



Powerful Questions

Improving Ideas, Increasing Success

**2025 Florida Children and Families
Summit**

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Florida Human Services Research LLC

Why are we here today?

**To learn how to use powerful
questions to shape and polish
your ideas . . .**

**. . . leading to better
organizational outcomes**



What will we cover?

- **You already have a great idea—so why ask questions about it?**
- **What is the Insight Questions Framework and how do you use it?**
- **You have questions—now what about answers?**



What will we cover?

- **You have answers—now what about your idea?**
- **Your idea's finally polished—now what do you do with it?**
- **What could go wrong—and how do you avoid it?**



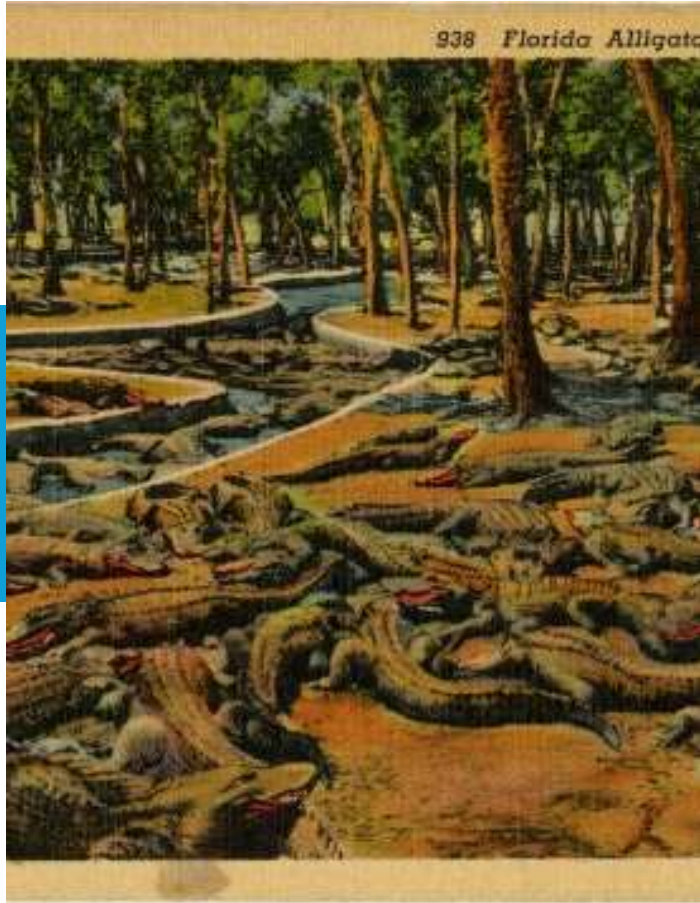
Who is Your Presenter?

Hilary Brazzell

- **Former Policy Chief for Children, Families & Seniors Subcommittee (Florida House of Representatives)**
- **Staff and advisor to task forces, committees, and workgroups at local and state level**
- **Managing Principal, Florida Human Services Research LLC**
- **Master in Public Administration, Harvard University**
- **(Nearly) lifelong Florida resident**

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**Great ideas
in Florida
history . . .**



and not-so-
great ones . . .

**In trying new
policies and
programs—
your
organization
is either:**

Achieving its goals—

or working against them

Following its strategy—

or changing it

Fulfilling its mission—

or conflicting with it



How can policy and program development go wrong? You can . . .

- Solve the wrong problem**
- Rely on false assumptions**
- Be unable to implement**
- Underdeliver**



**The answer is—
(asking) questions!**

**The important and
difficult job is never
to find the right
answers, it is to find
the right question.**

— Peter Drucker



The Insight Questions Framework helps you . . .

