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WRITING GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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Understanding the needs or problems in your community and the capacity to address them leads directly into the development of goals, objectives, and a plan of action. This chapter is divided into two sections: Section One will distinguish between goals and objectives and discuss two types of objectives; Section Two will provide guidelines for developing the implementation plan. Together, these two sections describe what is to be achieved und how it will be accomplished. The next chapter will describe evaluation methods for determining whether your objectives were achieved. Table 6.1 refines the conceptual framework discussed earlier to show the connections annong the sections of the proposal and identify the questions each should answer.

# SECTION ONE: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### **Program Goals**

There is often confusion between the use of the terms goals and ohfer, tives, and many times they are used interchangeably. For our purposes, we are distinguishing between them. Goals respond to identified needly or

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 Determine the problem/need

 What are the problems/needs?

 What conditions or circumstances need to be addressed?

 Who experiences or is impacted by them?

 Who experiences or is impacted by them?

 What factors contribute to their occurrence?

 State the goal(s)

 What is the ultimate desired result for changing conditions or circumstances?

 What is the ultimate desired result for changing conditions or circumstances?

 What are the agreed-upon issues/needs to be addressed in the long run?

 State the objectives

 What will be the immediate outcomes, results, or benefits?

 What changes are expected during a specified time period that will address the problems/needs?

 Describe the implementation plan

What activities or actions will be taken to lead to the desired results? What theory of practice will achieve the expected outcomes?

Develop a plan for measuring the expected outcomes What are the short- and long-term indicators that measure progress toward the outcomes? What data will be collected to determine the extent to which the outcomes

were achieved?

problems and are statements of the ultimate mission or purpose of the program or collaborative. They represent an ideal or "hoped for" state of the desired change. They are often described as broad, idealistic, nonmeasurable statements of well-being. *Objectives*, on the other hand, represent the immediate desired and measurable outcomes or results that are essential for achieving the ultimate goals. They provide more tangible evidence that the desired state was achieved. The goal of a program may be "to eliminate child abuse" or "to prevent domestic violence." The objective may be "to improve family functioning by 25%" or "to decrease by 10% the cases of the provide domestic violence in Grant City." Most proposals identify one to three goals. Other examples of goals are

- To initiate movement toward a pollution-free environment in the United States of America
  - To increase the number of pregnant women in the state of New York who receive early prenatal care
    - To reduce the number of birth defects in Grant County

As you see in these examples, goals are ambitious statements—they are the desired state of things. As such, they are not generally attainable over the short term, yet they help us to keep our focus and communicate the project clearly to others.

Goals are usually written indicating the geographic area in which the services are to be provided. To write the goals, return to the needs or problems you seek to address and state the major reasons for your work. The following two questions can assist you in developing goals:

- What satisfactory condition will exist if we eliminate, prevent, or improve the situation?
- 2. What is the overall, long-term condition desired for our program recipients?

In some cases, the funders may provide the goals associated with the funding. For example, when applying for funding through federal or state sources, the goals are usually listed in the Request for Proposals, in which case it is advisable simply to restate those goals, adding the geographic area of service. If you are developing both goals and objectives, double check to be sure that the goals fit within legislative mandates or other funding missions.

### Formulating Objectives

Outcome objectives are the *expected* results of the actions taken to attain the goal. They provide the promise of what will be achieved over the course of the funding period. Outcome objectives are specific, achievable, measurable statements about what will be accomplished within a certain time frame. It is also useful to think of objectives as the steps that you will take to reach the goal.

Typically, three to four objectives are derived from each goal and are defined more narrowly, since you are predicting that you will accomplish certain things within an agreed-upon time period. It is wise to develop objectives for each type of change expected and for each target group. For example, with the goal "To eliminate child abuse and neglect," several objectives may be targeted to parents, one to teachers, and a third to the community at large.

In collaboration, agencies can develop objectives that are either agency specific or shared among the agencies. Developing shared objectives within a collaborative can be especially challenging, since organizations must collectively take responsibility for the desired results. Shared objectives require a certain level of trust between agencies, since the objective must be met for reimbursement to occur.

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The two major types of objectives, process and outcome, are explained below.

