

PELA Peer Project Consultations
***Exploring Stakeholders and Causal Systems
in Your Community Change Project***

Participants:

1. Project Presenter: Person whose project is being presented.
2. Facilitator: Main responsibilities are to manage the time boundaries and to keep the Project Presenter from controlling the conversation. The facilitator role should rotate among group members.
3. Note-taker: Takes notes for the Project Presenter. The note-taker role should rotate among group members.
4. Consultants: All the group members except the Project Presenter.

Process

Suggested time allocation and process for a 20-minute consultation. The proportions are important, especially allocating at least twice as much time for diagnosis as for any of the other components.

1. The Project Presenter describes:
 - a. Change s/he has in mind and the public value s/he would like to help create,
 - b. Other stakeholders and their (anticipated) interests regarding the change and current conditions, including presenter's own interests
 - c. Alternative ways to understand the causal system or forces shaping the condition you propose changing
 - d. Key questions the Presenter has about the issue and how others view it—3 minutes
2. The Facilitator questions the Project Presenter to address missing parts of the diagnosis, for example:
 - a. Who are the major players/stakeholders?
 - b. What interests does each have about the existing condition?
 - c. What would success look like to the Presenter?
 - d. What other explanations of the current condition occurred to the Presenter?
 - e. What else does the Presenter want to share with the team?—3 minutes

3. Project Presenter watches and listens while the Consultants extend the diagnosis, for example:
 - a. What other stakes might the Presenter have in this issue?
 - b. How else might the situation look to the other key stakeholders? What is the story they are telling themselves?
 - c. What untested assumptions might the Presenter be making?
 - d. What is the adaptive challenge for the stakeholders? For the Presenter? What are the value choices each has to make?
 - e. What are the underlying or hidden issues?
 - f. What options are off the table for the Presenter and why?
 - g. What has the Presenter contributed to the problem? What is her/his piece of the mess?
 - h. What possible interpretations has the Presenter been understandably unwilling to consider?
 - i. What would success look like to stakeholders other than the Presenter?—7 minutes
4. Project Presenter watches and listens while group brainstorms about potential next steps, for example:
 - a. What decisions does the Presenter need to make?
 - b. Who else does the Presenter need to involve and how?
 - c. What steps does the Presenter need to take next?—3 minutes
5. Project Presenter reflects on what she/he heard
—3 minutes

Potential Traps and how to avoid them:

1. Project Presenter will dominate the conversation, defending and explaining. The Project Presenter should remain silent during steps 3 and 4.
2. Consultants will jump too quickly to conclusions. Consultants should question their own assumptions, as well as those of the Project Presenter.
3. Consultants will be afraid to tell the presenter bad news. Consultants should remember their job is to help the Presenter explore different perspectives and anticipate challenges others may raise later.
4. Project Presenter will hide real stakes and anxieties. Presenter should seek honest feedback from consultants to prepare for challenges other may raise later.
5. Consultants will offer insight from their own experience or expertise, rather than see the problem through the eyes of the Project Presenter and other people in the project. Consultants should listen empathetically to appreciate the concerns and perspective of the Presenter.