- **Solve the right problem**
- **Identify potential obstacles earlier**
- **Establish reasonable expectations for results and outcomes**
- **Create more options**
- **Build support for adoption of the proposal**





Overview of the Insight Questions Framework approach

A systematic approach helps you cover all the bases

--but every idea or proposal needs specific questions answered

The Insight Questions Framework approach lists *general* types of questions

-- for brainstorming specific questions to ask about your unique idea

**Ask the right
questions if
you're going to
find the right
answers.**

**--Vanessa
Redgrave**



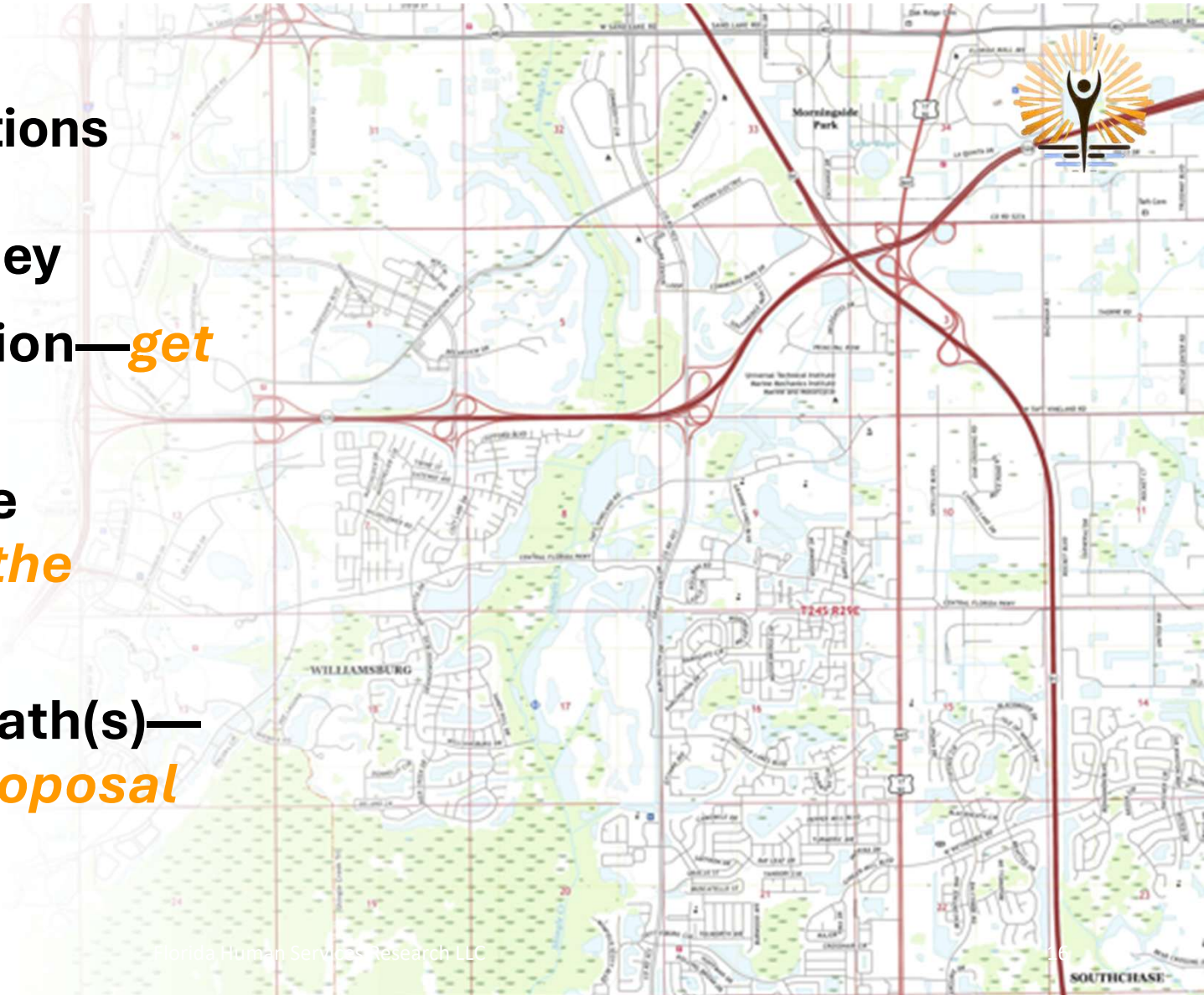
Attendee activity:

**Identify problem or
opportunity**



The Insight Questions Framework: Guiding our Journey

- Set your direction—*get the big picture*
- Understand the terrain—*learn the details*
- Pick the best path(s)—*finalize your proposal*



The Key Elements of the Insight Questions Framework



Set your direction



- What is the problem or opportunity, and the goal?
- What are the *minimum* requirements and *optimum* benefits for the solution to meet?
- What are the root causes of the problem?
- What is the proposed solution—and alternative ideas?

