

# S.M.A.R.T. Behavior Change Outcome Objectives

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## Step 4.2: Write specific, measurable objectives for each intervention activity.

Outcome objectives specify the kind and amount of change you expect to achieve for a specific population within a given time frame for each intervention.

You have already identified desired program outcomes and written related goals, which may have been grouped in short-term, intermediate and long-term categories. For example, your short-term goal may be increasing awareness, your intermediate goal may be changing attitudes, norms and behavioral intentions, and your long-term goals may be changing behavior and improving health status. Behavior change can be an intermediate or long-term goal, depending on the circumstances and how behavior is defined.

Remind yourself that social marketing seeks behavior change:

- to improve the personal welfare of members of the target audience, and
- to benefit society more broadly.

This implies that every aspect of planning should begin at the end—the desired behavior—and work backward to achieve the behavioral goal.

So, begin with an outcome objective that quantifies the desired behavior change.

Then estimate the amount of change that would be necessary in what each target segment thinks, feels, knows, intends, and does to reach the ultimate behavioral objective.

For the outcome and each of its determinants, specify:

- Who specifically will be affected?
- What will change?
- How much change will occur?
- By when?

Develop SMART Outcome Objectives

Make sure your outcome objectives are "SMART."

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Time-specific

Examples of SMART outcome objectives are:

- Short term: Increase the proportion of high school youth who report that they believe the tobacco industry deliberately uses advertising to get young people to start smoking from 20 percent in January to 60 percent in September.

- Intermediate: Decrease the proportion of high school youth who report trying a cigarette in the last 30 days from 30 percent in 2002 to 20 percent in 2004.
- Long-term: Decrease the number of smoking related premature births beginning in 2006.



## *Dig deeper into the **SMART** concept.*

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- Objectives should be **specific**. Explicitly state what you want to happen, where and to whom as a result of your intervention.
    - **Specific objective:** At least 90 percent of county schools will institute campus-wide no-smoking policies by 2004.
    - **Non-specific objective:** To stop teens from smoking.
  - Objectives should be **measurable**. This means you must identify the current, or baseline, value and the level or amount of change that is expected. Your funders will insist on measurements. Measurable objectives will guide evaluation design, allowing you to track progress, document success or know where interventions aren't progressing as planned.
    - **Measurable Objective:** To increase fruit and vegetable consumption among workers in Montgomery Hospital (the target audience) by 50 percent by June 2003.
    - **Non-measurable objective:** To ensure that the workers in Montgomery Hospital eat more fruit.
  - Objectives should be **achievable** and realistic. Especially when you aim to change chronic, addictive behaviors (e.g., overeating, smoking), you may have to settle for small steps in a long process. If you overreach, your target audience may turn away completely. Besides, your realism reflects on your credibility. You cannot save the world with any intervention. But you can make the world a better place in a very concrete, albeit incremental, way.
    - **Achievable objective:** To reduce marijuana use by youth age 14-16 in Iowa by 5 percent by December 2004.
    - **Non-achievable objective:** To stop youth from using marijuana.
  - Objectives must be **relevant**, i.e., logically related to your overall goals. Check with your target audience to ensure that what you hope to achieve in the short run will get you where you want to be in the long run.
    - **Relevant objective:** Developing pictorial instructions that can be understood at low reading levels to improve patient compliance with "Back to Sleep" recommendations among people with low literacy by 10 percent in the next six months.
    - **Irrelevant objective (or not relevant enough):** To improve patient compliance among people with low literacy by teaching adults to read better.
  - Objectives should be **time-specific**. Your interventions are limited in time and space. While you always hope and plan for permanent change, you must be realistic

about when to measure the effect that you can achieve. Your funders, partners, and policymakers will want a report within a realistic time frame. Identify the end point of your intervention and the points along the way at which you'll measure progress. If you have the resources, you could learn a lot about the permanency of your behavior change and the durability of your intervention by measuring change at a distant point in the future.

- o Time-specific objective: To reduce the proportion of adults in the U.S. who smoke to 12 percent by 2010 (a specific goal of Healthy People 2010).
- o Non-time-specific objective: To reduce the proportion of adults in the U.S. who smoke to 12 percent.



#### Step 4.2

Write specific, measurable objectives for each intervention activity. Outcome objectives convey specifically how much your program must accomplish to be considered successful. Specific, quantified outcome objectives provide the evaluator with standards against which to judge the effects of various intervention activities. Your evaluator can help you set realistic objectives, thus helping to build in a positive evaluation result.