

Problem Solving Phases

The consultant and the church should be aware of the major phases in the process of problem solving. In an effective consultative process this cycle tends to repeat itself a number of times.

1. Defining the Problem

- ! The church's statement of the problem emerges
- ! The consultant's perception of the problem may be appropriate
- ! A working definition of the problem is developed together
- ! Realistic and obtainable goals are agreed upon

2. Working on the Problem

- ! Alternative plans of action are developed and tested
- ! Information is collected as needed for further plans of action
- ! Roles are worked out for implementation of the first action step

3. Orientation and Training

- ! Orientation to roles and responsibilities is provided as necessary
- ! Training in needed skills is provided as necessary
- ! The consultant shifts to the role of trainer if necessary

4. Testing and Action

- ! The agreed upon initial action is put into effect
- ! The church should have the responsible role
- ! The consultant should usually, at least temporarily, withdraw

5. Assessment and Re-Planning

- ! The consultant re-enters the situation
- ! The initial action is assessed
- ! The next action is planned

Problem Solving Functions

The consultant can help the church move systematically through the problem solving process by providing or supporting certain functions.

1. Diagnosing the Situation

- ! What are the forces for change?
- ! What are the forces resisting change?

2. Assessing Readiness for Change

- ! How strong are the various forces?
- ! How realistic is change under existing conditions?

3. Identifying Goals for Change

- ! What degree of change is possible?
- ! What action seems appropriate at this point?

4. Developing a Plan for Change

- ! What are the alternatives and their probable consequences?
- ! What is the most appropriate leverage or beginning point?