

Writing Measurable Goals and Objectives

Most social service, public health, and educational delivery programs attempt to bring about a change "for the good" in their target population. In order to evaluate a program to assess whether or not the program is "working" as planned, program planners develop measurable goals and objectives to help guide the development, implementation, and assessment of the program.

As part of a Local Project, it is imperative that *all* work statements include measurable goals and objectives. These measurable goals and objectives not only assist with the evaluation and accountability of each program, but also help to keep the program on track. Goals and objectives will be measured on a quarterly basis starting Fiscal Year (FY) 2010-2011 in all reports submitted to ITCA.

In order to assess whether or not the program is successful, the objectives need to be described as clearly and specifically as possible. For example, describing the changes in the target population's knowledge, attitude and behavior or a combination of these areas is useful in specifying the intended change. Change should be expressed as an increase, decrease, or maintenance in the target population's knowledge, attitude, behavior or combination of the three areas. ***Remember that evaluation of these goals and objectives should occur throughout program implementation so that appropriate changes, if necessary, can be made immediately.*

Writing Goal Statements

A good goal statement is:

- ✓ An optimistic and positive view of what could be
- ✓ A global statement, containing things not easily measured
- ✓ A demand for action and planning
- ✓ A clear, straightforward statement in simple language
- ✓ Realistic and clearly stated

Goal statements should not indicate how goals are going to be achieved, save that for the objectives! It is likely that some *goals* may not be achievable during the contract year. Goals may take five or more years to attain.

Examples:

All Pascua Yaqui tribal members who use/abuse commercial tobacco will have access to tobacco cessation services.

All parents of American Indian children attending the Tucson School District who smoke commercial tobacco will protect their children from the harmful effects of environmental tobacco smoke.

No Hopi youth tribal member living on the Hopi reservation will have access to commercial tobacco products.

Seventy-five percent (75%) of the urban Indian population in the Phoenix area will recognize the Local Project by name and be aware of its services.

Source: This handout is modified from the Arizona Department of Education goals/objectives worksheet.

process, Impact, and Outcome Objectives

It is very common to confuse the differences between process, impact, and outcome objectives.

***Process objectives** specify or describe the methods or activities used to bring about desired changes in the target population.

Examples include: the number of hours each participant spends in the program, a date by which participants will be recruited, activities of the program or satisfaction level participants have with the program.

This could be written as: "to recruit 20 pregnant women for a cessation program by November 30, 2010."

Process objectives are the easiest to evaluate.

***Impact objectives** describe the specific effect or change desired to achieve in the target population as a result of the program activities.

An example would be knowledge gained by the participants as a result of the program.

This could be written as: "to increase the knowledge among seventh graders of the harmful effects of commercial tobacco use by 25% by June, 2010."



This references the direction of the change (increase), the target population (seventh graders), the knowledge area (harmful effects of commercial tobacco), the specific change expected (increase by 25%), and the expected time frame (June, 2010). Changes can be expressed in positive or negative terms.

For example, some changes might make more sense expressed in a reduction of knowledge, attitude, or behavior, such as "to decrease by 10%, the use of tobacco among seventh graders by June, 2010."

Impact objectives are the most *important* to evaluate, as they determine whether or not the methods and program activities result in the desired changes among the target population.

**Outcome objectives* are the effects the impact of the program activities may have on the target population *over time*.

An example of this would be cessation rates at 6-month and 12-month follow-ups after the end of an 8-week cessation program. This could be written as: "25% of clients will remain commercial tobacco-free at 6-months follow-up."

The main difference between impact and outcome objectives is that outcome objectives are measuring the long-term effects. Impact objectives are more immediate effects than outcome objectives. Outcome objectives are also the most difficult objectives to evaluate. Evaluation involves follow-up with participants and assessment of the program content.

Both process, impact and outcome objectives are more immediate than goals. They often can be reached in a matter of hours, weeks, or months; whereas goals could take years to achieve. Goals create the foundation upon which objectives are built.

Guidelines for Process Objectives

Process objectives describe how the program was delivered and support the achievement of impact and outcome objectives. These objectives can describe the program delivery system, track client participation, describe demographics of participants, number of participants served and the amount of the program/service/intervention experienced (usually in hours, sessions, or lesson plans). If an implementation plan for a program exists, the major steps of the plan should be the process objectives for the impact and outcome objectives that are set to be achieved.

