

# Tier One: Program Definition

The purpose of the first tier is to:

- Assess community needs and assets;
- Review research literature; and
- Describe your program.

Ideally, these tasks will be performed prior to program implementation, however, it is never too late to do them. Before advancing to Tier Two, consider issues in each of the above areas.

We begin by assessing community needs and assets.

## Assess Community Needs and Assets

Before beginning a program, document the needs and assets of the community. This information specifies the type, depth, scope, and complexity of problems in the community (Rossi & Freeman, 1993), as well as community resources and strengths (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993).

If an assessment has recently been done, you're ahead of the game. You might not need to perform another one. Documenting the results of that assessment may be sufficient. However, we do recommend that assessments be performed periodically throughout the life of the program to ensure the program continues to address the changing needs and assets of the community.

On the other hand, if you have not yet conducted an assessment, CSREES makes many resources on this topic available to Extension professionals. If you'd like more information on how to do a needs and assets assessment, CYFERnet (<http://www.CYFERnet.org>) is a good place to begin. Further information on assessing community needs and assets, also called context evaluation, is available at both of the following sites:

<http://www.wkkf.org/Publications/evalhdbk/chapter4.htm>

<http://deal.unl.edu/TOP/needsassessment.html>

The Needs and Assets Assessment Worksheet found at the end of this tier will not cover everything that you may have documented in your assessment. It is intended to be used as a discussion guide for the evaluation team. Find a time when your team can meet for two or three hours to begin this discussion. You may identify needs for additional information or consideration. The purpose is to mobilize your evaluation team, establish common ground, and examine your assessment process.

Concerned that children from Brown Road Elementary School were deficient in reading skills, the principal, teachers, and parents approached their county Extension agent for assistance. The agent made several initial suggestions. First, she suggested that they work together to document the demographic characteristics of the larger community and the school (e.g., ethnic composition, SES, mobility rates, birth and divorce rates, primary occupations, percentage of population receiving welfare assistance, etc.). This was important in documenting the need for funding. Second, she suggested that the group determine the extent of reading difficulties in the school and ensure that the drop in scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills was not just a fluke. She thought they might compare report card grades to those of other schools in the city, ask teachers their opinions concerning reading difficulties of children at Brown Road Elementary, ask children about ease of reading, and talk to the school's reading specialist, as well as people from the university. Third, she encouraged them to explore needs of teens that might be satisfied by their involvement in a program, if they found one to be necessary.

The assessment revealed that children were experiencing reading difficulties. Teachers expressed concern that lessons were taking longer than expected and that they did not have the resources to allow for specialized time with certain children. In addition, it identified teens who were isolated and not connected to the school or community.

Once the team had documented that both children and teens could benefit from a program that involved teens as reading tutors, the Extension agent suggested that they examine community programs that might already exist to address reading difficulties and issues of isolation. She also asked them to consider what untapped community resources existed that might be used to solve the problem. The assessment identified community members as the greatest source of untapped resources. When asked, most people in the community said they would be willing to contribute time or money to improve the reading skills of children and to connect teens to the community. Some teens were willing to volunteer time and had the support of their parents.

In sum, the assessment supported the need for a program that addressed reading difficulties of children at Brown Road Elementary School and issues of isolation for teens in the community.

## Review Literature

Once the needs and assets of the community have been clarified, a review of the literature will allow your evaluation team to explore what programs and activities have been useful in communities similar to your own. It will equip you with the knowledge and information needed to convince funders and community members that the program has a good chance of producing the desired results.

A literature review provides the opportunity to identify attributes of successful programs, as well as those of ineffective programs. This information will allow you to capitalize on the strengths of other programs, while avoiding their weaknesses. This will increase the chances that your own program will be successful.

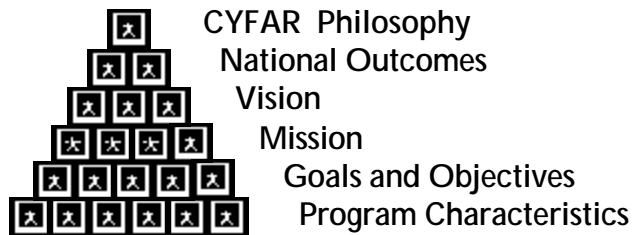
A literature review will also provide the foundation needed to develop a theory as to how the program will successfully meet the needs of the community. It is never advisable to invest in a program unless there is reason to believe that it will lead to the desired outcomes. The literature can provide the basis needed to make this claim.

If you've never done a literature review, you may wonder where to gather your information. Any university library will serve as a good resource. Many universities have their own electronic databases available for you to search. Or, universities may provide links to other searchable databases. Some of these databases can be accessed without going through a university Web site. For example, ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) is available at <http://www.accesseric.org>. The CYFERnet Web site (<http://www.CYFERnet.org>) is also a good place to go for pertinent literature.

The team turned to the CYFERnet for literature on reading programs. They were particularly interested in programs that included teens. The literature pointed to the benefits of teen tutoring programs for both young children and teens. The literature also suggested that parents play an important role in reading development. Because of this, parents were encouraged to read with their children each night.

# Describe Your Program

With the necessary background information in place, it is time to give your program an identity. A well defined program is essential to an effective evaluation. Below are six steps that can be used to define the identity of your program.



At the broadest level of definition, the philosophy of your program will be consistent with the philosophy of CYFAR. Next, discuss how your program addresses each of the National Outcomes. From there, describe the “thinking” behind the development of the program as it relates to program vision and mission. Finally, you’ll become more specific and discuss the goals and objectives of the program, then launch into its characteristics.

We begin defining your program by relating it to the philosophy of CYFAR.

## CYFAR Philosophy

It is important that your program reflect the basic attributes of effective programming identified in the CYFAR philosophy.

Your evaluation team should take time to discuss with program staff how your program reflects the CYFAR philosophy in each of the eight attributes.

- Exemplify a community-based, holistic approach
- Promote partnership with citizens
- Address complex conditions
- Solicit and value diversity
- Instill collaboration
- Combine a coherent spectrum of services
- Are accessible and respectful of people
- Bolster resiliency

Once you feel that your program reflects the CYFAR philosophy, you’ll be ready to move on to the next step of program identity formation — identifying primary and secondary National Outcome Areas.

## National Outcome Areas

The next step in program definition is to decide how it addresses each of the four National Outcome Areas and determine which are central to your program. Based upon an ecological approach to program development and delivery, projects will incorporate all of the National Outcome Areas into their programs. By integrating all four outcomes, programs will reflect the research base of CYFAR that emphasizes a community-based, holistic philosophy for the purpose of creating greater gains for children, youth and families.

Since it is difficult to implement a program that addresses all four outcomes equally, ecological projects will typically give more attention and resources to one or two of the National Outcome Areas. As you read the outcomes below, determine which are primary to your program and which are secondary (at least one should be designated as primary). This information can be documented in the Specifying National Outcome Areas Worksheet.

### National Outcome Areas

**Children:** Children (ages 0-11 years) will have their basic physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs met. Babies will be born healthy.

**Youth:** Youth (ages 12-18 years) will demonstrate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior necessary for fulfilling, contributing lives.

**Parents/Families:** Parents will take primary responsibility for meeting their children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs and provide moral guidance and direction. Families will promote positive, productive and contributing lives for all family members.

**Communities:** Communities will provide safe, secure environments for families with children.

Clarifying priorities relative to the National Outcome Areas will help focus thinking as you proceed with the next step of creating a vision.

The primary focus of the teen tutored reading program was on the Children and Youth National Outcome Areas.

The reading program directly addressed the Children Outcome Area in that it fostered the intellectual development of children. Also, by incorporating teens as tutors, social and emotional needs of children were met.

