



R E S O U R C E

Charting Your Course: Problem Statement



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SCHOOL of EDUCATION
and HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
YOUTH-NEX

Problem Statement

Develop a Problem Statement

A problem statement is a clear and focused statement that describes a challenge or issue you intend to address. A well-developed problem statement can help to guide your research and solution development.

1. Review your data.

- ➔ Analyze the data you've collected through empathy map, interviews, shadowing, surveys, document analysis, and/or other methods.

2. Identify key themes and patterns.

- ➔ Look for recurring issues, challenges, or concerns.

3. Use the five W's to develop your problem statement.



WHO: Who is affected by the problem?



WHAT: What exactly is the problem?



WHEN: When does the problem occur?



WHERE: Where does the problem occur?



WHY: Why is this a problem?



HOW: How does the problem show up?

Additional Tips

- Frame the problem in a way that suggests potential solutions.
- When possible, use quantifiable terms to describe the problem (e.g., "a 20% increase in vaping").
- Avoid blame or judgment (i.e., no accusatory language)
- Share your problem statement with those the problem affects most and ask for feedback.

Example:

***Problem:** The 27% increase found in reports of anxiety and depression found among high school students in our school district during the 2023-24 school year, as well as the limited access to mental health resources, is contributing to a decline in academic performance, social well-being, and overall quality of student life.*

This problem statement clearly identifies the target group (high school students), the problem (anxiety, depression), the impact (declines in academic performance, social well-being, quality of life), and the context (school district). It avoids suggesting solutions, allowing for a broad range of potential solutions.