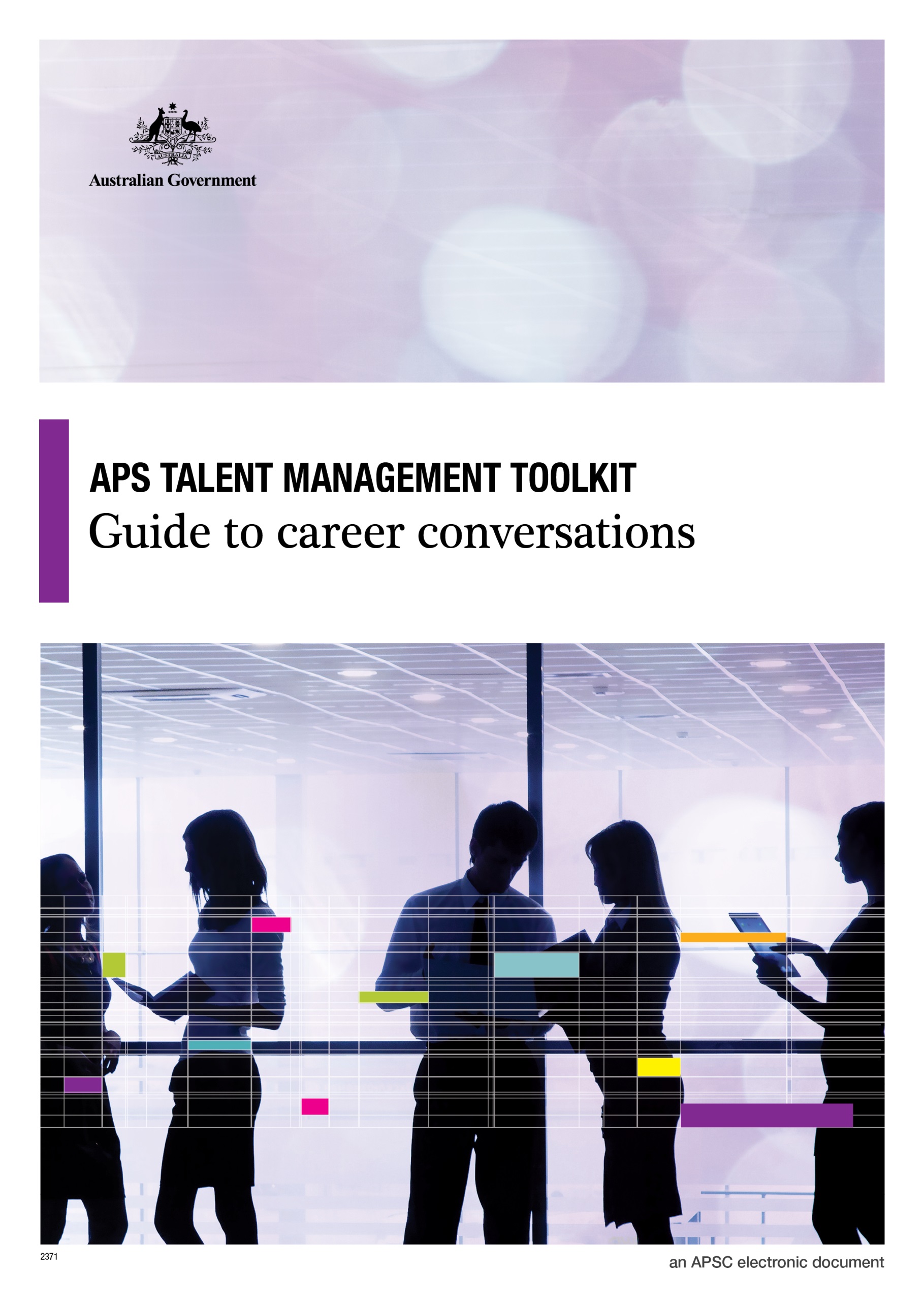
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Career Conversations are most effective when conducted regularly with all employees. These are a particularly important step in effective talent management. The Guide[[1]](#footnote-1) to Career Conversations is divided by placement on the APS Nine-Box Grid which maps potential and performance on a matrix. More information can be found in the [**Talent Management Guide**](http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-publications/talent-management-guide/supporting-guidance/guide-to-career-conversations).

**Career Conversations as Coaching Conversations**

Career Conversations are most effective when run from a coaching mindset. The manager’s role is to ask questions to prompt consideration and reflection by the individual around their future aspirations and perceived development requirements.

