Community Development Goal Setting
Introduction

In the process we have come to appreciate how goal setting can awaken the sense of community possibilities and energize people toward constructive resolution of their common problems. With goal setting, communities can achieve a clarity of purpose.

Goal setting is the guiding process for all planning, management, and accountability functions necessary for successful community development.

True goal setting is necessarily a participatory process because the interests and values of the community are represented in all the people.
Introduction

Persons joining together openly to set and work toward common goals fulfill themselves individually and collectively. This is the essence of participatory goal setting.

Participatory goal setting leads to better decision-making, increases agency productivity, improves administrative accountability to citizen interests and values, lessens frustrations with citizen participation, resolves imbedded conflicts, and promotes stability.
Why Set Goals?

Reasons to Set Goals

- Setting goals provides a sound basis for planning, implementation, and evaluation
  - Setting goals provides a way to escape the frustrations of negative citizen reaction and participation by involving citizens from the start.

- Setting goals clarifies problems
  - Almost everyone has a vague idea of what these problems are, but when goals are written down for everyone to see, these problems are easier to understand.

- Planning based on goals elicits community support
  - The goals of the community represent those things that most people agree should be done. Planning based on these goals stresses the shared values of the community rather than the disagreements and therefore minimizes the negative effects of special interests.
Why Set Goals?

Reasons to Set Goals (cont.)

Goal setting leads to positive action

- The process of setting goals allows citizens to state their needs, clarify their values, evaluate their community, and get a clear view of its problems.

Goal setting leads to creative problem solving

- If a community takes time to examine its goals carefully rather than rely on traditional solutions, new ways are likely to be found.

Goals are based on the potential of a community

- Goal setting describes both the potentials and the constraints of problem situations, thereby pointing to realistic solutions.
Why Set Goals?

Reasons to Set Goals (cont.)

- Plans based on goals can be evaluated and consciously change
  - When plans are based on explicit goals, concerned and involved citizens can review and evaluate the progress the community is making toward accomplishing the goals.

- Goal setting promotes human resource development
  - Through goal setting, citizens can learn to take charge of their lives, to be responsible for their community, and to shed the incapacitating belief that community developments will inevitably be controlled by others.

- Goal setting identifies the community needs and values of minorities and special populations.
  - A knowledge of their special problems can lead to positive action by the majority or serve as a rallying point for minority action.
Why Set Goals?

Reasons to Set Goals (cont.)

Goal setting has long-term educational value for the participants

- By participating in setting community goals, many residents will think comprehensively about their community problems for the first time.

Goal setting is a good investment

- Goal setting can redirect budgets to those projects deemed most critical.

Participatory goal setting demonstrates good faith on the part of community leaders

- Setting community goals precludes a few people with vested interests contrary to the public good from totally directing the process.
Meeting the Challenges

Communities are facing unprecedented challenges, rooted in the inadequacies of traditional institutions and practices and other challenges imposed by exogenous factors.

Accompanying these challenges is a heightened sense of value for the qualities of community life that are most severely threatened.

Meeting the challenges to communities will depend foremost on the ability of communities to identify the goal preferences of citizens and rally community support to achieve common goals.
Meeting the Challenges

Seven of these appear to have the greatest implications for goal setting:

- Improving Productivity and Accountability
- Reconciling Special Interests
- Coping with Fiscal Conservatism
- Restoring respect for Public Institutions
- Developing Human Resources
- Protecting Citizen Rights and Values
- Overcoming Problems and Frustrations with Citizen Participation
Goals, Policies, and Objectives

The goal is defined as the end toward which effort or ambition is directed; aim; purpose. Often goals remain implicit and reflect core values that are relatively enduring over time.

Policies, designs, objectives, and standards are operational terms. They are the physical representations of goal concepts, and as such they should be deduced from preestablished goals.

Goals are the vital force that shapes not only the action proposals but the entire course of community development.
Theory

System Model of Goal Setting

Goal Setting

Goal Identification → Goal Clarification → Goal Prioritization → Goal Implementation → Goal Evaluation

Feedback and Social Learning
From this theoretical perspective, the incentive or motivation to engage in group goal setting is dependent on the utility of involvement as based on subjective assessment of potential benefits and costs.

