

SOLVING PROBLEMS TOGETHER

*The methodological journey
of a co-creation process*



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The methodological journey of a co-creation process

Are you ready for co-creation?

Solving problems together is a practical guide to designing and implementing challenge-based co-creation processes in the public sector that presents how co-creation was done in the project Improving civic participation with emerging technologies. Part road-map, part toolkit, and part reflection, the guide follows the project's methodological journey—from early scoping and team alignment to challenge definition, co-creation, and pathways to testing, implementation, and scaling. At each step, it presents the project's experience, providing practical advice,

tools, canvases, exercises and real-world insights that teams can adapt to their own contexts to collaboratively define meaningful public challenges and tackle them creating innovative digital solutions.

Public institutions are facing increasingly complex and intertwined challenges, from declining trust to polarisation, from digital disruption to climate change. These are not issues that governments and public administrations can solve alone. Co-creation—understood as a process through which two or more public and private actors solve a shared problem, challenge, or task through a constructive exchange of knowledge, resources, competences, and ideas—is increasingly recognised

as a powerful solution. Yet, in our experience, many public servants who want to embrace it hesitate. They often lack access to structured advice, tested processes, or clear examples of success to build confidence. Through this guide, we share what we did and learnt, with the aim of making co-creation more accessible and enabling its diffusion across public sector teams.

Solving problems together shares the experience of project Improving civic participation with emerging technologies. The project was led by Portugal (Agência para a Reforma Tecnológica do Estado/LabX), Spain (Instituto Nacional de Administración Pública/Laboratorio de Innovación Pública) and the Netherlands (Digicampus), who

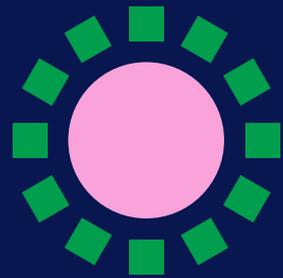
authored this guide with support of the OECD Public Governance Directorate. The project was supported by the European Commission under the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) and implemented by the OECD, in cooperation with the European Commission. The purpose of this guide is to ensure the learnings, tools, and resources developed remain available for future initiatives and that this project's co-creation tools can be re-use, adapted and further improved across European public administrations. All materials are shared under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). Users are warmly invited to reuse, adapt, and share their feedback via cocreation@oecd.org.

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This guide accompanies the reader through the five phases of the co-creation process adopted in this project :



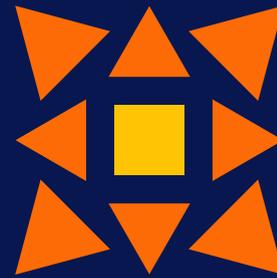
Define the scope and align the team

Establish a strong foundation of knowledge, mandate, and direction for the project.



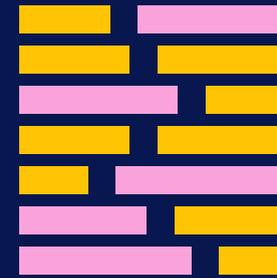
Surface and refine the challenge

Define meaningful, actionable challenges based on real needs..



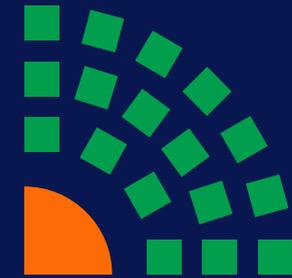
Ideate solutions

Generate different possible solutions to the challenges through the collaboration between public teams and external makers.



Break the ground for testing and implementation

Move from prototype to implementation readiness, going from 0 to 1.



Prepare for rolling out and upscaling

Support institutional integration and broader adoption, share learnings, and inspire replication.



How to navigate this document?

Goal:

What that phase aims to achieve.

Activities:

How to design and deliver the phase, explaining what we did.

Insights from the field:

Lessons learned and advice from practice.

Achievements:

The character progresses along the journey after completing each phase

1 Define the scope and align the team

This phase is meant to help you set foundation for the co-creation journey. The end goal is to clarify direction, build internal alignment, and ensure your team has the mandate and shared understanding to move forward confidently.

Prompt questions

- Have you agreed on a clear mandate, objectives and a clear desirable vision with your team?
- Do all team members understand their roles and commitments?
- Have you mapped the initial ecosystem and identified key stakeholders?
- Is there a shared understanding of timelines, resources, and constraints?

Set a strategic direction and empower team with a mandate

Set strategic direction and a desirable vision
The first step in the journey was to establish a clear and shared strategic direction for the project, one that recognised both the ambition of civic innovation and the practical realities of public sector work. Before jumping into challenge definition or solution design, it's crucial to build a shared strategic direction to ensure public teams have a clear mandate to act, and they developed a clear vision of a desirable future. In our experience, this work started with an inception report that translated the broader project goals into a concrete roadmap. The report was not only a planning tool but also a way to align expectations and responsibilities across countries, partners and institutions.

Align of core team
The process of developing the inception report involved in-person meetings in Portugal, Spain, and the Netherlands. These meetings offered an early opportunity to align with local partners and decision-makers, clarify the roles of the OECD, the project beneficiaries and the European Commission, and begin identifying key stakeholders and potential political sponsors. Using a participatory technique (the vision of a desirable future). In our experience, this work started with an inception report that translated the broader project goals into a concrete roadmap. The report was not only a planning tool but also a way to align expectations and responsibilities across countries, partners and institutions.

Build initial connections
Additionally, the national trips provided the occasion for exploratory interviews and meetings with dozens of stakeholders from civil society, government, academia and industry. These conversations helped sharpen the understanding of the institutional landscape and opportunities for collaboration in each country. This evidence was further reinforced by a short digital survey that allowed for the identification of relevant actors, initial gaps and opportunities, and country-specific baselines in the area of civic participation and emerging technologies.

Co-creation starts with trust, clear direction, and shared understanding.

Build a shared knowledge base

Lever relevant and usable knowledge
Any successful co-creation process must be grounded in a solid understanding of both policy trends and context-specific dynamics. To this end, we worked on two fronts: first, a global overview of the state-of-the-art in emerging technologies for participation; and second, a systemic mapping of the national ecosystems in Portugal, Spain and the Netherlands. This approach translated concretely in two studies—one thematic, the other ecosystemic—and grounded the project in evidence and made its knowledge base accessible to others. Importantly, both these publications reflected explicit efforts to communicate easily and accessibly with all the actors across the ecosystems: clear communication is key for systemic change.

Map good practices, learning, and experiences
The first publication—*Tackling civic participation challenges with emerging technologies*—explores the potential of artificial intelligence, blockchain and virtual reality to improve participatory processes. It analyses how such tools can reduce barriers to participation, increase administrative capacity and enhance transparency and accountability in public decision making. The paper also reflects on risks, providing practical considerations and a roadmap for public authorities.

