



## SETTING TARGETS FOR PROGRAM SUCCESS

Leading program administrators and evaluators have found that success is more likely to occur if program managers set targets or desired outcomes for their efforts. A leader in understanding how ideas are implemented to succeed in the real world, The Rensselaerville Institute recommends addressing the following questions when planning programs.

- How do we define success from our activity?
- What evidence will we use to communicate that success to others?
- How will we know along the way that we are on course to achieve that success?

Targets are numeric success measures that you can use to determine how much your program is actually impacting people's lives. The Rensselaerville Institute recommends that organizations set targets that are "doable with a stretch" and are based on what would have happened to and for participants without a given program.

The institute also recommends that you set milestones to ensure that your program is on the right track toward achieving its targets. Milestones reflect participant progress and are much more important to track than work-plan activities. You should focus not on what your program offers but, rather, on what participants actually receive.

Milestones and targets become the core of a program management system and are highly useful for generating program strategy. It is a good idea to share your program's targets and milestones with participants. This ensures that everyone knows where they are in relation to the goal.

### **Setting Targets in Resident Services Programs**

Enterprise and our community-based partners have used the principles and processes developed by The Rensselaerville Institute to set targets for success for the adults, children and properties in our resident services initiatives. Based on our experience during a three-year demonstration program, the steps we recommend are:

1. Analyze previous success with specific programs to increase assets and meet the needs of resident families.
2. Survey residents to determine the level of interest in specific services and to learn what level of participation you might expect over the coming year or two.

3. If your organization has an existing program, investigate how to improve its services. Consider how much better your results could be assuming the expected level of participation and how much you might be able to impact the program's results by improving existing services and setting clear targets and milestones.
4. If your organization is establishing a program, investigate and replicate best practices in like services and set bold but doable targets based on the amount of participation expected and the experience of similar, effective programs.

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