

Goal Setting

Facilitator Guide





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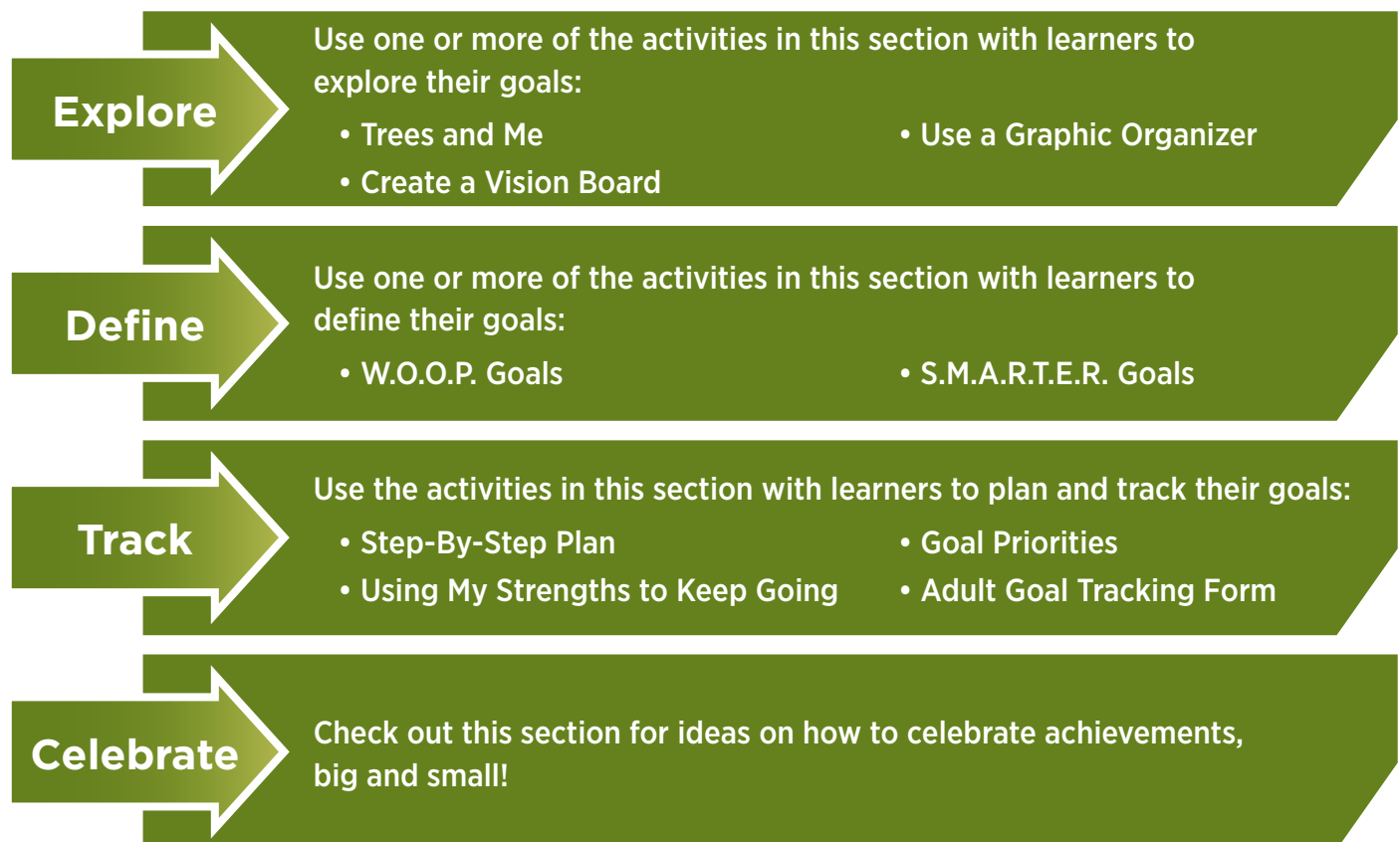
Introduction

Welcome to the *Goal Setting Facilitator Guide*. This guide is intended to support those who work with adult learners—both experienced facilitators as well as those who are new to these roles. All programs are different. Each program will facilitate the goal setting process in the context of a unique community. Within this publication, the terms families, parents, parenting adults, and caregivers are used interchangeably. This terminology takes into account various family structures that may engage with programming, such as one where the primary caregiver is a parent, a grandparent, or a guardian.”.

This guide provides useful strategies, tips, and ready-to-print activities that will help you present goal setting to adult learners. These activities are intended to be interactive and visually engaging. You may want to modify them as you engage the learners in your classroom. See the quick guide below for the activities included.

Goal setting is vital to the success of families. Through goal setting and achievement, individuals reach new milestones in the journey toward their full potential. As you work with families, the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) can be a great resource for any questions or concerns you may have. Interested in partnering with NCFL? Visit familieslearning.org/contact to submit your information and get started.

Quick Guide for Activities





Section 1: Explore Goal Setting

Scenario 1: How Do We Move From Striving to Thriving

Background Information

What Is Goal Setting?

Why Is Goal Setting Important With Adult Learners?

How Do I Guide Learners Through an Inquiry Process?

How Can We Explore Goals?

Activity: Trees and Me

Activity: Create a Vision Board

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Section 1: Explore Goal Setting

Scenario 1: How Do We Move From Striving to Thriving?

At the Americana Community Center in Louisville, Kentucky, goal setting was viewed as an opportunity to accompany English language learners from striving to thriving. This took into consideration the multiple areas of their lives. Through facilitated goal setting, learners directed their own educational, emotional, physical, relational, and financial growth. Americana staff worked to build confidence and equip learners with skills to be successful in taking risks towards achieving their goals. This was done in a learning environment that provided safety and support as learners faced growth-producing challenges.

With learners of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds all in the same learning environment, it was important for the facilitator to create goal-setting activities that were individualized and could be built upon together as a class. Through self-reflection and group sharing, parents engaged with each other's ideas, life experiences, and creativity. Providing the time for learners to share their own ideas with each other was a great way to help them process their thinking with their peers.

From the initial interaction with learners, facilitators built unique and meaningful relationships with each parent. This supported parenting adults in stepping out of their comfort zones toward the goals they defined for themselves and for their families. This trust was necessary before leading learners through goal-setting activities. Facilitators asked questions, and parents shared their stories with each other. What the learner chose to share was valued by the facilitator as important information needed to guide the entire process.

One activity used in the parenting class was creating "Dream Boards." To complete this activity, facilitators provided magazines, scissors, glue, and blank poster paper for parenting adults to use to cut out pictures from magazines of things that represented what they desired in their lives. Another activity used was "3 Stars and 1 Wish." Parenting adults brainstormed three "stars" in their lives and one "wish." These "stars" signified parts of themselves they liked or areas that made them happy. It was beneficial for individuals to identify their "3 stars" and share them out loud. This strengthened their ownership of each attribute. After discussing their "stars," parenting adults returned to their "wish." The stories voluntarily shared allowed classmates to give affirmation and encouragement to one another.

As the facilitator, remember how important it is to set a safe and supportive learning atmosphere. Plan ways to intentionally build relationships and trust. When working through various goal-setting lessons, aim to always teach by encouragement. The most successful lessons happen when learners gain confidence after recognizing their own strengths and acquiring the necessary tools to achieve their goals. This empowers individuals and entire communities.



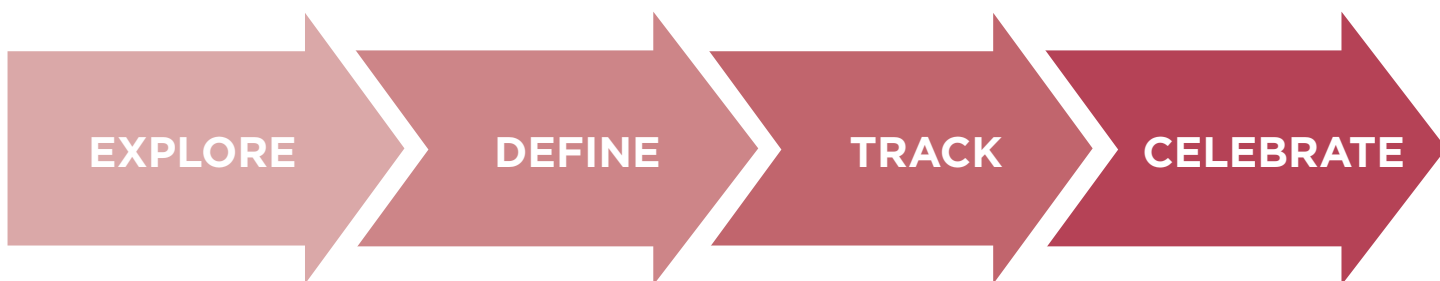
Americana Community Center, Louisville, Kentucky

Background Information

What Is Goal Setting?

A goal is what we want to achieve. Goals help us focus on a change that we would like to make. Goals help us plan and make progress. Goal setting is an interactive, ongoing, and cooperative process involving learners and facilitators. It is essential to adult education programs. (LINCS, n.d.).

Learners and facilitators can explore, define, track, and celebrate achieving goals. These are the steps of the inquiry process when setting goals.



During these steps, challenges are addressed, and successes are celebrated. This process is learner-centered and considers the internal and external motivators that drive adults to set and achieve personal goals. In doing so, adults grow as role models and educators of their families and communities.

Learners come to adult education and family literacy programs with varied interests and needs. It is important to honor the diversity of the learners' interests and the wealth of their life experiences throughout this process of inquiry. Goal setting can drive instruction as you seek out community resources and plan lessons that support the goals that learners set.

Why Is Goal Setting Important With Adult Learners?

Goal setting is a foundational life skill for adult learners. It affirms the wealth of experience and potential of each learner. It provides learners with adequate supports and relevant classroom activities. It promotes growth as learners develop their self-awareness, self-confidence, and self-efficacy. Self-awareness says, “This is who I am.” Self-confidence says, “I feel good about who I am.” Self-efficacy says, “I believe I can do this.” Although each participant’s background may be different, they can all walk into the adult education classroom to participate, encourage one another, and achieve the goals they set out to achieve.

Integrating goal setting as a regular and central part of adult education classrooms provides an opportunity to orient your adult learners to goal setting.

- **Authentic goal setting encourages learners to identify their own unique goals, set the path to achieve these goals and the actions that will get them there.**
- **Thoughtful goal setting respects learners and their experiences, especially when exploring potential or unstated goals.**
- **Reflective goal setting facilitates meaningful questions and truthful answers that assist learners as they define their goals.**
- **Useful goal setting applies gained knowledge and skills to monitoring progress toward goals.**
- **Effective goal setting engages learners actively, supporting them on toward the next objective or goal, and then celebrating successes together.**

*This builds a sense of “where have I been,”
“where am I now,” and “where do I want be?”*

Through exploring stated and unstated goals, learners reflect on their life experiences and become more self-aware of the past, present, and future. Through defining goals and progressing toward their completion, learners build a sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy. Each step towards achieving their goal encourages them to continue making steps forward. For this reason, it is essential to celebrate all successes, small and big. All successes are wins for learners in your classroom.

How Do I Support Learners?

Recognize Internal and External Motivators

The learning environment is a place where learners evaluate their aspirations and make them a reality through setting and achieving goals (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). There are many ways to support learners as they explore their goals and achieve them.

Knowles (1980) argues that internal motivators are more powerful than external motivators. We begin to understand if learners are more internally or externally motivated to complete their goal by identifying the roots of their motivations. External motivators are important to the goal-setting process. However, learners will be more likely to persist in meeting their goal if they are also internally motivated. Sometimes, learners need extra support when they want to change their course of action. Provide consistent support and feedback throughout the goal-setting process.

Facilitator Tips

1. Encourage learners to identify their external and internal motivations.
2. Provide consistent support and feedback throughout the goal-setting process.

Support Learner Persistence

It is challenging to juggle learning another language or earning a credential along with the many stressors and responsibilities that adults experience. For this reason, adults need support in persevering to reach the goals they have set. Think about the ways you can help your learners to have a healthy balance in life so they may be able to persist through tedious situations or difficult life events. Set up intentional meetings with learners to ensure they have the support they need.

Create strategic partnerships in the community to find resources for learners. Provide resources based on the learners' needs. If learners can create a good work/life/school balance, then they are more likely to be successful in meeting their goals.

The New England Literacy Resource Center names six learner needs that can be better met by programs to support persistence:

- Sense of belonging and community
- Clarity of purpose
- Agency
- Competence
- Relevance
- Stability

As an example, they recommend that “Adult education providers can boost learner persistence by intentionally addressing these needs through all facets and phases of the program. For example, an informative and welcoming student orientation that begins the goal-setting process and that involves enrolled students as presenters can address various needs for a sense of belonging, clarity of purpose, competence, relevance and agency” (The New England Literacy Resource Center, 2013).

Addressing persistence, then, is no small task for facilitators or program staff. Facilitators and staff can plan programs of study that positively impact student persistence through understanding why students struggle to persist and the types of support available. Helping learners set goals and work toward reaching them are great supports we can offer!

Reflect: How does my program encourage learners to have a healthy balance in life?

Support Learner Resiliency

When people are resilient, they cope well with disruptive change. They overcome problems. They tend to remain healthy when experiencing stress. They change to new ways when the old ways are not working. Think back to when you learned to ride a bike, speak a new language, or write your first college essay. How did you feel? Were you comfortable and confident or apprehensive and self-conscious?

Reflect: How does my classroom provide time for learners to plan for and learn from life's challenges?

Facilitators can create an environment to help students increase their resiliency. George Lakey (2010) describes the classroom environment as a container. He explains that a “strong container has walls thick enough to hold a group doing the turbulent work with individuals willing to be vulnerable in order to learn” (p. 14). Adult learners need to feel safe and, therefore, need a “strong container to do their best work, to feel proud of themselves, and to experience their power” (p. 14). How, then, can you create and maintain a strong container in which learners can do their best work? For example, mastering a new math or reading skill is the risk and the learning environment is the safe place in which to take it. Create a thoughtful, supportive environment that invites learners to attempt new challenges. Support learners as they learn from these challenges. Using the strategies in the following chart is a great way to start.

To Build Resiliency, Work on:	Example
Staying calm under pressure	Practice stress-reducing strategies
Problem solving	Participate in volunteering
Investing in my health	Exercise with friends/classmates
Valuing my feelings	Write reflectively
Expressing my feelings	Communicate feelings with facilitators and classmates
Increasing my desire to learn	Participate in a community event that interests me
Asking for support	Communicate needs with facilitators and classmates
Taking actions	Complete objectives that lead to achieving personal goals

Universal Design for Learning and Goal Setting

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a strengths-based approach that can help you support each learner to reach their goals. UDL looks at barriers in the learning environment and offers ways for you as the facilitator to address them. While it began by addressing barriers that students with learning disabilities experience, it has grown to encompass all learners. UDL is “a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn” (CAST, 2018). UDL practices are essential for some and useful for all.

