



**NYU**

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

**PADM-GP 4154**  
**Management Consulting for Public Service  
Organizations**  
**Spring 2021**

**Instructor Information**

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**Course Information**

- Dates: 3/24/21 – 5/5/21
- Day/Time: Wednesdays 4:55 – 6:35 PM
- Class Location: Remote

**Course Description**

Management consultants work in all corners of the public and nonprofit sectors on every imaginable topic—from organizational strategy to technology implementation, education to migration. But what is management consulting? Why do so many public service organizations rely on it? What qualifies you to be a management consultant? And what does responsible public service consulting look like?

Management Consulting for Public Service Organizations will answer and invite debate on these questions. You will learn how to look for what clients really want and how to partner with them effectively. Through our readings and discussions, we will break down the components of consulting into its core elements and provide tangible strategies and approaches you can apply whether you manage consultants or become one yourself. As in consulting, many of your assignments will be collaborative and require you to demonstrate interpersonal as well as technical skills. Your final deliverables will be evaluated by current public service management

consultants. You will leave this course with a more clear understanding of what a public service-facing management consultant does, having practiced some of the skills they use, and with insight into how you can add the most value to the organizations and sectors you care about.

## Course and Learning Objectives

By the end of the course students will:

1. Have an expanded set of consulting-relevant problem-solving tools
2. Understand effective consultant-client partnership
3. Have experience partnering with a client in the design of a consulting engagement

## Learning Assessment Table

<b>Graded Assignment</b>	<b>Course Objective Covered</b>
Class Participation	All
Individual Assignments	All
Group Project	All

## Assignments

### Group Project

The core assignment of Management Consulting for Public Service Organizations is a project that asks student teams to engage meaningfully with a client. This will involve 1) learning about a real, COVID-19 related challenge currently facing a state government, 2) engaging with the client to gather information about their needs, 3) designing an approach for addressing their needs, and 4) evolving your approach based on client feedback.

The client is a State Department of Health, trying to stand up a COVID-19 contact tracing program rapidly. In the first class, students will be assigned to a consulting team, comprised of 3-5 students. Each consulting team will be assigned to one of two consulting projects: change management or performance management. In Class 2, students will be given more information about the client, the context, the two projects, and an overview of contact tracing. Prior to Class 3, each group will submit a set of preliminary questions to ask the client, to better understand their challenge, needs, and expectations for partnership.

Then, during Class 4, you will meet the client. We have recruited public service management consultants, currently working on this exact scenario for a state government, to serve as our clients. The consulting teams will have the opportunity to ask their questions and extract as much information as possible from the client, to inform a proposed approach to the work.

We will assume that each consulting team wins the work. In Week 6, each consulting team will hold a project kickoff with the client. We will provide guidance on what should be covered during the kickoff meeting. You will develop a PowerPoint deck to guide this conversation. Lessons from Classes 1-5 will help you prepare content for and manage the meeting. During the meeting, your challenge will be to balance active listening, inquiry, and advocacy.

During the kickoff, your consulting team will observe another consulting team's kickoff meeting, and vice versa. You will be evaluating how the other team performed using a rubric. Following the kickoff meeting, each student will reflect on what should be changed about each component of their team's kickoff deck.

### Group Project Deliverables Schedule

Due Date	Deliverables	Individual or Group?	Description/ Format
Sunday, April 4	Questions for the client	Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Word document</li> <li>5-7 questions your team will ask the client to better understand their challenge and needs</li> </ul>
Wed, April 28	Kickoff Deck	Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PowerPoint</li> <li>Your team's deck should include:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Your understanding of the client's objectives</li> <li>2) Your approach - what will your team deliver and how; what will you require of the client?</li> <li>3) Implementation timeline</li> <li>4) Assumptions</li> <li>5) Questions for client to enable forward movement</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Thursday, April 29 (Day after Class 6)	Completed Rubric	Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During Class 6, you will meet with the client, and you will watch another group meet with the client</li> <li>You will complete a rubric evaluating the other team's client meeting</li> <li>The completed rubric is due the day after class</li> </ul>
Wed, May 5	Reflections on how you would adjust your team's kickoff deck based on the client's feedback	Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Word document</li> <li>Indicate what you would change about each of the components of your kickoff deck</li> </ul>

## Individual Assignments

In this course, 65% of your grade comes from individual effort and 35% from your collaborative group project. Many large consulting firms operate on a meritocracy model, so individual achievement matters. But client work is group-based and success comes down to how effectively the consulting team works together, in partnership with their client.