Points to remember when in a coaching conversation are listed below:

* Coaching is about facilitating the performance, learning and development of another.
* You are not trying to ‘teach’ a person when coaching.
* A coach helps people to see opportunities for improvement and identify practical ways forward for themselves.
* A coach uses a blend of observation, talking, listening, questioning and reflecting with the coachee.
* The focus of the supervisor and manager is on enabling their staff to perform independently and to take personal responsibility for their own success.
* Supervisors and managers who coach well improve staff productivity, morale and job satisfaction.

Useful information on forming a development plan, with particular focus to on the job learning can be found in the publication [**'A guide to learning on the job in the APS’**](http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-publications/on-the-job-learning-good-practice-guide)**.**

Note: *these are guides only and can be tailored or expanded on as necessary to the specific conversation.*

| **Top Talent**  *(High Performance, High Potential)* | |
| --- | --- |
| **Descriptor** | * Performs strongly, consistently delivering quality results. * Demonstrates high potential for more senior/ complex roles. * Potentially promotion ready now. * Focus on recognition, engagement and retention (eg. high profile stretch assignments). |
| **Feedback** | * We consider you as broadly ready for more complex roles with greater responsibility. * We would like to help you refine your skills. * Your ambitions align with the future direction of the agency/APS and we would like to see you reach your potential. * You are currently demonstrating many of the capabilities necessary for success at the next level. These include… * The areas that may prove challenging for you at the next level are… * We could like to develop a plan to develop these areas while focusing on your strengths iin preparation for your next role. |
| Questions | * What motivates you? * What disengages you? * Where do you see your career? – Next 12 months, 5 years, 10 years * What do you regard the greatest risk to realising those goals? * What experiences do you need in order to step into desired moves? * How do you think you could gain this experience? * Which of your personal styles assist you? * Which of your personal styles hold you back? * How do you think you are perceived within the broader organisation? * Does that enhance or hinder your ability to achieve results? * How strong do you consider your general management skills? * What experience would strengthen this? * How do you rate your leadership capability? * How do you think your peers would rate your leadership capability? * What experience could enhance this? * Do you consider yourself a generalist or specialist? * Is there any deeper technical understanding you need? |
| **Development Focus** | Learning on the job  * Secondments to next level roles – either internal or external. * Participate in a task force, project or assignment. * Gain experience in an unfamiliar area at level.  Learning from others  * Mentoring and sponsorship from a senior manager in your field or within an area of aspiration.  Formal learning  * Talent development programs. * Leadership development programs (internal or external). |
| **To Note** | * Consider activities to raise individual’s profile across the APS. * Focus on maintaining engagement whilst understanding and responding to future development requirements. |

| **Emerging Potential**  *(Moderate Performance, High Potential)* | |
| --- | --- |
| **Definition** | * Generally performs well and demonstrates high potential. * Likely to be promotion-ready in near future (next 2-3 years). * Keen to learn and apply new skills. * Target development to stretch performance and maintain engagement/ commitment to APS. |
| **Feedback** | * You have the potential to progress to higher and more complex roles in the future. * Successful individuals at the next level have the following attributes… * You are already demonstrating a number of these, including… * Areas that may be focused on for development are… |
| **Questions** | * What motivates you and makes you feel valued at work? * What gets in the way of good performance? * What holds you back? * What disengages you? * What inspires you? * Where do you see your career? – Next 12 months, 5 years, 10 years * What do you regard the greatest risk to realising those goals? * Do you think you are in the right role to realise your goals? * What experiences do you need in order to step into desired roles? * How do you think you could gain this experience? * What support would you need from your manager/the organisation to make this happen? * Which of your personal styles assist you? * Which of your personal styles hold you back? * How do you think you are perceived within the broader organisation? * Does that enhance or hinder your ability to achieve results? * How strong do you consider your general management skills? * What experience would strengthen this? * How do you rate your leadership capability? * How do you think your peers would rate your leadership capability? * What experience could enhance this? * Do you consider yourself a generalist or specialist? * Is there any deeper technical understanding you need? |
| **Development Focus** | On the job learning  * Broaden experience through project work across a number of functions to better understand the organisation as a whole. * Seek out new and different experiences via project work, challenges and secondments (internal and external).  Learning from others  * Mentoring with someone who is successful at the next level. * Shadow a high performer to understand uplift.  Formal learning  * Leadership development programs (internal or external). |
| **To note** | * Be clear in discussion around what higher performance would look like in clear, specific and measurable goals. * Focus on stretching performance – understand where interests lay and shape a project around this where possible. |