Understand and bring together the innovation ecosystems
The second publication—*How innovation ecosystems foster citizen participation using emerging technologies in Portugal, Spain and the Netherlands*—offers a cross-national perspective on how diverse actors contribute to innovation in this space. It examines their motivations, enablers and obstacles, and provides guidance for those looking to support sustainable tech-based participation initiatives. In our experience, doing research for it meant creating spaces for the ecosystems to gather together, paving the way for the following systemic initiatives.

Learn from the forefront of knowledge and practice

Seek the advice of key experts and practitioners in the field
Bringing in expert perspectives is a critical step in shaping a project that is both realistic and forward-looking. Beyond different efforts to bring people in the project through the whole process discussed in all phases, since the beginning we assembled an expert panel of 12 international thought leaders in digital participation, public innovation and emerging technologies. The panel served as an advisory body, meeting three times over the course of the project, on a pro bono basis. For this engagement, we found it very important to prioritise the diversity among stakeholders and always be clear about the engagement effort that we were demanding from them.

Leverage expertise to detect risks and opportunities
The first session helped frame the potential to scale promising initiatives and connect fragmented efforts, especially through combining ecosystem mappings with research on the leading practices in the field. They also welcomed the project's challenge-based structure, which could keep teams focused on real problems. However, they flagged significant risks: too much emphasis on pilots without ensuring long-term adoption; insufficient support for solution maintenance; and weak integration of public actors beyond the initial phases. These insights shaped later methodological choices, including the emphasis on mandate, governance and sustainability.

Insight from the field

The systemic mapping provided deep knowledge, but also something more subtle and vital: it helped the project team meet and bond with all ecosystem actors on the ground. These early connections proved essential later on, when it came time to identify challenges, co-create solutions and build lasting coalitions. Indeed, actors met at this stage in later phases became protagonists of the process. For co-creation to succeed, trust must start early—and in person when possible.

Timeline in months

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do you want to learn more?

- [Team Alignment Map \(Strategizer\)](#)
- [The Inception Phase \(Project Management Institute\)](#)
- [Collaborative Policymaking, a qualitative systematic review of advice for policymakers \(Cairney & Toomey, 2024\)](#)
- [Collective Impact \(Community Toolbox\)](#)

1 Define the scope and align the team

Prompt questions:

List to help teams reflect on whether they've covered the essentials before moving forward.

Links to resources:

All the tools we used are linked so you can reproduce them.

Timeline:

How long each phase took in our project (but every timeline is context-dependent!)

Do you want to know more?

Other tools, experiences, papers, etc.

Each phase can be explored independently, according to the users' needs and objectives, and used as an actionable module in itself. Importantly, the phases described here are those of our project, and other co-creation processes

might require different structures. All the phases presented offer to users a consistent structure of resources.

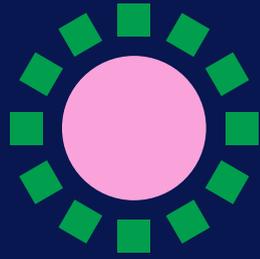
You can use this document as a planning tool to shape your own process, a facilitation guide for workshops and

bootcamps, a teaching resource to introduce challenge-based co-creation, a reference pack to extract and adapt canvases and exercises, or much more. We recommend starting by identifying your current phase and adapting the

tools to your context. All canvases and activities are presented to be modified. We are sharing what we did and learnt and hope it will be useful.

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1

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Build initial connections

Additionally, the national trips provided the occasion for exploratory **interviews and meetings with dozens of stakeholders** from civil society, government, academia and industry. These conversations helped sharpen the understanding of the institutional landscape and opportunities for collaboration in each country. This evidence was further reinforced by a short digital survey, that allowed for the identification of relevant actors, initial gaps and opportunities, and country-specific baselines in the area of civic participation and emerging technologies.



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The first session helped frame the core **opportunity and risks of the initiative**. Experts recognised the potential to scale promising initiatives and connect fragmented efforts, especially through combining ecosystem mappings with research on the leading practices in the field. They also welcomed the project's challenge-based structure, which could keep teams focused on real problems. However, they flagged significant risks: too much emphasis on pilots without ensuring long-term adoption; insufficient support for solution maintenance; and weak integration of public actors beyond the initial phases. These insights shaped later methodological choices, including the emphasis on mandate, governance and sustainability.

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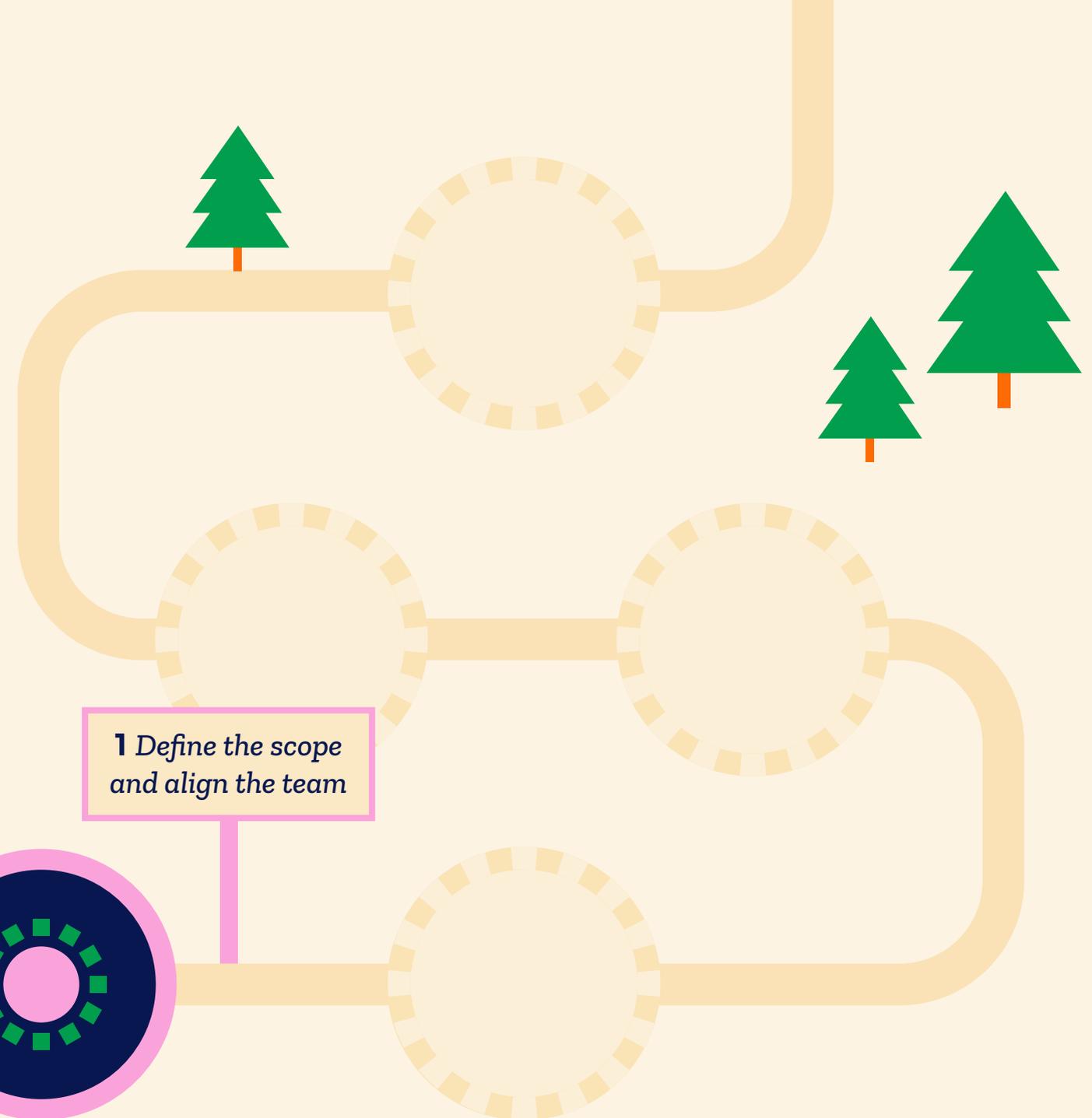
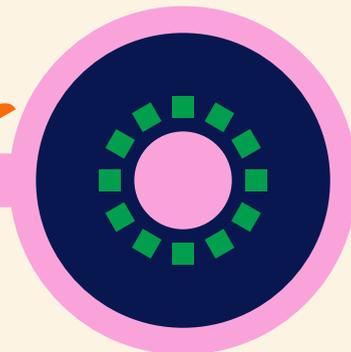


