

## Developing Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives are a key part of program planning because they can help you (1) determine what you want to do and (2) set the criteria you will use to evaluate whether you have achieved what you set out to do.

A goal is a broad statement of the result you want to achieve over the long term. It establishes the direction and focus of your work. In SPRC's strategic planning approach, goals are set in Step 2.

Objectives are more concrete statements that set specific target results and describe how these results will be achieved. Objectives also help you stay focused on attaining the goal and monitoring progress. It usually takes multiple objectives to attain a goal. When objectives have been achieved they can be used to show stakeholders what the program has accomplished. Objectives are set in Step 4 of the strategic planning approach after programs and activities have been selected to achieve the goals.

### SMART Objectives

Objectives are more likely to be effective if they are written using the SMART attributes:

**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**chievable  
**R**elevant  
**T**ime-bound

**Note:** You may have heard people talk about SMART goals. They are essentially the same as SMART objectives. We use the word “goal” differently here. For our purposes, a goal is a broad statement about what you hope to achieve, while “objectives” refer to the activities you may do to help you attain the goal.

Now let's take a possible suicide prevention goal and one of the objectives that could help achieve it, and see how the SMART attributes apply.

Goal: “Reduce suicidal behaviors among LGBT youth in Big County.”

Objective: “By November 2019, provide training workshops to 50% of the high school teachers and guidance counselors and 75% of the staff in youth-serving organizations in Big County on how to create environments that promote social connectedness for LGBT youth ages 15–19.”

**Specific** objectives include the *who*, *what*, and *where* of what you want to accomplish. Keep in mind that the more specific the objective is, the easier it will be to measure.

- *Who* refers to the target population, e.g., high school teachers and guidance counselors and staff in youth-serving organizations that work with LGBT youth ages 15–19.
- *What* refers to the action, e.g., workshops to help staff create environments that promote social connectedness for LGBT youth.
- *Where* refers to the place the action will occur, e.g., schools and youth-serving organizations in Big County.

**Measurable** refers to *how much* change you expect. Measurable objectives use quantities, such as numbers and percentages, or other data that can be collected. For example, in Big County 50% of the high school teachers and guidance counselors and 75% of the staff in youth-serving organizations will be given the workshops.

**Achievable** means that the objective is realistic in terms of the program's resources and other aspects of implementing the program, such as the availability of the school and agency staff who would participate and the amount of time in which the program would be conducted.

**Relevant** means the objectives relate directly to your goal. It answers the questions of why the program should be done and the impact it will have. In this example, this training program is considered relevant because it is expected to help reduce suicidal behaviors among LGBT youth in Big County.

**Time-bound** sets out *when* the objective will be attained. To be effective, objectives need a time frame within which they will be accomplished. Having a specific time frame helps with planning and evaluating a program. The time frame in this example is "by November 2019."

## Process and Outcome Objectives

Objectives can be focused on *process* or *outcomes*.

**Process objectives** focus on the activities and services to be carried out by a program (usually determined in Step 4 of the strategic planning approach). The objective used in the prior example is a process objective because it describes the workshops that will be provided.

"By November 2019, provide training workshops to 50% of the high school teachers and guidance counselors and 75% of the staff in youth-serving organizations in Big County on how to create environments that promote social connectedness for LGBT youth ages 15–19."

**Outcome objectives** state the intended results of a program or activity. They describe the expected changes in the target population's knowledge, attitudes, skills, or behaviors as a result of the program or activity. Here are two examples of outcome objectives.

"By November 2019, 90% of the high school teachers and guidance counselors and 90% of the staff in youth-serving organizations who were trained in Big County will report in pre/post-test questionnaires that they have increased their knowledge, attitudes, and skills in creating an environment in their school or agency that promotes social connectedness for LGBT youth ages 15–19."

"By February 2020, 50% of the high school teachers and guidance counselors and 50% of the staff in youth-serving organizations who were trained in Big County will have made changes consistent with the training in their school/agency that will help create an environment that promotes social connectedness for LGBT youth ages 15–19."

Creating target percentages depends somewhat on your situation. It can be helpful to look at the evaluation results reported for similar interventions or activities to get an idea of the percent change to expect. You can find this information by reaching out to other programs and looking at the research literature. Generally, percentages are somewhat lower for outcome objectives than for process

objectives because not everyone who is trained will experience changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, and then make changes in what they do (behaviors).

## Objectives vs. Activities

Although objectives, especially process objectives, may mention activities, they are different from activities. Objectives state the *results* to be attained from the activities and help monitor your progress toward achieving your program goals. Activities are the *events* that are conducted as part of the program to attain your objectives. Since objectives are based on the program and activities, they are not created until after the program and activities are determined.

Here is an example:

Objective:

“By November 2019, provide training workshops to 50% of the high school teachers and guidance counselors and 75% of the staff in youth-serving organizations in Big County on how to create environments that promote social connectedness for LGBT youth ages 15–19.”

Activity (to attain this objective):

“Training workshops for high school teachers and guidance counselors and staff in youth-serving organizations on how to create environments that promote social connectedness for LGBT youth ages 15–19.”