

# Steps To Identifying Issues

Modify freely for your public assemblies.

## Basic Ground Rules and Commitments: Accepted by All Participants

1. Our purpose is to move beyond conflict and control, to mutual agreement or majority decision.
2. We will not judge, criticize, or evaluate any ideas or proposed solutions as we engage in the process.
3. We will not attempt to exercise power or control, including anger, name-calling, put-downs, threats or intimidation or manipulation of any kind.

(Note: To resolve disputes involving differences of faith, philosophy, or personal taste, the parties can agree to disagree or agree to study the subject further.)

## Phase One: Identifying Issues

1. The facilitator invites others to say “what issues and challenges need to be addressed.”
2. The facilitator writes these issues in a numbered list on a sheet, chalk board, or other method so that all can observe.

(As the issues are being stated, the facilitator uses reflective listening as needed in order to clarify meaning. In the event a strong emotion is expressed or a participant becomes too verbal, the facilitator uses reflective statements, checks if the person feels understood, then directs the participants back to the issue.)

3. The facilitator then asks participants to say the number of one of the listed issues that they think needs to be addressed first.
4. The facilitator makes a tick by the number of each listed issue selected by participants, then circles the one with the most ticks. This becomes the first issue for listing solutions.

## Phase Two: Creating Solutions

1. Writing the issue on the chalkboard or flipchart, the facilitator makes a numbered list below it and says, “Now I would like us to brainstorm as many solutions for this issue as you can think of, and as you state them I will write them down on this list without judgment, criticism, or discussion.”

2. The facilitator stimulates ideas with the following statements. (To increase the number of ideas and with writing material, large groups can break into small groups or dyads and brainstorm using the following statements presented by each small group facilitator):

- a. Let’s write down what’s happening now, because that is always a choice.
- b. What’s the opposite of what’s happening now?
- c. What is a fantasy of what you might like to see happen but you don’t think is possible?
- d. Think of an approach that seems silly or ridiculous.
- e. Imagine what someone you respect (a relative or other wise person) might say as a solution.
- f. I can think of a possible solution that would work well and that no one has mentioned. Can anyone guess what it is? (the facilitator writes down ideas the participants guess)
- g. My idea is ..... (the facilitator adds his or her solution to the numbered list).

## Phase Three: Reaching a Creative Agreement

1. The facilitator says: “Now using your writing material, I would like each of you to take a separate sheet of paper and privately write down the number of up to three of the listed possible solutions or approaches that you think would be most practical or workable to address the challenge or issue.”
2. The facilitator says: “Now tell me the number of the listed solutions you have chosen, and I will make a tick by each of the solutions.”
3. The three solutions most selected by the participants, become the agreement or solution strategy for the issue addressed.
4. Depending on the issue, volunteers can be invited and a time can be determined to implement the strategy.
5. Repeat Phase Two and Phase Three for each of the remaining issues selected most often by the participants.