

Guidance for problem solving and Decision Making

Following basic guidelines to problem solving will help break down the issue and allow your committee to solve the problem at hand.

1. Defining the problem

This is often where people struggle. They react to what they think the problem is. Instead, seek to understand more about why you think there's a problem.

Ask yourself and others, the following questions:

1. What can you see that causes you to think there's a problem?
2. Where is it happening?
3. How is it happening?
4. When is it happening?
5. With whom is it happening? (Don't jump to "Who is causing the problem?" When we're stressed, blaming is often one of our first reactions. Which is ineffective when solving problems)
6. Why is it happening?

Prioritise:

If you discover that you are looking at several related problems, then prioritise which ones you should address first.

2. Look at potential causes for the problem:

It can be useful to get input from other people on the committee who notice the problem and who are affected by it.

- Collect input from other individuals one at a time
- Write down your opinions and what you've heard from others.
- Write down a description of the cause of the problem and in terms of what is happening, where, when, how, with whom and why.

3. Identify solutions to resolve the problem:

Here we should be trying to think of possible solutions, it can help to sit down within your committee and collect as many ideas as possible. Remember not to pass judgement on ideas, and take note whether you agree or not.

4. Make a decision on which solution you are going to use:

Important to consider:

- Which solution is most likely to solve the problem for the long term?
- Which solution is the most realistic to accomplish for now? Do you have enough time to implement the approach?
- The risks involved, in each solution. Does the risk outweigh the benefits?

5. Plan how to implement the solution (this is your action plan)



Consider:

- What will the situation look like when the problem is solved?
- What steps should be taken to implement the solution?
- What resources will you need in terms of people, money and facilities?
- How much time will you need to implement the solution?
- Who will primarily be responsible for ensuring implementation of the plan?
- Communicate the plan to those who will be involved in implementing it

7. Verify if the problem has been resolved or not

Here you should resume normal activities with your action plan in place, and consider the below:

- What changes should be made to avoid this type of problem in the future?
- Consider "What did you learn from this problem solving?" Consider new knowledge, understanding and/or skills.

Further Help

Contact your staff support, if you are struggling to solve a problem then you can reach out to your staff support at the Students' Association who would be happy to help:

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