

## DEFINING THE PROBLEM

**What** is happening that makes you think there is a problem?

What do you observe happening?

What have others observed happening?

What do you think should be happening that is not?

**Where** is it happening?

Does the problem occur in more than one location?

Is it happening online as well as in person?

**How** is it happening?

How does the problem unfold?

Does the problem occur consistently?

Is there a pattern?

Is it getting worse?

**When** it is happening?

Does the problem occur often?

Is it sudden or has it developed over time?

Can the timing of the problem be predicted?

Is the problem triggered by a specific activity?

With **whom** is it happening?

Does the problem typically happen to a single person? A group of people?

Does the problem typically happen to one category of library user or employee?

Does the problem involve non-library users?

**Why** is it happening?

What internal factors might be influencing the problem?

What external factors might be influencing the problem?

## APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

- Systematic discovery of the best in people and organizations.
- Extensive one-on-one interviews.
- Unconditional positive questions, directed conversation, and storytelling.

### SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Will you please tell me a story about the work you most enjoy doing?
- Will you please tell me a story about a time when you felt most excited and enthusiastic here at the library?
- Can you please share a time here at the library when you know that you mattered and it helped build your confidence?
- Can you think of a story that demonstrates a positive approach to customer service here at the library?
- We believe that people do their best when challenged to excel and are given the support to do so. Will you tell me about a time here when you felt you were pushed to be your very best and knew you had support behind you?
- What do you think gives life to this library? What is at the center of this library that makes it what it is today?
- If you had three wishes for this library that would make it an even better place to work, what would they be?
- If you came to work tomorrow and one small thing had changed to make the library better, what would it be?

### STRENGTHS – WEAKNESSES – OPPORTUNITIES – THREATS (SWOT) ANALYSIS

- Extends traditional “pros and cons” analysis to include more strategic thinking.
- Can be done alone, in pairs, or in a group.

<b>OPTION:</b>	
<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>

### PLUS – MINUS – INTERESTING (PMI) ANALYSIS

- Extends traditional “pros and cons” evaluation to include more creative thinking.
- Helps participants suspend judgment and see all sides of an issue; can help calm tense situations.
- Can be done alone, in pairs, or in a group.

	PLUS	MINUS	INTERESTING
OPTION 1			
OPTION2			
OPTION 3			
OPTION 4			

## SOME POINTS TO CONSIDER WHEN EVALUATING OPTIONS

- User benefits?
- User preferences?
- Ability to attract non-users?
- Unique features?
- Innovative aspects?
- Expense?
- Cost savings?
- Quality improvement?
- Turnaround time improvement?
- Productivity improvement?
- PR value?
- Recruitment and succession issues?
- Readiness/capability to implement?
- Timing, deadline pressures?
- Disruption of other key activities?
- Reliability?
- Effect on morale?
- Staff development opportunities?
- Partnership opportunities?
- Opportunities to build on existing assets?
- Learning curve?
- Training?
- Ease of maintenance?
- Community or lifestyle trends?
- Political impact?
- Environmental impact?
- IT/network capacity?
- Contract/purchasing requirements?
- Competitive advantage?
- Accreditation?
- Grant eligibility?
- Fun factor?

## TIPS FOR MAKING EFFECTIVE DECISIONS

1. Avoiding or not making a decision is not as powerful as thinking through your choices and then deciding not to act.
2. Most decisions are time sensitive. If you wait too long to tackle a problem, the problem may change.
3. Keep a paper trail of your decision-making discussions. This helps keep you focused on the important issues and makes it easy to explain your reasoning to others.
4. Whenever possible, involve those who will be affected by a decision in the decision-making process.
5. Be careful to distinguish facts from rumors, beliefs, and opinions.
6. Not all facts are equally relevant.
7. Recognize that there are always risks involved in making decisions. There are no guarantees.
8. Spend your time and energy on the important decisions. Make easily reversible or relatively unimportant decisions quickly. Take as much time as needed to make irreversible decisions.
9. Don't waste time looking back. Assume that you made the best decision you could at the time and move ahead.
10. Be sure that everyone involved in the decision-making process is using the same vocabulary. Provide a glossary if necessary.
11. Listen critically throughout the decision-making process.
12. Focus on your assets and look for ways to add value.
13. Understand your own biases.
14. Never confuse the ideal and reality. We can strive for ideal, but by definition we can't achieve it. You will never make the *perfect* decision.