

Case Study: Using the SMART Indicator Checklist to Determine Indicator Quality

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The program team for a refugee economic self-sufficiency project wanted to ensure that they had monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans in place that would help them and the donor learn about their project and adjust implementation as needed. Their project aimed to enable refugees to successfully move and stay out of poverty, be economically self-sufficient, and fully participate in the mainstream economy.

The team identified indicators to track project progress and impact. To make sure that their indicators met quality standards, the team used the SMART checklist. Their notes on one of the indicators can be found in this document. Ultimately, they decided that this indicator was indeed SMART.

Outcome	Outcome Indicator
85% of enrolled refugee clients will increase their knowledge of financial literacy topics in Year 1.	Percent of refugee clients enrolled in Year 1 who score higher on financial literacy post-assessments than on pre-assessments

			Yes or No
S	Specific	Does the indicator measure only one variable or aspect of a program, project, objective, outcome or output?	Yes; while the program objective relates to broad economic self-sufficiency, this indicator measures only changes in financial literacy knowledge.
		Does the indicator clearly specify <i>what</i> variable is being measured, for/among <i>whom</i> ?	Yes; the indicator measures financial literacy knowledge of San Diego refugee clients enrolled in financial literacy education.
M	Measurable	Are there practical ways of measuring the indicator?	Yes; paper pre- and post-assessments will be given to clients on the first and last days of financial literacy education. Scores will be recorded and managed in MS Excel, which will also be used to calculate the indicator.
		Have the data elements that are used to calculate the indicator been clearly defined?	Yes; the data elements are: • # of female refugee clients enrolled in financial literacy education. • # of male refugee clients enrolled in financial literacy education. • # of enrolled male refugee clients with higher post-test score than pre-test score. • # of enrolled female refugee clients with higher post-test score than pre-test score. • Pre-test scores for each participant. • Post-test scores for each participant. • Difference between pre-and post-test scores for each participant.
A	Attainable	Is the target attached to the indicator achievable?	Yes; past experience shows that we can expect 85% of enrolled clients to score higher on post-assessments than pre-assessments.

R	Appropriate	Does the indicator measure the objective, outcome, or output it is meant to measure? Does measuring this tell us whether we have achieved what we wanted to achieve?	Yes; the indicator is directly associated with the output of financial literacy education and the outcome of increased financial literacy knowledge.
	Attributable		
	Relevant		We have confidence in this indicator because we incorporated client feedback into the design of our assessments to minimize barriers associated with test-taking (e.g., English literacy).
	Realistic	Is it possible to measure this indicator (within the available timeframe, with the available resources)?	Yes; we have designated a staff member to deliver the assessments prior to enrollment and at the end of financial literacy education in Year 1, record the needed data (class enrollment, pre- and post-test scores), and calculate the indicator. Program monitoring is a designated part of her job description and her other responsibilities allow time for these tasks. The program has the necessary funding to cover this staff member and the costs of our data management system. Purchasing the pre/post-test is not necessary and other than the salary of the designated staff member, there are no costs associated with administering the survey.
T	Reliable	Is it clear how the indicator will be calculated so that the same results would be seen if the indicator were calculated repeatedly to measure the same condition or event?	Yes: STEP 1: For each female client enrolled who took <i>both</i> the pre-test and post-test, subtract pre-test score from post-test score. STEP 2: Count number of these clients where difference between pre- and post-tests is greater than zero. STEP 3: Divide this number by the total number of female clients enrolled. Repeat these steps for male clients enrolled, and for male and female clients combined.
	Timebound	Does the indicator state within what timeframe the indicator will be measured?	Yes; the indicator refers only to Year 1 of our economic self-sufficiency grant.