
PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FACT SHEET

What are Performance Standards?

Performance standards are written expressions of the major work you do and describe the specific results you expect to accomplish during the year. Performance standards are specific to you, your work, and your position within the organization.

Performance Standards

The best practice is to have between three to five Performance Standards.

- Communicate major responsibilities or contributions and the related outcomes that are expected of you;
- Focus on the desired results of your work and describe expected outcomes;
- Align with the mission, goals, and priorities of your organization;
- Are appropriate to occupation and grade;
- Are documented in your performance plan;
- Are the basis for determining your final rating of record; and
- May change from year to year or within a year due to changing work focus or organizational goals.

Creating Effective Performance Standards

An effective performance standard answers the following questions:

- What do I need to achieve? What result do I want to accomplish?
- How will achieving this job element help my organization? Is there a “line of sight” between the job element and my organization’s mission?
- Does the job element focus on a major component of work I am responsible for accomplishing within the period of performance?
- By when must I do this?
- How will I know if I am successful?
- What critical behaviors are expected?
- Is the job element appropriate to my occupation and grade level?
- Is the performance standard written to the “Fully Successful” level?

‘SMART’ and ‘TEAM’ are two models that provide a structure to help you answer these questions and create effective performance standards.

SMART	TEAM
Specific: Your performance standard describes, clearly and concisely, what you expect to accomplish in the coming year.	Target: Your job element describes what you expect to accomplish and what the final product/ service/deliverable looks like.

Labor and Employee Relations Division

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SMART	TEAM
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Measurable: The result of your performance standard is observable or verifiable through appropriate quantity, quality, resources, or time measurements.

Achievable: Your performance standard shows a clear line of sight between your organization's mission and goals and your work.

Relevant: Your performance standard is challenging yet attainable, the outcome is within your control, and the expected results are appropriate to your responsibilities, occupation, and grade.

Timed: Your job element identifies realistic time-frames for completion.

Evaluation: Your job element clarifies the criteria against which you will be evaluated and describes the expected and appropriate levels of effort, expertise, complexity, and independence for successful completion.

Alignment: Your job element is linked to your organization's mission and goals with a clear line of sight with what you achieve in your work.

Measurement: The result of your job element is observable or verifiable and includes appropriate quantity, quality, resources, or time measurements.

Effective performance standards clearly identify performance expectations so you and your rating official have a shared understanding of the criteria against which the rating official evaluates performance. The performance standards describe the differences between expected levels of performance based on criteria such as the amount of guidance needed, effectiveness in achieving the performance standard, contributions, ability to prioritize work, and professional conduct.

An effective performance standard addresses the critical nature of the work to be performed, those tasks which, if not performed in accordance with the standards, lead to mission failure. While your rating official is responsible for developing your performance standards, it is in your own best interest to be involved in the development of your elements so that you understand what is expected of you. Work with your rating official (in person, if possible) to establish your performance expectations and performance standards. Communication is the key to reaching a shared understanding. Once your performance standards are established, a higher level reviewer approves them.

Updating Your Performance Elements and Standards

Your performance standards may be updated and revised throughout the year to reflect changes in position, job responsibility, or work priorities. These changes most commonly occur during performance discussions, in which you and your rating official check for the continued relevance of each performance standard. Typically, performance standards are not changed 90 days prior to the end of the appraisal cycle so you have sufficient time to demonstrate accomplishment. Whenever new performance standards are added, they may need to be approved by a higher level reviewer, depending upon your local organization's policies.