



The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat  
Le Secrétariat de la littératie et de la numératie

# **The Coaching Clinic™**

*"working intelligence"*

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## **Coaching Chip Number 6**

This Coaching Chip:  
[Problem Identification Tips](#)

### **Problem Identification Tips**

Taking the time to identify the problem ensures that you will be solving the right problem.

#### **Five Problem Identification Tips**

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##### **Tip 1. Start with a good problem statement.**

Writing a clear problem statement is the first step to solving your problem. It's like the first domino that when tipped results in more happening.

##### **Tip 2. Appoint a problem solving team.**

This is a team who can judge if the problem statement is clear and if what is being identified is actually the problem that needs to be solved. Be sure that those involved are impacted by either the problem and/or potential solutions.

##### **Tip 3. Identify and clarify the problem.**

Look for the fundamental problem, not causes, symptoms, consequences or solutions. It is okay to identify these to ensure that they don't become part of the problem statement. For example an unclear problem statement would be: 'Our committee has too many people.' This may be a cause but it is not the basic problem. A clear problem statement would be: 'The committee is not able to

accomplish tasks in a timely manner.'

**Tip 4. Test the problem statement by turning it around.**

If the reversed statement presents the desired situation of the problem being solved then you know you're on the right track.

**Tip 5. Go for universal understanding.**

Test that there is a common understanding of what you mean in your written problem statement.

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