



Planning Your Project

Planning your project will help you to make your grant application as effective as possible, because it will enable you to map out and illustrate how the different parts of the project fit together. Planning will also help to make your project more effective: you will be able to think through all the aspects of what you are trying to do and how you will do it.

If your proposal receives funding from the Maine Community Foundation, you will be asked to provide a project progress report. Developing an evaluation method before the project begins allows you to collect information during the project itself and may show you how effectively your project is meeting its intended goals. When you have all your data in hand, it will be much easier for you to complete your project progress report and explain if, how, and why your project changed in nature.

In addition to helping you assess the results of your work, the project progress report also helps MaineCF to measure the impact of its grantmaking and identify issues and best practices that might be beneficial to other organizations in the future.

To help you develop an evaluation plan for your project, we have developed a series of questions to assist you in describing your project's **goals**, **objectives**, **strategies** and **evaluation methods**. Defining and understanding the relationship between and among these elements is the first step in creating a successful project. Following is a more detailed explanation.

Goals

A goal is a "big picture" statement that summarizes the project's purpose. The best question to ask when setting a goal is "What do we hope to accomplish in the long term?" Goals for a project are normally broad, ambitious, and related to your organization's mission. The timetable for an organization to achieve its long-term goals usually extends beyond the scope of an individual project.

Examples of goals

1. All Central High School students will be involved in some form of volunteer community service
2. All Maine high school graduates will go on to obtain a postsecondary degree
3. All residents of Bayside will be invested in the future of their neighborhood

Objectives

Objectives are *what* you hope to accomplish and *when* the anticipated change will occur as a result of your project. Objectives are measurable, tangible, time-specific and achievable in the time between the grant award and when the funding period ends, which for MaineCF grant programs is normally one year or less. When developing your objectives, ask yourself, “What will be different as a result of this project?”

Be sure there is an easy method to collect and analyze the data required to demonstrate your project’s impact and success. There can be multiple objectives for one goal. Objectives are sometimes referred to as outcomes.

Examples of objectives linked to goals

#	Goals	Objectives
1	All Central High School students will be involved in some form of volunteer community service.	50% of all graduating seniors will have completed at least 20 hours of community service prior to graduation.
2	All Maine high school graduates will go on to obtain a postsecondary degree.	80% of high school seniors involved in a mentoring program will be enrolled in a two- or four-year college or university six months after graduation.
3	All residents of Bayside will be personally invested in the future of their neighborhood.	40% of registered voters in Bayside will participate in a strategic planning workshop on economic and community development in their neighborhood.

Strategies

Strategies lay out in step-by-step detail the actions that staff, volunteers, and/or participants will take to reach the project's objectives. When forming strategies, ask yourself, "How are we going to execute the project?"

Examples of strategies linked to objectives

#	Objectives	Strategies
1	50% of all graduating seniors from Central High School will have completed at least 20 hours of volunteer community service prior to graduation.	Create and distribute to all high school seniors an inventory of all volunteer opportunities in the community.
2	80% of high school seniors involved in the mentoring program will enroll in classes at a two- or four-year college or university six months after graduation.	Assign all interested seniors to adult mentors who will support a student's academic and personal success. Mentor and student will meet weekly to discuss issues related to academics and career planning, including pursuit of postsecondary education.
3	40% of registered voters in Bayside will participate in day-long strategic planning workshop on economic and community development in neighborhood.	All residents will receive a written invitation by mail and follow up phone call from member of steering committee.

Evaluation Methods

As part of your project planning, you should develop a way to measure how effective your strategies have been in reaching the objectives set for the project. Ask yourself, “What tools will we use to collect the information we need to measure our success?”

Here are a few possible evaluation methods:

- Give a questionnaire to event participants asking them to rate various aspects of the event on a 1 to 5 scale and answer questions about what they liked and what you might change the next time you hold a similar event.
- Track the number of ongoing participants and new participants in your program.
- Gather information from teachers about behavior changes they’ve seen in students who participated in your program.

Examples of evaluation methods linked to strategies and objectives

#	Objectives	Strategies	Evaluation Method
1	50% of graduating seniors from Central High School will have completed at least 20 hours of community service prior to graduation.	Create and distribute to all high school seniors an inventory of all volunteer opportunities in the community.	Administer a questionnaire to all seniors prior to graduation asking if, where, and how often they volunteered in the community.
2	80% of high school seniors involved in the mentoring program will enroll in classes at a two- or four-year college or university six months after graduation.	Assign all interested seniors to adult mentor who will be committed to student’s academic and personal success. Mentor and student will meet weekly to discuss issues related to academics and career planning, including pursuit of postsecondary education.	Six months after graduation, mentors will determine what students are currently doing, including if they are engaged in college-level courses. Mentors will report that information to project coordinator.
3	40% of registered voters in Bayside will participate in a day-long strategic workshop on economic and community development in their neighborhood.	All residents will receive a written invitation by mail and follow-up phone call from member of steering committee.	Ask all participants to provide name and address when arriving at workshop. Compare list of participants with list of registered voters from Bayside neighborhood.