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## **PATHways** “In Development or Improvement Needed” Rating

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Selecting an appropriate rating for a performance factor requires some consideration. It is often easy to tell when an employee has achieved expectations or even gone above and beyond to earn a higher rating. Likewise, it is sometimes painfully obvious when an employee needs to take corrective action to improve performance. But what rating should supervisors give newly hired employees and those who are underperforming?

The rating “In Development or Improvement Needed” is flexible enough to encompass those employees who are still developing their skill (“In Development”) as well as employees who are underperforming (“Improvement Needed”).

Here are some questions to ask when considering giving a rating of “In Development or Improvement Needed.”

### **NEW EMPLOYEE OR NEW RESPONSIBILITY**

It may seem reasonable to give a rating of “In Development or Improvement Needed” for new employees to indicate that they are still learning their job. However, keeping in mind that some jobs take months (and even years) to master, this rating may not be the most appropriate. It is important to take into consideration whether the employee was aware of the performance expectations and had an appropriate amount of time, resources and support needed to accomplish them.

To determine between a rating of “Achieves” or “In Development or Improvement Needed,” supervisors should consider whether the new employee is progressing as expected. If a new employee is performing at the level to be expected for the specified time period being evaluated, then that employee has **Achieved** performance expectations for the period being reviewed.

For example, let’s take a recently hired employee whose performance plan included initial expectations for the remainder of the performance review period. When rating each evaluation factor, take into consideration such questions as: Did the employee accomplish those initial goals? Did the employee take the required trainings? Is the employee adhering to office standards? If yes, the employee “**Achieved**” the expectations established for the performance review period. Next year’s performance plan would include expectations for any further development that may be needed.

On the other hand, if the employee has a significant learning curve, such as employee you have hired knowing that additional training will be required to be able to perform the job, or one who is learning a new skill due to changes in the workplace, then “**In Development**” might be appropriate.

It is helpful, and a best practice, to develop onboarding plans for employees who are new or who assume new duties. These plans outline expectations and goals for their first months of employment. If you have a clear onboarding plan, then you can rate the new employee based



on their progress towards that plan. Need help developing on onboarding plan? Visit the HR onboarding web resources at <http://employees.tamu.edu/employees/onboarding>.

## **UNDERPERFORMING EMPLOYEE**

Does an employee have an area where a performance or behavioral deficiency can be defined, has been communicated, and the employee has not shown expected progress? If so, **“Improvement Needed”** may be appropriate. When an employee is underperforming, there should be a specific development plan for corrective action for each rating factor in which improvement must occur.

## **DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

It is important when you give a rating of “I,” whether the focus is on “In Development” or “Improvement Needed,” that you create a development plan to help the employee achieve success. This plan should clarify the expectations and identify resources that will be required for success. For example, if an employee has been struggling with maintaining a department database, the performance plan might include developmental activities such as attending a Microsoft Access class, getting cross training, and/or shadowing another employee. Having an outlined plan with an achievable due date, providing the support needed, and giving timely feedback throughout the year on their progress can help increase motivation and encourage employees to reach their goals.

Remember, the overall goal is to help employees rise to successful standards. After all, when employees are successful, the supervisor is successful, and that success reflects on the department and university.

### **Resources:**

[Performance Evaluation Rating Definitions](#)

[Strategies for Promoting Employee Development](#)

[PATHways Performance Management Process](#)