Do you want to learn more?

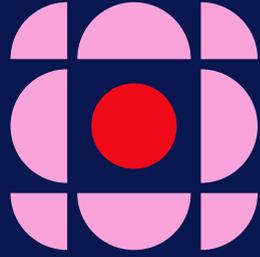
- ▶ [Challenge-led system mapping \(EIT Climate-KIC, 2020\)](#)
- ▶ [OECD Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes \(2022\)](#)
- ▶ [The Inception Phase \(Project Management Institute\)](#)
- ▶ [Collaborative Policymaking: a qualitative systematic review of advice for policymakers \(Cairney & Toomey, 2024\)](#)
- ▶ [Collective Impact \(Community Toolbox\)](#)



1 Define the scope and align the team



2



Surface and refine the challenge

This phase is meant to help you identify the right problem to work on. The end goal is to define a meaningful, actionable challenge, based on real needs, that offers potential for innovative solutions.

Prompt questions

- Is the challenge Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART)?
- Have you tested the framing of the challenge with multiple stakeholders?
- Do you have a final written challenge description agreed by the team?



From problems to challenges: setting up dialogues to identify where it hurts

Recognise the problems

The success of any co-creation process hinges on the **quality of the challenges** being addressed. Challenges that are too vague, too broad or not grounded in real pain points are unlikely to lead to actionable or innovative solutions. In our project, this began with one-on-one onboarding meetings with potential public sector teams to clarify expectations and commitments. Teams were then invited to fill a simple **challenge exploration form**², prompting them to reflect on the problem, affected populations, past attempts at solving it and their level of commitment to tackling it.

Frame the challenge right

Online hour-long sessions brought teams and facilitators together to revisit the initial statements in the first **re-framing workshops**. Teams were asked to narrate their challenge to different audiences—citizens, minister, journalists—and to reflect past attempts and failures. A key tool used at this stage was a **stakeholder mapping exercise**³, which helped teams identify the broader ecosystem around the problem—and potential future allies.

Dive deeper into your challenge

After the workshop, teams were invited to revise their challenge definition. A **second, more detailed form** collected critical information such as interdependencies, success criteria, existing policy links and available non-financial resources. This **iterative process** ensured that each team entered the next phase of the journey

with a well-formed challenge—one that was institutionally grounded and rich enough to support real innovation.





Re-framing and ideation workshops: national sessions to refine problem statements

Test and validate challenges

Once teams had completed the re-framing process, they were invited to in-person **re-framing and ideation workshops** held in each participating country. These sessions brought together challenge owners and external stakeholders—colleagues, partners, and users—to stress-test early challenge drafts and surface blind spots.

Use structured tool to shape actionable challenges

Teams started by revisiting the **re-framing canvas**⁴ using sticky notes and structured prompts, which helped shift from abstract problems to actionable opportunities. Once the challenge was defined, teams moved into solution ideation, using a modified version of the **6-3-5 brainstorming method**⁵, which allowed participants to build on each other's ideas quickly and collaboratively. Ideas were then discussed and prioritized using dot voting. Finally, each team presented their refined challenge and early ideas in a plenary session, which reinforced shared learning and encouraged cross-team exchange.

Consolidate iterative learnings

At the end of this phase, facilitators used all the material produced—from forms to canvases to workshop notes—to produce **final challenge descriptions**. These summaries were reviewed and validated by teams and later used in the open call to bring in external makers and developers.



To solve a problem, you must first see it clearly from every angle.

Insight from the field

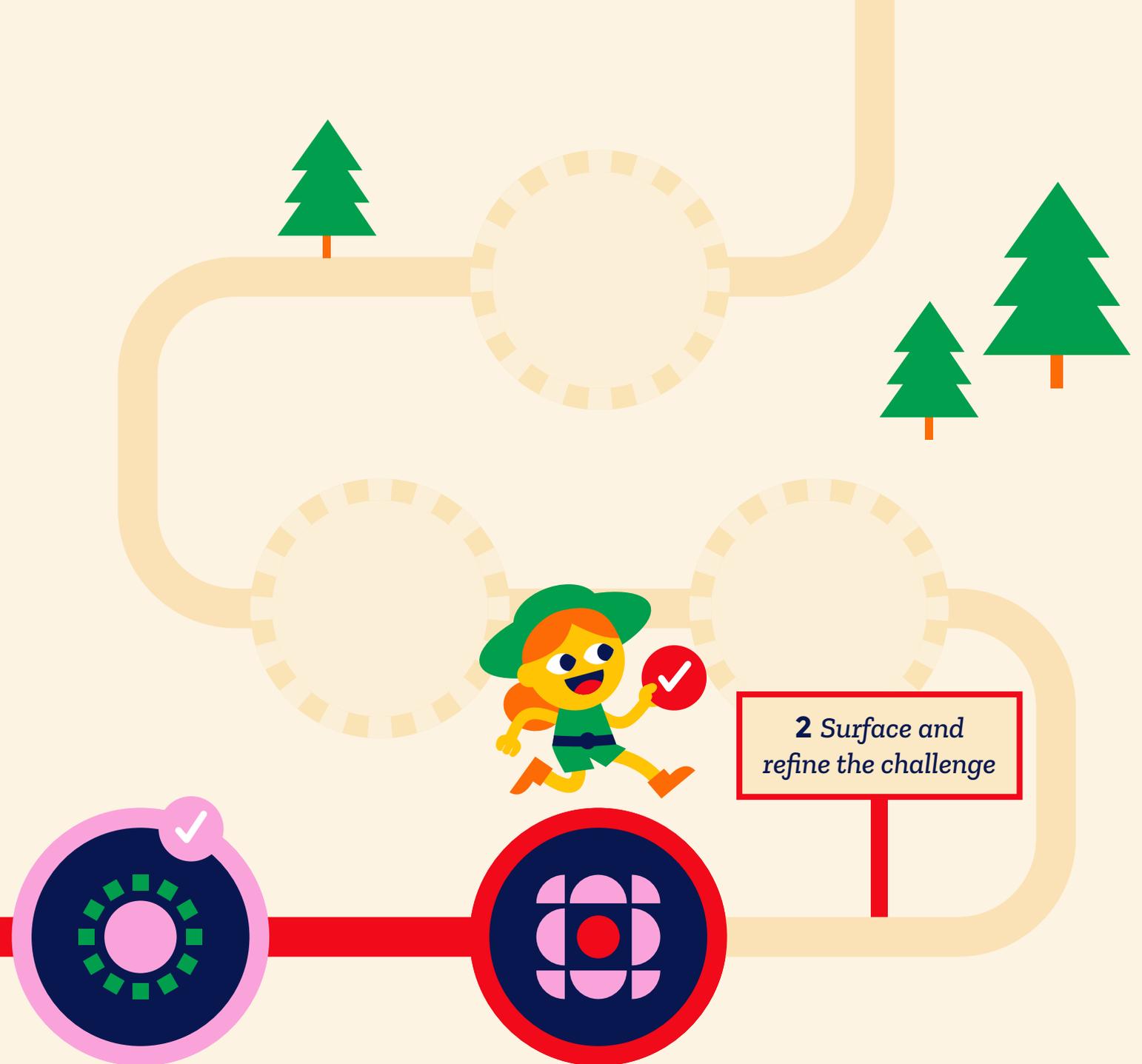
Defining challenges is defining teams. In the Netherlands, two teams working on the defined challenges of “online polarisation” and “citizen voice” with a focus on the [Polis](#) platform realised their objectives aligned and merged their efforts. In Portugal, a coalition of challenge owners collaborated on a shared issue. These realignments were not only efficient—they strengthened the legitimacy and potential of the challenges. When teams invest in reframing together, they often discover who else needs to be in the room.

Timeline in months

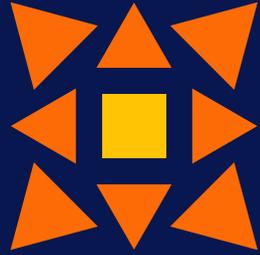


Do you want to learn more?

- ▶ [Define the problem \(Australian Public Service Commission, 2024\)](#)
- ▶ [Toolkits to identify a problem-solving approach \(OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation\)](#)
- ▶ [Problem Framing Canvas: Defining the right problem \(MITRE, 2021\)](#)
- ▶ [How to Lead a Workshop for Stakeholder Mapping \(Pontia, 2021\)](#)
- ▶ [Polis \(The Computational Democracy Project\)](#)
- ▶ [The powers of problem definition: The case of government paperwork \(Weiss, 1989\)](#)



3



Ideate solutions

This phase is meant to bring public teams and external contributors together to prototype fresh ideas. The end goal is to translate challenges into tangible, early solutions that teams can own and build on.

Prompt questions

- Have you prepared participants with warm-up sessions and clear expectations?
- Did the bootcamp provide a safe and structured space for collaboration?
- Did teams successfully generate and consider multiple ideas of solutions?
- Do you have tangible prototypes and documentation from the bootcamp?



Create a space where people feel comfortable

Design and intensive and focused format

A challenge-based **co-creation bootcamp**, can bring public teams and external makers together to rapidly prototype solutions. Rather than stretching collaboration over months, a bootcamp condenses it into high-energy days in which time pressure, physical co-location, and focus on doing rather than discussing foster creativity and ownership. While some participants may be experienced in co-creation, others may not. A structured format of the process ensures everyone can contribute. The right balance between structure and flexibility allows creativity to emerge without leaving anyone behind.

Understand your goals and curate the event accordingly

Before designing your bootcamp in detail, reflect on **what you want to achieve**. Are you aiming for a tested digital prototype, a policy roadmap, or new partnerships? Clear outcomes help shape the structure. This should also be reflected on the physical space, which should support teamwork, inspiration, and informal interactions. Breakout rooms, whiteboards, prototyping materials and areas for relaxation all help set the tone. The mood of the space will shape the energy of the teams.



Find the right building partners through an open call

Curate the way you open collaboration

It is important to curate how public sector teams will connect with external contributors. The channel you choose shapes both who applies and how they engage—whether through an open call, targeted invitations, or partnerships. In our project, we launched an open **Call for Makers**, which attracted over 400 applications from nearly 50 countries, spanning sectors and skillsets. This wide net ensured diversity, but the process also included careful curation to match contributors with the needs of each team. Curating this step is important because it affects the quality of co-creation, but also because it could represent the first point of contact with partners that will then have more structured and profound collaborations with public sector through procurement processes.

Select and build teams with shared criteria

Shortlisted candidates were **selected based on criteria co-designed with project partners**, ensuring a balance between technical capability and alignment with the challenges, enabling cross-country collaboration where possible. For **team formation**, it is important to combine external expertise and institutional knowledge, ensuring each team has enough capacity to imagine, build, and implement.



Setting the scene: building teams, pre-bootcamp warm-up and expectation-setting

Start collaboration early

Good preparation is essential for a successful co-creation bootcamp.

Don't wait until day one for teams to meet. Use online sessions to introduce participants, align expectations and build trust. In our project, we held two **preparatory calls**. The first brought together all challenge owners from the three countries and the second introduced selected makers to their challenge teams. These sessions allowed teams to start thinking proactively about their challenge and co-define the values that would guide the bootcamp.

