

Under-the-Hood Questions for Projects

Background Questions

- How did you come to realize that this project was needed?
- Why is that a problem?
- How does this problem show up?
 - Are you looking at data?
 - Are you receiving calls? From whom?
 - Is someone else complaining or concerned? About what?
- What gets in the way of solving it?
- Who cares about this project and why?
- Who realized this project was necessary?
- Who is most interested? Least interested?
- What is your most important requirement?
- What is your biggest worry about this project?
- What's at risk here for you? For the agency? For the jurisdiction?
 - What could go wrong?
 - Why would that matter?

Outcome Questions

- What is your desired outcome?
- If successful, what will be different?
- How will you know?
- What does success look like?
- How will you know if the project is successful?

Why Questions

- Why does it matter to solve the problem? For the agency, the jurisdiction?
- Why is this important to you, personally?
- Tell me more...
 - Why is the schedule such an important factor?
 - We always want projects to come in on budget, why is this one particularly important for budget?
- Why are you doing this project?
- Why is this project at the top of the funding list?
- Why is this project exciting for you? For the agency? For the jurisdiction?

How Questions

- Who is impacted by this project?
- Who needs to feel engaged and heard in this project?

- Who needs to trust you for this to be successful?
- Who wins? Who loses?
- What can't you accomplish? Why is that a problem?

Seeding Questions

- Is this project going to solve the long-term problem?
- What is your long-term goal?
- What do you think will be the next steps after this project?
- How long do you want the new relationships, projects, software, collaboration to last?

Other Tips

- Ask obvious questions
- Don't assume you know the answers
- Don't problem solve too early
- Let them feel their problem

Under-the-Hood Questions for Personal Relationships

Personal Background

- Who do you work for?
- What do you do for them?
- Where are you from?
- How long have you been there?
- How did you decide to [work here; study that topic; live here; etc.]
- What's the most interesting role you played there?
- What do you like about working there?
- How did you get started in this field?

Personal Connections

- Where did you go to school?
- What did you do this weekend?
- If you weren't doing this, what would you be doing?
- What do you do when you're not working? Listen for commonalities for lines of inquiry (but don't dominate the conversation):
 - Sports
 - Hobbies
 - Travel
 - Pets
 - Interests

- Do you have kids?
- What vacations are you planning?
- Comment on the photos in the office

Business Connections

- What brings you here?
- What's your connection to (ITE, ITSA, or a person....)?
- What's the most interesting thing you heard today?
- What did you think about the [presentation, session, demo, etc.]
- Tell me about the most interesting projects are you working on.
- What's the most exciting activity happening in your department?

Other Tips

- Make eye contact (don't look over their shoulder at someone else you'd rather talk to)
- Don't look at the phone. Period.
- Lean in to convey interest
- Be interested to be interesting
- Don't hijack the conversation
- Avoid your favorite topic (so you don't talk too much)