

# Creating Connections: Future Collaborations

Centre for Facilitation | University of Warwick

**“The external facilitation of this event improved the outcomes considerably. Clear aims and goals were identified prior to the event. This kept the focus throughout the workshops and resulted in positive feedback from attendees and several multi-disciplinary seed funding grant applications.”**

**Professor Kerry Kirwan, WMG**

## Keys to Success

1. Collaboration with the client so interesting ways of exploring each topic could be designed.
2. Creating a relaxed and informal working space that encouraged sharing.
3. Management of timings so a lot of ground covered in the time available.



## Why focus on connections?

It is very hard for early career researchers to meet other people outside their specialist area and yet we know that large scale research challenges will need interdisciplinary collaboration to secure results.

The first two workshops have focused on two different Grand Challenge: Anti-Microbial Resistance and the Circular Economy.

The workshops were attended by early career researchers from different areas of the University. A series of lively discussions and activities provided the space for the participants to explore the topic and to get to know more about the other researchers and their research area.

The intention is to replicate this format in a range of subjects and encourage Early Career Researchers from all disciplines to share knowledge and collaborate so that they have a more secure multi-disciplinary foundation for future funding calls and grant applications.

## How did the approach make a difference?

Many researchers fear the traditional networking event because it can feel very challenging to start a conversation with strangers. In this format the networking happens in a more natural way and provides the opportunity for people to talk about their own research and to explore how they might be able to add value to one of the Grand Challenge themes.

At the end of the sessions an open forum is provided where any of the participants can propose an idea that they are interested in exploring further and others can choose to join them to shape this idea further. A small pot of seed funding is provided which participants have applied for after attending the workshop.

## What did our facilitators do to make a difference?

Participants often arrive uncertain of whether the event will be a good use of their time. Our professional facilitators maintain the balance between a relaxed working environment and a productively focused event. The participants know that they are in safe hands and this helps them to relax and do their best work.

**“This workshop was well organised It was short, and the time spent was well invested and provided the challenge of making the people from very different communities find a common ground” ECR 2019**

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