National Guard Bureau
Office of Technician Personnel

Technician Personnel Regulation 430

**Performance Appraisal Program
"Five Rating Level Evaluation Method"**

Writing Effective Critical Elements

Participant's Guide

Writing Effective Critical Elements
Participant's Guide - Table of Contents

Courseware adapted from Office of Personnel Management and Civilian Personnel Management Service materials.

Writing Effective
Critical Elements Using the
SMART or MARST Formats

Overview

- Performance Appraisal Program – The "Five Rating Level Evaluation Method"
- Performance Appraisal Process
- What Changes
- What Does Not Change
- Writing Effective Critical Elements

Workshop Introduction

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Learning Goals and Objectives

- Review mission and goals statements then write two (2) critical elements for an employee using Workcenter Descriptions or Position Descriptions.

- Weight each critical element as appropriate.

- Evaluate whether or not the critical elements satisfies either the SMART or MARST criteria by collaborating with teammates to review, revise, and finalize critical elements.

- Able to describe the role of critical elements within the broader concept of performance management.

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TPR 430, Performance Management

- Prescribes a Five Rating Level Evaluation Method

- Clarifies the procedures, and requirements for documentation of the Performance Appraisal system

- *Prescribes the use of the NGB Form 430, Performance Appraisal, to be used with MyBiz & MyWorkplace

Five Rating Level Evaluation Method
What Changes

- Annual Appraisal Cycle: 1 Oct – 30 Sep*
- New Terms
- Summary Pattern: Level 1 thru Level 5
- Mandatory Interim Review
- Mandatory Supervisory "Critical Element"
- Close Out Assessments
- New NGB Form 430
- PAA accessed through MyBiz and MyWorkplace
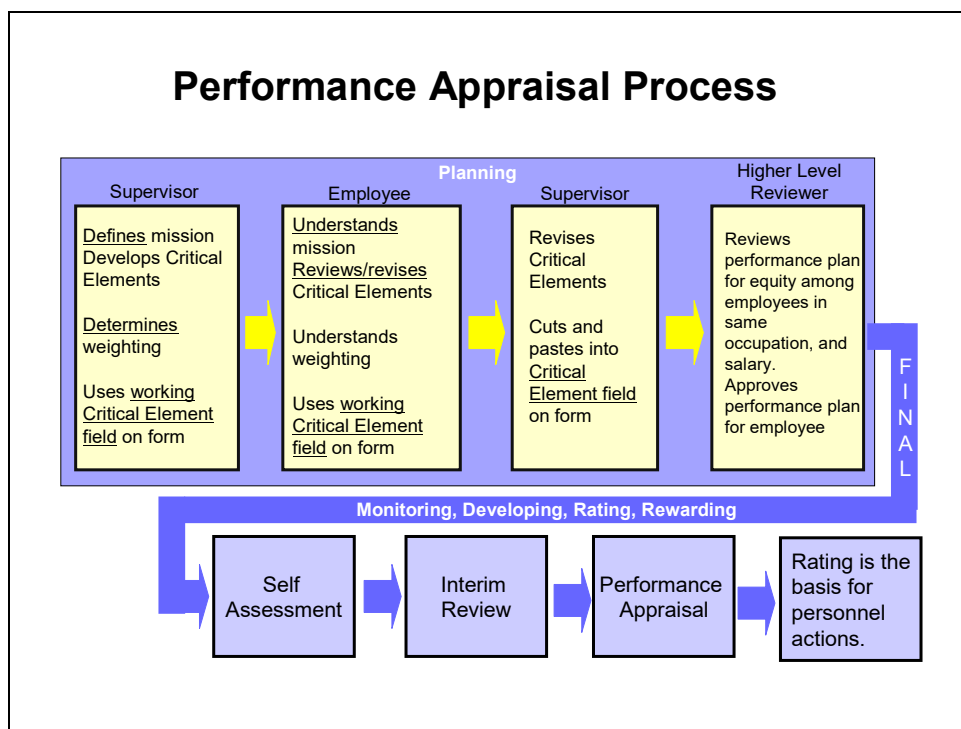
Five Rating Level Evaluation Method
What Does Not Change

- Trial/Probationary Ratings

- Postponement of Annual Rating of Record

- Communicating Performance Plans

- Below Fully Successful/Unacceptable
  Performance

- Performance Improvement Plans

- Appeal Process

Overview of Performance Management

Performance Appraisal Process

		Planning		Higher Level Reviewer
Supervisor	Employee	Supervisor		
Defines mission Develops Critical Elements Determines weighting Uses working Critical Element field on form	Understands mission Reviews/revises Critical Elements Understands weighting Uses working Critical Element field on form	Revises Critical Elements Cuts and pastes into Critical Element field on form		Reviews performance plan for equity among employees in same occupation, and salary. Approves performance plan for employee

F I N A L

Monitoring, Developing, Rating, Rewarding

Self Assessment	Interim Review	Performance Appraisal	Rating is the basis for personnel actions.

