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Performance Management Goal Setting Quick Start Guide

Introduction

City Colleges of Chicago is committed to cultivating a culture of clarity, accountability, and excellence; where expectations are clear, performance conversations are fair, and growth is supported at every level of the organization. To support this commitment, we are sharing the CCC Performance Goals – Manager Quick Guide & Employee SMART Goal Bank, a practical resource designed to help managers and employees develop clear, measurable performance goals aligned to CCC's 12 Performance Competencies.

When performance goals are thoughtfully aligned to these competencies, they strengthen coaching conversations, reduce ambiguity in performance expectations, and promote consistency and equity in evaluation across the district. This resource is organized into two parts:

- ❑ **Part A: Manager Quick Guide** provides supervisors with a concise reference for reviewing, coaching, and evaluating performance goals using SMART criteria. It is intended to support productive goal-setting discussions and shared understanding of what strong performance looks like.
- ❑ **Part B: Employee SMART Goal Bank** offers employees a menu of pre-aligned SMART goal options connected to each performance competency. Employees are encouraged to select and tailor goals that reflect their role, responsibilities, and development priorities, in consultation with their manager.
- ❑ An appendix with competency definitions and descriptors is also included.

Managers will partner with employees to ensure goals are appropriately scoped, measurable, and aligned to departmental and institutional priorities.

Together, these tools are designed to:

- ❑ Promote consistency and fairness in goal setting.
- ❑ Strengthen coaching-based performance management.
- ❑ Reinforce CCC's standards of excellence.
- ❑ Support individual growth while advancing our shared mission.

Thank you for your continued commitment to excellence, accountability, and student-centered service. If you have questions or need support, please contact your manager or the Office of Human Resources.

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Section One: Introduction

1.1 Manager Quick Guide

Setting SMART Performance Goals Aligned to CCC's 12 Performance Competencies

Why This Matters (Manager Lens)

CCC's performance competencies define *how* work gets done; not just *what* gets done. Strong goals:

- Reinforce standards of excellence.
- Improve clarity and fairness.
- Reduce rework and reactive supervision.
- Support coaching-based performance conversations.

The 3 Rules of Strong Competency-Aligned Goals

1. One goal = One primary competency

Goals may involve overlapping competencies, but anchoring to one competency ensures clarity and fair evaluation.

2. Behavior + Result + Evidence

Every goal should answer:

- What will I DO differently?** (behavior)
- What will change as a result?** (outcome)
- How will we know?** (evidence)

3. SMART ≠ Complicated

Smart goals should not be overly complicated. Good goals are clear enough that two different supervisors would rate them the same way.

What Managers Should Look For (Quick Checklist)



To ensure that the performance goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound, they must follow the SMART criteria:

- Specific** deliverable or action
- Measurable** outcome that can be reviewed
- Attainable** scope for the employee's role
- Relevant** to CCC's mission and/or goals
- Time-bound** or timeline with an end date

The following page includes a worksheet to help you ensure your performance goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

1.2 SMART GOAL WORKSHEET

INITIAL GOAL	<p>Write the goal that you have in mind.</p>
S	<p>What do you want to accomplish? Who needs to be included? When do you want to do this? Why is this a goal?</p> <p><i>Use action verbs and avoid vague language.</i></p>
M	<p>How can you measure progress and know if you've met your goal?</p>
A	<p>Do you have the skills required to achieve the goal? If not, can you obtain them? Is it within your control? Is the amount of effort required on par with what the goal will achieve?</p>
R	<p>Why am I setting this goal now? Is it aligned with our overall objectives (CCC strategic objective, 55 for All equity goal, other department-level goal)?</p>
T	<p>What's the deadline and is it realistic?</p>
FINAL SMART GOAL	<p>Review your answers above and craft a new goal statement based on them.</p>

1.3 Coaching Tips



If goals are tied to competencies, feedback from managers can be more specific and actionable. Instead of general or subjective comments, feedback can focus on how well the employee has met the specific competencies that align with their goals.

This helps employees understand what they need to improve and how they can achieve their objectives.

Use these sample coaching prompts to help employees anchor the goal to the right CCC competency and align the goal to the SMART goal criteria. *You may not need to coaching assistance for each stage. This section is designed to provide guidance if you experience challenges selecting or refining goals.*

Detailed Coaching Prompts by Goal-Building Stage

Stage 1: Clarifying the COMPETENCY (Alignment First)

Use these prompts to help employees anchor the goal to the *right* CCC competency.

