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**Rowe, Rebecca, A. *Performance Evaluations: Investigating Effective Solutions***

**Abstract**

Performance evaluations must be viewed as an integral part of a manager's responsibility to their employees. The purpose of a performance evaluation is to ensure that managers and their direct reports have a clear and mutual understanding of the job functions being performed, the standards set by the organization and the current state of performance by the employee. This paper will reflect on the current state of performance evaluations and employee's perceptions within the City.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

Performance evaluations are an integral part of the human resources function and what organizations use to gauge overall performance and manage their most valuable resource; employees. Performance evaluations are commonly used by business organizations to formally track employees' individual performance and overtime identify those individuals who should be considered for promotion or whose performance could be leading to disciplinary action or termination. The design and administration of performance evaluations are subjective to each employer, with some employers using annual, quarterly, monthly, or sometimes even weekly performance evaluations to track how employees are performing, set goals for future performance, make corrections to dwindling performance and praise strong performers.

This study focuses on analyzing and exploring the perception of a newly introduced performance evaluation to all City staff. Within the City, the following services are offered: protective services (fire and police department), parks and recreation, administration (human resources, City Clerk and City Manager), finance, community development, engineering, central garage, public works division (street, park, water and wastewater services) friendship (senior) center and a public library. Within those areas, employees are represented by seven labor unions which represents 87% of employees. Non-union employees represent 13% of the workforce. Historically, the City provided all probationary employees, who were within their first year of their position, a performance evaluation at six-months and one year. After the employee had completed one year of probationary employment, performance evaluations were no longer conducted. At the end of 2017, a new performance evaluation schedule and form was created in hopes of conducting more effective and timely evaluations of the employee's performance. The schedule for performance evaluations is currently based on the department the employee is

assigned to. Each department is expected to complete their performance reviews by the designated date to ensure that within the 2018 calendar year, each employee will receive a performance evaluation.

Previously, probationary employees were rated on a numeric-based scale from 0-8 in five categories: quantity of work; quality of work; cooperation and attitude; learning capacity, adaptability and potential and attendance. If they scored between a 0-16 they were considered an unsatisfactory employee, 17-26 a satisfactory employee or 27-40 a better than average employee. The numeric scale caused resentment with employees because the numbers were subjective and did not provide any written commentary on their performance to better understand why they received one numeric value over another.

With the new performance evaluation form, the employees are no longer rated on a numeric scale but rather management makes comments on the employee's performance in ten categories. After commenting on the ten evaluation categories, five SMART goals are listed by his/her manager as objectives for the employee to work towards in the coming year. Managers can then make additional comments on the employee's performance followed by comments from their department head and the City Manager. The ten evaluation categories discussed on the new performance evaluation form include: job knowledge; customer service; teamwork; attitude/motivation; communication; attendance/dependability; creativity/innovation; planning and time management; safety/work rules and decision making/problem solving. Employees who work in a management capacity will have an additional three categories on their performance evaluation which include: leadership; fiscal management and supervising employees.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Discussions between managers and employees regarding their current performance can be a tool and platform for building better work relationships; and can also be used to start conversations about performance in the future. According to a survey conducted by LinkedIn, 69% of employees say they would work harder if they felt their efforts were better recognized (Hogan, 2016). The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of the City's employee of having annual performance evaluations, and what they believe to be beneficial and unbeneficial about the new performance evaluation process implemented at the beginning of 2018. Employees of the City historically, while completing their probationary year in a position, received performance evaluations and feedback on how they were progressing with learning their new position.

Arguably, employees who have surpassed their probationary period are just as in need of a performance evaluation. It can be generally stated that many employees who have been with an organization for many years start to get comfortable and complacent in their roles and often display a lack in creativity, innovation and engagement. The goal of the City's new performance evaluation tool and procedures is to reignite their employees' passion for their positions, push them to complete annual goals and objectives and make them actively think about their performance.

At the end of 2017 the new performance evaluation tool and process was introduced to management; and the system was put into use in early 2018. The new performance evaluation now requires evaluating probationary employees quarterly to ensure that a working relationship between employee and management will be built on honesty and trust. For those employees

beyond their probationary period, they now will receive a yearly performance evaluation to discuss their performance and set goals for the following year.

The problem the City may encounter with this change to conducting performance evaluation is an unwelcomed response from employees that have become accustomed to not having their performance monitored more closely and formally documented. Although it is believed by the implementers of the new performance evaluation system that removing the numeric rating scale and providing constructive feedback in ten categories will allow for open communication and honest feedback on performance, the removal of the numeric scale will also make the performance evaluation less subjective and more personal. A potential issue the City faces with performance evaluations is ensuring that employees find them valuable and impactful to their work experience.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine before the new performance evaluation tool and process was fully implemented, what the general perception and beliefs of the City's employees were regarding the changes being made to individual performance evaluations; and if there were any differences in perceptions between the different groups that comprised the City's workforce. The question used to guide the study: what are the perceptions of the City's employees regarding the new performance evaluation procedures being implemented for the first time in 2018?

Because the City's workforce is comprised of many different sub-groups as related to the type of services the City provides, and because both the performance evaluation tool and the process was changed, the following questions were used to better understand the perceptions of the City's employees:

- In what ways do the employees believe the new performance evaluation system will be beneficial to them.
- In what ways do the employees believe the new performance evaluation system will be unbeneficial to them.
- Are there significant differences between the perceptions of the different sub-groups of the City's workforce regarding the new performance evaluation procedures?

