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Guidance Paper Citizen Engagement

for Circular Cities cooperating with the
Creative and Cultural Sector Industries (CCSI)

This guidance paper supports cities and organizations in effectively leveraging citizen engagement to promote circular lifestyles, using CCSI as a powerful vehicle.

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Creative Circular Cities



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1. Introduction

This one is for you if ...

- ... you believe creativity can drive the transformation towards a circular future.
- ... you want to live in a society where circularity is part of daily life.
- ... you are aware of the potential for citizen engagement and creative thinking to spark change in cities and communities.
- ... you believe creatives can be a catalyst for circularity.

Why a Creative Circular City?

A creative circular society thrives on visibility, accessibility, and storytelling. It's not just about recycling but reshaping how we think and act, changing our behaviors. Creativity bridges the gap between ideas and action, inspiring solutions that are inclusive and impactful.

If you believe collaboration and imagination are key to making circular practices visible and accessible, this is for you.

Why Creativity?

Creativity drives innovation and helps us rethink systems, spaces, and habits. It turns challenges into opportunities and makes circularity both practical and engaging. The Creative and Cultural Sector Industries (CCSI) have unique strengths – visibility, accessibility, and storytelling – that make them powerful allies in circularity initiatives. CCSI connects with people on an emotional level, transforming complex ideas into accessible narratives. This sector can bridge gaps between citizens and circularity initiatives, fostering a more relatable and engaging experience of circularity. By leveraging CCSI's strengths in visibility, storytelling, and accessibility, cities can bridge the gap between abstract metrics and real-world action, inspiring citizens to not only reduce their ecological footprint but also leave a meaningful handprint on their communities and the planet.

If you see creativity as the spark for designing circular lifestyles, this is for you.

Why Circularity?

Circularity transforms waste, leftovers & processes into opportunity and focuses on regenerating resources rather than depleting them. It's about shifting from "footprint" – our environmental impact – to "handprint" – our positive contributions. Citizen engagement itself has no footprint; its impact depends on how it supports circular solutions.

If you see the potential of circularity to reshape systems and create shared value, this is for you.

Why Citizen Engagement?

Citizen engagement empowers individuals to shape their communities, making circularity more inclusive and grounded in real needs. It's the foundation of a sustainable society where people co-create solutions for the future. Individual actions – the handprint – alone don't create systemic change; but they influence social norms and demonstrate proof of concept. When scaled, citizen-led initiatives generate pressure for policy change, encouraging municipalities to integrate circular practices into regulations and incentives. Engaged communities can actively participate in policy discussions, ensuring that sustainability measures reflect real-life experiences and needs.

If you believe in the power of participation, this is for you.

Why do Policymaking differently?

Traditional policymaking often follows a top-down, expert-driven approach, which can be slow to adapt, disconnected from everyday realities, and met with resistance from communities. In contrast, participatory and citizen-driven policymaking creates more effective, inclusive, and resilient solutions by integrating lived experiences and grassroots innovations into governance. By actively involving citizens in shaping circular policies – through co-creation workshops, public deliberation, and localized experimentation – governments can design policies that are not only technically sound but also socially embedded and widely accepted. This shift from "policy for the people" to "policy with and by the people" enhances democratic legitimacy, accelerates systemic change, and ensures that sustainability measures reflect real-life needs rather than abstract goals.

If you're convinced that policymaking done differently becomes a process of empowerment, innovation, and long-term transformatio, this is for you..

Our Framework: From Input to Impact

This framework makes citizen engagement actionable and impactful:

- **Inputs/Outputs:** Formats and methods – assessed for effort, accessibility, and impact.
- **Outcomes/Impacts:** Measured through qualitative and quantitative indicators, with tools like the Cornerstone Indicators or the Circular Value Flower capturing the value of citizen engagement and circular initiatives.

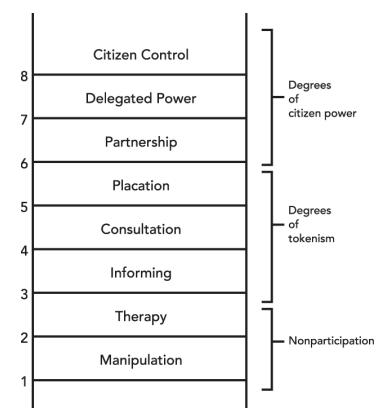
If you're ready to create, engage, and innovate for a circular society, this is your roadmap.

How to Citizen Engagement

Citizen engagement is crucial to create democratic infrastructure that allows people to shape their surroundings and daily lives. In the context of circularity, engaging citizens helps communities collectively adopt circular practices and build resilience. Engaged citizens can drive social innovation, provide local solutions, and champion the shift toward circular economies.

Arnstein's "Ladder of Citizen Participation"

Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969) is a framework that categorizes different levels of public involvement in decision-making, ranging from non-participation to full citizen power. Applied to citizen engagement for circularity and policymaking, this model helps us assess how deeply communities are involved in shaping sustainable urban transitions.



Source: "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," by S. Arnstein, 1969, *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), p. 217. # 1969. American Planning Association.

Arnstein's ladder consists of eight rungs, which can be grouped into three categories:

1. Non-Participation (Manipulation & Therapy)

At the lowest levels, citizen engagement is symbolic or misleading, with no real influence over decision-making. In circular policymaking, this could look like:

- Greenwashing campaigns that present sustainability as a marketing tool without structural commitment.
- One-way information campaigns where citizens are "educated" about circularity but have no role in shaping policies.

Risk: Circularity remains an institutional effort with little real connection to communities, making adoption slow and policies ineffective.

2. Tokenism (Informing, Consultation, Placation)

At this stage, citizens are informed or consulted, but their input may not significantly impact decisions. Examples include:

- Public hearings on waste policies where citizens can voice opinions but have no decision-making power.
- City-run pilot projects where residents participate but don't co-create the strategy.

Risk: While these steps increase awareness, they often lack meaningful follow-up, leading to frustration and disengagement.

3. Citizen Power (Partnership, Delegated Power, Citizen Control)

At the highest levels, citizens co-design, co-decide, and co-implement circular policies.

This involves:

- Partnership-based policymaking, where governments and citizen groups collaborate on circular infrastructure (e.g., participatory budgeting for zero-waste projects).
- Delegated power, such as citizen assemblies that have real influence over urban sustainability policies.
- Self-organized initiatives gaining formal support – e.g., cooperatives running local recycling systems or repair hubs integrated into municipal planning.

Chance: Circularity is no longer just a governmental agenda – it becomes a living ecosystem of policies shaped by and for communities.

Circular transformation needs both infrastructure and behavior change. Arnstein's ladder helps identify where engagement efforts fall short and how to move beyond consultation toward real co-governance. If circularity is to be embedded in everyday life, citizens must not just be informed about policies – they must be active architects of them.

2. Inputs and Outputs

In this section, we detail various actionable formats and methods that you can use to engage citizens effectively, presented as step-by-step guides. Each format and method will be assessed according to three criteria: Effort, Accessibility, and Impact to help practitioners choose the most appropriate tools based on their resources and goals.

Making Space for Engagement: Designing an Environment for Participation

Creating physical and mental space for citizen engagement is essential to fostering collaboration, creativity, and inclusivity. Inspired by design thinking principles, the environment should be adaptable, welcoming, and encourage interaction. Flexible furniture arrangements, writable surfaces, and open layouts help participants visualize ideas and co-create solutions. Spaces should be accessible, comfortable, and stimulating, with elements that spark conversation – such as provocative visuals, interactive installations, or real-world data displays. The infrastructure should support active participation, ensuring tools for engagement (e.g., post-its, markers, digital boards) are readily available. Beyond the physical setup, psychological safety is key – moderators should establish a culture of openness, curiosity, and respect, making it easy for diverse voices to be heard. Thoughtful space design removes barriers to engagement, making participation intuitive, dynamic, and impactful.

