



**It's About People, Not Process**  
[oa.mo.gov/engage](https://oa.mo.gov/engage)

## **Frequently Asked Questions (December 17, 2018 UPDATE) Information for Team Members, Supervisors, and Managers**

This document provides detailed answers to the most frequently-asked questions (FAQs) about ENGAGE and REFLECT. It is for all team members. This document also shows you where to find more information and examples.

### **If I have questions or need guidance about ENGAGE or REFLECT, where should I go for help?**

You can find all information on ENGAGE and REFLECT at <https://oa.mo.gov/engage>. All team members should review additional materials as they become available. Updates are distributed via email and posted on the website. It is worth the few minutes to review the latest materials. They are designed to answer the latest questions from across all agencies.

Additionally, each team member, supervisor, and manager can consult with his or her supervisor or department human resources (HR) office for information.

The Office of Administration, Division of Personnel will also work with agency HR staff.

Your coworkers can serve as excellent sounding boards and help you work through questions and issues.

### **What is ENGAGE?**

ENGAGE is our approach to professional development. It was created using team members' feedback from all departments. The feedback highlighted the need to improve professional development practices. The feedback also showed the need to bring together supervisors and their teams more. The approach is based on best practices from other organizations.

ENGAGE is a back-to-basics method. ENGAGE focuses on leaders working with their team members as individuals. ENGAGE establishes clear expectations and development goals for each team member. Team members receive regular feedback focused on how they are performing to help them and their teams improve.

Leaders also have the chance to explain the organization's direction and how team members' work every day fits into the big picture. ENGAGE helps team members understand their roles and contributions. These conversations are opportunities to step back from the day-to-day, reflect upon work and skills, and chart a path forward to improve.

*For more on this topic, see the video: "Where We Are Going."*

## What can I do as a team member to help these conversations be effective?

There are many things team members can do to make sure ENGAGE works. Here are the basics:

- **Schedule** – Establish monthly check-ins.
- **Prepare** – Review your notes and priorities before your conversation. Take time to think about questions you want to ask your supervisor. Look at your own performance to discuss with your supervisor, e.g., Do you think you are doing a good job? How can you do better? What things have you done well?.
- **Focus** – Agree to work on a few specific development goals for the next month.
- **Reflect** – Be open to feedback. Whether it feels positive or critical, feedback is meant to help you. Don't get defensive when your supervisor provides you feedback. It should not be personal. Take it as a chance to improve your own development and impact. Take notes during the meeting. Notetaking tends to keep people more engaged. Your notes will be a good resource as you reflect. Notes also help you plan your next steps based on feedback.
- **Act** – Commit to using the feedback to get better and reach our goals.
- **Ask** – Check with your supervisor, colleagues, and customers about how you are progressing toward your development goals. Tell your supervisor how he or she can help you to perform better. You may have great ideas that your supervisor never considered.

*For more on this topic, see the “ENGAGE Training Modules” videos, the “Guide for Team Members,” and the “Guide for Supervisors” on the ENGAGE website.*

## What should we talk about in my ENGAGE conversation?

Keep it simple. There are several things team members need to know to be effective:

- Expectations for their current role
- How their role fits into the mission, vision, and values of the organization
- How they are doing and steps they can take to improve in their current role and to position themselves for future opportunities
- Available professional development opportunities

Supervisors can also benefit from the perspectives shared by team members. They also should be open to feedback. Supervisors should consult with their own managers about their teams. Supervisors should also inform managers about the feedback they plan to provide. These conversations between supervisors and managers will help supervisors with their feedback to each individual team member.

*More conversation ideas can be found in the “Conversation Starters” guide located on the ENGAGE website.*

*For more on this topic, see the “ENGAGE Training Modules” videos.*

## **How often should supervisors, managers, and team members have ENGAGE conversations?**

Supervisors are expected to support the professional development of their team members. This is a primary responsibility for anyone in a management or supervisory role in the State of Missouri.

Supervisors should schedule a conversation once a month with each of their team members. The very first ENGAGE conversation should last 30-45 minutes to discuss major professional development goals for the year. The conversation may take longer if a new supervisor is involved.

Monthly ENGAGE conversations should last about 15-30 minutes after the first conversation. In addition to your scheduled monthly conversation, we encourage you to have quick feedback discussions. For example, quick feedback conversations can take place after a meeting or presentation, in response to a draft memo, or at the beginning or end of a shift; etc.).