**Assumptions of the Study**

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, there are limited assumptions that exist. The City is comprised of a diverse group of workers who fall into various categories such as unions versus non-union and new employees versus tenured employees. The study will assume that the different groups of employees will have varying opinions of the benefits of performance evaluations and areas of the performance evaluation that hold little to no value.

## **Chapter II: Literature Review**

Throughout this chapter, employee performance evaluations, and the barriers that interfere with effective performance evaluations will be reviewed. Key elements that make performance evaluations valuable and an integral part of the human resources function will be discussed. When implemented properly, performance evaluations can help develop an organization, cultivate talent and grow a high functioning workforce. Furthermore, the importance of performance evaluations will be investigated from the eyes of employees and what they believe to be valuable content in a performance evaluation.

### **Evolution of Performance Evaluations**

Performance evaluations are “a formal analysis of any individual’s actions pertaining to his/her job, as well as the results of those actions, in relation to a particular position” (What is PERFORMANCE EVALUATION?, n.d.). Performance management dates to 1883 when the Pendleton Act, or Civil Service Act, was put into place for federal government workers (Broderick, Mavor, Milkovich, & Wigdor, 1991). The Act provided a merit system that aimed to end favoritism and had promotions based on merit competition but the United States Civil Service Commission did not move to establish a uniformed rating system for appraisals until 1912 (Performance Management Overview & History, n.d.). Performance evaluations have changed and improved over time. Through a push for progressive ideas and development of employment laws, employee benefits and further research on the impacts of production output with high performers, by the early 1960’s, 60% of American companies had some form of a performance management system (Huprich, 2008).

## **The Purpose of Performance Evaluations**

The purpose of performance evaluations varies from organization to organization but overall, the general purpose of a performance evaluation is to review the past performance (whether that is one week or one year), recognize the employees contributions to the workplace, improve individual performance through feedback and development opportunities, identify organization objectives and match them with individual objectives and provide data to document historical performance (Purpose and Objective - Classified Employee Performance Evaluation, n.d.). Aside from the general purpose of the performance evaluation, Grigoroudis and Zopoundis (2012) suggest the organization should determine: (1) who should design and maintain the evaluation process (2) which leader should evaluate which employee, (3) who will review the results of the performance evaluations and (4) how will the results of the performance evaluation be used.

Furthermore, it is suggested that an organization also determine: (1) how will the performance of individuals be evaluated and measured, (2) how will each supervisor provide the results of the performance evaluation and (3) how will the performance evaluation relate to the compensation policy (Fekete & Rozenberg, 2014). When conducting performance evaluations, it is important to first understand what the objectives of a performance evaluations are.

Organizations should determine why they are conducting performance evaluations and what the anticipated outcome is. Some objectives may include: (1) employee promotions, (2) employee confirmation on performance, (3) training and development, (4) job competency building, (5) compensation reviews, (6) improved communication or (7) HR program evaluations (Singh, 2015).

## **Types of Performance Evaluations**

The success of an organization depends on how it measures its talent and how it uses performance evaluations to heighten performance (Singh, 2015). Many different types of performance evaluations exist and more continue to be developed or be redesigned. Methods of performance evaluations in-use include: (1) Rating Scales Methods, (2) Forced Choice Method, (3) Forced Distribution Methods, (4) Performance Tests and Observations, (5) Essay, (6) Comparative Evaluation Method and (7) 360-degree Method to name a few. Each method for evaluating performance has its benefits and concerns but those depend on the organization, leadership and needs of the employee.

**Common forms of performance evaluations measurement.** The graphic rating scale is a commonly used type of performance evaluation measurement. Typically, this performance evaluation method will list traits such as communication, teamwork or productivity and ask the reviewer to rate the individual on that trait. Two types of scales are commonly used: discrete scale and continuous scale. The discrete scale shows a scale with a start and end point (i.e. 1-10 or excellent, average and poor) and asks the rater to select the best match to the employee's performance. A continuous scale shows a scale and the manager puts a mark on the scale that best fits the employee's performance (i.e. exceeds expectations – doesn't meet expectations) however it is just a start and end with no options between. The continuous scale can cause some concerns because it can be too vague for some employees (McGregor, 2006).

## **Benefits and Concerns with Performance Evaluations**

Concerns have plagued the performance evaluation process for quite some time. Many benefits and concerns are evident when examining the performance evaluation process. Employers should understand that if they depend on one noteworthy conversation per year

regarding an employee's performance, they need to make it impactful. If organizations can understand the benefits and concerns with performance evaluations, they can eliminate some of the stigma associated with the process and improve on areas that could be identified as a challenge or barrier to their organization.

**Benefits of performance evaluations.** According to the Queensland Government, staff performance reviews are a time when you can acknowledge and value your employees and identify areas for development or training (Queensland Government, 2016). Furthermore, performance evaluations can assist in finding out who is performing their jobs, clarify roles and promote open communication (Queensland Government, 2016). Performance evaluations can assist with rewarding staff who are performing well, adding value to the organization and embraces the organizations values. Additionally, the role the employee plays in the organization can be defined and assist in resetting expectations for performance and how their roles play in integral part of the organization and its processes. Open communication can help create discussions about not only on the employee's performance but process improvements for the organization and creating an overall positive culture for ongoing feedback and development.

Performance evaluations can also increase and solidify the focus of the organization such as corporate values, focus on achievement of results and goal completion or increasing organizational efficiency (Kourtit & de Waal, 2009). Organizations are also able to communicate the strategic vision by establishing goals that are in line with the vision (Segal, 2000). When communicating the goals and expectations the organization has of their employees, organizations should also connect those goals and expectations back to the strategic vision of the organization. According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), attitude surveys indicate that employees leave organizations due to a lack of appreciation and recognition because they are

enticed by another business in hopes of receiving the recognition elsewhere (Segal, 2000).

