

# The EIP Peer-to-Peer Learning Guide

## How to make peer-to-peer support and learning effective in the public sector?

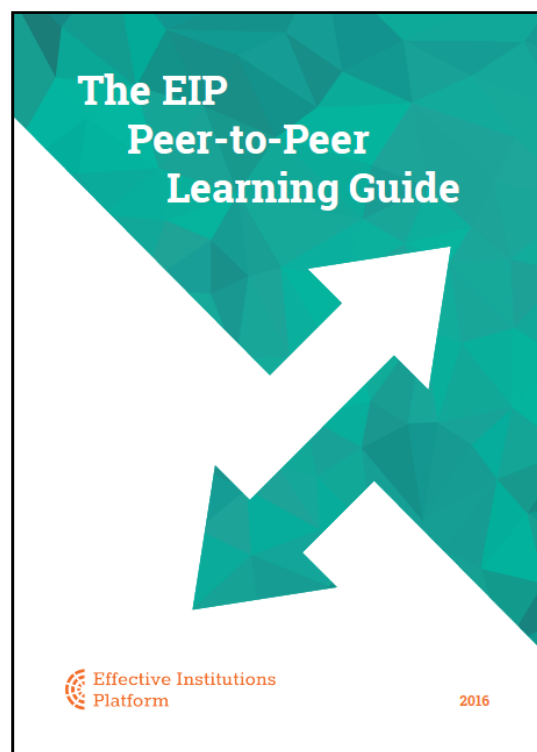
The Effective Institutions Platform (EIP) is undertaking a consultation on an innovative product that it will be launching in early 2016: *The EIP Peer-to-Peer Learning Guide*.

**Leading experts** Matt Andrews (Harvard Kennedy School) and Nick Manning (ex-World Bank) collaborated with the EIP to develop the innovative and user-friendly guide, which helps actors to think through how to engage in and generate effective peer-to-peer support and learning.

There is strong current interest to shift the focus for achieving improvements in public organisations and in public service delivery from pre-defined solutions to more applied approaches for supporting reforms in **contested and complex contexts**.

Peer sharing and learning are **innovative and alternative approaches** that are increasingly being used in the public sector to understand the challenges faced by public sector change agents, allowing them to tap into the experience of other practitioners.

The work of the EIP aims to **fill the evidence gap** on how, when and why peer sharing and learning work.



### What is the Effective Institutions Platform?

*The Effective Institutions Platform (EIP) brings together experts and practitioners from across 60 countries and organisations to discuss and work through the most salient challenges we face in strengthening **the effectiveness of the public sector and its institutions**. The EIP is the only global platform which provides a safe space for practitioners to engage in policy dialogue, knowledge sharing and peer learning across traditional policy and geographical divides.*

To access a full online copy of the draft Peer-to-Peer Learning Guide go to <http://www.effectiveinstitutions.org/en/our-approach/1>  
Please get in touch with the EIP Secretariat to provide feedback on this work: [effectiveinstitutions@oecd.org](mailto:effectiveinstitutions@oecd.org)

## Why 'Peer Learning'?

### Local Expertise: A Solution to the 'Tyranny of the Experts'

- Despite numerous experiments with peer-to-peer learning approaches to public sector reform, the development community continues to rely predominantly on **external experts** who are often unaware of the local circumstances.
- No one knows the challenges facing development practitioners better than the **practitioners themselves**.
- Each practitioner is privy to a wealth of knowledge and experience, but their experiences are rarely transferred to others. By **passing this expertise** on to practitioners in other countries and ensuring it is shared within one's own country, practitioners can build on past experiences.