[More about "Making Space"](#)

Formats

The following formats and methods explained align with Arnstein's Ladder of Participation by positioning citizens as active co-creators rather than passive recipients of decisions. The formats operate at the top rungs of the ladder (partnership, delegated power, citizen control) because they empower participants to shape decisions, contribute knowledge, and drive real change. These methods move beyond consultation by giving communities ownership over circular solutions, ensuring bottom-up engagement rather than top-down imposition. They recognize citizens as experts in their lived experiences, driving innovation, systemic transformation, and lasting impact.

Open Assembly

Intro

The Open Assembly is an initial impulse to create active allyship and agency on a local level. It identifies and collects the concerns of a neighborhood or community and discusses actionable steps around a specific question, introducing a sociocratic way of working. Through open exchange, initial ideas and solutions for local challenges are developed, forming a basis for further collaborative action.

Objective

Set the first step for an active and enabled community around specific topics.

Time

2–3 hours

Ideal for

20–60 people (more with good planning)

Suggested Output

Created working groups, identified local concerns, actionable ideas, and a shared communication tool.

Delivery Plan - Step-by-step

Preparation:

1. Book a suitable space with seating arranged in a circle or half-circle.
2. Prepare flipcharts/whiteboards, pens, moderation cards, and technical equipment.
3. Provide snacks and drinks for a welcoming atmosphere. (social lubricant)
4. Send clear invitations to participants, explaining the topic and goal.
5. Assign at least two facilitators for the event if more than 15 participants.

Execution (to be fine tuned in alignment with facilitators)

- Welcome (10-15 min): Introduce participants, the goal, and the process.
 - Share insights into self-organization methods. Introduction (15 min): Discuss the status quo of the topic, and brainstorm collective actions.
 - Open Round (15 min): Share inputs on the chosen topic, emphasizing global and local contexts.
 - Collection of Topics (15-30 min): Participants write topics/concerns on moderation cards for discussion.
 - Prioritization and Grouping (10-20 min):
 - Pool and prioritize similar topics.
 - Discussion Round (1 hour): Explore prioritised topics in groups or sequentially.
 - Summary and Conclusion (20-30 min): Summarize results, agree on next steps, create working groups and select a communication tool.
 - Farewell: Optionally, share a meal for informal networking and idea exchange.
- Follow-up: Send a summary to participants and initiate agreed-upon next steps.

Measuring Success

Number of participants, working groups created, and real actions/outcomes generated.

Rating

Effort: High

Accessibility: Low

Impact: High

Creative Approach: medium

Expert Tip

Make sure that your first citizen engagement event is not the last. By arranging follow-up meetings at the end of the Open Assembly and keeping communication up and running until then, you make sure participants will join again.

Critical Mapping Workshop

Intro

A workshop designed to analyze and visualize the strengths and weaknesses of a neighborhood, identify potential for sustainable and collaborative projects, and raise awareness of local challenges and resources. Participants use mapping techniques to develop specific ideas for placemaking initiatives.

Objective

Identify actionable ideas and potential for sustainable and collaborative projects within a neighborhood. Identify key persons who would be motivated to further work on the ideas and projects. This allows you to identify projects with a good potential for implementation and long term survival.

Time

2–3 hours

Ideal for

10–30 participants

Suggested Output

Visualized map highlighting local strengths, challenges, and potential projects; actionable placemaking ideas.

Delivery Plan - Step-by-step

1. Preparation: Obtain a large map of the neighborhood (printed or projected). Gather markers, adhesive dots, and materials for marking places on the map. Prepare moderation cards, pens, flipcharts, and whiteboards. Send invitations to participants, clearly explaining the topic and objectives.
2. Execution: Welcome and Introduction (15–20 min): Introduce the topic, objectives, and workshop program. Explain the mapping method and key issues.
3. First Mapping Round (30–45 min): Participants mark positive or problematic places on the map (e.g., favorite spots, heat islands, littered areas, unsafe, nice to relax, ...).
4. Discussion and Brainstorming (45–60 min): Review marked areas together, identify potential solutions (e.g., community gardening, rainwater harvesting).
5. Second Mapping Round (30–45 min): Participants refine ideas and mark additional suggestions based on the discussion. Summary and Next Steps (20–30 min): Collect key results and ideas on a flipchart.
6. Jointly plan next steps and assign responsibilities.
7. Follow-up: Summarize results, share with participants, and establish a roadmap for action.

Measuring Success

Number of participants, quality of discussions, engagement in follow-up actions, and actionable outputs.

Rating

Effort: Low

Accessibility: Low

Impact: Medium

Creative Approach: High

Expert Tip

To take the workshop to the next level, integrate layered mapping techniques that combine physical infrastructure, social behaviors, and policy frameworks – this will reveal hidden dynamics shaping circularity in urban spaces. Additionally, use speculative mapping to co-design future scenarios with participants, enabling them to visualize and prototype alternative circular systems beyond existing constraints.

Circular Mini Hackathon

Intro

A participatory workshop that introduces participants to the concept of circular lifestyles. Through hands-on activities, discussions, and collaborative ideation. Attendees explore ways to implement circular principles in their everyday lives, neighborhoods, and broader communities. The format is designed to inspire practical action and foster a sense of shared responsibility for sustainable living.

Objective

Empower participants to understand, adopt, and promote circular lifestyles by co-developing actionable ideas for their communities.

Time

3–4 hours

Ideal for

15–40 participants

Suggested Output

Community action plan with specific circular initiatives (e.g., repair cafes, community composting, upcycling projects).

Delivery Plan - Step-by-step

1. Preparation: Secure a venue with space for interactive activities and small group work. Gather materials such as whiteboards, flipcharts, markers, and reusable items for prototyping/upcycling demonstrations. Invite local circular economy experts to provide brief insights or facilitate activities. Prepare a participant toolkit (e.g., circular lifestyle guides, examples of best practices).
2. Execution: Welcome and Introduction (20 min): Warm-up activity to engage participants. Brief presentation on circular living principles and the workshop agenda. Circular Inspiration (20 min): Lightning talks or videos showcasing real-life examples of circular practices.
3. Exploration Station (30 min): Interactive stations where participants experience circular solutions (e.g., upcycling, waste sorting, zero-waste cooking).
4. Group Brainstorming (45 min): Small groups identify local opportunities for circular interventions (e.g., repair networks, resource sharing platforms).
5. Prototyping Ideas (45 min): Participants outline actionable project ideas, including steps, resources, and stakeholders. Presentation and Feedback (30 min): Groups present ideas and receive feedback from peers and facilitators.

6. Summary and Next Steps (20 min): Consolidate ideas into a draft action plan and define responsibilities for follow-up activities.
7. Follow-up: Share the action plan and toolkit digitally. Organize a follow-up session or online forum to track progress and maintain engagement. Make sure you have information on where you could forward some of the ideas or projects for further mentoring or financial (business incubators, municipality department, ...) support.

Measuring Success

Number of participants, diversity of proposed ideas, engagement in follow-up activities, and implementation of circular initiatives.

Rating

Effort: Medium

Accessibility: Medium

Impact: High

Creative Approach: High

Expert Tip

Introduce a small seed fund or micro-grants for winning ideas to accelerate real-world implementation – this not only boosts motivation but also transforms concepts into action faster. Pairing the prize with mentorship or access to local resources can further increase the chances of long-term impact.

