Presidential Management Fellows (PMF)

Action Learning Guide

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PMF Action Learning Guide
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PMF Action Learning Guide

I. Introduction

Action learning is a powerful action-oriented problem-solving model that can be used to engage fellows on substantive projects and to develop leadership skills. Each action learning team will work on an important project or issue, culminating in a deliverable product – a report, program or strategy – that is valuable to managers and executives in the Federal Government. Our objective is to provide teams of fellows with substantive work on complex organizational issues while achieving individual, team and organizational development.

This action learning model will be used to replace the former Career Development Groups (CDGs) within the PMF Program. CDGs helped to create a sense of community among the interns and gave them an opportunity to network with mid-level and senior managers who served as advisors. But many CDGs met infrequently, had few guidelines and, in many cases, became primarily social outings. According to the Merit Systems Protection Board (2001), the CDGs were ineffective at enhancing the leadership development of Presidential Management Interns.

Alternatively, action learning has proven to be effective in corporate and academic settings to solve issues of importance to executives while developing future leaders. Action learning is similar to top management development programs that involve students as 'consultants' on a real world project to benefit 'clients.' It can offer excellent returns on investment to the agencies that host teams. Agencies benefit directly by resolving current issues, and indirectly by developing critical leadership competencies within the agency and building relationships between fellows and senior managers.

Managers and executives serve as sponsors for a problem they need to resolve in their agencies. Sponsors work with a team of four to eight fellows who work part-time on a specific project over an average of eight months. Teams take responsibility for delivering results by developing analyses, recommendations and implementation strategies.

This *PMF Action Learning Guide* outlines the roles and responsibilities of participants, and describes the entire process. Fellows will participate part-time on action learning teams during their ongoing work schedules, carving time out of their current obligations with the permission of their supervisors. This option will be an addition to the other training, rotation and networking opportunities already available to fellows, and participation is not required. There will be no additional fees or obligations other than those outlined in this Guide. The PMF Program staff will provide training and support for fellows, sponsors and coaches, and agency PMF coordinators and supervisors.

The Guide is organized into four major sections: The *Roles and Responsibilities* section clarifies how each participating role and stakeholder in the PMF action learning model contributes to the overall goals. The *Process Map* section describes the procedural steps for each of the roles. The *Team's Life Cycle* section has details about implementation. Finally, the *Appendices* are a collection of handouts, charts and forms for teams to use during their work together.

II. Background on Action Learning

Action learning, an offshoot of experiential leaning, has a long history of proven success in adult education. Action learning combines many leading theories of 'learning by doing,' and since its development in the 1980's by Reginald Revans, has been used extensively by private industries and academia as a management and leadership development tool (Marquardt, 1999). There are few government agencies that have formally used this specific model, but many use leadership and management development approaches that combine elements of action learning such as challenging assignments, rotational opportunities, classroom training and mentoring relationships.

The action learning framework outlined in this Guide extensively incorporates the model developed by Michael J. Marquardt (2004) in his book *Optimizing the Power of Action Learning*, as well as ideas from William J. Rothwell (1999) in his *Action Learning Guide*, and Peter Senge (1994) in *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*. As Marquardt writes, "Perhaps action learning's greatest value is its capacity for equipping individuals, teams and organizations to more effectively respond to change." There are other suggested readings and trainings at the end of this Guide for those wanting to learn more.

The six key components and two ground rules (underlined) of action learning, as outlined by Marquart (2004), are each important to the success of a team:

- **Project**: **An important or urgent problem.** Ideal projects are focused on important, challenging and complex issues for which there are no known solutions and that require creativity and innovation to solve. Managers and executives who serve as sponsors share their problem and vision on an organizational issue critical to the success of the agency, and engage the team, provide resources and expect results.

- **Team**: **A diverse group of four to eight people.** Teams ideally comprise a group interdisciplinary and inter- or intra-agency members with a diversity of skills and perspectives, and a commitment to meet together and take action until the work is completed. Teams are led by members who experiment with and rotate into differing roles on the team. Every member is asked to make team meeting attendance a top priority.

- **Inquiry**: **Insightful questioning and reflective listening.** This process requires that <u>all statements within the group be made only in response to questions</u>. The action learning model helps to reframe problems, challenge assumptions and share insights to promote a more introspective, self-aware and innovative learning environment. Asking the right question is not easy – but is essential if fresh ideas and innovation are to occur.

- **Action**: **Implement action on the problem.** Some action must be taken on the project for real energy, innovation and learning to take place. Challenging work experience on real issues that applies the skills, knowledge and abilities of team members can provide an opportunity to demonstrate accomplishments and promote practical learning on specific leadership competencies.

- **Learning**: **Commitment to learn.** Everyone on the team agrees to be a learner in order to promote equality, vulnerability and a willingness to develop as individuals and as a group. This commitment to learning supports individual and agency development of leadership competencies through the action and learning process.

- **Coach**: **Presence of an action learning coach.** A coach is assigned for every meeting, usually a member of the team but alternatively an external expert to the group. Coaches generally intervene during two sections on meeting agenda – early in the meeting and always at least ten minutes before the meeting ends. Coaches also have the <u>power to ask key questions of the team at any point whenever they see an opportunity to learn</u> or clarify the problem or goal, and the team must attempt to answer that question before moving forward. The coach plays a critical role on the team to promote ongoing reflection and inquiry.

Inquiry is a key component of action learning. It is critical to question why the project is important, to whom, its parameters, who else may be impacted, or the unanticipated consequences of action or lack thereof. Questions are also encouraged about the group's process, learning, individual contributions, and participation. This type of inquiry enables the group and its individuals to employ creative methods of data-gathering, interpretation, introspection, and decision making that can lead a group through an experience of transformative learning.

Paradoxically, a team that takes time away from addressing its project goals to reflect on its process and assumptions is empowered to find better solutions, and discover better results, than a team that focuses solely on the project at hand.

Action learning's emphasis on reflection distinguishes it from other 'learning-by-doing' models. The key to action learning is the combination of personal and group reflection, not only on the issue at hand, but also regarding a group's work as a team and each individual's relationships and learning styles. When teams take time to reflect on group and individual learning, thinking and interacting, they become increasingly able to perceive and then challenge underlying beliefs and assumptions that can limit their scope of understanding and innovation.

The benefits of action learning in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service were highlighted by Stieglitz and Wicks (2003): "The practical learning experience enables participants to acquire specific skills and competencies desired by the organization, such as problem-solving and team-building, while also developing leaders. Action learning enables the individual to practice academic theory while increasing personal self-awareness and confidence through the process. The individual . . . may also benefit from increased visibility and interaction with senior leadership. . . . Unlike a work task force, the [team's] solution to the organization problem is secondary to learning from the process, interaction, and each other."

Action learning can help develop many of the leadership competencies outlined by the Office of Personnel Management as Executive Core Qualification competencies (see the table on the next page). Foundational, team leader and project management competencies are italicized to illustrate those most likely to be directly strengthened by participation on an action learning team. Fellows will be professionally challenged as they work on complex, real-time projects that impact agency missions. Action learning teams will also give senior managers the opportunity to actively mentor and develop the Federal Government's future leaders.

Leadership Competencies

Leading Change	**Leading People**	**Results Driven**	**Business Acumen**	**Building Coalitions**
Continued Learning	*Integrity, Honesty*	*Accountability*	Financial Management	*Influencing, Negotiating*
Creativity and Innovation	*Team Building*	*Customer Service*	Human Resources Management	*Interpersonal Skills*
Flexibility	Conflict Management	*Decisiveness*	Technology Management	*Oral Communication*
Resilience	Leveraging Diversity	*Problem Solving*		*Written Communication*
External Awareness		*Technical Credibility*		Partnering
Service Motivation		Entrepreneurship		Political Savvy
Strategic Thinking				
Vision				

The training fellows receive during their orientation sessions, and the information in this Guide and its appendices, will provide tools for team members and sponsors to use to strike a balance between action and reflection. This combination will enable fellows to complete a project while simultaneously helping them develop individual learning goals. One of the main goals of this model is to help teams experience how they can accomplish their objectives more effectively by using an action learning process.

Both the team and the sponsor are accountable for making this experience a developmental opportunity for fellows. Sponsors will be involved in the selection of their team members and will hold fellows responsible for the deliverable through ongoing monitoring. Team members will hold each other accountable as an important component of the process. Teams will also be evaluated by the sponsor and the PMF Program on the quality and timeliness of their deliverables, and the PMF Program staff will offer support as needed to teams and sponsors.

This type of adult learning tool can provide a powerful action-oriented, problem-solving, team-building experience. The PMF model contains the standard elements of action learning to provide opportunities for fellows to develop critical leadership competencies and to build networking relationships between fellows and senior managers. Action learning can be a powerful tool to support the PMF Program's goal of producing future leaders to meet the looming human capital crisis projected for future senior managers in the Federal Government.

III. Roles and Responsibilities

The responsibilities outlined below clarify how each participant role and stakeholder in the PMF action learning process contributes to the overall goals:

A. Action Learning Team
B. Agency Stakeholders

The next section, *Process Map*, describes the procedural steps associated with each of the roles and responsibilities described in this section. The team's life cycle section and the corresponding appendices have much more detail about implementation.

A. Action Learning Team

- **Sponsor**

Senior managers at the GS-14 level or equivalent and higher who serve as sponsors to a team are an essential component of the action learning model. Their commitment to both action and learning goals is critical to a team's success as a leadership development experience. Sponsors:

  - provide vision and articulate goals and expectations for the project,
  - demonstrate a commitment to the goals of action learning on the team,
  - sign a project agreement with team members,
  - provide resources to the team (funds for calls, materials and travel),
  - provide the team opportunity to take real action on the problem, and
  - recognize the accomplishments of the team.

Sponsors are generally not present at most of the team's meetings, but are expected to orient the team about the project, negotiate the project agreement, and participate in the team debrief (see Appendices B. 1., *First Meeting Agenda*, and E. 2., *Team Debrief*). The team may request that the sponsor attend specific meetings or help to set up meetings with stakeholders as needed. Sponsors need to fully support the dual purposes of action and reflection, as well as provide guidance, support and resources to the team.

Sponsors play a critical role by motivating the team to successfully complete a needed deliverable and providing real-world pressures. The sponsor must be aware that the overall goal is a developmental experience for fellows.

- **Team Members**

There should be four to eight members on an action learning team. Ideally, members will be from different divisions or agencies to bring a diversity of knowledge and experience to the project and expand the learning opportunities for the teams. Team members from field offices should be strongly encouraged and specifically supported in their participation via teleconferencing and other methods of virtual participation. Members:

  - provide ongoing reports and a final deliverable to the sponsor,
  - take responsibility for their reflection and learning,

- rotate through a variety of team roles for developmental growth, including:
    - facilitator – prepares agendas and runs meetings,
    - coach – questions the team's adherence to action learning principles and helps the team reflect on their process,
    - recorder – takes notes and prepares meeting minutes,
    - project manager – uses project management tools and techniques to plan and execute work on the deliverable, and
    - point of contact – primary communication conduit between the team, sponsor, and the PMF Program staff.
- attend every meeting of the team as a top priority to ensure continuity, and
- provide project summary and evaluation documents to the PMF Program staff.

Fellows will participate on action learning teams part-time during their ongoing work schedules, carving time out of their current obligations with the permission of their supervisors. This option will be an addition to the other training, rotation and networking opportunities already available to fellows. Only fellows who actively participate in the accomplishment of the deliverable and the evaluation process will be credited for having completed an action learning team.

Experimentation with different roles will give members opportunities to more clearly understand various components of a team-based process. Fellows may need to serve multiple roles on a team depending on the size and needs of that team. Members are strongly urged to adopt the 'no surprises' rule and keep the sponsor well informed about the team's progress.

- **Coach**

Teams are required to assign one member as a coach during each meeting. The specific responsibilities of this team coach are emphasized here to illustrate the importance of this role. Every member of the team is strongly urged to serve in this role during at least one meeting. Detailed guidance for those serving in this coaching role is included in the *Team Life Cycle* section of this Guide and Appendix B. 3., *Team Coach*. Coaches:

- take responsibility to ensure that teams use the principles of action learning (e.g. that team members make statements only in response to questions),
- are assigned for every meeting, and are usually a member of the team but alternatively an external expert to the group,
- ask key questions of the team at any point whenever they see an opportunity to learn or clarify the problem or goal, and the team must attempt to answer that question before moving forward, and
- intervene during two sections on meeting agenda – often early in the meeting and always at least ten minutes before the meeting ends.

In addition, the PMF Program staff will identify a pool of external coaches to serve as volunteer consultants to teams on process issues. Teams are strongly encouraged to meet with an external coach, who is not *at all* connected to the team's deliverable, at least once early in their process. External coaches can ensure the appropriate use of action learning methodology and provide the support that teams may need to get started on their projects. External coaches can provide expertise in group process and meeting facilitation to multiple teams.

Coaches can help teams to question and learn, as well as to anticipate and overcome moments of frustration or conflict. Access to external coaches also provides fellows an opportunity to network with and learn from organizational development experts from across government. Coaches assist teams during each stage of their group life cycle to help teams stay focused on both the task and the process. (See Appendix B. 3., *Team Coach*; and Appendix C. 3., *External Coach*).

B. Agency Stakeholders

- **PMF Supervisors**

As with rotations, supervisors approve fellows' participation in this development activity, but do not manage the process and are not accountable for the activity's outcome. Fellows are encouraged to discuss with their supervisors how their team's goals tie into their Individual Development Plans (IDPs) when making the case to become a team member. Fellows are required to keep their supervisors informed about their workload by:

- obtaining approval from their supervisors before their participation on a team,
- providing copies of their team's project agreement to their supervisor during the team's formation, and
- providing copies of project summaries upon completion of the team's work.

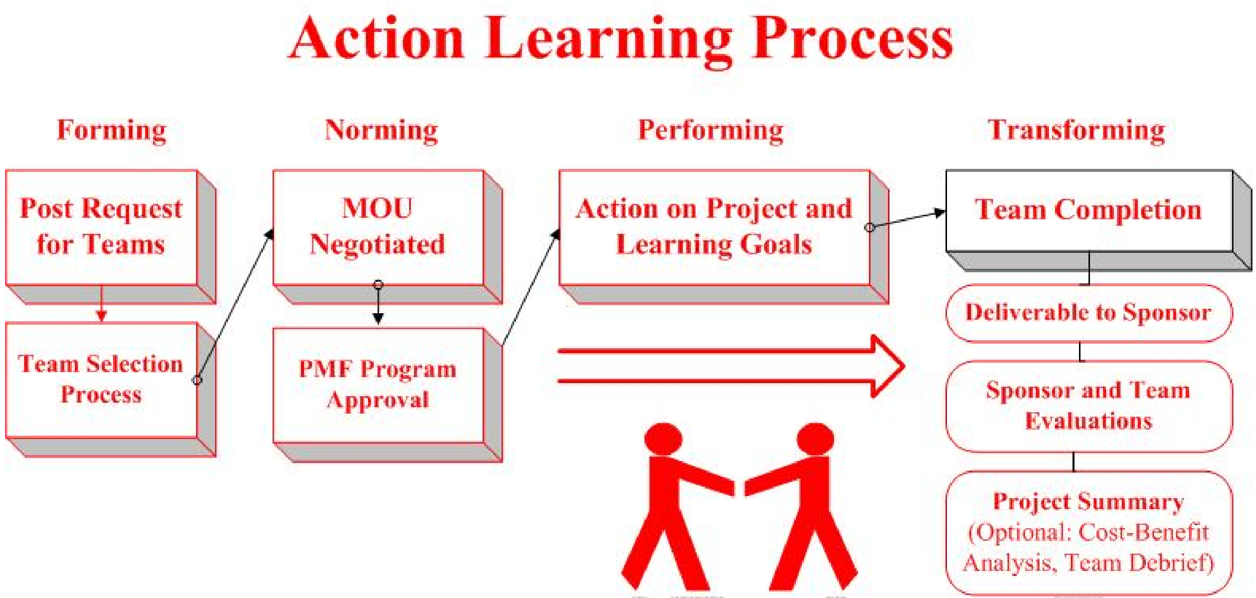
- **Agency PMF Coordinators**

Agency PMF coordinators are an important link to the human resource community within each agency, and they serve to facilitate the leadership development of fellows. They need to be informed about, and engaged in, the action learning process and:

- facilitate the formation of teams and the recruitment of sponsors and coaches, and
- receive copies of project agreements and project summaries to stay informed about fellows' activities.

- **PMF Program Staff**

The PMF Program staff are responsible for the overall implementation of this action learning model. They are also responsible for making improvements as needed, and providing evaluative data to demonstrate the model's effectiveness.



IV. Process Map

This section outlines the basic steps to form, implement and complete an action learning team and is arranged along the life cycle of a team. More details about how to progress during each of these stages in a team's life cycle will be presented in the next section.

A. Team Formation (Forming)
B. Project Agreement (Norming)
C. Action on Project and Learning Goals (Storming and Performing)
D. Team Evaluation and Completion (Transforming)

A. Team Formation (Forming)

1. Post Request for Teams

Teams can be formed by either fellows or sponsors. Potential sponsors could post a request for a team to recruit fellows to their team, or vice versa, by posting requests on the PMF webpage using the format below and in Appendix A.1., *Request for Team*. Requests should include as much information about the topics below as is known at the time of the posting. This request for team will serve as a precursor to the project agreement outlined in the next section. If a team is formed through networking, it is still encouraged to post a request to attract qualified fellows or other resources. Requests for team will be posted as action learning opportunities at www.pmf.opm.gov for 30 days and can be renewed.

- **Project Title**: Teams need a unique, descriptive title (no more than 50 characters).
- **Request:** Is this request a sponsor seeking members, or member(s) seeking sponsor and/or team?
- **Brief Description**: What is the proposed project goal?
- **Deliverable**: What type of deliverable do you anticipate? Is this deliverable clear and realistic within the anticipated timeframe?

