

# PEER ASSIST



## WHAT IS A PEER ASSIST?

A facilitated event in which peers with relevant experience share their knowledge and experience, usually in the form of best practices and lessons learned, with a team that has requested help on a specific problem, project, or activity.

## PEER ASSISTS ARE ORGANIZED

- » as facilitated sessions.
- » for groups of no more than 15 or 20 people, which include the Host Team (asking for input/assistance) and the Resource Team (peers from outside the team sharing knowledge and insights).
- » either as a short session (90 minutes) or long session spread over several days. The length depends upon
  - › the complexity of the challenge.
  - › the geographic range participants are coming from.

## USE IT TO

- » solve a specific business challenge -- generally more useful for solving adaptive challenges.
- » enable knowledge transfer among peers.
- » support collective learning, cross-linkages, and networking.
- » stimulate new perspectives and new lines of inquiry.
- » increase willingness to learn from one another—establish an open culture of learning in an organization.

## HOW TO USE IT

- » The host team should have clear outcomes and deliverables in mind.
- » Timing is key -- it should allow for the learning to feed into action.
- » Ensure that the resource team members bring recent experience and practical knowledge to share on the topic. You don't have to bring in the most senior people.
- » Select an experienced facilitator who can maintain a balance between telling and listening and prioritize action ideas and recommendations.
- » Keep the following core process steps in mind:
  - › Ensure resource team participants clearly understand the context (including past efforts) and challenges.
  - › The resource team should ask questions and have a dialogue with the host team to develop a good understanding of the issues (background materials can be sent ahead of time to resource team).
  - › After the resource team has discussed the challenge and possible solutions, the host team needs to take the recommendations from the resource team without interrupting or defending past efforts and decisions.
  - › Make sure to have a formal conclusion and feedback session at the end of the peer assist to summarize the outcomes. Generally someone from the host team will do this.