



Center for Leadership & Educational Equity

Probing Questions Exercise

Developed by Gene Thompson-Grove and Teri Schrader.

1. Read the Consultancy framing question.

Assume the question comes from a well-facilitated pre-conference and the presenter DOES want a Consultancy

Assume clarifying questions have been asked and answered — and there are no obstacles to now asking probing questions of the presenter (some groups like to ask 2 or 3 clarifying questions — but it should be only 2 or 3).

2. “Hold” the Consultancy question as a group, and individually create 1 or 2 probing questions. Write each question on a separate sticky note.
3. As a group, “workshop” the questions you have developed.
 - Take turns asking your questions, and as a group, discuss the efficacy of each question. Place the questions on the continuum from more to less probing.
If the person with the dilemma is in the group, that person should place the questions on the continuum, one at a time, saying WHY they are placing each question there.
 - Look at the questions that are less probing, and ask about each one: “Is this not probing because it is clarifying, or because it is a suggestion or advice?”
 - Then, ask yourselves: “What might we do to these questions to make them more probing?” Rewrite the less probing questions so they are more probing, paying attention to the questions that are really advice. Try changing the question’s *architecture, scope and/or meaning/context*.
4. After you have heard and worked with all of the questions and placed them on the continuum, discuss:
 - Which questions worked especially well? What is it about the question that makes you say so?
 - What are the general characteristics of effective probing questions? What do these questions *do* for the person considering them?