



National Security Personnel System Contributing Factors Fact Sheet July 2007

This Fact Sheet provides specific information on Contributing Factors. For information on other NSPS subjects, please visit the NSPS web page at <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps>.

What Are Contributing Factors?

Contributing factors, part of the NSPS Performance Management System, are attributes of job performance that describe the *manner in which* a job objective is achieved. They reflect behaviors that the Department of Defense (DoD) deems important for the accomplishment of work in DoD organizations.

There are Seven Contributing Factors:

- 1. Communication**
- 2. Cooperation and Teamwork**
- 3. Critical Thinking**
- 4. Customer Focus**
- 5. Leadership**
- 6. Resource Management**
- 7. Technical Proficiency**

Why Use Contributing Factors?

The NSPS performance management system aligns individual work with DoD's mission and priorities – and focuses on outcomes and results. The employee's job objectives define "what" the employee's work priorities should be, or what work needs to be accomplished.

Employees must know "how" to approach the work. Contributing factors address how employees should complete their job objectives and identify the work behaviors necessary for effective, efficient work accomplishment.

How Are Contributing Factors Selected?

The supervisor is responsible for selecting contributing factors to correspond with each job objective. The supervisor should select the factors that are the **most relevant, critical, and meaningful** attributes for successful job accomplishment. Supervisors and employees should work together to establish a shared understanding of work expectations and behaviors.

What Is the Role of a Contributing Factor?

Prior to selection, supervisors and employees need to understand what a contributing factor *is intended to do*. An effective contributing factor should:

- Reflect the manner of performance important for accomplishing the job objective.
- Elaborate on the job objective, providing meaningful information about the employee's **approach to work** that could potentially lead to an adjustment in the job objective rating/overall compensation.
- Be selected based on the relevance to the job objective *and not based on* the employee's strengths and weaknesses in performing the work.

The “**leadership**” contributing factor plays a special role in NSPS:

- It must be selected for the mandatory supervisory job objective.
- It *may be* selected for a supervisor's other job objectives.
- It *may be* assigned to any employee who is responsible for directing work and developing other employees.

How Many Contributing Factors Should Be Selected?

- Generally, each objective should have *at least one and no more than three* contributing factors.
- Best practices have shown that selecting one or two contributing factors is most effective.
- Supervisors should resist the tendency to select all of the contributing factors that *could potentially* correspond with the job objective.

Example: Selecting Contributing Factors for a Job Objective

Jackson, Language Specialist

Jackson is a Language Specialist, YA-1040-2. Before selecting the contributing factors for Jackson's job objective, Jackson's supervisor must decide what the objective is intended to accomplish:

Jackson's job objective:

Throughout the performance period, help my organization provide successful communication of program goals and objectives to foreign government officials. Provide technically accurate, clean, and contextually correct interpreting support to delegation/team leaders during not less than four mission/assignments over a six-month period.

During mission, confer with team leader to ensure no ambiguities in meaning occur. Prior to each assignment, attend pre-trip briefings and collect all pertinent information to include talking points. Prior to assignment, meet with the Chief to demonstrate level of preparedness to support mission. This objective helps my organization reach its goal of providing effective programmatic support.

The expected outcome is clear: Jackson must ensure successful communication of program goals and objectives to foreign government officials throughout the performance cycle. This objective is "what" is expected of Jackson.

Jackson's supervisor reviews the seven contributing factors to determine which attributes are **most critical to the successful completion of the job objective**. Jackson and his supervisor agree that "communication" and "critical thinking" best describe "how" Jackson must go about achieving the objective.

How Are Contributing Factors Evaluated?

1. The supervisor reviews and rates each job objective using the appropriate performance indicators.

- **Performance indicators** are included in the NSPS Implementing Issuances and provide general descriptions of levels or thresholds of **work performance**. Level 3 (valued performer) and Level 5 (role model) performance indicators are available for each NSPS pay schedule and pay band. The supervisor uses the performance indicators to measure, evaluate, and score the achievement of job objectives.

2. The supervisor evaluates the contributing factors.

- The supervisor compares the contributing factors and associated work behavior descriptions for each of the employee's job objectives to the DoD benchmark descriptors for the employee's pay schedule and pay band.
 - **Benchmark descriptors** are included in the NSPS Implementing Issuances and provide general descriptions of "expected" and "enhanced" behaviors for each contributing factor within each NSPS pay schedule and pay band.
- With the benchmark descriptors in mind, the supervisor decides whether the assigned contributing factors **collectively made an impact** on the accomplishment of the job objective—and whether the employee's work behaviors (contributing factors) were at the expected or enhanced level based on the employee's work level (pay schedule and pay band).
- Based on the influence of the contributing factors, the supervisor determines whether to adjust each job objective rating by +1, -1 or 0 (no impact).
- The adjusted job objective ratings are then averaged to determine the employee's recommended rating of record. The employee's performance plan and recommended rating are provided to the pay pool panel for higher-level review.

