Thank you for your interest in the P-Lab, the newest addition to the MIT Sloan Action Learning Lab program. Action Learning Lab teams have provided high impact consulting services to hundreds of companies and organizations. Our teams work on the problems host companies want to fix. This document provides a brief overview of the P-Lab to be launched in spring 2012.

Managing Sustainable Business for People and Profits P-Lab
Managing Sustainable Business for People and Profits is an intensive course that integrates classroom learning with real-world team consulting projects. Through their classroom experience, students examine the challenges, concepts, and emerging practices at the intersection of people and profits. The concurrent Action Learning Lab provides the students with hands-on consulting experiences, and it offers businesses a chance to tap the resources of talented grad students to address a pressing need.

Managing Sustainable Business for People and Profits is part of the Sloan School of Management’s focus on sustainability. At MIT sustainability means realizing the fundamental alignment between healthy businesses, healthy environments, healthy societies, and an economy that serves human needs. Sustainability offers many opportunities for firms and organizations to improve their performance while playing a positive role in support of human health and welfare. This course and the action learning lab shine a spotlight on these opportunities.

Action Learning Labs – Consulting Projects Designed by Companies and Organizations
The Action Learning Projects are designed by you – leaders of companies and organizations; and they address the real-world business challenges you face. They enable graduate-level management students at MIT’s Sloan School to apply their skills to address something important to you. Here are some hypothetical examples:

- A healthcare provider wants to assess options to cultivate the skills and patient care responsibilities of frontline workers.
- A food manufacturer wants an analysis of consumer demand for healthier products.
- A social capital fund wants to find more effective means for understanding the workforce management practices of firms in their SRI portfolio.
- A start-up firm is growing rapidly and wants to build a high performance work system
- A sustainability NGO wants to refine mechanisms for conducting social life-cycle analyses.
- A regional industry group wants to develop a cohesive approach towards workforce recruitment and training.
- A group of philanthropists in a region wants to assess the feasibility of expanding worker-cooperatives as a means to create jobs for low-skilled workers

We hope projects will elevate understanding of:

- **HOW** core business policies and practices impact the wellbeing of people and communities throughout the value chain. Projects that help to illuminate the joint gains and/or trade-offs of business decisions affecting people and profit might include: employment policies, talent
development, product development, merchandising and marketing, ownership structures and social benefit business forms, e.g. worker-coops or B-Corporations, supply chain management, strategic community engagement would all fit.

- **WHAT** incentives and forces in the larger operating environment of business enhance or inhibit these practices. Projects related to social sustainability assessment and standard-setting, finance and social investing, certification, employee and consumer voice would all fit.

- **WHY** these practices are good for business. Projects that analyze the business returns and broader societal value of these practices would fit.

We welcome a project proposal from your organization. As a first-year host for P-Lab, you will play a critical role in shaping this new program at MIT Sloan. We look forward to your creative ideas and working with you as a partner in this effort.

**How it Works**

P-Lab project teams work from MIT on short, intensive projects that address the problems and opportunities for host organizations and advance the field as a whole.

- Teams of up to four (4) graduate students, drawn from the MIT Sloan School of Management MBA and Fellows Programs, and departments across MIT will work with host organizations on a specific project.

- Host organizations, which can include large or small companies, non-profit institutions, and government agencies, set the project focus and negotiate with their student teams on the scope, schedule and deliverables.

- The students form their teams to build a strong mix of skills and experience, and select their top three choices of specific projects. Based on the interests and capabilities of the teams, the faculty matches the team with a host organization, and the host organization then decides whether to accept the team. Over a five-week period, the student teams will meet twice-weekly in class, and also work in teams outside of class.

- Teams will establish a weekly conference call or, for a local host, on-site meetings, with the host organization. This involves a commitment from the host of at least one-hour per week over the five-week period.

- At the end of the project, teams will formally present their conclusions to senior management, and deliver written reports and backup data detailing their analysis.

**P-Lab Schedule:**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>February 7, 2012</td>
<td>“Managing Sustainable Business for People and Profits” class begins.</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 15, 2012</td>
<td>P-Lab Project Proposals due from Host Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 20, 2012</td>
<td>Faculty and Host Organizations Finalize P-Lab Project Descriptions. Projects posted for student review.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late February-Early March, 2012</td>
<td>Team/Host Match. Host Organizations contacted to review the skills and capabilities of the prospective team. Host decides whether to accept matched team. Accepted student teams talk with host organizations to establish scope and schedule, obtain relevant information and/or data from the host organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 15, 2012</td>
<td>Work plans due. Teams and host organizations jointly agree to a detailed work plan for the April-May work period.</td>
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April 3, 2012  P-Lab Begins. Student teams start work on the project.

Week of May 7, 2012  Draft Final Report sent to host organization for review and comments.

Week of May 14, 2012  Lab Poster Day. Students from both P-Lab and S-Lab present their projects to the MIT community, host organizations, and sustainable business community

Week of May 14, 2012  Final Reports are delivered to host organizations.

**Host Organization Obligations**

Host organizations will receive optimal results if the CEO and senior management spend focused time and energy on the project and with the team and if the team interacts with front line employees. This is especially true during the weekly conference calls and if the teams travel to the host site. *Please seriously assess the ability of your company’s senior management to commit the time necessary to gain maximum benefit from a P-Lab team. We estimate a minimum of one hour per week over the five-week period.*

**NOTE:** Host organizations do not pay the students any salary or compensation. (MIT policy prohibits full-time students from receiving compensation for course-related work.) Thus, there is no cost to host companies for the project teams, but the host organization is expected to cover travel and lodging costs for any travel to the host organization’s office(s) or other approved project trips.

**Next Steps**

If you would like to host a student team for the spring 2012 P-Lab, please log into our website and fill out our brief questionnaire: [http://actionlearning.mit.edu/p-lab/apply](http://actionlearning.mit.edu/p-lab/apply). The questionnaire provides critical information that will be used by P-Lab student teams to shape their team project preferences and by the faculty to generate the best match among teams and host companies. Your organization’s questionnaire will be posted, along with all the others that are submitted, on an MIT website restricted to P-Lab students. *Please take the time to thoughtfully describe your organization and the project, so that students can fully appreciate the opportunity.* In framing your project, please think of the P-Lab team as working on a short (approximately 5 weeks) but intensive project with your company.

If you have any questions or need any clarifications regarding P-Lab or the questionnaire, please feel free to contact Tom Kochan ([tkochan@mit.edu](mailto:tkochan@mit.edu) 617 253 6689)

Please send your completed questionnaire at your earliest convenience. Final Proposals are due no later than February 15, 2012.

On behalf of the students of P-Lab, we look forward to working with you and your organization this coming spring.

Very truly yours,

Professor Tom Kochan
Barbara Dyer
Ryan Hammond