

## Getting SMART: Writing Measurable Objectives and Outcomes

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Writing measurable objectives has been the nemesis of many a grant writer. Once upon a time it was enough to say, “We will use your grant money to help students read better.” No more! For better or worse (we believe for better), those days are past.

If you’ve written a grant proposal in the last 10 years, you’ve probably been asked to write measurable objectives. The easiest and most foolproof way to write them is by using SMART criteria. SMART is an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable (or Attainable), Relevant (or Realistic), and Time-bound.

A word about terminology: At GrantProse, we use the term goal to refer to the overarching purpose of the grant project. We use the term objective to address specific project needs. Objectives allow you to “diversify,” or broaden your scope. For instance, you might have a single goal for all children to be born healthy. Per this goal, you might have an objective to ensure every pregnant mother-to-be receives prenatal care, another objective to train pediatricians in the latest delivery techniques, and a third objective to improve hospital delivery procedures.

With goals and objectives spelled out, we use the term outcome more specifically, to measure the achievement of an objective — thus, we usually use the SMART criteria to write measurable outcomes. Following our example here, one measurable outcome might be, “By December 2014, children born in XYZ hospital will demonstrate a 25% improvement in APGAR scores, relative to baseline established for the 2013 year.”

Requests for proposals (RFPs) may use differing terminology, but whether the RFP asks for SMART goals, SMART objectives, or SMART outcomes, the way they are written is the same — they state who is involved, what the desired results are, how progress will be measured, and when the outcome will occur.

Here, we share several online resources that will help you write SMART objectives:

- The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) provides a comprehensive online guide to developing SMART objectives, complete with a downloadable Word template.
- [Developing Measurable Program Goals and Objectives](#) is a PDF from the Florida Department of Education that takes users through each SMART criterion and includes a useful list of things to remember about writing measurable objectives.

- The [Minnesota Department of Health](#) discusses SMART objectives in a Q&A format for each SMART criterion. For example, for the Measurable criterion, it asks: How much change is expected, in what direction, and what data will prove the change has occurred?
- The [March of Dimes](#) Hawaii Chapter provides a PDF on writing SMART objectives, which offers specific examples as well as information on types of objectives (process, impact, and outcome).
- Sometimes you need to know what a SMART objective isn't. This PDF from [Health Education Partners](#) has good examples of SMART vs. non-SMART objectives.
- The PDF [Developing SMART Goals](#) from the University of New Hampshire offers a formula to write SMART goals using suggested prompts.

Keywords

Grant writing, SMART objective, SMART outcome, measurable objective, measurable outcome, goal

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