

PRESENTED BY **NC DOA**  
Department of Administration  
**Purchase & Contract**

NOT ALL BOXES ARE SQUARE  
Critical Thinking in Procurement

2025 **PEAK** BREAKOUT SESSION

ELEVATING NC PROCUREMENT TOGETHER

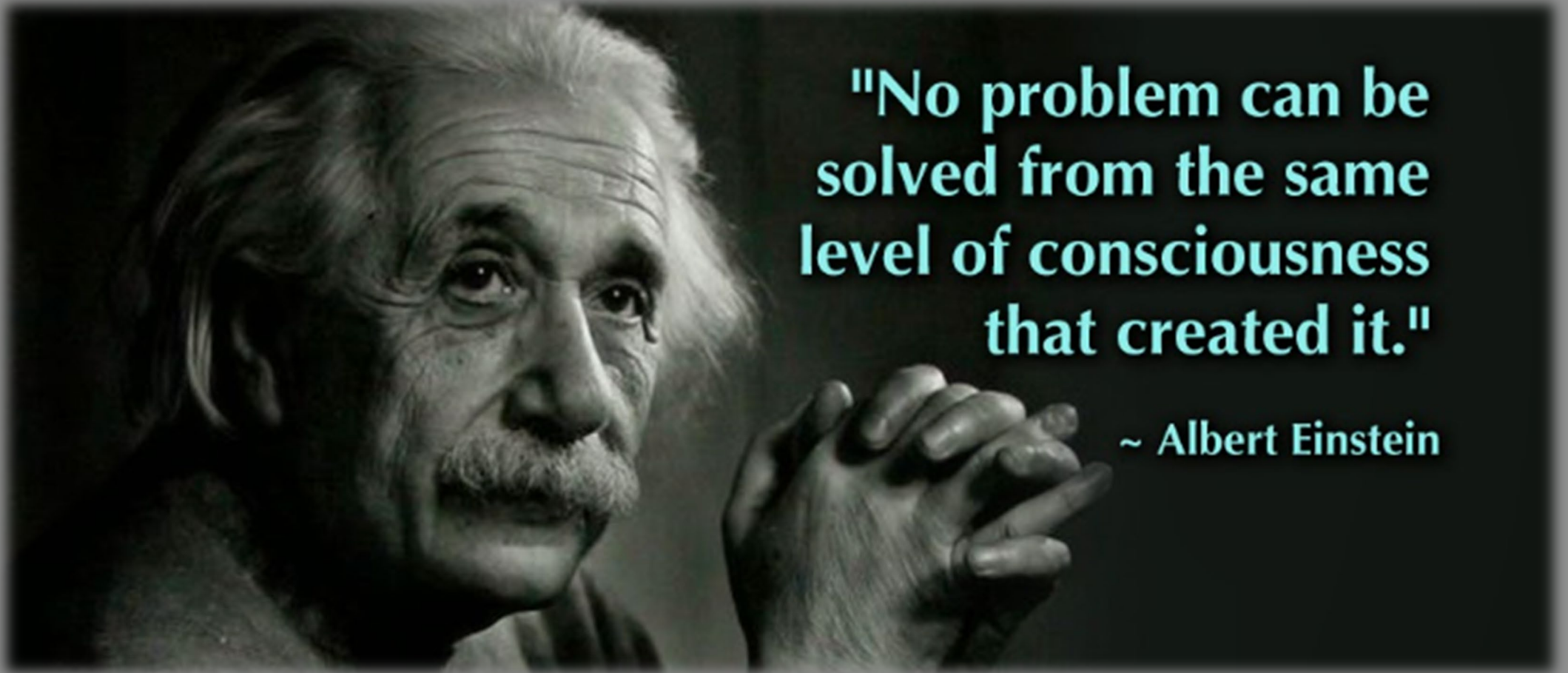
# Stinkin' Thinkin'... Critically.

