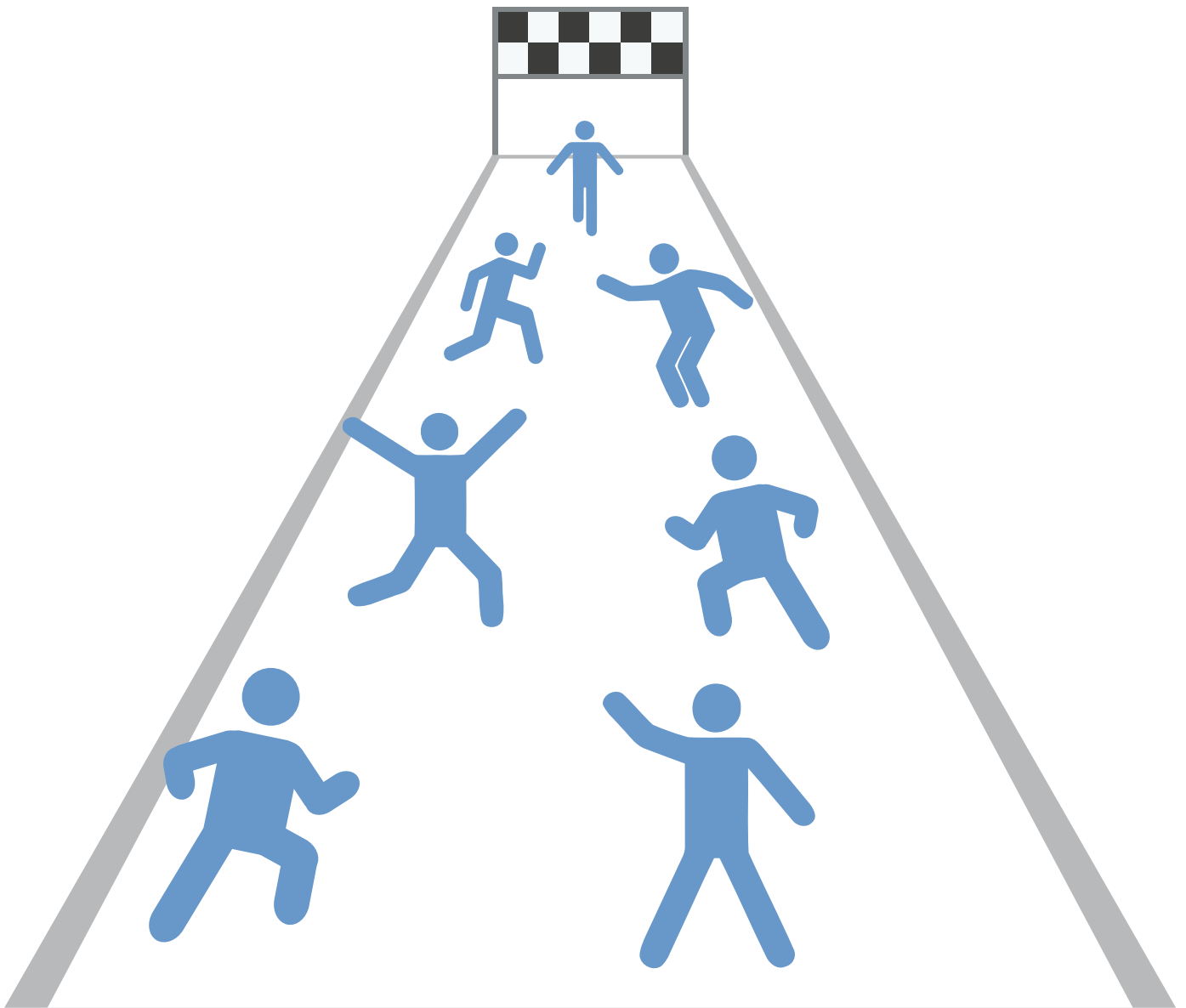


# SETTING CHALLENGING PERFORMANCE GOALS



United Nations  
Performance  
Management

This guide shows how to develop goals that are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound).

