Case 4: Who gets a say when a shared room changes?

The Common Room's board is weighing paid rentals on two free evenings, so the crew prepares a comment before the meeting.

On your own Read What happened. Underline who decides and what the board is considering. About 5 minutes.

Your role: You're the one who checks the budget figures before the crew speaks to the board. **New skill:** Weigh the trade-offs of each option.

Mari shows Sami a printed schedule.

What happened

It is the Friday after the crew's first screening, and the board meeting is coming up. A small neighborhood nonprofit runs the Common Room alongside the bookshop. The nonprofit's board is considering paid rentals on two evenings a week to help cover staffing. No vote has happened yet.

Mari, 19, works the bookshop counter and closes the shop. She knows that "just keep it free" does not pay the evening staff. Sami runs a print workshop in the room after her afternoon shift. It is one of the few step-free rooms nearby.

Caio, 24, runs the crew's Tuesday film night. Tuesday is one of the evenings Option B would rent out. Mateo already has a headline for a petition. The crew agrees the room matters, but they do not agree on the best schedule.

Your question: Which option should the crew support, and what should they ask the board?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess in the box. About 5 minutes.

Proposal A proposal is a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet.

En español: propuesta

In this case: Option B is a proposal on the board's agenda. No vote has been taken, so it is not a decision yet.

Trade-off A trade-off is a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up.

En español: compensación entre opciones

In this case: Paid rentals help close the $200 weekly gap but take away free evenings Sami and Dec use.

Decision-maker A decision-maker is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice.

En español: quien toma la decisión

In this case: The nonprofit board decides, not a city community board and not the crew.

Who is involved

Mari

Closes the bookshop, then stays for zine night

"I'm the one they pay to lock up, and I'm also one of the people using this room after. I can't pretend either half away."

Sami

Runs a print workshop in the room

"We keep deciding what the evening people need. Has anyone asked them yet?"

Your first guess

Before you look at the evidence, what do you think the crew should ask the board for?

My first guess is ___, because ___.

Notes

Reading passage

What is the problem represented to be?

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Proposal**: A proposal is a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet.
- **Trade-off**: A trade-off is a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up.
- **Decision-maker**: A decision-maker is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice.
- **Framing**: Framing is choosing which parts of a situation a message brings forward.

The story: The meeting nobody can attend

The Common Room's board meets Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. The small nonprofit that runs the room alongside the bookshop is weighing paid evening rentals to help cover staffing. The agenda item is marked "for discussion," and no vote has been taken. By Friday, the crew's group chat has split along predictable lines. Mateo, who likes turning "we should" into a plan, has drafted a petition headline. Others are less sure a petition is the right tool.

Mari holds both sides of the problem in one job. She is paid to lock up the bookshop and then stays for zine night with her friends. She wants the free time protected, but she knows the bookshop has costs, and she proposes asking which hours earn money and testing a different arrangement. Sami raises a procedural objection. The crew keeps speaking for evening users without asking them. For her own part, she wants three things from the meeting: the actual proposal, a way to give input without speaking on the spot and a clear answer about what that input can change.

Caio, 24, runs the crew's Tuesday film night, one of the evenings Option B would rent out. Dec rehearses on Thursdays. The proposed meeting time overlaps several people's shifts. The people most affected by the decision are among those least able to attend it.

Stop and think. Sami wants to know what her input can change. Why does that question matter before anyone speaks?

Reading an agenda like an analyst

The documents lay out the choice. Option A keeps the current free evenings and leaves the funding gap. Option B replaces Tuesday and Thursday evenings with paid rentals. Option C pilots one rental evening for six weeks while seeking additional funding. Each is a **proposal**, a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet. The budget note puts evening staffing and utilities at $600 a week against $400 in grants and donations. Each rental is projected to add $120 after costs, so two would cover the $200 gap and one would leave $80. The note adds a caution the headline would never carry: demand is uncertain.

A **trade-off** is a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up. Every option has one. Option A protects the evenings and leaves the deficit. Option B closes the deficit on paper and ends two free nights. Option C limits the loss and leaves a smaller gap. It also leaves open what the board will do if the pilot falls short.

The policy scholar Carol Bacchi offers a sharper tool. Her approach asks what a proposed solution assumes the problem is (Carol Bacchi, "What's the problem represented to be?", November 1, 2017). Option B represents the problem as a $200 gap and treats two free evenings as the price. That representation is a form of **framing**, the Case 1 idea of choosing which parts of a situation a message brings forward. It brings the budget forward and pushes Sami, Dec, Mari and Caio into the background. Bacchi's question applies to the crew's own preferences too. A petition to "keep it free" represents the problem as a threat to free space and leaves the staffing cost out of view.