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# Critical Thinking



**"No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it."**

**~ Albert Einstein**



# What is critical thinking anyway?

- Intellectually disciplined **process** of actively and skillfully **analyzing**, **synthesizing**, and **evaluating** information.
- **Goal** is to form a judgment through the application of **rational**, **skeptical**, and **unbiased analyses** and evaluation.



# What makes up a good Critical Thinker?

Application of critical thinking include  
**HABITS OF THE MIND**

- Self-Directed
- Self-Disciplined
- Self-Monitored
- Self-Corrected

Critical thinking is **not** a natural process, it must be **induced**, and **ownership of the process** must be taken for **successful** questioning and reasoning.





# What's Challenging Critical Thinking?



Overworked "TOO MUCH TO DO"

Assumptions



Everyone's gotta opinion!



Intellectual laziness....



Personal Bias's (conscious and unconscious)



No practice of rational thinking

# Techniques for Building Critical Thinking Skills

**5 Ways.... Ask why... repeatedly**  
Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?

**Assumption Testing**  
State Assumption, then challenge it!

**Understand Your Bias!**  
Journal, reflect, bias?  
Challenge yourself to see from different perspectives.

**Structured Thinking**  
Solve logic puzzles or brain teasers.

**Brainstorming** (no right answer)  
Breakdown all possible solutions  
Review Pros & Cons

**Devil's Advocate**  
Take opposite stance of your belief to test strengths, considering all sides of an issue.

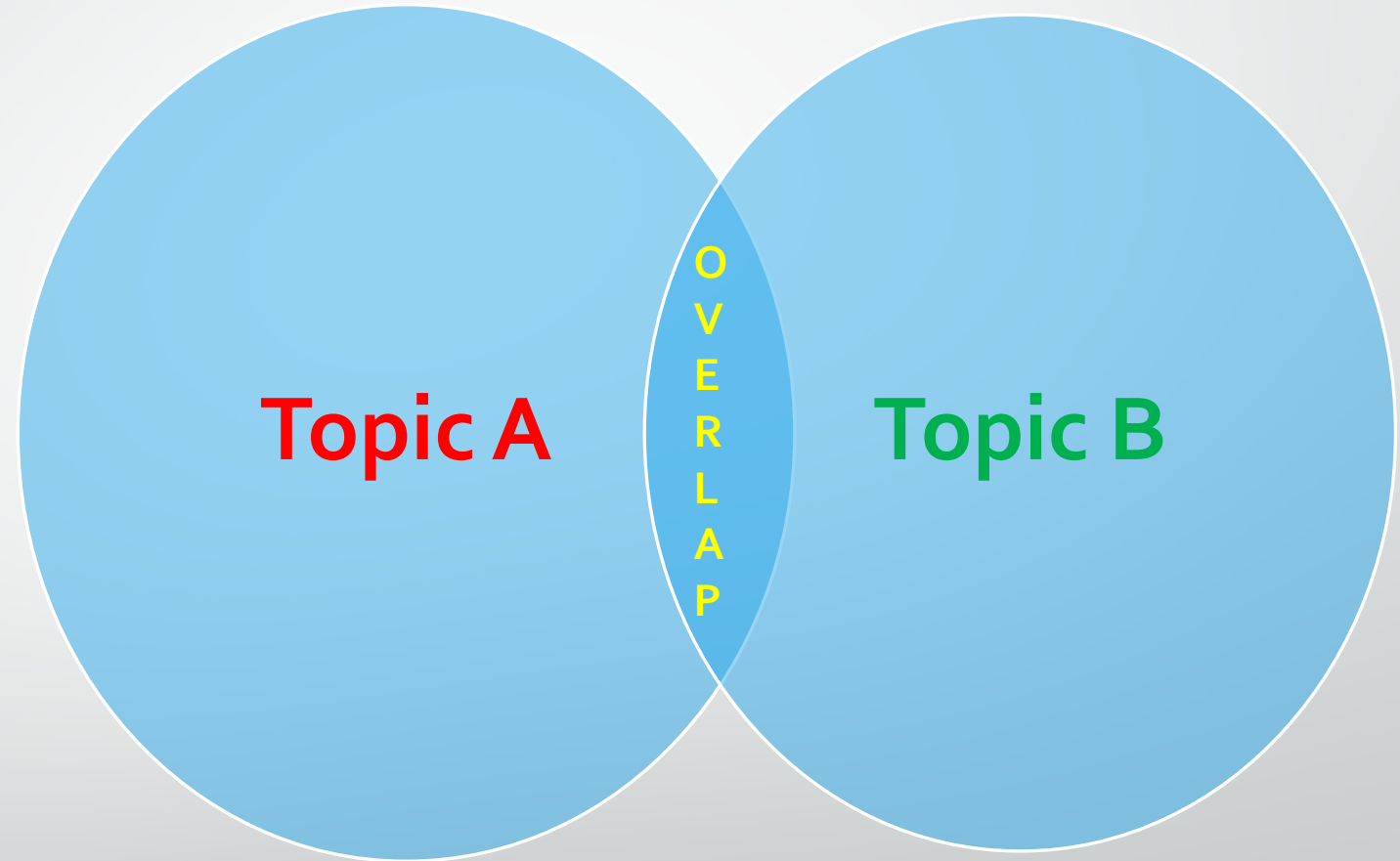
**Evaluate Arguments!**  
Google, strengths of reasoning, evidence, false representation, evidence support the conclusion?