## What is a goal?

The elements of a goal are:

- An accomplishment to be achieved
- A measurable output or deliverable
- A specific date and time to accomplish the goal

A written goal provides a strong statement of your intent and the results to be achieved. Goal statements contain these elements:

- Action verbs
- Specific dates and times
- Measurable outputs

## What do goals come from?

- UN' mandates
- General Assembly resolutions
- Budget submissions
- Your department/mission/office compact
- Your department/section/unit work plan
- Goals from previous performance cycles

It is critical that you understand the importance of your role and how you contribute to the success of the Organization. Knowing how one contributes increases levels of engagement and motivation.

## On-going Output Goals

These are the outputs related to progress/standards for on-going duties and responsibilities.

Example: To ensure all incoming correspondence is properly logged and followed up so that requests are answered within five days.

## Problem-Solving Goals

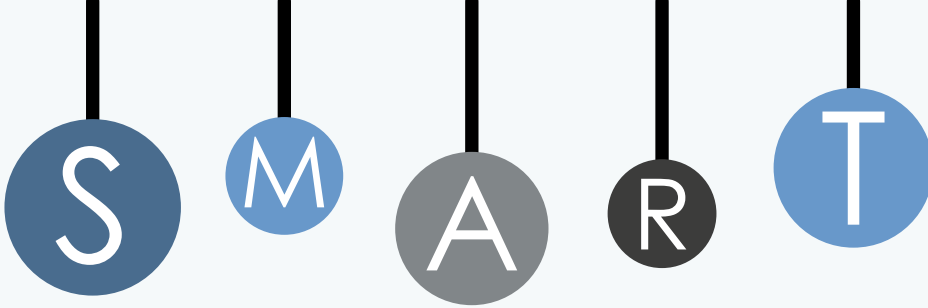
These goals focus on problems to be solved based on analysis of current problems.

Example: To reduce the time between the issuing of request for proposals (RFPs) and the contracting of the vendor by 20%.

## Improvement Goals

These goals look at what is already done well, but can be improved, or what new ideas can be introduced.

Example: To create an intranet website to better disseminate information and improve departmental communications by January 2015.



## Using the SMART method to write goals

### **S**pecific

SMART goals are specific and concise. They are not complicated and wordy. A good rule to follow is that if a goal is difficult to remember or describe then it means it is too complicated and not concise enough.

### **M**easurable

SMART goals state exactly what is expected in measurable terms. If we can't measure a goal, we can't determine whether or not it has been realized. Goals should state results that can be seen, counted or measured.

### **A**chievable

SMART goals must be stated in realistic terms, be within one's control, and yet at the same time be challenging enough to provide a test of one's abilities.

### **R**elevant

SMART goals need to be relevant to the office mandate and to the specific work being performed by a unit/section.

### **T**ime-bound

SMART goals have a deadline and usually a specific calendar date in which they will be achieved. Goals help prioritize our daily activities. Poorly written goals often omit specific deadlines (e.g., "Improve productivity") and cannot, as a result, be fairly evaluated.

# Using action verbs to write goals

When developing goals, use action verbs that permit external verification of an end result either through direct measurement or observation.

Avoid verbs that cannot be externally verified or are not an end result, such as:

|             |             |           |            |
|-------------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| Appreciate  | Comprehend  | Learn     | Practice   |
| Assist      | Enjoy       | Like      | Support    |
| Be aware of | Know how to | Listen to | Understand |

Aim to use verbs that can refer to specific actions that can be measured or observed such as:

|             |            |             |            |
|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| Assemble    | Decrease   | Generate    | Provide    |
| Build       | Decrease   | Identify    | Reduce     |
| Calculate   | Define     | Increase    | Reduce     |
| Categorize  | Design     | Inform      | Remove     |
| Collect     | Discuss    | Integrate   | Reorganize |
| Communicate | Document   | Measure     | Research   |
| Compare     | Expand     | Modify      | Tabulate   |
| Compile     | Facilitate | Operate     | Transfer   |
| Complete    | Formulate  | Organize    | Translate  |
| Construct   | Gather     | Participate | Write      |

