

FemSTEM Coaching Circles Pilot 2

Executive Summary

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Introduction

The second round of piloting for the FemSTEM Coaching Circles took place in August 2021 on the following dates:

1. 06.09.2021
2. 13.09.2021
3. 20.09.2021

Carolyn Usher (Trainer, Project Manager and experienced facilitator of Circles at Inova Consultancy) Babefl Csokan (International Project Manager) and Rachel Taylor (Graduate International Project Assistant) conducted these Circles. The Circles were attended by a total of 11 participants. Below is a summary of the attendees:

Participant	Experience in the STEM Sector
1	Neuroscientist
2	Works in aquaculture
3	Integrated logistics support engineer
4	Hardware design engineer
5	Previous experience working in the STEM sector and in teaching science
6	Masters student in Energy Management
7	Civil engineering with biology PHD student
8	Chartered civil engineer
9	Software engineering apprentice
10	Systems engineer
11	PHD researcher in Chemistry

Summary of Results

Similarly to the first piloting, participants were asked to complete three 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.

The soft skill assessments suggested that participants reported that they had developed some of their soft skills throughout the course of the Coaching Circles. In particular, participants reported an improvement in **networking, teamwork, goal setting, understanding of their values, communication skills and creative thinking**. Some areas such as **problem-solving** skills show a decrease, this may be a product of participant's self-reflection throughout the Circle's process. As part of the aim of the Coaching Circles was to encourage self-reflection, a decrease does not necessarily indicate a reduction in skill but an increased awareness of their skills and areas of improvement.

Regarding the session evaluation forms, the response was positive! Participants especially found networking with other women in STEM to be useful and reported that they enjoyed listening to the stories of like minded women. Additionally, the majority of participant's expectations were met. Some expressed that they had limited or no expectations and one person stated that they expected guest speakers (an expectation that was indirectly met as testimonials via the FemSTEM website and E-Coaching programme are available).

Responses to the final evaluation form were also favorable, with participant's expressing that the Circles had helped them to build their confidence and self-efficacy. Some even stated that they would practice techniques such as the 'questioning technique' in their mentoring sessions at work! 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?

Almost all of the respondents gave each aspect a '5', with only one person giving one aspect a 3. This highlights the positive response from participant's and suggests that the Circles were impactful and helped participants to achieve their goals.

Conclusion

To summarise, the second piloting of the Coaching Circles was a success. This can be evidenced by the fact that we had a very high retention rate throughout the Circles and the feedback from the evaluation forms were very positive. From this, it can be gathered that Inova Consultancy's recruitment strategy for the pilot worked well. As mentioned, participant's were engaged throughout and expressed their gratitude towards being able to share their experiences with other women in the sector.

The piloting enabled Inova Consultancy to gather important information and feedback which will support the sustainability of the project. For example, it was evident that group discussion was considered as useful so facilitators should allow plenty of time for group discussion. Additionally, a WhatsApp group proved to be a useful tool to encourage participants to continue to network and support each other.

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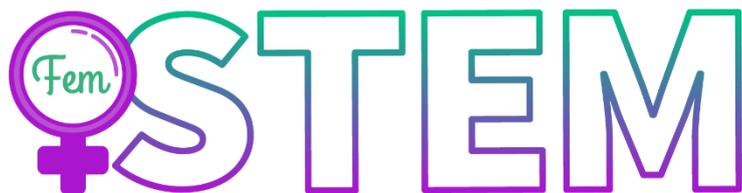
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Recruitment, retention, progression



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