Stop and think. Apply Bacchi's question to Option C. What does it assume the problem is?

Decision-makers and public participation

A **decision-maker** is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice. The board controls its own schedule, so a strong comment names the proposal, explains one effect with evidence and asks for something the board can decide. Public agencies follow different rules. New York's community boards, for example, have advisory authority (NYC.gov, Brooklyn Community Board 13, no date listed).

New York's libraries show how funding decisions reach ordinary schedules. City budget cuts ended Sunday hours at every branch that still had them, and Brooklyn's last Sunday was December 17, 2023 (NY1, November 17, 2023). Restored funding, part of a $58.3 million investment, brought Sunday service back starting July 14, 2024 (NYC Mayor's Office, July 1, 2024). Council members thanked residents who called and wrote (New York City Council, July 14, 2024).

Professional codes speak to the board's side of the table. The American Society for Public Administration asks public servants to "inform the public and encourage active engagement in governance" (ASPA Code of Ethics, 2013). The crew's plan puts that into practice.

Decision-makers and public participation, continued

It sends the board a joint question that leaves room for disagreement. Mari checks the figures, Sami proposes a way to send written feedback and Mateo rewrites the petition as a request the board can answer. Your role is to check the budget figures before the crew speaks to the board.

Stop and think. A petition to keep the room free is also a frame. What does it bring forward, and what does it leave out?

Sources

Real source | Carol Bacchi | November 1, 2017
What's the problem represented to be?

Real source | NYC.gov, Brooklyn Community Board 13 | No date listed
About community boards

Real source | NY1 | November 17, 2023
Public libraries over the next two weeks to begin closing on Sundays

Real source | NYC Mayor's Office | July 1, 2024
Mayor Adams Celebrates $58.3 Million Investment in City's Three Library Systems

Real source | New York City Council | July 14, 2024
NYC Council, Library Leaders, and New Yorkers Celebrate Library Budget Restorations to Restore Full Service, as Branches Reopen and Reinstate Services on Sunday for First Time in Months

Real source | American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) | 2013
ASPA Code of Ethics

Notes

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 10 minutes.

Evidence A | Board agenda, Wednesday 6:30 p.m. meeting

The proposal

Evening rentals, for discussion. Option A: keep the current free evenings; the funding gap remains. Option B: replace Tuesday and Thursday evenings with paid rentals. Option C: pilot one rental evening for six weeks while seeking additional funding. No vote has been taken.

Look closely: Is this a vote or a discussion? Which words tell you?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Weekly budget note for the board

The budget note

Evening staffing and utilities: $600. Current grants and donations: $400. Each paid rental is projected to add $120 after its extra costs. Two bookings would add $240; one would add $120. Demand is uncertain.

Look closely: Which number is a guess, and what could change it?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | **Listening notes from evening users**

The missing voices

Sami works afternoons. Dec rehearses on Thursdays. Mari closes the shop. A nearby resident worries about late noise. The proposed meeting time overlaps with several shifts.

Look closely: Whose voice is missing from these four notes?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Notes

Key idea: trade-offs

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics. Then answer the question in the box. About 12 minutes.

The board is weighing a **proposal** about the free evenings. A proposal is a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet. Option B would help close the $200 weekly gap, but it would end the free Tuesday and Thursday evenings. A **trade-off** is a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up. Every option on the agenda has one, including the one you prefer.

Carol Bacchi's policy-analysis approach asks what a proposed solution assumes the problem is. Option B treats the $200 gap as the problem and two free evenings as the price. That leaves two questions open: who loses those evenings, and what happens if bookings come in lower than projected? Ask the same questions about your own favorite option.

A **decision-maker** is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice. Here, the nonprofit's board controls its own schedule. A community board or a city agency would follow other rules. A strong comment names the proposal, explains one effect with evidence and asks for a decision the board can make. The board can still choose an option the crew did not ask for.

Professional standards

Real source | **American Society for Public Administration (ASPA)**

ASPA Code of Ethics: 5. Fully Inform and Advise

"Provide accurate, honest, comprehensive, and timely information and advice to elected and appointed officials and governing board members"

In plain words: ASPA members agree to give decision-makers, such as board members, accurate and complete information.

Question: The budget note projects $120 more per rental. What should it also tell the board about how certain that is?

Your answer

The note should also say ___, because ___.

