

Performance Excellence

Year-End Essentials for Supervisors

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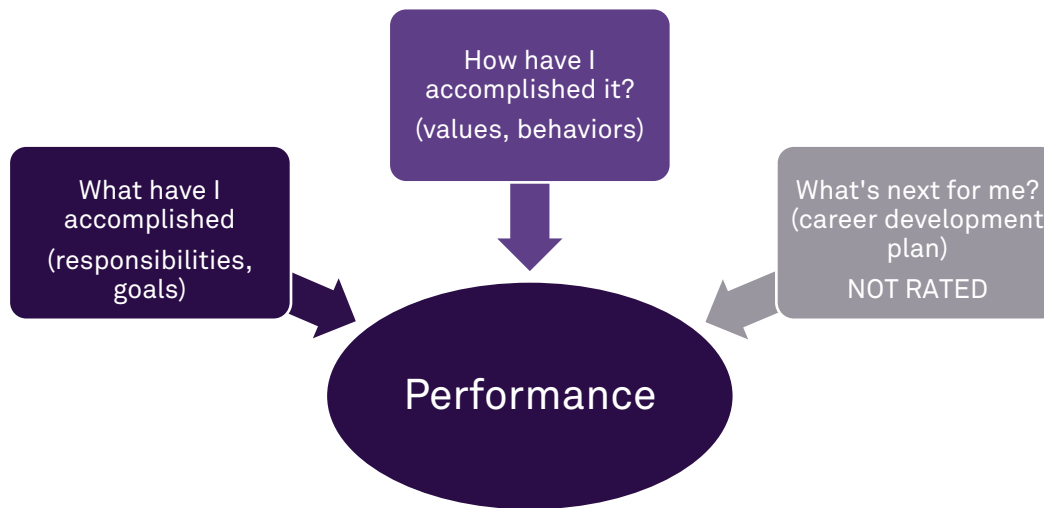
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Purpose of this Guide

This guide is created to help you, as supervisors, support the performance and development of your staff within the year-end Performance Excellence process. This includes writing the review, assigning a rating, and conducting a performance conversation. Read this as you prepare for year-end activities, or follow along in real time as you complete each phase.

Performance Defined



What is performance? Performance combines what you do and how you do it. At Northwestern, “what” you do includes job responsibilities as well as performance goals. The “how” of your work is evaluated relative to Northwestern’s values and associated behaviors. The Performance Excellence review includes space for a career development plan, emphasizing its role in increasing performance through time. Progress on a staff member’s career development plan is *not* included in review and rating.

See <http://perform.northwestern.edu> for full information on SIMple goals and Northwestern values and behaviors.

Writing the Review

1. Review Elements

The written supervisor review should contain manager observations of accomplishments, any shortfalls, and desired improvements or areas for growth.

Best practice is to begin the review with a “primary message,” backed up by specific examples. The primary message may be considered the main theme of the review. After you’ve written the primary message and filled it out with examples, add any additional observations about accomplishments, shortfalls and development/growth to round out the picture.



2. Collecting Data

What data will you need to formulate an objective review and rating? Think about how your organization keeps track of activity, progress, feedback, metrics, and communications. Assemble your data, ask staff to include specific information or documents within their self-review, or sit down in advance of the review to discuss projects and outcomes.

Other “data” can come from those who work with this staff member, and some supervisors choose to collect feedback from these colleagues, collaborators, clients or customers, as may be appropriate.

