

STEPS assessment rubric

Systematic Evaluation of Programs and Services · September 17, 2026

This rubric shows what makes a STEPS goal complete and what makes its results clear. It covers Part A goals and Part B results. Scores describe what a submission contains when read against a common standard; they are not evaluations of the department that produced it. Continuous improvement plans will be addressed separately.

Writing goals and results

1. Put the outcome, target, and timeframe in the Goal field, and complete them in Part A. Goal and Actions are read together, so a detail stated in Actions counts, but results reported in Part B cannot supply a target or timeframe the goal left out.
2. State what you mean. A goal is credited for what it says, not for what a reader can infer you intended. If the target is 10 percent, write 10 percent. If the deliverable is a plan, name the plan.
3. Attend to every component. Each is assessed on its own, so a precise target does not make up for a missing timeframe, and a clear timeframe does not make up for a vague outcome.
4. Name an outcome your unit can drive. Outside factors affect every goal and do not count against you. What matters is whether your described actions and your unit's authority are enough to move the outcome you name.
5. If the outcome sits outside your unit's own operations, say how your work reaches it. A retention goal from a unit that does not teach or advise needs to state how its activities affect retention.
6. State a timeframe. The reporting year itself does not count as one, because every goal shares it. Name a month, a term, a fiscal year, or a recurring schedule.
7. Report results on what you committed to. Your Part B results are judged against the goal as you wrote it in Part A. If part of the goal statement is context rather than a commitment, write it so a reader can tell the difference.

Goal quality (Part A)

Five components, each 0, 1, or 2, for a maximum of 10.

Component	0	1	2
Specificity	Cannot tell what the unit will do, or on what it acts.	Direction is clear, but scope, population, or activity is left general.	The work, its scope, and who or what it acts on are all identifiable.
Measurable target	No number, count, or finished product anywhere in the submission to check against.	A direction without an amount, or a target that covers only part of the goal.	A number, percentage, dollar figure, or a deliverable that is either done or not.
Temporality	No dates or deadlines anywhere in the submission.	A general period is named, or dates cover only some of the actions.	A specific deadline or a schedule of dated milestones.
Affectability	The outcome belongs to another unit, or lies beyond the unit's reach with no explanation of how the work affects it.	The unit contributes but shares the outcome, or names how its work applies without saying what its own part is.	The outcome sits within the unit's own operations, or an outcome beyond its reach comes with a clear account of how the unit's work affects it.
Measure fit	The way the goal is to be measured could not show whether it was met, even if done well.	The measurement covers part of the goal, or is reasonable but not spelled out.	If carried out, the measurement would show whether the goal was met.

Results quality (Part B)

Three components, each 0, 1, or 2, for a maximum of 6. Where the goal is a deliverable, a clear statement that it was completed is sufficient evidence, and brevity is not penalized.

Component	0	1	2
Evidence	Claims only, with no data, where the measurement described in Part A calls for data.	Some data or documentation, but incomplete against the measurement described.	Evidence appropriate to the measurement described. For a deliverable, a clear statement of completion is enough.
Completeness	Describes work other than what the goal committed to.	Addresses part of the goal, leaves out results the work produced, or leaves out what limited the result.	Addresses what the goal committed to, what the year's work produced, and what limited the result.
Interpretation	No conclusion is drawn, or the conclusion is contradicted by the results themselves.	A conclusion is stated but barely supported, or claims more than the results show.	States what the results mean or what was learned, within what the evidence supports.