



### **Writing Effective Performance Plans** A Workshop for Senior Executives

Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of  
Defense

Civilian Personnel Policy

[www.cpms.osd.mil/sespm/index.htm](http://www.cpms.osd.mil/sespm/index.htm)

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This presentation provides DoD executives with a foundation for writing effective performance plans. The presentation focuses on:

- Aligning individual requirements to mission and organizational goals
- Writing effective requirements using the SMART-Q framework

By the end of the presentation, you will understand what is expected in a performance plan and have the information necessary to complete it.

If you would like additional information and support, resources are identified at the end of the presentation.



### Workshop Overview

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- Setting the Context
- Developing an Effective Performance Plan
- Performance Planning Process – Key Elements
- Aligning Work with Organizational Goals
- Writing Your Plan – Common Terms
- Developing Effective Performance Requirements
- Writing Effective Performance Requirements
- SMART Q Framework
- Writing SMART Q Performance Requirements
- Translating Requirements into Accomplishments
- Engaging in Ongoing Dialogue
- Taking Advantage of Available Resources

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The workshop focuses on a series of topics that address:

- Why performance management is important
- How the SES performance plan is developed
- What the key elements are of the plan
- What the SMART Q framework is
- How to write performance requirements using the SMART Q framework
- How to translate requirements into accomplishments
- Why engaging in ongoing dialogue is critical
- What resources are available to you as you develop your plan



### Setting the Context

- Increased emphasis on executive accountability
- SES bonus payout directly related to demonstrated results
- Aligning organizational goals with individual performance – starts at the top
  - ✓ Executives must demonstrate this alignment and support transition to organization-wide pay-for-performance system

**Results.Results.Results.**

DoD is transforming the way it recognizes and rewards its civilian workforce. As we implement National Security Personnel System (NSPS), it makes sense that greater emphasis is placed on executive accountability. Demonstrating results that are directly related to mission and/or organizational accomplishment determine your performance payout.



### Setting the Context

- Executives take the lead and set the example
- Core of successful performance management systems:
  - ✓ An increased emphasis on aligning individual work with mission
  - ✓ A commitment to acknowledging and rewarding performance
  - ✓ An ability to distinguish levels of performance
  - ✓ Ongoing communications

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Executives must lead and set and set the example for DoD's transition to a performance management culture. It begins at the top. At the core of every successful performance management system is:

- An increased emphasis on aligning individual work with mission and/or organizational goals
- A commitment to acknowledging and rewarding performance
- An ability to distinguish levels of performance so that those who are contributing the most are rewarded appropriately
- A communication process that allows everyone to understand how he/she contributes to achieving the mission and/or organizational goals



### Developing an Effective Performance Plan

- **Writing an effective plan:**
  - ✓ Clarifies your priorities
  - ✓ Establishes performance criteria
  - ✓ Sets into motion the ability for your organization to cascade priorities
  - ✓ Focuses you and your organization on a common set of requirements
  - ✓ Makes concrete to your staff what is important/what will be rewarded
  - ✓ Demonstrates your commitment to organizational effectiveness

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Given the continued and increased emphasis on results and mission accomplishment, writing an effective plan is a worthwhile investment in time as it:

- Clarifies your priorities for the performance cycle
- Establishes the performance criteria that you will be accountable for achieving
- Sets into motion the ability of your managers/supervisors to cascade their priorities based on your priorities
- Focuses you and your organization on a common set of requirements
- Makes concrete to your staff what is important and what will be rewarded
- Demonstrates your commitment to organizational effectiveness



### Performance Planning Process – Key Elements

- There are three steps in the performance planning process:
  - ✓ Step 1 – Align and Plan Your Performance
    - Ensure that your plan is aligned with your organizational goals and mission
  - ✓ Step 2 – Write Your Performance Plan
    - Complete your performance plan
  - ✓ Step 3 – Engage in Ongoing Dialogue
    - Establish a plan to ensure that you and your executive have regularly scheduled conversations to discuss your plan

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Three steps are identified as part of the performance planning process:

- Step 1 – Align and Plan Your Performance
- Step 2 – Write Your Plan
- Step 3 – Engage in Ongoing Dialogue


Each step is critical to successfully writing and implementing your plan. Once you complete Steps 1 and 2, you meet with your executive to discuss your plan and ensure that expectations are satisfied and that both parties have a clear understanding of priorities for the upcoming performance cycle.