What if more than one Contributing Factor is selected for a single job objective?

The successful accomplishment of a job objective sometimes requires the use of several specific work behaviors (e.g., Technical Proficiency, Cooperation/Teamwork). When a supervisor selects more than one contributing factor for an objective, the supervisor evaluates the selected contributing factors in the aggregate (as a group) to determine whether, collectively, the factors had a major influence on the accomplishment of the objective.

The "aggregate" review of contributing factors is a deliberate design element of the NSPS performance management system. The system recognizes that some factors may be more important than others in achieving the desired outcome. Rather than constructing a formulaic approach for evaluating contributing factors, the system provides supervisors and pay pool managers with the flexibility to make the best decision based on a review of the total impact of all selected contributing factors.

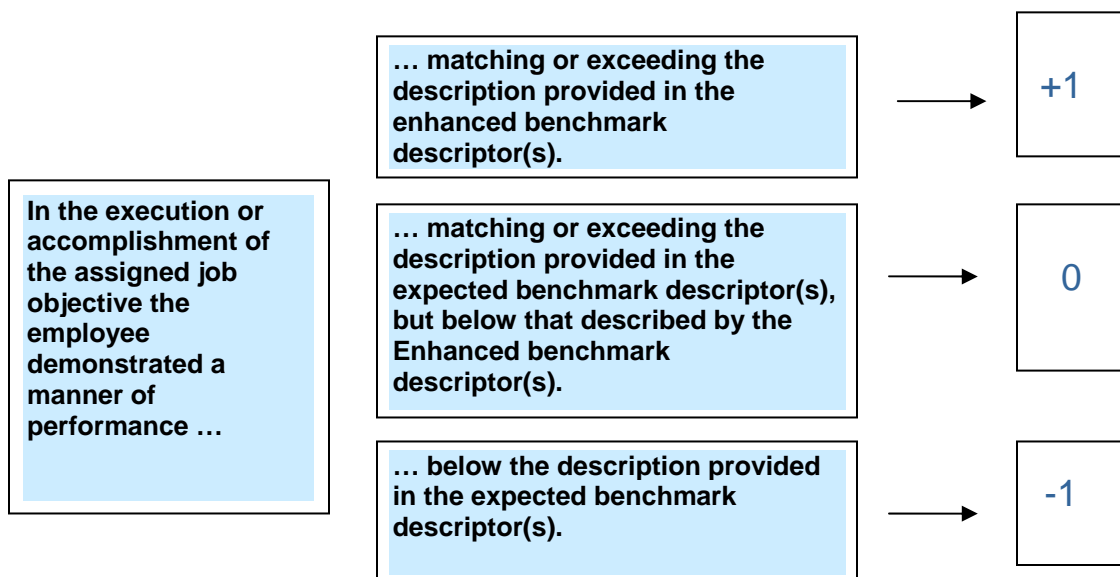
Are There Special Situations to Consider When Evaluating Contributing Factors and Adjusting Ratings?

Yes. Some special situations are:

- **If a job objective is rated at Level 1**, contributing factors cannot be used to raise the rating to a Level 2.
- **If a job objective is rated at Level 2**, contributing factors cannot be used to lower the rating to a Level 1.
- **If a job objective is rated at Level 5**, it has received the highest possible rating.
- If the employee is a **supervisor** whose position is classified in a **non-supervisory pay schedule**, it is important to use the work behaviors and benchmark descriptors that are applicable to the pay band.

Example: A Program Manager, YA-3, with supervisory responsibilities should use the YA-3 work behaviors and benchmark descriptors for non-supervisory job objectives. The Program Manager must also apply the Pay band 3 “Leadership” contributing factor to the supervisory job objective. This contributing factor is the same for YA-3 and YC-3 positions.

Contributing Factor Evaluation Process



Is Additional Information Available on Contributing Factors?

Yes. Several important resources are available:

- The NSPS **Performance Management Implementing Issuance**, including Appendix 6 (Contributing Factors), is available at: <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/docs/1940PerformanceManagement.pdf>.
- Component-issued guidance may also be available. The NSPS Program Manager at the Component can direct employees to this information.
- Several NSPS training courses include information on contributing factors:
 - **NSPS 101**: web-based training educates viewers on the core elements of NSPS. Available at: <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/nsps101/index.htm>.
 - **iSuccess**: web-based training helps employees write job objectives, select Performance Indicators/Contributing Factors, and translate job objectives into self assessments. Available at: <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/iSuccess>.
 - **HR Elements for Managers, Supervisors and Employees**: classroom training helps employees gain insight into the core elements of NSPS. Course guide available at: <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/docs/HRMSEMagazineS1V3.pdf>.
 - **NSPS Performance Management Training**: classroom training helps employees learn how performance is planned, monitored, developed, rated, and rewarded. Course guide available at: <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/docs/PMEPGS1V3.pdf>.