- **Timeline and Workload**: How long do you estimate the team will exist? How much estimated time will be required of team members each week or month?
- **Learning**: What are the team's action learning goals? How will participation in this team help its members gain leadership competencies?
- **Location and Communication:** How often will the team meet and for how long? Where will this team meet? What is the strategy for facilitating field or inter-agency participation? How will this team work virtually? How often might the sponsor meet with the team?
- **Host Agency**: Host agency if known, or suggested agency(ies).
- **Team**: What diversity of knowledge and skills will be important on this team?
- **Sponsor**: Name and title if known, or suggestions for the ideal sponsor.
- **Point of Contact**: Contact email and phone for interested fellows and/or sponsors.
- **Application Procedures**: What information does the point of contact need from potential members or sponsors? Is there a deadline for applications?

2. Selection Process

Teams and sponsors may choose their own selection process. The sponsor or team may decide to request a statement of interest and/or to interview interested parties.

- **If a potential sponsor requests a team**: The sponsor may request that interested fellows submit information supporting their request to join the team such as a resume or statement of interest.
- **If a team or fellow is seeking a sponsor**: The fellow or team may ask potential sponsors to submit information supporting their request to sponsor the team such as a statement of interest, his or her vision for the team, or the resources the sponsor has to offer.

There are numerous ways for teams to form. A few examples include: (1) a senior executive has a project, posts a request and selects a team from the respondents, (2) a fellow with a project idea posts a request to find a sponsor and fellows to form a team; (3) a fellow browses the requests on the webpage and responds to a few projects of interest.

B. Project Agreement (Norming)

1. Negotiate a Project Agreement

Once formed, a team must negotiate a project agreement between the members and the sponsor to submit to the PMF Program staff. A team will often need to meet a few times before the sponsor and the members come to agreement on the issues below as part of developing the norms in their group. The project agreement is an expanded version of the request for a team. (See Appendix B. 4., *Project Agreement*).

- **Project Title**: Teams need a unique, descriptive title (no more than 50 characters).
- **Brief Description**: What is the proposed project goal? Briefly describe the project in more detail, and whether or not the subject matter sensitive or confidential.
- **Deliverable**: What is the team's anticipated project deliverable to the sponsor?

- **Timeline and Workload**: How long do you estimate the team will exist? How much estimated time will be required of team members each week or month?
- **Learning**: What are the team's action learning goals? How will participation in this team help its members gain leadership competencies? How will the team capture its learning throughout the experience?
- **Location and Communication:** How often will the team meet and for how long? Where will this team meet? What is the strategy for facilitating field or inter-agency participation? How will this team work virtually? How often will the sponsor meet with the team?
- **Resources**: What resources will the team need to accomplish their goals? What resources is the sponsor able to provide to the team?
- **Team**: Who are the members of the team and what is their contact information?
- **Sponsor and Host Agency**: Name, title, agency, and contact information for the sponsor.
- **Point of Contact**: Who is the contact person for information about this team?

2. Teams Submit their Project Agreement to the Program Staff

Teams are required to submit an electronic copy and a signed faxed copy of their project agreement to the PMF Program staff for review. The faxed project agreement should be signed and dated by the sponsor and all team members. When the project agreement is approved by the PMF Program staff, the team point of contact and the sponsor will receive notification by email. **The team is not officially approved until the PMF Program staff emails confirmation of the team's formation.**

3. Supervisor Sign-Off and Coordinator Notification

Team members are required to make their supervisor and agency PMF coordinator aware of their intention to participate in an action learning team, and have the supervisor sign-off on the final copy of the project agreement before submission to the PMF Program staff. Fellows should save a copy of this transaction should a dispute occur. It is not the PMF Program staff's responsibility to monitor supervisor approval.

4. Project Agreement Renegotiations

If and when a team's project agreement is formally renegotiated, the PMF Program staff should receive an electronic copy of the new version to add to its records, and copies of the revised edition must be given to the fellow's supervisor and agency PMF coordinator.

The program will work best – for both the participant and the organization – if all of the key "players" are involved in this project agreement stage. Unless the goals and expectations are clear and communication frequent, teams and sponsors may come into conflict over project goals or other issues. If teams use this Guide as recommend, they will be capable of forming teams built on solid foundations of sponsor support and team commitment.

C. Action on Project and Learning Goals (Storming and Performing)

Teams are urged to approach 'performing' or implementing their project agreements by creating a balance between task (action) and process (reflection). The *PMF Action Learning Guide* provides specific tools and action learning principles. Teams will also be urged to incorporate reflection and lessons learned through meeting agendas, IDPs, and the evaluation process.

The ‘storming’ stage, covered in more detail in the next *Life Cycle* section of this Guide, is a stage that many well organized teams can minimize by careful planning during the first two ‘forming’ and ‘norming’ stages.

- **External Coach**

Teams are encouraged to receive external coaching at least once, preferably early in their life cycle, to help teams create a balance between action and learning from the beginning. The PMF Program staff will make a list of external coaches available to teams. (See Appendix C. 3., *External Coach*).

As mentioned earlier, coaches play a pivotal role in the life of the team. They provide the critical inquiry and reflection tools that help the team to learn as they take action on their project goals. Coaching can help teams through frustration or conflicts that can prevent teams from progressing to the stage where most of the work on their project gets done.

D. Team Evaluation and Completion (Transforming)

The team should be considered terminated when the sponsor *and* the team each submit formal evaluations to the PMF Program staff. A team cost-benefit analysis and debrief are also strongly suggested. Additional details about each of these components are included in the *Life Cycle* section, as well as the appendices.

- **Project Deliverable**: The team is required to submit the project deliverable to the sponsor according to the terms of the project agreement.

- **Formal Evaluations:** Team members and the sponsor are each required to submit formal evaluations to the PMF Program staff. The sponsor’s final evaluation should indicate whether or not he or she has received the completed deliverable from the team, and include a list of active team members at the completion of the deliverable (see Appendix E. 3. and 4., *Member* and *Sponsor Evaluations*).

- **Project Summary**. The team is also required to submit a project summary to the PMF Program staff describing the project deliverable and its lessons learned.

- **Cost-Benefit Analysis**. The team is encouraged to complete a cost-benefit analysis. An example can be found in the next *Life Cycle* section, with additional details in Appendix E. 1., *Cost-Benefit Analysis*.

- **Team and Sponsor Debrief.** It is recommended that a debriefing process take place between the team and the sponsor in order to ensure a more comprehensive evaluation process.

While ongoing reflection allows teams to learn in real-time, a more structured evaluation process at the end of a project is necessary for the team to step back and assess the experience as a whole. In this way, the evaluation and completion of an action learning team will continue to balance the value of the task and process. These tools will be used to capture overall lessons learned, best practices and process improvements for the PMF Program staff.

V. The Team's Life Cycle

This section contains suggestions, handouts and readings for teams to use during the normal stages of their life cycle. It provides specific suggestions and additional information about how to implement action learning teams from the standpoint of an ideal team, and follows the typical group life cycle. (More information can be found in Appendix B. 6., *Group Life Cycle*)

A. Forming the Ideal Team
B. Norming and Ground Rules
C. Storming and Conflict Management
D. Performing the Team's Work
E. Transforming the Future

A. Forming the Ideal Team

The forming and norming stages in a group's life cycle are the most important stages to get 'right.' If the team incorporates the suggestions outlined in this Guide, from development of its project agreement to the group process suggestions in the appendices, the group will be well on its way to becoming a high performing team. The following components of an ideal action learning team are listed below:

- **Ideal Project**

Ideal projects are focused on important, challenging and complex problems for which there are no known solutions and that require creativity and innovation to solve. Ideal action learning projects are those that are significant, urgent, attainable and valued by the agency. If the sponsor already has a specific solution for the problem, the team would only be able to serve as an implementation task force rather than the learning experience it is intended to be.

Ideal projects have a relatively short and somewhat flexible timeframe of eight months or less. They are not so high profile that the sponsor may unduly pressure the team with demands for perfection or fears of failure, nor so time sensitive that the team forgoes reflection and learning to accomplish the task quickly. A general timeframe of four to eight months is recommended -- long enough to form a solid team and short enough to maintain focus on the goals.

Teams often begin formation with a set of assumptions about their project, but may complete the project agreement with a very different problem definition or may need to make revisions after the first project agreement has been submitted. It is important for teams to challenge each other's initial assumptions about the project and learning goals, particularly regarding the feasibility of achieving the deliverable within the time constraints anticipated by the members and the sponsor. After a lively discussion about these assumptions the team and sponsor can often come to clearer, more realistic, and better defined goals.

- **Ideal Member**

The ideal team member will have the following characteristics:

  - interest in the project or issue,
  - toleration of ambiguity,
  - curiosity and motivation to learn,

- comfortable not knowing in front of others,
- willingness to take measured risks, and
- ownership for his or her own action and learning.

- **Ideal Team**

Teams include four to eight interdisciplinary inter- or intra-agency members with a diversity of perspectives and a commitment to meet together and take action until the work is completed. Teams are led by members who ideally experiment with and rotate into differing roles on the team. It is also helpful to reiterate that the ideal team is made up of a diversity of skills, talents and perspectives. Team members would ideally:

- be from different agencies or divisions to bring a diversity of knowledge and experience to the project and expand the learning environment on the teams,
- strive for a balance between expertise and naiveté on an issue to challenge assumptions and encourage healthy debate about the team's goals,
- contain some members who have group process skills to keep the group dynamics focused and positive, and
- strongly encourage and specifically support fellows in field offices to participate via teleconferencing and other methods of virtual participation.

The importance of a relatively naïve member of the group versus subject matter experts should not be underestimated. In action learning folklore, one corporate team invited the pizza delivery guy into their meeting for a few hours by promising him a large tip. His fundamental questions helped the team to challenge their basic assumptions and led to a break-through solution that saved the company millions of dollars (Marquardt, 2004).

The expectation that every member attend every meeting possible means that larger teams will face the greatest challenges of communication, participation and commitment. Smaller teams that contain a maximum of diversity are likely to have the greatest learning and impact.

- **Ideal Sponsor**

Sponsors share their problem and vision on an issue that is critical to the success of the agency while they engage the team, provide resources, and expect results. The ideal sponsor will be someone who understands and is committed to, the balance between action and reflection, task and learning. He or she will support individual and team learning goals, and engage the team in constructive dialogue and real action to solve the problem and/or implement a solution.

- **Ideal Coach**

The coach, whether internal or external to the team, has the power to ask key questions of the team at any point and intervene whenever he or she sees an opportunity to learn or clarify the problem or goal. The coach plays a critical role on the team to promote ongoing reflection and inquiry. An ideal coach demonstrates a high degree of emotional intelligence -- he or she can perceive emotions both within his or her self and others, can navigate those emotions toward the desired results with empathy and respect, can acknowledge her or his own and other's assumptions and can manage all of these effectively. The ideal coach can speak with honesty, courage, compassion and authenticity.

Asking 'learning' questions is an art form, and the role of an observing coach or 'mirror' to the group can help members better see themselves and each other. The ideal coach is committed to helping others develop to their highest potential. In its truest form, coaching is a two-way street. That is, the coach learns as much as the person or group he or she is coaching. This learning frequently shows up as greater self-knowledge such as new insights about one's values, beliefs, and assumptions. An effective coach inspires the group with a willingness to grow as they help others to do so.

- **Virtual Participation**

Teams will face challenges associated with the diverse geographic or agency distribution of members. Managing dispersed teams is an invaluable skill in the modern work environment both in government and the private sectors. We encourage teams to try different forms of virtual participation methods, including:

- phone and video conferencing,
- email and web-based information sharing, and
- travel for periodic in-person meetings.

Team meetings that combine in-person and conference-call participants can be difficult for those not physically present. Those who are physically distant to a more centralized group may feel somewhat more detached or 'out of the loop.' Virtual participants may miss some of the non-verbal cues and informal support that occur for those physically present. On the other hand, time and cost savings, as well as the opportunity to dialogue, may make phone participation a viable option for those more distant participants. Email can lose the nuances and humor found in many personal interactions, but it can also be a very effective tool for discussions between scheduled meetings.

Other options for electronic communication include 'communities of practice' software where members can log onto a common website to share information and documents like minutes or lessons learned. Teams are encouraged to try new forms of technology to keep in touch with each other.

Sponsors have the responsibility to be aware of the challenges of dispersed participation and to provide resources (within reason) to the team to facilitate the participation of fellows in other agencies or locations. The contribution of fellows in the field can be invaluable to a team. Diversity of opinion and experience on a team is critical to foster lively discussions, question assumptions and consider new insights.

- **Team and Member Stability**

While each team member is asked to make attendance at all meetings as a top priority, there are likely to be times when not every member is able to do so. It is generally better for the team to meet infrequently with every member, than to meet more frequently with a subset. Members may temporarily have limited participation due to extended medical leave, rotations or work assignments, preceded or followed by extensive contributions to the team. Each team needs to discuss how it will deal with the ebbs and flows of member participation. Your team may need to form clear guidelines, however, to determine if and when a team member should be dropped from a team, or how to determine if a team member's very limited participation should be noted in evaluations or determinations of potential credit for participation on a team.

- **Additional Resources**

Additional handouts and worksheets are provided in the appendices to help new teams as they form. These Appendices A. 1-4, are summarized below with (*) starred items prioritized for use during this part of the team's life cycle.

1. Request for Team*: Teams can be formed by either fellows or sponsors. Potential sponsors could post a request for a team to recruit fellows, or vice versa, by posting requests on the PMF webpage using this standard format.

2. Getting to Know You: This chart can be used to gather professional and personal information about each member and is ideally completed very early in the team's life cycle.

3. Individual Learning Goals: This worksheet has questions for members to ponder about their individual learning goals before the first team meeting and between subsequent meetings.

4. Personal Styles: The personal styles of individual members can have a tremendous impact on the team. Understanding the strengths, and weaknesses, of each style can help to appreciate each person's contribution to a team.

B. Norming and Ground Rules

Once the team has formed and comes together for the first time, it is critical that members get to know each other and start to work on some concrete goals together. This stage in a team's life cycle can be very frustrating to those who are more task oriented, but the details negotiated here can be critical to the teams success in later stages.

- **Additional Resources**

Additional handouts and worksheets are provided in the appendices to help teams during the norming stage. These Appendices B. 1-12, are summarized below with (*) starred items prioritized for use during this part of the team's life cycle.

1. First Meeting Agenda*: This suggested first meeting agenda is included to provide a starting point for new teams. Consider making the first meeting at least three hours with the entire team attending in person. Decisions will need to be made in advance about who will coordinate the meeting logistics, and serve as facilitator and coach during the first meeting.

2. Ground Rules*: Ideally, teams establish their ground rules for working with each other during their first or second meeting. Ground rules and action learning principles are the norms that groups develop together to describe *how* they want to work together. These

ground rules can lay the foundation for trust, camaraderie and cohesion within a team, and will help to ensure that the team is ultimately as effective as possible.

3. Team Coach*: Each team is required to select an coach for each meeting to serve as the keeper of action learning principles for the team. Coaches can also help teams anticipate and overcome moments of frustration or conflict, especially during the norming and storming phases in a group's life cycle.

4. Project Agreement*: It cannot be overemphasized how important it is to come to a clear understanding about each of the project agreement elements. Several meetings may be needed before the project agreement is completed, but this is the priority task of the new team.

5. Lessons Learned*: Each team is encouraged develop a strategy to compile its ongoing learning. Teams can share their lessons at the end of each meeting, and ask recorders to add them to a common list on an ongoing basis. This sample chart can help individuals and teams to capture their lessons throughout the life of their work.

6. Group Life Cycle: Each team generally follows a predictable life cycle from forming, norming and storming, through performing and transforming. It can be immensely helpful to predict these stages and take steps to prepare for each stage in advance.

7. Questioning: Questioning is useful throughout the problem solving process from the initial stages of framing the problem to the later stages of deciding how to implement a chosen action. But questioning is most critical in the early stages of the problem solving process. Getting the correct definition of the problem is crucial to all later stages of the problem solving effort.

8. Powerful Listening: Powerful listening is being able to understand fully what another person means when they speak and being aware of what possibilities their speaking offers to us. It involves the capacity to see the world as another sees it, and thus avail ourselves of their perspectives, experience, creativity, motivation and wisdom.

9. Dialogue: Dialogue is a tool for productive conversations. In an organizational context, a productive conversation is one where all views are sought out, the reasoning behind these views is made explicit so it can be examined, people truly listen to what others are saying and are open to considering points of view other than their own, and the group moves toward a conclusion which all can support.

10. Meeting Facilitation and Roles: Contains tips about how to structure meeting goals and agendas and the roles members can play to help meetings run more smoothly including the facilitator, coach and recorder. Members are encouraged to rotate through a variety of team roles for developmental growth.

11. Decision Making Models: Participatory decisions are better than those of the lone genius. When teams are involved in discussions and encouraged to disagree and critique, final decisions will be stronger and the team will be more likely support the final verdict.

12. Peer Feedback: Asking for peer feedback can be a powerful way to learn about your self. This kind of exercise -- done individually, in pairs, or in a larger group -- can be a transforming experience. The goal is to learn about your self in a supportive environment much like the Toastmaster's Clubs that give two positive and two negative pieces of feedback to each individual speaker.

C. Storming and Conflict Management

Many teams are fortunate to have relatively few conflicts, while others go through a predictable and sometimes difficult storming stage. Conflict is a healthy and normal part of any group and will not go away if ignored. Teams that are honest about the conflicts that emerge and take steps to deal with their conflicts constructively are those that will be most effective and most fun to work with.

Most conflicts can be resolved with the tools below and the help of the team's coach. But in the event that your team would like assistance with problems or conflicts, it can request the services of an external coach from those available through the PMF Program staff. Teams are also encouraged to contact the PMF Program staff to receive additional assistance as needed.

- **Additional Resources**

We encourage you to review the following tools to help you analyze your conflicts and take steps to resolve differences on your team. These Appendices C. 1-3, are summarized below with (*) starred items prioritized for use during this part of the team's life cycle.