Formula for Process Objectives:

By When:	Time period in which activity is to take place.
Who:	Description of the target population.
Activity:	Component of the program being measured.
Results*:	Measurement of the activity.

EXAMPLES:

By November 1, 2010, at least 20 seventh graders will be recruited to be peer leaders.

By January 15, 2011, 80% of the 20 peer leaders will be trained in secondhand smoke prevention through the youth coalition program.

By May 31, 2011, peer leaders will conduct at least 8 commercial tobacco prevention skits for Red Ribbon Week at their Fredonia High School.

Example of impact objectives to these process objectives:

By May 31, 2011, at least 50% of peer leaders will show an increase in their self-esteem.

By May 31, 2011, eighth-twelfth grade students will increase their knowledge of secondhand smoke by 25%.

Measurement examples*: attendance sheets, program schedules, number of materials distributed, etc.

* This should be described in the evaluation section *only* (section C.) of the work statement.

Impact and Outcome Objective Formula

The following tool can be used to help agencies formulate *measurable* impact and outcome objectives. The basic components of the impact/outcome objectives formula are:

- By When:** The date by which the intended change will occur; usually expressed as month and year (i.e. June, 2010).
- Who:** Description of target population experiencing change, include the number in the target population whenever possible (i.e. 50 pregnant women who use tobacco).
- Will:** Establishes direction of change and describes the specific knowledge, attitude or behavior change expected (i.e. increase knowledge by 25%).
- Results*:** Describes how change will be measured (i.e. survey, self report). Note: This should be written in the evaluation section of the work statement.
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EXAMPLES:

By June 30, 2010, 30% of American Indian sophomores in the Flagstaff School District will decrease their use of commercial tobacco products by 10%.

By June 30, 2010, at least 75 sixth graders at Arizona Middle School will show a 15% increase in their knowledge of the hazardous effects of commercial tobacco use.

By June 30, 2010, 25% of participants completing the cessation program will remain tobacco-free at the 6-month follow-up.

MEASUREMENT EXAMPLES*: pre-test/post-test, Native American Youth Tobacco Survey (NAYTS), discipline incidents, and client intake forms, etc.

*Note: Be certain that it is clear as to why this activity is being proposed.

* This should be described in the evaluation section *only* (section C.) of the work statement.

Guidelines for Writing Impact and Outcome Objectives

1. Set a specific time by which the change will occur. This usually occurs at the end of the contract period, unless an objective needs to be met in order to meet another objective. For example, one objective may be to recruit 20 youth as peer leaders by October 2010 so they can be trained in commercial tobacco prevention by November 2010 to then deliver presentations by January 2011 (please see examples on page 5).
 2. The impact and outcome objectives should always be written in terms of a specific target population. It is important to define who is being targeted for the desired change and how many are in the target population. Describe the target population with enough specifics that someone outside the program could identify who is being targeted. Descriptors include: age, grade level, location (i.e. school, church), general problem/risk, number of participants expected, etc. For example: all 5th graders (300) at a certain school, 50 pregnant women at Women Infant Clinics, 35 students from Arizona High School, etc.
 3. Determine the direction of the change (increase, decrease, maintain, etc.).
 4. Describe the specific change desired among target population. It should be expressed as of the knowledge, attitude, behavior areas and include specifics about the change. For example, "increase resistance to negative peer influence" provides more direction than "decrease contact with friends who get into trouble."
 5. Clearly define the extent of change desired among target population (% change). The percentage or unit of change should be reasonably achievable. In other words, if all 300 fifth graders at Arizona Elementary School are put through an 8-week, one-hour per week curricula, what is the expected increase in knowledge or expected change in attitude or behavior? Define it!
 6. Measurements for change can include data that is already collected (school records, NAYTS survey, intake forms) or data that needs to be collected. The important thing to remember is the data must fit the intended change. For example, an increase in school attendance would not be a good indicator for increased knowledge of tobacco use. Ask yourself what would be acceptable as indicators of the intended change described in the impact or outcome objective and then see if the data already exists. If not, a method for collecting the data needs to be established *before* the program/activity is implemented. Just remember that, *this method for collecting data should be described in the "Evaluation" section (section C.) of each work statement.*
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