

Tips for Aligning Performance Plans with Organizational Goals

Step 1: Look At the Overall Picture

To align performance plans with organizational goals, supervisors must first understand what the agency and unit goals are, and what the employee's job is based upon his/her position description.

Understanding this may include a supervisor (and employee) reviewing several documents including the Agency's strategic plan, a unit or program strategic plan, the unit's WorkPlan, the unit's budget and associated action or unit program of work and the employee's position description.

It is necessary to determine which goals and measures the work unit and employee's work can affect.

Step 2: What method is most appropriate when determining Work Unit Accomplishments?

There are three methods for determining work unit accomplishments. Use any or all of the following three methods to help develop and/or clarify standards and measures.

Method A: Goal Cascading Method

Cascade the Agency and/or Program goals to the work unit level. Determine the work unit's accomplishments that directly affect the organization's goals. The "goal cascading method" is a good method because the Forest Service has clear organizational goals and objectives, which include our strategic plan. Many units and programs also have their own strategic plans or more detailed work plans that are aligned with the Agency's Strategic Plan. This method requires answers to each of the following questions:

- What are the agency's (or program's) specific goals and objectives?

These can be found in the Agency or Program Strategic Plan. Go to http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/rpa/FS_SP_FY04_08.pdf for the "USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan for FY 2004 to FY 2008."

- Which agency or program goals can the work unit affect?

A work unit may affect only one Agency or Program goal, but in some situations, goals are written so broadly that the work unit may affect more than one.

- What product or service does the work unit produce or provide in order to help the agency or program reach its goals?

Clearly tying or aligning work unit products and services to organizational goals is key to this process. If a work unit recognizes that it generates a product or service that does not

affect organizational goals, the work unit needs to analyze the situation. They will need to ask themselves, if the product or service does not contribute toward agency's goals, why is it necessary?

Method B: Customer-Focused Method

Determine the products or services that the work unit provides to its customers. The "customer-focused method" works well when there are no clear agency goals, and when the work unit knows who its customers are and what they expect. Often this method is easier to apply to administrative work units that provide support functions, such as a Human Capital Management unit, an Acquisitions Management unit, or a Facilities Maintenance unit. This method focuses on achieving customer satisfaction and requires answers to each of the following questions:

- Who are the customers of the work unit?

If the work unit provides a support function, most of its customers may be internal to the agency.

- What products and/or services do the customers expect?

Remember, when answering this question; be sure to describe accomplishments and not activities.

- **Activity:** an action taken to produce results and is generally described as a verb (e.g., *filing* documents, *developing* software programs, *answering* customer questions, or *writing* reports.)
- **Accomplishment:** (or output) is the product or services of an employee or work unit activities and is generally described using a noun (e.g., *files* that are orderly and complete, a software *program* that works, accurate *guidance* to customers, or a *report* that is complete and accurate).
- **Outcomes:** are the final result of an agency's products and services and other outside factors that may affect performance. (e.g., *reduced* number of duplicate data calls needed because of missing information, *improved* audit findings related to efficient use of budget allocation, *improved* fish hatcheries based on decrease in toxicity.).

For more information, visit the Managing for Results web page at:

<http://fswb.wo.fs.fed.us/results/>

Method C: Work Flow Charting Method

The "work flow charting method" works well for work units that are responsible for a complete work process, such as the processing of a case, the writing of a report, or the production of a customer information package.

This method asks work units to develop work flow charts. A work flow chart is a picture of the

major steps in a work process or project. It begins with the first step of the work process, maps out each successive step, and ends with the final product or service.

To help build a work flow chart, answer these questions:

- How does the work unit produce its products or services?

Start by listing the most basic steps in the process. For this purpose, you do not need to list all the activities required. (However, if you were analyzing the work to find ways of improving the process, you would need to list every activity.)

- Which are the most important steps in the process?

By determining these steps, you highlight areas for performance measurement. As you map out the process, you may find yourself describing activities. Try to group the activities into key steps by describing the results of those activities as one step in the process.

Step 3: Determine Individual Accomplishments That Support Work Unit Goals

Use the following questions to help you determining the individual accomplishments that support work unit goals:

- What does the employee do?

When answering this use an action verb to introduce the statement. (Types and edits letters and memoranda for Forest Supervisor.)

- Why does the employee do it?

State why the task is done. (When editing memoranda, consults style manual to ensure documents are presented in appropriate formats.)

- What is the result?

Describe what is expected. (Final reports, letters and memoranda that are accurate, useful, and submitted on time.)

Use the following factors when considering how an employee will be measured:

- Frequency of the responsibility.
- Length of time it takes to complete the responsibility. If it does not require a substantial part of the employee's time, it might not be worth measuring.
- Whether the employee controls the outcomes of the responsibility. Employees should be held accountable for, and measured on the outcome of jobs within his/her control.
- Impact on the organization. Jobs or programs that will have an impact on the organization's ability to accomplish its mission or meet its goals should be included as a performance standard and clarified so the employee clearly understands what is expected.

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?