

Define the Situation Activity

Overview: This activity can be used with anyone. It is an easy and accessible method, regardless of literacy, to more fully understand the circumstances and conditions that influence an issue within a community in order to identify potential solutions and advance a policy, system or environmental change. It intends to understand the situation from the various participants involved in the issue and take inventory of the factors that can affect or correct the situation.

Goals:

- 1 Understand an issue from various perspectives of people involved in the issue.
- 2 Identify opportunities for change or desirable solutions from each perspective
- 3 Understand what programs, practices or policies exist that contribute or are barriers to the desirable solutions identified.
- 4 Identify who has the power to make the changes desired.

Materials Required

- Butcher paper or dry erase board
- Prompt questions
- Markers

Note

This activity can be done in workgroups or committees to get started. Note that this can be an efficient method to start the process but it is critical that if the committee is not made up of members of the specific perspective, that efforts are made to engage with the members of the specific perspective, those experiencing the issue. They are the best partner in identifying the most appropriate solutions to the issue.

Activity Overview

- 1 Welcome and introductions
- 2 Goals and overview of activity
- 3 Define the Situation Activity
- 4 Closing

Welcome and introductions. Greet everyone and thank them for their willingness to participate in the activity. Ask everyone to introduce themselves and answer the question. This activity is to help warm the group up to sharing and participating. It is meant to be a safe space where they begin to trust the facilitator and each other. The question can be anything relevant to the group or current events. Examples could be:

- If you were able to travel in time, what point in the future or past would you visit?
- If you could ask President Obama one question what would you ask him?
- If you could talk to one person, now living, who would it be and why?

Goals and Overview. Provide a brief overview of what the goals of the activity are and why their expertise is so important to the solutions of the issue. The goals include:

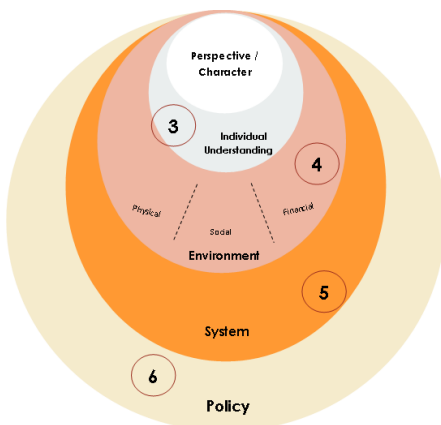
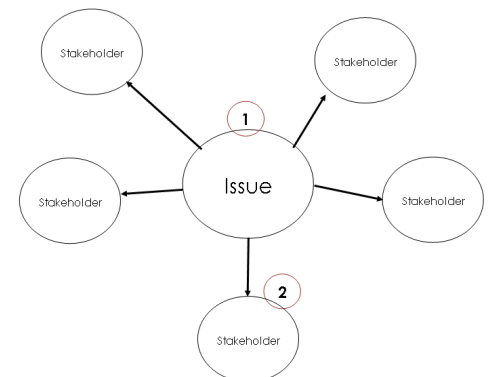
- 1 Understand an issue from various perspectives of people involved in the issue.
- 2 Identify opportunities for change.
- 3 Begin to define who has the power to make the change.

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Once you have selected a priority area, write the issue in the middle of the butcher paper and circle it. First ask the group to think about and share who is affected by the issue. Second, write down the answers around the issue, circle them and draw a line to them, creating a map of stakeholders.

If you are working in committee or have a large enough group, break into smaller pairs or groups of 4-5. Have each pair select one affected perspective or stakeholder in the situation.

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Have them brainstorm and write their thoughts to the questions listed on the Activity worksheet or have them write their responses on butcher paper. The Activity worksheet has prompt questions that will guide the group in thinking about each layer of the situation from what is desirable by the person affected to what is viable within the environment, system and policy.

Once they have completed their brainstorming, have each group share their initial thoughts. Offer time for the other groups to add thoughts to the list.

When the list and responses seem to be completed, ask the full group what else is needed to know? What information would be helpful to have in addition to what is noted? Ask where they might find the additional information or who might have it?

Finally, ask each group to describe where they think opportunities exist for change in each layer; individual, environment, system and policy. For each response, ask them to make note who they think has the power to make the change or who has the decision making power.

Prompt Questions See **Stakeholder Scan Activity Worksheet** for prompt questions. The groups can work on butcher paper to answer these or on copies of the worksheet. You will want to collect whatever it is they are brainstorming on.

Closing

Once the groups have shared and everyone has had an opportunity to make observations of the various situations explain that the next step in this process will be to understand the root causes. Depending on your plan, you may want to ask the member organizations who participated in this activity if they have access to the various affected groups or stakeholders and discuss how you might engage with them to better understand their perspective on the root causes.