### Assignment 1: Reading Reflection (Word Document, max 500 words)

Choose any reading from the course, required or optional. Answer these questions:

1. What do you want to remember from this reading? Be specific: is there just one important point you are taking away or are you hoping to take the full framework with you?
2. Why do you want to remember it? Just because you intend to hold onto this idea / concept / opinion does not mean you have to agree with it.
3. Imagine you are a consultant for a public service organization you are familiar with. How might they benefit from the insights in this reading?

### Assignment 2: Reflection on Classmates' Group Project Meeting (Word Document, max 500 words)

Each group project will be evaluated using a rubric and each evaluator will use the same rubric: the course professors, the mock clients, and you. Your assignment is to evaluate a peer team's client meeting using the standard rubric. Each student will be assigned to a peer group and will observe this group during the client meeting class held on April 28.

Successful reflections will:

- Include responses to each element of the rubric with evidence from observation
- Include your ideas for how the group may have structured or managed a client meeting differently in instances where you believe the peer group failed to fully address the rubric criteria
- Show compassionate and thoughtful reflection

### Rubric Criteria

1. How well the consultant team appears to understand and respond to the client's core problem
2. How well the consultant team listens to and receives client feedback. Do they adjust appropriately to the feedback in the moment?
3. How successful is the consultant team's partnership design? Do they suggest a partnership model that makes sense for what's needed? Do they ask the client to take responsibility when applicable?
4. How creative, thoughtful, and realistic is the consultant team's approach and timeline?
5. How well prepared is the consultant team for the client meeting? How well do they manage it?

6. How professionally does the consult team present themselves?
7. How effectively did the team communicate and validate their assumptions with the client?

Assignment 3: Adjustments to the Kickoff Materials based on client feedback (Word Document, max 500 words)

Following the kickoff meeting in Class 6, reflect on your client’s feedback, and determine how you would adjust each component of the kickoff deck:

- How has your understanding of the client’s objectives evolved?
- What would you change about your approach? For example, would you add, remove, or adjust any deliverables? Would you ask the client to take on more or fewer responsibilities?
- Should you accelerate or expand the implementation timeline?
- Do you need to adjust your assumptions after testing them with the client?
- Did the client meeting raise additional questions?

## Grading

Students will be graded on their class participation, their reflective assignments, and their group project.

### Grade Breakdown

- 20% Class Participation
- 15% Reading Reflection
- 15% Reflection on Classmates’ Group Project Meeting
- 15% Adjustments to the Kickoff Materials based on client feedback
- 35% Group Project (10% Client Questions, 25% Kickoff Deck + Client Meeting)

## Course Map

Wk	Date	Topic	Description/Key Questions	Deliverables
1	3.24.21	What is consulting?	What is management consulting? How does it compare with other “helping modalities”? Introduction to priorities management and the group project. Review course framework and expectations.	<u>Required Readings:</u> “Consulting is More Than Giving Advice” (Turner) Humble Consulting, Ch 1, 3 to pg 64 (Schein) The McKinsey Mind, Ch. 1, 2 (Rasiel)  <u>Optional Readings:</u>

				The Consulting Bible, Ch. 8 (Weiss)
2	3.31.21	Relationship Management	A consulting engagement is a relationship. How do you create and maintain one that is healthy and productive? How do you balance advocating for your ideas with the need to learn what's really underlying a client's challenge? This class draws on group dynamics, reflective practice and executive coaching to deepen your core people skills.	<p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>Leadership on the Line, Ch. 3 (Heifetz and Linsky)</p> <p>"Becoming a First Class Noticer" (Bazerman)</p> <p><u>Optional Readings:</u></p> <p>On Becoming A Leader, Ch 5 (Bennis)</p> <p>"The Fear of Feedback" (Jackson and Stober)</p> <p><u>Assignment:</u> Client questions assignment due by Sunday 4/4 @ Noon</p>
3	4.7.21	A framework for analysis + A model for responsible public service consulting	In this class we'll apply a framework for the analysis of a client organization and outline a model for what responsible public service consulting can look like.	<p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>Banishing Bureaucracy: The Five Strategies for Reinventing Government, Chapter 1 (Osborne, Plastrik)</p> <p>"Value-Added Consulting: Teaching Clients How to Fish" (Fischer)</p> <p><u>Optional Readings:</u></p> <p>Systems Thinking for Social Change, Ch. 1, 2 (Stroh)</p> <p>"Why Design Thinking Works" (Liedtka)</p> <p>"Integrity in Management Consulting: a contradiction in terms?" (Hagenmeyer)</p>
4	4.14.21	Change management and performance management	Consultants are hired to design, plan for and implement transformational changes. Changes only stick when employees – from leaders to front-line staff – and other important stakeholders understand, buy-in and	<p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>"Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail" (Kotter)</p>

