



Texas Agricultural Extension Service

A Guide for Developing Goals/Objectives

In this guidesheet are principles and elements of program goals and objectives and how to formulate long-range and annual goals in the program development processes of planning and evaluation.

Goal setting helps you become productive. In establishing goals, you clarify what results are needed from Extension programming and carry out those things that will achieve the desired result.

Clearly written goal statements are required in the *Long-Range Extension Program (LREP)* and *County Program Plan* (plan of work) as necessary components of good educational practice. A concise goal statement is a statement of purpose, not only for carrying out the plan but for interpreting the plan's meaning to others.

Dictionary definitions¹ treat goal and objective as synonymous terms, both as statements of an intent/purpose or a desired end result.

Common adult education usage tends to narrow these to certain time frames as "long-range goal" and "annual objective." TAEX guidelines distinguish these terms as "long-range objective" and "annual goal."²

Numerous sources are available to help in formulating goal statements, including *Extension*

Program Guides in areas related to statewide initiatives, reports about previous programs, and the expressed needs of clientele.

Use guidelines in this publication for formulating program goals and objectives.

WRITE GOAL STATEMENTS AS COMPLETE SENTENCES.

Goal statements identify three elements:

1. the target audience or intended participants (*the subject*);
2. the desired behavior (what participants are expected to do - *an action verb*); and
3. the subject matter content of the intended learning (*the object*).

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¹GOAL: the end toward which effort is directed: aim; ambition, an object of desire or intent. OBJECTIVE: something toward which effort is directed; goal; use, a particular service or end. - *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, pp. 493 and 791.

²Marshall, M.G. *Program Development*, p. 61.

FORMULATE THE GOAL STATEMENT IN RELATION TO AN INTENDED RESULT.

A goal should be a description of the desired clientele behavior upon completion of the program. Goals should also be at appropriate levels of intended program results. As the educator, you will want the educational program to produce and measure the highest possible level of results that can be obtained from the program.

These may be presented either as phases of the adoption process³ or as levels in the chain of program events, which are expected types of results.

For example (in adoption process terminology), if the intended audience is aware of a problem but has not yet learned or evaluated what solutions could be applied, the goal should be aimed at either an awareness or trial stage, and not at adoption or usage of new information/skills.

In another example, notice how the same goal could be expressed in various ways to reflect varying levels of desired results [See illustration on next page, using the Levels of Evidence Model⁴], whether they are inputs, activities, participation, reaction, learning change, practice change or end result.

Goals at levels 1-2 **INPUTS, ACTIVITIES** (in the model) address only the things that Extension educators are doing.

In reality, statements for levels 1-2 are not intended program results — they're "process goals" or the actions an agency or educator will do to work on a goal. These simply state what inputs go into the educational program, instead of what outcomes are expected.

The example goal at level 2 might be written more appropriately at level 5, in terms of what the targeted clientele will gain from the program (instead of what the Extension agent will do). It then becomes a program guide as well as a measure. For example:

(LEVEL 2) Conduct leadership shortcourse to train adult volunteers in 4-H leadership.

(LEVEL 5) New and experienced leaders will learn concepts relating to improving leadership skills, teaching 4-H projects and leading special interest clubs.

(LEVELS 1-2-3) To increase the county's 4-H membership.

(LEVELS 5-6) Fifty pre-teens become active 4-H members.

OR Extension Youth Development Committee conducts campaign to increase county 4-H membership.

Simply adding "Extension Youth Development Committee" in the last goal statement above changes it from levels 1-2 to levels 5-6, because it changes the implication of what the educator will do to what clientele will do.

SEPARATE RESULTS (ENDS) GOALS FROM PROCESS (MEANS) GOALS.

A program goal should be descriptive of desired end-conditions (results) that the program is trying to achieve, not the actions used to get there.

Beginning a goal/objective statement with "*To have...*" or "*To be able to ...*" (and omitting WHO will have or be able to) leaves the statement as only an activity toward a goal — it's not yet a clientele-oriented goal! It's still at levels 1-2.

³Lionberger, et al, 1982. The adoption theory presents the process in five phases: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, adoption.

⁴Bennett, 1976.

PROGRAM CHAIN OF EVENTS MODEL

LEVELS OF EVIDENCE

EXAMPLE GOALS/OBJECTIVES

7 END RESULTS (benefit/impact to participants from changes derived through program)	4-H Leaders and members will have effective leadership skills to use in community organizations and projects.
6 CHANGE IN PRACTICE (adoption or application of a change)	Older 4-H members in leadership project will teach six new non-traditional projects for members.
5 CHANGE IN LEARNING (skill, knowledge, attitude aspiration)	Youth will gain positive attitude about 4-H for older members and participate in opportunities for the older members.
4 REACTIONS (how people feel about program)	Youth who join 4-H will reenroll to explore new interests.
3 PEOPLE INVOLVEMENT (number and kinds of participants)	100 more youth will join 4-H in non-traditional projects.
2 ACTIVITIES (methods used to deliver the program)	Conduct shortcourse to train experienced and new leaders for opportunities in 4-H leadership.
1 INPUT (kinds of resources expended on program)	Use 20 percent FTE on 4-H IMPAC plan. Coordinate agricultural 4-H projects with CEA-AG.

Beginning a goal or objective statement with "To teach..." or "To provide an educational program for..." also restricts the goal to levels 1-2 where participant behavior change is not identified. For example:

MEANS/PROCESS - Teach beef producers how to establish pastures for winter grazing.

ENDS/RESULT - Beef cattle producers establish temporary pastures for winter grazing.

This means being clear on the difference between "means" and "ends." A goal/objective should focus on **ends**, the desired end condition, instead of on **means** or how it will be accomplished.

BE CLEAR, PRECISE, DEFINITE.

A precise goal statement enables you to plan a total program and to know when you've achieved

the result. It shows the purpose of the program by defining the particular level of behavior on the part of identified participants that will constitute achievement. Careful choice of wording, clarity and simplicity are essential. For example:

VAGUE: Individuals use family resources better.

BETTER: Young couples apply management principles in using their financial resources.

Specific goals direct action more reliably than vague or general goals.

MAKE THE GOAL/OBJECTIVE MEASURABLE.

The type of behavior change the program will address and maximum level of measurement are set when the goal is written.

Design the evaluation around what the goal is about. Don't try to measure *attitudes* when your program addresses *knowledge* gain.

The Program Model (see illustration on page 3) is used here to illustrate that, in a "goal achievement" programming framework, the type and level of a goal clarifies (but also limits) the kinds of evidence that can show the desired program outcome.

See how the measurement strategy changes when the level of the goal changes:

**(LEVEL 2) Teach beef producers
how to establish pastures
for winter grazing.**

**(LEVEL 6) Beef cattle producers
establish temporary pastures
for winter grazing.**

When stated as ACTIVITIES (level 2), the only realistic measures of this process goal are whether the educator presented information to beef producers, and if so, how well.

At levels 3-4 PEOPLE INVOLVEMENT, REACTIONS, only the immediate outcomes of attendance and participant feelings about the program are suggested by the goal statement as being relevant.

Restated as CHANGE IN PRACTICE (level 6), it's possible to measure, among several alternatives, the number of producers who implemented the practice of establishing temporary pastures, the type of production enterprises they have (beef cattle or otherwise), the size and quality of pasture, and its usage.

Stronger evaluation information can be available if the annual goal is planned at levels 5-6 KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE, SKILL, ASPIRATION or PRACTICE CHANGE.

If you prefer, goal/objective statements may be quantified (e.g., number of beef cattle producers, percentage of land in temporary pastures) to serve as benchmarks in an evaluation. If used, the quantity must be meaningful and attainable.

BE REALISTIC.

Write the goal in terms of what can be addressed within the program period of one to four years. Don't dream up fancy words or idealistic phrases that just sound good. A goal is a guide to action, the standard by which the program results can be judged.

Focusing on selected aspects of the problem or identifying particular client groups for intensive effort can greatly increase the potential for the program to have visible results.

The best way to find out what is realistic is to study thoroughly the present situation — find out what IS — and compare it with a similar situation in another county/setting, or what research literature shows is possible — what CAN BE. Then it's up to you to develop the program that will produce those results.

Use these guidelines:

1. Write long-range goal/objectives at levels 6-7. These broad, comprehensive results and practice changes tend to need a multi-year effort.
2. Write annual goals at levels 5-6. Specific, shorter term and focused goals will be the most appropriate.
3. Certain teaching objectives for an educational activity might be appropriately expressed at levels 3-4, where immediate evaluation is helpful to the educator.

WRITE ANNUAL GOALS AS INCREMENTS OF LONG-RANGE GOALS/OBJECTIVES.

Long-range program objectives are included in the *Long-Range Extension Program (LREP)*, which covers a four-year period. The *County Program Plan* (plan of work) is written for only one calendar year. Thus in TAEX written plans, the annual goal can be expected to represent only a step toward achievement of a long-range goal.

The following examples illustrate how narrowing of long-range goals/objectives can be done. Any of the following approaches could be used, but in this narrowing process, be sure to maintain a clear linkage between the annual (short-term) and the long-range goal.

**Example
GOAL/OBJECTIVE:**

Rural and urban Texans increase water conservation practices in household and agricultural operations and in municipal uses.

■ **Narrow the targeted audience:**

Consider all the potential audiences that may be involved in this program. Select one or a few of these for a focused effort during the year.

Texas farmers adopt irrigation technologies that conserve water.

Texas ranchers use weed-brush control and proper grazing practices that will use precipitation better.

Homeowners practice effective water management in their lawn care.

■ **Narrow the scope of time:**

The goal can specify the time the program and its application will occur. Some programs are handled best during a particular season or in a short period of time.

Farm residents measure retention in ponds/tanks from runoffs during the rainy season--April and May.

Southern homeowners plant hardy native materials in landscapes during winter months.

■ **Narrow to a stage in the learning process:**

The five stages of the adoption process [awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption] will help in defining an appropriate stage.

Homemakers become aware of techniques to conserve household water and treat rural water for household use.

Rural homemakers evaluate alternatives for disposal of household waste water.

Homemakers adopt recommended practices related to recycling water.

■ **Narrow to one problem among many:**

This means separating the issue-program into its various components and formulating a specific goal for each component. The following is only one example, to illustrate.

**WATER IN AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS
Farmers, ranchers and livestock feeders reduce water quality impacts of their agricultural operations.**

**WATER USE FOR LAWN/YARD CARE
City-town users reduce rate of per capita water consumption for horticultural and domestic purposes.**

**HOUSEHOLD WATER MANAGEMENT
Rural residents improve supplies of drinking water and treat household wastewater properly.**

**MUNICIPAL WATER USAGE
Municipalities, utility districts and farm operators improve management of wastes, effluents and sewage sludges for beneficial uses on agricultural lands.**

Each of these components can become a separate programming effort, guided by its precise goal (intended result). Parts of the components may complement programming of other components in the long-range and annual plans.

■ **Narrow the expected behavior change:**

Determine whether knowledge, manual skills, attitudes, practices or some combination of these is the area toward which the program should be directed. Research studies should provide information about what kind of change is important and what kind must precede other changes.

Homemakers gain knowledge of effective watersaving measures in the laundry, bathroom and kitchen.

Homeowners learn how to install water conserving toilets and shower heads.

Homeowners install and use lawn watering meters/gauges.

Homeowners keep records of water usage over various seasons to gain effective reduction in water bills.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

Attention to these points makes the goal/objective understandable to yourself and others. For program accountability and interpretation, the purpose must be clear. Precision and clarity are essential.

Attention to these points makes the goal/objective measurable. For IMPAC and other major programs, you will want to measure levels of knowledge, skill, attitude or practice change for the target audience. Specific indicators will tell you what difference was made in their lives, avoiding measure of just whether some Extension activity was conducted, how many people participated, or their reactions to the experience.

A well stated goal can increase the likelihood that evaluation will measure the extent to which the stated goal/objective itself is achieved.

BENEFITS OF GOAL SETTING

Goal setting makes you look to the future, forecasting what the problems, needs and resources will be. You must imagine and estimate what the situation can be after the program intervention.

Goal setting helps you to take an objective look at time, needs, problems, and your resources.

Goal setting helps to set standards against which you can check progress. It sets a level that helps you to evaluate performance; it provides a benchmark for later comparison.

Goal setting leads to a commitment for action, a feeling of being a part of the team when people are involved with the educator in determining what the program should achieve. When program committee members and potential participants understand and agree on the goals/objectives, and set responsibility for action, they are led toward commitment for action.

And when achieved, the goal setting process provides satisfaction to those involved in it, building even greater interest in future programming.

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