



## National Security Personnel System Writing SMART Objectives Fact Sheet October 2006

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

### General

The NSPS performance management system promotes a performance culture in which performance and contributions of the workforce are recognized and rewarded more accurately and fully. An essential part of the system's design is to provide a fair and equitable method for appraising and evaluating performance. Job objectives are used as a way for managers/supervisors to communicate the major work that needs to be accomplished.

### What are Job Objectives?

*Job objectives* communicate major individual, team, and organizational responsibilities or contributions and the related outcomes and accomplishments that are expected of the employee.

*Job objectives* are linked to the mission or goals of the organization.

*Job objectives* focus on results and describe a future situation or expected outcome.

*Job objectives* capture the large buckets of an employee's work – not the small daily tasks of the job.

*Job objectives* must be appropriate to the pay band and salary of the individual.

### Requirements for Job Objectives

Everyone in NSPS will be assigned at least one job objective; generally, it is best to use three to five job objectives.

Job objectives may be weighted. No job objective may have a weight of less than 10%, and the total for all weighted objectives must be 100%. Component policies may specify additional requirements.

Managers/supervisors must be assigned at least one job objective that directly addresses their managerial roles under NSPS.

## What are SMART Objectives?

- **S - Specific** means that an observable action, behavior, or achievement is described. It also can mean that the work relates to a rate of performance, frequency, percentage, or other number. The job objective should be specific about the result, not the way it is achieved.
- **M - Measurable** (or observable or verifiable) means that a method or procedure must exist to assess and record the quality of the outcomes. Some work is measured easily; in other cases, behaviors or results need to be verified or observed.
- **A - Aligned** means drawing a line of sight between job objectives throughout the organization so that all are working toward the same goal. This improves the performance of the team, the command, and the entire organization.
- **R – Realistic/Relevant:** *Realistic* means the achievement of a job objective is something an employee or a team can do to support a work-unit goal. The job objective is achievable with the resources and personnel available and within the time available. *Relevant* implies that the job objective is important to the employee and the organization.
- **T - Timed** (or timely, time-bound) means there is a point in time when the job objective will start or when it will be completed.

## Criteria for Effective Job Objectives

Consider these criteria when writing job objectives:

- Are the job objectives results-focused?
- Do the job objectives focus on the “large buckets” of work the employee is responsible for accomplishing within the period of performance?
- Can a “line of sight” be drawn between the job objectives and the organization’s mission and goals?
- Are the job objectives appropriate for the employee’s salary level, pay schedule, and pay band?
- Are the job objectives written in a SMART framework so that the supervisor and employee have a shared understanding of what is expected?

## Mandatory Supervisory Job Objective

Managers/supervisors must be assigned at least one job objective that directly addresses their managerial role under NSPS. This mandatory job objective must cover these criteria:

- Communicating performance expectations and holding employees responsible for accomplishing them
- Making meaningful distinctions among employees based on performance and contribution
- Fostering and rewarding excellent performance
- Addressing poor performance
- Ensuring that employees are assigned a rating of record when required
- Adhering to laws and regulations governing merit-systems principles, prohibited personnel practices, and equal employment opportunity

## Utilizing Automated Tools

To support supervisors and employees during the performance management phase of NSPS, the Department of Defense developed a set of online tools. 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. The application also 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 the NSPS web site at <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 all employees under NSPS required to have a written performance plan containing job objectives?**

**Answer:** Yes, all employees must have a written performance plan with job objectives that focus on the critical work the employee performs, is aligned with organizational goals, and focused on results.

**Question: Is there a required number of job objectives?**

**Answer:** Everyone in the workforce needs to have a minimum of one job objective. Typically, most employees will have three to five objectives.

**Question: How many job objectives do managers/supervisors need to have?**

**Answer:** Managers/supervisors must be assigned at least one job objective that directly addresses their managerial roles under NSPS.

**Question: If the employee is working toward goals that span several appraisal periods, how is the work evaluated?**

**Answer:** The work should be divided into smaller portions with milestones that fall within a single appraisal period.