3. Primary Message Examples

- Jane Doe has increased our team’s credibility and impact across the university by consistently exercising her excellent critical thinking and project planning skills. Project X that launched in the winter and wrapped up recently, was a success because of how Jane worked with stakeholders to think through potential roadblocks at the beginning, and solicited input on the scope of work document. Throughout the project, she planned by carefully defining/documenting roles, responsibilities, and milestones, and continually communicated with everyone to keep it on track. I see her applying this same critical thought and organizational skill to her smaller projects, which she defines and tracks carefully in our online project files. This tracking will enable our team to communicate our collective impact more thoroughly.
- Joe Galvez is an exemplary staff member who improves student experience by bringing a positive and curious attitude to all aspects of his administrative role. I have saved five email threads from the year from students thanking Joe for his help. In these emails, students mention how he welcomed their questions, asked clarifying questions himself, pointed them toward the right information and was kind and funny in the process. He is fulfilling his responsibilities and doing it in such a way that everyone around him has a great experience – it’s contagious and beneficial.
- John Smith is a leader on technical expertise within our team, and needs to increase collaboration skills so that we can achieve our collective goals. As we launched the software platform for _____, John has not consistently delivered his input in a timely manner, which has impacted project timelines (in November, etc and in January, etc).

These sample primary messages may be followed by one-two paragraphs describing additional observed accomplishments or shortfalls from the past year and the improvements or growth you would like to see in the coming year.

4. Performance Review Worksheet

Primary message formula options
<i>(Name)</i> created <i>(this impact this year)</i> by <i>(doing this)</i> . (Examples using action verbs.....)
<i>(Name)</i> is <i>(this kind of contributor: a leader, an innovator)</i> who demonstrates this by <i>(describe actions)</i> . (Examples using action verbs.....)
<i>(Name)</i> created <i>(This impact this year)</i> and needs development in <i>(these areas)</i> in order to grow into their role. (Examples using action verbs.....)

Name

Impact, results created, the role played (beyond official title)

How have you observed the staff member's impact, results, or role (behavior, accomplishments, shortfalls)?

5. Action Verb Index

Communicatio	Negotiate	Initiate	Research	Administer
n/	Observe	Institute	Retrieve	Analyze
People Skills	Outline	Integrate		Appoint
Address	Participate	Introduce	Helping Skills	Approve
Advertise	Persuade	Invent	Adapt	Assign
Arbitrate	Present	Model	Advocate	Attain
Arrange	Promote	Modify	Aid	Authorize
Articulate	Propose	Originate	Answer	Chair
Author	Publicize	Perform	Arrange	Consider
Clarify	Reconcile	Photograph	Assess	Consolidate
Collaborate	Recruit	Plan	Assist	Contract
Communicate	Refer	Revise	Clarify	Control
Compose	Reinforce	Revitalize	Coach	Convert
Condense	Report	Shape	Collaborate	Coordinate
Confer	Resolve	Solve	Contribute	Decide
Consult	Respond		Cooperate	Delegate
Contact	Solicit	Data/Financial	Counsel	Develop
Convey	Specify	Skills	Demonstrate	Direct
Convince	Speak	Administer	Diagnose	Eliminate
Correspond	Suggest	Adjust	Educate	Emphasize
Debate	Summarize	Allocate	Encourage	Enforce
Define	Synthesize	Analyze	Ensure	Enhance
Develop	Translate	Appraise	Expedite	Establish
Direct	Write	Assess	Facilitate	Execute
Discuss		Audit	Familiarize	Generate
Draft	Creative Skills	Balance	Further	Handle
Edit	Act	Budget	Guide	Head
Elicit	Adapt	Calculate	Help	Hire
Enlist	Begin	Compute	Insure	Host
Explain	Combine	Conserve	Intervene	Improve
Express	Compose	Correct	Motivate	Incorporate
Formulate	Conceptualize	Determine	Prevent	Increase
Furnish	Condense	Develop	Provide	Initiate
Incorporate	Create	Estimate	Refer	Inspect
Influence	Customize	Forecast	Rehabilitate	Institute
Interact	Design	Manage	Represent	Lead
Interpret	Develop	Market	Resolve	Manage
Interview	Direct	Measure	Simplify	Merge
Involve	Display	Net	Supply	Motivate
Join	Draw	Plan	Support	Navigate
Judge	Entertain	Prepare	Volunteer	Organize
Lecture	Establish	Program		Originate
Listen	Fashion	Project	Management/	Overhaul
Market	Formulate	Qualify	Leadership	Oversee
Mediate	Found	Reconcile	Skills	Plan
Moderate	Illustrate	Reduce		Preside

