

## **Session Design: Dr. Downtown Word Café**

*January 30, 2020, 9 AM – noon*

*Virginia Main Street Directors Retreat*

*Farmville, Virginia*

**Resource:** <http://www.theworldcafe.com/tools-store/hosting-tool-kit/>

### **Purpose:**

- Harvest and share collective discoveries about Main Street program common challenges
- Engage people who are meeting for the first time in authentic conversation
- Create a meaningful interaction between a speaker and the audience
- Provide each person an opportunity to contribute

### **Participants:**

- 25 Local Virginia Main Street Program Executive Directors
- Moderator: Kyle Meyer, CD Program Administrator, DHCD's Virginia Main Street Coordinating Program
- Table Hosts:
  - Ilsa Loeser, Principal, Letterpress Communications
  - Sheri McGuire, Executive Director, Longwood SBDC
  - Bob Weaver, retired Executive Director, AMI Kids

### **Summary:**

1. This world café style session is designed to harvest and share collective discoveries around communications, nonprofit management, and small business support as it relates to Main Street, organizational development, and impact on the community.
2. Directors are divided into three groups [dots on nametags, red, blue, and green]
3. Each group will start at a designated table [table tents will show which group is at which table]
4. A professional in communications [Ilsa Loeser], nonprofit management [Bob Weaver], or small business support [Sheri McGuire] will host each table. The job of each table host is to engage in the conversation as a participant and steward, not as a formal facilitator. The added role of each host is to share the essence of the conversation for the guests who arrive for the next round.
5. Each table has a different question for each rotation and each question builds upon the other. Everyone at the table is responsible for supporting the host in taking notes, summarizing key ideas, and if so moved, making drawings that reflect interesting thoughts and insights as they unfold.
6. After 30 minutes, the groups will have five minutes to rotate to the next table.
7. At the beginning of the second and third rotation, the table hosts will summarize the discussion from the prior group and then host discussion on the next successive question.
8. Once all three rotations complete, table hosts and attendees will gather for collaborative discovery, have a moment to reflect by answering one question on a post-it, and placing it on the graffiti board. The table hosts and attendees will then be seated and have an opportunity to share their answers.
9. Table hosts are invited to respond, listen for patterns, insights, and deeper questions.
10. A scribe captures conversation on the flip charts.
11. At noon we the session adjourns.

### **Schedule:**

- 9 AM Explain purpose and summarize the session
- 9:10 First Table Discussion

9:40 Rotate  
9:50 Second Table Discussion  
10:20 Rotate  
10:30 Third Table Discussion  
11 Gather  
11:15 Final Group Discussion  
Noon Adjourn

**Supplies:**

- Nametags
- Dots
- Table Tents
- Flipcharts and table paper
- Markers

**Questions:**

*Communications:*

- What marketing and communications challenge, if resolved, could make the greatest difference to the future of your Main Street program?
- What is the next level of thinking that we need to address?
- If our success was completely guaranteed, what bold steps might we choose? How can we support each other in taking the next steps?

*Nonprofit Management Questions:*

- What nonprofit management challenge, if resolved, could make the greatest difference to the future of your Main Street program?
- What is the next level of thinking that we need to address?
- If our success was completely guaranteed, what bold steps might we choose? How can we support each other in taking the next steps?

*Small Business Support Questions:*

- What small business/entrepreneur support challenge, if resolved, could make the greatest difference to the future of your Main Street program?
- What is the next level of thinking that we need to address?
- If our success was completely guaranteed, what bold steps might we choose? How can we support each other in taking the next steps?

*Collaborative Discovery Question for Post-it:*

- What is one discovery that stuck with you after going through the rotations? Write down, one thing on your mind right now. You may not know how you are going to apply it in your community. If more than one thing, put on another sticky note.
- What about that was so powerful?

- Re-frame as an action: What is one thing I am going to do when I get back to my community?