1. Ladder of Inference*: This tool can help question the ground on which actions (or proposed actions) are based. Most people assume that they act based on data observed in the world and anchor all of their actions on hard, objective evidence. The Ladder of Inference is a reminder that, as human beings, our actions may be based on much more subjective grounds.

2. Conflict Management*: There are effective processes to analyze and manage conflict while negotiating win-win solutions. Diverse perspectives can bring about conflict in groups, but it will also lead us closer to the truth.

3. External Coach*: Teams are strongly encouraged to receive external coaching at least once, preferably early in their life cycle, to help create a balance between action and learning from the beginning. External coaches can provide fellows with an opportunity to learn more about group process and facilitation skills, better understand the action learning model, resolve difficult conflicts, and network with organizational development experts from across government.

D. Performing the Team's Work

Performing the team's work will involve the majority of the team's time. Guidance and direction for project deliverables will be driven by the team sponsor. Much of the technical information and support for teams will come from the sponsor and other stakeholders, as well as from members with specific expertise. If the team has incorporated the suggestions in the prior sections, this stage of the group's life cycle should go well.

- **Action Strategies**

Action by the team will move from challenging initial assumptions about the project goals, reframing and formulating the goal, developing and testing alternative solutions, and finally, taking action and reflecting on that action. Much of the team's time will be spent on the initial analysis, but this is critical to forging new and creative solutions to problems. Alternative solutions can be mapped along different axes – difficult verses easy, and frivolous versus critical, inexpensive or costly to solve. This type of analysis can help to prioritize problems that are critical or solutions that are inexpensive or easy to implement.

- **Project Stakeholders**

Early in the process the team might consider the various stakeholders that will be impacted by the project, as well as who this project will be handed off to when the team dissolves. These stakeholders might be invited to specific meetings or interviewed by members of the team to seek their input and collaboration.

- **Additional Resources**

Teams can review the following tools to help analyze project goals. These Appendices D. 1-5, are summarized below with (*) starred items prioritized for use during this part of the team's life cycle.

1. Systems Thinking*: Systems thinking is a way of understanding the forces and interrelationships that shape the behavior of systems. Once better understood, this discipline can also be used to change systems more effectively, and to act more in tune with environmental, political, cultural and economic realities.

2. Stakeholder Mapping*: This tool can help to identify groups and individuals inside and outside the organization that can affect the outcome of your efforts. It can also help teams to develop strategies to increase the chances of successfully implementing solutions.

3. Four Frames of Organizations*: The Four Frames tool is a way to look at organizations and proposed actions in organizations using four different lenses for seeing the world: structural, political, human resource and symbolic. If all you have is one way to see the world, then you will see and act as if that is the *only* way to see it and limit your understanding and your range of possible actions.

4. Force Field Analysis*: This method of analyzing a situation to determine how one might best bring about change. The force field analysis was developed in the 1940s by

sociologist Kurt Lewin, and can be used by an individual or a group seeking to bring about change.

5. High Performing Teams: High performing teams are no accident -- they are structured to provide optimum conditions for success. This document includes ways to identify such a team, and the emotional intelligence that often underlies its success.

E. Transforming the Future

Each of the following components, briefly outlined in the earlier *Process Map* section, will help each team to summarize its learning and come to completion on its mission and goals. These components will also help members to reflect upon their individual and team learning goals. Together, these lessons can help to transform each member of the team, and can also help to transform how we work together across the government and beyond.

- **Team submits the Project Deliverable to the Sponsor**

After all of their hard work, team members submit their project deliverable to the sponsor according to the terms of the project agreement. Congratulations are in order!

A team that is unable to successfully complete its deliverable or fall short of sponsor expectations for any reason must send its sponsor an analysis of its work together including attempts made to correct obstacles to success and lessons learned from the process. Even if a team is not able to complete its deliverables satisfactorily, it may have had a significant learning experience that can be invaluable. Determinations will be made by the PMF Program staff, in consultation with the team and its sponsor, when disputes arise about crediting member participation on teams that do not satisfactorily complete their deliverables. It should be reemphasized here that the primary goal of this component is to provide a development experience for fellows, and that if they can show significant achievement in their learning goals, the team may be considered a partial success.

- **Formal Evaluations from the Sponsor and the Team**

Team members and the sponsor are each required to submit formal evaluations to the PMF Program staff. The sponsor's evaluation form also indicates whether or not he or she has received the completed deliverable from the team, which team members were active at the completion of the deliverable, and whether or not the sponsor held a debrief with the team. The formal evaluations will also reflect how action learning principles were followed during the team's implementation. These evaluations will be used to capture lessons learned, best practices, and feedback for process improvements.

- **Team's Project Summary**

The team is also required to submit a project summary to the PMF Program staff and its sponsor. The project summary must describe the project, what the team did and what the team learned. Teams should collect lessons learned throughout its experience and take time to reflect on, compile and document them in this project summary. This activity will augment team and individual learning and will help team members to apply what they have learned in other contexts. If the team did not accomplish the goals set out in its project agreement, the project summary should include an analysis of the challenges it faced that prevented it from doing so. Team members are also encouraged to provide supporting documentation such as copies of reports, presentations or research to PMF Program staff.

- **Cost-Benefit Analysis**.

Teams are strongly encouraged to complete cost-benefit analyses as an exercise to help sponsors quantify resources that have been dedicated to the projects and to help members develop business acumen skills. This can also provide valuable information to agencies and PMF Program staff about the costs of action learning teams.

To determine the overall cost of a project, take into account not only direct expenditures, such as travel, and communication costs, but also productivity losses or gains to agencies as a function of the hours spent on the project and thus not spent on other agency-related activities. Teams can also determine specific costs to the sponsor and to individual team member agencies or divisions. An example can be found in this appendix.

Calculating the benefits of a team's work – in terms of project completion and leadership development – is much more difficult to quantify. However, for comparative purposes it can be said that hiring a team of external consultants to provide a similar deliverable is likely to exceed the estimated cost for your team. Alternatively, a two-week, full-time leadership training program, factoring in lost productivity, could reach upwards of $5,000 per fellow without the benefit of putting learning into practice.

- **Team and Sponsor Debrief**

Teams are strongly encouraged to participate in a debriefing process between the members and the sponsor in order to ensure a more comprehensive evaluation process. While ongoing reflection allows teams to learn in real-time, a more structured evaluation process at the end of a project is necessary for the team to step back and assess the team's experience as a whole. In this way the evaluation and completion of an action learning team will continue to balance the value of the task and process.

- **Recognition and Awards**

Some form of recognition is useful to encourage participation in action learning and add value to the completion of a project. Sponsors are encouraged to recognize the work of their teams in creative and meaningful ways. For example, a letter of recognition, ideally with reference to the attainment of specific leadership competencies, could be sent to each team members' supervisor. Team members may also wish to recognize the contributions of their sponsor. Possibilities include a luncheon with certificates, letters of appreciation or an annual report of completed action learning projects.

- **Program Evaluation**

The PMF Program staff will conduct analyses of the data collected from action learning teams based on qualitative data captured in the project summaries, as well as quantitative data from project agreements and formal evaluations. This data will provide a wealth of information for the Program staff to distill into best practices, revisions to the Guide, training programs and administrative processes. This information will also provide a rich pool of data for program evaluation that will help to determine if this action learning model is successful as a leadership development tool.

- **Additional Resources**

Additional handouts and worksheets are provided in the appendices to help new teams as they form. These Appendices E. 1-4, are summarized below with (*) starred items prioritized for use during this part of the team's life cycle.

1. Cost-Benefit Analysis: A team cost-benefit analysis is strongly encouraged to help sponsors quantify the resources they have dedicated to these projects, and help team members develop business acumen skills.

2. Team Debrief: It is highly recommended that a debriefing process take place between the team and the sponsor in order to ensure a more comprehensive evaluation process.

3. Member Evaluation: A sample member evaluation is included for your review, although the results are likely to be collected electronically by the PMF Program staff.

4. Sponsor Evaluation: A sample sponsor evaluation is included for your review, although the results are likely to be collected electronically by the PMF Program staff.

VI. Suggested Reading and Training Resources

A. Suggested Reading

There are a wide variety of books available on action learning and related subjects, as well as a wealth of information on the internet. Just a few of the many resources are listed below for your review. Those that are starred would be exceptionally useful for action learning teams.

- **Action Learning**

Marquardt, Michael J. *Action Learning in Action**. 1999.
Marquardt, Michael J. *Optimizing the Power of Action Learning**. 2004.
Rothwell, William J. *The Action Learning Guide*. 1999.
Peter M. Senge, Charlotte Roberts, Richard D. Ross, Bryan J. Smith, and Art Kleiner, *The Fifth Discipline Field Book: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization**, Doubleday, 1994.
Steiglitz and Wicks, http://patimes.aspanet.org/archives/2003/10/leadstory3.html

- **Diversity**

Thomas, R. Roosevelt Jr., *Beyond Race and Gender*.
Tjosveld, Dean, *The Conflict Positive Organization.*
Steele, Shelby, *The Content of Our Character*.

- **Communication**

Ailes, Roger. *You are the Message*.
Belcher, Curt and Weaver, Richard L., *Listen to Win*, Master Media, 1994.
Bohm, David, *On Dialogue*, Routledge Publishing, December 1996.
Decker, Bert. *You Got to be Believed to be Heard.*
Fisher, Roger and Ury, William. *Getting to Yes*, Penguin Books,1991.
Goldberg, Marilee, *The Art of the Question: A Guide to Short-Term Question-Centered Therapy*, John Wiley and Sons, 1997.
Goldberg, Marilee, *The Spirit and Discipline of Organizational Inquiry*, The Manchester Review, volume 3, number 3, 1998.
Isaacs, William, *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*, Doubleday, 1999.
Kegan and Lehey, *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work.*
Krisco, Kim H. *Leadership and the Art of Conversation*, Prima Press, 1997.
Sypher, Beverly Davenport; Bostrom, Robert; and Seibert, Joy H., *Listening, Communication Abilities, and Success at Work*, The Journal of Business Communication, 1989.
Tannen, Deborah. *You Just Don't Understand*.

- **Effective Meetings**

Bradford, Leland P. *Making Meetings Work*.
Doyle, Michael and Strauss, David, *How to Make Meetings Work*.
Kayser, Thomas A. *Mining Group Gold*.
Kinlaw, Dennis, *Team-Managed Facilitation.*
Glasser, William, *The Control Theory Manager*.
Rees, Fran, *How to Lead Work Teams*.

- **Teams**

Francis, Dave and Young, Don, *Improving Work Groups*.
Katzenbach, John and Smith, Douglas, *The Wisdom of Teams*.
Zenger, John, et. al. *Leading Teams*.

- **Consulting**

Block, Peter, *Flawless Consulting*.
Killman, Ralph, *Beyond the Quick Fix*.
Weisbord, Marvin, *Productive Workplaces*.
Schein, Edgar, *Process Consultation*.

- **Leadership**

Bolman, Lee and Deal, Terrence, *Reframing Organizations**. 2nd Edition, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.
Isaacs, William, *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together: A Pioneering Approach to Communicating in Business and in Life,* New York: Doubleday, 1999.
Scholtes, Peter R., *The Leader's Handbook -- A Guide to Inspiring Your People and Managing the Daily Workflow*, McGraw-Hill, 1998.
U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *Growing Leaders; The Presidential Management Intern Program.* (2001).

- **Websites**

Action Learning:
Systems thinking: www.pegasuscom.com

B. Training Resources

Each PMF stakeholder group will be required or encouraged to attend training on action learning through courses, web-based training, suggested reading or other options. Training for fellows will be incorporated into PMF orientation sessions to include the competencies necessary for successful action learning teams. Training is also available through other venues such as OPM's Management Development Centers and the Federal Executive Institute (http://www.leadership.opm.gov), or U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Graduate School (http://register.grad.usda.gov/Catalog), at the agency's discretion.

- **Fellows**: Fellows will receive training in action learning during their orientation sessions, and are encouraged to develop additional skills such as group dynamics, facilitation, communication, team building, project management, and conflict management.
- **External Coaches:** People selected to be external coaches will be experts in group dynamics and facilitation. Additional training will only be necessary if there are not enough external coaches familiar with the action learning model to meet team requests.
- **Agency coordinators and supervisors:** These two groups are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with the action learning model. They may be invited to attend action learning training courses offered to fellows and external coaches.

VII. Conclusion

Action learning can be an effective tool to support the PMF Program's goal of developing future leaders to meet the looming human capital needs projected for future senior managers in the Federal Government. Few other cost-comparable options can compete with action learning to solve current agency problems while simultaneously providing opportunities for practice-based leadership development in creativity, strategic thinking, team building, conflict management, oral and written communication, problem solving and financial management skills.

The PMF Program staff is indebted to the many individuals who gave their considerable talent and energy to bring this project to fruition. We would like to specifically acknowledge a few key individuals. The first Action Learning Team of PMFs created the framework for this Guide: Kye Briesath (OPM), Charles Conyers (OPM), Rozina Damanwala (OPM), Richard Davis (CDC), Barbara Goldberg (OPM), Jennie Mustafa-Julock (NIH), Alessandro Nardi (State), Bridget Purcell (OPM), Margaret Sharkey (Mint). Action learning experts Michael Marquardt (Georgetown University), Terry Newell (OPMs Federal Executive Institute), and Bob Kramer (American University) provided important insights for this Guide, as did OPM staff members Kim Bauhs, Mike Beckmann, David Glines and Sande Lehrer. Many others offered their feedback and support, and we are grateful to them all.

We hope that after reading this Guide, you will become excited about the potential of action learning for the PMF community of fellows and for your personal career growth. We encourage you to share your thoughts, concerns and suggestions about this action learning model with the PMF Program staff as we implement this fascinating model during the next few years. We look forward to continuing a dialogue about action learning, and are committed to helping it succeed as an exciting leadership development tool.

VIII. Appendices **(*Starred items are prioritized for use during a team's life cycle.)**

Each of the following appendices can be useful to your team, especially those that are starred for use during a specific stage of your team's life cycle. Teams are encouraged to divide the reading among the members, and report back to the larger group with recommendations for integrating these ideas into the life of the team.

A. Forming

1. Request for Team*

(1 of 1)

Please use the instructions provided in the PMF Action Learning Guide to complete your Request for team. Requests should include as much information about the topics below as is known at the time of the posting. Once you have completed this form, please email it to the PMF Program staff at PMF@opm.gov with request for team in the subject line. Staff members will review your request, and once approved, will post the Request on the PMF webpage for 30 days.

- **Project Title**: Teams need a unique, descriptive title (no more than 50 characters).
- **Request:** (check the appropriate response)
  __ Sponsor seeking members __Member(s) seeking sponsor __ Member seeking team
- **Brief Description**: What is the proposed project goal?
- **Deliverable**: What type of deliverable do you anticipate?
- **Timeline and Workload**: How long do you estimate the team will exist? How often will the team meet and for how long? How much estimated time will be required of team members each week or month? How often might the sponsor meet with the team?
- **Sponsor**: Name and title if known, or suggestions for the ideal sponsor.
- **Agency**: Host agency if known, or suggested agency(ies).
- **Location/ Communication:** Where will this team meet and with what frequency? What is the strategy for facilitating field or inter-agency participation? How will this team work virtually?
- **Learning**: What are the team's action learning goals? How will participation in this team help its members gain leadership competencies?
- **Team**: What knowledge and skills will be important on this team?
- **Point of Contact**: Contact email and phone for interested fellows and/or sponsors.
- **Application Procedures**: What information does the point of contact need from potential members or sponsors? Is there a deadline for applications?

2. Getting to Know You

Nickname, Full Name								
Work Phone								
Cell Phone								
Email Address								
Work Address								
Agency, Division and Title								
Graduate Degrees, School, Field of Study								
Undergrad Degrees, School, Field of Study								
Five Year Career Goals								
Desired Rotations								
Training interests and Goals								
Origin, race, family, life info you're willing to share								
Perceived Strengths								
Perceived Weaknesses								
Characteristics or facts that most often surprise people about you								
What others must understand to work effectively with you								
What personal style or animal are you? (see Appendix A 4)								
A time you failed and what you learned from it								
A time you showed courage								
Person, living or dead, you'd like to have dinner with and why								

3. Individual Learning Goals

(1 of 1)

It would be helpful for each team member to answer these questions before the first meeting to be clear about their individual learning goals. It would also be helpful to review these questions periodically to evaluate next steps and evaluate progress toward your goals.

What do I hope to learn by joining this team?

What leadership competencies do I want to strengthen during this program?

What actions will I commit to take between now and the next meeting?

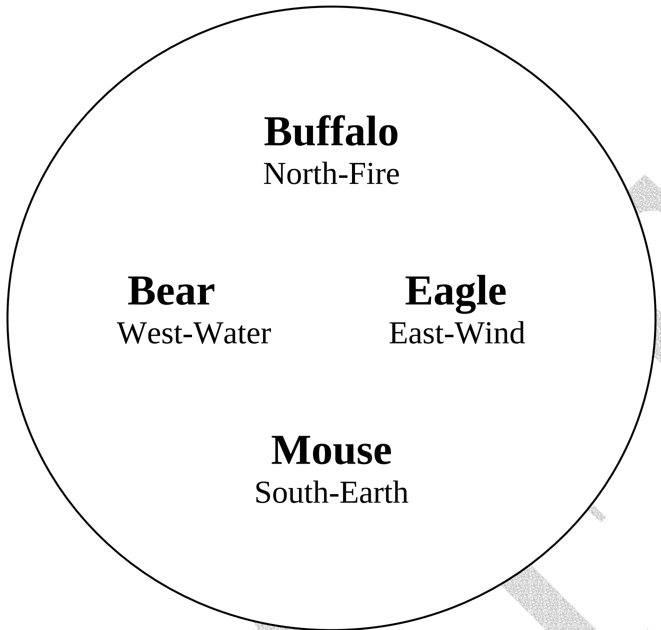
On the Project:

On what I want to learn:

Adapted from the Federal Executive Institute, U. S. Office of Personnel Management.

