

# Writing a Successful Performance Agreement

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## I. Carefully consider the institutional goal.

A goal is a concise statement that describes a particular purpose or aim to be achieved.

**A. Select a stretch goal.** The Board has made clear its desire that all institutional goals be “stretch” goals. Examples of definitions of “stretch goal” include the following:

- A stretch goal is a dream with a deadline.
- A stretch goal is ambitious.
- Stretch goals require institutions to adopt new solutions.

**B. Specify the goal.** The Regents’ System Goals are intended to be extremely broad. Narrow the goal and make it very specific to fit your institution’s purpose. Avoid linking processes to goals. The goal should focus on performance outcomes, not on the particular process selected to achieve the outcome.

If information about institutional processes is important to understanding the performance agreement, include necessary information under the “comments” section of the application.

Institutions are required to select at least three goals, one of which must be Regents System Goal B: Improve Learner Outcomes. Please see pages three and four for Goal B guidelines.

## II. Select performance indicator carefully.

**A. Performance Indicators:** Indicators should be performance outcomes, not process outcomes, and should be direct measures of the outcome whenever possible. Write a precise description of a performance indicator that clearly indicates the data to be collected. The performance indicator allows for measurement. The performance indicator will dictate the targets for the next three years.

Process outcomes are how an indicator is achieved, not the indicator itself. Examples of performance versus process outcomes include:

<b>Performance Outcome Indicator</b>	<b>Process Outcome Indicator</b>
Increase the number of Hispanic students enrolled full-time.	Increase number of recruiting events in Southwest Kansas.
Increase number of students achieving WorkKeys scores on the three exams required for Gold-level certification.	Initiate the WorkKeys program.
Increase number of students enrolled in online courses.	Increase the number of faculty attending workshops on developing distance learning courses.

- B. Three-year Performance History:** Show the baseline value of the performance indicator (data). The baseline means “where are you now?” You must use numbers as well as percent, i.e., 75%=63/84, when reporting performance history. If the program is new and no baseline data is available, put “N/A” in this area.
- C. Data Collection:** Describe exactly how the data for the performance indicator will be collected. For example, if the data is “retention,” describe exactly how retention will be calculated.
- D. Targets:** Describe the rationale for selecting the targets so that Board can determine the degree of difficulty in achieving the goal. (Note: Targets must be expressed in terms of the performance indicator/data. For example, if the performance indicator is “retention,” the targets should be expressed in terms of the actual retention figures expected in the next 3 years. You must use numbers as well as percents to describe targets; i.e., 75%=63/84, when possible.

### **III. Recognize the audience.**

Legislators and Board members may not be familiar with practices and terminology that are often taken for granted by the higher education community.

- Explain acronyms
- Avoid jargon
- Provide a brief background on standardized exams and/or surveys

### **IV. Form follows function.**

The Performance Agreement packet read each year by the Board is at least 100 pages. When this many pages are being reviewed the reader’s task is greatly facilitated by a common format. Use the performance agreement form on the web page. (We recommend developing the performance agreement in a word processing program and then pasting it into the performance agreement form.) Even minor deviations from the format can interfere with the reader’s “cognitive processing” of the performance agreement.

### **V. Other Tips**

- Study the performance agreements that were approved last year. These agreements are located on the website and will give you a good idea of what the Board is looking for in a performance agreement.
- Use a team-approach when crafting the Performance Agreement. Though one person is often assigned to write the Performance Agreement, input about the content should be broad-based.
- Write a clear, concise narrative.
- Use Board staff as a resource.

## **Regents' System Goal B: Improve Learner Outcomes**

### **Guidelines**

**12/23/2009**

Regents' System Goal B: Improve Learner Outcomes. Institutions will facilitate improved learner outcomes in competency areas where Kansas needs to advance. Regents' System Goal B is a required goal for all institutions.

The Board's philosophy on assessment of learner outcomes includes the following:

1. Assessment of learner outcomes is a difficult undertaking.
2. Kansas has the resources to become a national leader in the assessment of learner outcomes.
3. No single measure of learner outcomes provides complete or perfect information.
4. Measures of learner outcomes vary in their usefulness and in their sophistication, and therefore can often be viewed on a continuum from no measures to weaker measures to stronger measures.
5. The measurement of learner outcomes should not be hindered by the search for the perfect evaluation tool.
6. The strongest measures of learner outcomes include some form of standardization such as training for evaluators, norming processes, and independent validation beyond the local setting.
7. The indicators supporting the learner outcomes goal should be evaluated both independently and as a group.

