



Improvement Cymru Academy Toolkit Guide

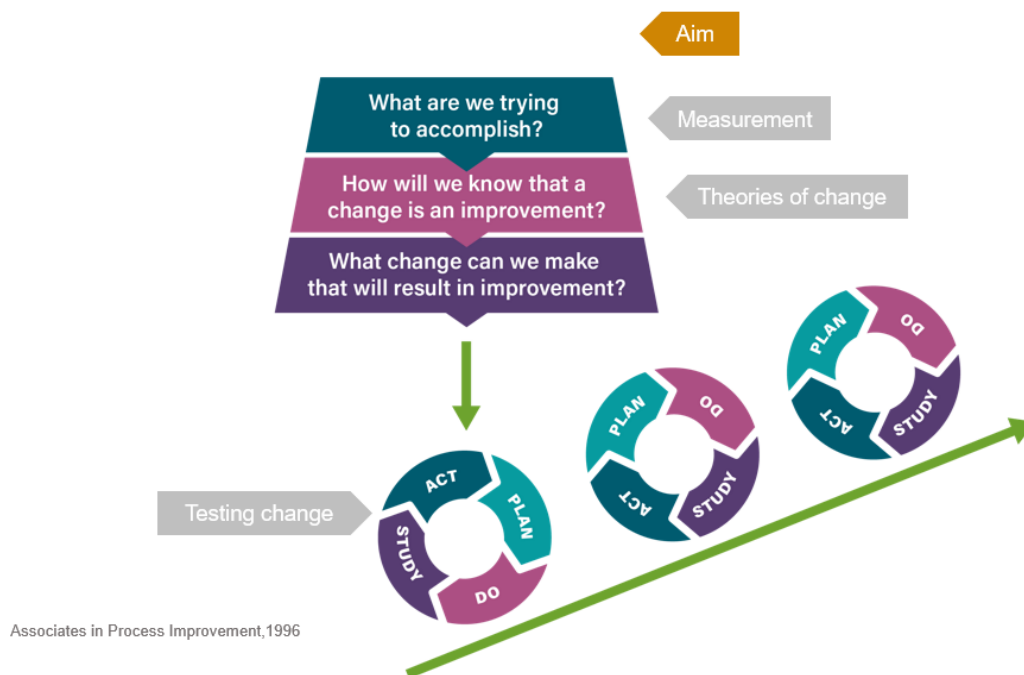


Developing your SMART aim

What is a SMART aim?

All improvement projects will consist of an aim which is based on The Model for Improvement. The aim seeks to answer the third question: **What are we trying to accomplish?** The aim reflects the desired outcome of your improvement project, To enable you to consider all the relevant aspects needed, we use SMART - an acronym that helps you set and achieve your goals. By applying a SMART framework, your goals become more attainable, achievable and clear. SMART stands for: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound.

The Model for Improvement



Rationale

A SMART aim is an effective way to focus on the specifics of your project and has a proven method that sets you up for success by supporting you to organise and achieve your desired outcomes. Quite often people will state generic goals without consideration of the specifics, measures, the goal being achievable, realistic or time-bound, which can cause a loss of performance, time, and effort.

When to use a SMART aim

Your improvement project starts with understanding your problem. Take a look at our Toolkit Guide 'Understanding your problem' to help you with this. Once you have identified your problem, it is time to consider your aim – what do you want to achieve with your improvement project. The impact of the problem that you have identified in your problem statement, will help you to develop your aim.

How to use a SMART aim

Your project team should be involved in identifying and agreeing your aim. Once you have developed your aim, consult with your stakeholders – it's important to have them on-board with your project from the outset

When completing your SMART aim, it's important to consider the statements within the acronym.

Specific

With specific goals you can outline the steps you need to take to achieve them.

Measurable

You will need to decide a measure to achieve your goal. An example can be a date, time, percentage. This makes your goal tangible and traceable. This type of measure is an outcome measure.

Achievable

It's important to set an achievable target. If it's too ambitious it can be overwhelming and if it's too easy it can cause limitations within your project.

Relevant

Make it purposeful and think about the impact it will make within your control and influence.

Time bound

A time-bound goal will allow you to work within a realistic timeframe. An advantage of this is that you will be able work on your priorities.

SMART aim examples

Specific example:

I want to be better at running. – This is not specific

I want to run 5K. – This is specific with a goal and date to work towards.

Measurable example:

I want to run 5k in 30 minutes in the next 3 months.

Achievable example:

I want to start the 'Couch to 5K' challenge where I will be able to run 5k in the next 3 months.

Relevant example:

I want to run 5k to live a healthier lifestyle.

Timebound example:

I want to train 3 days per week.

Full Aim

My aim is to run 5k in 30 minutes within the next 3 months, training for three days each week to enable me to compete in the Couch to 5K challenge, in order to live a healthier lifestyle

Helpful tips

In your aim you need to address, what are you trying to achieve and how realistic it is. What the time frame is, what the specific population is and then apply it to how you will measure it.

It's also important to consider:

- A worthwhile topic – does it link to the domains of quality? Make the links explicit.
- Outcome focused – is it clear what the overall outcome is you are focusing on?
- Measurable – ‘increase’ or ‘decrease’ are good words to use in an aim.
- Specific population - be clear about the scope – which ward, clinic, client group is the project working with?
- Clear timelines – by when are you aiming to address the issue? This isn't a target but a goal.
- Succinct but clear – would all you stakeholder groups understand what you are trying to do?

There is an accompanying template at the end of this guide to support you writing your SMART aim.

Additional resources

<https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/improvement-cymru/improvement-cymru-academy/> or email us at improvementcymruacademy@wales.nhs.uk to find out about the improvement courses we offer.

Further reading

Halvorson, H.G. (2017) *Nine Things Successful People Do Differently*. Harvard Business Press: USA

Langley, G.J et al. (2009) *The Improvement Guide: A Practical Approach to Enhancing Organizational* 2nd edition. Jossey-Bass: USA.

The Science of Improvement—Setting Aims [online] Available at: [Science of Improvement: Setting Aims | IHI - Institute for Healthcare Improvement](#) [Accessed 8th February]

SMART aim template

In improvement we make our aim
'SMART'.

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Realistic

Time bound

Use this space to write your improvement aim.

My Aim Statement

