

SMART

Short description

SMART helps you to formulate clear objectives. SMART means:

- **Specific:** It means that the objectives are valid for a bounded policy area.
- **Measurable:** Measurability of objectives is an important precondition for managing and controlling a (public) organisation. 'If you can't measure it, you can't manage it. Objectives, which contain words like 'adequate', 'sufficient', 'take care of' or 'to meet' (for example expectations), are not measurable and need operationalization.
- **Acceptable:** It means that the main actors can agree with the objectives. In a democracy the majority decides, but the objectives must also be acceptable to the executors of the policy and to those who are affected by it. Sometimes unpopular measures may have to be taken. In that case it's rather a case of control and enforced regulation than acceptance. Acceptance means also that you explain why you have chosen this objective (and not other possible alternatives).
- **Realistic:** Realistic objectives are both ambitious and reachable. There is tension between those two. Seek the balance.
- **Time bounded:** The dimension of time enables adjustability. When you don't define when an objective must be reached, you can't conclude if the activities done are pushing towards goal reaching or if adjustment is needed. Neither a clear justification of the activities is possible. There is also the danger that policy is continued too long, because it isn't clearly stated when the policy maker is satisfied with a certain level of achievement.

Strengths

- Many cases illustrate the power of SMART-objectives (For example, IBM and Nokia could make huge strategical changes in a short time by making their objectives SMART).
- SMART increases the chance of discovering contradictions between objectives. Especially when there are different departments with their own programs and projects.
- When all objectives are SMART formulated a better integration of policy and discovery of overlap can be achieved.
- Clear formulation of objectives leads to effective management of employees, teams, departments and management teams. It enables also a achievement based Human Resources system, which can be motivating to employees.

Limitations

- Not all goals can be made specific or measurable perfectly. When SMART objectives is the standard, it's important to explain explicitly why objectives can't be made SMART, if that's the case.
- SMART objectives can lead to the illusion that everything is in control, but complications can evolve through intervening variables and the influence of

other actors. SMART is a, wishful, but not a sufficient precondition for realizing objectives.