

Why set objectives?

Setting work objectives is central to the Planning, Development and Review process. The objective setting aspect of PDR sets the framework for review and feedback. Clearly formulated objectives describe what you are aiming to achieve during the year and how you will measure the outcome of each objective.

Clearly formulated objectives:

- Enable achievement of the strategic and School/Unit priorities.
- Increase focus and commitment toward reaching targets and goals.
- Provide a benchmark against which the individual's progress and achievements can be discussed and reviewed.
- Assist staff in gaining experience and achievements that are continually developing their knowledge and capabilities and support career progression.
- Ensure that staff members are working towards a balanced portfolio of activities appropriate to their role and the stage of their career.

Useful questions to ask when setting objectives

To be effective, an objective must be meaningful and achievable; there is little point in setting objectives that are so large or unclear they cannot be achieved. So, when setting objectives with staff members it is useful to ask the following:

- How does the individual's role support the strategic priorities and School/Unit key objectives?
- What objectives are appropriate for the role of the individual?
- How do they fit with the workload allocation model/workload expectations?
- What are the resource requirements?
- How do they impact on the objectives of others?
- How can the objectives be measured? What sources of evidence, data, and feedback are available to enable on-going review?
- What challenges are anticipated in seeking to achieve these objectives?
- What assistance might be needed to enable achievement?
- If required, how might the objectives be prioritised?
- If very large, how can the objective be broken down into smaller, clear and attainable 'chunks'?

Applying the SMART principle

Keeping the principle of **SMART** front of mind when setting objectives ensures that they are:

