Richardson Police Department
Competency-Based Appraisal Manual

Introduction

This manual and the competencies that accompany it is the result of a long and comprehensive process undertaken to increase the relevance and applicability of the Richardson Police Department's appraisal system. At the time this process was developed, numerous interviews, focus groups and surveys were conducted with command staff, managers, field supervisors, support staff, civilian employees, and officers in the department. This process led to development of core competencies and unit-specific competencies for appraisal purposes. Changes to both the appraisal instrument itself and the process of conducting appraisals were initiated as the result of this research process and revision of the appraisal instruments. At the core of this change is the philosophy that the appraisal process is a learning process first and should be used to both reward exemplary performance and correct inadequate or unacceptable performance. Additionally, this process seeks to be more reflective of the modern mission of a police department and increase the professionalism and performance of all the officers and civilians employed in the Richardson Police Department. The following forms were developed for use in the appraisal process:

- **Core Competencies for All Personnel**
- **Patrol Addendum (Patrol officers only)**
- **Investigations Addendum (all sworn investigators)**
- **Communications Addendum**
- **Detention Addendum**
- **Support Addendum (Crime Scene, Planner, Property and Evidence, Purchasing, Records, Secretaries, and Training)**
- **Special Units Addendum (Crime Prevention and School Resource)**
- **Supervisors Addendum (All sworn and civilian supervisors)**

The Core Competencies for all personnel contains 15 core competencies developed during the research process. Each addendum contains an additional 5 competencies unique to each designation for a total of 20 competencies. As such, 75% of the appraisal is based on competencies that cut across the organization and reflect the core values of the Richardson Police Department. The competencies in the Addenda reflect the unique skills and requisite competencies for specialized positions within the organization. The addenda were developed with two primary guiding principles, pragmatism and functionality. The addenda are pragmatic in that they are limited to a small number as there is a need for command staff to be able to review them expeditiously and without numerous additional forms. They are functional in that each addendum describes a completely different skill set based on the functions of the unit(s) being assessed in the addendum.

Competencies

This section describes the process through which the competencies were established and describes the competencies themselves. A full definition with indicators and measurement is contained in each unit-specific addendum. The competencies were developed through a process starting with interviews of key personnel and command staff. They were asked to identify the characteristics that were important to assess for all personnel in the department. Subsequently, focus groups were conducted with personnel from all of the divisions and units in the department. The focus groups were asked to come to the meetings with ideas concerning how personnel in their unit or division should be evaluated and ideas for indicators and competencies. For the purposes of the focus groups, competencies were defined as skills that should be considered as requisites to perform a specific job or function. In essence, a competency is a core skill or performance standard that is necessary for the adequate performance of a given job assignment. There are some competencies that cut across job descriptions and should be part of any person's requisite skills. Other competencies are unique to a given job function or area of the department. In the appraisal process, the fundamental criterion for appraisal is the level of competency, or lack thereof, displayed by each person in the performance of their jobs. The members of the focus groups were then asked the following questions:

- Given this definition, what do you believe are the core competencies that should be part of everyone's job description?
- How do you think these core competencies should be measured? In other words, what criteria should be used to assess a person's level of competency for each of the core competencies you identified?
- What competencies are unique to your specific job description?
- How should these unique competencies be measured?
- What do you believe are the primary issues and problems with conducting appraisals using the competency framework?
- How can these issues be overcome?
- What type of rating system or numeric appraisal system do you believe would be fit this type of competency framework?

Results from the focus groups were used to develop a comprehensive organizational survey that assessed the problems and issues with the prior appraisal system and other organizational issues. Survey results clearly indicated that personnel in the organization wanted a comprehensive appraisal process that had real meaning tied to reward systems in the department. Finally, follow-up interviews were conducted with key personnel and command staff to discuss the results of the survey and to validate findings from the research process to that point. It was at this stage that the core competencies and unit-specific competencies were developed and described. Well over 300 variables and statements were submitted to the researchers concerning what to measure as a competency. The list was collated and entered into a spreadsheet and then subjected to a process of combining similar variables into categories. Over time, 15 core competencies were developed that subsumed and categorized the more than 300 variables collected during the research process. Subsequently, unit-specific competencies were developed as well. The core competencies developed included:

- **Problem-Solving Skills**
- **Communication Skills**
- **Interaction and Interpersonal Skills**
- **Attitude**
- **Decision-Making Ability**
- **Motivation**
- **Documentation Skills**
- **Dependability**
- **Professionalism**
- **Technical Competency**
- **Customer Service**
- **Ability to Multitask**
- **Knowledge**
- **Leadership**
- **Organizational Skills**

In order to reflect the diversity of job functions and the various organizational units in the department, a separate process was used to determine the competencies for individual job functions and units. The organization was examined and it was determined that seven unique job functions needed to be separated and competencies developed. Focus groups were conducted with commanders, officers, and civilians from each of the units and functions described below. A process similar to that employed in the development of the core competencies was used to develop unit-specific competencies listed below.

Patrol Addendum

- **Problem Interdiction Skills**
- **Specialized Tactical Skills**
- **Incident Response Skills**
- **Knowledge of Community and Community-Specific Problems**
- **Works within Legal Authority**

Investigations Addendum

- **Case Management**
- **Case Preparation**
- **Information Management**
- **Interviewing and Interrogation**
- **Application of Investigative Practices**

Communications Addendum

- **Telephone Skills**
- **CAD Skills**
- **Radio Skills**
- **Specialized Knowledge**
- **Specialized Equipment**

Detention Addendum

- **Restraint Tactics / Application of Use of Force Techniques**
- **Safety and Security Practices**
- **Prisoner Case Management**
- **Ability to Deal with Inmates**
- **Specialized Knowledge, Documentation, and Procedures**

Support Addendum

- **Specialized Knowledge**
- **Specialized Technical Competency / Special Equipment**
- **Service to the Department / Safety, Security, Confidentiality, and Discretion**
- **Teamwork, Networking, Information Management, and Coordination**
- **Self-Improvement / Ability to Work Independently**

Special Units Addendum

- **Public Relations**
- **Teaching, Education, Presentations, and Counseling**
- **Specialized Knowledge and Abilities**
- **Sensitivity to Special Constituencies**
- **Ability to Build Relationship and Trust in Community**

Supervisors Addendum

- **Strategic Thinking and Planning**
- **Management and Supervisory Skills**
- **Resource Allocation and Deployment**
- **Conflict Resolution Skills**
- **Situational Leadership**

Once these competencies were developed, the team set about defining and operationalizing (defining and determining indicators and measures) the competencies. This process included additional interviews, reviews of the material by key personnel, reviews of the material by command staff and supervisors, and additional feedback from all of the various units. As a result, a comprehensive list of indicators and measurements was established for all of the core and unit-specific competencies.

Indicators and Measurement

Determining what competencies to assess was only part of the process, defining the competencies, determining how to best measure and assess the competencies, and developing indicators of the competencies was the next step. In order to complete this process, the research team drafted initial definitions of each of the competencies and then circulated these definitions among the key groups mentioned previously for review and comment. Once the definitions were firmed up, we distributed the list of competencies to all of the unit supervisors and command staff in the department. Additionally, we conducted a training session with middle managers and upper administration to review the results of the research process to that point, overview the findings of the focus groups and organizational survey, and review the competencies. Each person in the training was asked to submit a list of indicators and discuss how they were going to measure each of the competencies developed. Once these lists were received, the researchers collated and combined the information into usable forms for the competencies.

In the process of measuring and assessing the competencies, the evaluator should view the definition of the item, examine the list of indicators, and determine, specifically, how they will go about assessing the competency. The list of indicators should not be viewed as a checklist. In fact, in many cases, a specific indicator may not apply at all to the person being evaluated. The indicator may only apply to certain units or certain groups of individuals. The evaluator should consciously examine the list of indicators of each of the core competencies to assess and determine which indicators specifically apply to their personnel and which indicators are more important than others for the purposes of the appraisal. As is described in the section below on the process, the evaluator should then meet with their personnel to discuss the appraisal process, the competencies, and how, specifically, they will be assessed in this framework. Each of the competencies is listed, defined, and operationalized. It should be noted that the competencies and this manual should be considered living documents subject to update and change with each successive appraisal process. In other words, over the course of using this process and these forms, additional information and clarification should occur that feeds back into the competencies and the appraisal process. The listing of indicators is not presented in a particular order, they are merely suggestions for measuring and determining a person's level of competency in a particular area.