If costs and benefits are important in determining citizen behavior in goal setting, it is necessary to understand the processes by which citizens judge costs and benefits.

Leaders of goal setting should be as clear as possible about both the costs and rewards of participation so citizens can decide to enter into goal setting with the best information available.
Theory

Social Learning

Citizens may be motivated to engage in community goal-setting activities either because they see potential benefit in community improvement, or see the likelihood of personal growth and satisfaction through social learning, or both.

From a social-learning perspective, goal setting, goals implementation, and goals evaluation constitute a long-range community learning experience.

Through goal setting planners and consultants have contact with the grass-roots members of the community in a way that cuts through superficiality to address basic community values.
**Theory**

**Community Organization**

- Social exchange and social learning have little meaning without reference to the context of the community organization.

- Groups that do not primarily retain their members by exchanging monetary rewards for activities must retain members by some other incentive.

- To the extent that groups benefit members and group membership is values, individuals may be influenced to join in collective actions of shared interest.

- Application of these principles to community goal setting requires the development of sufficient consensus that diverse populations and particular interests remain subordinate to the common goals of community.
Theory

Social Comparison

- Most citizens’ commitment to any goal setting project will depend not only on the benefits they expect to reap from goal setting but also how these benefits compare with those of other possible activities.

- Judgments of satisfaction with a goal setting project will reflect this dynamic view of the relative merits of goal setting in comparison with the attractiveness of other opportunities lost.

- Social comparisons also come into play in setting expectations and aspirations and in shaping the perceptions of costs and rewards of participatory goal setting.
Theory

Information Dependency and Overload

- Awareness of information dependency and overload led to steps to generate and disseminate relevant information on timely basis.
- Information must be representative and accurate. Given the complexity of most community issues, any single view or any sole source of information is prone to error.
- Where it is feasible to counterbalance the inherent biases of different information or goal-setting techniques, better results can be expected.
Theory

**Locus of Control**

- Fate control is characterized by the ability of one party to control the outcomes of the other party regardless of what the other party does.
- If citizens are operating under fate control, then their outcomes are non-contingent on their responding.
- Behavior control is marked by the ability of either party to adjust his or her behavior and thereby vary the outcomes.
- When they have no behavior control and therefore cannot affect community outcomes, citizen participation is illusory and is not self-sustaining.
Theory

Equity

Social judgments may result in the perceptions of system inequities, which some individuals or groups are not receiving a proportionate share of community goods and services.

I order to make a more concerted effort, the same group that constituted the basis of social reality comparisons will be the one likely to spearhead the community response.

A latent common interest will be transformed into a group consciousness and activities to mobilize public opinion and affect social decisions.
Theory

**Performance, Satisfaction, and Participation**

- In goal setting an increase in any one of the three variables tends to produce and increase in the other two.

- The interdependence of performance, satisfaction, and participation is made more complex by the moderating effects of several goal-related variables, including the difficulty of the goal, the specificity of the goal, and the group consensus about the goal.

- The effects attributable to having set goals and effects attributable to participatory are revealing and are necessary parts of full appreciation of participatory goal setting.
Participatory Goal-Setting Techniques

Starting Point

Often goal setting begins with only a vague awareness of problems and their potential for citizen action.

The commitment to goal setting must begin with a preliminary evaluation of the problems, resources, values, and potentials of the community.

This activity probably will depend initially on a small group of concerned citizens. The actions they take will be critical.

Goal setting will reflect the biases of the people who are central to the process, but these biases can be controlled if they are part of an open process.
The following principles will serve as a guide to selection and use of goal-setting techniques.

- Avoid simplistic approaches and simple response formats for complex issues, especially when citizens lack information on which to give an informed response.
- Keep time frames clear so citizens can orient appropriately to short, intermediate, or long term goals.
- Avoid goal setting that would interfere with elections, referendums, or other legal processes.
- Take a change on controversy. Goal setting should serve both majority and minority interests, and goals that first are valued by a minority may ultimately be deemed best overall.
- Use professional assistance in survey techniques to avoid gathering or using misleading and useless data.
Participatory Goal-Setting Techniques

Starting Point (cont.)

