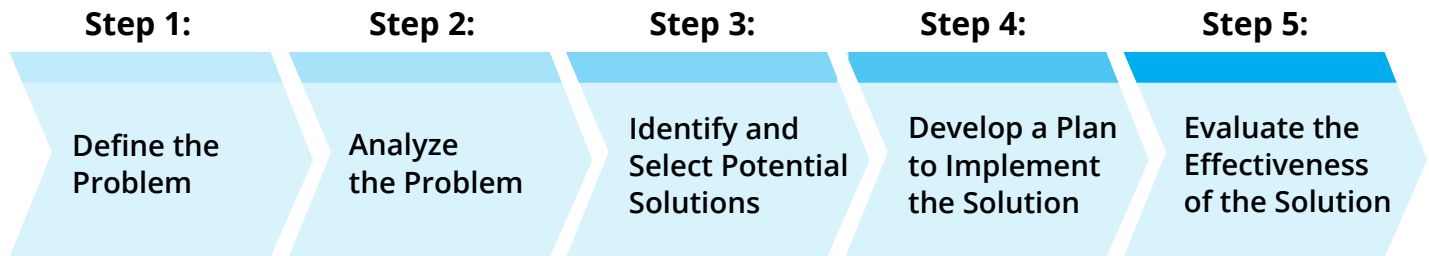


Solving problems as a team is different than solving problems as an individual. Team problem solving can benefit from multiple perspectives that lead to a broader range of solutions. The process for team problem solving is easy to learn and apply to most situations. It involves five steps. At each step, the team can raise questions to help focus the discussion and keep it moving forward.



The questions below can be used to guide a discussion with all team members. As time allows, the team should discuss the answers to each question by sharing information, perspectives, and opinions until the group feels they are able to move to the next step. This discussion can take place in one meeting, or over several meetings if the team does not have enough information to solve the problem.

Step 1. Define the Problem

- What is the problem (in one sentence)?
- How did we first notice this problem?
- Who or what is most affected by this problem?
- What effect is this problem having now?
- What effect will this problem have in the future?
- Do we have a clear picture of the problem?

Step 2. Analyze the Problem

- What are possible causes of this problem? For example:
 - Human error
 - Unanticipated circumstances
 - Insufficient training (for example, on systems or software) or support for an activity
 - Other processes, activities, or barriers (e.g., policies)
- What factors might affect our ability to solve the problem (e.g., limited budget or time)?

Step 3. Identify and Select Potential Solutions

- What are potential solutions for this problem?
- Have all team members contributed ideas for potential solutions?
- Who can help us solve the problem?
- For each solution, consider:
 - What are the possible outcomes? What are the benefits? What are the risks?
 - Who benefits the most? Who benefits the least?
 - Who else will be affected and should provide input?
 - What limitations do we need to consider?
 - How will the solution affect progress toward study goals?
- Which solution(s) will we select?

Step 4. Develop a Plan to Implement the Solution

- What steps are needed to implement the solution?
- What do we need to implement the plan (e.g., software, materials)?
- What is the timeline for implementation?
- Who will be responsible for implementing each step of the plan?
- Who else do we need to implement the plan?
- How will we gather feedback about the plan from all team members?

Step 5. Assess the Effectiveness of the Solution

- What is the team's plan for assessing the solution?
 - How will we know if the solution is effective?
 - When should we evaluate the solution?
 - When will we know if the solution is working?
 - Who is responsible for monitoring the solution?
 - How often do we need to check on the solution?
- What has changed about the problem?
- What further solutions might be needed?