

# SMART Targets



## Welcome to the SMART Targets e-learning

### Aims

The aims of this e-learning are to:

- ⚙ Equip you with structures to support the writing and checking of SMART targets
- ⚙ Demonstrate how SMART targets eliminate confusion and contribute to a fair, consistent and transparent IPP appraisal process

### Outcomes

By the end of this e-learning, you will be able to:

- ⚙ Apply a three-part model to setting SMART targets
- ⚙ Describe questions to check the meaning of a SMART target
- ⚙ Eliminate unclear language when writing SMART targets
- ⚙ Write meaningful targets that are truly SMART

As all staff have SMART targets as part of their IPP, and because targets should be agreed in a two way process, this e-learning is aimed at all staff, whether appraiser or appraisee.

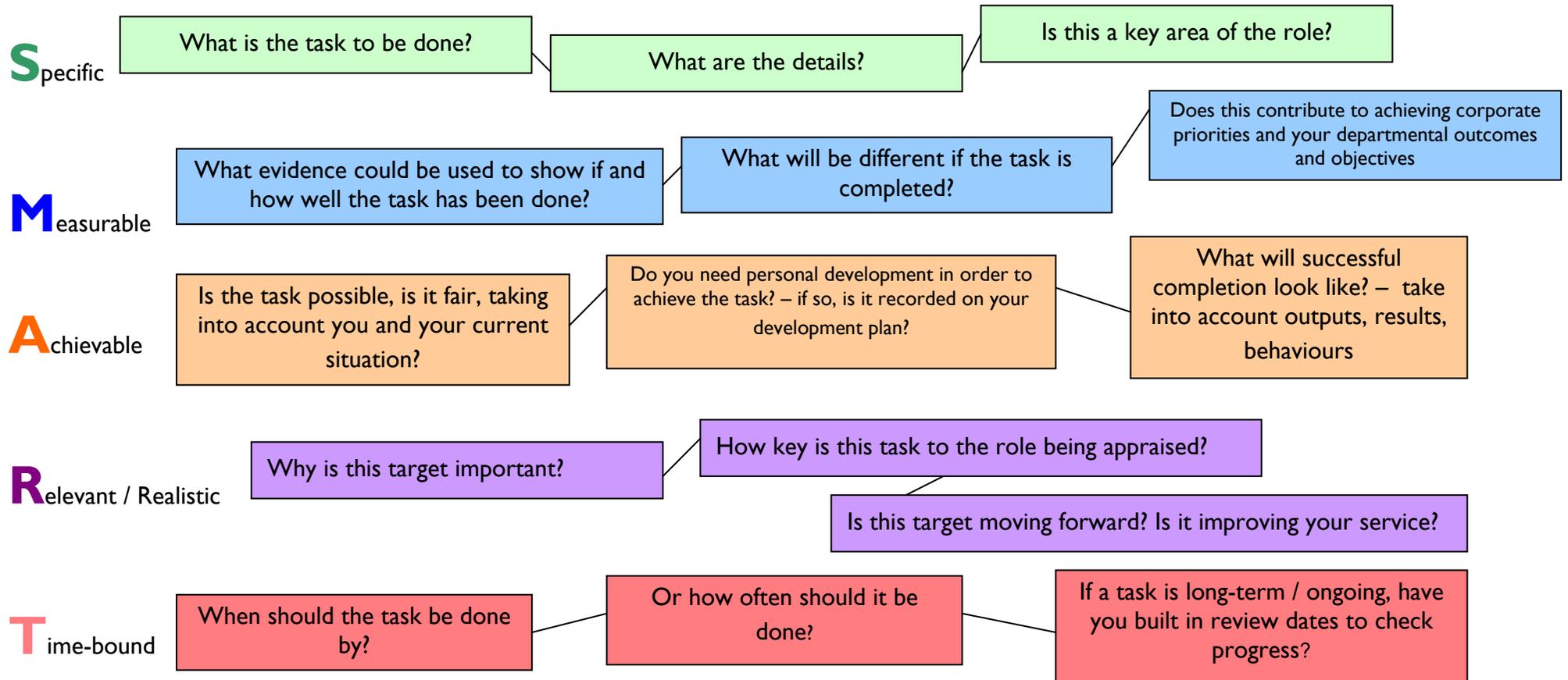
## Why SMART?

- ⚙️ The IPP framework supports performance and identifies achievement, both individual and organisational.
- ⚙️ SMART targets provide a clear outline of what needs to be done and how the outcome will be assessed.
- ⚙️ SMART targets, linked to evidence, help ensure that everyone is appraised in a fair, consistent and transparent manner, with subjectivity reduced.
- ⚙️ Ultimately, if targets aren't SMART, it will be hard to ascertain whether they have been achieved or not.



## How does SMART help me set targets?

Most of us are aware that the SMART is an acronym for what targets should be like – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound. But just knowing what the letters stand for doesn't really help set targets! Look at each letter to see some questions you should be asking to make sure your target covers all the aspects of SMART. All



### **It Seems SMART...but is it?**

Imagine you are in charge of Project X and Project Y

You and your line manager have agreed the following SMART target:

**Update team at monthly team meetings as to how project X is progressing.  
To be evidenced by minutes of the meetings.**

At first, this target seems SMART – it tells you what you have to do, where and when, and specifies which Project it relates to.

If this was your target, what would it mean to you?

Make a note of your answers to the questions.

What do you have to do at team meetings?  
Do you need to provide written or verbal updates?  
What skills do you need to do the updates well?  
How will you know if you have done well?



Now continue to the next page to see if other people agree with your interpretation of the target...

### **It Seems SMART...but is it?**

By now, you should have an idea of what the target..

**Update team at monthly team meetings as to how project X is progressing.  
To be evidenced by minutes of the meetings.**

...means to you., but do others agree? We selected a sample of officers and asked what the target meant to them. Here's what two of them thought...

1) What do you have to do at team meetings?

Update team members (verbally) of progress of project X that I am working on!

2) Do you need to provide written or verbal updates?

Assume verbal – and only at the monthly team meeting! The only 'written evidence of the progress will be within the 'minutes'

3) What skills do you need to do the updates well?

Verbal delivery – maintaining direct and to the point update!

4) How will you know if you have done well?

Questions from other people at the meeting? Project completed on time!

1. What do you have to do at team meetings?

Attend the monthly team meetings and tell attendees what is currently happening with the progress of Project X.

2. Do you need to provide written or verbal updates?

I don't know – this isn't specified, so I would do what I think is best – maybe talk people through what is happening and provide some written notes only if asked.

3. What skills do you need to do the updates well?

Basic communication skills, maybe the ability to respond to questions from attendees but, then again, I don't know what their interest in the project would be.

4. How will you know if you have done well?

I don't know – presumably I just have to show up and give my update.

### It Seems SMART...but is it?

Still looking at the same target:

**Update team at monthly team meetings as to how project X is progressing.  
To be evidenced by minutes of the meetings.**

We selected a sample of managers and asked what the target meant to them. Here's what two of them thought...

1. What does the Officer have to do at team meetings?

Update team at monthly team meetings as to how project X is progressing.

2. Do they need to provide written or verbal updates?

Unclear / could well assist update process, but Officer could argue that they haven't been asked to – and may decide that a verbal update is only required

3. What skills do they need to do the updates well?

Unclear – no guidelines specified e.g. presentation skills, report writing, facilitation, power point, financial & budgetary, time management etc

4. How will you know if they have done well?

Nothing stated or defined – could be clarity of update, success against milestones, audience understanding & feedback – any of the previous points in 3) with measurements

1. What does the Officer have to do at team meetings?

They have to update the team as to how Project X is progressing on a monthly basis.

2. Do they need to provide written or verbal updates?

Doesn't say, although the evidence will be provided via the minutes so that will be written.

3. What skills do they need to do the updates well?

Doesn't say on the target – I would **assume** communication, maybe presentation, assertiveness if they need some assistance from the team?

4. How will you know if they have done well?

The team will have been updated and would be able to articulate the progress of project X. Minutes will reflect the level at which the update has been communicated. Not as specific as it could be by way of **how** the update could be communicated and for what reason.

### **It Seems SMART...but is it?**

Looking again at the comments made by the two managers and two officers on the previous pages, we can see how one target caused uncertainty. Here are some of the comments again:

"Assume"	"Unclear"
"I don't know"	"Not specified"
"Only if asked"	"Nothing stated or defined"
"Presumably"	"Doesn't say"
"Maybe"	"Not as specific as it could be"

The only thing the two managers and two officers were certain about was that they needed to update the team at monthly team meetings about how project X is progressing, and that minutes would be used as evidence – **they were clear about these points because they had been written into the target!**

Obviously some discussion of what successful completion of the target would look like, and the skills required, would take place in the IPP meeting when the target was agreed. But why not reflect the verbal discussion in the written target? What would happen if the written target remained unclear and the appraiser or appraisee changed part way through the year?