4. Personal Styles

Native American Medicine Wheel



There are many ways to describe the skills and talents each member brings to a group, and this Native American Medicine Wheel is just one of a multitude. Observations about one's self and others can help teams to better understand what each individual brings to the group, and the challenges and opportunities inherent in the mix of styles in a particular group. Try to have fun discussing your animal types, and how each animal's strengths and weaknesses can be important to appreciate as the group works together.

Which animal do you most resemble?

Buffalo: Courage. Endurance. Action. Political. Negotiator. Motivational. Aggressive.
Questions: What do we need to do it? When can we start?

Bear: Introspective. Evaluation. Critique. Rational. Structural. Analytic. Expert. Logical.
Questions: What might go wrong? What are the obstacles? Should we do it?

Eagle: Visionary. Innovative. Holistic. Creative. Symbolic. Inspiring. Charismatic.
Questions: What's the big picture? Why? What is the long view?

Mouse: Collaborator. Intuitive. Emotional. Caring. Humanitarian. Coach. Teacher.
Questions: Is it fair? How will it impact others? What do you think?

What are some of the strengths of each animal?
What might be the most frustrating aspects of each animal?
Why might groups need the characteristics of each animal?
Is there a preponderance of one type of animal on your team? How might this affect the group?
What do you think of the ideal to develop each animal within yourself as you mature?
What other personality style inventories might relate to an analysis of a group?

B. Norming

1. First Meeting Agenda*

(1 of 1)

One member of the team or the sponsor can take the lead to plan the first meeting, and must recruit a facilitator and a team coach for that meeting. Plan to schedule the first team meeting for three or more hours, and ideally to meet in person for the first time. The coach is responsible for outlining the action learning principles (see Appendix B. 2., *Ground Rules* and Appendix B. 3., *Team Coach*) and ensuring that members make statements only in response to questions. It can be helpful to plan the agenda around critical questions. It would also be helpful to put times on the agenda to clarify expectations about start and end times.

Welcome Remarks: Why are we here?

Introduction Go Around: Who is everyone here?
What is your name, agency and division role, and why are you interested in this issue?

Coach outlines action learning Principles
The coach outlines action learning principles and asks the team to support them.

What does this team need to know about the project?
What background information about the issue is important to understand?
Why is the issue important to the agency? What might happen if it is not addressed?
Who is, or should be involved in addressing the issue? Who is knowledgeable about it?
How has the issue been addressed so far and with what results?
What are the major obstacles or challenges to be overcome on this project?
What is your vision of the work of this team to resolve the issue?

What are the goals of this team?
What are the parameters of the project, the deliverable, and the timeline?
What are some assumptions and challenges to the project goals?
What are the next steps in negotiating a project agreement with the sponsor?

Team Discussion (to be continued in this or subsequent meetings)
What ground rules would this team like to adopt for its work together?
How will the coach, facilitator and recorder and other roles be assigned?
How will the team work with its sponsor? How often will they meet together?
What are the individual and team learning goals the team would like to adopt?
How closely does this team model the six ideal action learning components?
What process will be used for journaling individual and team reflections?
When, where, how and how often should this team meet? Next meeting?
What actions will be taken between now and the next meeting?

Coach Questions (at least 10 minutes before ending meeting)
The coach asks questions that help the team learn about their work together.
Adjourn

2. Ground Rules*

Ideally, teams establish their ground rules for working with each other during their first or second meeting. Ground rules are the norms that groups develop together to describe *how* they want to work together. These ground rules can lay the foundation for trust, camaraderie and cohesion within a team, and will help to ensure that the team is ultimately as effective as possible. The first ground rules are required action learning principles (see page 4, *Background in Action Learning*), while others are suggested:

Ground Rules: Members agree to abide by these action learning principles:

- Every member of the team is asked to **attend every meeting** possible and to make meetings a top priority.

- Team members **make statements only in response to questions**. This helps to reframe problems, challenge assumptions and share insights to promote a more innovative learning environment.

- **Teams agree to assign a coach for each meeting** -- an observer and questioner to help the group reflect upon its process and learning.

- **Coaches are empowered to intervene with a question at any time during a team's meeting if they see an opportunity for the group to learn.** The team must answer the coach's question before proceeding with the rest of their meeting. The coach generally asks questions twice during every meeting: once early in the meeting, and always at least ten minutes before the meeting ends. (See Appendix B. 3., *Team Coach,* and Appendix C. 3., *External Coach*.)

- Some **action must be taken** on the project for real energy, innovation and learning to occur. This gives members the opportunity to demonstrate accomplishments and promote practical learning.

- Everyone on the team **agrees to be a learner** in order to create equality, vulnerability and willingness to develop and grow as individuals and a group.

- **Confidentiality**: Strong teams require that discussions within the team be confidential to protect the sponsor's information about the project and the individual team members' personal information. The sponsor needs to know that what is shared about the organization and issue will be under her or his control. Confidentiality is essential if a team is to develop trust in one another.

Other suggested ground rules might include: (2 of 2)

- **Decision Making**: How will disagreements be handled within the team? How will decisions be made? There are many types of conflict management techniques and decision making formats, and it can be helpful to be clear about the process to use and quorum needed for important decisions. (See Appendix C. 2., *Decision Making*, and Appendix B. 11., *Conflict Management*.)

- **Respect and Support**: Ideally, team members agree to respect and support one another. They call upon each other to find the best in each other and find ways to offer encouragement and seek understanding.

- **Honesty**: The ideal team will encourage honesty between members, and seek out the truth in each other as they understand it. This encourages diversity of thought and opinion that can challenge assumptions and help teams come to new awareness and transformative learning.

- **Vulnerability**: Only if the above ground rules are in place can team members make themselves vulnerable to each other in a safe way. Vulnerability, 'comfortable not knowing in front of others,' also includes admitting mistakes and taking ownership for actions and learning.

- **Fun**: Ideal teams have fun together and place a high value on enjoying each other and their work together. Great teams make fun a priority and take time to play.

There are many more ground rules that can be generated, limited only by a team's imagination. Be creative!

3. Team Coach*

Coaches are expected to maintain the principles of action learning in the team that coincide with the action learning ground rules (as outlined in the beginning of this Guide under *Background in Action Learning* on page 4, and in Appendix B. 2., *Ground Rules*). Their role is to help teams to balance task and process, action and reflection, work and learning, results and people – but to do so by asking good questions.

To reiterate some of the basic concepts here: Teams agree to assign a coach for each meeting -- an observer and questioner to help reflect upon their group's process and learning. This person is usually a member of the team but alternatively an external expert to the group. Coaches ensure that team members make statements only in response to questions as an action learning principle.

Coaches are empowered to intervene with a question at any time during a team's meeting if they see an opportunity for the group to learn. The team must answer the coach's question before proceeding with the rest of their meeting. The coach generally asks questions twice during every meeting -- early in the meeting and always at least ten minutes before the meeting ends. The beginning of the meeting provides an opportunity to review events between meetings and set the tone for this meeting. The end provides an opportunity to reflect upon what has occurred during the meeting or what needs to happen before the next meeting.

The coach is the catalyst for action learning by asking open and supportive questions that focus on learning rather than problems, the present and future rather than the past. The coach might ask the questions to learn more about a dynamic in the meeting, a particular agenda item, or the group's progress toward its goal. Asking the right questions is a skill and an art form. An effective coach understands the right questions to ask and how to ask them in the group. Questions can help individuals and teams continuously learn, and can be very empowering (see Appendix B. 7., *Questioning*). Here are some sample questions:

Action Learning Principles

- How does everyone understand the principles of action learning?
- What is our team's balance between questions and statements?
- Could you turn that into a question?
- Is this the right question? What might be a better question?
- How closely does this team reflect the six ideal action learning components?

Reflection and Learning

- What have I learned about my self? About leadership? About organizations?
- How are we balancing task and process, action and reflection, work and learning?
- What do we want to keep doing? Do less of? Do more of?
- What are the most significant lessons you learned on this team so far?
- How are we sharing what we have learned in our work together? For future groups?
- How can members and the team improve?
- How can our learning be applied to ourselves and our organizations?

Reframing the Problem (2 of 2)

- Do we have clarity and agreement on the presenting problem?
- Is the deliverable doable within the time constraints of the agreement?
- How has the presenting problem been analyzed?
- Were the issue's underlying assumptions challenged?
- How is my mindset influencing the data that I see? Decisions I make? Results I achieve?
- How might I expand my vision of what I can see about myself, this problem, this team?
- How creative have we been? How could we be more creative? What is in our way?
- What is the quality of our questions? Our ideas? Our strategies?

Action and Decision Making

- What action will each member commit to take between now and the next meeting?
- How does the group handle conflicts? Who helps to resolve them, in what ways?
- Does the group use a clear decision process? Do some make decisions individually?
- Does the majority push issues over the minority? Attempts made toward consensus?
- How is the group progressing toward its goal? Is the group on track?
- Who makes suggestions to move the agenda forward? Who helps to summarize?
- Who asks for facts, ideas, opinions, feelings or alternatives? Who prompts focus?

Member Participation

- How well do members get their ideas across? How are new ideas received?
- Who encourages others' (virtual) participation? How do they, could they, do this?
- Who has participated most in this meeting? The least? Why?
- How are the silent people treated? How is their silence interpreted?
- Are there any subgroups forming? Those who consistently agree or disagree?
- What do you see, hear, and feel about the group and its individual members?
- Who exerts strong leadership in the group? How? How do others respond?
- Who moves ideas forward? Who is a peacemaker? What other roles do people take?

Group Dynamics

- What did we do well? What could we have done better?
- What stage of the life cycle is the group in? How is that impacting this group?
- Are we having fun yet? What would make the meeting to be more fun?
- What does the body language of the group say? What feelings are predominant?
- What are the norms, patterns and culture of the group? Do people trust each other?
- What are our ground rules? Are they followed? How are expectations shared?
- Are members respected? Supported? Valued? How is that conveyed?
- Did the group consider or encourage divergent points of view?
- What animal styles are present and how does that impact the group?
- What have we learned about teams?

4. Project Agreement*

Please use the instructions provided in the PMF Action Learning Guide to complete your project agreement between the members and the sponsor. Once you have completed this form, please email it to the PMF Program staff at PMF@opm.gov with project agreement in the subject line. Teams are required to submit an electronic copy and a signed faxed copy of their project agreement to the PMF Program Office for review. The faxed project agreement should be signed and dated by the sponsor and all team members. When the project agreement is approved by the PMF Program Office, the team point of contact and the sponsor will receive notification by email. **The team is not officially approved until the Program Office emails confirmation of the team's formation.**

- **Project Title**: The team's unique, descriptive title (no more than 50 characters).
- **Project Abstract**: Briefly describe the project in more detail, and whether or not the subject matter sensitive or confidential.
- **Deliverable**: What is the team's anticipated project deliverable to the sponsor? Is this deliverable clear and realistic within the anticipated timeframe?
- **Timeline and Workload**: How long do you estimate the team will exist? How often will the team meet and for how long? How much estimated time will be required of team members each week or month? How often will the sponsor meet with the team?
- **Sponsor and Agency**: Name, title, agency, and contact information for the sponsor.
- **Location/Communication**: When and where will this team meet and with what frequency? What is the team's communication plan, and how will this team work virtually?
- **Learning**: What are the team's action learning goals? How will participation on this team help its members gain leadership competencies? How will the team capture lessons learned throughout the experience?
- **Resources**: What resources will the team need to accomplish their goals? What resources is the sponsor able to provide to the team?
- **Point of Contact**: Who is the contact person for information about this team?
- **Team Members**: Who are the members of the team and what is their contact information?

5. Reflection*

What did you learn?

(1 of 2)

Individual members are urged to reflect upon, and then journal or document, what they have learned while participating on the action learning team. It is very helpful to focus on reflections on a regular basis – every week or month for example. This type of reflection is a critical component of action learning, and one that is too often underused or overlooked.

Teams may want to compile individual reflections into a common document to share among the members. This information will be invaluable to include in the team's project summary and evaluations, is an important knowledge management tool that will help the PMF Program staff to assist future teams. The following chart is only one example of the categories teams might use to collect individual and team learning, but teams are encouraged to design their own methods. Answering at least the following three questions on a regular basis will be useful:

What have I learned about my self?
What have I learned about leadership?
What have I learned about organizations?

Topic, Background, Discussion, Source (optional)
SELF REFLECTION
Learning about Myself:
My Role in the Group:
TEAM STRUCTURE
Membership:
Project Agreement:
Roles on the Team:
Ground Rules:
LEARNING GOALS
My Individual Learning Goals:
Team Learning Goals:
PROJECT
Project Management:
Project Progress:

Topic, Background, Discussion, Source (optional)
TEAM'S LIFE CYCLE
Forming:
Norming:
Storming:
Performing:
Transforming:
SPONSOR
Relationship with Sponsor:
COMMUNICATION
Email or Website:
Teleconferencing:
Meetings:
PROCESS
Question and Reflection:
Team Coach:
Evaluation and Debrief:
DELIVERABLE
Project Goal:
Project Deliverable:
GUIDANCE
Action Learning Guide, Training, Webpage:
OTHER

6. Group Life Cycle

A group will typically develop in predictable stages. It goes through a life cycle as it first forms, storms as it struggles with itself, then clarifies its purpose and roles, establishes its norms, begins to perform its function, and then transforms either by disbanding or recreating into new groups. Each time new members enter an existing team, or some existing members leave, the process starts all over again. This cycle often repeats itself, not necessarily in this same order, throughout a team's existence.

- **Forming**

In the forming stage, team members are chosen. Decisions are shared about why they volunteered or were selected. They discuss what they hope to accomplish. They begin to explore the other members and boundaries of acceptable behavior in the group. Individuals transition to members. The group begins to test the leader's guidance, formally and informally. There is much optimism and anticipation. Defining the group's task and structure begins. Some impatience starts as clarification drags on before work can begin.

- **Norming**

The team finally begins to reach consensus about its mission and process. There is new enthusiasm on its focus. The team is tempted to go beyond the original scope of its work. Members reconcile competing loyalties and accept the team, ground rules and roles. Emotional conflict is reduced and relationships become more cooperative. They begin to express criticism constructively. There is more friendliness and caring. Members develop clarity about their work and why it is important, as well as the values that will guide them. A sense of cohesion allows them to begin to move toward the task.

Groups form for a common purpose. People will not attend a group meeting unless it is in their best interest to do so, be it for money, fun, or altruism. A group will quickly dissolve if its purpose is not clear. Once its vision is clear, the group next needs to clarify its roles, procedures and relationships to function effectively. It is helpful to revisit each of these categories periodically to make sure original decisions are still valid, or need readjusting to meet current needs.

- ❖ **Vision, Mission and Goals**: It is imperative to make sure that the underlying vision, mission and goals are clear before the group can begin to function. Why are we here? What is our vision? What is our mission? What are our goals?
- ❖ **Roles**: Next, the roles of the members need to be clarified. Who are our members? Who is our leader? How should they be chosen? What responsibilities are assigned to each?
- ❖ **Procedures**: Long-standing groups can get into ruts, so consider questioning procedures on a regular basis. How often should we meet? When and where? How many constitute a quorum for decisions? What is our strategy and timeline to reach our goals?
- ❖ **Relationships**: What are our ground rules? How do we want to relate to each other? How do we offer each other support? How do we challenge each other to grow and change? What style or gift does each member bring to this group?

Ground Rules (2 of 2)
Teams should start their work together by creating ground rules. Ground rules are a 'code of conduct' or agreements teams establish together about how they will work together. Common ground rules include respect each another, come on time, be honest, speak from your heart, maintain confidentiality, and have fun while working together. They set the stage for continued work and give teams a starting place to manage conflict when it occurs.

- **Storming**

Storming may occur before or after norming or performing, or may never occur at all. But if and when it does, storming is the most difficult stage for teams. Members have their own ideas about how to proceed, and personal agendas are rampant. They begin to realize that the tasks ahead are different and more difficult than they imagined. Impatient about the lack of progress, members argue about direction and action. They resist the task and the leaders, argue frequently, and are alternately defensive and competitive. Members take sides or leave the group. They question the wisdom of the task and leadership. There is tension, disunity and jealousy. Members are beginning to understand each other, but no real work is accomplished during these several meetings.

- **Performing**

The team understands its relationships and expectations. It can diagnose and solve problems, and choose and implement changes. Members discover and accept each other's strengths and weaknesses and learn what their roles are. Members share insights into personal and group processes. They are self-aware and constructively change as needed. Differences of opinion are valued and methods of preventing and managing conflict are understood. They practice a balance of task and process.

The team develops an espirit de corps – a spirit, soul and state of mind -- that shows a sense of bonding and camaraderie. They use 'we' instead of 'me.' Members are able to be honest and caring. There is a sense of trust, acceptance and community. Responsibility for leadership and tasks are shared. They are now an effective, cohesive unit that is getting a tremendous amount of quality work done and enjoying each other in the process. The team is producing significant results and having fun with each other.

- **Transforming**

The team's work is over. They reflect on what they have learned individually and as a group. They celebrate and take pride in their accomplishments. There is a bittersweet sense of accomplishment coupled with a reluctance to say good-bye. They mourn the group's death, although some relationships will continue. They move on to use what they have learned with existing teams, in new organizations and in future careers.

7. Questioning

What is It?

Questioning is a process used to uncover new information and insights about a significant issue, problem, or opportunity. We have all asked questions since we first demanded to know "why?" as children, but developing the ability to question effectively in an organizational and/or leadership setting requires a higher level of skill.

Why is It Important?

The more we understand a situation, the more choices we have before we act. The more choices we have, the more freedom of action we have as leaders. Questioning thus expands our choices and freedom of action. As Emile Chartier, a French philosopher once said, "No one is free to implement an idea he has not thought of."

When Do We Use Questioning?

Questioning is used throughout the action learning or problem solving process, from the initial stages of framing the problem itself to the later stages of deciding how to implement a chosen action. Questioning is most powerful in the early stages of the problem solving process, however. It is in these early stages that questions will direct the gathering of data and the redefinition of the problem. Getting the correct definition of the problem is crucial to all later stages of the problem solving effort. If you define the problem wrongly, it doesn't matter how well you implement the solution!

