

FemSTEM Coaching Circles Pilot 1

Executive Summary

Prepared by Inova Consultancy,
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Introduction

The first pilot of the FemSTEM Coaching Circles took place online in July 2021 across three sessions. The dates were as follows:

- 8th of July 2021
- 15th of July 2021
- 22nd of July 2021

The Circles were attended by a total of 11 participants. They were facilitated by Carolyn Usher (project manager and trainer) who has over a decade of experience in training and coaching.

Below is a summary of the attendees:

Participant	Experience in the STEM Sector
1	Studying an MSc in data visualisation
2	Mechanical and Structural Engineering and Architecture student
3	Mathematics student
4	Architect
5	Civil and structural engineering student
6	Materials Science student
7	Mechanical and Chemical Engineering student
8	Biology and chemistry teacher
9	PHD student in life Sciences

10	Biochemist
11	Psychology student

Summary of Results

In order to evaluate the impact of the Circles, participants were asked to complete various evaluation forms:

- Session evaluation forms which were completed at the end of each session
- A final evaluation form completed at the end of the final session
- Soft skills assessments' which were completed at the beginning and end of the piloting. These measured participants abilities and confidence relating to the soft skills that were to be worked on throughout the Circles. Individualised graphs were sent to participants after the Circles so they were able to reflect on their development.

Regarding the soft skills, the most significant improvements were in participants' **assertiveness, leadership, stress management, identifying future goals and communication**. The skills that stayed the same from the start to the end of the sessions were **enthusiasm, goal setting, understanding values, critical thinking and reasoning, and teamwork**. There were only decreases in two skills: **self-efficacy and creative thinking**. It is important to note that a decrease is not necessarily an indication of a reduction in skill; it may indicate an increase in self awareness and understanding of the need for some skill development.

The session evaluations were very positive. It was evident that participants found the goal setting in the first session to be particularly useful. Similarly, in the second session participants expressed that the focus upon individual strengths were helpful. It was evident that participants did not have many expectations for the Circles but those who did have expectations expressed that these were exceeded. In particular, sharing stories with other women in STEM was considered to be a very positive experience from participants.

The final evaluation form was also very positive. The following aspects were rated on a scale from 1 (definitely not) to 4 (yes, definitely):

1. Were the Circles useful for your soft skills development and goal setting?
2. Do you have a clear idea on your next steps after these sessions?

3. How useful was the peer support and small group environment to help you with self exploration?
4. Would you recommend the Coaching Circles to a friend?

None of the aspects above were rated below a 3 and the majority of respondents gave each aspect a '5' which highlights the positive response from participants. In addition to this, participants also expressed that the Circles helped them to achieve personal goals and expressed their gratitude for the opportunity.

Conclusion

Overall, the first round of piloting of the Coaching Circles was successful and participants were very engaged with the programme. One of the main takeaways from the Circles was that participants enjoyed speaking to other like minded women. In order to continue the peer-support and maintain communication, a WhatsApp group was created for all those who wanted to be involved. However, there was a lack of activity in the chat so a recommendation for the second pilot was to have a WhatsApp group from the outset to ensure communication throughout.

Participants engaged well with each session and supported each other during the peer-mentoring elements of the Circles. The online facilitation worked well as it enabled women from across the UK to come together and if this was held face to face, this may not have been possible due to commitments and travel difficulties. An online delivery, therefore, proved to be flexible and accommodating for participants. However, some participants did not wish to have their camera on and in future sessions it was recommended that the facilitator should actively encourage participants to have their camera on (unless there was a specific reason why they are unable to).

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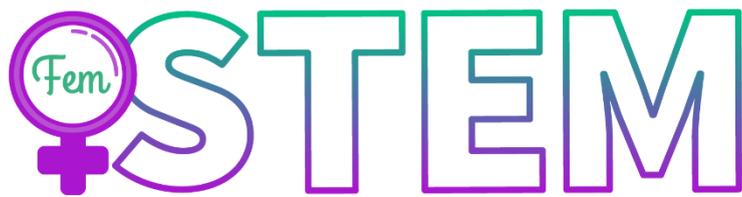
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FemSTEM

Recruitment, retention, progression



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