The Key Elements of the Insight Questions Framework



Understand the terrain



- What are likely considerations and impacts – with *range and risk level* – of best proposals? For example:
 - Cost
 - Workability
 - Administrative capacity
 - Support

The Key Elements of the Insight Questions Framework



Pick the best path(s)



- What are pro's and con's, based on research & requirements? How do these compare?
- What is the better option?
- How do I feel about this decision and the process for making it?

General Idea:

Let's have more foster families!

Set Our Direction Question:

What is the root cause of the problem?

MORE specific idea:

Let's retain more families that start training!

Understand the Terrain Question: Can it really work?

EVEN more specific idea:

Let's have classes in four new locations!

Understand the Terrain Question: What is the cost and how do we pay?

Even MORE specific idea:

Let's have a class in the community center in Fort Flamingo!

The Key Elements of the Insight Questions Framework



Set your direction

- What is the problem or opportunity, and the goal?
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For example:
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The Key Elements of the Insight Questions Framework, continued



Pick the best path(s)

- What are pro's and con's, based on research & requirements?
How do these compare?
- What is the better option?
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Coming up with specific questions



- What assumptions are being made? (who- what- where- when- why- how- how many)
- Walk through the process—how might things go in reality?
- What rules might apply?
- What would experts/key staff need to know to implement?

May need to do this multiple times as get new information and insights

Organizing your question list

- **Topic**
- **Responsible individual**
- **Source**
- **Notes**
- **Status**

--and your answer!



Next step: finding answers

- Check out websites/
use AI
- Read reports and
documents
- Talk to people
- Do surveys
- Review data
- Pilot test

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Question List Example

#	Topic	Question	Source	Status	Staff resp.	Answer	Note
1	Family analysis	Where do our candidate families live?	Data run/analysis of contact info	Done	JD	Southwest part of county	80% are in Palm Shores Harbor
2	Family analysis	How many families indicate multiple barriers, and what are top combinations?	Survey analysis	In process	JD		
3	Mtg sites	What are possible locations for larger meetings in the areas where candidate families live?	Talk to staff/look for gov't buildings, churches	Not started	PK		Waiting for completion of barrier analysis
4	Mtg sites	What are the costs/availability/process for renting/reserving?	Website/call	Not started	PK		Waiting for completion of barrier analysis

More on four specific elements of the Insight Questions Framework:



Cost



Workability



Administrative capacity



Support

Deep Dive: What is the cost and how do we pay?

What are the direct costs?

What are the indirect costs?

What is the return on investment?

What funding sources are available?

How sustainable is this financially?

**How would other programs and
funding be impacted?**

Deep Dive: Can it really work?

What is the expected result?

Is it a logical solution to the real problem?

Is there research confirming its effectiveness?

Has this been done successfully elsewhere someplace similar?

What other critical problems will remain that this won't solve?

Is it compliant with laws and regulations? Contract requirements?

Deep Dive: Can our organization make it happen?

Who specifically would implement this?

Do they have the capacity and capabilities?

What processes need to change?

How will we train staff?

What are IT system impacts?

How will we monitor implementation?

Deep Dive: Can we get the needed support?

Who cares about this?

What will they think?

What changes might they want?

How will we build coalition support?

What messaging will resonate?

Are there timing considerations?

General Idea:

Let's have more foster families!