The performance rating is a basis for personnel actions to include:

a. Within Grade Increases/Step Increases (5 CFR Parts 531 and 532).

b. Incentive Awards (5 CFR Part 451)

c. Reassignments, Reductions in Grade or Removals (5 CFR Part 430).

d. Promotions (5 CFR Part 335 and TPR 300(335)).

e. Reduction in Force (TPR 300 (351)).

Employee's Responsibilities

Employees are encouraged to:

- Participate in development of critical elements
- Identify and record their accomplishments
- Participate in interim reviews and the end-of-year assessments, including the self-assessment
- Understand the link between their performance expectations and conduct, and organization mission and goals

Rater's Responsibilities

- Ensure employees attend performance management training
- Develop critical elements aligned to mission objectives
- Communicate performance expectations to employees and hold them accountable for achieving them
- Provide employee feedback—at least one interim review
- Foster and reward excellent performance
- Address poor performance
- Make meaningful performance distinctions among employees

Higher Level
Reviewer Responsibilities

- Be involved in the performance management process throughout the rating period
- Ensure organizational goals are communicated to subordinate supervisors and employees
- Ensure equitable and consistent application of, and compliance with, performance management requirements by all subordinate raters

Requirements for Critical Elements

- Critical elements must be linked to the mission

- Minimum of 2 critical elements; key responsibilities must be captured as critical elements to define performance expectations

- Mandatory Supervisory Critical Element

- Critical elements must be in either the SMART or MARST format

- Critical elements may be weighted

Critical Elements are not Task Descriptions

Critical Elements:	Task Descriptions:
• Focus on the results and contribution	• Focus on the tasks or activities completed
• Describe "what" the person will accomplish	• Describe "how" the person will do the work
• Employee responsible for outcome	• Manager ultimately responsible for the outcome

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Additional Considerations for
Writing Critical Elements

- Articulate Expected Results

- Absolute Standards

- Totality Approach

- Length of critical elements

Articulate Expected Results - critical elements communicate the accomplishments expected of the employee during the rating period. The critical elements are not task lists; supervisors should consider using "accomplish" or "complete" to phrase an critical element instead of using "prepare, provide, plan, etc.", if it is workable.

Absolute Standards – *Normally, avoid absolute standards*, although there are times that absolute standards are necessary (e.g., Accomplish safety checks of Blackhawk helicopters with 100% accuracy at all time). When absolute standards are used (e.g., work must be completed within 7 days), it is difficult to assign any other rating level besides Level 3 (met the critical element) or Level 1 (failed the critical element). Since critical elements are written at Level 3, using 5-7 days as Level 3 (e.g., work must be completed within 5-7 days) would allow supervisors to use 3-4 days as the standard for assigning a Level 4 rating score, etc.

Totality Approach – When developing critical elements, keep in mind that each element will be rated in its totality as opposed to individual phrases. *If taken apart, a portion of the critical element may not meet the SMART criteria or offer an absolute standard, but that should not be a concern.* However, the critical element as a whole should provide enough specificity of the expected outcomes for the rating period.

Length of Critical Elements – Critical Elements should not be a lengthy list of tasks with every finite detail of expectations. Supervisors and employees are expected to have continuing communication during the rating cycle to discuss expectations of any particular task/project as needed. Maximum field size for each critical elements is 1000 characters.

Develop Critical Elements for an Employee Using the SMART Format

- **SMART** is a framework for developing (and evaluating) Critical Elements

  Specific

  Measurable

  Aligned

  Realistic/Relevant

  Timed

Critical Elements Are <u>Specific</u>

- Define an observable action, behavior, or achievement
- Link to a level of performance, frequency, percentage, or other number
- Are specific regarding the description of the result (not the activities to achieve that result)
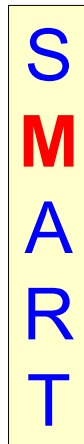
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Example: "Specific" Critical Element

Provides accurate and timely advice and guidance on an "as needed basis" to headquarters staff and *managerial accountants in the field – resolving normal issues/inquiries* in 5 – 7 business days, *for more complex situations an initial response should be given* in 5 – 7 business days and updated until resolved. *Provides responses to questions and inquiries* covering a variety of policies and directives *that require the* correct application of accounting principals, theories, concepts and practices *to financial processes to produce* accurate results and meet legal requirements.

- **Specific:** What do you want your employee to accomplish? Make it as clear and specific as you can, so there is no ambiguity about the result. At the end of the year, can you answer the question, "Has he or she achieved this goal?"

