

County Solutions: Project Overview

How to Choose County Issues for Use With *County Solutions*

Identify a need in your community. It may be a problem that needs a solution or an improvement that would enhance public life in your area. Either way, it must be a need that would be appropriate for the county government to address, either through action or regulation. This is because the goal of *County Solutions* is for your class to propose a public policy solution for the issue.

County issues will likely fall into one of these categories:

- “Hot” issues already being discussed in the county
- Needs in the county that are getting little or no attention

Either type of issue will work with *County Solutions*. If you choose an issue already being discussed in the county, you will probably be able to find local news, groups, and agencies that are focused on addressing the issue. If you choose an issue that is not being discussed, you will need to look to other communities to find informational materials to use with *County Solutions*.

If you can answer “yes” to all of these questions, your issue will work with *County Solutions*:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | Can the issue be appropriately addressed or solved through public policy (government regulation or action)? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | Is there a county agency that has addressed this issue, either locally or in another community, or that could address this issue? (Your county’s website should have links to your county government’s departments and agencies.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | Does that county agency have a website with information about the issue? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | Is there a non-governmental group working to address this issue, either locally or in another county? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | Does that group have a website with information about the issue? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | Can you find one more website that has information about the issue? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | Can you find three news articles that discuss the issue, either in your local media or from another community? |

Idea Jump-Starters

Here are some general topics to get you started thinking about issues for *County Solutions*:

Homelessness	Transportation	Health/Safety	Planning/Zoning
Young People	Senior Citizens	Environment	Utilities/Services
Jobs/Training	Pets/Wildlife	Recreation	After-school

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Materials Needed for *County Solutions*

- Active reading tools (highlighter or colored pencils)
- Art supplies (scissors, colored pencils, markers, crayons, glue or tape, scrap paper)
- Method of showing the class information (projector, smart board, etc.)

Advanced Research and Preparation Required for *County Solutions*

County Solutions is designed as a series of in-class lessons and does not require students to do outside research. For a fuller *County Solutions* experience, you could contact a representative from your county government agency, but it is not necessary. The teacher will need to gather a limited number of materials beforehand that will be the informational foundation of the project. Three lessons require you to have outside information prepared in advance:

Before Step One:

- Research issues that could be solved by the county level of government and would be of interest to kids. If you need help, get in touch with your county government to see if they can offer ideas.
 - We suggest visiting the National Association of Counties (NACo) website for resources and contacts. (www.naco.org)
- Select two issues for your class to choose from for its class project.
- Find one news article explaining each issue. (You may compliment these with news clips and video.)

Before Step Two:

- Find two medium-length news articles that focus on the community issue your class selected in Step One.
- Complete the 5W + H graphic organizer for each article to act as a teacher key.

Before Step Four:

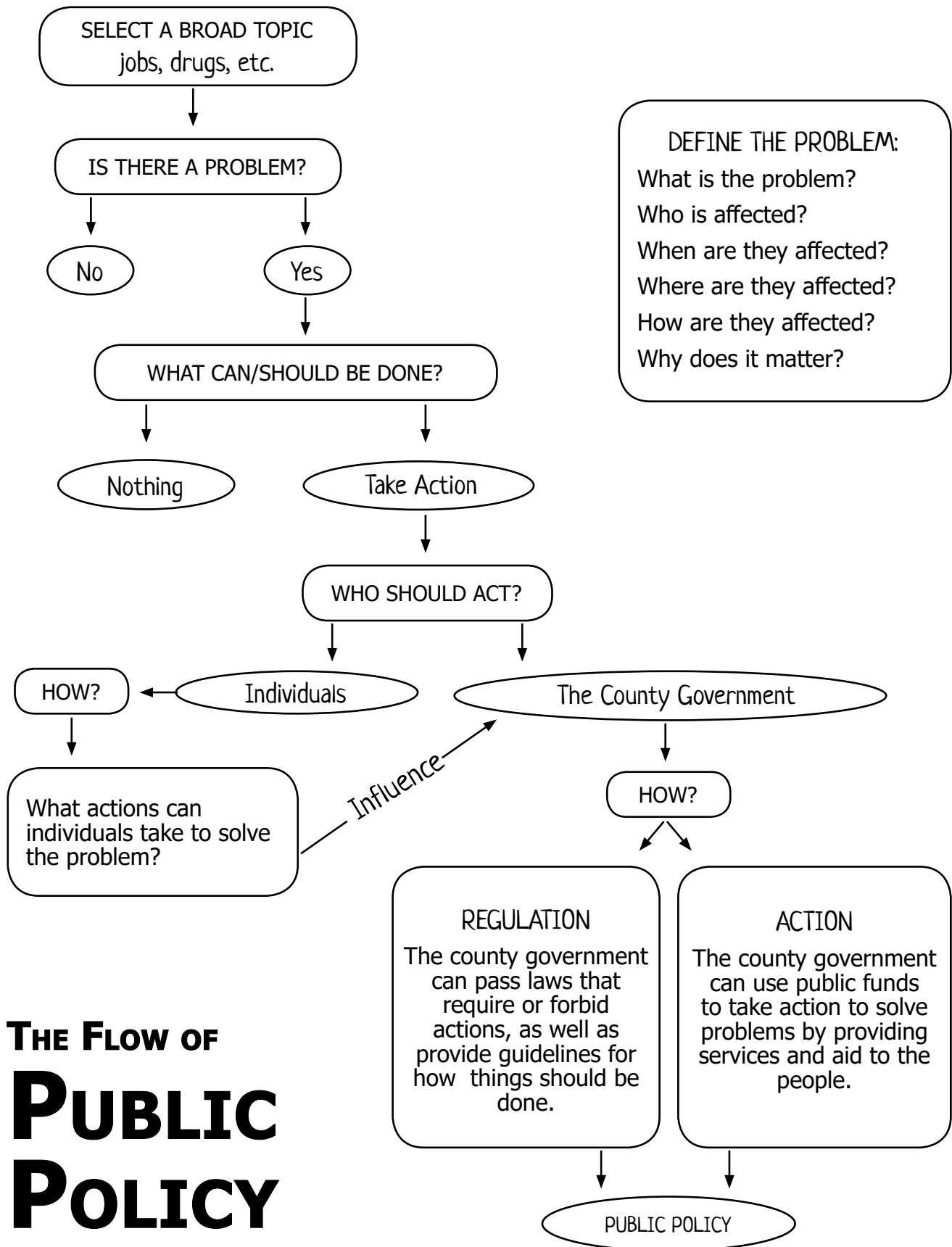
- Find three different websites that relate to or directly address the class issue. At least one site should be a county agency related to the class issue, and one should be some type of non-profit organization.
- Complete the Information Collector for each website to use as a teacher guide.

***County Solutions* Flow Chart**

The flow chart on the next page shows a progression of thinking through an issue to arrive at a public policy solution. *County Solutions* is based on this model of analysis. You may wish to project this flow chart as your class works through *County Solutions* to help your students understand the big picture and keep track of where they are in the process.

Periodically, you will find a reference to this flow chart in the lessons.

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THE FLOW OF PUBLIC POLICY