

Linking and Developing Measurable SES Results

Text-Only Version

Course Purpose

The basic Senior Executive Service, or SES, performance appraisal system links senior executive performance to the achievement of agency strategic goals and objectives. The SES performance appraisal system regulations for system approval and system certification apply to all career, non-career, limited term, and limited emergency senior executives. There are five critical elements in the basic SES performance appraisal system: Leading Change, Leading People, Business Acumen, Building Coalitions, and Results Driven. Part 5 of the Executive Performance Agreement provides the mandatory performance requirements for the first four critical elements. You may write agency-specific performance requirements for the first four critical elements, however you must write the performance requirements for the fifth critical element: Results Driven. The performance requirements within results driven must clearly link to agency strategic goals and objectives, be results-focused by describing the desired result from meeting the requirement instead of the method for achieving that result, and describe the desired result in measurable terms. This course will assist you in developing measurable results-focused performance requirements for the Results Driven critical element in your Executive Performance Agreement. To get the most out of this course, it is recommended that you collect all the documents and information you need to write your results-driven performance requirement. See [Read More](#) for examples of types of information and sources.

Read More

Sources of appropriate goals and objectives:

Type of Information	Source
Agency or Government-wide performance goals and objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presidential orders and initiatives• Agency high priority goals• Agency annual performance plans• Strategic plans• Organizational goals• Budgetary priorities
Department or Program Division <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Performance goal targets such as timeframes• Qualities used to measure outputs and outcomes	Agency, department, or division performance plans
Agency performance management <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Measuring practices• Appraisal process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Performance Improvement Officer• Executive Resources staff

A Performance Improvement Officer (PIO) is a senior-level agency leader with responsibility to supervise agency performance management activities; advise agency leaders about measuring performance; and

assist with integrating performance information into an agency's employee performance appraisal process.

Topics and Objectives

Welcome to the course on Linking and Developing Measurable SES Results-Focused Performance Requirements. This course has four topics. In this introduction, you have learned about your role in completing Part 5 of the Executive Performance Agreement: Results Driven. In topic two, Overview of Performance Requirements and Standards, you will learn about the different performance management terms used in developing performance requirements. In topic three, Developing Performance Requirements, you will learn how to develop measurable results-focused performance requirements using a logic model. The course summary will provide a review of the concepts you learned in this course.

Pre-course Exercise Introduction

Depending upon how long you have been a senior executive, you may or may not be familiar with the terminology and concepts used in developing measurable results-focused performance requirements. Before continuing this course, take a few minutes to check your current understanding about this terminology by answering a few questions.

Question: Read the question provided. Select the best response. What are work activities?

- Products or services
- Actions taken to produce products or services
- Results of products or services

Answer: Work activities are the actions taken or processes used to produce products or services.

Question: Read the question provided. Select the best response. What are outputs?

- The results of products or services
- The actions taken to produce products or services
- The direct products or services stemming from activities

Answer: Outputs are the direct products or services generated by employee and work unit activities. Outputs are generally described as nouns such as memos, reports, or guidance. An output is a type of result.

Question: Read the question provided. Select the best response. What are outcomes?

- The actions taken to produce products or services
- The results of an agency's products or services
- The products or services stemming from activities

Answer: Outcomes are the results generated by the use or implementations of output products or services. They can be Short term, intermediate, and long term.

Question: Read the question provided. Select the best response. Which of the following is a measurable results-focused performance requirement?

- Hold at least one staff meeting per month to communicate the Secretary's initiatives.

- Participate in at least five conference calls and a net conference to collaborate with District Office personnel
- Attend two conferences on leadership development
- Improve the protection of park cultural resources so that 57% of archeological sites listed in the database are in good condition

Answer: “Improve the protection of park cultural resources so that 57% of archeological sites listed in the database are in good condition” is a measureable results-focused performance requirement. All other responses are activities that can generate specific outputs. A measure, results-focused performance requirement is an output or outcome that is written in terms of quality, timeliness, and possibly quantity and cost-effectiveness.

So how did you do? This exercise covered some of the basic concepts you need to know and understand to develop measurable results-focused performance requirements. Let's take a closer look at what measurable results-focused performance requirements are.

