Defining Terms

Healthy People 2020

Before beginning work on setting priorities, it's a good idea to develop a common understanding of terms. People often use the terms *vision, goals, objectives, strategy, baseline*, and *target* differently.

Vision

Examples:

■ Create a society of healthy, caring adults.

■ Ensure all children have access to health care.

■ Create a community free from substance abuse.

Why is a plan being established?
(Broad and lofty statement of general purpose to guide planning around a health issue)

Tips

■ To begin crafting a vision, ask "How would things look if the issue was perfectly addressed?"

■ Consider drafting guiding principles to support your vision statement.

■ Use the vision to guide choices in the planning process and to communicate priorities.

■ State what you want, not how you plan to get there.

Goals

Examples:

■ Increase regular exercise among older adults.

■ Provide all community members with opportunities to safely participate in physical activity every day.

■ Eliminate secondhand smoke in public places.

What do you want to happen?
(Describes what the plan is trying to accomplish)

Tips

■ Ask yourself, "What would make this effort a success?"

■ Use goals to clarify what is important within a priority area, before drafting objectives.

■ Begin with action words such as *reduce, increase, eliminate, ensure, establish,* etc.

■ Focus on the end result of the coalition's work.

■ Consider whether the goal is community-wide or specific to a particular population (by age, race, gender, ability, etc.).

Objectives

Examples:

- By 2020, increase the use of safety belts and child restraints to at least 93 percent of motor vehicle occupants in Franklin County. (Baseline: 69 percent in 2007)
- By 2020, increase to at least 95 percent the proportion of people who have a specific source of ongoing primary care in Colorado. (Baseline: 84 percent of adults aged 18 years and over in 2004)
- By 2015, increase to 100 percent the proportion of health plans that offer treatment of nicotine addiction in Nebraska. (Potential data source: state managed care survey)

How will we know whether we reached the goal?

(Offers specific and measurable milestones, or targets; sets a deadline; narrows the goal by adding who, what, when, and where; clarifies by how much, how many, or how often)

Tips

- Consider a wide range of things that could indicate progress toward achieving health goals. Among these are individual behaviors, professional practices, service availability, community attitudes and intentions, insurance status, service enrollment, policy enactment, voluntary participation in employer programs, organizations that offer particular programs, policy compliance/enforcement findings, results of population screening or environmental testing, or the occurrence of events that suggest breakdowns in the public health system.
- Be specific. What is to be achieved? (What behavior or what outcome? Who is expected to change, by how much, and by when?)
- Be clear with numbers and percentages (i.e., know your denominator). There is a big difference in increasing enrollment by 20 percent, to 20 percent, or by 20 people.
- Make sure the objectives are relevant to the goal and vision. Do they show what the coalition hopes to accomplish and why? Are they challenging?

Strategy

Examples:

■ Increase tax on cigarettes by at least 75 cents.

■ Provide skills training to physicians on effective physical activity counseling.

■ Enforce laws prohibiting tobacco sales to minors.

How will the objective be reached?

(Specifies the type of activities that must be planned, by whom, and for whom)

Tips

■ Generate a list of strategies that gives various sectors a job to do (e.g., businesses, voluntary organizations, government, health care organizations, social services, faith communities, and citizens). Consider strategies that require sectors to work together.

■ Choose strategies that are achievable.

■ Ask whether the strategy addresses known risk factors and how it will reduce risk and/or increase health factors.

■ Provide known effective (efficacious and possible) interventions and strategies.

■ Seek individuals affected directly or indirectly by the health threat. Enlist their support in getting policy maker or partner support.

■ Consider evidence-based strategies from the Guide to Community Preventive Services.

Baseline and Target

Examples:

■ Baseline: 21.9 percent of adults performed muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days of the week in 2008.

■ Target: 24.1 percent of adults performing muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days of the week by 2020.

Objectives need a target and a baseline.

■ A **target** is the desired end point amount of change, reflected by a number or percentage.

■ A **baseline** is where the community is now, or the first data point in the tracking continuum.

■ Exceptions include policy or organizational objectives that can be measured simply by being established.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Source

Adapted from *Healthy People 2010 Toolkit: A Field Guide to Health Planning.* Developed by the Public Health Foundation, under contract with the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office of Public Health and Science, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (pp. 60–63).