



Making Our Evaluation SMART(IE)

Total time: 14min 32sec

Carli Rohner 00:14

Thank you for listening to this short recording. In this audio series we explore prevention, evaluation, and assessment. These are part of a larger audio library to help explore creative prevention ideas and developing and expanding our prevention efforts. In this recording, we explore making evaluation measurable by talking about SMARTIE indicators and milestones. This is Episode Four in the audio series on evaluation and assessment, and it may be helpful for you to listen to episodes one through three prior to listening to this episode. Today we're joined by National Prevention and Evaluation Contractor Patrick Lemmon and I'm Carli Rohner, Campus Coordinator at Oregon Sexual Assault Task Force. In Episode Three of this series, Patrick and Meg talked about how evaluation is like planning for and going on a road trip. Among the valuable things on any road trip are milestones along the way. Patrick, what do milestones mean for evaluation?

Patrick Lemmon 01:07

Well, hi, Carli. Glad to be here with you and to be able to continue these conversations. When Meg and I were talking about milestones, what we were really talking about was a way for us to get a sense, while we're on the way wherever we're going of whether we're heading in the right direction, that if we realize halfway through our trip, that we actually are going north rather than south, it's better to be able to turn around only halfway into it than waiting until the very end and realizing we're in the totally wrong place. So the same thing is true with evaluation. Evaluation helps us on the spot to figure out whether we're on the right track, whether we need to make sure to explore something a little bit more deeply, or whether we really need to just start all over again. And so identifying those milestones ahead of time really makes it a lot easier to get that sense.

Carli Rohner 02:02

And that's kind of where our conversation today comes into play with the SMARTIE acronym. And so we know that people often use this acronym of SMART, S-M-A-R-T. Or as we are starting to see more folks do, and as we like to do, starting to use the acronym SMARTIE, S-MA-R-T-I-E, to think about how to make sure that those milestones are evaluable. And we wanted to start off walking through the acronym and just kind of walking folks through what are those specific measures or the specific letters that we're talking about.

So I'll start with S. S stands for specific. And when we're thinking about that in relation to our goals for our project, and what we're wanting to be evaluating along the way, we want to make sure that we're starting with things that are really clear, so we don't want it to be a really broad goal that then would be difficult for us to measure later on. So getting those to be as specific as possible up front. So what is the specific item or the specific initiative, or the specific section that we're wanting to evaluate can be really, really helpful.



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Patrick Lemmon 03:08

Yeah, and connected to that the M stands for measurable. And as you heard Carli saying, specificity helps to build the degree to which we can measure something; the more specific we are, the easier it is to measure. And I know that we'll be talking in another session about the idea that anything that we can describe, we can measure. So you might get put to the test with this specific issue, how measurable is something? We can figure out a way to measure something that at least approximates what we're looking for if we pay attention. And again, ahead of time, think about what that might look like and how we'd recognize the change that we're looking for.

Carli Rohner 03:53

Yeah, and that flows perfectly into A, which we qualify as agreed upon or standing for agreed upon, you might also see A in some of these other acronyms stand for attainable or ambitious, it depends on the model that you're using. But for ours we like to use agreed upon, because that also gets to looking at these factors up front, before you get into your evaluation. So you want to make sure they're agreed upon by the folks, not only that we'll be doing the evaluation [with], but also those folks who are working in your prevention programming, or your prevention initiatives or strategy. So are those evaluation components specific and measurable ahead of time? And do you all agree on what that means and what that looks like? We want to make sure that we're stretching some of the boundaries that we have. So are we looking forward to having a really great evaluation? Certainly, but what we're wanting to also do is make sure in the meantime, that folks are all on the same page.

Patrick Lemmon 04:53

Okay, and then the next is realistic. I'm making sure that I'm remembering the letters in order. Realistic is the next one. And there are a couple of different ways to think about realistic. One of them is, we don't want to promise the moon if we can't get all the way there. Because then we'll be disappointed, our funders will be disappointed, the people we're working with will be disappointed. So we want to make sure that it's achievable in some way. But we also want to make sure that it's challenging, because I don't think it's realistic for us to say, we were going to make this little bitty change that almost nobody's going to notice and that it doesn't excite anybody. That's another piece that's important about being realistic is that if we're not going to challenge ourselves, it's not going to generate energy or enthusiasm.

And then the next one on the list is time-bound, that we want to be again, like specificity, we want to be as clear as we can about the timeframe in which something is going to happen. So if I expect to see this change within six weeks, that I'm going to look at it one way, whereas if I expect to see the change in three years, I'm going to look at it in another. But if I don't say either six weeks or three years, nobody knows when we're going to be expecting to begin seeing indications of that change.