Create a digital space

To sustain momentum between these sessions and the event, create **online channels** to share useful materials, pose questions, and coordinate logistics. You can rely on a wide variety of tools ranging from WhatsApp to Teams, to Notion, to Slack. Choose a tool that participants are familiar with, that requires minimal efforts and ask them if they'd like it. Avoid overbuilding platforms that won't be used.

Prepare your facilitators

Make sure teams will be guided effectively in the co-creation process. Develop a detailed **facilitation guide**⁶—outlining time, activities, and responsibilities—and run a mock session to test the format and iron out issues. If resources allow, assign one facilitator per team. Their role is not to lead the content but to maintain focus, time, and inclusion. Finally, refine your facilitation approach to ensure that it allows you to reach your goal, but also that it ensures engagement: co-creation should be exciting and fun!





Challenge-based cocreation in 6 steps

Follow a clear, phased method

Our bootcamp was structured around six phases, inspired by the design sprint method. Each phase gave teams a structure to explore ideas while staying focused

CO-CREATION BOOTCAMP



When challenges meet creativity in a safe and playful space, ideas turn into prototypes and teams turn into changemakers.



Understand and define

Teams began their work together with the [Lego Duck icebreaker](#)⁷, followed by a [canvas to map the challenge](#)⁸: past attempts, users, stakeholders, success criteria, resources and potential risks. The goal was to build shared understanding and clarify the focus of the work. Each team chose its own working style—digital notes, sticky walls, or hybrid formats. Respect the process but give room for team autonomy.



Ideate

Using the [«Crazy 4» method with a custom canvas](#)⁹, participants quickly generated multiple ideas of solutions. Sharing, clustering, and voting helped surface promising directions. Prioritising speed over perfection made it easy for everyone to contribute and opened unexpected paths.



Sketch

Participants turned selected ideas into higher fidelity representations using a [sketch canvas](#)¹⁰. The focus was on identifying key features and user flows. Teams compared sketches, explored commonalities, and merged and remixed ideas as needed – some even deciding to use scissors and physically reassemble parts from different sketches to form a new hybrid concept. Structured flexibility in how teams worked supported richer outputs.



Select

Teams selected one idea to prototype. In our case, selection was based on *value creation, citizen focus, feasibility, and potential for uptake*—but you should define your own relevant criteria. This phase concluded the first day of work and it was followed by team presentations to other teams, allowing for the circulation and cross-pollination of the insights that emerged during the first half of the bootcamp.



Prototype

On day two, teams used a [prototype canvas](#)¹¹ to organise their thinking before building. Filled the canvas, teams approached prototyping with different mediums ranging from cardboard to digital wireframes, to service blueprints, to AI-generated clickable prototypes. The format varied, but the purpose was the same: make the idea concrete enough to generate useful feedback. What's essential is not the fidelity of the prototype, but how clearly it communicates the solution.



Pitch

After prototyping each team had five minutes to present their prototype to a jury of government representatives, EU officials, and experts. Evaluation focused on *value-added, feasibility, political sponsorship, and scaling potential*. In our case, the pitches were also the occasion to select three prototypes—one per country—as the most promising and the one that would be further developed. Ending the bootcamp with a pitch helped add visibility and motivation—and can help secure next steps.

Insight from the field

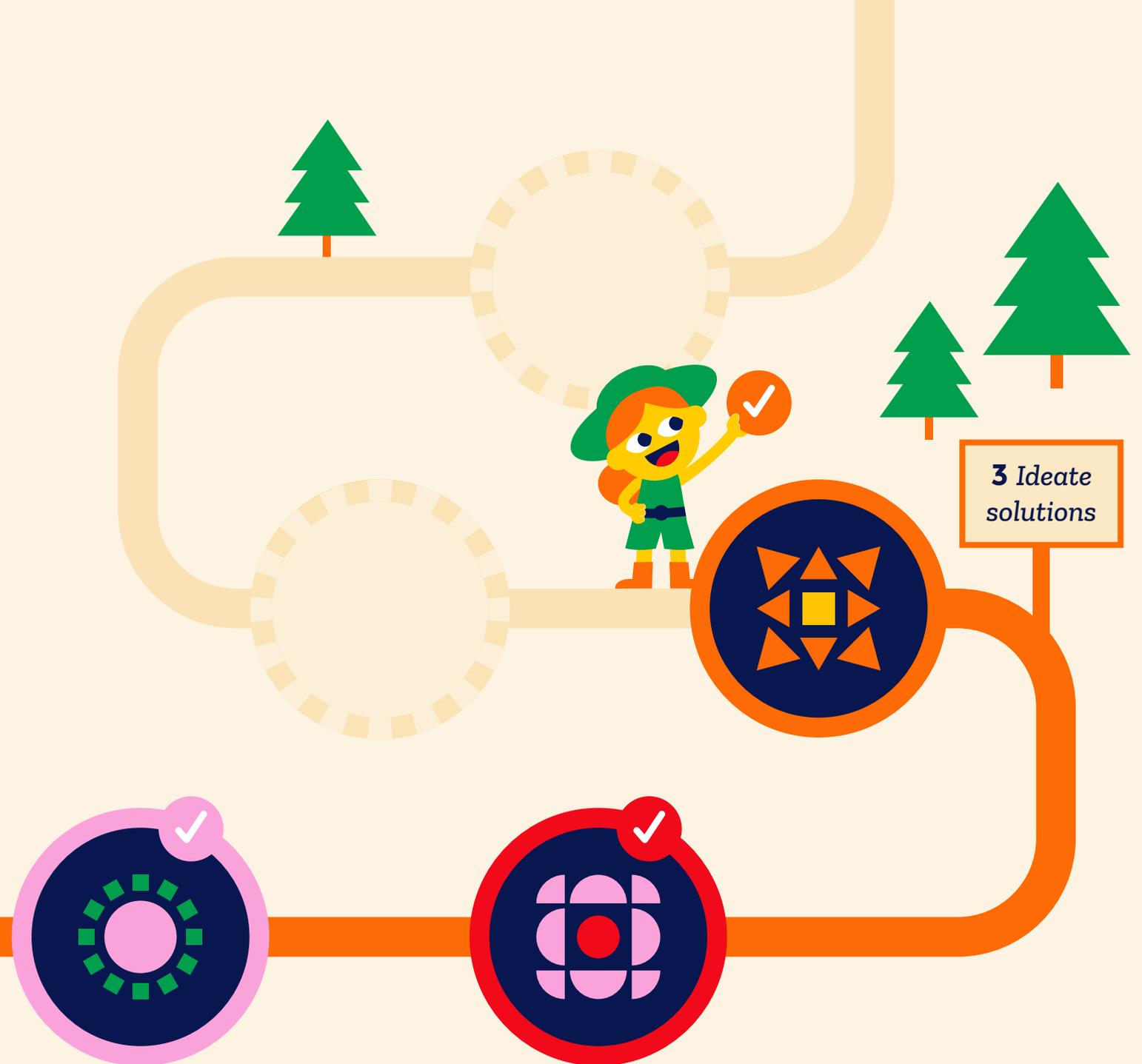
Structured flexibility was our motto. Teams adapted the methods we proposed—collaborating on an online document editor instead of sticky notes, remixing sketches with scissors, or using Lovable to build demos. The structure created a safe and focused environment; the flexibility empowered teams to own the process. After preparing the bootcamp activities, be ready to see them transformed to best fit the trajectory of each team. More importantly, be ready to guide teams in the new paths while helping them stay true to the goal of each session.

