



Using the World Café to Improve Instructor Engagement: A Guide for Health Profession Opportunity Grants Programs



Building Pathways to a Brighter Future

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Introduction

The [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) Program, authorized by the Affordable Care Act, and administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, [Office of Family Assistance](#) (OFA), funds health care education and training programs targeting Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) participants and other low-income individuals to prepare them for high-demand health care occupations. In September 2010, HPOG’s first round of five year grants were awarded to 32 grantees in 23 states. Grantee programs represented a range of organizational types, including four state agencies, nine Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), twelve institutions of higher education, two community-based organizations, one Tribal council, and four Tribal colleges. They offered a diverse range of community and job-driven employment training opportunities in more than 50 distinct occupations, such as nurse aides, registered nurses, medical assistants, pharmacy technicians, and home health aides. Each program aimed to improve job prospects for hard-working, low-income adults and help them identify and secure employment leading to self-sufficiency.

“Underlying the World Café is the concept that if you have a group of people in the room who are interested in the same topic and can get them motivated through the right questions, good ideas and strategies will be born.”

– Dr. Frances Baldwin,
World Café senior steward

OFA offered grantees numerous training and technical assistance opportunities,¹ as well as a chance to participate in two pilot programs. These pilots, [The World Café](#) and “Designing with Stakeholders,”² aimed to (1) improve collaboration between instructors and HPOG staff, and (2) engage instructors in devising innovative strategies to improve student persistence.

Instructors play a critical role in course completion, yet are not often given the opportunity to help devise student engagement or intervention strategies early in program development. There is a growing movement, however, toward collaborative practices for expanded instructor engagement. Community colleges, for



¹ Other technical assistance papers over the course of the grant covered a range of topics, including: [TANF-HPOG partnerships](#), [apprenticeship](#), and [using labor market information to inform job-driven training](#).

² In this pilot opportunity HPOG grantees convened stakeholders in “design thinking” events to discuss what instructor engagement would include from the beginning stages of a HPOG grant. They focused on assessing their current status, evaluating instructor perspectives, inviting instructors to roundtables, and developing action plans. Their experiences, strategies, and findings from these events were presented at the 2014 Annual HPOG meeting. For more information about “design thinking,” see the paper, [“Creating Solutions Together: Design Thinking, The Office of Family Assistance and 3 Grantees.”](#)

example, are beginning to create innovative ways to improve student completion rates by engaging instructors early and often in the development of student performance improvement initiatives.³ Engaging instructors is particularly valuable for HPOG programs where instructors may be part of a larger college community and teaching blended classes of HPOG and other students. It may also be useful if there is limited institutional knowledge of the HPOG program and instructors are not familiar with the model or the supports it offers.

The purpose of this paper is to provide guidance to HPOG directors, community college deans, instructors, HPOG staff, and collaborators on using The World Café to facilitate meaningful dialogue and innovative ideas for action around instructor engagement and student completion. Fully involving instructors in program design and the development of student success strategies has been challenging for many HPOG programs when relying on conventional communication channels. The World Café pilot provided a unique opportunity to test a different communication technique that could not only improve connections between instructors and HPOG staff, but also expose instructors to a new tool they could consider in engaging HPOG students, many of whom have struggled in traditional classroom settings.

Building on a set of comprehensive resources and the outcomes of four HPOG programs that piloted the World Café, this guide provides a step-by-step approach to the Café method. It includes:

- An overview of The World Café.
- An in-depth discussion of the Café's seven design principles with illustrative examples from the HPOG pilot programs.
- Profiles of each HPOG pilot, their questions addressed, and strategies identified.
- Additional resources and a checklist to help programs use The World Café.

The World Café Pilot Program Sites

Four HPOG programs piloted The World Café between November 2014 and June 2015. Each used the approach's design principles and flexibility to implement their events in manners reflective of their local and institutional cultures and nuances. Pilot programs were required to host a minimum of two Café conversations. The first would kick off the pilot, confirm their specific focus area(s), and design an action plan. The second would serve as an update meeting to review the action plan, assess its effectiveness, and discuss progress made or emerging barriers. The following programs (listed below with their stated focus areas) participated in the pilot:

- [Eastern Gateway Community College](#) (OH): to design approaches to increase collaboration with instructors and create strategies to better engage students (Eastern Gateway).

³ Rhoades, G. (2012). *Faculty Engagement to Enhance Student Attainment*. Paper prepared for National Commission on Higher Education Attainment. From: <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Faculty-Engagement-to-Enhance-Student-Attainment--Rhoades.pdf>. Center for Community College Student Engagement (2012). *A Matter of Degrees: Promising Practices for Community College Student Success*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program. From: http://www.ccsse.org/docs/matter_of_degrees.pdf

- [Gateway Community and Technical College](#) (KY): to increase participation of program instructors in developing program designs and student engagement interventions and practices. (Gateway Community).
- [Pensacola State College](#) (FL): to better engage instructors and help them understand the mission and goals of HPOG while increasing the visibility of the program at the college (Pensacola).
- [Schenectady County Community College](#) (NY): to create a model for instructor engagement that leverages instructor's and community partner's capacities (Schenectady).

