

Defining S.M.A.R.T Project Aims & Objectives

For linking needs and project objectives

Before you start

- **Evidencing the need.** Identifying and evidencing the need for project action. The need for action and the vision for change provide the main key for defining project aims and objectives.
- **Specifying aims and objectives.** Articulating a set of aims and objectives that are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable (sometimes also called actionable), realistic, and time-bound).
- **Verifying the original rationale.** Reviewing project aims and objectives at certain intervals in view of potentially changing circumstances regarding the original needs over time.

Tools useful to support this exercise

- URBACT Opera Co-creation method
- URBACT Problems & Solutions Table
- Nested Wholes Diagram & Iceberg Model

The needs and objectives of a project should relate directly to the identified needs or problems it is supposed to address. The SMART principle seeks to facilitate the clear identification of the aims and objectives of a project to provide a useful focus for designing relevant project activity.

This task consists of a design framework that will provide you with an effective basis for designing project activities and managing expectations.

What for?

- To narrow down the project aims and objectives into achievable and realistic proportions.

How to use it?

Step 1 P'S' for Specific: Define the aims and objectives of a project clearly and relate them directly to the identified need/problem. There should be no doubt or vagueness in the articulation of the project aims and objectives.

Step 2 F'M' for Measurable: The measurability of aims and objectives relates to the need for evidencing project need and being able to demonstrate whether the project will actually have made any difference to the original problem/need identified once completed.

Step 3 D'A' for Actionable: The aims and objectives of a project require being actionable and achievable. They need to focus on something that you can actually do something about. You need to be able to design project activities that relate directly to the aims and objectives, therefore these should be actionable.

Step 4 'R' for Realistic: Project aims and objectives need to be realistic, so that they are achievable within the context of your organisation, your community, your funding environment, and your policy landscape.

Step 5 'T' for Time-bound: The timing of aims and objectives resonates with all aspects of the SMART approach and brings added focus. It helps you to consider the project's overall feasibility within a given time frame.

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