Performance evaluations can also assist in indicating who is a strong and weak performer in the organization. Moreover, performance evaluations can track performance overtime, and if necessary, be the documentation that can assist with terminating a poor performing employee.

Additional benefits to performance evaluations can include motivation to employees. Performance evaluations can play a significant role in the satisfaction an employee receives from their performance. With improved job satisfaction, performance evaluations, when conducted properly, can also provide an employee with a sense of belonging and commitment to the organization and recognition for their efforts (Harri, 2011). Performance evaluations can also be an indicator of the effectiveness of an organization's recruitment techniques in finding the best candidate for the position. The data from the performance evaluations will indicate if the quality and type of employee selected for the position meet the needs of the organization and if their performance is continuously improving, declining or holding steady (Harri, 2011).

**Concerns with performance evaluations.** Although performance evaluations hold a valuable seat in the human resources function within an organization, there are concerns that should also be acknowledged. Concerns to an organization could include: ratings and feedback employee receive are too subjective making them unreliable, supervisor bias, halo/horn effect, increases in internal competition amongst coworkers and performance evaluations can be costly and time consuming (Kourtit & de Waal, 2009). Further examining the concerns, when the halo effect is present on performance evaluations, it refers to a generalized, overall positive rating of the employee's performance. This can lead to inflated and inaccurate statements about the employee's performance which, often times, leads to the leader spending more time talking than a two-way conversation, they don't accurately document ongoing performance and they rate all

work as satisfactory and don't create plans for employee development. (Hennington, Bradley, Crews, & Hennington, 2013). The horn effect would be the opposite in the sense that all performance is looked at negatively and difficult for the employee to be satisfactory in the eyes of the leader.

When poorly executed, other concerns such as lowered self-esteem if given all negative, non-constructive feedback, decreased motivation to perform and damaged communication between employees and leadership (Huprich, 2008). Other various disadvantages to include: data variation due to many different managers using the same performance evaluation form, discourage collaboration and teamwork and negative incidents or experience could be prioritized (Singh, 2015). With all the different types of performance evaluations that exist, it is fair to say that the type of performance evaluation is not always the problem, rather it is the leadership producing the review who is causing the potential negativity and lack of importance surrounding the evaluation (Sawayda, Ferrell, & Ferrell, 2013).

### **The Future of Performance Evaluations**

The purpose of performance evaluation and why they are being conducted and their benefits have been an ongoing conversation. Businesses internationally "are replacing annual reviews with frequent, information check-ins between management and employees" (Cappelli & Tavis, 2016). Organizations are finding that performance evaluations that have a look back period of the year prior and lack clear goals and structure limit the employee's motivation to improve and grow (The changing performance management paradigm: evolution or revolution? Is there a future for performance management?, 2015). Employers who have frequent, informal check-in with their employees allow for a steady line of communication while focusing on building the workforce by correcting troubles immediately and praising good efforts and

successes in a timely manner. It has been estimated that 70% of multinational companies are moving towards the idea of frequent check-ins on goals and performance versus the annual review process (Cappelli & Tavis, 2016). Furthermore, regular check-ins that focus on goal setting and aligning the current needs of the organization will vastly improve the content of performance evaluations.

The future of performance evaluations is geared toward a full performance management system. The use of technology to track performance will be the main source for tracking performance and more frequent performance evaluation are already happening.

### **Chapter III: Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to determine, before the new performance evaluation tool and process was fully implemented, what the general perception and beliefs of the City's employees were regarding the changes being made to individual performance evaluations; and if there were any differences in perceptions between the different groups that comprised the City's workforce. The question used to guide the study was: what are the perceptions of the City's employees regarding the new performance evaluation procedures being implemented for the first time in 2018?

Because the City's workforce is comprised of many different sub-groups as related to the type of services the City provides, and because both the performance evaluation tool and the process was changed, the following additional questions were used to better understand the perceptions of the City's employees:

- In what ways do the employees believe the new performance evaluation system will be beneficial to them.
- In what ways do the employees believe the new performance evaluation system will be unbeneficial to them.
- Are there significant differences between the perceptions of the different sub-groups of the City's workforce regarding the new performance evaluation procedures?

#### **Subject Selection and Description**

The City currently employs 274 employees. Of those employees, 166 are full time regular employees, 26 are part-time regular employees and 82 are seasonal, temporary or City council employees. For purposes of this research, part-time, seasonal and council employees were excluded from this survey because they do not receive a formal, written performance evaluation.

The employees selected to participate in the survey were those who were regular full-time employees which accounted for 166 participants. In total, 62 or 37% of full-time employees participated in the survey.

The study utilized the convenience sampling method for subject selection. The only requirements for participating in the study were that subjects had to be a full-time regular employee of the City, and over the age of 18 years old. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and subjects were neither rewarded or coerced for participating. To ensure this, each subject was provided with, and agreed, to participate prior to gaining access to the survey to ensure they agreed to participate voluntarily.

To ensure inclusion with the study, all genders, age ranges, races and social-economic statuses were asked to participate, but characteristics of gender, race, or any social-economic characteristics outside of age and tenure with the City were not factors relevant to the study. The demographic factors that were relevant to the study were age range, years of employment with the City, and union affiliation. Years of employment distributions will include: 0-4 years; 5-10 years; 11-15 years; 16-20 years; 21-25 years; 26-30 years; 31-35 years and 36-40 years. Table 1 provides a summary the years of service for participants and percent of the workforce they account for in the survey.