Annual REFLECT conversations will last longer than your regular monthly ENGAGE conversations. You will have more ground to cover. Take more time to prepare. The REFLECT conversation should take about 30-45 minutes. The exact time will depend on the role.

Managers should also ask supervisors whether they've had their ENGAGE conversations with their teams. Managers should also ask their supervisors how well the supervisors know their team members' development goals.

*For more on this topic, see the video: "Why Regular ENGAGE Conversations Matter." For more on REFLECT, see below.*

## **Why are ENGAGE conversations required every month?**

An important part of every supervisor's and manager's job is to ensure the professional development of his or her team members.

ENGAGE provides an opportunity to step back from the routine discussion of tasks, processes, and deadlines. ENGAGE allows us to focus on helping team members improve and reach their goals. Regular feedback helps us develop as we build new skills. Imagine learning any other new skill: Do you learn faster and better with regular coaching? Or, by going months or even a year without feedback?

Some managers and supervisors already provide team member feedback on a weekly basis and connect daily performance to long-term development goals. This is great. If you're already doing this, continue and use the guidelines of monthly conversations and notebooks as described.

*For more on this topic, see the video: "Why Regular ENGAGE Conversations Matter."*

**Do managers and supervisors need to meet with all their team members, or just the ones that having performance issues?**

ENGAGE is about the professional development of **all** team members. Supervisors are expected to meet regularly with each team member. Team members with performance concerns may need more coaching and redirecting. High-performing staff also need time and attention from their supervisors. Team members need to hear from supervisors when they are doing a great job and when they need to improve.

*For more on this topic, see the video: "Why Regular ENGAGE Conversations Matter."*

**What if I can't find time once a month to meet with the people I supervise?**

All supervisors and managers can find the time. This is a priority. Good management and supervision requires supervisors to spend time with their team members. Remember, helping the professional development of team members is expected of all supervisors.

It is important to make this time available each month. Most conversations will take usually 15-20 minutes a month when you get into a regular rhythm.

The best supervisors and managers also provide regular feedback outside of ENGAGE conversations.

There are a few exceptions to the expectation that a supervisor have regular in-person conversations with all his or her team members. [See below: "What if I work an alternate shift or in a different location than my supervisor?"]

*For more on this topic, see the video: "Why Regular ENGAGE Conversations Matter."*

**Will managers and supervisors be able to address serious performance concerns during the conversation?**

Absolutely. Managers, supervisors, and team members can develop better relationships when they meet more frequently. These relationships and more frequent conversations about professional development allow performance issues to be addressed more quickly and effectively.

Supervisors should consult with their HR team about specific next steps when a team member cannot or will not perform as expected. They may move to more formal actions and processes to address concerns, such as verbal counseling and reprimands, written counseling and reprimands, and performance improvement plans, etc. These actions would be reflected in an individual's official personnel file, just as before. This would be separate from ENGAGE notebooks.

*For more on this topic, see the video: "How to Approach a Challenging Conversation."*

### **What if I work an alternate shift or in a different location than my supervisor?**

Supervisors and team members can meet monthly in most cases. Certain situations may require alternative accommodations.

For instance, some teams work in different locations across the state. In such cases, consider phone calls or tele/video conferencing options if you're concerned about physical distance. so phone conversations may be appropriate part of the time.

Direct care staff in healthcare and mental health facilities may also have different requirements because of their nature of their shift work and number of people being supervised by one leader. In these situations, supervisors can identify team leads or "mentors" each shift to hold your monthly conversations.

We have worked out approaches to deal with such situations. Please consult with your HR team if you feel you are in an exceptional situation.

Even in unique situations, it is still important for supervisors and their team members to have face-to-face conversations on a quarterly basis.

These approaches are exceptions. Using these approaches for convenience or to avoid regular conversations is unacceptable. Please confer with your agency Personnel Director or HR professional if you have questions.

### **How are expectations and baseline performance standards established?**

Expectations are critical to your ENGAGE conversations and your professional development.

Team members need to understand their job functions, performance measures, goals to achieve in the next year, and how they contribute to their agency's mission. These expectations can be shared with team members in a variety of ways. You can use a monthly ENGAGE conversation to discuss a team member's expectations. The supervisor should send an e-mail to the team member about their expectations after their conversation. Team members are responsible to say if they had a different understanding.

*For more on this topic, see the video: "How to Have the First ENGAGE Conversation."*

### **Without a form, where is the accountability?**

Everyone can help with accountability. Supervisors and team members can both request scheduling a conversation.