### **Examples of Indirect Measures of Learner Outcomes**

1. Graduation rates and/or retention rates
2. Interviews of students, alumni or focus groups
3. Surveys of students, graduates, or employers
4. Self-reported job placement data
5. Self-report of student learning
6. Number of students participating in a particular activity (research, clinicals, etc)
7. Addition of graduation or certification requirements to the curriculum
8. Number of students in a particular program
9. Number of students meeting particular requirements (as opposed to success rates)

## **Regents' System Goal B: Improve Learner Outcomes**

### **Guidelines**

**12/23/2009**

#### **Examples of Direct Measures of Learner Outcomes\***

1. Performance on locally developed exams
2. Performance on essays
3. Performance on blind-scored projects
4. Performance on professional exams
5. Performance in capstone experience or capstone course
6. Performance in juried review of projects, exhibitions, and/or performances
7. Performance on portfolios scored on a rubric
8. Performance on nationally recognized certification and placement exams
9. Performance on other standardized tests
10. Pretest/post-test gains
11. Student success rate in the initial enrollment in a general education mathematics or English course
12. Success rate of developmental students in college-level general education courses
13. Success rates of students in a particular program or achieving a particular certification or minor
14. Response to "real-life" scenarios
15. Student performance on embedded questions - questions intended to measure specific student outcomes that are placed within tests of all sections of the same course. Sets of embedded questions, each requiring a higher level of proficiency, are used across sequential courses
16. Performance on oral exams
17. Evaluation of student portfolios (if portfolios are evaluated according to a rubric)

\*Some examples are taken from the web pages of Kansas State University, the University of Central Florida, San Diego State University, and other sources.

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## **Examples of Direct Measures of Goals A and C through F**

### **Goal A: Efficiency/Effectiveness/Seamlessness**

Success of transfer students at the receiving institution  
Increase number of dollars spent on joint facilities  
Increase number of students participating in joint programs  
Dollar savings as a result of joint ventures  
Increase number of articulation agreements

### **Goal C: Improve Workforce Development**

Increase number of participants in professional noncredit training programs  
Increase number of students completing the Basic Employability Skills Training (BEST) course  
Increase number of graduates with in STEM areas  
Increase number of bachelors, masters, and first professional degrees awarded  
Increase number of graduates with special education endorsements

### **Goal D: Increase Targeted Participation/Access**

Increase number of Hispanic students enrolled  
Increase number of students retained after successfully completing academic probation  
Increase number of female students enrolled in programs identified as nontraditional for females  
Increase number of full-time students receiving need-based aid

### **Goal E: Increase External Resources**

Increase amount of federal science and engineering research expenditures  
Increase amount of licensing income  
Increase the amount of extramural support for research/scholarly activity

### **Goal F: Improve Community/Civic Engagement**

Increase number of middle school students participating in on-campus educational programs  
Increase number of college students/staff/faculty participating in community service projects

## Alignment of Performance Agreements with the Developing Strategic Plan

Current policy specifies the goals to be used in development of an institution’s performance agreement. These will need to be reassessed in light of the Strategic Questions currently under consideration by the Kansas Board of Regents. Aligning institutional goals with the five elements of the strategic plan should be relatively straightforward since, with one possible exception, they overlap. The following chart provides a side-by-side comparison of the existing Performance Project goals and the Five Questions shaping the draft Strategic Plan:

<b>PERFORMANCE PROJECT: SYSTEM GOALS</b>	<b>DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN: STRATEGIC QUESTIONS</b>
<i>Goal A:</i> Increase System Efficiency/Effectiveness/Seamlessness	<i>Question One:</i> Educational Alignment
<i>Goal B:</i> Improve Learner Outcomes (required)	<i>Question Four:</i> Assessment of the Outcomes of Student Learning (required)
<i>Goal C:</i> Improve Workforce Development	<i>Question Five:</i> Economic Alignment
<i>Goal D:</i> Increase Targeted Participation/Access	<i>Question Two:</i> Participation <i>Question Three:</i> Persistence

(See minutes of May 5, 2009, BAASC meeting.)