



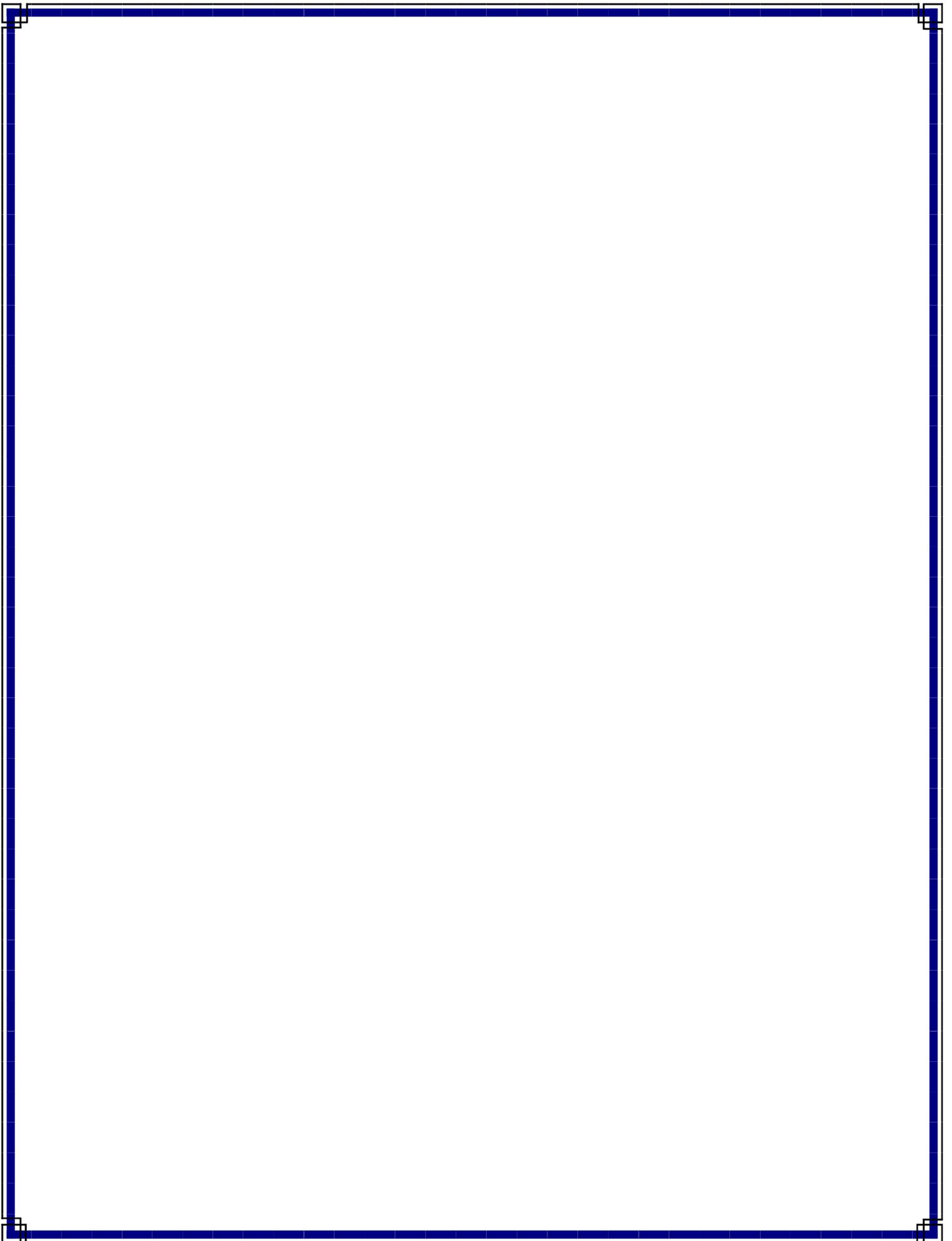
**National Association for State
Community Services Programs**

NASCSP TARGETING FIELD MANUAL

Setting and Reviewing Targets

**400 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 395, Washington, DC 20001
(202) 624-5866 • nascsp@nascsp.org
www.nascsp.org**

August 2008



∞ TABLE OF CONTENTS ∞

I – INTRODUCTION	1
Background	1
What are “Targets”?	2
Do Not be Confused by Slight Differences in Terminology.....	2
How Targeting Fits into Current Work Plans and Data Reports.....	3
Setting Realistic Targets	3
Targeting Can Be Useful; It Is More Than a Required Activity	4
II – MEASUREMENT (WHAT? WHEN? HOW?)	6
What to Measure?.....	6
Measuring Impacts—What Kinds of Indicators?.....	6
When to Measure?	8
How to Measure?	8
Building a Logic Model.....	8
III – THE TARGETING PROCESS	10
How Do You Set a Target?	10
Goals, Outcomes, Benchmarks, Indicators and Targets.....	10
Where Do NPIs Fit into the Targeting Process?	11
Why Do I Need All Those Indicators and Targets?	12
IV – WORDING YOUR INDICATORS CLEARLY	13
Examples.....	13
Language	14
Definitions.....	14
Units	14
Measurement of Indicators	15
Targets: The Bull’s Eye.....	15
V – TACTICS FOR SETTING TARGETS	16
Using an Established Trend Line	16
Identifying a Trend Line from Existing Data	17
Setting Targets by Using Expert Input.....	20
Mapping Program Steps as an Aid to Setting Targets	20
Other On-Paper Tools.....	25
“Borrowing” an Outcome Estimation from another Program.....	26
Internet Sources	27
Targets Specified by a Funding Source	27

VI – TARGETING IN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES..... 28

Dealing with the Impact of One-Time Events 28

Dealing with Wide Variations 29

Dealing with the Complexity of Anti-Poverty Programs 31

Targeting for Long-Range Goals..... 31

Targeting for Multi-Program Goals 33

VII – THE TARGETING CYCLE..... 35

Target Review: A Dynamic Process 37

Target Review: When Answers Are Difficult to Find 39

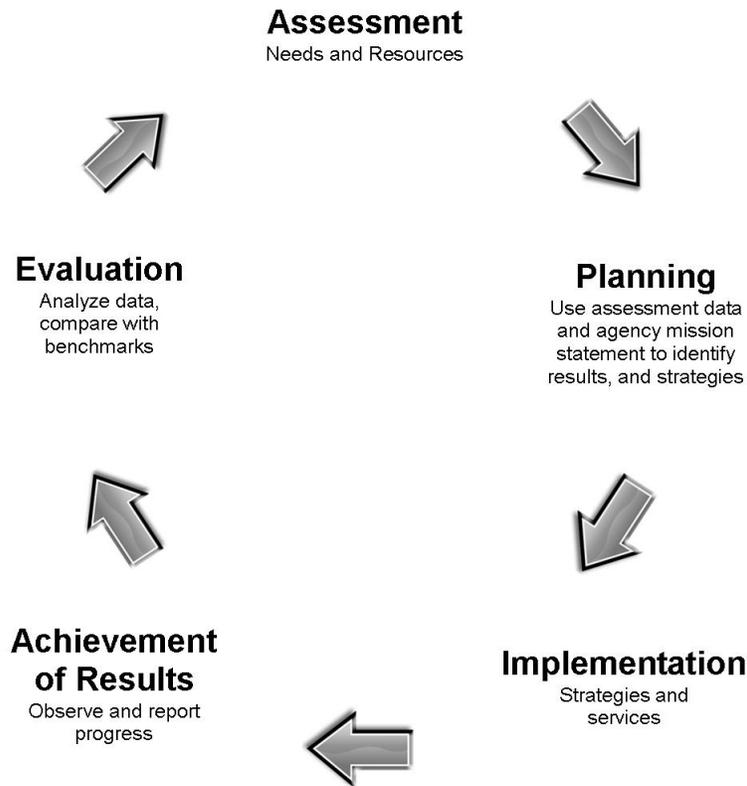
VIII – CONCLUSION 42

I – INTRODUCTION

Background

Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) is represented by the graphic cycle shown below. ROMA assumes that all agencies have a mission statement, conduct periodic community assessments, use assessment data and the mission statement to identify the results they expect to achieve, and have a planning process that enables them to select activities and strategies to achieve those results. Following implementation of the strategies they have selected, ROMA requires observation and reporting of results. Finally, analysis of the data regarding actual results, and comparison with planned results, allows agencies to assure quality and accountability.

The Results Oriented Management and Accountability Cycle



National Peer-To-Peer (NPtP) ROMA Training Program, "Planning for Results," Version 1.4

As part of identifying the expected results, agencies must be specific about them, in terms of measurable indicators of these results. The indicators include specific language about what change and the quantity of the identified results are expected. Establishing the quantity of results expected is called

"establishing targets," which is a part of the planning process in the ROMA Cycle.

What Are "Targets"?

To understand the concept of a "target," it helps to see its relationship to familiar program monitoring concepts: goals, activities, indicators, and targets.

- What do we want to achieve? A **goal**. Goals are usually stated in broad, general terms. In the Community Action/CSBG network we have Six National Goals that shape all of our discussions about the results we achieve.
- How will we try to reach the goal? With **activities and strategies (services, advocacy, partnerships, etc)**. These are also known as "outputs."
- How will we know if we reached the goal? By looking at **indicators** of the **results** (often called the "**outcomes**") of our activities.
- How large of an effect will these results have on our community? We need to quantify the result we hope that an indicator will show us. That figure will answer questions such as: How much? How many? What percent of those needing or receiving service are expected to achieve the result? The answer we aim for is a **target**.

In other words: ***A target is a number representing the projected scope of the outcome that you predict you can achieve.*** Another way to think of a target is that it is a commitment of projected performance based on your knowledge of past performance.

Do Not be Confused by Slight Differences in Terminology

The GPRA legislation (Government Performance and Results Act of 1993) refers to "performance plans" and "performance goals," which both relate to the concept of targeting. Based upon the legislation, agencies establish performance plans including:

- Performance goals to define the level of performance to be achieved by a program activity, expressed in an objective, quantifiable, and measurable form;
- Performance indicators to be used in measuring or assessing the relevant outputs, service levels, and outcomes of each program activity;
- A basis for comparing actual program results with the established performance goals; and
- The means to be used to verify and validate measured values.

In the CSBG/IS Survey and the guide that accompanies it, NASCSP uses "performance target," "target," and "expected to achieve" to describe the same concept.

How Targeting Fits into Current Work Plans and Data Reports

Targets are a part of most existing state work plans. Most plans require agencies to identify how many (individuals, families, communities, partners, and etc.) will be served. This is a service target. ROMA also asks agencies to project how many of those served will achieve results. This is a performance target. This information is already found in many state work plans.

As agencies implement services and document results, they gather data on both the quantity actually served and achieved results. This information is also already available in planning and reporting processes across the country.

However, a more focused look at how agencies establish targets and how they use the information/data they collect regarding how well they achieved the targets they projected, will increase the quality of management and accountability across our network.

Targets put the results that indicators measure into the perspective of your resources and capabilities. Targets tie national, state, or agency indicators to the scale and timing of the specific program you run in a specified time period. A target says: ***We can achieve the results our indicator measures for x (people, households, neighborhoods, etc) in y months. The "x" and "y" are targets.***

Setting Realistic Targets

A target demonstrates your expectation about your capacity to deliver results. The process for establishing targets also tests your ability to be realistic about your expected achievements.

A negative characteristic of targets is that managers may set and report on targets that are not challenging. This is the concept that once you set a number of expected results, you either "pass or fail" in achieving the set number. Consequently, managers may be tempted to set low targets so they are sure on "passing" and reaching the established number. What is wrong with low targets? They can suggest to the public and funders that an organization is not aiming high or is unable to evaluate its own performance in a realistic way. Easy targets also fail to provide much information about what will work to gain continual program improvement with experience. Finally, if you achieve a much higher number of results than predicted, funders may assume that you do not need all of the resources you put into the project in the current year.

Targets can connect this year's results to your future management decisions if targets are well designed and provide feedback on what works and what does not.

Targeting Can Be Useful; It Is More Than a Required Activity

While targeting is a requirement, you should not view it only as an imposition on your time, made by external forces or distant authorities. Setting targets, then considering the meaning of any differences between targets and actual achievements, and, finally, making any changes you determine to be needed, turns the result measurement process into a management tool to develop stronger approaches.

The task of choosing indicators and setting targets gives you an opportunity to reflect on your work. This is something that line workers and supervisors often do informally, but with heavy pressures on everyone's time, it is sometimes difficult for your whole team to reflect formally on your activities and results. The targeting "requirement" can initiate an ongoing process of regular, thoughtful review of the expectations your agency team shares for its programs.

The Adult Education targeting process case study below is an example.

A CASE STUDY FROM ADULT EDUCATION:
Targeting encourages reflection; reflection produces change

When the local school district's GED test preparation program suffered a large budget cut, the Mount Auburn Community Action Council (MACAC) stepped in to fill the gap. In a short time, 100 students had enrolled in MACAC's new GED test preparation course. The course promised ungraded, highly interactive training with feedback on problem areas and strengths as well as one-on-one teaching. Based on information found on the internet from an adult education clearinghouse, the MACAC staff set a target of 40 graduates by the end of the first year.

At the end of the first year, only 13 students had completed the GED test preparation course and taken the test. In addition, a substantial number had dropped out of the preparation course. The program director talked to the director of the former GED test preparation course, who was not surprised by the low completion rate. He said, "It's just the way adult education is." Nevertheless, MACAC's GED teachers were not sure they were achieving the best results possible. The program director and the teaching staff agreed to analyze the gap between their target and their Year One outcome.

As a first step, the staff identified students who had dropped out or who had missed a large number of classes. Those students were sent a letter, saying that the MACAC staff was looking for ways to better meet their students' needs. The letter asked for the student's help in the form of a brief interview over the telephone. A few days later, a MACAC staff member called each student.

The interview approach was highly successful. Not only did the telephone conversations provide insights to the staff, the students seemed to appreciate being asked for their input. It became clear from the interviews that a lack of motivation was not a problem. To the contrary, most students were anxious to take the GED test, but they became increasingly frustrated over time by their slow rate of progress. In addition, the classes were scheduled in a way that made attendance burdensome for the many students who had night-shift jobs.

Reflecting on the results of the survey, the teaching staff questioned their policy of providing extensive feedback to students but not grades. The theory had been that being graded might intimidate the students. The teachers realized that a lack of grades meant that students did not see an objective indicator of any increments of progress was made, and might not perceive the progress that the teaching staff could see.

With these insights, the program director and the teaching staff decided on changes that promised to make a significant difference for their students. The hours were changed slightly. They established several intermediate "certificates of accomplishment" as tangible evidence of a student's progress. In addition, a procedure was established for evaluating each student after enrollment and then creating an individual plan that included an estimated time to graduation. The program director and teaching staff thought that the first year target was still appropriate for the following year, and they expected that their program modifications would make the target reachable.

II – MEASUREMENT (WHAT? WHEN? HOW?)

What to Measure?

When setting targets, it is important to choose indicators carefully. When considering which indicators you want to track and set targets for, you should ask: Which kinds of indicators will show us whether we are having the effect that we want to have? Which kinds of indicators also will give us information that we will want to review and discuss farther down the road?

Here is a menu of different kinds of indicators:

- ◇ Process indicators – provide evidence of whether the program unfolded according to plan. For example:
 - A curriculum was developed, tested, and modified.
 - It then was approved by all members of the program advisory committee and implemented during the contract year.
 - Pre and post testing was administered to participants.
 - Attendance at class was documented and analyzed.
 - A survey of thoughts and opinions about the classes was completed by all participants.
- ◇ Service delivery indicators – provide straightforward information about what a program is providing. *How much? How many? How often?* These are the kinds of questions we can answer with service delivery indicators. For example:
 - The number of classes that were held, and
 - The number of people who attended each one.
- ◇ Customer satisfaction indicators – provide information about whether a program met its customers' expectations. For example:
 - The survey of thoughts and opinions about the class indicated that the class met customers' expectations.
- ◇ Impact indicators – provide evidence of whether the program had the impact (achieved outcomes or results) it was intended to have. For example:
 - Post-test scores show that customers achieved the established level of performance expected for success.

Measuring Impacts—What Kinds of Indicators?

NPIs are "results oriented" and as such are all what we just called **impact** indicators. The other indicators are useful management tools to help you understand what resources are needed to achieve the benchmarks along the way to the end result. They are also useful accountability tools to help measure

progress toward goals. If you are choosing a strategy for measuring your results, a variety of indicators may be helpful. Keep in mind that process indicators, service delivery indicators, and customer satisfaction indicators do not usually provide evidence of results.

However, consider the information in the examples below.

Can Service Units Indicate a Result?

A **service indicator** can be a **proxy** for an **impact indicator**. Examples:

- The number of individuals (senior citizens, individuals with disabilities, or other vulnerable populations) receiving Meals on Wheels.
- The number of families who receive emergency shelter or who receive funds to avert eviction.

OR

A **service indicator** might be a **poor impact indicator**. Examples:

- The number of people who used your computer lab last month to search for a job. (They may not be searching effectively.)
- Attendance at parent education classes. (The parents who listen to a parent educator may misunderstand part of what they are hearing, or their attention may wander.)

Can Processes Indicate an Impact?

If we want the parents of children in our Head Start program to take an active role in their child's transition to kindergarten:

A **process indicator** might be a **good impact indicator**. Example:

- The director succeeds in having a one-to-one discussion with every child's parents about their role in the transition and beyond (once the child starts kindergarten). The documentation of the parent's response to the discussion could be a meaningful indicator of an impact on the parent's knowledge, attitudes and/or behaviors.

OR

A **process indicator** might be a **poor impact indicator**. Example:

- The director prepares written information on options and home activities and then sends the information home with every single child. These staff activities are documented but no impact on the parent is documented.

Can Customer Satisfaction Indicate an Impact?

A **customer satisfaction indicator** might be a **good impact indicator**. Example:

- Evaluations filled out by participants in a support group for parents of seriously ill children, that state the value for the participants of being a part of the group in terms of reported change in knowledge, attitude or behavior.

OR

A **customer satisfaction indicator** might be a **poor impact indicator**. Example:

- Evaluations filled out by parents who attended a series of parent education classes that state their level of enjoyment of the class. (A parent might enjoy the classes without adopting any of the parent educator's intended changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, or beliefs.)

When to Measure?

Be sure your plans include measurement times. You will identify the time or times that will show you whether you are having the impact you want to have.

Of course your **impact indicators** and targets will be for your program's final goal. But as stated previously, in some circumstances it is helpful to have "interim" indicators and targets that will keep your program moving forward as projected. These interim measures may be of process or service indicators.

For example, a program to help low-income renters become first-time home buyers might begin with a series of classes in home-buying basics. You probably will record attendance. It can be a useful indicator. Excellent attendance will help you estimate the number of renters who may reach the goal of buying a home. On the other hand, if attendance is poor, it is an early warning that the rest of the program may not go well.

How to Measure?

For each type of indicator you select, you must also identify a measurement tool that you will use. We have mentioned some "tools," such as pre- and post- tests, surveys, and attendance records. Some others include pay records (to verify employment), rent receipts (to verify stable housing), completed budgets and paid utility bills. There are many other tools.

You should also identify the process for measurement: Who will be responsible for data collection? What is the process for measurement? Who will conduct the analysis of data?

Building a Logic Model

Using all of the information we have discussed so far, your agency can create a Logic Model to help simplify the presentation of your expected outcomes and show the interconnectedness of all the resources and activities that will go into the achievement of the outcomes.

The following example of a Logic Model shows where you would enter the agency mission statement, the identified need, the activity provided by the agency, the broad outcome, the projected indicator (including the target number), the actual indicator (after measurement), the measurement tool, and the measurement process.

Sample Logic Model: from the *National ROMA Peer to Peer Training Project*

Organization: **Program:** • Family • Agency • Community

<u>Problem Statement</u>	<u>Service or Activity (Output)</u>	<u>Outcome</u>	<u>Outcome Indicator</u>	<u>Actual Results</u>	<u>Measurement Tool</u>	<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Frequency of Data Collection and Reporting</u>
Identified Problem, Need, Situation	Identify the # of clients served or the # of units offered. Identify the timeframe for the project.	General statement of results expected	<u>Projected #</u> and % of clients who <u>will</u> achieve each outcome. Identify the timeframe for the outcome.	<u>Actual #</u> and % of clients who <u>achieved</u> each outcome.		Include Collection Procedure, Personnel Responsible	
(1) Planning	(2) Intervention	(3) Benefit	(4) Benefit	(5) Benefit	(6) Accountability	(7) Accountability	(8) Accountability
<p>Organization of Program Mission:</p>							

National Peer-To-Peer (NPtP) ROMA Training Program, "ROMA for Community Action Agencies and CSBG Eligible Entities," Version 4.1.

III – THE TARGETING PROCESS

How Do You Set a Target?

It is important for you to include the concept of setting targets as a part of the ROMA process, which begins with your community needs assessment, followed by a consensus among your stakeholders on your agency's overall goals.

Using one goal as an example, let us review the steps that take you from a broad goal to establishing targets.

Goals, Outcomes, Benchmarks, Indicators and Targets

Your **goal** is likely to be broad. Example: "Our low-income participants will become more self-sufficient." You will recognize this broad goal as Goal One of the Six National Goals.

For your goal, you may have **sub-goals**, such as employment, employment supports, and economic enhancement and utilization. These are subsections found in the National Indicators of Community Action Performance (also known as the National Performance Indicators, or NPIs) under Goal One.

For each goal or sub-goal, you will have one or more **outcomes** that you hope to achieve. By using **indicators**, you will state the outcomes in a measurable way. Some indicators are suggested in the NPIs, but you may identify other indicators that more closely match the outcomes you hope to achieve.

For example, your customers are enrolling in a vocational skills-building program, and there are training courses to prepare for several vocations available. Your proposed outcome is that individuals will complete the career preparation training course most appropriate for each and secure employment in that field. You know that enrollees might drop out if they do not like the work they are being trained to do. Therefore, your program seeks to help each customer find a career that is a good fit with his/her strengths and interests.

During the program planning phase, you and your staff will identify **benchmarks**, or intermediate outcomes, that will help you to measure progress toward this ultimate outcome. The benchmarks will be written in "outcome language" so you can measure each of them – giving you measurable evidence of how much progress you have made toward the outcome. In other words, the benchmarks will be written as outcome **indicators**, which will help you answer the question: *Did you achieve the outcomes to address your goal? (These benchmarks, taken together, may form a "scale.")*

For example, on the basis of your assumptions, you might decide that the program **activities** should include vocational testing and counseling. One benchmark for this activity might be: *“unemployed customers completed vocational testing and were counseled within two months of enrolling in the vocational skills-building program.”* This is stated as an indicator of an intermediate result.

Now you want to state how many customers you project will achieve this benchmark, based on the most accurate estimation you can make. If your **indicator** is the completion of vocational testing and counseling, a **target** is 95 out of 100, or *95% of vocational skills-building program participants will complete vocational testing and be counseled within two months of enrolling in the program.*

Note: the target for the number of customers who finally secure employment in their field will be a smaller number and percent than the number who reach this first benchmark.

At the end of a program cycle, you will look at the results of each of a program’s benchmarks and at whether you hit or missed your targets (and by how much). Then you will have insight into how accurate your assumptions were during the program planning phase.

Where Do NPIs Fit into the Targeting Process?

The unique aspect of NPIs is that they are a collection of indicators that are used by all Community Action Agencies across the country, and as such they provide a standard set of data that can be aggregated at the national level. The NPIs identify ways of discussing different kinds of success at reaching broad goals, such as ROMA Goal 1: Low-income people become more self-sufficient. In addition, many of the NPIs measure progress toward a sub-goal which itself is quite broad. For example, NPI 1.1 A—unemployed customers who obtained a job.

Your agency may have several areas of activity that are designed to help customers achieve one or more outcomes under the sub-goal “obtain a job.” Activities might include vocational testing and counseling; a choice of several vocational training courses; classes in “soft skills” such as how to develop good work habits and good workplace interpersonal skills; résumé-writing workshops; and job-hunting supports. For each of these activities, you have an expected outcome. You may have one or more indicators (or benchmarks) for the activities; for example: the number of customers who achieve a certain score on a test, or the percent of customers who complete a certain program step. For each indicator, you should set a target for the number and percent of customers who will achieve each indicator.

It is only when your customers progress to the National Indicator level that they will be reported on the NPIs. Other program indicators/benchmarks will be used by your agency, and possibly by your state, to show progress toward the broad goal.

Why Do I Need All Those Indicators and Targets?

In multiple-component programs, you need a multi-part picture of results. Without establishing measurements (indicators) of the different activities or investments in each program component, it would be difficult to evaluate how different elements of the program are working.

Predicting your success at reaching a broad goal is the same as “setting a target,” which means making a commitment to aim for the target. You commit to having a well thought-out program design and invest in the activities that will enable you to reach the desired level of achievement.

Your success at reaching a broad goal can be better managed when you specify what program steps’ outcomes will move participants toward the goal.

IV – WORDING YOUR INDICATORS CLEARLY

The following model for describing an indicator can help with clear wording:

The target number expected to achieve the result	The percent this target represents (of the total population receiving a service)	The result or benchmark expected to be achieved	The target date
--	--	---	-----------------

The first two columns represent the “target” in the indicator. *You may not always provide information regarding the percent, as in the second example below.*

Examples

14 out of 21 (66%) students enrolled in the ESOL program will graduate by the end of this calendar year.			
TARGET	RESULT		TARGET DATE
14 out of 21 (66%) students	will graduate from the ESOL program	by	the end of this calendar year

34 units of affordable elderly housing will be developed by July of 2009.			
TARGET	RESULT		TARGET DATE
34 units of affordable elderly housing	will be developed	by	July of 2009

12 agencies (100%) will implement a statewide ROMA targeting system by FY 2008.			
TARGET	RESULT		TARGET DATE
12 agencies (100%)	will implement a statewide ROMA targeting system	by	FY 2008

Using this model, create an indicator statement for your specific project. Remember that the **indicator will include a target number** expected to achieve the outcome. Your indicator will be clearer, if whenever feasible you include the percent of the total service population.

Check your indicator statement for clarity in several areas that can cloud communication—use of clear language, specific definitions, and units of measurement. Examples of good practices in these areas appear below.

Language

Indicators should be described in the simplest possible English. Specialized terms should be used only when there is no less-technical equivalent.

An Unclear Statement

20% of recent "financial literacy" graduates will decrease the **incidence of dissavings**.

A Clear Statement

20% of recent "financial literacy" graduates will **save more money than they borrow**.

Definitions

When there are multiple ways to interpret a word, its intended meaning in the indicator should be clearly defined. Sometimes it is not convenient to fit a clarification into the description itself. In that case, a definition should accompany the indicator wherever it is stated in writing.

An Unclear Statement

50% of skills training participants will receive a **certificate or diploma**.

A Clear Statement

50% of skills training participants receive a **certificate or diploma**.
***A certificate or diploma** is defined as either a two-year Associate's degree from an accredited college or university, or a credential recognized by a state or national industry association. It is not a certificate awarded by the individual training provider for completion of a program.

Units

Because indicators include targets which deal with measurement, the indicator should state clearly which units of measurement are being used.

An Unclear Statement

There will be a 50% **increase in the amount of emergency food supplies** distributed to elders in the Brown Bag program.

A Clear Statement

There will be a 50% **increase in the number of pounds of emergency food** distributed to elders in the Brown Bag program.

Another Clear Statement

There will be a 50% **increase in the number of elders** who receive emergency food through the Brown Bag program.

Measurement of Indicators

In our previous discussion of measurement, we talked about the “what, when, and how” of measurement. When there are several possible ways to measure an outcome, the indicator should be clear about how the target will be measured. Clarification either can be part of the description itself or it can accompany the description (as in the Logic Model, where this information will appear in the last three columns).

An Unclear Statement

40% of **low-income residents** will increase their **employment income**.

A Clear Statement

40% of the **individuals whose income is at or below 125%** of the HHS Federal Poverty Guideline will report an increase in **total wages** in dollars plus the value of employee **benefits**.

Targets: The Bull’s Eye

Frequently an outcome will be framed in terms that raise the question “How much is enough?” or “How good is good enough?” In these cases, there needs to be a clear statement regarding the prospective standard of success—in other words, a **target**.

A Broad Goal, Not a Target

Participants in the IDA program **increase their savings**.

A Clear Target

Participants in the IDA program will increase their savings **by a minimum of \$500**.

V – TACTICS FOR SETTING TARGETS

How can you estimate the results of activities that have not yet occurred? Does it seem like a hopeless challenge?

It can be a challenge, but it is not hopeless. Here are some tactics that may help.

Using an Established Trend Line

When you need to set a target for a program's outcome that your agency has provided for a while, you may have good data on the results readily available among the pieces of information you have been routinely collecting. If so, you will have a good picture of what the indicator shows over time. You will be able to see what trends the outcome data have been following.

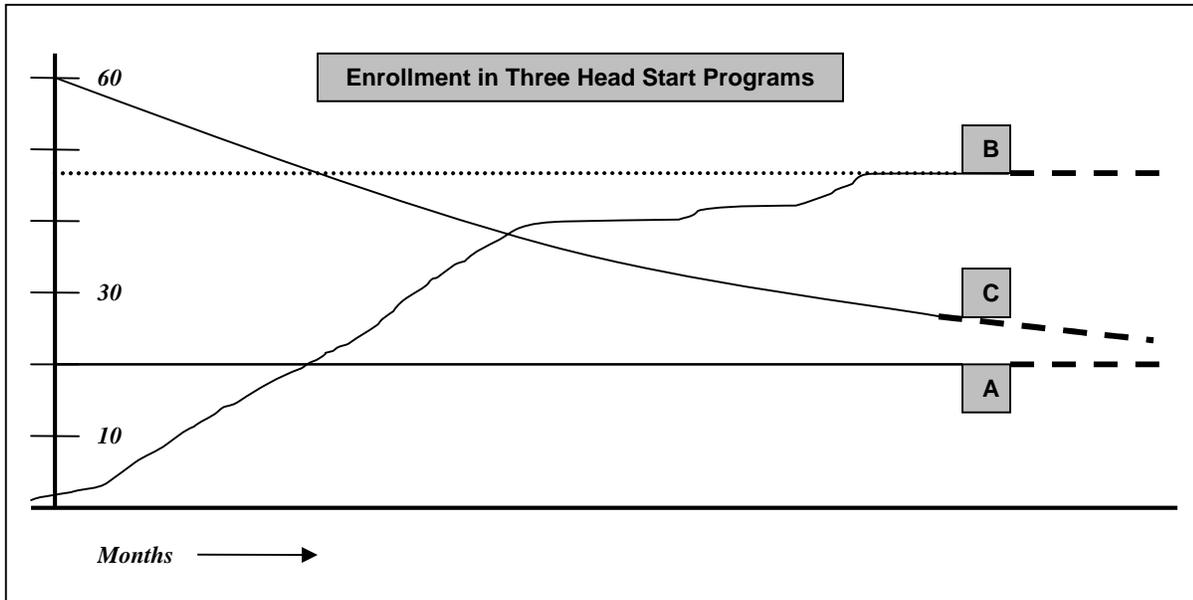
For example, you may want to set a target for the number of children who will be enrolled in Head Start during the upcoming fiscal year—a process indicator. If past history shows little or no change over time in enrollment, the simplest way to set a target is to extend the “trend line” in a straight line; **this is a “straight-line projection.”** The straight-line projection technique also can work well when there is a steady trend in one direction.

The graph below shows three straight-line projection possibilities:

- 1) The enrollment in Head Start program “A” has followed a consistent trend for many months. A straight-line projection suggests that enrollment will continue to be about 20 children per month.
- 2) Head Start program “B” has shown a gradual upward trend to its maximum enrollment of 48. A straight-line projection would suggest that enrollment is likely to continue at 48.
- 3) Head Start program “C” has experienced a steady downward trend to its current enrollment of 25. If the factors responsible for the loss in enrollment are not addressed or cannot be offset, a straight-line projection suggests that enrollment will fall to 20 within the next few months.

Your target for each future case would depend on the activities that might or might not change the trend.

If you decided to try to improve enrollment in Program 3, you would plan for new activities and estimate what level of enrollment each would provide. You then would set targets based on your informed estimates and planned investments.



Identifying a Trend Line from Existing Data

What if you need to set a target for a program’s outcome that your agency has provided for a while, but the pieces of information you have been collecting routinely do NOT offer information on the results you expect to achieve? You may be able to use the routinely collected information to identify the probable trends of the results. To be useful, though, each trend line has to be accurate. Three steps are important in the process of identifying a trend:

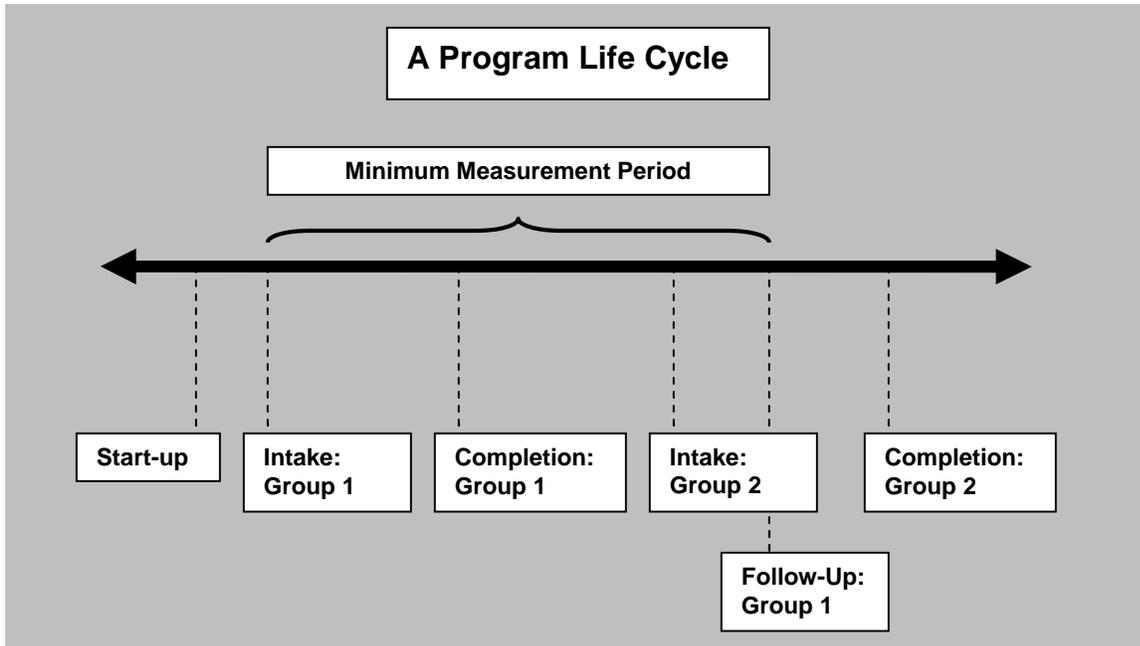
- 1 – Deciding on a Time Period for Including Outcome Data;**
- 2 – Checking Early Data against Indicators; and**
- 3 – Ensuring Data Used to Identify Trends Are Accurate and Uniformly Collected.**

Each of these steps is discussed below.

1 – Deciding on a Time Period for Including Outcome Data

Identifying a trend requires looking at program results over an appropriate period of time—a long enough time to allow the program to be tested fairly. In general, this means AT LEAST one “program life cycle.” The time required for the start-up of a new program should NOT be included in the length of time used for establishing a trend line. An example would be: “The time from completion of the intake of a new group of participants to the time when they completed a training program and were placed in jobs.”

The following chart shows the “life cycle” of a short-term training program which involves customers intensively for a few weeks or months and then follows up with them afterward.



2 – Checking Early Data against Indicators

Frequently, the data collected in the program’s early part will overlap easily with the indicators selected for targeting. For example, in the program pictured below, the data set on the left was reported monthly to the program’s funding source during the program’s first three years. The indicators on the right were later chosen for targeting purposes. Since several years of data were available, it was easy to identify the trends in the data. This aided the targeting process, since the indicators selected for targeting could be derived easily from the available data.

Data Available for Identifying Trends

Number of persons referred to the program (average 300 per year)

Number of new customers completing intake (average 120 per year)

Number of customers successfully completing the training program (average 100 per year)

Scores achieved on the skills test administered at the end of training:

On average,

- 5 had scores < 20%
- 10 had scores between 21- 45%;
- 10 had scores between 46-65%;
- 20 had scores between 66- 85%;
- 40 had scores > 85%

Data Trend for One of the Selected Indicators

Number and percentage of customers who score at the “proficient” level (score > 85%) after training

Trend: Approximately 40 participants per year (40% of graduates and 33% of entrants) scored at the “proficient” level after training.

Numbers of customers employed 30, 60 and 90 days after completion of training.

Of graduates, an average of 85% had jobs at 30 days, 77% had jobs at 60 days, and 64% had jobs at 90 days.

Wages and benefits provided by the jobs obtained

Of jobs obtained, 42% paid more than \$10.75/hr (the local self-sufficiency wage); 88% of these jobs had benefits.

Data Trends for Another of the Selected Indicators

Number and percentage of customers who get a job offering a family-supporting wage and benefits after training, and keep the job for a minimum of 30 days.

Trend: Of the 100 customers successfully completing the training program, 85 had jobs at 30 days; 42% of those jobs, or 36 jobs, were at a living wage. Of the 36 jobs, 88%, or 31 jobs, had benefits.

TARGETS

During the upcoming year:

120 new customers will be enrolled in the program.

40 participants will score at the “proficient” level after training.

31 participants will get a living-wage job with benefits and will hold the job for 30 days or longer.

3 – Ensuring Data Used to Identify Trends Are Accurate and Uniformly Collected

When identifying the trends that data have followed over time, it is important to review the methods used to collect the data. Why?

1) A measurement process may have a built-in error.

In the program described above, there could be errors if job “benefits” are not clearly defined. What if several program participants had obtained jobs with an employer who provided only free-of-charge parking or an on-site day care center? Lumping those jobs together with the ones that provided more valuable benefits, including health insurance and paid leave, overstates the number achieving a desired outcome.

2) A measurement process may have changed significantly over time.

For example, the program manager might have decided at the end of the first year that future program participants would score their own skills tests. The change in procedure reduced participants’ self-consciousness about their scores, perhaps, but also reduced accuracy compared to teacher-reported scores.

Setting Targets by Using Expert Input

Subjective judgment can have a valuable place in the targeting process when the judgments are provided by experts. Who are “experts”? They may include: line staff or former line workers who have had experience with the sort of program for which you are setting targets, members of one of your agency’s advisory groups, graduates of the program or a similar program, or members of your board of directors, who sometimes have special insights into one or more areas of programming. Be flexible as you think about the question, “Who could help us accurately estimate what targets can be achieved?”

Mapping Program Steps as an Aid to Setting Targets

Almost all goals are reached through a process which occurs over time and which can be broken down into steps. Many of these steps lead to measurable outcomes for which you can select an indicator.

If you:

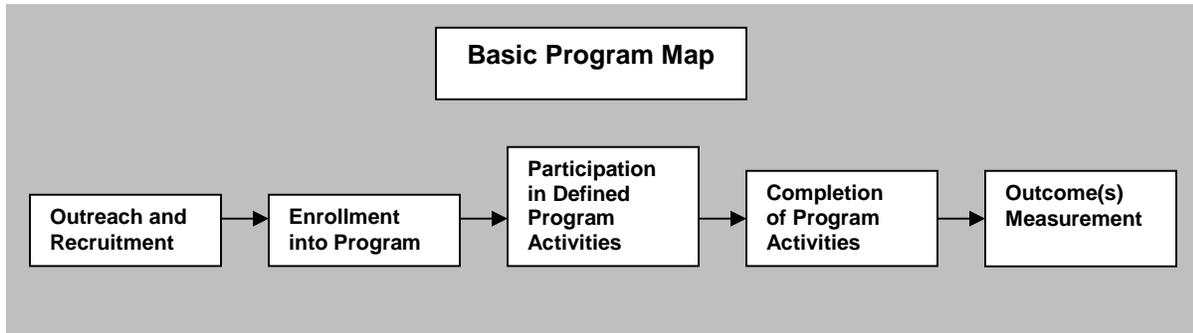
- *Identify the general process which leads to the projected final result and*
- *Break the process into discrete steps, with activities listed in sequence,*

You can:

- *Find measurable outcomes associated with each step and*
- *Establish an indicator of each outcome.*

Identification of the process and the discrete steps is called “mapping.” For a program delivering direct services to individual customers, this can be done most effectively by “walking through” the customer’s experience of the program.

The following program “map” lays out some familiar steps in the delivery of a direct service program.

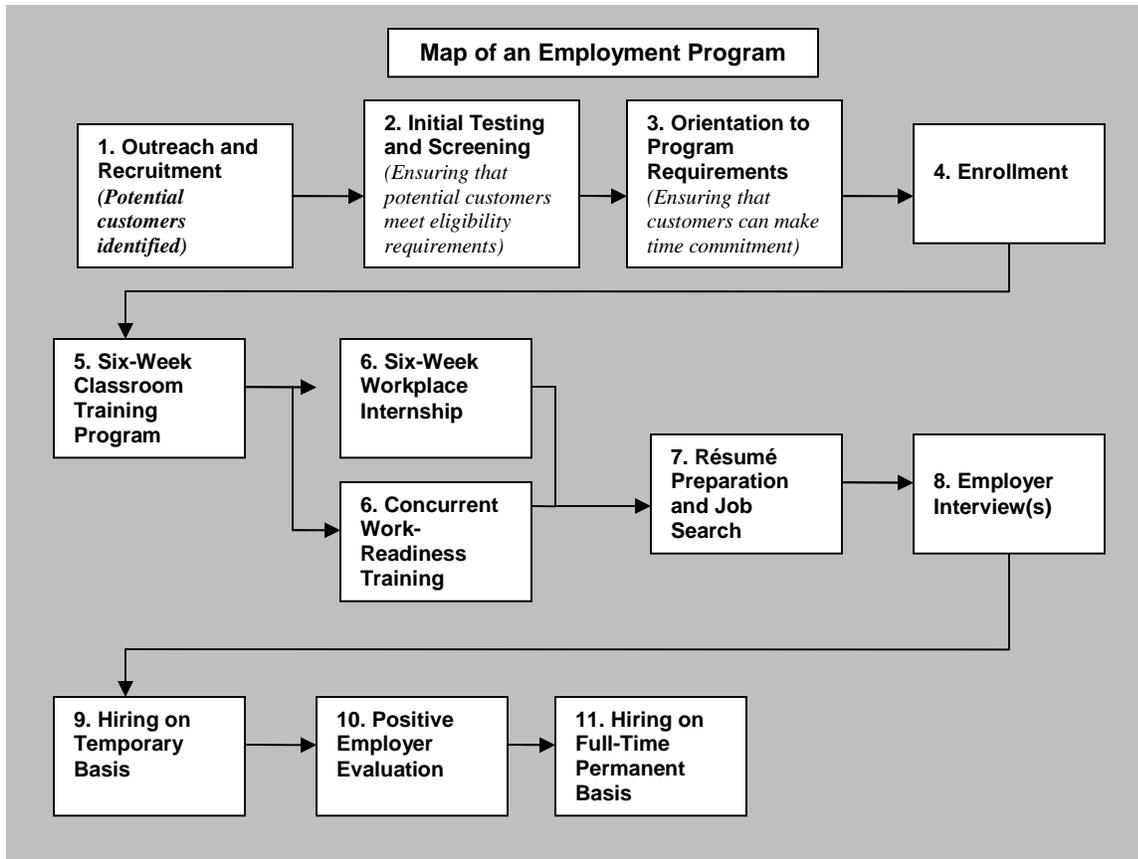


A program map can help with the identification of service and process indicators, such as the number:

- *Of customers recruited;*
- *Enrolled;*
- *Who participate in activities; and*
- *Who complete the full program of activities.*

Example of Using a Program Map to Set Targets

In the following example, mapping was used to analyze an employment and training program.

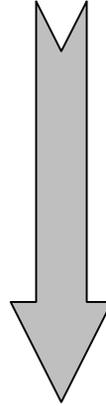


Embedded in any program map is the assumption that a customer must successfully move through each program step to progress—and to ultimately reach a successful outcome. A map showing the customer experience can help estimate how many customers will complete each step and consequently achieve the desired outcome. The main problem for analysis is estimating attrition at each step.

In the examples below, estimates were based on the insights of program managers, line staff, and “graduates” of similar programs.

Estimated Customer Attrition in an Employment Program

<p>Outreach and Recruitment</p>	<p><i>This program reaches out to more than 600 community residents, but no recent training program has attracted more than about 200 applicants.</i></p>	<p>-67%</p>	
<p>Initial Testing and Screening</p>	<p><i>A significant proportion of applicants will be excluded because the funding source has rather rigid requirements for residency and income. Additional applicants will be excluded because they do not have a high enough reading score.</i></p>	<p>-20%</p>	
<p>Orientation to Program Requirements</p>	<p><i>Some eligible customers miss the orientation session.</i></p>	<p>-12%</p>	
<p>Enrollment</p>	<p><i>Many potential customers are likely to be discouraged by the required time commitment. Others do not show up to complete the intake form and contract.</i></p>	<p>-12%</p>	
<p>Classroom Training Program</p>	<p><i>Classroom skill's training is rigorous. Many customers are likely to drop out. In other programs that were similar, almost a third of the group failed to complete this segment.</i></p>	<p>-30%</p>	
<p>6-Week Workplace Internship</p>	<p>Work-Readiness Training</p>	<p><i>These two phases of the program run concurrently, and customers must complete both. Some people may complete the workshops but not the internship and vice-versa. This is another tough part of the program where attrition may be high.</i></p>	<p>-30%</p>
<p>Job Search</p>	<p><i>Customers must complete a résumé, identify appropriate job postings, and contact employers. While this is not the highest-stress portion of the program, some people will drop out.</i></p>	<p>-8%</p>	
<p>Employer Interview</p>	<p><i>A few customers are likely to have a bad experience in the interview or find the idea of the interview overwhelming. Some level of loss is likely.</i></p>	<p>-9%</p>	
<p>Temporary Hiring</p>	<p><i>Most customers in the program at this point are motivated to succeed. However, some do not meet employer standards because of CORI or other barriers.</i></p>	<p>-10%</p>	
<p>Employer Evaluation</p>	<p><i>Some customers will have difficulty adjusting to the workplace and will receive a negative evaluation. Other life stresses also may reduce customers' ability to continue past this step.</i></p>	<p>-15%</p>	
<p>Permanent Hiring</p>	<p><i>The customers who have stayed with the program to this point AND have achieved the final outcome of permanent employment.</i></p>	<p>-5%</p>	



The following table shows one way to organize the employment program’s steps, outcome indicators, estimates of attrition, and targets.

Attrition Estimates and Targets for an Employment Program				
Program Step	Indicator	Estimated Eligible Customers	Estimated Attrition	Estimated Customers Achieving Final Outcome (Target)
1. Recruitment	Potential customers identified by name and address	600	67% ¹	200
2. Testing/Screening	Potential customers deemed eligible AND having minimum skills as tested	200	20% ²	160
3. Orientation	Potential customers attending full orientation	160	12% ²	141
4. Enrollment	Customers signing contract for participation	140	12%	124
5. Classroom Training	Customers completing training	120	30%	87
6. Internship*	Customers completing internship	80*	30%*	61*
7. Work-Readiness*	Customers completing work-readiness classes	80*	30%*	61*
8. Job Search	Customers developing a résumé AND sending it to participating employer(s)	60	8%	56
9. Employer Interview	Customers completing at least one employer interview	55	9%	1
10. Temporarily Hired	Customers hired on a temporary basis	50	10%	46
11. Evaluation	Customers receiving a positive employer evaluation	45	15%	39
12. Permanently Hired	Customers hired on a permanent basis	38	5%	37 (Final Outcome)

¹Based on recent initiatives.

²Based on income guidelines and test scores in previous programs.

*Simultaneous steps.

Other On-Paper Tools

When thinking about program elements and possible indicators, it can help to “get it on paper” to give your team an overview. Program mapping, as shown in the example above, and the Logic Model mentioned earlier, are two on-paper tools that can provide an overview of your program. These tools can be used in different ways for different situations, as illustrated by the case study below. You may have other favorite tools, such as tables, lists, matrices, or a schematic different from the one described here. When choosing indicators and setting targets for a program, the “best” on-paper tools are the ones that are the most useful to your team. Any tool that works well for you is a tool that you should use.

A CASE STUDY FROM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Program mapping can help the overall picture emerge

Pissequa County Community Development, Inc. is strongly identified with initiatives to bring good jobs and decent housing to this rust belt community. Much of the activity of the PCCD Executive Director and her staff is focused on advocacy, community organizing, negotiating, and planning such initiatives. PCCD staff have picketed City Hall, sat on committees, and worked with planners and architects.

It is slow work. Sometimes it takes up to five or ten years for a project to come to fruition. As a result, PCCD has needed to find “interim indicators” which can be used to track the progress of initiatives before the final outcome—jobs or homes—is achieved.

From 1998 to 2005, PCCD’s Director of Economic Development used the following interim indicators: **number of hours devoted to meetings with city planners and others; number of meetings with community residents; media coverage of initiatives; and number of proposals submitted for initiatives.** For this seven-year period, the agency’s performance appeared to be strong, based on meeting all of the targets set for these indicators. Nevertheless, no new housing was built, and no new jobs were brought to the county. What went wrong?

The PCCD Executive Director decided that new indicators were needed. She asked for a program analysis of all current initiatives, and she suggested using program maps as a tool. As the steps of each project were laid out on paper, a picture began to come into focus.

All of the projects shared the same basic action steps. When staff members tabulated how long it took projects (both current and past) to reach each step, they noticed that there were five points at which projects were most likely to be delayed—or to be stopped entirely. These were: **site acquisition; zoning approval; obtaining financing; signing a contract with the builder or developer; and receiving a certificate of occupancy.** These steps were clearly the “make or break” points in the development process. The time to complete these program phases became the new interim indicators.

“Borrowing” an Outcome Estimation from another Program

If you know of a program in another community or another state that is highly similar to the program that you are implementing, and if the other program’s outcome indicators are the same as the outcome indicators that you plan to use, it may be practical to base your target on the other program’s outcome data. The following table can help you assess the practicality of this targeting approach. Additionally, it can help you adjust borrowed outcomes to fit your program by identifying the probable impact of differences in the program structure, its environment, and other factors affecting implementation.

Adjusting Borrowed Outcomes for a Literacy Program		
Major Factors Influencing Comparability	Differences between the Program in Dale City and Our New Program	Probable Impact on Outcomes
Program Factors		
<i>Staffing Pattern and Qualifications</i>	Both programs use volunteers supervised by an experienced adult educator. The programs have the same supervision and staff-to-customer ratios.	No predicted impact
<i>Sequence and Standards for Program Activities</i>	The programs use the same implementation manual. The programs also use the same curricula and teaching materials.	No predicted impact
<i>Intensity of Customer Interaction</i>	Our new program averages 4 hours per week of interaction with each customer, compared to 2 hours per week in the Dale City program.	Expected to improve outcomes slightly
<i>Availability of Resources for Customers and Staff</i>	Our new program has its own classroom, while the Dale City program has had to move frequently. Our program also offers support to customers in the form of subway passes and child care.	Expected to improve attendance and to improve outcomes slightly
Environmental Factors		
<i>Program Accessibility</i>	Both programs are in centers that can be reached using public transportation. Both programs have bicultural staff and volunteers.	No predicted impact
<i>Community Support</i>	Both agencies are highly regarded and well-publicized in their neighborhoods.	No predicted impact
Customer Factors		
<i>Intensity of Customer Needs</i>	The average customer in both programs has a fourth-grade reading level.	No predicted impact
<i>Complicating Factors</i>	Over 50% of customers in our program are referred from local homeless shelters, which is not true of the Dale City program. These customers have a high incidence of health and mental health difficulties. On the other hand, they are less likely to have work and family obligations that interfere with classes.	Expected to adversely affect outcomes to a slight degree

In this example, the identified differences between the programs are expected to produce small differences in outcomes, but the differences may tend to cancel each other out. Consequently, borrowing the other program’s outcome is likely to provide a useful initial target in this case.

Internet Sources

The internet can be a source of “borrowed” outcome estimations. National clearinghouses often have statistics in areas such as average rates of GED test preparation class completion. National advocacy organizations may have reports that include program outcome statistics. Foundations often have reports of the outcomes achieved by their grantees. If you do not know which organizations are working in the program area for which you are setting targets, or if you do not know which foundations have funded similar programs, a Google search sometimes can help you zero in on the sources you need.

Targets Specified by a Funding Source

Sometimes the source of your funding gives you a target that you are expected to hit. This makes the targeting process easy, but you still should carry out a target review process (see Section VII) after you have measured results. Even though setting the target was not within your control, the situation does not need to be a win-or-lose one. Not only will a target review process enable you to understand why you missed the target, it will enable you to give the funding source an explanation when you deliver the news that the target was not met.

VI – TARGETING IN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

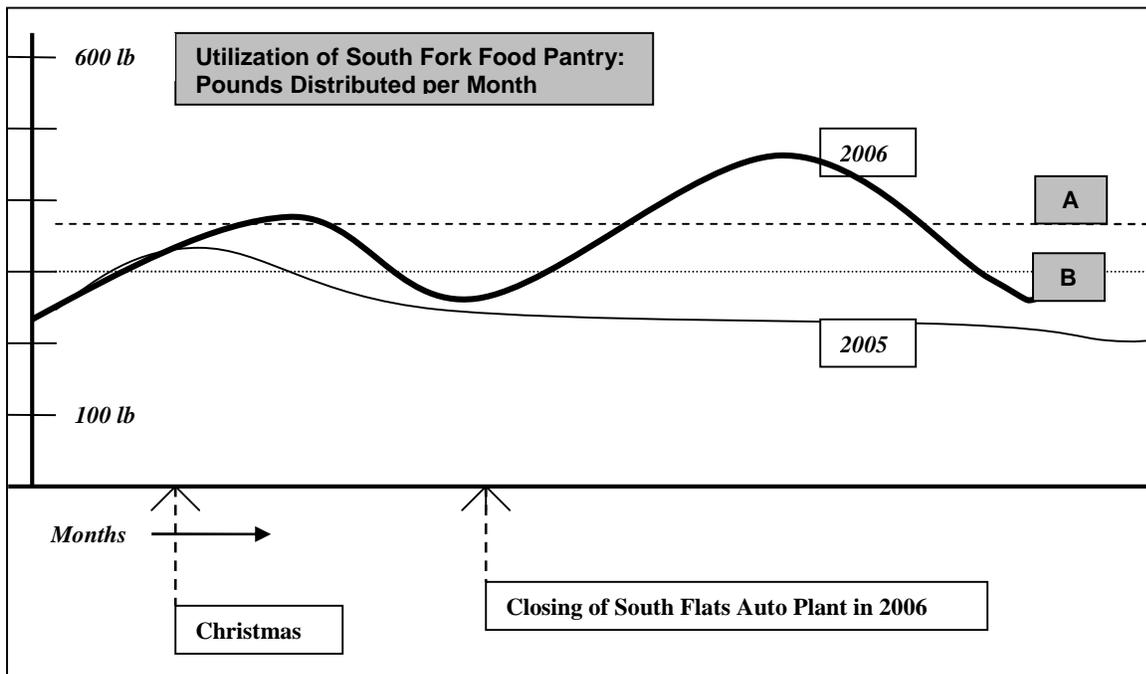
Some program circumstances make it unusually challenging to set accurate targets. This section is focused on targeting when the process is made difficult by one-time events, by wide variations in a major program element, or by the complexity inherent in Community Action’s work.

Dealing with the Impact of One-Time Events

In Section V, one suggested tactic for setting a target was to look at the trend over time of the outcome you are targeting. When using a trend line for setting a target, it is desirable to have information from a program that has been in a “steady state”—with no major program, environmental, or data collection changes.

Of course, in social services, the environment is changing all the time. A perfectly steady state is never available. Looking backward in time, if a sudden change in a trend line is seen, it is important to analyze the cause. If the cause was an event with a large, one-time impact that is unlikely to recur, the trend line can be adjusted before using it to set a target.

The following graph, for example, describes the experience of the South Fork Food Pantry over two years. The narrower solid line represents the number of pounds of food distributed each month in 2005. The heavier solid line represents pounds of food distributed in 2006.



Assume for a moment that the South Fork Community Action Coalition would like to set a target which is a straight-line projection from the program's past history. In other words, they want to shoot for about the same level of service that has been provided before—no big changes.

They might set the target using a straight-line projection, using the average outcome value for the period of time being reviewed and simply extending it into the future. The average amount of food distributed per month in 2006 was 365 pounds (the value is shown by the straight dotted line marked "A"). Multiplying 365 by 12 months, the South Fork CAC staff would set a target of 4,380 pounds to be distributed in the next year.

Would this be a reasonable target? Maybe not. The availability of two years of data allows us to identify a potentially misleading factor in the 2006 data. Both years show a "bump" in utilization of the food pantry during the holiday season. In 2006, however, food pantry utilization continued to increase beyond the holiday season before dropping to a level similar to the level of a year before. The increase was caused by lay-offs as a major area employer began to have economic difficulty. As the laid-off workers were recalled to work, use of the food pantry eased. Then there was a very large peak in utilization a few months after the employer closed its doors. This coincided with the end of cash benefits for many laid-off workers. Within a few months, utilization declined to earlier levels, suggesting that most families found new ways to make ends meet.

The closing of the auto plant was a major environmental shock that South Fork hopes never to see again. If the unusual "bumps" from that event are eliminated from the data, the average amount of food distributed per month in 2006 is 300 pounds (shown by the dotted line marked "B"), which is not much more than the average monthly values in 2005. This value means a projected annual target of 3,600 pounds.

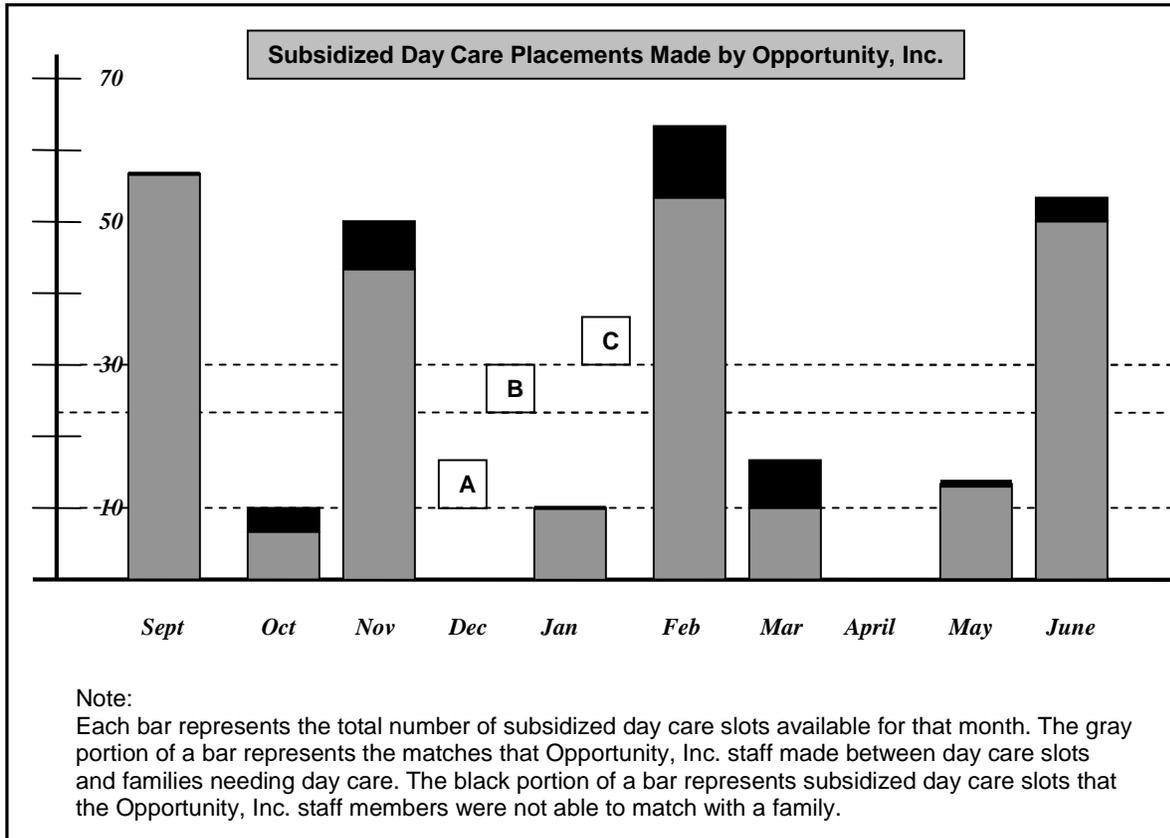
Dealing with Wide Variations

A trend line may not be an aid to setting a target if quantities vary widely from one measurement period to the next. A better approach in this situation might be to set a contingent target: "If A occurs, our target will be B, but if Y occurs, our target will be Z."

For example, the following chart is from a program, funded by a local foundation, in which Opportunity, Inc. locates subsidized day care slots for low-income parents. At the start of the program, the foundation required Opportunity, Inc. to set a monthly target.

The staff wishes that they could aim for a yearly target, not a monthly one. The number of open subsidized slots varies widely from month to month according to whether any day care centers have closed, whether any are newly accredited and approved, or whether any centers have increased their capacity.

Another factor is how many children have “aged out” of day care. In addition, the Opportunity, Inc. staff has found that about 10% of open slots are impossibly far removed geographically from any of the Opportunity, Inc. parents who need a day care placement. As the Opportunity, Inc. managers discuss target-setting, they know that if they use the average number of monthly placements (dotted line “B”) as a target, there inevitably will be months in which outcomes do not reach the target.



One group of managers is concerned that the agency seems to be “underperforming” when viewed in this way. They would prefer to set the monthly target at a low value (dotted line “A”) which will be met about 80% of the time.

Another group of managers would like to see the agency set an “aspirational” target, which would represent an overall increase of about 25% in voucher delivery (dotted line “C”). They argue that the current level of service is too low, and they feel that leaving the target at the current average will provide little incentive for staff to meet the challenge of matching families with day care slots.

A third group of managers has pointed out that when no match can be made, it is almost always for reasons that are beyond the staff’s control. There is no evidence that the staff members are anything but dedicated and hard-working.

Overall, their success in matching families with day care slots is quite high when slots are available. There is a lot of unmet day care need among the parents served by Opportunity, Inc., but the cause is the inadequate number of subsidized day care slots overall. There are unlikely to be enough slots available in the upcoming year to enable a 25% increase in placements no matter how successfully the Opportunity, Inc. staff matches families with day care slots. Arbitrarily increasing the target by one-fourth would have no impact beyond being hard on the staff members' morale.

The managers decide to resolve their difficulty **by not setting a target that is measured by a monthly average**. Instead, they will set a contingent target, with the monthly target depending on the number of subsidized day care slots that are available that month.

Here is the subsidized day care placement target on which the managers agreed: *For the next fiscal year, if no subsidized day care slots are available, the target for that month will be zero. If subsidized day care slots are available, the target for that month will be 90% of the number of slots.*

Keep in mind that you will also be setting overall program targets based on funding, past performance, etc.

Dealing with the Complexity of Anti-Poverty Programs

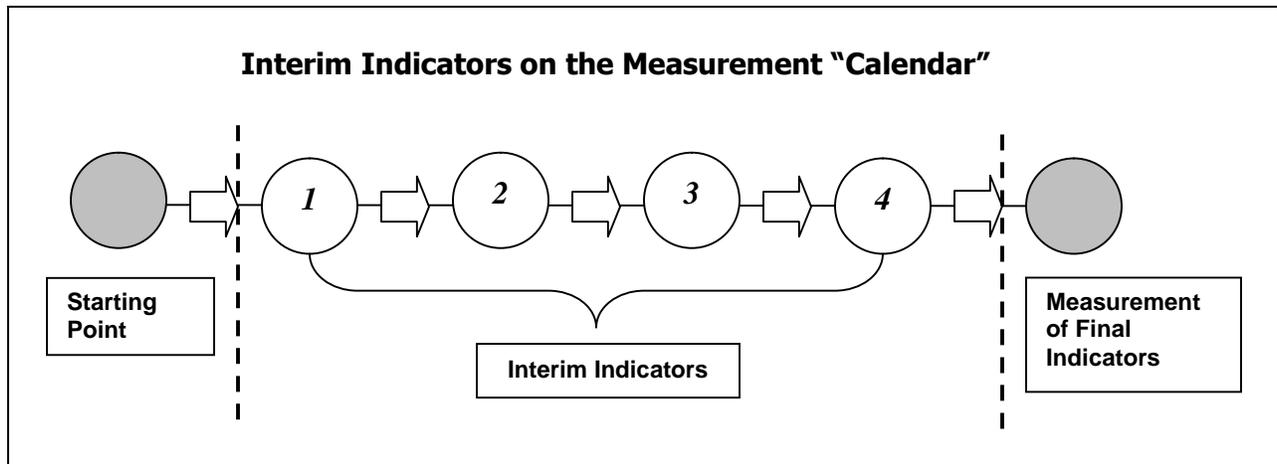
Poverty is an enormously complex issue. Reducing poverty, whether for a household or for a community, is difficult and requires a long-term effort on many levels.

As a result, some targeting challenges come from the anti-poverty goals of Community Action organizations. These challenges include:

- ***Targeting for long-range goals and***
- ***Targeting for goals that depend on the activities of many programs working together (multi-program goals).***

Targeting for Long-Range Goals

Given the nature of our work in Community Action, many of our programs have very long-term final outcomes. Funding sources and other stakeholders often are interested in short-term results. When a program's goal will take a long time to reach, interim indicators are especially important.



Here are some guidelines for choosing interim indicators of progress toward a long-range goal:

An interim indicator should be as meaningful as possible in and of itself.

For example, in a project with a goal of increasing family incomes over several years' time, most stakeholders will find a one-year measure of job acquisition for unemployed parents very meaningful—even if it is not the final measure.

An interim indicator should show how successfully customers are moving toward the desired final outcome.

Look for interim indicators that are crucial to your long-term success. When you have identified one, test its usefulness by asking yourself: If we were extremely successful at this stage, would long-term outcomes be likely to increase? If we failed at this stage, would we still be able to achieve the long-term outcomes? If it is not a "make or break" part of reaching the goal, it is not likely to be a good interim indicator.

Sometimes an interim indicator should be chosen because it relates to a goal in a way that is unambiguously apparent to all stakeholders.

For example, untreated substance abuse or mental health difficulties might be obstacles to reaching the goal of increasing families' incomes over five years' time. An important indicator for your team could be the number of parents entering or continuing treatment. If the funder is focused on income, however, a better interim indicator would be the number of days lost to work or training because of untreated substance abuse or mental health struggles, compared to each enrollee's number of "sick days" related to substance abuse or mental health BEFORE enrollment in the program.

**A CASE STUDY FROM YOUTH RE-ENTRY:
Interim indicators are productive in several ways**

Rocky Coast Self-Help runs a well-regarded youth development program which works with young men being released from juvenile justice custody. The program staff considers their long-term outcomes to be permanent employment, completion of a GED, and avoidance of repeat incarceration.

The program managers have struggled with the fact that some groups of enrollees are “tougher” than others and take a much longer time to reach the long-term outcomes. In addition, many participants seem to be doing well but drop out of touch toward the end of the 24-month program. As a result, managers have trouble setting targets, and the line staff is frustrated because they think that the real results of their efforts are not reflected in the measurement of final results.

Rocky Coast addressed this problem by adding a set of interim indicators which could be measured during the program’s earliest months. The indicators included avoidance of risk-taking activities and demonstrations of important competencies.

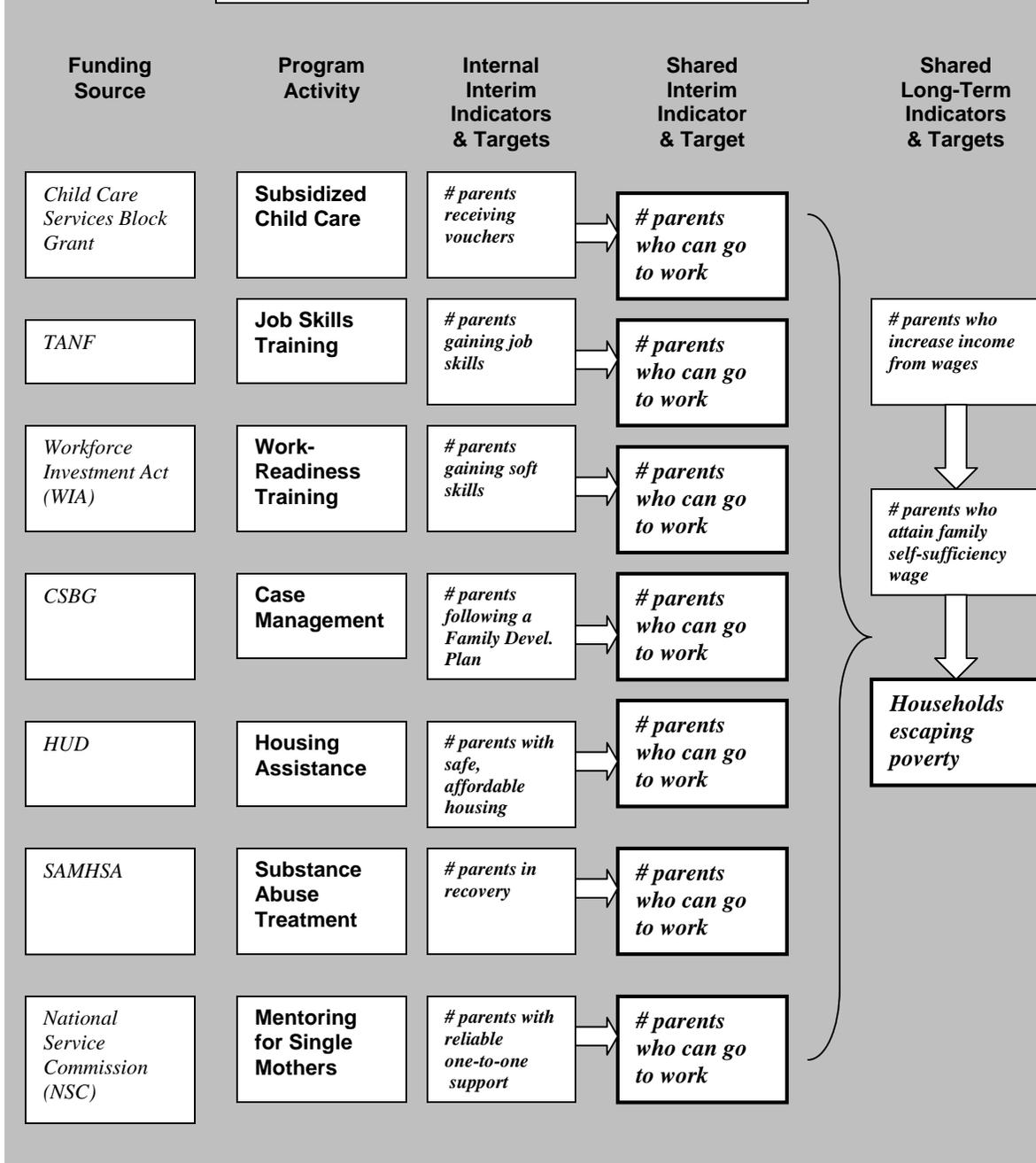
Adding interim indicators helped the program in several ways. It focused case-management activity on finding and responding to early warning signals of problems. The ability to show concrete progress even for “tough” customers removed the temptation the staff members were feeling to “cream” the customers with the fewest problems instead of concentrating on young people who needed the program the most. In addition, the program managers have been able to identify trends in the interim outcome data and set targets that are accurate and achievable.

Targeting for Multi-Program Goals

Community Action workers know, perhaps better than others, about the wide range of supports needed to help families pull themselves out of poverty. Traditional social services approaches that keep each program in a separate “silo” do not do a good job of reflecting this reality.

The Community Services Block Grant funds the staff and investments which integrate different support activities, because most agencies work with several separate programs, funded by a variety of sources. The following chart shows how operationally distinct programs can contribute to meeting one or more poverty reduction targets. Each separate program has its own internal targets, but they also share targets related to the long-term goal of family self-sufficiency.

An Example of Multi-Program Outcomes Indicators

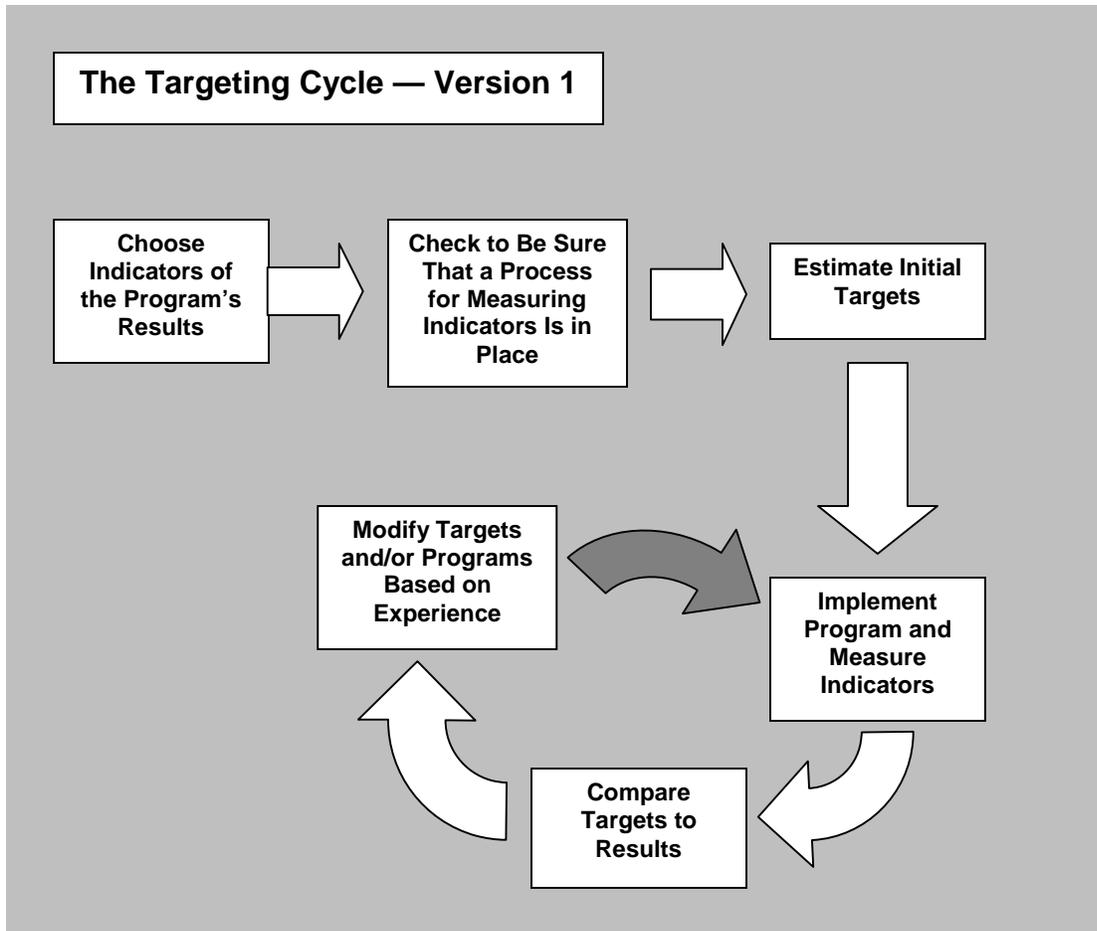


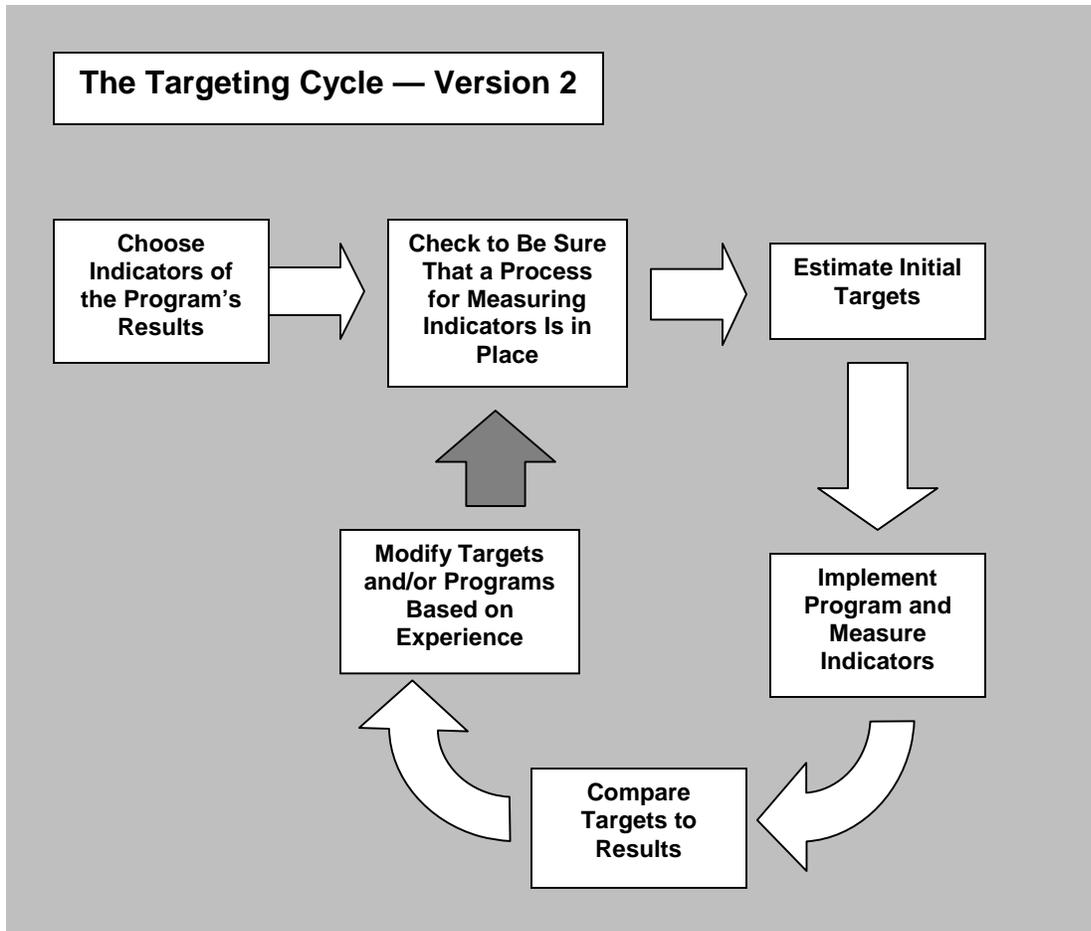
VII – THE TARGETING CYCLE

Target-setting is not a one-time task. Targeting is a dynamic process which can aid in the processes of gaining insight into programs and making improvements. The best way to think about targeting is as a continuous cycle with these steps:

- ***Choosing Indicators of Desired Results;***
- ***Setting Targets (Estimating What the Indicators Will Show);***
- ***Ensuring That a Results Measurement Process Is in Place;***
- ***Comparing Targets to Actual Results; and***
- ***Modifying the Initial Targets and/or Making Program Changes Based on Experience.***

Your team can start the cycle at any point, although in picturing the targeting cycle, it is easiest to begin with the process of choosing a means of measuring your program's results.





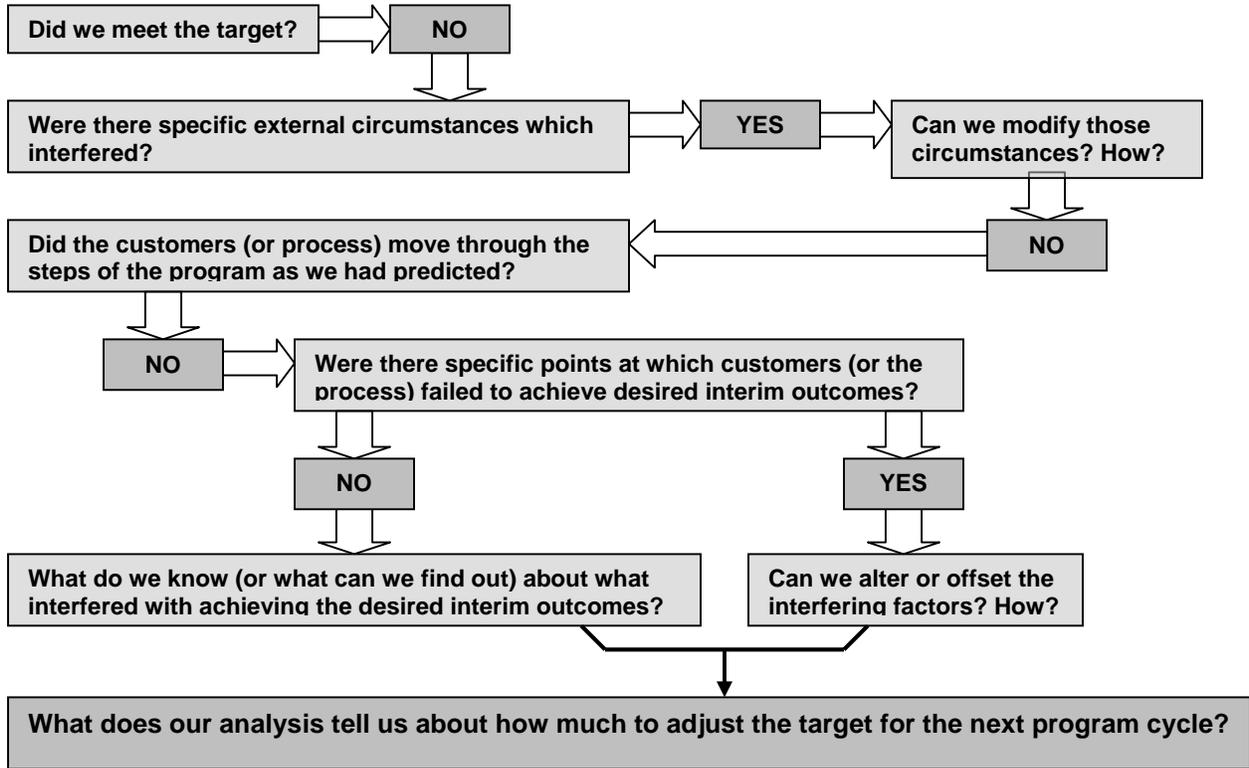
Target Review: A Dynamic Process

In a new program, the initial target may be unrealistic despite your best efforts to set an accurate target. The experience of program implementation may tell you that you need to modify the target either upward or downward. In established programs, targets may need to be modified because of environmental changes or changes in a program (such as the loss of a staff person). Even if a program's results match the original targets exactly, the targets should be reviewed and changes considered as the program further matures.

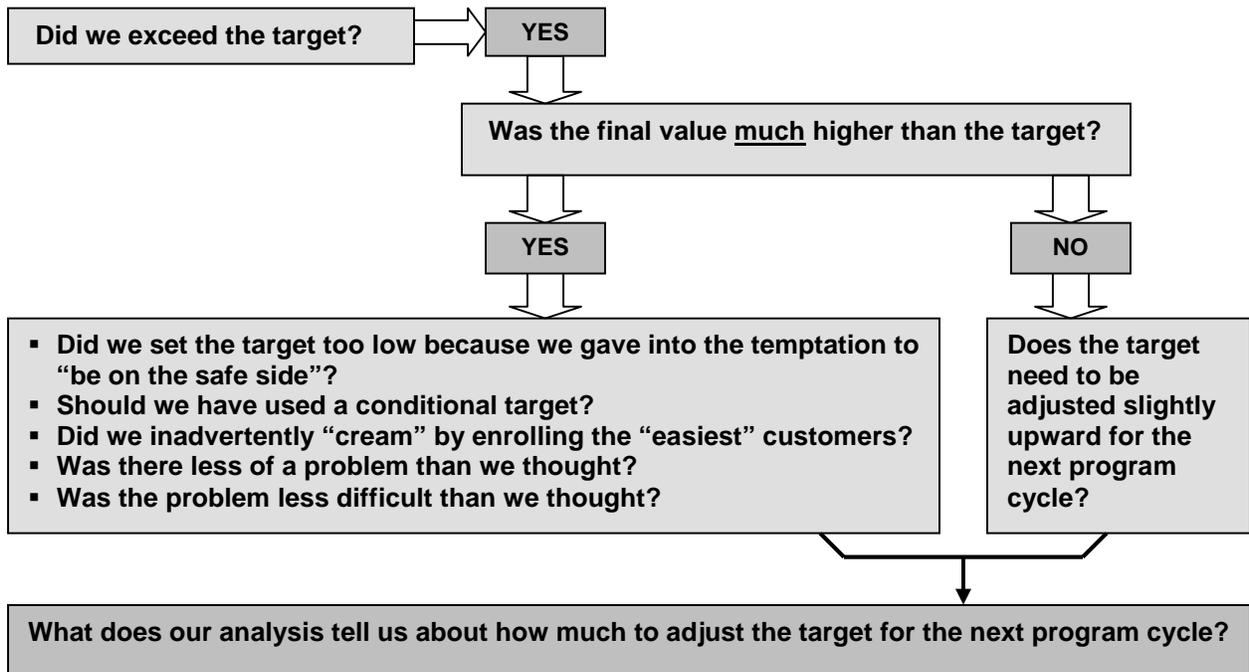
Therefore, although it may be tempting to see target review as a simple yes-or-no question:

Did we meet the target?

...answering this question is only the first step in a target review. The second step is to seek answers to the question, "Why?" Why did you meet the target or miss it? In other words, ask yourself: "what went well?" and "what do we want to do differently?"



A similar process is useful if your program exceeded its target, as shown below.



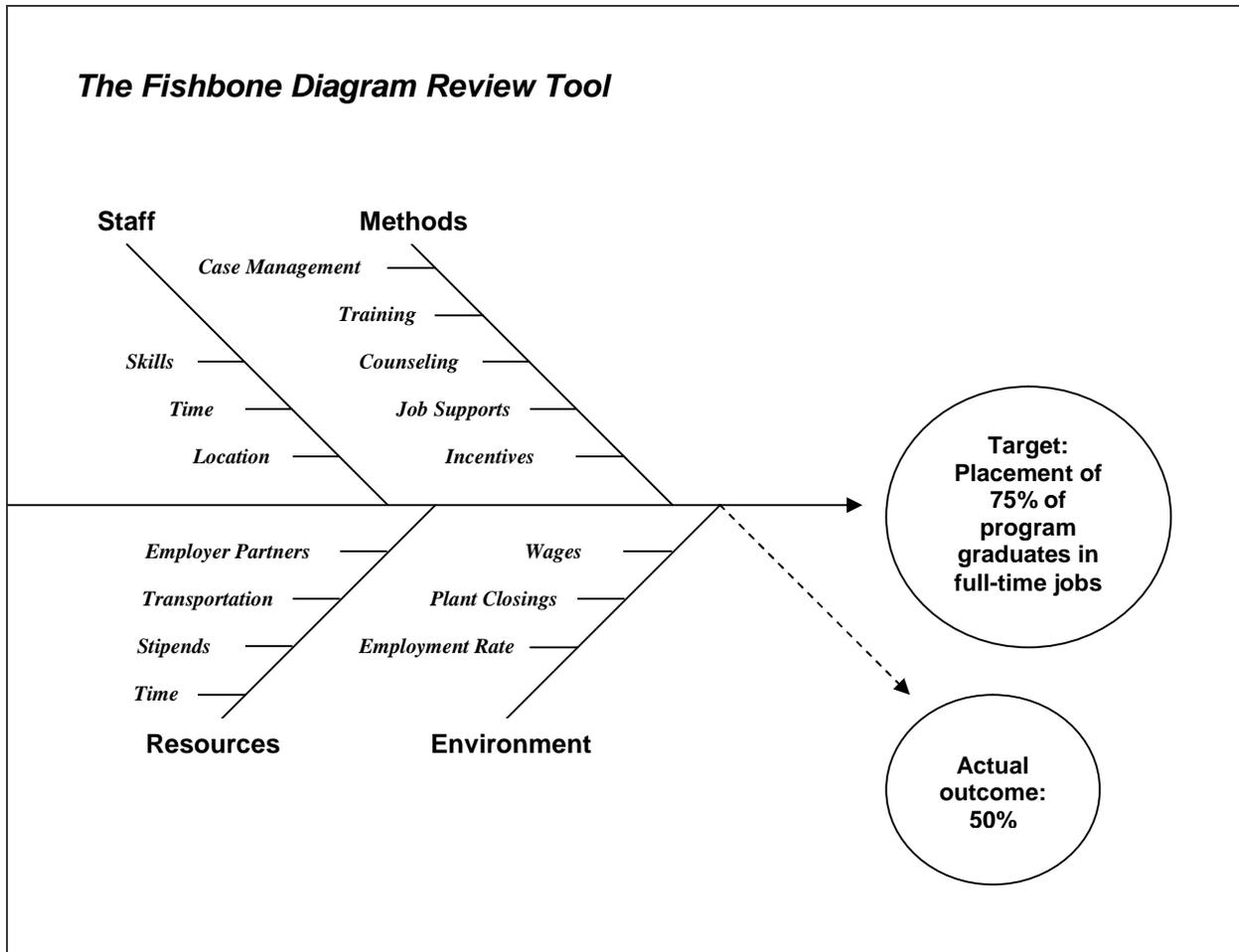
Setting a higher target for next year may not even be the best use of dollars. For example, if setting the target higher only means getting more people enrolled in something, too much investment may go into increasing enrollment rather than into achieving more meaningful, lasting outcomes for a smaller number of participants.

Target Review: When Answers Are Difficult to Find

Whether your program's results exceeded your target or fell short, understanding the mismatch between targets and results is not always easy. A helpful tool might be a **fishbone diagram**. It provides a way to visualize various factors in a process and the way in which those factors influenced outcomes.

When a team constructs a fishbone, a benefit is the ***integration of knowledge of people who understand different aspects of a problem***, as shown in the example below. The outcome to be analyzed is a shortfall in hoped-for job placements. The "spine" points to the targeted outcome—75% of program participants would be placed in full-time jobs. Each of the "ribs" represents a cause contributing to the outcome, both hoped-for and actual. The ribs are assigned to major factors, and smaller issues that contribute to the major factors branch off the ribs.

It is likely that, as a program was designed and implemented, different people were focused on different areas of the program. The staff supervisor concentrated on arranging job counseling for the program participants. The job developer worked with local employers to arrange placements for graduates of the job-readiness program, and so forth. When it was time for the review, the fishbone diagram below was developed by same **team** of people, who began by identifying the probable contributing factors to the desired outcome and then placed them on the "fishbone," filling in as many details as they could.



We can see that different members of the team identified different parts of the map of necessary program elements. For example, in regard to the "Staff" rib, the staff supervisor narrowed it down to key resources. When she analyzed how each was delivered or used, she reported that the staff members in charge of job counseling may not have had adequate counseling skills. It became apparent to her that too little time had been allocated for counseling; further, the location was not as easy for potential program participants to travel to as the staff had assumed during the program design phase.

In regard to the "Resources" rib, the job developer added the four key resources from the program plan. She then analyzed the question of **why** the employment partners did not provide as many jobs as they initially had said they would. It was important to know what went wrong—the local business environment or the relationship between the program staff and the employment partners? Might the partners have been dissatisfied with the quality of the last group of job-readiness program graduates they hired? If so, was the job developer or program manager responsive to their concerns?

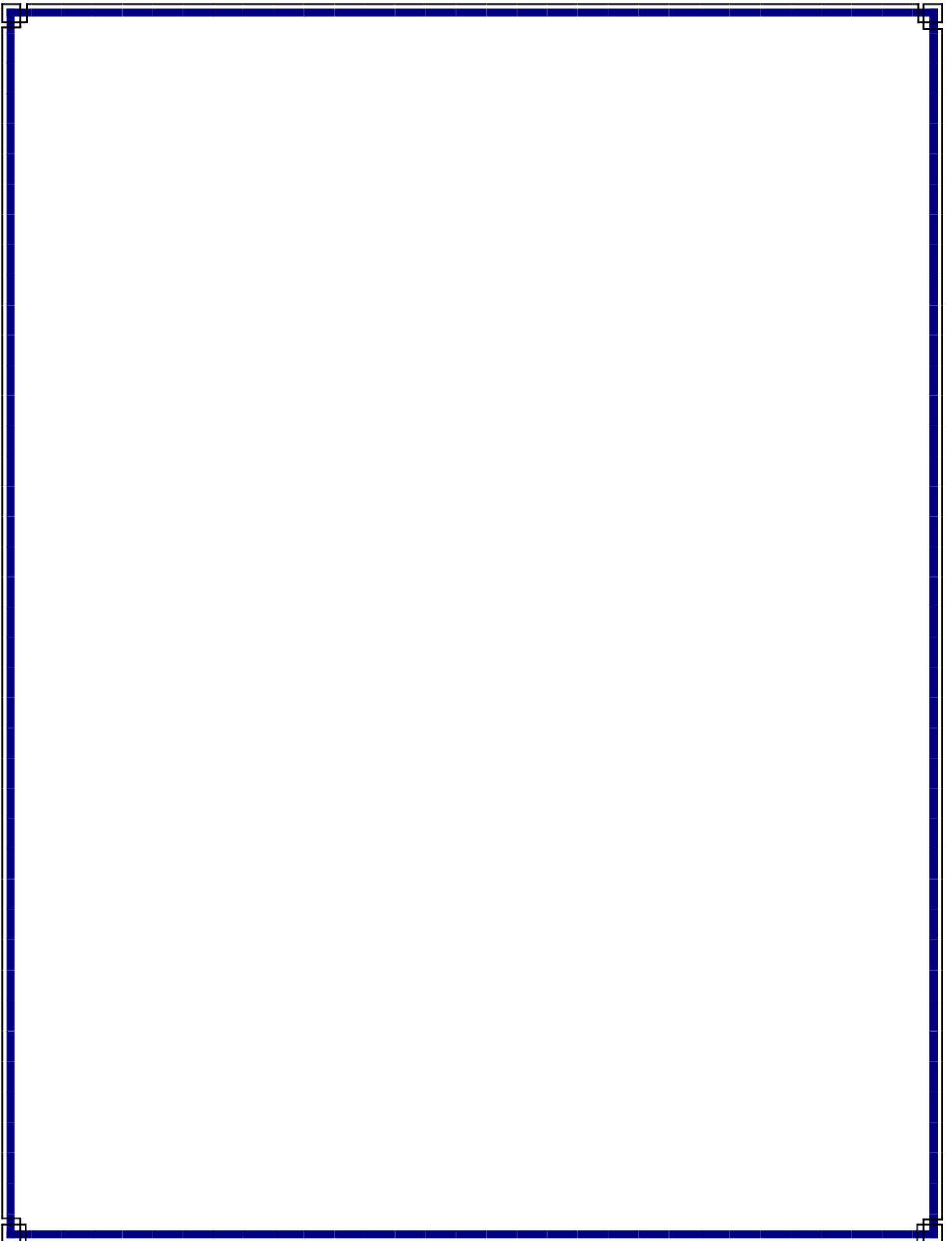
In regard to the "*Environment*" rib, the community planner offered information on changes in the business environment which are causing employers to retrench.

These are only some examples of the pieces that might be included in a fishbone diagram of the job-readiness program. Although fishbone diagrams can be used at several points in the targeting process, from program design through program reviews, they are especially helpful in a **target review**, when you need to understand why a program undershot (or overshot) its target.

VIII – CONCLUSION

Target-setting follows several steps that you are accustomed to taking: identifying outcomes that you hope your customers will achieve, planning program activities, and choosing indicators of results. Although target-setting is a requirement, you should not view it only as an external imposition on your time. The task of choosing indicators and setting targets gives you an opportunity to reflect on your work.

As you go through the dynamic process of 1) setting targets, 2) then considering the meaning of any differences between targets and actual achievements, and 3) then making any changes you determine to be needed, you will be actively engaging in Results Oriented Management and Accountability to develop stronger approaches and improve results.





National Association for State Community Services Programs

**400 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 395, Washington, DC 20001
(202) 624-5866 • nascsp@nascsp.org**