

EFFECTIVE ADVISORY BOARDS

The Problem Solving Template

Applied to Advisory Boards



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“What is the problem we are trying to solve?”

- The primary work of organizations is problem solving.
- Definition: *A problem is any situation that you want to change*
- *Why do you need an advisory board? What problem will having an advisory board solve for you?*
- Unfortunately, groups routinely engage in activities without a clear sense of what situation they want to change, i.e., what problem they are trying to solve. (especially advisory boards!)

Common Characteristics of (non-Effective) Boards

- Boards are not very effective/dysfunctional
- Organizations often do not look forward to meeting with their boards
- Boards give lots of advice, talk a lot and leave
- Board members often don't trust it is a good use of their time:
 - may not be reliable
 - show up late
 - not follow through
- Best potential boards members may refuse to join boards - *"I won't waste my time"*

Cost of having a non-effective board

- Loss of having a strategic partner for your program
- Loss of \$\$\$
- Loss of talent
- Loss of visibility

“What is the problem we are trying to solve?”

- The first step in problem solving should always be to identify the problem and state it succinctly in a single sentence.
- You (and then your advisory board members) must:
 1. Own the problem statement
 2. Agree it is a problem worth solving.
 3. Agree it is the right problem to solve (i.e., the most fundamental, the most strategic starting place).
 4. Believe it can be solved.

How do we do this?

The Problem Solving Template

The five steps to the Problem Solving Template:

1. **Context/Current State:** (What's going on that makes you think you have a "problem"? What are the symptoms?)
2. **Problem Statement:** (One sentence—clear, succinct, concise. Completes the sentence, “The problem I’m trying to solve is....” in a grammatically correct fashion)
3. **Intent:** (Your goal for the work. Usually the Intent “falls right out of the Problem Statement.”)

How do we do this?

The Problem Solving Template

The five steps to the Problem Solving Template:

4. Desired Outcomes: (**Nouns** : everything that you must have in order to successfully achieve the intent, these are not **activities**)
5. Action Plan (Steps and processes needed to “operationalize” each Desired Outcome)

Using the Problem Solving Template

1. Work with a partner. Choose one program to focus on.
2. Jot down symptoms of your **Current State** of your program (*10 min*)
3. Develop a single problem statement that begins with, “*The problem that an advisory board will help me solve is . . .*” (*10 min*)
4. Translate the problem statement into an Intent Statement (Usually the opposite of the PS) (*1min*)

Using the Problem Solving Template

Desired Outcomes:

1. List everything that you will need to demonstrate you have accomplished your intent
 - These must be nouns (not verbs)
(*10 min*)