

# Module: 3 Goal Setting

## Introduction:

Adult learners come to literacy programs for many different reasons. As a practitioner, you will need to find out those reasons. During the intake interview, the learner will usually give you clues about why they have come to your program. Some learners are very clear about their goals and know exactly what they want to learn. Other learners may have a hard time telling you why they have come or what they hope to learn. It can be a challenge for practitioners to guide the learner through this process.

## Goal Sets

The **Goal Set** tells you in which direction the learner wants to go. Learners generally come to literacy programs because of one or two of these reasons:

- 1. Education** – to prepare for more education  
(GED, college, university, or other training)
- 2. Independence** – to become more independent in daily living
- 3. Employment** – to prepare for getting a job;  
or to be more successful at work

## Short-Term Goals:

Short-term goals are what the learner will work on **while they are in** the literacy program. Goals must be realistic so the learner can succeed.

## Long-Term Goal:

A long-term goal is what the learner will work on **after they leave** the literacy program.

## Learner Outcomes:

Learner outcomes are **samples of the learner's work** that show they have learned new skills and achieved short term goals.

## Training Plans

The training plan is a very important tool. It outlines a plan of action for the learner and practitioner to follow.

- As a practitioner, you will use it to help you organize your learners' daily activities. It will also help you keep clear records of their progress and achievements.
- For the learner, the training plan will help them understand how to reach long-term goals by breaking them down into smaller goals. The short-term goals are again broken down into smaller skills the learner can handle (learner outcomes). This process helps the learner see their progress and not be overwhelmed by their long-term goals.

## Training Plans Include:

- personal information: name, address, telephone number, background information that relates to the their goals
- short-term goal: what the learner will learn by the end of the time period on the training plan
- long-term goal: the learner's main goal (may be achieved at your program or at a later point in time)
- skills the learner already has (Literacy Levels)
- skills the learner will need in order to achieve their goals
- a plan for how the learner will achieve their goals
- demonstrations: samples of the learner's skills in areas that relate to their goals

- timeline: how long it will take the learner to achieve their short-term goals; and the number of hours they will attend each week
- progress plan of how the learner will move on to the next step
- signatures: the learner and the practitioner sign their names to show they both understand and agree on the training plan

### Tips for writing training plans:

- write in **clear language** so the learner can understand
- explain **how** the learner will develop skills to reach their goals
- explain how classroom **activities relate to the learner's goals**
- explain **your role** in helping the learner reach their goals
- **review the training plan often** with the learner

### Setting Goals:

Every learner is unique. Their educational background, life experiences, learning styles, and hopes for the future are all different. That is why there is not just one way to help a learner set goals. Practitioners must be sensitive and respectful of the learner's individual needs. Use your professional wisdom (intuition) to assist the learner find their goals.

Some learners may come to you with very unclear goals. For example, they may say only that they want to improve their English. This goal is far too general. As a practitioner you will need to find out more. How do they want to use that English? For communication? For work? For study? For helping a child with homework? You need to pull out information to make the goal more specific. Then you can assist the learner in breaking down that long-term goal into short-term goals they can achieve.

Some learners may have goals that are not realistic or too far out of reach. For example, the learner may want to be a chef. If you feel this is not a

realistic goal for the learner you may want to guide them to mygates.ca or the internet NOC listings (National Occupational Classification). Find what level of skills is needed for that job. Your learner may realize the goal is too high for now. Show them other kitchen related jobs. See what skills are needed for these and work with the learner to find goals they can achieve.

In the same way, some learners may set their goals too low. Again, you may want to use the My Gates or NOC web site to look at what other jobs may be of interest to the learner.

Learners may change their goals as they learn and experience more. It is important to be flexible and encourage learners find their own path. Training plans can be changed and should be reviewed with the learner every 3 to 6 months.

### **Barriers to Goal Setting:**

- In the past, the learner's goals may have been set by another person. Maybe a teacher, family member or friend always told them what to do. They may not have felt motivated to succeed because the goals were not their own.
- The learner may want or need to find a job quickly. Sometimes the learner does not have the time to develop their skills and get a more interesting job that will pay more.
- The learner may have a goal - but not understand what skills they will need to achieve that goal. The goal may not be realistic for the learner.
- Many learners cannot imagine what their future might be like. This makes it hard to decide on a goal or develop a training plan. The practitioner may again need to use their "professional wisdom" to help guide the learner.
- Some learners may not fully understand their own skills and abilities or how to develop them to reach a goal.

- Discrimination is a very real barrier for some learners. They may have goals for employment but be afraid to try to achieve them. They may fear they will never be hired because they are Deaf or Deaf-Blind. This is a “sticky barrier” and, sadly, it is too often true.

Setting goals and making plans to achieve those goals can be a challenge for learners and practitioners. It is important to find the right balance. **Don't overwhelm** the learners by asking them to do more than they can handle. **Do encourage** them to take more responsibility for their training.

Practitioners must also be sensitive to each individual learner. Understand, some may be very nervous about returning to “school.” Others don't really want to be there. Their skill levels and expectations are all different. You can help your learners be more comfortable and positive.

- **Offer them a safe place to learn.** Encourage mutual respect, acceptance and trust.
- **Take time for each learner.** Guide them as they set realistic goals and make plans on how they can be successful.