- Be careful to avoid antagonism or invasion of citizens’ privacy.
- Keep presentations of goal setting both objective and realistic about the chances of future achievements of the community.
- Avoid allowing hostility between participants to remain unresolved.
- Do not become so preoccupied with short-term goals that long-term goals are neglected.
- Discount early estimates of cost and time requirements. Goal setting need not be expensive or prolonged in order to be through and worthwhile. Once the skills are developed, it is no more difficult than a thorough site analysis.
Participatory Goal-Setting Techniques

**Costs and Resources**

- In practice, goal-setting techniques will be selected in terms of their anticipated costs and benefits.
- Typically these costs are absorbed by agencies, volunteers, businesses, and community organizations, though some kinds of cost are more easily absorbed than others, and selection of techniques should take this into account.
- Success in goal setting will depend on the selection of techniques that can effectively utilize the talents represented by the participating citizens.
Participatory Goal-Setting Techniques

Costs and Resources (cont.)

- A partial listing of local resource groups and the kinds of assistance they are prepared to contribute follows
  - County Office of the Agricultural Extension Service – Informative materials, consultation, and referral services.
  - Local Library – Space for displays, distribution, and collection of materials.
  - Area University or Community College – Technical consultation.
Participatory Goal-Setting Techniques

Costs and Resources (cont.)

- Local or County Planning Department – Source and repository of information, possible staff support, consultation, coordination.
- Newspapers and Local Television and Radio Stations – Media communication, public service announcements, and public affairs programming.
- Community Centers and Churches – Meeting rooms, mimeograph machines.
- Businesses – Cash donations and supplies.
Participatory Goal-Setting Techniques

**Benefits**

Goal setting is motivated fundamentally by the anticipation that certain benefits will result from the process.

The following twenty benefits may result from goal setting.

- Prepares people for development.
- Clarifies problems.
- Elicits community support and cooperation.
- Reconciles special interests.
- Uncovers hidden problems and interests.
- Fosters creative solutions.
Participatory Goal-Setting Techniques

Benefits (cont.)

- Describes community constraints and potentials.
- Guides evaluation.
- Promotes human resource development.
- Involves minorities and special populations.
- Promotes civic education.
- Contains costs of community development.
- Restores confidence in community institutions.
- Provides controls for unrealistic citizen expectations.
Participatory Goal-Setting Techniques

Benefits (cont.)

- Protects citizen rights and values.
- Generates objective information.
- Informs citizens,
- Develops appreciation of diverse interests.
- Solidifies community support for development.
- Promotes productive, orderly, and consistent development.
Participatory Goal-Setting Techniques

Goal-Setting Techniques

After previewed the major considerations of costs and benefits, citizens and planners can review goal-setting techniques with an eye toward finding one or a combination that matches local need.

The result of those computations and interpretive refinements is a categorical system that clearly identifies eight major approaches to goal setting.

- Skill-supplemented techniques are those that require special talent for successful implementation. Lay citizens are not precluded from using these techniques, but typically they will require consultation or other support services.

- Mediated action techniques are distinguished by mediator roles that link separate groups or individuals. The mediator represents, clarifies, or assists community transactions.
Open process techniques are relatively unlimited with respect to participation, structure, and content of community discourse.

Focus process techniques are characterized by definite limitations on participation, content, and purpose.

Representative process techniques are formal or quasi-formal means for democratic representation of private interests. They are modeled after traditional forms of democratic decision-making and therefore are familiar and widely accepted.

Educational process techniques have the dual purposes of long-range educational development of the participants and community goal setting.
Survey techniques are information-gathering techniques that are firmly grounded on a scientific tradition that includes probability sampling and statistical analysis of data.

Public information techniques are primarily information dissemination and review techniques. They have widespread application in community affairs reporting.
Participatory goal setting has clear benefits for beleaguered citizens and community planners. Experiences based on consultation, practice, and research indicate the consistently positive effects of goal setting in large and small communities.

Differences among techniques within groups are based on important but generally peripheral characteristics of techniques.

Planners and citizens must develop more systematic and broadened abilities in implementing goal setting in public settings.
Bibliography