| **High Achiever**  *(High Performance, Moderate Potential)* | |
| --- | --- |
| **Definition** | * Performs strongly, consistently delivering quality results. * Shows moderate potential for more senior/ complex roles. * Demonstrates interest in learning and applying new skills when required.   Focus on enhancing potential and maintaining engagement/ commitment to APS. |
| **Feedback** | * You have the scope to take on broader roles. * We are confident in your skills and ability to get things done. * We would like to keep abreast of your aspirations should they change. |
| **Questions** | * What motivates you and makes you feel valued at work? * What disengages you? * What inspires you? * Where do you see your career? – Next 12 months, 5 years, 10 years * What do you regard the greatest risk to realising those goals? * Do you think you are in the right role to realise your goals? * What experiences do you need in order to step into desired roles? * How do you think you could gain this experience? * What support would you need from your manager/the organisation to make this happen? * Which of your personal styles assist you? * Which of your personal styles hold you back? * How do your strengths fit with your current role? * How do you think you are perceived within the broader organisation? * Does that enhance or hinder your ability to achieve results? * How strong do you consider your general management skills? * What experience would strengthen this? * How do you rate your leadership capability? * How do you think your peers would rate your leadership capability? * What experience could enhance this? * Do you consider yourself a generalist or specialist? * Is there any deeper technical understanding you need? |
| **Development Focus** | On the Job Learning  * Work on live challenges (with teams from different functions) to gain experience and exposure. * Discussion to understand preferred areas of interest and ways of working. * Assign further projects in those areas to keep realising areas of potential.  Learning from Others  * Participate in action learning groups with multi-disciplinary teams across agencies. * Coach people with lower performance. * 1-1 coaching with executive coach. * Mentoring (role of mentor and/or mentee).  Formal Learning Options  * Talent Development Programs (APSC). * Leadership Development Programs (internal or external). * Formal technical training. |
| **To note** | * Do not discuss any specific succession details (i.e. where the individual may sit on a succession plan). * Focus on engagement and utilising current skills in other areas, as well as developing new skills. * Consider role fit. Would a different role increase their potential for growth? |

| **Unrealised Potential** *(Low Performance, High Potential)* | |
| --- | --- |
| **Descriptors** | * Performing below expectations despite high potential. * Keen to learn and apply new skills. * Target development towards improving specific job performance or change job for better person-job fit. * Regularly review progress with this individual. |
| **Feedback** | * (If working in a difficult situation) We acknowledge that you are working in a difficult situation and we have confidence in your ability. * When you have managed the challenges in your current role, we are keen to support your potential growth into a larger role. * Whilst you are facing these challenges, we would like to focus on how we can support you to bring the performance of your area up to the required level. * (If not working in a difficult situation) We acknowledge that you have greater potential than your current performance indicates. What holds you back from achieving higher performance? |
| **Development Focus** | * Consider whether development would support better performance? * Participate in an action learning group to learn through the experience of others. * Manager coaching * External mentor or coach * Courses focused on change management and fundamentals of role. |
| **Questions** | * What motivates you? * What makes you feel valued in the work place? * What are your major challenges in the next year? * Where do you think you will be in a year? * What do you need in order to become more effective and how can we help? * What additional support do you need from your team? * What ambition do you have for the future? * What have you learnt about yourself in your career so far? * Are there any barriers preventing improved performance? * What do we need to do to ensure optimum performance? |

| **Well Placed** *(Medium Performance, Medium Potential)* | |
| --- | --- |
| **Descriptors** | * Generally performs well and shows some potential. * Demonstrates interest in learning and applying new skills when required. * Target development to round out performance and maintain engagement. |
| **Feedback** | * You are a valued performer. * We feel confident involving you in new initiatives due to your ability to help us with effective implementation. * We think you have some potential to take on a bigger or more complex role sometime in the future. * We would like to better understand your aspirations to ensure we are supporting you towards a role where you can contribute within an area that inspires you. |
| **Development Focus** | * Involve individual in a range of activities that help identify strengths. * Increase involvement in implementation of new initiatives. * Involve in change projects. * Training to either extend technical skills or maintain practice requirements. |
| **Questions** | * What motivates you? * What makes you feel valued in the work place? * How do you see your career progressing? * What do you feel your strengths are? * How can we continue to build and develop these strengths? * Is there anything preventing improved performance? * Do you feel informed and involved in your team? * What gets in the way of performance? * Where do you see your career path and level of ambition? * What could prevent you progressing? |

