



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

## **Frequently Asked Questions (May 16, 2018, UPDATE) Information for Team Members, Supervisors, and Managers**

This document provides answers to the most frequently asked questions (FAQs) about ENGAGE. It is intended to be used by all team members. This document reflects clarifications and refinements to the original FAQs released in January 2018. This document also notes where additional ENGAGE materials can help explain further or provide examples.

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

In addition to these FAQs, all staff can find essential information on ENGAGE, including videos, guides, and other resources, at <https://oa.mo.gov/engage>. All staff should stay up to date on ENGAGE by reviewing additional materials as they become available and are distributed via email, the website, and other channels. It is worth the few minutes every week or two to review the latest materials. They are designed to answer the latest questions from across all the agencies.

Additionally, each team member, supervisor, and manager can consult with his or her respective supervisor or assigned department human resources (HR) office for information. HR leaders from all the agencies participating in ENGAGE meet regularly to coordinate and ensure consistency.

Staff in the Office of Administration, Division of Personnel will also work with agency HR staff, as needed.

Finally, we have found that other coworkers can serve as excellent sounding boards and help each other work through questions and issues.

### **What is ENGAGE?**

ENGAGE is our new approach to professional development. ENGAGE is based upon team members' feedback from all departments that emphasized the need to improve professional development practices and increase interactions between supervisors and their teams. The approach is also based upon best practices from other organizations.

ENGAGE is a back-to-basics method that supports interaction among leadership and their teams. ENGAGE involves establishing clear expectations and development goals for each team member. Then team members receive regular feedback focused on how they are performing to help them and their teams improve. ENGAGE also provides the opportunity for leaders to explain the organization's direction and for team members to understand their role and contributions. These conversations provide the opportunity to step back from the day-to-day, reflect upon work and skills, and chart a path forward to improve.

By the end of the year, a review or summary document that complements ENGAGE will be developed to support accreditation and other HR requirements.

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

### **As a team member, what can I do to help these conversations be as effective as possible?**

There are a number of things that team members can do. Here are the main elements of ENGAGE:

- **Schedule** – Establish monthly check-ins.
- **Prepare** – Review your notes and priorities before your conversation; take time to think about questions you would like to ask your supervisor; and look at your own performance as your supervisor might (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 more critical, feedback is meant to help you. As you listen to feedback from your supervisor, don't get defensive. It should not be personal. Take it as a chance to improve your own development and impact. Also, take notes during the meeting. Notetaking tends to keep people more engaged. Your notes will be a good resource as you reflect and plan your next steps to act upon the feedback you received.
- **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 doing toward your development goals. Let your supervisor know how he or she can help you to perform better. You may have great ideas that your supervisor just never considered.

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

### **Without having the appraisal form to focus on and guide our conversations, what should we talk about in these meetings?**

The idea is to keep it simple. There are several things employees need to know in order to be effective: their work expectations; how their role fits into the mission, vision, and values of the organization; how they are doing and steps they can take to improve; and what opportunities for professional development may be available.

Supervisors can also benefit from the perspectives shared by team members and should be open to receiving feedback during the conversation. Supervisors should also consult with their own managers about their teams and the feedback they plan to provide. These conversations will help supervisors calibrate 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 these one-on-one performance and development conversations?**

Every supervisor is expected to support the professional development of his or her 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. To start, the first of these conversations should last roughly 30-45 minutes to discuss major goals and development objectives for the year. If the first conversation involves a new supervisor, or if the conversations in the past have been infrequent, then the first conversation of the year may take longer.

Monthly meetings thereafter should last 15-30 minutes. In addition to your scheduled monthly conversations, we encourage quick feedback discussions whenever appropriate (e.g., after a meeting or presentation; in response to a draft memo; at the beginning or end of a shift; etc.).

Managers supervising supervisors should make it part of their regular ENGAGE discussions to ask whether their development conversations with their teams have taken place and how well the supervisors know their team members' development goals.

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

## **Why are the meetings required on a monthly basis?**

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 to focus on helping the team member improve and reach their goals. Regular feedback helps speed up our development 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?

As with any new approach, there can be anxiety. There will be learning curves and bumps in the road as supervisors and team members learn how to have better professional development conversations. It is okay. This consistent, monthly two-way dialogue will help both gain confidence.

There are some managers and supervisors who have been doing this all along. Some provide on a weekly basis structured feedback that links daily performance to long-term development goals. This is great. If that is your rhythm already, 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 direct reports, or just the ones that appear to be having performance issues?**

ENGAGE is about the professional development of **all** our colleagues. Supervisors are expected to meet regularly and individually with **all** team members. Team members with specific performance concerns may need additional coaching and redirecting. However, the highest performing staff also need time and attention from their supervisors. Team members need to hear from supervisors both when they are doing a great job and when they have an area that needs development.

