Writing Objectives

These materials include definitions for different types of objectives and a detailed process for writing objectives. Please note, however, that not every agency uses these same definitions, nor does every agency follow the same process. If your organization uses different terminology or committee members prefer different terminology, then use those terms. *Moving to the Future* is intended to provide guidance. Use what is helpful in these materials and modify them to meet your needs.

Objectives are the pathways to achieving a goal. For example, if the health goal is "Improve access to nutrition services among children with special health care needs," then "advocate for payment of nutrition services by Medicaid" and "add a Registered Dietitian to the interdisciplinary CSHCN team" are ways to achieve the goal and could be objectives.

Much of the information included on pages 1–3 in this piece was covered in the "Writing Objectives—Overview" portion of the website. We are repeating the information and including new examples here because writing good objectives is so important to developing a useful and effective nutrition and physical activity plan. And initially it can be challenging to write good objectives.

An objective is a specific measurable intended result of your committee's work. Objectives need to relate logically to a goal, and specific measurements and time frames should always be included in objectives.

Moving to the Future describes and defines two different types (or levels) of objectives—outcome objectives and process objectives.

Outcome Objectives

Outcome is the term used in *Moving to the Future* to describe an objective that addresses health status, behaviors, environment, or policy. Generally it will take a community at least three years to achieve these objectives. Other common terms for such objectives are impact, behavioral, long-term, community-level, and intermediate. Here are three example outcome objectives:

- By 2015, the percentage of people in Friendly City eating at least 5 fruits and vegetables a day will increase from 22.6% to 33%. (Baseline data source: state health agency website, BRFSS 2005 data. Goal source: team members' choice.)

  > TIP: Objectives that include numbers should list the source of those numbers.

- By 2010, the five largest employers in Friendly City will be active participants in the 5ADay worksite program sponsored by the state health department. (The goal of five employers was chosen by task

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force members because these worksites together employ approximately 7,500 people.)

- By 2010, the Friendly City government will contribute at least $30,000 annually to a 5ADay position in the county health department. (The goal of $30,000 was chosen because 30K is estimated to be one-half the salary and benefits cost of a full-time staff person in 2010.)

Process Objectives

Process objectives provide the groundwork to implement interventions. They are linked to the outcome objectives and provide direction on how to achieve the outcome objectives. Sometimes the health environment or health policy objectives, included in the outcome objective definition, overlap with these process objectives. Generally it will take a community a year or two to achieve these objectives. Other common terms for these kinds of objectives include learning, short-term, structure, intervention, and annual. Here are three example process objectives:

- By July 1, 2008, St. Mary's Hospital, the city's largest employer, will sign up as a 5ADay worksite as part of the state health department's 5ADay program.
- By July 1, 2007, 5ADay program staff will educate Friendly City Council members and the city manager on the benefits of a 5ADay program.
- By December 2007, Friendly County will offer three community programs that provide behavioral and social support for increasing physical activity.

Detailed steps to achieving the process objectives would be listed in the strategies and action steps/activities described in the next chapter, "Develop a Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan."

Vagueness is a common error in writing objectives. This is a problem because it hinders evaluation. If the objective is not clear, then you don't know what to measure and you won't know if your interventions made a difference. Lack of clarity can also cause problems with the implementation phase. Two easy-to-remember acronyms have been created to help people write good objectives—SMART and RUMBA.

SMART objectives have these characteristics:
S—specific
M—measurable
A—achievable (or attainable)*
R—relevant (or resources or results-oriented)*
T—timeline (or time specific or time phased)*
*different resources use different words

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Objectives that RUMBA have these characteristics:
- R—relevant
- U—understandable
- M—measurable
- B—behavioral
- A—achievable

More background information on objectives can be found in the "Writing Objectives—Overview" portion on the *Moving to the Future* website. It includes frequently asked questions on objectives and provides more examples of well-written objectives.

Instructions for Using the Writing Objectives Worksheets

1. Decide who will be involved in approving the final objectives. These may be the same people who set priorities and wrote goals. Or, this may be a good time to involve more people.

> TIP: At this phase you are starting to think about interventions. Additional people may want to get involved.

2. Choose one person or a small group of people who will draft some objectives for the whole team to discuss, edit, and finalize. Writing objectives in a large group meeting is generally not a productive use of people's time.

3. Start by writing outcome objectives. Using the Writing Objectives Outcomes Worksheet on page 5 of this piece do the following:
   o Write your goal at the top of the page.
   o In box A, identify the health status improvements you expect if you were to achieve your goal. (This could be similar to or even identical to your goal.)
   o In box B, identify the behaviors you would expect in order to achieve the goal. (Again, this could be similar to or even identical to your goal.)
   o In box C, identify the changes or improvements in the environment you need in order to achieve the goal.
   o In box D, identify the policies you need in place in order to achieve the goal.
   o Rewrite the answers in boxes A, B, C, and D, making them SMART objectives or objectives that RUMBA.

   See the "Example Writing Objectives Worksheets" for additional guidance.

4. Consider using or referring to local, state, or national objectives that are already written and that meet the SMART or RUMBA criteria.

5. At this point you may want to reconvene your team and finalize your outcome objectives. Finalizing

> See the "Setting Priorities Possible Techniques" handout for ideas on working with your committee to facilitate decision making.

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may include rewording drafted objectives or choosing a few objectives to focus on.

6. To help make sure your objectives are well written and to help you prepare for evaluation, complete the evaluation worksheets for each outcome objective. Template worksheets are on pages 6–9 of this piece. The "Example Writing Objectives Worksheets" file has several completed evaluation worksheets.

7. Next, write the process objectives, which will lay the groundwork for interventions. Sometimes the health environment or health policy objectives overlap into this next level. Keep in mind that you will write strategies and action steps for each process objective, further detailing your work. Using the Writing Objectives Process Worksheet, on page 10 of this piece, below, do the following:
    o Write your goal in the space provided.
    o Write one of your team's outcome objectives in the box labeled as such.
    o Answer questions 1, 2, and 3.
    o Based on the answers to questions 1—3, you will have some intervention ideas.
    o Rewrite the intervention ideas, making them SMART objectives or objectives that RUMBA.

    There are example worksheets in the "Example Writing Objectives Worksheets" that may be helpful to you and your team.

8. Finalizing the process objectives may take some time because these objectives deal with interventions. Deciding on intervention strategies may involve more team members, which just takes more time. Be prepared to spend one or two team meetings finalizing these objectives.

9. As with the outcome objectives, there is an evaluation worksheet to complete for each process objective. See page 11 of this piece for a template.

10. Record your objectives on the "Priority, Goal, and Objectives Summary Sheet" in the "Determining Priorities and Writing Goals and Objectives—Summary Overview" portion on the *Moving to the Future* website.

11. Use the "Do We Have Program Gaps?" worksheet to make sure you have interventions in your community that address most if not all of the levels of influence in the social-ecological model. After completing the "Do We Have Program Gaps?" worksheet you may realize you need one or two other interventions in your community. Return to the Writing Objectives Process

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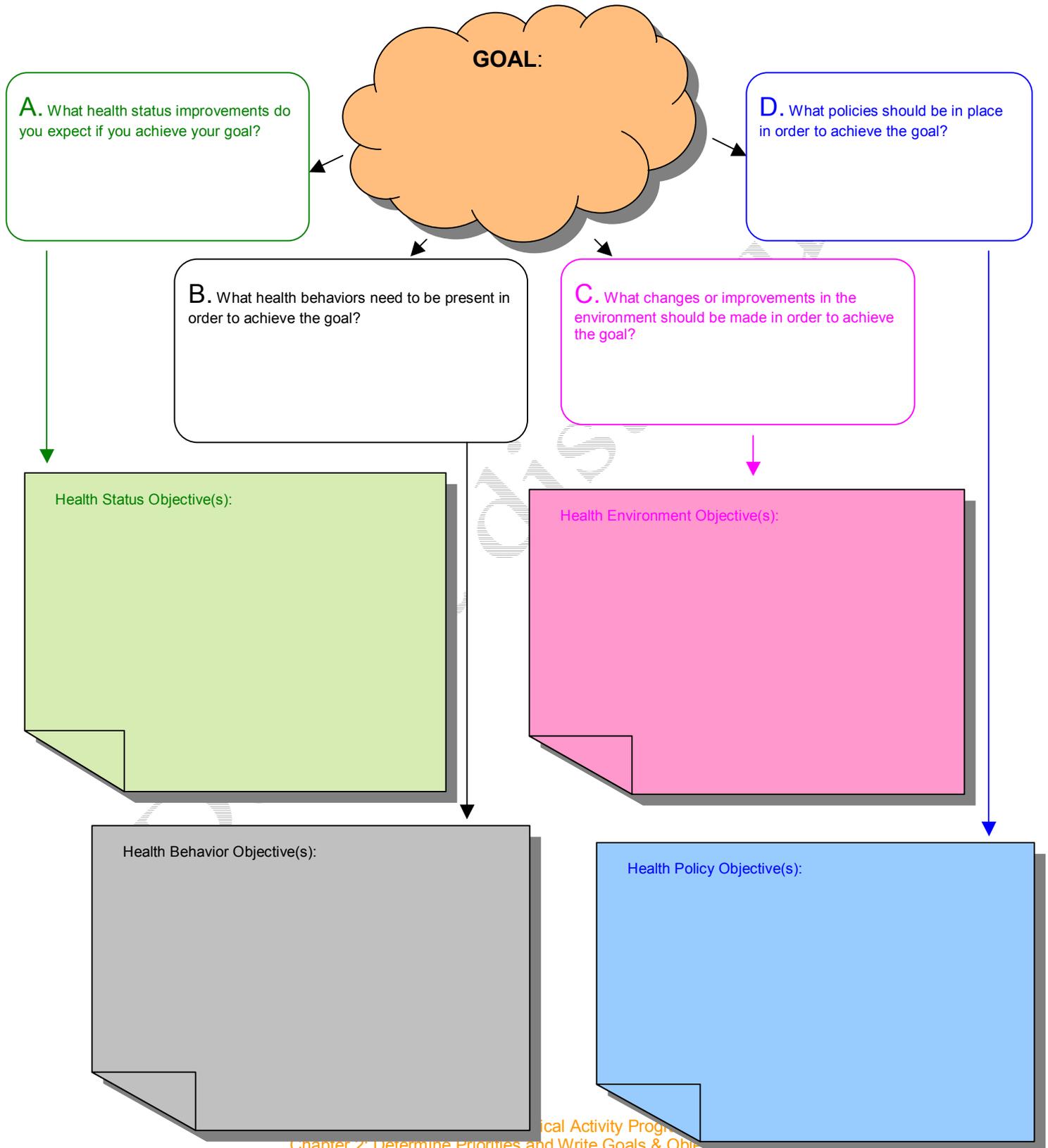Writing Objectives – Overview, Writing Objectives

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Worksheet on page 10 in this piece to think through additional intervention ideas and to translate those ideas into process objectives.

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Writing Objectives
Outcomes Worksheet
Reproduce this sheet as needed.

GOAL:

A. What health status improvements do you expect if you achieve your goal?

D. What policies should be in place in order to achieve the goal?

B. What health behaviors need to be present in order to achieve the goal?

C. What changes or improvements in the environment should be made in order to achieve the goal?

Health Status Objective(s):

Health Environment Objective(s):

Health Behavior Objective(s):

Health Policy Objective(s):

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Writing Objectives
Outcome Objective Evaluation Worksheet
Reproduce this sheet as needed.

Health Status Objective:

What specifically are you measuring?

How exactly will you measure this (administer a survey, collect health data, complete a checklist, observe change, etc.)?

Do you know if a survey or other measuring tool already exists?
  ☐ Yes. Describe:

  ☐ No. Describe possible solution:

When should you start collecting this data?

How long will it take to collect this data?

Do you have the capacity to do this monitoring and evaluation within your team?
  ☐ Yes, and the person responsible is:

  ☐ No, but

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Writing Objectives
Outcome Objective Evaluation Worksheet
Reproduce this sheet as needed.

Health Behavior Objective:

What specifically are you measuring?

How exactly will you measure this (administer a survey, collect health data, complete a checklist, observe change, etc.)?

Do you know if a survey or other measuring tool already exists?
    ☐ Yes. Describe:

    ☐ No. Describe possible solution:

When should you start collecting this data?

How long will it take to collect this data?

Do you have the capacity to do this monitoring and evaluation within your team?
    ☐ Yes, and the person responsible is:

    ☐ No, but

Writing Objectives
Outcome Objective Evaluation Worksheet
Reproduce this sheet as needed.

Health Environment Objective:

What specifically are you measuring?

How exactly will you measure this (administer a survey, collect health data, complete a checklist, observe change, etc.)?

Do you know if a survey or other measuring tool already exists?
☐ Yes. Describe:

☐ No. Describe possible solution:

When should you start collecting this data?

How long will it take to collect this data?

Do you have the capacity to do this monitoring and evaluation within your team?
☐ Yes, and the person responsible is:

☐ No, but

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Writing Objectives
Outcome Objective Evaluation Worksheet
Reproduce this sheet as needed.

Health Policy Objective:

What specifically are you measuring?

How exactly will you measure this (administer a survey, collect health data, complete a checklist, observe change, etc.)?

Do you know if a survey or other measuring tool already exists?
☐ Yes. Describe:

☐ No. Describe possible solution:

When should you start collecting this data?

How long will it take to collect this data?

Do you have the capacity to do this monitoring and evaluation within your team?
☐ Yes, and the person responsible is:

☐ No, but

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GOAL:

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Process Worksheet
Reproduce this sheet as needed.

Outcome Objective:

Questions and ideas to consider when developing the process objectives.

TIP: You can write objectives that address programs and services already available in your community.

1. What changes need to happen to help achieve this outcome objective and address the goal?

2. What does the research indicate as the best ways to address the outcome objective?

3. What findings from the community assessment address the ideas in your answers to questions 1 and 2, above?

Based on the answers to questions 1–3, what intervention ideas emerge? Translate those ideas into SMART objectives or objectives that RUMBA.

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Writing Objectives
Process Objective Evaluation Worksheet
Reproduce this sheet as needed.

Process Objective: (copy from your Process Worksheets)

What specifically are you measuring?

How exactly will you measure this (administer a survey, collect health data, complete a checklist, observe change, etc.)?

Do you know if a survey or other measuring tool already exists?
☐ Yes. Describe:

☐ No. Describe possible solution:

When should you start collecting this data?

How long will it take to collect this data?

Do you have the capacity to do this monitoring and evaluation within your team?
☐ Yes, and the person responsible is:

☐ No, but

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