

# Writing SMART 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Objectives Training



Now that you've decided to apply for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers grant in Arizona, take a moment to learn what Arizona expects in terms of grant objectives for your application. In this PowerPoint, we will discuss the difference between goals and objectives, review the key components of SMART objectives, and practice making SMART objectives for the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program. Keep in mind throughout this presentation, for the Arizona 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grant application, each site must include at least 2 (but no more than 3) Academic objectives, at least 1 (but no more than 2) Youth Development objectives, and 1 Family Engagement objective. For the Academic objectives, 1 needs to be related to reading goals, 1 needs to be related to math goals, and the optional third objective can be related to reading, math, or another core academic area.



### What are program goals?

- Based on your needs assessment
- Long term plans
- Big picture

### What are objectives?

- Processes/outcomes occurring *within the program year* that impact your goals.
- Specifically address the needs of your youth and families.

Every 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program should be based on overarching goals for the community to be served. Goals address big picture ideas and speak to what changes you'd ultimately like to see in your community. These program goals answer the needs of your youth and are often the concerns that initially sparked the "fire in your belly" to apply for a grant like this. The 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funding is intended to have an impact on outcomes in core academic areas, so goals for the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program should concern these areas, with your Academic objectives including at least one for reading and one for math.

In order to track if you are making progress towards your goals, Arizona's 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grant requires every program to submit objectives that measure progress towards those goals over the course of a program year. These processes and outcomes gives a sense of how well you are doing in reaching your program goals and are measured yearly.



## Goals & Objectives

How will you know you are progressing towards your program's goals?

If you are meeting your objectives, you are progressing toward your goals!

How will you accomplish your objectives?

Through program offerings that relate to your individualized SMART objectives!

What is a SMART objective?

Your objectives will tell you if you are making progress towards your program goals. Your objectives should be written with these in mind and should focus on progress in the core academic areas, in line with the intended purpose of the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grant funding. Your program offerings- the classes and activities that make up your 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program- will drive the progress towards your objectives. Each objective is required to be SMART. This format will ensure that your objectives can be used to make statements about your progress on your program goals.

## What is a SMART objective?



Each objective should have five key components- it should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time Bound.



The components of your objectives should measure up to inspection using the “SMART” criteria, helping grant applicants get their objectives into their best form. **Ask** yourself who is targeted by the objective, what result you expect to see, when you expect to see the result (or what the timeline for measurement is), and what measurement tool you will use to determine if the goal is met. The next slides illustrate each of the SMART elements one by one to help clarify what is meant by each term when building solid objectives.



## Specific

- Describe an observable action or achievement  
– **Be precise!**
- Link it to a rate, number, or percentage.

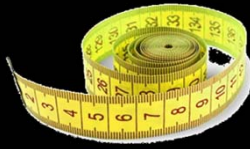
Example:

**The phone will be answered quickly.**



**The phone will be answered in no more than 4 rings.**

Each objective should be Specific. It may seem like an objective needs to be long and complicated, but SMART objectives should be clear and concise to ensure you know exactly what you are looking for in terms of progress. Adding in a rate, number, or percentage to your objective will move the objective into being specific. In the example sentences, adding “in no more than 4 rings” made the second sentence specific and clear.



## Measurable

- A system or authority has to exist which allows for tracking and recording outcomes.

E.g. Grades, Benchmark testing, Surveys

- The system must be reliable and may be already in place.

Objectives should be Measurable- there should be a way to track or measure whether or not you have made progress towards this objective. Think about the data you are already collecting-you may not need new measurements. Using existing measures enables programs to collect data that is already understood and relevant to the school community. The measurement tool should be explicitly listed in the objective to meet this criteria.



## Achievable

- There is a likelihood of success...  
— *But it will not be easy.*
- Objectives need to be stretching.
- Objectives need to be agreed upon, not enforced top-down.

Objectives need to be Achievable- you wouldn't pit your local little league champs against the Diamondbacks! Don't set up your staff or your youth to fail. Success should be possible but should remain a challenge. On the other hand, take your 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program seriously! Don't set your expectations too low. Determine, with your team, what you can expect to achieve with the population(s) you are targeting for services. When objectives are set by a team of people, there is buy in and they are more likely to be accomplished.






## Realistic

- Can you see gains related to the objective within the course of a program year?
  - *Remember that all Arizona 21<sup>st</sup> CC:C grant program objectives must be measurable within the program year.*
- Can the people tasked with meeting the objective really have an impact?
  - Do they have the resources, authority, and skill?
    - ❖ **Remember: Setting targets that are plainly ridiculous will not motivate people.**

Objectives should be Realistic- Is the objective possible within the timeframe and with the given tools (staff, funding, etc.) at hand? If not, the objective should be adjusted to be practical within the program year and with the resources available. This includes staffing- does the staff available for the program have the skills and credentials to make the sort of change you are setting in the objectives?

