8-Step Action Plan Template

Date:

Step 1:

Identify your overall goal

Clarity is very important here; the more clearly you can visualise/articulate your goal, the easier it is to plan a route towards it.

## *Step 2:*

Set SMART objectives (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, **T**ime bound**)**

These should:

- Be precise
- Be expressed in positive language
- Start with an action verb to ensure they are focussed on something that can be achieved (e.g. complete, publish, investigate, propose, revise, plan, install)

Some examples:

- Submit *x* grant applications (to the minimum value of *x*) to *x* or *y* funding bodies by *date*
- Publish *x* research papers in *specify referred journals* by *date*
- Submit *x* abstracts for consideration to *specify type and / or level of conference* by *date*
- Continue to update knowledge and understanding in field by attending *x* workshops for professional development by *date*
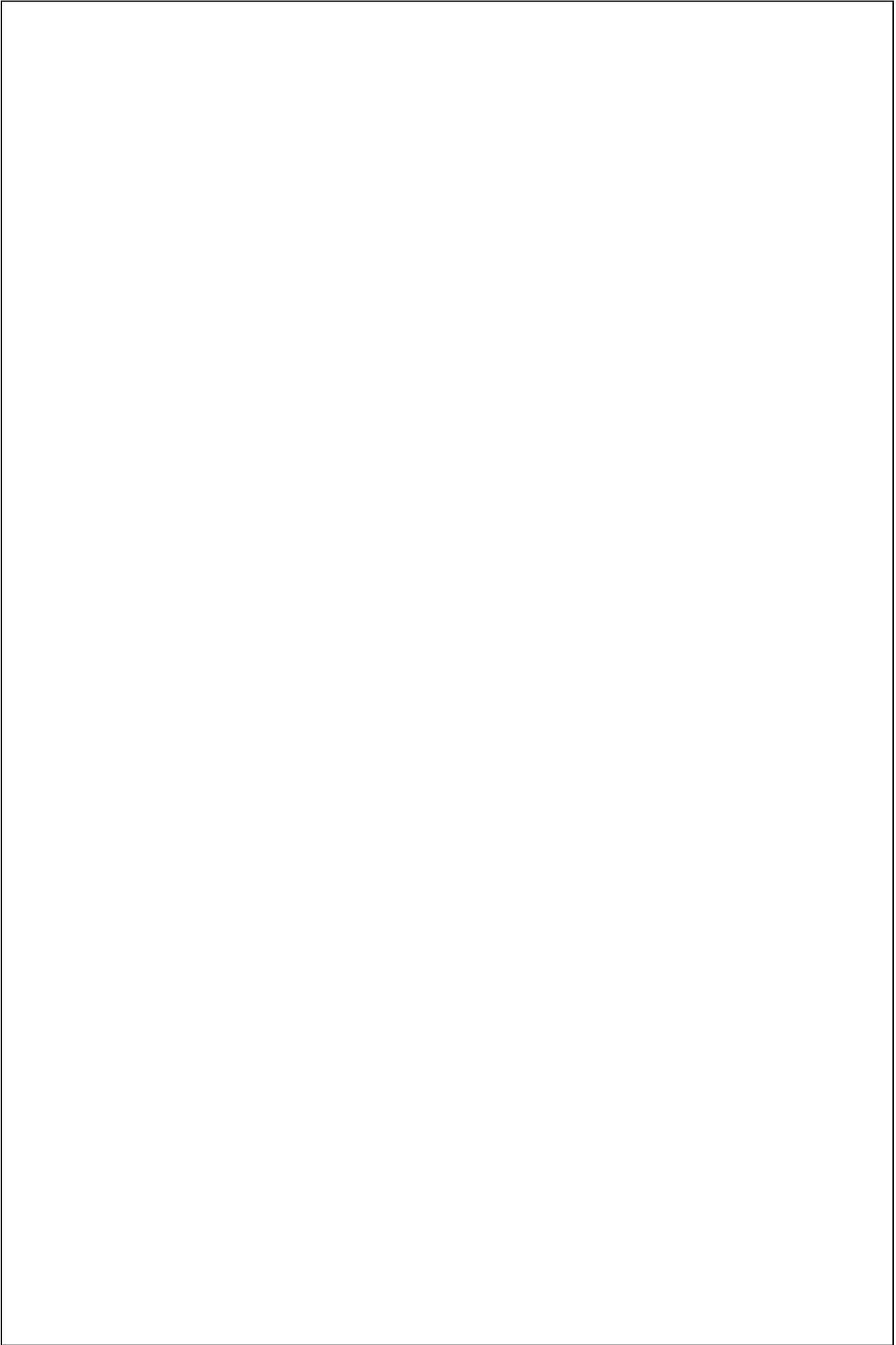
Step 3:

Identify the individual tasks and order them by priority

Break down any large objectives into smaller tasks, so they don't seem so difficult to achieve. Consider what you will do NOW. There is no point in having an action plan that will start in six months' time.

