

Tool 6

Youth Co-Creation Workshop Facilitation Guide (In-Person)

This in-person facilitation guide is designed to help you structure inclusive co-creation workshops with young people, broadening the scope of youth engagement and supporting the development of OGP commitments that genuinely reflect their priorities and experiences.

The guide follows the natural flow of a workshop: preparation, facilitation, and follow-up. Work through each section in order. Greater attention is given to power dynamics, participation, conflict management, and follow-up, as these are central to meaningful co-creation.

PART 1: BEFORE THE WORKSHOP

1.1 GET CLEAR ON YOUR GOAL

Write one clear sentence describing what you want to achieve through the workshop. For example: “Identify three youth priorities to inform the action plan.” If the objective cannot be clearly defined, the workshop may require further planning before it takes place.

1.2 CONDUCT A POWER AUDIT BEFORE THE WORKSHOP

This is an important preparation step and builds directly on Tool 1 of this Toolkit. Before the workshop, review the expected participants with your team and ask:

- Who is expected to participate? List the individuals, organisations, and groups represented.
- Which participants, groups, or perspectives are likely to have the greatest influence on the discussion? Why?
- Which participants or groups may face barriers to speaking openly or contributing equally?
- Who has participated in similar processes before, and who may be joining such a space for the first time?
- Who should be represented in the process but is currently missing?

Use these reflections to decide how you structure the workshop, choose participation methods, and create opportunities for different voices to contribute.

Document these reflections and use them to inform how you structure the workshop, select participation methods, support different voices, and identify any groups that still need to be included. Without understanding these dynamics beforehand, facilitators may unintentionally reinforce existing power imbalances.

The purpose is not to label individuals, but to understand participation patterns and design a process where different voices can contribute.

1.3 PLAN FOR THE BARRIERS AND ACCESSIBILITY

Participation barriers are not always related to interest or motivation. Practical factors such as cost, location, timing, accessibility, language, and safety can affect whether young people are able to participate meaningfully. Before finalizing the workshop design, identify these barriers and plan how they will be addressed.

Accessibility check:

- ☐ Venue is physically accessible for participants with different mobility and accessibility needs.
- ☐ Participants know how to reach the venue and have clear logistical information.
- ☐ Language needs have been considered (including interpretation or translation where needed).
- ☐ Workshop materials are available in accessible formats.
- ☐ Online participation options have been considered where appropriate.
- ☐ Safety concerns have been assessed, especially for participants who may face risks due to their identity, public participation, or community work.

1.4 REGISTER PARTICIPANTS AND MAP DIVERSITY

Prepare a participant registration form before the workshop. Collecting this information serves two purposes: it allows you to follow up with participants after the session, and it helps you assess the diversity of the room, a critical indicator of whether your outreach reached beyond the usual suspects.

At a minimum, ask participants to share: name (optional), gender, age, region or community, and whether they identify with an ethnic, indigenous, or minority group. Keep this data confidential and handle it in line with your data protection obligations.

If key demographic groups are absent on the day, note it. That gap is a finding in itself.

1.5 DESIGN THE AGENDA AND CHOOSE YOUR METHOD

Build a simple agenda: opening and ground rules, the main working sessions, breaks, and a close.

Keep working sessions to chunks of about 45 minutes. Pick methods that spread participation (see Part 2). Share the agenda with participants beforehand so they know what to expect. Lack of information beforehand can create additional barriers, particularly for participants who may be unfamiliar with such processes.

A sample half-day agenda you can adapt:

Time	Activity	Purpose
0:00–0:20	Welcome, introductions, and agreeing to ground rules	Settle the room and set a safe, equal tone
0:20–0:35	Icebreaker	Warm people up and surface who is in the room
0:35–1:20	Working session 1 (e.g. World Café on the issues)	Gather ideas widely in small groups
1:20–1:35	Break	Rest and informal talk
1:35–2:20	Working session 2 (e.g. participatory mapping)	Go deeper on priorities
2:20–2:45	Dot voting on priorities	Decide together, with every vote equal
2:45–3:00	Closing session: Agree on next steps and how you will report back	End clearly and promise to follow up

PART 2: DURING THE WORKSHOP

2.1 RECOGNIZE THE FACILITATOR'S OWN ROLE

Facilitators influence whose voices are prioritised through the questions they ask, the people they invite to speak, the ideas they record, and the way they manage discussions. Although facilitators do not determine the outcome, they influence the conditions in which participation takes place.

Before and during the workshop, facilitators should reflect on their own assumptions, relationships, and positions in relation to participants. Ask yourself:

- Whose perspectives might I naturally prioritise?
- Am I giving equal attention to different participants?
- Am I recording all ideas fairly, or only the ones that align with my expectations?
- Are my facilitation choices making it easier or harder for some people to participate?

A facilitator's role is not only to manage time and activities; it is also to create conditions where different voices can contribute meaningfully.

2.2 OPEN BY SETTING GROUND RULES THAT SUPPORT EQUAL PARTICIPATION

The first ten minutes set the tone for everything. Develop a short set of ground rules together with participants rather than imposing them. For example: one person speaks at a time; no idea is mocked; everyone will be invited to contribute. Write them up where everyone can see.