How Do I Use Questioning?

Using questioning effectively requires both a questioning *mindset* and questioning *skills*. The questioning mindset, aptly described in the table below by Marilee Goldberg, is one of approaching an issue as a learner not a judger. As a learner, one seeks to open possibilities and approach the issue without preconceived judgments.

Judger	**Learner**
Automatic	Thoughtful
Knows it already	Beginner's mindset
Judgmental evaluator	Unbiased observer
Thinks "either-or", "right-wrong"	Thinks "both-and"
Oriented towards rejection, defense, attack	Oriented towards acceptance, recognition
Assumes possibilities limited	Assumes possibilities unlimited
Win-lose	Win-win

As a skill, one's questioning ability grows the more one can differentiate among and learn when best to use open-ended (learner mindest) as opposed to closed-ended (judger mindset) questions.

The following table presents several types of open-ended questions and an example of each:

Type of Question	Example
Reflective	"You said …. What leads you to think that?
Probing	"Where do you think the bottleneck is occurring?"
Clarifying	"Could you explain a bit more?"
Feeling	"How do you feel about that?"
Analytical	"Who else could help with this?"
Consequences	"What are the consequences of doing that?"
Assumption Surfacing	"What assumptions are governing how you look at this?

"If I were informed that the world was in danger of coming to an end in 60 seconds, I would spend the first 59 seconds formulating a question and the 60th second answering it."

Albert Einstein

Adapted from the Federal Executive Institute, U. S. Office of Personnel Management.

8. Powerful Listening

Listening is the beginning of all knowledge.
Plato

What is It?

Powerful listening is being able to understand fully what another person means and being aware of what possibilities his or her speaking offers to us. It involves the capacity to see the world as another sees it, and thus avail ourselves of another's perspectives, experience, creativity, motivation, and wisdom.

Why Use It?

A 1989 landmark study entitled "Listening, Communication Abilities, and Success at Work" in The Journal of Business Communication ends with this statement:

> "What we can conclude from this study is that listening is related to success at work. Better listeners held higher-level positions and were promoted more often than those with less developed listening abilities."

Further, in today's world of rapid and discontinuous change, it is the leader who can extract value and possibilities out of every conversation who will have more options for addressing the increasingly complex challenges we face in our organizations and in society as a whole. Albert Einstein put it well when he observed: "The current problems we face cannot be solved with the same level of thinking which created them."

Einstein's point calls upon us to engage the very best that everyone in our organization has to offer. Powerful listening is a prime tool for doing that.

When Do I Use It?

- Powerful listening is the way to listen when our intention is to "Seek first to understand, then to be understood."
- Powerful listening is the way to listen when we want to build a culture of respect, empowerment, and continuous learning.
- It is the way to listen when we want to capitalize on all the perspectives, experience, creativity, motivation, and wisdom resident in our workforce.

How Do I Use Powerful Listening?

In his book, *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*, author William Isaacs recalls a manager saying to him, "You know, I have always prepared myself to speak. But I have never prepared myself to listen."

This observation contains the first challenge many of us face in becoming better listeners -- being aware of how we're listening now.

The Indian poet, Krishnamurti, put the challenge this way:

> "I do not know if you have ever examined how you listen, it doesn't matter to what, whether to a bird, to the wind in the leaves, to the rushing waters, or how you listen in a dialogue with yourself, to your conversation in various relationships with your intimate friends, your wife or husband.
>
> If we try to listen we find it extraordinarily difficult, because we are always projecting our opinions and ideas, our prejudices, our background, our inclinations, our impulses. When they dominate, we hardly listen at all to what is being said. In that state there is no value.
>
> One listens, and therefore learns, only in a state of attention, a state of silence, in which the whole background is in abeyance, is quiet. Then, it seems to me, it is possible to truly communicate."

Krishnamurti offers us a picture of the state for powerful listening -- one of attention, inner silence, "in which the whole background is in abeyance...."

Isaacs adds the importance of listening without resistance, or more precisely, "listening *while noticing* our resistance." The challenge here is to become conscious of the ways in which we push back on what we are hearing when it is not agreeable to us or does not conform to how we see things. We do that by judging what we're hearing, distorting what is being said without even realizing it, discounting it outright, or by projecting our opinions of the speaker onto them.

The authors of *Listen to Win -- A Guide to Effective Listening*, Curt Bechler and Richard Weaver, offer these questions for us to assess how we listen now:

- Do I choke off an employee's conversation to ask questions?
- To correct what he or she says? To tell him or her my views?
- Do I brush aside another's arguments because I know I'm right?
- Do I frequently have to backtrack because I've misunderstood information or instructions another person has told me?
- Am I quick to label a conversation or speaker as dull or boring?
- Do I tend to squirm or fidget while others are speaking?
- Do I know what other people are going to say before they say it?
- Do I listen for the other person's feelings as well as the content of their message?
- Do I 'multi-task' (e.g., respond to e-mails) while listening?
- Do I prefer talking to listening?

To change our habits, two things are necessary: a picture of the ideal we are striving for and some practical first steps for getting there. Isaacs and Krishnamurti have offered us the picture. Practical first steps come from the work of Peter Senge and his co-authors of the *Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*.

How to Listen Powerfully:

1. Stop talking. To others and to yourself. Learn to still the voice within. You can't listen if you are talking.

2. Imagine the other person's point of view. Picture yourself in her position, doing her work, facing her problems, using her language, and having her values. If the other person is younger or more junior, remember your own early years.

3. Look, act, and be interested. Don't read your mail, doodle, shuffle, or tap papers while others are talking.

4. Observe nonverbal behavior, like body language, to glean meanings beyond what is said to you.

5. Don't interrupt. Sit still past your tolerance level, the point when you would normally speak.

6. Listen between the lines for implicit meanings as well as the explicit ones. Consider connotations as well as denotations. Note figures of speech. Instead of accepting a person's remarks as the whole story, look for omissions -- things left unsaid or unexplained, which should logically be present. Ask about these.

7. Speak only affirmatively while listening. Resist the temptation to jump in with an evaluative, critical, or disparaging comment at the moment a remark is uttered. Confine yourself to constructive replies until criticism can be offered without blame.

8. To ensure understanding, rephrase what the other person has just told you at key points in the conversation. Yes, I know this is the old 'active listening' technique, but it works.

9. Stop talking. This is first and last, because all other techniques of listening depend on it. Take a vow of silence once in a while.

Listening is the most underdeveloped leadership skill.
Peter Drucker

Adapted from the Federal Executive Institute, U. S. Office of Personnel Management.

9. Dialogue

What is It?

Dialogue is a tool for having a productive conversation. In an organizational context, a productive conversation is one where all views are sought out, the reasoning behind these views is made explicit so it can be examined, people truly listen to what others are saying and are open to considering points of view other than their own, and the group moves toward a conclusion which all can support.

Dialogue means "looking into what you do not yet know, what you do not yet understand, or seeking to discover what others see and understand that may differ from your point of view." (from *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together* by William Isaacs). It is the art of asking genuine questions, ones that seek to understand the facts, beliefs, and assumptions behind what people say and do. The key word here is 'genuine' -- that is, from a stance of honest curiosity.

Dialogue can also be understood by looking at how it differs from another kind of conversation which is often present in organizations: debate. When people engage in debate, they rarely develop their own or the group's thinking and find it very hard to reach a conclusion they can all support. The following table points out some key distinctions between dialogue and debate:

DEBATE	DIALOGUE
Assumes that there is one answer and that you have it	Assumes many people have parts of the answer
Tries to prove others wrong	Tries to work with others to find common understanding
Listens to find flaws and make counter-arguments	Listens to understand and find areas of agreement
Defends assumptions as truth	Reveals assumptions for examination
Seeks closure around own view	Seeks to discover options

Why Use It?

Dialogue is very helpful in allowing one to fully understand an issue or proposed course of action and in building the commitment of others to what is decided. People who have been involved in a dialogue feel that they have been heard and valued. They have had a chance to lay their agenda on the table. Just as importantly, they have had a chance to think deeply about the issue, uncovering their underlying assumptions, beliefs, and values and testing to see what data their thinking rests upon. They have had a chance to advocate for a point of view and lay that point of view open to the thoughtful yet supportive scrutiny of others. They have the comfort of knowing that their thinking about an important topic has been done as carefully as possible.

When Do I Use It? (2 of 3)

Use dialogue for the reasons suggested above: to (1) explore an issue or proposed course of action; (2) test your thinking; (3) understand the thinking of others, especially others whose ideas and support you need; and (4) build common understanding of an issue with a group to increase the chances that the group can work collaboratively to address it.

Dialogue is an excellent tool to move up and down the Ladder of Inference. It is also an excellent way to increase the extent of your self-disclosure and openness to feedback – that is, to increase the size of your "open" window in the Johari Window.

How Do I Use It?

The following guidelines are important to promote an effective dialogue. They do not have to be followed in any particular order, but a dialogue that does not include all of them will be less useful. When many of them are missing, you are more likely to be engaged in a debate.

- **Connecting Precedes Content**

Dialogue requires a relationship of trust. Trust comes when people sense they are cared about and their needs cared for. Spend some time before launching into the issue making sure there is a personal connection between participants. Surface any personal needs participants wish to share (that block their attention to the issue) and help address them if you can.

- **Listen**

Attend fully to what others are saying and demonstrate this by your physical presence (e.g. looking at them, leaning forward) and your ability to recall and paraphrase what they have said. You know your are listening if you are NOT formulating what you will say next while they are still talking (because it is impossible to listen and think at the same time).

- **Suspend Judgment**

Keep an open mind about everything that is being said until you and the group have had a chance to fully explore it. Judging closes off thinking. It comes to a conclusion, which you should not do until all points of view have been put on the table and examined.

- **Ask Good Questions**

Good questions both clarify thinking and spark new thoughts. They are open-ended (what if …? have you thought about …?) rather than being leading questions – statements disguised as questions (don't you think you should do X?). They have no simple answer and often require us to collect more information in an effort to answer them.

Inquiry requires that we enter a conversation in a state of genuine curiosity with the intent to discover and learn, where we openly share our views and ask about the views and thinking of others. To become more effective at dialogue, we need to:

(1) become as comfortable listening as we are talking,
(2) ask questions which invite others to make their thinking process visible, and
(3) suspend our beliefs and judgment so we can understand another's point of view.

Examples of questions of inquiry, asked with genuine inquisitiveness, are: (3 of 3)

"Can you help me understand your thinking here?"
"What leads you to conclude that?"
"What data do you have for that?"
"What do you assume is true in this?"
"Where does your reasoning go next?"

A question not asked is a door not opened.

Marilee Goldbet

- **Identify Underlying Assumptions**

We assume our actions are always based on hard data. In most cases, however, we base our actions equally on our values, beliefs, and assumptions about people and the how the world works. If we are listening, have suspended judgment, and ask good questions, we can uncover the true basis for our views about an issue or proposed course of action. We can uncover how much we propose to act based on beliefs, values, and assumptions as opposed to objective data – and what those beliefs, values and assumptions are. When we can do that, we can expose those beliefs, values, and assumptions to the scrutiny of others – who may see "reality" very differently. This may be a valuable step in defining the real issue we face and uncovering the course of action most likely to address it.

- **Support Silence**

Periods of silence for the individual as well as the group are implied in many of the previous guidelines for a good dialogue. We highlight it here as a separate point to emphasize that it is important. Organizations often abhor silence. We usually reward people for being quick on the uptake, being decisive, jumping into the conversation, taking the lead, being verbally facile, being persuasive. We usually wonder about people who say little, seem to take a long time before responding (as in: "doesn't he *get* it?") or are quiet in meetings. Yet carefully reflecting on a dialogue through being silent and supporting others in being silent is essential if we are truly to be able to listen, suspend judgment, formulate good questions, and uncover assumptions.

- **Advocate**

It is important to acknowledge the balance between inquiry and advocacy. On the surface, this seems inconsistent with dialogue. But advocating a point of view is not the same thing as debating. In debate, we are closed to other views and just try to force our own. We are not interested in our position being explored or questioned. In advocacy, on the other hand, we are putting a point of view forward and explaining the data, beliefs, values, and assumptions on which it is based. We are inviting questions and are open to our thinking being challenged. It is impossible to have a good dialogue without some advocacy. How can an individual or group ever decide on a course of action if no one ever says: here is what I believe and propose to do. A good dialogue has an effective mix of questioning (often called inquiry) and advocacy.

Adapted from the Federal Executive Institute, U. S. Office of Personnel Management.

10. Meeting Facilitation and Roles

Agenda Planning

Meetings are generally occasions when people gather to make decisions and take action to accomplish specific goals. Good meeting ingredients include well understood goals, a clear process for reaching those goals, sensitivity to people's feelings, and empowerment of the people in the meeting. All of these are important to develop an effective meeting agenda, and ideally, agendas are created with as much input from group members as possible.

Sample Agenda

Gathering Time

Members socialize, check-in with each other.

Welcome and Introductions

Start on time!
Pay attention to new people, assign 'buddies,' use nametags, do introductions.
Build community by getting to know each other.
Assign roles as leader, facilitator, timekeeper, recorder.

Agenda Review

Pass out written agenda or post on flipchart.
Give each item a time and/or amount of time.
Negotiate changes or additions to the agenda, and adjust times accordingly.

Reports

Start with a review and approval of last meeting's minutes.
Keep reports very short, or distribute written reports.

Main Items

Clarify agenda items that need decisions today, or just discussions.
Don't try to do too much -- this is a constant struggle!
Discuss most important items first, set priorities.
Keep focus on the agenda and encourage participation by all.
Before time is up, close discussion and start decision making.
Review decisions made and action steps needed: who will do what, by when.

Break In long meetings take time to stretch, rest, and move around.

Next Steps

Choose next meeting date, time and place, and assign next meeting's roles.

Announcements

Try to distribute in writing instead.

Evaluation and Coach Questions

Question what went well and suggestions for improvement at next meetings.
Share what we learned about our selves, about leadership, about organizations.

Closing

Affirm everyone's good work and always end on time!

Adjourn

Meeting Evaluations (2 of 3)

Continually monitor progress, make ongoing improvements and re-evaluate. Learn from your mistakes and your successes! Use these tools to help you evaluate:
Start-Stop-Keep: What you want for future meetings: keep as is, more of or start, less of or stop.
Content and Process: Use a scale of 1-10 to rate the content and process of the meeting.
T-Bar: What went well (+) this meeting, suggestions for improvement (->) for future meetings.

Before the Meeting

Always plan the agenda before the meeting with input from others on the team.
Estimate the time needed for each item and weigh its importance.
Plan who to invite. Remind people about the meeting, time and place.
Arrange to have different people present each item on the agenda.
Prepare agenda, minutes, reports, flipcharts and markers, other materials needed.
Have proposals for decisions written or thought through in advance.
Set up the seating arrangements. Arrange refreshments for long meetings.
Prepare the meeting space and place – set the stage for positive group dynamics.

During the Meeting

Start on time!
Keep the discussions relevant to the agenda items.
Urge people to be brief and specific, but hear everyone out.
Draw out those quiet folks.
Record who will do each task and when it will be done.
Pay attention to the emotional tone of the meeting.
Learn to have better meeting through evaluation and feedback.

After the Meeting

Wind down, socialize and enjoy each other.
Check in with people to find out how they're doing.

Planning Prevention

Planning prevents the following: reviewing information that could better be covered in a memo; rehashing old problems and opening 'gripe' sessions; addressing a subject of concern to a very few of the people present; allowing a few people to monopolize the meeting; failing to work from a written agenda; frustration of not meeting your goals; and unnecessary meetings. A meeting is no substitute for progress.

Meeting Roles

Teams need a delicate balance between task and process. Task roles include getting the job done, sticking to an agenda, keeping time during the meeting, and getting the minutes out. These are important but the team glue is in the process roles: seeing that everyone participates, supporting members, and looking for common perspectives. This takes a high degree of emotional intelligence as well as skill and experience on the part of all team members. These roles may be formally defined or unspoken, consistent or fluctuating, or some combination depending on the group. Typical roles on an action learning team include:

- **Facilitator** (Task and Process)

Facilitators or chairs accept a special responsibility (although all members share it) to help the group accomplish common tasks – but to do so using a participatory and respectful process. They help the group move through the agenda in the time available, make the necessary decisions, and plan action on those decisions. This is a powerful role in any group – the leader's choice of words, use of body language, and other presentation techniques have a dramatic impact. An effective leader uses many techniques to help the group work effectively. The more people within a group that develop facilitation skills the more effective the group will become. Intentionally learn, teach and practice leadership skills with as many members of your group as possible. Consider rotating the facilitator role.

- **Coach** (Process)

Action learning teams agree to have a coach assigned at every meeting to focus on process issues and to help the group reflect upon how they work together. This person is empowered to ask questions during the meeting to focus on the group process and help the group reflect on its learning, feelings, and people. The coach role is ideally one that every member of a group learns during meetings. (See Appendix B. 3., *Team Coach* and Appendix C. 3., *External Coach*.)

- **Recorder** (Task)

The recorder is responsible for recording the date, time, attendees, and decisions make at the meeting. They record the assignments, deadlines and other details of each decision, as well as the next meeting time and place, who is serving in the next meeting's roles, and capturing lessons learned. They distribute the minutes and notice for the next meeting.

- **Timekeeper** (Task and Process)

The timekeeper calls when time has expired and suggests that the discussion stop so that a decision can be reached. The timekeeper keeps things on schedule, or makes sure the group contracts for time changes on the agenda before going further.

