How to Write SMART Corrective Action Plans (CAPs)

Safety Assurance and CAPs

Safety Assurance ensures that agencies follow their established procedures and that these procedures are effective in maintaining safety standards.[1]

Common Safety Assurance activities include inspections, investigations, internal safety reviews, compliance checks, and audits (including State Safety Oversight Agency triennial audits). Agencies require **CAPs** to address findings of noncompliance.

CAPs specifically describe at a minimum:

- The **actions** to minimize, control, correct, or eliminate the risks and hazards identified by the CAP.
- The **schedule** for taking those actions.
- The **individuals responsible** for taking those actions.

What Is SMART?

SMART stands for **specific**, **measurable**, **attainable**, **relevant**, and **timebound**

SMART is a framework for setting clear and effective goals. It enhances productivity, promotes accomplishment, and drives long-term success by focusing efforts on attainable objectives.

Using the SMART framework helps agencies create CAPs that are well-defined, achievable, and trackable, enhancing the likelihood of success.

Benefits

Writing SMART CAPs can help:
- Clarify the actions.
- Focus efforts to achieve specific corrective actions.
- Identify agency resources.
- Communicate outcomes, progress, and achievement among stakeholders.
- Track progress toward meeting a corrective action.

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[1] The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies. Recipients and subrecipients should refer to FTA's statutes and regulations for applicable requirements.

Specific

A **specific** CAP is clear, detailed, and eliminates ambiguity by answering what, when, and who.

Specific Questions
• **What** corrective action will we take to improve safety?
• **When** will we complete this corrective action?
• **Who** is responsible for achieving this CAP?

Measurable

A **measurable** CAP includes clear metrics to track progress and evaluate success, ensuring focus and accountability. To create a measurable CAP, identify specific **metrics** for **monitoring** and assessing its effectiveness.

Measurable Questions
• Can we **quantify** or **measure** progress objectively?
• What **metrics** or **indicators** will we use to track progress?
• Is there a **clear method** for determining when we will complete the corrective action?

Attainable

An **attainable** CAP is realistic and achievable with your current resources, skills, and constraints. It strikes a balance between being challenging and feasible, considering both internal capabilities and external factors.

> ### Attainable Questions
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> - Do we have the necessary **skills**, **expertise**, and **resources**?
> - Is the timeline realistic considering the **resources** and **constraints**?
> - What **external factors** could impact our ability to achieve this corrective action, and have we accounted for them?

Relevant

A **relevant** CAP aligns with agency **policies**, **procedures**, and **priorities**. Setting relevant CAPs ensures your agency directs its efforts toward the most impactful areas.

> ### Relevant Questions
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> - Is the corrective action a priority given recent safety inspections or incidents?
> - Does the corrective action align with the agency's policies and procedures?
> - Will the corrective action improve safety?

Timebound

A **timebound** CAP establishes a clear deadline, promoting due diligence and accountability. It helps maintain momentum and provides a specific endpoint for evaluation.

Choose a deadline that is realistic yet challenging to keep the CAP on track.

> ### Timebound Questions
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> - When is the deadline for completing this corrective action?
> - Does the deadline create a sense of urgency and encourage focused effort?
> - What milestones can I set to help meet the timeline?

For more information on Safety Assurance, please visit the [PTASP TAC Resource Library](). The PTASP Technical Assistance Center is also available at [PTASP-TAC@dot.gov]() to provide technical assistance with any PTASP-related topic.