Critical Elements are "Measurable"

- Provide a method to allow tracking, recording, and validation of quality of a specific behavior, action, or outcome
- Define:
  - Quantity (how many)
  - Time (how long)
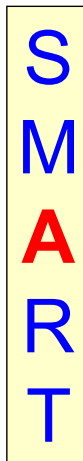 - Quality (how good)
  - Resources (how much)

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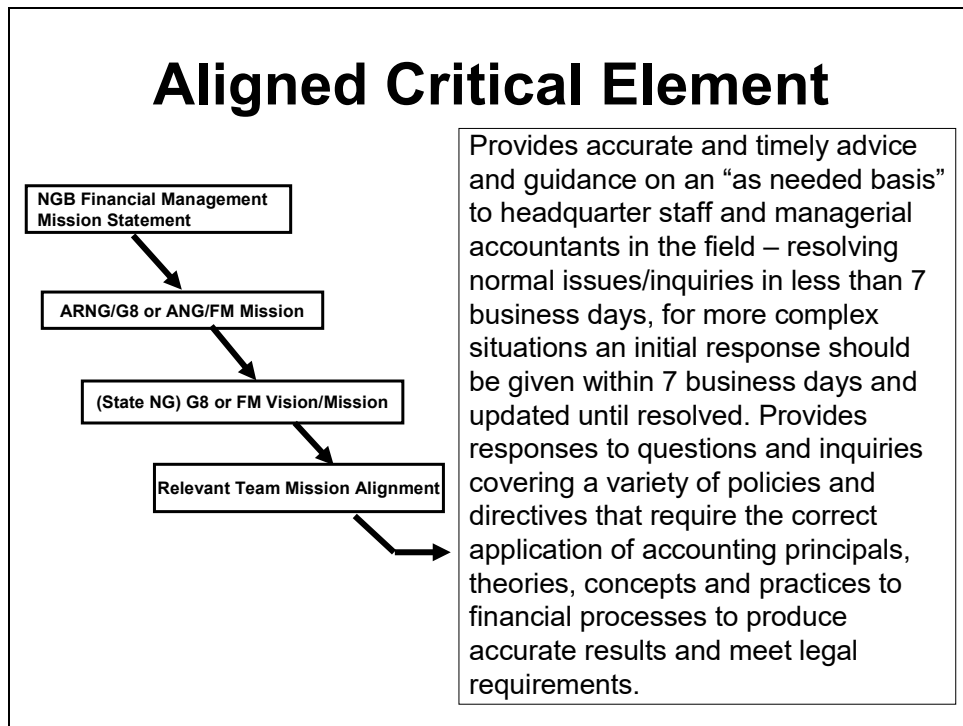A
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> ## Example: "Measurable" Critical Element
>
> Provides *accurate and timely advice* and guidance on an "as needed basis" to headquarters staff and managerial accountants in the field – resolving normal issues/inquiries *in 5 – 7 business days,* for more complex situations an initial response should be given *in 5 – 7 business days and updated until resolved.* Provides responses to questions and inquiries covering a variety of policies and directives that require the *correct* application of accounting principals, theories, concepts and practices to financial processes to produce *accurate results and meet legal requirements.*

Measurable: What are you going to measure? If you don't know what you are going to measure, and how you will measure, it is pointless to be specific.

Critical Elements Are <u>Aligned</u>

- Line of sight is drawn between the employee's work, unit's goal, and the organization's mission
- Critical Elements ensure all are working toward shared goals
- All critical elements in the organization pull in the same direction
- Managers/supervisors need understanding of their own goals, objectives and critical elements before they can work with their employees to establish theirs

S M A R T

Aligned Critical Element

NGB Financial Management Mission Statement

↓

ARNG/G8 or ANG/FM Mission

↓

(State NG) G8 or FM Vision/Mission

↓

Relevant Team Mission Alignment

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Provides accurate and timely advice and guidance on an "as needed basis" to headquarter staff and managerial accountants in the field – resolving normal issues/inquiries in less than 7 business days, for more complex situations an initial response should be given within 7 business days and updated until resolved. Provides responses to questions and inquiries covering a variety of policies and directives that require the correct application of accounting principals, theories, concepts and practices to financial processes to produce accurate results and meet legal requirements.

Aligned: Does this critical element fit with your organization's objectives and/or the organization's overall mission? If not, the critical element may need adjusting. If you have your organization's mission statement, include the goal number or other identifier to which this critical element applies.

EXAMPLE: Mission Statement – The Army trains, mobilizes, deploys, sustains, transforms, and reconstitutes conventional forces, providing relevant and ready land power to Combatant Commanders world wide in defense of the nation both at home and abroad.

NGB Financial Management Mission – Secure resources to support combat-ready forces and transform the operational force institutional processes. Provide professional resource management services and facilitate better business practices while caring for our people…our most precious resource.

Resource Integration Division Vision/ Mission – Be the Best Resource Management Team: Responsive, Innovative, Open, Professional and Caring. Provide professional Resource Management Support and Advice for Financial Policy and Systems.

Relevant Team Mission Alignment – Provides professional resource management support and advice for financial policy and systems

Aligned Critical Elements – Provides accurate and timely advice and guidance on an "as needed basis" to headquarters staff and managerial accountants in the field – resolving normal issues/inquiries in 5 – 7 business days, for more complex situations an initial response should be given in 5 – 7 business days and updated until resolved. Provides responses to questions and inquiries covering a variety of policies and directives that require the correct application of accounting principals, theories, concepts and practices to financial processes to produce accurate results and meet legal requirements.

Critical Elements Are Realistic/Relevant

- Realistic: Goals and objectives achievable with the resources and personnel available, and within the available time

- Relevant: Goals and objectives are important to the employee & organization

- Responsibility must be appropriate to employee's grade

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Realistic/Relevant Examples

- **GS07** – Under limited supervision provides accurate and timely advice and guidance on an "as needed basis" to headquarters staff and managerial accountants in the field – resolving normal issues/inquiries in 5 – 7 business days. Prepares responses for supervisor's review, to questions and inquiries covering a variety of policies and directives that require the correct application of accounting principals, theories, concepts and practices to financial processes to produce accurate results and meet legal requirements.

- **GS11** – Provides accurate and timely advice and guidance on an "as needed basis" to headquarters staff and managerial accountants in the field – resolving normal issues/inquiries in 5 – 7 business days, for more complex situations an initial response should be given in 5 – 7 business days and updated until resolved. Independently prepares responses to questions and inquiries covering a variety of policies and directives that require the correct application of accounting principals, theories, concepts and practices to financial processes to produce accurate results and meet legal requirements.

Make meaningful performance distinctions among employees.

Realistic/relevant: Is it realistic and relevant? "Realistic" questions whether the critical element is doable and whether it is within the employee's control. "Relevant" asks whether it is a high priority.

Critical Elements Are <u>Timed</u>

- Established start and/or end dates are defined
- Specific dates (e.g., March 15) are preferred over relative descriptions of time (e.g., 6 months)
- Milestones can be included

Examples:

▸ Specific Time – by December 10
▸ Relative to another event – 6 months after…
▸ Recurring – quarterly, bi-weekly

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Timed Example

Provides accurate and timely advice and guidance on an "*as needed basis*" to headquarters staff and managerial accountants in the field – resolving normal issues/inquiries in 5 – 7 business days, for more complex situations an initial response should be given in 5 – 7 business days and updated until resolved. Provides responses to questions and inquiries covering a variety of policies and directives that require the correct application of accounting principals, theories, concepts and practices to financial processes to produce accurate results and meet legal requirements.

Timed: Put in the timeline for expected results. For long-term projects that require more than one rating cycle to accomplish, critical elements should identify what results are expected within the rating cycle.

Example - SMART Critical Elements

- Complete the installation of 150 new computers in the DOIM Office, by the second week of September.

- Provide a monthly progress report, with information on completed work and anticipated obstacles, in the last week of each month.

- Ensure that the DA Form 2062 issuing the new computer to the PC user is signed by the user and forwarded to the Property Book Officer in 2-3 workdays of signature.

Weighting Critical Elements

- Each critical element may be weighted to indicate importance and effort

- Weighting is entered as a percentage in increments of 5%

- At the end of the performance cycle, the percentages are multiplied to the individual objectives' rating to produce the overall performance rating

- If values aren't entered, all critical elements are weighted equally

  - Critical Element 1 — 35%

  - Critical Element 2 — 20%

  - Critical Element 3 — 15%

  - Critical Element 4 — 15%

  - Critical Element 5 — 15%

  Total Weighting = 100%

Weight critical elements – Critical elements may be weighted to reflect relative priority, contribution to mission, complexity, importance, etc. Weighting critical elements enables supervisors and employees to identify and focus on the most important expected accomplishments for the rating period.

When choosing to weight critical elements, weights must be applied to an entire work group not an individual.

