How to Write SMART Objectives

For funded partners, program planning includes developing five-year program goals (a broad statement of program purpose that describes the expected long-term effects of a program), strategies (the means or broad approach by which a program will achieve its goals), and annual work plan objectives (statements that describe program results to be achieved and how they will be achieved). Objectives are more immediate than goals; objectives represent annual mileposts that your program needs to achieve to accomplish its goals by the end of the five-year funding period. Each year, your work plan objectives should be based on the strategies you have selected to reach your program goals. Because strategies are implemented through objectives and program activities, multiple objectives are generally needed to address a single strategy. Objectives are the basis for monitoring implementation of your strategies and progress toward achieving your program goals. Objectives also help set targets for accountability and are a source for program evaluation questions.

Writing SMART Objectives

To use an objective to monitor your progress, you need to write it as a SMART objective. A SMART objective is

1. Specific
Objectives should provide the "who" and "what" of program activities.

Use only one action verb, because objectives with more than one verb imply that more than one activity or behavior is being measured.

Avoid verbs that may have vague meanings to describe intended outcomes, like "understand" or "know," because it may prove difficult to measure them. Instead, use verbs that document action, like "At the end of the session, the participants will list three concerns..."

Remember, the greater the specificity, the greater the measurability.

2. Measurable
Objectives should quantify the amount of change expected. It is impossible to determine whether objectives have been met unless they can be measured.

The objective provides a reference point from which a change in the target population can be measured clearly.

3. Achievable
Objectives should be attainable within a given time frame and with available program resources.

4. Realistic
Objectives are most useful when they accurately address the scope of the problem and programmatic steps that can be implemented within a specific time frame.

Objectives that do not directly relate to the program goal will not help achieve the goal.

5. Time-phased
Objectives should provide a time frame indicating when the objective will be measured, or a time by which the objective will be met.

Including a time frame in the objectives helps in planning and evaluating the program.

Objectives Checklist

1. Is the objective SMART?

   ☐ **Specific:** Who? (the target population and people doing the activity) and what? (the action or activity).

   ☐ **Measurable:** How much change is expected.

   ☐ **Achievable:** Can be accomplished given current resources and constraints.

   ☐ **Realistic:** Addresses the scope of the health program and proposes reasonable programmatic steps.

   ☐ **Time-phased:** Provides a timeline indicating when the objective will be met.

2. Does it relate to a single result?

3. Is it written clearly?

Examples of SMART Objectives

Non-SMART objective 1: Schools will be trained on the selected scientifically based sun safety health education curriculum.

This objective is not SMART because it is not *specific*, *measurable*, or *time-phased*. It can be made SMART by *specifically* indicating who is responsible for training the schools, how many people will be trained, who they are, and by when the training will be conducted.

SMART objective 1: By year two of the project, the Division of Cancer will have trained **75% of elementary schools in districts 1, 3, and 6** on the selected scientifically based sun safety health education curriculum.

Non-SMART objective 2: 90% of cancer survivors will participate in our self-management course.

This objective is not SMART because it is not *specific* or *time-phased*. It can be made SMART by *specifically* indicating who will do the activity, by when, and who will participate in the self-management course.

SMART objective 2: By the end of the calendar year, district health staff will have enrolled 90% of **newly diagnosed** cancer survivors **from the Elms Cancer Community Center in the Chronic Disease Self-Management course.**