Community Problem Solving

Project Information for Coaches and Students 2021-22
“The genius of the future will be the creative mind adapting itself to the shape of things to come.”

- E. Paul Torrance

Creativity, (1991)
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What is Community Problem Solving?

Community Problem Solving (CmPS) is a project in which students identify real problems and implement real solutions in a community – local, state, national, or even global. CmPS projects are student-driven and produce young leaders ready to solve problems they may encounter throughout their lives.

CmPS promotes cultural agility by solving real life, contemporary challenges.
CmPS Students

CmPS can be pursued as an extracurricular activity or as part of the regular school curriculum and projects can take one or more years.

- Engages students in the real world using independent thought and action
- Apply the problem solving process to real and current problems in their communities
- Stimulates critical and creative thinking skills
- Fosters collaboration and teamwork
- Encourages students to develop a vision for community improvement
REAL LIFE APPLICATION OF CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING

PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS

BENEFITS of CmPS

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION OF REAL PROBLEMS

BEYOND SERVICE LEARNING

• COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
• PROJECT MANAGEMENT
• STUDENT CHOICE & VOICE
WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

- **Junior Division**
  - Grades 4-6

- **Middle Division**
  - Grades 7-9

- **Senior Division**
  - Grades 10-12

Projects may be completed by a team of students or an individual student.

*Grades are equivalent to grade levels of the USA*
SELECTING A PROJECT

Student Choice → Selected Community → Authentic Concern → Plan to Act
In Community Problem Solving, students decide what the focus of their project will be. A coach assists, guides, and facilitates, but does not determine the project. This gives students agency in creating lasting change within their communities.

- Inspiration
- Long-term interest
- Student-initiated
Students determine the community that will be the focus of their efforts. It can vary considerably in size – it is up to the students to determine their “community” for their project.

- School
- Local community
- Region
- Nation
- World
Identification of an issue should be born out of a genuine student interest that emerges because of their own experiences. A personal connection from the student(s) improves engagement and commitment.

- Student passion
- Opportunity to have an impact
- Community buy-in
Projects should focus on student designed and implemented actions.

- Establish goals
- Brainstorm actions
- Identify allies & obstacles

*Research may inform actions, but is not the function of a CmPS project.*
PROJECT ELEMENTS

**Project Proposal**
- Submitted mid-year to Affiliate
- Overview of goals
- Planned actions

**Project Report**
- Submitted for Affiliate Bowl
- Explains actions implemented
- Discusses obstacles or changes to plan

**Supporting Materials**
- May be submitted for Affiliate Bowl
- Provides evidence to support claims

All three elements are required for the International Conference
The Proposal is a planning/guiding document that captures the original analysis of the Area of Concern and the students’ anticipated actions. The Project Proposal should comprehensively depict the use of the problem solving process in the *inception* of the project. It establishes the project vision, defines goals, specifies deadlines, and demonstrates the use of the problem solving process during project development.

**Guidelines:**
- Up to 2000 words
- 12 point, non-script font
It establishes the original goals and framework for the project. As the problem solving process is employed within a project, it is natural that the project itself will develop and evolve, and thus sequence of steps may vary or be repeated as the project is implemented.

**Strategy:** Students are encouraged to use the problem solving process to structure the Proposal.

**Note:** The Proposal should not be re-written or modified once it is submitted mid-year.
PROJECT PROPOSAL

Area of Concern
Clearly and thoroughly explains the problem situation to be addressed.

Challenges Identified
Identifies a variety of the community’s challenges related to the Area of Concern.

Underlying Problem
States an important part of the Area of Concern to address.

Solution Ideas
Identifies varied and unique solution ideas addressing the Underlying Problem.

Determination of Plan
Identifies the most promising solution idea(s) to be the basis of the Action Plan.

Action Plan
Explains what the project intends to accomplish and the proposed chronology of actions.
The Area of Concern provides the background about the situation that led to the students’ understanding and selection of the issue to be addressed.

- Explains the significance of the issue
- Includes information from research about the situation
- Describes the community involved
- Tells why it is important to the participants and the community.
- Delineates the existing problems of the community
- Incorporates factual data demonstrating a research-based analysis of the current community situation
Challenges Identified

Challenges are issues, concerns, or problems that need attention or consideration. Demonstrate flexible and insightful thinking by examining the Area of Concern from a variety of perspectives, indicating a thorough examination of the community’s situation.