As a concrete analogy, think of a sidewalk in an urban environment. Many people need to use it to get from block to block. Depending on how the sidewalk is designed, it can present barriers for people in wheelchairs to move around. A curb cut is when the sidewalk is graded to meet the street level. This makes crossing streets easier for those who use wheelchairs-- but it also makes it easier for those who are using bicycles, riding scooters, pushing strollers, running, or walking to move around.

This one structural change can improve use and access for everyone who wants and needs to move around. Likewise, we can use techniques that may be designed for people who experience structural barriers to learning and make them useful for all students. This involves providing various means of engagement, representation, and action and expression (CAST, 2018) so that all students can access and participate in the learning process. This works with goal setting as well.



“UDL calls explicitly for expert learning or teaching students how to learn, how to set goals, and how to share what they know to reach those goals in authentic, meaningful ways” (Chardin & Novak, 2021). UDL does not create a one-size that fits all learning experience. Instead, UDL practices create multiple ways for learners to engage, participate, and show their learning (CAST, 2018). Below are several ways you can do this.

Think about adults’ learning styles.

Learning styles will influence the way learners set goals as well as the way they achieve them. Learning styles might include:

- Verbal
- Visual
- Musical/Auditory
- Physical/Kinesthetic
- Logical/Mathematical
- Social
- Solitary
- Combination of styles

Make goal setting and goal achievement a group experience.

When learners are aware of their peers' goals, they can support one another and learn from the strategies that each person is using. The Colorado Department of Education's *Adult Learner Goals Toolkit* (2004) includes instruments for setting goals, exploring feelings about goal work, revisiting goals and celebrating goal achievement. Several of the activities provide guidelines for goal setting in groups, in pairs, and through students conducting interviews with one another.

As another strategy, you might create a goal wall to provide a concrete visual for the class (Nicol, 2017). Learners can see what others are doing, and it also highlights what they have in common.

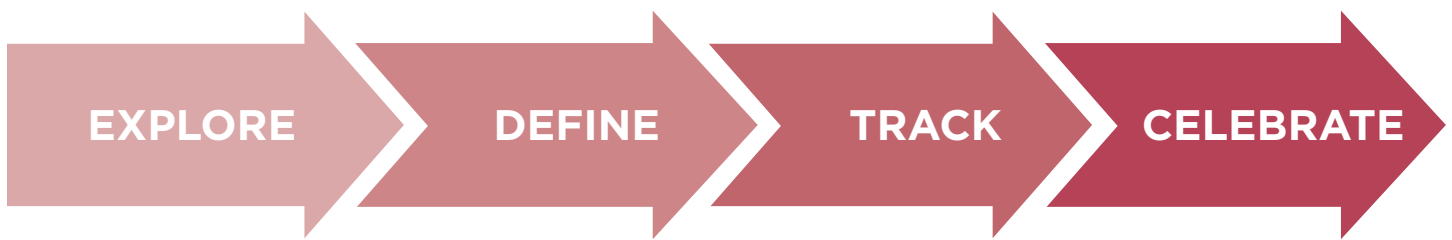
- Write goals in different colors and on different charts to show the types of goals the students in the class have: employment, reading, writing, math skills, learn more about children's development, etc.
- If goals are listed on one chart, alternate colors so learners can differentiate from one goal to the other easily.
- Use pictures, photos, or drawings to display everyone's goals.
- Post progress toward goals such as how many resumes were written, how many books were read, how many jobs were attained, how many GEDs earned, etc.

How Do I Guide Learners Through an Inquiry Process?

Setting and monitoring goals is a process. They need to establish priorities and figure out a starting point. You can guide learners through this process and provide support as learners target areas for improvement and set goals. Additionally, when goals are set, you will be there to help learners revisit them frequently to monitor progress and adjust.

When working with learners on goal setting, encourage them to set personal goals with program supports. These are student-centered goals that focus on the individual needs of learners and their families. Encourage and track student-centered goals even if the program does not provide direct support towards those goals. In this case, building community connections with other organizations, schools, and programs that can support your learners in these areas is essential.

One way to support students in practicing their goal-setting skills is to set a goal as a class. By doing this, you can model goal setting, build community, and practice skills that each learner will use to set their own goals. Following the inquiry process below for group goal setting can help learners use it more effectively for their own goal setting.



Actively engage learners at each step. This guide has been developed around each of these stages, and activities have been provided for each of the sections. Remember that these are suggested activities, and they are not the only activities that are possible. Use your creativity and knowledge of your learners and community to facilitate goal setting. Help learners achieve their goals.

Adult learners often need foundational support to tackle their goals. From exploring goals to celebrating achievements, facilitators provide supports as learners drive the process. It is not enough for them to articulate the goals; they need to have the tools to reach them and to understand what will be required of them to be successful. You can support them by:

- **teaching executive functioning skills like organization and time management**
- **teaching study skills**
- **helping them to understand how they think and how they learn**
- **keeping copies of learner goals in their files for them to refer to**
- **helping learners keep portfolios of their work**

How Can We Explore Goals?

To help learners think about the goals they might set, it is helpful to begin with a process of inquiry. Inquiry allows facilitators and learners to ask questions. The focus is on exploring possibilities so that learners can think about their needs, wants, and dreams. To help learners through an inquiry process, facilitators can use a variety of tools and strategies. Facilitators and learners can explore possibilities by asking questions, such as those listed below.

Reflective Questions to Discover Goals
What interests me about the program I participate in?
What do I want to learn more about?
What would I like to accomplish today?
What would I like to accomplish this week?
What would I like to accomplish this month?
What would I like to accomplish this year?

Provide students with resources, tools, prompts, and flexibility to help them think about the goals they want to set for themselves. Not all learners think best when asked to sit down at a desk or table in the classroom with a goal setting document in front of them. They may need more inputs to stimulate and encourage their thinking. You could support them in articulating their goals by allowing them to approach the task in a way that meets their processing and expressive needs.

Learners can:

- read books, stories, poetry, or song lyrics for inspiration.
- look at photos or digital dream boards, watch videos, or listen to music to get ideas.
- take a walk, sit on the floor, or in a comfy chair to stimulate their thinking.
- talk with a peer, a teacher, a family member, or have a discussion with a group to process their ideas.
- take photos, paint, or make a collage to inspire their thinking.
- just listen to others or sit in silence away from others to think.
- think about people they admire and want to emulate.
- think about their community and contributions they want to make.
- explore their feelings about current and past goals to inform future goals.

Provide opportunities for learners to express their goals in diverse ways. Just as learners need varying parameters to think through their goals, they need different options for expressing their ideas. Instead of writing a list of goals, they may need to document their goals by:

- making an audio or video recording
- writing a story, song or poem
- making a chart, mind map, or flow chart
- drawing a picture, painting, making a collage, drawing comics, using graphics or symbols
- writing on index cards or on poster boards

Activity: Trees and Me

Materials: cardstock or construction paper, colored pencils, markers, pens/pencils

Central Ideas and Practice:

1. Explain to students that this activity is one way to explore goals. Students have already achieved goals in life. They are likely working on other goals now and have an idea of more goals they would like to achieve in their lifetime.
2. In the activity, students will draw a tree to represent their life. Trees are a vibrant image, significant to each environment. Many people find inspiration in trees. Ask students what kind of trees they are familiar with. Then, ask them to draw their own tree any way they would like.
 - Draw a tree. Think of yourself as this tree.
 - Roots describe the past. This is where, who, and what you have come from.
 - The trunk describes the present. This is where and who you are now.
 - Branches describe the future. This is where you are going and who you will become.
 - Include images and words as you choose to represent past, present, and future.
3. Once students have all had a chance to draw their tree, ask students to display their trees on a wall in the classroom or simply hold them up for others to see. Give the opportunity for students to talk about how they drew their tree and what it represents.
4. Over time, you can return to these images during goal-setting conversations in a group setting, or one-to-one meetings with students.

Activity: Create a Vision Board

Materials: Vision Board Template and posterboard for each learner, magazines, newspapers, pictures, scissors, glue or tape, colored pencils, markers, pens/pencils

Central Ideas and Practice:

1. Explain to learners what vision boards are.
 - a. They are boards that can be made digitally or with paper materials.
 - b. They give learners a space to show what is important in their vision of their future.
 - c. They may include pictures the learner draws, paints, or cuts out of magazines or other materials.

For digital boards, learners collect pictures from digital sources that show their vision.
2. Show learners an example of a vision board. Ask, “Have you ever created something like this before? What did you include on your board?” If they have not done this, ask how they might decide what kind of pictures to include.
3. Explain that learners will create vision boards. These boards are a starting place for setting goals. A vision can be a helpful place to start. Specific goals will give structure to achieve pieces of that vision so we stay on track for the overall vision.
4. As a first step in creating the vision board, have learners complete the Vision Board Template (see next page). This handout will help learners consider what is important to them in the different areas of their lives. The template includes prompts for learners to consider different areas of their lives that may be a part of their vision for the future.
5. Provide time for learners to share their vision boards with a peer or the class before you display them. Explain that you will post learners’ vision boards in the classroom if they agree to this and if there is space for them. If it is not possible to post the boards in the classroom, ask learners to tell you where in their homes they will post their boards. Explain that it is important to post the vision board where it is visible. The boards will help remind the learners what they are working to achieve.
6. If the learners will create a digital vision board, provide digital resources as a starting place. You might use Microsoft PowerPoint, Google Slides, Canva, or another digital tool with learners. Be sure to provide mini-lessons on skills needed to use the tools so learners feel confident using them.



Vision Board Template

Community

Family

Health and Wellness

Education

Work/Finances

Relationships

Activity: A Graphic Organizer for Goal Setting

Materials: copies of graphic organizers, pens/pencils

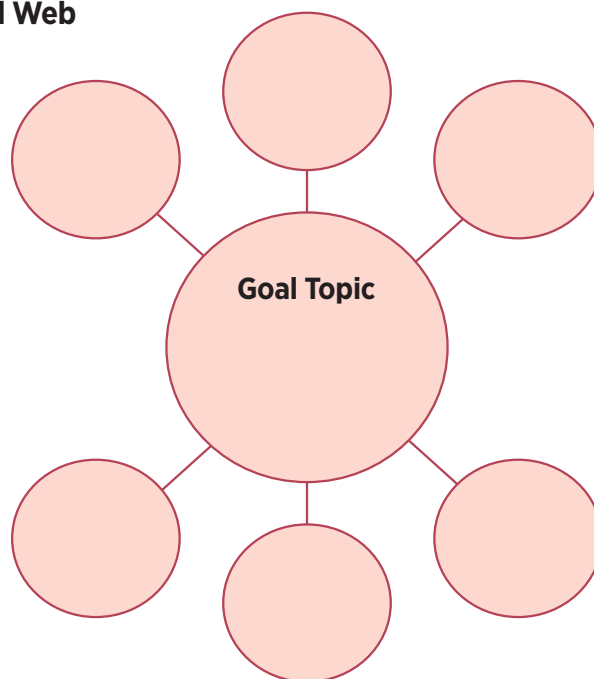
Central Ideas and Practice

1. Using graphic organizers can help us organize information and ideas. Some reasons why graphic organizers can be helpful in writing goals include:
 - a. providing a guide to help us think about how ideas are related
 - b. helping us to think through information now rather than procrastinating
 - c. helping us to group similar ideas into categories
2. Show examples of what learners might have used in the past such as word webs, charts, etc. What kinds have they used? What worked well for them? What did not work as well?
3. Introduce the Word Web graphic organizer.
 - a. Introduce the Word Web. This graphic organizer gives us space to write a topic to begin with and then connect it to other ideas. One helpful way to use a Word Web for goal setting is for learners to write a goal topic in the middle circle and use the other circles as spaces to write ideas about how they might work to achieve that goal.

Application

Before learners create their own, practice brainstorming a goal topic as a group using the word web below. Then, provide time for them to work with the organizer. Remind them that brainstorming with a partner can be helpful as they begin this process. Move around the room to provide additional support as learners are brainstorming. Learners may have questions about completing the organizer because it may be a new tool.

Example Goal-Setting Word Web



A large, abstract teal graphic on the left side of the page, composed of several overlapping geometric shapes like triangles and polygons, creating a dynamic, layered effect.

Section 2: Define Goals

Scenario 2: What Does Success Look Like for Me and My Family?

Background Information

What Are Some Types of Goals?

What Are Long-Term and Short-Term Goals?

How Can We Define Goals?

Activity: Setting W.O.O.P. Goals

Activity: Setting S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goals

Section 2: Define Goals

Scenario 2: What Does Success Look Like for Me and My Family?

Staff at Catholic Charities of Louisville, Kentucky, used a holistic family-centered approach to programming that was driven by personal and family interest. Goal setting began as a process of thinking about the future and motivating families to make it happen. This process guided each family to organize its time and to make the most of it. With this effort, the program valued goal setting and achievement as a vehicle for happiness, self-confidence, and the recognition of personal strengths and abilities.

Specific types of goals were identified with follow-up questions, including:

- *Career: What do you want to accomplish in your employment? How can the agency support you? What are you good at and would you like to do in the future?*
- *Financial: How much money do you want to make? How is this related to your family and career goals?*
- *Education: What would you like to learn more about?*
- *Family: How would you like to grow as a parent? How do you want to be seen by your spouse and children? How do you know your child is learning in school? How can you help your child do well in school?*
- *Skills: What kind of new skills will support your short-term and long-term goals?*
- *Physical and Mental Health: What steps are you going to take to live a healthy life?*
- *Vacation: How do you rest? How would you like to enjoy yourself?*
- *Family Service Learning: How do you want to make your community a better place to live?*

Reflective questions identified steps to achieving the goal, including:

- *How do I overcome the challenges that I face?*
- *What does success look like for me and my family? What do I want out of life?*
- *How am I motivated to accomplish what I want for myself and my family?*
- *What is the benefit of achieving this goal for me and my family?*

From reflective and specific questions like these, facilitators worked with parents to define what they wanted to accomplish and to plan their next steps. Families began with small goals such as regular home routines like cleaning the house. Then, they thought through what each step of that process would be and planned. For example, as a family, they talked through questions like: *Will we need to get up early? Do we need to buy cleaning supplies? Should we ask someone in the family to help? If yes, how are we going to delegate responsibilities?* Families also worked with larger literacy-based goals. The steps of this process were identified and might have included going to school, looking for additional classes, reading at home, or finding a mentor. With both sets of goals, facilitators worked with families to identify resources through Catholic Charities and in the local community.

Goals can be broken down into specific objectives to create actionable steps for success.

Goal setting and achievement positively impact the entire family when individuals are motivated to decide what they want to do and then to make the plan to achieve that vision. Facilitators support families in this process by helping to identify the smaller objectives that make the bigger vision possible. Prioritizing is key when families have more than one goal. This allows families to direct their attention toward the goals that are more important.



