

# PROBLEM STATEMENT FORMULA

Use this interactive document to help plan and develop a problem statement. Type directly into the blue boxes below and the text size will automatically adjust so all of the required information can be added.

**Step #1:** Introduce the problem (insert 2-3 sentences here):

Provide some general background information about the problem that will be the focus of the study.

**Example:** In the United States, the primary non-litigious method of resolving formal conflict is mediation. Mediation is a conflict resolution process facilitated by a neutral third party mediator (Boulle et al., 2008). Mediators are dispute resolution professionals who assist disputing parties to reach mutually acceptable conflict resolution outcomes. Wissler (2002) noted a positive correlation between mediator experience and successful conflict resolution, confirming that a mediator's proficiency optimized after facilitating approximately 35 mediation sessions.

**Step #2:** After presenting this general background, explicitly state the general problem:

The general problem is

resulting in

State the general problem that your project is designed to examine.

Include the negative consequences of the problem.

**Example:** The general problem is the supply of mediators outweighs the demand for mediation in the general population resulting in limited opportunities for mediators to gain experience (Velikonja, 2009).

**Tip:** The problem should be applicable and relatable beyond the context of the topic. In other words, writers must identify a problem -- a real problem, not a situation.

**Step #3:** Support the problem by adding one or two sentences that **DIRECTLY** address the impact or adversity of the general problem.

[Blank blue box for writing]

Think about how this problem impacts people, society, organizations, etc. Be sure to use references to research to support your ideas about the existence of this problem.

**Example:** Velikonja (2009) noted that most mediators are “constantly scrambling for work” (p. 258).

**Step #4:** Add one or two sentences that transition to the specific problem:

[Blank blue box for writing]

**Example:** This shortage of work and experience could impact the performance of mediators.

**Step #5:** Clearly state the specific problem:

The specific problem is [ ] resulting in [ ]

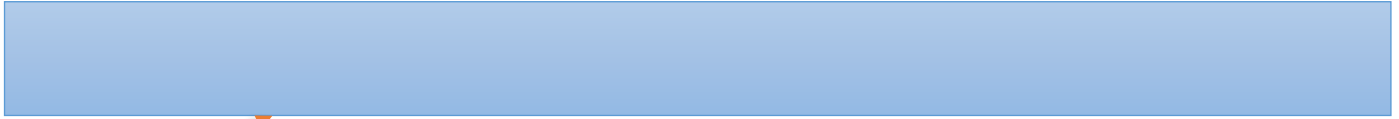
State the specific problem that your project is designed to address.

Include the negative consequences of the specific problem.

**Example:** The specific problem is that in addition to limited opportunities to practice mediation, mediators are subject to long delays between mediations, resulting in lower practice frequency, and lower quality of work (Wissler, 2002).

**Tip:** The specific problem should align directly with the topic of the study.

**Step #6:** Add one or two sentences that address the impact or adversity of the specific problem.



Think about how this specific problem impacts people, society, organizations, etc. Remember to use references to research to support your ideas about the existence of this problem.

**Example:** Velikonja (2009) reported that mediators often practice for years before mediating 35 cases. Wissler (2002) suggested successful conflict resolution outcomes increase if mediators have more rather than less mediation experience.

**Step #7:** Conclude with a sentence summarizing the importance of addressing the problem.



Think about *why* it's important to investigate this problem. What will this research do for people, society, organizations, the field of study, etc.?

**Example:** Examining the relationship between mediation experience, practice frequency, time between mediations and successful conflict resolution outcomes could have a significant influence on the formalization of mediator practice frequency and proficiency standards.

**Tip:** Remember to save your PDF after you have added your content to the blue boxes above. Also, remember that this document is designed to help you develop the different pieces of the problem statement. You will need to take the ideas you added to this document to create your properly formatted problem statement to use within the Letter of Intent (LOI).