



# CITY OF HOUSTON

## Administrative Procedure

Subject: **Houston Employee Assessment and Review (HEAR) Process**

A.P. No:

**3-20**

Effective Date:

**September 17, 2012**

### 1. AUTHORITY

1.1 Chapter 14, Article II, Division 13, Section 14-162 of the Code of Ordinances.

### 2. PURPOSE

2.1 To provide a consistent employee performance management process, the Houston Employee Assessment and Review (HEAR), for municipal employees that supports a culture of high performance by motivating, recognizing and developing employees to achieve objectives and goals on their performance plan aligned with City and departmental objectives and goals.

### 3. OBJECTIVES

3.1 To support a culture of high performance facilitated by the HEAR process founded on the following core elements:

- 3.1.1 SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely) employee performance goals aligned with the City's/department's/division's strategic goals;
- 3.1.2 Assurance of fairness and objectivity through the training of supervisors and managers;
- 3.1.3 Simple and short forms identifying the core goals and behaviors to be achieved;
- 3.1.4 Regular communication with employees (quarterly or at least semi-annual updates) to recognize, motivate and/or provide opportunities to improve performance; and
- 3.1.5 Growth and development opportunities.

### 4. DEFINITIONS

4.1 *Houston Employee Assessment and Review (HEAR) form* – A form used to communicate to the employee his/her SMART performance goals/objectives and behavioral factors over a defined period of time that is used for both the reviews (quarterly or at least semi-annual) and the final assessment.

Approved:

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09/17/2012

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## 5. SCOPE

- 5.1 All municipal employees shall have their performance assessed in accordance with this policy. Exceptions include department directors and executive level employees above pay grade 26 as well as part-time, seasonal and temporary employees. These exceptions may be assessed using the HEAR process at the discretion of the department director or Mayor. This policy shall not cover police officers or fire fighters covered under Chapter 143 of the Local Government Code of the State of Texas.

## 6. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1 Directors are responsible for:

- 6.1.1 Ensuring that the management and supervisors of their department understand and incorporate the core elements of the HEAR process.
- 6.1.2 Ensuring that the supervisors and managers have access to the Human Resources Department for training on how to prepare HEAR performance plans, provide ongoing communication with employees and complete assessments.

- 6.2 Supervisors and managers will be responsible for:

- 6.2.1 Learning and following the core elements of the HEAR process.
- 6.2.2 Providing assessments on an annual basis or as scheduled. If the supervisor is not available, the supervisor's manager will complete the assessment.
- 6.2.3 Communicating to the employee about expected performance goals/objectives, whether on a formal or informal basis.
- 6.2.4 Ensuring that all finalized HEAR forms are received by the Human Resources Department for inclusion in the employee's official file.
- 6.2.5 Ensure timely administration of HEAR process, which should be incorporated in the supervisor's and/or manager's performance assessment.

- 6.3 Employees will be responsible for:

- 6.3.1 Providing suggestions and having the willingness to discuss SMART goals/objectives and behavioral factors on the plan form with the intent to reach a mutual agreement;
- 6.3.2 Providing input to supervisor or manager on achievements;
- 6.3.3 Accepting feedback and follow-through on development and growth suggestions;
- 6.3.4 Reviewing and signing the current year's HEAR plan as well as the final HEAR form.

- 6.4 The Human Resources Department will be responsible for:

- 6.4.1 Providing formats of the HEAR forms for both reviews and assessments.
- 6.4.2 Providing training on "best practices" in developing and communicating the employee performance plans and evaluations, as well as providing ongoing feedback.
- 6.4.3 Preparing an annual report to the Mayor reflecting departmental compliance with this policy.

## 7. PROCEDURES

7.1 The following process is recommended to accomplish the HEAR program objectives:

7.1.1 At the beginning of the performance review process:

7.1.1.1 The department and/or divisions should establish annual strategic goals, objectives and core values that can be translated into SMART goals/objectives and behavioral factors for each employee.

7.1.1.2 On the employee's HEAR form, his/her goals/objectives and behavioral factors should be aligned with:

- the department's and/or division's strategic goals/objectives and core values; and
- the supervisor's goals/objectives.

7.1.1.3 The supervisor and employee should discuss the SMART goals/objectives and behavioral factors with the intent to reach a mutual agreement. However, if a mutual agreement is not reached, the supervisor has the final determination on the SMART goals/objectives and behavioral factors to be included on the HEAR form.

7.1.2 Throughout the performance review period, the supervisor will:

7.1.2.1 Provide continuous feedback, including quarterly or at least semi-annual reviews, on performance.

7.1.2.2 Review the HEAR form with the employee for any modifications to goals/objectives or behavioral factors.

7.1.3 At the end of the performance review period:

7.1.3.1 The employee provides input on his/her achievements.

7.1.3.2 The supervisor completes the performance assessment and submits it to his/her manager for review.

7.1.3.3 The supervisor discusses the performance assessment with the employee and recommends development and growth opportunities.

7.1.3.3.1 If any changes to ratings on the performance assessment occur during this discussion, the supervisor should submit the revised performance assessment to his/her manager for review.

7.1.3.4 The performance assessment is finalized by signatures of the employee, supervisor and manager.

7.1.3.4.1 A signature by an employee does not indicate an agreement with the rating given to the employee, but simply indicates that the employee has received the performance assessment.

7.1.3.4.2 Should an employee refuse to sign, the supervisor shall write "Employee refuses to sign" and sign his/her name to the document along with the date and his/her employee number.

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- 7.2 The performance assessments are to be given to the employees on a regularly scheduled basis to ensure consistency across departments:
- 7.2.1 Performance assessments should be conducted during the fifth (5th) and the eleventh (11th) month of a new hire's probationary period, and then annually thereafter.
  - 7.2.2 For promotions with a change in pay grade, a five (5) month assessment should be conducted.
  - 7.2.3 For all municipal employees, annual assessments are to be conducted in April (non-supervisors) and May (supervisors and managers).
  - 7.2.4 Performance assessment schedules may change at the discretion of the Mayor.
  - 7.2.5 Department directors have the authority to increase the frequency of an employee's performance assessment, for reasons such as the restructuring of the department or a division, or to document extraordinary or unacceptable performance.
  - 7.2.6 Employees with an overall performance rating of "below expectations" shall be reassessed within 120 days or at the discretion of the director. A civil service employee has the right to appeal an overall assessment rating of 2.99 or less through the City's grievance process.
  - 7.2.7 Any employee with two consecutive assessment ratings of "below expectations" may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination or indefinite suspension. This applies even if the employee has not had any prior disciplinary actions performed against him/her.