



# The World Café



# DEFINITION

- The World Café is a creative process for facilitating collaborative dialogue and the sharing of knowledge and ideas to create a living network of conversation and action.
- In this process a café ambiance is created, in which participants discuss a question or issue in small groups around the café tables.
- At regular intervals the participants move to a new table. One table host remains and summarises the previous conversation to the new table guests. Thus the proceeding conversations are cross-fertilised with the ideas generated in former conversations with other participants.
- At the end of the process the main ideas are summarised in a plenary session and follow-up possibilities are discussed.

# WHEN TO USE

The World Café process is particularly useful in the following situations:

- to engage large groups (larger than 12 persons) in an authentic dialogue process
- 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 have established relationships with each other
- to conduct in-depth exploration of key strategic challenges or opportunities
- to deepen relationships and mutual ownership of outcomes in an existing

## *less useful*

- The Café is *less* useful when:
- you are driving toward an already determined solution or answer
- you want to convey only one-way information
- you are making detailed implementation plans
- you have fewer than 12 persons (In this case, it is better to use a more traditional dialogue circle, council or other approach for fostering authentic conversation.).

# Procedure

- **A. Overview**
- In the Café event the participants explore an issue by discussing and drawing in small groups or ‘tables’ for multiple consecutive sessions of 20-30 minutes. Participants change tables after each session in order to ‘cross-fertilise’ their discussions with the ideas generated at other tables. The event is concluded with a plenary, where the key ideas and conclusions are established.
- **B. Preparation**
- **1. CHOOSE CAFÉ FACILITATOR**
- **2. CLARIFY THE PURPOSE**

# *Explore Questions That Matter!*

The question(s) addressed in a Café conversation are critical to the success of the event. Your Café may explore a single question or several questions may be developed to support a logical progression of discovery throughout several rounds of dialogue.

## *A Powerful Question*

- is simple and clear
- is thought provoking
- generates energy
- focuses inquiry
- surfaces unconscious assumptions
- opens new possibilities
- seeks what is useful

