

Criteria for Goals & Objectives

These tips were developed by Sandy Cooper, North Carolina State Librarian. They were based in part on the work of others as noted below. They are posted here to aid library staff in North Carolina as they write goals and objectives, in particular for grants funded by the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant program managed by the State Library of North Carolina.

Use these two checklists to evaluate the goals and objectives you write.

Goals Checklist

1. Does it describe an ideal condition or state that the library believes is important in fulfilling its roles and mission?
2. Is it a declarative sentence?
3. Is it free of library jargon?
4. Is it short, concise, and easily understood?
5. Is it stated in terms of what the public will receive?
6. Does it provide a framework for objectives for the next three -- five years?

Objectives Checklist

1. Does it relate to a goal?
2. Does it indicate a date by which the objective will be reached?
3. Does it focus on an end result (what and when) rather than a method to achieve the end (how)?
4. Does it relate to a single result?
5. Is it measurable (how will you know if you have reached it)?
6. Is it clearly written?

Is It An Objective Yet?

Planning is aided by the establishment of goals and objectives. While some consensus about the meaning of these terms exists, it is not universal. For purposes of this checklist, goals are understood as the ends toward which a group or agency is striving and are expressed in broad, non— measurable statements. Objectives are statements of specific programs of action to be taken or measurable results to be achieved within a specified period of time which, if accomplished, move the group or agency closer to the goal.

Requirements for Objectives *	Example of Objective Development
<p>1. The purpose of objectives is to allow evaluation of movement toward a goal. Every objective must relate to a goal.</p>	<p>1. Goal: Library users will receive quality reference and information service.</p> <p>Objective: The library will buy materials people need to answer reference questions, train library staff to give better service, and borrow via interlibrary loan those materials the library doesn't own.</p>
<p>2. An objective should state a date by which it will be accomplished.</p>	<p>2. By 1985, the library will buy materials people need to answer reference questions, train library staff to give better service, and borrow via interlibrary loan those materials the library doesn't own</p>
<p>3. The objective should focus on an end result. An objective should specify <u>what</u> and <u>when</u> and not discuss <u>why</u> and <u>how</u>. The <u>why</u> should be obvious from the related goal statement. The <u>how</u> should be developed separately as the strategy which will be employed. When the objective focuses on the what and not on the how, planners can evaluate various strategies for the accomplishment of the objective.</p>	<p>3. By 1985, library users will receive increased answers to their reference questions and the library will have access to materials not owned by the library.</p>
<p>4. An objective should specify a single result to be accomplished.</p>	<p>4. By 1985, library users will receive increased answers to their reference questions.</p> <p>By 1985, library users will have access to material not immediately available.</p>

<p>5. An objective should be stated in terms of an outcome which can be measured or a program to be accomplished. There should be a clear answer possible to the questions “To what degree did we do it?” (measurable outcome) or “Did we do it?” (program accomplishment).</p>	<p>5. By 1986, users will find information they seek in subject materials with an immediate fill rate of 65%</p>
<p>6. To ensure wide understanding, objectives should be written clearly and simply.</p>	<p>6. By 1986, 80% of users will receive information requested but not immediately available within 10 days</p>
<p>*Adapted from Jane Robbins-Carter, “State of Wyoming, Library Effectiveness Measurement Kit,” September, 1976; Vernon E. Palmour, et. al., <u>A Planning Process for Public Libraries</u>, (Chicago, American Library Association, 1980); and Eleanor Jo Rodger, Fairfax County Public Library, unpublished handout at planning workshop.</p>	

Why Make An Objective Measurable?

It's a lot of trouble to make an objective measurable. Making an objective measurable means you must have something to measure it against -- a benchmark, a baseline.

For example, let's say you want more people to use your library. It's tempting to write this objective:

To increase the use of the library.

To make it measurable you have to know:

- * the current use of the library
- * what use you want to increase or will any use do
- * what increase is reasonable to expect and work toward
- * how you will measure that increased use

That's hard work!!

But.....

Making objectives measurable is the ONLY way to have a plan that is truly useful to you. A measurable objective will:

- * tell you when you have accomplished your objective
- * tell you if the objectives was worth the time, effort, and money used to reach it
- * allow realistic and regular revision of the plan as objectives are actually reached or declared unreachable
- * help prioritize your budget decisions because you will be able to calculate exactly what it will cost to implement an objective
- * discipline your thinking and teach you to ask the right questions