Weighted Critical Elements

Job Obj.	Rating	Weight	Obj. Rating
1	3	10%	0.30
2	3	25%	0.75
3	3	65%	1.95
	3.00	**100%**	**3.00**
Job Obj.	Rating	Weight	Obj. Rating
1	4	10%	0.40
2	2	25%	0.50
3	5	65%	3.25
	3.67	**100%**	**4.15**
Job Obj.	Rating	Weight	Obj. Rating
1	4	10%	0.40
2	4	25%	1.00
3	2	65%	1.30
	3.33	**100%**	**2.70**
Job Obj.	Rating	Weight	Obj. Rating
1	3	10%	0.30
2	3	25%	0.75
3	2	65%	1.30
Disadvantaged	→**2.67**	**100%**	**2.35** ←

When the Overall Weighted Rating is .51 or higher, the rating is rounded to the next higher whole number. When the Overall Weighted Rating is .50 or lower, the rating is rounded down to the next lower whole number. The following table summarizes the conversion of Overall Weighted Rating to (or Final) Rating of Record:

OVERALL WEIGHTED RATING	RATING OF RECORD	RATING OF RECORD DESCRIPTOR
4.51 to 5.00	5	Outstanding
3.51 to 4.50	4	Excellent
2.51 to 3.50	3	Fully Successful
2.00 to 2.50	2	Marginal
1 on any critical element	1	Unacceptable

**Consider These Questions When
Reviewing the Performance Plan**

- Are the critical elements vague?
- Can the critical elements be measured or verified?
- Are the critical elements too complex or unnecessarily long?
- Does each critical element have a timeline?
- Do the critical elements emphasize appropriate aspects of the work?
- Are there too many or too few critical elements?

Go to Page 34

At this point the slide presentation ends, and each participant should follow along in their participant's guide.

Table Top Exercise
Critical Elements in the SMART or MARST Format

The purpose of the exercise is to develop critical elements for an employee. You may use materials you have brought with you or what you have developed using in class.

In preparation for writing critical elements you should have the following items readily available:

- Organization's Mission, Goal statement

- Branch/Section Mission, Goal statement

- Sample Work Center Description – provide critical element title headings, and lists key tasks under the title heading

- Position Description – provide key functions and duties and responsibilities

   REMINDER: Critical Elements focus on results and contribution not the specific task or activities completed.

1. **Instructions: Write two critical elements** using the Writing Critical Elements Worksheet, on pages 46-47**,** and using the Critical Elements Writing Guide, on page 36, and the sample critical elements provided during the course.

2. Identify the mission and goals that the employee's critical elements should align to.

3. Review the materials provided for writing critical elements.

Section Headings	Page
Critical Elements Writing Guide	Page 36
Mission, Goals, and Strategic Plan	Page 37
Components for Critical Elements	Page 38
Standard Supervisory Performance Critical Element	Page 44
Writing Critical Elements Worksheets	Page 46-47

4. You may choose to use one of critical element formats (SMART or MARST). Use the worksheets applicable for each critical element type to develop each component and then pull everything together into one complete critical element.

- In writing the critical element, you may choose to write in "bullet point" format, using clauses to highlight summarized requirements.

- There are 1000 characters available on the performance plan for each critical element. Or, you may choose to use the narrative format or bulleted format. **Best Practice:** use the narrative format to save character spaces.

5. Review each critical element by using the questions to evaluate the effectiveness of the critical element:

- Is the element challenging to the employee?
- Will the element require the employee's focused attention to achieve it? Will it require extraordinary effort to achieve? If so, it is too challenging.
- Will it be easily exceeded? If so, it is not challenging enough.
- Does the level of challenge align to the employee's position description?)
- Is the element in the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Aligned, Relevant and Realistic, Timed) or MARST format?

6. If your employee is a supervisor, the critical elements must include at least one critical element related to supervision. Review to Standard Supervisory Performance Critical Element, page 44.

7. Weighting the critical elements is optional. Refer to "Components for Critical Elements", page 38. Record the weighting for all elements on the critical elements worksheet.

8. Prepare to discuss the selected mission/goals statements for the occupation, critical element, and weighting with another participant in the role play. Be prepared to:

a. Explain how the critical element aligns to the mission and goals

b. Discuss the expectations of the employees contribution as defined in the critical elements

c. Justify the weighting, if used, given to each critical element

Critical Element Writing Guide

Purpose: The purpose of this guide is to provide supervisors and employees with reference material and examples for developing meaningful critical elements. Critical elements are the core of the performance management program and therefore play an important role in the successful implementation and execution of the five level evaluation method.

General functions of Critical Elements:

- Establish a link between the employee's work and the organization's mission and goals

- Communicate the major work assignments to be accomplished

- State expected outcomes and results

- Establish the basis on which employee's performance will be rated

Fundamentals of Critical Elements:

- **Link to mission and organizational goals** - Critical elements should draw a line of sight between the organization's mission and goals and the employee's work. It is important to organizational performance that employees understand this relationship. The critical elements of the employees should drive organizational performance and accomplishments. Supervisors and higher level reviewers will ensure that critical elements support the organization's mission and goals.

- **Aligning Mission and Goals to Performance Expectations:** IAW TPR 430, para 2-8(a). Aligning Performance Expectations and Strategic Goals. Performance expectations shall support and align with the DoD mission and its strategic goals, organizational program and policy objectives, annual performance plans, and other measures of performance. The DoD mission and goals cascade to the organization, and resulting organization mission and goals are the basis for individual performance expectations.

Mission, Goals, and Strategic Plan

The below HRO Mission Statement is a sample mission statement. For the purpose of this activity, you may use this mission statement as a template, or list the organizational goals of your organization.

Sample HRO Mission Statement
(From HRO Work Center Descriptions)

Provide a full range of quality personnel support to the full-time work force which is divided into several different and distinct personnel systems. These services are provided to ensure that our forces can meet the needs of their respective missions both in peace and in war.

Hire quality personnel, train and mentor them providing them a meaningful and productive career and retire them with dignity, having a well trained cadre of personnel from which to select their replacement in order to meet missions both in peace and war.

Describe the expected results - Critical elements are results-oriented; they must clearly identify what performance results and/or products are expected of the employee.

Cover the major responsibilities - Critical elements communicate the major responsibilities and most important work activities; they are not intended to cover all tasks. There are usually 2 to 5 major responsibilities (**key functions**) for a job.

Example: an Administrative Assistant may have three key functions - office management, correspondence, and travel coordination. A set of good critical elements should cover the key functions in a job and address the key tasks and expected outcomes associated with those functions. Supervisors and employees should identify these functions first and then write the critical element(s) to describe the key tasks to be accomplished during the rating period.

Components for Critical Elements

Each Critical element has three mandatory components, and one optional component.
1. Number
2. Title (limited to 80 characters)
3. Text in SMART or MARST format. (limited to 1000 characters)
4. Optional - Weight

EMPLOYEE NAME: *(Last, First, Middle Initial)*		APPRAISAL YEAR:
PART F - JOB OBJECTIVES (Duplicate this page for each job objective)		
JOB OBJECTIVE NO.	TITLE: (Limited to 80 Characters)	LAST MODIFIED ON:
JOB OBJECTIVE (Limited to 1,000 Characters)		
WEIGHT: %	OBJECTIVE RATING:	

Figure 1. NGB Form 430

Critical Element No. 1
- **Title:** Property Book Unit Supply-Enhanced (PBUS-E) Management (Property Control)
- **Critical element:**

Critical Element No. 2
- **Title:** Program and Budget
- **Critical element:**

NOTES:
1. IAW TPR 430, para 2-8(f)(1): Each eligible employee shall be assigned at least two and generally three to five critical elements.

2. IAW TPR 430, para 2-8(f)(3): <u>Mandatory critical element(s) for Supervisors</u>. A supervisor's performance plan, shall include at least one supervisory critical element. This critical element may require accountability for the effective administration of (if applicable), Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), and/or other National Guard specific requirements in addition to applicable policies for which supervisors will be held accountable. Those included in this regulation and supplemental guidance issued by National Guard Bureau as well as those in other laws or regulations.

3. <u>Reference Figure 1</u>: The paper version of the NGB Fm 430 is only a pictorial representation of the automated appraisal form used in the Performance Appraisal Application Tool.

4. When using the automated NGB Form 430, accessible in the Performance Appraisal Application Tool, via MyBiz and MyWorkplace, critical elements should be documented in the Job Objectives block. When using a locally developed appraisal form, use local procedures.

Weight critical elements (Optional) - Critical elements may be weighted to reflect relative priority, contribution to mission, complexity, importance, etc. Weighting critical elements enables supervisors and employees to identify and focus on the most important expected accomplishments for the rating period. Assigned weights are communicated to the employee by the supervisor. It is the employee's responsibility to ask for clarification if there are any questions.

No critical element can be weighted less than 10 percent and all weighted critical elements must total 100 percent. This does not preclude equal weighting of critical elements if appropriate. Typically, weights will not change during the rating period unless the number of critical elements are changed (added or deleted) which will require weights to be redistributed, or unless mission priorities dictate such a change.

Weighting Parameters

- Minimum weight for any one critical element is 10%.

- Weight of all critical elements must add up to 100%.

- Weights must be assigned in increments of 5%.

- If a "no rating" is given on any critical element, supervisors must re-weight the remaining critical elements to obtain a total of 100%.

- Weights are assigned by the supervisor to each critical element at the beginning of the rating period

- Weighted Critical Element Rating Process: If critical elements were weighted, the weights are applied to the adjusted rating. These weighted scores shall be added together to obtain the overall average score. Again, however, if a Level 1 has been assigned to any critical element, the overall rating of record shall be a Level I regardless of the rating or weighting on any other critical element, e.g., the critical element has a 10% weight.