Prioritize	Incorporate	Collect	Clarify	Assemble
Produce	Inspect	Compare	Coach	Build
Recommend	Log	Conduct	Communicate	Calculate
Reorganize	Maintain	Critique	Conduct	Compute
Replace	Monitor	Detect	Coordinate	Conserve
Restore	Obtain	Determine	Critique	Construct
Review	Operate	Diagnose	Develop	Convert
Schedule	Order	Evaluate	Enable	Debug
Secure	Organize	Examine	Encourage	Design
Select	Prepare	Experiment	Evaluate	Determine
Streamline	Process	Explore	Explain	Develop
Strengthen	Provide	Extract	Facilitate	Engineer
Supervise	Purchase	Formulate	Focus	Fabricate
Terminate	Record	Gather	Guide	Fortify
	Register	Inspect	Individualize	Install
Organizational Skills	Reserve	Interview	Inform	Maintain
Approve	Respond	Invent	Instill	Operate
Arrange	Review	Investigate	Instruct	Overhaul
Catalogue	Route	Locate	Motivate	Print
Categorize	Schedule	Measure	Persuade	Program
Chart	Submit	Organize	Simulate	Rectify
Classify	Supply	Research	Stimulate	Regulate
Code	Standardize	Review	Teach	Remodel
Collect	Systematize	Search	Test	Repair
Compile	Update	Solve	Train	Replace
Correct	Validate	Summarize	Transmit	Restore
Correspond	Verify	Survey	Tutor	Solve
Distribute		Systematize		Specialize
Execute	Research Skills	Test	Technical Skills	Standardize
File	Analyze		Adapt	Study
Generate	Clarify	Teaching Skills	Apply	Upgrade
		Adapt		Utilize
		Advise		

Cognitive Bias

“Nobody would say, ‘I’m voting for this guy because he’s got the stronger chin,’ but that, in fact, is partly what happens.”
 - Daniel Kahneman, author *Thinking, Fast and Slow*

As we evaluate others, our judgments may be influenced by cognitive bias. Reflect on the following biases to explore your own review and rating pitfalls. Do certain staff members, preferred characteristics, or tendencies come to mind?

Bias	What it looks like	How to lessen the impact
Halo effect	This staff member walks on water. Everything they do is wonderful.	Establish what “wonderful” looks like on your team. Connect your definition to results. Evaluate your staff member relative to this definition.
Horns effect	This staff member is a problem. Everything they do is annoying, sloppy or disappointing.	Establish what “annoying, sloppy, or disappointing” looks like on your team. Connect your definition to results. Evaluate your staff member relative to this definition.
Stereotyping/ Personal biases	This staff member is the kind of person I prefer (race, gender, clothing, speech, appearance, work habits).	List out your preferences. Evaluate staff members relative to visible accomplishments and results and be especially careful to do so with staff members who do or do not match your personal preferences.
Confirmation Bias	I believe <i>this</i> about a staff member, so I will seek data that aligns with my belief.	Argue with your own claim. Draft your primary message, and then look for data, information or input that contradicts your message.

First impression or Primacy effect	The first project they worked on here was a flop.	Evaluate all accomplishments or shortfalls over this performance year (only).
Recency effect	This staff member gave an amazing presentation last week.	
Spill-over effect	This staff member was my top performer last year, or three years ago, etc.	
Lenience	Everyone is above average on my team.	Notice your review and rating preference. Try to differentiate reviews and ratings across your team according to accomplishments and results.
Stiffness	Everyone is so-so on my team.	
Central tendency	I always rate a certain way (low or high). It's just how I see the world, or how I think it should be done.	