*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 that a supervisor spend time with his or her team members. Remember, helping the professional development of team members is expected of all supervisors.

It is, therefore, important to make this time available each month. Remember that once you get into a regular rhythm of the conversations, most will take usually 15-20 minutes a month to check in with a team member. The best supervisors and managers also provide regular feedback outside of formal meetings.

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

### **The new process seems less regimented than PERforM. Will managers and supervisors still be able to address serious performance concerns with this less formal approach?**

Absolutely. By meeting more frequently, managers, supervisors, and team members should be able to develop better relationships. These relationships, along with more frequent professional development-centered conversations, allow performance issues to be addressed more quickly, and more effectively.

If it becomes apparent through regular ENGAGE conversations that an employee cannot or will not perform as expected, a supervisor should consult with his or her agency's HR team about specific next steps. This may involve a 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. All of these would be reflected in individual personnel files, as before. Any such documentation would be separate from ENGAGE notebooks.

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

### **What about "special appraisals" or probationary appraisals? Will those be done?**

Not formally. The ongoing focus of supervisors, managers, and team members should be to have more frequent, regular, face-to-face, development-centered meetings. In the event a team member is not meeting expectations, managers and supervisors should continue to consult with their assigned agency HR office as needed and follow its guidance.

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

In the vast majority of cases, supervisors and team members can meet monthly. There are a few special situations where alternative accommodation may be necessary. If shift work is the concern, supervisors can identify team leads or “mentors” for each shift to ensure monthly conversations and routine feedback occur. In cases where physical distance is the concern, consider phone calls or tele/video conferencing options to ensure monthly conversations take place. Even under these unique circumstances, it remains important for supervisors to arrange face-to-face interactions on at least a quarterly basis with their team members.

Keep in mind, these approaches are intended to be exceptions, use of these concepts for convenience or to avoid regular conversations is unacceptable. Please confer with your agency Personnel Director or HR professional if you have any questions about these exceptions.

### **Does ENGAGE involve a numerical rating similar to what was done in PERforM?**

No, ENGAGE does not use numerical scores. Supervisors should clearly inform team members about how they are doing relative to expectations and goals, but without a numerical score.

As the ENGAGE process evolves, we likely will decide to include some form of end of year record that summarizes the previous monthly conversations. We may also ultimately adopt some standard terms or categories to help team members better understand their progress and to facilitate the development conversation process.

### **It sounds as though there aren't expectations. How do we establish expectations and baseline performance standards?**

Expectations are critical to professional development and ENGAGE.

Team members need to understand their job functions, performance measures, goals to achieve over the next year, and how they contribute to the mission of their agency. These expectations can be shared with employees in a variety of ways. You can use a monthly ENGAGE conversation to discuss a team member's expectations. In some cases, the established objectives from PERforM may be a useful starting point; however, the intent is not to copy this list. Supervisors and team members should not feel constrained to use old objectives. After a conversation discussing expectations for a team member's role, the supervisor should send an e-mail outlining the expectations. It will be the team member's responsibility to indicate if they had a different understanding based on the first conversation.

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

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

Everyone involved will help ensure accountability. Supervisors and team members can both submit meeting requests for a meeting time, with an understanding that their schedules may require some juggling to find a mutually acceptable time. When managers hold monthly conversations with team members who supervise others, a part of the discussion should include, “the status of their ENGAGE conversations.”



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A simple tracking tool has been designed to assist departments interested in a quick and easy way to capture ENGAGE meeting dates and ensure supervisors are conducting monthly meetings. If you are unsure whether your department is using this resource, please contact your HR office.

*This tool is accessible on the "Other Resources" page of the website.*

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

A good supervisor should try to improve or strengthen his or her working relationship with team members. A principal goal of ENGAGE is to step up the frequency and quality of communication between team members and supervisors. ENGAGE provides the skills and the common approach to facilitate real professional development conversations. The goal is that this improved communication will build more effective relationships and enhance the ability to work together to accomplish the mission of the department. ENGAGE conversations should provide an opportunity for supervisors and team members to discuss various situations and devise plans for addressing them. All parties need to keep in mind, these are professional conversations focused on observed behaviors that impact how we can work in collaboration to attain outcomes which better serve the citizens of Missouri.

Managers should check with supervisors on the progress of their ENGAGE discussions and can be a resource to support productive conversations. Your agency's HR office is also a source for possible options on how to approach challenging situations.