In the news

Real source | Education Week | February 6, 2023

Letting Students Decide Where Money Should Go: How One District Did It

A real district let students propose and vote on how shared school spaces and money would change.

Real source | First Alert 4 (KMOV) | June 4, 2026

St. Louis shuts down streets to cars, hands them over to neighbors

A city pilot that changes a shared space for a trial run, so neighbors can test trade-offs before anything is permanent.

Notes

Sort the evidence

On your own Follow each option to its consequences. Mark the consequences that depend on a projection. About 8 minutes.

Follow each option to its consequences. Which consequences depend on a projection, and who carries the cost if it misses?

Option B: paid rentals replace Tuesday and Thursday evenings

A projected $240 would cover the $200 gap if both evenings book

Who is affected

Check: What happens if bookings fall short of the projection?

Dec loses Thursday rehearsals and Mari's late evenings stop being usable

Who is affected

Option C: one rental evening piloted for six weeks

A projected $80 gap remains while the board seeks funding and reviews the pilot

Who is affected

Check: What happens if bookings fall short of the projection?

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is ___. I would ask ___.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what the crew should ask for first and explain why. Then fix the two marked lines. About 6 minutes.

What should the crew ask the board for first?

- ☐ **A** Post that the board is taking away the free nights.
- ☐ **B** Ask for the budget assumptions, who uses each evening and a way to comment without attending.
- ☐ **C** Support whichever option brings in the most money.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

(1) The board should not take away our free nights. The Common Room is important to the community and a lot of people use it. I have been coming here for movie nights since it opened and it's one of the only places we can all hang out without paying. Renting it out just shows (2) the board cares more about money than people. Sami and Dec would lose their spot and that is not fair. Please keep it free for everyone. Thank you for listening.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

Grades 11—12

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Write a policy memo comparing all three options on cost, access and uncertainty, and recommend one.

Use: All evidence plus Bacchi's "What's the problem represented to be?" excerpt.

You'll make: Policy memo, 400—500 words

Time: 60 minutes

1. Fill in the options matrix: cost, access and uncertainty for Options A, B and C.
2. Mark each figure that depends on the $120 projection.
3. Write what Option B assumes the problem is.
4. Choose one option and a measure for reviewing it.
5. Draft the memo's comparison and recommendation on the Your draft page.
6. Finish the memo, 400 to 500 words, in the online workspace.

Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Option A: cost, access, uncertainty

Option B: cost, access, uncertainty

Your task, continued

Option C: cost, access, uncertainty

What Option B assumes the problem is

My review measure

Notes

Your draft

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 22 minutes.

Your comparison section

Your recommendation

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 6 minutes.

Does your memo compare all three options fairly?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Are your figures accurate, with their assumptions named?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Do you apply Bacchi's question to the funding framing?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Does your recommendation include a review the board could measure?	☐ Yes	☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No figures or perspectives.	☐ Mentions money or people vaguely.	☐ Uses one figure and one affected perspective accurately.	☐ Uses figures conditionally and names an uncertainty.
Reasoning	☐ Assigns bad motives to the board.	☐ States a preference without addressing the gap.	☐ Recommends an option and addresses the gap.	☐ Weighs trade-offs across options and explains the choice.
Audience & purpose	☐ Speaks to the wrong decision -maker.	☐ Addresses the board but asks for nothing specific.	☐ Makes a request the board can act on.	☐ Requests a process that includes people who can't attend.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Tone edits only.	☐ Replaces a motive claim with evidence.	☐ Adds a figure, a perspective and a follow-up request.

Check your work, continued

One change I made after feedback

I changed ___ because ___.

Notes

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then finish My take. About 10 minutes.

1. **Option B treats the $200 gap as the problem. What does that way of stating the problem leave out?**

2. **Mari is paid to close the shop and also uses the room at night. How does that shape what she asks for?**

3. **How is the Common Room's board different from the City Council that helped restore library Sundays?**

My take

My claim: ___.

The best evidence is ___, because ___.

My take, continued

Someone who disagrees might say ___.

The limit of the evidence is ___.

I would change my mind if ___.

Notes

Talk about this case at home

Case 4: Who gets a say when a shared room changes?

In this case, a community room's board is weighing whether to rent out two free evenings to cover its costs. Your student used a budget note and notes from evening users to write a comment the board could act on.

See the case online.

Questions to talk about

1. Who decides the hours at a public library or community center?
2. What should a group know before it asks a board for a change?
3. How can people give input if they cannot attend a meeting?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.