1. “Which CCC competency best represents how you’re being asked to show up differently?”
2. “If this goal were successful, which competency would your manager say you demonstrated more strongly?”
3. “Are you strengthening a skill, a behavior, or an impact related to this competency?”

Manager Tip: Ensure the employee can name the competency and describe it in plain language.

Stage 2: Making the Goal SPECIFIC (From Vague to Concrete)

Use these prompts to move from intention to action.

1. “What will you do more, less, or differently as a result of this goal?”
2. “If I observed your work for 30 days, what would I see that’s new or improved?”
3. “What part of your role does this goal directly apply to?”

Manager tip: Ensure the goal focuses on an action the employee controls.

Stage 3: Strengthening the MEASURE (What Evidence Looks Like)

Use these prompts to clarify measurability without over-engineering.

1. “How would someone else know this was done well?”
2. “What would you save, submit, or point to at the end of the cycle?”
3. “What changed because of this effort; quality, clarity, speed, experience, or outcomes?”

Manager tip: Ensure the goal produces an artifact, metric, or observable outcome.

Stage 4: Checking ACHIEVABILITY (Right-Sized for Role & Bandwidth)

Use these prompts to prevent over-scoping or inequitable expectations.

1. “Is this something fully within your control, or does it need reframing?”
2. “Given your role and workload, is this reasonable within this cycle?”
3. “Would this feel achievable if priorities shift mid-cycle?”

Manager tip: Ensure the goal stretches performance without creating hidden pressure.

Stage 5: Ensuring RELEVANCE (Connecting to Mission & Priorities)

Use these prompts to connect goals to CCC’s mission and team objectives.

1. “How does this support students, stakeholders, or the college community?”
2. “Which team or institutional priority does this advance?”
3. “If this goal were removed, what would we lose?”

Manager signal: Ensure the goal clearly contributes to something larger than the task itself.

Stage 6: Tightening the TIMEFRAME (Avoiding Open-Ended Goals)

Use these prompts to add urgency and closure.

- “When will we know this goal is complete?”
- “What’s a meaningful checkpoint before the end date?”
- “Is there a natural milestone we can anchor this to?”

Manager tip: Ensure the goal has a clear end date and review moment.

Things to look out for: (When to Revise a Goal)

Use these coaching prompts if the goals are not SMART aligned.

1. "Could this goal be interpreted in multiple ways?"
2. "Is this measuring effort instead of impact?"
3. "Would two managers assess this the same way?"
4. "Is this really a goal, or just a general expectation?"

Managers can use these prompts to ensure employee goals aren't just "tasks," but are drivers of professional growth and institutional impact.

Competency	Ask the Employee...
Ownership and Quality of Work	"If this goal hits a roadblock, what is your plan to maintain ownership and responsibility rather than waiting for direction?"
Growth Mindset	"What is the specific 'stretch' in this goal? What new skill will you need to develop to achieve this action or goal?"
Mission-Driven (Alignment)	"How does completing this specific task directly improve the student experience or contribute to our '55 For All' target?"
Continuous Improvement	"Once this is complete, how will we check the results to forecast a better process for next time?"
Collaboration For Impact	"Who else needs to be on board for this to succeed? How are you planning to connect rather than just direct?"
Leadership (General)	"How does this goal move you from being an individual contributor in your current role to a leader?"

Examples of Strong Evidence

- Work products (documents, decks, Standard Operating Procedures)
- Meeting agendas or notes
- Before and after comparisons
- Stakeholder or team feedback
- Tracking logs or dashboards

Section Two: Example SMART Goal Bank

This bank of sample competency aligned goals can be applied to roles across the district and colleges.

CORE COMPETENCIES (All Employees)

1. Collaboration for Impact

- Contribute to a cross-functional project and deliver one documented improvement by December 30, 2026.
- Improve collaboration by clarifying roles, communication, or handoffs and document outcomes.

2. Cultural Humility & Equity Mindset

- Strengthen my equity-minded practice by completing one CCC-approved equity or cultural humility learning experience and applying the learning by making at least two concrete changes to how I design, communicate, or deliver my work, with outcomes documented and shared with my manager by December 30, 2026.
- Identify one existing process, practice, or communication within my scope that may create barriers for certain students or stakeholders, gather input from at least 3 impacted users or partners, and implement one equity-informed improvement, documenting the change and its intended impact. by December 30, 2026.

3. Growth Mindset

- Complete 2 learning activities and pilot one new skill or tool for 30 days.
- Apply feedback or learning to improve quality, efficiency, or confidence in key responsibilities and report out at monthly manager check-ins.

