

Introduction to County Goal Setting

Purpose: This goal setting overview is designed to help counties start the critical process of explicitly outlining program outcomes of interest specific to the county. This guide provides a simple stepwise process for counties to complete in order to derive those outcomes of interest and then set appropriate goals related to them.

Description: This is a brief document that introduces county goal setting, and provides framing for thinking about county, program and client goals. The graphics and stepwise process succinctly walk counties through initiating the goal setting process.

When to use: This goal setting guide can be used alongside the other county resources with whatever frequency the county would like to reflect on progress and update goals. The county may choose to examine their program at quarterly, semi-annual, or annual intervals depending on the continuous quality improvement desires and the magnitude of the change expected as well as how long that change is anticipated to take.

How to use: County CalWORKs leadership and other key staff involved in the county assessment and reflection process should read the goal setting guide completely prior to engaging in a reflective and analytic conversation. The guide should be used to facilitate the conversation amongst team staff members designated to set and reflect on goals for continuous quality improvement.

What successful use would look like: Counties will establish a regular process for engaging in county reflection, assessment, and goal achievement. Counties will record, distribute, and follow up with staff on goals. Goals will be easy to understand and applicable to regular staff activities such that county team members can use them as part of a framework for making service delivery decisions and engage customers with intentionality in a goal-achievement framework.

Why setting county-level goals is an important component of CalWORKs 2.0

Effective county-level goals can keep everyone focused on the same destination, help create clarity about how each of the program activities contributes to the county's overall goals and identify how to target limited resources. Given the structure of CalWORKs, it is quite likely that counties will have goals in similar domains (e.g., engagement, employment, education, and family well-being) but their actual goals within those domains may differ, reflecting their unique priorities and caseloads.

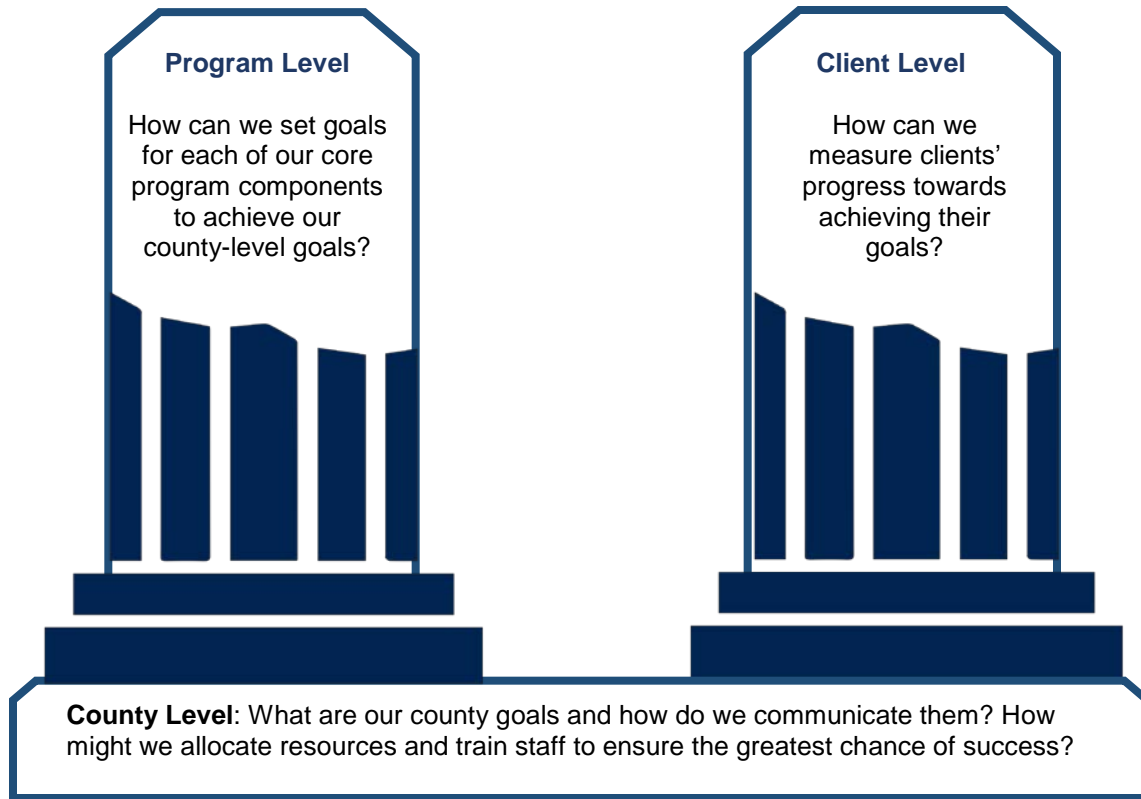
Effective goals are also a critical component of creating better programs. If you know where you're heading and where you are now, it is much easier to think specifically and strategically about how to get from point A to point B – and to figure out whether the strategies you've implemented are helping get you there. It also helps to target limited resources to the components of your program where you feel like you have the best chance of making improvements.