Overview of Performance Requirements and Standards

Measurable Performance Requirements

As you know, the performance requirements you write must be measureable and results-focused. First, let's examine what makes a performance requirement measureable. To be measurable, a performance requirement needs to describe the desired result using metrics. There are four metrics typically used in performance requirements. Quality refers to how well work is performed and is often measured by accuracy, effectiveness, usefulness, reliability, or security. Timeliness refers to how quickly work is completed and is often measured as completion within a certain time period or by a certain date. Quantity refers to the amount of work performed or outputs produced and is often measured by raw numbers, percentages, or level of productivity. Cost-effectiveness refers to how much time or money was saved either in the creation or acquisition of a product or service, or as a result of using a more efficient product, service, method for performing a duty. Cost-effectiveness is often measured as reduced labor hours or financial cost to perform the same work. All performance requirements must include metrics describing quality and timeliness. When appropriate, performance requirements also include metrics for quantity and cost-effectiveness. These metrics enable you to focus on achieving results, provide accountability, and encourage improved customer service. Select each metric to review an example performance requirement. Select Commonly Used Quality Dimensions from your course Resources for more guidance on writing measurable performance requirements.

Quality

Often measured by:

- Accuracy
- Effectiveness
- Usefulness
- Reliability
- Security

Example performance requirement demonstration Quality:

Over the course of the reporting period: identify, research, evaluate, and produce two finished reports **based on all source information**. The reports are aligned to the overall strategic goals laid out in the Naval Criminal Investigative Service's (NCIS) mission and follow the required form. The products (reports) should **require minimal revisions** to conform to NCIS analytical standards.

Timeliness

Often measured as:

- Completion within a certain time period or by a certain date

Example performance requirement demonstration Timeliness:

Complete deployment activities and gain agency approval to release to production all approved sites **by March 1 of the fiscal year**.

Quantity

Often measured as:

- Raw numbers
- Percentages
- Level of productivity

Example performance requirement demonstration Quantity:

At least **89% of Partner organization representatives** are satisfied with the training provided by the training center as evidenced by the customer satisfaction survey.

Cost-Effectiveness

Often measured as:

- Reduced labor hours or reduced financial cost to perform the same work

Example performance requirement demonstration Cost-Effectiveness:

The reconstructions project is completed **5% under budget**, meeting all specifications, by September of the fiscal year.

Results-Focused Performance Requirements

Now, let's examine what it means for a performance requirement to be results-focused. To be results-focused, a performance requirement needs to directly support achieving the agency's strategic goal. This means that by meeting the requirement, you provide a meaningful contribution or make a significant difference that brings your agency one step closer to achieving its strategic goal. For example, if you were supporting an agency strategic goal to improve the health of the general population, a measureable results-focused performance requirement that would contribute to achieving that goal would be that by July 1 of the fiscal year, your agency will reduce cholesterol levels in American adult males by 7 to 9 points on average. The performance requirement supports achieving the agency

strategic goal because lower cholesterol decreases the occurrence of health problems such as heart disease. The performance requirement is measurable because it specifies an outcome using metrics that describe quality and a period of performance. Note that the quality metric provides a range of performance, above which exceeds and below which is minimally successful. Select Results-Focused Performance Requirement Examples from your course Resources for more examples of results-focused performance requirements.

Performance Standards

Each performance requirement you write must describe the standards by which to measure your achievement of that requirement. To standardize the evaluation and management of SES performance across agencies, the system provides a common performance rating scale, as documented in the Executive Performance Agreement. The scale has five standards, one for each performance level, that indicate the degree to which you meet a requirement. While the Executive Performance Agreement includes five levels of performance, this course focuses on how to describe what is expected to achieve Levels 3 and 5. At a minimum, you must write measurable performance requirements that describe the target performance expected at Level 3. To encourage improved performance, your requirements should include a description of the minimum performance required to achieve a stretch goal at Level 5. It is sufficient to describe the minimum performance expectations for this level because anything above those expectations will be considered Level 5. Be sure your Level 5 requirement is rigorous enough to allow for performance at Level 4. For example, if performance at Level 3 is 20% to 25%, then a reasonable performance at Level 5 would be 35%, not 26%. This allows for performance at Level 4 from 26% to 34%. As you establish measureable results-focused performance requirements, keep in mind that each requirement must describe the various degrees of achieving that requirement. See Level 3 and Level 5 to review excerpts from the Executive Performance Agreement, or select it from your course Resources to review the entire document. See Read More to review guidance on incorporating metrics into standards.

Level 3

Level 3 performance standard:

The executive demonstrates the high level of performance expected and the executive's actions and leadership contribute positively toward the achievement of strategic goals and meaningful results. The executive is an effective, solid, and dependable leader who delivers high-quality results based on measures of quality, quantity, efficiency, and/or effectiveness within agreed upon timelines. The executive meets and often exceeds challenging performance expectations established for the position.

Examples of Level 3 performance requirements:

- By September 30, the lead level in the Region's water will be reduced by 5-10%.
- At least 40-60% of customers are satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of their National Park experience.
- By July 31 of the fiscal year, your agency will have eliminated its case backlog so that 50-70% of all claims are adjudicated within 60 days.

Level 5

Level 5 performance standard:

The executive demonstrates exceptional performance, fostering a climate that sustains excellence and optimizes results in the executive's organization, agency, department, or Government-wide. This represents the highest level of executive performance, as evidenced by the extraordinary impact on the achievement of the organization's mission. The executive is an inspirational leader and is considered a role model by agency leadership, peers, and employees. The executive continually contributes materially to or spearheads agency efforts that address or accomplish important agency goals, consistently achieves expectations at the highest level of quality possible, and consistently handles challenges, exceeds targets, and completes assignments ahead of schedule at every step along the way.

Examples of Level 5 performance requirements:

- By September 30, the lead level in the Region's water will be reduced by 20% or more.
- Seventy-five percent or more of customers are satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of their National Park experience.
- By July 31 of the fiscal year, your agency will have eliminated its case backlog so that 90% or more of all claims are adjudicated within 60 days.

Note: Level 5 performance should be rigorous enough to allow for Level 4 performance.

[Read More](#)

Standard: Provides criteria for evaluating your performance towards meeting a requirement

OPM guidance for incorporating metrics into performance requirements:

- When a quality or quantity target for a performance requirement is set, the Level 3 requirement should be high enough to be challenging but not so high that it is not really achievable, and it must be able to be exceeded.
- Timeliness requirements should be set realistically in view of other performance requirements and needs of the organization. It is important that performance requirements be achievable.
- Performance requirements that address cost-effectiveness should be based on specific resource levels (money, personnel, or time) that generally can be documented and measured in agencies' annual fiscal year budgets.

Knowledge Check

Question: Read the question provided. Select the best response. What, if anything, is missing from the following performance requirement?

The annual program report to Congress is completed by September 1 of the fiscal year.

- The performance requirement is fine as written
- There is no cost-effective metric
- There is no quality metric

Answer: The statement has a timeliness metric, September 1, but does not include a quality metric, for example "accepted with only minor changes not affecting recommendations." Remember that to be measureable, performance requirements must describe the outcome in terms of quality and timeliness; cost-effectiveness is not a required metrics and should only be included when it is appropriate.

Developing Performance Requirements

Development Process Overview

To develop performance requirements that are measurable, results-focused and directly support achieving an agency strategic goal or objective, you may find it helpful to perform a two-part process. In part one of this process, you would use a tool called a logic model to identify, organize, and combine all the information you need. In part two of this process, you would use the information from your logic model to write performance requirements. Using this logic model process will help you tie your individual performance to your organization's performance. The logic model has five steps. First, you identify the agency strategic goal or objective you are trying to achieve. As part of that process, you identify any assumptions or external factors that might influence your inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. Next, you identify inputs needed to achieve your objective, the activities you must perform using those inputs, and the outputs that should result from those activities. If appropriate, you must also identify the broader outcome that you expect to result from the development and implementation of your outputs. After completing this first part of the process, you are ready to begin the second part. You use the information from your logic model to write measurable results-focused performance requirements by describing an output and/or outcome necessary to achieve the strategic objective in terms of quality and timeliness, quantity, and cost-effectiveness. As this course examines each of these steps in more detail, you will use a [logic model template](#) to capture information about your own agency strategic goal and what is required to achieve it. You should save your template and leave it open as this lesson continues so you can build on your previous entries. If you accidentally close your template, you can re-open your saved template, or you can start over by opening a new template. Once you have completed your logic model, you will complete Part 5 of the Executive Performance Agreement.