Table 1

*Distribution of the City's Workforce's Years of Employment*

Years of Employment	Total Number of Employees	Percent of the Workforce
0-4 years	48	29%
5-10 years	19	11%
11-15 years	29	18%
16-20 years	25	15%
21-25 years	22	13%
26-30 years	14	9%
31-35 years	4	2%
36-40 years	5	3%
Total	166	100%

The study population included employees from the seven unions within the City: American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME); City of Winona Professional Employees Association (COWPEA); Teamsters; Law Enforcement Labor Services (LELS) Police Officers; LELS Sergeants; International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) - Firefighters and IAFF - Fire Captains along with non-union employees.

Table 2 provides a summary of each union affiliation of the subject population and percent of the workforce they account for in the survey.

Table 2

*Distribution of the City's Employee Union Membership*

Union	Total Number of Employees	Percent of the Workforce
AFSCME	26	15%
COWPEA	15	9%
Teamsters	50	30%
LELS – Police Officers	29	18%
LELS – Police Sergeants	7	4%
IAFF – Firefighters	12	7%
IAFF – Fire Captains	6	4%
Non-Union	21	13%
Total	166	100%

The subjects that agreed to participate in this study ranged in age from 24 to 65.

Table 3 provides a breakdown of each age range of the subject population and percent of the workforce they account for in the survey.

Table 3

*Distribution of the City's Total Workforce Ages*

Age Range	Total Number of Employees	Percent of Workforce
24-35	46	28%
36-45	33	20%
46-55	57	34%
56-65	30	18%
Total	166	100%

## **Instrumentation**

The instrument used was a survey tool consisting of six questions constructed by the researcher to gather the necessary data to answer the research question. The survey was available primarily electronic with the option to have a printed copy of the survey if the participant did not have access to a computer or smartphone.

The survey included four demographic characteristic questions that asked the respondents to identify their age range, years of employment, last time they received a performance evaluation and union affiliation. Participants were asked to identify reasons they believed performance evaluations were beneficial and unbeneficial. Both questions included six possible response from the participant. Participants could select multiple responses to each question. The answer options on the survey to all the questions were all close-ended questions in which they could select the answer that most accurately reflected them. To determine the most impactful answer options to each question, the answers were drawn from the researcher's readings, literature reviews and other professional studies.

The survey tool was validated by the City Manager and Human Resources Coordinator who reviewed the survey tool and questions prior to distribution to the participants. Furthermore, the survey tool was also reviewed by Dr. Richard Herling, an experienced developer of research studies and data collection tools.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

For purposes of this research and to keep responses anonymous, respondent data was collected via a survey which could be taken electronically through Qualtrics or via a printed paper copy. Employees could request a copy of the survey in paper-form via in person request, phone or email. Respondents were instructed to return the completed survey in a seal envelope

via interoffice mail to ensure responses remained anonymous. The initial email and a follow up reminder was sent to all full-time City staff in March 2018. The email was sent as a request to all employees but not as a requirement. Employees were notified in the initial notification that their responses would remain anonymous and that the research was for the researcher's scholarly studies. A copy of the initial notification email was posted at each work location. For employees who wanted to participate via a printed copy of the survey, copies were available for pick up in the City Manager's office. Employees were asked to complete the survey within one week of the initial email requesting participation. It was anticipated that the employees would not spend more than 5 minutes completing the survey.

The researcher obtain permission to send the survey from the City Manager and sent to all full-time employees of the City with the following established understanding that the research would be kept anonymous, employees were told the time commitment needed to complete the survey prior to starting, the research obtained an informed consent and explained the participants rights by agreeing to participate in the survey and the research established a deadline to complete the survey.

After the survey was sent, the data collection phase began. During the data collection phase, if asked questions, the researcher would remain neutral to any feedback or responses received from the participants. After the responses were collected, the data is analyzed using tools available in Qualtrics.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected in the survey was analyzed by comparing the total respondents by breaking down the results into a percentage. The raw data from Qualtrics was downloaded to Microsoft Excel to form a table that compared the data and formulas were used to determine the

percent of participants per each response option for each question. The data generated allowed for comparative distributions based on years of employment, age, and union affiliation. The data showed patterns and anomalies in the self-identified perceived beneficial factors and non-beneficial factors based on the demographic identifiers. Furthermore, the data analyzed also indicated if an employee who has not had a performance evaluation for a certain time range still finds value in performance evaluations.

## **Chapter IV: Results**

The purpose of this study was to determine, before the new performance evaluation tool and process was fully implemented, what the general perception and beliefs of the City's employees were regarding the changes being made to individual performance evaluations; and if there were any differences in perceptions between the different groups that comprised the City's workforce. The question used to guide the study was: what are the perceptions of the City's employees regarding the new performance evaluation procedures being implemented for the first time in 2018?

Because the City's workforce is comprised of many different sub-groups as related to the type of services the City provides, and because both the performance evaluation tool and the process was changed, the following additional questions were used to better understand the perceptions of the City's employees:

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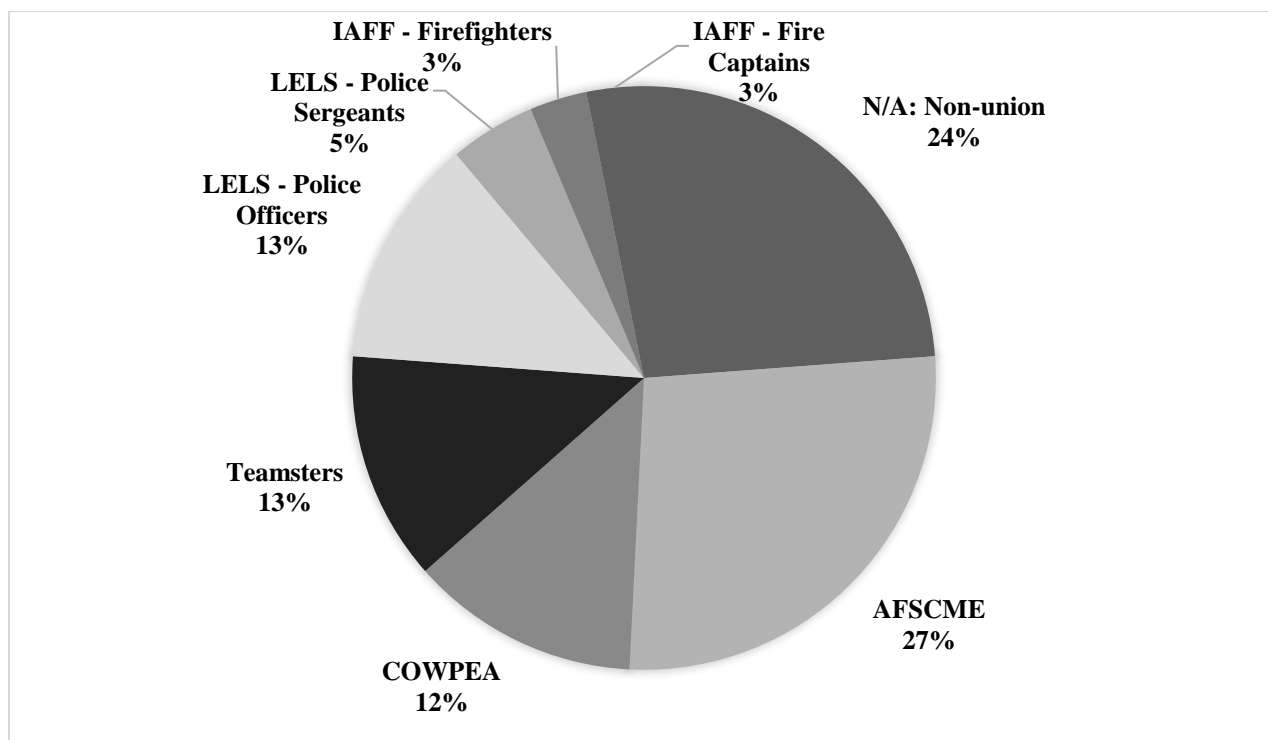
### **Data Analysis**

The instrument used was a survey tool consisting of six questions constructed by the researcher to gather the necessary data to answer the research question. The survey was available primarily electronic with the option to have a printed copy of the survey if the participant did not have access to a computer or smartphone. The survey included four demographic characteristic

questions that asked the respondents to identify their age, years of employment, last time they received a performance evaluation and union affiliation. The survey was distributed to 166 full-time regular employees with the City. Of the 166 eligible to participate in the survey, 63 employees completed the survey which accounted for roughly 38% of the full-time workforce. The survey tool consisted of six questions and the first four questions were used to collect demographic information from the respondents.

The majority of the City's workforce are represented by seven different unions. The first question of the survey asked participants to identify which union they were affiliated with to determine if there were significant differences in the respondent's perceptions of the new performance evaluation process based on group affiliation. Participants self-identified if they were represented by a union, and which one of the seven unions they were a member of: N/A: Non-union; AFSCME; COWPEA; Teamsters; LELS – Police Officers; LELS – Police Sergeants; IAFF – Firefighters; IAFF – Fire Captains.

Employees from each of the seven unions participated in the study. The union with the highest response rate was AFSCME, with 27% of participants being affiliated with that union. The lowest response to the study was by the IAFF – Firefighters and IAFF – Fire Captain each accounting for 3% of the study respondents. Roughly one fourth of the study respondents (24%) self-identified as non-union employees. The distribution of study respondents is summarized in Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* Distribution of study participants by union affiliation.

The second survey question asked the respondents to identify which age range they were fit within to determine demographic information for the study. The age ranges were selected based on the current age demographic of full-time regular employees of the City. To strive to keep the survey anonymous, age ranges were select. The highest response rate came from the 46-55-year-old range accounting for 33%. The lowest response rate came from the 56-65-year group accounting for 13%. The distribution of study respondents is summarized in Figure 2.

