

Problem Definition Tool and Supporting Guidance

How we define a problem sets a tone for how we understand it, work with it and propose solutions for it. Yet, oftentimes the way we conceive of a problem doesn't tell the full story; Sometimes, it is missing key people, perspectives or ideas.



The problems with problems tool* is a part of the **equitable ways of thinking and working** element. Coherence Lab Fellowship Alumni receive a free copy of the tool. Please reach out to Joselin Padron-Rasines (jpadronrasines@education-first.com) for additional information. For all others, the tool is available for a discounted purchase [here](#) (discount code: CLFTEAM).

*Created by the team at Equity Meets Design. Learn more about their work at equitymeetsdesign.com and <https://courses.equitymeetsdesign.com/>.



HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

This tool provides the skeleton materials necessary to walk a team through the problems with problems tool included above. It includes the tool, a use case, objectives and additional resources. **Feel free to tailor these materials to meet your specific needs and context, and leverage existing opportunities within your team to engage in this work (e.g., divide between multiple existing meetings, use existing meeting structures to work through the tool, iterate on the process over months as work allows).** Please adhere to any copyright instructions.

There are many ways this tool can be used. For example:

States in the Coherence Lab Fellowship¹ used the problem with problems tool from Equity Meets Design to get clear on problems facing their state education agencies and to refine their Problem of Practice (PoP).



OBJECTIVES

By using this tool, you will be able to:

- Evaluate a problem to assess the ways in which it is useful
- Enhance understanding of a problem

¹ Additional information about the Coherence Lab Fellowship and Instructions for how to make electronic copies can be found in the [Coherence Toolkit Overview](#).



RESOURCES

- [Design Brief](#) (Note: This brief incorporates elements of the problems with problems tool linked above, but it is a different tool with a different objective)
- Additional resources can be found in the [Coherence Resource Guide](#).



Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike. You can remix, adapt, and build upon our work non-commercially, as long as you credit Education First and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and license your new creations under the identical terms.