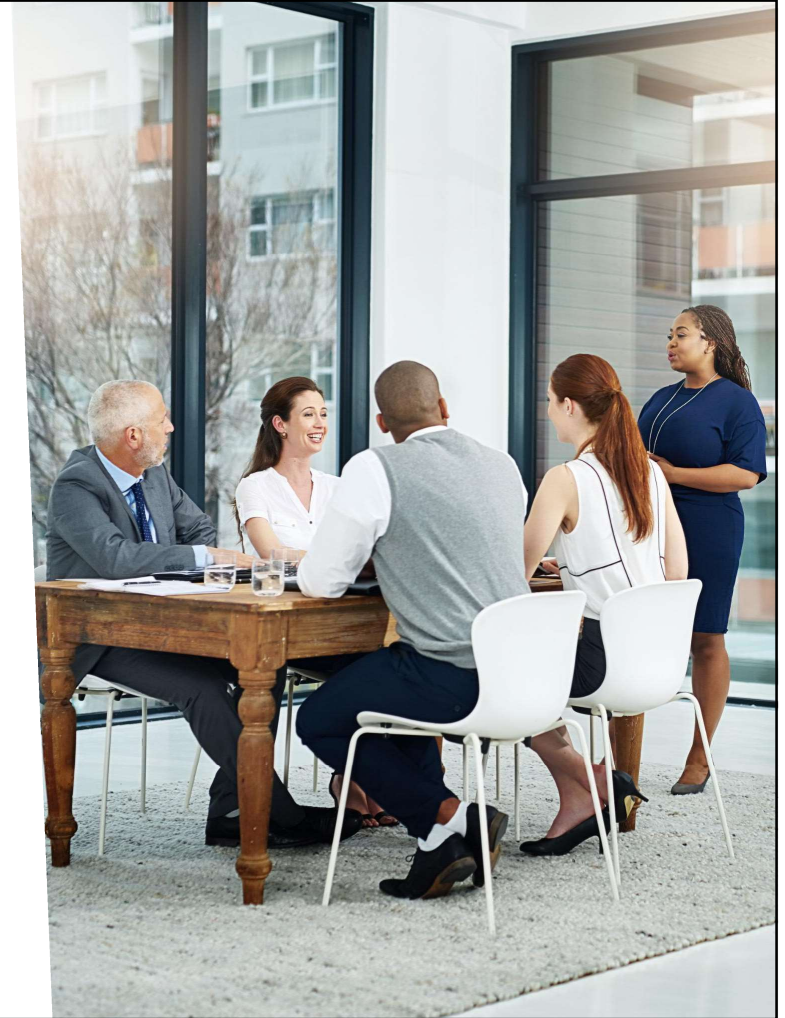


Effective Evaluations of City Managers

STRATEGIES FOR ASSESSING
LEADERSHIP IN CITY GOVERNANCE



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PRESENTED BY:

WELCOME & SESSION
OVERVIEW



We will cover:

- Purpose and Legal Context
- Design and Content
- Challenges and Best Practice
- Interactive Scenarios
- Wrap Up and Q & A



EVALUATION PURPOSE AND
LEGAL CONTEXT

Role and Purpose of Evaluations

Accountability and Alignment

Evaluations reinforce accountability and align city manager performance with strategic priorities for effective governance.

