

BRAIN TRUST

WHAT IS THIS TOOL?

A Brain Trust is process for a group of organizations to serve as advisors and content experts on a particular topic area to guide a mobilizing body's work in that area. Organizations contribute their ideas and expertise through a series of ongoing virtual meetings, individual review or work time, and conversations with relevant stakeholders.

ABOUT THIS TOOL GUIDE:

100Kin10 unites the nation's top academic institutions, nonprofits, foundations, companies, and government agencies to address the nation's STEM teacher shortage. Together, we are tackling systemic challenges and getting 100,000 excellent STEM teachers into classrooms nationwide. To support other networks and organizations in their work on complex, systemic challenges we are opening up our toolbox and sharing what we've learned.

[View the full tool library >>](#)

100% of a recent 100Kin10 Brain Trust members agreed or strongly agreed that the amount of time invested was worth it.

“Meetings were efficient, well-run, and got me thinking about the work I'm doing in a new light. I'm always thinking about where our work needs to go next and the Brain Trust work has been invaluable in helping me think through the best direction for the work we're doing. Thank you!”

“I loved the opportunity to think about a complex issue in a group where folks all come with different backgrounds and expertise yet are working on solving the same issues.”

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO USE THIS TOOL?

Use Case:

- When a mobilizing body wants input, thinking, and expertise from the field to inform new ideas, programs, research, etc.

Process:

The mobilizing body:

- Announces the Brain Trust and invites organizations to sign-up to participate. The number of participants will likely depend on the topic at hand and the envisioned process, but should include a diversity of perspectives and typically include only one representative from any given organization.
- Facilitates ongoing meetings (virtual or in-person) and work product reviews to gather feedback and input from the Brain Trust.
- (Optional but recommended) Hosts in-person workshops to gather more input and feedback in a structured way. This could include a broader audience to review all current research and thinking, provide a wider set of feedback, and begin laying the groundwork for collaborative action.
- Integrates Brain Trust feedback into the work at hand to strengthen the final outcomes.

The Brain Trust organization:

- Participates in ongoing virtual meetings, reviews materials and other work products, attends in-person workshops (if held), and offers ongoing ideas, guidance, feedback, and expertise on the topic at hand.

Timing:



The length and engagement level of the Brain Trust can be as involved as is needed for the particular topic at hand. It may look like 3-5 virtual meetings over the course of 3 months.

INSIGHTS FOR SUCCESS



1. Ensure a crystal clear framing of the project, a specific outcome, and the process for how individuals will engage in the Brain Trust. With a large many people involved in a Brain Trust it is important to clarify the vision, goals, and outcomes at the start.
2. Start with a broad set of opening questions for the Brain Trust to elicit strong conversation from the start. Example: “WOW! Why are you excited about this plan? What’s important in this plan? / I WONDER...What questions do you have about this plan? Where do you see a potential opportunity? / I SUGGEST...What would you change or add to this plan? Who should we talk to or look at?
3. Be authentic in how you engage the Brain Trust. Avoid using them in a perfunctory manner, and prioritize using their feedback in a real way to guide the project.
4. If the project is more intensive, consider bringing on a consultant to support the process.



NEED ADDITIONAL RESOURCES OR SUPPORT?

For additional resources or details related to implementing this tool, please email to info@100Kin10.org.

NOT EXACTLY WHAT YOU WERE LOOKING FOR? TRY:

→ **Community Critique >>**

→ **Feedback Session >>**

HOW DOES THIS TOOL EFFECT CHANGE?

Research has shown that there are six qualities that drive sustainable and systemic change: coordinated, direct, diverse, emotionally-resonant, knowledge-driven, and measurable.

This tool enables change that is:

DIVERSE

Through a Brain Trust, a broad range of stakeholders can share their expertise, feedback, and ideas, to support a diversity of perspectives being included in the shaping and thinking of challenging ideas.

KNOWLEDGE-DRIVEN

Brain Trust participants can inform the work with relevant insights on research, organizations, initiatives, thought leaders, etc. that can be used to inform new thinking and work, to ensure the mobilizing body's efforts are building upon what has already been done.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

→ SYSTEMS MAP

- Together with network partners, hundreds of STEM teachers, and research and academic institutions across the country, 100Kin10 named the 100 underlying root causes of why it is so hard to get and keep great teachers, especially in STEM, and identified their myriad connections. This map — called the Grand Challenges — offers stakeholders a way to see their work with a 360-degree view, account for how challenges influence one another, find likely and unlikely allies with whom to partner, and access recent and relevant research. A “Systems Map” is an essential guidebook to anyone trying to effect a complex problem as it enables a complete understanding of the entirety of the problem trying to be solved.

[Learn more about 100Kin10's Grand Challenges website >>](#)

→ MOBILIZING BODY

- 100Kin10 is a network of 280+ diverse partner organizations committed to addressing America's STEM teacher shortage. 100Kin10 is governed by a backbone organization that oversees network activity and mobilizes partners to take action toward the shared purpose. The Mobilizing Body could be any organization or individual that spurs and leads others to action and supports them through that process — whether they are mobilizing a few, or a few hundred.

[Learn more about 100Kin10 >>](#)

→ COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

- These tools support collaborative action that addresses field-wide challenges (e.g. those identified on the Systems Map). “Collaborating Organizations” are organizations (or individuals) who step up to jointly take on challenges that are bigger than what they can effect on their own. This may look like a defined network, an association, an informal gathering of organizations, or something else yet. In 100Kin10's case, these are the “partner” organizations in the network.

[View all 100Kin10 partners >>](#)

→ QUALITIES THAT EFFECT CHANGE

- 100Kin10 has a hypothesis about what leads to systemic change, they are the Change Elements and they are — coordinated, direct, diverse, emotionally-resonant, knowledge-driven, and measurable.
 - Acting in a **coordinated** way looks like:
 - Aligning stakeholders working on the problem around a common vision
 - Working with a broader set of stakeholders addressing the problem to ensure efforts are mutually-reinforcing and complementary to each other
 - Acting in a **direct** way looks like:
 - Getting at a root cause of the problem you are trying to solve
 - Avoiding designing a programmatic, surface-level response to a symptom of the problem
 - Acting in a **diverse** way looks like:
 - Including all stakeholders who contribute to or are impacted by the problem in an authentic way
 - Acting in a **emotionally-resonant** way looks like:
 - Making the case for the urgency of the problem through appealing to emotion, empathy, connections, and values
 - Acting in a **knowledge-driven** way looks like:
 - Building from the existing research base
 - Adapting or integrating existing solutions, where possible, to recreating the wheel
 - Acting in a **measurable** way looks like:
 - Naming what success looks like
 - Understanding how the solution is contributing to solving the problem