



Department of the Interior
Establishing Results-Oriented Position Specific Performance Commitments for
Executives

An important component in building a results-oriented performance culture is the establishment of results-oriented performance elements. As a prerequisite for certifying Senior Executive Service (SES) performance management systems, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requires that executives' performance plans include results-oriented performance elements accounting for at least 60% of each executive's summary performance rating.

The Department of the Interior's new SES Performance Management System meets this requirement through the use of Position-Specific Performance Commitments. Commitments are critical actions, objectives, and/or results that the executive is expected to accomplish during the performance rating period. Commitments describe individual accountability for accomplishing organizational goals and capture individual contributions to organizational success.

As part of the annual SES Performance Agreement, each executive is required to have a minimum of two (maximum of six) performance elements that contain Commitments defined at the Fully Successful level. Executives and their supervisors must develop Commitments in consultation. This document provides guidance for writing effective Position-Specific Performance Commitments under the Department's SES Performance Agreement and Appraisal System.

Characteristics of Effective Performance Commitments

Effective Performance Commitments:

- Derive from mission, strategic business goals, and business plans;
- Describe distinct observable, measurable, and demonstrable actions, objectives or results to be achieved during the performance period; and
- Include appropriate measures or indicators of quality, quantity, timeliness, and cost effectiveness.

Linking Performance Commitments to Organizational Goals

The SES Performance Agreement and Appraisal System links individual performance to organizational success through a cascading process. The continuum of goals from the Department to the Bureau and Program levels provides an overall framework, and individual Position-Specific Performance Commitments are constructed to capture the specific results for which the executive is accountable. The explicit alignment between individual Position Specific Performance Commitments and organizational goals helps demonstrate the connection between executives' daily activities and organizational performance.

Content of Position-Specific Performance Commitments

Under the Department's SES Performance Agreement and Appraisal System, Executive Performance Agreements must include two to six Position-Specific Commitments defined at the Fully Successful level. Each Commitment must contain at least one:

(1) Objective - This is the intended accomplishment, product, outcome, or deliverable (tied to organizational goals) *that the employee will produce* during the performance cycle.

(2) Measure/Milestone - This provides the yardstick for determining how well the objective was achieved, and may be expressed in terms of quantity, quality, timeliness or cost/cost-effectiveness:

- Quantity – How much? How many?
 - Quantity measures address how much the employee or work unit produced. They may refer to the number of products produced or services provided.
 - Quantity measures may be expressed as “no more/fewer than,” “at least,” “no more/less often than.”
- Quality – How well (subjective and objective measures of satisfaction)?
 - These measures address how well the work is performed or how accurate or effective the final product is. Quality refers to accuracy, appearance, usefulness or effectiveness.
 - Quality measures may include expressions of service attributes such as “courteous,” “helpful,” “tactful” and “resourceful.”
- Timeliness – When? How quickly? By what date?

--Timeliness measures should be set realistically in view of other performance requirements and needs of the organization.

- Cost/Cost Effectiveness – How much money, effort, or time has been saved?

--Cost/Cost-Effectiveness measures are used to assess the utilization of resources (money, personnel, time). They may be expressed in terms of manpower or dollar savings from reducing unit costs, decreasing time to produce/provide a product or service, or reducing waste.

- Position-Specific Performance Commitments should clearly articulate what is expected of the executive during the year, worded in terms of specific results, not just a responsibility or job duty. A Commitment that only describes activities that the executive performs, or restates organizational goals without specifying outcomes and including measures for evaluating success, is unacceptable.
- It is not enough simply to include measures -- the measures must be meaningful for the Commitment. The intended accomplishment, product, outcome, or deliverable must be identified before determining the best measures to gauge success.
- In most cases, it should be possible to measure accomplishments using current or slightly modified versions of review processes and tracking systems that are already in place. If application of a measure requires establishment of a totally new system or process, the measure may be inappropriate, and a more feasible measure for the intended outcome should be considered.

Developing Performance Commitments

The following templates provide two different approaches for developing Position Specific Performance Commitments:

Template 1

| Step | Action | Component |
|------|--|-----------------------|
| 1. | Begin by writing "I will" EXAMPLE: "I will" | Objective |
| 2. | Write an action verb EXAMPLE: "correct" | Objective |
| 3. | Write an object noun for the action verb; answer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What will be accomplished? • Which stakeholder interests will be affected? EXAMPLE: "significant deficiencies identified in the FY-07 audit" | Objective |
| 4. | Write a quantitative or qualitative measure relating to the object noun; | Measure/ Milestone |

| | | |
|----|---|-----------------------|
| | <p>answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much? How many? What kind of? • How much money, effort, or time will be saved? <p>EXAMPLE: “to a level that is accepted as sufficient by the Office of the Inspector General auditors”</p> | |
| 5. | <p>Write a target time-frame for achieving the expectation;</p> <p>answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When? How quickly? By what date? <p>EXAMPLE: “by 2nd Quarter FY-08”</p> | Measure/ Milestone |
| 6. | <p>(Optional) Write other context clauses to clarify the commitment;</p> <p>answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the work be performed? • Where will it happen? • Who will be involved? <p>EXAMPLE: “in compliance with accepted accounting standards.”</p> | Measure/ Milestone |

