

THE NEED

When presenting a need, you must do more than simply identify a problem. You must go through several steps to ensure that you have created the solid foundation needed to justify the plan you will present. The affirmative must:

1. **Identify some problem in the status quo (present situation) and attach it to commonly held values.** As people generally are wary of change, the affirmative must convince them that a serious problem exists that has a negative effect on society. For example, if the resolution were “The nations of the world should strengthen the International Criminal Court,” the affirmative might emphasize a problem: the Court is unable to deal with crimes against humanity or terrorism.
2. **Identify the cause of the problem.** Only by correctly identifying the cause of the problem can the audience evaluate existing policy and the affirmative’s suggested alternative. For example, the affirmative debating the resolution above might point to a lack of financial resources or the failure of the Rome Statute to define *terrorism* as reasons why the Court cannot address crimes against humanity or terrorist acts.
3. **Demonstrate that the present system cannot solve the problem.** The affirmative should show that present policies cannot solve the problem because of significant gaps or barriers that prevent it from dealing with the issue. Demonstrating the presence of gaps and barriers, however, is not sufficient. The affirmative also must prove that these gaps or barriers are a significant part of the cause of the problem. In the above example, the affirmative has identified the gaps as lack of definitions or lack of resources. The affirmative would then need to provide evidence showing how these have made the Court ineffective in handling terrorism and crimes against humanity.

THE PLAN

The plan is the affirmative’s proposal for replacing the current policy. It contains both essential and nonessential elements.

The essential elements include an *actor* and an *action*. When thinking about a solution to a problem, you should think both in terms of who (what existing or potential *actor* would best solve the problem) and what (what specific *action* should be taken in order to solve the problem).

The actor sometimes is specified in the resolution. For example, the resolution “Resolved that the United Nations should expand the protection of cultural rights” specifies the United Nations as the actor. In other resolutions, the affirmative will have to decide who is the appropriate actor to implement the policy. For instance, the resolution “Resolved that the nations of the world should strengthen the International Criminal Court” gives the affirmative more latitude in selecting the appropriate actor. Who are “the nations of the world”? Probably, but not necessarily, the United Nations.

The affirmative should choose an actor capable of carrying out a given plan. For example, if the plan involves a change in defense policy, the actor most like-