PROBLEM SOLVING WORKSHEET

What's the problem?
- Give me your view on the situation
- What is the history?
- How long has this been a problem?
- When did you first define it as a problem?

- What part did _____ play in it?

- Tell me your assessment of_____'s part
- Why is this a problem?
- What is the real problem?
- What are the costs and benefits?
- What price are you (others, and your organization) paying now because of the problem?
- What is the cost of solving it?
- Would solving it be worth the cost?
- Where is your leverage for solving the problem?
- Which alternative gives you the most leverage?
- What aspects of the situation point toward your working through it successfully?
- What forces hinder you?

Step 1: Define the problem

What is the problem you want to work on? Write it down as you define it now.

Ask yourself: Why is this a problem? Is it a real problem or a symptom? Is your problem really a proposed solution to the real problem? Write your thoughts on these questions.

Rewrite your definition of the problem.

How to go about solving the problem…
- What outcome do you want?

- How will you know when you have it?

- What is keeping you from having it today?

- What is reasonable to achieve?

- What must you do to accomplish this?

- What would _____ have to do?

- What would you say to _____ to get him/her to see their part in the problem?

- What would _____ answer if you said that?

- Picture the situation as you would like it to be. If it were working perfectly, how would it look?

- What will you do first?

- What resources do you have to help you?

- What will you do if you run into a problem in trying your plan?

- Why don't you do that now? What is stopping you?

- What will you say to _____?

- Do you have a "plan B"? What would it be?

- How might I help you? What do you need?

- How are you contributing to the problem?

- What have you learned about yourself by grappling with this issue?

Step 2: Define success in solving the problem

If you were to succeed in solving the problem you have just defined, what would success look like? Describe what would happen if you were successful.

What have you done to help?
- Have you done anything to confront the problem?
- Why not? (If the answer is "no" or "kind of")
- What could you have done?
- What would have happened if you had?
- What is the best thing that would have come from it?
- What is the worst thing?
- This may take you out of your comfort zone, but how would you confront _____ on this issue?

Step 3: Generate alternatives

What are some ways you could solve your problem and achieve the success described? Come up with a list of choices – do not edit yourself, just think of as many as you can.

Which of these do you like best? Circle three to five of the best.

Suggestions…

- This is how I envision the possibilities
- How about _____? He might be of real help.
- I agree with your approach
- What if you did _____, in addition to that?
- What if you did as you are suggesting, but positioned it this (a different) way?
- Would you do it this way _____ or that way?
- What would happen if you _____?
- This is the way I have approached similar problems in the past
- Why are you suggesting that? Do you believe that will work best? What would be the best thing that will result from that?
- I think what you are suggesting will run into this difficulty. _____ Because _____ I think you will need to achieve _____ in the end. This is the bottom line
- Tell me how you disagree with me. Negotiate with me.
- We need to solve the problem by _____.
- How will you do it?

Step 4: Evaluate alternatives

The next step is to pick a "Plan A" and a backup "Plan B" for solving your problem. Here are some things to consider in picking from your list of choices.

- How much time will this take?
- Will it cost any money?
- Are there any downsides?
- Will the option yield other benefits beyond solving the problem?
- What just seems to be the best?
- Who else will be affected?

Once you have considered all of this, write the letter "A" beside the first choice and "B" beside the second best choice.

Step 5: Agree on action

If you want to follow through on this approach to solving the problem, it is important to decide what you need to do and when. Mentor and Protégé should do this together.

My "Plan A" is to…

To accomplish this, I will:

TASK	BY WHOM	WHEN

Step 6: Schedule follow-up

Set a time to check back with each other to see how the problem solving is going – or how it went.

We will check on progress on _____ [date].

Questions to discuss:

What did or did not work in solving the problem?

Knowing what you know now, what would you do if the problem happened again,?