Note: Challenges are NOT those experienced by students, but are only those that are generated from an examination of the Area of Concern.
Challenges may be presented in paragraph or linear form (bulleted), and no specific number of Challenges is required. Concerns causing the situation, as well as those resulting from the situation, should be presented.

Remember to:
- Demonstrate what the Challenge is
- Explain why it is a Challenge
- Present how it connects with the Area of Concern
The Underlying Problem (UP) should show a relevant, direct connection to the Area of Concern and consider a major issue(s) derived from the challenges. The UP must identify an action goal based on analysis of the Area of Concern. An excellent UP narrows the Area of Concern to an achievable size and addresses a significant aspect of it. The UP should be an outgrowth of identified Challenges and concerns, and clearly communicate the desired outcome of and need for the project.
Underlying Problem

UPs should be structured as follows:

**Condition Phrase**
- Concise rationale for pursuing the selected goal

**Key Verb Phrase**
- Well-defined primary action goal addressing an aspect of the Area of Concern

**Purpose**
- Justification for accomplishing the goal – the desired result that should flow from accomplishing the KVP

Remember to:
- Precisely define your goal
- Select something of interest
- Select something of importance

States an important part of the Area of Concern to address.
Demonstrate a variety of ways in which the Area of Concern can be improved by responding to the goals established in the Underlying Problem. Solution Ideas should be clearly explained and directly related UP. They should reflect the research completed, and demonstrate flexible and insightful thinking.
Solution Ideas

Solutions may be written in paragraph or linear (bulleted) form. Generated solution ideas do not need to be fully developed. They can be expanded, combined, refined, excluded, or refined later in the problem solving process.

Remember to:
- Address the Key Verb Phrase
- Support the Purpose
Employ a method, technique, or “thinking tool” to analyze solution ideas. Determining the solution idea that will be developed into the Action Plan should be a reasoned and deliberate decision so that it effectively responds to the Underlying Problem and provides the project with the greatest likelihood of success.
Appropriate thinking tools might include, but are not limited to, use of an evaluation matrix, a pro/con list, ALoU, criteria, or other documented decision-making strategies.

More tools and details can be found in *Creative & Critical Thinking Tools for CmPS*.

Remember to:
- Provides evidence of effective application of method/tool
- Explain thought processes used in decision-making
The Action Plan is a plan to solve the Underlying Problem. Thoroughly communicate the intended course of action, and show a complete plan and strategies for implementation. This should be written in the future tense.
Action Plan

Communicates the efforts students *intend* to implement, and considers aspects of the project such as:

- What the project expects to accomplish
- The impact the Action Plan will have on the Area of Concern
- Strategies for implementation
- Description of tasks
- Details on how the intended solution will operate
- Addresses how the Action Plan responds to the UP
- Deadlines, activities, presentations, anticipated achievements, etc.

Remember to:

- Respond to the Underlying Problem
- Consider how to involve and impact the community
The Project Report presents what efforts were actually undertaken, tasks accomplished, project modifications, and student reflections. It communicates the progress achieved during the implementation of the project. This section reflects the actual work accomplished by the students to date and the progress made to fulfill the goals established in the Underlying Problem. Emphasis should be placed on the explanation of the Action Plan – its role in community engagement, project accomplishments, hurdles encountered, lessons learned, etc. It reflects how the problem solving process was employed throughout the project’s implementation as the need to adapt/expand/modify the project goals/actions/efforts arose.

Guidelines:
- Up to 3500 words
- 12 point, non-script font
Students should demonstrate the breadth of the project and the range of activities pursued to address the Area of Concern and the goals identified in their Underlying Problem. Students should incorporate information that reflects the impact of the project, the community support and involvement in the undertakings, and events and projects carried out by the students.

The structure and format of the Report is at the discretion of the students. They should address the noted themes in the manner they believe is most effective. An effective Report may combine prose, lists, diagrams, or other descriptive elements to effectively communicate the implementation of the project.

Note: Multiple themes might be addressed by a single action
PROJECT REPORT

- Presents actions undertaken
- Demonstrates impact of project
- Recounts obstacles encountered

Relevance
Resources
Community Involvement
Adaptation of Plan
Reflection/Assessment
Organization
Community Impact
Effectiveness of Action Plan
Sustainability of Project Impact
Relevance

Considers how well the project achievements actually impacted the Area of Concern identified in the Underlying Problem. If the Underlying Problem or Action Plan was modified from the one presented in the Proposal, include the change and its justification. Activities planned for completion after the submission deadline should also be described.

Organization

Tasks and responsibilities are clearly delineated, effectively organized, and implemented. Demonstrate effective management and coordination among stakeholders (students and community).
Resources

Identification and utilization of resources in the implementation of the Action Plan. Resources may include media, agencies, organizations, experts, community leaders, references, and more.

Community Impact

Considers the positive effects the Action Plan has on community stakeholders.
Community Involvement

Demonstrate relationships/partnerships that were cultivated with the community to fulfill the objectives of the project and meet the needs of the community.

Effectiveness of Action Plan

Measures the effectiveness of the activities undertaken to accomplish the objectives explored in the Area of Concern, and the objectives of the Underlying Problem. Analyzes how well the project achievements actually impacted the Area of Concern and overcame the challenge area identified in the Underlying Problem.
Adaptation of Plan

Demonstrate effective utilization of problem solving skills to adapt the proposed Action Plan to unforeseen circumstances so that the project may proceed toward fulfilling its objectives. While goals and procedures were clearly established, they remain flexible and fluid to adapt to the project as needed. Changing/reworking the project as more knowledge and experience is acquired, is considered part of the problem solving process.

Note: Effective problem solving encourages adjustments, and thus the sequence of steps may be adjusted or repeated throughout the project.
Sustainability of Project Impact

Refers to the continuation of a project’s impact even after students’ direct involvement has concluded

Reflection/Assessment

Include a thoughtful and thorough analysis of the outcomes of their project. Objectively assess and reflect on the accomplishments, indicating an understanding of achievements and areas of growth, victories, and difficulties. Include details on effectiveness in addressing the Area of Concern and the goals of their Underlying Problem.
SUPPORTING MATERIALS

The Supporting Materials provide the opportunity to present evidence of project actions beyond the description included in the Proposal and Report. The Portfolio, Display, Promotional Video, and Interview offer additional avenues through which to depict the efforts of the project and the impact it has had on the community.

Each element of the supporting documentation should add to the presentation of the project and build on the Proposal and Report, rather than duplicating information already presented.

*Note: Confirm submission requirements with your Affiliate directly.*
SUPPORTING MATERIALS

- Portfolio
- Promotional Video
- Display
- Interview
The Portfolio should chronicle student efforts and verify the claims made in the Report. Materials included in the Portfolio provide visual evidence of the actions and accomplishments described in the Report and should present a complete picture of the project. The Portfolio provides an in-depth look at the work and may be used throughout the evaluation as a source to verify assertions made in the Proposal and/or Report.

**Guidelines:**
- Accessible offline
- Does not exceed 20 double-sided or 40 single sided pages/slides

**Note:** For IC, all projects are encouraged to include one page (front and back) at the beginning of their Portfolio that recounts “Updates” since the Proposal and Report were submitted.
Portfolio

- Includes a variety of elements depicting student efforts
- Demonstrates strategies employed to arrive at decisions
- Presents information in a logical manner
- Portrays a complete picture of the project

Evidence provided may include:
- Planning documents
- Event programs/brochures
- Meeting agendas
- Interview forms
- Community feedback
- Media coverage
- Surveys
- Photo of events
- Examples of “thinking tools”
- Correspondence with stakeholders
The Promotional Video is designed to promote the project, highlighting accomplishments, documenting actions, and exhibiting engagement and excitement about the project. Students are encouraged to develop creative presentations that promote their project and its goals.

**Guidelines:**
- Up to 3 minutes in length

**Note:** Authenticity and content should take priority over production quality.
Promotional Videos may:
- Promote project’s goals
- Serve as a call to action
- Highlight accomplishments
- Recruit participants
- Educate interested parties

Video styles to consider:
- Demos
- Educational Event
- Explainers
- PSA
- Interviews
- Testimonials
- Vlogs
The Display should describe the project to the audience (evaluators and subsequently the community more generally). It should capture the audience’s attention and communicate the project goals and accomplishments, and should not need student commentary to present the project.

Valuable, fragile, or otherwise unnecessary props should not be included. A great project may escape attention if key elements are not presented or are lost among extraneous items. Remember, during preliminary review, displays may be reviewed without students present.
Display

- Present the project’s objectives
- Display the project’s accomplishments
- Capture the audience’s attention
- Communicate the project’s goals

Guidelines:
- Tabletop display
- Standard tri-fold display board
- Up to 50 inches tall (127 cm)
The interview provides evaluators with an increased understanding of the project while allowing the student(s) to share the passion for the project and to describe actions taken after the Project Proposal and Report were submitted. This interview offers students the opportunity to explain the project and to offer additional information on recent accomplishments and/or project changes. Evaluators will ask questions to learn more about the project and the process used. Students are not required to present an oral “pitch” of the project but may do so.

