

Refining Your Evaluation: Refining S.M.A.R.T. Performance Indicators

Purpose

This worksheet contains a series of questions that will support states in making Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely (S.M.A.R.T.) decisions to refine their performance indicators for the SSIP. Going through this exercise will help states to write performance indicators that will provide the information needed for the SSIP and to articulate a rationale for making changes to existing performance indicators and their corresponding outcome statements.

This document is designed for states who are working to refine their performance indicators for the SSIP.

Background

As part of the SSIP Phase II and Phase III process, states are required to plan for, assess, and report on the progress of their SSIP. The information in this document will assist states and their stakeholders, and can also be combined with documents in this series to reexamine and revise intended SSIP outcomes and refine how data are collected, analyzed and reported. Other worksheets in this series include “Refining Intended SSIP Outcomes”, a worksheet designed to support states in identifying the outcomes most critical to the success of their SSIP and “Data Pathway: From Source to Use”, an exercise that guides states through some questions and considerations regarding data collected for their SSIP. States can use each worksheet or exercise separately or in combination, depending on their need to reexamine different areas of their SSIP.

Defining a performance indicator

A performance indicator is an item of information that measures whether intended outcomes are being achieved. Indicators are the most direct evidence you can get for an outcome and usually contain a percentage, average, or other statistic that shows the direction of intended change (i.e., an increase or decrease). A good indicator not only shows direction but also is feasible to measure. In some cases, an intended outcome may not have existing data that support it; therefore, it may be necessary to collect new data or to refine the indicator so that it aligns with existing and readily available data (Sierra Health 2000).

Because outcomes are complex and involve broad social, health, or educational issues, it is advisable to address fewer than four outcomes and to attach fewer than six indicators to each outcome (Sierra Health 2000).

Examples of “good indicators”

- Percentage of families that report an increased capacity to help their child develop and learn
- Number of coaches available to providers who are trained to fidelity on EBP
- Percentage of providers who complete the COS quality practices modules
- Percentage of providers in compliance with state and federal regulations

References

Office of Special Education Programs Performance Accountability Implementation Team (2016). SSIP Phase III Guidance Tool.

Sierra Health Foundation. (2000). We Did It Ourselves: An Evaluation Guidebook.

University of Virginia Human Resources. Writing S.M.A.R.T. Goals.

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Refining Your Evaluation: S.M.A.R.T. Performance Indicator Worksheet

Directions: Choose one of your performance indicators and respond to each question below. If your response is 'no' or not readily apparent, use the lines provided to revise your indicator. Respond to the next question using your revised indicator. Write your final revised indicator at the end of the worksheet.

Performance Indicator:

- 1. Specific.** Are the terms included in the performance indicator clear and commonly understood? Would a stakeholder with basic knowledge of the program know what the indicator means?
- 2. Measurable.** Does your indicator begin with words such as number of, percent of, increase in, or similar phrases? Have you identified a feasible process for collecting the data? Is your measure defined the same way over time?
- 3. Achievable.** Is it possible? How does the expected change or target relate to your baseline data? Will meeting the indicator help you achieve a goal toward meeting your SIMR?
- 4. Relevant.** Is the performance indicator aligned to the intended outcomes of the SSIP? How well will this indicator support you in explaining your outcomes to stakeholders, OSEP, and the public?
- 5. Time-bound.** Does your performance indicator include information about when it will be accomplished (e.g., by 2020 or within 6 months of initiation)? Will the timeframe for your performance indicator enable you to report data to OSEP for your SSIP in a timely manner?

Revised Performance Indicator: