

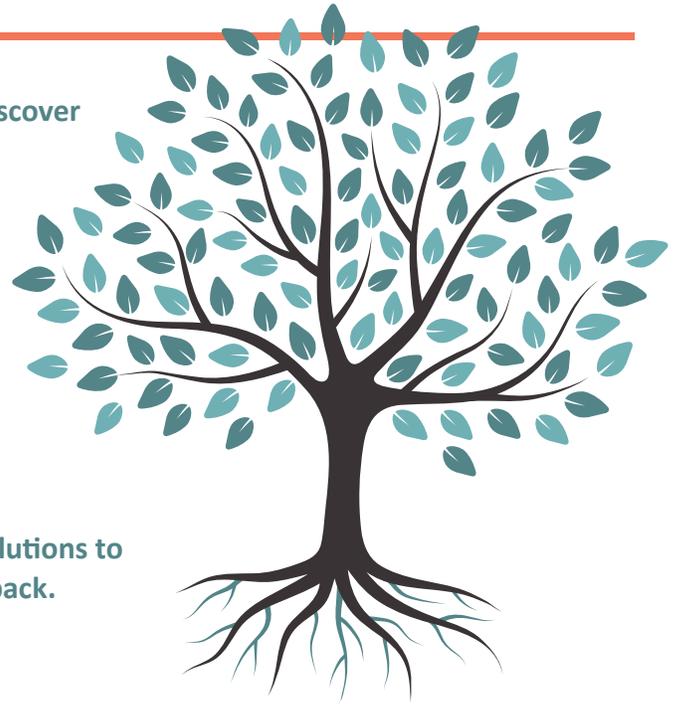


ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS FACILITATION GUIDE

The Root Cause Analysis (RCA) is a process used to discover the underlying or “root” causes of social issues, including the symptoms and problems of the issue, and to identify appropriate solutions.

This tool is a team building exercise to unify coalitions and encourage rich conversations about deeply rooted problems and learning why systems (like the tobacco industry) cause and maintain inequities especially in low-income communities.

The RCA can reveal new short-term and long-term solutions to systematically prevent root problems from growing back.



Definitions

- **Issue:** An issue is an overarching situation in a community that requires discussion to find sustainable solutions to the associated problems. Issues are usually associated with a scope of work objective that can be remediated through policy development. An example of an issue, 1 out of 3 youth are using flavored tobacco products in your community.
- **Symptoms/Problems:** Are easily visible and above the surface. These are conditions and experiences that people either feel or observe in their community. For example, a family living in an apartment complex being exposed to toxic secondhand smoke every day because their neighbor smokes.
- **Root causes:** Root causes refer to problems that keep occurring because the “root” or real causes are not being addressed. They are

the underlying source creating problems and encouraging those problems to persist even though services or efforts may be in place to help. For example, adultism – behaviors and attitudes based on the assumption that adults are better than young people, social institutions, customs, and attitudes.

- **Solutions:** There can be both short-term and long-term solutions to an issue. A short-term solution can provide short-term relief for a problem/symptom. For example, organizing a cigarette-butt clean up event at a local park to reduce tobacco waste. The main objective is to identify long-term solutions through policies, like eliminating the sale of all tobacco products. Policies passed by a city council, county board of supervisors, or Tribal councils can prevent root causes from resurfacing. Long term solutions could also include actions that will ultimately causes changes in normative behaviors.

Facilitating the Activity

Step 1: Before starting this exercise, facilitators are encouraged to create a safe environment as the discussion could involve sensitive and personal experiences while completing this exercise. Ground rules could include:

- Agree to keeping discussion matters confidential
- Communicate openly with respect, fairness, and honesty during the exercise
- Be inclusive and participatory
- Acknowledge the diversity of the group
- Establish a conflict management procedure

Step 2: Everyone should understand the term “root cause”. Ask for participant volunteers in the group to offer a definition. If not, review the definitions – Issue, Symptom/Problem and Root Causes.

Step 3: The session can be conducted either with the entire group or in smaller breakout groups. No more than eight participants should be in a group for completing the RCA worksheet.

Step 4: Each participant should have a copy of the RCA worksheet printed or on their computer.

Step 5: Have a participant volunteer to be a scribe and write down the group’s ideas/concepts, which will be shared back to the larger group (if smaller breakout groups take place). Ask for a participant volunteer to report the information back to the large group (more than one person can volunteer to do so)?

Step 6: Determine the issue. The scribe will write the issue the group has decided to address. Issues could be determined before or after completed the “symptoms/problems” section. Occasionally, it may be helpful for groups to identify and share the symptoms and problems of our communities which can lead to defining an issue.

Step 7: Identify multiple “symptoms/problems” with the associated issue. What problems are being caused by the issue? These are usually more tangible experiences that people can be facing or observing in their community.

Step 8: Connect the symptoms/problems to their root causes. When listing the issue and symptoms, ask “why” several times for each symptom/problem to uncover multiple root causes. You may find that several of these symptoms are a result of the same root cause. For example, a problem can be high rates of youth using tobacco products. Why is there a higher rate of use in your community?

Step 9: Find solutions. After identifying and writing down all three categories above (issue, problems/symptoms, root causes), relevant solutions will be identified to remediate what was listed. Questions that could be helpful to ask the group could be:

- “What are solutions that will have a long-lasting impact in our community?”
- “Are there tobacco policies that could deter social, economic, government problems to persist?”

Step 10: Bring groups back together to report and discuss what was discovered with the RCA. Ask people to share:

1. Something they learned, or a moment in the discussion that surprised them.
2. One thing they liked and one thing they would change about the conversation.
3. Develop next steps based on the results of the RCA.

Step 11: Close the discussion and thank people for their participation. Make sure to follow-up with participants and apply accountability for accomplishing what was decided as next steps.