

# Writing SMART Objectives

Program planning includes developing program goals and objectives. **Goals** are high level statements that provide overall context for what the program is trying to achieve. **Objectives** are specific statements that describe what the program is trying to achieve and how they will be achieved.

Objectives are more immediate than goals and represent milestones that your program needs to achieve in order to accomplish its goal by a specific time period. Objectives are the basis for monitoring implementation of strategies and/or activities and progress toward achieving the program goal. Objectives also help set targets for accountability and are a source for program evaluation questions.

## Writing SMART Objectives

To use an objective to monitor progress towards a program goal, the objective must be **SMART**.

A **SMART** objective is:

1. **Specific:**
  - Objectives should provide the “who” and “what” of program activities.
  - Use only one action verb since 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 output/outcomes (e.g., “understand” or “know”) since it may prove difficult to measure them. Instead, use verbs that document action (e.g., identify 3 of the 4 Komen breast self –awareness messages).
  - The greater the specificity, the greater the measurability.
2. **Measurable:**
  - The focus is on “how much” change is expected. Objectives should quantify the amount of change expected.
  - The objective provides a reference point from which a change in the target population can clearly be measured.
3. **Attainable:**
  - Objectives should be achievable 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-bound:**
  - Objectives should provide a time frame indicating when the objective will be measured or time by which the objective will be met.
  - Including a time frame in the objectives helps in planning and evaluating the program.

## SMART Objective Examples

**Non-SMART objective 1:** Women in Greene County will be provided educational sessions.

*This objective is not SMART because it is not specific, measurable, or time-bound. It can be made SMART by specifically indicating who is responsible for providing the educational sessions, how many people will be reached, how many sessions will be conducted, what type of educational sessions conducted, who the women are and by when the educational sessions will be conducted.*

**SMART objective 1:** By September 2016, Pink Organization will conduct 10 group breast cancer education sessions reaching at least 200 Black/African American women in Green County.

**Non-SMART objective 2:** By March 30, 2017, reduce the time between abnormal screening mammogram and diagnostic end-result for women in the counties of Jackson, Morse and Smith in North Dakota.

*This objective is not SMART because it is not specific or measurable. It can be made SMART by specifically indicating who will do the activity and by how much the time will be reduced.*

**SMART objective 2:** By March 30, 2017, Northern Region Hospital breast cancer patient navigators will reduce the average time from abnormal screening mammogram to diagnostic conclusion from 65 days to 30 days for women in the counties of Jackson, Morse and Smith in North Dakota.

## SMART Objective Checklist

Criteria to assess objectives	Yes	No
<b>1. Is the objective SMART?</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Specific:</b> Who? (target population and persons doing the activity) and What? (action/activity)</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Measurable:</b> How much change is expected?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Achievable:</b> Can be realistically accomplished given current resources and constraints</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Realistic:</b> Addresses the scope of the program and proposes reasonable programmatic steps</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Time-bound:</b> Provides a time frame indicating when the objective will be met</li> </ul>		
<b>2. Does it relate to a single result?</b>		
<b>3. Is it clearly written?</b>		