Storytelling Night

Intro

A relaxed and inspiring evening event where community members, local changemakers, and sustainability enthusiasts share personal stories, creative narratives, or fictional tales about circular lifestyles. Through the power of storytelling, the event fosters emotional connection, raises awareness, and inspires participants to envision and embrace a circular future.

Objective

Use storytelling to emotionally engage participants, build awareness, and inspire action toward adopting circular living practices.

Time

2–3 hours

Ideal for

30–100 participants

Suggested Output

Increased community awareness, shared inspiration, and a repository of stories that can be used in future campaigns or initiatives.

Delivery Plan - Step-by-step

1. Preparation: Secure an atmospheric venue (e.g., a café, community hall, or outdoor space) with a small stage or storytelling area. Invite a mix of speakers: local storytellers, community members, circular economy experts, and creative performers. Set up audiovisual equipment (microphones, lights, projector for visuals). Create a comfortable ambiance with seating, lighting, and refreshments. Promote the event widely, encouraging audience members to share their own stories during an open mic session.
2. Execution: Welcome and Introduction (10 min): Host sets the tone by introducing the theme and importance of storytelling for circular living. Featured Stories (60 min): Pre-invited storytellers share their tales, ranging from personal anecdotes to creative narratives (5–10 minutes each).
3. Interactive Segment (20 min): Open mic or community storytelling where audience members share their thoughts or short stories.
4. Reflection and Connection (30 min): Facilitated discussion or mingling where participants share takeaways and explore how the stories relate to their lives.
5. Closing (10 min): Host wraps up with a call-to-action, encouraging participants to take small circular steps in their daily lives.
6. Follow-up: Collect and compile the stories into a digital or printed “Circular Storybook” to share with the wider community. Create a social media campaign featuring excerpts and quotes from the event.

Measuring Success

Number of participants, level of audience engagement, diversity of shared stories, and post-event feedback indicating increased awareness or action.

Rating

Effort: Low

Accessibility: High

Impact: Medium

Creative Approach: High

Expert Tip

Adapt the format to different audiences – whether a storytelling breakfast for professionals, a school session for kids, or a festival plug-in to reach new communities beyond the usual sustainability crowd. By embedding the event into an existing gathering, you can expand its impact, attract diverse participants, and engage those who wouldn't typically seek out circularity discussions.

Citizen Science

Intro

A collaborative initiative where citizens gather data about local resources, waste streams, and opportunities for circular practices in their community. By actively engaging participants in data collection and analysis, the format fosters awareness, collective learning, and actionable insights for transitioning to a circular economy.

Objective

Engage citizens in gathering and analyzing data to identify opportunities for circular economy practices in their community.

Time

4–6 weeks (data collection and analysis), with 1 kickoff and 1 concluding event (2–3 hours each).

Ideal for

20–50 participants

Suggested Output

A resource map, a community database of waste streams and circular opportunities, and a list of actionable initiatives.

Delivery Plan - Step-by-step

1. Preparation: Identify specific research goals (e.g., mapping repair services, waste collection points, or local reuse initiatives). Create simple data collection tools (e.g., online surveys, mobile apps, or printable forms). Recruit participants and provide clear instructions on data collection methods. Set up a central platform for data submission and updates – it can also be a simple notebook or kit, especially if your target group isn't comfortable with digital tools.
2. Execution: Kickoff Event (2–3 hours): Introduce the project, train participants on data collection methods, and assign specific tasks or areas for research.
3. Data Collection Phase (4–6 weeks): Participants gather data on the selected topic, submitting findings regularly via the chosen platform.
4. Midway Check-In (Optional): Host a virtual or in-person session to review progress, address challenges, and share initial findings.
5. Concluding Event (2–3 hours): Present the collected data and findings. Facilitate a discussion on key insights and develop an action plan for using the data to implement circular initiatives.
6. Follow-up: Publish the resource map and database online. Organize smaller task forces to implement the identified initiatives (e.g., establishing repair cafes or waste diversion programs).

Measuring Success

Number of participants, amount and quality of data collected, and actionable initiatives implemented based on findings.

Rating

Effort: High

Accessibility: Medium

Impact: High

Creative Approach: Medium

Expert Tip

Strengthen participant engagement by providing a small symbolic thank-you gift – this simple gesture fosters recognition, appreciation, and long-term commitment. Whether it's a certificate, locally made product, or exclusive event access, meaningful rewards help build a lasting relationship with contributors and reinforce their role as valued co-creators of knowledge.

Additional Resource

<https://shop.aalto.fi/media/attachments/55d58/mattelmaki.pdf>

Habit Lab

Intro

A participatory session designed to uncover daily habits, identify barriers to sustainable behavior, and co-create simple, actionable interventions to promote circular practices. This format uses behavioral design techniques to help participants reflect on their routines and design nudges that encourage sustainable and circular living.

Objective

Identify key behaviors to target for circular lifestyle adoption and develop actionable, participant-driven behavioral interventions.

Time

2–3 hours

Ideal for

15–30 participants

Suggested Output

A set of behavioral insights, mapped barriers and opportunities, and co-designed nudges or interventions to promote circular behaviors.

Delivery Plan - Step-by-step

1. Preparation: Prepare a comfortable, interactive space with materials such as whiteboards, sticky notes, markers, and behavioral mapping templates. Develop a list of key circular behaviors (e.g., waste sorting, reuse, energy saving) to guide discussions. Create a short presentation on behavioral design principles and their application in daily life. Invite participants from diverse backgrounds to ensure varied perspectives.
2. Execution: Welcome and Introduction (15 min): Introduce the session objectives, explain behavioral design basics, and outline the flow of activities.
3. Habit Mapping (30 min): Participants map their daily routines and identify behaviors related to consumption, waste, or energy use. Facilitators guide reflection on pain points and barriers.
4. Behavioral Barriers & Opportunities (30 min): Small groups analyze mapped habits to identify barriers (e.g., lack of awareness, inconvenience) and brainstorm solutions or opportunities.
5. Designing Interventions (45 min): Groups co-create simple interventions or nudges (e.g., visual prompts, community reminders, or digital tools) to address barriers and encourage sustainable habits.
6. Presentation & Feedback (30 min): Groups share their interventions, and facilitators provide feedback on feasibility and potential impact.
7. Summary and Next Steps (15 min): Recap key ideas and outline how participants can implement interventions in their own lives or communities.

8. Follow-up: Provide participants with a summary of the co-designed interventions and connect them with tools/resources to implement their ideas. Follow up after a month to collect feedback and evaluate the impact of their interventions.

Measuring Success

Number of interventions designed, diversity of behavioral insights, participant feedback, and the adoption rate of proposed interventions.

Rating

Effort: Medium

Accessibility: Medium

Impact: High

Creative Approach: High

Expert Tip

Make behavior change tangible and trackable by integrating gamification elements like personal challenges, habit trackers, or community leaderboards – this keeps participants engaged beyond the lab. Pairing these with small, immediate rewards (e.g., recognition, badges, or local discounts) can reinforce new habits and help embed circular practices into daily life.

Popup Activation

Intro

A mobile, interactive outreach method designed to activate citizens in public spaces by raising awareness, gathering ideas, and inspiring immediate participation. This format is informal, engaging, and accessible, fostering connection and sparking action on community initiatives.

Objective

Mobilize and engage citizens by creating accessible, high-impact opportunities for participation in community initiatives.

Time

2–4 hours per pop-up event

Ideal for

100–200 passersby or participants per event

Suggested Output

Increased awareness of initiatives, sign-ups or commitments, actionable feedback or ideas from the community.

Delivery Plan - Step-by-step

1. Focus Definition: Determine the specific initiative or message to promote and develop a clear, engaging communication strategy.