Ground rules are an important tool for managing power dynamics, because you can point back to them later without it feeling personal.

2.3 OPTIONS FOR OPENING ACTIVITIES

Choose activities that help participants connect, understand the purpose of the workshop, and create an inclusive environment. Effective openers help participants connect, understand who is in the room, and recognise how different experiences and perspectives may shape the discussion. Three that work:

- **Two truths and a hope.** Each person shares two true things about themselves and one hope they have for their community. It surfaces what people care about, not just their names.
- **Where do you stand?** Name an imaginary line across the room ("agree" at one end, "disagree" at the other) and read out a statement. People move to their spot. It gets bodies moving and shows the range of views without anyone having to make a speech. Adapt activities depending on the sensitivity of the topic and the safety of participants. For some discussions, anonymous methods may be more appropriate.
- **One-word check-in.** Each person says one word for how they arrived feeling. It is quick, it includes everyone equally, and it tells you the room's mood before you start.

2.4 USE METHODS THAT DISTRIBUTE PARTICIPATION AND REDUCE POWER IMBALANCES

Workshop methods are not neutral. Some approaches naturally favour participants who are more confident, experienced, or familiar with formal discussions. Use participatory methods that create multiple ways for young people to contribute and help distribute decision-making power more equally.

The following methods are useful because they reduce the risk that participation is shaped mainly by a small number of voices:

- **World Café:** Small-group conversations allow participants to exchange ideas in a less intimidating setting and help ensure that more voices are heard.
- **Dot voting:** Gives every participant an equal opportunity to prioritise ideas and prevent decisions from being shaped only by the most vocal participants.
- **Participatory mapping:** Allows participants to share knowledge visually and can support contributions from people who may be less comfortable speaking in formal discussions.

If you want to explore additional facilitation methods and activities to use during your workshop, consult Tool 7 of this Toolkit.

2.5 MANAGE DOMINANT VOICES

Some participants may unintentionally take up more space in discussions, while others may have more influence because of their role, experience, or status. Facilitators should create balance without embarrassing or excluding participants. Concrete actions:

- **Use the ground rule, not your authority:** “Thanks, that’s a strong point, let’s hold it there so we can hear some others, as we agreed.”
- **Go round the table deliberately:** “I’d like to hear from someone who hasn’t spoken yet” or “I’d love to hear from this side of the room.”
- **If one person keeps cutting in, name it gently:** “I want to make sure everyone gets the same space, let’s come back to you after we’ve heard a few others.”

2.6 SUPPORT LESS-HEARD PERSPECTIVES

Silence does not necessarily mean a lack of ideas or interest. Sometimes silence reflects the effects of invisible power identified in Tool 1 of this Toolkit, where individuals or groups may have learned that their perspectives are less likely to be heard. Concrete actions you may implement:

- Use small groups or pairs first, then ask each group to report. Participants who may hesitate to speak in a large group often feel more comfortable contributing in smaller groups.
- Ask for written input on cards alongside spoken input, so a good idea does not depend on confidence to be heard.
- Avoid spotlighting individual people as it can frighten them into freezing

2.7 HANDLE CHALLENGING MOMENTS

Sometimes disagreements become personal, dismissive, or harmful to participants. Facilitators need approaches to manage conflict while protecting participation. Concrete actions:

- Stay calm: Your steadiness sets the tone of the discussion.
- Name it without attacking back: “I can see this matters to you, but let’s keep it about the issue, not the person.”
- Restate the ground rule everyone agreed: “We said no idea gets mocked here; let’s hold to that.”
- Redirect to the work: “Let’s bring this back to the question on the table.”
- If it continues, pause, take a short break, and speak to the person one-on-one rather than fighting it out in front of everyone.

PART 3: AFTER THE WORKSHOP

3.1 CAPTURE AND DOCUMENT RESULTS

Fill in a short record while it is fresh. If documentation is delayed, important insights and decisions may be lost. Include who was missing and whose perspective may still need to be considered. Adapt the following template to your needs:

Item	Notes
Workshop title and purpose	
Date, location, and duration	
Number of participants and groups represented (include who was missing)	
Key ideas and priorities raised	
Decisions or agreements reached	
How youth inputs will be reflected in OGP commitments	
Facilitation methods used and lessons learned	
Next steps and responsible persons	
How and when participants will be informed of outcomes	

3.2 CLOSE THE LOOP: FOLLOW-UP WITH PARTICIPANTS

Follow-up is an essential part of meaningful participation. If participants contribute their time and ideas but receive no follow-up, they may feel that their contributions were not valued or considered, and may reduce trust in future participation processes. So always report back: tell participants what came out of the workshop, what is being used, what is not, and honestly why. A reply that says “we could not use this, and here is the reason” respects people far more than silence.

Failing to follow-up after participation can discourage future engagement and reinforce the perception that contributions are not valued.

3.3 LEARN FROM IT

Ask yourself and your team: who spoke and who didn't? Did the methods work? Who was missing, and how do we reach them next time? Note it down so the next workshop is better.