

Continuous Quality Improvement Toolkit

A Resource for Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program Awardees

Module 4 Facilitation Guide: Creating SMART Aims

Purpose/Goals: The purpose of this training module is to learn how to identify, evaluate, and apply the key elements of a SMART (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-bound) aim and to develop a SMART aim for CQI efforts. This module provides learning opportunities to practice aim development.

Time: About 60 minutes (20 minutes of content and 40 minutes of activities).

Format: This presentation is intended to be given in person but can also be delivered via webinar if necessary. We recommend that participants sit with their agency in small groups of four to six per table. Coaches should float between tables and connect with each agency team.

Equipment: An in-person training requires a laptop and projector to deliver this presentation. This training can also be conducted via Webinar, which would require a Webinar service, laptop, and telephone.

Materials:

- PowerPoint slides — The notes section of the PowerPoint slides contains talking points to use during the presentation. A copy of the slides may be provided to participants.
- *What Is a SMART Aim?* handout — This handout provides a step-by-step framework for developing a SMART aim. The talking points on Slide 28 reference how to use this handout to complete the activity.

General Topics Covered:

- Identifying elements of a SMART aim
- Evaluating SMART aims
- How to develop a SMART aim for CQI work

Introduction to PowerPoint Activities and Participation. When the icon below appears, participants will be engaged.



Activity: SMART Elements (Slides 10, 13, 16, 19, and 21)

- **Introduction:** This activity will give participants an opportunity to look at example aim statements and learn to identify the critical elements.
- **Time:** About 3–5 minutes per slide.
- **Instructions:** After discussing the respective slides for each SMART element, such as “Specific,” a slide with three examples of aim statements will follow. The participants will be asked to decide if each statement meets the criteria being discussed. For the first example, ask if the aim is “specific.”
 - When the slide with the three examples appears, the red checks will not be visible. After the participants indicate their first answer, click “Enter” for the first check to appear. Only click once, or multiple checks will appear.
 - Use the talking points for each slide to help facilitate discussion.

Activity: Evaluate This Aim (Slides 26 and 27)

- **Introduction:** This activity will give participants an opportunity to evaluate two different aim statements and learn to identify the key components of a good statement.
- **Time:** About 5 minutes per slide.
- **Instructions:**
 - First, read Slide 26 aloud for the participants. Use the language in the talking points as a guide for how to read and discuss this aim statement.
 - Remember to pause after asking a question and allow participants an opportunity to respond. If a participant correctly identifies answers to the questions, reinforce her/his statements and reiterate the points. If her/his language is not as clear as the statements provided in the talking points, use the talking points to clearly reinforce key points.
 - This is an incomplete aim statement for the reasons identified in the talking points. If participants struggle to see the flaws, highlight them and ask the participants to discuss as a large group why these missing components are so critical. For example, “by the end of the year” is vague. Ask the participants what “end of the year” could mean? Remind them that programs such as MIECHV define a program year as the fiscal year, not the calendar year. How likely would it be for everyone to have the same understanding?

- Next, read Slide 27 aloud. Follow the same process as before, using the talking points to discuss the aim statement.
 - In the example provided, the aim statement is a good one; use the talking points to help reinforce the reasons why.
 - If participants struggle to see the important differences between this aim statement and the last one, reinforce this aim as being more specific because it includes a precise date and a goal for improvement.

Activity: Create Your Own SMART Aim (Slide 28)

- **Introduction:** This activity will give participants an opportunity to develop an aim statement through a guided activity. Pass out the *What Is a SMART Aim?* handout.
- **Time:** About 15–20 minutes.
- **Instructions:** First, read the example scenario on the slide.
 - Use the information contained in the talking points to walk through the example included in the worksheet.
 - Ensure participants create a SMART aim statement that is different from the example in the worksheet.
 - If possible, have facilitators/coaches sit with each group to help teams work through the details of their statements.
 - Remind participants to stay focused on just the statement, and not potential solutions.
 - Once each team has walked through each step of the worksheet and developed its final SMART aim statement, come back as a large group and have each team share its statement. In larger groups, share only two to three example statements.
 - When teams report out on their statements, use each as an opportunity to highlight what was done well and what elements still need to be added or improved. For example, teams may have developed a statement that is missing key components. Use this as an opportunity to highlight learning opportunities, being careful not to criticize the statements. Remind everyone that this is new and time is needed to learn a new skill, such as developing a SMART aim.
 - When bringing the groups back together to discuss their SMART aims, see if someone comes up with the idea of including both initiation and 3-month exclusive breastfeeding. If nobody includes the idea “Of those who initiated breastfeeding,” highlight this idea for the group. Explain that since a mother can’t breastfeed at 3 months if she never initiates, and the initiation rate is not as high as it could be, initiation should be looked at first. The number of mothers who breastfeed at 3 months will increase if the number who initiate is increased. Some projects looking to increase breastfeeding rates might start with the population who initiated and work from there. In this case, there could be an increase in those who initiate, since 40 percent of the potentially eligible population is not initiating. This also gives more room later to develop projects that focus on all aspects from initiation through continuation, instead of just one area, such as continuation at 3 months.