Set Our Direction Question:

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MORE specific idea:

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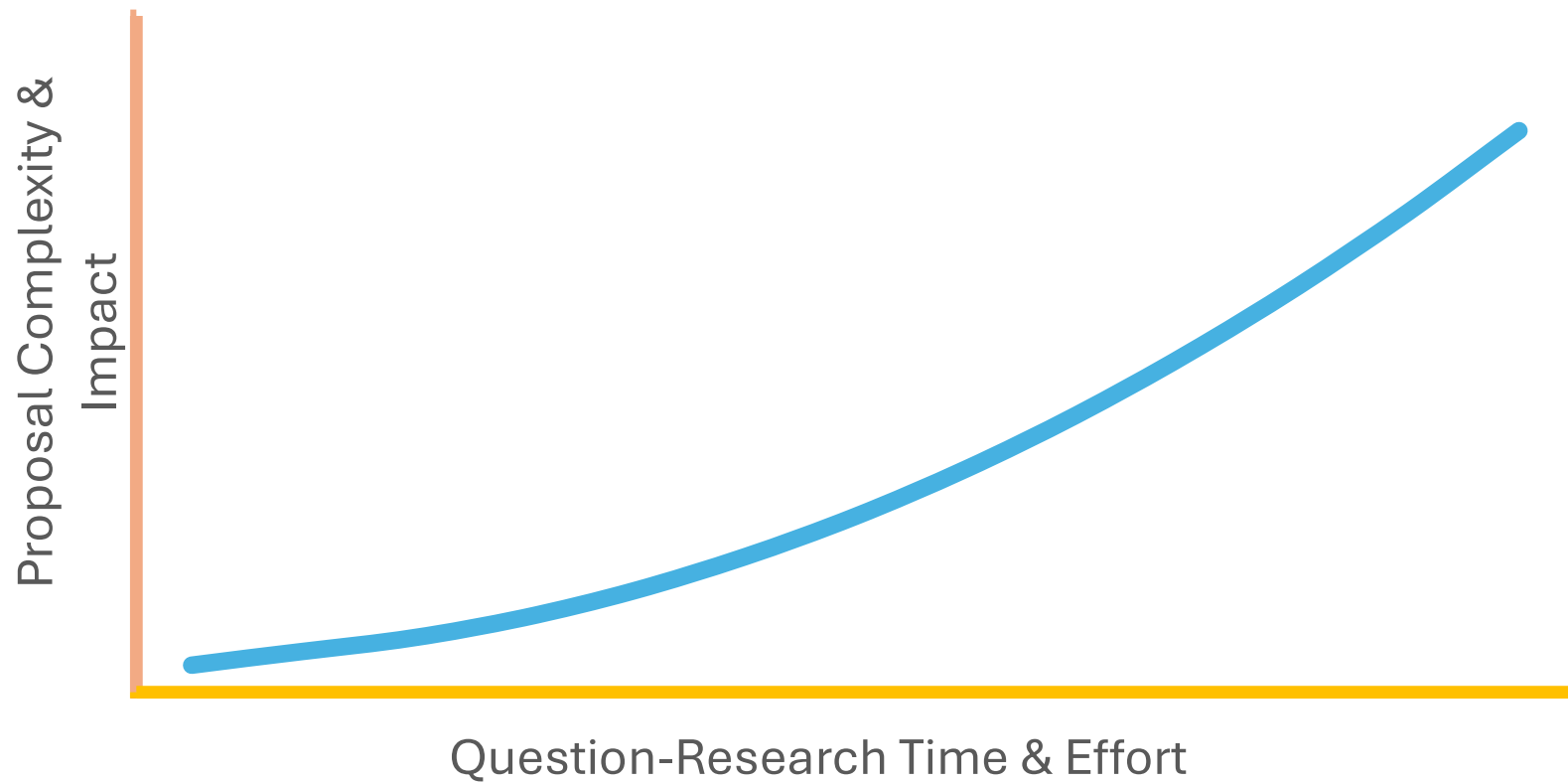


- What is the problem or opportunity, and the goal?
- What are the *minimum* requirements and *optimum* benefits for the solution to meet?
- What are the root causes of the problem?
- What is the proposed solution—and alternative ideas?
- What are considerations and likely impacts – with *range and risk level* – of best proposals?
For example:
 - Cost
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- What are pro's and con's, based on research & requirements?
How do these compare?

