

How to facilitate a session

A guide to hosting a World Café — how to prepare the tables and questions, run the rounds, and harvest concrete proposals.

World Café

labs4change.org · Methodology Toolkit

1 Prepare

- Invite about 16–25 people and arrange small tables of 4–6 in a relaxed, informal space.
- Write one open guiding question per round (2–3 rounds), building from recognising the issue to proposing action.
- If the topic is sensitive, consider inviting practitioners as conversation partners, not lecturers.
- Assign a host per table, a timekeeper and a lead facilitator; provide paper tablecloths and markers.

2 Run the session

- 10 MIN** Welcome — explain the format and café etiquette: everyone contributes, build on others, note ideas on the table.
- 15 MIN** Round 1 — recognise the issue: each table discusses the first question while the host captures notes.
- 15 MIN** Round 2 — everyone but the host moves tables; the host recaps and the new group builds on it.
- 15 MIN** Round 3 — rotate again and move toward concrete proposals.
- 20 MIN** Harvest — reconvene as one group; each host shares highlights; cluster the themes on a wall or board.
- 15 MIN** Prioritise & close — agree the one or two proposals to take forward, and who owns them.

3 Follow up

- Write up the harvested themes and the proposals the group prioritised.
- Share them with participants and any partner organisations involved.
- Hand the priority proposals to your Action Plan or a prototyping session.
- Thank the table hosts and invite feedback.

4 Running it online

- Use a shared whiteboard with one “table” (frame) per group, and breakout rooms for each round.
- Keep one host per breakout room who stays while the others rotate between rooms.
- Bring everyone back to a single board for the harvest, and use quick polls to prioritise.
- Prefer privacy-respecting tools, and keep rounds shorter (10–12 min) online.