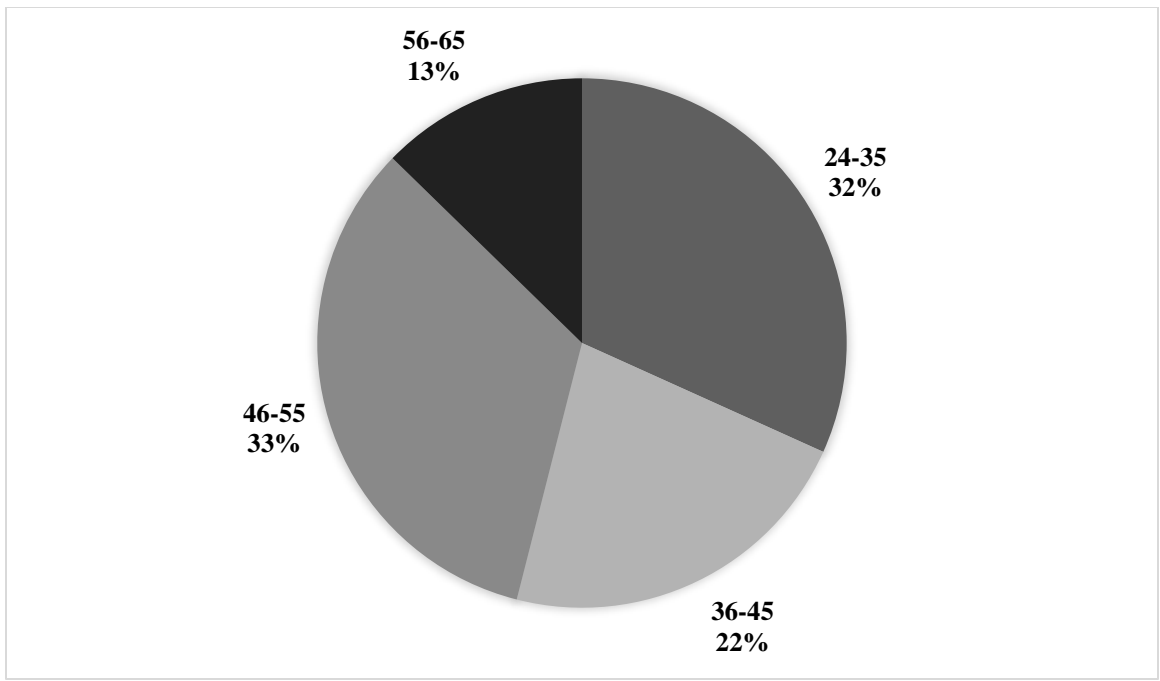
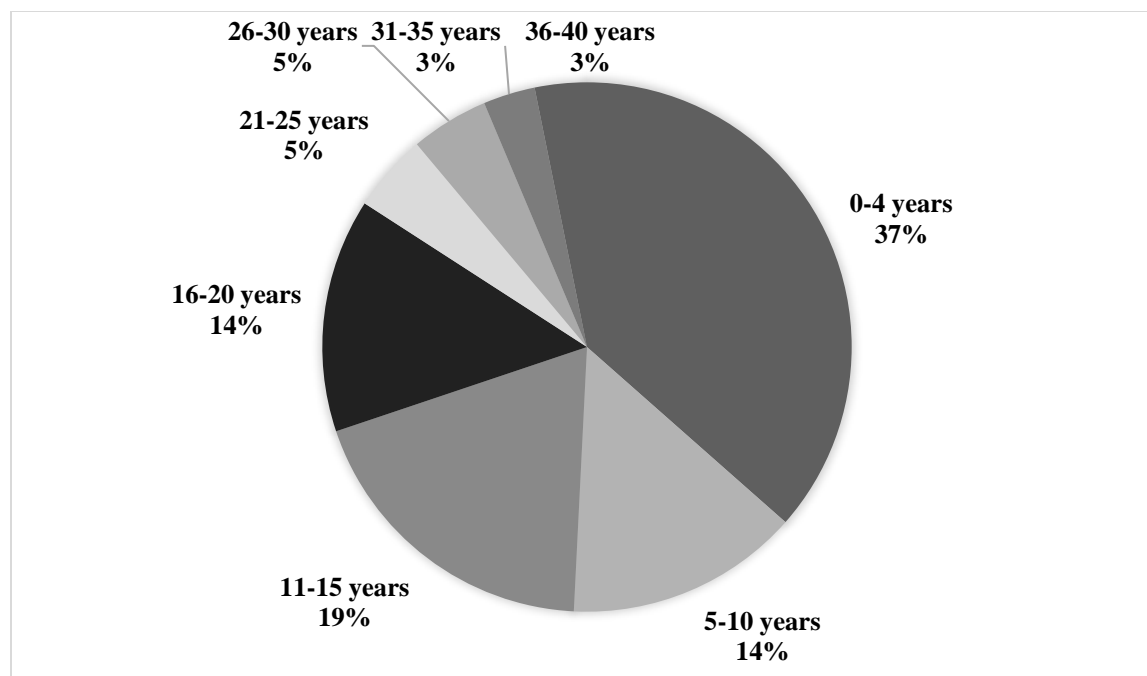


Figure 2. Distribution of study participants by age range.

The third survey question asked the respondents to identify how many years they have worked for the City to determine demographic information for the study. The years of service ranges were selected based on the current minimum and maximum years of service for full-time regular employees. The highest response rate came from employees with 0-4 years of service accounting for 38% of respondents. The lowest response rate came from employees with 36-40 years of service accounting for 1% of respondents. The distribution of study respondents is summarized in Figure 3.



*Figure 3.* Distribution of study participants by years of employment.

The fourth survey question asked the respondents to identify when their last performance evaluation was to determine demographic information for the study. Prior to 2018, employees were provided with performance evaluations after 6 months and one year in their position. After that, no formal performance evaluation was conducted. To determine when an employee last received a performance evaluation, the following ranges were provided: within 6 months; within 1 year; 2-5 years; 6-10 years and 11+ years. From the responses received, 29% of employees have received a performance evaluation within 6 months. Following closely behind, 24% of employees have received a performance evaluation within the last 2-5 years. However, for 14% of respondents, it has been 11 or more years since they have received a performance evaluation. The distribution of study respondents is summarized in Figure 4.

