DEVELOPING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES – SUMMARY OF THE SMART MODEL

Differentiating Between Goals and Objectives:

Understanding the differences between a goal and an objective can be confusing. Goals are broad, brief statements of intent that provide focus or vision for planning. They are usually non-specific and non-measurable. Below is an example of a typical program goal:

"Water use within the Great Lakes Basin will be sustainable."

Objectives are meant to be realistic targets for the program or project. Objectives are typically written in an active tense and use strong verbs like 'plan', 'write', 'conduct', or 'produce' rather than words like 'learn', 'understand', or 'feel'. Objectives can help you focus your program on what matters. They will always answer the following question:

WHO *is going to do* **WHAT, WHEN, WHY,** *and* **TO WHAT STANDARD?**

Some of the most common errors in writing objectives include:
- o Writing an objective like an activity;
- o Writing an objective like a vision; or
- o Writing too many objectives.

SMART Objectives:

SMART objectives refer to an acronym built around the five leading measures of a strong program. This acronym can be very helpful in writing objects that can be employed to evaluate the quality of programs proposed and carried out.

> **Specific** – *What exactly are we going to do, with or for whom?*
> The program states a specific outcome, or a precise objective to be accomplished. The outcome is stated in numbers, percentages, frequency, reach, scientific outcome, etc. The objective is clearly defined.

> **Measurable** – *Is it measurable and can we measure it?*
> This means that the objective can be measured and the measurement source is identified. All activities should be measurable at some level.

> **Achievable** – *Can we get it done in the proposed timeframe/in this political climate/for this amount of money?*

The objective or expectation of what will be accomplished must be realistic given the market conditions, time period, resources allocated, etc.

> **Relevant** – *Will this objective lead to the desired results?*
> This means that the outcome or results of the program directly supports the outcomes of the organization's long range plan or goal.

> **Timebound** – *When will this objective be accomplished?*
> This means stating clearly when the objective will be achieved.

Types of Objectives:

There are three main types of objectives that may be used in developing a program/project plan: *process*, *impact*, and *outcome*. Objectives can be thought of as a "short hand" version of your activities (process) and what you hope happens as a result (impact, outcome) – that is, the bridge that takes you to your goal. Process objectives focus on the activities that you will do within a specific time period. In contrast, impact and outcome objectives serve to "keep your eyes on the prize" by reminding you of what your activities should lead to.

i. Process Objectives
Process objectives help you be more accountable by setting specific numbers/types of activities to be completed by specific dates. Process objectives state what you are doing and how you will do it. They describe participants, interactions and activities.

ii. Impact Objectives
Impact Objectives state how you will change attitudes, knowledge or behaviour in the short term and describe the degree to which you expect this change.

iii. Outcome Objectives
Outcome Objectives tell what the long-term implications of your program will be by describing the expected outcome for the community. Note that outcome objectives are rarely measurable because many different elements may influence what is being measured.