

Data & Outcomes

During the **Preparation Phase**, the goals and objectives for the new program should be clearly established and incorporated into any service contracts. In addition, the process for collecting and reporting outcome measures should be determined. All of this should be discussed with the developer, who may have requirements or recommendations.

Basic Definitions

Both **goals and objectives** are what is intended to happen when a change or a new program is implemented:

- **Goals** are the general aim or purpose of the program and are typically quite broad (e.g., reduce re-entry to foster care).
- **Objectives** are measurable statements that describe the desired outcomes (e.g., reduce re-entry to foster care by 25% over the next three years).

Outcomes are what are actually achieved when the data from the change or program is examined.

Determining Objectives

First, clarify the objectives of the program and then decide what can be measured to determine whether the objectives are being met:

- What are the objectives of the program? These should be concrete and measureable such as “increase attendance and grade point average,” not “help students succeed in school.”
 - Develop process objectives (e.g., number of clients seen, number of clinicians trained, etc.) and client objectives (e.g., improvement on behavioral measures, placement changes, etc.).
 - Identify system-level objectives (e.g., decrease percentage of clients experiencing a placement change by 5% in the next year) and individual-level objectives (e.g., improve *Parenting Stress Index* scores between beginning and end of services).
- How will each objective be measured?
 - Develop a concise metric for how each one should be examined; for example:
Attendance = (# of school days in time period - # absences) / # of school days in time period.

Writing SMART Objectives

One common way to write objectives is to use the SMART framework: each objective should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic/Relevant, and Time bound. Sample questions for each component and an example are given below.

Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Realistic/ Relevant	Time-phased
<p>What exactly are we going to do, with or for whom?</p> <p>Example terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete • Decrease • Deliver • Develop • Improve • Increase • Obtain • Raise • Recruit • Refer • Train 	<p>Is it measurable and can we measure it?</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number • Average • Percentage (proportion) • Change over time 	<p>Can we get it done within the proposed timeframe?</p> <p>Can we address barriers or challenges that may arise?</p>	<p>Are there necessary staff and resources to attain the objective?</p> <p>Are goals achievable (reasonably high, not impossible)?</p> <p>Have other programs had similar results?</p> <p>Does the objective fit with overall goals?</p>	<p>When will we accomplish this objective?</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By the beginning/ end of ___ quarter or ___ year

Example: In 2015, 80% of clients enrolled in Triple P parenting classes will complete at least 80% of the sessions.

Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Realistic/ Relevant	Time-phased
Clients enrolled in Triple P parenting classes	80% of clients 80% of sessions	Yes	Yes/Yes	In 2015

How to Measure Outcomes

Existing/Required Measures

- Does the developer have outcome measures that are recommended or required?
 - Will the developer be collecting data on outcomes? How often and in what format?

- How will these measures be collected, who will compile the data?

Identifying Measures

- If the developer does not have established measures to examine outcomes, the measures will need to be identified:
 - Start by looking at the research on the program – how did these studies assess outcomes?
 - Talk to other sites implementing the program to see how they have assessed outcomes.
 - Look at measures developed for similar programs – could they be used as is or revised?

Initial Measurements

- What is the baseline performance? This may have been done as part of the Exploration Phase needs assessment and summarized in the *Identifying and Clarifying the Problem* form ([Appendix E4](#)), but if not, determine using data from prior to program initiation.
 - It is helpful to examine data over several years to see if normal fluctuations are present. For example, child welfare referrals tend to go up in the fall when schools re-open.
- Use baseline performance to determine what type of change is reasonable to expect.
 - Again, using several years of historical data can be helpful to determine this.
 - Work with the program developer to get an idea of what type of result might be reasonable, given the population and baseline data.

Collecting Data

Once the specific measures and indicators that will be used to measure outcomes have been determined, a method to collect this data will need to be established.

- When will be data be collected? At a minimum, data should be collected at entry and exit from services, but for longer programs, it may be useful to assess during services as well to see what progress is occurring.
- How will data be collected? Different methods will need to be collected for client reported data versus record abstraction data.
 - Consider work load issues:
 - Paper forms can be given to clients to complete when they check in for services, but will need to be scored by hand or scanned.
 - Computerized forms that self-score can be useful, but require access to computer equipment and availability of staff to assist with administration as needed.

- How will the collected data be stored?
 - Is there space in current electronic record systems to enter entire measures or scores?
 - If not, will a separate system (e.g., Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, Microsoft Access database) need to be developed?
- How will the provider staff be trained on administering and collecting the outcomes data?

Reporting Data

A standard format for reporting outcomes data will need to be developed. Many systems use a monthly or quarterly report from contractors as a way to monitor service provision. Outcomes data, both process and client, should be an integral part of such a report.

- How will outcomes data be reported by the service provider?
 - Monthly report, client level database, etc.
 - How frequently will outcomes be examined?

Other Considerations

- Is there a start-up period before full outcomes can be expected? For example, a therapist may need to see a few clients using a new treatment model before they are fully comfortable with the process and delivering optimal services.
 - Discuss with developer to determine what is typical
- What will the process be if outcomes objectives are not being met?
 - This should be specified in any contracts.
- Fidelity should be addressed during any examination of outcomes – Refer to the *Assessing Fidelity* tool ([Appendix F3](#)) for more information.
- Other outcomes to review:
 - Satisfaction with services – family, child, etc.
 - Does the agency/county have an existing tool that can be used?
 - Does the developer have a recommended satisfaction tool?
 - Engagement – dropout rates, etc.
 - How does it compare with similar programs?
 - If dropout is high, consider doing follow-up with those who drop out to determine reasons and address as necessary