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# Developing Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, & Time-Bound Objectives

## Introduction

**Goals** are the specific result or purpose expected from the project. Project goals specify what will be accomplished over the entire project period and should directly relate to the problem statement and vision. The goal is achieved through the project objectives and activities.

**Objectives** are specific steps that lead to the successful completion of project goals. Completion of objectives results in specific, measurable outcomes that directly contribute to the achievement of the project goals.

Setting specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives is a good way to plan steps to meet your long-term goals. It helps you take your grant from ideas to action. Setting SMART objectives keeps the project moving forward, helps with accountability and timing, and lets you know that you are accomplishing what you set out to accomplish.

## Definition of SMART Objectives

SMART stands for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

- **Specific:** The objective clearly states, so anyone reading it can understand, what will be done and who will do it.
- **Measurable:** The objective includes how the action will be measured. Measuring your objectives helps determine if you are making progress. It keeps you on track and schedule.
- **Achievable:** The objective is realistic given the realities faced in the community. Setting reasonable objectives helps set the project up for success.
- **Relevant:** A relevant objective makes sense. That is, it fits the purpose of the grant, it fits the culture and structure of the community, and it addresses the vision of the project.
- **Time-bound:** Every objective has a specific timeline for completion.

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## Tips for Writing SMART Objectives

<p><b><u>S</u>pecific</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define what you expect</li> <li>• Determine who will do it</li> <li>• Detail accountability</li> <li>• Use action verbs, expressing physical or mental action, as much as possible</li> <li>• Provide enough detail               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Will depend on the objective but should be enough to be clear</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b><u>M</u>easurable</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify how you will know the objective was accomplished               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Usually this means quantity but can also mean quality (e.g., 80% of participants agree or strongly agree on the feedback form)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b><u>A</u>chievable</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure you have the time, manpower, resources, &amp; authority to accomplish the objective</li> <li>• Consider if there may be factors beyond your control</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>R</u>elevant</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure the objective helps you meet the purpose of your project &amp; the grant overall</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>T</u>ime-Bound</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specify when the objective should be completed</li> <li>• Include time-lined benchmarks for long-range goals &amp; all objectives</li> </ul>

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## Examples of SMART Objectives

*Sample objective 1: Collaborate with 11 community-based organizations.*

The bulleted list below demonstrates how this objective meets and does not meet SMART objective criteria.

- ***Is it Specific?***
  - The objective is clear but could be more specific in terms of *who* will do it and *what* “collaboration” means.
- ***Is it Measurable?***
  - Yes, but *how* the objective will be measured needs to be stated.
- ***Is it Achievable?***
  - Yes, if you have the time and resources needed.
- ***Is it Relevant?***
  - Yes, because collaborating with other agencies improves the chances that changes will be made and contributed to sustainability.
- ***Is it Time-bound?***
  - No, it does not specify a timeframe for completing the objective. Language should be added to specify completion time.

*Sample SMART objective 1: The project director will obtain Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) that spell out the terms of agency collaboration with 11 community-based organizations involved with youth by August 31, 2024.*

This objective outlines *what* will be done and *who* will do it. It is measurable in that it specifies some detail about MOUs, and it is time-lined. Depending on how the program team is set up and how it will report to the BSCC or other grant program, more specific detail may be needed to make this objective even better.

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*Sample detailed SMART objective 1:* The project director will obtain MOUs that spell out the terms of agency collaboration for 11 community-based organizations working with youth. MOUs will state the number of times per year organizations will meet and how they will work together. The advisory committee will review all MOUs before final signature is obtained, and the project director will submit all signed MOUs to the advisory committee and BSCC by August 31, 2024.

Figure 1 below presents the sections of a SMART objective and outlines how *sample detailed SMART objective #1* meets SMART criteria.

**Figure 1. SMART Details of Sample Detailed SMART Objective #1**

<b>Specific</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Who:</b> Project director</li> <li>• <b>What:</b> MOUs</li> <li>• <b>Detail:</b> Terms of collaboration</li> </ul>
<b>Measurable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>How many?</b> 11</li> <li>• <b>Documented by:</b> MOUs</li> <li>• <b>Accountable to:</b> Advisory committee &amp; BSCC</li> </ul>
<b>Achievable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Justification:</b> There are 11 organizations that work with youth.; program has good relationships with most; staff &amp; resources available to help program meet objective</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Rationale:</b> Grant calls for "integrated services." MOUs help define terms of working together (i.e., collaboration)</li> </ul>
<b>Time-bound</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>When:</b> 11 MOUs submitted by August 31, 2024</li> </ul>

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*Sample objective 2:* Continue to educate our community that violence is a public health problem.

*Sample detailed SMART Objective 2:* The project team will hold two 5K walk/runs with at least four entities by July 1, 2024 and speak once a month at 9 community meetings from January–September 2014, to educate our community that violence is a preventable public health problem.

Figure 2 presents the SMART details of *sample detailed SMART objective #2*.

**Figure 2. SMART Details of Sample Detailed SMART Objective #2**

<b><u>S</u>pecific</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•<b>Who:</b> Project team</li> <li>•<b>What:</b> Walk/runs &amp; presentations</li> </ul>
<b><u>M</u>easurable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•<b>How many?</b> 2 walk/runs; 9 presentations</li> <li>•<b>Documented by:</b> Sign-in sheets &amp; agendas</li> <li>•<b>Accountable to:</b> Advisory committee</li> </ul>
<b><u>A</u>chievable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•<b>Justification:</b> We have time to plan &amp; staff to implement</li> </ul>
<b><u>R</u>elevant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•<b>Rationale:</b> The type of awareness raising is consistent with the purpose of our project &amp; the grant overall</li> </ul>
<b><u>T</u>ime-bound</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•<b>When:</b> 2 events &amp; 9 presentations by September 2024</li> </ul>

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Note. This handout was adapted from the following source:

*Setting Goals and Developing Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound Objectives*, by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration. <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/nc-smart-goals-fact-sheet.pdf>