

Goals and Objectives

Establish Clear Goals and Objectives

Almost all grant application guidelines require that you state the goals and/or objectives of the proposed program or project that needs funding. It usually doesn't take a lot of time to draft an overall goal and several accompanying objectives. And though you may adjust the goals and objectives as you further develop the grant request, it is helpful to think through what you're trying to achieve, and how you intend to go about it. A proposal that clearly states a project's goals and objectives has created the groundwork for a compelling grant request.

The first step is to understand what distinguishes goals from objectives.

Goals are Visionary

Goals are the long-term vision for your project or program. They are your motivation, the part of your world view that applies to the subject area of your grant proposal. Goals define what will occur for the people you serve if the program is successful. You may have one, or several, goals.

Goals often directly reflect the size of the budget. A \$10 million request, for example, can afford an ambitious goal, such as:

To affect a dynamic, fundamental reform of mathematics and science education that results in improved achievement for all K-12 students in our state.

In fact, this particular project and the size of the budget are large enough that there may be several goals. However, very few grant requests require more than one goal.

Consider this same basic project, but scaled down to benefit only one school district, and with a more modest budget request of \$250,000. This goal might read:

To improve test scores for all students in the areas of mathematics and science education in the North County School District via a fundamental reform in teaching methods and curricula.

As you can see, goals are visionary, but must be potentially achievable within the context of the grant request. Tying the goals to the size of the budget helps to balance the vision with reality.

You can also think of goals as performance targets. Performance targets embrace change and often focus on the people who are being served by the project. If the grant application guidelines don't mention goals, but rather require that you articulate performance targets, just ask yourself, "How will this project change society?" Your answer should generate a performance target that will provide the grantmaker with the information required.

For example, restating the goal for the statewide K-12 project as a performance target could read:

To prepare K-12 students to excel in the areas of mathematics and science via fundamental reform of both curriculum and teaching method in schools throughout the state.

Notice how the performance target focuses on how the students will be affected, and that this project will fundamentally reform teaching methodology.

Whether the application guidelines require goals or performance targets the next step is to identify specific objectives to accompany each.

Objectives are Measurable

While goals are visionary, objectives are achievable and measurable within the scope of the proposed work.

When you're writing an objective, start with "To," followed by a verb and then give a short explanation of what you're trying to accomplish. If possible, add the time it will take to achieve the objective. Try to be realistic when establishing objectives for the grant request because the success of your project is often judged by referring to the stated objectives.

Objectives tend to get unwieldy. For example, this objective is clearly stated, and it's easy to tell what is going to be accomplished and when, but the scope of this objective is too broad:

To create, in cooperation with five local arts organizations, a traveling Inland Sea exhibit with accompanying curriculum for grades K-12 by fall 2017.

I would break it into several smaller objectives, such as:

To establish a coalition of up to five regional arts organizations to collaborate on developing an Inland Sea traveling exhibit by March 2017.

To develop a set of teachers guides (K-12) for the Inland Sea Exhibit by fall 2017.

An easy way to determine if your objective is too broad is to develop a set of tasks to accompany each objective. If this list of tasks goes on and on you need to narrow down your objective.

Here's a checklist that will help you write clear objectives:

- Always specify a result, not an activity.
- Describe just one result you want to accomplish.
- Tell when the result is to be accomplished.
- Emphasize what will be done and when, but don't tell why or how it will be done.
- Clearly relate each objective to one or more of the goals.
- Make sure the objectives are specific, measurable, and verifiable.
- Allow for flexibility on the part of those implementing the objective.

Once you've developed the goals and objectives, you will find that you refer to them many times as you continue to draft the grant proposal.