



World Cafe Background Information

Are you interested in finding out what your peers are doing and sharing your ideas on a topic? This World Cafe session is just the way for you to do it.

The session will begin with the facilitator providing an overview of the agenda and objectives of the session. This will be followed by a "highlight the essence" introduction to some key issues / observations about the topic presented by Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who will help to lay the ground work for some provocative discussion following this introduction.

The facilitator will then explain the process that will be used for participants to engage in dialogue, guided by specific questions posed by the facilitator.

In 3 rounds of supplied questions, each with increasing complexity and provocativeness, participants will be encouraged to discuss their experiences / challenges and insights about the topic. A volunteer participant at each table will act as a "table host" capturing insights on flipchart paper at each table to capture the key points of discussion. The table host will also act as a facilitator to ensure everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the discussion. While the table host will remain at the same table for each round, participants will be asked to change tables and group members (i.e. to shuffle themselves up to get a diversity of viewpoints) at the end of each round.

The dialogue generated at each table will serve as the "content" of the program. The session will be highly interactive and emergent in nature in that participants will "create" the learning and the wisdom of the group will be leveraged to support "sense-making" about the topic under discussion.

At the end of the session, a plenary style debrief will be conducted to surface trends in thinking, group observations and significant insights. Participants will then be asked to identify 3 stop / start / continue actions they could take in their own work as a result of participating in the session.

The World Cafe concept - a primer

World cafe is a proven, simple and powerful conversational process for fostering constructive dialogue, accessing collective intelligence, and creating innovative possibilities for action. The process was developed in 2001 by Juanita Brown as part of a PhD Thesis and was inspired by her work as a community organizer and corporate strategist. Originally developed in 1995, the cafe concept has been used in universities, corporations, government, non-profits and many other organizations.

The world cafe concept is a valuable technology to use:

- When you want to generate input, share knowledge, stimulate innovative thinking and explore action possibilities around real life issues and questions
- To engage people in authentic conversation, whether they are meeting for the first time, or are in established relationships
- To develop work networks
- To deepen relationships and mutual ownership of outcomes in an existing group.

Cafes work as a great interactive learning format because they operate on the assumption that:

- The knowledge and wisdom we need are already present and accessible (in those who turn up to participate)
- Intelligence emerges as the system connects to itself in creative ways
- Insight evolves from honouring each other's wisdom, listening to the middle, searching for patterns in knowledge