Strategic Goal: Elements of an agency's strategic plan that identify the major functions and operations of the agency

Example from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

- Strategic Goal — Protect America's waters
- Strategic Objective — Reduce human exposure to contaminants in drinking water, fish and shellfish, and recreational waters, including protecting source waters

Inputs: Required resources that are invested or allocated to support the activities performed to achieve outputs

May include: staff and volunteers, funds, materials and equipment, technology, and time

Example from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

- Headquarters Staff
- BEACH Act Grant funds

Activities: Actions performed using inputs to create outputs in the form of products or services

Example from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

- Direct data analyses
- Develop annual report

- Maintain database
- Develop guidance

Outputs: Products or services resulting from activities that are used to achieve specific outcomes for affected people or entities

Example from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

Report with recommendations on developing partnerships with local, regional, and state officials, as well as the beach-going public

Outcomes: The results expected from creating or utilizing outputs (products and services)

Example from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

Implementation of recommendations, resulting in 80% to 85% participation from local authorities in identifying and remediating sources of contamination in the Great Lakes region

Performance Requirements: Statements that describe an output or outcome necessary to achieve the strategic objective in terms of quality and timeliness, and when appropriate, in terms of quantity or cost-effectiveness as well

Example from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

80% to 85% of local authorities in the Great Lakes region will identify and remediate sources of contamination by the end of the fiscal year

Identify Relevant Strategic Goal or Objective

Now that you've seen the overarching process, let's explore each step using a threaded scenario about reducing energy consumption. Note that this fictional threaded scenario is for illustration purposes only. To develop relevant performance requirements, work with your senior leadership to identify an agency strategic goal or objective to which you can link your performance. Not all agency strategic goals and objectives are relevant for every executive. In collaboration with your senior leadership, you should identify agency strategic goals and objectives that are relevant to you, and that you play a significant role or have significant responsibility in achieving. In the threaded scenario, the cross-agency goal is "Reducing energy consumption 50% by the year 2035." A strategic goal that supports the cross-agency goal and is relevant to the executive's work is "Reducing energy consumption by 12% in the next five fiscal years." Access your saved logic model template. If you accidentally closed your template without saving, you can [open a new one](#). Take a moment to identify one of your agency's strategic goals or objectives that is relevant to you; then document it in your template. See Read More to review sources of appropriate goals and objectives.

[Read More](#)

[Cross-Agency Goal](#)

Sources of appropriate goals and objectives:

Type of Information	Source
Agency or Government-wide performance goals and objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presidential orders and initiatives • Agency high priority goals • Agency annual performance plans • Strategic plans • Organizational goals • Budgetary priorities
Department or Program Division <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance goal targets such as timeframes • Qualities used to measure outputs and outcomes 	Agency, department, or division performance plans
Agency performance management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measuring practices • Appraisal process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Improvement Officer • Executive Resources staff

A Performance Improvement Officer (PIO) is a senior-level agency leader with responsibility to supervise agency performance management activities; advise agency leaders about measuring performance; and assist with integrating performance information into an agency's employee performance appraisal process.

Capture Assumptions and External Factors

You know what your agency strategic goal is; now you need to identify relevant assumptions and external factors. Assumptions and external factors influence how you meet your performance requirements to achieve your agency strategic goal. Assumptions and external factors can influence your agency strategic goal, inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. Assumptions may include expectations about the availability of certain resources during the period of performance or beliefs about the willingness of stakeholders to participate in activities that support you achieving your goal. In the threaded scenario, an assumption that influences the agency strategic goal is that to prevent a conflict of interest, the executive will need to hire an external vendor to conduct the energy audit. There are four common external factors you should consider: environmental, social, political, and business. In the threaded scenario, an external factor is that all the qualified local vendors who could perform an energy audit are contracted for the next six months. Access your saved logic model template. If you accidentally closed your template without saving, you can [open a new one](#). Take a moment to identify any assumptions or external factors that might influence the agency strategic goal you identified; then document it in your template.