11. Decision Making

Decision Making or Problem Solving Model

- **Define the Problem**: Note goals, challenges, and prior attempts to solve problem.
- **Reframe the problem**: Challenge assumptions to clarify why it is important and to whom, who else is impacted and how, and reexamine the scope of the problem. (See Appendix D. 3., *Four Frames of Analysis*; Appendix B. 7., *Questioning*; and Appendix C. 1., *Ladder of Inference*).
- **Gather Information**: Explore key stakeholders, data, assumptions and values (see Appendix D. 2., *Stakeholder Mapping*).
- **Identify Important Criteria**: Criteria you might use to evaluate and prioritize alternatives including cost, feasibility, importance, time constraints, suitability, flexibility, impact, ethics, organizational culture or other factors.
- **Develop Alternatives**: Brainstorm a variety of alternative solutions (see Appendix C. 2., *Conflict Management*).
- **Select Best Alternative**: Weigh advantages and disadvantages of alternatives based on above criteria in cooperation with stakeholders as appropriate and try to predict unintended consequences (see Appendix D. 1., Systems Thinking).
- **Clarify the Solution**: Develop specific plan and timeline with measurable outcomes, inform stakeholders, and compromise as needed.
- **Implement the Solution**: Implement the plan as effectively as possible.
- **Monitor Progress**: Establish process and procedures to evaluate specific and measurable outcomes during preplanned timeframes.
- **Review and Learn**: Evaluate results based on experience thus far, reconsider alternatives as needed.

Participatory Decision Making

Participatory decisions are always better than those of the lone genius. Decisions usually start with a divergence of opinions, and ideally end with a convergence of thought. The middle point, known as the groan zone, is often frustrating. Negotiation is an art form that is underappreciated. Involve the team and stakeholders in discussions. Encourage dissent and critique. Your final decisions will be stronger, and your team will be much more likely to own and support your final verdict. (See Appendix C. 2., *Conflict Management*, for more ideas).

Polling: Straw poll, often used to drop bottom vote getters after each round of voting.
Weighted Primary: Cost-benefit analysis of the best options.
Autocratic: Leader makes the decision.
Consultative: Leader decides after seeking input.
Consensus: All agree to go along, can 'live with it,' given the alternatives.
Unanimous: Members are in absolute agreement.
Majority Vote: Majority wins, but clarify the quorum needed for decisions.

Participation can be increased to overcome a group's natural tendency to defer to the person in charge.

- Write individual notes first, then share aloud in the group.
- Break into small groups for part of the discussion.
- Set aside specific time to challenge the ideas of the leader.
- Have the leader speak first or last, before or after hearing other's perspectives.
- Ask the leader to leave the room or not attend a specific meeting.
- Submit comments anonymously, possibly from a wide variety of stakeholders.
- Go around the room asking each person to speak to the issue.

Decision Questions

Decisions are not clarified the following questions have been answered:

- **How** do we make decisions? Who decides? What is a quorum?
- **What** (exactly) did we decide to do? (be specific)
- **Why** are we doing this? (relates to your mission and goals)
- **How much** will it cost? (time, money energy)
- **Who's responsible** for doing it? Who will do which parts of the task?
- **When** will it be started, completed? (times and dates)
- How will we **evaluate** it to determine if we were successful?

Decision Making Styles

People and groups fall into a range of decision making styles, some more or less appropriate depending on the circumstances. The most appropriate style depends on the readiness level of the group involved, and the ideal is to match styles between the leader and group. Mismatches can result in the negative labels (noted in parenthesis) in the following chart. Urgent crises are often resolved using the most authoritative style.

	^	Participating	Selling
	|	Facilitative	Consultative
	|	(Patronizing)	(Manipulating)
	|	(Condescending)	(Rationalizing)
	|		
Supportive	|	Delegating	Telling
Behavior	|	Delegative	Authoritative
	|	(Abandoning)	(Controlling)
	|	(Avoiding)	(Coercing)
	|		

-------------------------**Directive Behavior** -------------→

12. Peer Feedback

(1 of 1)

Asking for feedback can be a powerful way to learn about your self. This peer feedback exercise -- done individually, in pairs, or in a larger group -- can be a transforming experience. It uses the Johari Window concept to encourage people to seek information about themselves from others to reduce their blind spots. It is important both to learn to give honest feedback gently and receive it graciously (see Appendix C. 2., *Conflict Management* for more suggestions about giving feedback). The goal is to learn about your self in a supportive environment much like the Toastmaster's Clubs that give two positive and two negative pieces of feedback to each individual speaker. Honest feedback is a real gift, and should be sought after and appreciated.

Arena Known to self and others.	**Blind Spot** Unknown to self, but known by others.
Façade Known to self, unknown to others.	**Unknown** Unknown to self and others.

Similarly, members are encouraged to seek consultation from each other about how to handle difficulties or conflicts within the team. Care should be taken, however, not to 'triangulate' by talking about a third person in the team without an agreement ahead of time to take specific action to resolve the issue with the person(s) involved by an established deadline. If the member of the team who is asked to give feedback or advice feels the need for outside assistance, they can suggest that the first member seek the services of a skilled facilitator who has agreed to serve as the team's external coach (see Appendix C. 3., *External Coach*).

Peers may be asked to give feedback or coaching on the following topics:

- I would like feedback from you on the following issues… (specify in writing).
- I would like support for the following learning objectives from you by… (specify).
- I would like to consult with you about how to handle an issue in the team…
- What are my greatest strengths? Please give at least two examples, and offer appreciation for my contributions to this team.
- What are my greatest challenges (weaknesses)? Please give at least two examples, and suggest constructive alternatives for future team work.

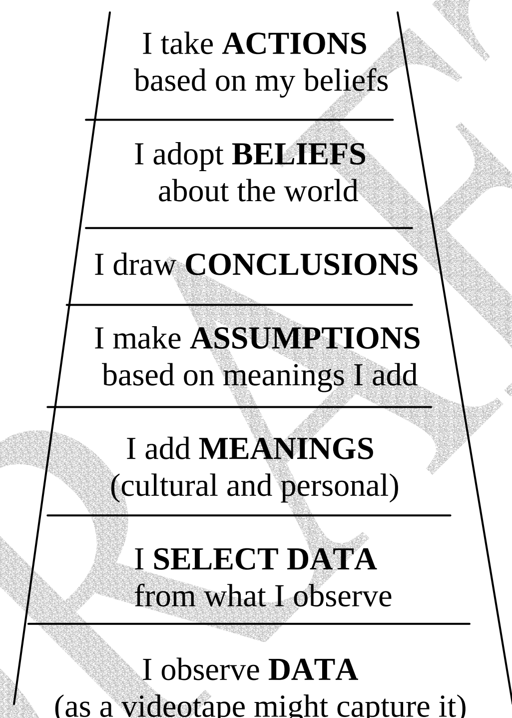
Peers often agree to check in by an agreed upon date, or on certain intervals such as monthly, to share observations and feedback, discuss learning or applying skills and knowledge, or dialogue about how to handle challenging issues within the group. Peers engaging in this process often agree to their own ground rules that might include honesty, confidentiality, taking action and support for each other.

C. Storming

1. Ladder of Inference*

What Is It?

The Ladder of Inference is a tool to help us question the ground on which our actions (or proposed actions) are based. We normally assume that we act based on data we observe in the world, anchoring all of our actions on hard, objective evidence. And we often wonder why others see things differently: the "truth" is so clear! The Ladder of Inference reminds us that, as human beings, our actions may be based on much more subjective grounds.



Why Use It?

The Ladder of Inference helps us become more aware of how we think and why we think the way we do. It also gives us a tool, in conversation with others, to make our thinking more visible and thus open to question.   Finally, it gives us a tool to inquire of others how they reached the conclusions they did and why they think as they do.

If we acknowledge that our actions may be based on selecting only certain data, meanings we assign to data (based on cultural and personal experiences and biases), assumptions we make, and/or our beliefs about the world, then we must also acknowledge that other people, with other ways of looking at the same hard data, may have different points of view worth considering. We can then offer our meanings, assumptions, and beliefs as hypotheses, subject to examination and change.

When Do I Use the Ladder of Inference? (2 of 2)

Use the Ladder of Inference whenever you need to question the thinking and reasoning behind a course or proposed course of action. Triggers that may signal the need to use the Ladder of Inference are:

- People cannot agree on what the facts mean or what to do.
- You keep going around on the same issue and can neither agree with others nor prove the “error of their ways” to them.
- Everything you’ve tried does not work and you are searching for a new way to think about the problem.
- You’re willing to step back from the problem and test the assumptions on which your thinking is based.

How Do I Use It?

The following questions, based on the Ladder of Inference, may help trigger new ways of thinking and acting. While phrased to apply to you, the same questions can be used by a group confronting a problem or to help someone else probe their own thinking.

- What are the data on which actions are based? Are actions based on data or just assumptions about what the data are?
- Have I ignored some data and concentrated on other data?
- Do my beliefs about the world affect what data I can see and not see?
- What do the data mean? Do the data mean the same thing to everyone else? If not, might this be part of the problem?
- What are the assumptions on which actions are based?
- What if these assumptions were not true? How might I act with a different set of assumptions?
- How do my beliefs (moral, ethical, religious, professional, etc) affect the actions I consider or reject?
- Am I jumping rungs on the ladder too quickly (e.g. see some data and immediately draw conclusions about what the data mean)?

References

Senge, Peter, Ross, Richard, Smith, Bryan, Roberts, Charlotte, and Kleiner, Art, *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*, New York: Doubleday, 1994, pp. 242-246: “The Ladder of Inference.”

Adapted from the Federal Executive Institute, U. S. Office of Personnel Management.

2. Conflict Management*

Diverse perspectives can cause conflict in groups while leading us closer to the truth. Conflict is inevitable and often productive, but needs to be managed constructively. Like a fire that needs to be managed to keep us warm without getting us burned, it helps to manage conflict before it gets out of control.

Conflict Analysis

Conflicts can be categorized as intrapersonal (internal issues such as value conflicts or burn out), interpersonal (disagreements between individuals), intra-group (conflict within a group), or inter-group (disagreements between groups). It helps to analyze the issues and decide if the conflict is one to resolve "off-line" with another member personally, or is an issue to bring to a group for discussion. Any of these problems can ultimately become group problems if left unresolved.

People Problems	Group Problems
Overbearing participants (have to say it all)	Unclear mission, vision or goals
Wanderlust (can't stay focused on agenda)	Confusion on roles and responsibilities
Discounters (nay-sayers, it'll never work)	Procedural issues (strategy and timing)
Reluctant folks (don't want to be here)	Poor leadership skills in the group
Rush to task (won't bother with process)	Lack of agenda and meeting focus
Hidden agendas (other issues at play)	Confusion about the group life cycle
Feuding parties (play out conflict in group)	New group members not included
Interrupters (cuts others off)	Lack of ground rules
Won't let go (repeats issues, decisions)	Split on direction or decision
Too many of same type in the group	Decision reached undemocratically
Slacker (won't do share of the work)	No balance between task and process

Principled Negotiation

Principled negotiation is to decide the issues 'hard on the merits and soft on the people' by separating the people from the problem. Using the process below can help to negotiate and resolve conflicts.

- **Find a good time** to talk. Plan a context and setting to help everyone feel comfortable. Remember to respond instead of react throughout your negotiations.
- **Identify the problem** and speak only for yourself by using 'I' statements such as, "when this happens __________ (concrete description of behavior), I feel __________ (angry, sad, etc.). The result is ____________ (what happened or may happen soon). Try to make your feedback timely, practical, descriptive, direct, digestible, non-judgmental and intended to help.
- **Assume good intentions** and empathize with the other person. "I know (or can understand) that there may be reasons this happened because ______." Build a bridge to

create optimism for win-win solutions: “Things have gone better when I (or they) _______.” Create good will.

- **Actively listen** to each other. Paraphrase, or put into your own words, the factual content and feelings you heard until the other person agrees that you understand exactly what they meant. Be aware of your emotions. Use positive body language to listen. Look at the person you are speaking to. Don’t interrupt, allow them to finish.
- **Reframe the problem** by focusing on underlying issues – needs, desires, concerns -- not positions. Consider using the *Ladder of Inference* in Appendix C. 1. to search for assumptions, perceptions and beliefs. Look for alternative perspectives and multiple ways to meet basic needs and concerns.
- **Ask questions** if you do not understand. How, when, why, who, what and where questions are helpful. Stay with the present issue. Don’t change the subject.
- **Brainstorm a variety of solutions** before deciding what to do and insist that the result be based on objective standards. The only person you can control is your self, so consider what you will do differently. Take responsibility for your own actions in the past, present and future.
- **Negotiate a solution** and specific agreement. Closed questions, starting with can, have, do, is, will and would, can help. Clarify in writing the specific actions to be taken, a timeline to do so, consequences for not keeping agreements, and check-in times to review agreements. Seek third party intervention if unable to come to a mutual solution.
- **Plan an action strategy** to implement the solution, and continue to evaluate how well it is working.

Win-Win Solutions

Assertiveness, rather than aggressiveness or passivity, is an important ingredient in negotiations. Personal approaches to conflict set the stage for potential solutions. Avoidance of confrontation or conflict, including denial or justification for withdrawal, can perpetuate problems in the long run. Accommodation can generate giving at one’s own expense for fear of risking relationships. Competition and aggression can win at any cost by dominating or running over others. Compromise can be an acceptable middle ground. Collaboration, with assertion for one’s own needs in cooperation with others, can set the stage for win-win solutions. Win-lose propositions are likely to spark future conflict and are therefore also likely to be temporary solutions at best. The ideal is to come up with win-win solutions that all parties can support.

Aggressive	^	Compete Win-Lose		**Collaborate** **Win-Win**
Assertive	|		Compromise Give and Take	
	|	Avoid Withdrawal		Accommodate Obliging
Passive	|-----------------------------------→			
		Uncooperative		Cooperative

3. External Coach

Teams are strongly encouraged to receive external coaching at least once, preferably early in their life cycle, to create a balance between action and learning from the beginning. External coaches can also assist with conflicts that might occur within the team. Teams can request the services of an external coach from a list provided by the PMF Program staff.

External coaches can provide fellows with an opportunity to learn more about group process and facilitation skills, better understand the action learning model, and network with organizational development experts from across government. Below are some issues that the team, the sponsor if applicable, and an external coach might want to discuss before meeting together.

Desired Outcomes for the Team

The team must first have some sense of its objectives. Similarly, for a coach to be able to suggest approaches a team might pursue, give useful feedback, or be an effective role model, he or she must first understand clearly why the team has requested their assistance. The possible roles for an external coach are broad. Establishing a shared understanding of the coach's role ensures both have clear expectations from the outset. These might include:

- assisting the team during their formative stage to utilize the action learning principles,
- reviewing and assisting the team with their learning goals, or
- helping to resolve conflicts or disagreements within the team.

Working Together

It is up to the team to contact a coach from the list provided by the PMF Program staff and set up a mutually agreeable arrangement that is free of charge. Some coaching relationships are loosely structured, others are highly organized. Regardless of the form, here are some topics to address at the start:

- the nature of contact (face-to-face, phone, e-mail), frequency of contact, and how contact will occur (e.g., on a scheduled basis, as needed),
- who can initiate contact outside of whatever is planned,
- any limitations on hours for contact (i.e., is it okay to telephone one another outside normal duty hours?),
- any anticipated challenges and how they might be resolved, and
- the parameters of confidentiality. (All information the team shares is strictly confidential, and anything the coach shares is confidential if he or she identifies it as such.)

Once an external coach agrees to work with the team, individuals may approach that coach for assistance to address personal issues on the team with the understanding that the issue may be brought to the entire team as negotiated in advance with the external coach. Members may also consider seeking consultation from fellow team members using the tools in Appendix B. 12., *Peer Feedback*. The PMF Program staff can also be contacted to recommend solutions for teams that need extensive additional coaching or other support services to resolve differences on the team or between the team and the coach.

D. Performing

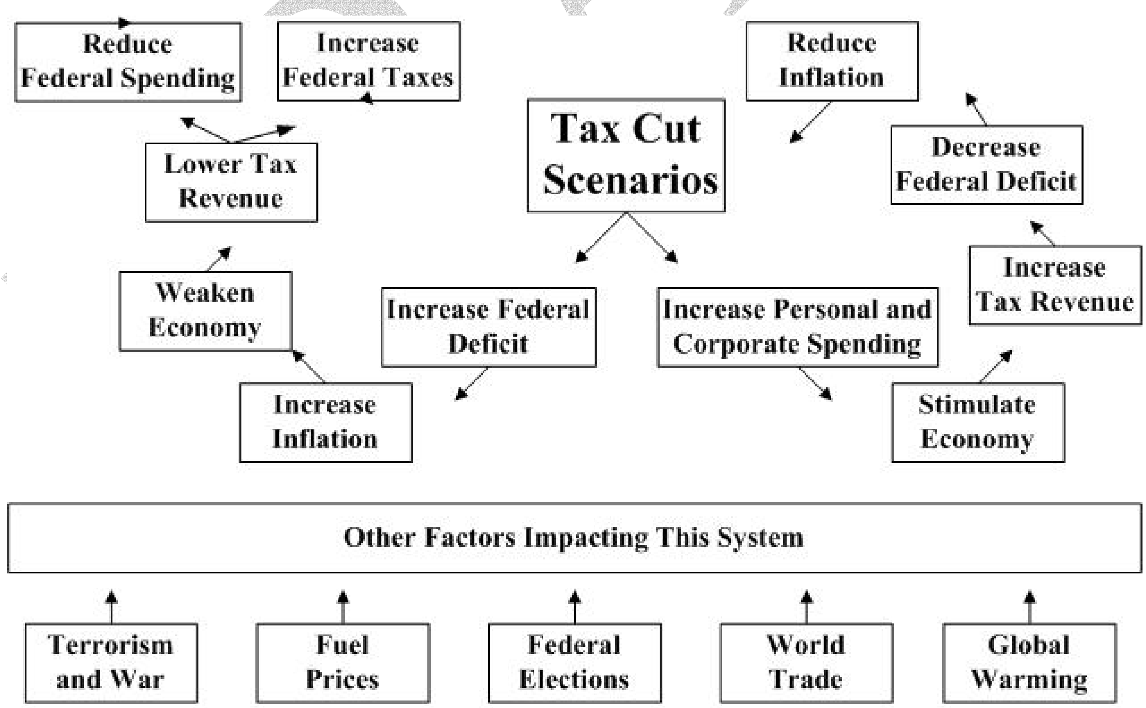
1. Systems Thinking*

Systems thinking is based on the assumption that everything is connected. Systems thinking uses a holistic approach as a way of understanding the interrelationships that impact the behavior of systems. Once understood, this discipline can also be used to change systems more effectively and to act more in tune with environmental, political, cultural and economic realities.