Always keep in mind that grant objectives are intended to have an impact on academic needs of your identified population. Setting goals that are impossible will not motivate anyone and will likely hinder the program in the short and long term.



## Time Bound

- This one is simple!
- Objective timeframes must allow 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs to measure progress for individual students in *each year of the program*.
- The time when measurements are taken must be clearly stated.

Arizona 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Program Objectives need to be Time Bound and measurable within the program year. Setting your objectives to be measured within the year will allow your program to make a statement about your specific students in that given year. Annual measures also enable programs to track impact and make adjustments within the year as needed. The timeframe should be clearly identifiable within the objective.



## Outcome vs Process Objectives

- New in the Cycle 15 application, sites will need to have both **Outcome objectives (for Academic and Youth Development)** and **one Process objective (for Family Engagement)**.
- **Outcome Objectives** will measure the results from the activities held with the project goals in mind.
- **A Process Objective** will measure the activities (types, number of) held to meet the project goals.

New in the Cycle 15 application, Arizona's 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs will need Outcome Objectives for Academic and Youth Development components and a Process Objective for the Family Engagement component. Outcome Objectives measure the *results* (or outcomes) from the activities in the program related to that objective. Process Objectives measure the activities themselves- they focus on the *steps* (or process) implemented to achieve the program goal.

## Why Process Objective for Family Engagement?

- Programs need to focus on meaningful activities that are relevant to their community needs.
- Sometimes, measurable outcomes are elusive when working with family engagement - the evaluation methods needed to evaluate outcomes in family engagement can be expensive, time consuming, and require more training than 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC can provide.
- Process evaluation is a method of tracking the movement towards a goal - focusing on the methodology rather than the final result.

In our efforts to continue to move towards best practices and what works for the field in Arizona, we have decided to focus more on the process of family engagement than the outcomes. Research shows that family engagement can be complicated to measure but that meaningful engagement is still crucial to student success. Meaningful evaluation of outcomes with family engagement is often expensive and beyond the scope of most 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC sites. In focusing on the process tangibles (how often events will be held, how many adult family members attended, the types of events held, the type of outreach, etc.), a site can ensure they have a measurable goal that is meaningful to the work at their program. Process evaluation is a technique of tracking movement towards a goal from a different angle, focusing on the methods instead of the outcomes.



Now we understand the components of a good objective. The next slides illustrate the elements of SMART objectives in creating an objective, step by step.

## Who?

- Regularly attending students?
- Students in specific grades?
- Adult family members of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC regular attendees?



Be **specific**. WHO are the people you are targeting with your services? Regularly attending students? Students in Specific grade levels? Adult family members?



## What result are you seeking?

- 25% of regularly attending students will improve in math...
- 15% of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders attending 30+ days will advance one level in reading...
- 65% of adult family members of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC regular attendees will attend 2 or more family engagement events during the course of the year...

Now that you've selected your WHO (in blue above), you have to decide what RESULT (in white above) you are seeking for your WHO.

A note about the percentages: One of the most important aspects of a SMART goal is to be realistic- is your goal something that can be accomplished, given the targeted students, in the course of the program year? Looking closely at *your data* will help you determine what is most realistic for your site. For example, if your grant is going to target the bottom 25% of your campus, expecting all of those students to advance one level in reading may be a goal that is too large to be achievable or realistic, depending on what you use to measure "one level." Your goal should be rigorous but not so hard that it is impossible to achieve.



## How will you measure?

- 25% of regularly attending students will improve in math as measured by report card grades.
- 15% of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders attending 30+ days will advance one proficiency level in reading on benchmark testing.
- 65% of adult family members of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC regular attendees will attend 2 or more family engagement events during the course of the year as measured by event sign in sheets.

Now you've got your WHO (in blue) and your desired RESULT (in white), how are you going to MEASURE your desired outcome? (in yellow above).

In the first two examples, the lower percentages are realistic and achievable, given then measurements used. Your percentages may even be lower, based on your measures and your students.





## By when?

- Each year, 25% of regularly attending students will improve in math from the first semester of the school year to last semester as measured by report card grades.
- From the first test to the last test of each program year, 15% of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders attending 30+ days will advance one proficiency level in reading on the benchmark tests.
- By the end of each program year, 65% of adult family members of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC regular attendees will attend 2 or more family engagement events during the course of the year as measured by event sign in sheets.

Now you've got your WHO (in blue), your desired RESULT (in white) and your MEASURE (in yellow). Finally, you need to define WHEN (in red above) your objectives will be measured.

Remember: All Arizona 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC objectives must be measurable annually, looking at data collected within the program year.

## Optional Practice Activity:

- ☐ Working with your site team, write a practice SMART objective for your application.
- ☐ Share and give feedback to each other.
  - Specific?
  - Measurable?
  - Achievable?
  - Realistic?
  - Time Bound?

This and the next pages have white backgrounds to facilitate printing as handouts for optional use while creating objectives for your individual application.