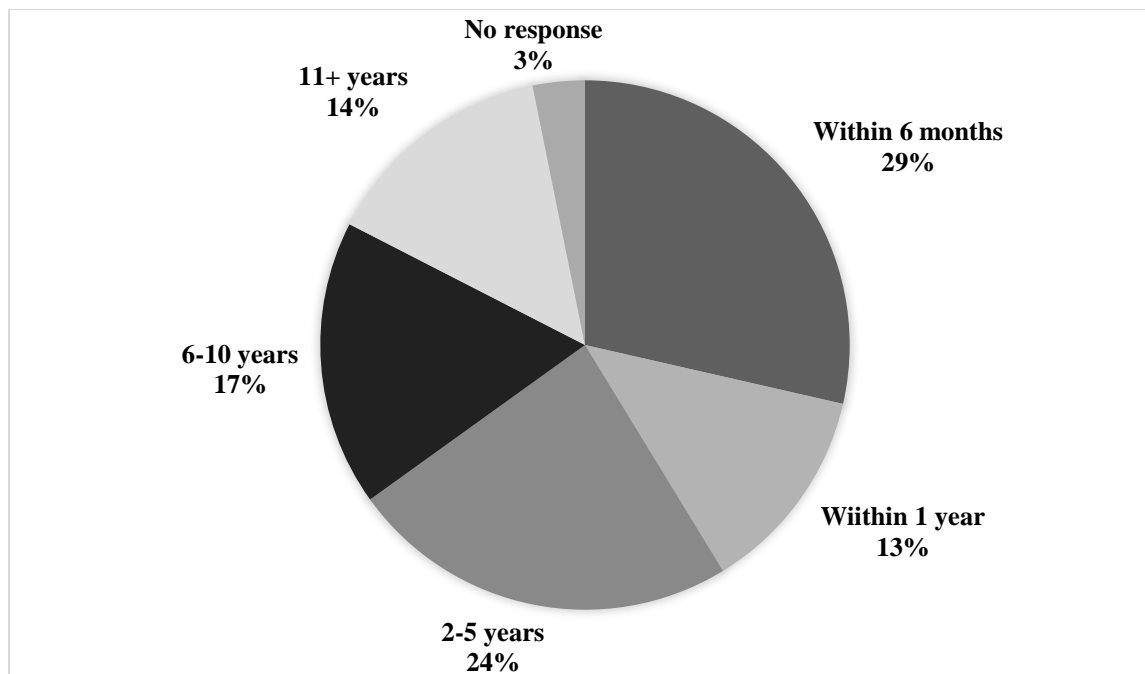


Figure 4. Distribution of study participants by years since the last performance evaluation.

The fifth survey question asked the respondents to identify ways they believe performance evaluations were beneficial to aid in the study. Participants had six options to choose from when identifying benefits of performance evaluations. Participants of the survey were able to select multiple answers to this question. Overall, 42 respondents felt that performance evaluations are beneficial because they track your strengths and weaknesses. The group who felt strongest about performance evaluations strengthening their communication with their supervisor was those 46-55 years old. Furthermore, respondents between the ages of 56-65 did not feel that performance evaluations indicted a feeling of being valued by their supervisor. Additionally, 26 respondents felt that performance evaluations are beneficial because they provided recognition for their performance. However, the employees who are between the ages of 56-65 did not agree, overall, with that statement as they had the lowest response rate for that survey option. In Table 4 the responses are tabulated based on the respondent's union affiliation. In Table 5, the responses are tabulated based on the respondents age range. The data is analyzed

in as union affiliation and age range to determine if demographic play a role in how beneficial performance evaluations are. The distribution of study respondents is summarized in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4

*Why Performance Evaluations are Beneficial by Union Affiliation*

		LELS - Police		IAFF -		N/A: Non-		Total		
		AFSCME	COWPEA	Teamsters	Officers	Sergeants	Firefighters		Captains	Union
In what ways do you believe performance evaluations are beneficial	Track your strengths and weaknesses	12	6	5	5	1	1	1	11	42
	Better communication with your supervisor	9	4	4	4	2	0	0	10	33
	Provides you with structure and a process for planning your goals for the upcoming year	7	3	2	4	1	1	1	9	28
	You feel valued by your supervisor	6	2	4	5	1	0	1	7	26
	Provides you with recognition for your performance	6	2	5	4	1	0	1	7	26
	They motivate you to continue performing well or make improvements to your performance	7	3	5	5	1	1	1	10	33
	<b>Total Respondents</b>									

Table 5

*Why Performance Evaluations are Beneficial by Age Range*

		24-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	Total Number of Responses	Percent of Respondents
		In what ways do you believe performance evaluations are beneficial?	Track your strengths and weaknesses	12	12	13	7
Better communication with your supervisor	9		7	14	3	33	17%
Provides you will structure and a process for planning goals for the upcoming year	10		8	8	3	29	15%
You feel valued by your supervisor	8		9	8	1	26	13%
Provides you with recognition for your performance	7		7	10	2	26	13%
They motivate you to continuing performing well or make improvements to your performance	11		10	10	4	35	18%
						193	100%

The sixth survey question asked the respondents to identify ways they believe performance evaluations were unbeneficial to aid in the study. Participants had six options to



Table 7

*Why Performance Evaluations are Unbeneficial by Age Range*

		24-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	Total Number of Responses	Percent of Respondents
In what ways do you believe performance evaluations are unbeneficial?	Responses on the performance evaluation from my supervisor are not genuine	3	4	4	0	11	22%
	Goals are unrealistic	0	0	0	0	0	0%
	I already have an open communication work environment with my supervisor	14	7	11	4	36	72%
	Performance evaluations waste time	0	0	0	1	1	2%
	Performance evaluations create a negative experience with your supervisor	0	0	1	0	1	2%
	My supervisor and I never see eye-to-eye on my performance	0	0	0	1	1	2%
						50	100%

## **Chapter V: Conclusion and Recommendations**

The purpose of this study was to determine, before the new performance evaluation tool and process was fully implemented, what the general perception and beliefs of the City's employees were regarding the changes being made to individual performance evaluations; and if there were any differences in perceptions between the different groups that comprised the City's workforce. The question used to guide the study was: what are the perceptions of the City's employees regarding the new performance evaluation procedures being implemented for the first time in 2018?

Because the City's workforce is comprised of many different sub-groups as related to the type of services the City provides, and because both the performance evaluation tool and the process was changed, the following additional questions were used to better understand the perceptions of the City's employees:

- In what ways do the employees believe the new performance evaluation system will be beneficial to them.
- In what ways do the employees believe the new performance evaluation system will be unbeneficial to them.
- Are there significant differences between the perceptions of the different sub-groups of the City's workforce regarding the new performance evaluation procedures?

### **Conclusions**

The study had three sub-questions, as stated earlier which drew the following conclusions. Participants as a whole felt strongly that performance evaluations will be beneficial in many ways but most highly chosen response was to track their strengths and weaknesses. Of the 57 responses to the questions, 44 participates, or 77%, selected that option. The response

between age ranges was relatively uniform as this was the highest response for all age ranges. Respondents also believed that performance evaluations will motivate them to continue performing well or make improvements to their performance. Of the 57 responses, 35 participants, or 61%, selected that option. Participants between the ages of 56-65 did not feel as strongly for this option as only four participants selected this option. Respondents between the ages of 46-55 felt the strongest that performance evaluations were beneficial because they provided employees with recognition for the performance whereas other age ranges did not feel this was a beneficial piece to performance evaluations. Respondents between the ages of 46-55, according to this study, are seeking recognition for their work and better communication with their supervisor whereas respondents between the ages of 24-35 want to track their strengths and weaknesses.

This research was conducted because the City recognized that performance evaluations were a shortcoming for every department and they wanted to develop a solution. A new performance evaluation was put into place in January 2018 with the goal that by the end of the calendar year, every employee will have had a performance evaluation and they will have a performance evaluation annual thereafter. As of the time the data was collected, 42% of employees had received a performance evaluation within one year. To ensure that the feedback supervisors are providing is thoughtful and genuine, the Human Resources Coordinator and the City Manager are reviewing all performance evaluations before they are given to the employee. This system will allow the City Manager to provide his feedback to the employee and review the feedback given. The performance evaluation form being used also includes an area for supervisors to set goals for the coming calendar year. For many employees, this is a way to help track their strengths and weaknesses and give employees tasks to work towards and accomplish.

Participants believed that performance evaluations, although they have their benefits, also have their shortcomings. Respondents felt strongly, across all age ranges that performance evaluations were unbeneficial because they already have an open communication work environment with their supervisor. This finding suggests to the City that they should look at this positively that 72% of respondents felt their performance isn't an annual conversation but rather an ongoing conversation so employees don't feel surprised and uncertain how their supervisor feels they are performing. However, 22% of respondents felt that responses on their performance evaluations were not genuine from their supervisor. Respondents between the ages of 56-65 feel the same as the other participants because none of them selected this response.

Another factor to consider with the responses from employee is that 55% of respondents have not had a performance evaluation within the last year. For 24% of respondents, it's been 2-5 years since their last performance evaluations and for 17% of respondents, it's been 6-10 years since their last performance evaluations.

### **Limitations**

Limitations the research included the cons that come with qualitative data. Limitations can also exist with data collection methods of a survey. Limitations could also include being impersonal. The survey distributed to participants was intended to remain anonymous. To keep it anonymous, respondents could take the survey electronically and for those without email and computer access, they were given the option to complete a paper copy of the survey and return in a sealed envelope. Another limitation could be the lack of detailed responses due to the close-ended questions. Respondents were not given the option to write-in their own responses to questions which limited the amount of detail the researcher could gain from responses. Furthermore, the wording of the questions could create bias with the respondents. Finally, with

any research, the response rate is unknown and could be low resulting in an uneven distribution of responses from one union or age range.

### **Implications**

The research findings from the analysis of the research questions help to determine the possible benefits of performance evaluations and the reasons why employees may feel like performance evaluations are not beneficial. The findings of this research have several implications for the City. Employees who participated in the survey are now expecting a performance evaluation annually. Should the City, as its done in the past, not continue with performance evaluations annually, employees may begin to find more reasons to deem performance evaluations as unbeneficial.

One can assume that employees want to feel as if their voices are being heard and their reasoning behind performance evaluations being unbeneficial be rectified. The City does have actions in place to ensure that performance evaluations are impactful by having multiple members of leadership (i.e. City Manager, Human Resources Coordinator and Department Head) review the performance evaluation before it is presented to the employee. Should the employees still feel that their opinions were not heard or that performance evaluations are deemed unbeneficial by their supervisors, more employees may start to feel that they are not genuine or important to their performance and relationship with their supervisor.

### **Recommendations**

Based on findings through this research, recommendations for the City going forward would be: continue with the open communication between employees and their supervisors, provide an annual performance evaluation to all employees and provide genuine, thoughtful commentary on all performance evaluations to ensure that employees strengths and weaknesses

are being evaluated. A strength of the City and its supervisor/employee relationship is communication. Many respondents felt that they already had open communication with their supervisor and this would result in performance evaluations being unbeneficial. Contrary to that belief, this is a strength. The annual performance evaluation is the formal check-in with employees, but the true goal of a performance evaluation should be that their performance is documented and goals are set for the upcoming performance period. Ongoing conversations should already be happening between supervisors and employees to ensure that there are no surprises or misunderstanding with their performance. It is recommended that this same study be repeated in one year to see if progressive changes have been made to conduct annual performance evaluations and to determine if employee satisfaction increases.

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