

In program planning, we often think of what we want to accomplish in terms of goals and objectives so that we can easily explain our expectations to others.

A **goal** is a statement that explains what the program wishes to accomplish. It sets the fundamental, long-range direction. Typically, goals are broad general statements.

**Objectives** break the goal down into smaller parts that provide specific, measurable actions by which the goal can be accomplished. Objectives define for our stakeholders and partners the results we expect to achieve in our program or intervention. For our program expectations to be clear, we must write clear, concise objectives.

**The two general types of objectives are process and outcome.**

*Process objectives* focus on the activities to be completed in a specific time period. They enable accountability by setting specific activities to be completed by specific dates. Process objectives explain what you are doing and when you will do it. They describe participants, interactions, and activities.

Example: By June 30, 2019, provide training for 20 settlement counselors in the use of new case file management system.

*Outcome objectives* express the intended results or accomplishments of program or intervention activities. They most often focus on changes in policy, a system, the environment, knowledge, attitudes, or behavior.

Objectives can also be thought of as short-term, intermediate or long-term.

- Short-term objectives are generally expected immediately and can occur soon after the program or intervention is implemented, very often within a year.
- Intermediate objectives result from and follow short-term outcomes.
- Long-term objectives state the ultimate expected impact of the program or intervention.

### *Developing SMART Objectives*

One way to develop well-written objectives is to use the SMART approach. Developing specific, measurable objectives requires time, orderly thinking, and a clear picture of the results expected from program activities. The more specific your objectives are, the easier it will be to demonstrate success.

**SMART** stands for: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable/**A**chievable, **R**elevant, **T**ime bound

**Specific**—*What exactly are we going to do for whom?*

The “specific” part of an objective tells us what will change for whom in concrete terms. It identifies the population or setting, and specific actions that will result. In some cases, it is appropriate to indicate how the change will be implemented (e.g., through training, or through implementation of the program model). Coordinate, partner, support, facilitate, and enhance are not good verbs to use in objectives because they are vague and difficult to measure. On the other hand, verbs such as *provide, train, publish, increase, decrease, schedule, or purchase* indicate clearly what will be done.

**Measurable**—*Is it quantifiable and can WE measure it?*

Measurable implies the ability to count or otherwise quantify an activity or its results. It also means that the source of and mechanism for collecting measurement data are identified, and that collection of these data is feasible for your program or partners.

A baseline measurement is required to document change (e.g., to measure percentage increase or decrease). If the baseline is unknown or will be measured as a first activity step, that should be indicated in the objective. The data source you are using and the year the baseline was obtained should always be specified in or adjacent to your objective statement. If a specific measurement instrument is used, you might want to incorporate its use into the objective.

For example, “From January to June 2019, serve 50,000 lunches to children from K-6 in Peel Region.”

Another important consideration is whether change can be measured in a meaningful and interpretable way given the accuracy of the measurement tool and method.

**Attainable/Achievable**—*Can we get it done in the proposed time frame with the resources and support we have available?*

The objective must be feasible with the available resources, appropriately limited in scope, and within the program’s control and influence.

Sometimes, specifying an expected level of change can be tricky. To help identify a target look at historical trends or look at programs with similar objectives. You can also consult with partners or stakeholders about their experiences. In some situations, it is more important to consider the percentage of change as a number of people when discussing impact. Will the effort required to create the amount of change be a good use of your limited resources?



Peel Region  
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## Setting Goals & Objectives

**Relevant**—*Will this objective have an effect on the desired goal or strategy?*

Relevant relates to the relationship between the objective and the overall goals of the program or purpose of the intervention. Evidence of relevancy can come from a literature review, best practices, or your theory of change.

**Time bound**—*When will this objective be accomplished?*

A specified and reasonable time frame should be incorporated into the objective statement. This should take into consideration the environment in which the change must be achieved, the scope of the change expected, and how it fits into the overall work plan. It could be indicated as “By December 2010, the program will” or “Within 6 months of receiving the grant,”

**Source: CDC Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention**

[https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/docs/smart\\_objectives.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/docs/smart_objectives.pdf)

