

CSI BRAINSTORMING GUIDE

MISS AMERICA ORGANIZATION

Start With YOU

- What is something I could talk about for 10 minutes without getting bored?
- What issue makes me emotional, angry, or passionate?
- What has personally affected me or someone I love?
- Have I ever struggled with something that I wish someone had helped me through?
- What experience has changed the way I see the world?
- What do I wish people understood better?
- What is something I've overcome?
- Is there something I've experienced that I could use to help someone else?

Think About the People Around You

- Is there an issue affecting my family, friends, classmates, or community?
- Have I watched someone I love struggle with something?
- Is there a group of people I feel especially connected to?
- Who in my community might need an advocate?
- What problems do I see among young people my age?
- What do I wish my school/community offered that it currently doesn't?

Think About Your Interests & Talents

- What am I naturally good at?
- Could one of my hobbies become a service project?
- What do I love doing that could benefit other people?
- Could I use **art, music, sports, academics, fashion, technology, animals, writing, performing, etc.** to make an impact?
- Is there something I already participate in that could be expanded to help others?

Look Around Your Community

- What is a problem I notice in my school?
- What is a problem I notice in my town?
- What populations in my community are underserved?
- What resources exist - but aren't being used or aren't well known?
- What is something local organizations are already doing that I could help strengthen?
- What is a problem that could be addressed through **education or awareness**?

Ask Yourself: "What Could I Actually DO?"

- If I had a title and a platform, what could I realistically change?
- Could I educate people about this issue?
- Could I organize an event?
- Could I create a mentorship program?
- Could I raise money or supplies?
- Could I volunteer?
- Could I partner with an existing nonprofit?
- Could I create something that continues after my year as a titleholder?
- What is one measurable thing I could accomplish in 12 months?

Find the Intersection

"I care about _____ because _____."

"I have experienced _____, and it made me realize _____."

"I wish more people knew _____."

"I want to help _____ who are struggling with _____."

"One thing I wish I could change in my community is _____."

"If I could give every young person one thing, it would be _____."

"A problem I see that people aren't talking about enough is _____."

"I already have a skill in _____, and I could use it to help _____."

"If I had \$10,000 and one year to make a difference, I would _____."

The Miss America Test

1. Would I still care about this if I didn't have a crown?
2. Can I explain why this matters to me personally?
3. Can I educate others about it?
4. Can I take tangible action - not just raise awareness?
5. Can I identify who I'm trying to help?
6. Can I measure my impact?
7. Can I realistically make an impact during my year?
8. Would I be excited to talk about this in an interview?
9. Could this become something bigger than one event?
10. Does this feel authentically like ME?

Brainstorming Exercise

Write down **10 things I care about**, without worrying whether they're "good CSI ideas."

Then circle the **three that create the strongest emotional reaction**.

For each one, ask:

"Why does it matter?" → "Why does it matter TO YOU?" → "Why does THAT matter?"

Keep asking **why** until you get past the generic answer and reach the **personal story underneath it**.

Examples:

Example 1: Mental Health

"I care about mental health."

→ Why?

"Because I know a lot of teenagers who struggle with anxiety."

→ Why does that matter to you?

"Because I've watched friends struggle and not know where to turn."

→ Why does THAT matter?

"Because I wish I had known how to recognize when someone needed help and what I could do for them."

💡 **Potential CSI:** Teaching teens how to recognize, support, and connect peers experiencing mental-health challenges.

Example 2: Arts Education

"I care about art in schools."

→ Why?

"Because art was always my favorite class."

→ Why does that matter?

"Because it gave me a place where I felt confident and successful."

→ Why does THAT matter?

"Because I know there are other students who may not feel successful in traditional classrooms, and I want them to have that same opportunity."

💡 **Potential CSI:** Expanding access to arts experiences for students who may not thrive in traditional academic environments.

Example 3: Animal Rescue

"I want to help animals."

→ Why?

"Because I've always loved dogs."

→ Why does that matter?

"Because my dog helped me through a really difficult time."

→ Why does THAT matter?

"Because I realized how much animals can impact people's emotional well-being, and I want other people and animals to experience that relationship."

💡 **Potential CSI:** Supporting animal adoption, fostering, or human-animal companionship.

Example 4: Literacy

“I want to help kids read.”

