supervisor will identify the areas that need improvement, determine actions the employee is expected to perform within designated dates, and specify time periods to check the employee's progress in improving performance; this information will be documented in an action plan. The employee's failure to meet and maintain job expectations could lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. The improvement plan may be documented on the PAC forms or in another form, but it will be documented and signed by both the employee and the supervisor.

### C. Who will conduct a review of every employee's performance appraisal?

All employees' performance forms will be reviewed by Human Resources. New employees will be integrated into the Performance Awareness Conversation with consistent reviews, communication and feedback between the supervisor and the employee.

### D. How will employees' performance be reviewed?

Employees will typically have a performance review conversation at least semi-annually. Some managers may choose to meet with employees monthly or quarterly.

### E. What happens if an employee disagrees with his performance review, at any time during the year?

If an employee disagrees with his/her supervisor on performance assessment, he or she may prepare a written response. That response will become part of the overall performance review document and will go into the employee's official personnel file.

# PERFORMANCE LEVELS

For each category below, the supervisor will designate the employee’s performance in comparison to the written description for each category. **Please understand that all parts of the expectations and the descriptions of performance must be met consistently to achieve a designated performance level as described below.**

Performance Level	Description of Performance
<p><b>Performance is Far and Above Expectations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describes those few employees whose contributions to their work, department and the City far exceed job requirements on a consistent and sustained basis. This individual is performing the functions at the highest level and can teach or counsel others.</li> <li>• Accomplishments toward expectations and goals are superior even under challenging circumstances.</li> <li>• Demonstrates outstanding interpersonal skills.</li> <li>• Maintains self-motivation and initiates actions that enhance operations or job results without instruction.</li> <li>• Work is characterized by accomplishments not typically achieved by other workers; accomplishments toward goals and personal skills surpass job requirements.</li> <li>• Performance is consistently and significantly beyond established standards and demonstrates extraordinary skill levels.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Good, Competent Performance; Meets 100% of Expectations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job requirements are performed fully and completely on a regular basis.</li> <li>• Employee is doing the job he/she was hired to do, reasonably and routinely meeting all expectations.</li> <li>• Consistently performs work in a competent and acceptable manner and achieves expected results.</li> <li>• Achieves goals and performance expectations as stated.</li> <li>• Work behavior is appropriate for the workplace and the position.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Room for Improvement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some improvement needed to fully achieve the expectations of the City and the job; an improvement plan will be or has been developed.</li> <li>• Performance requires action to achieve expected results.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fails to Improve</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavior is not consistently appropriate for the workplace and the position.</li> <li>• Performance expectations and objectives are not met.</li> <li>• Employee consistently displays poor work performance and has failed to improve.</li> <li>• A review at this level may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.</li> </ul>

# PAC FORMS

The forms are completed by the supervisor in preparation for the Annual Summary of Performance Meeting, based on documentation from ongoing communication during the review period.

## A. and B. - Core Expectations and Job Specific Expectations

**Core Expectations** apply to every position and every employee of the City and incorporate basic tenets of the City's Operating culture.

**Job Specific Expectations** identify the specific requirements for the employee's job. These expectations are usually taken from the employee's job description. When rating an employee's performance as Meeting Expectations, the employee must meet every area of the expectation. Meeting Expectations means that an employee is doing every aspect of the area to be rated with full competence.

**C. Individual Goals.** The PAC Individual Goals section identifies specific goals agreed upon at the beginning of the performance year. They can encompass anything that would strengthen the employee's performance or help him or her develop. Although the supervisor should have final approval on what goals will be chosen, it is encouraged that the employee have meaningful input regarding the choice of goals.

**D. PAC Summary of Performance.** The PAC Summary of Performance form reflects an overall rating of the employee's performance for the entire review period. The supervisor will complete it at the conclusion of the Annual Summary of Performance Review Meeting. The supervisor will provide an explanation for the overall ratings of each component (Core Expectations, Job Specific Expectations and Individual Goals).

Employees will sign the forms acknowledging the discussions took place. If an employee disagrees with the rating, he or she may write their comments on the form or an attachment.