
TIPS FOR ESTABLISHING PERFORMANCE PLANS

Performance Element Considerations

The following considerations should be made when developing performance elements:

- Performance elements should be developed by the supervisor and employee jointly, whenever possible.
- Set short-term goals with a long-term view. Performance elements are generally set for periods of a year or less.
- Identify critical issues and possible obstacles.
- Do not underestimate resource needs.
- Build in flexibility. Regular status updates and check-in meetings make it much easier to identify problems or shifts in priorities.

Generating Performance Elements

The following questions may help generate ideas for performance elements. Based on organizational goals:

- What impact should the employee's work have on the organization's mission?
- What can the employee do to improve the overall effectiveness of the organization?
- Has the employee suggested program or process changes that help the organization meet its objectives? If so, can the changes be completed during the appraisal cycle?
- What needs to be done to improve the quality of service? What refinements can be made to the organization's operations? What needs to be introduced or eliminated?
- What can be accomplished now that could not be achieved last year (due to increased resources, system modifications, changed priorities, updated skills, etc.)?
- What skills, processes, and products must be updated to meet demand?

Putting it All Together

When putting it all together, performance elements and standards clearly communicate specific expectations of job performance required to achieve mission success. Following are some additional points to consider when writing performance plans:

- Are the employee's performance goals aligned to the DoD and organizational mission and goals?
- Does the performance plan include critical elements? Are all the elements truly critical?
- Do the number of supervisory performance elements equal or exceed the number of non-supervisory (technical) performance elements? (*not applicable to code "4" supervisors in DCPDS*)
- Are the elements and standards clear and understandable?

TIPS FOR ESTABLISHING PERFORMANCE PLANS

- Are the standards written using the SMART criteria (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**imely)?
- Are the standards “absolute” or “backward”? (“Absolute” standards should generally be avoided. “Absolute” standards should only be used when a failure to perform could result in serious injury, loss of life, breach of national security, or great monetary loss. “Backward” standards should never be used.)
- Do the standards include specific measures (e.g., quality, quantity, timeliness, and cost-effectiveness)?
- Is the performance standard written to the “Fully Successful” level?
- Does the performance standard adequately communicate expectations to the employee?
- Have the written performance standards been evaluated? Was the performance plan updated as needed?

SMART STANDARDS

Performance standards are written as descriptions of how employees are expected to achieve their work. The following are examples of **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**imely performance standards, as well as some that are not so SMART:

SMART	Not so SMART
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a plan to ensure that work is delivered on time so that 90% of set deadlines are met this fiscal year and that the manager/supervisor is informed in advance of deadlines that may not be met. • Create procedures, tools, and practices to ensure that all team members are aware of priorities, deliverables, deadlines and any changes. Reduce failures due to communication errors to five percent by December. • Take advanced-level Excel training in September and incorporate new skills into deliverables on an ongoing basis. • Provide accurate and relevant information to call center clients in a manner consistent with published service standards. • Develop a risk-based plan for nuclear facility inspections for the coming fiscal year, targeting 100% completion of high-risk premises and a minimum of 20% completion of low-risk premises, and inspect in accordance with regulatory requirements and guidelines. Note this is an appropriate “absolute standard” because a failure to perform could result in serious injury, loss of life, breach of national security, or great monetary loss. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet all deadlines set by manager/supervisor. • Improve communication within the team. • Improve skills in Excel to meet job requirements. • Answer calls that come into call center and respond to callers as appropriate. • Plan and inspect regulated premises.

Labor and Employee Relations Division

TIPS FOR ESTABLISHING PERFORMANCE PLANS

SMART	Not so SMART
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By February 28, 20XX, deliver three briefings to key stakeholders regarding the new security initiative within the unit, and prepare a detailed report on the feedback received.• Solicit updates and new material for the intranet site from within the Division and from key client groups. Develop new material and obtain approval by January 1, 20XX. Publish approved material by March 31, 20XX, and delete or archive material that is out of date.• Ensure mandatory training of all staff on the safe operation of equipment. Develop a tracking system to monitor staff completion of training and the potential need for refresher training in accordance with best practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepare security briefings.• Maintain the Division's intranet site.• Provide mandatory training on the safe operation of equipment.