To ensure you stay on track, make a commitment to establishing a process for ongoing communication – this ensures that you and your executive maintain a shared understanding of expectations and performance.



### Aligning Work with Organizational Goals

- Performance plans must be derived from, aligned with and linked to one or more of the following:
  - ✓ President's Management Agenda (PMA)
  - ✓ Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR)
  - ✓ Mission statement
  - ✓ Strategic Plan
  - ✓ Organizational goals
  - ✓ Agency performance plans and budget priorities
- Relationship must be clear and transparent
- Responsibility must be obvious
- Results must be demonstrated and measurable



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graph TD; A[DoD Strategic Plan] <--> B[Component Vision, Mission and Goals]; B <--> C[Organization Vision, Mission and Goals]; C <--> D[Individual Performance];
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During Step 1 you align your work with the mission and/or organizational goals. Give some thought to what you want to focus on and consider reviewing documents such as:

- President's Management Agenda (PMA)
- Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR)
- Mission Statement
- Strategic Plan
- Organizational Goals
- Agency performance plans and budget priorities

**Ask yourself:** What are the priorities I need to focus on for the coming performance cycle.

For many, aligning individual work with mission and/or organizational goals is often time consuming and not as simple as it appears. Given all that may be on your plate, categorizing your work and aligning it may take time. Further, you need to focus on the “big ticket items” – those activities that define your priorities. Give attention to ensuring:

- Relationship is clear and transparent
- Responsibility is obvious
- Results can be demonstrated and measurable



## Aligning Work with Organizational Goals

### ■ Ask yourself

- ✓ What are my primary goals and expectations relative to achieving my organizational goals?
- ✓ Does leadership have a shared understanding of my priorities and responsibilities?
- ✓ Do I have the right type of resources to achieve my priorities and responsibilities?
- ✓ Do I have a communications strategy in place to keep my staff informed so we have a shared understanding of how to accomplish our priorities and responsibilities?

Answers to these questions help you determine what your performance plan includes.

There are a few questions that you may want to ponder as you identify how to align your work. Answers to these questions help you determine what to include in your performance plan. As well, this activity helps you focus on the critical, few requirements that need to be the focus of your performance plan. Consider:

- What are my primary goals and expectations to achieving my organizational goals?
- Does leadership have a shared understanding of my priorities and responsibilities?
- Do I have the right type of resources to achieve my priorities and responsibilities?
- Do I have a communications strategy in place to keep my staff informed so that we have a shared understanding of how to accomplish our priorities and responsibilities?

### Suggested Activity

Take 30 minutes to jot down your primary responsibilities. Now, try to align your responsibilities with the mission and organizational goals. Take advantage of the various documents you have at your disposal to inform your thinking.





### Writing Your Plan – Common Terms

- **Performance Element** – the major job assignments and/or position responsibilities that contribute to accomplishing the mission and organizational goals.
  - ✓ Leadership/supervision (**mandatory**)
  - ✓ Contribution to mission (**mandatory**)
  - ✓ Resource management
  - ✓ Communication
  - ✓ Cooperation/Teamwork
  - ✓ Customer care (**mandatory**)
  - ✓ Technical competence/problem-solving

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During Step 2 you will develop your plan. There are a few terms that you need to be familiar with and understand as they form the framework for completing the plan.

**Performance Element** – The major job assignments and/or position responsibilities that contribute to accomplishing the mission and/or organizational goals. Seven performance elements are identified.

A definition for each performance element is provided on the performance plan.

To determine if you must complete all elements, please see specific organizational guidance – you must complete the mandatory elements.

The elements may be weighted. You and your executive will determine the relative weight of each element. The sum of the values must be 100%.



### Writing Your Plan – Common Terms

- **Performance Requirement** – also known as an objective – identifies what you plan to accomplish during the rating period
  - ✓ You must write at least one results oriented requirement (objective) for each mandatory performance element
- **Performance Level** – criteria incorporated into your requirements to define what you want to be held accountable for
  - ✓ The performance criteria are written at the “Achieve Expectations” (AE) level

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For each performance element, you will write a **performance requirement**. Often a performance requirement is referred to as an objective. Under NSPS, a performance requirement is referred to as a “job objective”.

