

Performance Standards

Definition:

Performance standards state the expectations for employee roles and responsibilities as they relate to the agency's mission, vision, and values. Performance standards are written, measurable criteria against which an employee's effort is evaluated to determine the level of functioning. They define how good is 'good enough.'

In other words, a standard constitutes a yardstick against which to evaluate progress. Performance standards should be presented to an employee at the beginning of every rating period.



Measurement:

General Measures: Performance standards should be: *objective, measurable, realistic, and stated clearly in writing (or otherwise recorded)*. The standards should be written in terms of specific measures that will be used to appraise performance.

To develop specific measures, you first must determine the general measure(s) important for each element. General measures used to measure employee performance include the following:

- Quality addresses how well the work is performed. Quality refers to accuracy, appearance, usefulness, or effectiveness.
- Quantity addresses how much work is produced. A quantity measure can be expressed as a general result to be achieved.
- Timeliness addresses how quickly, when or by what date the work is produced. The most common error made in setting timeliness standards is to allow no margin for error. As with other standards, timeliness standards should be set realistically in view of other performance requirements and needs of the organization.
- Cost-Effectiveness addresses dollar savings to the [agency] or working within a budget. Standards that address cost-effectiveness should be based on specific resource levels (money, personnel, or time) that generally can be documented and measured in [the agency's] annual fiscal year budgets. Cost-effectiveness standards may include such aspects of performance as maintaining or reducing

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unit costs, reducing the time it takes to produce a product or service, or reducing waste.

For each element, decide which of these general measures are important to the performance of the element by asking the following questions:

- Is quality important? Does the stakeholder or customer care how well the work is done?
- Is quantity important? Does the stakeholder or customer care how often a general result is achieved?
- Is it important that the element be accomplished by a certain time or date?
- Is it important that the element be done within certain cost limits?

Specific Measures: Once you've decided which general measures are important, you can develop specific measures. It is these specific measures that will be included in the standard. To develop specific measure(s) for each element, you must determine how you would measure the quantity, quality, timeliness, and/or cost-effectiveness of the element. If it can be measured with numbers, clearly define those numbers. If performance only can be described (i.e., observed and verified), clarify who would be the best judge to appraise the work and what factors they would look for. (The first-line supervisor is often the best person to judge performance, but there may be situations, depending on what is being measured, when a peer or the customer receiving the product or service would be the best judge.)

The following questions may help you determine specific measures. For each general measure, ask:

- How could [quality, quantity, timeliness, and/or cost effectiveness] be measured?
- Is there some number or percent that could be tracked?

If there is no number, and the element can only be judged, ask:

- Who could judge that the element was done well? What factors would they look for?

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