Timeline in months



Do you want to learn more?

- ▶ [20 years of building on the Double Diamond \(Design Council, 2023\)](#)
- ▶ [Learn How to Use Sketching as an Ideation Method \(Interaction Design Foundation, 2024\)](#)
- ▶ [Design Thinking Phase 4 - Everything you Need to Know About Prototyping \(Facilitator.com\)](#)
- ▶ [A Scoping Review of Empirical Evidence on \(Digital\) Public Services Co-Creation \(Rodriguez Müller et al., 2021\)](#)
- ▶ [Co-creation for Policy \(EIT Climate-KIC & Joint Research Centre, 2022\)](#)



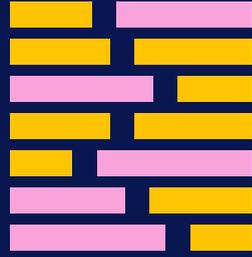
4

Break the ground for testing and implementation

This stage is meant to help teams move from prototype ideas to readiness. The end goal is to produce technical specifications, implementation roadmaps, and momentum for making the solution real.

Prompt questions

- Are technical specifications complete, validated, and owned by the challenge team?
- Has an implementation roadmap been co-developed with stakeholders?
- Have you planned a path for both selected and non-selected prototypes?
- Is there a plan to sustain momentum through a community of practice or similar?



Technical specifications: translating prototypes into tech specs with expert input

Bridge design and delivery

Moving from prototype to implementation requires detailed technical specifications that translate ideas into buildable systems. Start by collecting all relevant documentation—user needs, functionalities, mock-ups, and feedback—and validate it with challenge owners.

Work iteratively with technical experts

Technical experts can help you translate your idea into tech specs. Engage them early. Then ask them propose a table of contents, draft the specs, and revise in multiple feedback rounds with challenge owners. This iterative cycle builds clarity and shared ownership.

Define key components

Final specs should cover functional and non-functional requirements, user roles, AI pipelines, interface structure, integration points, and evaluation methods. All these elements matter to create a blueprint that is actionable for IT teams.



Implementation roadmaps: identifying phases of development and ensuring preparedness

Translate specs into action

With specs in place, build an **implementation roadmaps** that help teams go from prototype to fully deployed solution. This includes identifying what needs to happen, in what order and with what resources. We recommend structuring the roadmap around five key layers:

1. **Technical development** – including upgrades, integrations, and testing
2. **Milestones and metrics** – defining clear goals and checkpoints
3. **Resources and capabilities** – people, budget, skills, and partners
4. **Governance and ownership** – who leads, who approves, who maintains
5. **Stakeholder engagement** – which audiences to involve and when

Ground the roadmap in real constraints

Implementation roadmaps should be co-developed with challenge owners and colleagues most likely to be involved in the next steps to ensure that you're building on current systems, constraints, and institutional dynamics rather than abstract ambition. build on. These documents are not rigid plans but structured starting points to mobilise action.



Light incubation: tailored coaching for non-selected teams

Don't ignore good ideas

Even prototypes not selected for immediate development can hold valuable insights. A light incubation track—what we called the “Prototype nursery”—can support further exploration. This is what we did and it brought teams the support needed to gain support inside their organisations and continue working on the challenge and the solution.

Offer structured follow-up

Organise 1-2 coaching sessions bringing challenge owners together with selected experts to revisit ideas, extract learnings, and laying the groundwork for potential future development. This lighter touch keeps momentum alive and can be precious.

Turning prototypes into reality requires not just technical blueprints, but governance, ownership, and a shared commitment to action.



Community of practice: sustaining momentum beyond the bootcamp

Turn one-off experience into collaborations

One of the most valuable outcomes of the bootcamp was the **community** it sparked—participants from government, civil society, and tech ecosystems who now shared a lived experience and common language. But communities don't sustain themselves. To sustain engagement, follow-up quickly—via newsletter, online meetings, or shared platforms. Recognise that managing a community requires time and ownership, hence assign dedicated capacity to maintain momentum and coordinate early activity.

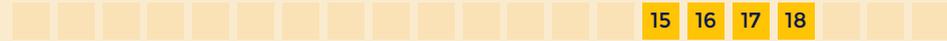
Shift from coordination to co-ownership

As the community matures, identify key conveners and ask them to shape the agenda or host activities. Over time, **empowering members** to lead creates resilience and relevance over time.