Following the core competencies are the unit-specific competencies. Each of these forms was developed to specifically reflect the demands of a given unit or job assignment. Patrol, investigations, detention, and communications are all relatively self-explanatory in terms of why separate forms are necessary. Further, the job function differences between these units are clear. A separate form was generated to evaluate supervisors as their job responsibilities differ from line staff, but are consistent in terms of their function in the organization. There are a variety of other units that could have, conceivably, necessitated separate forms. However, generating a myriad of forms places an undue burden on the command staff to review multiple forms. In addition, while the measurements of competency undoubtedly will vary across these units, the underlying competency is similar. As such, support units and special units were combined into one form reflecting their mission while allowing for individuality in the measurement of the competencies. For supervisors, the five competencies are the same—however, the expectations and measurement of the competencies will vary depending on whether the person is a civilian supervisor, a sergeant, a lieutenant, or a captain. Similarly, the expectations of a support unit person are similar, but how the competency is measured in crime scene will be different than how it is measured in records or property. As such, the five competencies developed for support units are the same, but as will be clear the measurements of these competencies vary by unit. Nonetheless, this will allow comparability across support units by the administration.

Completing the Forms and Assessing Competencies

The point ranking system reflects five possible scores: Exemplary of Competency, Exceeds Established Competency, Meets Established Competency, Needs Improvement, and Unacceptable. These rankings are defined as follows:

- **Exemplary of Competency**—The person has demonstrated a complete understanding and comprehensive proficiency of the competency. Comparatively, the person clearly exceeds the performance of all others in this area and consistently demonstrates the highest level of proficiency and understanding. As such, this person is an example to others in this category and represents the highest standards of the department in this area.

- **Exceeds Established Competency**—Compared with others, this person exceeds what is normally expected in this area and demonstrates a consistently high level of proficiency in this area. The person goes beyond what is expected continually and represents the highest level of achievement in this area.
- **Meets Established Competency**—The person has demonstrated that they understand this area and have demonstrated through their actions or performance that they are doing what is expected in this area.
- **Needs Improvement**—The person is lacking in actions, performance, knowledge, or attitude the skills needed to perform at the expected level in this area. The person requires corrective action or training in this area to improve their level of competency. They can be lacking in this area due to inexperience, lack of training, the need for education, or some other correctable deficiency. Additionally, their performance in this area can simply be lower than others in a comparable situation.
- **Unacceptable**—The person has demonstrated through their actions or attitude a detrimental level of competency in this area that affects their job performance or the performance of others. They have clearly manifested apathy or indifference to improving and require substantial supervision in this area.

In assigning a particular score, the evaluator should be guided by the fact that the default score is Meets Established Competency. Any deviation either higher or lower requires additional justification and explanation. In the case of scoring higher, a justification and explanation for the higher score is necessary. In the case of scoring lower, a justification, explanation, and corrective action plan is necessary. The corrective action plan must include a date for completion of the plan and the parameters that the person will have to complete in order to correct the deficiency. These parameters can include, but are not limited to, additional training, additional education, loss of certain privileges, loss of the ability to work extra assignments, or any other corrective action deemed fit by the evaluator. Evaluators should also be guided by the philosophy that this process is designed to be learning-based and not punitive. In other words, evaluators should not be afraid to assign a rating of needs improvement when necessary. Self-improvement and organizational competency are the goals, not ranking employees or punishing singular events or people.

The scoring system in the prior system had resulted in scoring “compression,” with numerous personnel scoring in a very small window of scores. This had resulted in scores as small as .01 making a difference in the final ranking. This has lead to scoring competition and arguments over minimal differences in the end result. As such, the following scoring system is now adopted:

Exemplary:	**6.25**
Exceeds Expectations:	**5**
Meets Expectations:	**4.25**
Needs Improvement:	**3.5**
Unacceptable:	**2.25**

Under this system, a person who meets expectations in all categories receives a score of 85 which places a person in the middle category and translates to an overall “meets expectations” appraisal. This should not be viewed negatively by anyone as meeting all expectations means the person is consistently performing their job functions at expected levels. A full discussion of scoring is below, but the final score should not enter into the determination of any of the individual scores for a given competency. Each competency is assessed independently, without regard to other competencies or the final score in order to increase the focus on learning and developing competencies overall. In completing the forms, the evaluator should look to the indicators and determine precisely how they will measure each competency. This should not be shocking or unexpected to any of the personnel as the evaluator should actively share their thoughts with their personnel prior to the appraisal process ever beginning. The process of the appraisals is discussed in the next section.

