SMART: Developing Effective Goals and Objectives

Excerpted from Presentation Given by Barry Nagle
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Agenda

Part A

– Goal/Objective Definition
– How to be SMART
  • Review of the component terms
– SMART tool
  • Table to facilitate SMART Objective Development
– SMART Benefits/Costs
Goal/Objective Definition
Goals/Objectives

• The most important element of a successful program is the development of attainable goals and measurable objectives
  – Guides program planning and design
  – Communicates to stakeholders
  – Enables evaluation

• Success is dependent upon realistic goals
Goals: Characteristics

• Describe the overall purpose of the program
• Describe broad outcomes and concepts (what we want to accomplish)
• Expressed in general terms.
Goals: Development Steps

- Research the topic (*define needs*)
- Involve stakeholders (*gains commitment*)
- Brainstorm goals
- Select the goals that have priority (*decide on what matters*)
- Limit the program to two-five goals (*select realistic goals*)
Goals: Samples

- The program will inspire and motivate students to pursue careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
- The program will positively impact the gender diversity of the STEM workforce
- The program will increase the capacity of minority institutions in STEM research
Objectives

• Specifically state how the goals will be achieved
• Are measurable: Define what you want to see
• Encourage a consistent focus on program functions
Objectives Are Not...

Tasks

• Conducting a training session is a task.
  – *Poor objective:* We will conduct a training session

• An effective objective is something the program can *fail* at.

• An effective objective defines intent
  – *Better objective:* Faculty that attend the training session will be able to identify at least three NASA grant programs that align with their research interests.
  – *The affiliates that attend this training will be able to formulate three SMART objectives for each ASGP goal*
How to be SMART
SMART Objectives

• **Specific:** Be precise about what you are going to achieve
• **Measurable:** Quantify the objectives
• **Appropriate:** Align with the needs of the target audience
• **Realistic:** Do you have the resources to make the objective happen?
• **Time-Specific:** State when you will achieve the objective
**S**mart: Specific Objectives

**Specific**: Be precise about what you are going to achieve

- Specify target
- Specify intended outcome
- One outcome per objective
- Avoid vague verbs (e.g. know, understand)
- Make sure the objective is linked to the goal
- *Sample*: By January 2010, at least 3% of the engineering majors at the institution will be female
SMART: Measurable Objectives

**Measurable:** Quantify the objectives

- Use measures as indicators of program success
- If possible, establish a baseline (*e.g.* In January 2009, 2% of the engineering majors at the institution were female)
- **Sample:** By January 2010, at least 3% of the engineering majors at the institution will be female
**Appropriate Objectives**

**Appropriate:** Align with the needs of the target audience
- Meeting the objective will advance the goal
- Identify a specific target audience
- Are inclusive of diversity within your group
- *Sample:* By January 2010, at least 3% of the engineering majors at the institution will be **female**
- *Note:* The “A” is sometimes called “Attainable” or “Achievable” in the literature.
SMART: Realistic Objectives

**Realistic**: Do you have the resources to make the objective happen?

- Are important to stakeholders
- Are adequately resourced
- Can be achieved

**Sample**: By January 2010, at least 3% of the engineering majors at the institution will be female

*Take care on what you say you can do! The January 2009 baseline was 2%. Is a 1% increase in one year realistic?*
**SMAR T: Time-Specific Objectives**

**Time-Specific:** State when you will achieve the objective

- Provide timeframe indicating when objective will be met
- *Sample:* By **January 2010**, at least 3% of the engineering majors at the institution will be female
Goals and Objectives

Maintain a clear connection between your goals and objectives. By maintaining this connection, you are articulating your theory of goal attainment.
SMART Tool
**Goal:** The engineering department will positively impact the gender diversity of the engineering workforce

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>By January 2010, at least 3% of the engineering majors at the institution will be female</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakdown</td>
<td><strong>Verb</strong></td>
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<td>be</td>
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<table>
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<th>Objective</th>
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SMART Benefits and Costs
Benefits

• Facilitates communication with program stakeholders
• **Informs on what data should be collected**
• Enables effective program management
• Enables government funders to better fulfill PART requirements
• Facilitates the linkage of activities and intended effects/goals
• Enables a focus on evaluation
  – Process level (activities)
  – Output level
  – Outcome level
• Facilitates replication
Costs and Limitations

• Impression that creativity is limited
• Time-consuming
• GI/GO
• Encourages too great a focus on discrete measures
Comment on Metrics

• A well-written objective suggests the metric(s)

• Example:
  – *On an annual basis, at least 5% of the students that apply to the program will be female*

  • Metrics:
    – Total applications to the department
    – Percentage of applications from females

• While this may appear obvious, this is an area where programs often fail.