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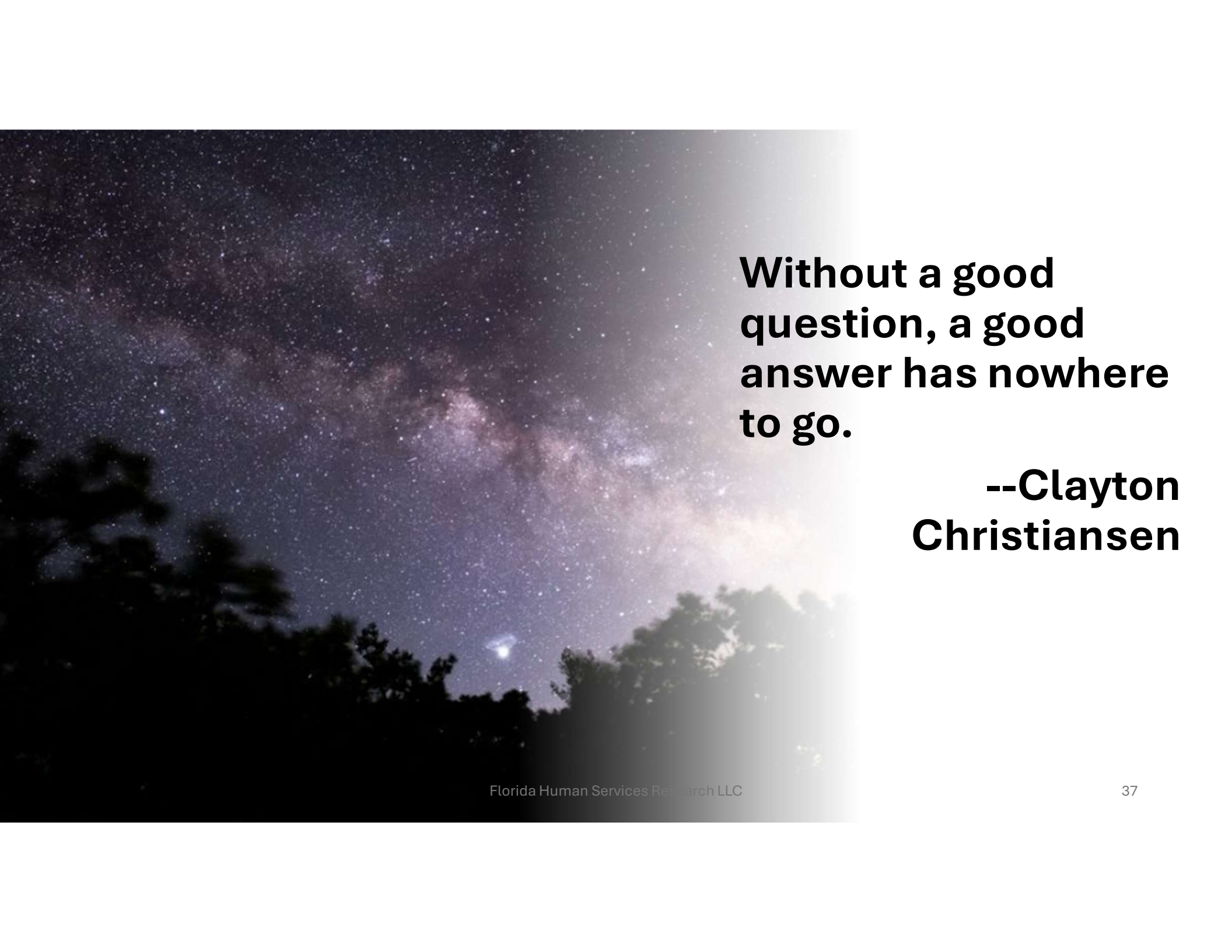
Match Time and Effort to Complexity and Impact