Healthy Council-Manager Relationship

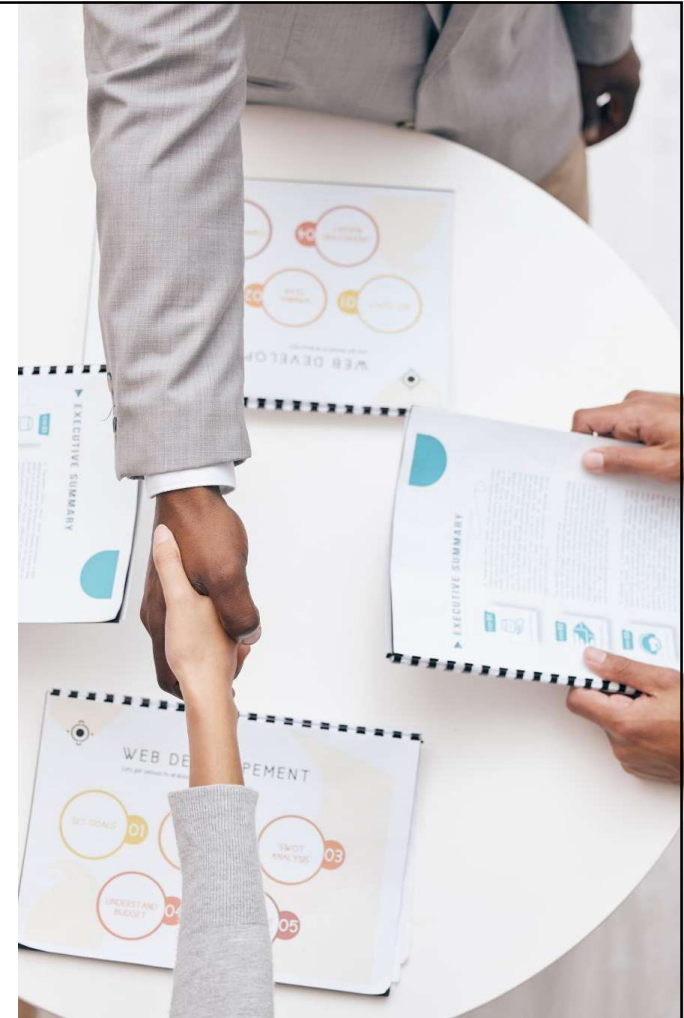
Evaluations help maintain clear expectations and promote trust between the council and city manager.

Promoting Transparency and Trust

Well-structured evaluations prevent micromanagement while fostering transparency and trust in municipal governance.

Continuous Improvement Culture

Aligning evaluation goals with strategic objectives fosters continuous improvement and professional growth.



Legal Foundations and Constraints

Legal Compliance Importance

Understanding legal frameworks ensures compliance and reduces risks in city manager evaluations.

Key Legal Considerations

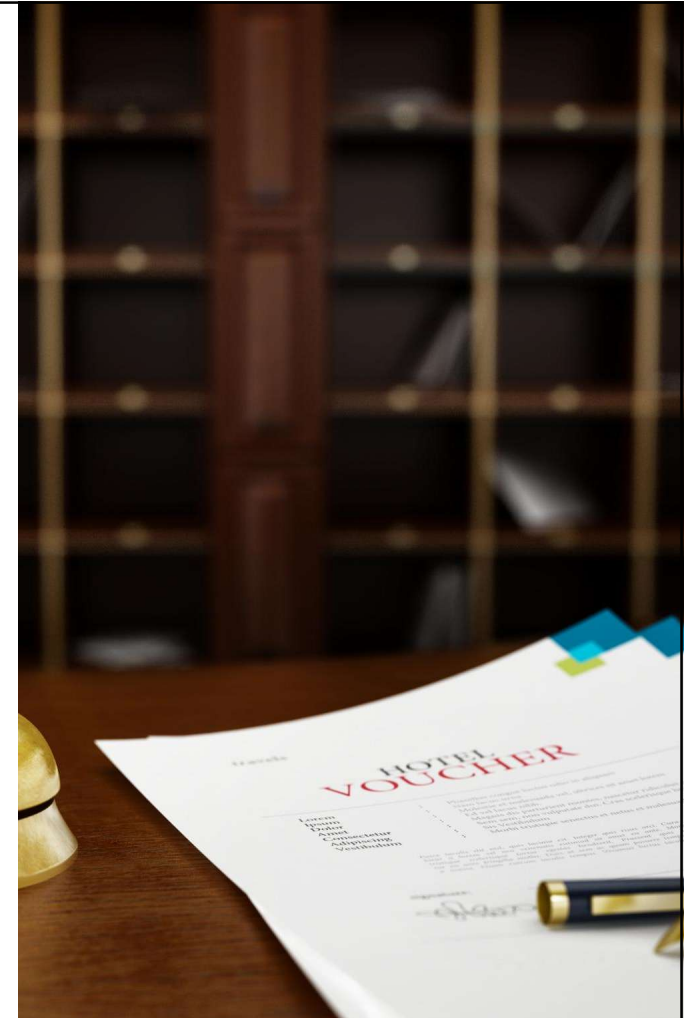
Focus on public records laws, open meetings, and confidentiality obligations in Oregon.

Risk of Poor Evaluations

Bias or poor documentation can lead to litigation and reputational damage.

Best Practices for Evaluations

Use job-related criteria, keep it simple, and avoid discriminatory language to withstand legal scrutiny.



