



SOCIAL
ENTERPRISE
INSTITUTE

TOOLS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE



WORKSHEET

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

A worksheet to help you identify the social or environmental problem you're looking to address, and to dive deep in understanding as much as you can about it.

THIS WORKSHEET WILL HELP YOU TO:

- ✓ CLEARLY IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM YOU'RE COMMITTED TO TACKLING
- ✓ DETERMINE WHICH BENEFICIARY GROUPS TO FOCUS ON
- ✓ UNDERSTAND THE LOCATION, SCALE, AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM
- ✓ IDENTIFY POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES THAT MIGHT HELP SOLVE THE ADDRESS YOU'VE IDENTIFIED
- ✓ COMMUNICATE THE PROBLEM TO OTHERS IN A CLEAR, PERSUASIVE WAY



ABOUT THE WORKSHEET

This tool covers one of the first steps we recommend before rushing in to tackle the social or environmental problem you're passionate about.

Understanding the problem you're trying to solve is the most important part of building a successful project, campaign or enterprise: it provides clarity, direction and meaning to your work. And it's at the very basis of understanding what success looks like (ie. the problem gets addressed).

On the flipside, misunderstanding the problem you're trying to solve can lead to poor direction, wasted effort, and most importantly, no impact!

So, what is problem are you trying to solve? Can you clearly define and describe your problem, and can you prove your problem exists? We'll help you answer these and other questions, below.



HOW TO USE IT

“If I had an hour to solve a problem I’d spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions.”
— Albert Einstein.

Take a moment to reflect on the following questions. Use the space provided to place your answers.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM YOU ARE TRYING TO ADDRESS?



WHAT TARGET GROUP(S) OF BENEFICIARIES ARE YOU TRYING TO HELP?

(beneficiaries are those experiencing the social problem you are trying to solve)

IN WHAT WAYS ARE THE TARGET GROUP(S) AFFECTED BY THE PROBLEM?

(Think about how people experience the problem, and describe its effects and the needs arising)



WHERE ARE THEY LOCATED?

(Be specific, you can't serve everyone, at least at the beginning)

WHAT ACTIVITY DO YOU SEE ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM?

(Write down what you think the beneficiary has to do (or receive) in order to address the problem. This could be a guess at this point, and that's ok.)



PROBLEM STATEMENT

After collecting the information you need about the problem, it's time to articulate the problem in a clear statement. This is a useful exercise because it helps to concentrate your thoughts in one place, and provides a one-line statement that you can use to clearly articulate your problem to others.

Take what you've written above and distill it in a few words in each of the categories below. Remember, be specific.

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| PROBLEM: | |
| BENEFICIARIES: | |
| LOCATION: | |
| ACTIVITY: | |

Next, you can insert what you've outlined above in the statement below:

_____ in _____ needs to _____ so they can _____.
[beneficiary] [area, place] [do this] [address this problem]

And that's it! Now you have a problem statement! What do you think? Will this make it easier for you to explain your idea to others?



WORKED EXAMPLE

We'll look here at the issue of seniors' loneliness and isolation. In this instance, there was data that proved social isolation and loneliness were serious contributors to mental and physical decline in the elderly.

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| PROBLEM: | Isolation and loneliness (which causes health issues) |
| BENEFICIARIES: | Seniors (over 65 years old) |
| LOCATION: | Minnesota |
| ACTIVITY: | Shared youth and seniors apartment living |

Next, use what you've outlined in the statement below:

_____ in _____ needs to _____ so they can _____.

[beneficiary] [area, place] [do this] [address this problem]



Seniors in Minnesota need to live in co-housing arrangements with youth so they can eliminate isolation and loneliness.



FURTHER INFORMATION

Thanks for taking the time to check out this guide.

Motivated to learn more? The Social Enterprise Institute has put together a wide range of practical courses and resources to help you plan, start and grow a successful social-purpose business.

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TOOLS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

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