



National Security Personnel System Writing Effective Self Assessments Fact Sheet October 2006

This Fact Sheet provides general information concerning the performance management system and writing self assessments. For more information on performance management and other NSPS subjects, please visit the NSPS web site at <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps>.

General

As part of the NSPS performance management system, employees are encouraged to conduct self assessments of their performance and contributions during the rating cycle. These are opportunities for employees to provide input concerning their performance and contributions as part of the interim and annual review process.

What is a Self Assessment?

A self assessment is an employee's narrative description of accomplishments related to the job objectives and associated contributing factors identified on the employee's performance plan. While writing an effective self assessment takes some effort, it does not have to be lengthy; however, the self assessment should provide the supervisor with a clear picture of the employee's perception of his or her own performance and contributions.

The self assessment is not an exercise in good writing. Rather, it is an opportunity for an employee to describe major contributions and how the work meets or exceeds the supervisor's performance expectations.

Documenting everything an employee accomplishes during the appraisal period is not expected. Employees are encouraged to keep a journal throughout the appraisal period to record significant activities as they occur. The journal makes the self assessment activity easier to complete and keeps the self assessment specific and relevant to job objectives.

Employee Guidelines for Writing a Self Assessment

When writing a self assessment, the following guidelines may help:

- *Restate objectives.* Paraphrasing job objectives and contributing factors gives managers/supervisors a clear picture of how well the employee understood performance expectations.

- *Highlight most significant achievements for the rating cycle.* The self assessment does not need to be lengthy. The employee should highlight what mattered most during the rating cycle.
- *Make the connection between what was done and why it matters to the organization.* Highlight how the organization is better off because of the achievement or contribution by describing the tangible benefit (i.e., a cost savings to the organization or a solution that enabled employees to better perform their jobs).
- *Cite instances where employee actions or conduct exemplified Contributing Factors.* Employee conduct relative to contributing factors can influence the performance rating. Be sure to highlight specific instances where employee behavior made a positive difference in the outcome of a job objective.
- *Note challenges faced and how employee fared.* Overcoming challenges is an important part of the overall performance rating. Challenges may be technical or interpersonal in nature. They may also involve the ability to succeed despite limited resources or difficult circumstances.

Automated Tool for the Self Assessment

The Department of Defense has developed a set of online tools to support the performance management phase of NSPS, including the self assessments for interim and annual reviews. The first of these tools – the **Performance Appraisal Application** – is now available to employees *who have already converted to NSPS*.

The Performance Appraisal Application facilitates the NSPS performance management and appraisal process for managers, supervisors, and employees – from establishing performance plans to assigning the recommended rating. It supports the NSPS mission by providing an online venue for regular communication, where supervisors and employees can exchange ideas about work performance, document areas of growth, and share ideas before job objectives and work plans are finalized.

Employees *who have not yet converted to NSPS* may not access and utilize the Performance Appraisal Application at this time. However, everyone may view a web demonstration of the Performance Appraisal Application or read about how the new application works to assist the NSPS workforce.

To access the web demonstration, please visit our web site:
<http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps>.

Employees who have already converted to NSPS and would like to access the Performance Appraisal Application should contact their servicing human resources office for assistance.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: Are employees required to complete a self assessment?

Answer: While the self assessment is entirely voluntary, it is recommended that the employee complete the self assessment narrative. The employee's perspective will better inform the rater of performance and contribution that may impact the recommended rating and payout.

Question: What is the purpose of the self assessment?

Answer: Employees use the self assessment to describe accomplishments related to expectations, objectives, contributing factors, organizational mission and goals, and other factors. The self assessment also provides the manager/supervisor with a clear picture of how the employee perceives his or her own performance and contributions.

Question: How can an employee be sure that he/she has captured major achievements when completing a self assessment?

Answer: Employees are encouraged to maintain an ongoing record, or journal, of major achievements throughout the appraisal cycle. By documenting major achievements as they occur, employees will have ready access to the information needed to complete the self assessment.

Question: Is there an automated process for completing the self assessment for the Interim and End-of-Cycle Review?

Answer: Yes. Employees who have converted to NSPS have online access to the self assessment in the Performance Appraisal Application. For more information on the self-assessment process using the Performance Appraisal Application, please visit the NSPS website at <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps>.