
How to Conduct an Effective CAO Performance Review

Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities
2023 Spring Conference

Presented by
Gerald Walsh Associates Inc.



Performance reviews are universally unpopular

- 66% were strongly dissatisfied with their performance review process and said it interferes with their productivity.
- 65% reported the process is not even relevant to their jobs.
- 61% felt the process was outdated.
- 62% felt it was often incomplete, too generic, or too infrequent.



Why conduct performance reviews?

- Gives CAO an opportunity to report on progress against goals.
- Invites Council members to reflect on CAOs overall performance.
- Identifies areas for development.
- Formalize goals for the coming year.



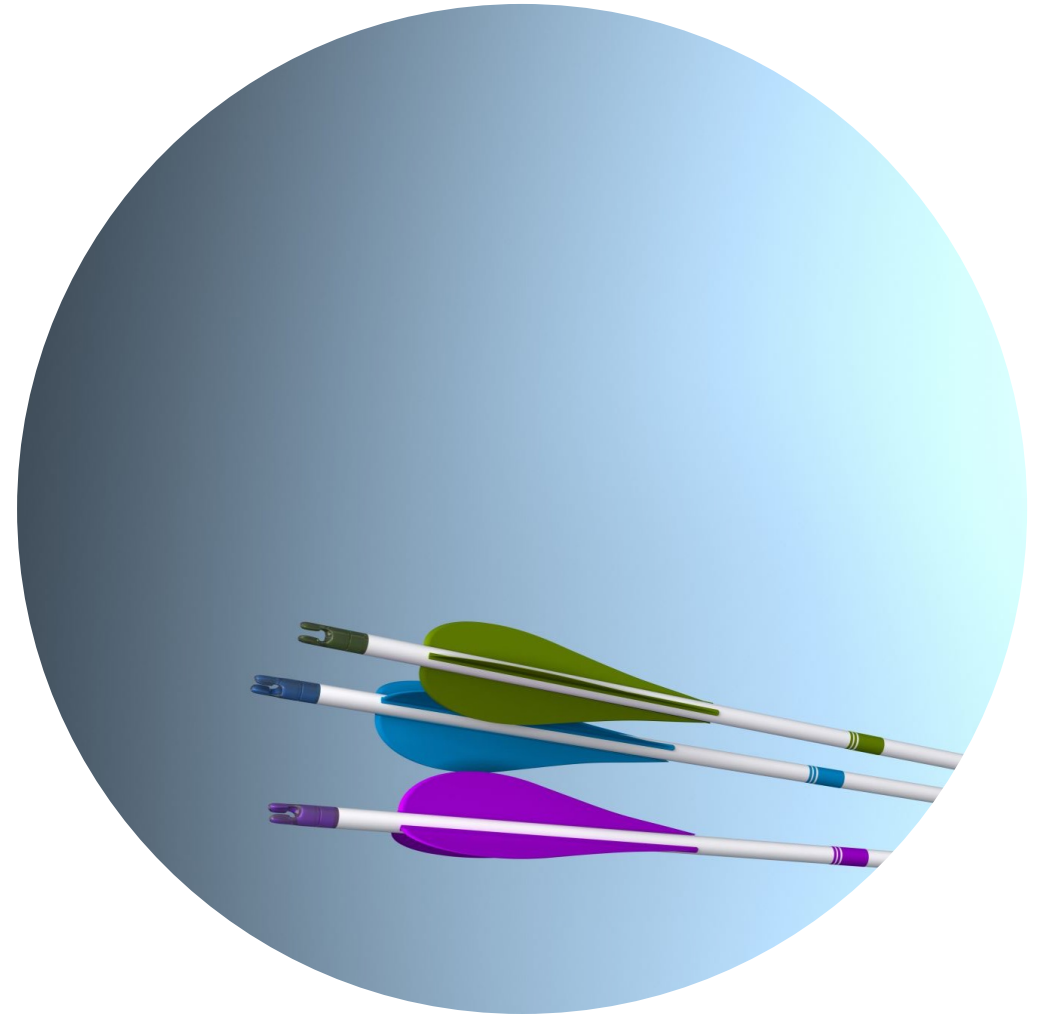
Uncouple pay from performance

- Discussing compensation can undermine honest conversations about performance, goals, and development.