The program directly addressed the Youth Outcome Area in that as teens became more adept at tutoring, they obtained knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for fulfilling, contributing lives. The academic aspect of tutoring enhanced their knowledge of the English language, while the social aspect enhanced attitudes of self and perceptions of their ability to make a difference in the community.

The Parents/Families and Communities National Outcome Area were the secondary focus of the program.

The program addressed the Parents/Families Outcome Area in that the team met with parents each semester to emphasize the importance of parents for the academic success of children. At these meetings and at all parent-teacher conferences, parents were encouraged to read with children each night and to become actively involved in the intellectual development of their children.

The program addressed the Communities Outcome Area by involving community members. The team had been examining what types of incentives might be offered by local businesses to teens willing to donate time toward improving the literacy skills of young children.

## Vision

Vision will take the form of a global statement that expresses the ideal of the program. The vision needs to reflect community needs and assets, the CYFAR philosophy, and the National Outcomes.

### CYFAR Vision

American communities where children & youth lead positive, secure & happy young lives while developing skills, knowledge & competencies necessary for fulfilling, contributing lives;

All children & youth live in families & communities which promote their positive development.

The vision statement:

- communicates purpose and incorporates the present with the future.
- is expressed in words that everyone can understand and facilitates goal development.
- is long-term, meaningful, and appeals to a higher purpose.
- makes the program worth doing and keeps it on track (King, 1994).

For those in CSREES, "vision" evolves from the collaborative efforts of Extension professionals, community members, funders, evaluators, and program participants. The collaborative process makes it important for stakeholders to discuss why they want to implement the program and what they hope to accomplish. In the end, stakeholders will feel as though they "know" the program and its values.

If more information is needed on the process of creating a vision statement, there are web-based resources available. For example, go to <http://www.allianceonline.org/faqs/spfaq7.html> for a description of what's in a vision statement.

Below are possible questions\* to consider when creating “vision.” Your team can document the vision in the Vision Statement Worksheet at the end of Tier One.

**Q. When the program began, where did you hope it would be in five years?**

**A. We hope teen tutored reading sessions will expand to other academic areas so that children struggling in any class can receive help before that class becomes problematic. We hope all children needing help in any academic area will receive it and succeed in school. Furthermore, we hope that teens will receive academic and personal growth benefits from taking active roles of responsibility and that their chances of high school completion will increase.**

**Q. What is the purpose of the program? What problem does it address?**

**A. There are two primary purposes. First, the program aims to eliminate a multitude of academic problems that stem from reading difficulties for children at Brown Road Elementary School. Second, the program aims to provide opportunities for teens that will promote positive growth and development.**

**Q. What do you hope your program will offer over and above what other programs offer?**

**A. We hope that our program will target children before they fall behind in class. Other programs wait until it’s too late, leaving children frustrated from playing “catch-up” all the time. We also hope to provide teens with a unique school experience. The program is unusual in that it fosters personal growth as teens take on roles of responsibility. As personal growth blossoms, greater commitments to school and community are expected to develop. It is believed that they will grow to realize that adults recognize their worth and value their contributions.**

**Q. What is the vision?**

**A. All children in our school will possess the academic skills needed to succeed in school, hence, increasing their chances of high school graduation and living fulfilling, contributing lives. Teens will play an important role in the success of the community. The increased responsibility will lead to personal growth and increase their chances of graduating from high school.**

\* Questions adapted from King (1994).

## Mission

To attain the vision of the program, you will first need to create a mission for the program. The mission statement must be consistent with community needs and assets, the CYFAR philosophy, the National Outcomes, and the vision.

### CYFAR Mission

To marshal resources of the Land-grant and Cooperative Extension Systems to collaborate with other organizations to develop and deliver educational programs that equip limited resource families and youth who are at-risk for not meeting basic human needs, to lead positive, productive, contributing lives.

The mission identifies the program and participants (i.e., what the program will do and who it will serve).

The mission statement allows others to act consistently with the broader goals of the program.

The mission statement reflects the quality of a program's services.

It reflects the value of the program and the effective and efficient use of resources.

The mission statement reflects the services or activities of the program. It translates into the amount of time and resources that can be spent on one participant, while continuing to serve the needs of other participants (King, 1994).

A helpful Web site on what's in a mission statement is available at <http://www.allianceonline.org/faqs/spfaq6.html>

**Vision represents the end; mission represents the means to the end. The vision statement defines what you want your program to be and the mission statement defines what you'll do to get there. Good vision and mission statements will help keep you focused and on track (King, 1994).**

Below are possible questions\* to consider when creating "mission." The mission of your program can be documented in the Mission Statement Worksheet.

**Q. What services are offered by your program? Are they related to the needs and assets identified in the assessment?**

**A.** The assessment identified that reading problems at Brown Road Elementary School were a major concern of parents and teachers. A second concern involved teens at risk for school drop-out. Our project offers teen tutored reading sessions that provide targeted children with extra help. Furthermore, by incorporating teens, their bond with and commitment to the community will strengthen.

**Q. Who will be the recipient of these services?**

**A.** Any child in the school whose reading grades drop below a "B-" anytime during the school year (not limited to report card grades) will be targeted for services. For the pilot program, tutors will consist of teen volunteers. Afterwards, teens identified as at risk for drop-out will be recruited as tutors.

**Q. How will what you do achieve the vision?**

**A.** The extra help received during tutoring sessions will teach reading skills to children who are deficient in this area. Research literature shows that children who cannot read don't do well in school, and therefore, are at greater risk for later drop-out. School drop-out has been linked to greater difficulties in leading fulfilling, contributing lives as adults. If we can help children with academic difficulties early on, the chances of them completing high school should increase and so should their chances of living fulfilling lives. Similarly, as teens take roles of responsibility and develop a sense of positive self worth, their connection to school will increase. These attributes have been linked to school completion.

**Q. What is the mission?**

**A.** To offer teen tutored reading sessions to children who may be at risk for future academic failure if they are unable to master basic reading skills at an early age. Academic failure has been linked to school drop-out, which has been linked to fewer chances for productive, contributing lives. Similarly, by incorporating teens as tutors, their sense of responsibility will increase and make school more intrinsically rewarding. Teens have been found to continue school when they find it rewarding.

\* Questions adapted from King (1994).

## ☒☒☒☒☒ Goals and Objectives

So far, the steps of program definition have been rather general. This is about to change. To tighten program definition, you will specify the goals and objectives of your program.

### *Purpose of each...*

**Goals** serve the purpose of determining whether the vision and mission are being carried out effectively and as planned (King, 1994).

**Goals** are the criteria by which program success will be judged.

**Goals** specify what will happen as a result of the program.

**Objectives** state how it will be determined if goals have been achieved.

**Objectives** state who will change, by how much, and by what date as a result of the program.

**Objectives** are measurable and linked to the variables of interest (Rossi & Freeman, 1993).

### *How to state each...*

Clearly stated goals are a necessity. Clearly stated goals will reflect program priorities, assure important variables have been identified, and facilitate accurate measurement of program success. For more information on writing goals, go to [http://www.nnfr.org/eval/pareval/pareval\\_wrgoals.html](http://www.nnfr.org/eval/pareval/pareval_wrgoals.html)

Objectives can be stated in absolute or relative terms (Rossi & Freeman, 1993). Absolute objectives state that negative behavior will be eliminated from everyone or that desirable behavior will be present for everyone. Relative objectives state that negative behavior will be reduced by some proportion or that desirable behavior will be increased by some proportion.

To write useful, measurable objectives:

- use strong verbs;
- express only one aim and one result for each objective; and
- specify the estimated time of attainment (Rossi & Freeman, 1993).

Go to [http://www.nnfr.org/eval/pareval/pareval\\_wroobj.html](http://www.nnfr.org/eval/pareval/pareval_wroobj.html) for further guidance in writing objectives.

### *Incorporate literature review...*

Research based literature provides a good source of information on which to base goals and objectives. You can use the information you collected in your literature review. Another useful Web site on goals and objectives is available at <http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/miscpubs/eacwest/evalhbk.htm#IIIGoals>

## Application ...

At this time, your team will find it useful to document the goals and objectives of the program. These will be referred to periodically as we evaluate the process of program delivery and plan for the outcome and impact evaluations. Space has been provided for this activity in the Goals and Objectives Worksheet. This worksheet includes questions designed to facilitate discussion around the link between earlier activities in this tier and your program's goals and objectives.

### Poorly stated goal with accompanying objective:

**Goal:** To increase self-esteem in students.

**Objective:** Improve reading skills.

We have a few problems here. First, the goal is too vague and broad to be useful. Second, the objective has no apparent connection to the goal, unless it is ASSUMED that improved reading skills will lead to increased self-esteem. Even so, this is an inappropriate objective for that goal because the connection between the two is not clear and is not based on the literature. Furthermore, the objective fails to specify which students will change (any student? all students? the teens or the younger students?), to what extent they will change (improved compared to what?), and by what date they are expected to have made these changes (tomorrow? next week? next year?). Finally, an objective that relates to reading skills does not lend itself to a measurable indicator of self-esteem.

### Well stated goal with accompanying objective:

**Goal:** Significantly increase the literacy rates among children with reading difficulties at Brown Road Elementary School by implementing a teen tutored reading program.

**Objectives:** By the end of the 1996-1997 school year, all children who received tutoring will:

(a) maintain at least a "B-" average in reading; and

(b) score above the 75th percentile on the Woodcock-Johnson, Revised and the WYATT.

The goal is specific as to what it expects the program to accomplish (increase literacy rates).

The objectives are closely linked to the goal and specify who will change (children with reading difficulties), to what extent they will change ("B-" average in reading and scoring above the 75th percentile on assessment tests), and by what date they are expected to have made these changes (end of the '96-'97 school year). The objectives lead to measurable indicators of the goal — school grades and standardized test scores.

## Program Characteristics

The final step in defining the program is to describe its characteristics. Your evaluation team will discuss who your program intends to serve, what it is designed to do, and what the intended results of participation will include. At the very least, consider recruitment procedures, potential participant characteristics, services offered, expected outcomes, program personnel, and program surroundings. The Program Characteristics Worksheet includes questions that address each of these areas and can be used to facilitate your team's discussion.

One classroom, determined by need, was selected to serve as the "pilot." Teachers referred a student to the program when his or her reading grades dropped below a "B-" average. Once referred, the child met with a teen tutor for one half hour, three times per week. During these sessions, tutors worked with participants on specific reading lessons designed to promote literacy. Tutors were also encouraged to aid participants with their classwork and homework. The sessions were overseen by a teacher. Teachers alternated this position.

For the pilot program, eight teens had been trained as tutors. They were trained by a 4-H leader and received extra class credit for their time.

Once implementation problems were resolved, the program planned to expand to include all classrooms and to recruit and train more teens. Teens identified as at risk for drop-out were to be actively recruited. The literature showed that teens with excessive tardies and unexcused absences are at greater risk for drop-out; this is how "at risk" was defined.

Over the short-term, it was expected that grades of participants would continue to improve. Over the long-term, it was expected that the developing pattern of academic success would keep children engaged in school. Program participants were expected to be more likely to continue school than if they had not been in the program.

Both immediate and long-term improvements were expected in teens who tutored, as well. Teens were expected to experience an increase in school grades and to report an increased sense of responsibility. It was expected that these two outcomes, combined, would keep teens engaged in school and increase their chances of completion.