*Process Objectives.* Process objectives (a) describe the expected improvements in the operations or procedures, (b) quantify the expected change in the usage of services or methods, or (c) identify how much service will be received. Process objectives do not indicate the impact on the program recipients. Rather they are formulated because the activities involved in implementation are important to the overall understanding of how a problem or need gets addressed. They help to provide insight into experimental, unique, and innovative approaches or techniques used in a program. Process objectives are usually designed to increase knowledge about how to improve the delivery of services.

For example, process objectives might be written to measure different types and amounts of staff interaction with clients, to examine outreach activities with difficult-to-reach youth, or to describe interagency collaboration. A process objective focused on coalition building is not necessarily concerned with *what* is accomplished by the coalition but in *how* the coalition is formed and maintained. Process objectives may be written to study program implementation methodology, to determine whether the program is on track, or to address the internal functioning and structure of an organization, as in the following objectives:

- Ten child abuse prevention support groups will be formed by agency staff within the first 6 months of the project.
  - A computerized client-charting system will be developed to track and retrieve 50% of client records by June 30, 20xx.

Both examples focus on the activities required to provide service, rather than the impact of those activities on the clients or participants. Process objectives are not routinely developed in proposals, since funders typically focus on giving funds for the direct benefit of the program recipients. In contrast to process objectives, outcome objectives are used to describe the expected benefits to program recipients. *Outcome Objectives.* The second and more common type of objective is known as an outcome objective. An outcome objective specifies a target group and identifies what will happen to them as a result of the intervention or approach. Outcomes may depict a change at one or more levels, such as

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at the client, program, agency, systems, cross-systems, or community level (Gardner, 1999). Outcomes are usually written to indicate the effectiveness of the approach used by stating what will be different. Changes may occur in multiple areas such as

- Improved behavior
- Increased skills
- Changed attitudes, values, or beliefs
  - Increased knowledge or awareness
    - Improved conditions
- · Elimination of institutional or systemic barriers
  - More effective policies, practices, or laws

Well-stated outcome objectives provide the following:

- A time frame
- The target group
- The number of program recipients
- The expected measurable results or benefits
- The geographic location or service locale, which may be stated in the goal (e.g., group home, hospital, jail, neighborhood)

An objective may also identify the target group in terms of their age, gender, and ethnicity (if applicable). Objectives use action verbs (e.g., to reduce, increase, decrease, promote, or demonstrate) to indicate the expected direction of the change in knowledge, attitude, behavior, skills, or conditions. They define the topic area to be measured (e.g., self-esteem, nutrition, communication) and the date by which the results will be accomplished.

As you develop outcome objectives, think again about the needs of the program recipients and the community. Is the purpose of your program or collaborative to increase knowledge about certain topics so as to affect behavior? Do the intended program recipients have the knowledge yet persist in unhealthy behavior, leading you to work more directly on attitudes, values, or beliefs? What exactly do you hope to change? Will you focus on improving the conditions for a group? The objective should capture the primary purpose of the service you provide.

Many times, staff in therapeutic settings have difficulty in formulating measurable outcome objectives and are more apt to develop process objectives. Their difficulty lies in finding ways to conceptualize and make observable the progress of clients, especially those who are in non-behaviorally oriented counseling settings, and in subjecting the client to a formal evaluation process. Thus, staff often find it easier to describe the therapeutic process as an objective, without stating a quantifiable or measurable outcome objective.

However, as funders focus greater attention upon results-based accountability and efficient allocation of resources through such mechanisms as purchase of service contracts, agencies will need to increase their capacity to measure their effectiveness and impact. Having an in-depth understanding of the nature of the need/problem and the factors associated with its occurrence, along with formulating a well-developed theory of change that identifies progressive indicators or benchmarks toward the desired change, can help guide the development of outcome objectives. Too often, outcomes are aimed at changing complex or chronic conditions within a short time period and are not rooted in a full understanding of what achieving those desired changes will actually take.

Furthermore, an organization's theory of change may not incorporate important factors that contribute to the occurrence of the problem. For example, the goal may be to reduce child abuse and neglect, while the outcome is to improve family functioning by increasing knowledge about effective parenting. At the same time, alcohol and drug abuse may be mediating factors against improved family functioning, which are not being addressed. Thus, "increasing knowledge" may be a necessary component in the theory of change, but it is not sufficient to achieve the stated outcome objective of improved family functioning.

One way organizations address this is to partner with other groups. Agencies can develop objectives that are agency-specific or that are shared with collaborative partners. Developing shared objectives within a collaborative can be especially challenging, because organizations must collectively take responsibility for the desired results. Shared objectives also require a certain level of trust between agencies, because reimbursement funding comes after the objectives have been met. A progression of outcomes is developed that identifies the change or benefits towards an overall desired end. The United Way of America (1996, p. 32) describes three levels of outcomes:

- Initial Outcomes: the first benefits or changes that participants experience (e.g., changes in knowledge, attitudes, or skills). They are not the end in themselves and may not be especially meaningful in terms of the quality of participants' lives. They are necessary steps toward the desired end and, therefore, are important indicators of participants' progress toward it.
- 2. Intermediate Outcomes: they are often the changes in behavior that result from new knowledge, attitudes, or skills.

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3. Longer-Term Outcomes: the ultimate outcomes a program desires to achieve for its participants. They represent meaningful changes for participants, often in their condition or status.

The following is an example of a short-term outcome objective focused on increased knowledge of the target group:

Two hundred pregnant women living in the Grant neighborhood will increase their knowledge by 40% about prenatal care by June 30, 20xx.

A longer-term outcome could be stated as

Eighty percent of the pregnant women living in the Grant neighborhood will access prenatal care in the first trimester by June 30, 20xx.

Sometimes so-called "proxy outcomes" are developed. For example, you may wish to improve birth outcomes by decreasing the incidence of low birth weight babies. However, this goal may be very difficult to measure. At the same time, research has shown a direct link between women receiving early prenatal care and improved birth outcomes. Therefore, one can use getting women into early prenatal care as a "proxy" measure for the desired outcome of improved birth weight.

The beginning grant writer is apt to confuse an objective with an implementation activity. A common error is to write the actual program or service that will be offered without indicating its benefits. Such an error would result in the following example of a *poor* objective:

One thousand youths between the ages of 12 and 16 will have participated in a 6-week education program on violence prevention by June 30, 20xx.

In this example, the "6-week education program" is an implementation activity and does not describe its impact on the participants regarding violence prevention. The following questions may help the writer to reach the outcome level of the objective: Why are youths receiving a 6-week program? To increase their knowledge or improve their skills? To change behavior? A revised, well-stated objective would look like this:

One thousand youths between the ages of 12 and 16 will increase their knowledge by 40% in conflict resolution and anger management by June 30, 20xx. As you write your objectives, make sure you are stating the expected *outcome* or changes in the program recipients, not just identifying the approach being used. The following example shows how a single goal can lead to several process and outcome objectives:

Sample Goal: To prevent drug use among young people by promoting their academic success and emotional well-being.

### Process Objectives:

- To form a coalition of 10 youth-serving agencies to develop a comprehensive plan for providing after-school activities at two junior high schools by June 30, 20xx.
- 2. To establish a multilingual teen drug prevention hotline with a corps of 100 volunteer high school students by June 30, 20xx.
- 3. To develop a multimedia drug abuse prevention campaign targeted to junior high school students and their parents by June 30, 20xx.

### **Outcome** Objectives:

- One hundred at-risk junior high school students will increase their knowledge by 60% about the dangers of drug and alcohol use by June 30, 20xx.
- One hundred and twenty five junior high school students who are academically at risk will show a 30% improvement in their reading and math scores by June 30, 20xx.
- 3. One hundred and fifty parents will increase their knowledge by 60% in effective communication techniques for teaching their children about decision making, goal setting, and the dangers of drugs by June 30, 20xx.
- One hundred parents will increase their involvement with their children's school by 50% by June 30, 20xx.

### In summary:

- 1. The *goal statement* provides a general aim and direction for the project, but lacks specificity as to what will be achieved.
- 2. Process objectives identify the approach to be used but do not state what impact it will have on the participants. It is not necessary for every proposal to have both process and outcome objectives. Process objectives are written when the funder has indicated that the desired outcome is to develop a new approach or test out a particular method of service delivery.
- 3. Outcome objectives specify "who" and "how many" are to achieve "what results."

Common errors in writing objectives include (a) putting more than one measurable outcome in the objective and (b) saying much more than is needed. Keep the objectives simple and clear. While you want to stretch as far as possible with a vision for improved conditions or circumstances, objectives should be realistic and not promise more than can be delivered within the time period stated. Remember also that objectives are directly tied to the contractual relationship between the agency and the funder, and as such, the agency may be held accountable if the objective is not met.

# SECTION TWO: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

## **Developing the Implementation Plan**

The implementation plan is the nuts and bolts of the proposal; it provides a clear account of what you plan to do, who will do it, and in what time frame the activities will be accomplished. This section is the logical next step after writing the goals and objectives, for while the goals and objectives indicate *what* you wish to achieve, the implementation plan explains *how* the objectives will be accincted. It presents a reasonable and coherent action plan that justifies the resources requested. The design of your program should generate confidence that it reflects sound decision making and is the most feasible approach for addressing the implementation plan and lead directly to the tasks and activities to be undertaken. A well-defined plan of action indicates to the funder the reasonableness and rationality for achieving the desired results. This section will assist you in formulating a systematic and step-by-step

implementation plan. The discussion will be organized in three parts: defining the preparatory

The discussion will be organized in three parts: defining the preparatory tasks, identifying the specific program-related activities, and writing the narrative.

### Preparatory Activities

Regardless of the type of program you wish to undertake, a common set of activities usually are considered at the beginning of the project. We refer to these as "preparatory activities" (i.e., the start-up activities or general tasks necessary to get the program underway). With each task, it is also useful to identify the person responsible for accomplishing the activity and to estimate the time needed for completion. While the type of preparatory

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activities will vary, depending upon the nature of your program, the following, not listed in any time sequence, are typical:

- Developing staffing plans
  - Selecting site/facilities
- Ordering special equipment
- Setting up interagency agreements and collaboration plans Selecting or developing program products or materials
  - Building community linkages and partnerships
- Developing outreach strategies and approaches to involving program participants
  - Setting up evaluation mechanisms

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A variety of activities will need to be accomplished to achieve the program outcomes, most of which have resource implications. These resources include personnel (e.g., staff, volunteers, program recipients, community groups, other organizations), nonpersonnel (e.g., equipment, facilities, materials, and supplies), and other program-related costs. One must also be mindful of any restrictions or constraints on the program, such as policies and regulations that would affect how the resources can be utilized.

## Program-Related Activities

these major groups.) Remember that program design must be considerate of In general, we have grouped human services programming into five major broad categories: (a) training or education; (b) information development and dissemination; (c) counseling, self-efficacy, and other support services; (d) provision of resources or changing conditions; and (e) advocacy and systems change. (There may be other subcategories, but we have chosen to address to assist you in identifying the kinds of activities that might be required to the diversity within the target population. While there is no single approach to developing the implementation plan, the following questions are designed conduct programs in the five major categories. You can use the answers from these questions to forge a coherent and workable plan of action.

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## Training or Education Programs

Examples: Career development workshop, job preparation training, parent education

- 1. What are the training or educational objectives?
  - 2. What will be the content of the presentation(s)?

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- What strategies or techniques will be most effective with the population (e.g., teaching aids and tools)? e.
- What will be the typical format and schedule? Does it take into consideration Who will conduct the training? What criteria will be used to select trainers? 4 ŝ
- What other arrangements will be needed for the program participants to the program participants' needs and schedules? 6
  - participate fully?

## Information Development and Dissemination

Examples: Ad campaign for drug abuse prevention, videotape on AIDS prevention, health care newsletter, parent training manual, resource and referral service

- Who is the targeted audience?
- What will be the content and format?
- How will it be developed? Who will develop it? e. 4
- Which group(s) will review before distribution to determine effectiveness and appropriateness?
  - What dissemination strategies will be utilized? ŝ

# Counseling, Self-Efficacy, and Other Support Services

Examples: Bereavement counseling, support group for victims of abuse and violence, drug and alcohol abuse counseling, and crisis hotline

- What counseling strategies or techniques will be used?
- What are the underlying assumptions or evidence of the validity of the techniques with the specific population? ci.
  - What will be the counseling process and format? ŝ
    - What issues and content will be addressed? 4
- What other resources (e.g., support system, professionals) will be needed by the program participants? S.
  - What are the plans to reduce the attrition rate? ý.

# Provision of Resources or Changing Conditions

Examples: Transportation for the disabled, meals program for older Americans, youth recreation program, health care screening

- What resources will be provided?
- What is the most effective delivery approach for the population? N
  - When, where, and how will they be delivered? ÷.
    - Who will develop, organize, and deliver them? 4
- Any special equipment and/or materials needed? How will these be obtained?

## Advocacy and Systems Change

Examples: Legislation to ban smoking in public places, education reform, health care coverage for low-income families, alcohol and drug treatment on demand

- What is the research and data on the issues? 1
- What policies, regulations, or laws need to be changed? N
- What are the most effective strategies to create effective change? What are What coalitions or partnerships are necessary to achieve the changes? ë 4
  - important media strategies?
- What compromises are acceptable?
- Who will be the spokespersons? 5.0

### **Units of Service**

specify how much of that activity will be provided. This question relates often referred to as the "output" of your program. It describes the types or In addition to identifying the tasks to be undertaken, one must also to the volume of work that is expected or the products of your program, amounts of service provided. Examples include

- One hundred hours of group counseling with 75 drug abuse addicts
- Two hundred health care newsletters printed and distributed to persons 55 years and older
  - One hundred and fifty high school dropouts attending 10 hours of computer training sessions

achieve the objective. Compare these two examples of units of service in The results or outcomes are influenced by how well the program has been conceptualized and whether there were sufficient units of service to relation to the outcome of "remaining drug-free."

- 75 drug addicts received 5 hours of group counseling 75 drug addicts received 100 hours of group counseling 5

determinations as to how many hours are needed to achieve the outcome of remaining drug-free. In considering the units of service, one must often balance the resources available with a realistic understanding of how long Both programs are providing group counseling, but they have different achieving the desired change will take.

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## Writing the Project Narrative

including the preparatory and program-related activities. Included within the methods section, or program approach. Many times, grant writers are instructions may lack specific details about content and format. In our experience, if there are incomplete instructions, we then provide a complete iect description. It brings together your conceptualization of the work plan, his section are subsections sometimes referred to as the scope of work, explanation of the project, starting with the goal of the project, followed by the objective, the implementation activities, and a detailed description of the evaluation method. This section allows you to bring more detail into the narrative, including the rationale for your particular program and staffing This section may also be referred to in the proposal guidelines as the *pro*unclear as to how to proceed with the writing of this section, as proposal levels, for example, than in any other section of the proposal. The followng is an abbreviated example of a project narrative section:

The Learning for Life Project has two goals. The first is to ensure that all children receive a quality education, and the second, to eliminate school dropouts. The first objective under Goal 1 states Objective 1.1: Two hundred (200) low-income school age children in the XYZ School District will improve their grades one full level by June 30, 20XX.

cational needs assessed by a learning specialist and be matched with a tutor abilities, and the tutors will be ready to be matched by the second month of the project. The tutors will spend approximately 100 hours a year with each of after the completion of tutoring. If students demonstrate an improvement in To accomplish this objective, each of the 200 children will have their eduwho has the necessary skills to help the child. In the first month of the project, the project directors and the learning specialist will select appropriate assessment instruments for the children. Relationships currently exist with the Faculty in the School of Education at these universities will assess student their students during the regular school day (see Appendix on "Estimating Time"). The evaluation of this objective will be accomplished by assessing student grade point averages at the start of tutoring, based on their grades of the previous quarter, and comparing them to the grades of the quarter ending University of Grant State and Grant City College to develop the tutoring pool. their grades by one full level, the objective will be met. The project director will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the evaluation component.

Objective 1.2: Two hundred (200) parents of children in tutoring will increase their time spent providing homework assistance by 10% by June 30, 20xx. PROPOSAL WRITING

(The writer will continue to address the implementation activities and the evaluation for this objective.)

It is not unusual to complete other subsections of the narrative, including the scope of work forms, a time line, or some other visual representation of the project. Experienced grant writers appreciate the opportunity to present the project activities in a variety of formats to ensure that the reviewers have a complete understanding of how the objectives will be achieved. In have a complete understanding of how the objectives will be achieved. In (see Schaefer, 1985 & 1987) are often used to enhance the presentation.

### Scope of Work

As stated above, many state agencies require a scope of work form, which provides the basis for the legal contract. This format is useful for conceptualizing the various parts of the project, for it shows the relationship among the goal, the objectives, the activities, and staff responsible for the activities; a time line; and the evaluation. This is somewhat redundant to the narrative, but it does offer the advantage of a quick, one-page synopsis of each objective, implementation activity (approach), time line, and evaluation. In Table tive, implementation activity (approach), time line, and evaluation. In Table 6.2, we have filled out a scope of work form using the above example.

As you study the scope of work form, you will notice that the goal is written across the top of the page and is numbered (for example, Goal #1). The first column contains an objective that is numbered in sequence relative to the goal to which it applies.

The second column identifies the major activities that will accomplish the particular objective. It is also customary to list underneath each activity the job title of the responsible individual(s).

The third column, the time line column, indicates the start and end date

for each activity. The final column is for the evaluation of the objective, which identifies how each objective will be measured to determine if it has been achieved.

### **Project Time Line**

In addition to seeing a description of the project activities, funders typically desire to see a schedule of those activities. A visual display of the action plan provides the reader with a real sense of when different phases of the project will be undertaken. It also helps to generate confidence in your ability to plan effectively and carry out the grant or contract requirements.

Scope of Work Form	
TABLE 6.2	

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Contractor Geta Grant Agency

Contract Number Agency Number

Scope of Work

County Grant County

The contractor shall work toward achieving the following goals and will accomplish the following objectives. This shall be done by performing the specified activities and evaluating the results using the listed methods to focus on process and/or outcome.

Goal No. \_\_\_\_\_ (specify) \_\_\_<u>To ensure that all children receive a quality education</u>

Methods of Evaluating Process and/or Outcome of Objectives		in grades is accomplished, the objective will be met. (Project Director, Learning Specialist)		
Time Line	7/1/xx to 11/30/xx 7/1/xx to 8/31/xx	10/1/xx to 4/30/xx	10/1/xx to 6/15/xx	
Implementation Activities	1.1.A. The educational needs of the students will be assessed. (Learning Specialist, Project Director) 1.1.B. Assessment instruments for the children will	be reviewed and selected for use. (Learning Specialist) 1.1.C. Students will be matched with tuttors who will spend approximately 100 home with the spend	(Project Director) (Project Director) 1.1.D. Student grade point records will be obtained for appropriate quarters to conduct evaluation. (Project	Director)
Measurable Objective(s)	1.1 Two hundred (200) school age children will improve their grades by 20% by June 30, 20xx			

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TABLE 6.3

### GANTT Chart

### Geta Grant Agency

## Project "Learning for Life" Time Line

### Fiscal Year 20xx to 20xx

A variety of techniques can be used to present the project's timetable. One of the most common is a GANTT chart, which shows activities in relation to a time dimension (see Table 6.3). In preparing a GANTT chart, perform the following steps:

- 1. List the major activities and tasks.
- 2. Estimate the amount of time to be expended on each activity or task.
  - 3. Determine how the activity is spread across a time period.

The time period is typically divided into months or quarters, and an activity's begin and end points are depicted with row bars, Xs, or similar markings. Generally on a GANTT chart, activities are listed in the order in which they will be accomplished (a forward sequence).

By examining the GANTT chart, one sees which activities are to occur within a particular time frame, which can be useful for project monitoring. Also, some funders require quarterly reports, and from the GANTT chart, they can determine what you plan to accomplish each quarter. It is a good idea to include the preparation of any reports to the funder as an activity on the chart. If there are few activities or the project has a relatively short time span,

the time line format shown in Table 6.4 may be used.

## TABLE 6.4 Time Line

### Geta Grant Agency

Project "Learning for Life" Time Line

Fiscal Year 20xx to 20xx

Activity	Time
Hire staff	July 1 to July 30
Train staff	August 1 to September 15
Develop curriculum	July 1 to September 30
Schedule workshops	August 15 to September 30
Conduct workshops	October 1 to May 30
Conduct evaluation	October 1 to May 30
Prepare final report	June 1 to June 25

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