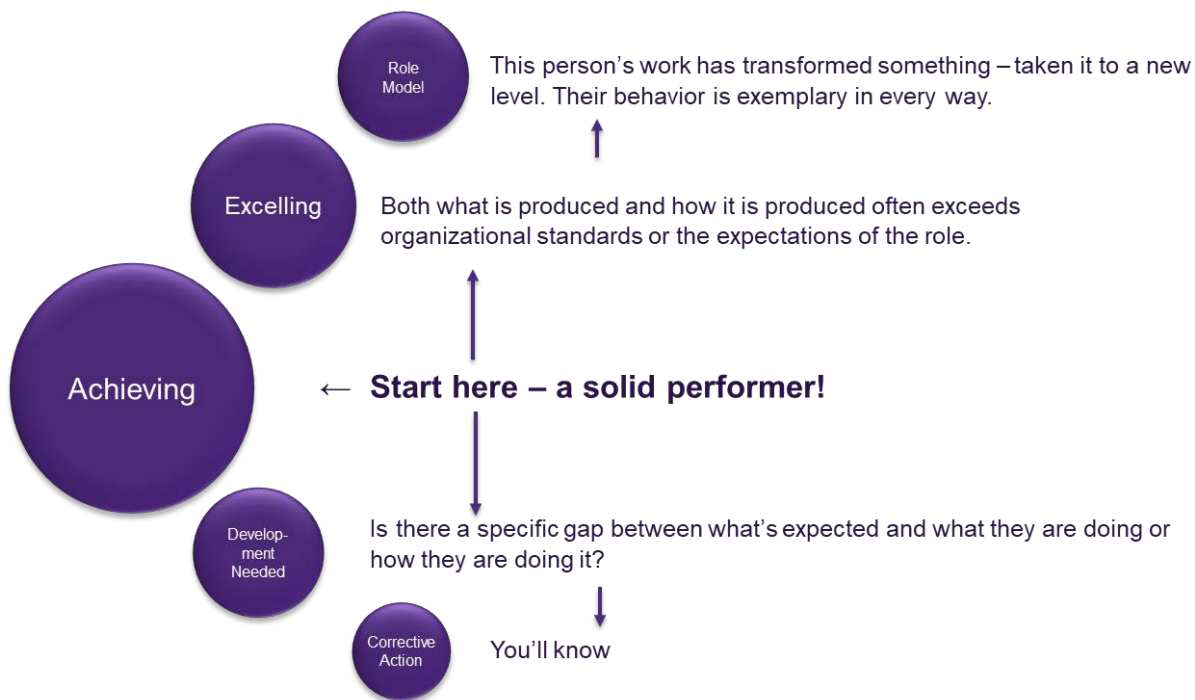
Assigning a Rating

Northwestern’s rating framework has five, qualitative ratings. Supervisors are encouraged to begin by assigning an **Achieving** rating to their staff members, and then to think specifically about why they may have earned a higher or lower rating.

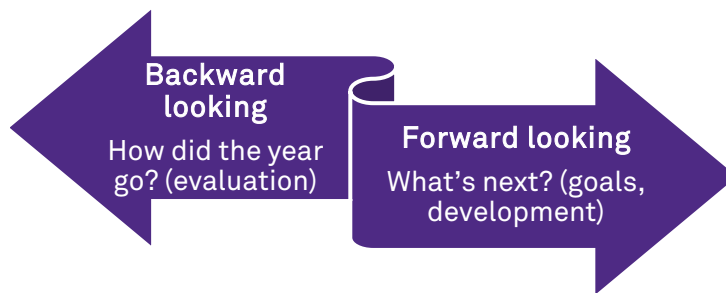
Achieving indicates solid performance. Someone who fulfilled their job responsibilities and generated results as anticipated. As you look back at the written review you have drafted, do you see evidence of impact that was a higher than expected? If significant impact is clearly demonstrated, consider an **Excelling** rating. The **Role Model** rating is meant to be used sparingly, for staff members whose work was transformational and made a profound impact. This rating may be appropriate if a staff member stepped in to lead an unexpected project, or for a staff member whose efforts created a meaningful and sustainable improvement in team or department outcomes.

Development Needed is a rating designed to support a primary message that identifies a specific and essential skill or behavior gap. This gap in skills or behavior must be addressed in order for this staff member to fulfill the expectations of their role. **Corrective Action** is a formal process experienced by few staff members with significant performance issues. For those already in that process, this rating is an appropriate choice.