→ Why?

“Because some kids struggle with reading.”

→ Why does that matter?

“Because reading affects almost everything they do in school.”

→ Why does THAT matter?

“Because struggling to read can make a child believe they're not smart, when they simply haven't been given the right support.”

 **Potential CSI:** Literacy tutoring and confidence-building for struggling young readers.

Example 5: Special Education

“I care about children with disabilities.”

→ Why?

“Because my brother has a disability.”

→ Why does that matter?

“Because I've seen how hard it can be for him to participate in things other kids take for granted.”

→ Why does THAT matter?

“Because I want to help create communities where inclusion isn't something families have to fight for.”

 **Potential CSI:** Creating inclusive recreational, educational, or community opportunities.

Example 6: Body Confidence

“I care about body positivity.”

→ Why?

“Because girls are constantly comparing themselves to other people.”

→ Why does that matter?

“Because I've struggled with comparing myself to other girls.”

→ Why does THAT matter?

“Because I don't want younger girls to spend their teenage years believing their worth is determined by what they look like.”

 **Potential CSI:** Self-confidence and healthy self-image education for young girls.

Example 7: Bullying

“I want to stop bullying.”

→ Why?

“Because bullying is really common in schools.”

→ Why does that matter?

“Because I've seen how much it can affect someone's confidence.”

→ Why does THAT matter?

“Because I remember what it felt like to feel like I didn't belong, and I don't want other kids to feel that way.”

 **Potential CSI:** Peer inclusion and anti-bullying initiatives.

Example 8: Elderly People

“I want to help senior citizens.”

→ Why?

“Because I love spending time with my grandparents.”

→ Why does that matter?

“Because I've realized how lonely older people can become.”

→ Why does THAT matter?

“Because some of the people who have spent their entire lives caring for others deserve to feel remembered and valued.”

 **Potential CSI:** Intergenerational mentorship/visitation programs.

Example 9: Food Insecurity

“I care about hunger.”

→ Why?

“Because some families don't have enough food.”

→ Why does that matter?

“Because children shouldn't have to worry about where their next meal is coming from.”

→ Why does THAT matter?

“Because I know how much harder it is to learn, concentrate, and feel secure when your basic needs aren't being met.”

 **Potential CSI:** School/community food-access programs.

Example 10: Women's Empowerment

“I want to empower young women.”

→ Why?

“Because girls need more confidence.”

→ Why does that matter?

“Because I've watched talented girls hold themselves back because they don't think they're good enough.”

→ Why does THAT matter?

“Because I know how different my own life could have been if someone had taught me earlier that I was capable of taking up space and using my voice.”

 **Potential CSI:** Confidence, leadership, public-speaking, or mentorship programs for young women.

Example 11: Financial Literacy

“I think financial literacy is important.”

→ Why?

“Because teenagers don't learn enough about money.”

→ Why does that matter?

“Because many young adults graduate without understanding credit, budgeting, or student loans.”

→ Why does THAT matter?

“Because I don't want someone's lack of financial knowledge to limit the opportunities they have later in life.”

 **Potential CSI:** Financial-literacy education for high school students.

Example 12: Grief

“I want to help people dealing with grief.”

→ Why?

“Because I've lost someone I love.”

→ Why does that matter?

“Because I remember feeling like everyone expected me to move on.”

→ Why does THAT matter?

“Because grief doesn't have an expiration date, and I want people experiencing loss to know they don't have to go through it alone.”

 **Potential CSI:** Grief support and resources for young people.

Example 13: STEM

“I want more girls in STEM.”

→ Why?

“Because there aren't enough women in certain STEM careers.”

→ Why does that matter?

“Because girls need to see women succeeding in those fields.”

→ Why does THAT matter?

“Because when I was younger, I didn't see many people like me doing those jobs, and I assumed they weren't for me.”

 **Potential CSI:** STEM mentorship and exposure for young girls.

Example 14: Foster Care

“I want to help children in foster care.”

→ Why?

“Because they deserve stable and supportive environments.”

→ Why does that matter?

“Because children shouldn't feel like their circumstances determine their future.”

→ Why does THAT matter?

“Because every child deserves at least one person who believes in them and reminds them that their story isn't already written.”

 **Potential CSI:** Mentorship, educational support, or enrichment opportunities for foster youth.