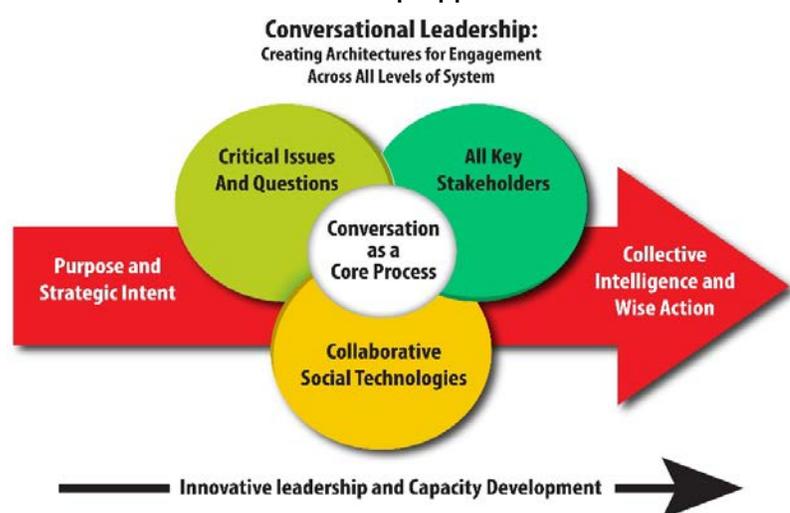
The World Café Approach and Implementation Guide

The World Café approach to strategic dialogue and collaboration has been used for [almost 20 years](#) by a range of corporations, non-profit organizations, governments, and education institutions in the United States and other countries to develop innovative strategies that address critical and complex social and business issues. It offers a framework for organizations to have deeper and more productive conversations to discover new ideas and insights. The approach, said Dr. Frances Baldwin, a senior steward with The World Café, is not for a "business as usual meeting." Cafés lend themselves most, she said, "to situations where organizations have 'hit a wall', have hard questions they want to consider, or are looking for fresh, new ideas." Donald Proffit, a private consultant and experienced Café host, agreed. "The Café is best used when you are trying to discern 'what is possible,'" he said, "it is often used before strategic planning sessions to help organizations identify topics of focus."

Through years of experimentation, World Café leaders have identified seven primary design principles to implement the approach, which are reinforced by a concept they refer to as "[conversational leadership](#)."

Conversational leadership (see Figure 1)⁴ recognizes that meaningful and supported dialogue can help people and organizations discover shared interests, disseminate knowledge, and strategically plan for the future. According to The World Café, "Conversational leadership takes root when leaders see their organizations as dynamic webs of conversation and consider conversation as a core process for effecting positive systemic change."

Figure 1: The Conversational Leadership Approach



⁴ Hurley, T. J., & Brown, J. (2010). "Conversational Leadership: Thinking Together for a Change." *Oxford Leadership Journal*, 1(2), 3. From: http://www.oxfordleadership.com/journal/vol1_issue2/brown_hurley.pdf

Taking this approach, they suggest, can “grow intellectual and social capital, but also provide a collaborative advantage in [an] increasingly networked world.”⁵

Strengthened by these concepts, The World Café provides a framework for hosting successful large group discussions about important and complex topics. It is a simple, adaptable approach that encourages dialogue, collaborative thinking, and supports the asking and answering of questions that matter to users. It is an organic and living process that can be adapted to specific purposes and locations and to meet users' unique focus areas.

*The following pages share an overview of each of the approach's seven principles, with implementation examples from the four HPOG programs that piloted it to improve instructor engagement.*⁶

⁵ Conversational Leadership. *The World Café*. (n.d.). From: <http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/conversational-leadership>

⁶ This section draws from materials that HPOG programs can use to adapt and apply these principles, including: The World Café's [Design Principles](#), [Hosting Tool Kit](#), [Resource Guide](#), and [The World Cafe Book: Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations that Matter](#).



Set the Context

In preparing to host a World Café, HPOG programs should plan ahead and ask themselves how, where, when, and why they are using this platform to identify and implement shared strategies. For this step, The World Café suggests users do the following:

- Identify the reason(s) they are bringing people together.
- Articulate what they want to achieve.
- Be clear about the purpose(s) and parameters of the meeting.
- Determine who should participate in the conversation.
- Identify themes or questions that are most relevant to address.

In identifying who should participate in the conversation, for example, the Café host and/or planning group should think broadly about the universe of potential perspectives and individuals whose input they would like to consider when addressing their focus area(s) for the Café. For HPOG programs interested in student persistence and instructor collaboration, Dr. Baldwin suggests grantees expand their traditional ideas about who is a 'relevant' participant for purposes of the World Café. Reflect back on the purpose of the event to inform the participant list, which may include not only HPOG staff, leadership, case managers, and instructors, but also students, whose experiences and perspectives may enrich dialogue around student-focused support solutions. Programs, she said, should also consider including at least 15 to 20 participants, representing a range of backgrounds and perspectives that can be connected and aligned across numerous conversation rounds. Cafés are also not the typical hour-long meeting; many will last two to three hours to build relationships and foster in-depth conversations.

For the HPOG pilots this early context setting was incredibly important to ensure the most relevant questions relating to instructor engagement were posed. For Schenectady and Pensacola, the programs first asked themselves what pressing concerns they had around instructor and student engagement. By starting with their 'problem statements,' each program was able to quickly and easily

Having a Café Host

Having an experienced host is helpful when holding a World Café event. He or she can help guide dialogue and ensure that the spirit of the seven design principles is upheld. He or she can also:

- Work with a planning team to determine the event's purpose and goals.
- Help develop the invitation.
- Explain the purpose, parameters, and guidelines for the event.
- Pose questions to the group and encourage everyone to participate.
- Keep dialogue moving and transition through conversation rounds.
- Make sure key takeaways are visually recorded.

Source: The World Café (2015). *A Quick Reference Guide for Hosting World Café* (Hosting Toolkit). From: <http://www.theworldcafe.com/tools-store/hosting-tool-kit>

identify who they needed at their Café to help address their concerns. For both, issues around instructor knowledge of HPOG's work, as well as the individual needs and challenges facing HPOG students, were drivers for engaging specific instructors and community partners.

To prepare at Gateway Community, the HPOG program director created an ad hoc work group to help shape their World Café agenda and objectives. The group discussed the need and desire to better engage instructors in developing program designs and student engagement strategies. From there, to hone in on the right questions to pose, they discussed how instructors had (or had not) been engaged in the past, and also looked at relevant program and labor market data on current courses offered, high demand health careers, and data on HPOG supportive services. They later used the data to enrich conversation during the Café and as part of Gateway Community's action planning conversations.



Create a Hospitable Space

The World Café emphasizes the importance of creating an inviting and safe space to host Cafés. “When people feel comfortable to be themselves, they do their most creative thinking, speaking, and listening.”⁷ In creating this welcoming and relaxed environment, many World Cafés are physically set up like a café, with small round tables (see Figure 2). The World Café recommends, for example, covering tables with white linen or checkered tablecloths, providing colored pens, butcher block paper, or ‘talking sticks’ for participants to use.⁸ They also suggest keeping tables small—to four or five chairs each.⁹ “These small groups,” said Mr. Proffit, “keep conversations safe and provide space for introverted participants to join the dialogue.” The Café’s [Hosting Toolkit](#) suggests:

- Selecting a space with an outdoor view or natural light.
- Arranging tables in a random fashion that is open and easy to maneuver.
- Placing at least two large sheets of paper over tablecloths and encourage drawing, scribbling, and connecting ideas.
- Adding posters to the walls or flip charts with inspirational or relevant quotes.
- Providing beverages and snacks.

HPOG pilots were creative about the spaces they chose for their World Cafés and how they were set up and decorated. They also paid special attention to how they invited participants to their events. For example, Gateway Community invited 22 people to their Cafés, most of whom were instructors teaching the most commonly attended classes among HPOG students, such as nursing assistant, health information technology, pharmacy technician, and medical assistant. To immediately start building rapport and welcome instructor staff, Gateway Community’s HPOG program director invited each community college instructor in person. This gave her an opportunity to meet briefly with each invitee and begin to improve communication.

Figure 2: Eastern Gateway’s World Café Set Up



Eastern Gateway took care to set up a warm and welcoming environment for the ten instructors attending its World Cafés. They chose a small room, with a lot of natural light that was conveniently

⁷ *A Quick Reference Guide for Hosting World Café* (2015). The World Café Community Foundation, Creative Commons Attribution (2015). From: <http://www.theworldcafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Cafe-To-Go-Revised.pdf>

⁸ A ‘talking stick’ or speaker staff is an item participants can pass amongst each other when it’s each individual’s turn to speak.

⁹ *World Café Method*. (n.d.) The World Café. From: <http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method>

located at the nursing school where their invited instructors worked (Figure 2). They organized the Café around instructors' busy schedules, setting a date when school was not in session and around lunch. They also asked school administration in advance for an additional hour of instructors' time so that they could have two uninterrupted hours together. Each participant was welcomed by colorful cards that introduced the event and questions that the small group would consider in their time together. "These efforts did not go unnoticed," said Kathleen Reagan, director of the nursing school and Café participant. "Hospitable is a good way to describe it," she said, "our instructors were open and as the session progressed, contributed more; we saw that the HPOG program valued our contributions and we heard how case managers really wanted to make a difference in our students' lives."

The HPOG pilots also began their events with warm welcomes and introductions that shared Café etiquette, history, ground rules, and process. For example, during Schenectady's opening session, the Café host facilitated a 'visual introductions' exercise that encouraged participants to think about three words that describe them and then use flip chart paper to draw and present those attributes to the group. Referring to their Cafés, each of which lasted two-and-a-half hours, as the "Schenectady Bistros," this icebreaker immediately created an informal and comfortable atmosphere in which participants could freely share ideas.



Explore Questions that Matter

At the core of The World Café is posing and facilitating in-depth discussions around open-ended questions that matter to participants. After settling on a focus area for the event, The World Café suggests developing questions that are relevant to participants' "real-life concerns" and that "attract collective energy, insight, and action."¹⁰ Questions should also "evoke conversations and a line of inquiry into something that

participants don't already know," said Dr. Baldwin. In instances where the Café host isn't an expert in the substantive focus area of the Café, he or she may be well suited to help craft or review those questions as an independent and neutral voice, suggested Dr. Baldwin.

"We laughed and joked too. It wasn't just me asking questions, it was fostering a conversation that was professional, but relaxed, open, and friendly."

—Shari Prichard, HPOG program administrator and Café pilot host, Eastern Gateway Community College

Crafting meaningful questions that spark dialogue can be one of the hardest steps of implementing The World Café. When developing questions, programs should:¹¹

- Start from scratch and not make assumptions about participant knowledge.
- Carefully consider the first question posed, making sure it is open-ended and can drive future conversation.
- Develop questions that test ideas and don't immediately push participants to getting to "the answer."
- Test their assumptions about questions developed at the beginning of the Café by giving participants an opportunity to test the questions to see if they address the true issues of focus or whether the questions should be modified.
- Pose questions that:
 - Are relevant to the real life and work of the people exploring it.
 - Are genuine in the sense that participants don't already know the answer.

¹⁰ *A Quick Reference Guide for Hosting World Café* (2015). The World Café Community Foundation, Creative Commons Attribution (2015). From: <http://www.theworldcafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Cafe-To-Go-Revised.pdf>. Useful guides for crafting meaningful questions can also be found at: Marquardt, M. (2005). *Leading with Questions: How Leaders Find the Right Solutions by Knowing What to Ask*. Audible Studios. From: <http://www.amazon.com/Leading-Questions-Leaders-Solutions-Knowing/dp/B003G5W4oK>; Vogt, E.E., Brown, J., and Isaacs, J. (2003). *The Art of Powerful Questions*. Whole Systems Associates. From: [http://www.principals.ca/documents/powerful_questions_article_\(World_Cafe_Website\).pdf](http://www.principals.ca/documents/powerful_questions_article_(World_Cafe_Website).pdf)

¹¹ Tips from Dr. Baldwin, Mr. Proffitt and Vogt, E.E., Brown, J., and Isaacs, J. (2003). *The Art of Powerful Questions*. Whole Systems Associates. From: [http://www.principals.ca/documents/powerful_questions_article_\(World_Cafe_Website\).pdf](http://www.principals.ca/documents/powerful_questions_article_(World_Cafe_Website).pdf)

- Invite fresh thinking or feelings and generate engagement on new possibilities rather than focus on past problems or obstacles.

