

# ISSUE CRITERIA

## *Scope the Issues Until Actionable*

### WHAT ARE ISSUE CRITERIA?

In the Community Voice process, issue criteria are used by organizers and neighbors to make a decision about which problem to focus on for collective action.

Issue criteria are like the lens through which all possible issues are viewed. They help scope a complex problem, which at first might seem too large to do something about.

Using issue criteria, the problem is narrowed to something neighbors and allies at the table can take action on. The group moves forward with issues that meet the criteria.

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“When I started a professional organizing career six years ago I constantly asked those training me, “How are we going to figure out how to narrow down these large issues to something that we can do something about?” I was anxious about how this would work out. The single most helpful thing as I was trying to get my head around how we were going to bring all of the people in the room with different agendas and points of view to consensus on what direction we would go was our issue criteria. We posted it up in every meeting and reminded people about the lens we were using to get where we were going. It always worked to help everyone in the room see how we could narrow down these really big issues that we were trying to tackle down to something we had the power to do.”

— **LEA WHITEHURST-GIBSON**, *Virginia Community Voice Executive Director*

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## ISSUE CRITERIA

### Priority

- Is the issue a priority within our group (*i.e. committee or working group*)?
- Is the issue a priority within our community?
- How do we know that it is a priority?

### Unity

- An issue can be a priority but not bring people together
- Does the issue bring people together?
- How do we know if the issue brings people together?

### Grounded

- Is the issue specific and clear?
- Have we defined who, what, when, how, how much we want?
- Is there supporting data and research that speaks to the scope and severity of this issue?

### Influence

- Is the issue something we have the power or influence to affect?
- If not, which organizations or people need to be involved that are not already?

### Visibility

- Is this issue something controversial?
- Is there an opportunity for media attention?
- Will the issue help gain visibility for the group?

### Allies & Key Decision Makers

- Can we identify potential allies who would work alongside our group on the issue?
- Can we identify the key decision makers who have the power to affect the issue?