Enemy Swim Day School, Waubay, SD

Background Information

What Are Some Types of Goals?

There are many types of goals. Goals can focus on topics including basic needs, employment, education, health, and family (Lauby, 2019). These goals can be long-term or short-term. Specific objectives outline steps for achieving goals. A person might actually be working toward several goals at the same time. We can guide learners to think about the different types of goals and which ones make the most sense for now and for later.

Again, common topics for goal setting include employment, education, skill-building, finances, health, relationships, community, and family (Lauby, 2019; Radar, 2015). By targeting certain topics, you can help learners monitor their progress and provide support where needed. When working with learners on goal setting, consider the types of services your program offers. Consider which community partners can provide additional services with community partners to make more services available to families.

What Are Long-Term and Short-Term Goals?

Goals can be big and take months or years to complete. For example, a learner might want a high-school equivalency degree, or parents might want their children to finish high school. These goals are an individual’s vision for the future. The goals point individuals in the direction that they want to move. However, they may be difficult to achieve in a reasonable timeframe if they lack the specificity that inspires action. They may be challenging to evaluate.

Long-term goals will be achieved over an extended period while short-term goals can be reached in a brief amount of time. Short-term goals can be objectives, or steps, to achieving larger goals. A realistic short-term goal might be accomplished in days, weeks, or months. A long-term goal might take a year or more to achieve. While there is no definitive amount of time that separates short-term from long-term goals, generally a year is a good dividing point. The chart below includes examples of related long-term and short-term goals that an individual learner might set.

Examples of Related Goals	
Long-Term Goal	Short-Term Goal
Earning a high-school equivalency degree	Mastering division skills and concepts
Obtaining a job in the cyber-security industry	Enrolling in a cyber-security training program
Developing better family relationships	Eating dinner together as a family three nights per week
Developing leadership skills	Participating in a Family Service Learning® project
Support children’s education	Using PACT Time® activities at home

Therefore, long-term goals can be addressed with more specific, targeted short-term goals. These short-term goals may suggest a specific action or approach that a learner can take. For example, for the long-term goal of earning a high school equivalency degree, a short-term goal could be: I will master fraction concepts.

How Can We Define Goals?

Clearly defined goals are essential to success. When goals are too easy, unrealistic, or boundless, they can lead to feelings of frustration and failure. So, rather than jumping right into goal writing, facilitators can support learners by helping them to understand how to define goals. Learners need opportunities to explore what well-defined goals look and sound like. Facilitators can use modeling and examples to support this learning. Two useful ways are to set W.O.O.P. goals or to set S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals. These are detailed below.

W.O.O.P. Goals

W.O.O.P. is one way that learners can define a goal. The W.O.O.P. goal-setting process was developed by psychologist and researcher Gabriele Oettinger. Learn more about this model of goal setting here: WOOPMyLife.org.

W.O.O.P. stands for Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, Plan. It begins with identifying what you wish to achieve and why. Then, you consider challenges that you may face and plan how to work through them. This helps learners to define their goal, and develop a larger, more detailed plan with the steps to reach it.

Wish. First, ask learners to think about something they wish for. This can be something meaningful that they want in their lives for themselves or for their families. Maybe it's something they have dreamed of doing for a long time like becoming a nurse. Or it could be something they just thought about that could change their life, like moving to a different neighborhood.

Outcome. Next, ask them to visualize what reaching that goal would be like. How does it make them feel? Who will be there with them to celebrate their success? Family, friends, teachers, co-workers? Where will they be when they achieve the goal? Maybe at a college graduation or walking into the office of a new job?

Obstacle. Next, ask learners to think about what might get in the way of achieving their goal. Obstacles could be things like life demands that take time and energy, people in their life who are not supportive, or challenges in finding resources. This step might bring up many emotions when learners reflect on themselves and situations they face.

Plan. The final step is to plan. Ask learners to name the strengths and resources they have that can address the obstacles they identified. This might be strengths like public speaking skills or knowing where to go in the community to access resources.

W.O.O.P. Goal Setting Example

W

I have wanted to be a nurse since I was young. I want to complete a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training and test.

O

I will feel proud of myself when I complete the training and pass the test. I will feel hopeful and ready to start a new career. I know my family will be there to cheer me on at my graduation. I will feel confident looking for a job.

O

I tried before, and I had to drop out to take care of my family. I worry that the same thing might happen again.

P

I'll think through the steps I need to take to get into a program and complete it.

Sample W.O.O.P. Goal:

I will complete my Certified Nursing Assistance (CNA) training and take the CNA test by the end of this year.

Activity: Setting W.O.O.P. Goals

Materials: W.O.O.P. Goal worksheet, pencils/pens

In this activity, learners will be able to create a W.O.O.P. goal.

Central Ideas and Practice

1. Discuss why creating goals is important. Some key reasons include:
 - **Creating goals helps give us specific steps to take toward fulfilling something we want to achieve. Dreams are important. However, to make dreams reality, it is important to set targets that lead to making the dreams come true.**
 - **It can also be a helpful way to see what goals are important to other people. It can provide understanding when others have unique perspectives.**
 - **Creating W.O.O.P. goals helps learners think about the importance of a specific success and its impact. It also helps to plan for things that might get in the way of success.**
2. Introduce W.O.O.P. goals. Discuss what the acronym means—Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, Plan. Share an example of a W.O.O.P. goal.
3. Discuss how learners can move from an idea that they visualize to a goal that they want to achieve.
4. If learners already created a vision board, ask them to choose one of the pictures. With that picture, ask them to write a W.O.O.P. goal that could help them achieve one of their dreams. Learners may work together to think about specific goals and consider how long it may take to complete a goal. Be sure to move around the space to provide guidance.
5. Explain to learners that when they write goals these might be long-term goals. These are goals that they may not complete for several months or even a year or longer. Short-term goals may be achieved in a day or a few weeks. Sometimes there are many short-term goals that help achieve a long-term goal. Learners may need a couple of “small wins” to propel them towards a bigger achievement. Any of these types of goals can be used in the W.O.O.P. process.
6. Discuss how learners could introduce the concept of goal setting to their children. Explain that it is easier to begin with short-term goals when talking with young children because they can focus on the short-term more easily.

W.O.O.P. Goals Worksheet

Use the chart to describe a wish, the outcomes, any obstacles, and a plan.

Wish

What do you want to see in your life?

Outcomes

What will it feel like to achieve your goal?

Obstacles

What might get in the way of achieving your goal?

Plan

What personal strengths and resources do you have that can help you achieve your goal?

Write your W.O.O.P. goal here:

S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goals

Setting S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals is a specific goal-setting strategy that can be used with different types of goals. Not every goal will have all five characteristics. However, goals that are written with five characteristics in mind tend to be clearly outlined and actionable (Doran, 1981). In recent years, some have included two more letters to improve goal setting (Kulikov, V, 2023). The acronym S.M.A.R.T.E.R. refers to seven characteristics of meaningful goals:

- Specific
 - Measurable
 - Attainable
 - Relevant or Results-based
- Timely or Time-bound
 - Evaluated
 - Reviewed and Rewarded

The chart below explores the characteristics through descriptive questions.

Characteristic	Description
Specific	Does the goal clearly say what it seeks to accomplish? Does it name who is involved? Does it set up a time frame?
Measurable	Does the goal set an objective? Does it suggest a method for measuring success? How will I know if I have successfully met my goal?
Attainable	Is the goal practical considering the resources available? Can it be completed within a reasonable amount of time?
Results-Based	Does the goal move me toward a substantial and meaningful change? Does the goal address an issue or problem?
Time-Bound	Is this the appropriate time to work toward this goal? Can it be completed in the timeframe established?
Evaluated	When will I take a look at my goal to see if anything has changed in my life or focus?
Reviewed and Rewarded	How will I review my goal? How will I reflect on what went well and what I could change? How will I reward myself for all the hard work I am doing?

Using the S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Method

The S.M.A.R.T.E.R. method provides a template for clearly defining goals that include a measure of success.

- Begin by modeling for learners how to write a goal statement. Then break it down into action steps or more achievable short-term goals. Consider setting a goal that the whole class might work toward together. Group goal-setting activities allow learners to experience defining and monitoring progress toward a goal before they tackle their own individual goals.
- Learners can use templates that outline the characteristics of S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals to write their own goals. Encourage learners to write one or two long-term goals using the S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goals for Success handout in the Setting S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goals Activity. Provide time for learners to share their goals with peers. Encourage them to make any necessary changes that they learn through the feedback process.
- Once learners have written their S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals, the next step will be to have them think about the steps they need to take to achieve those goals and to prioritize the steps. Use the Step-by-Step Goal-Setting Activity and handout included in this section.
- A well-defined goal is a destination. Learners still need a road map to help them achieve their goals. We can guide learners to write an action plan that identifies the interim steps that will eventually lead to the successful attainment of the goal. We will tackle this in Section 3. By working together to create a plan, we can help learners establish a method for monitoring progress towards completion of their goals.

Activity: Setting S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goals

Materials: S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goals Worksheet, S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goals for Success handout, pencils/pens

In this activity, learners will be able to determine if a goal is a S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goal and write a S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goal.

Central Ideas and Practice

1. Discuss why creating goals is important. Some key reasons include:

- Creating goals helps give us specific steps to take toward achieving something we want to achieve...like those dreams from the vision boards! Dreams are important. However, to make dreams reality, it is important to set goals that lead to making the dreams come true.
- It can also be a helpful way to see what goals are important to other people and provide understanding when each other's actions or perspectives are different.
- Setting goals helps us think about the steps required to achieve what we want.
- Creating S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals can help us think about achievement within a timeframe. It also helps us plan for reviewing our goals and making changes along the way.

2. Introduce S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals. Discuss what the acronym means—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-Based, Time-Bound, Evaluated, Reviewed and Rewarded. Share examples and non-examples. Share examples of goals that meet this criteria and goals that do not.
3. Practice writing S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals. Hand out the S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goals Worksheet. This asks learners to determine if the example goals are S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals.
4. Discuss how learners can move from an idea that they visualized to a goal that they want to achieve.
5. If learners already created a vision board, ask them to choose one of the pictures. With that picture, ask them to write a S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goal that could help them achieve one of their dreams. Learners may work together to think about specific goals and consider how long it may take to complete a goal. Be sure to move around the room to provide guidance. Think about using word webs as a support to the process.
6. Explain to learners that when they write goals they often think of long-term goals. These are goals that they may not complete for several months or even a year or longer. Short-term goals may be achieved in a day or a few weeks. Sometimes there are many short-term goals that help achieve a long-term goal. Learners may need a couple of “small wins” to propel them towards a bigger achievement.
7. Discuss how the learners could introduce the concept of goal setting to their children. Explain that it is easier to begin with short-term goals when talking with young children because they are able to focus on the short-term more easily.

S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goals Worksheet

Look at each of the following goals. Check to see if they are S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals. Use the boxes to check which parts of a S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goal you see. Then, revise the goals to make them S.M.A.R.T.E.R.

Remember S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals are:

S=Specific: Clarify what/how much.

M=Measurable: How I will know when I get there.

A=Achievable: Challenging, yet achievable.

R=Results-based: Worth pursuing, important.

T=Time-bound: Target the finish time.

E=Evaluated: Check-in and adjust as needed.

R=Reviewed and Rewarded: Reflect and celebrate.

1. This week I will read to my child for 15 minutes each day.

☐ S. ☐ M. ☐ A. ☐ R. ☐ T. ☐ E. ☐ R.

2. I will save money for a new phone this month.

☐ S. ☐ M. ☐ A. ☐ R. ☐ T. ☐ E. ☐ R.

3. I will get a driver's license.

☐ S. ☐ M. ☐ A. ☐ R. ☐ T. ☐ E. ☐ R.

4. I will enroll in college classes this year.

☐ S. ☐ M. ☐ A. ☐ R. ☐ T. ☐ E. ☐ R.

5. I will exercise more each day this month.

☐ S. ☐ M. ☐ A. ☐ R. ☐ T. ☐ E. ☐ R.

S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goals of Success

S.M.A.R.T.E.R.	Sample Goal	My Goal
S Specific What will I do?	I will attend classes.	
M Measurable How will I know I met the goal?	3 of 4 classes a week	
A Achievable Is the goal possible with the resources I have available?	I will schedule appointments so I can attend 3 of 4 classes a week	
R Results-based What results do I want to experience?	This will advance my education.	
T Time-bound By when will I achieve this goal?	This month	
E Evaluated When will I check-in?	I will check in with my teacher weekly.	
R Reviewed and Rewarded How will I reflect and celebrate?	At the end of the month, I will reflect on how I did. I will let my teacher know how I want to celebrate reaching my goal.	



Section 3: Track Goals

Scenario 3: How Do We Make the Program Work for Our Families?

Background Information

How Can We Plan and Track Goal Progress?

Activity: Step-by-Step Plan

Activity: Using My Strengths to Keep Going

Activity: Goal Priorities

Activity: Adult Goals Tracking Form

Section 3: Track Goals

Scenario 3: How Do We Make the Program Work for Our Families?

Staff in the Toyota Family Learning program at San Mateo County Libraries in San Mateo, California, used a data-informed process to guide parents in setting goals for their participation in the program. In the Initial Family Interview that is part of the data collected by the program and provided to the evaluator, parents noted how important several goals in a list were for them.

A couple of weeks into the program, parents received a copy of their responses and a short discussion was facilitated on the various goals among the whole group. Then the parents were divided into small groups per highest priority goal clusters and given a piece of paper with a silhouette in the middle of it. The parents were instructed to draw themselves in the silhouette and create a vision board around it to show the highest priority goal they had. The session ended with an opportunity for parents who wanted to share their vision board with the rest of the parents to describe what they included.

During the next session, staff introduced and explained the S.M.A.R.T. approach to goals and created a sample goal with the group. Once the group understood the concept, parents got into their groups from the previous session and wrote their own S.M.A.R.T. goals with support from their group and the facilitators. In the goal priority groups, learners worked together to decide action steps that would help them start to work on their goals. The groups also embraced the idea that they could be accountability partners for each other by setting common action steps that would help them all work toward their goal since they had the same priority area.

Accountability groups of parents continued to check in with and encourage each other as parents worked to achieve their goals. Facilitators were also able to provide targeted support to groups when they worked together around their priority areas because they had a similar focus. This made it easier for staff members to keep track of parents' goals and the progress they were making toward achieving them.

Using a data-driven approach to goal setting and tracking is an important way to ensure that programming meets the needs of the participants. Facilitators can make small adjustments or large changes to programming to meet participants' goals. No matter the degree of customization that can be made, participants are more likely to feel connected to a program and have regular attendance if they can see how the program is meeting their needs.



San Mateo County Libraries, San Mateo, California

Background Information

How Can We Plan and Track Goal Progress?

There is no single way to plan for and track progress toward a goal. For example, this might look different for an employment goal and a family goal. However, you can more than one way for learners to plan for their goal. You can also create flexible routines that allow learners to see when they are making progress and when they need more support.

- After learners set a goal, you can use the Step-By-Step Plan activity for them to visualize the steps it will take to achieve their goal. The Using My Strengths to Keep Going activity is another way to plan for a goal. It will help learners think more about the strengths and resources they can use to reach their goals. When learners have more than one goal, the Goal Priorities activity is useful.
- You may want to use the Adult Goals Tracking Form to record one or two high priority goals for each learner. If you want to track two goals for a student, think about printing two sheets. Track one goal on each. Keep these goals in mind as you prepare lessons. Note learners' progress toward these goals. This is an example of a printed form that can be used. You might also upload this to a digital platform for learners to complete. You might also find an alternate way to track goals with a phone app or another digital tool.
- Learners can create goal journals. Have learners decorate the covers of composition notebooks with pictures or images related to their goals. Then each week, encourage learners to write or draw about the progress they are making towards their goals. This opportunity for self-reflection allows learners to think about what is going well and what struggles they are encountering. It can also help you know which learners need more support.
- If learners would find it useful, encourage them to involve their children when developmentally appropriate. This might look like asking their children to draw on the next page of their goal journal or using a sticker chart on the refrigerator. Families can put a gold star on each accomplished task together. This can be one more way to support motivation.
- Learners' plans can be used to create checklists. Learners can note the dates when they achieve each interim step towards their long-term goals. Note the progress that learners are making, and provide support when learners appear stuck on a step.

Activity: Step-by-Step Plan

Materials: Step-by-Step handout, pens, pencils, markers

Central Ideas and Practice

Once learners have defined a goal, it's time to plan how to achieve the goal. Ask learners to think about how many steps it takes to reach a goal. Does the number change depending on the type of goal? Can the number increase or decrease in the middle of the process if the situation changes?

1. Create your own example of a Step-by-Step Plan with the template provided to share with the group or guide the group in creating a collective goal as practice.
2. Then, have learners use the template to plan with their own goals. Have learners write their goal at the bottom of the ladder.
3. Give them time to brainstorm all the steps they will need to take to achieve this goal. Ask them to discuss with a partner which steps need to happen first.
4. Once learners have had a chance to consider which steps are needed and in what order, have them write their steps on the rungs of the ladder.
5. Then, have pairs of learners review each other's steps to reach their goals and give each other feedback. You might ask them to discuss:
 - how long it might take to complete the steps
 - what resources, information, and skills they already have
 - what resources, information, skills and help they will need
6. Provide a monthly calendar and have learners think about when they are going to work on the steps to achieve their goal. Have them note times on the calendar to work on their goal. Have learners plan for the following day, week, or month and write specific actions they will take on the calendar. Ask, "What first steps did you decide to take? When will you take them?"

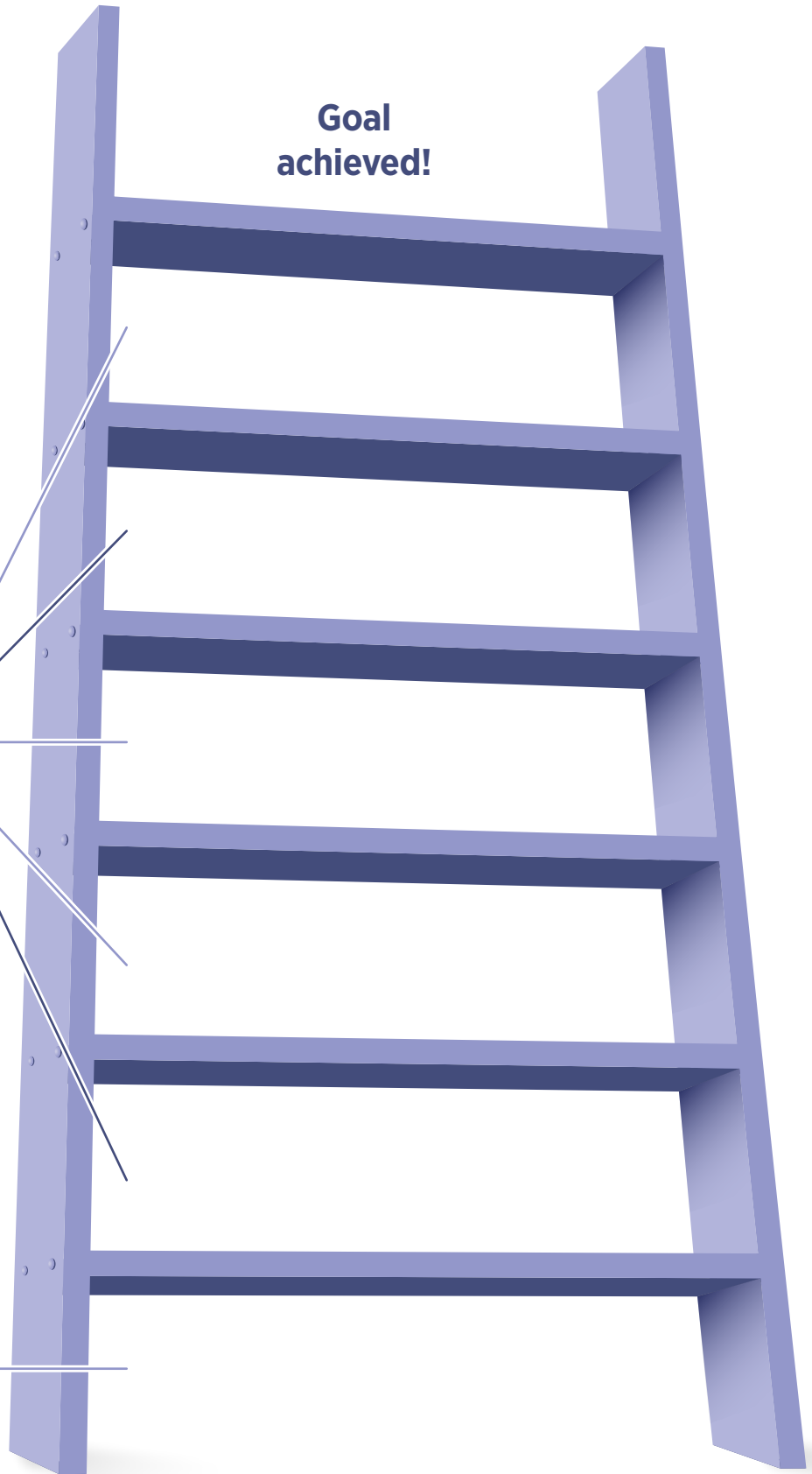
Step-by-Step Goal

1. Write your goal at the bottom of the ladder.
2. Decide what steps you can take to reach your goal.
3. Write those steps on the rungs of the ladder.

**Write your
action steps here.**

**Write your
goal here.**

**Goal
achieved!**



Activity: Using My Strengths to Keep Going

Materials: Using My Strengths to Keep Going Template handout for each learner, pens/pencils

Central Ideas and Practice

1. Explain to learners that having well-defined goals is an important first step, but a clear plan can help them make sure that they know what steps they will follow to meet the goals. Some important information to share about action plans includes:
 - a. They can help break down long-term goals that may require several steps to achieve.
 - b. They may be used as a checklist for learners to make sure they are on track for reaching their goals.
 - c. They help us build a habit of looking at the steps for reaching a goal. This can make a goal seem easier to reach.
2. Ask learners if they have had experiences they can share about a time when they set a goal but did not achieve it. Provide time for two or three learners to share a goal and an idea of why they did not achieve it.
3. Explain that writing out a plan that includes naming one's own strengths can help anticipate and overcome barriers that might get in our way. Sharing the plan with another person makes us more likely to achieve our goal. Knowing the barriers helps us be ready to overcome them when we experience them.
4. The template includes space for learners to think ahead about which of their strengths will help them meet the challenge of each step in reaching their goal. It also provides space for learners to return to the form and reflect once they've used their strengths to complete a step toward their goal.

Using My Strengths to Keep Going Template

Goal: _____

Step	My Strengths	Possible Barriers	How will I use my strengths to meet the challenge?	Reflection

Activity: Goal Priorities

Materials: Goal and Effect Goal Organizer handout for each learner, pens/pencils

Central Ideas and Practice

1. Ask learners to share briefly about their goals. How many goals do they have? What kind of goals do they want to achieve? How do they decide which goal is most important?
2. Explain that it is important to understand which of our goals are short-term goals that we can achieve quickly, and which ones are long-term goals that we may need more time to achieve. Share reasons why goal priorities are important.
 - a. We often have short-term goals that help us to achieve longer-term goals.
 - b. Some people work toward a few goals in different areas at the same time.
 - c. Deciding the priority level of goals can help learners focus on the goals that are most important at different times.
3. Share one or two examples of goals that learners might set, such as “I will pass the math section of my high school equivalency test this year,” and ask learners to decide what the effect might be if someone achieved the goal. For example, the learner who passes earns high-school equivalency and may get a raise at work with the new credential. Explain that the goal is a cause and the raise is the effect.
4. Explain that sometimes it is helpful to start with the effect that we want to achieve, or the vision, and think back to what goal we might set to help us achieve that effect.

Application

Ask learners to use the Goal and Effect Organizer to help them think about how their goals are connected with outcomes. When learners have listed two or three goal cause and effect pairs, ask them to mark the goals based on their importance. Number one is the highest priority, and goals become less of a priority as the numbers increase. Learners may want to create a timeline or priority list to help them remember which goals to focus on most in the near and far future.

Goal and Effect Organizer

Goal	Effect	Priority #

Which goal is your highest priority right now? Why?

How will you remember which goals to focus on most?

How can you organize your other goals to make sure you remember to work on them?

Activity: Adult Goals Tracking Form

Materials: Adult Goals Tracking Form handout for each learner, pens/pencils

Central Ideas and Practice

1. This tool helps to keep track of the goals learners are working on and the progress they have made. It can be used to document ongoing achievement throughout a term or school year.
2. Support each learner as they complete the form to focus on one specific goal. Use additional pages when working on more than one goal.
3. Meet with learners regularly to reflect on their goals. On the tracking form, add the steps learners have taken that show their progress toward reaching each goal. These steps may include:
 - a. completing a unit of study
 - b. earning a certificate
 - c. reading a book
 - d. filling out applications for work
 - e. furthering education
 - f. completing a project
 - g. attending a community event
 - h. attending a school event
4. Add documentation regularly to support the notes that you add to the form.

Adult Goals Tracking Form

Learner’s Name: _____

Date Enrolled: _____

Goal Area: Circle one or fill in the blank.

EducationCareerFamily Engagement

CommunityCulturePersonal

Specific Goal:

Date Set:

Date	Progress Made to Meet Goal	Reflection/Documentation/Comments



Section 4: Celebrate Success

Scenario 4: Goals Take Time—How Do We Get There?

Background Information

Let's Celebrate Success!

Section 4: Celebrate Success

Scenario 4: Goals Take Time—How Do We Get There?

The Family And Child Education (FACE) program staff at Chief Leschi School in Puyallup, Washington, utilized goal-setting strategies that addressed the time it took to make progress toward goals and the topics of interest to parents. They found that goal setting and achievement take time. It can take weeks, months, or even years. In addition to academic goals in adult education, parenting adults had non-academic goals. These were related to health, parenting, culture, family, or other areas of personal interest.

Facilitators used weekly and monthly goal-setting activities to guide discussions beyond yes and no questions. Parenting adults identified and defined their goals by using goal-setting inventories. One challenge was supporting parenting adults in defining smaller goals that are necessary to achieve the bigger goals they have stated. Based on the rapport between teacher and learners, reflective questions helped to overcome this hurdle.

Facilitators identified three important stages: planning, progress, and achievement.

Planning: In this stage, facilitators compiled stated learner goals on their class roster. This gave ease of access to facilitators when planning lessons that were driven by the interests and goals of the parenting adults. This also made it easier to prepare for individual meetings.

Progress: As learners progressed through the class, facilitators periodically wrote letters and notes of encouragement for each adult. These notes were helpful during the year to motivate adults in attendance and participation. They were especially important at the end of each semester to support parenting adults in their long-term journey toward achieving the goals they had set.

Achievement: The class celebrated small achievements along the way. Then, at the end of the term, bigger wins were acknowledged. Certificates were given for achievement, recognition, and attendance. These recognized goal completion as well as small and big successes.

It is the strength of the rapport in the class and motivation to continue that supports adults over the long term. By utilizing strategies that focus on learner-stated goals, giving encouragement throughout the process, and celebrating achievement, facilitators support parents in their achievement of academic and non-academic goals.



Chief Leschi School, Puyallup, Washington

Example Notes of Encouragement

“Thank you so much for being a part of the FACE Adult Education class. You may not feel you are moving forward or going as fast as you want—but just know—most assuredly, you are! I see your challenges, but I see you overcome them each day. Don’t ever give up because I know you are going to make it.”

“You are such a hard worker. Remember to stop and take care of yourself. You have the most giving heart and your family truly relies on you. Remember to refresh, restore, and replenish. Keep faith in yourself and your abilities. You are almost at your AA degree, then you will move on to your BA degree. You will go far and have many successes!”

Background Information

Let’s Celebrate Success!

One of the most important aspects of goal setting is celebrating success. Learners can be celebrated for each step they take towards achieving their goals. By celebrating milestones as a regular part of the program, you can create an environment where progress is valued. Seeing their peers succeed can be very motivating for learners in a program.

Encourage learners to recognize family members, classmates, and community members who supported their achievements.

Recognizing large and small achievements is another part of celebrating success. For academic achievements, create a standard system for giving certificates of completion. For non-academic achievements, use creative ways to recognize learners through certificates and personal notes of encouragement. Bulletin boards and newsletters give visual representation to recognition. Ceremonies and community parties can be used strategically. These highlight the successes of individual and community milestones.

Consider how acknowledging learner success can also support them in achieving future goals. For example, after completing something like First Aid Certification or earning a Food Handler’s Permit, you might encourage students to add that to their resume. This would strengthen resume writing skills and support future career opportunities.

Appreciating the support of family members, classmates, and community members is important also. These are the individuals and groups who helped make achievements possible. Invite them to celebratory events when possible. Practice thank-you letter writing. Ask learners to write a thank-you letter to someone who supported them in achieving their goal. This could be a family member, a friend, a classmate, a staff member, a community member, or someone else. This gives them practice with authentic writing. It can also be a method of building and improving relationships. Encourage learners to think about ways that they can support others toward their own goal achievements.

Ways to Acknowledge Success
Certificates of achievement
Personal notes of encouragement along the way as learners take small steps forward
Bulletin board display of learner progress
Newsletter recognition
Class or school-wide ceremony
Party
Thank-you letter writing

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Goal Setting

Facilitator Guide

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