**Questions and Answers Regarding the EPRS Process**

**Q. How is the Self-Assessment used?**

**A***. The Self-Assessment gives employees the opportunity to reflect on their performance. It is a formal mechanism by which they may document their accomplishments, and it provides an opportunity for employees to recognize and promote their performance. In addition, it can be used as a tool to support an interactive dialogue between an employee and a supervisor or a reviewer, as well as a tool with which differences of opinion about an employee’s performance can be addressed. Supervisors and employees should bring copies of the self-assessment to their meetings at Stages B and C to ensure that it serves as a platform for those discussions.*

**Q. How is the Career Growth Objective used?**

**A*.*** *The Career Growth Objective is a formal mechanism for addressing the future development of an employee’s skills and competencies. The Career Growth Objective is designed to allow employees to articulate professional goals and to identify opportunities to learn new skills, perform new tasks, work on particular projects, or become a subject matter expert. The Career Growth Objective provides employees the opportunity to add structure to their particular career paths by benchmarking their development with appropriate milestones. In addition, the Career Growth Objective connects the supervisor more tangibly to an employee’s development by documenting how a supervisor might be able to help an employee meet one or more of the self- identified goals.*

**Q. Will the Self-Assessment and Career Growth Objective be attached to my EPRS?**

**A*.*** *At this time, the Self-Assessment and Career Growth Objective will not be attached to the EPRS. Because these forms are new to employees, the Department and the Unions wanted to provide employees with adequate time to learn how to effectively utilize these tools before making a determination as to whether the forms should be attached to the EPRS.*

**Q. What is the reviewer’s role in the employee performance review process?**

**A.** *The reviewer has an important role to play in the EPRS process. In general, the reviewer is responsible for ensuring that supervisors understand the EPRS process, that evaluations are conducted in a fair and timely manner, and that the evaluations reflect accurate assessments of actual performance. To this end, the reviewer is responsible for meeting informally with the supervisor throughout the review period to discuss the performance of an employee and the overall objectives as they relate to the mission and goals of the division and the agency.*

*At Stages B and C, the reviewer shall discuss with supervisors the rating scale and the differences among the ratings, as well as how the ratings apply to the duties and performance criteria on an employee’s EPRS. The reviewer has the responsibility at Stages B and C to make sure that ratings are consistent with job performance, and that the supervisor’s comments relate to the employee’s job performance. In addition, the reviewer should make sure that all*

*supervisors’ ratings are consistent—for example, that supervisors are giving similar ratings to employees performing work of similar quality in regard to the same or similar duties.*

*At Stage C, the reviewer will give a final rating of an employee’s overall performance. This final rating shall take into consideration, among other factors, the supervisor’s ratings, the reviewer’s knowledge of the employee’s performance, and the comments included on the EPRS form.*

**Q. What happens when supervisors and reviewers don’t agree on an employee’s ratings or**

**comments?**

**A.** *The goal is for ongoing communications between reviewers and supervisors so that they are on the same page throughout the EPRS process. To this end, supervisors and reviewers should discuss the Progress Review ratings prior to the Stage B meeting. If the reviewer’s overall rating of the employee’s performance is different from the supervisor’s overall rating at Stage B, the reviewer should include comments on the EPRS form indicating the areas of disagreement.*

*Supervisors and reviewers are also expected to discuss Annual Review ratings prior to the ratings being finalized for the Stage C meeting. If the reviewer’s overall rating of the employee’s performance is different from the supervisor’s overall rating at Stage C, the reviewer’s rating is the final, rating. Reviewers and supervisors should discuss any disagreement regarding an employee’s overall rating, and reviewers must include comments on the EPRS form indicating the specific areas of disagreement. Further, the reviewer should attend the performance review meeting between the supervisor and the employee, so that the reviewer can explain the overall rating.*

*While supervisors and reviewers are encouraged to discuss comments contained in an employee’s performance review, it is not a requirement of the process that they agree on the comments, and they should feel free to include whatever comments they believe appropriate.*

**Q. If an employee has questions about a reviewer’s rating or comments, can the employee schedule a meeting with his/her reviewer?**

**A***. Yes. An employee’s reviewer represents a significant part of the performance review process and employees are encouraged to schedule meetings with their reviewers if they would like to discuss their overall rating or the reviewer’s comments.*

**Q. Why are there only three ratings on the EPRS?**

**A.** *The three-tiered rating system was negotiated with the Unions through the collective bargaining process and is part of the collective bargaining unit agreements. Any change to this rating system would need to be part of a Commonwealth-wide negotiation process.*

**Q. Is the overall rating at Stages B and C an average of each duty rating?**

**A.** *The overall rating reflects the bottom-line evaluation of an employee's total work for the review period. The overall rating is not an average of all the duty-ratings contained in an employee’s EPRS. Some duties are more significant, while other duties may be performed more frequently.*

*The overall rating is based upon all duties assigned, even if all duties are not contained in an employee’s EPRS form. In unusual circumstances, an overall rating may be affected by performance of duties not contained on the EPRS form.*

**Q. Are supervisors/managers permitted to use a number to evaluate my performance? A.** *Supervisors/managers are allowed to use norms, averages, and ranges when applicable to*

*evaluate performance, and the Department recommends the use of ranges as an appropriate*

*measurement tool. Supervisors are responsible for setting reasonable standards, and must be able to justify the establishment of these standards and explain their correlation to unit goals and objectives.*

**Q. What incentive is tied to the EPRS?**

**A.** *Aside from working to serve the citizens of the Commonwealth by contributing to the fulfillment of the mission and goals of an employee’s office and division, as well as those of the Department, performance ratings may be used as a basis for personnel decisions, including promotions, transfers, and reassignments. (The Department and SEIU are currently in the midst of negotiating Supplemental M of the SEIU collective bargaining agreement, which addresses the appropriate weight that should be accorded to the promotional factors set forth in Article*

*14.)*

*According to Articles 12 and 24A of the NAGE and SEIU collective bargaining agreements, salary and step increases reflect performance-based pay. Employees who receive an overall “job duties not accomplished” at Stage C are not eligible for such increases. Pursuant to the collective bargaining agreements, not until an employee receives an overall “job duties accomplished” or “highly effective” shall he or she be eligible for salary and step increases previously denied.*

**Q. If three different titles are performing the same duties, shouldn’t there be different**

**expectations of performance?**

**A.** *Every effort should be made to assign work within job classifications, and performance should be evaluated based on duties and performance criteria established for a particular job title. Accordingly, employees in lower titles performing work within their classification would be evaluated based upon the standards for success for their assigned position title. If, due to operational needs, employees in a higher title are asked to perform the duties of a lower level title, they will be held to the standards set forth to be successful in the lower level position*

*pursuant to Article 16 of the collective bargaining agreements. Since employees in higher titles have no control over work assigned, they must to be evaluated on the jobs they are being asked to perform.*

**Q. What happens if my supervisor leaves in the middle of the review cycle?**

**A.** *If a supervisor is leaving the agency, he or she should hold an informal Progress Review with the employee and memorialize the review in writing to the reviewer and to the employee. By doing so, the supervisor’s input may be included in the next formal review process. If the supervisor is leaving the unit, but staying within the agency, the new supervisor may ask the old supervisor to weigh in on the employee’s performance evaluation. In such a situation, consideration will be given to the amount of time the employee was under the direction of each supervisor; for example, if the supervisor left the unit 10 months into the evaluation cycle and*

*the new supervisor oversaw the employee only for 2 months, it would make sense for the old supervisor to complete the performance evaluation with input from the new supervisor.*

**Q. When should duties be removed from your EPRS and when should they be added?**

**A.** *Duties or the performance criteria for a duty may change during the year. Duties included on an employee’s EPRS are the essential duties and responsibilities—those that are the most significant and that are performed most frequently. There is no set number of duties to be included. Employees and supervisors should discuss which of an employee’s duties are most important for the review period to ensure a clear understanding of expectations. Duties will not be removed from the EPRS during an EPRS review cycle. If an employee stops performing a particular duty, it should be noted on the EPRS that the employee no longer performs the duty as of the date the duty is no longer being performed. If the employee is assigned a new duty, that duty should be added and the date of the assignment noted in the comments section under the particular duty. Duties no longer performed may be removed at Stage A of the following fiscal year.*

