

Performance Measures Job Aid

A Good Performance Measure Is “SMART”

~ Keep your eye on the agency’s goals and set objectives accordingly ~

What is an objective? Is it the same as a goal?

Objectives are not the same as goals. The difference is we **perform** objectives and we **reach** our goals. Objectives are the means to reaching a goal. It usually takes several objectives to reach a single goal. In a results-oriented culture, agency goals are established. They are then passed down from senior management. Every Forest, District, Branch, or unit has a responsibility to help reach the agency’s goals. Individual employees are charged with meeting a specified number of objectives within their work unit.

What is a performance “measure?”

A performance measure is a statement that quantifies or qualifies the desired result or behavior. It describes a level of performance in terms of the results expected by the supervisor.

What is the SMART method?

The SMART system is an easy way to write objectives. SMART means:

Specific

Measurable

Attainable

Relevant and **R**easonable

Time-bound

1. **Specific:** The performance measure should be clearly defined, be free from ambiguities, bias, personal feelings, or opinions and contain finite measures that specify the line between satisfactory work and less-than-satisfactory work.
2. **Measurable:** There are many ways to measure the outcome of an objective. The most frequently used ways to measure are:
 - Quality (customer satisfaction, consistency, effectiveness, and accuracy)
 - Quantity (amount process, amount produced)
 - Timelines (efficiency, met deadlines, milestone achievement)
 - Behavioral (empowerment, initiative, creativity, problem solving, teamwork)

An outcome can also be measured by counting the average age of the accounts receivable at the beginning of the period and again at the end.

3. **Attainable:** To be attainable, it must be known that the knowledge, authority, approval, time, budget, staff, and resources are available for the employee to accomplish the objective.

4. **Relevant, Reasonable, and Results-Oriented:** Objectives will only be relevant when they are tied to the goals and objectives of the agency, whether it be the strategic plan or the individual work unit.

Objectives must be reasonable for an employee to achieve during the specified time frame or rating period. Measures must be nondiscriminatory by being consistently applied to all personnel in the same or similar position (or grade) with the same authority.

Although the standards may be the same for similar positions, the measures should reflect the grade level of the employee.

5. **Time-bound:** The importance of including a due date or deadline is extremely important and cannot be over emphasized. Deadlines create a sense of urgency and create a good frame of reference for measurement. Objectives without deadlines are just “good ideas” or “promises.”

Deadlines must be realistic and should be agreed upon by the employee and supervisor. However, if the employee and supervisor reach an impasse on the deadline for a task or function, the supervisor does have the right to make the final decision.

When writing objectives you should ask your self the following questions:

- What needs to be accomplished?
- What is intended?

These questions point out that each objective must be singular and require an action verb. An objective may be stated as:

By the end of the first quarter of the FY, the average age of accounts receivable will be reduced by 12 days, without causing customers to complain that collections are overly aggressive.

This objective describes a single outcome, and the word “reduced” is the action verb.

Ways to Measure . . .

- **Qualitative measures:** Refers to the accuracy, appearance, or usefulness of the work effort. For example, typical quality measures may focus on the number of errors allowable on customer satisfaction surveys or number of drafts permitted before final submission.
- **Quantitative measures:** Refers to the number of products produced, services provided, or a general result. They are expressed in terms of numbers, percentages, frequencies, etc.
- **Timeliness measures:** Refers to completion times and are usually expressed as how quickly, when, or by what date an employee produces the work.
- **Cost-effectiveness measures:** Refers to dollar savings or cost control for the Government that can be documented and measured in the agency annual fiscal year budgets. Cost-effectiveness measures may include maintaining or reducing unit costs, reducing the time it takes to produce or provide a product or service, or reducing waste.

Tips for Developing Performance Measures . . .

To determine the type(s) of measure(s) that might be appropriate for each task, think about the following questions and remember, we are measuring what is important, not what is easy to measure:

- Is quality important? Does the agency, stakeholder, or customer care how well the work is done?
- Is quantity important? Does the agency, stakeholder, or customer care how many items are produced?
- Is it important to accomplish the standard by a certain time or date?
- Is it important to accomplish the standard within certain cost limits?
- What measures are already available?

Tips for Evaluating the Measures . . .

Evaluate the tasks by using a combination of descriptive and numeric measurements:

- Numeric measures are easy to verify and provide a quantifiable, objective tool.
- Descriptive measures are verifiable descriptions of what would represent meeting expectations.

Think about the following questions when evaluating the measures for each task:

- How could quality, quantity, timeliness, and/or cost-effectiveness be evaluated?
- Is there some number or percent that could be tracked?
- If the task does not lend itself to being evaluated with numbers and can only be described, who could judge that the expectations of the element were met?
- What factors would they look for?