A Café may explore one question or address several that build upon each other over the course of multiple rounds of conversation. The World Café suggests that small rounds last about 20 minutes and that individuals travel to a new table at each new round (and address the next question, where appropriate). The World Café also suggests designating 'table hosts' or individuals who stay at the same table for two conversation rounds. This table host can help record conversations, but also share what previous table participants discussed so that 'travelers' can build off past ideas and conversations.

Each of the HPOG pilots opted to explore multiple, inter-related questions over the course of their World Cafés (see questions listed at Appendix 1). Because each had at least two Cafés, which occurred from a few weeks to a few months apart, the events lent themselves to building upon one another. They also allowed programs to check in on strategies identified in the first Café and assess the extent to which they were implemented before the second Café. Several programs tested their new strategies between Cafés and used the second event to solidify new approaches, discuss progress, barriers, and modify plans as needed.

Schenectady and Pensacola, for example, took similar approaches to their exploration of ideas. In both, they used the two-Café construct to develop a set of iterative questions that began with broad, exploratory, and open-ended inquires and moved, over the course of the events, to more specific, action-oriented questions (see Appendix 1, pp.22,24). This approach worked well for both programs as they wanted to begin their Cafés with early questions that easily built consensus and a shared vision between HPOG staff and college instructors, who hadn't had much experience working together previously.

In contrast, Eastern Gateway's approach was to pose a series of related questions about communication and student services from the perspectives of HPOG staff, instructors, students, and community college staff. Taking this approach allowed the group to analyze different aspects of the program from multiple vantage points, which produced rich conversations and insights given the diversity of opinions and individuals at the event.

Crafting the Right Questions

For example, in hosting a World Café about instructor engagement, instead of asking, "What can we do to ensure students are able to complete training," a host may ask:

- Are there bigger or broader ways of thinking about student completion and success? What may these be?
- What avenues have we not pursued?
- What is more possible?



Encourage Everyone's Contribution

"Conversational leadership starts with a belief in the possibility of collective intelligence—the recognition that we can be smarter, more creative, and more capable together than we can alone.¹²" HPOG pilot programs were careful to identify the right people to participate in their events, but also sought to embed opportunities during Cafés for each person to meaningfully contribute.

The World Café suggests that Café hosts encourage participants to contribute their ideas and perspectives in manners that are most comfortable for them (e.g., some may prefer to verbalize their ideas, others may be more comfortable writing them). Encouraging everyone's contribution, however, is not the Café hosts' duty alone, said Dr. Baldwin. It is incumbent on all participants to both self-advocate and organize within their small group discussions. The host will provide the initial framework and guidelines for the event, but he or she is neither the teacher nor facilitator of the Café. The World Café also suggests that Café hosts encourage this self-organization and participant contribution by:

- Setting the ground rules early for encouragement and support of all written and verbal contributions within each small group.
- Moving between the tables during conversation rounds, listening to participant dialogue, and engaging where appropriate.
- Adding a talking object/stick at each table, which participants can pick up when they are ready to speak or pass to those they are interested in hearing from.
- Gently reminding people when it is time to move to new topics or hear different perspectives.
- Inviting individuals to share insights or results from small group discussions with the larger group in between conversation rounds.
- Graphically or visually recording shared insights for the whole group to see as the event unfolds.

Supporting Participants' Social Capital Skills

The World Café provides opportunities for participants to:

- Collaborate.
- Work in a team.
- Build a collective model.
- Manage time together.
- Self-advocate.
- Actively listen.
- Coach and learn from each other.

Source: Power Path. *Participatory Learning: World Café*. From: http://aoh-vorarlberg.weebly.com/uploads/3/0/0/9/30096007/pl_worldcafe_card_final_414.pdf

¹² Hurley, T. J., & Brown, J. (2009). Conversational Leadership: Thinking Together for a Change. *The Systems Thinker*, 20(9), 2-7. From: <http://www.theworldcafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Conversational-Leadership.pdf>

Each of the HPOG pilots used their own staff, often their project director, to host their World Cafés. Each had a vested interest in improving engagement with instructors and identifying new and better approaches to helping students complete their health care training. This leadership-level support set the tone for each event, emphasizing that instructor perspectives were needed and wanted to improve HPOG services.

Café hosts encouraged instructor contributions in a variety of ways. At Eastern Gateway, the host regularly asked participants to reflect on ideas or concepts shared, as they were articulated, to engage dialogue and begin to build consensus or identify and discuss areas of disagreement. To encourage everyone's contribution, even those who couldn't attend the Café, Pensacola's HPOG staff shared their Café questions with instructors well in advance of the event and encouraged them to think about their responses, and also share the questions with other college faculty to solicit their ideas. During the event, the Café host called upon instructors to share their colleagues' suggestions and weave them into larger group discussions and action planning.¹³

Gateway Community used a mixed presentation and information-sharing format to begin a dialogue with its participants. Like some of the other pilots, college instructors weren't as familiar with the HPOG program or services it offered to students. The Gateway Community host used some of the flexible Café time to share labor market and program information and data as a jumping-off point to get instructor reactions, and also to begin to identify shared opportunities for HPOG staff and instructors to regularly communicate.

¹³ Programs should consider whether it is appropriate for their Café to share questions in advance. In some circumstances and where key players cannot attend, this is needed. However, when key participants can attend, doing so may result in participants getting attached to their responses. "Not sharing questions beforehand can support spontaneity and the practice of thinking together," said Dr. Baldwin.



Connect Diverse Perspectives

A key aspect of a World Café event is allowing participants to network, meet new people, and carry their ideas and perspectives across conversations. As noted above, this is often done, in part, by allowing participants to travel from table to table over the course of the event. A continuous exchange of diverse perspectives can lead to insightful dialogue and increases the capacity of participants to hear and learn about different strategies, while also thinking about their own perspectives in new and innovative ways.

If the Café uses the 'traveler' approach, the individual designated to remain at each table can welcome new participants and share the key points from previous discussions to facilitate deeper conversation and help connect perspectives. Encouraging table participants to write their ideas on large pieces of paper and leave them at each table also allows table participants to visualize and build upon their discussions to connect diverse perspectives.

In part because of their smaller number of participants (some just seven or eight), most HPOG pilots did not have Café participants change tables. Therefore, to connect perspectives, particularly between HPOG staff and instructors, pilots used a variety of approaches. Schenectady was most interested in improving communication amongst participants and building a shared HPOG culture across partner agencies that focused collectively (rather than separately) on improving student successes. Therefore, Schenectady's Café host explained HPOG's continuum of services to participants, identifying where each participant partner's organizational supports fit in. They then used a round robin approach to identify and discuss gaps in their continuum of services and build off and reflect on diverse ideas about how to fill those gaps. Hearing instructors' perceptions about how they could be engaged, in addition to case managers' ideas about how to involve instructors, helped the program identify a wide range of tangible, diverse ideas about improving instructor involvement.

Gateway Community used presentations to ensure all participants had the same baseline understanding of the HPOG program before engaging in deeper dialogue about how it could be improved. Once instructors knew more about the HPOG program and its services they were excited to share their insights and suggestions on improving specific interventions and support services for students. Those ideas were connected and recorded by each table's designated notetaker who took notes on flipchart paper he or she placed on the wall for the table to review and approve.

Connecting Ideas and People

"As the travelers bring key insights or themes from their earlier conversations, ideas start to connect up to other ideas. Now the exploration spirals to another level. Often people will find a common theme in relation to the original question that takes them deeper. Or, someone will bring a counterpoint view or an unexpected connection that sparks a whole new avenue of relevant inquiry...at times it's not the people who move, but their ideas."

Source: Brown, J. (2002) *A Resource Guide for Hosting Conversations that Matter at The World Café*. Whole Systems Associates.
From: <http://www.theworldcafe.com/tools-store/store>



Listen Together for Patterns and Insights

To foster connections between tablemates, as well as in the larger group, the World Café suggests offering multiple opportunities for participants to share their reflections and takeaways. Doing so helps the group as a whole identify patterns, insights, and shared ideas that can lead to new collaborative approaches. For example, at small group discussions, the table host can encourage participants to listen for common themes and reflect and record them before moving to the next conversation round. At the end of rounds, the Café host can then engage a short full group discussion that allows participants to share their reflections or takeaways, either by noting them verbally or jotting them down. Hearing what resonated with other participants helps everyone determine what they considered to be important themes. Participants can also use this time to identify conversational overlaps, common elements in strategies discussed, and areas that were not discussed across small table conversations.

“Using the World Café helped us create a flat organizational structure across partner agencies. It wouldn't be just program directors communicating anymore. Staff at all levels would talk to each other and make decisions together.”

—Tiziana Rota, HPOG program director and café pilot host, Schenectady County Community College

To identify patterns at Eastern Gateway's Café, between each round of conversation, the host reconvened the whole group to review key themes and ideas shared. Going back through the flip chart notes taken during the previous round, the host asked participants to reflect on their conversation by asking if what was transcribed represented their collective suggestions, and if they had anything they wanted to take out or modify. She also asked participants to share what concepts they felt most

strongly about and why. This allowed participants to find suggestions together that they were most driven to implement and begin to develop a realistic action plan.

Similarly, at Gateway Community, the Café host facilitated several rounds of larger group conversations over the course of their Cafés and in between small group discussions. For each, the host collected small group flip chart notes and displayed them for the larger group to review and begin to combine ideas. At Schenectady, the host encouraged the whole group to review their growing list of suggested approaches and discuss which they could implement together. They then narrowed their list and agreed upon a set of strategies (listed in Appendix 1) that could improve communication across programs and better serve students.



Share Collective Discoveries

The last phase of The World Café involves visually showcasing the key themes, questions, and ideas that were generated during small group discussions. “This is a powerful aspect of the Café experience,” said Mr. Proffit, “doodling, drawing, and mind mapping becomes another way to share knowledge, learnings, and understanding.” The World Café recommends having a participant or host graphically record concepts shared “to capture the harvest.” This may involve asking participants to silently reflect on important takeaways and sharing them with the larger group for the recorder to illustrate or jot down. The World Café suggests doing one or several of the following:

“As a leader, it is important for me to not assume the best way to do things...the World Café model is helpful in getting a wide variety of feedback, in a wide variety of ways.”

—Mary Pat Behler, HPOG program director and Café pilot host, Gateway Community and Technical College

- **Have a graphic recorder:** to draw the group’s ideas on flip charts or a wall, using text, illustration, and graphics.
- **Take a gallery tour:** by affixing the large paper that was at tables to the walls so participants can see each table’s ideas. This may also include a walking protocol where participants can identify themes or ideas with which they agree or are uncertain of.
- **Post insights:** by placing large sticky notes with single insights or takeaways from participants on the walls so all can view them.
- **Create idea clusters:** by grouping sticky notes into ‘idea clusters’ so that related concepts are visible to help plan next steps.

For example, Gateway Community developed a list of shared strategies during their Café. It was displayed on flip chart paper throughout the room and debated to identify top priorities among participants. After the event, Gateway Community’s HPOG program director and her ad hoc Café planning team compiled the list into a plan and personally followed up with each participant to get feedback, to add additional ideas, and to get final confirmation and buy-in for the approach. This added step helped further solidify new partnerships between HPOG staff and instructors, as well as ensure all parties would work together to implement the plan. Similarly, Schenectady recorded their shared findings by having a notetaker; their Café host also added shared ideas to flipcharts to assure buy-in from the group. This allowed the host, after the event, to act quickly on those suggestions, such as creating a shared calendar for HPOG entrance interviews. The new calendar let instructors know when HPOG staff would be interviewing prospective students so they could participate in them and in the admissions process.

Outcomes and Lessons Learned

The World Café provided a forum for HPOG pilots to build the relational groundwork for mutually beneficial engagement between HPOG program staff and instructors, as well as develop a process by which innovative ideas could be generated. The four programs that piloted it adapted its key principles to create structures that built enthusiasm and collective buy-in, and worked for their participants and interests.

Whether to improve communication between case managers and instructors or to identify real-time interventions that support student success, each pilot created a baseline set of action steps to monitor. Some of the strategies pilots identified included:

- **Instructor-staff communication and feedback:**
 - Providing instructors and community college staff with information about the HPOG program, its purposes and objectives, and doing so regularly as new instructors and staff onboard to increase institutional knowledge of the HPOG program.
 - Encouraging HPOG case management staff to work regularly with instructors in real time to identify and help resolve student persistence barriers.
 - Encouraging HPOG staff to attend instructor faculty meetings, orientations, and events.
 - Developing a joint instructor and HPOG staff newsletter.
 - Arranging regular meetings between HPOG program staff and instructors.
 - Involving instructors in the development of funding proposals from the beginning and throughout the grant program.
- **Student engagement:**
 - Providing professionalism classes prior to occupational training.
 - Changing program hours to mirror elementary school hours to improve attendance among student-parents.

Top Tips from HPOG Program Directors Who Piloted the World Café

- Consider using Cafés early in the HPOG grant to build community partnerships and enhance communication.
- Have an experienced Café host and at least one other host or note-taker to help record and synthesize ideas.
- Be mindful of participants' schedules and flexible when setting a date, time, and location for the event.
- Don't underestimate the power of a welcoming environment and food.
- Explain the Café method early and set ground rules.
- Take care in developing questions and share them in advance with participants, if needed.
- Give it a shot. You will be surprised with what you accomplish together.

- Offering courses in a variety of formats (such as hybrid, part-time, online, weekend, or accelerated programs).
- Engaging instructors in student entrance and exit interviews.
- Promoting intensive and regular case manager follow-up with students to strengthen persistence.
- Providing additional learning supports, such as archived video lectures and one-on-one tutoring.
- Providing access to tutoring resources for instructors.

"We needed to find a way to better link instructors to the HPOG program. This had been a missing link early on. The World Café experience helped us resolve it by giving instructors an opportunity to learn about HPOG and our case managers a chance to see what instructors were doing with students on a day-to-day basis."

–Inger Barnes, HPOG program director and Café pilot host, Pensacola State College

Participating pilots valued their Café experiences and plan to continue to improve instructor engagement, whether by regularly communicating with instructors, more widely disseminating planned newsletters, or regularly participating in college faculty meetings. Many also plan to continue to use The World Café to address complex or hard-to-resolve issues. As the program director from Gateway Community noted, "This process is about building relationships and having the capacity to implement a flexible process that can be used to address multiple issues – an important tool in any program director's resource kit."

Appendix 1: World Café Pilot Program Profiles

Below are profiles of the four HPOG World Café pilots. Each describes who attended, questions posed, and strategies identified through the World Café.

Eastern Gateway Community College World Café Pilot

The Eastern Gateway team volunteered to participate in the World Café pilot to gain insight into how the program could be a better partner with college instructors. Through the pilot, the program hoped to improve communication with instructors and understand how to better engage students.

Who Attended

Eastern Gateway's Cafés occurred on January 20, 2015 and April 9, 2015 and were held at the Hannah E. Mullins School for Practical Nursing. They included ten licensed practical nursing instructors and HPOG staff.

Questions Posed

Over the course of the Cafés, participants contemplated the following questions:

- From an admissions process/requirements standpoint, what can we do to ensure accepted students are fully capable and equipped to complete healthcare training?
- From a classroom perspective, how can we encourage students to attend and complete training?
- From a student's perspective, what are the barriers or areas of improvement that we can address to strengthen student success numbers?
- From an organizational perspective, how can we best engage instructors in planning for future grant opportunities?

For their second Café, participants reconvened to discuss how communication between instructors and HPOG students had improved, and to further explore the student-focused solutions that were proposed during the first Café.

Strategies Identified Through The World Café

Participants reflected on and came up with a range of strategies relating to admissions, student completion, service enhancements, and instruction modification.

Instructors reflected on how to transform the admissions process to ensure students are ready to complete health care training. Suggestions included:

- Preparing high school students with prerequisite math and science skills.

- Abiding by the admissions guidelines in all cases.
- Providing a professionalism class for all enrolled students, prior to beginning training.
- Requiring students to complete the Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) training.
- Increasing the complexity of the Medical Terminology course.

They also discussed the classroom environment and services to improve student attendance and training completion. They suggested:

- Holding class hours that correspond with elementary school hours.
- Offering a variety of formats for training, such as part-time, online, hybrid (online and in-person), weekend, and accelerated programs.
- Ensuring instructors are courteous and professional.
- Offering meals during class time.
- Providing financial incentives, such as tuition reduction or student loan forgiveness, based on grade point averages (GPA).
- Using more technology in the classroom.
- Making attendance part of class grades.

To address student barriers within the classroom context, instructors suggested:

- Clearly conveying the expectations of the program.
- Changing the program structure, including providing a condensed program with shorter breaks, making the program a four-day program with shorter days, and ensuring all work is completed at school (no homework).
- Enhancing the learning environment through state-of-the-art facilities and live models.
- Providing additional educational supports, such as archived video lectures, one-on-one tutoring, alternative testing methods, and lower-passing GPA requirements.

Gateway Community and Technical College World Café Pilot

The purpose of Gateway Community's World Cafés was to ensure instructors are involved and have a greater voice in developing program designs and student engagement interventions and practices.

Who Attended

The Gateway Community Cafés were held on December 5, 2014 and January 5, 2015 and a follow-up check-in meeting was held on March 20, 2015 to assess the status of the plan. Twenty-two HPOG program staff and faculty participated in the Cafés, including the associate provost of nursing and allied health services, the director of allied health services, and instructors in paramedics, health information technology, human services, massage therapy, nursing assistant, pharmacy technicians, phlebotomy, and medical assistant.

Questions Posed

Gateway Community's Café host first presented data on support services offered through HPOG as well as labor market information about professions they train for and emerging high demand health markets. Following these presentations, and over the course of the Cafés, she then asked participants:

- What are the challenges for each service that works?
- What are the solutions for each service that works?

Strategies Identified Through The World Café

Gateway Community developed a communications plan to capture relevant faculty and staff observations about what has worked well with the HPOG program as well as ideas for better instruction and student support practices. The plan developed during the Café included:

- Sharing a list of HPOG students in occupational training courses with allied health instructors at the beginning of each semester.
- Bi-weekly contact between instructors and HPOG case management staff to review faculty updates on student progress.
- Sharing information on the HPOG budget and program goals with instructors.
- Developing a process for updating and refining the communications plan with HPOG faculty and staff.

As a result of this plan, Gateway Community has increased instructor knowledge about the HPOG program overall and program goals specifically; increased instructor-HPOG staff engagement; and collectively agreed upon a plan for information-sharing and inclusion of instructor ideas into future funding proposals. Gateway Community has also identified improved ways to maintain and support communication between HPOG and health instructor staff. They have learned to:

- Work closely with the allied health director and program coordinators to identify times convenient for faculty to attend HPOG program events like The World Café.
- Maximize existing and mandatory feedback channels faculty already use.
- Not underestimate the power of food and an informal environment to facilitate great conversation.
- Schedule events like The World Café around student absences on campus (i.e., between exams and holiday break).
- Follow up with allied health program coordinators individually after The World Café to continue gathering instructor ideas and general feedback.

Pensacola State College World Café Pilot

Pensacola was interested in improving instructors' knowledge about HPOG so that instructors could better serve students. To this end, they had two primary goals for their World Café pilot. The first was to improve instructor engagement by arming instructors with information and resources that would help them become familiar with the mission and goals of HPOG. The second was, through improved instructor knowledge of HPOG, to increase the visibility of the program throughout campus.

Who Attended

Pensacola held its Cafés on January 29, 2015 and March 26, 2015. They were held on campus and included seven participants, including HPOG case managers and instructors teaching nursing, phlebotomy, and electrocardiogram (EKG) classes.

Questions Posed

During their Cafés, Pensacola focused on several solution-driven questions:

- By your own definition, what does it mean for an instructor to be "engaged" with HPOG?
- Why might instructors not be engaged with HPOG?
- What are new ways for us to increase instructor engagement?
- How can HPOG better collaborate with instructors to increase student success?

Strategies Identified Through The World Café

Over the course of the Cafés participants overwhelmingly agreed that instructors needed to know the goals of HPOG and what was expected of students through the program. Conversely, they agreed that HPOG staff needed to regularly check-in with instructors about students' status and needs. They agreed upon the below communication and engagement strategies:

- Ensure HPOG staff is aware of new instructor hires and that all new employees are given information about HPOG.
- Develop a newsletter for staff and instructors.
- Develop a way for HPOG staff to access the online portion of classes so tutoring and assistance can be given.
- Provide books and other resources to tutors/instructors to help them tutor students.
- Revise and streamline student attendance forms.
- Invite instructors to HPOG team meetings.
- Invite the HPOG program director to instructor and simulation staff meetings to discuss HPOG.

Participants also prioritized several strategies and agreed that they would begin to test and implement them before the second World Café. These included: developing and disseminating an HPOG newsletter (Figure 3); meeting with new instructors; researching the feasibility of accessing E-Learning; and assessing/revising the current academic/attendance report form.

At Pensacola’s second Café participants discussed accomplishments and next steps. They distributed the first HPOG Newsletter, planned for HPOG staff’s attendance at future college department meetings, and agreed to replace their current academic attendance forms with opportunities for detailed conversations between case managers and students. To maintain momentum, the group also agreed to meet again before the new school semester in the Fall of 2015.

Figure 3: Pensacola’s HPOG Newsletter

HEALTH PROFESSION OPPORTUNITY GRANTS

Volume 1 / Issue 1

ONE PERSON’S SUCCESS

“I cannot say enough about the grant and how it helped to pave the way for my future. The staff was always welcoming and made sure that I had every single tool necessary to succeed. A huge thank you to the entire HPOG staff! You really have helped to change the lives of many students. I can only hope that this grant will continue to improve the lives of other students and to improve the fantastic college from which I am proud to say I earned my degree.”

Alexis

WHAT IS HPOG?

HPOG is a federal grant funded by the Department of Health & Human Services—Office of Family Assistance. It was designed to assist moderate to low income individuals who are training for a career in the healthcare field. If accepted, students can receive assistance with tuition, books, tutoring, uniforms, equipment, child care, transportation, case management & limited emergencies. See the full HPOG website at <http://hpogcommunity.acf.hhs.gov/pages/about-hpog/about.aspx>

HOW CAN STUDENTS APPLY FOR HPOG?

- Pick up an application from the HPOG office or print one at www.pensacolastate.edu/HPOG.
- Submit the completed application and all required documentation to the HPOG office.
- The application will be reviewed for eligibility & the applicant will be notified of the next steps.

HPOG CONTACT INFORMATION

- Warrington Campus of Pensacola State College at 5555 W. Hwy. 98, Pensacola, FL
- Building 3600, Room 3644
- 850-471-4590

HPOG SCORECARD FOR GRANT YEARS 1-3

Program	% Completed	% Employed
EKG (14 Enrolled)	93	46
EMT (28 Enrolled)	64	57
LPN (50 Enrolled)	80	92
Medical Asst (27 Enrolled)	59	75
Massage Therapy (13 Enrolled)	100	69
Nursing Asst (61 Enrolled)	92	78
Phlebotomy (24 Enrolled)	67	63
RN (101 Enrolled)	72	85

“Changing lives one person at a time”

Schenectady County Community College World Café Pilot

Schenectady's goal in participating in The World Café was to create a model for instructor engagement that leveraged instructors' knowledge and capacities. They were interested in improving and better opening the lines of communication between HPOG staff and instructors to best serve students.

Who Attended

On February 11, 2015 and June 22, 2015, about ten instructors, community partners, the Albany Community Action Partnership (ACAP), the Schenectady Community Action Program (SCAP), and Schenectady County Community College HPOG staff gathered for their World Café pilots.

Questions Posed

During their Cafés, Schenectady focused on several key engagement questions:

- What does it mean to you for an instructor to be engaged in HPOG?
- Based on your answer(s) to question one, what are the dilemmas and opportunities we face with instructor engagement?
- What would most help in the future development of HPOG and our students' success?

Strategies Identified Through The World Café

Over the course of the Cafés, instructors identified two areas where communication between HPOG and instructors could be strengthened. The first related to involving instructors in student admissions and the second related to improving transitions at the end of training, from instructors to community partners. To address these areas of concern, Café participants identified several new strategies, and agreed to reinstitute others that were no longer used:

- Use a 'mock interview' process for HPOG staff and instructors to interview prospective students and have a better sense for their readiness to enter health care training.
- Encourage meetings between HPOG employment specialists and instructors toward the end of training to review each student's strengths and weaknesses. This would help instructors identify assets and areas of concern as students move into the employment phase of their training.
- Reinstitute a practice of having instructors participate in the program's student selection workshops to discuss classroom rules and expectations with incoming students.
- Reinstitute weekly meetings between case management partners and instructors to discuss individual students' concerns, strengths, or issues.

Appendix 2: World Café Checklist for HPOG Programs

Below is an easy reference checklist for HPOG programs to begin to prepare for and use The World Café.



Set the context

- Identify a Café host.
- Identify the reason(s) you are bringing people together.
- Articulate what you want to achieve.
- Be clear about the purpose(s) and parameters of your Café.
- Determine who should participate in the Café (at least 15 to 20 people).
- Determine how long the Café should be (a few hours).
- Identify themes or questions that are most relevant to address.



Create a hospitable space

- Find a welcoming space with an outdoor view or natural light.
- Arrange tables in a random fashion that is open and easy to maneuver.
- Keep tables small – to four or five chairs each.
- Cover tables with white linen or checkered tablecloths and provide colored pens, butcher block paper, or 'talking sticks' for participant use.
- Place at least two large sheets of paper over tablecloths and encourage drawing, scribbling, and connecting ideas.
- Add posters to the walls or flip charts with inspirational or relevant quotes.
- Provide beverages and snacks.



Explore questions that matter

- Develop questions that are relevant to participants' real-life concerns and that attract collective energy, insight, and action.
- Develop questions that are open-ended and for which participants don't already know the answers.
- Consider having participants review questions in advance.
- Consider one or multiple iterative questions over the course of the Café.
- Host small conversation rounds that last about 20 minutes each.



Encourage everyone's contribution

- Encourage participants to contribute their ideas and perspectives in manners that are most comfortable for them.
- Empower all participants to both self-advocate and organize within their small group discussions.
- Have Café hosts move among tables during conversation rounds and listen to participant dialogue.



Connect diverse perspectives

- Give participants time to network, meet new people, and carry their ideas and perspectives across conversations.
- Invite individuals to share insights or results from small group discussions with the larger group in between conversation rounds.
- Encourage individuals to travel to a new table at each new conversation round to hear and share diverse perspectives.
- Designate 'table hosts' to stay at the same table for two conversation rounds to share what previous table participants discussed so that 'travelers' can build off past ideas.



Listen together for patterns and insights

- Offer multiple opportunities for participants to share their reflections and takeaways.
- Encourage participants to listen for common themes and reflect and record them before moving to the next conversation round.
- Encourage participants to identify conversational overlaps and common elements in strategies discussed.



Share collective discoveries

- Visually showcase key themes, questions, and ideas that were generated during small group discussions.
- Have a participant or host graphically record concepts shared.
- Have a graphic recorder to draw group ideas on flip charts or a wall, using text, illustration, and graphics.
- Affix large paper that was at tables to the walls so participants can see and assess each table's ideas.
- Group participants' ideas into 'idea clusters' so that related concepts are visible to plan next steps.

Appendix 3: Additional World Café Resources

Below are resources HPOG programs can use to better understand and implement the World Café.

Select World Café Overview Resources

Lenzo, A. (2014). *The World Café: We are Wiser Together* (Interview by L. Faris) [Transcript]. Retrieved July 23, 2015, from Collaborative Services website.

<https://collaborativeservicesinc.wordpress.com/2014/01/16/the-world-cafe-we-are-wiser-together/>

Hurley, T. J., & Brown, J. (2009). Conversational Leadership: Thinking Together for a Change. *The Systems Thinker*, 20(9), 2-7.

<http://www.theworldcafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Conversational-Leadership.pdf>

Brown, J., & Isaacs, D. (2005). *The World Café Book: Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations that Matter*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

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Brown, J., Isaacs, D., Vogt, E., & Margulies, N. (2002). Strategic Questioning: Engaging People's Best Thinking. *The Systems Thinker*, 13(9), 2-6.

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Brown, J., Isaacs, D., Margulies, N., & Warhaftig, G. (1999). The World Café: Catalyzing Large-Scale Collective Learning. *Leverage*, (33), 1-2.

<http://www.theworldcafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/catalyzinglearning.pdf>

Select World Café Implementation Resources

World Café Tool Kit Resources. (n.d.).

http://www.theworldcafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Tool_Kit_CheckList.pdf

A Quick Reference Guide for Hosting World Café (2015). The World Café Community Foundation, Creative Commons Attribution.

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Schieffer, A., Isaacs, D., & Gyllenpalm, B. (July 2004). The World Café: Part One and The World Café: Part Two. *World Business Academy: Transformation*, 18(8-9).

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Vogt, E.E., Brown, J., and Isaacs, J. (2003). *The Art of Powerful Questions*. Whole Systems Associates.

[http://www.principals.ca/documents/powerful_questions_article_\(World_Cafe_Website\).pdf](http://www.principals.ca/documents/powerful_questions_article_(World_Cafe_Website).pdf)