



# Texas Community Futures Forum

2004

## How to Write a Good Issue

**T**hese simple guidelines will help make writing your issue or concern easier. They are suggestions to consider, but you are not required to follow them exactly. Just use them in a way that makes sense to you.

### What's your vision?

- ◆ Try to picture the outcome you want in your mind. What does it look like? Try to write a sentence that describes that outcome, the situation that will exist when the change is accomplished.
- ◆ If it's easier for you, brainstorm just ideas at first and then turn them into issue statements.
- ◆ As you turn your ideas into issue statements, write each one in large letters on a separate sheet of paper.
- ◆ Here's an example:  
Working parents will have affordable child care.  
Notice that the *subject* is "working parents," the *change* is "have," and the *outcome* is "affordable child care."

### Start with the people.

- ◆ The subject for your issue statement will be the people affected

by it. The subject may also be a place, object, or situation, but thinking about change in terms of people is usually best.

### What's the change?

- ◆ Include a verb, or action word, that describes the change. Most of our statements will be about changing something or making it better. After all, do we really need to plan to keep things the same? Your action word will describe what your subject is expected to do.

### State the outcome.

- ◆ What is the outcome you want? How will your subject be different when the change is accomplished? What is the new condition, activity, or situation you want to achieve?

### Check it over.

- ◆ Make sure that your issue statement is clear and understandable to other people.
- ◆ Include enough concrete details so that people using this information to plan for solutions can understand what you mean.
- ◆ Your statement doesn't have to be too specific. Remember that, if you are able to combine similar issues, that issue will be more likely to receive votes.

## Set priorities.

- ◆ When your small group discusses priorities, think about how “actionable” each issue is. Can it actually be addressed in concrete ways?
- ◆ When you hear the issue, can you think of an educational response?
- ◆ Does the mix of priorities consider all parts of your community? Is an important segment left out? (For example, agriculture, environment, businesses)

## Issue Statements should be:

- ◆ **Specific:** Good issues are clear, precise, and definite. Remember that someone else (who may not have been part of the County Forum) will have to create programs to answer these issues. If issue statements are too general or too fuzzy, they will be hard to address.
- ◆ **Measurable:** The issue statement must be written so that you can measure your progress, and, most importantly, so you’ll know when you’ve achieved it!
- ◆ **Achievable:** The issue should be something that can be accomplished, not just “pie in the sky.” Try to focus on issues that can achieve significant progress in the next 5 years.
- ◆ **Realistic:** The issue should be appropriate for the people, circumstances, geographic area, etc., where you live.

## Good Issues

- ◆ People in residential areas will reduce their use of water in their households and landscapes.
- ◆ Youth need a safe place for constructive after-school activities.
- ◆ Carbon dioxide emission from ABC industrial plant needs to be reduced.
- ◆ We need a center where senior adults can go for educational programs.

## Too General

- ◆ Water
- ◆ Youth
- ◆ Pollution

## Too Specific

- ◆ Senior adults need a place to play bingo on Tuesday afternoons once a month.

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