If the staff member is new in their role, please evaluate their performance relative to the learning curve of their role. Are they progressing as expected (**Achieving**)? Faster than expected (**Excelling**)?



Conducting the Conversation



The performance conversation is an essential part of Performance Excellence and has two parts: a look back at the year's performance (oral version of written review) and a conversation about the year ahead.

Backward Looking: How did the year go?

1. Deliver your written review, verbatim, or in summary
2. Share the assigned rating, incorporating key messages:

Role Model

- Affirm contributions, identify what they did and how they did it and the impact created that led to the staff member's Role Model rating.
- Emphasize that not many individuals receive this rating. "You were one of the school or unit's highest performers this year."
- Manage expectations – Role Model is a special rating reserved for profound, transformational impact. Staff members may not receive this rating in years where opportunities to leverage strengths or reach stretch goals don't come along.

Excelling

- Affirm contributions, identify what they did and how they did it and the impact created that led to staff member's Excelling rating.
- This is a great rating, indicating above average performance.
- If they ask "why not Role Model?" - Role Model indicates profound or transformational impact (often beyond scope of role or department). The difference between Excelling and Role Model may depend on what opportunities arise for an individual to take on additional responsibilities in a given year.

Achieving

- Achieving is a very good rating and means you are a strong performer. It does not mean average and/or middle of the road.
- Highlight strengths and significant accomplishments.
- Discuss ways the staff member may seize more opportunities to make a contribution within the scope of their current role.

Development Needed

- Identify gaps in staff member accomplishments, skills and/or behaviors and their impact on the organization.
- Provide a positive message about the opportunity to close the gap, meeting the expectations for the role.
- Put the staff member in the driver's seat for closing gaps, with your help and support.

3. Ask reflective questions

- What went well from your perspective?
- What could have gone better?
- What barriers to success have you experienced?

Forward Looking: What's next?

This section of the conversation may include preliminary goal-setting, and provide an opportunity to discuss short- and long-term career goals. Questions for this part of the conversation could include:

- Based on this discussion, what goals would you like to set for next year?
- How do you prefer to receive ongoing performance feedback?
- What training or experiences interest you?
- Where do you see yourself in 2 years? 5 years?
- If you could add one new responsibility or project, what would it be?

Common Mistakes

- Leaving too little time
- Accepting interruptions
- Lack of privacy
- Not owning the message
- Talking without listening
- Using "always" or "never"
- Repeating yourself

Best Practices for Process

Once a review is drafted and a rating assigned, best practice is to share drafts with your immediate supervisor and solicit input. In some schools or units, a formal calibration process will be employed. Releasing the review to the staff member may happen before or after the performance conversation, as recommended by your school or unit. Northwestern's recommendation is to separate the review and rating conversation from the merit conversation. A typical flow may look like this:



APPENDIX

Year-end in myHR Learn

Reviewing & Rating Annual Performance Plans

For Supervisors

Review and recognize a staff member’s individual performance, develop enrichment opportunities for staff, and identify those who may need assistance.

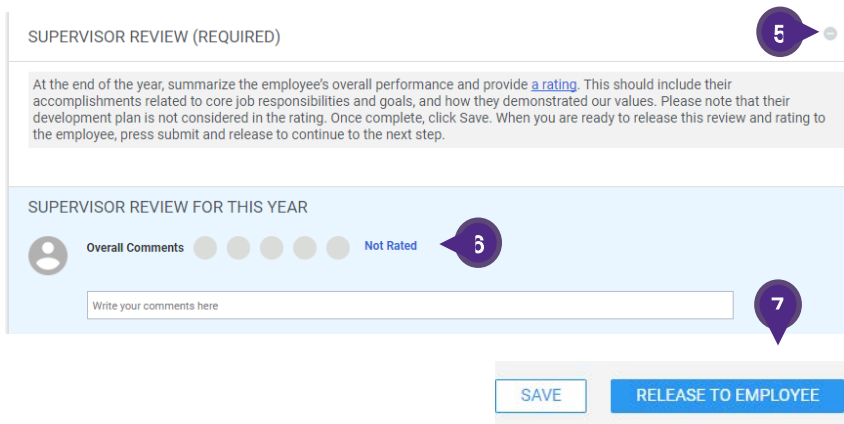
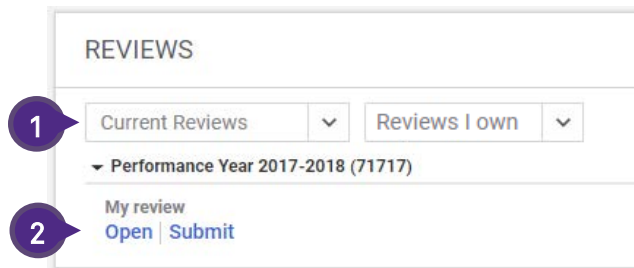
Overview