Effective goals can also keep staff engaged because they know what they are aiming for and what is expected of them – and allows them to celebrate their successes along the way.

Effective goals should be SMART – specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound. There also should be a manageable number of them. It is better to have a few goals which you

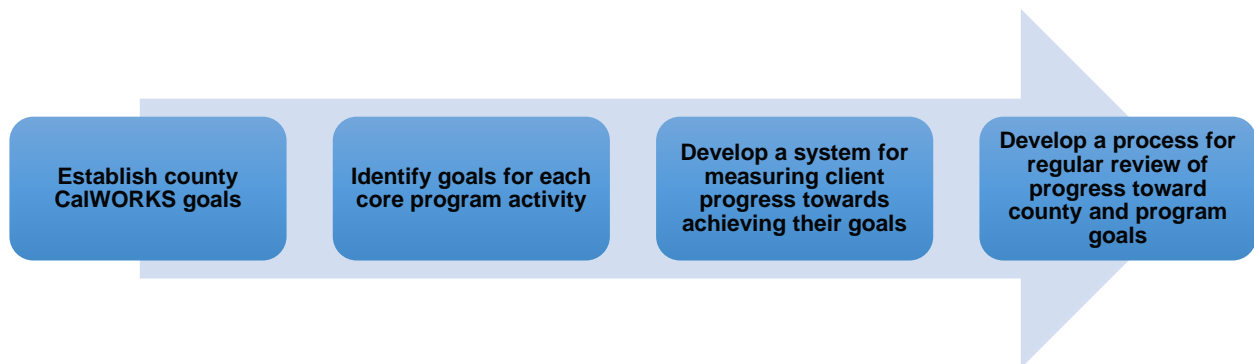
can realistically strive to achieve than to have many goals that fail to provide a clear roadmap for what you hope to achieve.

Effective County-Level Goals Provide the Foundation for Program and Client-Level Goals



Steps to Successful County and Program-Level Goal-Setting

Counties can use a four-step process to create a goal-achievement foundation for their programs. The primary aim of this process is to encourage counties to take a systematic look at their program through the lens of CalWORKs 2.0, which aims to encourage staff at all levels to think about the goals of CalWORKs as broader than meeting the TANF Work Participation Rate (WPR). The four steps do not need to be completed all at one time. You can start with establishing county-level goals and add the other components as time and resources permit.



1. **Establish county-level CalWORKs goals.** County-level goals should reflect the outcomes you hope to achieve for the families you serve. You can start by being explicit about how you define client success in your county. For example, do you define success as: Getting a job? Getting a job at a specific wage? Increasing education or skills? Improving well-being (e.g., providing stable housing)? Engaging clients in program activities? After clarifying how you define success, you can begin to establish county-level goals that provide an explicit framework for what you hope to achieve.
2. **Identify goals for each core program activity.** CalWORKs uses a broad range of strategies to guide participants toward economic and life success. This component of the goal setting process encourages counties to think strategically and specifically about what constitutes success within each program activity, providing staff with clearer direction on the purpose of each program activity. It also helps to clarify how each component contributes to the overall county goals.
3. **Develop a system for measuring client progress towards achieving their goals.** The goal achievement framework underlying CalWORKs 2.0 recognizes the importance of breaking bigger and longer-term goals into small steps with shorter time horizons. Creating a system to measure progress towards achieving longer-term goals can help instill in staff and clients the importance of achieving small steps. There are different ways in which progress and/or interim steps could be captured. For example, you might track movement from no participation to any participation to substantial participation to full participation.

Examples of county-level goals

- Increase participation in post-secondary education by 10 percent within the next year
- Increase program engagement by 10 percent within the next six months
- Place 50 percent of clients assigned to group job search in paid employment within three months.

Note that the first two goals are improvement goals and the last goal is an absolute target; both are acceptable types of county-level goals.

Examples of core program activity goals

- Increase the percentage of clients in subsidized employment that move into unsubsidized jobs within six months by 20 percent by January 2019
- Increase the percentage of clients that participate in a program activity after orientation by 50 percent by the end of fiscal year 2018
- 50 percent of clients that enter a post-secondary education program complete it

Alternatively, you might use the CalMAP (included in the frontline guide) as a framework for measuring progress in specific domains. Still another approach would be to track the status of goals that clients set, identifying whether they have been achieved, revised or replaced with a different goal.

4. **Develop a process for regular review of progress towards county and program goals.** Counties can model the importance of reviewing and revising goals by establishing a formal process for writing, distributing and assessing achievement of goals. These regular review periods should also inform whether goals need to be revised and what next steps to take for counties, programs, and customers to achieve success.