

## Policy: Performance Development and Progression (PDP)

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# Performance Development and Progression (PDP) Policy

## 1. Introduction

The Victorian Ombudsman (VO) Performance Development and Progression (PDP) policy and process are designed to facilitate a formal planning and constructive, two-way discussion and feedback process between supervisors and staff. The policy covers all VO employees, including secondees and all casual and fixed term employees where the period of employment is expected to extend beyond 3 months and the end of the cycle period (see 5 below). Contractors are NOT covered by this policy.

From 2013-14, managers and staff are encouraged to reduce our environmental footprint by not printing out hard copies of the plans, by scanning in signatures (where required) and by sending TRIM links.

The PDP policy is designed to be easy-to-use and of practical benefit to managers and staff. This is in line with VO's commitment to:

- regularly review and assess an individual's performance throughout the year
- positively reinforce good work performance
- have in place a supportive and flexible working environment
- facilitate career development.

Clearly articulated performance goals help:

- employees to feel confident about the value of the work they complete
- facilitate career/role development
- assist in ensuring individual priorities align with office goals and priorities.

Good performance management promotes a climate of openness and accountability. Regular informal discussions and more formal, documented performance plans enable supervisors and staff to recognise achievements and value to the office and to identify and address areas of concern promptly.

The PDP process comprises two critical features:

- A formal documented plan
- Regular and on-going feedback and discussions about performance between staff and supervisors.

## 2. The Aim of the PDP process

VO meets its PDP policy obligations under the Determination and the *Public Administration Act 2004*. It aims to:

- provide a planning and assessment process which is equitable and transparent
- provide ongoing clarity for staff regarding the expectations of their roles
- encourage staff to discuss their career goals and build these into their PDP plans
- support and encourage staff to achieve both work and career goals
- provide links with other learning opportunities
- encourage and facilitate regular performance feedback
- recognise good performance and address areas of concern
- provide an equitable and objective base for progression decisions/recommendations
- enhance VO's organisational performance and achievement of its strategic goals.

## 3. The role of staff and management in the PDP process

All staff members are expected to:

- discuss and agree draft PDP plans on a timely basis with their supervisor including goals and performance measures against which their performance and development can be managed transparently
- actively participate in ad-hoc informal and formal half-yearly and End of Cycle discussions. This includes providing and receiving constructive feedback
- actively contribute to the work in their area, perform their duties to the best of their ability and take responsibility for their actions
- be willing to learn and apply new knowledge, skills and approaches
- take responsibility for, and proactively explore, options for their own development including reviewing their goals on a regular basis.

To ensure the success of the PDP process, supervisors are to:

- have a clear understanding of the PDP aims, actions, processes and documentation
- work towards an innovative, industrious and supportive workplace
- commit to undertaking and completing the requirements of the process in a timely manner, primarily:
  - in consultation with the individual, agreeing goals which are aligned to the VO Annual Plan and unit/division plans (if applicable) and performance measures to fairly and transparently guide performance and development
  - determining if an individual has satisfied their performance measures, thus enabling them to achieve progression

- provide their staff with clear direction and expectations in the form of goals and performance measures
- discuss individual career objectives to help identify, plan and provide appropriate opportunities
- build collaborative and productive relationships through regular, ongoing two-way work discussions and constructive feedback
- monitor performance and effectively manage areas of concern
- review and acknowledge achievements, success, effort and contribution.

Directors will also report regularly to the Executive on the management of the PDP program.

#### 4. Progression Payments

Staff members may be eligible for progression payments within a Grade (effective from 1 July). However, these progression payments are not automatic and must be earned. The PDP process assists management to determine those individuals who will receive a progression payment.

#### 5. Completing the PDP Plan

The PDP plan is designed to document an employee's goals to provide a framework for the employee and their supervisor to monitor progress and achievements in line with corporate goals. The PDP plan also assists in identifying any additional development opportunities to assist the employee in a better understanding of their working environment, to enhance their prospects of meeting more challenging goals and/or to aspire to different and more demanding opportunities.

The PDP cycle runs from 1 July through to 30 June in the following year.

The PDP planning discussion meeting should be held between Manager and employee at the beginning of the progression cycle i.e. by 31 July, or if new to the role, within one month of commencing the new role. If an employee commences a role within three months of the end of the cycle, a PDP is still be developed within one month of them commencing and will apply through until the end of cycle the following year.

The PDP plan documents the PDP discussion/agreements:

- goals and achievements
- development opportunities
- formal assessments – half-yearly and end of year.

