



Peer Circle Discussion Topic Examples

Peer Circles may structure their meetings around any topic, and in any format that they wish. The following examples may be a useful starting point if groups are seeking ideas. These topics were compiled from ideas shared by participants in prior cohorts.

Each of the below topics is structured in the same way: A few pieces of media of varying lengths and formats that relate to the topic at hand that group members could read ahead of the meeting, and a short list of questions that could be used to start a discussion during the meeting.

Please keep in mind that these are examples and starting places – you are encouraged to find your own discussion fodder and expand beyond these topics!

Table of Contents

Leadership and Management	1
Addressing Conflict	2
Work/Life Balance	3
Career Progression and Development	3
Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Grants Management	3
DEI in Grantmaking.....	4

Leadership and Management

Relevant Media:

- ReThinking with Adam Grant: Brené Brown and Simon Sinek on the leadership skills we need to build (40 minute podcast; [Apple Podcasts](#) | [Spotify](#) | [Transcript](#))
- Leaders: When you don't know the answer from Molly Grisham (1.5 minute video | [YouTube](#))
- The Leap to Leader from the Harvard Business Review ([Link to article](#))
- Communication, teamwork, trust: Top tools for leaders (An article on the leadership philosophy of Atul Gawande, MD, MPH | [Link to article](#))



Discussion Questions:

- What qualities or skills have you observed in skillful leaders or managers? How do those qualities help them lead or manage effectively?
- What are your leadership/management goals? What qualities or skills do you have and/or need to develop in order to help you reach those goals?
- What type of feedback or external support would benefit you in reaching your leadership/management goals? Where could you seek that feedback or support?

Addressing Conflict

Relevant Media:

- Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument from Psychologysketchbook (2.5 minute video | [YouTube](#))
- 8 Steps to Effectively Handle Workplace Conflict from Forbes.com ([Link to article](#))
- Managing Conflict and Challenging Conversations at Work (Slide deck from a workshop presented at the October 2023 Health Research Alliance Members Meeting – Garth Fowler, PhD led a workshop on using assertiveness to navigate conflict and challenging conversations | [Link to HRA website page](#) | [Link to slide deck](#))

Discussion Questions:

- What is your ‘default mode’ for addressing conflict? In what situations is this conflict mode most effective, and when is it less effective? (The Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument may provide helpful vocabulary here, but formal ‘modes’ aren’t necessary for thinking about or discussing this question.)
- Consider conflict(s) that you’ve experienced that have been particularly difficult to navigate – what made those conflict(s) so challenging? How might you change or maintain your approach if you were to experience something similar in the future?
- Discuss one of the case studies in the ‘[Managing Conflict and Challenging Conversations at Work](#)’ slide deck (slide 7, slide 14, slide 18):
 - What would your desired outcome be for this case, if the conflict is successfully navigated?
 - What conflict mode would you engage to address this case?
 - What statements or assertiveness techniques could you use to articulate the problem and start addressing the conflict?



Work/Life Balance

Relevant Media:

- Work-Life Integration Is the New Work-Life Balance. Is Your Team Ready? ([Link to article](#))
- What Happens to Cause Burnout? Understanding Burnout from Work, Virtual Work From Home and More (6 minute video; [YouTube](#))

Discussion Questions:

- What does “balance” or “integration” of your work and personal life mean for you?
- What strategies or approaches are currently working well for you in attaining your ideal balance/integration? What challenges are you experiencing?
- What organizational practices are (or would be) supportive of you creating your ideal work/life balance?

Career Progression and Development

Relevant Media:

- Grants Management Professional Competency Model from Peak Grantmaking ([Interactive Model](#); [Downloadable PDF](#))
- How researchers and their managers can build an actionable career-development plan from Nature (despite the word ‘researchers’ in the title, this article is broad enough to appeal to just about any type of professional; [Link to article](#))

Discussion Questions:

- What are your current career development goals?
- What challenges or successes have you experienced in working to reach those goals?
- What resources, information, or skills would you like to gain in order to make progress towards your goals?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Grants Management

Relevant Media:

- Resources on the AI LLM page on the HRA website ([Link here](#))



- Responsible Adoption of AI in Philanthropy from the Technology Association of Grantmakers ([Link to webpage](#) – this site also links out to many other resources)
- AI in Grantmaking: Taking Careful Steps Toward the Future ([Link to blog](#))
- Practical Applications of AI in Philanthropy ([Link to article](#))

Discussion Questions:

- Has your organization incorporated AI into any of your grantmaking/grants management practices? If so, what tools and strategies did you find to be the most useful? What were the shortcomings?
- In what aspects of your daily job, or grants management in general, do you think AI is most needed or could be the most helpful?
- What reservations or concerns do you or your organization have about AI?

DEI in Grantmaking

Relevant Media:

- Resources on the Inclusive Grantmaking Initiative (IGI) page on the HRA website ([Link here](#))
- Research article: “Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice in Grantmaking for Health Care Research: A Pragmatic Review and Framework ([Link here](#))
- Video: “Advancing DEI Practice in Philanthropy: Grantmaking and Engagement (~1 hr video, [Link here](#))

Discussion Questions:

- Does your organization have a DEI statement or goals? If so, how does your organization’s mission, values, and/or vision relate to the DEI statement or goals?
- Has your organization incorporated changes into any of your grantmaking/grants management practices to align with your organization’s DEI values? If so, what tools and strategies did you find to be the most useful? What challenges did your organization face in implementing these practices?
- Are there any DEI strategies that you would like to implement in the future or learn more about?
- How have Has anyone in your group faced challenges from the recent passing of anti-DEI legislation? If so, how has this impacted your organization?