



# Mission Objectives

## Integrated Country Strategy



Managing for Results

With the Goals and Country Context established, it's time to turn to the more concentrated task of setting Mission Objectives.

### Characteristics of Mission Objectives

Mission Objectives answer the question "What targeted changes do we want to bring about to advance the Mission Goal?" Mission Objectives should be **specific, realistic, and results oriented**. The Mission may not be able to fully accomplish the Mission Objective during the three-year planning period, but should be able to make substantial progress on it. And it needs to be specific enough that we can recognize the target and can devise realistic approaches for getting there. For instance, "Rule of law strengthened" tells the reader nothing about the area of focus or the specific and realistic change the Mission wants to influence. The test of whether an objective is realistic is going to vary from Mission to Mission depending on a number of factors including the country context and the anticipated resources available to the Mission. A Mission should have a sense of whether a Mission Objective such as "Improved governance results in free and fair elections and the end of government corruption" is a change that we can make some progress on over the next three years given projected resources and operating environment. In this case, is it realistic to assume that we be able to achieve this ambitious result?

### CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD MISSION OBJECTIVES

**Results Oriented**- Identifies an ambitious change that should occur, that otherwise might not happen without the Mission's efforts.

**Specific**- Clearly defined results, not too broad - it states some particular attributes you are trying to attain.

**Realistic**- Given constraints - external (e.g. political) and internal (e.g. human resources) - something that is challenging and ambitious.

### DEVELOPING MISSION OBJECTIVES

**Review Country Context and Joint Regional Strategy:** Country Context and Mission Goals should be reviewed to frame and inform the conversation on Mission Objectives.

**Deliberate and Draft:** The Objectives under any one goal should represent the various components needed to make progress on the Goal.

**Test the Mission Objectives:** Once you have developed the Mission Objectives, review the examples and critical questions on the next pages to ensure you have drafted strong set of Mission Objectives.



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### Components of Mission Objectives

The Mission Objective should describe a result the Mission will help bring about, not just an action that the Mission is going to undertake. If the Objective is not well written, no matter what activities we do, there is no way of telling if we are coming closer to achieving the desired final results.

A properly written objective should have two key components (1) a desired end-state or change to the current state and (2) the effort or action that influences or impacts the change.

An objective that conveys only actions inhibits measuring progress by obscuring the purpose behind action and making it difficult to establish the bar for success. One example of using these two components is:

#### KEY COMPONENTS

Change in Current State or Desired End-State + Effort or Action

***“Increase U.S. exports and investments in Freedonia to decrease poverty, and encourage greater regional leadership on economic issues”***

In this example the effort or role of the Mission is to help increase US exports and the end state achieved by this effort is decreased poverty and greater regional leadership on economic issues by the host country.

When an objective describes only an action and no desired end state, it renders the bar for success arbitrary. For example, if your Objective is “Communicate to Washington decision makers and other nations in the Freedonia region the regional and global value of the bilateral alliance,” then one cable that discusses the value of the bilateral alliance essentially achieves the written objective. The statement does not consider whether the communication has real impact. So, a better way to phrase the objective is “Improved engagement with Washington decision makers and other nations resulting in an increased understanding of the regional and global value of the bilateral alliance.” This emphasized “understanding” as the result of the “improved engagement.” Emphasizing results in Mission Objectives will ensure that the impact of any activity, rather than the mere performance of that activity, becomes the central focus of measuring success. Once you’ve developed the initial draft Objectives here are a few questions you can ask to get a sense of whether you are on the right track.



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### QUESTIONS TO TEST OBJECTIVES

Are these the highest priority changes we are seeking to address over the next three to five years or is the set of objectives a “laundry list” of things the Mission could do?

Do the Objectives together make considerable and measurable progress on the strategic Goal?

Are the Objectives stated clearly enough to be measured?

Does the evidence validate the Objectives? Do past practice, assessments and other external information support the choice of Objectives?

### EXAMPLE OBJECTIVES

GREAT	NOT SO GREAT
GOF authority in under-governed geographic and social spaces is expanded and opportunities for extremism are reduced by working with the GOF and international partners, to advance Freedomian respect for the rule of law, including human rights	Freedomia is Governed Justly and Democratically  <i>Not specific</i>
U.S. exports and investments in Freedomia are increased to drive more equitable distribution of income, decreased poverty, and greater regional leadership on economic issues	Invest in Environmental Sectors  <i>Not specific and an action, not a result</i>