Insight from the field

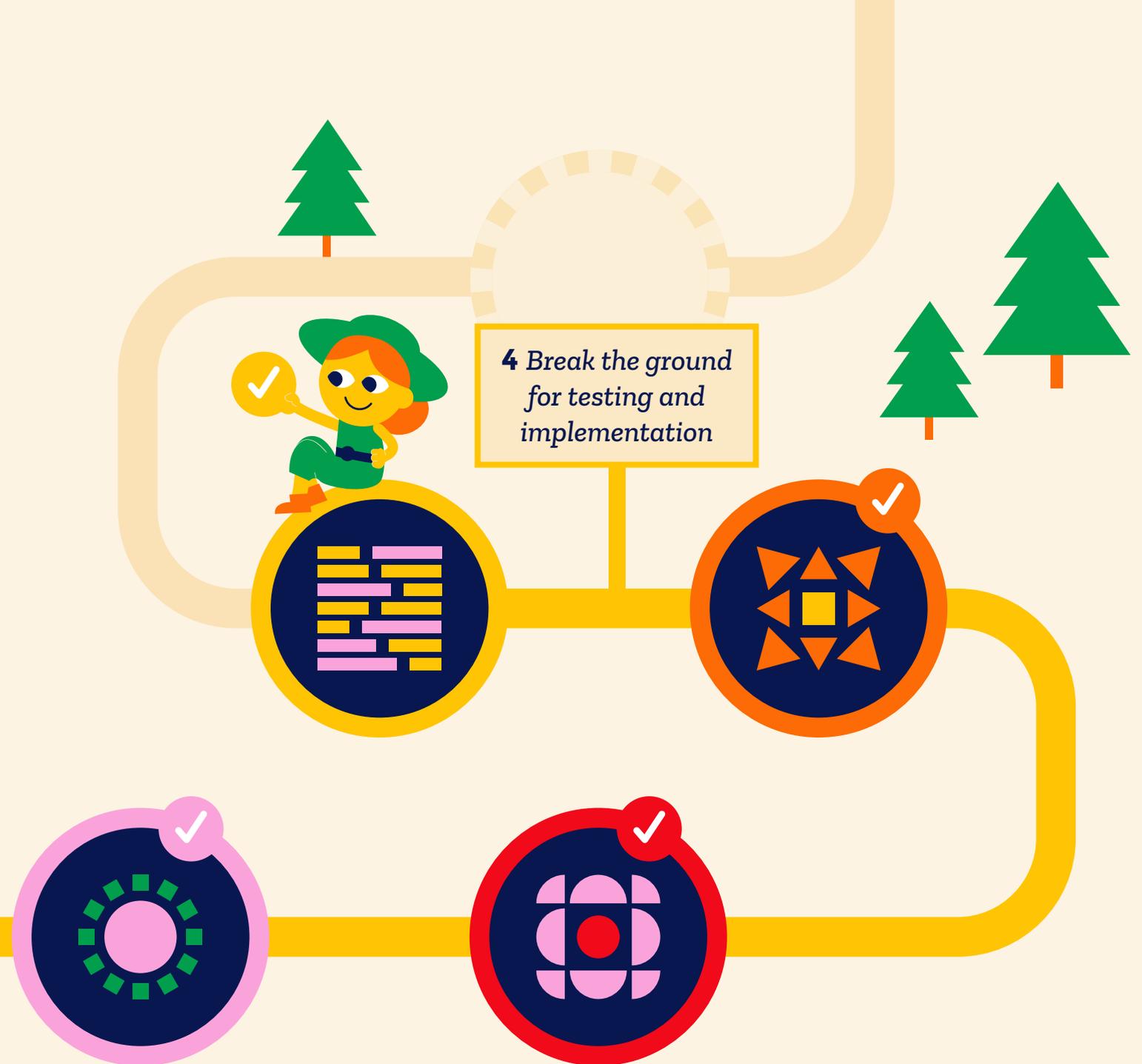
Governance, governance, governance. When moving from ideas to action, most of the conversations are not about code—but about buy-in, leadership, and responsibility. In our project, the key to progress wasn't just having a good technical solution, but ensuring high-level sponsorship, clarity of roles, and institutional support. Implementation lives or dies on governance..

Timeline in months

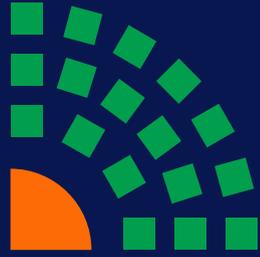


Do you want to learn more?

- ▶ [Government Design Principles \(UK Government, 2025\)](#)
- ▶ [A practical guide to writing tech specs \(Cooper, 2020\)](#)
- ▶ [The state-of-the-art of public-sector technology roadmaps: A taxonomical approach to energy technology roadmaps \(Geum & Park, 2012\)](#)
- ▶ [The Community of Practice Playbook \(European Commission, 2021\)](#)



5



Prepare for rolling out and upscaling

This phase is meant to support broader adoption and institutional integration. The end goal is to consolidate learnings, share results, and set the stage for scaling the solution in new contexts.

Prompt questions

- Do you have a realistic action plan covering mandate, funding, and partnerships?
- Have you tested the solution's readiness engaging external stakeholders through events or dedicated sessions?
- Are lessons learned through the whole process captured and shared?
- Have you considered recognition and visibility as part of scaling strategy?



Action plans: Setting the stage for upscaling

Translate momentum into structure

Prototypes and implementation roadmaps not enough. To move from promising solution to institutional change, teams need **action plans**. These documents help structure the next steps by connecting the solution to the broader system by outlining what it will take to upscale. Action plans should be collaborative, specific, time-bound and realistic. In our project, the action plans were drafted engaging all relevant ecosystem stakeholders.

Use a structure to prepare upscaling

Our action plans broke down **up-scaling into six pathways**: mandate and sponsorship, funding, regulation and technical requirements, partnerships, skills and culture, and iteration loops and knowledge diffusion. These categories helped uncover blind spot, identifying blockers and potential levers or tipping points to enable change. Not everything needs to be solved right away—but knowing where the gaps are is a huge step forward. If done well, action plans don't just help a single team move forward, but invite others to join the journey.



Share what you've built, celebrate the wins, and get ready to grow bigger!





National and EU-wide closing events: showcasing results, gathering feedback

Turn celebration into visibility

Demonstrating progress is essential for both recognition and momentum. **Public closing events** are more than ceremonies: they are opportunities to attract institutional support, gather critical feedback, and signal readiness for next steps. In our project, each participating country hosted a final event where challenge owners pitches their prototypes, discussed lessons learned, and explored what was needed to scale their work.

Build legitimacy and new alliances

These events brought together challenge owners, public officials, researchers, and civil society. The goal was to **create bridges**—between design and policy, experimentation and implementation. Event formats varied, but all created moments of institutional engagement and support.

Look at wider ecosystem

To spread the impact beyond the core teams, we recommend holding a **learning session that brings in a broader audience** beyond the directly engaged people. In our project, an online session brought together not only participants from the three countries but also peers from across Europe. The event included prototype pitches and high-level discussions. To maximise the value of opportunities like this one, we recommend sharing concrete outputs (e.g., prototype demos, roadmaps) and inviting high-level decision makers to join the stage to legitimise the prototype's trajectories.



This tool: the guide as a replicable asset

Turn experience into learnings

The final phase of a co-creation journey should leave behind more than just memories. **Tools, templates, and guidance** documents are essential for helping others learn from and build on your experience. This guide was designed with this goal in mind. It offers step-by-step account of each phase of co-creation, along with adaptable tools and templates. We hope it can lower the barrier to entry and make co-creation easier for other.

Experience beats templates

No workshop can be run twice the same way. But having a place to start is invaluable. This guide was built from global inspiration and refined through direct experience. We invite those who want to share their resources to accompany their tools and templates with their **hands-on experience** and learnings, which are what matters in an age where technology makes creating a generic template very accessible.

Now what?

This guide tells the story of how we did co-creation in government—working across three countries, multiple institutions, and diverse ecosystems. It documents how we moved from ambition to challenges, from exploratory chats to structured collaboration, from sticky notes to digital prototypes, and from fragmented teams to shared momentum. It's a concrete example of how institutions can shift from linear planning to iterative, collaborative problem solving.

