

Setting and Achieving Goals

As a leader, you know how important it is to have a vision for the future. The best way to accomplish that vision is to set goals. You will need both long- and short-term goals, with short-term goals serving as the building blocks to reach your long-term ones. Follow the steps below to start defining and, more importantly, achieving your goals.

Step 1: Define your long-term goals.

Working toward and achieving goals in all aspects of your life is a great source of motivation and fulfillment. Long-term goals are the bigger goals that you set for yourself, such as to become a doctor, receive an advanced degree, or start a business. When creating goals, make sure you also define how you will measure success. For example, if your goal is to start a business, you might say you are successful if the business is still operational one year from the time you establish it.

A strong goal will be **SMART**, which means that it follows these rules:

1. **Specific**—Define your goal in detail. It's hard to work toward a vague goal!
2. **Measurable**—Identify the ways you will know your goal has been accomplished.
3. **Achievable**—Make sure your goal is something you realistically can accomplish. Ending poverty may not be possible on your own, but providing educational opportunities for underprivileged youth may be.
4. **Relevant**—Your goals should align with the direction you want your life to take and, if applicable, the needs in your community.
5. **Time-Bound**—Putting a deadline on your goals will keep you motivated and on track.

Give each goal the SMART test. If it passes, you have created an excellent goal for yourself.

Step 2: Define your short-term goals.

Short-term goals keep you on track toward achieving your long-term ones. If your long-term goal is to start a business, your short-term goals may be to conduct market research, make a business plan, meet with a mentor, and so forth. Based on the outcome of a short-term goal, you may need to reevaluate your long-term goal. Perhaps, when developing your business plan, you find out that the cost of starting a business is greater than you anticipated. Will this change your long-term goal? Are there additional short-term goals you can establish to help you work toward your long-term goal? Make sure you reevaluate your long-term plan as you complete each short-term goal. Remember that short-term goals do not need to be as ambitious as your long-term one may be. Developing your professional skills is a great short-term goal. If that's one of your goals, check out resources on how to write a biography, prepare for a job interview, and deliver a speech.

Step 3: Identify the resources you will need to achieve your goals.

After you define your goals, make a list of the resources you will need to achieve each goal. Resources may include research and information, money or financial support, or help from others, such as your family, friends, members of your community, or your coworkers. By having a list of what you need, you will know where and to whom to turn for support. After you have defined your goals and what you need to achieve them, make sure you continue to review your established goals so you can stay on track. The best way to do this is to write everything down.

If you're looking for more resources to develop your personal, organizational, and business skills, complete the Young Leaders of America Initiative (YLA) course, [Link opens in a new window](#)*Strategies for Personal Growth and Development!*

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