

Actions

Actions are the steps you take to reach your objectives. They involve real people taking real responsibility and expending real resources.

For example, if your objective is to increase attendance at the 2013 Sophomore Spring Retreat by 10%, what will your school do to make this happen? Who will do it? What will they need to make it happen?

When schools submitted plans annually, actions comprised the bulk of those plans. Under the longer range approach now in place, the focus has shifted to *Goals, Strategies, and Objectives*. Actions are, of course, still important, for without them plans remain merely plans. However, for significant goals over a four-year time span, that may each involve multiple strategies, each of which in turn perhaps generating multiple objectives, listing all of the necessary action steps within a written plan would be a monumental undertaking. It is also likely that, over the four years covered by the plan, while goals, strategies, and objectives should remain fairly stable, at least some of the actions planned at the beginning of the cycle and/or the people responsible for them might change.

Actions are an important part of your Four-Year Plan. However, only those key actions to be undertaken in Year One of the plan need to be included in the written version submitted to the Office of Sponsorship. Information about additional key actions in later years can then be shared during the Office of Sponsorship Visits and conference calls. Of course, a record of all of these key actions should be maintained by your MIT, to aid in ongoing planning and implementation and to share with the Mission Integration Visiting Team during Year Four of the cycle.

*Objectives that are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**easonable, and **T**imed and that have **L**everage and are uniquely **Y**ours should be included as part of your Four-Year Mission Integration Plan. In other words, your Objectives should be written **SMARTLY**.*

Objectives may require many actions to complete, some of which may be more consequential than others. Only those key actions that begin the work of meeting your objectives need to be included in your written plan.

The other brochure in this series is:
*The Four-Year Plan:
Charting a Course*

If you have questions regarding the content of this brochure, please feel free to contact::



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Mission Integration
Planning Process



Second of Two

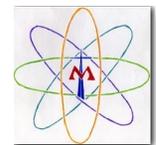
The Four-Year Plan: Making It Real

Office of Sponsorship - Marianist Province of the United States

Determining broad goals and general strategies for meeting them are important steps in the process of developing a Four-Year Mission Integration Plan. They may be likened to deciding a destination and mode of travel when planning a trip.

Once these tasks are complete, however, it becomes necessary to focus on the details. For a trip, that means specific routes and schedules; for the planning process, it includes *Objectives* and *Actions*.

This brochure addresses these parts of the plan.



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Planning the Details

Once your Mission Integration Team (MIT) has identified one or more strategic approaches to reaching a goal, it is time to move from abstract and general ideas to the concrete and specific. What will you do to carry out your strategies? How will you know you have been successful? When do you expect to finish?



The answers to these questions are found in your **Objectives**. Your objectives should be what some have termed *SMART*, an acronym for *Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timed*.

Suppose you have chosen a strategy of expanding your student retreat program as a means of addressing your goal of deepening the faith of your school community. To do this, you could add one or more new retreats, lengthen or intensify existing retreats, or increase attendance or involve more staff, among other possibilities. Your MIT needs to choose from among these or other options.

Suppose your MIT decides to increase attendance at existing retreats. This objective then must be stated in a way that meets the *SMART* criteria. One possible example:

Increase the number of students who attend the Sophomore Spring Retreat in 2012 by 10% as compared to 2011.

This objective is specific (the targeted retreat is named), measurable (you can count the number of students attending) and timed (when the objective will be met is stated). The objective must be reasonable and attainable as well. Your MIT will need to judge whether a 10% increase in attendance for this particular retreat can reasonably be accomplished within the specified time frame.

Suppose your MIT instead, or in addition, decides to add a new retreat. Is this reasonable and attainable, given the resources and competing priorities of your school? Do those who will need to create the new retreat agree? Can the objective be reached during the span of the plan? The objective must also be specific. What does adding a new retreat mean? Will you consider the objective met if the new retreat experience is planned, or must it be offered, or must it actually take place? How these questions are answered is up to your MIT, but answer them it must.

SMART is not Enough

SMART objectives are commonly accepted as sufficient for many planning purposes. For the Four Year Mission Integration Plan, two additional criteria are also important.

Your objectives must meaningfully enhance the Marianist character of your school.

Blessed William Joseph Chaminade used a fulcrum and a lever as a metaphor for the way his followers were to work. It is appropriate, then, that your objectives have *Leverage*. You may generate



many objectives that meet the *SMART* criteria. With unlimited resources, you could adopt them all. In reality, your MIT must choose those that move you closest to your goal with the resources you do have.

In the example above, would increasing retreat attendance by 10% significantly advance your goal of deepening the faith of your school community? Does the gain warrant the amount of effort? Perhaps it does, alone or as one of several objectives supporting the strategy of expanding your retreat program; perhaps there are other objectives that would leverage greater effect. Only your MIT, in consultation with your school community, can answer these questions. The important thing is to not become so focused on attaining specific objectives that you lose sight of the overall goal.

One of the advantages of being part of a network of Marianist-sponsored schools is the opportunity to learn from one another, broadening your perspective and being exposed to new ideas. There can, however, be a temptation to try to adopt wholesale an idea that has been effective in another school simply because it has been effective there. An additional criterion for your objectives is that they be *Yours*. Using another school's successes as inspiration is certainly appropriate, but your MIT should choose objectives that meet your school's needs, build on your school's strengths, and support your school's goals.