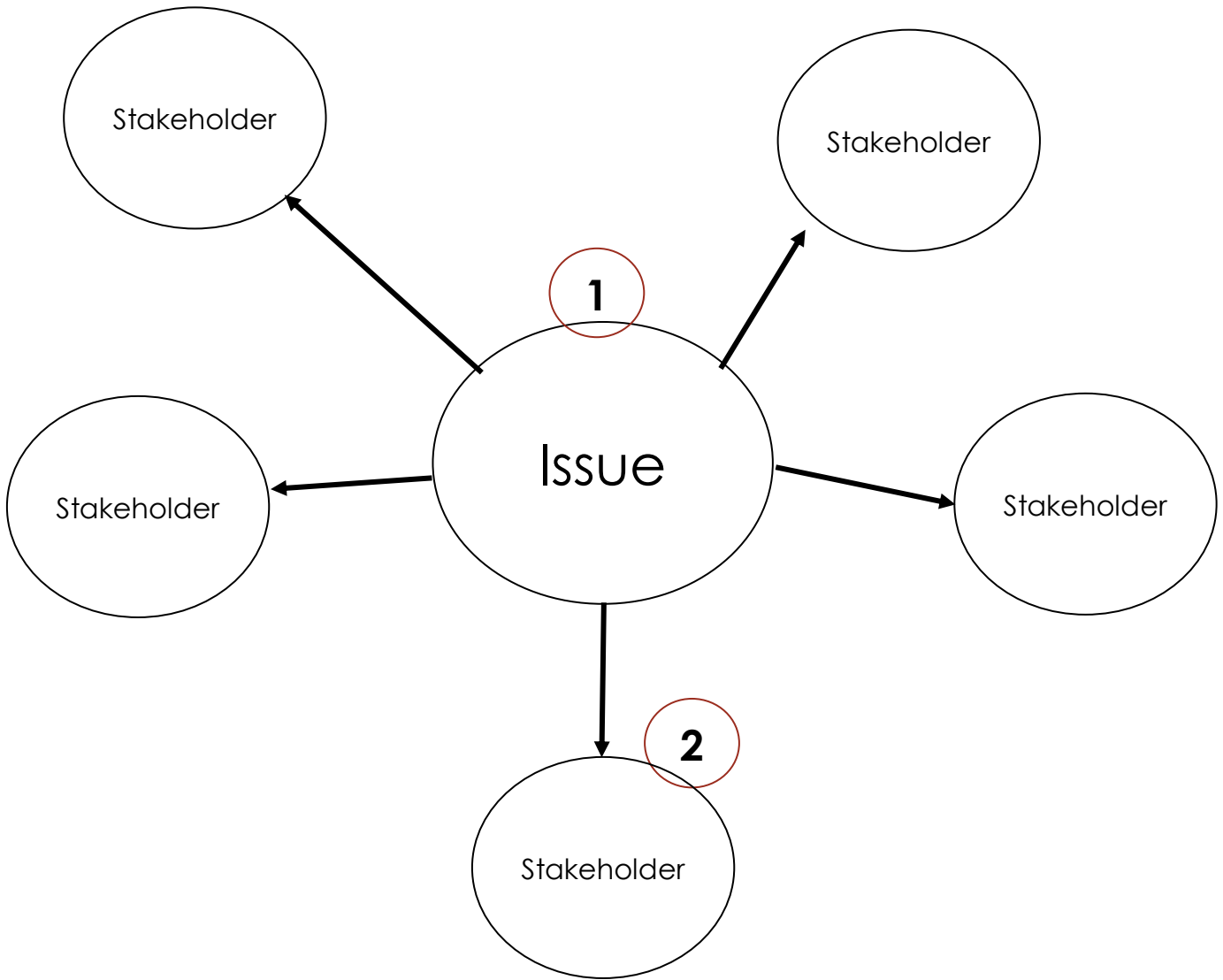
Thank everyone for their time, honesty and openness to share.

Moving to Understanding Root Causes Once this activity is complete, you can move to Understanding the Root Causes. See separate activity for possible steps.

