

GUIDE TO MPF GRANT OVERALL & SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

This guide on how to write overall and specific objectives aims to help MPF grant applicants develop clear, focused, and measurable project objectives. It includes (1) a definition of objectives, (2) tips for writing objectives, (3) examples of objectives from existing projects. As grantees may be used to different funding mechanisms requiring an impact and outcome statements in place of objectives, the document also includes guidance on how to translate such statements into MPF project objectives.

WHAT ARE PROJECT OBJECTIVES?



Project objectives define what a project aims to achieve. They provide clear direction to the project team, donors, and stakeholders about a project's purpose and thus form its very core.

Defining objectives at an early stage in project planning saves time later by helping to structure the project's activities and outputs as well as develop the results matrix or log frame. Well-defined measurable objectives also facilitate a project's monitoring, evaluation, and learning plans and actions, key to effective project implementation.

As noted, different donors have different approaches and use different terminologies when defining 'results', which can be confusing. MPF's approach involves the following.

- **Overall objective.** This is the ultimate and planned result, goal or change that the project seeks to achieve. This goal is outside of the project's direct control may be beyond the project's duration. It should generally be defined for a specific target group (e.g. unaccompanied youth migrants, refugees, etc.) and within a geographic area (a country, region, etc.).
- **Specific objectives.** Specific objectives are the effects or changes brought about, or influenced by, a project's outputs. These are also not under a project's direct control. Depending on the complexity of the project and on donor requirements, specific objectives may focus on (1) increasing capacity (e.g. strengthened policy frameworks, improved knowledge and skills of trained staff, new international cooperation agreements) or (2) driving actions and behaviours that relate to this increased capacity, such as the results of implementation of new policies or the use of trained knowledge and skills, which change how trainees behave in different situations.

Objectives should start with the following formulation: 'To + infinitive' (e.g., 'To increase xx') and should be specific, measurable, and achievable.

Each application should have just **one overall objective** and ideally **no more than three specific objectives**. The overall objective should reflect your best assessment of what can realistically be achieved with the available resources and project timeframe. It should be informed by evidence, commensurate with the type of the problem to be addressed. The specific objectives should support this overall objective.

GUIDANCE FOR WRITING OVERALL AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

This section provides guidance on how to write overall and specific objectives, combining general guidance and specific tips.¹

¹ The MPF team can provide assistance in helping ensure that your overall and specific objectives are articulated at the right level, neither too ambitious nor too limited.

1

Ensure the objectives are clearly stated and measurable.

The wording and intent of an objective should be clear enough so that a third person will be able to identify when it has been achieved. Objectives can be further specified through indicators in the log frame.

Example: To increase regular labour migration of qualified health care professionals from outside of the EU (overall objective)
NOT To support the Government to improve labour migration governance.

2

Emphasise the results of the action, not the action itself.

Describe the **intended result** rather than planned actions. Avoid words such as “support” and “facilitate” and focus on the result itself.

Example: To increase identification of false travel documents increased (specific objective)
NOT To train border guards in document identification.

3

Maintain a single focus.

Each objective should contain just **one core concept** or **idea**. Objectives with more than one concept are difficult to measure. In the example below, it would be possible to achieve the first part of the objective while making no progress on the second.

Example: To increase the proportion of voluntary returnees successfully reintegrated in their country of origin (overall objective)
NOT To increase the proportion of voluntary returnees successfully reintegrated in their country of origin and strengthen the legal framework on assisted voluntary return.

4

Focus on the ‘what’ not the ‘how’.

Although it is important to describe how you plan to achieve a particular objective, this should not be done in the wording of the objective. Avoid words such as “by” and “through”.

Example: To increase the detection of irregular migrants attempts to the Schengen Area (overall objective).
NOT To increase the detection of irregular migrants attempts to the Schengen Area by improving cooperation with partner countries along the Central Mediterranean Route.

5

Test wording to avoid ambiguity.

Test the wording with various stakeholders to ensure that the objective is understandable across diverse partners and not interpreted differently by different people. Avoid using acronyms.

Example: To increase the proportion of eligible migrants accessing the national assisted voluntary return and reintegration programme increased (specific objective)
NOT To increase access to AVRR.

TRANSLATING IMPACT AND OUTCOME STATEMENTS TO OBJECTIVES

Some applicants may be used to stating intended results in terms of impact and outcome statements. Objectives are essentially just a different way of writing impact and outcome statements. Whereas the latter state the achievements themselves, an objective is worded in terms of an aim. Adjusting from an outcome to an objective is usually a matter of moving the verb to the beginning of the sentence and making it into an infinitive.

- *Impact statement:* Number of irregular migrants arriving in the Schengen Area reduced.
(Overall) objective: To reduce the number of irregular migrants arriving in the Schengen Area.
- *Outcome statement 1:* Referral of vulnerable migrants to protective services increased.
(Specific) objective 1: To increase the referral of vulnerable migrants to protective services.