UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

E X T E N S I O N

Institute of **F**ood and **A**gricultural **S**ciences

Writing SMMART Objectives[1]

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Brief Overview of Objectives

An objective is a statement that specifies the measurable changes we expect in our target audiences as a result of our Extension education programs. In this respect, objectives should be learner-centered in that it should describe the progress that will occur in the *learner* after having successfully completed an Extension learning experiences, activities, or program series.

In Extension, measurable objectives are a top priority. A goal is a broad statement that reflects the overall purpose of the program and what the program will accomplish. A goal is defined at a conceptual level and is not measurable. Measurable objectives are sets of specific statements describing the short-term, intermediate and long-term intended results of a program that fulfill the overall goals of extension. These results need to be attainable and inherently capable of being evaluated. In other words, the objective must be written in a way that determines whether the objective has been achieved using evaluation data. Measurable objectives have several benefits in that they help us to:

$ provide direction to our Extension programs and efforts;
$ determine appropriate types of learning experiences to offer;
$ communicate the intended results of our program to stakeholders; and
$ develop our evaluation plan.

SMMART Objectives

One way to insure that our objectives are measurable is to make them SMMART.

S - Specific
M - Measurable
M - Meaningful
A – Assigned
R - Realistic
T - Timed

Specific

The objectives are focused on specific changes that we expect in our target audience. Generally,

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we state the specific change based on whether we are writing short-term (annual) objectives or long range (major) objectives.

Typically, short-term changes focus on the type of:

Generally, long-range changes involve changes in
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$ social conditions;
$ economic conditions and gains; and/or
$ environmental changes.

After determining what type of change you want in your participants, clearly describe specifically what the change is. For example, "Participants will develop core financial management skills…" Additionally, you will need to use active words that describe *how* and through what *activities* the participant will make these changes.   Let's build on our first example; "After completing the 5 sessions of our Household management program, our participants will develop core financial management skills".   Active words illustrate the tools you will use to shape the changes in your participants. The more specific you can be with your objectives, the easier it will be to measure and evaluate them.

Measurable
SMART Objectives must *specifically* indicate the *degree* or *quantity* of the change expected using descriptive words or numbers. For example, how *many* skills will be developed, what *percentage* of knowledge gain do you expect, etc. These methods of measurement build in the indicators you will need to track the success of your program. A measurable objective also indicates how the change will be determined. If the objective is not measurable, you and your participants will have no idea if the program is actually working! Making objectives measurable makes them visible and holds all stakeholders accountable for success. Of

$ skills developed;
$ change in aspirations; and/or behavior
$ change or practice adoption.
$ knowledge gain;
$ attitude change ;

course, the degree of change is situational based on many factors such as what participants already know about the topic, etc.

Meaningful
People will not be motivated to change if the change is not worthwhile. When creating a program and writing objectives, ask yourself "Is this filling and important need in the community?" Are the objectives going to be valued by the participants? Everyone's time is valuable and creating meaningful objectives will make your program important to your participants. Keeping objectives leaner-centered will help you determine what your community members want to hear, as well as what they need to learn.

Assigned
In order to make your program as successful as possible, you need to make your target audience as specific as possible. This means for each program, your objectives are assigned to a specific group of people so that you can really hone in on the clientele who will truly benefit from your services. Having an assigned target audience for your objectives makes your educational program client-centered and allows you to tailor materials to their needs.

Realistic
The more realistic your objectives are, the more you and your staff and volunteers will want to make it happen because the end product seems within reach. If they are not realistic, you can build your staff and/or your volunteers up with

false hopes that can leave them discouraged when they cannot meet these high expectations. However, if you are honest and realistic about what you can reasonably expect from your program, it will benefit everyone involved. If you share these objectives with participants it is even more critical to make them realistic. This is because when participants successfully complete objectives, it can build their self-esteem and confidence in not only applying their new skills and knowledge, but also in achieving future goals and objectives in Extension programs. By setting realistic objectives, you can build success and confidence into your program.

Timed
A timed objective puts limits on how long you and your participants have to complete the objective. It isn't so much a deadline as it is a target date or point in the extension program process where you expect to see certain changes. This makes your objectives more specific because you are letting your participants know approximately *when* they can see improvements. Timeliness also makes your objectives more *realistic* because participants will know that some skills may take time, and also that some skills or knowledge can be picked up quickly, giving them a light at the end of the tunnel. Additionally, your objective will be more *measurable* with a timed component.

Template for a SMART Objective

To (increase/decrease/change) (what specifically) **by** (how much) **among** (who) **by** (when or time frame) **as determined by** (how will you measure it).

By using this framework, you can create SMMART objectives for your program and start to see significant improvements in the results and efficiency of your extension work. The sentence structure can vary as long as all of the components are contained in the objective.

Sample SMART Objectives by Program Area

Family and Consumer Sciences
At least 50% of the 40 participants in the Noonlighting Program will reach or exceed their professionally described weight loss goal within one year of joining the program as indicated by pre/post weigh-in.

4-H/Youth Development
80 percent of the youth who will participate in the weeklong Shooting Sports Program will increase their knowledge of safe and responsible use of firearms as indicated by increasing their test scores from pre to post by at least 20%.

Horticulture
At least 30 landscape maintenance professionals will attend the Limited Certification Training workshops. By the end of workshops, 80% will have increased their knowledge of pesticide use and safety, IPM and ELM/FYN as measured by a retrospective pre-test. Ten percent will take and pass the Limited Pesticide license exam.

Livestock
(Dr. Guion)

Natural Resources
At least 300 waterfront property owners participating in the Water Quality Program will adopt at least one management practice to protect water quality as measured by a three-month follow-up survey.

Agriculture
The average annual nitrate concentration will decrease by 40% due to changes in farming practices among 50 farmers in Sunshine county who participated in the Farm Smart Program as measured by yearly soil analysis over the next

four years.

Sea Grant

In a four week follow-up survey, at least 50% of the 60 participants in the boating safety program will indicate they adopted at least two new safety practices they were not using prior to the program.

Conclusion

Setting realistic and measurable SMMART objectives will allow Extension educators to accomplish a number of tasks. It allows for efficient evaluation of programs by determining effectiveness, target audience, and realistic expectations, etc. These objectives serve as a foundation for determining success and failure while creating a direct link between research, practice, and community action. Creating SMMART objectives is a vital step in proper service delivery for Extension professionals and their clients.

References:

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