

## Setting SMART Goals

Setting clear goals helps turn ideas into action. The SMART framework provides a structured way to define goals so they are clear, realistic, and achievable. SMART goals are **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound**, helping you focus your efforts and track your progress over time.

Using the SMART approach can help you clarify what you want to accomplish, identify the steps needed to get there, and stay motivated as you work toward your professional development goals.

### Specific

The first term stresses the need for a specific goal rather than a more general one. This means the goal is clear and unambiguous. To make goals specific, they must tell an individual or team exactly what is expected, why it is important, who is involved, where it will happen, and which parameters are important.

**A specific goal will usually answer the following five questions:**

- Who: Who needs to be involved?
- What: What is it that will be accomplished?
- When: Include specific timeframes and deadlines.
- Why: Specific reasons, purpose, or benefits of accomplishing the goal.
- How: What strategies and/or tactics will be used?

### Measurable

The second term stresses the need for concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of the goal. The thought behind this is that if a goal is not measurable, it is not possible to know whether an individual or team is making progress toward successful completion. Measuring progress is intended to help the goal stay on track, reach target dates, and eventually experience the satisfaction of goal achievement.

**A measurable goal will usually answer questions such as:**

- How much?
- How many?
- What impact?
- How will I know when it is accomplished?

Continue on the next page.

## Attainable

The third term stresses the importance of goals that are realistic and attainable. While an attainable goal may stretch an individual or team in order to achieve it, it is important that the goal is not too extreme. That is, the goals are neither out of reach nor below minimum standards for performance, as these may be considered meaningless. When you identify goals that are most important, you can then work to develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them.

### **An attainable goal will usually answer the question:**

- Is this a goal that is both a reasonable stretch and realistically attainable?

## Relevant

The fourth term stresses the importance of choosing goals that matter. A goal to "Make 50 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches by 2:00 pm" may be specific, measurable, attainable, and time-bound, but may lack relevance to a central mission. Goals should be relevant to the overall performance objectives or outcomes of the division/school/institution, or else we should question why we are doing them at all. This is an aspect of organizational alignment. Relevant goals (when met) drive a team, department, and organization forward. A goal that supports or is in alignment with other goals would be considered a relevant goal.

### **A relevant goal will usually answer questions such as:**

- Is this goal worthwhile? Why?
- Is this the right time?
- Does this goal support our overall performance outcomes?

## Time-bound

The fifth term stresses the importance of grounding goals within a time frame, providing target dates and deadlines. A commitment to a deadline helps an individual or team focus their efforts on completion of the goal on or before the due date. This part of the SMART goal criteria is intended to prevent goals from being overtaken by the day-to-day crises that invariably arise within organizations and establish an appropriate sense of urgency.

### **A time-bound goal will usually answer such questions as:**

- When is the goal due?
- When are the interim milestones toward the goal due?
- What can be accomplished within the next six months, six weeks, today, etc.?

## Setting Effective Goals

### **S** - Is it **specific**?

Can you answer the questions: who, what, when, where, and why?

[Provide your answer here.]

### **M** - Is it **measurable**?

How will you measure your progress?

[Provide your answer here.]

### **A** - Is it **attainable** and **aspirational**?

Can you attain this goal? What steps will you need to take?

[Provide your answer here.]

### **R** - Is it **relevant**?

What knowledge, skills, or abilities will you need in order to reach this goal?

[Provide your answer here.]

### **T** - Is it **time-bound**?

When will you accomplish this goal? Can you set fixed deadlines?

[Provide your answer here.]

**Your finalized goal statement:**