Colorado Legislative Council Staff (LCS): Performance Evaluations

Amy Zook | Deputy Director
Colorado Legislative Council
amy.zook@state.co.us | 303-866-4750
www.colorado.gov\lcs
Office Organization

The 3 primary sections of the office providing research and information to the legislators are:

- Policy and Research
- Fiscal Notes
- Economists
A review of the performance evaluations for each of the 3 sections found inconsistencies, particularly with regard to core performance objectives.

- For instance, every position requires strong writing skills, but those skills were not necessarily emphasized in the performance review documents for each section.

- Economics focused almost entirely on economic analysis and did not provide an avenue to address performance issues related to writing and research.
Example of Old Research Associate Evaluation Form *(Staff was given a grade of Outstanding, Proficient, Meets Standards, Needs Improvement, or Unsatisfactory)*

Performance Objectives
- Respond to research requests by setting agreed-upon time lines and by completing requests on or before due dates.
- Volume, accuracy, and timeliness of self-initiated research meets or exceeds agreed upon standards and time lines.
- Demonstrates knowledge of assigned area of public policy by providing clear and accurate expertise as needed in a timely fashion, with an ability to respond bias-free to more complex questions with minimal assistance.
- Consistently manage committee workload and agenda, attend assigned committee meetings, arrive in a timely manner, and prepare meeting summaries, committee reports, and background materials within established time lines.
- Proven research skills and understanding of standard methodology.
- Effective written and oral communication skills, including public speaking.
- Ability to work independently, with general supervision of work activity.
- Ability to think creatively and initiate or participate in projects that improve office systems or processes or benefit the General Assembly.
- Proficiency in computer programs to produce documents that are effective and accurate.
- Demonstrated customer focus.

*The office had not adopted any criteria to differentiate between Proficient, Meets Standards, etc., and the staff complained the “grading” varied too widely between managers.*
By comparison, here is the form for a Senior Fiscal Analyst. (These are staffers who would most likely have similar years of experience in the office.)

**Performance Objectives**
- Ability to apply standard procedures of fiscal note section.
- Read, understand and grasp essence of proposed legislation and statutes.
- Ability to respond to broad range of requests, ideas, and perspectives.
- Proficient in computer software and spreadsheet applications.
- Effective written and oral communication skills.
- Strong interpersonal, customer service, and relationship building skills.
- Proven research, quantitative, and analytical skills.
- Ability to develop effective working relationships.
The review also found inconsistencies in the job titles between the 3 sections

- Policy and Research had 8 job titles
  - Research Assistant
  - Senior Research Assistant
  - Research Associate
  - Research Associate II
  - Senior Analyst
  - Senior Analyst II
  - Principal Analyst
  - Principal Analyst II

- Economists had 4 job titles
  - Economist I
  - Economist II
  - Economist III
  - Economist IV

- Fiscal Notes had 3 job titles
  - Fiscal Analyst
  - Senior Fiscal Analyst
  - Principal Fiscal Analyst
What Did All the Titles Really Mean?

- The staff was confused.

- The staff communicated it did not understand what was expected of them to climb from one level to the next?

- Really, what was the difference between an Economist I and Economist II? A Sr. Research Analyst and a Research Associate?
The management team decided to first identify a set of core standards that would apply to all analysts and sections of the office.

Four Core Performance Objectives were identified:

- Writing
- Research
- Job Knowledge
- Interpersonal Skills
The management team then identified Performance Objectives that were unique to job requirements:

- **Committee** – applies to any staffer with direct committee staffing responsibility. This pertains to everyone within the Policy and Research section and just a few staffers in the other sections.

- **Fiscal Analysis** – applies to any staffer who writes a fiscal note.

- **Economic Analysis** – applies only to the economists.

