

“Connection Circle” Activity

What’s needed: whiteboard or flipchart paper, markers, prompts (on agenda)

1. Attendees will nominate elements of evaluation they’re interested in learning more about. Nominations can include skills, tools, processes, ideas/concepts, or other knowledge they’d like to learn more about during their time together. As attendees share their nominations, facilitator will write them on the board around a circle. After 5-10 options have been elicited, the facilitator will ask attendees to make connections between the variables to help the group think more systematically about their challenges with evaluation, and to identify one (or two) topic(s) or skill(s) that can serve the needs of as many people in the group as possible.
 - a. *Questions to pose to the group: What aspects of evaluation do you find most challenging? What about evaluation leaves you scratching your head? Which skills would you like to strengthen to support your evaluation tasks? How do the various skills and topics we identified interact with one another? Where do connections exist between them? What one or two skills or topics in the connection circle would be beneficial to most people in the group?*

2. After connections have been drawn, the group will review the network of connections made and narrow down the focus of the group for the remainder of the cohort experience. Facilitator will emphasize that we should try to identify skills or topics that “touch” a lot of the variables we identified. Focusing on this topic or skill might create a ripple effect for the other variables and help increase attendees’ confidence in the evaluation tasks they’re assigned in their work.
 - a. *Questions to pose to the group: What story, if any, does this connection circle tell? Does there appear to be one or two key skills or topics that might help improve confidence in carrying out evaluation tasks you’re assigned?*

3. *By the end of this activity, the group will have identified one or two topics or skills to learn more about for the remainder of the cohort experience. This activity will also help the group think more systematically about the different elements of evaluation, and how improving one skill or gaining more knowledge in one area may improve a number of other evaluation tasks they carry out.*