The Iceberg

One way to understand systems thinking is to use the iceberg metaphor (from Connecting Systems Thinking and Action, by Ed Cunliff in *Systems Thinker*, March, 2004). Imagine the tip of the iceberg as the events we see above the water that are connected to the much larger iceberg under the water that include the underlying patterns, systems and mental models we use to interpret the events we see. The four basic levels of systems thinking are:

- **Events**: Observable behavior or events -- exactly what is happening, when, to whom? Who else is affected or cares? Describe the observable events or behaviors 'above the water' in as much factual detail as possible and in as broad a context as possible.
- **Patterns**: What are the patterns or trends of the events? Use statistics, modeling, simulations, and graphs to identify trends over time -- ideally over the long term. Draw causal loop diagrams to identify potential causation factors in the broadest context possible (see diagram below).



Causal Loop Diagram

- **Structure**: What are the underlying structures, rules or laws that drive events? What are the forces compelling others to act as they do? How are the patterns reinforced? Use other tools in the appendices including the *Force Field Analysis, Stakeholder Mapping*, and *Four Frames of Organizations* to identify and flesh out these structural forces.
- **Mental Models**: Why is the structure designed this way? Who benefits, how and why? What are the unwritten rules underlying these patterns? Use creative thinking to identify the underlying assumptions that serve as motivation for these structures or patterns. Consider using the *Ladder of Inference* in Appendix C. 1. for this exercise.

Archetypal System Failures

Peter Senge, in the *Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*, offers a few archetypes to diagnose system failures that may be impacting the system. Five classic system failures are illustrated below:

- **Fixes that backfire: Tax cuts may stimulate the economy or increase the deficit and cause inflation.** Sometimes not enough data is known to accurately predict an outcome. Alternatively, short term fixes that address symptoms but not root causes may provide temporary benefits and later reveal unintended consequences. Collect data, study each solution separately, and consider the combined impact of other factors.
- **Limits to growth: Over hiring during boom times, or extreme down sizing during recessions, can backfire**. Anticipating the future is difficult – building or cutting too fast or too slow can be equally problematic for different reasons. Anticipate how changes in the larger system may impact your issue. Consider incremental changes.
- **Shifting the burden: Giving welfare mothers more money for each additional child may increase welfare family size.** Even well intentioned efforts can escalate problems by creating patterns of learned helplessness, capacity atrophy or crisis intervention. Prevention efforts, or shifting the burden from the symptoms to the cause, can eliminate reinforcing loops which cause patterns that later difficult to break.
- **Tragedy of the commons: Too many cars use the beltway at 9 and 5 to cause rush hours.** Individual solutions sometimes work against the common good to cause patterns of over-use or under-use. Consider creative incentives based on self interest to counter problematic trends, in this example car pooling, mass transit, flex time or telecommuting.
- **Accidental adversaries: Environmentalist and hunters' animosity prevent cooperation to save wetlands**. Consider working with competitors or enemies on common ground projects ('unlikely bedfellows'). Good will can also create new opportunities with former adversaries.

Creating Change

Suspend preconceptions and remain open to new ideas and novel approaches. Involve stakeholders in the decision making process to get a wider view of the systems. Seek long range solutions that address root causes rather than symptoms. Look for creative alternatives with unlikely partners. Consider strategies to add new causal loops or break existing loops in your diagram and draw the changes you anticipate. Once potential solutions are identified, try to simulate what might happen and analyze the anticipated results before executing the new strategy. Discuss possible unintended consequences in detail. Remain open to new revelations or changes that may impact your systems. Be creative.

2. Stakeholder Mapping*

What Is It?

The purpose of Stakeholder Mapping is to:

- Identify groups and individuals inside and outside the organization that can affect the outcome of efforts to address a business issue.
- Identify:
  - their likely interests in the business issue,
  - their likely degree of support or opposition for proposals for change,
  - their power with respect to approval and implementation of change proposals, or
  - the coalitions they belong to (i.e. who influences them and whom they influence).
- Develop strategies to increase the chances to successfully address the business issue using the knowledge gained from the stakeholder map.

Why Use It?

Successful action on any significant organizational issue or challenge invariably requires the support of others. Action that seems promising often founders, however, because of unanticipated opposition from some and lackluster support from others. John Gardner, former Secretary of the Department of Health Education, and Welfare, used to say that the problem with change in organizations is that "for everyone who can say 'yes,' there are 100 people who can say 'no.'" And, we might add, some of the 100 usually do and even the one who can say 'yes' is too often silent.

Stakeholder mapping is a way to identify potential supporters and opponents early in the process of change so that you can find ways to gain the help of the former, perhaps convince the latter to change their mind, or at least build a change strategy that addresses their concerns.

When Do I Use Stakeholder Mapping?

Use this tool early in a change effort because it helps you "map" out the change territory and develop strategies to increase your chances of success. Use stakeholder mapping whenever you need to answer questions like these:

- Who cares about the business issue I am addressing?
- Whose support do I need? What will get the interested in helping me?
- Who might be an opponent? Why?
- What are the relationships between various stakeholders on this issue?
- How can I build a powerful coalition to support change?

How Do I Do Stakeholder Mapping?

There are three steps:

1. Create the Stakeholder Map

The stakeholder map circle drawing at the end of this document suggests that every stakeholder can be mapped according to the degree of power or influence she or he is likely to have on your efforts to successfully resolve your business issue. The circle closest to you includes those individuals and organizations that have the power to approve or veto aspects of your change effort. The next circle includes those who have influence over others but can't themselves give you the go ahead or stop you. The final circle includes those who might get engaged in one of the two first circles but for now are only interested observers at best – who do not see any of their vital interests at stake at present.

Thus, the concerns of those inside the first circle are the most important for you to address, followed by those in the second circle. Those in the third circle may be important either in keeping them uninvolved or in drawing them in if you need additional support for your efforts. They will become engaged only if their interests are addressed or threatened in some way.

Using the circle map, put the name of the individuals or organizations that care or might care about your business issue in the appropriate "circle of influence." Use the name of a person where he or she is central as an individual. Use the name of an organization when it is the organization that carries the most weight rather than the individual power broker within that organization (don't fret about this – just get a name down!). Consider people and organizations in all segments of society that have or might have a vested interest in your issue (e.g. your agency, other Executive branch agencies, Congress, media, interest groups, etc.). Be as specific as you can at this point. For example, if Congress cares, identify which members or committees rather than just saying "Congress."

Next, draw an arrow between any individuals and organizations on your map (crossing circles wherever necessary) using the following legend:

→ Influences the views of the stakeholder to whom the arrow points

⇔ Joint influence: these stakeholders influence each other

2. Identify Stakeholder Power, Interests, and Coalitions

Place every name in circles 1 and 2 of the drawing in the left hand column of the Stakeholder Mapping Chart. These are the stakeholders you want to address. (You can include those in circle 3 later if you wish to deepen the analysis.)

Under each heading in the chart, respond as follows:

(3 of 6)

a. Power: Power is divided into two areas: approval and implementation. It is helpful to distinguish between the two. A given individual or organization (e.g. a Congressional committee) might have a lot of power over whether you can get approval to do something (i.e. adoption of the change) but little power over how you go about it at the implementation stage. Conversely, another stakeholder, such as a group of employees, might have little power over whether the change is approved but considerable power over implementation (if their active support is needed at that stage). Some stakeholders will have power over both, and some power over neither. Use the following scale to indicate the power of each stakeholder over approval and implementation:

++	=	Very Powerful
+	=	Powerful
	=	Not Powerful

b. Interests: In the space provided, write what the *interests* of this stakeholder might be in the business issue you are addressing. It is important to distinguish here between what their interests are and what position they might take on your issue.

Positions:	A statement of what someone *wants* (e.g. "I want this program in my office.")
Interests:	A statement of the basic *need someone seeks to address* (e.g. "I have lost too many staff and funds already. My credibility and effectiveness as a leader are in jeopardy if I don't get this program assigned to me.")

Often, people harden in defending their position. But, if you can uncover their true interests, you may be able to craft a solution that meets their interests – and thus find them willing to change their position to accommodate where you need to go.

Once you have identified the interests of each stakeholder, make a rough estimate of whether the stakeholder is likely to favor or oppose the changes you have in mind. If it is too early to make this assessment (because you don't know what changes you have in mind yet), leave this blank. You can always return to the analysis later on.

Use the following scale:

++	=	Strongly Favor
+	=	Favor
0	=	Neutral
-	=	Oppose
--	=	Strongly Oppose

(4 of 6)

c. **Likely Coalitions**: Stakeholders, including you, increase their power and influence by forming coalitions. Using your stakeholder map chart at the end of this document (but going beyond it as well), fill in the appropriate columns in the chart to indicate: (1) who influences each stakeholder and (b) who influences them. Keep in mind that there may be people or organizations that influence key stakeholders who are not shown in Figure 1. Indeed, finding out who these others are may be central to influencing the stakeholders you have identified. (Feel free to use abbreviations or even to code the stakeholders in the drawing as a shorthand way of completing this part of the mapping.)

3. Devise Strategies to Increase the Chances for Success

Use your completed Stakeholder Map drawing and chart to identify strategies to move ahead in addressing your business issue. Consider the following questions:

- Identify those who are powerful and possibly (or actually) opposed. Are there ways you can draw them in and increase the chances they will help you (e.g. talking to them, uncovering their needs, building their needs into your problem resolution)?
- Are there some who might favor the change but are not particularly powerful? Is there a way to build their power (e.g. sharing information, building them into the change implementation effort)?
- How can those with the most power and who are likely to be the most supportive be used to bring about change? How do you make sure you retain their support?
- Looking at all the interests displayed, especially among the powerful stakeholders, are there commonalities that might suggest coalitions you could develop? Are there striking differences, which would suggest the need to find some common ground or at least prepare for conflict?
- Are there stakeholders who are not likely to be engaged at present who you would like to become more active? How can you achieve this?

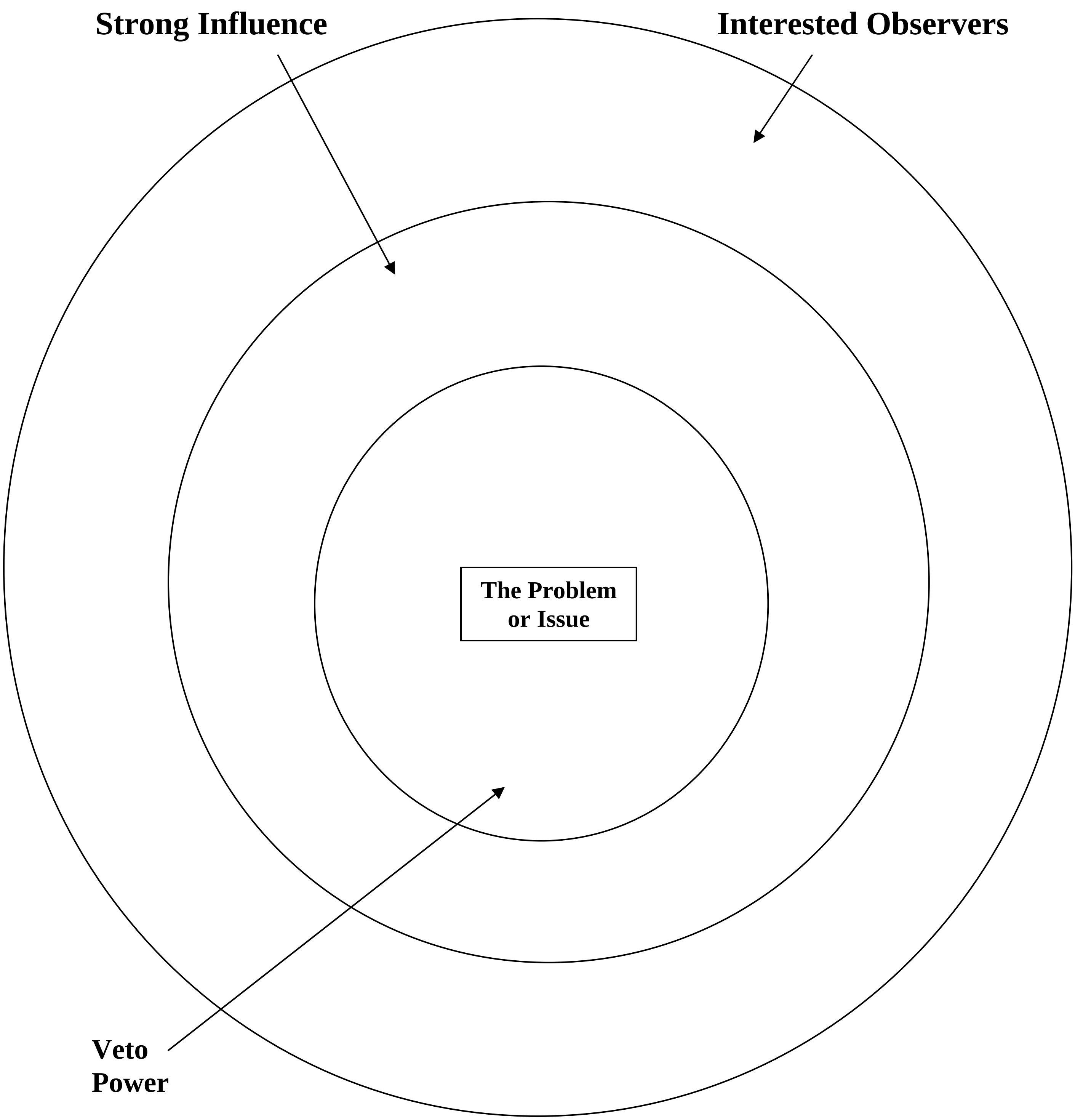
What If I Can't Answer All the Questions In the Stakeholder Map?

At the early stages of your work on the business issue, you might have significant gaps in your Stakeholder Map. Your analysis may thus suggest the need to gather more information to identify who the stakeholders are, what their interests are, etc. It is thus an excellent idea to return to your stakeholder map from time to time to assess its accuracy, identify changes you need to make in it, and use the revised map to generate new opportunities for action and learning.

References

This tool is based on work done at The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, by Dr. Larry Hirschhorn.

Adapted from the Federal Executive Institute, U. S. Office of Personnel Management.



Stakeholder Map

Stakeholder Mapping Chart

(6 of 6)

Stakeholder	Power Over		Interests	Favor or Oppose	This Stakeholder	
	Approval	Implementation			Influences	Is Influenced By

3. Four Frames of Organizations*

What Is It?

The Four Frames tool[1] is a way to look at organizations and proposed actions in organizations using four different lenses for seeing the world. Abraham Maslow used to say that: "If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail." If all you have is one way to see the world, then you will see and act as if that is the *only* way to see it. This limits understanding and the range of possible actions. Each frame is based on a different set of core assumptions, as shown below (drawn from Bolman and Deal's *Reframing Organizations*):

STRUCTURAL	**POLITICAL**
HUMAN RESOURCE	**SYMBOLIC**

- **Structural Frame**

Organizations exist to accomplish specific goals. A best structure can be found to match the organization's goals, strategies, environment, technology and people. This best structure keeps people focused on getting the job done rather than doing whatever they want. Specialization of job functions is part of this structure, ensuring the best use of expertise. Authority structures, rules, policies, standard operating procedures, and systems (e.g. budget, personnel, information, etc) are essential for smooth functioning. Problems are usually the result of faulty structures or systems.

- **Human Resource Frame**

Organizations exist to serve human needs. Organizations and people need each other: organizations need ideas, energy, expertise; people need jobs, work to do, pay and benefits. When the fit between people and organizations is poor, one or both will suffer. When the fit is good, both will gain. The best fit can be obtained by proper attention to such issues as management styles, training and development, participative management, etc.

- **Political Frame**

Organizations are coalitions, composed of varied individuals and interest groups (e.g. hierarchical levels, functions, offices, gender and ethnic subgroups). Individuals and groups will never see everything the same way due to differences in values, beliefs, and perceptions of reality. Since most decisions in organizations involve the allocation of scarce resources, conflict is inevitable among people and groups. Thus, goals and decisions in organizations result from bargaining, negotiation, and jockeying for position and power.

- **Symbolic Frame**

What matters in organizations is not what happens (the "facts") but what events *mean*. People act on what things mean to them. Yet the same event (facts) can mean different things to different people because people differ so much in their values, perceptions, and experiences. As a result, it is hard to move organizations ahead through pure reason alone. In such an ambiguous, uncertain world, people create symbols to provide direction and reduce confusion. Symbols may be rituals, stories, ceremonies, initiation (orientation) rites, and other trappings of organizational culture. Symbols help give people clarity and direction in an uncertain world.

Why Use the Four Frames?

By applying the Four Frames tool, you increase the chance that analysis of the problem and possible solutions will be thorough and systemic.

Think of this in reverse. An organization is confronted with increased demands for performance, for example. If one views this with the Structural frame alone, the solution may appear to be reorganization – finding a better way to organize, realigning systems to fit the new organizational chart, and revising policies and procedures. But viewed from the Human Resource frame, one might also see the need for paying attention to the new management style and training that will be needed to change behavior required by the reorganization. The Political frame will give a view of the situation that would alert us to the inherent conflicts that will emerge as established power sharing and resource allocations are challenged. This may give us some clues about how to resolve these conflicts before they destroy the structures and human resource systems we are trying to put in place. Finally, the Symbolic frame will alert us to the importance of communicating the new structure and direction in ways that appeal to people's need for meaning: ways to celebrate the new ways we operate, stories to help clarify the new reality we face, symbols to capture the value of the new organization we need to become.

