

Problem Framing

Step 1 – The Problem

- A. How would you describe the problem? Develop a single-sentence definition.
- B. How has the problem shown itself? Who does it hurt, and how does it hurt them?
Under what conditions does it hurt them?
- C. How big is the problem? Is it getting worse?
- D. What results can be expected to occur if the problem is not solved?
- E. What is presently being done to meet the problem? In what ways are these efforts ineffective?

Step 2 – Analysis of the Problem

- A. What causes led to the present problem? What conditions exist that allow the causes to act as they do?
- B. Which of these causes are major and which are secondary?
- C. Should solutions deal with the major causes of the problem, with the secondary causes, or with the symptoms of the problem?
- D. What is the absolute minimum action that must be taken to address causes or symptoms of the problem?
- E. What would an ideal solution to the symptoms or problems be?
- F. What will your solutions cost in terms of person-power or other resources?
- G. What are the boundaries that a solution must observe? Do social customs, institutions, laws, etc. place a boundary on the feasibility of possible solutions?
Should any of these serve as additional criteria that possible solutions must meet?

Step 3 – Decision and Actions

Adapted from University of Delaware Department of Communication handout prepared by Dr. C. Pavitt and from “The Reflective Thinking Sequence” (Dewey, 1910)