| **Proven Performer** *(High Performance, Low Potential)* | |
| --- | --- |
| **Descriptors** | * Performs strongly, consistently delivering results. * Currently shows limited potential for more senior/ complex roles. * Valuable contributor– focus on maintaining engagement, recognise/ reward contribution. |
| **Feedback** | * You are a highly valued proven performer. * We are happy to have you as an experienced role model for others in your team. * We value your positive influence and the impact this has in the workplace. * Your strengths and abilities are well-aligned to the work you do. * It is important to maintain your skills in the forefront of your area and we would like to focus on that in your development. |
| **Development Focus** | * Stretch skills to advanced levels in current area of speciality. * Build coaching/influencing skills to help others build their capability in this area of specialty. * Participate in projects or secondments to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives as a way of helping to own role even more effectively. * Participate in action learning groups with multi-disciplinary teams from own or external agencies. * Attend seminars and courses that provide breadth along with depth of skill. |
| **Questions** | * What motivates you? * What makes you feel valued in the work place? * What do we need to do to ensure continuous performance? * Are you happy with what you are doing? * How do you see your career progressing? * What could prevent this progression? * What derails your performance as a team member? * What is your profile in the organisation and how could this be developed? |

| **Uncertain** *(Low Performance, Medium Potential)* | |
| --- | --- |
| **Descriptors** | * Performing below expectations but shows some potential. * Provide candid feedback and ensure performance agreement is in place. * Regularly review progress with individual. |
| **Feedback** | * Consider if they are in a new role and if so, acknowledge there will be a settling in period. * You were selected to do this role because of… * We saw future potential for… |
| **Development Focus** | * Focus on developing understanding of the role, particularly on the job learning through: * Policies and manuals * Teaching/reference aids * Website. * Work alongside highly engaged professionals to learn good practice and build networks. * Coaching (particularly if in a new stretch role). * Courses/training for skills specific to role. |
| **Questions** | * What motivates you? * What makes you feel valued at work? * How would you/others rate your performance at present? * What standard of performance do you think you deliver? * What do you require to enhance your performance and how can we support this? * What do you consider your particular strengths? Are you using them in this role? * What are your barriers to success? * Where do you see your career path and ambition? * What could prevent you progressing? |

| **Solid Contributor** *(Medium Performance, Low Potential)* | |
| --- | --- |
| **Descriptors** | * Generally performs well, although potential is limited. * Shows limited interest in learning new skills. * Target development to round out performance and enhance adaptability. |
| **Feedback** | * You are considered to be responsive to changing organisational work practices and organisational direction. * Your strengths and abilities appear to be well aligned with your current role. * We appreciate that you sometimes go out of your way to put in extra efforts even when it isn’t expected of you. |
| **Development Focus** | * Projects aligned with strengths and abilities to broaden knowledge. * Explore new and different types of work within current role scope that keeps the individual interested and motivated. * Work alongside highly engaged deep professionals to gain additional insights and knowledge share. * Courses to extend technical skills or keep up with practice requirements. |
| **Questions** | * What motivates you? * What makes you feel valued at work? * What areas of skills and knowledge do you feel need developing in order to improve your current performance? * Are there any issues preventing you from performing at an even higher level? * How do you see your career progressing? * How would you like to achieve this? * What are you strengths and how can we utilise them better? * How might the organisation better utilise your skills and experience? |

| **Strongest Concern** *(Low Performance, Low Potential)* | |
| --- | --- |
| **Descriptors** | * Performing below expectations coupled with low potential. * Ensure performance agreement is in place and regular/candid feedback is provided and documented. * Formal exit may be required. |
| **Feedback** | * We’d like to see your performance increase as we believe it can. * Let’s talk about what prevents you from higher performance and what needs to change in order to shift that. |
| **Development Focus** | * Provide regular feedback. * Relevant training in core requirements of the role. * Support to assist individual to identify and move to a role of greater fit (where initiated by the individual). |
| **Questions** | * What motivates you to come to work and feel valued? * Is something missing? * How do you feel about your current performance and behaviours in role? * What factors have affected the present situation? * What are your strengths? Are they aligned to the role? * How can we support you to improve your performance? * Do you wish to develop? What are you barriers to success? |

1. Conversation guides drawn from information provided by the New Zealand Government Leadership Development Centre. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)