



Setting Objectives

Overview: Setting objectives is a key step in strategic project planning and assessment. This training is focused on teaching participants how to formulate and write clear objectives by guiding them through the steps of objective writing. This training has a more straightforward focus on setting objectives, and may be used in conjunction with a more entertaining and fun training like *Goal Setting with BHAGS*.

Category: Project planning and management; goal-setting; impact

Level: Introductory to advanced

Type: Structured activity suitable for workshop (e.g. retreat or training) or for use during regular meeting structure. This may be broken down over a period of time.

Focus or Goals of this Guide:

- Provide participants with a deeper understanding of the elements of objective writing.
- Give participants an opportunity to experiment with objective-writing for their own projects.

Materials:

- Flip chart and markers, pre-written
- Copies of the writing objectives worksheets (see end) for all participants.

How to Prepare:

This training will guide you through instructions for setting objectives. The training presents the elements of objectives writing followed by an example and an opportunity for participants to try using the Objectives Writing Worksheet.

How to Do/Brief Outline:

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|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1) Introduction to Objectives Writing | suggested time 10-15 minutes |
| 2) Review of Worksheet | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 3) Practice of Objective Writing | suggested time 25 minutes |
| 4) Review | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 5) Revision | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 6) Discussion and Wrap-Up | suggested time 15 minutes |
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Introduction to Objective Writing

Suggested time: 10-15 minutes

Introduce both yourself and the topic. Explain why you are providing the training and how participants will be able to apply the information. Consider using prepared flip charts to present the topics. Start off by defining an “objective.” You might ask the participants for their input before introducing the following definition:

An objective is:

A precise, measurable statement of what your program intends to achieve during a specified period of time, as it works toward a desired outcome.

It is essentially a statement about what will change.

The basic components of an objective are:

- *Description of the activity or service to be provided (e.g. tutoring)*
- *Expected result of the activity or service (e.g. increased reading level)*
- *Tool to measure the impact of the provided service or the quality of the provided product (e.g. pre/post reading level test).*
- *Standard of success the project hopes to meet (e.g. average increase of at least one reading level)*
- *Number of service recipients or individuals who benefit (e.g. 25 middle-school youth per year).*

The worksheet includes all of these elements.

Also objectives should be **SMART**.

S	–	specific
M	-	measurable
A	-	attainable
R	–	realistic
T	-	time-bound

Why are objectives important?

Objectives allow participants to measure the success or failure of a project or program. Furthermore, the specific roles and responsibilities that determine an organization’s strategies are developed based on the objectives.

After presenting these topics, give these **examples** of objectives:

Improve the reading level of 25 middle-school youth through tutoring, as measured by an average increase of at least one reading level on a reading level test that will be administered before and after the project.

Recruit 20 high school students by the end of the semester for a training program given by Stetson University students.

Provide 40 hours of parenting training to 100 teen parents, leading into 80% enrollment and 50% participation in the activities of a six-month parent-child education program.

From here move on to the review of the worksheet.

2 **Review of Worksheet**

Suggested time: 10 minutes

All participants should have a copy of both the “Sample Completed Objectives” and “How to Write Objectives” worksheets (see end).

Walk participants through the “Sample Completed Objectives” worksheet. Encourage volunteers/participants to read different sections. Talking the participants through this sample objective writing is a good way for them to see how objectives are formed.

3 **Practice of Objective Writing**

Suggested time: 25 minutes

Pass out the worksheet “How to Write Objectives”. Have participant’s pair up, particularly those from the same organization/program. Using their program or organization as the base, have them work through the worksheet designing objectives for upcoming service projects or events. Give participants 25 minutes to complete this task.

They can use the sample worksheet as a reference, and should ask questions as needed. Remind them that the final objective should not only cover all the five steps but should be SMART as well.

You, as the facilitator should monitor participant’s progress, assisting groups with trouble shooting. As time progresses and participants complete portions of the worksheet, stop the groups’ efforts for a moment, and have a pair share a portion of their process like completed sentence for the “Describe Your Activity Section” or “Choose Your Evaluation Measure.” As a facilitator, guide this sharing and provide people with coaching.

4 Review

Suggested time: 10 minutes

There are two approaches to Review. Choosing between one or the other depends largely on the dynamics of your group. If participants know each other fairly well and are involved in the same organization, exchanging objectives with another pair may be more beneficial. However, if the participants are involved in different projects, or are less comfortable sharing and critiquing each other, reviewing objectives in a large group might be the better choice. Both are described below. It is up to you as the facilitator, to decide which approach is more appropriate for your group.

In either choice, it is important to clarify that feedback should be based on the principles of SMART-ness. Input can not be “Your activity seems inaccurate or stupid” or “We don’t do that.” Participants from different pairs who are in the same organization won’t necessarily generate the same objectives. That is not an issue. The intent of the training is for participants to learn the key components of good objective writing, and to gain practice with objective writing. It is not a competition for ideas or for intellectual judgment.

PAIRS: After the pairs finish writing their objectives, have them re-copy the statement onto a separate piece of paper, and exchange it with another pair. Every pair should read some other pair’s statement and assess its “SMART”-ness. Remind participants what SMART stands for. Pairs should productively critique the objective, citing both what is good and what could be improved. As the facilitator, monitor pairs exchanges.

LARGE GROUP: After the pairs finish writing their objectives, have them circle up. Explain that everyone will now be sharing their completed objective statement. Ask for a volunteer to go first, and write their completed objective up on the flip-chart. All participants should assess the statement for its “SMART”-ness and share their input. After the group has identified what needs work, you as the facilitator should provide the person presenting with input on how they could improve the statement. If their evaluation measure seems inaccurate or inappropriate, offer an alternative. Indicate if they haven’t identified the who, what, when, where, why etc. Student presenters should take notes on these areas for improvement, as they will be asked to implement them and present a revised statement. All pairs will present their statement, and be critiqued.

5 Revision

Suggested time: 10 minutes

After completing the process of review, have pairs take a few minutes to revise their statements incorporating the groups’ input for improvements. If this means redoing one of the steps, pairs should do that, and recreate the whole statement.

6

Discussion and Wrap-Up

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Have the group circle up again, and a few pairs present their previous statement and their new revised statement. After some participants have shared their revised statements, take a couple of minutes to talk about what the next steps after setting objectives might be.

These next steps may include producing the methods for evaluation. Have participants identify what these are and have a couple share with the group.

Sample Completed Objectives Worksheet

Why have an objective?

The importance of an objective is to measure the project's services, document outcomes, and demonstrate success.

What is an objective?

An objective is a precise measurable statement of what your program intends to achieve during a specific time period toward your desired outcome.

Steps to a Measurable Objective:

1. Describe your Activity
2. Define your Desired Result
3. Choose your Evaluation Measure (methods/instruments)
4. Define your Standard of Success
5. Describe your Beneficiaries

1. Describe your Activity

A good objective will contain an activity statement which describes who does what, when, where and with whom.

Before you describe your activity, think about the following questions:	Example
What is the one thing your program will do?	Host a Building Blitz day
Who will do this activity?	Students of Habitat for humanity
With whom will they do this activity?	Deland community and students
When/how often will they do this activity?	May 5, 2005
Where will they do this activity?	Various sites in the community
How will they do this activity?	Build 3 Homes

A complete description of an activity might look like the following:

The students of the Habitat for Humanity chapter will host a Building Blitz on May 5, in order to build three homes in the Deland community.

2. Define your Desired Result

Your desired result reflects the impact of your group's activity on your beneficiaries (or stakeholders). It should answer the question, "What happens because we did this activity?" Use only one result per activity. If your activity has multiple impacts, which most do, choose the most meaningful impact that will be measurable in the program year.

Before you describe your desired result, think about the following questions:	Example
What types of things do you think your group will report happening as a result of this activity?	3 homes built
What types of things do you think your beneficiaries (stakeholders) would report happening as a result of this activity?	Students will learn more about community residents
What are these things telling you?	Increase community relations

A complete result statement might look like the following:

Students will join together with community members to build three homes and, in the process, will learn more about each other.

3. Choose your Evaluation measure (methods/instruments)

Measures help you determine the impact of your services. The measures you list describe the means you will use to know if your activity has achieved the desired result. List the instrument, which is a specific tool for collecting and documenting information (e.g. a survey, a phone log, pre/post test), you will use when writing your measure for each objective.

Before you describe your choice of measures, think about the following questions:	Example
Examine your intended result. What is it that you want to see happen?	3 homes built, and the residents and students learn more about each other
What concrete indicators might you look at to determine if what you wanted to happen did actually happen?	The homes constructed and the residents and students communicating with each other
Which instrument would best capture what you are looking at?	Construction log of homes being built and survey of students and residents
What are the advantages and disadvantages of each measure?	Log: it is easy, may not capture all the stages Survey; easy to administer, people may not be able to read, people may not have time to complete the survey or want to complete the survey.
What resources do you have?	Experiences Habitat staff who have evaluated these types of events before.

A complete list of measures might look like the following:

A construction log will show that the three homes have been built. Additionally, the students and residents will complete a survey to gather information on their experience serving with each other.

4. Define your Standard of Success

The standard of success indicates who and what will change, and by how much, for each measure you choose. Be realistic! You are the best judge of how much change you can expect as a result of your activities.

Before you write about your Standard of Success, consider the following questions:	Example
How will these individuals show change or accomplishment?	3 homes built and students and residents communicating more with each other
What is the minimum number of people (number or percentage) affected by your activity?	12 residents of the three homes, 60 students and 20 residents who are volunteering their time
To what degree will they show this change or accomplishment?	80% of the students and residents will report increased communication and will report that they think the communication will continue after the day ends
Over what time period will they show this change or accomplishment?	Over the course of the Building Blitz day

A complete standard of success might look like the following:

Students and area residents will complete building three homes by the end of the Building Blitz day. Eighty percent of the students and residents will report increased communication and learning, which they think will have implications beyond the one day project.

5. Describe your Beneficiaries

The description of your beneficiaries is a reasonable reflection of the number of individuals you plan to reach with your activity. Include in your count those who are directly affected.

Before you describe your beneficiaries, think about the following questions:	Example
What types of people will benefit from your activity?	New homeowners, students, community residents
Of those benefiting , who will receive the most direct benefit?	For our purpose as a campus organization, the students
How many people or organizations directly benefit from your activity?	12 residents for the three homes, 60 students and 20 residents who are

	volunteering their time
What are some descriptions of your beneficiaries?	Students: freshman-seniors involved in service Residents/Homeowners: lived in the community on average for 28 years, low-income, intergenerational families living together.

A completed description of beneficiaries might look like the following:

Sixty students and 32 community residents will benefit from the enhanced communication between both groups. Twelve residents will directly benefit from the building of their new home.

A complete objective combines all of these components and looks like this:

Sixty students and 32 community residents will participate in a Habitat for Humanity Building Blitz day on May 5, 2005. The day will result in the students completing the construction of three homes and increased communication between the residents and students, with lasting implications. We will measure success by a log of completed homes and a survey of students and residents (80% of the students and residents will report that their involvement in the building blitz has increased the communication between both groups).

How to Write Objectives Worksheet

Why have an objective?

The importance of an objective is to measure the project's services, document outcomes, and demonstrate success.

What is an objective?

An objective is a precise measurable statement of what your program intends to achieve during a specific time period toward your desired outcome.

Steps to a Measurable Objective:

1. Describe your Activity
2. Define your Desired Result
3. Choose your Evaluation Measure (methods/instruments)
4. Define your Standard of Success
5. Describe your Beneficiaries

1) Describe your Activity

A good objective will contain an activity statement which describes who does what, when, where and with whom.

Before you describe your activity, think about the following questions:	Your Answers
What is the one thing your program will do?	
Who will do this activity?	
With whom will they do this activity?	
When/how often will they do this activity?	
Where will they do this activity?	
How will they do this activity?	

A complete description of an activity:

2) Define your Desired Result

Your desired result reflects the impact of your group's activity on your beneficiaries (or stakeholders). It should answer the question, "What happens because we did this activity?" Use

only one result per activity. If your activity has multiple impacts, which most do, choose the most meaningful impact that will be measurable in the program year.

Before you describe your desired result, think about the following questions:	Your Answers
What types of things do you think your group will report happening as a result of this activity?	
What types of things do you think your beneficiaries (stakeholders) would report happening as a result of this activity?	
What are these things telling you?	

A complete result statement:

3) Choose your Evaluation measure (methods/instruments)

Measures help you determine the impact of your services. The measures you list describe the means you will use to know if your activity has achieved the desired result. List the instrument, which is a specific tool for collecting and documenting information (e.g. a survey, a phone log, pre/post test), you will use when writing your measure for each objective.

Before you describe your choice of measures, think about the following questions:	Your Answers
Examine your intended result. What is it that you want to see happen?	
What concrete indicators might you look at to determine if what you wanted to happen did actually happen?	
Which instrument would best capture what you are looking at?	
What are the advantages and disadvantages of each measure?	
What resources do you have?	

A complete list of measures:

4) Define your Standard of Success

The standard of success indicates who and what will change, and by how much, for each measure you choose. Be realistic! You are the best judge of how much change you can expect as a result of your activities.

Before you write about your Standard of Success, consider the following questions:	Your Answers
How will these individuals show change or accomplishment?	
What is the minimum number of people (number or percentage) affected by your activity?	
To what degree will they show this change or accomplishment?	
Over what time period will they show this change or accomplishment?	

A complete standard of success:

5) Describe your Beneficiaries

The description of your beneficiaries is a reasonable reflection of the number of individuals you plan to reach with your activity. Include in your count those who are directly affected.

Before you describe your beneficiaries, think about the following questions:	Your Answers
What types of people will benefit from your activity?	
Of those benefiting , who will receive the most direct benefit?	
How many people or organizations directly benefit from your activity?	
What are some descriptions of your beneficiaries?	

A completed description of beneficiaries:

6) A complete objective combines all of these components:
