

## A Team Member's Guide to ENGAGE

Supervisors and their team members across all departments have said that you want to get back to basics. You want to have real professional development conversations that help individuals and teams achieve their goals and better serve the citizens of Missouri.

This guide provides an overview of the basic steps for these conversations.

For additional information and guidance, please see the videos and other resource materials on the **ENGAGE** webpage: <https://oa.mo.gov/engage>.

If you have ideas for how we can improve **ENGAGE**, please submit your feedback at <https://oa.mo.gov/engage/feedback>.

What is most important is to get started, have regular conversations about what is working well and what can be improved, learn from each other, and get better at helping each other excel.

### BEFORE THE CONVERSATION:

#### Schedule – Establish monthly check-ins.

- Reach out to your supervisor, or his or her assistant, to confirm a time for your conversation. Expect to spend about 30-45 minutes for your conversations initially to develop your goals for the year, and again at the end of the year then to review progress during the year. Other check-ins throughout the year may take 15-20 minutes.

#### Prepare – Review your notes and priorities before your conversation.

- Block time to prepare for your conversation with your supervisor.
- Keep a notebook to help you remember important priorities during your conversation.
- Draft your view on your overall professional development goals for the year (usually no more than five) before your first conversation with your supervisor at the start of the year. You will want to refer to these throughout the year, update them, and adapt as you develop. Some questions for you to consider are:
  - What were your biggest development successes of the previous year? What strengths do you want to build upon?
  - What skills would you like to develop or master this year?
  - Are there any additional responsibilities you would like to try?
  - Are there other projects you are passionate about pursuing?

- Looking beyond this year, how do you see your role or position changing through time? Do you see yourself moving to a different role, and, if so, what skills will you need to demonstrate to get there?
- Review your notes from your last conversation and the plan of action you developed to address specific development goals.
- Think about what topics you would like to cover in your upcoming conversation, including your progress toward your development goals, any challenges you are experiencing in your work, any ideas you have about how to improve how we work together, etc.
- When thinking about your current major assignments or responsibilities, consider:
  - Whether or not you have completed your specific tasks or assignments?
  - How to address obstacles that may be preventing you from completing your assignments?
  - What you have learned from your recent experiences about what you should be doing to perform better?
  - What new skills have you developed?
  - What new skills would you like to develop?
- Prepare any specific feedback for your supervisor, including suggestions for how your team could work together better.
- Identify the top 1-3 topics you would like to discuss with your supervisor to get his or her feedback. You will likely not be able to cover every topic in each of your monthly conversations.

## DURING THE CONVERSATION:

**Reflect – Be open to feedback. Whether it feels positive or critical, feedback is meant to help you.**

- Arrive with a positive mindset to your conversation. Make it a real conversation.
- Don't be defensive. Honest feedback is constructive – whether you feel it is more positive (i.e. about your strengths and accomplishments), or more critical (i.e. about what you can do better). View feedback as an opportunity to learn, improve, and progress toward your development goals.
- Be prepared to offer your own view on how you are doing, and how you have met your responsibilities since the last conversation.
- Listen carefully to your supervisor's perspectives and specific points of feedback. Try to understand what is being said – and don't focus on what you might say in response.
- Ask follow-up questions to ensure you understand what your supervisor is talking about. Ask for specific examples if feedback (positive or critical) is only offered in general terms.

- Don't take critical feedback personally. Remember that it should be about specific behaviors in specific situations, and not an attack on you as a whole person. We can all improve.
- Ask your supervisor to provide examples of where you have met expectations in the past month, if he or she does not offer any.
- Request suggestions about any areas where you could improve or develop further if your supervisor only offers positive feedback.
- Reflect upon whether the feedback is new or fits in a pattern, and how you are progressing to achieve your overall development goals.
- Put into your own words any recommendations from your supervisor, and confirm with him or her that you got what he or she is trying to say (i.e. "Just so we are on the same page, I heard you recommend that next time I should try to do X instead of Y. Is that what you were suggesting?"). This will help you both be sure that you understand the feedback and expectations.

### **Focus – Agree to work on a few specific development goals for the next month.**

- Identify with your supervisor one or two specific goals to focus upon in the next month. They should link back to your overall professional development goals for the year.
  - For the first conversation of the year, work with your supervisor to refine your draft professional development goals for the coming year (usually not more than five).
  - Adapt your overall professional development goals, as appropriate, during the year as you reach your goals and/or your responsibilities evolve. If you achieve all your professional development goals in six or eight months, then you should develop a new list of priorities.
- Work with your supervisor to identify ways for you to demonstrate progress toward your goals in tangible ways in the next month (i.e. during your upcoming shifts, do A; when leading the next meeting, try B; in your next written report, do C; in your next conversation with a citizen, use D approach; etc.)
- Ask for suggestions for potential additional professional development activities as appropriate (i.e. training, meetings, seeking advice from others, etc.).
- Take notes and record your action items. Refer to these notes during the month to remind yourself of your specific goals. Review them before your next conversation.

### **AFTER THE CONVERSATION:**

#### **Act – Commit to using the feedback to get better and reach your goals.**

- Record the main points of your conversation in your notebook. Example points include:
  - Notable achievements in the past month.

- Any changes in responsibilities or expectations.
- Examples of progress toward professional development goals.
- Main points of feedback you received.
- Specific development goals to focus upon during the coming month.
- Specific actions you will take to build and demonstrate new skills.
- Look for opportunities to address your feedback (both positive and critical).
- Try out new ways of doing things. They will not always come naturally, and sometimes they may not work. Regardless, it is still better to try and learn.
- Refer back to your notebook every week to review your goals, jot down notes of what you have tried and what has worked, etc.

### **Ask – Check with your supervisor, colleagues, and customers about how you are progressing toward your development goals.**

- Don't feel that a formal, scheduled meeting is needed to receive feedback. You want to get into a regular rhythm of conversations where people help you, and you help people.
- Follow up with your supervisor when you see him or her, especially if he or she has had the opportunity to see you in action working on your feedback. Just 60 seconds after a meeting or another conversation can be enough time for a "course check."
- Let your colleagues know your development goals and what you are working on, if you feel comfortable sharing. Ask them to provide observations that can help you (i.e. "I am working on improving my eye contact when I speak in a meeting. Could you watch how I do in this afternoon's meeting?").
- Ask your "customers" – whether they are colleagues elsewhere in the state government or directly with a citizen – how we could be doing better. This is a quick and simple way to help us all stay focused on what we can do to help others.