

## How to Set Effective Goals

**SMART:** All goals should be written in a SMART format.

**Specific** – Focused, concrete and well-defined outcome or result

**Measurable** – Result or outcome is measurable and the goal contains clear criteria for measurement. Targets are numbers; use current levels as guidance in determining potential performance levels.

**Attainable** – Challenging, yet attainable; within your circle of influence

**Relevant/Realistic** – Aligned with business goals and realistically stretches your abilities

**Time-bound** – Specifies a completion date or deadline

**Number of Goals:** Goal success is increased as the number of goals is reduced; less is more. To ensure that you are able to give an appropriate level of attention to each goal, it is recommended that you limit the number of goals to 5-7.

**Goal Weighting:** Weighting helps to establish priorities for effort and focus -- the higher the weight, the higher the priority. All goal weights need to add up to 100%. General guidelines for priorities: 5% weighting = acknowledgement, 10% = awareness, 20% = focus, 30%+ = urgency.

**Common / Cascaded Goals:** Common goals originate from organizational goals and are broadly shared with others in the organization to make sure all of the right people are working together. Common goals could include, for example: meeting budget, patient satisfaction, interdepartmental satisfaction, employee satisfaction, or clinical indicators.

If you receive goal(s) cascaded to you, answer these questions:

1. Can you copy your supervisor's / the organization's goal exactly as it is written and directly impact the outcome? - If yes, copy your supervisor's / the organization's goal. If no, then ...
2. Can you rewrite your supervisor's / the organization's goal in a way that the outcome you create will indirectly impact the outcome? If yes, write the goal in that way. If no, then...
3. Is there a goal which is in alignment with the goal category (Service, Quality, etc.) but not directly related to your supervisor's or the organization's goal? If yes, write that goal. If no, then there is probably no need to create a goal for that goal category.

**Custom Goals:** Custom goals are yours or your department / unit's unique goals and not shared broadly with others. Even with custom goals, it is important to have alignment with organizational priorities and values.

**Outcome Goals vs. Project / Process Goals:** Goals should be written as outcomes instead of tasks or projects. Outcome measures and goals strengthen the overall impact of your contribution on organizational outcomes and help you focus on the outcome rather than on the task itself. Outcome goals usually begin with the words "increase, decrease or maintain" for a measure and contain all of the elements of SMART. (For example: To [increase/decrease/maintain] – what - to the amount of - as measured by - data source)

If you find yourself writing a project or task goal, answer these questions: "If this project or task happens well, what will change?" or "To what end are you doing this work?" or "What will be the impact to the organization?" Then replace the original process/task goal with an outcome goal.

If you have to write a process / task goal, clearly indicate what the factors of success look like, especially with respect to impact and effectiveness.

**Goal Ratings:** Goals should be written in the same way that they will be evaluated, using a 1-5 rating scale. Discuss and agree with your manager what result would get each of the five ratings at the time you establish the goal. To ensure that goals across the organization are written with a fairly uniform level of difficulty, ratings should be written with common definitions of likelihood.

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|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1 = Unsatisfactory Performance    | = less than last year's performance* / significantly below target          |
| 2 = Performance Needs Improvement | = last year's performance with perhaps minimal improvement* / below target |
| 3 = Successful Performance        | = 60-70% likelihood of achieving the target                                |
| 4 = Excellent Performance         | = 15-25% likelihood of achieving the target                                |
| 5 = Exceptional Performance       | = 5-10% likelihood of achieving the target                                 |

\* Applies only if you are working on long-term goals that aim for incremental improvements year over year.