Establishing Critical Elements:

- Supervisors need to have a clear understanding of leadership expectations on the work unit supervised before establishing critical elements for the employees. The critical elements of the employees should drive organizational performance and accomplishments.

- Critical elements are established at Level 3, Fully Successful rating.

- Supervisors and employees should have a meaningful dialogue on performance expectations and critical elements at the beginning of the rating cycle.

- Supervisors are encouraged to involve employees in the development of their critical elements and weighting, although final decisions are the supervisor's.

- Identify the major responsibilities of the job and develop, typically, 2 to 5 critical elements that reflect those responsibilities using the fundamentals described above. Although the automated tool will allow up to 10 critical elements, establishing ten initially will limit flexibility to add critical elements during the rating period.

- Each employee will have a minimum of two (2) critical elements.

- Evaluate the critical elements against the SMART or MARST format.

- Critical elements may be adjusted (modified, added, or deleted) as needed during the performance cycle. Supervisors will discuss adjustments and expectations with employees as soon as the need for the change is known. When new critical elements are assigned, critical elements must communicate that portion of a major performance expectation that can be accomplished within the time remaining in the appraisal period (TPR 430, para 2-9). New/revised critical elements have to be approved, and in place for a minimum of 120 days before assigning an official rating.

- Employees in supervisory positions must, include the standard supervisory critical element.

- The automated performance appraisal form allows a maximum of 1000 characters for each critical element.

S-M-A-R-T Format:

SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Aligned, Realistic/Relevant, and Timed. It is a framework for developing and evaluating critical elements.

Specific. Clearly state the expected accomplishment that can be observed. To be specific, a critical element must define an observable action, behavior, or achievement; link to a level of performance, frequency, percentage, or other number. Specific is related to the result, not the activities to achieve that result.

Measurable. State the criteria for measuring accomplishments. Provide a method to allow tracking, recording, and validation of quality of a specific behavior, action, or outcome. Define quantity (how many), quality (how good), resources (how much), and time (how long, how often).

Aligned. Draw a line of sight between the work of the employee, the goals of the work unit, and mission of the organization. Critical elements ensure all employees are working toward the organization/mission goals.

Realistic and Relevant.

- Realistic - the expected results can be achieved with available resources and time (e.g., if a new employee reports six months into the rating cycle, can the expected results be accomplished during the remaining of the rating cycle?) and are under the employee's control. The critical element should be sufficiently complex to challenge the individual but not so complex that it cannot be accomplished.

- Relevant – Expected accomplishments should be commensurate with the major responsibilities and salary of employee.

Timed.

State the timeline for expected results. For long-term projects that require more than one rating cycle to accomplish, Critical elements should identify what results are expected within the rating cycle. The time component can be specific (*by 1 July*, *end of 4th quarter*), relative to another event (*six months after…*), or recurring (*quarterly*). The minimum rating period is 90 days.

M-A-R-S-T Format:

Instead of following the order of S-M-A-R-T there is a another method for writing critical elements:

1. First, decide what you are going to Measure. ***If you do not know what you are measuring and how to measure it, it is a wasted effort to be specific.*** Do not rush through step M.

- Provide a method to allow tracking, recording, and validation of quality of a specific behavior, action, or outcome

- Define:
    – Quantity (how many)
    – Time (how long)
    – Quality (how good)
    – Resources (how much)

2. Next address Aligned. Ask whether the critical element fits with your managers'/supervisors' critical elements and the organization's mission. If not, the critical element may need to be readjusted.

3. Then move to the Realistic/Relevant. Is it realistic and relevant? "Realistic" questions whether the critical element is doable and within your control. "Relevant" asks whether it is a high priority.

4. Then comes the Specific. Once you have established the criteria you can detail what you want to accomplish. Make it as specific as it can be so that there is no ambiguity about the result. At the end of the year you have to be able to answer the question, "Did the employee achieve the critical element?"

5. The timeline is the Timed. Finally, enter the timeline.

6. Before attempting to write the entire critical element in a sentence, collect the key points that address the five dimensions of SMART or MARST.

Considerations for Writing Critical Elements (helpful hints):

- **Articulate Expected Results** - Critical elements communicate the accomplishments expected of the employee during the rating period. Critical elements are not task lists; supervisors should consider using "accomplish" or "complete" to phrase a critical element instead of using "prepare, provide, plan, etc.", if it is workable.

- **Absolute Standards** – Normally, avoid absolute standards, although there are times that absolute standards are necessary:

  - **Example 1**: Accomplish safety checks of Blackhawk helicopters with 100% accuracy at all time.

  - **Example 2**: When absolute standards are used (e.g., work must be completed within 7 days), it is difficult to assign any other rating level besides Level 3 (met critical) or Level 1 (failed critical).   NOTE: Since critical elements are written at Level 3, the Fully Successful level, using 5 to 7 days as Level 3 (e.g., work must be completed within 5-7 days) would allow supervisors to use 3-4 days as the standard for assigning a Level 4, Excellent rating score, etc.

- **Totality Approach** – When developing critical elements, ***keep in mind that critical elements are rated in its totality as opposed to individual phrases.*** If taken apart, a portion of critical element may not meet the SMART criteria or offer an absolute standard, but that should not be a concern. However, the critical element as a whole should provide enough specificity of the expected outcomes for the rating period.

- **Length of critical elements** – Critical elements should not be a lengthy list of tasks with very finite detail of expectations. Supervisors and employees are expected to have continuing communication during the rating cycle to discuss expectations of any particular task/project as needed. Maximum field size for each critical element is 1000 characters.

Standard Supervisory Performance Critical Element

In accordance with TPR 430, para 2-8(f)(3). A supervisor's performance plan shall include at least one supervisory critical element. This critical element may require accountability for the effective administration of (if applicable), Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), and/or other National Guard specific requirements in addition to applicable policies for which supervisors will be held accountable. Those included in this regulation and supplemental guidance issued by National Guard Bureau as well as those in other laws or regulations.

> **Sample Supervisory Critical Element:** Execute the full range of human resources (including performance management and fiscal responsibilities within established timelines and in accordance with applicable regulations. Adhere to merit principles. Develop a vision for the work unit; align performance expectations with organizational goals. Maintain a safe work environment and promptly address allegations of noncompliance. Ensure EEO/EO principles are adhered to throughout the organization. Ensure continuing application of, and compliance with, applicable laws, regulations and policies governing prohibited personnel practices; promptly address allegations of prohibited discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

NOTE: To meet the EEO portion of this critical element, supervisors must comply with those applicable provisions of the DoD Civilian Equal Employment Opportunity Program, DoDD 1440.1, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Management Directive 715. Communicate EEO policies and ensure adherence throughout the work unit. Seek early dispute resolution through Alternate Dispute Resolution techniques, promptly address accommodation requests, and ensure that EEO-related training requirements are met.

The Standard Supervisory Performance critical element above may serve as the basic supervisory element. ARNG/ANG organizations may add unique requirements as appropriate. ARNG/ANG organizations may establish policies for adding requirements to the standard supervisory critical element. More than one supervisory critical element can be used to rate employees who are assigned to a supervisory position.

Table Top Exercise

Critical Element Exercise with Handouts

You will have 30 minutes, and no more than 45 minutes to independently write two critical elements (One GS and One FWS). Weighting is optional. At the end of the activity, you should have at written two critical elements and are prepared for class discussion.

Courseware adapted from Office of Personnel Management and Civilian Personnel Management Service materials.

Table Top Exercise - Writing Critical Elements Worksheets

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Writing Critical Elements #1:

S   (specific) What do you want your employee to accomplish? Make it as clear and specific as you can, so there is no ambiguity about the result. At the end of the year, can you answer the question, "Has he or she achieved this goal?"

M   (measurable) What are you going to measure? If you don't know what you are going to measure, and how you will measure, it is pointless to be specific.

A   (aligned) Does this critical element fit with your organization's goals and objectives and/or the organization's overall mission? If not, the critical element may need adjusting. If you have your organization's mission statement, include the goal number or other identifier to which this critical element applies.

R   (realistic/relevant) Is it realistic and relevant? "Realistic" questions whether the critical element is actually doable, and whether it is within the employee's control. "Relevant" asks whether it is a high priority.

T   (timed) Put in the timeline.

Record final Critical element below:

Table Top Exercise - Writing Critical Elements Worksheets

Writing Critical Elements #2:

M   (measurable) What are you going to measure? If you don't know what you are going to measure, and how you will measure, it is pointless to be specific.

A   (aligned) Does this critical element fit with your organization's goals and objectives and/or the organization's overall mission? If not, the critical element may need adjusting. If you have your organization's mission statement, include the goal number or other identifier to which this critical element applies.

R   (realistic/relevant) Is it realistic and relevant? "Realistic" questions whether the critical element is actually doable, and whether it is within the employee's control. "Relevant" asks whether it is a high priority.

S   (specific) What do you want your employee to accomplish? Make it as clear and specific as you can, so there is no ambiguity about the result. At the end of the year, can you answer the question, "Has he or she achieved this goal?"

T   (timed) Put in the timeline.

Record final critical element below: