

Tool 13: World Cafe

Aim of the tool

To collect and link ideas on a topic of mutual interest.

When to use it?

Shared language phase - to share ideas, experiences, stories or project results; to solve problems; to plan.

What is a World Cafe?

The World Café methodology is a simple, effective, and flexible format for hosting large group dialogue. It is a creative process for leading collaborative dialogue, sharing knowledge and creating possibilities for action in groups of all sizes.

The technique builds on the notion of group intelligence. By organizing several discussion rounds where people are invited to discuss a topic of mutual interest in small groups, the technique enables bringing together individual ideas into one comprehensive message.



Source: World Café Community, example of a World Café setting

World Café - Step by step

World Café can be modified to meet a wide variety of needs. Specifics of context, numbers, purpose, location, and other circumstances are factored into each event's unique invitation, design, and question choice, but the following five components comprise the basic model:

1) *Setting*: Create a "special" environment, most often modelled after a café, where people feel invited to contribute i.e. small round tables covered with a tablecloth, plenty of paper or a flipchart paper tablecloth, coloured pens. There should be 3-6 chairs at each table. Small group sizes are essential.

2) *Welcome and Introduction*: The host begins with a word of welcome and an introduction to the World Café process, setting the context, explaining the etiquette of the cafe (see visual on the next page), and putting participants at ease.

3) *Small Group Rounds*: The process begins with the first of three twenty minute rounds of conversation for the small group seated around a table. At the end of the twenty minutes, each member of the group moves to a different new table. Only the table host stays to welcome the next group and briefly fills them in on what happened in the previous round, using the flipchart tablecloths as a visual reminder of the previous conversation.

4) *Questions*: each round is prefaced with a **question** designed for the specific context and desired purpose of the session. The same questions can be used for more than one round, or they can be built upon each other to focus the conversation or guide its direction. The question is at the heart of the conversation so make sure it matters for all participants.

5) *Harvest*: After the small groups (and/or in between rounds, as desired) individuals are invited to share insights or other results from their conversations with the rest of the large group. These results are reflected visually in a variety of ways, most often using graphic recorders in the front of the room.

When bringing together the discoveries and insights of the small groups, the group gets an opportunity to see and link all the harvested information from a broader perspective. Patterns can be identified and the collective wisdom becomes visible. Also possibilities for action might emerge.



Source: The World Café/Avril Orloff

Learn more

Brown, Juanita, David Isaacs and the World Cafe Community (2005) *The World Cafe: Shaping our futures through conversations that matter*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

The World Café website: www.theworldcafe.com

The World Café Toolkit: www.theworldcafe.com/pdfs/cafetogo.pdf

www.kstoolkit.org/The+World+Cafe

See a World Café in action: www.youtube.com/watch?t=74&v=6m7fpoAacBY