Targets should be fully SMART in order to eliminate uncertainty, making assumptions or having to guess their meaning. Confusion could be avoided if the target was changed from:

**Update team at monthly team meetings as to how project X is progressing. To be evidenced by minutes of the meetings.**

To

**Give short (10 minutes max) verbal updates to team at monthly team meetings as to how project X is progressing. Updates should be relevant to team and communicated in confident clear manner to engage interest. Where complex data is presented, written reports should be available at the meeting. To be evidenced by minutes of the meetings, written reports and feedback from team members.**

## Unclear words

Unclear ,or ineffective words are words that do not add meaning to a target. To write a SMART target, unclear words should be avoided if possible, or at least qualified (outlined and pinned down) in some way.

Here are some unclear words that are frequently used in targets. Turn the page to see how you can avoid confusion over the meaning of each word.

<b>more</b>	<b>improve</b>	<b>successfully</b>	<b>Good communication</b>
<b>efficiently</b>	<b>regularly</b>	<b>aim to</b>	<b>appropriate</b>
<b>100%</b>	<b>effectively</b>	<b>timely</b>	<b>complete</b>

<p>10 times more, once more, 37 times more? Give quantity as a percentage –15% or a number- 25</p>	<p>Unless you specify what improvement will look like, it's a matter of opinion. State what improvement is expected</p>	<p>The standard or level required to do something 'successfully' is a matter of opinion unless it is specified</p>	<p>Good communication-can mean different things to different people. Better to specify-written or verbal skills? Feedback, counselling, advice or presentation skills? etc</p>
<p>Efficiently will mean different things to different people-if you don't want to have a debate about it, record what 'efficiently' will look like when you set the target</p>	<p>Is once a year often enough? Be specific!</p>	<p>It is difficult to evidence that you have aimed to do something, and your time would be better spent getting something done instead! Also, to aim to do something implies an element of doubt as to achievability-this is not SMART</p>	<p>Appropriate is a matter of opinion unless you clearly state what this looks like</p>
<p>Is this really achievable? Use 100% in a target very carefully; you should allow for a small margin of human error. Are you setting yourself / your member of staff up for 'Improvement Required'? e.g. 100% satisfied customers is unlikely</p>	<p>You should be able to define what 'effective' looks like by giving the standards or linking to departmental, HCC or statutory guidelines</p>	<p>Can be interpreted in different ways- better to specify within 3 working days or within 3 rings, or in accordance with unit policy</p>	<p>Implies finishing something, but used on its own doesn't give us any information about the standard required. E.g. a completed report isn't the same thing as a well structured and well referenced report.</p>

## **A Model for target setting**

It is helpful to approach target setting in 3 parts. Most targets never get much further than part 1 with a bit of part 2 added in.

What needs to happen. Here you are summing up the task to be completed, e.g.  
To maintain client records ...  
To create work instructions for the 'X' process...  
To close calls yourself...

### **I- Broad statement of desired outcome**



### **2-'Success criteria' – what does this look like in terms of quantifiable outputs and soft skills?**

In this part you are detailing what success will look like in measurable terms  
...with 98% accuracy ,In line with departmental and statutory guidance  
...that follow departmental standard template. To be circulated to all staff by 30 April 07. Deal with queries arising from new instructions and compile and publish FAQs and answers on dept. website by 10<sup>th</sup> June 07.  
...so that 20% of calls logged are completed to satisfaction of client (9/10 closing solutions accepted by client first time). Number of overall calls logged should not fall by more than 10% compared to 2005-2006.