- **Leadership** – applies to all managers and some senior staffers with committee lead responsibilities.
The management team reduced the number of titles and created consistent titles across the three office sections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy and Research</th>
<th>Fiscal Notes</th>
<th>Economists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Analyst</td>
<td>Fiscal Analyst</td>
<td>Economist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Research Analyst</td>
<td>Senior Fiscal Analyst</td>
<td>Senior Economist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Research Analyst</td>
<td>Principal Fiscal Analyst</td>
<td>Principal Economist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve*

*Southern Colorado*
## Job Titles and Performance Measurements

- Performance measurement levels were created that correspond to the job title levels

### Performance Measurements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance is Inconsistent</th>
<th>Performance meets some job requirements, but not consistently. Overall performance is below the acceptable level and must improve to meet minimum position requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consistently Meets Job Requirements Under General Supervision</td>
<td>Demonstrates successful performance on all or most major assignments and objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meets and Often Exceeds Job Requirements with Limited Supervision</td>
<td>Demonstrates successful performance on all major assignments and objectives and consistently exceeds position requirements in some areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistently Exceeds Job Requirements with Limited Oversight and Some Supervision Duties</td>
<td>Demonstrates unusually high level of performance relative to all assignments and objectives. Distinguished performance overall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Expectations for a: | Research Analyst  
Fiscal Analyst  
Economist |
| Expectations for a: | Senior Research Analyst  
Senior Fiscal Analyst  
Senior Economist |
| Expectations for a: | Principal Research Analyst  
Principal Fiscal Analyst  
Principal Economist |
Performance Measurements for each Core Objective

• The management team worked to identify measurements for each objective. For **Writing** these are the areas staff is evaluated:
  • *Consistently follow document standards and style guidelines, including e-mail correspondence*
  • *Read one’s work critically and make necessary revisions before submitting the document for review*
  • *Put abstract or technical concepts into plain language*
  • *Writes a document that is well organized, clear, and addresses the questions posed in the request or assignment*
  • *Skill in editing the written product of others, including content*
Identifying Performance Expectations

- The management team identified the expectations for each performance measurement.
- Four levels of expectations were identified for each measurement.
- As staff progresses and gains experience in the office, it is expected their scores will increase.
- The scores also serve as a measurement for determining job titles.
- The following page is the Writing matrix. A similar matrix was created for each Core Performance Objective.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Performance is Inconsistent</th>
<th>Consistently Meets Job Requirements Under General Supervision</th>
<th>Meets and Often Exceeds Job Requirements with Limited Supervision</th>
<th>Consistently Exceeds Job Requirements with Limited Oversight and Some Supervision Duties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measurement</strong></td>
<td>Frequently fails to follow document standards and style guidelines</td>
<td>Consistently checks finished product before forwarding</td>
<td>Maintains high accuracy under tight deadlines; final versions of written material are usually free of technical errors</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Read one's work critically and make necessary revisions before submitting the document for review</strong></td>
<td>Consistently identifies and corrects grammar, punctuation, and other technical errors</td>
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<td>Consistently checks finished product before forwarding</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Put abstract or technical concepts into plain language</strong></td>
<td>Written communication is often too technical, making the information difficult for the reader to understand; often provides too much information and clouds the critical point</td>
<td>Uses ideas and language appropriate to the audience's level of understanding</td>
<td>Written communication sources material effectively and clearly and concisely conveys the intended meaning</td>
<td>Able to tailor writing to address the needs of a specific customer and quickly and clearly adjust and update a written product for a modified request involving similar technical information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writes a document that is well organized, clear, and addresses the questions posed in the request or assignment</strong></td>
<td>Documents often fail to address critical issues or resources; tends to overlook substantive details; edits frequently result in a significant rewrite of the written product</td>
<td>Documents usually cover content appropriately and accurately; is attentive to prior edits; written products consistently read well and are unbiased</td>
<td>Writes quickly, clearly, and accurately; written work is consistently concise and answers the question in the opening paragraphs; content is covered appropriately, with attention to detail; looks to improve by continuously learning from prior edits</td>
<td>Skill in producing documents that are comprehensive and accurate; written work is consistently concise and clear under tight time deadlines; critical questions and issues are anticipated and covered; explains complex ideas simply; written products serve as office standard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skill in editing the written product of others, including content</strong></td>
<td>Edits frequently fail to catch grammar, punctuation, and style errors; lacks consistency in checking sources or citations; is inconsistent about making suggestions to improve the memo content</td>
<td>Edits usually identify grammar, punctuation, and style errors; verifies the accuracy of all sources and citations; consistently makes suggestions as to the product's content</td>
<td>Edits focus on providing a more concise written product and identify grammar, punctuation, and style errors; edits do not include unnecessary wordsmithing; verifies the accuracy of all sources and citations; consistently makes suggestions to improve content</td>
<td>Edits result in an improved written product; edits are consistent and do not include unnecessary wordsmithing; verifies the accuracy of all sources and citations; appropriately identifies additional issues or topics that should be considered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>