### **Will more training be available?**

Yes. The ENGAGE website will be updated regularly with videos and resources. There are training programs offered through the Center for Management and Professional Development related to ENGAGE concepts. Also, new programs specific to ENGAGE are being developed for team members and supervisors to attend.

### **Will there be a computer system that supervisors, managers, and HR staff use to track employee performance?**

No. At this time, managers and supervisors should focus on getting "back to the basics." Their focus should be on regular (i.e. at least monthly) face-to-face conversations with their team members to discuss expectations, goals, performance, and professional development opportunities.

### **Since PERforM is gone, will there be any specific forms to fill out?**

No. You will no longer have to complete formal forms or submit anything through PERforM.

Instead, if you are a team member, you are encouraged to have a notebook for your development conversations with your supervisor. Before a development conversation, you should record in your notebook the major priorities you want to cover in the next conversation. During the development conversation, you can use the notebook to take notes of the conversation and your "takeaways." Such takeaways can range from specific points of feedback to suggestions about how you can accomplish tasks more efficiently and effectively.

For additional information, go to: <https://oa.mo.gov/engage> (Version 2, May 16, 2018)

If you are a supervisor, you are encouraged to have a notebook for each team member (your direct reports). This notebook should be used to plan for and then record pertinent information from the conversations (i.e. specific expectations shared in the meeting; goals that have been agreed upon during the meeting; significant examples of employee performance that have come up, etc.).

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

**Specific categories were used in PERforM and sometimes the work items didn't seem to fit cleanly in a category or the categories were too restrictive. Do managers and supervisors have to use any kind of formal categories?**

No. The nature of the work and the diversity of identified development opportunities should guide a supervisor and team member as they identify goals and discuss progress. As the ENGAGE process evolves, we may offer suggested categories to facilitate the development conversation process. We are deliberately minimizing the amount of formal paperwork.

**Without having a formal system to type in goals and record employee performance, should documentation be kept regarding performance/development conversations?**

Yes. Managers and supervisors should take notes of discussions with team members. To help with progress tracking and follow-up, documentation should be kept regarding expectations, performance, development opportunities, etc. It is also important for team members to keep a notebook to write down important information discussed or provided during conversations. This will help team members to remember expectations, timelines for completion of tasks, discussion items for upcoming meetings, etc.

We recommend that all team members have a notebook for their development conversations, and that all supervisors 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."*

**Is there a process for team members to provide feedback to their respective supervisors?**

Yes. These conversations should be two-way conversations. It may take time to build a professional relationship. Supervisors should actively seek feedback from team members because team members will likely have a good perspective on how the supervisor operates. Team members may be able to share valuable insights on the best ways the supervisor can work and communicate with them, and possibly with other team members too. These conversations also present the opportunity to discuss other workplace concerns.

**Is there any value in asking team members to evaluate themselves periodically?**

While not required, there are a number of potential benefits from some form of self-assessment. Such efforts reinforce that performance development is the responsibility of both the supervisor and the team member. Both should take responsibility for, and ownership of, the process. Regular self-appraisal can help team

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members more regularly monitor their own work, achievements, and development, and take initiative to make needed changes. We will continue to assess whether or not more formal self-assessments should be integrated into the ENGAGE process in the future.

**I have some 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. If you have new ideas or suggestions to improve the way work is done you should bring these to your supervisor's attention. 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 use these conversations to discuss training and professional development as needed. The ENGAGE process is designed to encourage everyone to improve and develop his or her skills.

**Will prior ratings be factored into consideration for promotions within our department?**

No. The old PERforM system did not appropriately distinguish performance among team members. As the ENGAGE process evolves, we may offer suggested standard terms or categories to help team members better understand their progress and to facilitate the development conversation process. Until then, agencies will continue to work to appoint the best candidates to positions. By maintaining an ENGAGE notebook, a team member has a valuable resource when preparing for a promotional interview. The ability to reference progress with specific examples and link a team member's contributions to the division, department, or State goals provide more compelling input than a rating on a PERforM evaluation.

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

Currently, we are reassessing our approach to rewards and recognition for exceptional performance – including formal and informal, financial and non-financial rewards. We plan to have more formal guidance by the end of the calendar year. Rewards for performance such as potential salary increases will be an option, as they have been previously.

While these reforms are being developed, we do not envision current ENGAGE conversations factoring directly into reward decisions. When evaluating any reward or recognition, however, a person's overall performance against expectations and long-term progress will be important to such decisions.

**Will HR staff be able to access past PERforM appraisals?**

Yes. In the event it is needed, Agency Administrators will have access to search for PERforM appraisals.

**If needed, will HR staff be able to run queries to access information that was previously in PERforM?**

Yes. The PERforM data that has been added to the HR data warehouse will still be available.

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