

SETTING S.M.A.R.T. OBJECTIVES

A well-known method used to develop clear well-written goals and objectives is the S.M.A.R.T. format.

- S** Specific
- M** Measurable
- A** Attainable
- R** Realistic
- T** Time-Bound

Developing specific, measurable objectives requires time, orderly thinking, and a clear picture of the results expected of program activities. The more specific the objectives are, the easier it will be to demonstrate success.

S.M.A.R.T. objectives engage focus, action, feedback, and learning. They assist in the development of work plans, and include measures to track and gauge progress.

UNDERSTANDING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In program planning, we often think of what we want to accomplish in terms of goals and objectives so that we can easily explain expectations to others. Goals and objectives support each other, but also have distinct differences.

- Goals explain what the program wishes to accomplish. They relate to aspirations, purpose, plan, and vision. Typically, goals are broad general statements and offer a fundamental, long-range direction. Goals may have more than one objective.
- Objectives are the work, or the stepping stones on the path towards the achievement of the goal. Objectives break the goal down into smaller parts to provide specific, measurable actions by which the goal can be accomplished. Objectives should be written clearly and concisely, help make goals realistic and concrete, and define program expectations for stakeholders and partners.

To understand and develop robust goals and objectives, utilizing the S.M.A.R.T. format is an effective method to support the Community Health Action Plan. Each component addresses an important and essential element to crafting quality objectives to appropriately address identified health priorities in the community and improve chronic disease prevention and control. S.M.A.R.T. objectives include the following:

Method	Definition	Ask these questions as guidance:
S	SPECIFIC The objective is concrete, detailed, focused, well-defined, straightforward, emphasizes action, and identifies the outcome. The objective clearly communicates <i>what is to happen, by whom, where at, by when, and why it is important.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is going to do what? • Who needs to be involved? • Where will this take place? • When does this need to be completed? • How is this going to be done? • Why is this important to do?
M	MEASURABLE Measurement is the standard used for comparison. It answers the question of quantity – how much, how often, how many? It applies to both the end result and the milestones along the way. Objectives are measurable when they can be counted or quantified. Baseline measurement is essential to record change or improvement from the beginning to the end. <i>If you can't measure it, you can't manage it!</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the baseline measurement? • How will I know that the change has occurred? • Can these measurements be obtained? • Is the objective quantifiable and measurable?
A	ATTAINABLE Standards are set by understanding the commitment, abilities, strengths, and weaknesses of the group. Objectives need to be realistic, possible, and achievable to keep partners motivated toward achieving them, but the vision also needs to stretch the imagination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can it be done in the proposed timeframe? • Do we understand the limitations and constraints? • Can we do this with the resources we have? • Do we have the dedicated workers for the project? • Has anyone else done this successfully?
R	REALISTIC Objectives must be relevant to what you want to achieve from short-term to long-term goals, and kept in line with the organization's vision and mission. Resources such as people, money, skills, equipment, and knowledge are necessary to support the tasks required to achieve the objective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have the resources available to achieve this objective? • Is the timeframe proposed reasonable? • Is it possible to achieve this objective?
T	TIME-BOUND Deadlines create an all-important sense of urgency and necessary focus, while helping to set priorities and prompting action. Without deadlines, there may be reduced motivation and resolve required to execute tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When will this objective be accomplished? • Is there a stated deadline?

CONCLUSION

The concept of writing S.M.A.R.T. objectives is very important for accomplishing the goals of the community. A good plan has S.M.A.R.T. goals and objectives that drive the work of the coalition and provide direction for the community. For change to occur in the community there must be a coordinated plan. Choosing and reaching manageable goals and objectives, identified by the CHNA process, allows communities to progress as they prepare for the next phase, implementation.

Tools and Templates

- [Language Hints in Writing S.M.A.R.T. Objectives](#) – offers action verb usage hints.
- [Sample S.M.A.R.T. Objectives](#) – an example of writing S.M.A.R.T. objectives.
- [S.M.A.R.T. Objectives Template](#) – a template to use when writing S.M.A.R.T. objectives.

Resources

S.M.A.R.T. Objectives

[Evaluation Guide. Writing SMART Objectives.](#) CDC Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention.

[Use SMART Objectives to Focus Goals, Plans and Performance.](#) PROJECTSMART.

[Creating Objectives.](#) Community Tool Box, University of Kansas.

References

1. Human Resources Service Centre. Edith Cowan University. (2010). Management For Performance (MPS). How to write SMART objectives. Retrieved from <http://www.hr.ecu.edu.au/mps/html/mps-smart-write.cfm>
2. Berry, S., & Thomas, R. (2013). Project Smart. *Use SMART Objectives to Focus Goals, Plans and Performance.* Retrieved from <http://www.projectsmart.co.uk/use-smart-objectives-to-focus-goals-plans-and-performance.html>