Example:

| | |
|--|---|
| Element 1: Financial Management | Link to Strategic Plan/Organizational Goals: Effectively Managed U.S. Gov't Finances |
| <p>Performance Commitments (written at the Fully Successful level)</p> <p>I will correct significant deficiencies identified in the FY-07 audit (objective) to a level that is accepted by the Office of the Inspector General auditors by 2nd Quarter FY-08, in compliance with accepted accounting standards. (measure/milestone).</p> | |

Additional examples of Commitments using Template 1:

1. I will develop an FY-08 financial plan for the \$38B XZY portfolio (objective) by the end of Quarter 1 (milestone/measure) and execute the FY-08 financial plan (objective) to at least 98% of target (measure/milestone).
2. I will develop an internal hiring model (objective) to reduce the fill time rate for vacancies by 10% by December 2007 (measure/milestone).
3. I will implement a quality control system to ensure products meet applicable standards (objective) by end of 3rd Quarter FY-08 (measure/milestone). I will complete quality control reviews of selected assignments (objective) for at least four programs by the end of FY-08 (measure/milestone).
4. I will provide timely initial feedback to customers (objective) within 5 days of request and with an error rate of less than 5% errors (measure/milestone).

Template 2

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| <p>What (Verb + Noun)</p> <p>When/How/Why (e.g., Timeframe/Method/Purpose)</p> <p><i>EXAMPLE</i></p> <p>What Reduce overtime in XYZ office from 150 hours/month to 50 hours/month</p> <p>When/How/Why by 4th Quarter FY-08 to improve organizational efficiency.</p> |
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Example:

| | |
|--|--|
| Element 1: Workforce Management | Link to Strategic Plan/Organizational Goals: Management and Organizational Excellence |
| Performance Commitments (written at the Fully Successful level) | |
| I will reduce overtime in XYZ office from 150 hours/month to 50 hours/month (what) by 4th Quarter FY-08 to improve organizational efficiency (when/how/why). | |

Additional examples of Template 2 Performance Commitments:

1. I will improve the accuracy and credibility of cost elements (what) by applying earned value technique reducing variance to < 15% in FY-08 (when/how/why).
2. I will implement an effective and consistent information management and information technology portfolio management process across the bureau (what) to reduce investment costs by 5% by September 30 (when/how/why).
3. I will reduce the risk of terrorist exploitation of vulnerable national-level financial enterprises (what) by conducting joint international bulk cash smuggling training in two new countries of highest national concern by the end of FY-08 (when/how/why).
4. Based on customer survey results, I will develop an action plan (what) to address key areas of dissatisfaction and achieve 2% improvement in customer satisfaction on the

July 2008 survey (when/how/why).

Useful Action Verbs for Preparing Performance Commitments

The focus of effort for each job can vary significantly. Some basic rules of thumb can help in writing Performance Commitments based on whether an executive primarily works with people and/or data.

Data

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|--------------|---|
| Analyzing | Appraise, audit, evaluate, examine, experiment, identify, investigate, recommend, report, research, scan, scrutinize, study, suggest, summarize, test, verify |
| Comparing | Arrange, choose, classify, contrast, distinguish, grade, index, inspect, match, rank, segregate, select, sort |
| Compiling | Accumulate, collect, count, inventory, measure, observe, time |
| Computing | Estimate, figure |
| Coordinating | Authorize, control, decide, deliberate, determine, develop, direct, execute, formulate, implement, manage, organize, regulate, schedule |
| Synthesizing | Calculate, compose, design, devise, forecast, interpret, invent, plan, solve, translate |

People

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Exchanging Information | Dictate, discuss, indicate, inform, meet, relay, request |
| Instructing | Demonstrate, explain, instruct, lecture, teach, train |
| Mentoring | Advise, arbitrate, counsel, diagnose, prescribe, reconcile |
| Negotiating | Bargain, confer, debate, mediate, reason, settle |
| Persuading | Convince, influence, motivate, promote, solicit |
| Supervising | Appoint, assign, enforce, lead, rate |

Additional Examples of Results-Oriented Performance Commitments

The following additional examples of results-oriented performance commitments are based on samples from various government agencies. Although the content will not be directly applicable to all executives, they are useful illustrations for incorporating objectives and measures into performance commitments.

Policy

- By April 1, 2008, develop a legislative strategy for the budget and legislative initiative to broaden Treasury's investment authority. Work with Legislative Affairs to advance this initiative in the current legislative session.
- By June 1, 2008, obtain policy level decision on the universal direct deposit program to encourage recipients to sign up for direct deposit. Once approved,

work with the Treasury policy offices in developing an implementation strategy and plan by September 30, 2008.

- Ensure that IT security management policies are codified across the Department, as necessary, specifically by issuing guidance on interfaces/interconnections by May 1, 2008, to address deficiencies identified by the IG in the 2006 FISMA evaluation.
- Develop and deliver upon reporting requirements by OMB, Congress, and other internal/external oversight bodies, specifically to deliver the 2007 FISMA report for unclassified systems by October 15, 2008.

