CLARIFYING PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

PARTICIPANT'S MANUAL

Comprehensive Public Training Program (CPTP)

State of Louisiana

CLARIFYING PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

Comprehensive Public Training Program (CPTP)

Sponsored by the Louisiana State Civil Service

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CLARIFYING PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class will allow participants to develop the skills needed to discuss performance expectations with others in order to identify responsibilities, priorities and measurable goals, as well as gain their support and commitment to the ideals of their agency.

JOB OUTCOMES

❑ Provides positive feedback in a way that reinforces or encourages desirable employee behavior.

❑ Provides negative feedback constructively.

❑ Coaches, motivates, and guides others toward objectives and accomplishments.

❑ Motivates employees at all levels to work toward the department's objectives, values, and strategies.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

❑ Identify the appropriate time to discuss performance expectations.

❑ Effectively respond to questions people have about workplace goals and priorities.

❑ Develop key actions for clarifying performance expectations.

❑ Use key actions to conduct a productive discussion about expectations.

❑ Clarify performance expectations in order to increase employee motivation and commitment.

CLARIFYING PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

Managing today requires working with people so they can better mange their own jobs. The key is giving employees up-to-date information to guide their work and providing line-of-sight to the organization's overall objectives so they will not be working in the dark.

When you are not clear with people about what the organization needs and what you expect, you set the stage for mismatched expectations. This leads to wasted time and resources because work often has to be redone.

Clarifying performance expectations involves having routine, interactive discussions with an employee to identify responsibilities, priorities, measurable goals, and a performance-tracking plan.

It is a good idea to discuss performance measures when:

- The organization has announced a change in direction, or needs to align effort to meet important goals.
- A new performance cycle has begun.
- The person is new to the organization, work group, team, role, or assignment.
- The person has asked you to clarify priorities and/or goals.
- The person is exceeding expectations and needs new challenges.

KEY ACTIONS FOR CLARIFYING PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

The ability to set and reset performance expectations in a timely and straightforward manner is one of a supervisor's most important skills.

The following key actions can be used to clarify performance expectations with others in a way that increases motivation and gains an employee's commitment.

1. State the purpose of the discussion.
2. Explain how the work supports the agency.
3. Mutually discuss expectations and measures.
4. Recap and check for commitment.
5. Set a date for follow-up.

1. ***State the purpose of the discussion***: Create a shared understanding of the purpose of the discussion and draw out the employee, encouraging him/her to take the lead. Clearly state why you are speaking about expectations. Let the employee know the reason for the performance expectation discussion. Clarify the scope of the discussion—determine what you need to cover, and explain the agenda to the individual.

In this situation:	Cover this:
The organization has announced a change in direction, or needs to align efforts to meet important goals.	Discuss responsibilities that have changed, any additional responsibilities, and any shift in priorities.
A new performance cycle has begun.	Discuss all of the person's responsibilities with a focus on those that are high priority.
The person is new to the organization, work group, role, or assignment.	Discuss all of the person's responsibilities with a focus on those that are high priority and how they fit into the organization's goals.
The person has asked you to clarify priorities and/or goals.	Focus on high-priority responsibilities and measurable goals.
The person is exceeding expectations and needs new challenges.	Review new responsibilities and discuss any shift in priorities.

2. ***Explain how the work supports the agency.*** People want to know that their work is valued. Share your understanding of the agency's goals and direction. This will provide a basis for evaluating how each responsibility contributes to the big picture.

- Describe how the individual's work supports the agency's goals, and benefits the work group or team.

- If needed, draw a simple diagram showing how the work relates to each important function.

- Explain the impact if the work objectives are not met. Describe the impact to the customer, team, department, and/or agency if the individual's work objectives are not met.

CRAFTING AN OPENING STATEMENT

Opening Statement Criteria

1. State the purpose of the discussion.
   - State why it is a good idea to discuss the performance expectations with the employee right now.
   - Review the scope and main focus of the discussion.

2. Describe how the work supports the organization/work group.
   - Describe how the employee's work supports the larger goal for the organization, division or department, and the work group or team.
   - Describe the impact if the employee's objectives are not met.

Individual and Small Group Activity

What:	Draft an opening statement.
How:	Use the following questions to help guide your writing:

- Did the opening statement meet all of the criteria?
- What improvement would you suggest in the openin   statement?
- From an employee standpoint, did the opening sound natural and non-threatening?
- Did the opening statement set your expectations for the rest of the discussion?

Notes:

3. **_Mutually discuss expectations and measures_.** Have an interactive discussion with your employee about responsibilities, priorities, and goals. Also discuss resources, strategies, and tools to help the employee overcome rough spots and meet his or her goals.

- Discuss responsibilities and priorities. The task is to determine the extent to which each responsibility contributes to the organization's goals, and to mutually draw up a list of priorities that balances the organizational impact with competing demands and personal preference.
  - It is important to make the discussion of work responsibilities and priorities an interactive process. This increases employee buy-in and may result in new information that will influence priorities.
  - When reviewing work responsibilities with an employee, use open-ended questions to draw out his/her ideas.
  - Prioritize responsibilities based on agency/work group impact. The contribution to the organization's goals should be the primary focus when prioritizing responsibilities. When discussing responsibilities with an employee, consider the following criteria to arrive at a mutual list of priorities:

    - Difficulty relative to the results you get in return.
    - Available time and deadlines.
    - Contribution to the person's career or professional development.

- Discuss measurable goals. When discussing measurable goals, the purpose is to create goals with terms that will enable an objective evaluation of each high-priority responsibility and measurable goal at a time to avoid dividing your attention and risking confusion.
  - Ask open-ended questions that encourage the individual to share ideas for measurable goals. Employees are more motivated to accomplish the goals they helped define.