**Q. When should the EPRS process start for a new employee?**

**A.** *Supervisors are expected to meet with employees within 10 days of their start of employment to explain job expectations and complete Stage A of the performance review process.*

*For an employee hired before March 31st of the fiscal year, the evaluation period will be abbreviated. Stage A should be completed within 10 days of employment; Stage B should be completed mid-way between that Stage A and the end of June (Stage C) and Stage C should be completed by the end of June.*

*For an employee hired on or after March 31st of the fiscal year, the evaluation period will be extended until the following June 30th. Stage A should still be completed within 10 days of employment and a formal Stage B should be conducted before the end of the employee’s probationary period. Due to the length of the EPRS cycle, the supervisor is encouraged to*

*conduct at least one additional review with the employee between Stage B and Stage C of the following fiscal year. Stage C would then be conducted in June of the following fiscal year after hire.*

**Q. What role does attendance play in the employee performance review process?**

**A.** *Attendance will affect an EPRS evaluation to the extent that a poor attendance pattern has a negative impact on operations or on an employee’s individual performance. While attendance information is no longer captured on the bottom of the EPRS Form, predictable and reliable attendance is an expectation and every employee has a responsibility to fulfill his/her work week obligations.*

**Q. When should employees know if they are on track to receive an overall “job duties not accomplished?”**

**A.** *As soon as performance problems are noticed, supervisors should advise employees that they may receive an overall “job duties not accomplished” and begin working with these employees to improve performance. Be advised the collective bargaining unit agreements state that employees nearing a Below shall be counseled by their supervisors in advance of the final stage of the evaluation (Stage C) as to the specific areas in which improvement is needed and what*

*must be done to attain a “job duties accomplished” at the Annual Review. This language ensures that employees have significant time to correct performance deficiencies prior to the Stage C evaluation.*

**Q. Is there a required number of “highly effective” and “job duties not accomplished”**

**overall ratings across divisions or the agency?**

**A.** *No. There is absolutely no quota, formula or ratio used to determine overall ratings given to employees.*

**Q. What is the appeal process?**

**A.** *In accordance with the collective bargaining agreement, employees may only appeal a final overall rating and not individual job duties of “job duties not accomplished” with Human Capital Development. If no change is made to the overall rating, an affected employee may file, through his or her Union, a review by a tripartite panel. See article 24A.3 of CBA. Civil Service employees with permanency may choose to appeal an evaluation with which they disagree through the procedures set forth in M.G.L. c. 31, s.6C. Employees must choose whether to appeal a review through the grievance process set forth in their respective collective bargaining agreements, or through the Civil Service process, but they are not permitted to appeal through both avenues.*

**Q. Is an employee required to sign his/her EPRS?**

**A.** *Employees are expected to sign their EPRS forms within two days of receipt. Signing the EPRS form signifies that an employee understands the job duties and criteria upon which he or she is to be, or was, evaluated. The signature does not signify agreement with the form or any ratings or comments contained therein. In fact, the employee may attach comments explaining areas of disagreement. Should an employee refuse to sign, the EPRS evaluation is still valid and becomes part of the employee’s personnel file. The supervisor or reviewer should note on the EPRS that the employee was offered the opportunity to sign the form but refused.*

**Q. Will supervisors receive additional training on the performance review process?**

**A.** *The development of training on the employee performance review process and the recent enhancements to the process is ongoing. For Stage C of fiscal year 2016, supervisors will receive additional training on the employee performance review process, which will include training on how to effectively utilize the Self-assessment and Career Growth Objective forms. Supervisors have an ongoing responsibility to understand and effectively implement their role in the employee performance review process.*

\*For more information, please see HRD’s EPRS Employee Guide and EPRS Supervisory Guide as well as the NAGE, Units 1 and 6, and SEIU, Unit 8 collective bargaining agreements.