**Question Yourself**

- What do I know about this claim?
- Why do I believe this is true?
- What evidence supports or contradicts this idea?
- What would happen if I accepted this as true?

# Venn Diagram Exercise

A Venn diagram uses overlapping circles or other shapes to illustrate the logical relationships between two or more sets of items. Often, they serve to graphically organize things, highlighting how the items are similar and different.

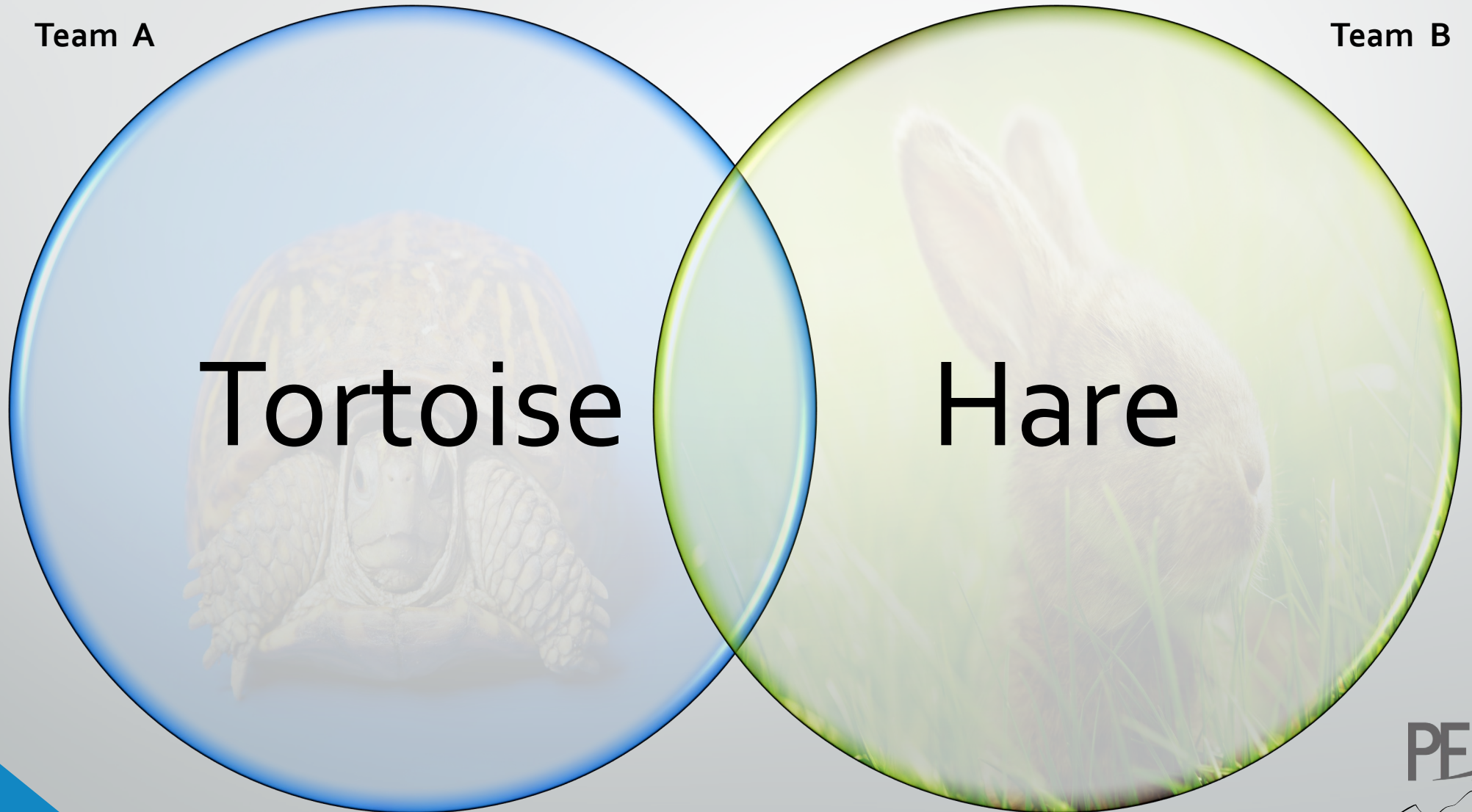




# Venn Diagram Exercise

Team A

Team B



Tortoise

Hare

# Pros vs. Cons



**Team A:**

List the pros of riding a bike to work everyday.



**Team B:**

List the cons of riding a bike to work everyday.

# Critical Thinking for Strategic Sourcing

- **Understand the Big Picture** – What's the overall goal of the project (reducing cost, improving quality, supplier relationship, what's important?)
- **Challenge Assumptions** – Think through assumptions (market, current contract, supplier relationships, quality, cost, delivery). What data supports these assumptions.
- **Evaluate and Analyze Data... Objectively** – What does cost breakdowns look like, supplier performance metrics, risk assessments. What can you objectively understand from data, what decisions need to be made from data?
- **Develop Scenario Thinking** – Think through multiple possible options and potential outcomes to help build resilience and adaptability in procurement strategies. If this, then that.
- **Cost Benefit Analysis** – Consider Total Cost of Ownership.
- **Think Long-Term, Not Just Short-Term** – What's the ongoing relationship with supplier look like, innovation or supply chain stability.





# Critical Thinking for Strategic Sourcing

- **Focus on Problem-Solving** – Identify root causes (why, why, why, why, why), brainstorm potential solutions. Don't react to the symptoms.
- **Learn to Negotiate Effectively** – Prepare thoroughly for understanding industry and entity needs, interests. What does a win-win solution look like. What's your negotiation plan, if it's not met.
- **Stay informed and Open-Minded** – Procurement is constantly changing. Stay current on trends, best practices, evolving industries. Keep an open mind about new ideas, approaches, technologies. Read procurement industry news, attend webinars, engage in discussions.



# Critical Thinking for Contract Management

- Engage in Strategic Contract Management – A strategic approach to supplier and performance management of the contract considers factors beyond cost (reliability, innovation, alignment with values)
- Instead of simply tracking metrics, analyze the data to identify areas for improvement and implement strategies to enhance contract performance
- Rely on others for idea. Lean on other agencies who utilize similar services for ways to improve contract performance.
- Regularly review contract performance KPIs with vendor and identify areas for optimization.
- Analyze the root cause of contract performance issues and identify alternative solutions.