Challenges in conducting performance reviews

- Scope of evaluation (lack of clear performance criteria)
- Subjectivity and bias
- Getting relevant feedback
- CAOs resistance to feedback
- Timing of evaluation
- Political influences





Best process to use for CAO evaluation

1. Gather background materials
2. Build support for process
3. Decide who will lead the process
4. Provide Council with overview
5. Design and distribute assessment tool
6. Discuss results with Council
7. Review results with CAO and develop action plans
8. Support CAO plans in coming year



MUNICIPALITY OF THE DISTRICT OF
YARMOUTH
truly connected

Gather background materials

- CAOs job description
- Municipal Government Act
- Strategic plan
- Annual goals and objectives
- Financial statements vs budget
- CAOs individual performance plan

Who should provide performance feedback?

- Council
- Direct reports
- Self-evaluation



Performance objectives for a CAO / scope of evaluation

- Leadership
- Strategic orientation
- Financial management
- Human resource management
- Governance and council relations

Leadership

The CAO:

1. Exercises sound judgment in dealing with significant issues affecting the Municipality.
2. Displays a high level of integrity, honesty, and fairness always.
3. Demonstrates a clear understanding of the local, regional, provincial, and national issues affecting the Municipality.
4. Ensures the effective stewardship of human, financial and physical resources.
5. Identifies, assesses and manages the significant risks to the Municipality.
6. Ensures that municipal services are delivered efficiently and effectively.
7. Supports diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Strategic orientation

The CAO:

8. Develops and communicates clear business plans that reflect Council' s strategic priorities.
9. Monitors and evaluates objectives and plans to ensure they are achieved and takes action as needed.
10. Reviews and, where appropriate, adjusts the long-term strategies and objectives of the Municipality in consultation with Council.

Human resource management

The CAO:

- 15. Ensures comprehensive performance reviews are conducted for all staff.
- 16. Ensures adequate staff resources are in place to carry out the work of the Municipality.
- 17. Has created a succession plan for all critical positions in the Municipality.
- 18. If required, brings confidential human resource matters to Councils attention.
- 19. Takes concrete steps to ensure employees' health, safety, and overall wellness.



What is the best scoring method?



Rating Scale

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Slightly agree

-
- Slightly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree

-
- Do not know / unable to answer



The value of qualitative feedback

- Enables evaluators to give more specific feedback on CAO strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement
- Specific examples of CAOs contributions and achievements demonstrates that Council is paying attention and values their contributions



At end of survey

What are the CAOs greatest strengths?

What are the things you appreciate the most about the CAO?

What areas would you like to see the CAO improve in the coming year?

Are there any specific training opportunities the CAO should utilize?





Direct reports

The CAO ...

1. Communicates the goals and strategy to the team clearly.
2. Keeps the team focused on our priorities and results.
3. Is open to new ideas and values the perspective I bring to the team.
4. Provides constructive feedback that helps me improve my performance.
5. Shows an interest in me as a person.
6. Supports my professional development and growth.
7. Is authentic and inspires trust.
8. Grants me the autonomy to do my job and does not micromanage me.
9. Shares relevant information with the team that helps us do our jobs better.
10. Is available when I need her, and she listens well when I have concerns.
11. Leads by example, and I consider her a role model.
12. Is a collaborative leader who actively encourages participation from all.
13. Supports me in my relationship with Council.

Direct reports

Open-ended questions:

1. What is one thing the CAO does very well as a leader?
2. What is one thing the CAO could improve upon to be more effective as a leader?
3. How can the CAO help you be more successful in your role with MODY



Who should provide performance feedback?