During monthly conversations, managers should ask supervisors about the status of their ENGAGE conversations with team members.

A simple tool tracks whether supervisors are having monthly meetings. Please contact your HR office if you're unsure whether your department is using the tracking tool. You can find the tool on the "Other Resources" page of the ENGAGE website.

### **How does ENGAGE work if the supervisor and team member have a personality conflict?**

Good supervisors try to improve their working relationships with team members. The goal of ENGAGE is to increase how often supervisors and team members communicate. It also is meant to improve the quality of their communication. Better communication makes effective relationships. It also improves how we work together to accomplish our departments' missions. . ENGAGE conversations are chances for supervisors and team members to discuss various situations and find way to address them. You should always remember these are professional conversations focused on observed behaviors that impact how we can work together. The better we work together, the more we can achieve to better serve Missourians.

Managers should check with supervisors on the progress of their ENGAGE discussions. Managers should support supervisors to help them have productive conversations. Your agency's HR office can help you approach challenging situations.

### **Is training available?**

Yes. The ENGAGE website has many training videos and resources. The Center for Management and Professional Development also offers training programs, including ENGAGE training for team members and supervisors. Some departments have developed their own ENGAGE training. Please consult your HR team to learn more about training opportunities.

### **Are there any specific forms to fill out for my ENGAGE conversation?**

Team members are encouraged to have a notebook for conversations with supervisors. Before your conversation, you should write down what you want to cover in the next conversation. You can use the notebook to take notes during the conversation and write your "takeaways." Takeaways can range from specific feedback to ways you can accomplish tasks more efficiently and effectively.

Supervisors are encouraged to have a notebook for each team member (your direct reports). Use your notebook to plan for conversations. Record important information from the conversations. For example, important information can be specific expectations you discussed, goals you agreed on, examples of team member performance, etc.

*For more on this topic, see the videos: "How a Supervisor Uses a Notebook" and "How a Team Member Uses a Notebook."*

**Should I keep documentation from my ENGAGE conversation regarding performance/ development conversations?**

Yes. Managers and supervisors should take notes from the conversations with team members. This will help you track progress and follow up the conversations. Documentation should be kept regarding expectations, performance, development opportunities, etc. Team members should use a notebook to write down important information from their ENGAGE conversations. This will help them remember expectations, timelines for tasks, topics for upcoming meetings, etc.

We recommend that all team members have a notebook for their conversations. All supervisors need to have a notebook for each one of their direct reports.

*For more on this topic, see the videos: "How a Supervisor Uses a Notebook" and "How a Team Member Uses a Notebook."*

**Can team members provide feedback to their supervisors during their ENGAGE conversations?**

Yes. These are two-way conversations. It may take time to build a professional relationship. Supervisors should actively seek feedback from team members. They can provide a good perspective on how the supervisor operates. Team members can also share valuable input on how supervisors can improve their work and communication with the team. These conversations are also chances to talk about other workplace concerns.

**I have ideas about ways that we can do things better in our office. Is it okay for me to bring ideas up during these meetings?**

Yes. You should share your new ideas or suggestions to improve the way we work with your supervisor. Your supervisor should encourage you to share suggestions.

**Are ENGAGE conversations a good time to discuss potential training or other professional development opportunities?**

Yes. Supervisors and team members should discuss training and professional development opportunities. ENGAGE is designed to encourage everyone to improve and develop their skills.

### **Will these conversations help me be considered for promotions within my department?**

A team member's ENGAGE notebook is a valuable resource when preparing for a promotional interview. Use your notebook to reference progress with specific examples and connect your contributions to the division, department, or State goals. Specific examples of your impact and professional development can be compelling.

### **How will ENGAGE be tied to raises?**

We are reassessing our approach to rewards and recognition for high performance. This includes formal and informal rewards as well as financial and non-financial rewards. We plan to have more guidance related to potential changes in financial recognition for high performance by the end of Fiscal Year 2019.

While these reforms are developed, we do not envision current ENGAGE conversations factoring directly into reward decisions.

Of course, a person's overall performance will be important, as it always is, when evaluating any reward or recognition. Overall performance could be reviewed along with expectations and long-term progress when considering raises. But raises or other forms of recognition will not be tied directly to ENGAGE conversations.

### **What is REFLECT?**

REFLECT is the special ENGAGE conversation between a supervisor and team member that will happen once every year.