#### 5.1. Goals and achievements

At the initial PDP planning discussion, managers and staff document the agreed:

- Goals – **What and Why**
- Strategies to Achieve Goals - **How**
- Performance measures – **What, Why, by When and by Whom.**

As part of the formal assessment process at mid and end cycle achievements are also to be discussed, agreed and recorded on the PDP plan.

##### 5.1.1. Goals

Goals are used to describe in generic terms the key aspects of the role the individual is to undertake during the assessment period. Goal descriptions should be based on job roles and should also reflect the 'Value Standard Range Descriptors' in Schedule E of the [VPS Workplace Determination 2012](#) (the Determination). Most importantly, they should be aligned to the VO Annual Plan and any branch/division plans (if applicable).

For the 2013-14 year VO has five strategic objectives (with 14 sub objectives) which you may want to consider using as goals (refer to [VO Annual Plan](#) for full details).

##### 5.1.2. Performance Measures

It is important to have objective and agreed measures in place for both parties to assess the extent to which the agreed goals have been achieved. Performance measures should be SMART - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timebound and/or Trackable.

##### 5.1.3. Development Opportunities

All employees, in conjunction with their supervisor, should consider any additional development opportunities which might assist the employee in a better understanding of their working environment, to enhance their prospects of meeting more challenging goals and/or to aspire to different and more demanding opportunities.

Listing of opportunities or skills gaps might include:

- mentoring/buddying
- on-the-job projects
- networking opportunities
- ongoing advice/assistance on administration in the VPS, dealing with difficult complainants, understanding our working environment (such as the prison system and processes)
- opportunities to change role and responsibilities.

Learning opportunities may take the form of formal learning and development programs eg: management training, studies assistance, Certificate 4 in Government (Investigation) for example.

Where opportunities are agreed, they are to be documented on the PDP plan. Please refer to the [VO Learning and Development Training Guide](#) in the first instance, when considering employee development.

It is important to note that not all identified requirements may be able to be met by the office, especially where formal training is identified. This should be borne in mind as part of the discussion between the supervisor and employee.

Although not essential, it would normally be expected that each employee would have at least one 'development opportunity' agreed and documented on the PDP plan.

Staff and supervisors should ensure that clear learning goals are developed and documented based on:

- individual career preferences
- any recognised gap between the current skill level and knowledge and the level required to undertake the role and achieve results to agreed standards.

The Learning and Development Officer will advise the supervisor, as soon as practicable, of the outcome of Executive consideration of development requirements. Where the office is unable to support identified and agreed requirements for an employee, the supervisor is to discuss, in conjunction with the Learning and Development Officer and the employee, other options to meet the identified requirement. This is to be agreed with the employee and appropriate changes made to the PDP Plan.

#### 5.1.4. Formal Assessment

Feedback is an on-going responsibility and is to be provided on a regular basis throughout the year. Formal half-yearly review discussions assist in the management of timely feedback and a review of performance to date. Half-yearly feedback discussions should be completed on or around 31 December.

Brief comments of the discussion can be recorded on the PDP plan and agreed achievements are also to be documented at this time. Other additions, changes and/or deletions should be recorded on the electronic plan if required.

At the completion of the half yearly assessments, HR will forward a form to be completed by Directors advising the Director Corporate Services if staff are on track to meet performance goals. The Director, Corporate Services will then provide a summary report to the Deputy Ombudsman who will discuss the half-year assessments with directors.

## 5.2. Handling areas of Concern

Where supervisors consider that there are areas of concern in an employee's performance and they are at risk of not achieving their identified goals, early action must be taken to discuss those concerns with the employee and strategies discussed, agreed and formalised as soon as possible to overcome the concerns. Equally, any employee who considers that they run the risk of not achieving agreed goals should raise their concerns with their manager.

Any employee 'at risk', should meet with their supervisor on regular occasions to assist with monitoring their performance and the success of the strategies in place to overcome any concerns and are to meet on a quarterly basis (i.e. end September and end March) to formally agree and document how matters are progressing. This is to be documented on the PDP plan.

The management of unsatisfactory performance is not part of this policy and is to be handled in accordance with Part 3, paragraph 18 of the [VPS Workplace Determination 2012](#).

Any supervisor or employee who has questions about the PDP process or unsatisfactory performance may consult with the Manager, Business Services on a confidential basis.

## 5.3. Change in work arrangements

VO encourages staff to be flexible to expand and enhance their work experience and job satisfaction and allow the office to meet its changing demands and circumstances.

To accommodate this flexibility, the PDP process recognises staff may move to different areas within the office during the cycle year. In developing plans, staff and supervisors are to:

- reflect as best as possible the varying nature of the work of the office
- ensure and facilitate the change in the responsible supervisor (the employee is not to be disadvantaged by a change in work role and each supervisor should be clear about the staff for whom they have responsibility to complete PDP plans).



## 5.4. Formal Assessment

Formal assessment discussions are where employees are to discuss with their supervisor their performance. There should be no surprises and any areas of concern held by the supervisor or employee, should have been the subject of ongoing discussions.

Formal assessments occur twice during the year – at mid-cycle (December/January) and end-of cycle (June/July).

Sufficient time should be scheduled for the assessment meetings. It is important that both the supervisor and employee have a shared understanding of goals and performance. This may take longer in some cases than others – such as new employees. The discussions should be, and be regarded as, a valuable experience for both the supervisor and employee.

### 5.4.1. Mid-cycle discussions

The mid-cycle assessment discussion usually takes place in December or January and provides the formal opportunity for the employee and supervisor to discuss performance and achievements to date, changes to the PDP plan and any other issues which might impact on the plan and/or the employee's achievement of the agreed goals. The discussion is also the opportunity to confirm changing priorities which would have been part of the normal day-to-day process and make any necessary adjustments to the agreed PDP plan.

Before the meeting, both the supervisor and employer should review the PDP plan to:

- ensure that goals are still relevant
- assess progress to date against goals
- consider achievements to date
- assess what and whether development opportunities are in place.

Employees should prepare a brief update for their supervisor on progress so far. This should provide sufficient information to enable an open and thorough discussion and assessment of progress. The update report may include: feedback from complainants, contractors, colleagues and managers such as hand-written notes, emails, letters and file notes of oral discussions

- examples of completed work
- a list of achievements to date
- notes about initiated changes and the impact they have had
- details of assignments, projects, training programs, formal courses and coaching
- examples of how new skills, knowledge and attitudes have been demonstrated.

The employee's update report should form the basis of the discussion. It is the opportunity for the individual and supervisor to determine whether there is a shared understanding of achievements and progress to date: constructive feedback on performance should be offered and received by both parties. In addition, it is also the time to discuss development opportunities – change in role, training, coaching, mentoring etc. - to help in achieving the agreed goals.

#### 5.4.2. The end-of-cycle assessment meeting

The End of Cycle discussion which usually takes place during June or July is the formal opportunity for both parties to:

- review and assess the performance and achievements over the full 12 months of the cycle
- establish whether all the performance measures have been met.

Again, the employee is to prepare an update report which will form the basis for the discussions. On this occasion, the report is to focus on:

- How the agreed performance measures have been met
- Achievements over the full period of the cycle
- Development opportunities undertaken.

#### 5.4.3. Post the assessment meeting

The relevant issues from the assessment discussion are to be documented briefly on the PDP plan in the **Supervisor and Employee Comments** sections. In the interests of reducing printing it is recommended that both the employee and the supervisor scan in their signature and date the relevant page of the plan to acknowledge the comments made.

To ensure the PDP discussion is recorded, the signed and dated copy of the unchanged or revised plan is to be electronically forwarded to the relevant Director who will then scan in their signature and forward a TRIM link to the HR Officer who will collate on behalf of the Director Corporate Services to forward to the Deputy Ombudsman for final approval.

## 5.5. Progression payments

A payment may be awarded to an employee once they have been assessed as meeting their progression criteria. However, there are some exceptions, for example, if a person:

- has been assessed as not meeting all their progression measures
- is at the top of their grade or value range.

Progression payments will be made in the next available pay and will be back paid to 1 July.

### 5.5.1. Eligibility Criteria for Progression

All **non-executive** employees are eligible including those who are:

- ongoing
- fixed term
- on secondment.

The following eligibility criteria apply:

- individuals must have been in their role (, secondment, ongoing, fixed term etc) for at least three months as at 30 June
- individuals must be employed by VO at the end of the progression cycle
- all goals must be met to qualify for a progression payment
- progression payments will only occur when a PDP plan has been developed, implemented and reviewed in accordance with this policy. Therefore it is vital to ensure that employees' PDPs are current and relevant and are updated as required when duties/responsibilities change.
- All staff, are required to set progression criteria in consultation with their supervisor, even if they are not eligible for progression or do not wish to progress.

## 6. Records management

It is important that all PDP records are properly managed to ensure that accurate and up-to-date records are available to both staff and supervisors. It is also important that access to personal information is restricted to those with a legitimate reason.

Each employee will have a TRIM file titled “Human Resources – Performance Management – Performance Development and Progression (PDP) – Name of employee”. This file is to be made accessible to the relevant supervisor/director/s. When an employee ‘transfers’ to another unit, supervisor/director of the new location will be given access to the TRIM file of the employee’s PDP. It is the responsibility of both supervisors and directors to ensure that this occurs.

Any changes to the PDP made during the course of the assessment period are to be updated via the electronic record.