

## **Brief Description:**

Peer Assist brings together a group of peers to elicit feedback on a problem, project, or activity, and draw lessons from the participants' knowledge and experience.

## **When to use:**

Peer Assists may be useful when:

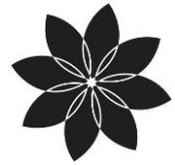
You are starting a new job, activity or project and you want to benefit from the advice of more experienced people.

- You face a problem that another group has faced in the past.
- You had not to have to deal with a given situation for a long time.
- You are no longer sure what new procedures to follow.
- You are planning a project that is similar to a project another group has completed.

## **How to use:**

Learning from your peers; someone has already done it:

- Communicate the purpose. Peer Assists work well when the purpose is clear and you communicate that purpose to participants.
- Share your Peer Assist plans with others. Consider whether others have already solved the problem; they may have similar needs.
- Identify a facilitator external to the team. The facilitator is responsible for managing the process so that meeting participants reach the desired outcome.
- Schedule a date for the Peer Assist. Ensure it is early enough to do something different with what you have learned.
- Invite potential participants who have the diversity of skills, competencies and experience needed for the Peer Assist. Avoid the usual suspects. Peer Assist works well with six to eight people; break up larger groups so everyone has the opportunity to voice experiences and ideas.
- Be clear on what you want out of the Peer Assist (usually options and insights) and plan the time to achieve them.
- Allow time to socialise in order to develop rapport.
- Spend time creating the right environment for sharing.
- Plan the event to allow a balance between telling and listening.
- Listen for understanding and for how you might improve your own activity.
- Consider others who might benefit from this knowledge, then share it with them.
- Commit to actions and keep the Peer Assist team updated.



## Timing (at least 1 hour 30 minutes)

- Introduce the session and divide into groups (10 minutes)
- Facilitator explains process and roles (5 minutes)
- Peer assistee presents the case (5-10 minutes)
- Discussion and facilitation (45 minutes)
- Validate notes and plan follow-up (5 minutes)
- Plenary debriefing (after multiple Peer Assists) (15 minutes)
- Close the session (5 minutes).

## Tips and Lessons Learnt

- In order to save time in producing a record of the session, have the facilitators of each group record the ideas and insights directly into an accessible format, such as a previously opened wiki, blog, forum, or simple document. The facilitator must be able to type at a reasonable speed for this to be useful.
- Avoiding the use of flip charts saves a step and minimizes waste. However, this can create difficulties for visual learners. This can be dealt with if computers and projectors are available for each group. In this case, ensure each group is close enough to a screen or a white wall.
- Arrange Peer Assist groups by language if required.