



● NARRATIVE LAB RESOURCES

Running a Campaign Clinic

This Campaign Clinic framework has been adapted from the original, which was developed by the team at Australian Progress. You can view the original version [here](#).

Narrative Lab Change the Narrative, Change the World



Running a Campaign Clinic

Background

A Campaign Clinic is a structured, time constrained process for generating new ideas for a “stuck” campaign by inviting a range of rapid-fire, fresh perspectives. The new ideas come from a brains trust of fellow travelers – people passionate about social change but who are not working on your specific campaign.

The process helps generate new ideas, approaches and strategies for campaigns or organising challenges.

I designed this format originally for use within Australian Progress Campaigning Fellowships as a way to help draw on the wide range of knowledge and expertise in the room to help Fellows who were running their own campaigns and were “stuck” about “what next” for their campaign. In the Fellowship, we always have a cohort with diverse backgrounds and experience, who are working on different issues. The Campaign Clinic provides a safe space for generating ideas using the skills and knowledge of those who share your values but also have a little more distance from the context and collectively, a broader range of experience than any single person.

Campaign Clinics are fairly simple to run once you explain the process to people, and are highly scalable, as they are self-organised and facilitated.

Format

A Campaign Clinic can be run in 35 minutes, plus 5 min set-up and 5 min debrief – a total of **45 mins** per round.

1	Host explains the context and challenges and the specific help they want.	5 mins
2	Group asks host questions to clarify the context and challenges.	5 mins
3	Group brainstorms ideas. During this time, the host just listens and CANNOT say anything.	15 mins
4	Host asks questions to explore any of the ideas that came up during the brainstorm.	5 mins
5	Host closes by summarising what they are taking away from the clinic, their next steps and thanking their group.	5 mins

The single most important “rule” relates to step 3 – during the brainstorm, the host cannot interject. This is important to allow the free flow of discussion at this stage, and to make the most of the time for the brains trust to generate ideas without any evaluation at this stage.

If time is short, step 3 can be reduced to 10 mins, and steps 4 and 5 combined into a single 5 min slot.

Process

The set-up stage involves:

- Explaining the process and benefits of Campaign Clinics and how they work.
- Inviting people who want to “host” a Campaign Clinic to identify themselves and provide a 30 second pitch on their campaign and what they are stuck on. (Note: if you are doing this in the context of a broader program with a group, you could have people indicate on a poster sheet or whiteboard if they are interested in hosting, so you can get an idea of numbers. If it is a breakout session in a larger conference, people will need to simply pitch on the spot).
- Participants self-select which group they want to join. The process works best with 6–8 per group so suggest people re-allocate if any of the groups are too large or small.

Once the groups are established:

- Ask someone other than the host to be timekeeper. This person will make sure that the group goes through each step in the time provided.
- It helps to have someone facilitating the entire process – managing the pitching, ensuring that the groups form quickly, and keeping an eye on the overall time.

When groups are finished:

- Do a debrief in plenary.
- Ask participants for their observations and feelings about the process.
- Ask hosts for their observations and feelings about the process.
- Invite comments from the whole group about why they think it was useful and how they might do something else in their own work.
- Close with a vote of thanks to all the participants and wishing the hosts well with the next stage of their campaign.

Why it works

Campaign Clinics have been run as a regular part of Australian Progress Fellowships since 2016 with lots of positive feedback. Based on feedback and my own assessment, this format works because:

- Participants are not stakeholders in the campaign and so can offer ideas freely without the host needing to accommodate all suggestions.
- Having strict time limits forces focus and attention.
- Preventing the host from speaking during the brainstorm allows lots of ideas to be generated. freely and for the host to listen without needing to defend or explain any aspect of the campaign to date.
- The groups are almost naturally diverse in the range of experience and perspectives, providing a broader range of contributions than someone might normally be to access.