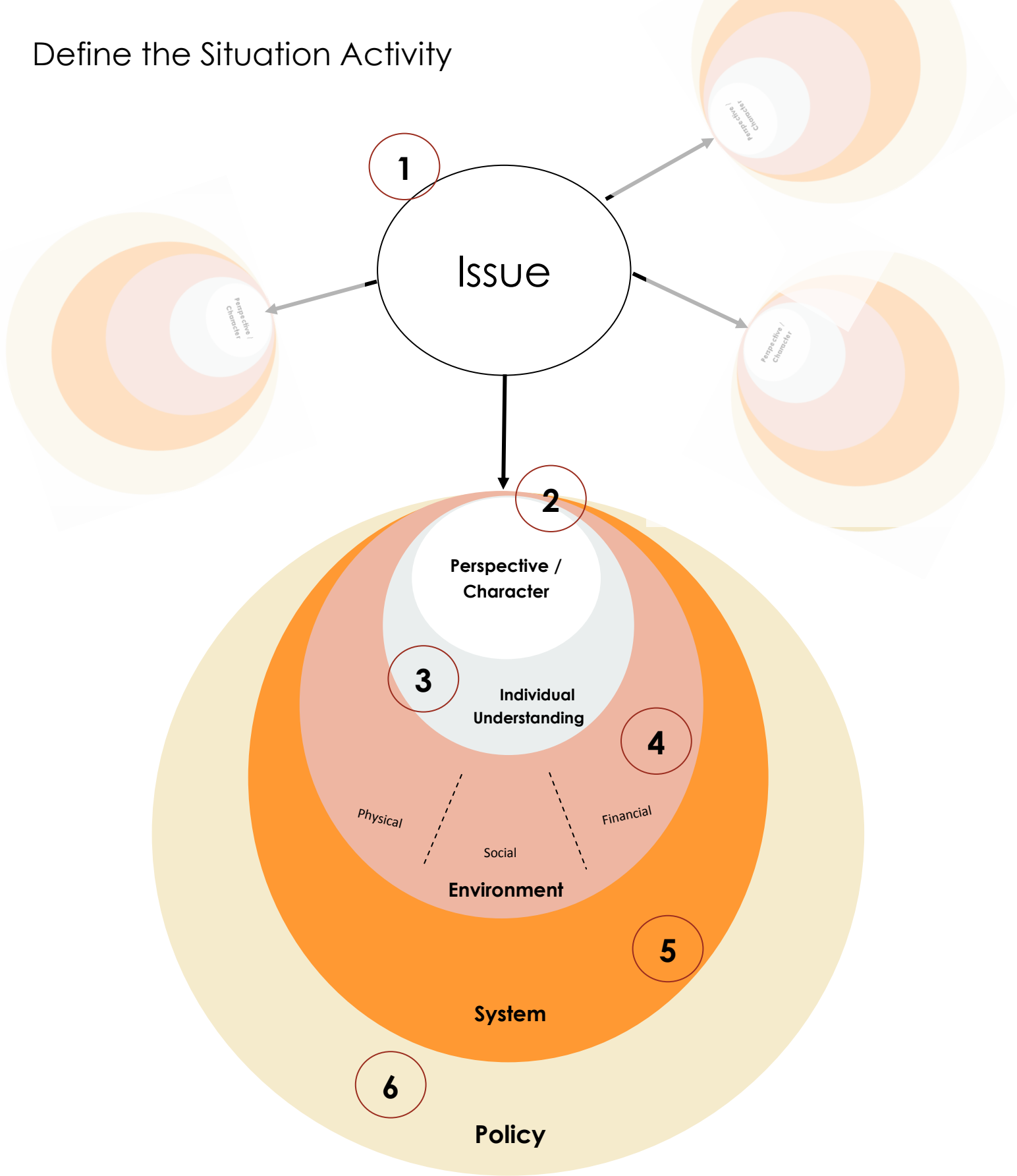
References

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7 Opportunities for Change?

8 Who has the power to make the change?

Stakeholder Scan Activity Worksheet

1. Priority Area (Issue):	2. Stakeholder (Perspective):
3. What is the stakeholder's understanding about the issue?	4.0 What is the stakeholder's attitudes (good or bad) about the issue
4.1 What are the stakeholder's behaviors that are positively helping the issue?	4.2 What are the stakeholder's behaviors that are negatively affecting the issue?
4.3 Describe how the stakeholder's social networks and family play a roll in the situation?	4.4 What are the physical assets and barriers that exist related to the issue?
4.5 What are the economic incentives and disincentives related to the issue?	5. What programs exist that address the issue? What programs or services do not exist or are not sufficient enough to reach the need?
5.1 What systems (processes and procedures across organizations and within) are in place for the stakeholder regarding this issue? What systems do not exist but would be helpful?	5.2 What organizational relationships (politics) exist or do not exist among program providers?
6. What policies are in place for the stakeholder?	6.1 Are there policies in other organizations, cities or states that have proven to work that could be adapted here for the issue?
7. Where are there opportunities for change in each layer?	
8. Who (people, organization, government or other) has the power to make the change for each opportunity identified?	