Step 4:

Identify any challenges, barriers, and self-defeating tendencies

Categorise them as follows:

- ACT – challenges, etc. which are within your control and important

- REFRAME - challenges, etc. which you can't control but are important; think about how you could view these challenges, etc. in a more positive and manageable light, for example as a focus for the actions you need to take

- CHOOSE - challenges, etc. which you can control but are not important

- IGNORE - challenges, etc. which you can't control and aren't important

Then, working in order, consider what strategies you can use to overcome your challenges, etc. A tendency to procrastinate, for example, could be tackled by setting SMART objectives and breaking them down into manageable chunks (Steps 2 and 3).
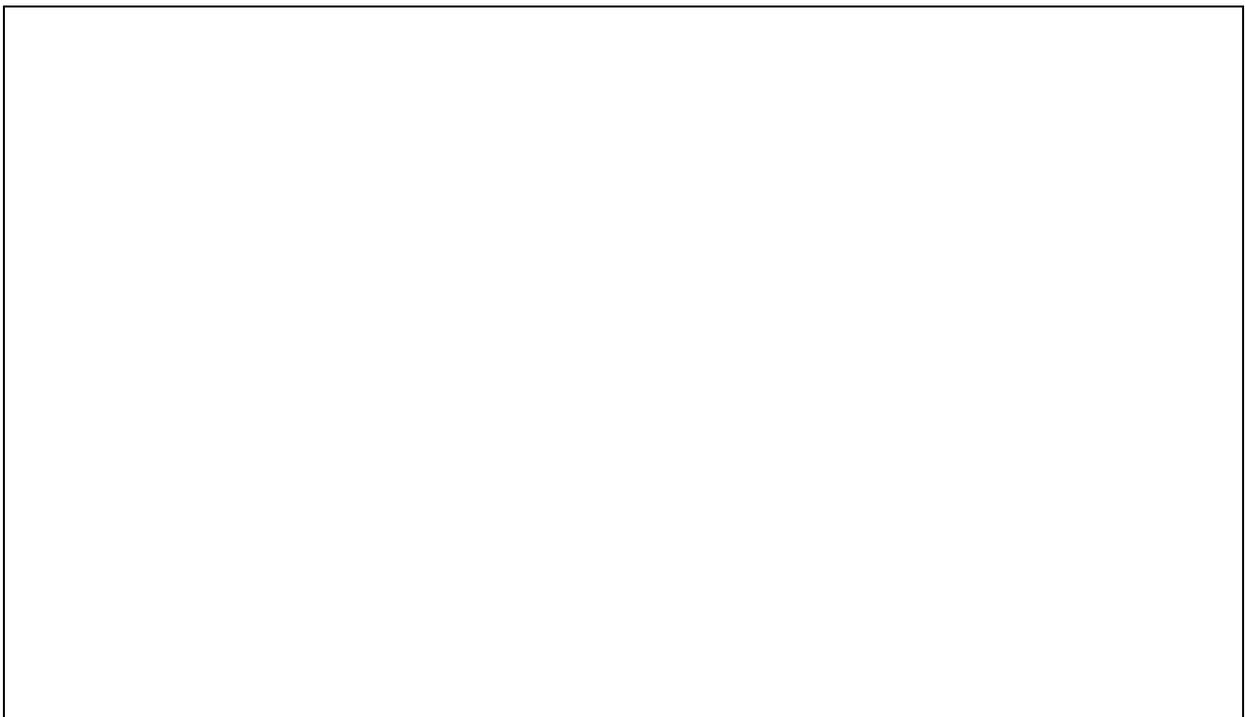
Step 5:

Determine who can help you

For example, if you listed 'procrastination' in Step 4, perhaps you could arrange for a friend or relative to support you in sticking to the objectives you set above in Step 2.

Step 6:

Determine what resources you will need

Step 7:

Decide on a realistic timescale to achieve your overall goal

Step 8:

Review your progress

Keep a diary or logbook of your activities and record in it your progress as things happen. A good time to start your review is about two weeks after you have begun. Review how far you have got towards your goal, identify any mistakes you have made and what you can learn from them, look at any new ideas or opportunities that may have presented themselves and then revise your plan to incorporate these.