Council

- Quantitative
- Qualitative

Direct reports

- Quantitative
- Qualitative

Self-evaluation





Biases that impact performance reviews

- Halo effect
- Horns effect
- Recency bias
- Similarity bias
- Contrast effect
- Leniency bias

Third-party
facilitator can
help the process



CAO performance review meeting

Agenda:

- Introduction and purpose
- Review of goals (KPIs) from previous year
- Self-evaluation
- Goal-setting for coming year
- Development plan
- Written summary with timelines

CAO performance review meeting

Conversation:

- Positive and constructive tone
- Ask open-ended questions
- Be specific and objective
- Listen actively
- Collaborate on goal-setting

Why might a CAO resist feedback?

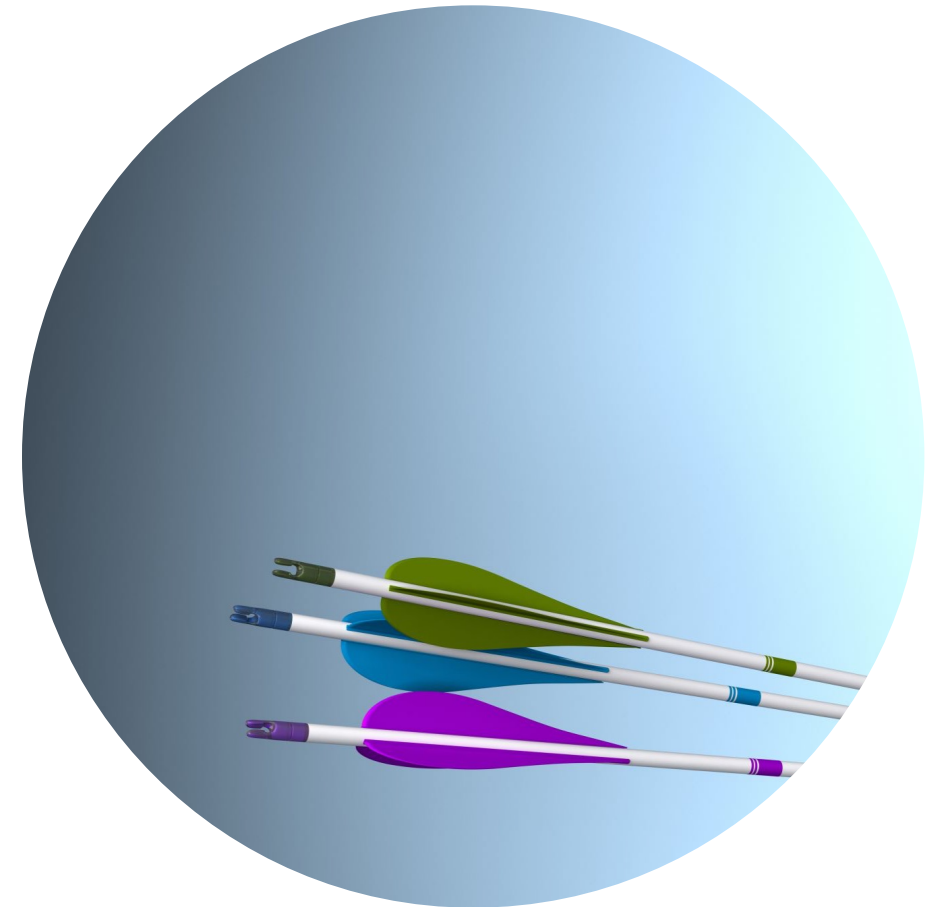
- Fear of criticism / only focusing on the negative
- Perception of bias
- Defensive
- Self-doubt
- Worried about consequences
- Lack of trust and respect





Best timing for a performance review

Key takeaways

- Objective and fair performance evaluations are crucial for the effective management of municipal governments
- Establish clear objectives, use proper evaluation methods, gather valid feedback, and ensure the process is fair, unbiased and transparent
- Success depends on evaluators skills and expertise, and CAOs willingness to accept feedback, engage in constructive dialogue, and commit to improvement





**Questions
and
Answers**

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