Our focus in the project was on improving civic participation with emerging technologies, but the methods, tools, and approaches are broadly applicable. They can be used to improve public services, design internal processes, and much more. What makes co-creation powerful in this setting is not its novelty or its techniques, but its intentionality: bringing people together with the time, tools, and trust to make something new.



You've reached the end of this guide—but hopefully just the beginning of your co-creation journey.



What can you do next?

Use this guide

Whether you're planning a local pilot, running a workshop inside your team, or building a public-private partnership, this guide is yours to adapt. It's designed for action—so take the pieces that serve you, remix them, and test them out. After putting it to work, tell us what worked, what didn't, and what you learnt.

Diffuse this guide

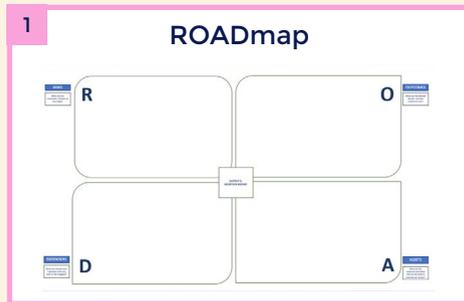
If you find this guide valuable, help it travel. Share it with peers, include it in your training decks, link it in a blog post, or present it at your next team meeting. You're welcome to translate it, publish excerpts, or reuse the visuals. Everything is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license, which means all we ask is credit. Co-creation doesn't spread through frameworks alone but through stories, relationships, and people willing to try.

Help us improve this guide

We'd love to hear from you to make this guide better. Suggest new methods, updated canvases, or examples we should include. We're keen to improve this resource over time, and your experience is what will make that possible. Drop us a line at cocreation@oecd.org, whether it's a sentence or a story.

The need for co-creation in government is only growing. Challenges emerge at the intersection of social, technological, and ecological systems. Public value is harder to define—and even harder to deliver. In this environment, collaboration is a necessity. So: go co-create. No single actor holds the answer. But together, we can ask better questions and, we believe, build better solutions.

Annex resources



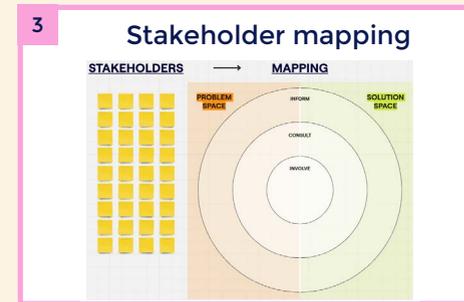
2 Challenge exploration form

The challenge exploration form asked the following questions:

1. What is the problem? Describe the problem you aim to tackle and explain its significance including business and/or effects.
2. How are you tackling the problem now? Outline your current strategy for addressing the problem, identifying its limitations.
3. Who are the primary groups or individuals affected by this problem? Describe their demographics, characteristics or any specific problem relevant to the issue.
4. Who are other relevant stakeholders? Identify other groups or organisations that are affected by the problem and/or should be engaged in the development of the solution.
5. How will we know the problem has been solved? Describe the indicators/competences or evaluation should achieve, identifying relevant success criteria.
6. What is the level of commitment to address this problem? Describe the resources including the team, including any high-level leadership that would support the adoption of solutions.

The subsequent challenge definition form extended the list of questions including also:

7. Have you attempted to solve the problem before? Describe previous attempts to tackle this problem and their outcomes. This information can provide valuable insights for potential solutions. (Please answer where relevant?)
8. What is the policy background to the challenge? Briefly explain any relevant policies, regulations, or government initiatives that relate to or impact this challenge.
9. Are there any interdependencies/risks? Identify any external factors, systems, or processes that might affect the development or implementation of a solution. Think about markets, relationships with other institutions, and anything that would affect the solution.
10. What criteria should a solution meet? Please consider aspects such as who the end users and their needs might be, compatibility with existing systems or processes, and any other relevant requirements (e.g. regulatory).
11. What non-financial resources can you provide to support the prototyping process? Consider any relevant skills, existing partnerships, or other resources you can offer to the OECD, developers and stakeholders.



4 Challenge re-framing

1.1 Problem statement	1.2 Stakeholders	
3. Reframing	3.2 Rethink the goal	3.3 Yours and their perspective
3.1 Look outside the frame		
4. Challenge Statement		

5 Brainwriting

IDEA A	IDEA B
IDEA C	IDEA D
IDEA E	IDEA F
IDEA G	IDEA H
IDEA I	IDEA J

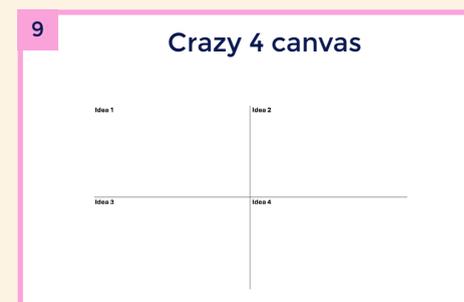
6 Facilitation guide

Phase	Facilitator's Role	Participant's Role	Time
1. Introduction	Set the context, explain the purpose, and introduce the participants.	Listen and understand the context.	10-15 min
2. Problem Statement	Facilitate the discussion to define the problem clearly.	Share their perspectives on the problem.	15-20 min
3. Stakeholder Mapping	Facilitate the discussion to identify and map stakeholders.	Identify and map stakeholders.	15-20 min
4. Brainwriting	Facilitate the discussion to generate ideas.	Write down ideas.	15-20 min
5. Solution Design	Facilitate the discussion to design a solution.	Design a solution.	15-20 min
6. Conclusion	Summarize the key findings and next steps.	Listen and understand the summary.	10-15 min



8 Understand and define canvas

Problem What specific issue are we addressing? *How is it defined?	Users Who is most affected? What are their needs, behaviors, and expectations?	Stakeholders Who else is involved? What are their roles?
Experience How has the problem been addressed in the past? What worked, what didn't, and why?	Resources What tools, skills, or funding can be leveraged? What's available and what's missing?	Risks What could go wrong? What constraints (legal, technical, cultural) should be considered?
Outcomes What improvements should be achieved for governments and users? How will we track these improvements?		



10 Sketch canvas

Process	1	2	3	4
Key features				
Other details				

11 Prototype canvas

Problem What specific issue are we solving?	Assumptions What do you believe about users' needs and behaviors?	Sketch Provide a sketch of the interface. Highlight the key features that directly address the problem.
Users Who will use the service and how? Who are the primary users directly engaged?	What assumptions are you making about technology capabilities or environment?	
Who are the secondary users (teachers, administrators or policymakers)?	Highlight the key assumptions to validate.	
Testing What are you testing?	How will you test it?	What specific outcomes will be a success?

Acknowledgements

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