

Working with Consultants

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<http://movetoendviolence.org/about-us/our-story>

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1. What resulted from the consulting project that was transformative?

Pamela: We have an operational program with a team of consultants that runs that program. This team works directly with me and we have a tight accountability and financial relationship, closely with the implementing team. Move to End Violence is meant to strengthen the movement to end violence against women and girls. We've been at it going on twenty months with a multi-faceted program – whole range of supports to leaders. Hanh has been with us since the beginning, helping us think through how to measure our success collectively. For me, we're true partners in the real sense of the word. Hanh asks challenging questions... the work is not really neat like Hanh only does X and the foundation only does Y. We are figuring things out together as we go, and that's been the most transformative piece. Hanh is showing up in the room, with us, in all of the convenings, even faculty meetings, as a participant and an evaluator. That has created an amazing dynamic. I believe it's helped her get the evaluation and a sense of things from being a part of all of that process.

Hanh: This is so fortunate for us. It's highly unusual to come on board early in the Initiative. They just finished the stakeholder scan and invited us to join before the launch of the design team. Being there on the ground from inception and being involved in the thinking about it has been transformative. There's a blurring of roles and an intentional revision of roles relative to movement builders. There's a consciousness about *power with* vs. *power over* mostly because Pamela is incredibly collaborative. She's been so respectful and engaged throughout. So unlike with some other funders, I'm able to be, in the true sense, an evaluator - being there in every moment as the Initiative unfolds. My input has been sought out and seen as a real time feedback. Our relationship is very close. We've had to negotiate that as I'm supposed to be "objective." Cohort members make me feel welcome, and I'm not seen as passing judgment on how they're doing. That's an important equation in there's a sense of we're all working toward a common purpose. The goal of this work is so transformative.

2. How was NoVo Foundation "ready" for this project?

Pamela: We are a very young foundation. We were committed to making a bold investment. A part of that commitment was to make sure that we would make a good investment and then to bring other partners in to support the work of the movement to end violence against women and girls. We were young and bold, at the same time, really wanted to cross the T's and dot the I's... to be responsible and bold at the same time. The other is the commitment to an evaluation and evaluator who reflected our values, cared passionately about social justice and ending violence against women and girls. That's one of the most important things about Hanh – her passion to social justice and this Initiative.

Hanh: They took the time to plan this well and a well-thought-out theory of change, and evaluation. They didn't rush into this work. That process took one-and-a-half years or longer, a whole 20 months before the whole Initiative was launched. The thoughtfulness was essential. The Foundation was ready to make a substantial investment over a long period of time. Even though the foundation was young, they were ready to make a ten-year commitment. That long term vision was important. The very fact that the Foundation, especially Pamela and Puja as they are very busy, was always ready to invest their time in this Initiative was key. There were many faculty meetings, cohort convenings that all represented an incredible investment of time and financial resources.

3. Assuming Pamela has worked with consultants before, what made this partnership with Hanh different? More joyous? More impact? And, for Hanh, you've worked with lots of social sector leaders, what made Pamela stand out?

Pamela: Two things that stand out: One is rigor; the very excellent work that Hanh does and that quality is totally dependable. Hanh's work is excellent, always. It's a pleasure to not have to worry about the excellence of the work. It's not always the case. It's a pleasure to work with someone who's always excellent.

The other is about Hanh's passion and commitment to this work. It's critical to our success. Her ability to show up in the room, how she is as a true intellectual partner to this work, and the trust we have built has been essential. It says a lot about her personality and how that has helped build our great working relationship. As part of this work, Hanh is capturing everything happening in the room. Then we debrief. Hanh offers astute comments based on her observations and how things can work better. That's always appreciated. Evaluators often make people nervous. But Hanh does not elicit that; people feel supported.

Hanh: I want to underscore the context of this work and how I am able to bring my humanity to this work. I've been able to bring my full self. We've cried, laughed, jogged together. That's enabled me to see the full dimension of this work. That's a given. That's the culture of the work.

Specifically, what makes this partnership tick is the tremendous respect I have for Pamela and Puja. It starts with the basic conception of this work. Honesty is always there to allow me to be able to say what the data is saying, and knowing when it's brought forward, it will be taken in a constructive way. I don't have to be afraid of being honest.

It is also a two-way thing. Accessibility is important. Pamela is very down to earth. NoVo is such an amazing Foundation. Some people may feel intimidated with Peter and Jennifer Buffet in the room... The Foundation really wants to collaborate and be about the work. There's a true sense of humility and being co-learners together. I have felt very supported in this work, to be able to go into territory that evaluators may not go to in traditional settings. And, evaluation of movement building is not an easy thing, and having metrics and knowing what to measure are not easy things.

4. Looking back, knowing what you know now, what's one thing you would have done differently?

Pamela: We have another eight years to go! The evaluation that has been done has been exceedingly positive. People are thrilled and excited about what's going on. I wonder and have a slight fear that when I'm in the room in such a small close knit group, no one wants to hurt anyone's feelings, and we're not getting the full picture. I wonder how to get more critical feedback and want to figure out a way to manage that more explicitly at the beginning and throughout.

Hanh: We do get good critical feedback from the cohort, and have had dialogue with [the Program Director] about it. They do show up in the reports, and would get richer if we can have more dialogue about it. I submit the report to The Raben Group [the intermediary for Move to End Violence], they then imbedded in their report our findings and recommendations [in their reports to the NoVo Foundation]. The Cohort is constantly asking for leadership, and that's imbedded in the recommendations about whose movement this is and who's leading it. Let the cohort have this space and power in Convening 5. I've been pushing, and it is clear from voices from the cohort, nothing is critical of a particular thing, but where's the authentic power sharing. It's there, and helpful to have more opportunities for dialogue so we can understand the feedback more intimately. People are very positive, are really enjoying this experience, and finding it meaningful. They always have constructive thoughts on how to improve.

5. On cultural competence

Pamela: Hanh's done it beautifully. Her cultural competence is related to building and having a set of shared commitment and values. That comes through. Hanh really learned about things further, went the extra mile to understand what NoVo was about. She asked a lot of questions, why do you think this? Why do you do this? They've been really good conversations.

Hanh: It's been a steep learning curve. The staff have helped by filling me in on the Foundation's perspective. It's been important for me to fundamentally understand, see and

value the importance of social change involved in this work. We would not have done this without that foundation of strong centering on the intersectionality of the work and moving it from the margin to the center of movement building. For me, it's been important to learn that and I've been eager to learn more about that. I get that. Even recently we had some thinking about how cohort members went back to their communities and ask what it means to serve those most marginalized in our society. I was interested in how those women of color engage in their communities, and white leaders in how they went back to engage their communities. Being Asian, I'm conscious of being cohort person of color in the room, observing the power dynamic at play, verbally spoken and formal and informal kinds of things.

Pamela: Often you are the only Vietnamese-American and now you are one of three!

6. How did you find each other?

Pamela: Jackie had heard about Hanh and went to meet her. I had heard about Hanh from other people and her name came up in other contexts. Don't think we did a RFP but interviewed a couple of people.