The Appraisal Process

The appraisal process is critical for the development of staff, critical in providing information for promotions and merit raises, and critical in documenting and managing deficiencies. However, many view the appraisal process as a chore that must be completed. As such, the appraisal process must be clearly understood by all managers and employees, must be relatively easy to complete, and must be consistently applied to the greatest degree possible. The process of conducting appraisals is fraught with difficulties, yet this process can make the difference in perceptions of management and the department as a whole. There are several key goals that should be pursued in the appraisal process. First, the process must be viewed as fair and consistent by the employees and management of the department. Second, employees must take a vested interest in the process or else they will view it as independent of their performance. Third, management must enforce the rules of the process consistently and be prepared to send back inappropriately prepared appraisals to supervisors. Consistency across units, evaluators, and the organization as a whole determines perceptions of fairness and applicability. Finally, the appraisal process should move away from numerical comparisons and judgment to a system based more on learning and career development. All of these goals are contingent on communication between evaluators and their personnel and between management and the evaluators.

It is crucial that extensive and consistent communication be maintained between supervisors (evaluators) and their personnel (evaluees) throughout the appraisal process. Specifically, the process will not be effective if the evaluators do not clearly and consistently communicate their goals and objectives of the appraisal process to their evaluees. This means that the evaluators must clearly define for the person the competencies, the indicators and measurement of the competencies, and how the appraisal process will be conducted. In addition, evaluators must assure relative consistency across evaluators in both substance and process to achieve an equal and fair appraisal process.

Step 1: The employee being evaluated should prepare the professional development appraisal input form for their supervisor to start the appraisal process.

This procedure gives the employee a vested stake in the appraisal process from the outset. More importantly, it gives the supervisor valuable information and knowledge about the accomplishments of the employee over the appraisal period that might have been forgotten or overlooked. The form also helps when an individual has been supervised by numerous supervisors during the appraisal period. In essence, the employee starts the process by giving the supervisor necessary information that can be used to gauge the progress, or lack thereof, of the person being evaluated. The list can then be used in preparing comments about the person for the appraisal record. The evaluator should request from the person being evaluated relevant information regarding the accomplishments, training, incidents, workload, and any other pertinent information between the time of the last appraisal and this current appraisal. The information should be submitted with enough lead time such that the evaluator can incorporate and include the information in the current appraisal. The information should be submitted electronically so that the evaluator can incorporate it into the narrative section of the appraisal if desired. The evaluator should discuss with their personnel what types of information are relevant and appropriate with an eye towards helping them in appraisal process. The submission should be structured to reflect the 15 core competencies and the five unit-specific competencies. In other words, the person should submit information structured to reflect the 20 competencies upon which they are being evaluated. Again, communication with personnel is of paramount importance in developing their self-interest in the appraisal process.

Step 2: The supervisor prepares the appraisal instrument and documentation.

The appraisal instrument is based on the exception principle. That is, the default ranking for all categories is “Meets Established Competency” and any ranking besides “Meets Established Competency” is an exception and must be justified in writing. For example, if the ranking of “Exemplary of Competency” is given, documentation justifying the ranking would be provided. The ranking would not be given in cases where the employee is performing their duties as expected or even when they exceed expectations. Additionally, the idea would be that a “Exemplary of Competency” ranking is rarely given except in special cases where an employee consistently goes above and beyond and demonstrates the highest levels of professionalism. In cases where the ranking of “Unacceptable” is given, documentation must be provided concerning an action plan for correcting the noted deficiencies. This creates an

atmosphere of learning rather than confrontation if done correctly. In other words, the employee is given specific feedback concerning why the ranking was given and provided with instructions on how to overcome the deficiency. A follow-up report to the ranking would then be required at a time specified by the supervisor in the documentation. Once the documents are prepared, they will be submitted to the division commander/manager for review prior to the evaluator and employee meeting to discuss the appraisal. The evaluators should prepare their instruments with consistency across their employees in mind remembering that scores of “Exemplary of Competency” and “Unacceptable” should be given in the most extreme cases and circumstances.

The evaluator should complete the requisite form for each person being evaluated. Each competency has a description associated with it and several indices that can be used to make an assessment. These should not be used as a “checklist,” but rather as an overall guide to help the grader determine what is being measured. Additionally, not every item listed in a given competency will apply to every job, but every job consists of each of the competencies listed. A brief narrative (1 – 2 paragraphs maximum) should be completed on each person with any additional information the evaluator deems relevant. If the evaluator chooses to select either “Unacceptable” or “Exemplary of Competency”, they must provide additional documentation concerning the ranking. In the case of “Exemplary of Competency”, the evaluator must provide a justification and explanation of why that person deserves the ranking. In the case of an “Unacceptable” ranking, the evaluator must develop a corrective action plan detailing what the person needs to do to correct the ranking, a plan for following up on the ranking in the near future, and a follow- up report concerning the results of the corrective action. All of the documentation needs to be discussed and reviewed with the person being evaluated. The corrective action should be conducted in the spirit of developing the person and in an open learning environment. Undoubtedly, there will be confusion and resistance in this process from time-to-time. The best way to overcome this is to clearly communicate
the goals and needs of the appraisal process to the personnel of the department and assure that the process is transparent. Clear understanding of the process and a transparent process will lead to increased buy-in from the personnel of the department and less conflict over appraisals generally.

Step 3: Division commander/manager reviews the appraisals and returns them to the evaluators for dissemination to employees.

Upon completion of all of the appraisal forms and narratives, the evaluator will submit all of their appraisals for review and approval by the upper administration of the department. Once the forms are approved, the evaluator will meet with each person that was evaluated to discuss their appraisal and any corrective action that might be necessary. This step allows the upper administration to review all the appraisals prior to dissemination to the employees to check for consistency among evaluators and for inappropriate documentation supporting the given rankings. This also allows for upper administrators to ensure consistency across raters thus reducing claims of “evaluator inconsistency.” This step will also have the effect of allowing the upper command to “evaluate the evaluators” on how they are implementing the new process and how well or poorly they are conducting appraisals. Once they have been reviewed, they would be returned to the evaluators for corrections and dissemination to the staff.

Step 4: Evaluators meet with employees to discuss their appraisals.

This step is critical in order to make the process more learning-based. The philosophy behind this approach is to create an environment where organizational values are translated and reinforced to personnel via effective appraisals that reward exemplary behavior and correct deficiencies. The goal is never to punish, but to teach and correct. As such, the opportunity to interact with the person and fully review their appraisal is a critical step in fostering a continual learning environment. Continual prodding and reminders to employees of the nature of this process will help to increase this awareness. However, the fact that tangible benefits are tied to the appraisal process will undoubtedly create some tension and resistance. The evaluators should be prepared to face this resistance in the process and in the meeting where the form is presented to the person.

Step 5: Appraisals are finalized, ranking into categories is completed, and ranking within categories based on seniority is determined.

The competency scores are summed to determine an overall score for the appraisal. Scores are rounded up or down based on the .5 level, round down if under .5 and up if .5 or higher. The final score determines placement in one of five categories:

- **Category I** **(85+)**
- **Category II** **(80-84.75)**
- **Category III** **(<80)**

The numerical divisions of the categories were determined based on several factors including where the middle score will fall, where civil service implications arise, and the possibility or likelihood of obtaining the highest category. Once grouped according to the above categorization, employees should be ranked within each category according to seniority. For example, a four-year patrol officer scores an overall 89 while a ten-year patrol officer scores an 88 on the final appraisal. In this case, the ten-year veteran would rank higher on the final list of officers in that category. In short, seniority determines position within each category after the competencies have been assessed. The total score cannot exceed 100 and could conceivably fall to a minimum score of 45. Clear civil service implications arise for any score under a 70. Someone who exceeds all expectations would receive a score of 100 while someone who receives all needs improvement would receive a score of 70. The deduction associated with Unacceptable and the reward associated with Exemplary will have the effect of further distributing the scores across the continuum.

The Total Selection Score (TSS) used in shift assignments should be based on the last Performance Appraisal report. All policies that require a minimum appraisal score, such as ability to work part-time jobs, lateral transfers, specialized assignments, and participation in the alternative career ladder are based on a minimum score of 80. If a person falls into Category III (drops below an 80), then the supervisor can determine both a corrective action plan and has the discretion to suspend certain privileges until the deficiencies are corrected. The appraisal process will be conducted every twelve months, except for probationary employees and in units where more frequent appraisals are deemed necessary.