Specific – Measurable – Achievable – Relevant – Time-framed

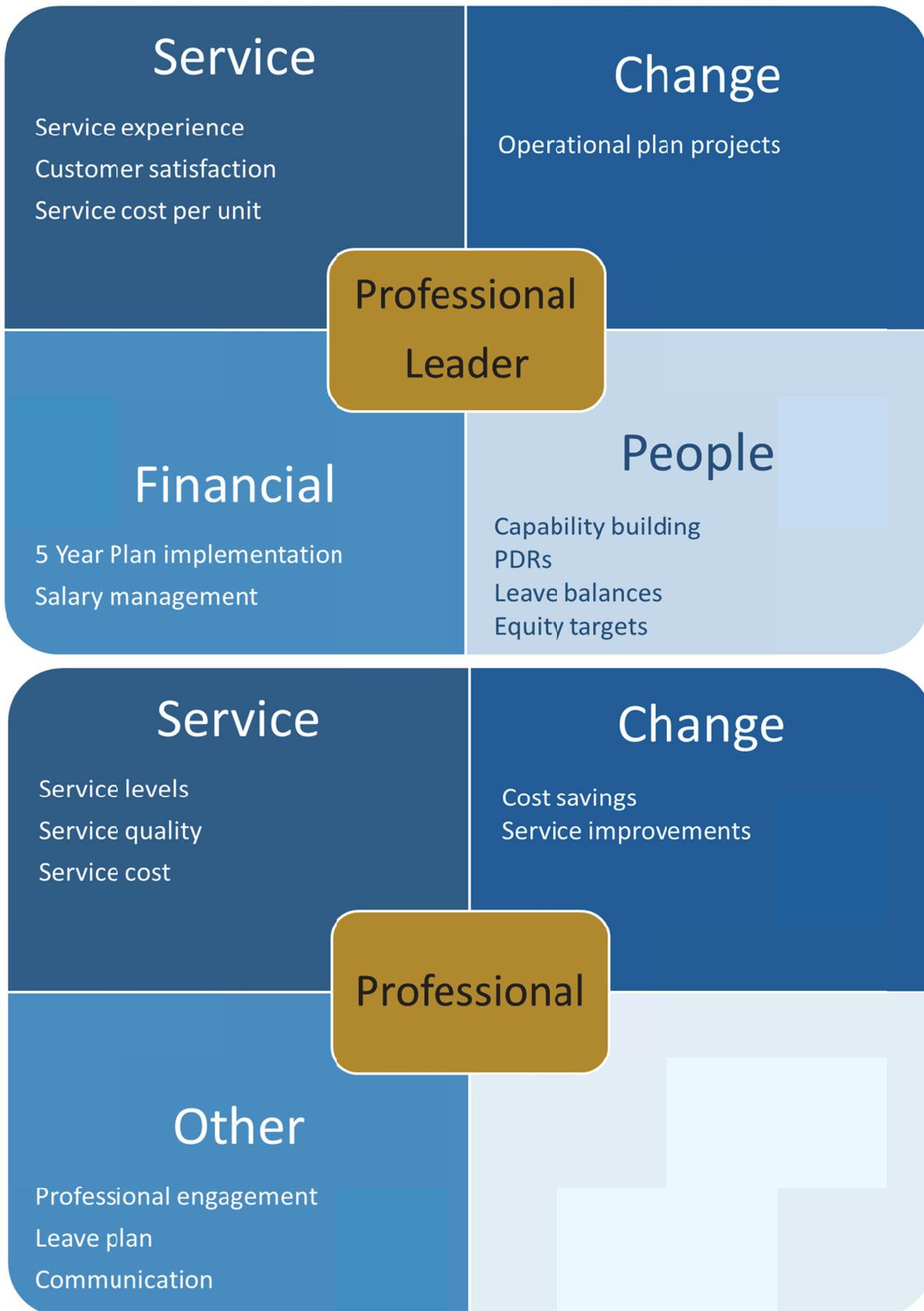
- Specific:** Is the objective clearly defined?
Work objectives should state specifically what needs to be achieved; they need to clearly specify the intended outcomes. Vague objectives lead to vague attempts to achieve them! Express the desired action and result using active verbs such as: *increase, develop, implement, publish, decrease, set up, negotiate, etc.* (see useful verbs for describing objectives listed below).
- Measurable:** Is it clear what success is and how one would know when it is achieved?
This means that it is possible to monitor progress and outcomes and determine the extent to which objectives are achieved. Consider both qualitative and quantitative indicators of success. It should be possible to evaluate the progress based on evidence. Therefore, objectives need to include a way of verifying whether the objective is being progressed, has been achieved and to what standard. Measures may be qualitative (quality of work, satisfaction) or quantitative (numbers achieved, costs incurred, revenue achieved). Generally there are four ways to measure; *quality, quantity, costs (or revenue) or time.*
- Achievable:** Is the objective realistic, yet challenging?
While objectives should provide challenge, they must also be achievable – there is no point setting yourself and staff up for failure! Consider the requirements and level of the role as well as the availability of resources.
- Relevant:** Is the objective important; does it add value?
To be meaningful and worthwhile, the objectives must be relevant to the level and priorities of the individual's role, as well as aligned with and contributing to University and School/Unit goals. When setting work objectives, identify the key priorities for the University / Portfolio/ Unit that relate to the staff member's position and identify how the individual can add value or contribute to achieving these priorities.
- Time-framed:** What are the timeframes in which the objective should be achieved?
Clear target dates should be set for achieving work objectives and completing interim steps. Timeframes – which can include miles stones - are useful for enabling individuals to monitor progress toward the objectives as well as to allow for interim adjustments that may be required due to changing priorities. Although the Planning, Development and Review process is annual, objectives can be set for longer timeframes. This may be particularly appropriate for research based objectives, with the ability to set milestones for the annual review cycle.

Useful verbs for writing objectives

Use action verbs to describe what needs to be achieved. Here are some options:

achieve	comply	draft	improve	obtain	revise
acquire	conceive	edit	increase	organise	save
act as	consult	eliminate	initiate	originate	select
adopt	contribute	engage	instigate	participate in	serve
analyse	control	ensure	introduce	perform	set up
answer	coordinate	establish	investigate	plan	solve
arrange	correct	evaluate	launch	prepare	source
assist	create	exceed	learn	present	streamline
attain	decrease	extend	lead	produce	submit
audit	define	facilitate	liaise	publish	supervise
avert	demonstrate	formulate	maintain	recommend	support
award	design	gain	manage	rectify	test
build	develop	generate	maximise	represent	train
carry out	direct	guide	monitor	research	turn around
coach	deliver	handle	motivate	restructure	visit
communicate	devise	identify	negotiate	review	win
					write

