Some Problems with Terminology[1]

1. The concept of Mission/Purpose
   These two terms are high level statements of intent, referring to the highest-level broad ends to be achieved. While these terms are frequently used interchangeably, projects and programs typically state a "purpose" while organizations typically state their "mission."

2. The Concept of Goal
   The term "goal" is frequently (incorrectly) used interchangeably with "objective," but these terms are not synonyms. While a goal is more focused than a broad mission/purpose statement in its description of desired ends or outcomes to be achieved, it is usually not measurable as objectives must be. Funders are increasingly clear that they will not accept broad goal statements in lieu of specific, measurable objectives.

3. The Concept of Objective
   In the chain of progressive specification, the objective is the most specific statement of what is to be achieved by a project or program. Objectives include criteria for determining success and are always measurable.

4. Distinguishing Between Ends and Means
   A major problem in the development of goals and objectives is the confusion of methods or activities (which are means) and goals and objectives (which are outcomes or ends). *Mission/purpose, goal, and objective statements are ends statements, not means statements*. They indicate an outcome to be achieved, not the activities or services to be offered as a means of achieving the ends. (A goal may be "improved knowledge of board governance principles" but it would not be "to offer a workshop on board governance.")

5. The Relationship Between Mission/Purpose, Goal, and Objective
   We clarify the relationship of mission/purpose, goals, and objectives by looking at them as a chain of relations, all end statements or outcomes to be achieved but at progressively greater levels of specificity.

6. More Problems with Terms: Types of Objectives
   Objectives are statements of precise measurable *outcomes* that will be achieved within a specific time frame during the project period. They are statements of an *end result* sought which contain the criteria for measuring the results, the specific target population, and the time frame for achieving the objectives.

   Given an understanding of need, a proposal writer would establish project goals. Each project goal would have at least one measurable objective. For each project objective there would be a set of activities (methods) designed to achieve the objective, and there would be an evaluation approach for all major methods relative to the objectives they were intended to achieve. The linage between need, goal, objective, method, and evaluation should be clear.

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[1] Excerpted from *Successful Grantseeking: A Comprehensive Guide to Developing Proposals, Finding Funders, and Managing the Grantskking Process*, Eighth Edition, by Barbara C. Bader and Steven Carr, Community Systems: Bozeman, Montana, 2002.

An additional difficulty in objective setting comes from the existence of various (and often conflicting) definitions of types of objectives. Thus, various authors write about behavioral objectives, performance objectives, product objectives, process objectives, research objectives, program objectives, services objectives, administrative objectives, operational objectives, outcome and output objectives, instructional objectives, etc.

Since confusion in terminology abounds in the literature and in practice, we recommend that grantseekers be concerned not so much with classifying their objectives as with writing clear, complete and appropriate objectives.

Relationship of Need to Project Purpose, Goals, Objectives, and Program Activities

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        ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
        │ Human, Social, Economic, or Environmental│
        │        Need, Problem, or Condition        │
        └─────────────────────────────────────────┘
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          ┌────────────────┴────────────────┐
    ┌───────────┐                      ┌───────────┐
    │  Goal #1  │                      │  Goal #2  │
    └───────────┘                      └───────────┘
        │                                  │
   ┌────┴────┐                        ┌────┴────┐
┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐      ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐
│Objective │ │Objective │      │Objective │ │Objective │
│   #1a    │ │   #2a    │      │   #1b    │ │   #2b    │
└──────────┘ └──────────┘      └──────────┘ └──────────┘
     │            │                  │            │
┌─────────┐  ┌─────────┐       ┌─────────┐  ┌─────────┐
│Services,│  │Services,│       │Services,│  │Services,│
│Programs,│  │Programs,│       │Programs,│  │Programs,│
│   or    │  │   or    │       │   or    │  │   or    │
│Activities│ │Activities│      │Activities│ │Activities│
│   to    │  │   to    │       │   to    │  │   to    │
│ Achieve │  │ Achieve │       │ Achieve │  │ Achieve │
│Objective│  │Objective│       │Objective│  │Objective│
│   #1a   │  │   #1b   │       │   #2a   │  │   #2b   │
└─────────┘  └─────────┘       └─────────┘  └─────────┘
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