

# Addressing Challenging Situations in Remote Management: A Guide for FAS Managers

Managing can be difficult even when you're sharing an office space with your team. Managing remotely can present some unique challenges. Below are a few ways to navigate managing a range of situations in a remote landscape.

## Managing to Deliverables

When everyone is in the office, it's easier to see first-hand which staff members are actively engaged in their work and which ones may not be. Managing remotely requires a shift from managing by observing the work to managing based on deliverables.

- **Set goals, priorities, and deadlines.** Your staff members should have a clear sense of what they need to accomplish as well as when the work needs to be delivered. Even if you can't observe your direct reports working, you should have an understanding of what work is getting done.
- **Check in about workflow.** Try to touch base with your employees about how their work is going. It can be helpful if staff members send brief status updates—for example, sharing progress they've made or obstacles they've run into.

## Managing Uneven Work Distribution

Some staff members may find their workload has increased significantly during this remote time, while others have less to do while away from their office.

- **Prioritize for increased workload.** Help staff members prioritize what work needs to be completed first vs. what can wait. Discuss potential deadlines and help staff formulate a plan to keep projects moving. Check in with staff members regularly about their progress and workload.
- **Reallocate work where you can.** Think about where responsibilities can be reallocated within your team, so that work can be more evenly distributed among team members.
- **Find opportunities for increased availability.** This may be a good time for staff members with extra bandwidth to pursue professional development opportunities. CWD virtual courses, LinkedIn Learning, and Harvard ManageMentor can be great resources for this.

## Managing Underperformers

Working with staff members who are underperforming can be more challenging when you're not in the same location. Chronic underperformers can use remote work to try to be 'out of sight, out of mind' and avoid being coached and managed closely.

- **Set clear expectations.** A staff member should know exactly what you expect from them when it comes to their performance, any deadlines, and the work they need to accomplish. Keep track of these expectations in writing where possible.
- **Engage the employee in problem-solving.** Find ways to help coach the employee through any challenges they may be encountering. What's not working? What could be different?
- **Share regular feedback.** Sharing regular feedback is especially important for someone who's not able to deliver what's expected of them. Find opportunities to share your concerns and ways they can improve. Discuss what they need to accomplish, how that differs from what they're actually doing, and the negative results that occur.

## Managing During Uncertainty

To be an effective manager during times of crisis, it's helpful to practice getting comfortable with the uncomfortable.

- **Make peace with uncertainty.** It's okay not to have all the answers or to feel anxiety about a given situation. You may not be able to change an overall situation, but you can learn to accept the fact that this is a difficult time in your work life and make thoughtful decisions from that more resilient mindset.
- **Be open and inclusive.** Your employees may appreciate hearing you speak openly and honestly about what you're all experiencing. While that kind of vulnerability may initially make you feel uncomfortable, it can also help a team to open up more and to recognize that we're all in this together.
- **Remain resilient.** Part of resilience is the ability to improvise during difficult times. Being resilient can help you to work through difficult times and to adapt for the future.