Key Result Areas – Professional



Example Objectives - Professional Staff

KRA: Service

- Achieve and maintain an average customer service rating of at least 4.0 (out of a possible 5.0) on annual survey by December 2014.
- Create the unit's 2014 strategic plan, discuss with the division and obtain final approval from executive leadership by June 2014.
- For the work unit's X Improvement project, develop a set of recommendations for improvement strategies based on relevant research and work unit feedback. By the end of the first quarter, provide a written report to all relevant stakeholders which includes a set of realistic recommendations (in terms of time and money required for implementation), as determined by the communication project goals.
- Promote and implement University policies and procedures in relation to occupational health and safety, and ensure there is adequate accountability for the implementation of all aspects of hazard management, design of work, training, workplace inspection and reporting within the division, according to University timeframes.
- By 30 June 2014, deliver three briefings to key stakeholders regarding the new security initiative within the University, and write a detailed report on the feedback received.
- For each project received during the year, solicit at least one individual from outside of your work unit to provide input at the planning stage. Incorporate the individual's input into your final report.
- Process and approve/decline all travel requests for the X office. Deliver 90% of approval notices within 10 business days of receipt.
- Facilitate informational training sessions on how to use the University's internal online tools for new employees who request training. Achieve a 90% satisfaction rate from employee training feedback surveys over the course of the evaluation period.
- Draft policy guidance for X topic and coordinate this draft through the appropriate channels to obtain concurrence from all relevant parties. Submit completed policy guidance for final signature by the appropriate signature authority by 30 June 2014.

KRA: Change

- By the end of 2014, present two acquisition plans to supervisor for new computer systems based on a thorough analysis of customer needs, capabilities, and cost/benefits.
- Revise the division's X Instructions and/or guidance so that associated policies, processes, roles, and responsibilities are up-to-date, thorough, and clear, as determined by supervisor review, within set timeframes.
- By the end of the October 2014, evaluate the computer security system training, assessing the extent to which the training is easy to use and if it covers the learning objectives sufficiently.
- Develop and recommend one feasible alternative process or long-term solution to recurring X problem by the end of September 2014. Draft a report with at least two thoroughly detailed and realistic options for changes to the strategy that may mitigate the current problem. The recommendations must meet relevant laws and regulations.

KRA: Financial

- Produce at least 95% accurately correct financial management reports to supervisor by the 28th day of every month throughout 2014.
- Deliver salary management project by 31st June 2014 to the agreed success criteria, including on time delivery, all project deliverables completed, and above average survey feedback from stakeholders in Post Implementation Review.
- Manage tracking and closure of all incoming inquiries relating to the 5 year plan implementation. Achieve closure within 10 business days of inquiry receipt, with 95% of responses satisfying request without need for follow-up.

KRA: People

- Performance objectives & development plans are in place for every direct report by 30 June 2014 with evidence of poor or mediocre performance being actively managed.
- Conduct quarterly coaching sessions with each team member to discuss performance, achievement and development through 2014.
- Complete PDR mid-year and end of year review conversations with all direct reports within set deadlines.
- Each direct report to meet at least 3 work objectives by 31 December 2014.

KRA: Other

- Distribute agenda papers to Chairperson and committee members 5 working days before the date of the committee meetings, and submit a draft of the minutes to the Chairperson within three days of the meeting having taken place.
- More effectively manage the email service into the X Office by ensuring a 75% reduction in student telephone enquiries received about the email they have sent; a clear roster for managing emails on a daily basis established by 1 June 2014.
- Implement new regulations in the safe storage of chemicals by June 2014, and ensure all staff handling chemicals are trained in the new procedures by the implementation date.
- All staff using safe chemical storage procedures to be monitored via monthly on spot checks after the implementation date. Number of accidents involving chemicals to be reduced by 50% during the 6 months after the implementation date.