Evaluation Sheet: Evaluation Café

What it is:
“The Evaluation Café is a method for group facilitation that allows stakeholders of a project or program to evaluate its impact in an informal brief session.”¹ This can be seen as an informal focus group. Evaluation Café allows you to collect points of view quickly. It also facilitates discussion amongst participants and provides opportunities to understand participants’ different opinions and views.

How it works:
The space is set up like a café, with chairs around tables and decorations if desired (e.g. flowers, candles, a tablecloth, music, refreshments). Participants sit in small groups around the tables and have 20-30 minute conversations about pre-defined questions. Participants can record their answers on paper tablecloths. After the 20-30 minute time is up, all but one of the participants rotates to a different table. The participant left behind acts as the host and welcomes the new group, relaying the conversation that’s been had so far. At the end of the session, everyone comes together to discuss emerging themes, insights, and learnings; these are recorded on flipcharts (or another recording instrument).

Planning the Café: First, identify the main objective of the meeting (what you want to find out) and develop 4-5 questions that can be answered in 20 minutes. Decide who will facilitate the session. You may want to have more than one facilitator. Prepare the questions to be discussed.

Examples of questions:
• To what extent has the program met your needs?
• How has the program impacted you?
• What did you like and dislike about the program?
• How comfortable did you feel participating in the program?

If the Café is being conducted with members who have been involved in planning the program, you might ask questions that relate more to the planning process; for example:
• What worked well and what didn’t?
• Did we achieve what we meant to achieve?
• What would we do differently?

Plan how long your session will be, how many people will participate, and where and how you will set the room up. The Café can work with 15 to 50 participants,

though 30 is an ideal number of people. The session requires 1-2 hours. Ideally, you would seat about 4 people at each table. To create a relaxed atmosphere, you can decorate the space with flowers, candles, tablecloths, music etc.

**Facilitating the session:** You can begin with introductions and then you might want to set ground rules with the group. Explain the purpose of the Café and the process. Explain the questions that are being asked and emphasize that everyone’s participation is important. Before the end of each rotation (approximately 20 minutes in to the session), have the groups write down their answers on the paper tablecloths. Everyone but one person (the host) should rotate. When you are done rotating, hang the tablecloths up and facilitate a discussion around these answers. You can record key points from the discussion on a flip chart or whiteboard.

**Pros:**
- Can quickly obtain information about participants’ views and opinions
- Fosters group interaction and discussion
- Can foster a relaxed, informal environment for evaluation

**Cons:**
- Requires a skilled facilitator
- Information collected may require further analysis

**Good to use when:**
- You’re looking for a more informal evaluation activity that will generate interaction and discussion
- You’re looking to get group opinions about the program
- You have a large group of participants interested in participating in evaluation

**What you will need:**
- A large open space
- Tables and chairs
- Paper “tablecloths”
- Markers or pens
- Flip chart or other means of recording information for the group
- A facilitator
- Decorative elements and refreshments (optional)

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2 Ibid.