2. Site and Timing Selection: Choose accessible, high-traffic areas (e.g., markets, parks) and schedule at peak times.
3. Setup and Materials: Create an inviting mobile setup with interactive tools (e.g., comment boards, games, workshops). Offer small incentives like giveaways or refreshments.
4. On-Site Engagement: Use trained facilitators to interact with citizens, share information, and encourage participation. Offer immediate actions like signing pledges or joining groups.
5. Feedback Collection: Provide tools for collecting feedback, such as surveys, comment cards, or digital polls.
6. Follow-Up: Compile insights and share with participants. Follow up with those who signed up or committed to actions.

Measuring Success

Number of participants engaged on-site.

Amount of feedback or ideas collected.

Number of sign-ups or commitments secured.

Post-event involvement in related initiatives.

Rating

Effort: Medium

Accessibility: High

Impact: High

Creative Approach: High

Expert Tip

Maximize impact by setting up in high-traffic locations where people naturally gather – markets, festivals, or transit hubs – to engage a broader audience beyond sustainability insiders. Keep interactions short, interactive, and visually striking, using hands-on activities or quick challenges to spark curiosity and encourage immediate participation.

News from the Future

Intro

A speculative storytelling format where participants create a first-page newspaper from the future, reporting on the success of the circular economy in their neighborhood or city. This engaging exercise helps communities envision the potential impact of their efforts, fostering motivation and alignment toward circular goals.

Objective

Encourage creative thinking and systemic visioning by crafting future news articles that highlight the achievements of circular economy initiatives. The exercise makes sustainability tangible, inspires action, and helps identify key milestones needed for transformation.

Time

2–3 hours

Ideal for

10–50 participants (community groups, policymakers, business leaders, students)

Suggested Output

A visually engaging "front page" newspaper with headlines, articles, interviews, and an expert tip on maintaining circularity.

Delivery Plan - Step-by-step

1. Setting the Scene (20 min): Participants imagine a future where circular economy efforts have succeeded. They brainstorm key themes: What has changed? What are the biggest wins? Who were the changemakers?
2. Writing the Headlines (30 min): Groups develop compelling newspaper headlines celebrating circular achievements (e.g., "Zero Waste Victory: City Diverts 99% of Trash!").
3. Crafting the Stories (40 min): Teams write short articles covering topics like policy changes, community innovations, new business models, or circular lifestyle shifts.
4. Designing the Page (30 min): The front page layout is created with headlines, images, quotes, and an expert tip (e.g., "How to Keep Circularity Thriving").
5. Presentation & Discussion (30 min): Groups present their newspaper pages, reflecting on how to make their envisioned future a reality.

Measuring Success

Level of creativity and engagement in envisioning a circular future.

Quality of discussion and insights generated.

Concrete action steps identified from the storytelling exercise.

Rating

Effort: Medium

Accessibility: High

Impact: High

Creative Approach: Very High

Expert Tip

Push creativity further by setting specific time horizons (e.g., 2030, 2050) and diverse perspectives – encourage participants to craft headlines from the viewpoint of citizens, policymakers, businesses, or nature itself. To make the visioning process more immersive, design mock newspaper covers, social media posts, or video news segments to bring these future scenarios to life.

Persona Switch

Intro

A role-playing and perspective-taking exercise where participants embody different societal personas to explore opposing viewpoints on circular economy challenges. This

method fosters empathy, flexibility, and deeper understanding of motivations, fears, and barriers related to sustainability.

Objective

Help participants step into others' positions, understand different perspectives, and overcome mental and cultural blockades that hinder the shift toward a circular economy.

Time

60–75 minutes

Ideal for

10–30 participants

Suggested Output

Deeper insight into public attitudes, common narratives, and psychological barriers that shape circular economy debates. Greater ability to communicate and advocate effectively for systemic change.

Delivery Plan - Step-by-step

1. Introduction (10 min): Present the concept of social opposites (e.g., consumption vs. restraint). Explain how these tensions create resistance to circularity.
2. Identifying Guiding Principles (15 min): Small groups (3–4 people) list societal dogmas related to circular economy challenges (e.g., "sustainability is expensive" or "I have the right to consume freely").
3. Clustering and Persona Naming (15 min): The whole group clusters similar dogmas and assigns a name to each "persona" (e.g., "Luxury Over Limits" or "Freedom to Consume").
4. Embodying Personas (20–30 min): Participants take turns standing in the persona's shoes, making statements from their perspective. They interact with other personas while the facilitator ensures thoughtful engagement and reflection.
5. Reflection and Final Round (15 min): Participants share their insights – what felt challenging, surprising, or illuminating? How can this awareness be applied to real-world circular economy initiatives?

Measuring Success

Level of engagement and willingness to embody different perspectives.

Quality of discussions and depth of insight into societal barriers.

Ability to recognize and challenge mental blocks in circular economy debates.

Participant feedback on shifts in understanding or strategy.

Rating

Effort: Medium

Accessibility: High

Impact: High

Creative Approach: Very High

Expert Tip

Deepen the empathy exercise by integrating real-world data and stories – use interviews, case studies, or short testimonials to ground personas in lived experiences. To make the

switch more impactful, have participants role-play decision-making scenarios where they must navigate circular challenges from their persona's perspective, revealing hidden barriers and unexpected opportunities.

Methods

Successful citizen engagement requires the right methods at the right time – whether to explore public sentiment, co-create solutions, test interventions, or drive systemic change. The methods outlined here offer a diverse toolkit for engaging communities in the transition to circular lifestyles.

At the beginning of a project, methods like Public Mood Mapping help assess attitudes and barriers. As initiatives take shape, Participatory Budgeting bring resource allocation and hidden value systems into focus, ensuring collective ownership. To spark change, Nudging introduces subtle behavioral shifts, while Alliance Building and Campaigning amplify efforts through collaboration.

These methods help projects move up Arnstein's Ladder of Participation, ensuring citizens are not just consulted, but actively shaping, leading, and sustaining change.

Public Mood Mapping

Objective

Assess public sentiment and attitudes toward circular lifestyles to identify opportunities, challenges, and starting points for engagement. This method ensures that initiatives align with community needs, perceptions, and readiness for change.

Description

1. **Define the Scope** - Identify key aspects of circular lifestyles to explore (e.g., waste reduction, sharing economy, or upcycling). Set clear objectives for the mood mapping (e.g., understanding barriers, gauging interest, or identifying champions).
2. **Select Tools and Channels** - Choose appropriate tools such as surveys, focus groups, interviews, or digital sentiment analysis from social media. Utilize accessible platforms like community events, local forums, or online tools to reach a broad audience.
3. **Data Collection** - Design questions or prompts that uncover feelings, concerns, and ideas about circular lifestyles (e.g., "What excites you about reducing waste?" or "What challenges do you face in repairing items?"). Use both qualitative (stories, open-ended feedback) and quantitative methods (rating scales, multiple-choice questions) to capture diverse insights.
4. **Analysis and Visualization** - Compile responses and identify patterns or trends (e.g., common concerns, frequently mentioned barriers). Create visual representations such as heat maps, word clouds, or sentiment graphs to communicate findings effectively.
5. **Community Feedback** - Share preliminary findings with the community and invite validation or additional insights through follow-up events or online discussions.

6. **Integration into Strategy** - Use the insights to shape project goals, engagement strategies, and communication plans. Address key barriers or misconceptions and amplify areas of enthusiasm or readiness.

Measuring Success

Number of participants engaged in the mood mapping process.

Depth and diversity of insights collected. Clarity and actionable nature of the findings.

Alignment of subsequent project strategies with identified public sentiment.

Expert Tip

Go beyond surveys – use interactive methods like emotion mapping, storytelling booths, or visual heatmaps to capture nuanced community sentiments. To translate insights into action, identify patterns and link emotions to specific urban or policy changes, ensuring that public mood informs tangible interventions rather than just being observed.

Consent Decision Making

Objective

A collaborative decision-making process designed to reach agreements efficiently by addressing objections and focusing on solutions that work for everyone. It fosters inclusivity, fairness, and shared ownership of decisions.

Description

1. **Clarify the Proposal** - Start with a clear proposal, ideally prepared beforehand. Ensure it is specific and actionable. Present the proposal to the group, providing context and background information.
2. **Questions for Clarification** - Allow participants to ask questions to fully understand the proposal. This step is purely for clarification and not for debating or critiquing.
3. **Express Reactions** - Each participant shares their initial reactions to the proposal. These can include thoughts, feelings, or concerns.
4. **Raise Objections** - Facilitator asks if anyone has objections to the proposal. Objections should be specific, reasoned, and based on how the proposal might cause harm or fail to meet the group's objectives.
5. **Resolve** - Objections Work collaboratively to address objections by modifying the proposal. This step focuses on finding solutions that meet the group's needs without causing harm. Repeat steps 3–5 until no valid objections remain.
6. **Consent** - Once all objections are resolved, ask participants for their consent. Consent means the proposal is “good enough for now” and “safe enough to try.”
7. **Implementation and Review** - Implement the decision with agreed-upon actions and timelines. Set a review date to evaluate the decision's effectiveness and make adjustments if needed.

Measuring Success

Decisions are made efficiently without unnecessary debate or delays.

All participants feel their concerns were heard and addressed.

The group achieves high levels of trust and collaboration.

Decisions are successfully implemented and reviewed for effectiveness.

Expert Tip

To keep the process efficient and engaging, set clear boundaries on what's open for discussion and what's non-negotiable, preventing decision fatigue. Use rounds of rapid objections where participants state concerns concisely, followed by a structured process to integrate improvements – this keeps the focus on finding workable solutions rather than seeking unanimous agreement.

Participatory Budgeting

Objective

A democratic process where citizens have direct input in deciding how to allocate a portion of a public or organizational budget. This method builds trust, enhances transparency, and empowers communities to address their most pressing needs.

Description

1. **Define the Process** - Determine the scope of the budget (e.g., percentage or amount available) and the areas it will address (e.g., community improvements, local projects). Set clear rules and guidelines for participation. Form a steering group including diverse community representatives to oversee the process.
2. **Idea Collection** - Engage citizens through workshops, online platforms, or surveys to gather project ideas that align with the budget's purpose. Encourage inclusivity by ensuring participation from underrepresented groups.
3. **Proposal Development** - Collaborate with citizens and experts to refine the collected ideas into feasible and actionable proposals. Provide support, such as cost estimation and project impact assessment, during this phase.
4. **Community Voting** - Present the proposals to the community through public events, online voting platforms, or other accessible channels. Ensure the voting process is transparent and fair, allowing every participant a voice.
5. **Implementation** - Allocate the budget to the winning proposals and begin implementation, ensuring regular updates to the community. Involve citizens in monitoring the progress to maintain accountability and trust.
6. **Evaluation and Feedback** - Conduct an evaluation of the outcomes and the participatory process itself. Gather feedback from participants to improve future cycles of participatory budgeting.

Measuring Success

Number and diversity of participants in the process.

Quality and feasibility of the submitted proposals.

Level of community satisfaction with the chosen projects and their implementation.

Transparency and trust built through the process.

Expert Tip

To ensure broad and meaningful engagement, break down complex budget decisions into relatable, real-life impacts – use visual tools, storytelling, or simulations to help participants understand trade-offs and priorities. Additionally, combine digital and in-person voting methods to make participation more inclusive and accessible to diverse community members.

Dragon Dreaming

Objective

A holistic, participatory approach to project building that promotes individual growth, strengthens community bonds, and serves the Earth by fostering creativity, sustainability, and inclusion.

Description

1. **Dreaming:** Gather the team to co-create a shared vision of the project. Encourage all members to share their dreams, aspirations, and intentions openly. Use tools like brainstorming or storytelling to visualize the desired outcomes and align everyone's aspirations.
2. **Planning:** Translate the collective dream into actionable steps. Create a project plan that defines roles, resources, and timelines while maintaining inclusivity and consensus in decision-making. Use participatory tools like mind maps or collaborative project management platforms.
3. **Doing:** Implement the project in line with the plan, emphasizing collaboration, creativity, and adaptability. Encourage continuous feedback and shared responsibility. Ensure that the process fosters individual and collective learning while maintaining sustainability principles.
4. **Celebrating:** Celebrate milestones and achievements to honor individual contributions, strengthen team cohesion, and foster gratitude. Include rituals, events, or moments of reflection to acknowledge successes and learnings. Share the outcomes with the wider community to inspire further action and collaboration.

Measuring Success

Personal growth: Participants report enhanced skills, confidence, or self-awareness.

Community cohesion: Stronger relationships and collaboration within the team.

Earth care: Positive environmental or social impact resulting from the project.

Completion of all four stages (Dreaming, Planning, Doing, Celebrating) with documented progress and learnings.

Expert tip:

This is very useful in the early stage of the project in helping shape the vision before moving to the strategy.

Three Horizons

Objective

A strategic framework to explore and envision transformative futures while identifying emerging innovations and opportunities in the present. It helps teams align current actions with long-term aspirations by considering three interconnected horizons: the present, transition, and the envisioned future.

Description

1. **Horizon One (H1): The Present** - Identify the current systems, structures, and practices that dominate the present landscape. Discuss their strengths, limitations,

and unsustainability over time. Reflect on what needs to change to address future challenges.

2. **Horizon Three (H3): The Envisioned Future** - Co-create a vision of the desired future state. Define what a successful and sustainable system looks like. Focus on innovative ideas and radical transformations that align with long-term goals. Encourage creativity and bold thinking, free from current constraints.
3. **Horizon Two (H2): The Bridge** - Identify emerging trends, practices, and innovations that act as bridges between H1 and H3. Discuss actions, experiments, and strategies that can help shift from the present to the envisioned future. Recognize challenges and tensions between maintaining the old system and implementing new approaches.
4. **Mapping Interconnections** - Create a visual map showing the three horizons, highlighting overlaps, conflicts, and synergies between them. Identify “pockets of the future in the present” (H3 elements already existing) and assess how they can be amplified.
5. **Action Planning** - Prioritize key actions and strategies to support the transition (H2) and build momentum toward the envisioned future (H3). Assign responsibilities and establish timelines for implementation.

Measuring Success

Clarity of the envisioned future (H3) and alignment of team members' perspectives.

Identification of actionable transition strategies (H2).

Recognition and amplification of existing innovations that align with H3.

Implementation of prioritized actions and progress toward systemic change.

Expert Tip

To make the transition between horizons more actionable, anchor discussions in real-world signals of change – identify existing innovations (Horizon 2) that are already bridging the gap between the present (Horizon 1) and the desired future (Horizon 3). Encourage participants to map who needs to act, what resources are required, and what narratives can accelerate the shift, ensuring the model leads to concrete next steps rather than abstract visions.

Placemaking

Objective

A collaborative approach to designing and activating public spaces, focusing on fostering community identity, connection, and well-being. Placemaking transforms ordinary areas into vibrant, inclusive spaces that reflect the community's needs and aspirations.

Description

1. **Community Engagement** - Organize events, surveys, or workshops to gather input from community members about their needs, ideas, and vision for the space. Engage a diverse range of participants, including underrepresented groups, to ensure inclusivity.
2. **Site Analysis** - Assess the physical, social, and cultural aspects of the space, including how it is currently used and perceived. Identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities through observation, mapping, and data collection.

3. **Co-Design Workshop** - Bring community members together to brainstorm and co-create design ideas for the space. Use tools like sketches, models, or mock-ups to visualize ideas and foster creativity.
4. **Implementation** - Develop and execute a plan based on the community's input, involving local artists, architects, and volunteers in the process. Focus on low-cost, high-impact interventions that can be tested and adapted over time (e.g., pop-ups, temporary installations).
5. **Activation** - Organize events, activities, or programs that encourage people to use the space and create a sense of belonging (e.g., markets, performances, workshops).
6. **Evaluation and Iteration** - Gather feedback on the space's use, accessibility, and impact through surveys or observation. Adapt and refine the space based on ongoing community input and lessons learned.

Measuring Success

Level of community involvement in the process and final design.

Increased diverse use of the space.

Improved social connections and sense of community ownership.

Positive feedback from participants and stakeholders.

Expert Tip

Focus on hardware (space), software (community engagement), and orgware (governance & maintenance) to create places that are not just well-designed, but actively used and cared for. Involve local stakeholders from the start, ensuring that interventions are rooted in existing community needs rather than imposed solutions – co-creation builds ownership and long-term sustainability.

Additional Resource

www.placemaking-europe.eu/toolbox

Nudging

Objective

Nudging is a behavioral science method used to influence people's decisions and actions in a subtle, non-coercive way. It helps individuals make choices that benefit them and society, such as adopting circular economy habits, reducing waste, or increasing sustainable behavior. By changing the environment or the way choices are presented, nudging guides behavior without restricting freedom.

Description

1. **D – Diagnose:** Identify the behavioral challenge (e.g., why people don't recycle, repair, or reduce waste). Use observational research, surveys, or data analysis to understand psychological barriers. Example: If people don't bring reusable bags, is it forgetfulness, inconvenience, or habit?
2. **O – Observe:** Analyze when, where, and how people make the decision. Identify existing habits, emotions, and decision-making processes in real-world settings. Example: If waste bins are hard to find, people litter. If products are over-packaged, they create waste.

3. **I – Intervene:** Introduce small environmental or cognitive changes to encourage the desired behavior. Examples of nudges: Defaults: Making the sustainable choice the automatic option (e.g., opt-out of disposable cutlery). Social Proof: Showing how many others are engaging in the behavior (e.g., "80% of your neighbors recycle"). Visual Cues: Using color-coded bins or footprints leading to recycling stations.
4. **T – Test:** Measure the effectiveness of the intervention through A/B testing, surveys, or behavioral tracking. Adjust the nudge based on feedback and observed behavior changes. Example: If reusable cup use increased by 20% after introducing a small discount, the nudge is working.

Measuring Success

Increase in desired actions (e.g., rise in recycling rates, more people bringing reusable bags).

Reduction in waste or unsustainable practices.

Number of people interacting with the nudge (e.g., percentage choosing the eco-friendly option).

Relation between Effort/Investment and Impact.

Long-term behavior change (even if the nudge is removed).

Expert Tip

A single nudge may create short-term behavior change, but combining multiple nudges enhances long-term effectiveness. For example, to encourage repair culture, you can set defaults (making repair the first checkout option), use social proof (displaying the number of repaired items per month), and ensure convenience (placing repair stations in high-traffic areas). By layering nudges that reinforce each other, you create an environment where sustainable behavior becomes the natural, easy choice – leading to lasting cultural shifts.

Additional Resource

www.coglode.com/cookbook

Alliance Building

Objective

Build strategic alliances with diverse stakeholders to amplify a campaign's reach, legitimacy, and impact. This method emphasizes collaboration, shared goals, and leveraging collective strengths for effective advocacy.

Description

1. **Identify Core Goals and Values** - Clarify the campaign's objectives and key values. Ensure they are inclusive and resonate with potential allies.
2. **Stakeholder Mapping** - Map out potential allies, including NGOs, businesses, community groups, and individuals, based on shared interests and complementary strengths. Identify decision-makers, influencers, and connectors within each stakeholder group.

3. **Outreach and Relationship Building** - Approach stakeholders with clear, personalized messaging that outlines mutual benefits and shared goals. Foster trust and alignment through meetings, workshops, or informal discussions.
4. **Co-Creation of Campaign Strategy** - Develop a collaborative campaign plan that leverages each partner's strengths (e.g., communication channels, expertise, or networks). Agree on shared responsibilities, roles, and decision-making processes.
5. **Joint Action and Execution** - Launch coordinated actions such as events, petitions, or media outreach that reflect the alliance's unified message. Ensure consistent communication and mutual support among partners during execution.
6. **Monitoring and Adaptation** - Regularly review progress and address challenges collectively. Adapt strategies to maintain momentum and alignment.
7. **Celebrate and Sustain Relationships** - Celebrate successes together to strengthen bonds. Recognize contributions and build goodwill for future collaboration. Develop a framework for ongoing communication and support beyond the campaign.

Measuring Success

Number and diversity of alliances formed.

Engagement and contributions from partners. Achievement of campaign goals (e.g., policy changes, public awareness).

Strength and sustainability of relationships post-campaign.

Expert Tip

Build alliances on shared values and long-term mutual benefits, rather than just short-term goals – this strengthens commitment and resilience over time. To maintain momentum, establish lightweight but regular touchpoints (e.g., quarterly check-ins, shared digital workspaces) to keep collaboration active and adaptive to changing needs.

3. Outcomes and Impacts

Disclaimer: Accessible and manageable KPIs and measurement approaches are relevant for a successful citizen engagement project. But remember: A proper impact measurement and evaluation needs a research team or a person who works scientifically, doing regular interviews as part of the project, ... – if there aren't the resources for this, focus on few, but clear KPIS.

What and How to Measure

Step 1: Define Objectives

Clearly outline the goals of your citizen engagement initiative. For example:

- Increase awareness about circular lifestyles
- Reduce local waste generation
- Encourage community-based repair and reuse

Step 2: Select Relevant Indicators

Choose KPIs that align with your goals:

- For **awareness**, use survey-based metrics
- For **behavioral change**, focus on waste reduction or repair habits
- For **ecological impact**, track metrics tied to waste diversion and resource reuse

Step 3: Collect Data

Use diverse data collection methods:

- **Quantitative Data:** Surveys, participation logs, and tracking waste/recycling volumes.
- **Qualitative Data:** Focus groups or interviews to gather deeper insights into citizen perceptions. (See *Qualitative KPIs*)

Step 4: Translate into Tangible Metrics

Where possible, convert metrics into universally relatable units:

- Amount of waste diverted → Equivalent of thermal recycling saved
- Number of repaired devices → CO₂ emissions saved by avoiding new production

Step 5: Monitor and Adjust

Periodically review the chosen KPIs – e.g., every 6 months – to ensure they are capturing the desired outcomes and adjust as needed.

Quantitative KPIs

Short-Term KPIs

- **Awareness:** Surveys or feedback forms measuring awareness of circularity.
- **Participation Rates:** Track attendance and engagement in events.
- **Satisfaction:** Collect qualitative feedback on citizen experience and learning.
- **Social media engagement:** Track metrics such as likes, shares, and comments on circularity campaigns to assess online reach.
- **Event Outcomes:** Number of actionable ideas or initiatives proposed during workshops or events.
- **Local Business Engagement:** Count of businesses adopting circular practices (e.g., using recycled materials or implementing repair services).

Long-Term KPIs

- **Behavioral Change:** Monitor changes in local waste management, recycling, or repair habits.
- **Community Resilience:** Measure the creation of local networks, partnerships, and self-sustaining initiatives.
- **Ecological Impact:** Quantitative measures, like reduction in local waste or increases in recycling rates.
- **Material Diversion Rates:** Track the percentage of waste diverted from landfills to recycling or reuse streams.
- **Circular Economy Jobs:** Monitor the creation of new jobs or enterprises related to circularity, such as repair services or second-hand shops.

Translating Metrics into CO₂ Equivalents

| Item | Measured Unit | CO ₂ Equivalent Saved | Source |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|---|---|
| Waste diverted | kg | 0,2–0,4 kg CO ₂ per kg waste | https://zerowasteurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/edd/2016/06/EN-Main-Report-1.pdf |
| Tablets/Phones/Computer | Number of devices | 221,5 (150-300) kg CO ₂ per device | https://www.getonlineathome.org/2023/11/22/the-carbon-impact-of-manufactured-vs-refurbished-computers/ and https://frc.cfsd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/FRC-Carbon-Calculator-Larger-Quantity-or-Weight-Help-Sheet-V1.1.pdf |
| Electricals | Number of Repairs | 26,3 kg CO ₂ per device | https://frc.cfsd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/FRC-Carbon-Calculator-Larger-Quantity-or-Weight-Help-Sheet-V1.1.pdf |
| Shared tools/appliances | Number of users | Varies (based on average usage patterns) | https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/policy-issues/resource-efficiency-and-circular-economy.html |
| Food waste reduction | kg | 0.5–0.8 kg CO ₂ per kg food waste | https://www.fao.org/4/i3347e/i3347e.pdf |
| Bicycles | Number of bike repairs | 126,6 kg CO ₂ per bike | https://frc.cfsd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/FRC-Carbon-Calculator-Larger-Quantity-or-Weight-Help-Sheet-V1.1.pdf |
| Furniture | Number of repairs | 7,7 kg CO ₂ | https://frc.cfsd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/FRC-Carbon-Calculator-Larger-Quantity-or-Weight-Help-Sheet-V1.1.pdf |

The Footprint and Handprint: Understanding Impact

The **ecological footprint** measures the environmental impact of individuals, organizations, or societies, expressed as the land and water needed to produce resources and assimilate waste. It highlights overconsumption and unsustainable practices, helping cities develop policies to reduce energy and resource use, as seen in Copenhagen's cycling infrastructure. Consumer campaigns also use footprint calculators to encourage shifts toward low-impact choices like plant-based diets and renewable energy. However, the footprint concept has faced criticism. Its promotion by fossil fuel companies, such as BP's focus on the "carbon footprint," diverted attention from corporate accountability to individual responsibility. Critics also argue it oversimplifies complex environmental issues,

ignoring factors like biodiversity loss or social equity, and its framing can induce guilt without actionable guidance.

In contrast, the **ecological handprint** emphasizes positive contributions to sustainability. It highlights regenerative actions, such as transforming urban spaces into community gardens, creating circular art initiatives, or teaching repair skills through public libraries of things. These activities foster community engagement and reduce environmental impact. Unlike the footprint, the handprint shifts the focus to “doing good” and sharing successes to inspire further action. For instance, cities can celebrate initiatives like zero-waste markets to amplify their impact and motivate others. While harder to measure due to its indirect and diffuse nature, the handprint provides a hopeful narrative of collaboration and empowerment.

Why Measure a Handprint?

- To demonstrate impact beyond traditional carbon footprint reduction.
- To influence policy by showing how citizen engagement leads to systemic change.
- To improve and scale projects by identifying key drivers of positive change.
- To communicate success in an accessible and motivating way.

Balancing both concepts allows cities to address environmental harm while promoting positive action. The footprint shows the urgency of reducing damage, while the handprint highlights opportunities for transformative change. Together, they offer a comprehensive framework for engaging citizens and advancing circular lifestyles.

Qualitative KPIs

While quantitative data tells what is happening, qualitative data explains why it's happening. It captures citizen perceptions, motivations, barriers, and emotional connections to circularity.

Understanding Citizen Perceptions

- What motivates people to engage (or disengage) with circularity initiatives?
- What emotional or social factors influence their behavior change?
- What frustrations or barriers exist in adopting circular practices?

Methods for Collecting Qualitative Data:

Focus Groups

- Small group discussions (6–10 participants) with guided questions to explore attitudes toward sustainability.
- Example: “What made you participate in this repair workshop? What would encourage you to keep coming?”

Interviews & Storytelling Sessions

- One-on-one conversations with key participants, local leaders, or disengaged citizens to understand different perspectives.
- Example: A market vendor sharing experiences on reducing food waste through community redistribution.

Participatory Observation

- Immersive field research where facilitators observe citizen interactions in real-time during circularity initiatives.
- Example: Noting informal knowledge exchange during a repair café and how participants support each other.

Mood Mapping & Sentiment Analysis

- Use public mood mapping exercises (stickers on maps, digital sentiment analysis, storytelling booths) to track emotions around circular initiatives.
- Example: Collecting "before and after" testimonials from participants in zero-waste programs to measure shifts in perception.

Photo & Video Diaries

- Have citizens document their engagement journeys (e.g., via short video testimonials or photo storytelling).
- Example: A household documenting their transition to a zero-waste lifestyle over several months.

Besides these methods, there are several frameworks that help manage and measure an initiative's impact in a qualitative way:

Social Impact Navigator

This framework provides a clear way to track how inputs and outputs (tangible activities and resources) translate into outcomes (immediate effects) and impacts (long-term change). By using this structure, we can systematically assess how citizen engagement activities facilitated by CCSI contribute to both short- and long-term circularity goals.

Key Elements

- **Inputs:** Resources, time, and partnerships involved in setting up citizen engagement initiatives.
- **Outputs:** Tangible activities or deliverables, such as events, workshops, and content.
- **Outcomes:** Immediate effects, such as increased awareness, skills, or motivation.
- **Impacts:** Broader, lasting changes in behavior, community structures, or ecological footprints.

This framework is essential for defining realistic expectations, setting achievable goals, and identifying how citizen engagement can generate meaningful impact.

More details

www.phineo.org/en/social-impact-navigator

Cornerstone Indicators

The Cornerstone Indicators framework provides a set of metrics designed to measure the effectiveness and resilience of organizations, projects, or systems in addressing social and environmental challenges. It focuses on six core dimensions:

1. **Purpose:** Clarity and alignment of goals with societal needs.

2. **Participation:** Engagement of stakeholders and inclusivity in decision-making.
3. **Partnerships:** Collaboration and network-building to enhance impact.
4. **Preparedness:** Readiness to address challenges and adapt to change.
5. **Performance:** Achieving outcomes effectively and efficiently.
6. **Planet:** Integration of sustainability and environmental responsibility.

What It's Good For

The Cornerstone Indicators framework is a versatile tool for:

- **Assessing System Health:** Evaluating the overall effectiveness, sustainability, and adaptability of a project or organization.
- **Strategic Planning:** Guiding organizations to align their operations with systemic resilience and impact goals.
- **Benchmarking and Monitoring:** Tracking progress over time or comparing performance across different initiatives.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Ensuring inclusivity and collaboration through participatory assessment processes.

It is particularly useful for complex, multi-stakeholder projects, such as those in sustainability, circular economy, or citizen engagement, to ensure their actions contribute meaningfully to long-term systemic change.

More details

www.cornerstoneindicators.com

Circular Value Flower

The Circular Value Flower is a framework that categorizes the diverse types of value created by circular economy initiatives. It emphasizes the interconnected and systemic nature of these values, grouped into five key categories:

1. **Cultural Value:** The preservation and enhancement of heritage, traditions, and identity through circular practices.
2. **Economic Value:** Financial benefits, including cost savings, revenue generation, and job creation within circular systems.
3. **Ecological Value:** Positive environmental impacts, such as biodiversity preservation, resource conservation, and reduction of emissions and waste.
4. **Social Value:** Improvements in community well-being, equity, inclusivity, and social cohesion.
5. **Aesthetic Value:** The beauty and design of products, spaces, or systems that inspire and create emotional connections.

The framework encourages a holistic approach by visualizing these value dimensions as interlinked “petals” of a flower, showing how circular projects can create comprehensive and balanced impacts.

What It's Good For

The Circular Value Flower is particularly useful for:

1. **Holistic Project Planning:** Ensures projects address multiple dimensions of value creation, balancing aesthetics, culture, economy, ecology, and social well-being.

2. **Stakeholder Communication:** Provides a clear, visual way to demonstrate the multifaceted benefits of circular economy initiatives, fostering collaboration and buy-in.
3. **Impact Assessment:** Helps organizations evaluate and report on the broad impacts of their circular economy projects across all value dimensions.
4. **Strategic Alignment:** Guides teams in identifying opportunities and synergies across value categories, ensuring alignment with systemic sustainability goals.

The Circular Value Flower is ideal for circular economy projects aiming to integrate and communicate their impact across diverse and interconnected areas of value creation.

[More details](#)

www.circularcommunity.org

Feral accounting

Feral Accounting is a method that broadens traditional financial accounting by recognizing non-financial contributions, informal exchanges, and latent resources within a community. It highlights the diverse actions and interactions that sustain meaningful economies beyond monetary transactions. By using a feral budget, communities can document both financial income (e.g., donations, grants) and non-financial assets (e.g., shared knowledge, voluntary work, environmental resources) on a single page. This approach challenges conventional economic frameworks and makes hidden contributions visible, fostering a more holistic and sustainable understanding of value.

What It's Good For

1. **Revealing Hidden Value:** Helps communities recognize underappreciated contributions, such as mutual aid, shared spaces, and environmental stewardship.
2. **Strengthening Community Resilience:** Encourages resource-sharing and collaboration by identifying overlooked or underutilized assets.
3. **Supporting Circular Economy Initiatives:** Aligns with circular practices by mapping informal economies that promote reuse, repair, and local self-sufficiency.
4. **New Approaches to Budgeting & Decision-Making:** Provides an alternative financial model that includes both formal and informal economies, offering a more comprehensive view of sustainability efforts.
5. **Advocacy & Policy Influence:** Can be used to demonstrate the real impact of community-driven initiatives, influencing funding decisions and policy frameworks.

By shifting the focus from pure financial metrics to holistic value creation, Feral Accounting empowers communities to take charge of their economies in a way that reflects the true wealth of human and non-human contributions.

Value of testing

The Value of Testing is a mindset and methodology that emphasizes experimentation, learning from failure, and continuous improvement. In contexts where innovation is hindered – such as the public sector, where fear of failure or restrictive policies discourage new approaches – this method highlights how testing, even when unsuccessful, generates valuable insights. Failed experiments provide inside knowledge, expose weaknesses in systems, and reveal new opportunities for innovation. By normalizing

iterative testing, organizations and governments can reduce risk, refine solutions, and build confidence in change processes.

What It's Good For

1. **Encouraging a Culture of Learning:** Shifts the focus from avoiding mistakes to learning from failure, fostering a mindset of adaptation and resilience.
2. **Overcoming Fear of Innovation:** Helps public institutions and risk-averse organizations understand that controlled testing reduces long-term risks rather than increasing them.
3. **Enhancing Policy & Decision-Making:** Provides evidence-based insights that improve policy implementation, making systems more effective and adaptable.
4. **Making Circular Solutions More Viable:** In circular economy projects, testing allows for scalable, optimized solutions by learning from pilot initiatives and adjusting strategies.
5. **Building Public Trust in Innovation:** When organizations transparently share lessons from testing, they demonstrate responsibility, improvement, and credibility in managing public resources.

By embracing the value of testing, organizations – especially in the public sector – move from a fear of failure to a mindset of progress, adaptability, and long-term success.

4. Conclusion

This Guidance Paper has outlined how citizen engagement, driven by creativity and culture, can be a catalyst for circular transformation in cities. By leveraging participatory methods, storytelling, and hands-on interventions, we can make circular lifestyles accessible, inspiring, and actionable for diverse communities.

Throughout this document, we have explored practical frameworks, engagement formats, and measurement strategies to bridge the gap between individual action, community-driven initiatives, and systemic change. From open assemblies and mapping workshops to policy co-creation and participatory budgeting, the methods presented here emphasize that circularity is not just a technical transition, but a cultural and social shift.

Key Takeaways

- **Make It Easy, Attractive, and Social** – The most successful citizen engagement initiatives lower barriers, create shared experiences, and use compelling narratives to shift behaviors.
- **Use What's Already There** – Strengthen existing networks, cultural spaces, and creative industries as platforms for circular initiatives
- **Emphasize Long-Term Vision** – While quick wins are important, embedding circularity in policy, infrastructure, and social norms ensures lasting impact.
- **Measure What Matters** – Track not just quantifiable impact (waste diverted, resources saved) but also qualitative insights (behavior change, community resilience, policy influence).

- **Policy and Participation Go Hand-in-Hand** – Citizen engagement should not be an afterthought but a core driver of circular policymaking, ensuring that top-down decisions align with lived realities.

Next Steps

This guide is a starting point – not a fixed formula. The effectiveness of citizen engagement depends on context, creativity, and continuous learning. We encourage practitioners, policymakers, and creatives to experiment, adapt, and scale these approaches in their own communities.

By embracing participatory governance, cultural engagement, and co-created solutions, we can transform circularity from an abstract concept into a lived experience – one that is rooted in local identity, creativity, and collective action.

**The transition to Creative Circular Cities is already happening.
The question is: How will you shape it?**

5. Additional Resources

Frameworks and General Guidelines

Facilitation Triangle

Explains the importance of facilitation in achieving effective collaboration between professionals and volunteers.

[The Need for Facilitation](#)

General Overview of Citizen Engagement

Offers a comprehensive introduction to citizen engagement and strategies for enhancing it in governance.

[Citizen Engagement Overview \(SAGE\)](#)

Measuring and Evaluating Engagement

How to Measure Citizen Engagement

Provides tools and frameworks for evaluating engagement impact, particularly in policy and research contexts.

<https://citizensandscholars.org/research/mapping-civic-measurement/>

[Measuring Engagement in Health](#)

Mapping Civic Measurement

Outlines a detailed framework and tools for assessing civic engagement across various dimensions.

[Citizens & Scholars Civic Measurement Guide](#)

Citizen Engagement for Circular Economy

Circular Citizens Handbook

A practical guide for cities on engaging citizens to promote circular economy transitions.

[Circular Citizens Handbook](#)

Engagement for Circular Economy

Discusses methods for involving citizens in waste management and circular practices.

[Power of Citizen Participation](#)

Creative and Cultural Approaches

Creative Public Engagement

Lessons from the creative arts industry on fostering public engagement.

[Creative Engagement Lessons](#)

Cultural Transformation via Creative Industries

Co-Creation as a means of citizen engagement in local cultural policy making

<https://www.culturecrossroads.lv/index.php/cc/article/download/73/52/161>

Community-Based Initiatives

Eclectis Project

Demonstrates participatory design methods for engaging communities in sustainable development.

[Eclectis Project Publication](#)

Interreg Europe Projects

Provides insights into successful citizen engagement in the circular economy from various European cities.

[Interreg Europe Report](#)