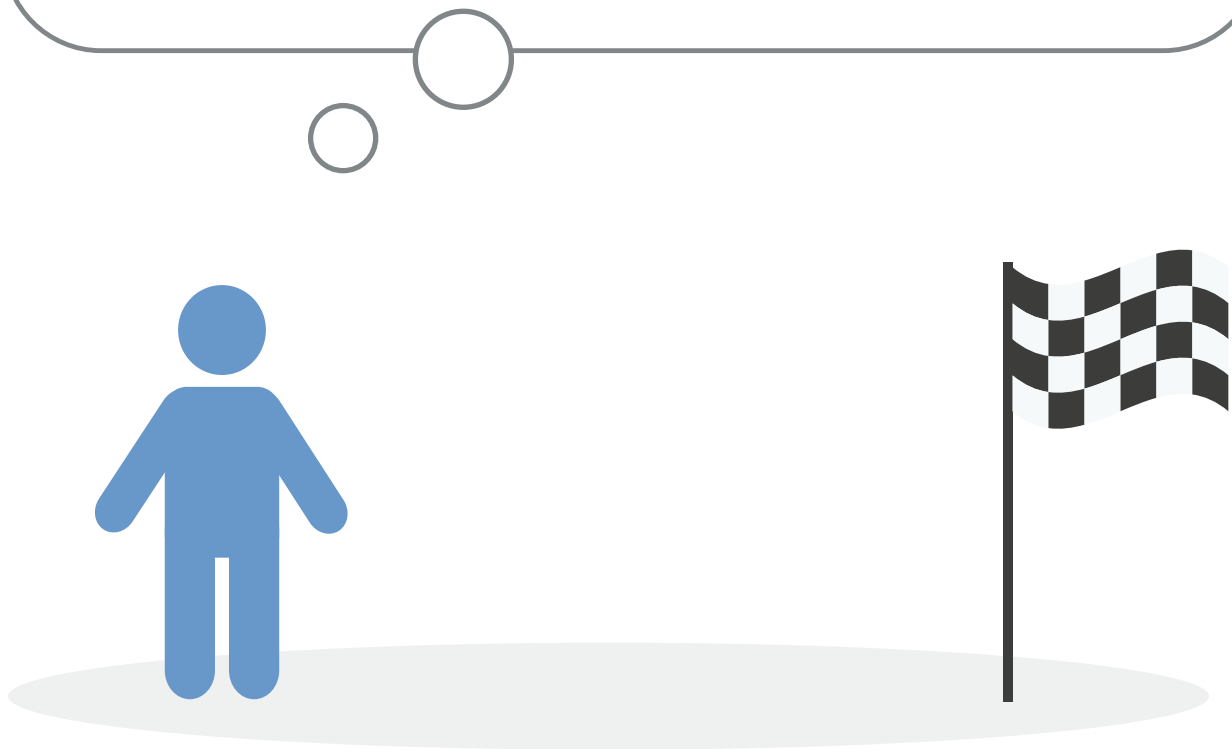
Complete five donor reports by 1 November

Edit 1 transcript by 3 October

Reduce typos in memos by 100% by 1 January

Decrease the processing time of consultant contracts  
from 6 to 4 months by 1 June 2014

Complete French Language Training Level 4 by  
1 January 2014



When writing goals, ask yourself the following questions:

- QUALITY: How well?
- QUANTITY: How much/many?
- TIME: By when?

These questions will ensure your goals are SMART.

### **The goal-setting discussion**

When you begin work planning for a performance cycle, it is important that you sit with your manager to determine what your responsibilities will be for the year. This meeting should be considered a starting point to gather information and formalize plans for the upcoming year. It is a joint discussion between you and your manager.

Included in this discussion are:

- Clarity on department/work unit priorities and goals
- Specific goals/performance expectations you are to achieve during the performance cycle aligned with the above
- Discuss how will you know that you have been successful
- Determine the competencies and skills required to achieve your goals and identify your competency gaps – what will you do to improve your competency development?