EVALUATION DESIGN AND CONTENT

Designing a Strong Evaluation Process



Clear Criteria and Consensus

Evaluation processes require clear criteria agreed upon by councils for fairness and alignment with goals.

Consistent Timing and Frequency

Best practices suggest consistent timing and frequency to ensure evaluations are timely and relevant.

Comprehensive Data Collection

Gather both quantitative and qualitative data for a thorough understanding of performance.

Simplicity in Design

A simple and manageable evaluation process improves effectiveness and stakeholder engagement.



Lawful and Defensible Evaluation Content

Focus on Job-Related Criteria

Evaluations should be based strictly on job-related performance to ensure fairness and legal compliance.

Avoid Discriminatory Language

Using unbiased and clear language prevents legal challenges and promotes fairness in evaluations.

Document Objective Evidence

Providing evidence-based feedback supports defensibility and accuracy in performance reviews.

Structure Feedback Professionally

Well-organized and professional feedback reflects accurate performance and reinforces trust.

EVALUATION CHALLENGES AND BEST PRACTICES



Common Missteps and How to Avoid Them

Avoiding Bias in Evaluations

Prevent personal or political bias from affecting evaluations to ensure fairness and objectivity in the process.

Clear and Linked Feedback

Provide clear feedback directly linked to established goals to enhance understanding and actionable outcomes.

Maintaining Transparency

Keep the evaluation process transparent to avoid surprises and build trust between those involved.

Simplicity and Seeking Advice

Keep the evaluation process simple and seek advice when needed to improve effectiveness and reduce complexity.



Constructive Feedback and Goal Setting

Effective Feedback Techniques

Constructive feedback balances recognition of strengths with identification of improvement areas to foster growth.

Setting Measurable Goals

Goals should be specific, achievable, and aligned with strategic priorities to support development effectively.

Leadership Growth Importance

Leadership development enhances organizational performance through continuous dialogue and mutual respect.



INTERACTIVE SCENARIOS AND
WRAP-UP



Scenario 1

- A city commission scheduled the city manager's evaluation but never agreed on what criteria would be used.
- During the evaluation meeting, commissioners each brought their own notes and opinions. Some focused on pet projects, others on personal frustrations.
- One commissioner criticized the manager for not attending enough neighborhood meetings, while another praised the same manager for delegating those tasks effectively.
- The evaluation ended with conflicting feedback, no consensus on performance, and the manager unclear about expectations moving forward.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

- No shared criteria → inconsistent measures of success.
- Feedback was personal and subjective rather than tied to strategic priorities.
- Lack of collective voice from the commission left the manager confused and unsupported.

WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN DONE DIFFERENTLY?

- **Agree on Criteria Upfront:** Use the city's adopted strategic goals as the framework for evaluation.
- **Speak as a Body:** The commission should discuss, deliberate, and then present a unified evaluation rather than individual "report cards."
- **Provide Linked Feedback:** Comments should connect directly to adopted goals (e.g., "Goal: improve community engagement — here's how we'd like reporting improved").
- **Document Clearly:** Provide a written evaluation summary, highlighting areas of strength and areas for improvement with action steps.

Scenario 1



Scenario 2

- **The city manager prepared no self-evaluation and entered the performance review defensively.**
- **When commissioners brought up concerns about project delays, the manager responded by blaming staff, the council's indecision, and external factors.**
- **Instead of acknowledging issues, the manager argued point-by-point, leaving the council feeling dismissed.**
- **The evaluation ended with rising frustration and damaged trust between the council and manager.**

WHAT WENT WRONG?

- **No self-assessment** → missed chance to frame performance and own successes.
- **Defensive posture** → eroded trust and made the evaluation feel combative.
- **Lack of accountability** → council left uncertain if issues would be addressed.

WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN DONE DIFFERENTLY?

- **Provide a Self-Evaluation:** Managers should prepare a written summary of achievements, challenges, and lessons learned tied to strategic goals.
- **Acknowledge Challenges Honestly:** Instead of deflecting, the manager could note barriers while also suggesting solutions.
- **Adopt a Growth Mindset:** Demonstrating willingness to learn and improve reassures the council that the manager takes accountability seriously.
- **Follow Up with Action Steps:** Agree on next steps and provide updates at future check-ins so the evaluation feels like a continuous improvement tool, not a one-time confrontation.

Scenario 2

Thank you

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