



Indiana
Department
of
Health

FEED FORWARD: LITTLE NUDGES BEAT BIG SURPRISES

Tasha Ramey

Workforce Development Coordinator

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OUR MISSION:

To promote, protect, and improve the health and safety of all Hoosiers.

OUR VISION:

Every Hoosier reaches optimal health regardless of where they live, learn, work, or play.



AGENCY PRIORITIES

1. Promote Maternal and Infant Health Outcomes
2. Prevent Chronic Disease
3. Improve Data Quality and Transparency



Learning Objectives

1. Using forward-focused feedback to support continuous improvement
2. Strengthening communication through timely, actionable guidance
3. Applying feed-forward techniques to navigate change and maintain alignment

***“Mistakes should be
examined, learned from, and
discarded; not dwelled upon
and stored”***

-- Tim Fargo

What Is Feed Forward?

- Future-focused, actionable guidance
- Short, ongoing conversations
- Helps employees adjust in real time
- Complements traditional feedback
- Not a review, not criticism, not a replacement for accountability

Why Traditional Feedback Falls Short

- Focuses on past mistakes rather than future growth
- Delivered too late to be effective
- Often lacks specificity and clear guidance
- Can feel like criticism rather than support
- Creates defensiveness rather than improvement
- Over-relies on formal review cycles
- Misses key opportunities when work priorities shift quickly

Feedforward vs. Feedback

Feedforward



- Focuses on future improvement
- Provides specific suggestions
- Feels constructive and positive

VS.

Feedback



- Focuses on past performance
- Identifies problems or mistakes
- Can feel critical or negative

Why This Matters:

- Gives timely, future-oriented feedback
- Builds confidence, clarity, and alignment
- Helps teams adapt quickly and avoid review surprises
- Promotes ongoing learning and improvement



Feedback for Continuous Improvement

Description:

- Give guidance centered on future actions, not past mistakes
- Identify small adjustments that create meaningful impact
- Reinforce strengths while outlining next steps

Techniques:

- Use short, frequent check-ins
- Provide specific, behavior-based suggestions
- Focus on what the employee *can do next*
- Ask: "What support would help you succeed?"

How Feed Forward Works

- Occurs during or immediately after the work is completed, while context is fresh
- Centers on one small, specific behavior at a time
- Encourages the employee to try a new approach right away
- Creates a continuous observe–guide–adjust–reinforce cycle



Why it's Valuable

- Improves clarity and reduces rework
- Supports faster decision-making and agility
- Strengthens alignment across teams
- Builds trust and transparency between employees and leaders



Strengthening Communication

Description:

- Make guidance timely
- Offer actionable steps, not vague suggestions
- Ensure clarity and shared understanding
- Use two-way dialogue, not one-directional critique

Techniques:

- Provide examples right after behavior occurs
- Keep messages short and direct
- Pair positive reinforcement with "next time" suggestions
- Confirm understanding before moving on

Applying Feed Forward During Change

Description:

- Helps employees realign quickly as priorities shift
- Reduces stress by clarifying expectations
- Ensures consistent performance through transitions
- Builds resilience and adaptability

Techniques:

- Provide rapid, real-time course correction
- Reinforce evolving expectations
- Share why changes matter to team goals
- Keep conversations focused on action and support

Feedforward For Employees

What It Means For Employees:

- Focuses on your future success, not past mistakes = growth opportunity
- Allows you to grow without blame, criticism or defensiveness
- Gives you clear steps you can try next time
- Encourages open conversations with your leader

How You Can Use Feedforward:

- Ask: "What can I do differently next time?"
- Listen to suggestions without defending or explaining
- Treat ideas as options, not judgments
- Pick one actionable idea to implement
- Thank the person offering feedforward

Why Feedforward Helps You Succeed

- Builds confidence by focusing on improvement
- Makes expectations clearer for next time
- Reduces stress around past performance
- Supports continuous learning and growth
- Strengthens relationships and trust with your leader

Real World Scenario:

Our team presents monthly community impact data. Last month we ran over time and didn't finish all the slides. Instead of revisiting the past, let's use feedforward to plan how to make next month's presentation stronger.

Discussion:

- What future-focused suggestion would help us stay within time next month?
- What process improvement should we try to ensure we cover all slides?
- What new habit or tool could improve the flow of our next presentation?

***Feedforward is the art of
aiming your energy at the
future, not the past – because
growth happens in the
direction you look!***

Key Takeaways

- Feed forward is proactive, future-focused, and continuous
- Timely guidance strengthens communication and trust
- Small nudges prevent big performance surprises
- Techniques support continuous improvement and change alignment
- Leaders help teams succeed by offering clarity, encouragement, and actionable next steps

Resources

- [Feedforward vs Feedback: Differences and Examples](#)
- [From feedback to feedforward: The game changer](#)
- [Feedforward vs Feedback examples](#)
- [Feedback vs Feedforward – What's the Difference?](#)
- [Feedback vs Feedforward: Why the Best Managers Look Forward, Not Back](#)
- [The Feed-Forward Exercise](#)
- [Try Feedforward instead of Feedback](#)

Questions?

Tasha Ramey

Workforce Development Coordinator

tramey@health.in.gov

