ENGAGEMENT 101
Café Conversations

A dynamic process in an informal setting mixes people and ideas, includes all voices, and surfaces new ideas and areas of agreement.

How it works

- People are seated around small tables
- The facilitator introduces a question, table groups discuss
- After a period, people move to other tables
- The facilitator introduces another question
- Ideas travel and build from question to question, table to table
- The facilitator captures output (themes, ideas for next steps)

When to use it

- To engage the community around an issue, proposal or vision of the future
- To break the ice among people who don’t usually come together
- To create a low-risk opportunity for all people to express their views

Advantages

- Works with any size group larger than 12
- Simple design, easy to organize and facilitate
- Easy to participate
- Invites natural conversation
- Everyone has a chance to speak
- No room for grand-standing by dominant players

Tips and cautions

- Sometimes difficult to find a large enough room with small tables
- Some people dismissive of “just talk”
- Important that the facilitator sets a welcoming tone and values the role of community conversation
- Follow-up is key, especially if the community is being consulted
- Could be followed by another process to move ideas into action

For more information go to the Resources section of the World Cafe website: http://www.theworldcafe.com