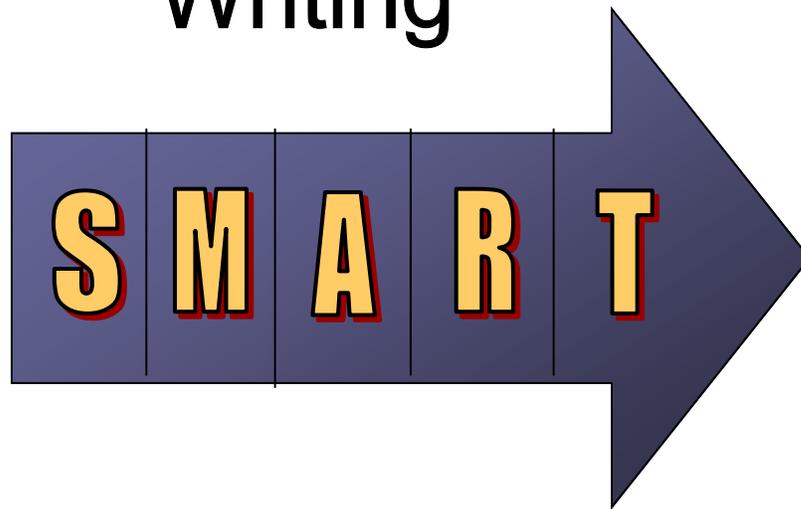


Writing



Objectives

Target Learners: Community-based Program Planners

# Foreword

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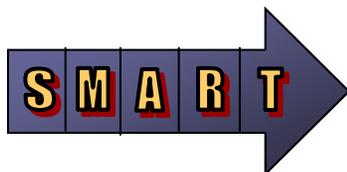
This instructional module was created with you in mind! Using this self-study module, in about 30 minutes busy public health professionals can gain skills in writing objectives. The instruction and practice materials that follow guide learners towards creating SMART objectives for strategic health plans, action plans and program planning.

The module immediately places you in the action—that is, you are an active participant in developing SMART objectives for your partnership. The storyline and scenario are always in the purple shaded boxes. Practice examples and feedback are provided throughout the module. A pre-test and post-test are available to gauge learning. You are also active in improving the materials and instruction by providing comments on the evaluation questionnaire. Ready for the action? Read on!

## Module Objective

After completing this module, you will be able to identify the SMART components in objectives and construct your own SMART objectives.

So, what is a SMART objective?



Turn the page to begin the story!

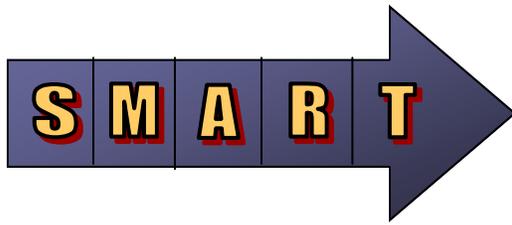
# Introduction

You have just been nominated to **represent** the Mosquito County Health Department on the **Mosquito County Health Partnership (MCHP)**. Because the partnership is the most influential entity dealing with the county's health issues, you recognize this as both an opportunity and challenge. And the timing is perfect for you to join the MCHP. At its next meeting, the MCHP will **begin strategic planning**, a process that incorporates input from citizens and public health experts in selecting priority health issues and taking action to improve health outcomes.



A week before the MCHP meeting you decide to **brush up on strategic planning**. After all, it's been two years since you facilitated your health department's own planning exercise. Good thing you kept that Institute of Medicine (IOM) report on community-based strategic planning! According to the IOM, the **purpose of selecting a strategic priority is to focus on important, forward-thinking opportunities**. Goals are broad, long-term aims that define the desired results associated with your strategic priority. And objectives are statements about how much, how and when a health issue should be changed. You vaguely remember some kind of acronym used for writing objectives. Is it MAGIC? SHARP sounds familiar. Hmmm.....





That's it!

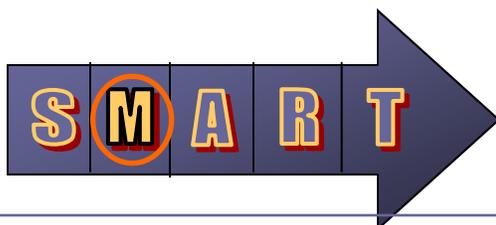
For objectives to be meaningful and useful in monitoring progress toward an outcome, they must include certain components. Well-written objectives are SMART!