For each performance element completed, you must write at least one requirement. When you are trying to write your performance requirement, ask yourself “what are the big chunks of work that I am responsible for?” This will keep you from writing a laundry list of tasks and focus your writing on describing outcomes.

As you write your performance requirements, you will identify the **performance criteria** that you want to be held accountable for achieving. To determine the performance criteria, refer to the rating levels identified in the performance plan. You must write the performance criteria at the “Achieve Expectations” (AE) level.

**Tip:** You may find it helpful to write criteria at the AE and the “Exceptional Results” (ER) level so that there is clear understanding of what degrees of performance look like.



### Developing Effective Performance Requirements

- You must have at least one requirement for each mandatory element.
  - ✓ Tip: To ensure that you are not focusing on tasks, the general rule is one to three requirements per element.
- Requirements draw a line of sight between your work and the organization's success.
- Ask yourself
  - ✓ How are you challenged? (For example: Does it require you to move beyond your current level of performance to achieve the objective?)
  - ✓ How does the requirement lead to improved individual performance?
  - ✓ How does achieving the requirement lead to improved organizational performance?

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As we have already mentioned, when writing your requirements you need to think about the “big ticket items” you are responsible for. By doing this, you avoid the desire to write down tasks that you need to identify because this is how you will achieve your requirements but they are not part of the plan.

**Tip:** Good practice is to write no more than three requirements for each element. You must have at least one requirement for mandatory elements.

The nature of your work determines what your requirements will include. For example, some types of work lends itself to writing clear requirements such as the head of an auditing organization, while other types of work such as an attorney or lead policy writer tend to struggle with identifying clear requirements and outcomes.

Remember you are:

- Accountable for what is in your control/purview
- Responsible for focusing on outcomes and results – this is not an exercise in identifying processes



### Writing Effective Performance Requirements

- **SMART-Q is a framework for success**
  - ✓ Easy to understand
  - ✓ Breaks down the process into concrete steps
  - ✓ Results in an objective that is easily understood and results may be demonstrated
  - ✓ Levels expectations about performance and what is expected
- **Because of the emphasis on results, we include “Q” – Quality**
- **Each requirement must include the SMART- Q framework**

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Using the SMART-Q framework may make it easier to write a clear requirement that

- Aligns with the mission/organizational goals
- Focuses on tangible product or service outcomes
- Describes what it means to achieve expected outcomes

Remember your requirements translated into outcomes are what you are evaluated on so writing requirements at the right level and with the right expected outcomes is critical.

Let's review the SMART Q framework.



### Writing Effective Performance Requirements

- Drafting performance requirements takes you from the general to the specific
- Agreement on specifics requires dialogue with your executive
- This dialogue establishes foundation for ongoing communications
  - ✓ Mutual understanding of alignment and expectations
  - ✓ Leads to outstanding results

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Drafting performance requirements takes you from the general to the specific. Agreement on specifics may require additional clarifying conversations between you and your executive. This dialogue establishes the foundation for mutual understanding of alignment and expectations and fosters outstanding results.

Let's review the SMART Q framework.



### SMART Q Framework

- **S**pecific: In detail, what will be accomplished? Is it concrete?
- **M**easurable: How will I know my requirement is achieved? Can the result be determined? What is the evidence?
- **A**chievable (attainable): Do I have the resources, tool, time and support to make it happen?
- **R**ealistic (relevant): Is the requirement relevant to the mission and organizational goals and can I actually get it done?
- **T**imed (time bound): Did I identify a completion date, scheduled milestones or another way to determine when the requirement needs to be completed?
- **Q**uality: Can the results of a performance requirement be described in terms of quality, either based on a concrete metric of an evaluative judgment?


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As you write your requirements, answer the questions posed for each SMART Q element. By doing so, you ensure that you have bases covered and that your requirement is results-oriented. Remember:

- Identify what is in your purview – you cannot be held accountable for things that are out of your control/purview
- Identify ways to measure your results – you should not create a requirement that has results that are too difficult to measure or that the system required to measure the results is too difficult or expensive to make it reasonable to do
- Focus on the outcome

The following slides offer examples for you to consider.



### Writing SMART Q Performance Requirements

- I am the Executive Security Officer:
  - Protect and defend our critical infrastructures, networks, and information to maximize mission assurance:
    - ✓ Implement 90% of digital signatures and strong authentication across the Department by 30 Sep 06.
    - ✓ Deliver a means for 75% of installations to self-assess Critical Infrastructure by 30 Sept 06.
    - ✓ Integrate IA into 85% of programs and complete Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) certification and accreditation for 90% of systems by 30 Sep 06.


