

Innovation for Everyone

Scenarios for Break-Out Groups

Participants in this workshop have been pre-assigned to a team for the break-out discussions. During the first break-out, each team will be asked to define a problem or challenge to use as their team topic for the remaining breakouts. We have suggested a scenario for each team based on the background and anticipated interests of most of the team members. We also assigned a “ringer” from an entirely different area to each team to keep it interesting. You may also define your own problem statement or challenge in the event your pre-assigned scenario doesn’t resonate with your team.

Through the workshop, you will be given assignments to use some specific techniques to help you tackle the problem in an innovative way. You may not know all your team members up front – but that’s OK, it’s a chance to meet new people at the lab. You may not have a specific interest in the topic your team is assigned or selects – but that’s OK, too. We simply want you to practice the techniques, so that you can apply them to your own challenges.

Have fun!

Scenario 1: Environmental Impacts from Laboratory Operations – Managing DOE and Public Expectations

Select a specific environmental event that might cause concern for both DOE and our neighboring communities. Perhaps it is concern about tritium in the sanitary sewer system at the Fermilab site. Or perhaps it is a concern about dust from the Open Cut in South Dakota. Your team has been assigned to develop some innovative ideas to address some new concerns, including both technical solutions to minimize the risk of such an event occurring and stakeholder communications to help minimize the public outcry should an event occur. How will you go about defining the concerns clearly enough that you can develop effective solutions?

Scenario 2: Laboratory Culture in the “New Normal” – Managing Employee and User/Affiliate Expectations

Concurrent with the many impacts that COVID has had on the laboratory culture, Fermilab has been implementing a new Site Security Plan that has many new elements – and many new restrictions. The impact on employees – and on our Users and other research Affiliates – has been significant, raising concerns in both groups about how it will affect the laboratory culture. Your team has been assigned the task of developing innovative solutions that will preserve the most important aspects of the laboratory culture, while helping employees and users/affiliates transition to this “new normal”. How will you go about identifying which elements of the culture really need to be preserved and which can be adjusted through creative problem-solving?

Scenario 3: Pitching a New Research Idea – Getting to “Yes” with DOE and Laboratory Leadership

There are many opportunities for scientists and engineers to present new and innovative research ideas to laboratory leadership and the DOE, from Early Career Awards, to Lab-Directed Research and

Development, to partnering with other institutions on proposals to other agencies. While your team may be “in love” with its new research idea, you are not sure if it fits within the laboratory’s mission and priorities or whether anyone in DOE might be willing to provide funding support. How will you go about determining whether your team’s idea will be supported or if you will need to modify your idea (and how) to gain support?

Scenario 4: Making Procurement “Shine” – A lab-wide approach

There is no question that the laboratory’s procurement processes have been under fire for some time – both internally and with DOE. While it is easy to blame procurement for all of the ills, the reality is that every person in the process, including the Division personnel making the request, have a role to play to make procurement processes “shine”. Your team has been assigned to look at the entire lifecycle of a procurement, from forecasting the need for major acquisitions to preparing requisitions to writing statements of work to actual emplacement of the subcontract. Who will you need to engage with to understand the current process – and its issues – to develop innovative, lab-wide approach to a more streamlined process?

Scenario 5: New Program “Start-Ups” – Planning for Success

Fermilab is a highly matrixed organization. New program “start-ups”, such as those led by the IARC team, the SQMS Center, or the emerging opportunities in AI/ML and microelectronics, are often at a disadvantage at securing technical support from other Divisions or Sections of the laboratory compared to the large projects and programs that are already in place. These “start-ups” can also create new staffing requirements in the mission support areas. Your team has been assigned to identify ways that the laboratory can help these new start-ups be more effective at planning resource needs and securing the necessary support from other parts of the laboratory to ensure success. How will you proceed?