

Issue Cutting Checklist

In advocacy and public policy work, a problem becomes an issue when it is made actionable. don't try to "solve" broad problems — they identify specific, winnable pieces of those problems that people can take collective action on.

From a Problem to an Issue

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Start with people's lived experience

Listen for what is most painful, urgent, or consistent across many people's stories.

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Identify what part of the problem can be solved with a policy solution.

Ask: Which piece can actually be changed through collective action?

Ask: What piece of this problem can be solved with public intervention/gov't solutions?

Research: What are others saying about this problem and potential policy solutions?

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Determine the decision-maker/target

A problem becomes an issue only when there is a specific target:

- City council
- School board
- State agency
- Landlord
- Congressional representative
- Police chief

If no decision-maker can make a measurable change, it isn't an issue yet.
Does the decision-maker lead at the local or county level where we have influence?

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Define a concrete demand

A demand is something someone can say yes to:

"Fund two additional mental health counselors at the high school."

"Pass an ordinance requiring landlords to provide 72-hour notice before shutoffs."

"Allocate \$3 million to violence interruption programs."