Carli Rohner 06:24

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And our next letter is I, which stands for inclusive, and this is a newer addition for folks who might have looked at the traditional S-M-A-R-T, or SMART goals model. And one of the things that is really exciting about this addition is that it brings in folks who have historically not been part of our evaluation conversation. So folks that might have been historically underserved or marginalized. And usually in our prevention work, that means that those folks that we're including those folks who are particularly the most impacted into our processes, our activities, our decision or policymaking, and it's in a way that helps share power to make our programs stronger. And so having that, an example might be, in the past, you wanted to have a team of student volunteers that you'll be recruiting and your measure is that you want to build a team of 10 prevention volunteers. One of the ways that you might expand upon that is to say that we're going to have a team of 10 prevention volunteers, with at least five of those volunteers being people of color that can help inform policy and programming. So thinking about that and just expanding on our goals helps to include more folks in our work.

Patrick Lemmon 07:44

And Carly, I appreciate the way that you said that, you brought back in the specific and measurable and agreed upon components of SMARTIE into the your description of inclusive so thanks for that. Then the final one we have to talk about, the final one that we have to talk about is equity-focused. And again, as Carly said, this is a newer one that's been added into our picture. But it really adds a lot to the conversation. It allows us to pay attention to things like differential impacts on different communities, communities that might have been marginalized. Although we're speaking specifically about evaluation in this workshop, this is also very true in program implementation as well. Paying attention to differential impact is really important. And so that might include thinking about how we asked particular evaluation questions, it might include recognizing that there might be distrust of surveys from people coming in from outside of a community to ask questions because of how that's been used against particular communities historically. So recognizing that and thinking about that ahead of time, makes us a lot more likely to be able to come in and do culturally appropriate work alongside our colleagues.

Carli Rohner 09:07

Thank you, Patrick. And one of the really distinct pieces about the smarty goals that I want to highlight for folks is that, as we're talking about, the inclusion of inclusive and equitable in the SMARTIE acronym, we also want to be really careful about tokenism. So including folks just for the sake of including them and not making that inclusion meaningful. And so in our example, earlier about volunteers, yes, we want to make sure that we're including, if your goal is 10 volunteers that you're including five volunteers of color in your overall pool, that is wonderful. But if those folks aren't being able to interact with your process or your goals in a meaningful way, then that's a really surface level addition to your goals. And so we want to make sure what folks are doing is sharing that inclusion in a meaningful way and that you're including marginalized or historically underserved communities in a way that shares that power within your prevention programming and shrinks some of those disparities overall. Otherwise, it's not really helping you achieve your overall goal, but also in regards to inclusion



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and equity, you're not achieving the actual access that you're hoping to with, in regards to these goals. So just want to highlight that for folks.

As we go forward and we're thinking about our SMARTIE goals, how do we use them? So Patrick, I would love to hear now that we've talked a little bit about the acronym first, SMARTIE, how do we use that in our prevention work?

Patrick Lemmon 10:39

Well, thanks, Carli. And again, I love what you've said about warnings about tokenism and just being aware of the importance of sharing power and sharing decision making authority in whatever communities we're working with. That's really critical. When we're talking about SMARTIE, again, this helps us to pay attention that one of the things I know really helps me, for example, if I'm working in a classroom, and we post the group agreements that we have every meeting, that's an easy way for me to remind myself and remind others about the things that we're prioritizing. They think this serves a similar function, that when I'm thinking about how I'm going to implement a program, or how I'm going to implement an evaluation, if I make sure that every time I think about it to start with SMARTIE, think about what's going on, how did I plan for this? What's this supposed to be looking like right now? And what's missing? Then it makes me much more prepared, going into conversations to figure out how we can improve, how we can make sure that we continue moving forward, or how we can build on our successes. I'm realizing I'm using negative examples, how we can improve where we're making mistakes, but it also is a very good opportunity for the positive side. What can we build on? How can we celebrate the accomplishments we've made, and really bring to the forefront the momentum that we're building? That's part of success, ultimately, is being able to recognize that and to share that broadly so that everyone sees that we're moving in the right direction, if that's what's happening.

Carli Rohner 12:25

Thank you so much for that frame. And it's so important to also think about how when we're thinking about using SMARTIE goals, how this interacts with all other facets of our prevention work. So in previous episodes and in our first series around prevention, and kind of the challenges that come up for folks, we talked pretty extensively about oppression, and how anti oppression and liberation work intersect with prevention work. And one of the wonderful things that I love about the SMARTIE acronym is that it helps us address some of those things simultaneously. For example, the inclusion of I and E helps us to slow down and think about our processes and/or our evaluation in a way that's very intentional. One of the things we know about anti-oppression work is that when we slow down, we're less likely to include bias in our programming or in our strategies. Adopting this extra component to our acronym, that I and E, also helps to serve that function. It's a nice thing to help us be really intentional in our work and serve multiple roles within our overall prevention work.

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So with that, I just want to say thank you so much for joining us, Patrick, and thanks for being part of our series. As you're listening to this short recording, folks, we want to encourage you to check out other recordings in the series on evaluation, as well as the exploring prevention audio library, and please let us know if you want to learn anything else about this topic or our additional prevention episodes by reaching us and reaching out to us at SATF. All of our staff emails are available on the website and we're looking forward to hearing from you. Thanks so much.

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