Attendee activity:

Brainstorm 3 questions



**Without a good
question, a good
answer has nowhere
to go.**

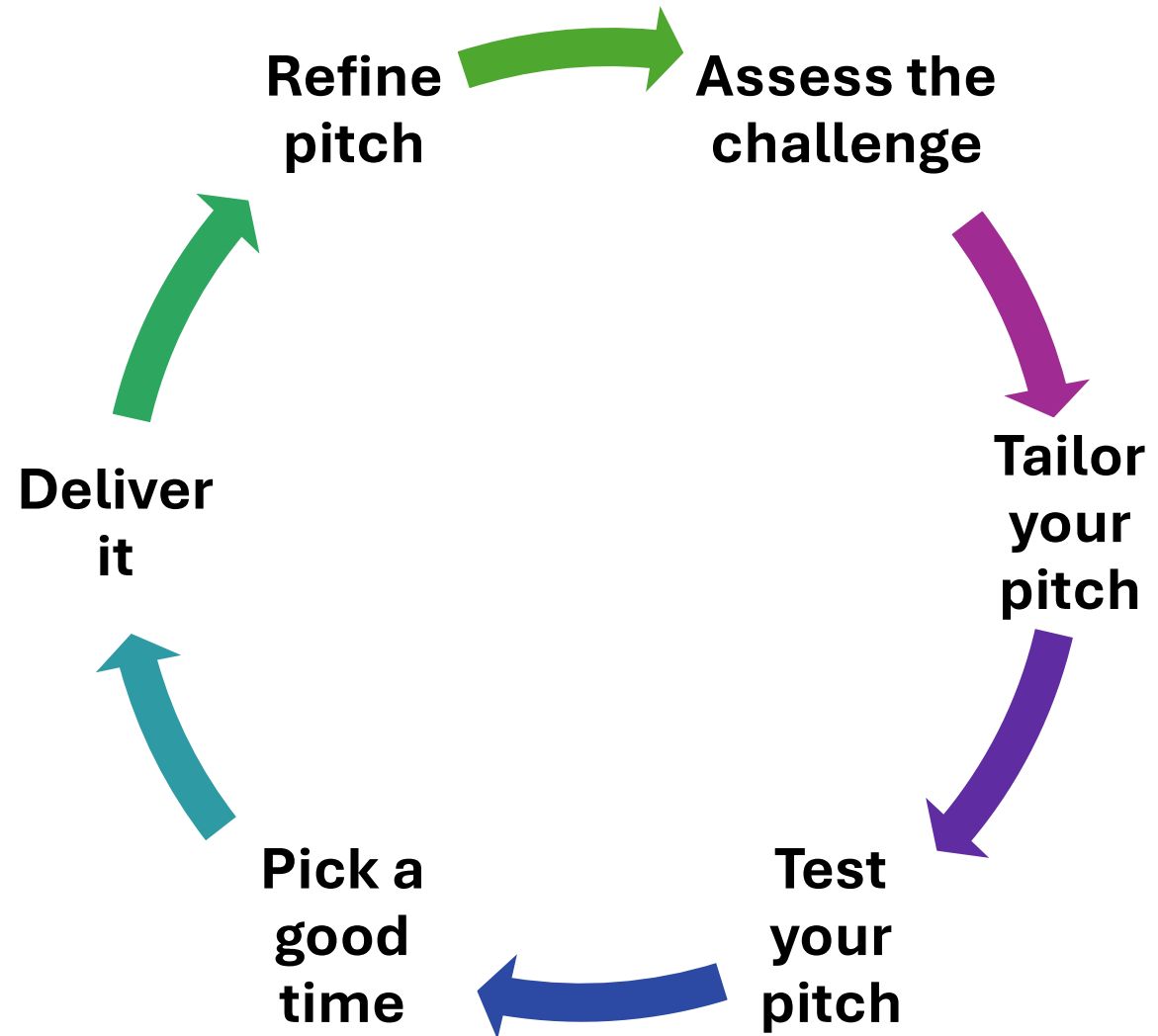
**--Clayton
Christiansen**



What next? Review and Refine

- Compare to goals and requirements
- Assess risks
- Do more research
- Consider other alternatives
- Revise (and even discard)

Closing the deal: selling your idea



Closing the deal: handling critiques and criticism

- **Have the right perspective:**
 - **There are pro's & con's for every idea**
 - **No one knows everything**
 - **Feedback is a gift**
 - **Criticism is better in private than public**



Closing the deal: handling critiques and criticism

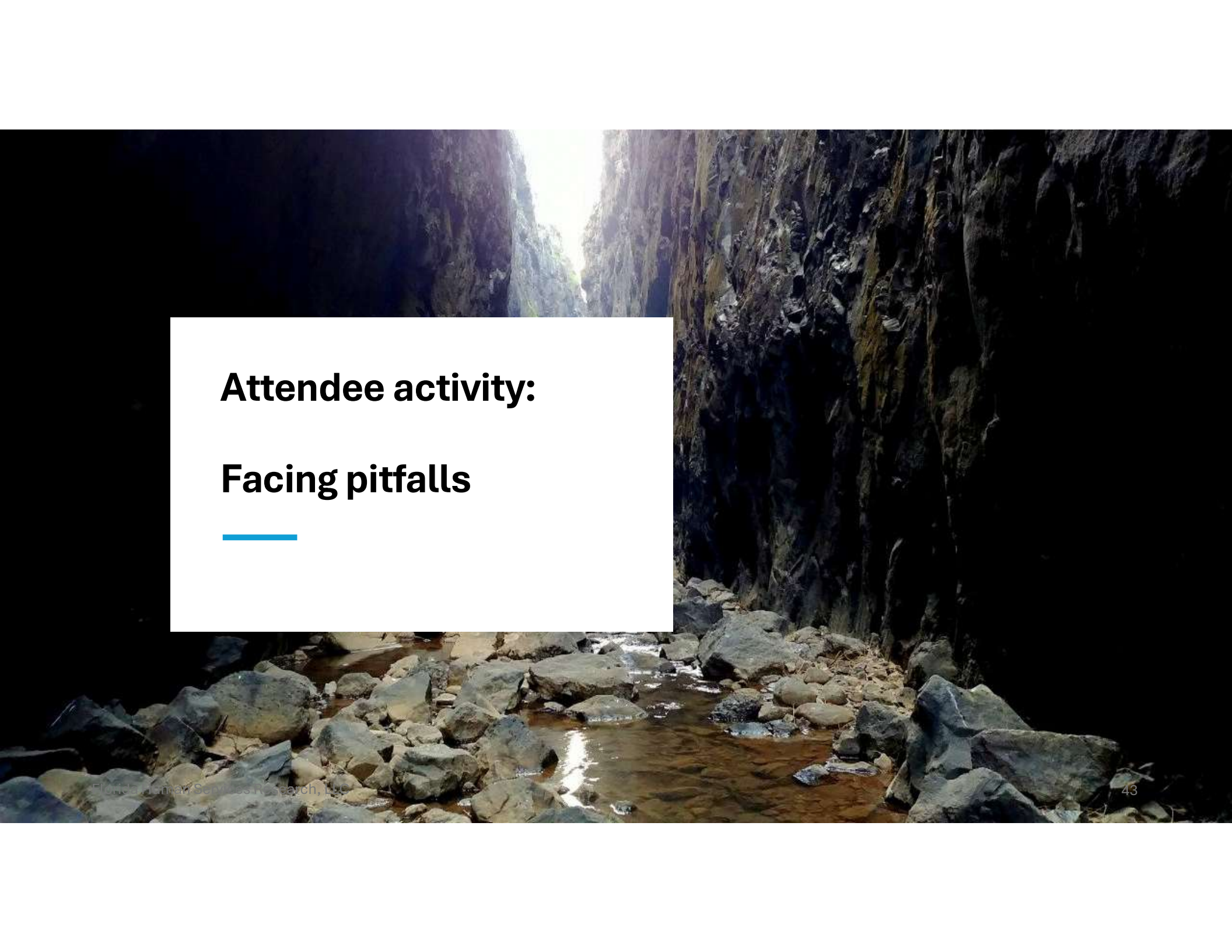
- Note specifics—*ask questions!*
- Reflect objectively
- Take action:
 - Research
 - Respond
 - Refine





