

Goals vs. Objectives

Goals are broad, brief statements of intent that provide focus or vision for planning. Goals can be warm and fuzzy. They can be broad and non-specific. Below is a typical program goal:

“Massachusetts’ children will have timely access to dental services”

Objectives are meant to be specific, realistic targets. Objectives are written in active tense and use strong verbs such as *plan, write, conduct, produce*, etc. rather than learn, understand, feel. Objectives help you focus planning on what matters. They will answer the following questions:

WHO is going to do WHAT, WHEN, WHY, and TO WHAT STANDARD?

Some of the most common errors in writing objectives include writing an objective like an activity, writing an objective like a vision, or writing too many objectives.

“SMART” Objectives

This refers to an acronym built around the five leading measures of a strong program project or plan. This acronym can be very helpful in writing objects that can be employed to evaluate the quality of programs.

- **Specific** – *What exactly are WE going to accomplish?* The accomplishment is stated in numbers, percentages, frequency, reach, scientific outcome, etc. The objective is clearly defined.
- **Measurable** – *Is it measurable & can WE measure it? How will WE know when WE have reached the objective?* This means that the objective can be measured and the measurement source is identified. If the objective cannot be measured, the question of funding non-measurable activities is discussed and considered relative to the size of the investment. All activities should be measurable at some level.
- **Achievable** – *Can WE get it done in the proposed timeframe/in this political climate/for this amount of money?* The objective or expectation of what will be accomplished must be realistic given the market conditions, time, resources allocated, etc.
- **Relevant** – *Why is this significant to our goal?* This means that the outcome or results of the program directly support the long range plan.
- **Time-bound** – *When will WE accomplish this objective?* This means stating clearly when the objective will be achieved.

To develop SMART Objectives that will help you reach your goal fill in the blanks below:

By ___/___/___, _____ will have _____.
[WHEN] [WHO/WHAT, include a measurable number] [HOW, WHY (remember to specify results)]

Adapted from http://www.marchofdimes.com/files/HI_SMART_objectives.pdf

Examples of 'SMART' Objectives from the New York State Oral Health Plan*

Objective 3.1 (Access)

**“By 2008, increase the number of dentists actively participating in the Medicaid program
from 2620 to 3600”**

Objective 3.5 (Access)

**“By 2008, increase the number of pregnant women in the Medicaid program who receive
comprehensive dental care from 13% to 26%”**

Objective 5.2 (Prevention)

**“By 2010, increase the proportion of 3rd grade children who have dental sealants to at
least 50%, and reduce the proportion of children with dental caries experience and
untreated caries to no more than 42% and 20% respectively”**

Objective 6.3 (Workforce)

**“By 2020, increase the under-represented minority enrollment in schools of dentistry and
dental hygiene to more closely reflect the population of New York”**

Objective 10.4 (Surveillance)

**“By 2006, develop a system to assess the distribution of the dental workforce and the
characteristics of dental practitioners”**

***Source: http://www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/dental/docs/oral_health_plan.pdf**