Working with your application team, practice writing a SMART objective. Then share with the group and give feedback about the SMART criteria- were they all met? Could any be strengthened?

## Optional Practice Activity: What's wrong with this objective?

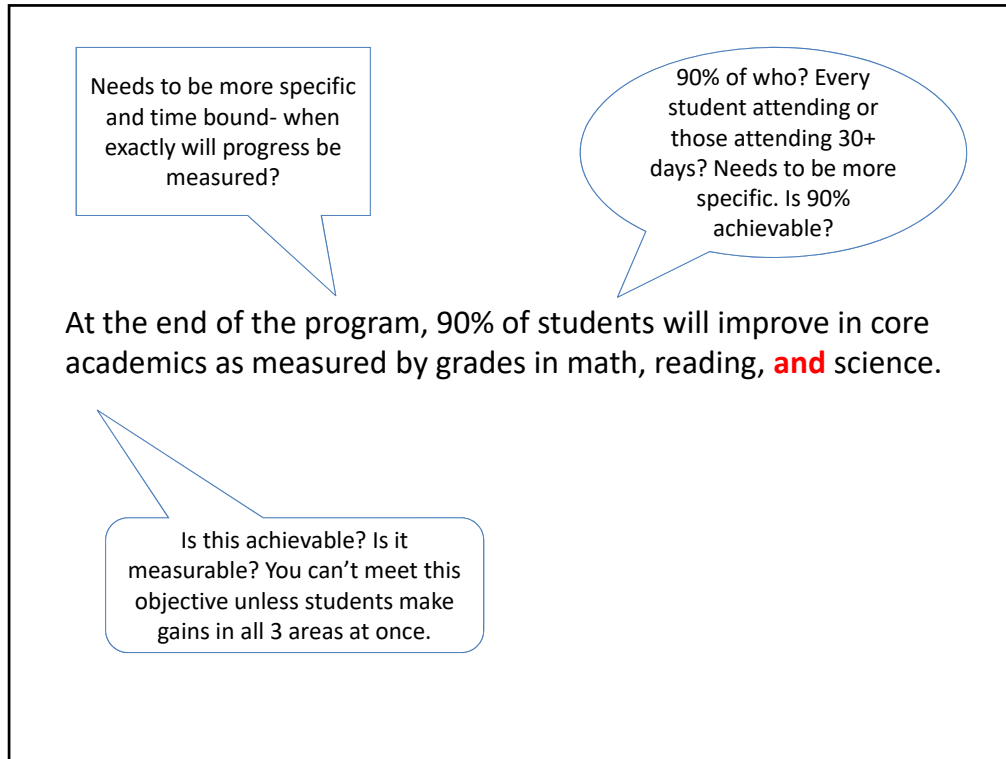
At the end of the program, 90% of students will improve in core academics as measured by grades in math, reading, and science.

- ☐ Specific?
- ☐ Measurable?
- ☐ Achievable?
- ☐ Realistic?
- ☐ Time Bound? (See the next slide for tips)

Optionally, review these next few slides to determine how to strengthen the example objective, based on the SMART criteria.

At the end of the program, 90% of students will improve in core academics as measured by grades in math, reading, and science.

Is this Objective Specific? Measurable? Achievable? Realistic? Time Bound?



Some of the key issues to discuss regarding this example are noted on the slide. Often, discussion with others will help clarify these issues.

The objective needs to be more specific and time bound- when exactly will progress be measured? 90% of who? Who is the targeted population for this objective? Is 90% realistic and achievable? Is the objective SMART if it includes all three academic areas in one objective? In doing so, the objective cannot be met unless the progress is achieved in all three areas.

## Stronger Objectives

1. At the end of the last semester, 20% of students attending 30+ days will demonstrate improvement in **math** grades from the first semester of the school year.
2. At the end of the last semester, 15% of students attending 30+ days will demonstrate improvement in **reading** grades from the first semester of the school year.
3. At the end of the last semester, 25% of students attending 30+ days will demonstrate improvement in **science** grades from the first semester of the school year.

This slide shows how the example of an objective provided on the previous 2 slides has been broken into 3 stronger objectives.

Notice that the 3 outcome objectives listed on this final slide have **Time-Bound** measures that are measurable annually.

The objectives are Specific enough to determine who is expected to improve (students who have regularly attended the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program).

Your team must determine what outcomes are Achievable for your target students; however, limiting each outcome objective to accomplishing growth in ONE academic area is certainly important to setting an achievable outcome measure.

The objectives are Realistic to the goals of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs to impact core academic outcomes, and are Measurable by data already collected by the school.

Now you are ready to write  
your own SMART  
objectives...



Now that you have reviewed the components of a SMART objective and practiced making objectives stronger, you are ready to determine which objectives you should write into your 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC application. Remember to consider the needs of *your* students and community when determining where you should focus, where you should set your bar, and how you should measure your success. And, finally, remember to work together with your community to set your objectives- multiple minds will ensure they are true to your needs and your community.