



# Understanding Partner Perspectives Tool

## Activity Output

- ✓ Determine the root cause of the conflict around a challenge
- ✓ Develop appropriate messaging for partners involved in the challenge
- ✓ Show where commonalities across partners might exist

## What Is a Central Issue?

Definition: A central issue is something that needs to be resolved and is critical in helping the public health and safety partnership move forward and be effective in its efforts. These can be things that your members need to agree upon or accept to move forward in developing the appropriate response(s).

### Examples:

- Members' connection to the North Star of preventing overdose deaths is central to the public health and public safety's effectiveness. Member unity helps prevent stalls, delays, or confusion about appropriate public health and public safety response(s).
- Member perspectives on what equity is and what the public health and public safety's equitable goals are should align to allow deeper dives into the issues by using disaggregated data sources, lived experiences, etc.
- Disagreement on appropriate overdose prevention solutions to implement could stifle the public health and public safety's response, which often must be swift. Agreement on the central issue allows further examination of the root causes prevention efforts should target.

## What are Our Perspectives Based On?

Our perspectives include **our values, accountabilities, perceived losses/barriers, and perceived gains/facilitators**. Understanding partner perspectives on each of these dimensions can help members build trusting relationships with each other and support mutual decision-making.

Conversely, not considering others' perspectives makes it difficult to coordinate and deliver evidence-based interventions for overdose crisis. This tool helps you understand how different partners, such as people, groups, sectors (e.g., public health and public safety), or beyond (e.g., housing, transportation) view a central issue.

<b>Values</b>	are the things people care about most.
<b>Accountabilities</b>	are the commitments to people and the people behind the ideas that matter to them.
<b>Perceived losses</b>	are the things people feel they stand to lose from making changes. They are closely linked to barriers to change.
<b>Perceived gains</b>	are the things people feel they stand to gain from making changes.

The Partner Perspectives tool can also be used when a point of tension/conflict/disagreement arises. For example, when considering partner values, you can reference the North Star and obtain their perspectives.

## Instructions:

### Part One: Map Partner Perspectives

1. Use the template provided on Page 5 to complete this activity. A completed example to reference has been provided on page 6.
2. Start by identifying the central issue people view differently or do not agree on (e.g., embedding harm reduction approaches to certain services). See above for definition and examples of central issues.
3. Then identify which partners are most directly involved in the central issue and indicate them as "Partner #1, 2", etc. The [Membership Engagement Pyramid Activity](#) can help identify the appropriate individuals/groups.
4. For each partner, try to tease out their values, accountabilities, perceived losses, and perceived gains by:

- Asking each partner about how they view the issue, or
- Using examples they have said in meetings or other discussions

## Guiding Questions

<b>Values</b>	What drives and motivates the partner?
<b>Accountabilities</b>	On whose behalf are the partners working? To whom do they report or feel accountable or loyal?
<b>Perceived losses/barriers</b>	What do they have to lose (e.g., identity, comfort, reputation, time, status, resources, security, independence)?
<b>Perceived gains/facilitators</b>	What will improve for the partner if things change?

5. Look at the results and determine where there are discrepancies among partners—these are the conflict points. For example, is it a clash in values? Is it that perceived losses aren't being honored or acknowledged?

## Part Two: Use Activity Results

**Step 1 Identify and recognize strengths.** Where is there overlap across the dimensions of partner perspectives? Identify these shared dimensions and discuss how they strengthen the work of the public health and public safety partnership.

**Step 2 Identify gaps and disconnects.** Where are the differences in perspectives? How critical are they to address and resolve? Is it sufficient to be aware of them? Or does the team need to do some deeper problem solving around the differences?

**Step 3 Identify action steps.** Develop action steps based on your findings from the previous two steps. See the tips below to assist you in moving through this step.

### Tips and Strategies:

- Recognize and accept that there may not be a single “right” answer to resolving discrepancies in perspectives. This is a good thing because there are likely multiple viable solutions for moving everyone forward.
- In some cases, simple realities (e.g., different accountabilities) will prevent reaching a perfect or complete solution. There may be gaps among perspectives that realistically cannot be bridged. However, identifying and naming those realities can help relieve tension that otherwise remains hidden and unaddressed.
- Identifying people’s underlying values, accountabilities, losses and benefits means you can recognize what is important to them. This can be a good trust-building and problem-solving strategy. For example, if you know that a partner fears a loss of autonomy, disagreements may stem from this fear. Discussions with this partner can center on maintaining their autonomy .
- Some solutions will inevitably mean that one or more partners do not get what they want. Naming and acknowledging that can help those folks stay engaged and committed despite the “loss”. Expressing appreciation for accepting/enduring the loss will also help.

### Take-Aways and Next Steps:

- ✔ Using a structured approach to understanding partner perspectives helps clarify root causes of disagreements.
- ✔ It also helps identify sources of agreement or alignment among members.
- ✔ Normalize naming partner’s values, accountabilities, perceived losses, and gains in discussions to integrate this approach into the culture of your public health and public safety partnership.

## Understanding Partner Perspectives Template

Partner #1	Partner #2
<p><b>Values:</b></p> <p><b>Accountabilities:</b></p> <p><b>Perceived losses/barriers:</b></p> <p><b>Perceived gains/facilitators:</b></p>	<p><b>Values:</b></p> <p><b>Accountabilities:</b></p> <p><b>Perceived losses/barriers:</b></p> <p><b>Perceived gains/facilitators:</b></p>
<p><b>Central Issue:</b></p>	
<p><b>Values:</b></p> <p><b>Accountabilities:</b></p> <p><b>Perceived losses/barriers:</b></p> <p><b>Perceived gains/facilitators:</b></p>	<p><b>Values:</b></p> <p><b>Accountabilities:</b></p> <p><b>Perceived losses/barriers:</b></p> <p><b>Perceived gains/facilitators:</b></p>
Partner #3	Partner #4

### Completed Example: Selecting Harm Reduction Interventions

Your public health and public safety partnership has been reviewing a list of evidence-based interventions and there has been some tension around the discussions about selecting harm reduction strategies. To have a productive discussion, you want to understand where this tension is coming from. You have identified the following partners who are involved in this challenge: public safety, a city official, and a peer support group. You listen to the conversation in your meetings and also have a chance to speak to them 1:1. The values, accountabilities, perceived losses/barriers and perceived gains/facilitators you have uncovered are outlined below.

The information gleaned from this exercise showed overlaps in values, accountabilities, and differences on which to focus in future discussions. For example, demonstrating the benefit of harm reduction to public safety; working with the city official on the fear of pushback; and ensuring that peer support groups know that others share their values and want similar gains to be made in the community.