4. Mission Driven

- Explicitly connect work to CCC's mission in major deliverables and confirm alignment with stakeholders for each collaborative project.
- Participate in two initiatives that directly support student or community experience by the end of Fall 2026.

5. Ownership & Quality of Work

- Reduce revisions or errors by 20% using a self-review or quality checklist by September 30, 2026.
- Improve reliability by consistently meeting timelines and standards; report out monthly.

6. Student / Stakeholder Orientation

- Collect feedback from at least stakeholders and implement one improvement on your next project.
- Improve service clarity, responsiveness, or satisfaction in one area of responsibility by the end of Fall 2026.

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES (People Managers / Project Leads)

7. Continuous-Improvement Minded

- Lead one continuous improvement cycle that measurably improves efficiency or quality by June 30, 2027.

8. Decision-Making

- Use a consistent decision framework for 5 major decisions and reduce turnaround time.

9. Develops & Motivates Others

- Hold monthly development-focused 1:1s and document one growth outcome per employee.

10. Emotional Awareness

- Intentionally apply emotional awareness practices during challenging or high-stakes interactions by pausing to assess my emotional response, choosing a regulated leadership response, and documenting at least 6 instances where this approach reduced tension, improved clarity, or supported productive outcomes.

11. Leads with Vision

- ❑ Publish and reinforce a clear team vision and priorities, achieving **80% clarity** via pulse.

12. Results-Driven & Strategic Resource Management

Deliver 3 priority outcomes on time while identifying 2 efficiency gains: report at end year 2026 cabinet reflection meeting.

Universal SMART Goal Template

By (date), I will (specific action) to achieve (measurable result). Success will be demonstrated by (evidence).

Appendix: Competency Definitions

List of CCC Performance Competencies

A competency is a skill or capability needed to perform a job well. Competencies are workplace behaviors that can be observed, measured, supported, and developed.

Core Competencies: Core Competencies are necessary for everyone district-wide regardless of their role.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration for Impact	<input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Humility & Equity Mindset	<input type="checkbox"/> Growth Mindset
<input type="checkbox"/> Mission Driven	<input type="checkbox"/> Ownership and Quality of Work	<input type="checkbox"/> Student/Stakeholder Orientation
Leadership Competencies: Leadership Competencies are necessary for positions of greater leadership like those involving managing people or oversight of complex functions.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Continuous-Improvement Minded	<input type="checkbox"/> Decision-making	<input type="checkbox"/> Develops and Motivates Others
<input type="checkbox"/> Emotional Awareness	<input type="checkbox"/> Leads with Vision	<input type="checkbox"/> Results-driven and Strategic Resource Management



Core Competencies

Collaboration for Impact

- **Definition:** Work effectively with colleagues and other stakeholders toward a common goal or to solve a problem.
- **Descriptors:**
 - Uses effective written and oral communication with internal staff, teams, and community served; demonstrates empathy and listening.
 - Conveys oral and written communication for various stakeholders in a concise, clear, and professional manner.
 - Participates in meetings, contributing where appropriate.
 - Focuses on accomplishing team goal, rather than a personal agenda.
 - Actively participates as a team member and shows willingness to contribute and be open to feedback.
 - Demonstrates active listening and responds in a manner that enhances mutual understanding.

Cultural Humility & Equity Mindset

- **Definition:** Demonstrates the values of diversity and inclusion. Fosters an inclusive environment.
- **Descriptors:**
 - Understands and is committed to goals of equity. Consistently centers equity in one's work.
 - Ability to articulate commitment to and advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.
 - Embraces and encourages diversity of individuals and perspectives.
 - Displays and provides intentional cultural sensitivity in alignment with mission and core values.
 - Understands and identifies potential biases and works collaboratively to resolve.
 - Supports a learning and working environment that is collegial, respectful, and professional for all students, faculty, and staff.

Growth Mindset

- **Definition:** Views growth as important for personal and professional development; seeks out opportunities to expand skills, even if change is required; demonstrates curiosity and eagerness to learn.
- **Descriptors:**
 - Actively supports organizational change.
 - Uses new information and experiences to identify opportunities to adjust work and/or professional style.
 - Open to discussing opportunities to learn from challenging or new situations; seeks help when needed.
 - Often thinks about ways to perform duties more effectively.
 - Shares information with others that can broaden learning and influence their work.

