

Searching the Community

If a problem is serious, people may already be working on it. Imagine that your concern is graffiti in your community. You might want to look at four major domains—government, business, the media, and nonprofits—to see what they are already doing about it.



Using the topic of graffiti as an example...

Government

- The police are on alert for taggers.
- The mayor believes a curfew for teenagers will reduce graffiti. He wants the city council to vote on a curfew law.
- The city's department of street maintenance paints over graffiti on city property.

Business

- A retail store donates paint for graffiti cover-ups.
- A local corporation gives money for an artist to help students who want to paint murals in local parks.
- A business specializes in graffiti removal.
- The Chamber of Commerce supports the mayor's proposal and has other ideas on graffiti prevention.

Media

- A local newspaper publishes an editorial on its website against teenage curfews. They offer other ideas on how to get rid of graffiti.
- A public television station runs a news story about the student mural-painting project.
- A TV cable company is required by law to run a public access channel. The company offers to help do a television show about gangs, graffiti, and the teenage curfew.

Nonprofit organizations

- A youth advocacy group opposes the mayor's proposed curfew. They say a curfew will restrict teenagers' civil rights.
- An educational support group opposes the mayor's proposal. It is raising money to support after-school sports, tutoring, and computer training.
- A homeowners' association supports the teenage curfew and wants more police patrols to stop tagging. It endorses all efforts to get rid of graffiti.

If you find that other people are already working on the problem, issue, or policy you chose, then you can use them as resources to answer questions. Think about government, business, media, and nonprofits in your community.

The more you learn about the problem, issue, or policy you are working on, the more specific your questions will become, and you will want to contact people who have knowledge and expertise.