# Developing a Well-Specified Problem Statement

## Virtual Meeting Facilitation Guide

## [Date], [Approx. 75-Minute Time Slot]

### Objectives:

* Understand features of a high-quality problem statement
* Develop a well-specified problem statement

| Time\* | Topic | Activity | Learning Objectives | Resources |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5-10 min.** | Welcome and Introductions |  | * Welcome participants and provide time for new participants to introduce themselves. Ask new members to share their name, position/title, organization affiliation, and core job responsibilities/expertise
* Summarize the previous meeting objectives and outcomes.
* Introduce key objectives for this meeting (see above)
 | * Agenda
 |
| **15 min.** | Developing a High-Quality Problem Statement | Presentation | * Using the PowerPoint (PPT) presentation, describe the features of high-quality problem statements and give examples.
* Allow time for discussion and Q&As. Ask participants to share personal experiences associated with developing and implementing problem statements.
* Has anyone been involved in research-practice partnerships in the past? If so, please share how the group developed a common problem statement? What challenges emerged, and how were they addressed?
* Did the problem statement change over time? If so, how? What factors influenced these changes?
 | * PPT Presentation
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| **45 min.** |  | Group Activity | * Share Google Document entitled “Problem Statement Exploration.”
* Assign each participant a row by listing their name in the leftmost column. Ask participants to spend 5 minutes answering questions in columns 2-4 (i.e., briefly describe one problem from the past week, past month, past 3-6 months). If the group is more than 8-10 people, consider creating small groups of 4-8 people.
* Continue sharing the completed “Problem Statement Exploration” document. Ask members to take a few minutes to review each column and identify common themes that emerge across participants’ responses. Next, ask participants to share these themes. Highlight statements within the document that represent these themes well.
* Once a list of general problem themes has been highlighted and/or developed, use the questions in the PPT slide to prioritize and narrow these problems, compiling them into one well-specified statement. The following questions can be used to prompt discussion and reach consensus on a well-specified statement:
* Which aspects of the problem are within the group’s control?
* Which aspects of the problem, when addressed, would produce the most substantial improvements for students?
* For whom and under what conditions are solutions most needed? Consider a variety of subgroups, conditions, subjects, etc.
* Write the agreed-upon problem statement in the final row of the table under the heading “Final Problem Statement.” Test the problem against high-quality features and further refine, if needed, to ensure the problem statement meets SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely) and high-leverage criteria.
* **When working with small groups**, each small group may complete the activity as described above. Reserve 15 minutes at the end of the session for small groups to share their final problem statements and either (1) adopt one group’s statement, or (2) integrate the multiple statements into one commonly agreed-upon statement.
* *Note: This activity works best when Networked Improvement Community participants are initially recruited to address a broad, commonly shared problem of practice.*
 | * PPT Presentation
* Google Document: “Problem Statement Exploration”
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| **5-10 min.** | Wrap Up and Next Steps |  | * Summarize key points from the meeting
* Discuss next steps (i.e., conducting a root cause analysis)
* Confirm next meeting date for root cause analysis
 | * Agenda and Meeting Summary Notes
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\*Times are estimates only. Time may fluctuate based on the nature of the discussion, group size, and meeting format (e.g., face-to-face vs. virtual).