

Developing Performance Expectations

Job Aid

March 2013

In order for an agency to achieve its mission, it must establish and clearly communicate individual performance expectations aligned with agency goals. It is essential that employees have a clear and detailed understanding of:

- What is required of them
- What it takes to be successful
- What success looks like

Establishing clear expectations helps employees understand why their jobs exist, where their roles fit within their agencies and how their jobs link to agency and department objectives. Use this aid to assist you when developing performance expectations.

The Importance of Establishing Performance Expectations

- Identifies expectations for each position based on established essential duties
- Describes what is needed to satisfactorily perform the duties
- Explains where the employee is meeting or failing to meet established expectations
- Increases unbiased evaluation of performance
- Can lead to improved performance. If an employee knows what is minimally required to be successful, it can motivate him or her to do better!

What is a Performance Expectation?

A description of expected performance of an essential duty or responsibility listed on the position description or

A description of expected demonstration of an attribute or value deemed necessary by the agency for the accomplishment of its core mission

Steps in Establishing Performance Expectations

- Review the position description. An effective position description accurately reflects the essential duties and responsibilities of the position.
- Update the position description, if necessary.
- Identify the minimum level of performance necessary to satisfactorily perform the required duties or to satisfactorily demonstrate the required attributes or values.
- Ensure the expectation is measurable, such as: number of cases, timely responses, percentage of errors, etc.
- Communicate the expectations to employees.

Writing Performance Expectations

- Use an action verb: reduce, expand, increase, create, complete, develop, etc.
- Identify the desired result for each expectation.
- Identify any constraints that may prevent achieving the expectation: cost, time, materials, etc.
- State how one will know the expectation was met.
- Ensure accomplishing the expectation is within the employee's control.

Assessing Performance

After managers and supervisors have established performance expectations, they must define how they will determine how well the employee performed each expectation. The most commonly used measurements of performance are:

- **Quality:** how well or thoroughly work is performed
- **Quantity:** how much work is completed within a specified period of time
- **Timeliness:** how quickly work is produced; answers questions such as “When,” “by what date,” etc.
- **Cost-effectiveness:** can be used when performance can be assessed in terms of the amount of money saved, earned, collected; may include such aspects as maintaining or reducing unit costs, reducing the time it takes to produce or provide a product or service, or reducing waste

Types of Measurement

Typically there are two types of measurement when it comes to assessing performance:

- Quantitative (metrics-based): how much
- Descriptive: what determines the job was done well

How much is usually easy to determine because it is based on metrics, in the form of numbers, percentages, costs, etc. Descriptive is more difficult; therefore, what is successful and what is not should be clearly spelled out. Managers and supervisors may want to establish and communicate critical success factors (CSFs) which can be used to determine what “meets expectations.” **Note:** It is necessary to consider the agency’s mission and goals when establishing CSFs to ensure unit CSFs assist the agency in meeting its established goals.

Examples

Quantitative (metrics-based):

- Respond to customer concerns within 24 hours of contact.
- Reduce the number of applications waiting to be processed in excess of 180 days by 50%.
- Ensure that monthly, quarterly, semi-annual and annual Project Management schedules are met annually.

For example:

Rating of 3 – Schedule is met 85% to 95% of the time

Rating of 4 – Schedule is met 96% to 99% of the time

Rating of 5 – Schedule is met 100% of the time

Descriptive:

- **Initiative:** Regularly seeks solutions to problems both within and beyond area of direct responsibility; looks for and takes advantage of training and networking opportunities to increase job skills and knowledge
- **Adaptability/Flexibility:** Consistently adapts to changes in the work environment; manages competing demands; accepts feedback; adjusts approach or method to best fit the situation to ensure completion of assignments

Establishing SMART Performance Expectations

Create expectations using the SMART methodology to increase the likelihood that the expectation is clear, measurable and can be accomplished. SMART expectations are:

S PECIFIC	clearly identify what actions and results should be accomplished
M EASURABLE	based on quantifiable measures
A CHIEVABLE	can be challenging but there should be a reasonable probability that a qualified and competent employee can meet the expectation
R ELEVANT	directly related to the requirements of the position and the goals and objectives of the unit, division or agency
T IME-BOUND	have a clearly established deadline

Examples of Expectations using the SMART methodology:

Staff Assistant:

Collects and analyzes information and data related to expenditures by staff, for preparation of reimbursement for travel; reviews for accuracy and obtains authorizing signatures for all travel reimbursements

Rating of 3 – process all staff travel within 2 days of receipt of authorizing signatures with 95% accuracy

Rating of 4 – process all staff travel within 2 days of receipt of authorizing signatures with 98% accuracy

Rating of 5 – process all staff travel within 1 day of receipt of authorizing signatures with 100% accuracy

Operations & Management Consultant:

Ensures that all assigned action items are completed by the agreed upon deadline and in a high quality manner

Rating of 3 – completed within established deadline

Rating of 4 – completed within 75% of the established deadline

Rating of 5 – completed within 50% of the established deadline

Comparison Exercise:

Original Performance Expectation - Government Operations Consultant:

Respond to inquiries and requests for assistance within 24 hours. If unable to satisfy request within 24 hours, email employee by end of workday to provide status of request. Notify supervisor by the end of the workday or sooner when issues cannot be resolved.

Rating of 3 – responds to 75% of requests within 24 hours

Rating of 4 – responds to 90% of requests within 24 hours

Rating of 5 – responds to 100% of requests within 24 hours

Questions to ask when reviewing the performance expectation:

- What is the performance expectation trying to accomplish? (Providing an answer or completing the request within 24 hours? Touching base with (responding to) the customer within 24 hours? What amount of time is acceptable for the task to be completed?)
- Is this a SMART performance expectation? (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound)

Revised SMART Performance Expectation - Government Operations Consultant:

Provides accurate responses to requests for assistance within 24 hours. If unable to satisfy request within 24 hours, email employee by end of workday to provide status of request. Notify supervisor by the end of the workday or sooner when issues cannot be resolved.

Rating of 3 – acknowledges 100% of requests within 24 hours in accordance within outlined requirements and completes at least 75% of requests within 24 hours and all requests within 48 hours

Rating of 4 – acknowledges 100% of requests within 24 hours in accordance within outlined requirements, completes 76-90% of requests within 24 hours and all requests within 48 hours

Rating of 5 – acknowledges 100% of requests within 24 hours in accordance within outlined requirements, completes more than 90% of requests within 24 hours and all requests within 48 hours

Comparison of the original performance expectation with the SMART performance expectation:

While the original performance expectation may have appeared to be specific, it didn't indicate that the response given must be correct. Also, in the rating scale provided, it implied that as long as contact was made (i.e., responded to within 24 hours) the follow-up action to complete the expectation was not being evaluated.

The newly developed performance expectation and rating includes additional measures to help differentiate between how many requests for assistance have been completed. The employee's ability to complete requests more quickly (while providing an accurate response) indicates the employee's level of expertise. Additionally, it should be noted that in the newly developed performance expectation, in order for a "request" to be considered "completed," the response must be accurate.