

# First Steps When Implementing a Safety Management System at Your Organization

Once your organization decides on a safety management system (SMS) model, you need to develop a plan to implement the criteria. At first glance, the SMS criteria may seem overwhelming; however, it does not need to be. When you have a good plan in place, implementing the criteria for your SMS becomes much easier to manage, especially for larger organizations. Follow the information in this one pager to break down the implementation process so you can tackle it one step at a time!

## PRIORITIZE WORKSITE IMPLEMENTATION

Decide how to implement the SMS criteria. *Do you want to start with a particular group or work activity? Do you want to roll out the criteria across the entire organization at once?* Determine your approach. A benefit to approaching implementation in small chunks is that it affords you chances to perform trial and error strategies and identify (and plan for) obstacles, before integrating concepts organization-wide.



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## COMMUNICATE AND DISPLAY TOP MANAGEMENT “BUY-IN”

Have top leaders verbally communicate and demonstrate commitment to the SMS, whether it is during a meeting or an organization-wide event. Ask the highest-ranking official at your organization to reinforce their commitment by writing and signing an S&H commitment statement and/or policy statement. Post any commitment statements in conspicuous locations throughout work areas so it is readily available to employees and provides a reminder of management’s commitment.

## DEFINE ORGANIZATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A successful SMS involves the creation, development, and achievement of S&H goals and objectives. Create [SMART goals and objectives](#) to identify a few items you want your organization to accomplish. Think back to when choosing which SMS to implement – *what kind of benefits did you anticipate achieving?* This consideration is a good start to deciding what goals to set. Make sure the goals you establish are meaningful and apply to your workplace! Continually evaluate your progress in meeting your goals and revise them, as necessary.

## DEVELOP AN SMS COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING PLAN

Create a communication and marketing plan to keep your workforce informed and onboard with your SMS. Identify the target audience for each communication, determine the message you are sending, and identify the channels to distributing the message (e.g., safety topic talks, bulletin board post, email). Decide which SMS information to include. Examples include your organization’s decision to pursue an SMS, implementation progress, organizational goals, and how they can be involved.



## CHOOSE AN SMS CHAMPION

Choose a champion and grant them the authority to take initiative and implement the SMS. Your champion needs to have the capability to manage a project and have a heightened knowledge of your organizational goals and priorities. The champion needs to be familiar with the SMS model and effectively work well and communicate with others. Give the champion enough time to lead SMS tasks and actively promote SMS in the organization – don't plan to keep them behind a desk all of the time!



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## DEVELOP AN SMS COMMITTEE AND GAIN EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT

Develop an SMS committee to discuss SMS implementation progress. Ensure the committee is comprised of employees representing different parts of your organization, including leadership and supervisors, and possibly even contractors. A cross-functional team promotes communication and allows employees to have a feeling of ownership within your S&H programs and processes. Put together agendas, hold periodic meetings, document meeting minutes, and take action on findings stemming from committee meetings.

## CONDUCT A GAP ANALYSIS

Reach out to the Department of Defense (DoD) SMCX and request an on-site gap analysis of your organization's processes and procedures against the SMS model. On-site assessments include documentation review, interviews, and site walkthroughs to evaluate S&H processes and employee knowledge. The SMCX produces an action plan you can use to implement or improve SMS criteria.

## CREATE AN IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Use a project mindset and set an anticipated timeline for full SMS implementation. Refer to gap analysis findings to determine actions your organization needs to take on your way to full SMS implementation. Assign timelines and responsible persons to each action. It's okay to revise timelines as your organization sees fit. Plan time for evaluation and adjustments after an action item is initially completed.

## TAKE ACTION

Once you have a plan in place, take action so you can work on implementing your SMS criteria!

**For more information on making a case for and choosing an SMS, see the SMCX one pagers:**

***“The Case for an SMS”***  
***“First Steps When Choosing an SMS”***

For additional information on the SMCX's services, please visit the SMCX-hosted website at: <https://www.smscx.org/>.

