

One-on-one Meetings

A guide to help supervisors to structure effective, regular one-on-one meetings with their team members.

One-on-ones are an important way to maintain a positive and productive workplace culture. Meeting regularly with each team member is an opportunity to discuss your performance and behaviour expectations, the person's progress against tasks and deliverables, their development requirements, and any other issues or concerns which may be impacting on their ability to successfully perform their role.

Setting up meetings

The frequency of one-on-ones will depend on the needs of the office, but should ideally be at least fortnightly – and face to face. The size of your team, travel, and other pressures on your time will impact how often and where you can schedule the meetings, so aim for a minimum of one meeting each month with every team member and use all of the technology now available to you to do so. It is important to demonstrate your commitment to these meetings in order to build trust – in this fast-paced environment rescheduling will sometimes be unavoidable, but make sure the meeting is moved to within the same week, if possible, to maintain the habit and momentum of regular discussions.

If you aren't already having one-on-ones with your team, send everyone an email or message outlining the context and goals of the meetings. In your email, set your expectations for how you would like everyone to prepare for their one-on-ones, and what they can expect during the meeting. Your email might look something like:

Dear team,

We all work incredibly hard, and it can be easy to forget to stop, check-in, and reflect on how we are going. I am going to set up weekly/fortnightly/monthly one-on-one meetings with everyone, and my goal for these meetings is to remove any roadblocks and connect with you on your work and how you are feeling about your role.

I'll send through standing calendar invites shortly. To prepare for our one-on-ones please think of at least two points against each of the following agenda items, to help frame our conversation each meeting:

- *Check-in and reflection on the last week/month (how you're feeling, what went well, what didn't)*
- *Status update on projects, tasks and deliverables*
- *Understanding and eliminating roadblocks (what is getting in the way and what can we do about it?)*
- *Career growth (what are your short and long term goals and how can we get you there?)*

Kind regards,

Preparation

Don't expect to "wing it" and have a one-on-one meeting that is constructive or useful. Preparation is key. During the time between one-on-ones, particularly if they are monthly, it is a good habit to keep notes about your team's performance and behaviour – both the positives and the causes for concern. This allows you to refer back to those notes before the meeting and ensures nothing you need to discuss is missed.

Framing the meeting with the agenda items suggested in this guide is another way of ensuring the one-on-one is productive for both you and your staff, and it takes some of the pressure and uncertainty about the conversations away if you both know beforehand what will, broadly, be discussed.

Make sure you are able to conduct the one-on-one in private, since you will be asking your staff to share some potentially personal information. It is also critical that the discussions during your one-on-one remain confidential – don't share the discussion with anyone that doesn't have a legitimate business need to know.

Conducting the one-on-one

During the one-on-one be aware of whether you are giving your whole attention to the person. Practice active listening, and avoid distractions like checking your phone or emails during the meeting so your team member knows you are interested in them and in what they have to say.

Use the following headings as a framework for the conversation:

Start with a check-in and reflection

Begin with a check-in – how are you both doing? Build trust by going first; be authentic and vulnerable. Reflect on the last month, what went well, what didn't. How is the person feeling, both about their performance and in general? Acknowledge positives. Do you feel they are modelling behaviours which will help them to contribute positively to office culture and outcomes? Be specific and provide examples.

Conversation starters:

We had a disappointing result last week and it left me feeling quite deflated. I went for a hike on the weekend – how did you recharge after that set-back?

What's something you're proud of that happened this week/month?

Who on our team deserves a shout out for their work, and why?

I want to acknowledge your hard work recently on a task, it made a positive difference to the office culture.

I feel like you have been a bit disengaged recently, what's going on?

Yes, when you say you've been frustrated I have noticed that you've been very short with some people. That hasn't made the situation any easier on the team, I wish you had raised this with me sooner. What's up?

Status update

How are specific projects, tasks and deliverables tracking? Don't spend too much time on this, as these conversations should be happening during day to day operations. This is a good time to reinforce the priorities of the office, and link how the person's tasks relate to the broader office goals. If there are performance concerns, timeframes are not on track, or the person is struggling with a task this is a good opportunity to identify it with a task-focus, rather than a person-focus, so they don't feel personally attacked.

Conversation starters:

There is a piece of work that needs to be completed by midday on Monday, how is that coming along?

What is your understanding of what is needed from you to meet your deliverable?

This piece of work will support a broader piece which is a key priority; I am concerned that I haven't yet seen any progress.

Where are things up to with your part?

Understanding and eliminating roadblocks

What does the person need to continue to meet goals, or improve where needed? If there are performance or behavioural concerns identified in the previous two sections, this is the time to talk about them in the context of

why are they occurring and what you can work together to do about it. Involving the person in the solutions shows you value their input and increases the chances of success.

Time, training, and tools – a combination of these three things will usually address any roadblock. Contact the [Parliamentary Workplace Support Service](#) (PWSS) or [Ministerial and Parliamentary Services](#) (MaPS) for assistance with identifying and implementing options.

Conversation starters:

What's one thing I can do to make work better for you?

Do I have anything outstanding for you that I haven't done yet?

Do you have any questions about what other team members are working on?

We've talked about how you are feeling frustrated that you keep missing deadlines – what do you think is contributing to this?

Talk about career growth

What is the person looking forward to learning/developing/doing in the short to medium term, then the long term – how can you support these goals? Discuss what you think the person's greatest strengths are, and in what areas they could develop. Identify opportunities for growth; think outside the box – are there opportunities for secondments to other offices or work areas so the person can gain new skills and experience to bring back to your office? What training will be beneficial to both the person and the broader goals of the office? Is there a person in your, or another, office that could be asked to act as a mentor to the person?

Conversation starters:

What professional or career-related goals would you like to accomplish in the next 6-12 months, and what makes you say that?

Is your job what you expected when you accepted it? If not, where has it differed?

What projects would you like to work on or be more involved in?

Confirm action items for next meeting

Agree and record what actions each of you will take between now and the next meeting. This may be around tasks or deliverables to be completed, training to be organised, or additional information to be sourced and shared. Consider whether you need a 10 minute follow up/review in the interim to help ensure the actions are progressing.

Follow up in writing

Create a record of the discussion that you can both refer back to over the coming month and at your next one-on-one, and send it to the person for their records. This helps ensure mutual understanding of what was discussed, and eliminates opportunities for confusion or disagreement. It also ensures you have accurate contemporaneous records to rely on to support employment decisions should performance or behaviour issues not resolve.

Further support

Building a positive workplace culture requires consistent, deliberate action, but there is plenty of support available – particularly to help prepare for the one-on-ones outlined in this Guide. The [PWSS](#) can be contacted 24/7 on 1800 747 977 or by emailing support@pwss.gov.au, and [MaPS](#) can be reached during business hours by calling 02 6215 3333 or emailing MOPSupport@finance.gov.au.