Guidelines:
- Individual Projects – 15 minutes
- Team Projects – 30 minutes
While every interview is unique based on the nature of the project, themes that are frequently addressed include:

- Reason/selection of the Area of Concern, choice of solution ideas
- Obstacles encountered and how they were addressed
- Unexpected occurrences
- Interactions with the community
- Lessons learned
- Roles and responsibilities
- Most rewarding/disappointing moment

*Note: All interviews will address the step in the problem solving process that was most important to the project.*
Throughout the Proposal, Report, and Supporting Materials, student work will be considered holistically with respect to effective communication, use of the problem solving process, and student engagement. There is no need for students to address these themes individually, but the description of the project should demonstrate effective communication (written and verbal), student leadership, project ownership, collaboration with other students and the community.

*Note:* Overall sections are included in the evaluation of the Proposal, the Report, the Supporting Materials, and the project in its entirety.
OVERALL

Clarity
The ability of the students to present their efforts, accomplishments, and actions, in a clear and logical manner

Ownership
The extent to which the project is student-driven

Creativity
The creative, productive thinking in evidence throughout the Report

Problem Solving Process
The application of the problem solving process throughout the entire project

Leadership
Active student leadership throughout the project

Teamwork
The collaborative nature of the project
Scoring CmPS Projects

Evaluation of CmPS Projects is completed in accordance with the official CmPS Evaluation Guidelines using the official CmPS Score sheet.

These documents may be obtained from your Affiliate or directly from FPSPI.
CmPS Season

REGISTRATION
- Contact your Affiliate directly to register.
- They will provide you submission requirements, deadlines, and fees.
- To find an Affiliate, visit our website
- If CmPS is not offered in your area, please contact FPSPI (elizabeth@fpspi.org).

PROJECT SUBMISSION
- The Proposal is designed to be submitted mid-year demonstrating the students’ understanding of their identified issue, and the actions they plan to undertake.
- The Report is submitted in conjunction with the Affiliate Competition.
- Supporting Materials may be required with the Affiliate Competition.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
- June, 2022: Portfolio, Display, Interview due at IC
Project Types

- Single Year
- Multi-Year
- Evolving
- Non-Competitive
Single Year Project

- Identified, solved, and submitted for competition within one FPSPI competition year.

Note: The vast majority of projects will be single year projects.
Multi-Year Project

- Requires more than one year to implement the Action Plan
- Coaches must submit a team roster indicating years of participation for each student
- Submitted for competition **only once**, upon completion of the project

**Note:** A minimum of 50% of team members must remain constant throughout all years of the project
Evolving projects have been presented prior to the current year (2021-22) and evaluated at the Affiliate and/or International levels. Students may choose to expand or redirect efforts or act upon evaluator recommendations to complete these projects more successfully, “evolving” them into an improved projects for the next year.

**Note:** A minimum of 50% of team members must remain constant throughout all years of the project.
Evolving Project

When submitted again at the Affiliate and/or International level these projects must:

- Include the “Preface for Evolving Projects”
- Include a timeline in the Action Plan for both years that clearly delineates the accomplishments of both years
- Modify the Area of Concern to reflect the transition from the previous project to the new one
- Revise the Underlying Problem and Action Plan to relate to the revised Area of Concern and to reflect improvements suggested by evaluators
- Demonstrate use of the six-step problem solving process by adding to and/or revising previously submitted Challenges and Solution Ideas so that they tie directly to the new Area of Concern and UP and re-analyze Solution Ideas for the best Action Plan
- Revise any other part of the Proposal or Report to reflect new team dynamics, organization, utilization of resources, and reflections that may have changed throughout the year
Non-Competitive Project

★ Accepted by some Affiliates, particularly for younger students. Contact your Affiliate directly for more information.
Duplicate Projects

- Has been previously submitted for evaluation (“winning” at any level is irrelevant)
- Consists of a project with items that are identical to the previous submission or have only minor changes

Duplicate projects are considered a violation of the philosophy of CmPS and shall not be in contention for an award at any level. Additional penalties are at the discretion of the Executive Director.
Community Problem Solving...

Have a great year! We are excited to see the change that FPS students will be in their communities.