- Determine the resources, strategies, and tools needed for success
  - The employee might feel stressed about meeting the specified goals, and may bring up issues or rough spots. Communicate resources, strategies, and tools to help the employee overcome rough spots and be successful.
  - Examples of resources include:
    - Resources—training another team member to reduce some of the responsibilities, or providing guidelines to clarify ambiguous procedures.
    - Strategies—deferring some tasks, finding time-saving shortcuts, or providing coaching to expand the person's abilities.
    - Tools—spreadsheets, software programs

- Discuss the performance-tracking plan. An interactive discussion for tracking performance encourages the individuals to take ownership of the final plan. A performance-tracking plan identifies the data sources for each high-priority responsibility and goal.

    - Explain data sources currently in place and any additional data sources that will be put in place for each measurable goal.
    - Summarize the performance-tracking plan by listing each high-priority responsibility, the measurable goal, and the data source for tracking performance.
    - Be sure that the employee understands exactly what is being measured, the procedures for performance tracking, and how the information is being used.
    - Directly ask if the employee understands the performance-tracking plan and if he or she has any questions.

Responding Effectively to Rough Spots—the following chart lists examples of rough spots an employee may raise when discussing performance expectations. It also includes examples of resources, strategies, and tools that you can use to help employees achieve their goals.

Rough Spots	Resources, Strategies, and Tools
1. Foresees difficulty handling all high-priority responsibilities.	• Provide spreadsheet or electronic tool to assist with management of responsibilities. • Examine tasks and activities to see if they can be streamlined.
2. Is unwilling to let go of low-priority items.	• Draw a diagram of how high-priority responsibilities fit into the goals of the organization, department, or team. • Transition low-priority items to another employee better suited to focus energy on these items.
3. Complains that priorities seem to change overnight.	• Explain why the new or changing priorities are important to the organization. • Identify skills that will allow the employee to manage changing priorities and coach toward the skills.
4. Points to another individual or group that may (intentionally or unintentionally) get in the way of achieving the goal.	• Coach the employee on how to work with the individual or group to resolve issues. • Discuss strategies for overcoming team conflict.
5. Asks for special consideration (compensation) for a heavy workload.	• Identify other non-monetary rewards that are valuable to the individual.
6. Maintains that a specific goal cannot be met with current resources.	• Provide a planning tool to assist in meeting the goal with the current resources.
7. Requests training you have not budgeted for.	• Shadow an employee with these skills.
8. Says that this year's performance targets are higher than last year's.	• Provide guidelines and best-practice documents to assist in streamlining procedures. • Identify additional employees to focus on achieving the target.

Video

What: Watch "An Impromptu Performance Expectation Discussion"
 	
 How: Watch the video to see how Miranda discusses priorities, rough spots, and the balancing of priorities with Bart.
 	
       • Use the space below to capture notes about the unplanned meeting and how Miranda handles the situation.
       • In your group, determine how Miranda uses the key actions to clarify expectations and respond to Bart's rough spots.

Notes:

4. ***Recap and check for commitment.*** Any time two busy people talk, it's a good idea to recap the highlights of the conversation—especially when you've reached agreements about performance expectations. It's also important to ask for commitment before ending the discussion.

   - Summarize before closing the discussion.
     – Review the agreed upon high-priority items, measurable goals, and performance-tracking plan. Discuss to-do items agreed upon during the conversation as well as resources, strategies, and tools the individual can use to achieve his or her goals.

   - Ask questions that will allow you to judge whether the employee sees the action plan as you do.
     – Sometimes, asking how the person plans to get started reveals the level of understanding as well as the level of commitment.
     – Asking the person to summarize the action plan is a good way to check for understanding of the details as well as the bigger picture.

   - Ask for a commitment. If the employee seems hesitant, you may need to continue your discussion.

5. ***Set a date for follow-up.*** Setting a date for a progress review will give you a set time to discuss items that may have been overlooked as well as discuss the results that have been achieved.

   - Based on the action plan, choose an early milestone and schedule a time to talk as soon as that milestone is reached.
     – It's easy to put the date on your calendar. The hard part is viewing the follow-up conversation as a high priority when the date for follow-up rolls around. Schedule a time to talk as soon as the milestone is reached.

   - Specify the issues you'll review.
     – Agree on the agenda so you will know the preparation required and the amount of time to schedule.

Video

What: Watch "Clarifying Performance Expectations"
How: Watch the video to see how the manager, Chris, conducts a meeting with Denise clarifying the performance expectations of her new role.

• Use the space below to capture notes about the manager and how his meeting is positive.
     • In your group, discuss the key actions that Chris used.
     • Determine how effective Chris was in discussing performance expectations with Denise.

Notes:

<u>*REFERENCES*</u>

AchieveGlobal (2004). *Clarifying Performance Expectations.* Tampa, FL: AchieveGlobal Headquarters, Inc.

JOB AIDS

To keep performance on track within your work group or team, commit to one or two actions and do them for at least three months.

- Once a month, review the performance goals for your work group or team. Use a short meeting or an informal e-mail message to let people know how the group is performing against its collective goals.

- Each Monday, select one individual with whom you will do an informal performance check during the week. Ask, "How's it going?" Listen and then focus on only one or two areas in which to make suggestions. Keep the interaction short. Unless it's absolutely necessary, avoid reviewing the entire job. Select a different employee each week.

- Routinely select one individual to recognize for achievements. Call attention to times when employees made good decisions on their own that supported important goals. The achievements can be small steps toward big goals. The idea is to let employees know you're observant and care about their contributions.

- Look for opportunities to let employees know how you've balanced competing priorities. Share the lessons you've learned.

- Select one or two difficult issues that employees may raise when you're discussing performance expectations. Find a peer who's willing to help you rehearse effective responses to rough spots or issues raised.