			<p>embrace the change agenda. This class introduces the basics of change management and explores the role a consultant may play in helping an organization manage major change.</p> <p>We'll also examine one model for managing the performance of employees that provide a service to constituents/customers.</p>	<p>Humble Consulting, Ch 4 (Schein)</p> <p><u>Optional Readings:</u></p> <p>Systems Thinking for Social Change, Ch. 5, 6 (Stroh)</p>
5	4.21.21	Estimations and Assumptions	<p>Consultants never have the luxury of perfect information. Instead, they are often required to conduct estimations based on reasonable assumptions. We'll outline how to build reasonable assumptions in order to effectively estimate.</p>	<p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>"McREDD: How McKinsey 'cost-curves' are distorting REDD" (Dyer)</p> <p>"McKinsey defends its climate costs slide rule" (Wynn)</p> <p><u>Assignments:</u> Individual Reading Reflection Assignment Due</p>
6	4.28.21	Group project: client / consultant meetings	<p>Student consultants discuss their implementation plans with mock clients, live.</p>	<p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>None</p> <p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kick-off Deck</li> <li>• Consultant/Client Meetings in Class</li> </ul>
7	5.5.21	Client meetings reflection + Managing consultants as a client	<p>Reflect on the group project experience. What will you take forward with you to your future role as a consultant or client?</p>	<p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>None</p> <p><u>Optional Readings:</u></p> <p>Managing consultants: a practical guide for busy public sector managers, Ch. 2 (Dobes)</p> <p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual Rubric Assignment Due 4.29.21</li> <li>• Adjustments to the Kickoff Materials due before class</li> </ul>

## Required Readings

Learning resources are required as outlined in the Course Map section.

<b>Titles</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Media/ Source</b>	<b>Read By:</b>
“Consulting is More Than Giving Advice”	Arthur N. Turner	Article/ Harvard Business Review	Class 1
Humble Consulting, Ch 1, 3 to page 64 (not case 4)	Edgar H. Schein	Book Chapter	Class 1
The McKinsey Mind, Ch. 1, 2	Ethan Rasiel	Book Chapter	Class 1
Leadership on the Line, Chapter 3 “Get on the Balcony”	Heifetz and Linsky	Book Chapter	Class 2
“Becoming a First Class Noticer”	Max Bazerman	Article/ Harvard Business Review	Class 2
Banishing Bureaucracy: The Five Strategies for Reinventing Government, Chapter 1	David Osborne and Peter Plastrik	Book Chapter	Class 3
“Value-Added Consulting: Teaching Clients How to Fish”	Daryl Fischer	Article/ Curator: The Museum Journal	Class 3
“Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail”	John P. Kotter	Article/ Harvard Business Review	Class 4
Humble Consulting, Ch 4	Edgar H. Schein	Book Chapter	Class 4
“McREDD: How McKinsey ‘cost-curves’ are distorting REDD”	Nathaniel Dyer and Simon Counsell	Report/ Rainforest Foundation	Class 5
“McKinsey defends its climate costs slide rule”	Gerald Wynn	Article/ Reuters	Class 5

## NYU Classes

All announcements, resources, and assignments will be delivered through the NYU Classes site. I may modify assignments, due dates, and other aspects of the course as we go through the term with advance notice provided as soon as possible through the course website.

## Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by [Wagner's Academic Code](#). All Wagner students have already read and signed the [Wagner Academic Oath](#). Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.



## **Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at NYU**

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities \(CSD\) website](#) and click on the Reasonable Accommodations and How to Register tab or call or email CSD at (212-998-4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu)) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

## **NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays**

[NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with the project kickoff meeting (Class 6) to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.