= Specific

Specific means that the objective is **concrete, detailed, focused** and **well defined**. Objectives need to be **straightforward** and to **communicate what needs to happen**. An objective that is specific answers the questions:

- What exactly are we going to do?
- With and for whom?

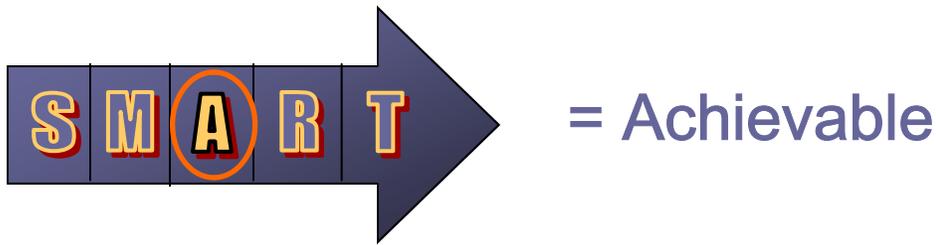


= Measurable

Measurable objectives include **units for counting, determining quantity and comparison**. For an objective to be measurable the **unit of measurement must be identified**. Measurement helps track progress toward completion. Measurable objectives answer:

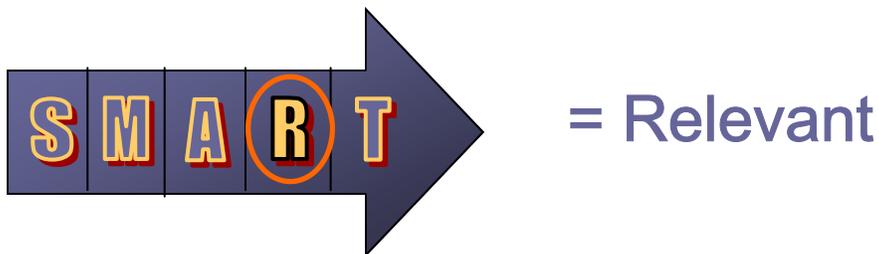
- How will we know a change has occurred?
- Can these measurements be obtained?





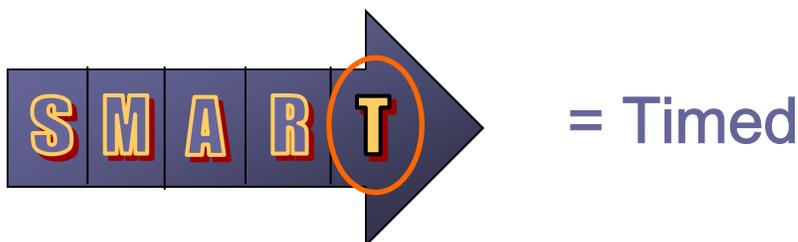
**Achievable** objectives are **feasible, reasonable and actionable**. When deciding if an objective is achievable consider if others have **done it successfully**, if it is **theoretically possible**, if you **have the necessary resources** or can get them and if you **understand the limitations and constraints**. Questions to ask:

- Is this possible?
- Can we get it done in the proposed time frame?



**Relevant** objectives **relate to or align with existing goals**. A relevant objective **adds useful value or contributes to the accomplishment of the larger goal**. Relevant objectives tell:

- How does this fit in the bigger picture?
- How will achieving this objective contribute to the goal?



**Timed** objectives have a **defined end point**. Objectives must have **deadlines for completion**. Timed objectives answer the questions:

- When will the work be accomplished?
- What is our deadline?



# Practice!

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Match SMART component terms with their definitions by writing the letter of the definition in the space provided.

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. ____ Specific   | a. Relates to or aligns with goals                                  |
| 2. ____ Measurable | b. Is concrete, detailed, well defined                              |
| 3. ____ Achievable | c. Has a defined end point  |
| 4. ____ Relevant   | d. Includes units for counting, determining quantity and comparison |
| 5. ____ Timed      | e. Is feasible, actionable, reasonable                              |

Answers: 1. Specific = b; 2. Measurable = d; 3. Achievable = e; 4. Relevant = a; and 5. Timed = c



# Examples

After attending your first meeting, you note that the MCHP is more dynamic than ever. With the recent \$1million grant award there was **no time wasted in identifying a strategic priority and goal**. The MCHP identified “**protecting the health and safety of children**” as a strategic priority. A related goal is “**to reduce the health impact of unintentional injuries to children.**”

You were selected to **lead the planning workgroup**. Your first task: **write objectives**--SMART objectives, of course! For the next meeting you'll need examples of the SMART components.....

The **specificity** component of an objective tells us what needs to happen to accomplish the task. It presents an explanation that is detailed, focused and well-defined.

Examples of specificity components in an objective are:

- Broadcast public service announcements about fire safety for children on WMTV
- Publish newspaper articles about school bus safety in the *Mosquito Times*
- Train child passenger safety technicians for the Mosquito County Sheriff's Office squad



Not specific enough:

- Hold an event (what kind of event, for whom?)
- Write a report (who will write, about what topic?)
- Train staff (what staff, who will do it?)



# More Examples

An objective is **measurable** when units for counting or quantifying have been identified and stated. Measurement is the standard used for comparison. Examples of measurable statements in objectives include:

- 3 public service announcements
- 2 published articles
- 10 trained technicians on the squad
- Reduce from 25% to 15%



Examples of statements that are **not** considered **measurable**:

- A few or some (exactly how many?)
- Reduce significantly (what is the amount considered to be significant? From what baseline to what target?)
- A year's worth (how do you count this? What number does this represent?)



# More Examples



Examples of statements of work that might **not be achievable** in the scope of your partnership

- Stop all motor vehicle crashes
- In the next year, build a new 8-lane highway with pedestrian and bicycle paths
- Require the governor to attend all meetings

To determine if an objective is **achievable**, consider its feasibility given the available resources and any limitations. Knowing about the strengths, weaknesses, and assets of your partnership contributes to determining the achievability of an objective. Examples of indicators of achievability include:

- Broadcast announcements on local television (media represented on partnership, psa's done before)
- Train technicians (training program already exists, program is nationally recognized)
- Sponsor annual community workshop on pedestrian safety (done annually, scope is reasonable, have fiscal and human resources)



# Learn from these Examples



The key to **relevance** in an objective is the alignment with the larger goal and priority. Determining relevancy requires an understanding of the issue at hand and which activities might have the desired impact. Examples of relevancy in objectives include:

- Fire safety instruction for children (relates to reducing injuries among children—the partnership’s priority and goal)
- School bus safety policy in Mosquito County school district (relates to reducing injuries, target audience is Mosquito County)
- Child passenger safety technicians for Mosquito County Sheriff’s squad (correct seat installation reduces injuries, aligns with goal)

Examples of **non-relevant** statements in MCHP objectives:

- Inspect construction sites for proper permitting and licensing (does not align with priority and/or goal)
- Conduct a statewide media campaign (goes outside the target area of Mosquito County)



# One More Example



These are incorrect or incomplete time statements within an objective:

- Around the same time next year (when exactly will that be?)
- After (an activity may follow another but the interval must be stated—within what time frame?)

**Time** frames in an objective set deadlines and prompt action. To determine if an objective has a time element, look for dates or specific units of time within which an objective will be accomplished. Some examples of time frames in an objective are:

- By the end of the federal fiscal year
- Within 30 days of delivery
- By December 31, 2008
- In six months



# Practice!

To try out your new skills, you will identify the SMART components in the example objectives. Scenario A is provided for background information. Answers are provided at the end of the practice exercise.

**Scenario A:** The Mosquito County Health Partnership (MCHP) identified “protecting the health and safety of children” as a strategic priority. One of their goals is “to reduce the health impact of unintentional injuries to children.” The MCHP is the largest and most influential partnership in the county with representation from all the major public and private entities including hospitals and health care, law enforcement, elected and appointed governmental officials, educational institutions, media, social service, and faith-based groups. The MCHP was recently awarded a \$1 million grant to address health priorities using evidence-based interventions.

## Practice Exercise

In example objective 1, underline the key words or phrases that contribute to the objective’s **specificity**:

**1. Example Objective 1:** By the end of the federal fiscal year, the MCHP will broadcast 3 public service announcements on WMTV about fire safety for children.

Underline the key words or phrases that make example objective 2. **measurable**:

**2. Example Objective 2:** By December 31, 2008 two (2) newspaper articles about school bus safety will be published in the *Mosquito Times*.



# Practice Continues

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In example objective 3, underline the keywords or phrases that indicate the objective is **achievable**:

**3. Example Objective 3:** By June 30, 2008 the MCHP will form one committee of at least five members to monitor trends in childhood injury statistics.

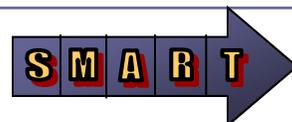
In example objective 4, underline the key words or phrases that indicate the objective is **relevant**:

**4. Example Objective 4:** Within one year, the MCHP will purchase and install 200 child passenger safety seats for Mosquito County residents.

Underline the keys words or phrases in example objective 5 that demonstrate the objective is **timed**:

**5. Example Objective 5:** A written policy addressing school crossing safety will be in place in the Mosquito County School District by December 31, 2008.

Answers: 1. MCHP will broadcast 3 public service announcements on WMTV on fire safety for children (tells who--the MCHP--will do what—broadcast psa's on safety; 2. two (2) newspaper articles (specified number); 3: By June 30, 2008 form one committee of five members (partnership has enough members to form subcommittee, time frame is reasonable); 4: Purchase and install child passenger safety seats for Mosquito County residents (safety seats known to reduce injuries, contributing to larger goal and priority); 5: By December 31, 2008 (clearly stated deadline)



# Spot the Missing Components

The planning workgroup has written lots of objectives. You could use some help **checking them for the SMART components**. You think, “Everyone should know how to write SMART objectives. All public health disciplines measure their progress, impact and outcomes.” You head down the hall to recruit volunteers.....

With your new volunteers, you put an objective to the **SMART objective test**. Here’s what they agreed upon:

Objective: Within six months the MCHP will hold 2 events.

- **Specific? No**, doesn’t tell what events or their purpose
- **Measurable? Yes**, clearly states there will be 2 events
- **Achievable? Yes**, it’s feasible for a large partnership to hold 2 events within six months
- **Relevant? No**, we don’t know the focus nor audience for the events
- **Timed? Yes**, within six months is the deadline

The workgroup re-writes the objective to read:

***Revised Objective: Within six months, the MCHP will hold 2 bicycle safety rodeos for children in Mosquito County.***

They made it **specific** (bicycle safety rodeos for children in the county) and **relevant** (bicycle safety contributes to reducing children’s injuries). What do you think?



# What's Missing? Your Turn!

Indicate SMART components that are present by **marking an X** on the line. Indicate the missing components by **marking an O**. For the missing components, **write in key words or phrases** that complete the SMART objective. **Write the new, complete objective** in the space provided. You may refer to Scenario A on page 12 for background information.

**Example Objective: Teenagers will participate in a defensive driving seminar.**

1. \_\_\_ Specific \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_ Measurable \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_ Achievable \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_ Relevant \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_ Timed \_\_\_\_\_
6. New complete objective: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Let's compare answers!

1. O Specific Mosquito County teenagers aged 15-18, seminar sponsored by the Mosquito County Sheriff's (need to specify who will do provide the seminar and who will participate)
2. O Measurable 200 teenagers (or some other count of participants and/or number of seminars)
3. O Achievable Need the measurable and specificity components to determine achievability; could make a case that with the partnership's resources it is achievable
4. X Relevant (is related to safety and preventing injuries)
5. O Timed By the end of the 2007-2008 school year (or some other time frame)
6. New complete objective: By the end of the 2007-2008 school year 200 Mosquito County teenagers aged 15-18 will participate in a defensive driving seminar sponsored by the Mosquito County Sheriff's Office.



# Writing Your Own Objectives



There's an MCHP meeting this afternoon. You're ready to present your workgroup's completed list of SMART objectives. Using the SMART guidelines made writing meaningful objectives easier!

## One last practice!

Write three of your own SMART objectives below. You may refer to Scenario A on page 12 for background information.

Your Objective 1: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Your Objective 2: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Your Objective 3: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

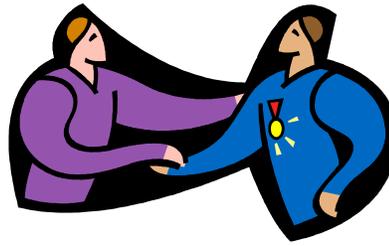
Do your answers contain all the SMART components? Are they specific? Can you measure them? Are they achievable? Relevant? Is there a time frame or deadline?





## You Did It!

Thanks to the SMART objectives you and your workgroup wrote, the MCHP will be able to measure their progress, evaluate effectiveness and celebrate reaching goals!



Now that you know the formula for writing SMART objectives, **test your skills on the post-test.**

More importantly, continue to use the SMART guidelines whenever you write an objective—whether it's for work, school or personal achievement—make it SMART!

Please share your thoughts on the content and format of this module. An evaluative attitude survey is included to collect your comments. Thank you!