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Examples from three types of executive positions are offered. To demonstrate how an element may be addressed by different types of positions, the element “Contribution to Mission” is used for each example.

As you read the requirements, ask yourself:

- Are the examples written using the SMART-Q framework?
- Can the outcomes can be measured without establishing new measurement systems?
- Are the results are achievable?
- Are the outcomes defined by time lines and/or milestones?

At the end of the performance cycle, the executive will be able to demonstrate his/her accomplishments and indicate the impact of his/her work on the organization.



### Writing SMART Q Performance Requirements

- **I am the Executive Security Officer:**
  - Under Element – Contribution to Mission
  - Focused on specific outcomes with realistic outcomes that are achievable, measurable and within the executive's purview
  - At the end of the performance cycle, the executive will be able to identify his/her accomplishments and the impact of the results on his/her organization.
- **Protect and defend our critical infrastructures, networks, and information to maximize mission assurance:**
  - ✓ Implement 90% of digital signatures and strong authentication across the Department by 30 Sep 06.
  - ✓ Deliver a means for 75% of installations to self-assess Critical Infrastructure by 30 Sept 06.
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To demonstrate how an element may be addressed by different types of positions, the element “Contribution to Mission” is used for each example.

If the requirement is written using the SMART-Q framework, at the end of the performance cycle, you will be able to demonstrate your accomplishments and indicate the impact of your work on the organization.

Because the performance criteria is well written (using completion percentages, for example), it will be easy to distinguish levels of performance for you and your executive.






### Writing SMART Q Performance Requirements

- I am an Executive Judge:
  - Serve the soldier and veteran in a courteous and timely manner; decide their cases on behalf of the Secretary with justice, equity and compassion; and in the public interest; and present decisions in clear and concise responses.
    - ✓ 80% of cases processed within the 300 day congressionally mandated timeframe.
    - ✓ 80% of active duty officer separations and grade determinations were decided within 48 hours of presentation for final decision.
    - ✓ 80% of initial case processing at no more than 72 hours from receipt of application.

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Think about the nature of your work and try to imagine what a requirement is for your work. Refer to the examples to give you ideas.



## Writing SMART Q Performance Requirements

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Under Element – Contribution to Mission

Focused on specific outcomes with realistic outcomes that are achievable, measurable and within the executive’s purview

At the end of the performance cycle, the executive will be able to identify his/her accomplishments and the impact of the results on his/her organization.

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What requirements did you come up for your position?



### Writing SMART Q Performance Requirements

- I am an HR Executive:

- Oversee the development and sustainment of programs and policies to fill vacant positions with the required numbers, mix, and quality employees to support the organization and facilitate its transformation.

- ✓ Vacant positions will be completed within 30 days of the issuance of the referral list for SES positions and 45 days for positions below that level.


- ✓ HR recruitment policies resulting from the National Defense Authorization Act will be written in a clear and cogent manner, receive Component consensus, and are published within 75 days of enactment of the Act. Generally, draft policies require minimal rewrite for clarity, accuracy, comprehensiveness, and Department intent.

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As you review the examples, note that while the work is different, the examples share similar qualities:

- The outcomes are obvious.
- The results can be measured.
- The outcomes seem reasonable.
- The outcomes specify when the work will be accomplished.
- The outcomes are written at a high level rather than focused on individual tasks – remember the process is important but the outcome is what is evaluated.
- At the end of the performance cycle, it will be easy to demonstrate results and impact on the organization.

**Suggested Activity:** If you have time, take about one hour to write at least one performance requirement for each mandatory performance element. Make sure you identify the performance criteria at the “Achieve Expectations” (AE) level.



### Writing SMART Q Performance Requirements

- I am an HR Executive:
  - **Under Element – Contribution to Mission**
  - **Focused on specific outcomes with realistic outcomes that are achievable, measurable and within the executive's purview**
  - **At the end of the performance cycle, the executive will be able to identify his/her accomplishments and the impact of the results on his/her organization.**
- **Oversee the development and sustainment of programs and policies to fill vacant positions with the required numbers, mix, and quality employees to support the organization and and facilitate its transformation.**
  - ✓ Vacant positions will be completed within 30 days of the issuance of the referral list for SES positions and 45 days for positions below that level.
  - ✓ HR recruitment policies resulting from the National Defense Authorization Act will be written in a clear and cogent manner, receive Component consensus, and are published within 75 days of enactment of the Act. Generally, draft policies require minimal rewrite for clarity, accuracy, comprehensiveness, and Department intent.

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As you review the examples, note that while the work is different, the examples share similar qualities:

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**Suggested Activity:** If you have time, take about one hour to write at least one performance requirement for each mandatory performance element. Make sure you identify the performance criteria at the “Achieve Expectations” (AE) level.



### Writing SMART Q Performance Requirements

- **Avoid these common errors when writing your objectives**
  - ✓ The objective is vague.
  - ✓ The objective is not measurable or verifiable.
  - ✓ The objective is too complex or lengthy.
  - ✓ The objective is not tied to a timeline.
  - ✓ The objective places emphasis on inappropriate aspects of the work.
  - ✓ The employee has too many objectives.

**Check your requirements against the common errors to make sure your requirements are clear, concise and results-oriented.**



### Translating Requirements into Evaluations

- Raters must consider how well the objectives were met when the appraisal is due
- Solicit input from those being rated focusing on accomplishments--the results of the efforts
- Accomplishments need to make the connection between what you did and why it matters.
- Consider these tips
  - ✓ Write them in a clear and concise manner.
  - ✓ Identify specific examples of what you achieved.
  - ✓ Demonstrate how your accomplishments support your organization.
  - ✓ Focus on results.

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At the end of the performance cycle, you need to translate your requirements into accomplishments. This is not necessarily a simple exercise. When doing this, you will need to document what you achieved and distinguish your performance. Ask yourself:

- Did I achieve my requirements at the “Achieves Expectations” (AE) level or did I exceed or not achieve this level?
- How d I distinguish my performance?
- What concrete examples can I use to demonstrate how the results improve my performance and my organization’s performance?
- Were there extenuating circumstances that affected my ability to achieve my requirements? If yes, did I document them and share them with my executive throughout the year so that there are no surprises? If no, do I have documentation that I can present and defend? How do I want to position this?

**One way to think about this activity:** This is how I demonstrate I did what I said I would do and this is how I set myself apart from my colleagues.



### Engaging in Ongoing Dialogue

- Ongoing communication with your executive is key
- Not enough time is an excuse – if you value performance and your employees, you will make time
- Share expectations and priorities drive the process
- Ask yourself:
  - ✓ Do I have a clear understanding of his/her priorities and how this affects my work – have his/her priorities changed?
  - ✓ Has anything occurred that requires me to adjust my plan?
  - ✓ Do I need additional resources/support to achieve my requirements

Often executives dismiss Step 3 because there is never enough time. If DoD values a performance culture, executives will make time. It is critical that you and your executive have a shared understanding of your priorities and that you have ongoing sessions to discuss expectations. Ask yourself:

- Do I have a clear understanding of his/her priorities and how this impacts my work – has his/her priorities changed?
- Has anything occurred that requires me to adjust my plan?
- Do I need additional resources/support to achieve my requirements



### Taking Advantage of Available Resources

- **Need more help completing your performance plan or reviewing sample performance requirements?**
  - ✓ Visit the SES page on the CPMS website at:  
<http://www.cpms.osd.mil/sespm/index.htm>
  - ✓ Visit OPM's SES and performance management information at  
<http://www.opm.gov/ses>
  - ✓ Visit the Whitehouse's page on PMA at:  
[http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budintegration/pma\\_index.asp](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budintegration/pma_index.asp)
  - ✓ Read the Handbook for Measuring Employee performance at:  
<http://www.opm.gov/perfom/WPPDF/2002/Handbook.pdf>
  - ✓ Read DoD's "Department of Defense Civilian Personnel Manual (CPM)", SC920.SUBCHAPTER 920 – Executive and Senior Professional Pay and Performance System
  - ✓ **Contact your Component Senior Executive Resources Office** 24

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If you need assistance with completing your performance plan, resources are available. You are encouraged to check them out.

As DoD rolls out NSPS, courses on performance management will be offered to Managers/Supervisors and Employees. You are encouraged to take these courses so you are familiar with the performance management system and how it aligns with and supports the SES performance management system.

We wish you well and hope that this presentation helps you write a successful performance plan.