

Tool 3: Goal Setting

Problem: Applicants often respond to very specific problems with very vague goals. Without having a specific goal in mind, it's difficult to develop an effective solution, let alone measure the impact of that solution. In addition, they neglect to set goals that represent a permanent, transformative change in society. Often organizations meet their programmatic goals but social injustices persist because the solution was not adopted systematically by other players in the field.

Solution: Top candidates develop clear, specific, and realistic goals. They also set goals that go above and beyond the direct work of their organization to reflect deep, lasting transformational change in their community. This impact will carry on well beyond the lifetime/scope of the organization.

Activity: Answer the following four questions about your vision for social change.

- **If your work succeeds, what will the headline in the newspaper say?**

Weak Example: "Low-income students doing better in schools"

Strong Example: "Low-income students perform as well as wealthy peers on all academic assessments nationwide"

- **If your work succeeds initially and then your organization ceases operations, what will the impact on society be?**

Weak Example: Without great teachers and leaders being recruited into the system, low-income students will return to poor achievement levels.

Strong Example: The talented young leaders in the corps will continue to improve public education for years to come. In addition, the enhanced status of education in society will ensure a steady stream of future leaders for generations, keeping the achievement gap between low-income and wealthy students closed for good.

- **How will you measure the volume of your work? And what goals do you have for each in the short and long-terms?**

Weak Example: The number of students served (hundreds of thousands by the near future)

Strong Example: The number of corps members recruited (4,200 by 2010) and students served (440,000 by 2008) and the diversity (33% people of color by 2010) and quality of the corps (95% had leadership positions in college by 2008), and the financial stability of the organization (\$160 million budget by 2010)

- **How will you measure if your work is making a difference? And what goals do you have for each measure?**

Weak Example: Student achievement (strong test scores in a couple of years)

Strong Example: Percentage of corps members achieving significant gains (i.e., 1 ½ years of progress in the course of one year) in their classrooms (80% by 2010), percentage of corps members who completed their two-year commitment (89% by 2008), and number of corps members serving in leadership positions (800 school leaders, 100 elected officials, and 12 social entrepreneurs by 2010)