Possible pitfalls—

- Desirability bias
- Falling in love with your idea
- Missing answers
- Analysis paralysis



Attendee activity:

Facing pitfalls

Making the Insight Questions Framework Your Own



Compare your initial idea to your final recommendation, to the decision, and later, the outcome



Review the leadership response and the rationale

What ultimately were the priorities and considerations?



Identify *your* questions that were helpful

Make a list for future projects



Evaluate your sources of information

See which were most helpful, where need more resources



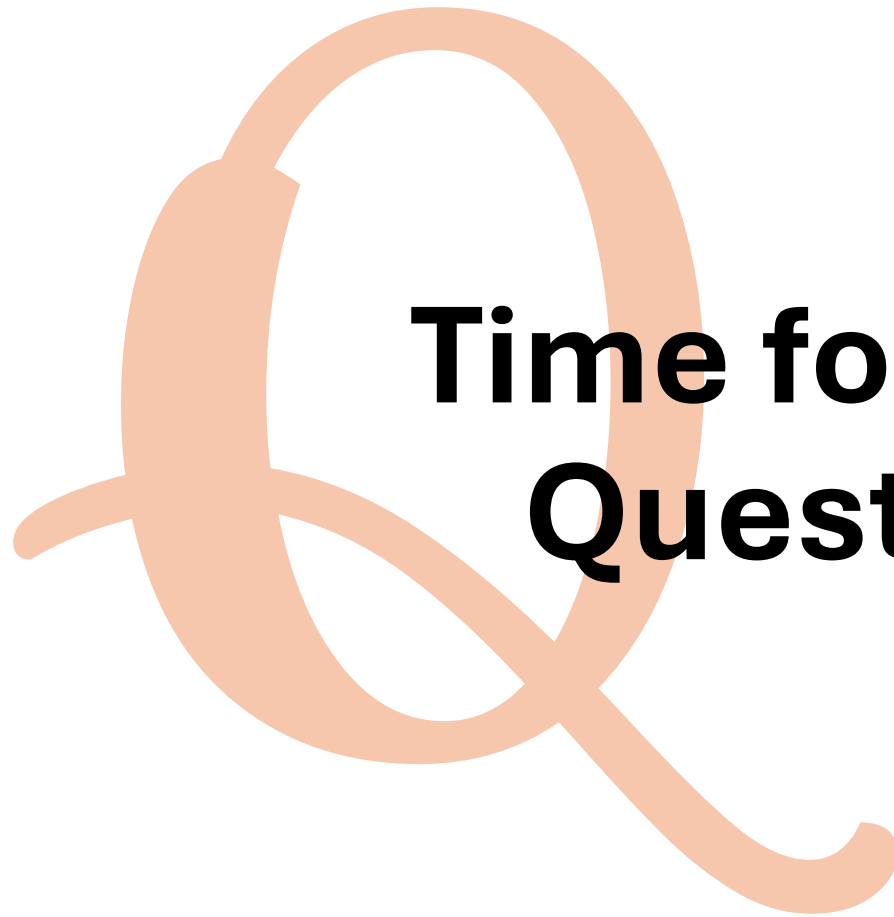
Consider the depth of inquiry

Did you go too deep, or not deep enough? What did you miss?

Key Takeaways



- **Explore your policy and program ideas through systematic questioning**
- **Find answers as best you can and use these to improve your ideas**
- **Get feedback and reflect, research, respond, and revise**
- **Be careful about pitfalls**
- **Continually improve your questioning process**



**Time for YOUR
Questions!**



How to Reach Us?

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