- Review your staff members’ annual plan and add final feedback.
- Assign a rating (Role Model, Excelling, Achieving, Development Needed, Corrective Action).
- When finished, click [SAVE](#). When you are ready for the staff member to finalize the review and rating, click [RELEASE TO EMPLOYEE](#).

Detailed Instructions

From the myHR Learn Home page...

1. Scroll down to the Reviews section. Select “Current Review” and “Reviews I Own.”
2. Click [Open](#) next to the name of the staff member.
3. Read the staff member’s comments. Click the plus sign [+](#) to open Job Responsibilities, Goals, Development Plan, and Northwestern Values.
4. Read the staff member’s Self-Review. Click [+](#) to open and read accomplishments and final comments. Open attachments to view any supporting documentation.
5. Provide your review in Supervisor Review (Required). Click [+](#) to open, enter comments, and [SAVE](#).
6. Assign a rating. Hover over the radio buttons to see labels. Click the appropriate one and [SAVE](#). When ready, click [RELEASE TO EMPLOYEE](#). **Note!** The plan is available for the staff member to finalize.



Not ready to release to employee?

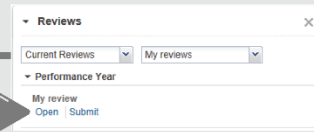
- If your unit conducts a calibration step, or releases ratings at a specific time, click [SAVE](#). Then exit.
- If you want your staff to make changes to the review, click [SAVE](#), then click “More actions” and “Reopen review.” Notify the staff member that the review was re-opened.

myHR Learn Year-End Workflow

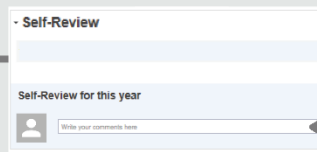
myHR Learn creates a seamless year-end summary experience for both staff and supervisors



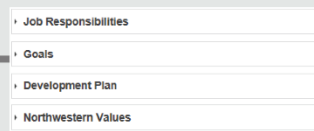
Open your review



Summarize your performance in the "Self-Review" field



Edit and complete comments to share with your supervisor



Add attachments as appropriate

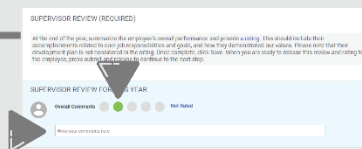


Save and submit the form



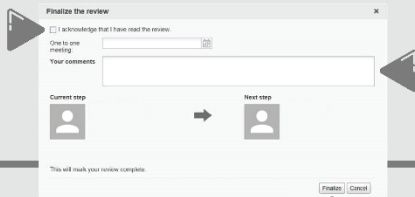
This forwards your feedback on to your supervisor so they can begin their own review

They'll provide feedback and a rating



Then your supervisor will release your review back to you

Acknowledge that you've received and read the review. Then you're ready to click "Finalize"



By finalizing, you complete and submit your year-end summary in myHR Learn

Ratings Definitions and Guidelines

- The vast majority of Northwestern staff want to be here and make meaningful contributions. Every staff member has room to improve, and benefits from knowing where they stand.
- Ratings are based on annual performance. No one should be evaluated based on prior years' performance.
- Ratings should be a summary of feedback provided throughout the year.
- New hires or staff members new to their role should be rated against their expected progress in learning the role, not against being fully capable in the role.
- Ratings should accurately reflect a staff member's contribution. They should not be used as a punishment, a way to avoid conflict, or as a substitute for other rewards.
- Expectations should increase every year. Doing the same things the same way without focusing on continuously improving should not merit the same rating year after year. This is true even for staff whose core responsibilities remain largely the same year-to-year.