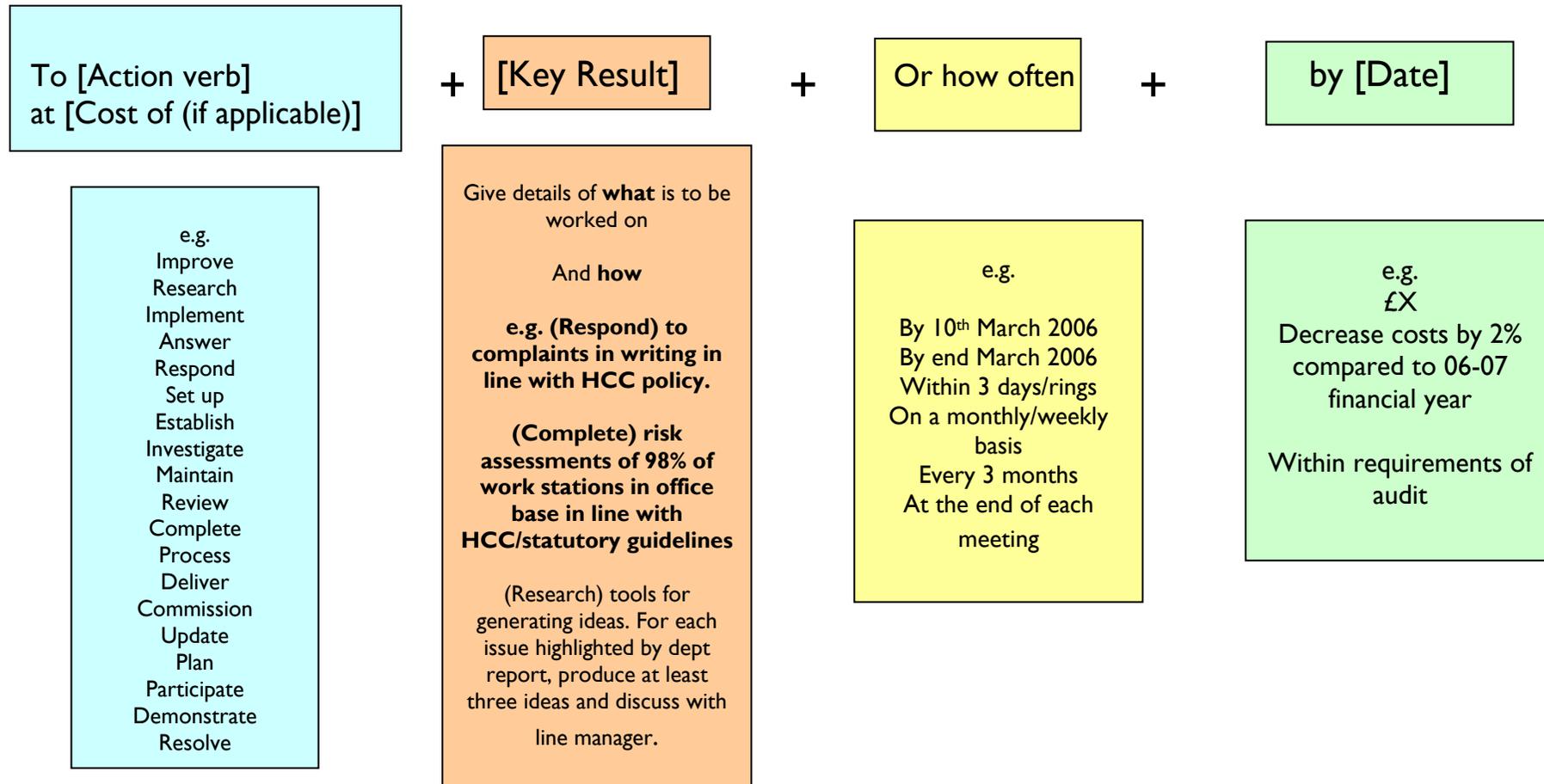
### **3-What information do I have to establish whether the above is being achieved?**

What evidence will be needed to demonstrate achievement? Think about information you already have available and how you could use it to measure different outcomes. If the information isn't currently available, make sure it is possible to obtain it or think laterally about measuring in a different way. Some types of evidence relate to resource control: e.g. number of hours spent on a project, or completion within budget. Responsibility for evidence collection is shared between appraiser and appraisee.

Evidenced by random sampling of records every 2 weeks, no complaints re breaches of confidentiality upheld.  
Evidenced by work instructions, FAQs on website and feedback from recipients as to clarity or instructions.  
Evidenced by call log and client feedback.

## Writing SMART targets:

It can be helpful to break down the language you use in targets.  
Below are examples of useful language for writing SMART targets:



## **Round up**

Thank you for completing this e-learning course.

You should now have an understanding of the importance of setting real SMART targets, and of how to go about structuring and writing them.

You can revisit this e-learning course at any time.

We hope that you have enjoyed this course and that it has achieved its aims.

Related face to face courses available from Hampshire Learning centre.

Managing Performance I

Introduction to Coaching

Listening, Questioning and Feedback

