

## Key Points

### Critical Elements:

- Align with organizational goals
- Describe a desired end state
- Focus on results
- Are measurable or observable
- Communicate specific and relevant outcomes
- Establish time requirements
- Reflect significant outcomes
- Are subject to higher-level review



Writing good critical elements are an integral piece of the five level evaluation performance management system.

This pamphlet is intended to assist employees and their supervisors to craft critical elements using either the SMART or MARST format.

### S.M.A.R.T.

Specific, Measurable, Aligned, Relevant/Realistic, and Timed

### M.A.R.S.T.

Measurable, Aligned, Relevant/Realist, Specific, and Timed

Critical elements are recorded in the Performance Appraisal Application tool, accessible via DCPDS MyBiz and MyWorkplace.

Please contact your local Human Resources Office for assistance with the Performance Appraisal program, or the Performance Appraisal Application (PAA) tool.

## National Guard Bureau Office of Technician Personnel

## Writing Effective Critical Elements



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## What are Critical Elements?

Critical elements are an expression of performance expectations in the performance plan that are linked to the organization's goals and missions. Critical elements communicate major individual, team, and/or organizational responsibilities and/or expected results. They specify related outcomes and accomplishments that are expected of the employee during the appraisal period.

### Critical elements may:

- Consist of several sentences
- Include lists or bullets
- Refer to a standard operating procedure, directive, regulation or policy to which the employee has access
- Be modified during the appraisal cycle to reflect changes in mission or organizational priorities

**Critical Elements should...** be specific, measurable, aligned to organizational goals, relevant/realistic and time-bound. Under the five rating level evaluation performance management program each employee will be assigned at least two critical elements. Most employees will have between three and five critical elements.

The exercise below may help you to identify and articulate expected results, timeframes and measures. You may choose to use these, or similar statements as you develop your critical elements.

*Complete these phrases by filling in the blanks with terms that apply to your job and that align with your organization's goals & mission.*

**1. Focus on results:** *Fill in the blank with specific, aligned, realistic and relevant work outcomes or results.*

The expected result for this critical elements is \_\_\_\_\_. or

The expected results at the fully successful level are: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.  
or

In support of the organizational goal to \_\_\_\_\_, the expected outcome for this critical element is \_\_\_\_\_.

## 2. Establish time requirements:

*Fill in the blank with dates or timeframes for accomplishment of expected work outcomes or results.*

The mission goals and objective should be achieved or attained not later than \_\_\_\_\_. or

The anticipated completion date is \_\_\_\_\_. or

Milestones for completion of this project are \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

## 3. Provide measurement criteria:

*Fill in the blank with metrics or measures by which work outcomes and results will be evaluated.*

These results will be measured in terms of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_. or

Metrics that will be used to evaluate this outcome include \_\_\_\_\_. or

Outcomes and results will be measured consistent with \_\_\_\_\_.