

# Why Set Performance Standards

- Communicate expectations
- Recognize high achievers
- Hold employees accountable
- Resolve poor performance issues
- Support WIGI determinations
- Determine status of probationers
- and last . . .
- It is a requirement for supervisors

# Developing effective performance plans

Performance plans are designed to

- effectively communicate
- your expectations –
- what you want the employee to do and
- how well you want it done.

# Creating/Updating an ePAP

- Review the specific goals and objectives identified in the Department's annual performance plan.
- Identify which agency performance goal(s) the work unit can affect.
- Determine what product or service the work unit produces or provides to support the Department's accomplishment of its goals.

# Writing the ePAP

- Identify the critical elements (1-5 CEs)
  - 1+ CE is linked to the Strategic Mission (GPRA).
- Develop specific performance requirements .
- Develop individual performance measures (performance standards) for each critical element.
  - Write general measures in terms of quantity, quality, timeliness, or cost-effectiveness

# What Is a Critical Element?

- An assignment or responsibility of such importance that unacceptable performance in that element would result in a determination that the employee's overall performance is unacceptable
- Regulations require that each employee have at least one but no more than five critical elements in their performance plan

# Critical Elements

- Flow from the position description
- Must describe work assignments and responsibilities that are within the employee's control
- Each employee must have at least one critical element
- Each employee must have at least one critical element that is linked to the strategic mission/GPRA

# Government Performance Results Act

**United States Department Of The Interior Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2011 – 2016** is comprised of five mission areas:

1. Provide Natural and Cultural Resource Protection and Experiences
2. Sustainably Manage Energy, Water, and Natural Resources
3. Advance Government to Government Relationships with Indian Nations and Honor Commitments to Insular Areas
4. Provide a Scientific Foundation for Decision-Making
5. Building a 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Department of the Interior

[http://www.doi.gov/bpp/data/PPP/DOI\\_StrategicPlan.pdf](http://www.doi.gov/bpp/data/PPP/DOI_StrategicPlan.pdf)

# Performance Standards

- While Critical Elements tell employees what they have to do, the Standards tell them how well they have to do it.
- Establishes a performance threshold, requirement, or expectation.
- A Fully Successful Standard must be established for each critical element and included in the employee performance plan.

# Writing Performance Benchmarks

- Fully Successful Performance Standard (Level 3) is a benchmark for performance.
- Determine
  - what it would take to exceed it, and
  - what unacceptable would look like.
- Employees must be involved in the development of their performance standards in the ePAP.
  - (Note: Page 1, Part A-2, of our ePAP form requires employee and supervisor signatures certifying that employee input into the development of the performance standards was solicited.

# Specific Measures

The following questions help determine the 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?*
- *Who could judge that the element was done well?  
What factors should they look for?*

# Writing Standards

- Performance standards are written to describe the “fully successful” level
  - They must describe experience or work in terms of quality, quantity, timeliness, method of work, or required savings.
  - They must be accurate, measurable, attainable, and reasonable.
  - They must be consistent, equitable and objective in the development of plans.
  - Established goals must be reasonable and attainable.

# Sample: Guidance and Technical Assistance

- Fully Successful Standard (to meet this standard, all of the bullets listed must be present or occur):
  - No more than 3-8% errors per quarter, as determined by the supervisor.
  - At least 60-80% of customers agree that the employee is willing to assist and that the information they receive is helpful.
  - Employee initially responds to customer requests for assistance within at least 1-8 working hours from receipt of request.

# Sample: HR Assistant – *Customer Satisfaction Element*

## • **FULLY SUCCESSFUL STANDARD**

• (To meet this standard, the employee must meet all of the following requirements). As determined by the supervisor through direct observation and/or discussions with several customers and/or peers):

- 1) Usually communicates clearly, courteously, and effectively with customers.
- 2) Routinely responds to each customer request with the most accurate and complete information available.
  - • If the information to a telephone call cannot be provided immediately upon request usually provides an answer within 3 working days of receipt of call.
  - • Email responses are usually answered within 5 working days.
  - • Formal written correspondence is produced within agency wide standards (usually 10 working days).
- 3) Generally mails requested information within 3 working days of receipt of request.
- 4) Whenever possible, elicits customer feedback to improve service.
- 5) If the employee cannot answer a customer's question completely, he/she generally provides name and phone number for the proper contact. If the question requires additional research, keeps the customer apprised of progress.
- 6) If requested material is temporarily unavailable to mail to customers, usually notifies the customers when they may expect to receive it.

# Sample: HR Assistant – *Customer Satisfaction Elements*

## ***SUPERIOR STANDARD***

Exceeds the *Fully Successful* standard plus two of the following occur:

- 1) Receives praise and/or written commendations from customers
- 2) On own initiative, assumes and accomplishes a significant amount of work beyond the normal load of assigned duties to achieve customer satisfaction
- 3) Proactively communicates with customers to establish good working relationship and assess customer needs
- 4) Consistently demonstrates in-depth knowledge of customer programs

## ***MINIMALLY SUCCESSFUL STANDARD***

The employee meets the first two requirements listed for *Fully Successful* and of the four remaining requirements, meets all but number(s) 4 & 6 .

# Sample Element: Team Participation

- Fully Successful Standard (to meet this standard, all of the bullets listed must be present or occur):
- The supervisor and team members are satisfied that the incumbent:
  - Usually assumes an appropriate amount of work/responsibility for group projects;
  - Typically demonstrates a willingness to assume other responsibilities as needed; and
  - Generally shares knowledge of office procedures/equipment with other members of the team.

# Example Element: Analytical Results and Specifications

To meet this standard, all of the bullets listed must be present or occur:

The Research Manager is routinely satisfied that:

- The method measures that appropriate variable.
- The results are relevant.
- The method is scientifically sound.
- There is a well-written protocol.
- The method is accurate, precise, reproducible, fast, and cost-effective.

# Let's talk about: Minimally Successful Standard?

“The Department of the Interior has not developed a benchmark standard for Minimally Successful standard for this performance cycle; however, managers and supervisors must develop a Minimally Successful standard when plans are established for the year and/or if it is determined that an employee has not achieved Fully Successful performance.”

## HR Assistant – *Customer Satisfaction Element*

### ***e.g. MINIMALLY SUCCESSFUL STANDARD***

The employee meets the first two requirements listed for *Fully Successful* and of the four remaining requirements, meets all but number(s) 4 & 6 .

# What to Avoid When Writing Retention Standards?

Remember: A retention standard is the standard that describes the level of performance necessary to be retained in a job.

An agency must ensure that “retention” standards:

- are not impermissibly absolute (i.e., allow for no error);
- and
- inform the employee of the level of performance needed to retain their job.

# Avoid Absolute Standards which

- Allow for no errors
- Require perfection at the retention level.

(Note: Absolute standards are acceptable in very limited circumstances such as where failure could result in loss of life, injury, or great monetary loss)

# Absolute Standards?

- *Poor:* Work is timely, efficient, and of good quality.
- *Better:* With few exceptions, work is timely, efficient, and of good quality.
- *Poor:* Communicates effectively within and outside of the organization.
- *Better:* On a routine basis, communicates effectively within and outside the organization

# Absolute Standards: Questions to Ask

- How many times may be employee fail this requirement and still be acceptable?
- Does a retention standard use words such as “all,” “never,” and “each,”?

(But: If the retention standard allows for no errors, would it be valid according to the criteria listed previously such as risk of injury or death, etc.)

# Avoid “Backward” Standards

- “Fails to meet deadlines.”
- “Performs work inaccurately.”
- “Requires assistance more than 50% of the time.”
- “Completes fewer than four products per year.”
- “Performance shows deficiencies that require correction.”

# More Common “Backwards” Standards

- “Performance shows deficiencies that require correction.”
- “Work frequently needs revision or adjustments to meet a minimally successful level.”
- “Assignments are completed, but often require assistance from supervisors and/or peers.”
- “Organizational goals and objectives are met only as a result of close supervision.”
- “On one or more occasions important work requires unusually close supervision or needs so much revision that some deadlines were missed.”

# “Backward” Standards: Questions to Ask

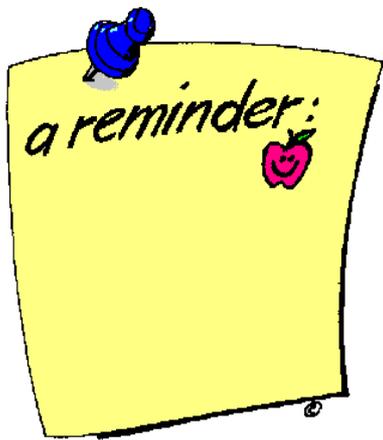
- Does the standard express the level of work the supervisor wants to see done or does it describe a negative performance?
- If the employee did nothing, would they meet the standard as written?
- If the employee requires assistance more than 50% of the time, would they meet the standard?

# Other Considerations to of Avoid?

- Conduct related issues
  - “Uses no more than five days of sick leave during the year.”
- Immeasurable “objective” measures
  - “Audits travel vouchers in order to track travel expenses.”

# The Discussion

- Be open, honest, and consistent
- Review each critical element and standards/ requirements.
- Allow the employee an opportunity to speak
- Ask questions to elicit information from employee
- Ask the employee about completing an IDP
- What training would the employee like to attend
- At the conclusion, ensure that an mutual understanding of the job has occurred.
- If changes are to be made, schedule a date and time for initiating the ePAP



# Initiating the ePAP Is the Starting Point

- There are no standards or expectations set for an employee's level of performance without an ePAP being initiated.
- Evaluating an employee's performance begins when you place the employees on their EPAPs. . . . And ends with the summary rating/rating of record.