Program Improvement

- Within FY-08, I will assure 90% of audits conducted address identified high risk areas. Of these audits, at least 50% are requested by the activity/organization and at least 90% agree with the audit recommendations to garner customer confidence by providing professional audit services.
- I will ensure that sufficiency reviews meet 90% of the content and 90% of the timelines as prescribed in applicable regulations.
- I will develop and begin implementing a plan to correct processing deficiencies no later than 50 days after receiving a deficiency report.
- I will submit Capital Investment Reports by 1st quarter FY-08 and achieve a score of 4 or higher from OMB on all reports provided to OMB in order to achieve “Green” standard for success under OMB-directed goals in support of the President’s Management Agenda.
- By March 31, I will develop a plan for new releases for the Fiscal Projections System that will occur in FY-08. I will complete new releases within 30 days of the scheduled implementation date with a minimum of minor errors and no major errors, with all desired functions meeting expectations, and all outcomes meeting stated requirements.
- I will conduct monthly 25% quality reviews for monthly benefit payments through the automated system to evaluate achievement of established accuracy (95% accurate) and timeliness standards (paid within 15 days).

Legal

- I will provide accurate and timely legal advice with respect to FOIA matters. In 90% of all cases, I will provide initial response to requests for legal advice

regarding FOIA matters (other than administrative appeals) within 5 business days.

- I will identify and implement a system for archiving and retrieving legal advice and litigation pleadings provided by electronic mail or in hard copy by May 1, 2008. I will ensure that the “Open Cases” project docketing system is reviewed with each attorney once a month and that the docketing system is updated within 5 business days thereafter.
- I will support the procurement function, and ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations, by providing timely and accurate advice on procurement-related matters and through a rigorous legal review of solicitations and proposed awards. I will provide 90% of advice and initial comments on procurement matters, including review of solicitations and proposed awards, within 10 business days of receipt.
- I will review all proposed adverse actions, and lesser forms of discipline, and will provide timely, correct and responsive legal advice, services and products to clients, to include the Labor-Management Relations Office. I will review and provide 90% of initial comments on all proposed adverse actions or lesser forms of discipline within 5 business days of receipt.

Budget/Financial/Cost

- I will successfully defend the budget and submit a balanced defensible out-year budget with a goal of receiving consistent support from Congress by FY-08.
- Through business transformation efforts, I will identify savings amounting to \$35M in FY-08 to support Treasury’s eBusiness initiative.
- During the first quarter FY-08, I will establish a workgroup to provide short and midterm recommendations for ensuring there is adequate investment capacity; and, by May 2008, I will provide sound, actionable recommendations to the Assistant Secretary.
- By March 30, 2008, I will develop a business case document addressing the cash management policies related to the target balance level, investment policies, and situations where cash balances significantly shortfall. I will obtain management approval of the policies by August 30, 2008.

Information Technology/Data

- I will implement policy and processes to facilitate exchange of technical data, financial and acquisition information among directors and staff reducing response

times for administrative taskers to ten working days by December 30, 2007, and support fact-based decision-making by the Director and senior managers.

- I will protect and defend critical infrastructures, networks, and information to maximize mission assurance by:
 - Implementing digital signatures and strong authentication across the bureau by March 30, 2008
 - Delivering a means for components to self-assess critical infrastructure by June 30, 2008
 - Integrating information assurance into programs and completing Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) certification and accreditation for all systems by September 30, 2008

Human Capital

- I will oversee the development and sustainment of programs and policies to recruit and retain the required numbers, mix, and quality of civilians to support the mission.
 - 90% of overall retention goals achieved
 - Reduction in the current civilian time to fill by 10 work days
 - 90% fill of critical occupation positions
 - 90% of recruiting quality goals met
- I will develop a concept for virtual workplace that leverages technologies and accommodates employees working in geographically separate space as an alternative to contiguous office space during 1st year quarter FY-08. I will implement a test during 3rd quarter, and prepare the schedule and obtain resources to implement a virtual workplace plan in my division as a prototype to broader bureauwide implementation during 4th quarter.
- I will institute an overseas strategy to deploy personnel to 5 strategic locations by June 30, 2008. I will establish formal bilateral relationships with affected countries by September 30, 2008.

Inspector General

- By the end of the first quarter, implement changes recommended to performance measures by the Strategic Performance and Management task force. Monitor the performance and results of Assistant IGs within area of responsibility to make sure they are on track to meet FY-08 results.
 - Issue 60% of new products with recommendations to promote improved tax administration.
 - Deliver 60% of audit products on or before date promised to stakeholders to ensure information is provided when stakeholders need it.
 - Assure 80% of recommendations made in FY-06 have been implemented to

assess the responsiveness of corrective actions.

- Achieve a 98% or greater use of allocated resources through monitoring and adjusting, as necessary, staff and financial resources between the Assistant IGs to balance workloads and use resources effectively during mid-year and end-of-year assessments.