

PELA Peer Project Consultations
***Assessing the Situation
for Your Adaptive 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. The change they are seeking and the value of that change to their community,
 - b. How this effort represents an ***adaptive challenge***,
 - c. Critical partners for the project and expectation around roles,
 - d. Some of the challenges he/she is facing or anticipates will face.—3 minutes

2. The Facilitator asks follow-up questions of the Project Presenter to address missing parts or to simply understand the situation better, for example:
 - a. Any potential key partners missing?
 - b. What would success look like to the Presenter?
 - c. What are the biggest obstacles?
 - d. What else does the Presenter want to share with the team?—3 minutes

3. Project Presenter watches and listens (“up on the balcony”) while the Consultants extend the diagnosis, for example:
 - a. Is their project really an adaptive challenge? Or is it more technical in nature?
 - b. How might this project appear to current or potential partners?
 - c. What are potential blindspots or traps to avoid?
 - d. What untested assumptions might the Presenter be making?
 - e. What are the underlying or hidden issues at play here?
 - f. What would success look like to partners and other 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?
 - d. What might the Presenter want to reconsider or be wary of?

—3 minutes

5. Project Presenter rejoins the group and 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.