"SMART" Objectives

Goals vs. Objectives

Understanding the differences between a goal and an objective can be confusing. Goals are broad, brief statements of intent that provide focus or vision for planning. Goals are warm and fuzzy. They are non-specific, non-measurable, and usually cannot be attained. Below is a typical program goal:

> *"All children in Hawaii will be born healthy"*

Objectives:

Objectives are meant to be realistic targets for the program or project. Objectives are written in an active tense and use strong verbs like plan, write, conduct, produce, etc. rather than learn, understand, feel. Objectives can help you focus your program on what matters. They will always answer the following question:

> *WHO is going to do WHAT, WHEN, WHY (what does it demonstrate), and TO WHAT STANDARD?*

Some of the most common errors in writing objectives include:
- ~ writing an objective like an activity,
- ~ writing an objective like a vision; or
- ~ writing too many objectives.

- **"SMART Objectives"** refers to an acronym built around the five leading measures of a strong program. This acronym can be very helpful in writing objects that can be employed to evaluate the quality of programs proposed and carried out.

  * **Specific** – *What exactly are we going to do, with or for whom?*
    The program states a specific outcome, or a *precise* objective to be accomplished. The outcome is stated in numbers, percentages, frequency, reach, scientific outcome, etc. The objective is clearly defined.
  * **Measurable** – *Is it measurable & can WE measure it?*
    This means that the objective can be measured and the measurement source is identified. If the objective cannot be measured, the question of funding non-measurable activities is discussed and considered relative to the size of the investment. All activities should be measurable at some level.
  * **Achievable** – *Can we get it done in the proposed timeframe/in this political climate for this amount of money?*
    The objective or expectation of what will be accomplished must be realistic given the market conditions, time period, resources allocated, etc.
  * **Relevant** – *Will this objective lead to the desired results?*
    This means that the outcome or results of the program directly supports the outcomes of the agency or funder's long range plan or goal, e.g., the selected MOD priority area.
  * **Time-framed** – *When will we accomplish this objective?*
    This means stating clearly when the objective will be achieved.

There are three main types of objectives that may be used in developing a program/project plan: process, impact, and outcome. Objectives can be thought of as "short hand" version of your activities (process) and what you hope happens as a result (impact, outcome) – that is, the bridge that takes you to your goal. Process objectives focus on the activities that you will do within a specific time period. In contrast, impact and outcome objectives serve to "keep your eyes on the prize" by reminding you of what your activities should lead to.

- **Process Objectives**
  Process objectives help you be more accountable by setting specific numbers/types of activities to be completed by specific dates. Process objectives tell what you are doing and how you will do it. They describe participants, interactions and activities.

  > *By December 31st, 10 practitioners will be trained to use the CenteringPregnancy® model.*

- **Impact Objectives**
  Impact Objectives tell how you will change attitudes, knowledge or behavior in the short term and describe the degree to which you expect this change.

  > *By December 31st, in participants in the program there demonstrate an 80% increase in awareness of the sign and symptoms of preterm labor.*

- **Outcome Objectives**
  Outcome Objectives tell what the long-term implications of your program will be by describing the expected outcome for the community. (Outcome objectives are rarely measurable because many different elements may influence what is being measured.)

  > *By December 31st, there will be a 70% decrease in the number of babies born prematurely or of low birthweight to program participants.*

To develop SMART Objectives that will help you reach your goal fill in the blanks below:

By ____/_____/___, _____will have
    [WHEN]   [WHO/WHAT, include a number that you can measure]

_____.
           [HOW, WHY (remember to specify results)]

Below is an example of a process and impact objective based on a hypothetical program goal, as well as a list of suggested activities that could be proposed to attain these objectives.

GOAL:
To increase access to and utilization of adequate and above adequate prenatal care among high-risk pregnant women.

Process Objective:
By May 31st, all clinic staff will have completed training on the components of perinatal care.

Impact Objective:
By December 31st, the clinic will report an 80% increase in the number of participants completing all prenatal visits

Examples of Activities That Will Help You Reach Your Objectives:
1. Train all staff on the components of adequate preconception/prenatal health.
2. Provide outreach to high risk women of childbearing age.
3. Provide transportation and other support/incentives to get women to the clinic.
4. Educate each patient on the benefits of early and adequate prenatal care.

References:
Community Health Education Section, San Francisco Department of Public Health
http://www.dph.sf.ca.us/CHPP/CAM/3-ToolBox/Skill-BasedActivities/WritingSMARTObjs.pdf
North Carolina Arts for Health Training Institute, Raleigh, NC, March 28, 2003
http://www.ncartsforhealth.org/developingmeasurableobjectives.html