

WRITING GUIDE FOR USING AIRMAN LEADERSHIP QUALITIES



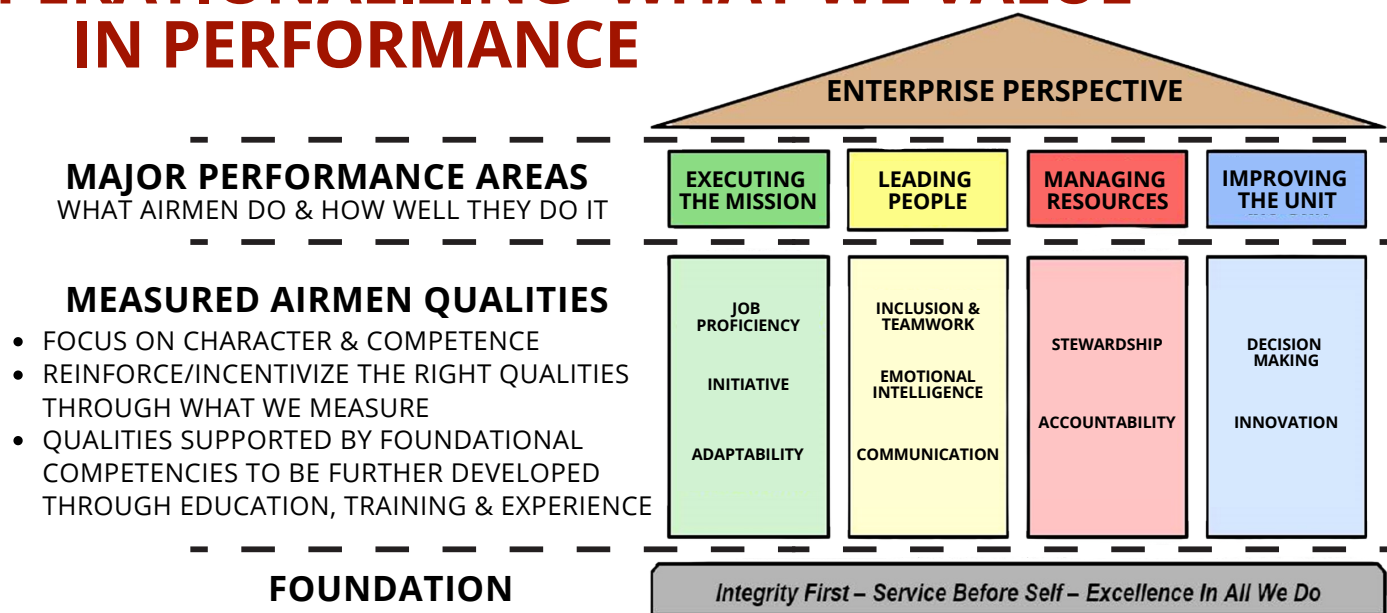
INTEGRITY, SERVICE, EXCELLENCE • PERSON, PROCESS, OUTCOMES

SUMMARY: The Air Force is implementing a new performance evaluation system. This guide explains the *why* behind the change, *what* the new evaluation system entails and suggestions for *how* to write narrative-style Performance Statements.

It starts with a straightforward PHILOSOPHY: The success of the Air Force resides in its people. To safeguard the Air Force's future, our performance evaluations **must** develop Airmen by providing assessment of performance and potential to inform promotion decisions. Therefore, we must set clear expectations about what we value, measure how **Airmen's outcomes and behaviors** embody those values and, incentivize Airmen to continue their development through meaningful feedback.

It encompasses what we VALUE: Our new system uses narrative-style Performance Statements combined with a new competency-based framework. Performance feedback and evaluations are measured upon 10 desired **Airman Leadership Qualities (ALQs)**. These ALQs represent the performance characteristics we want to define, develop, incentivize, and measure in our Airmen with increasing the clarity and effectiveness of feedback. The ALQs fall under the four Major Performance Areas (MPA) listed in [AFI 1-2, Air Force Culture: Commander's Responsibilities](#). Taken together, this system develops the mission-focused *Airmen we need*, while reinforcing the development of useful traits and behaviors our Air Force *values* by emphasizing Airmen's character and competence, along with successful outcomes and behaviors; it is universally designed for all ranks and AFSCs.

OPERATIONALIZING 'WHAT WE VALUE' IN PERFORMANCE



It requires a shift in CULTURE: Our previous evaluation system drifted away from offering meaningful feedback. The "Air Force bullet" became difficult to understand, plagued by confusing acronyms and abbreviations; it focused too narrowly on Airmen's achieved outcomes while ignoring the ways and means in which they accomplished them. Evaluating both Airmen's behaviors or actions and outcomes or results provides a **more accurate, holistic performance assessment** system. Nonetheless, the new system's success will fall to each Airman honestly and diligently enacting it to create the Air Force we want and need.

COMPETENCY-BASED ASSESSMENT: THE AIRMAN LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

DEFINED AS: any tool that is used to measure the observable behaviors that successful performers demonstrate while working on any given job. These behaviors are the result of various abilities, knowledge, motivations, traits, and skills that an Airman may possess.

DESIRED BECAUSE: it allows us to more deliberately develop our Airmen by offering feedback on both their achievements and behaviors. Results are important to document, but discussing only Airmen's accomplishments ignores their behavioral skills and growth. Future success is just as dependent upon the skills and behaviors Airmen have and are working toward as their past outcomes achieved.

WORKS BY: deliberately using the ALQs to provide feedback.

RATERS SHOULD:

- Familiarize themselves with the ALQs and how they relate to their ratees ahead of time.
- Co-create a personalized development plan with subordinates prior to evaluation.
- Document Airmen's skills, behaviors, and actions throughout the rating period.

LOOKS LIKE: raters measuring Airmen's performance using a whole person concept relative to the ratee's specific rank, AFSC, level of responsibility, and assigned duties throughout the entire rating period.

► **REMEMBER THAT** ◀

Competencies are what you know and can do; **Performance** is what you do and how well you do it; **Evaluations** demonstrate performance in alignment with Air Force values.

EXECUTING THE MISSION: Effectively uses knowledge initiative, and adaptability to produce timely, high quality, quantity results to positively impact the mission.

JOB PROFICIENCY: Demonstrates knowledge and professional skill in assigned duties, achieving positive results and impact in support of the mission.

ADAPTABILITY: Adjusts to changing conditions, to include plans, information, processes, requirements and obstacles in accomplishing the mission.

INITIATIVE: Assesses and takes independent or directed action to complete a task or mission that influences the mission or organization.

LEADING PEOPLE: Fosters cohesive teams, effectively communicates, and uses emotional intelligence to take care of people and accomplish the mission.

INCLUSION & TEAMWORK: Collaborates effectively with others to achieve an inclusive climate in pursuit of a common goal or to complete a task or mission.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: Exercises self-awareness, manages their own emotions effectively; demonstrates an understanding of others' emotions, and appropriately manages relationships.

COMMUNICATION: Articulates information in a clear and timely manner, both verbally and non-verbally, through active listening and messaging tailored to the appropriate audience.

MANAGING RESOURCES: Manages assigned resources effectively and takes responsibility for actions, behaviors to maximize organizational performance.

STEWARDSHIP: Demonstrates responsible management of assigned resources, which may include time, equipment, people, funds and/or facilities.

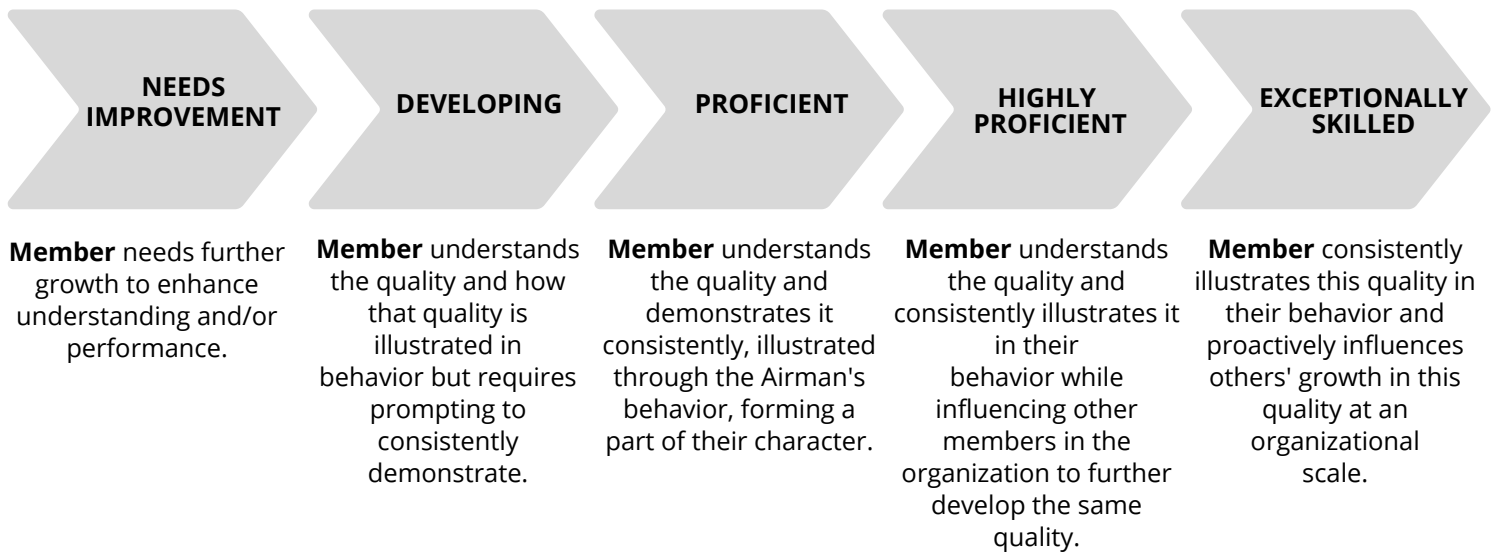
ACCOUNTABILITY: Takes responsibility for the actions and behaviors of self and/or team; demonstrates reliability and transparency.

IMPROVING THE UNIT: Demonstrates critical thinking and fosters innovation to find creative solutions and improve mission execution.

DECISION MAKING: Makes well-informed, effective and timely decisions under one's control that weigh constraints, risks, and benefits.

INNOVATION: Thinks creatively about different ways to solve problems, implements improvements and demonstrates calculated risk-taking.

PROFICIENCY LEVELS



COMMUNICATING COMPETENCIES: USING NARRATIVE-STYLE PERFORMANCE STATEMENTS

The **SHIFT** to Performance Statements:

To best communicate Airmen's performance, the Air Force has replaced bullets with *Performance Statements*. Performance Statements use narrative-style writing and plain language to describe Airmen's performance in each of the four Major Performance Areas **without the need of extensive technical or contextual knowledge**. Performance Statements should function as standalone sentences and include two elements: 1) the *behavior or action* taken by an Airman; and 2) the *impact, results, or outcome* of that behavior/action. If using acronyms and abbreviations, only utilize the approved [Air Force Acronym and Abbreviation List](#), unless noted by an approved category.

Adopting a **QUALITY** over **QUANTITY** Mentality:

Raters are encouraged to refer to the 10 ALQs when writing Performance Statements, but should not attempt to include them all. Instead, raters should select noteworthy anecdotes that are representative of the Airman's behaviors and achievements in the context of their position and rank. This new writing style helps shift our performance evaluation culture from the impractical attempt to **synthesize** an Airman's entire performance on one page to using representative examples that best capture the essence of an Airman's behaviors and results, whether successful or not. A coherent performance statement should identify a specific competency and describe how well it was performed in line with a given MPA/ALQ.

WRITING PERFORMANCE STATEMENTS

Performance Statements are the AF narrative-style of writing to communicate performance. They are efficient, increase clarity, and improve the ability to understand performance correctly and equitably. Guidance for writing Performance Statements is **deliberately not overly prescriptive** to enable flexibility and freedom when capturing performance.

TWO BASIC PRINCIPLES:

→ STANDALONE:

Each Performance Statement will be a standalone sentence and include 1. action and 2. at least one of the following: impact or results/outcome.

→ READABILITY:

Performance Statements are plain language and avoid using uncommon acronyms and abbreviations.

Performance Statements are written into the Major Performance Area (MPA) blocks with a 350-character limit. While not an exact science, you may consider writing two Performance Statements in a single MPA, generally aiming for each Performance Statement to be around 150-175 characters in length.

CONSIDER: Narratives generally contain a scene (context), a person, an action, and a tool/instrument (the means) used to achieve that action. Any combination of these elements can craft a noteworthy narrative.

CONSIDER: Thinking about:

1. the scope, or range of impact, a particular behavior/skill has; and
2. the quality, or depth/meaningfulness, of its impact.

CONSIDER: Compelling narratives resonate with their intended audience. They should be believable and relate to the community's prior experiences, expectations, and cultural norms.

CONSIDER: Whether an outside reader can make sense of the who, what, when, where, and why of the statement.

CONSIDER: Describing Airmen's successes and developmental needs or shortcomings. An Airman may exhibit proficiency in taking initiative and fostering innovation worthy of acknowledgement, even if their actions fall short of producing tangible results. Others may need additional support suggesting where they almost reached proficiency in an area of importance to their position and how to go about doing so.

AVOID: Overly clichéd superlatives, over-the-top praise, or overly common descriptors, which reduces credibility and distracts from the specific story being conveyed.

AVOID: Overly general or vague statements. Instead, link your feedback to the 10 ALQs and identify opportunities for future development.

- **For high performers:** focus on how they can be a future leader by discussing their desired development and the unique behaviors they possess, promising sustained, future success.
- **For good performers:** focus on contributions, areas of improvement, and potential for future growth; identify expected challenges and focus on steps they should take in the short term to achieve success.
- **For average or below-level performers:** discuss your performance concerns, and articulate why they need to improve; provide actionable steps for them to deliver better performance in the future.

NOTE: Comments derogatory in nature or imply behavior incompatible with or not meeting DAF standards will be considered referral per DAFI36-2406.

SAMPLE PERFORMANCE STATEMENTS AT ALL LEVELS

MPA BEING EVALUATED: EXECUTING THE MISSION
ALQ BEING HIGHLIGHTED: ADAPTABILITY

NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

Needs further growth to enhance understanding and/or performance.

Performance Statement: MSgt Bailey learned a Primary Care Team member tested COVID positive, and, after being prompted, notified her Flight Commander at morning huddle, while waiting for direction on future actions to take.

DEVELOPING

Generally accepts new information and changing conditions

Performance Statement: When MSgt Bailey learned a Primary Care Team member tested COVID positive, she notified her Flight Commander, and, with direction from her leadership, her team was able to determine a plan to resolve the issue.

PROFICIENT

Adjusts to change or ambiguity with composure to meet mission objectives

Performance Statement: Learning a Primary Care Team member tested COVID positive, MSgt Bailey responded professionally with appropriate action adjusting the daily schedule and created a new plan ensuring team coverage.

HIGHLY PROFICIENT

Independently adjusts to change or ambiguity with composure; empowers others to implement changes to meet mission objectives

Performance Statement: MSgt Bailey learned a Primary Care Team member tested COVID positive and, without prompting, empowered a SSgt as Team leader deciding on adjustments, ensuring team coverage and mission accomplishment.

EXCEPTIONALLY SKILLED

Leverages changes as an opportunity to better meet mission objectives; inspires others to be more adaptable and equips them to handle changes independently

Performance Statement: When a Primary Care Team member tested COVID positive, MSgt Bailey independently acted to empower a SSgt as Team lead ensuring coverage, mentoring them to create/brief new plans to Medical Group for process improvement.

REMEMBER: Leaders and subordinates jointly discuss and develop a shared understanding of what each ALQ and proficiency level looks like for them in their specific position and context; this will help the member generate their own examples of how their performance reflect a particular level, creating an opportunity to discuss examples specific to the duty center, the individual, and their level of responsibility.

TAKE AWAY

Your effort to understand and enact the Air Force's new performance management system, based on the ALQs along with narrative-style Performance Statements has the potential to more deliberately develop our Airmen and as such the future of our Total Force.