Viewing our problem from any one frame alone is inherently incomplete. Viewing it from all four increases the chances we will see the world more clearly and act effectively.

When Do I Use It?

Use the Four Frames tool when:

- trying to understand why a problem persists despite many efforts t solve it,
- seeking to get a "whole system" view of a problem or issue,
- generating possible solutions to a problem, and
- preparing plans to address a significant business issue.

How Do I Use It?

To use the Four Frames tool, ask the following kinds of questions:

- How would I define the problem I face if I saw it as a structural problem? A human resource problem? A political problem? A symbolic problem?
- What solutions might make sense from the viewpoint of each of the Four Frames?
  1. From the structural standpoint, for example, what changes in systems, polices, procedures, structures will be needed to address the problem?
  2. From the human resource standpoint, what new skills, management approaches, ways of interacting will be needed to address the problem?
  3. From the political standpoint, how will I marshall the support I need and negotiate with those who have competing interests?
  4. From the symbolic standpoint, how can I convey a picture of our future that enlists people in support of it?
- Now that I have a solution – or integrated solution – in mind, do the Four Frames suggest anything I may have missed?

References

Bolman, Lee and Deal, Terrence, *Reframing Organizations*. 2nd Edition, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.

Adapted from the Federal Executive Institute, U. S. Office of Personnel Management.

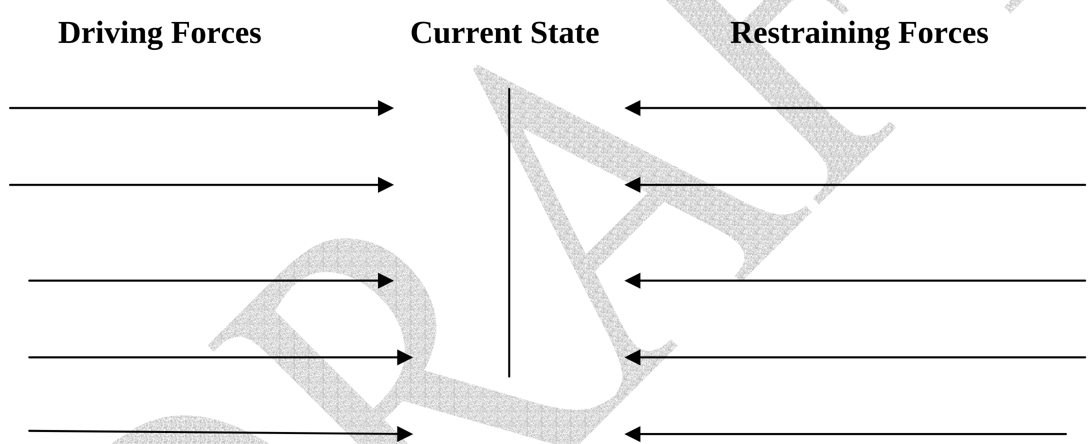
4. Force Field Analysis*

What Is It?

Force Field Analysis (FFA) is a method of analyzing a situation to determine how one might best bring about change. FFA was developed in the 1940s by sociologist Kurt Lewin and can be used by an individual or a group seeking to bring about change.

How Do You Use It?

FFA is based on the concept that a situation (personal or organizational) at a given point in time exists in a state of equilibrium. This status quo (illustrated below) exists because two sets of forces – called Driving Forces and Restraining Forces – balance each other and thus prevent any movement or change.



FFA involves the following steps:

1. Identify the personal or organizational situation you wish to analyze and describe the current state in the box in the middle of the FFA worksheet (on the last page of this handout).

2. Identify the change you would like to see -- the goal you are after -- in the current state. Write this goal in the box on the right of the worksheet.

3. Identify existing forces that are helping bring about the desired change – that are **driving** change in the desired direction. List each driving force on a separate line on the Driving Forces side of the worksheet. Draw the force vector ($\longrightarrow$) so as to represent the strength of the force. (That is, the stronger the force, the longer the arrow should be.)

4. Identify existing forces that are hindering change – that are **restraining** movement in the desired direction. List each restraining force on a separate line on that side of the worksheet. Once again, draw the force vector to represent the strength of the force.

5. At this point, you should have all of the forces identified. Now you must decide how you wish to bring about change. Since the current situation represents a state of equilibrium, you can only bring about change if you make a change in the force pattern. You have three choices. You can do any one or all of the following:

   - increase the strength of one or more of the Driving Forces,
   - decrease the strength of (or remove) one or more of the Restraining Forces, or
   - add one or more new Driving Forces.

   The theory and practice of FFA suggests it is often more productive to decrease or remove a restraining force than to increase a driving force. The rationale is that increasing a driving force often leads to a corresponding increase in an opposing restraining force. By contrast, decreasing or removing a restraining force allows existing driving forces to push ahead with the change. For example, if a driving force to improve an employee's performance is the threat of formal personnel action for failure to improve and a restraining force is an employee's threat of taking action against the supervisor, increasing the threat may just increase the employee's resolve to file a grievance.

6. Once you have identified the forces you will seek to change, you can proceed with implementing the changes. If your analysis and implementation have been thorough, you should see movement in the desired new direction.

When Do I Use It?

Force Field Analysis can be used to analyze and consider changes to address any personal or organizational problem. FFA can be a very effective tool for gaining a beginning understanding of why a problem exists and thus for directing one's further study of the problem. For example, does a supposed restraining force really exist and to the extent one thinks? Collecting data to test out one's assumptions about the restraining force may be a good next step. FFA can also be used to help brainstorm both possible causes of a problem and potential solutions.

Adapted from the Federal Executive Institute, U. S. Office of Personnel Management.

Force Field Analysis

Driving Forces (⟶)

Current Situation:

(⟵) Restraining Forces

Goal:

5. High Performing Teams

A high performing team is so much more than a group that works together (you'll know one if you're lucky enough to be in one). They work hard and have fun doing it. A focus on good process skills, and attention to people instead of just on the task, can get you to *team*.

- **Cohesion.** Teams have an esprit de corps that shows a sense of bonding and camaraderie. They share the same vision and goals. Individuals begin using 'we' more than 'me.' There is an atmosphere of trust and acceptance, and a sense of community.
- **Communication**. Teams are committed to open communication. They are honest and constructive in their conflicts with each other. Teams create a safe space where they can honestly state their opinions, thoughts and feelings. Listening is as important as speaking. Differences of opinion are valued. Conflict is acknowledged and dealt with constructively.
- **Self-Awareness**. They respect each other and learn to maximize each person's strengths. Through honest and caring feedback, members are aware of their strengths and weaknesses as team members. The strengths of each member are identified and used to the team's advantage.
- **Flexibility**. They work inter-dependently and trust each other. Teams are flexible enough to perform task and process functions as needed. The responsibility for team development and leadership are shared. They are democratic and non-hierarchical, ignoring rank over skill.
- **Morale**. Team members are enthusiastic about their work. Each person feels pride in being on the team. Team spirit is high. They laugh and have a sense of humor and perspective.
- **Results**. Teams produce results with a high degree of satisfaction in working with one another. They have fun working together and take pride in their accomplishments.

Emotional Intelligence

Great teams share a high level of collective emotional intelligence. Some of these qualities are:

- **Personal Competence**: **how we manage ourselves.**

<u>Self awareness</u> includes emotional self awareness, accurate self assessment of one's strengths and weaknesses, and self confidence with a strong sense of one's self worth and capabilities. <u>Self management</u> includes adaptability and flexibility in dealing with changing situations or obstacles, self control by inhibiting emotions in service of group or organizational norms, optimism with a positive view of life, initiative that is proactive with a bias toward action, achievement orientation that strives to do better, and trustworthiness with integrity and consistency of behavior, values and emotions.

- **Social Competence: how we handle relationships.**

<u>Social awareness</u> includes empathy that understands others and takes active interest in their concern, service orientation that recognizes and meets customer's needs, and organizational awareness that perceives political relationships within the organization. <u>Relationship management</u> includes leadership that inspires and guides people and groups, developing others by helping others to improve, change catalyst that initiates and manages change, conflict management that resolves disagreements effectively, influence that gets others to agree, and teamwork that creates a shared vision and synergy through collaboration and relationships.

E. Transforming

1. Cost Benefit Analysis

This is a sample cost benefit analysis that was developed by the first action learning team that drafted the recommendations for this model. It is an example of the analysis that your team is encouraged to conduct on its costs relative to other leadership development alternatives.

General Costs	**Costs for Sponsor & Coach**	**Costs per Member to Agency**	**Costs for 9 Team Members**	**Subtotal Category** (1st + 3rd column)
Salaries (1)	1,250	1,752	15,768	17,018
Teleconferencing (2)	1,080	32	288	1,368
Supplies and Equipment	100	30	270	370
Travel and Meetings	20			20
Website and Technology	50			50
General Costs Subtotal	**$2,500**	**$1,814**	**$16,326**	**$18,826**
Summit Costs (3)				
Lodging			765	
Per diem			540	
Out of State Travel			250	
Local Travel			180	
Supplies			30	
Summit Subtotal	**0**		**$1,765**	**$1,765**
TOTAL TEAM COSTS				**$20,591**
Alternative Training Costs (4)				
Two week Training		3,900.00	35,000	
Salaries (80 hours)		1,540.00	13,860	
Alternative Subtotal		**$5,440.00**	**$48,860**	**$48,860**

Notes:

1. Salary costs include the estimated hours that the agency's sponsor and coach spent with the team on conference calls and during the Summit at a salary rate of $48.05 per hour. This team of nine members contributed an average of 5 hours per week to the project for 15 weeks, plus a two day Summit, at a salary rate of $19.25 per hour at the GS 9 level.
2. Teleconferencing costs were high due to the necessity of using a conference call line for members unable to personally attend meetings at the sponsor's agency.
3. Summit costs were paid by the sponsor's agency, and did not include facilities rental because the event was held at an agency location and the sponsor and coach incurred not additional travel costs because they were already attending an event at the same location.
4. These are sample estimates for the cost of other leadership development options.

2. Team Debrief

A final action learning team debrief can help to provide deeper learning for each member of the team and for the team as a whole. It can also provide closure and a way to celebrate the work of the team and individuals on the team.

Self Reflection Questions

Team members are encouraged to ask and answer the following self reflection questions before gathering for a final team debrief. Members are also encouraged to use a peer mentor to explore observations about themselves from another's perspective (see Appendix B. 12., *Peer Mentor*).

- What did I learn about myself as a result of this experience?
- How well did I interact with other members of the team?
- What challenges did I encounter and how did I handle them?
- In retrospect, what might I have done differently as a team member?
- What might I try to do differently in the future as a result of this experience?
- How did this experience contribute to my personal or career development?
- What future developmental needs were underscored from this team experience, and how can those developmental needs be met in the future?
- How could this have been a more constructive process for me?

Team Debrief Questions

The self reflection and team debrief questions could be answered in writing prior to the team debrief to begin the process of reflection, but some of the answers might change as a result of the discussion by the team.

1. What do you feel was the single most important lesson that you, as an individual, learned as a result of this experience? What other lessons did you learn from this experience?

2. What other lessons do you believe the team learned from its experience? How closely did the team follow the six components and ground rules of the ideal action learning model, and how did that impact your work together?

3. How could what you learned from participating on this team help you in the future? Why do you think so?

It would be helpful to conclude the team debrief with a time for appreciations and celebrations. Teams may want to end with a dinner or informal gathering to enjoy each other and have fun together.

3. Member Evaluation

This evaluation form is intended to assess your experience with an action learning team in the Presidential Management Fellows Program. You will be sent a computerized form with these questions that ask you to reflect on your experience, and fill in the box that most accurately describes your reactions and thoughts. Please respond as quickly as possible, because your first impression is likely to be the most honest. Do not sign your name, but please indicate your team's project title so that we can match your responses to those of your sponsor and other team members. Your answers will remain confidential. PMF Program evaluations will only summarize anonymous information with the goal to improve future team efforts.

Please answer the following questions on a scale from One (Strongly Disagree or Ineffective) to Five (Strongly Agree or Highly Effective). If the question does not apply to you or you do not know the answer, please check NA.

Project Title:

Project Goals
The action learning team focused on a problem or issue of importance to the agency.
The team's project goal was clear.
The team was given freedom to experiment with solutions.
The team's project goal was completed effectively.
Important agency needs were met as a result of the action learning effort.

Team Learning Goals
I understood the action learning model and its relevance for leadership development.
The team established clear learning goals.
The team used structured time on their agenda for reflection and learning.
The team utilized a 'mirror' role in the group to facilitate reflection during meetings.
The team gathered lessons learned throughout their action learning experience.
The team participated in a debrief session with the sponsor before terminating.
The team accomplished its learning goals effectively.

Sponsor Relationship
The team received a clear sense of purpose and direction from the sponsor.
The team was given clear constraints on what it could or could not do.
The sponsor made sufficient resources available for the team to accomplish its goal.
The sponsor was effectively involved with the team.
The sponsor involved additional staff to assist with the team's work.
I developed a relationship with our team's sponsor that might be helpful in my future career.
I would recommend this sponsor for future teams.

Team Dynamics
The team possessed the expertise needed to solve the problem and complete its project.
Team members worked together cohesively and effectively to achieve their objective(s).

Team members increased their group process and group dynamic skills.
The team created an open climate in which each member felt free to contribute.
The team utilized a coach during their experience.
The coach helped to develop a supportive and reflective learning environment.

Individual Development
I established clear learning goals for myself as part of this action learning team effort.
My learning goals for this team were reflected on my Individual Learning Plan.
This experience helped me to build important leadership competencies.
I think that other individuals on the team developed important skills during the experience.
I developed the following leadership competencies during my experience:

Leading Change:	Continual Learning
	Creativity and Innovation
	External Awareness
	Flexibility
	Resilience
	Service Motivation
	Strategic Thinking
	Vision
Leading People:	Conflict Management
	Leveraging Diversity
	Integrity/Honesty
	Team Building
Results Driven:	Accountability
	Customer Service
	Decisiveness
	Entrepreneurship
	Problem Solving
	Technical Credibility
Business Acumen:	Financial Management
	Human Resources Management
	Technology Management
Building Coalitions/Communication:	
	Influencing/Negotiating
	Interpersonal Skills
	Oral Communication
	Partnering
	Political Savvy
	Written Communication

Agency Development
The team built support for its project with appropriate stakeholder groups.
Team efforts increased cooperation across jobs, divisions and/or agencies.
I received sufficient support from my supervisor for participation on this team.
I recommend continuing the action learning team experience for future fellows.

Please use the following scale for the next set of questions:
1: One to Two, 2: Three to Four, 3: Five to Six, 4: Seven to Eight, 5: Nine or More.
What number of team members signed the initial project agreement with the sponsor?
What number of team members remained active at the completion of the team effort?
How many hours per week on average did you spend on team efforts?
How many months did you work on the team project and learning goals?

Comments
What specific areas for improvement, if any, were apparent to you from this action learning team experience? Please suggest what you would do differently and why.

What were specific benefits of this action learning experience? How did you benefit most? How did the team benefit? How did the agency benefit?

4. Sponsor Evaluation

(1 of 2)

This evaluation form is intended to assess your experience as a sponsor with an action learning Team in the Presidential Management Fellows Program. You will be sent a computerized form with these questions that ask you to reflect on your experience, and fill in the box that most accurately describes your reactions and thoughts. Please respond as quickly as possible, because your first impression is likely to be the most honest. Do not sign your name, but please indicate your team's project title so that we can match your responses to those of team members. Your answers will remain confidential. PMF Program evaluations will only summarize anonymous information with the goal to improve future team efforts.

Please answer the following questions on a scale from One (Strongly Disagree or Ineffective) to Five (Strongly Agree or Highly Effective). If the question does not apply to you or you do not know the answer, please check NA.

Project Title:

Project Goals
The action learning team focused on a problem or issue of importance to the agency.
The team's project goal was clear.
The team was given freedom to experiment with solutions.
The team's project goal was completed effectively.
Important agency needs were met as a result of the action learning effort.

Learning Goals
I understood the action learning model and its relevance for leadership development.
The team established clear learning goals.
The team used structured time on their agenda for reflection and learning.
The team utilized a 'mirror' role in the group to facilitate reflection during meetings.
The team gathered lessons learned throughout their action learning experience.
The team participated in a debrief session with the sponsor before terminating.
The team accomplished its learning goals effectively.

Sponsor Relationship
The team received a clear sense of purpose and direction from the sponsor.
The team was given clear constraints on what it could or could not do.
The sponsor made sufficient resources available for the team to accomplish its goal.
The sponsor was effectively involved with the team.
The sponsor involved additional staff to assist with the team's work.
Members developed relationships with me as the sponsor that might be helpful in their careers.
I would agree to sponsor another action learning team in the future.

Team Dynamics
The team possessed the expertise needed to solve the problem and complete its project.
Team members worked together cohesively and effectively to achieve their objective(s).

Team members increased their group process and group dynamic skills.
The team created an open climate in which each member felt free to contribute.
The team utilized a coach during their experience.
The coach helped to develop a supportive and reflective learning environment.

Individual Development
I established clear learning goals for myself as part of this action learning team effort.
This experience helped me to build important leadership competencies.
I think that members on the team developed important skills during the experience.

Agency Development
The team built support for its project with appropriate stakeholder groups.
Team efforts increased cooperation across jobs, divisions and/or agencies.
Members received sufficient support from their supervisors to participate on the team.
I recommend continuing the action learning team experience for future fellows.

Please use the following scale for the next set of questions:
1: One to Two, 2: Three to Four, 3: Five to Six, 4: Seven to Eight, 5: Nine or More.
What number of team members signed the initial project agreement with the sponsor?
What number of team members remained active at the completion of the team effort?
How many hours per week on average did you spend on team efforts?
How many months did you work on the team project and learning goals?

Comments
What specific areas for improvement, if any, were apparent to you from this action learning team experience? Please suggest what you would do differently and why.

What were specific benefits of this action learning experience? How did you benefit most? How did the team benefit? How did the agency benefit?

Please list the full names of each of the members of your action learning team: