



Steps for Writing Program Objectives

Time for agents to write educational program objectives looms. How about six rules for certain success to create specific, measurable, observable, and realistic objectives?

NUMBER 6

Delineate the target audience: swine producers? dairy farmers? government officials? women with young children? Avoid global references like “program participants.” Delineation is even better if you can identify a measurable criteria associated with the target audience:

- Dairy farmers *with calf mortality rates of 5%..*
- Men *with cholesterol over 220. . .*

NUMBER 5

Delineating the target audience with a measurable criterion helps you market the program and increase the likelihood of participants with the need for which your program was designed. When participants are the real target audience, you have a greater chance of better evaluation results! Make the target audience the subject of the sentence in which you state your objective.

NUMBER 4

Specify a performance that is an educational outcome you expect the target audience to achieve as a result of your program. It can include knowledge gain, attitude change, skill development, intention formation to do something in the future, or behavior change.

Express the performance with a verb followed by what is to be achieved:

- The target audience will recall solutions for reducing stress related to transporting animals. (*knowledge*)
- The target audience will believe within two months of the program that transportation of animals is a very serious source of stress for animals. (*attitude*)

NUMBER 3

Specify a quantitative criterion regarding the performance so you know when you have achieved success.

- The target audience will identify 6 solutions for reducing stress related to transporting animals and agree to employ 2 of them within the next three months. (*knowledge and intention*)

Think about this: Does your target audience need to employ all management changes you present in the program to achieve a reduction in the problem your program is designed to eliminate? Maybe yes; maybe no.

NUMBER 2

What is important to remember is that if you *don't* specify a criterion related to the performance, you are suggesting that the audience needs to know or employ everything you discussed.

NUMBER 1

Specify a time frame in which you want the target audience to achieve the performance. The time frame will depend on the particular performance: it could be weeks or months, and in some cases, when a significant amount of money is involved such as a ventilation system in a barn, years. A working assumption regarding knowledge gain is that it takes place at an extension event (note objective in *NUMBER 3*) but if the program is a learn-at-home or series of newsletters, the time frame may be weeks.

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The reference citation for this Tipsheet is: Kiernan, Nancy Ellen (2001). Steps for Writing Program Objectives: Tipsheet #10, University Park, PA: Penn State Cooperative Extension. Available at: <http://www.extension.psu.edu/evaluation/pdf/TS10.pdf>

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