Mission-Driven

- **Definition:** Demonstrates commitment to the mission of the organization and alignment with core values.
- **Descriptors:**
 - Consistently acts in alignment with our mission, vision, and core values.
 - Understands how our mission impacts their role and how their role impacts the mission.
 - Uses a "one organization" mindset when tackling challenges and differences.
 - Proactively seeks to serve students and understand their unique, individual needs.
 - Uses the mission, vision, and core values to motivate and inspire their team.

Ownership and Quality of Work

- **Definition:** Effectively manages own work, and work of teams when relevant, ensuring delivery of high-quality work.
- **Descriptors:**
 - Responsive to supervisors, colleagues, students, and other stakeholders.
 - Tries alternative approaches when faced with obstacles and setbacks.
 - Acknowledges and learns from mistakes without blaming others.
 - Understands the impact of their work contributions to advancing goals and objectives.
 - Demonstrates consistent track record of being prepared and accountable for delivering work product on time.

Student/Stakeholder Orientation

- **Definition:** Recognizes needs of diverse stakeholders and students and demonstrates the ability to anticipate and respond to their needs.
- **Descriptors:**
 - Communicates with all students and/or stakeholders professionally and respectfully.
 - Understands cultural context of student and/or population.
 - Prioritizes the needs of students and/or stakeholders as key factor when making decisions.
 - Proactively asks questions of students and stakeholders to find ways to improve service.
 - Provides students and stakeholders access to organizational resources.

Leadership Competencies

Continuous Improvement Minded

- **Definition:** Identifies improvement opportunities & possible solutions with program/department in consideration of personnel and non-personnel resources.
- **Descriptors:**
 - Asks questions and identifies opportunities in program/department; gathers relevant information to recommend an improvement.
 - Effectively gathers input from stakeholders when appropriate and incorporates diverse perspectives while considering possible barriers and solutions and measures of success.
 - Embraces constructive feedback and improvement as an opportunity for growth and learning.
 - Effectively communicates and collaborates with others.
 - Executes improvement plans with limited obstacles and supportive stakeholder buy-in.

Decision-Making

- **Definition:** Thoroughly analyze relevant information to facilitate decision-making to effectively and responsibly improve processes and procedures.
- **Descriptors:**
 - Identifies when to own the decision and when to include others.
 - Promptly and thoroughly analyze relevant information before making decisions.
 - Makes necessary decisions in a timely manner even when information is limited or unclear.
 - Considers implications of decisions and demonstrates follow-through.
 - Considers both the long-term strategic direction and short-term outcomes of decisions.

Develops & Motivates Others

- **Definition:** Motivates others and supports their development through strong coaching.
- **Descriptors:**
 - Clearly communicates performance expectations and provides fair, actionable, and timely performance feedback.
 - Recognizes exemplary performance. Looks for positive attributes and concretely reinforces them.
 - Effectively addresses marginal and unsatisfactory performance.
 - Looks for positive attributes and concretely reinforces them, promoting confidence and optimistic attitudes.
 - Uses a range of tools and tactics to promote staff development.

Emotional Awareness

- **Definition:** Understands emotions of self and others; and responds with empathy.
- **Descriptors:**
 - Maintains consistent, positive attitude even when context is challenging.
 - Self-reflects and knows when and how to process and express own emotions.
 - Identifies and responds to underlying attitudes such as personality differences and cultural norms.
 - Emotional responses are consistent and transparent.
 - Shows emotional resilience to stress or setbacks.

Leads with Vision

- **Definition:** Effectively communicates, supports, and executes the overall vision. Ability to inspire others by building a culture of trust and accountability.
- **Descriptors:**
 - Understands the big picture of the organization and comes up with new ideas for achieving goals and vision.
 - Creates and communicates inspired vision/purpose throughout organization.
 - Sets clear, meaningful, challenging, & attainable group goals and expectations that are aligned with those of the organization.
 - Ability to forecast future needs and devises plans to meet those needs.
 - Translates the vision for a department into clear strategies.

Results-Driven & Strategic Resource Management

- **Definition:** Develops, implements, and/or executes strategic plans and decisions to achieve intended results within established financial and organizational parameters.
- **Descriptors:**
 - Guides clear decision-making processes and communicates effect of program/department's strategy on organization's financials and impact overall and gets necessary input to support actions as needed.
 - Creates new ideas and processes to address complex problems.
 - Takes initiative to map out clear plans and mitigate against risks.
 - Responsibly and effectively manages and allocates budget in a high-impact way within a program/department.
 - Participates in informing district-wide responses to changes in the external and internal environment.