Identify Inputs

Now that you know what your agency strategic goal is and have identified any assumptions or external factors that influence it, you need to identify the resources required to achieve that goal, called inputs. Common inputs include: staff, such as full-time equivalent, or FTE, positions, supervisors, managers, and executives; funding, such as budget allocations or grants; materials and equipment, such as tools or vehicles; technology, such as computers, software, and databases; and time. The availability of resources will vary by agency, across divisions, and within departments. In the threaded scenario, inputs the executive needs include staff to assist in conducting the energy audit, funding for that staff and other experts, and information on energy savings from both an individual and organizational

perspective. In addition to identifying which resources your agency needs, you should specify the measures, or metrics, associated with each resource. In the threaded scenario, the executive expresses the QUALITY of personnel in terms of staff characteristics including level of training, years or type of expertise, job level, or qualifications, and the QUANTITY of personnel in terms of the number of full-time equivalent, or FTE, positions. Knowing the inputs you need, and the resources you have available, helps you set realistic targets for activities, outputs, and outcomes. In the threaded scenario, the executive used the number of FTE positions dedicated to the project and the level of expertise associated with each position to determine when the project will be completed and the possible need for a contractor or other resource with specialized skills. Access your saved logic model template. Take a moment to identify inputs for achieving the agency strategic goal you identified; then, document them in your logic model template.

Identify Activities

You have identified the inputs you need to achieve your agency strategic goal. Now, you need to describe the activities you must perform using those inputs to produce outputs. To describe an activity, provide detail about the action to be performed and the individual who will perform it. In the threaded scenario, activities the executive performs include: write briefings and reports, direct staff to hire an expert to conduct the energy audit, develop a communication plan and inform staff at all locations of the initiative, and speak with metro management and executives about ways to promote or encourage use of mass transit. The actions you take toward achieving an agency strategic goal or objective may require the participation of internal and external stakeholders. In the threaded scenario, the executive works with stakeholders like community leaders, business or industry leaders, leaders of other agencies, the public, and members of other departments within the agency to perform the activities needed to achieve the agency strategic goal. Stakeholders can provide valuable data for determining the potential impact or outcomes of actions. Additionally, they may be able to verify the achievement of intangible outcomes such as improved quality of life. Access your saved logic model template. Take a moment to identify the activities, and any stakeholder involvement, needed to achieve the agency strategic goal you identified; then, document them in your logic model.

Identify Outputs

At this point, you know the activities you need to perform to achieve your agency strategic goal. Now, you need to describe the corresponding outputs that should result from those activities. Outputs are products of an activity. In the threaded scenario, as a result of activities in support of the agency strategic goal, the executive creates outputs such as recommendations for more efficient use of electricity or gas, recommendations for increasing use of green alternatives, the results of energy audits performed at four different locations, and a newly developed incentive program to encourage use of mass transit. Sometimes people confuse what they do with the product or result. It is important to differentiate activities from outputs. For example, attending a series of meetings and writing a recommendations report based on the discussions that took place in those meetings are ACTIVITIES, while the report itself is an OUTPUT. Typically, an individual has significant control over accomplishing an output. Depending on your level of responsibility in an agency, your performance requirements may describe achieving an outPUT instead of an outCOME. In this case, you would proceed from this step directly to part two of the process to write your measurable results-focused performance requirements. If the executive in the threaded scenario developed performance requirements based on an outPUT, such as a recommendations report, the requirements would include measureable aspects like the

number of reports, the quality of the report as measured by the completeness and accuracy of its content, and a completion date. Access your saved logic model template. Take a moment to identify the output or outputs needed to achieve the agency strategic goal you identified; then, document them in your logic model.

Identify Outcomes

You have identified the outputs you need to generate to achieve your agency strategic goal. Now, you need to describe the outcomes you will achieve using those outputs. Outcomes are the intended results or consequences that occur from creating or implementing outputs. In the threaded scenario, outcomes the executive achieves include increased use of mass transit in response to information from a recommendations report distributed to personnel, and reduced energy consumption from implementing new energy-conservation procedures at each location. Performance requirements written based on an outcome would include measurable aspects like levels of pollutants in the air, amount of traffic congestion, and quality of life. Sometimes people confuse outputs with outcomes. Outputs tend to be more visible internally and meaningful to specific personnel or groups within an agency, while outcomes are typically more visible externally and meaningful to a broad audience outside the agency such as customers, stakeholders, or the public. Usually, you have significant control over accomplishing an output, however, accomplishing an outcome may require using multiple outputs produced by others and exerting indirect influence to develop contacts in and outside an agency or to persuade others to get buy-in. While outputs are frequently tangible, such as reports, recommendations, or a new program, outcomes can be tangible or intangible, such as increased community involvement or better communication within an organization. Access your saved logic model template. Take a moment to identify the outcome or outcomes needed to achieve the agency strategic goal you identified; then, document them in your logic model. Select Outputs vs. Outcomes from the course Resources for a comparison.

Write Performance Requirements

Now you will use the information you captured in your logic model to write measurable results-focused performance requirements by describing an output or outcome necessary to achieve your strategic objective in terms of quality and timeliness, quantity, and cost-effectiveness. Effective measurable results-focused performance requirements are linked to the agency's strategic goals or objectives; results-focused; measurable in terms of quality, time, quantity, and cost; observable or verifiable; and stated in terms of outputs or outcomes that you have the control and influence to achieve. In the threaded scenario, the executive establishes performance requirements such as "Energy consumption at each regional office and headquarters will decrease by 10% to 12% in the fiscal year," and "Use of mass transit by headquarters staff will increase by 10% to 15% in the fiscal year." Your performance requirements will influence your work activities throughout the year, so it is important to identify all the information you need to meet them. To ensure that the final version of your performance requirements, against which you will be evaluated, captures all of the critical components needed for success, revisit your logic model and performance requirements throughout the year and update them with new or changed information. Open the [Executive Performance Agreement](#) and navigate to Part 5, results driven critical element. Using your completed logic model, write measureable results-focused performance requirements you can and will achieve to support meeting your agency's strategic goal. See Read More to learn about a few questions to ask to evaluate your performance requirements as you write them.

Select SMART or SMART-Q Goals from the course Resources for guidance on writing measurable results-focused performance requirements.

[Read More](#)

Performance Requirements

To ensure each performance requirement links to one of your agency's strategic goals and is complete, evaluate the requirement by asking yourself:

- Will meeting this performance requirement help me reach my individual goal?
- Have I included all of the information that I will need to meet this performance requirement?
- Does my meeting this performance requirement to achieve my individual goal directly support achieving one of my agency's strategic goals or objectives?
- Does the performance requirement describe an output and/or outcome consistent with the level 3 performance standard?

Resources

- [Commonly Used Quality Dimensions](#)
- [Logic Model Template](#)
- [Outputs vs. Outcomes](#)
- [Results Focused Performance Requirement Examples](#)
- [SMART or SMART-Q Goals](#)
- [Threaded Scenario](#)
- [SES Executive Performance Agreement](#)
- [Metrics Typically Used in Performance Requirements](#)
- [The Basic Senior Executive Service Performance Appraisal System](#)
- [References](#)

Course Summary

Congratulations! You have completed the course on Linking and Developing Measurable SES Results-Focused Performance Requirements. In the course introduction, you learned about the SES Performance Appraisal System and your role in completing Part 5 of the Executive Performance Agreement. In the overview of performance requirements and standards, you learned what a measurable results-focused performance requirement was and how to describe different levels of meeting a performance requirement. In the topic on developing performance requirements, you learned about the elements of a logic model and the characteristics of effective performance requirements. This course summary provides you a review of what you learned in this course. Be sure to check the course Resources for guidance and job aids to assist you in developing appropriate performance requirements. You may now [print your Certificate of Completion](#).