Role Model

Few staff (5%) are **Role Models**. This rating is reserved for those few staff who made a profound impact this year.

- Consistently went way beyond core job responsibilities.
- Exceeded all expectations and goals, making a profound impact on school/unit and University beyond what was planned.
- Demonstrated Northwestern Values in an exemplary way and modeled the values for others.
- Ready for expanded or new responsibilities.
- **Not recommended for new hires or new to role.**

Excelling

Some staff (25-30%) are **Excelling** and made a significant impact this year.

- Went above and beyond core job responsibilities.
- Exceeded expectations and goals, making a significant impact on school/unit beyond what was planned.
- Demonstrated Northwestern Values in an exemplary way.
- May be ready for new or expanded responsibilities.
- For new hires or new to role: progressed significantly faster than expected.

Achieving

Many staff (55-65%) are **Achieving** and made a solid impact this year.

- Fulfilled core job responsibilities.
- Achieved goals, making a solid impact on school/unit.
- Demonstrated Northwestern Values consistently.
- Showed personal growth.
- For new hires or new to role: progressed as expected.

Development Needed

Few staff (5-10%) made a limited impact this year, and there is **Development Needed** in one or more areas under review. This rating is appropriate when one or more of the following statements apply:

- Did not consistently fulfill core job responsibilities.
- Did not consistently meet expectations and goals.
- Did not consistently demonstrate Northwestern Values.
- Did not show much personal growth.
- For new hires or new to role: progressed slower than expected.

Corrective Action

Very few staff are in a formal **Corrective Action** process.

- Failed to improve despite ongoing efforts to address performance issues.

Northwestern Values and Behaviors

We strive for **Excellence**, taking pride in what we do. This looks like:

- Taking ownership and doing what is needed without having to be asked.
- Taking responsibility for outcomes, even when things don't turn out right.
- Bringing forward options and solutions, not just identifying problems.
- Doing what you say you will do, when you say you will do it, working through circumstances with determination.
- Producing quality work that is both accurate and insightful.
- Providing valuable and helpful service to customers, making things easier for them.
- Working efficiently, and using University resources responsibly.
- Being a good steward, always working toward a better and more sustainable future.

We learn through **Discovery**, growing all the time. This looks like:

- Developing your professional skills, being curious and willing to learn.
- Generating ideas and finding new ways to contribute.
- Making improvements to the way work gets done, even when things may not be your direct responsibility.
- Being open to and soliciting feedback, and applying that learning to the way you work.

We engage in **Collaboration**, achieving success together. This looks like:

- Building strong working relationships and a positive work environment.
- Keeping others informed and involved.
- Finding and using the strengths of others, across the University.
- Being a great team member, pulling your weight and making space for others to shine.
- Recognizing the contributions of others.
- Helping others develop through candid and constructive feedback.

We embrace our **Diversity**, fostering a vibrant community. This looks like:

- Treating everyone with courtesy and respect, creating a welcoming community for all.
- Being respectfully curious about people's experiences.
- Seeking diverse perspectives from others.
- Reaching out to be inclusive of others.
- Confronting people or situations that inhibit diversity.
- Increasing diversity, through hiring, development, and engagement.

We act with **Integrity**, building safety and trust. This looks like:

- Acting ethically, and seeking guidance when the ethics of a situation are not clear.
- Being transparent, open, and honest.
- Holding others accountable for unethical behavior.
- Acting with University's best interest at heart.
- Honoring University policies and regulatory requirements.
- Doing whatever is necessary to create a safe environment for all. Going beyond minimal standards to assure the intentions of our initiatives are realized.