REFLECT is the opportunity for a supervisor and team member to review role expectations, consider what they both can learn from recent experience working together, and then define the team member's professional development goals for the coming year.

Team members and supervisors answer a few questions to prepare for their conversations. Both use the questions to reflect on the team members' professional development in the past year, their main responsibilities in their current role, and goals for the coming year. ENGAGE notebooks can help them refresh their memories. They can keep copies of their notes with their ENGAGE notebooks.

A REFLECT conversation will last longer than your regular monthly ENGAGE conversations. You will have more ground to cover. Take more time to prepare. The REFLECT conversation should take about 30-45 minutes. The exact time will depend on the role.

*For more on this topic, see the video: "What Is Reflect?"*

### **Why REFLECT?**

Everyone's professional development path is different. Something that is easy for you may be hard for someone else. And, vice versa.

For additional information, go to: <https://oa.mo.gov/engage> (Version 3, November 27, 2018)



That's why we need to step back to consider where we have been, where we are going, and how to get there. We also need to confirm or update our expectations for our jobs.

ENGAGE helps us step back from the day-to-day to see how we are doing in a month.

The idea behind REFLECT is similar to ENGAGE. Taking the time once a year to step back will help you see the big picture. It also helps you understand where you have been and where you are going. It helps supervisors and team members stay on the same page about expectations.

*For more on this topic, see the video: "What Is Reflect?"*

### **What is the difference between ENGAGE and REFLECT?**

They are **not** different. REFLECT is part of ENGAGE.

REFLECT is just the name for a once-a-year ENGAGE conversation where a supervisors and team member step back to review expectations for the team member's current role, consider what they both can learn from recent experience working together, and set professional development goals for the coming year.

### **When do we REFLECT?**

A team member's REFLECT conversation will take place once a year. It will take place during the anniversary month in which the team member was hired for their current position.

For example, if you started in your current role in March 2018, then you will have your REFLECT conversation in March 2019.

Supervisors can find a team member's anniversary date on the ENGAGE tracking tool. We will start REFLECT in January 2019.

### **Where are the REFLECT notes filed?**

Supervisors and team members both keep copies of their questions and answers. We encourage you to keep them with your ENGAGE notebook. You should NOT file your REFLECT notes in official personnel or performance files.

The only exception will be those divisions that need documentation for accreditation purposes (i.e. parts of DSS, DMH, and DPS).

*For more on REFLECT notes, see the examples at: <https://oa.mo.gov/engage/reflect-resources>*

### **What should I do with the REFLECT notes?**

We encourage supervisors and team members to keep a copy of their questions and answers. The REFLECT notes will be a useful reference for ENGAGE conversations during the year. Supervisors can use them like other ENGAGE notes. REFLECT notes are also a reminder of development goals. Team members may also want to share REFLECT notes with new supervisors to help speed up the transition.

### **Do I record this REFLECT conversation the same way I record the normal monthly conversations?**

Before your REFLECT conversation, you should write out your answers to the REFLECT questions. After your REFLECT conversation, you may want to update or add to your answers. They are for your reference. You can include them in your regular ENGAGE notebook, or not. That is up to you.

*For more on REFLECT notes, see the examples at: <https://oa.mo.gov/engage/reflect-resources>*

### **As a supervisor, how will I know my team member's anniversary month?**

You can find it in the ENGAGE tracking tool. The month will appear next to the team member's name.

You can direct any questions about an anniversary date to your HR office.

### **As a supervisor, how do I confirm that the REFLECT discussion has taken place?**

Use the ENGAGE tracking tool. This is fast and easy. You can mark that you held a REFLECT conversation like you do with your ENGAGE conversations.

### **What if my anniversary month isn't until December?**

You can still discuss your development goals earlier in the year with your supervisor if your anniversary date is late in 2019. Use one of your regular ENGAGE conversations. Discuss with your supervisor. Decide what is best for you. No matter what, your annual REFLECT discussion may include more than a year's worth of information and experiences. That is ok.

### **What if the team member and supervisor have different opinions about the team member's accomplishments and challenges over the past year?**

This should be rare. Regular ENGAGE conversations should keep you both on the same page. That said, you may not always agree on every detail. In situations like this, we expect both sides to listen to one another and update their REFLECT notes. Both supervisor and team member can keep copies for reference. The notes, though, do not become part of an official HR file.

For additional information, go to: <https://oa.mo.gov/engage> (Version 3, November 27, 2018)