For example, consider organizations trying to halt the rise of child obesity. They might undertake any of the following:

- teach children about the caloric content of the foods they eat
- provide exercise facilities
- advocate for schools to stop serving sugary beverages
- work to ensure that low-income families have access to affordable fresh vegetables and fruit

Some of these approaches may be more effective than others, and some may fit your tolerance for risk or other personal preferences better than others.

As a second example, consider homelessness in some US cities. Ways to tackle this problem may include on-the-street health services, soup kitchens, shelters, permanent supportive housing, and working to prevent the eviction of families at risk of becoming homeless. You can't choose among these approaches without understanding the causes of the problem. Permanent supportive housing is an ideal solution for adults who are on the margin of productivity—but not necessarily the solution for runaway youth or people suffering from serious mental health problems.

ACTIVITY DEVELOP YOUR PROBLEM STATEMENT

As a guide to understanding the problem you're trying to solve, you may develop a *problem statement* that identifies the groups you're trying to help and articulates the core of the problem. For example, a problem statement for helping a particular homeless population might be: "Veterans, many of whom have served our nation in war zones, suffer the indignity and deprivations of being homeless and on the streets."

Reflect on a problem you're trying to solve in your focus area, and write down the problem statement. In creating your statement, consider:

- Is your problem statement empirically accurate?

- Does it identify its intended beneficiaries?

- Does it describe what really concerns you about the problem?

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Approaches

Q. How do I learn about various approaches to solving the problems that concern me?

A. A good starting place is to conduct Internet research or talk to experts (as we will discuss in **Chapters 7 and 8** on finding and vetting organizations). The goal is not to know the answers for sure but rather to know what questions to ask organizations and to learn enough to prioritize some organizations over others.

First, consider which nonprofit approaches are likely to be effective at solving the problem you've identified. Second, consider which of them best fit your personal preferences in terms of factors such as immediacy, visibility, and riskiness.