*"The long-term personal relationships established through the peer learning facility were of great value. In addition to the technical support, peer learning was helpful for reviewing options for forming and operating the change team."*

**Edit Németh,**  
*Ministry for National Economy,  
Hungary*

### Peer Learning & Learning Alliances: Creating Meaningful Linkages

- **Peer learning** fosters the transfer of deep, relevant tacit knowledge and promotes the diffusion of this knowledge back into countries and organisations where it can create impact at scale.
- **Every country is different.** Every public sector reform or change initiative is different, too. Peer learning allows for this diversity as peers themselves adapt the approach to their needs.
- **Peer-to-Peer Learning Alliances** are collaborative multi-stakeholder groupings of organisations that are willing to actively share experiences on and approaches to public sector reforms and learn from each other's successes, challenges, strengths and weaknesses, to achieve better results.
- Emerging evidence suggests **peer learning is effective** but there is a need to carefully design peer learning initiatives.

*"It helped me to learn about prioritising change, identifying the immediate challenge amongst a long list of problems, and reflecting on how to strike a balance between whole-of-government reforms and narrower focus on specific reform adaption."*

**Joe Abah,**  
*Bureau of Public Sector  
Reforms, Nigeria*

## The EIP Peer-to-Peer Learning Guide

- This guide builds on research about the **peer learning process**, which reflected on the experience facilitating peer learning engagement and peer learners themselves.
- The guide is not a set recipe for peer learning, but identifies principles of effective peer learning as well as key stages of peer learning processes as well as related **questions** (see 'A stylised peer learning process map').
- This guide, produced by the EIP and moulded by its members, will be further improved and refined leveraging insights for pilot **EIP Peer-to-Peer Learning Alliances**.
- Over time the guide will become a **repository of first-hand knowledge and experience** on peer learning in public sector reforms, made for and by practitioners.

*"Peer learning is a way of exchanging experiences between colleagues doing a similar job but working in different contexts, with the aim of unblocking reform obstacles and avoiding traps."*

**Jean-Paul Mabaya,**  
*Prime Minister's Office,  
Democratic Republic of  
Congo*

# A stylised peer learning process map

Pre-foundational phase: Consideration given to engaging groups of peers

## 1 Peer group foundational engagement established

### Tools

- › Purposeful matching
- › Group meetings
- › Common assessment product
- › Peer knowledge products
- › Training sessions
- › Expert peer review
- › Single- or multi-peer self-assessment



### Risks

- › “Magic bullet” thinking – “it’s peer engagement, so it must be peer learning, so it must be good”

### Risk Management

- › Structured assessment of the overall purpose of the engagement
- › Scoping the demand

## Achieves sustained contact between individuals 2

### Tools

- › Paired engagements
- › Online networking
- › Site visits
- › Joint peer activities
- › Community publications
- › Peer produced knowledge products



### Risks

- › Hitting formal target but missing the politically-smart point

### Risk Management

- › Exercises to help establish commitment and trust within the peer learning community
- › Activities for maintaining momentum

## 3 Learning outcomes achieved (technical skills, flexibility, political savvy, constructive subversion)

### Tools

- › Peer produced products
- › Site visits
- › Joint activities
- › Community publications
- › Single- or multi-peer reflection
- › Good-natured competition
- › Defining learning objectives



### Risks

- › Standard reform solutions are promulgated via peer learning
- › Scoping the demand

### Risk Management

- › Using research evidence
- › Tools for meaningful and inclusive conversations
- › Including formal training within peer activities
- › Approaches to evaluate learning objectives
- › Tools to develop reflection

## Learning applied to create change at scale 4

### Tools

- › Individuals from the same organisation learning as a group
- › Ensuring organisational mandates provided to individual learners
- › Report back sessions
- › Domestic communities of practice to feed lessons forward



### Risks

- › Weak evaluation of the peer learning engagement
- › Learning outcomes not focused on results at scale

### Risk Management

- › Establishing links between the peer learning and the home context
- › Strategising through a “theory of change”
- › Activities to help in building negotiation skills
- › Developing coalition-building skills
- › Approaches for evaluating the overall peer learning initiative

For more information about the Effective Institutions Platform, visit our site at [www.effectiveinstitutions.org](http://www.effectiveinstitutions.org) or contact us by email at [effectiveinstitutions@oecd.org](mailto:effectiveinstitutions@oecd.org).

