



CO-CREATION GUIDEBOOK



The main objective of the BLOOM project is to establish open and informed dialogues, co-created by European citizens, civil society, bioeconomy innovation networks, local research centres, business and industry stakeholders and various levels of government. BLOOM is creating spaces for the needed debate on preferences and values concerning the bioeconomy; for interaction and exchange of information, knowledge, meaning and aspirations, with the aim of establishing consensus on how a bioeconomy can be realized. Across Europe, five regional hubs have been established to foster public engagement in the bioeconomy and to create a space of exchange and debate. The hubs are focusing on different areas important to the regions.

Are you planning to use co-creation methodologies in your activities? This guidebook provides a summary and overview of some of the methodologies that we are using in the BLOOM project¹.

¹ For further information, download the full version of [Deliverable 3.3 “Guidebook on engagement and co-creation methodologies”](#).

WHY ARE CO-CREATION AND ENGAGEMENT IMPORTANT?

In a world of continuous technological advancement, intensified global competition and various other challenges, outreach to communities to identify needs as well as barriers is becoming increasingly important in order to establish open and informed dialogues between different stakeholders. Co-creation processes are at the heart of BLOOM’s five regional hub activities because co-creation follows an approach of involving different perspectives and collaboratively designing tools, materials, processes, activities or strategies.

Public involvement in the discussion of issues, problem solving approaches and policymaking activities can serve as a medium to enhance the quality of decision making, as it provides for lay knowledge and locally adjusted solutions.

Outreach and engagement activities bring along a number of benefits to both sides of the dialogue. They can foster a feeling of trust between the different stakeholders and give the opportunity to

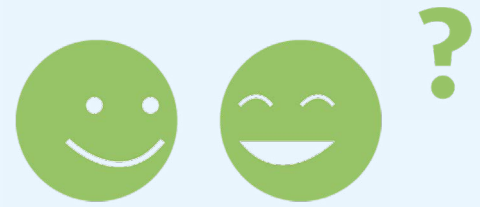


influence processes and end results for stakeholders that would otherwise have been left out. Furthermore, they enable the transfer of local knowledge which would otherwise have been left unheard to decision making or to research authorities and remove barriers to cooperation between stakeholders. Outreach and engagement activities allow the creation of conditions where a shared understanding, a feeling of shared responsibility and a sense of ownership can emerge, which helps with expectation management of the participating stakeholders and which leads to increased satisfaction with outcomes by all sides.

Public engagement is possible in many different levels. Herfordshire Council (2015)¹ introduces five levels of Engagement in their handbook for best practice community engagement techniques. This table visualizes how engagement increases with each level, what each level intends to achieve and gives some exemplary activities that are useful in each level of engagement, adapted to the context of BLOOM.

¹ Herfordshire Council (2015): [Best practice community engagement techniques Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Note 12.](#)

The Five Levels of Engagement				
Increasing level of engagement >>				
Informing	Consulting	Involving	Collaborating	Empowering
Providing information to the relevant stakeholders to enable them to understand problems, alternatives, opportunities and solutions.	Obtaining stakeholder feedback to inform decision making. Obtaining feedback on formal proposals.	Working directly with the stakeholders to ensure that issues, concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.	Working in partnership with stakeholders on all aspects of decision making including development of options and identifying preferred solutions.	Placing final decision making in the hands of the stakeholders.
The intention is to...				
Keep the stakeholders informed.	Keep the stakeholders informed, to their views and provide feedback on how their input influenced decision making.	Engage with the stakeholders to ensure that concerns and aspirations are reflected in decisions and service delivery. Provide feedback on how their input influenced decision making.	Look to the other stakeholders for advice and innovation to find solutions.	Facilitate stakeholders to take responsibility for designing and delivering services themselves.
Techniques...				
Brochures, websites, news releases and newsletters to raise awareness. For example: leaflets, Facebook or Twitter.	Public meetings, network meetings, focus groups, interviews, using social media, e-mail, website, Twitter or Facebook.	Public meetings	Round tables, Fora, Workshops	(Co-Creation) Workshops



A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO CO-CREATION WORKSHOP METHODOLOGIES

The methodology of co-creation emerged from transformative processes in the entrepreneurial world and aims at generating new products and services. For example, big companies and brands carried out effective collaborative creation actions involving users to develop new products and services but also to face structural changes as well as helping to solve new challenges in the internal management. This approach has been taken up by other fields, such as education, arts or the publishing sector. Co-creation is usually complemented by other concepts such as user centred design, design thinking or participative design. Hence, co-creation follows an approach to involve different perspectives and collaboratively design tools, materials, processes, activities or strategies. This approach gives voice to local communities.

An eye-level communication in the co-creation workshops between all participants is the first precondition to provide room for creative ideas and

visions. Thus, after having defined a clear goal, the structure of the workshop will be set up to foster team building within the workshop period and to get successful results.

BLOOM's goal is to raise awareness and enhance knowledge on the bioeconomy among EU citizens by stimulating activities via regional hubs and developing outreach activities demonstrating the potential social, economic and environmental impact of the bioeconomy.

To reach this goal, we engage various audiences through co-creation workshops to support knowledge exchange and to design outreach activities and materials on the bioeconomy. In the co-creation workshops, all participants have the possibility to bring themselves in and exchange ideas, ambitions and concerns related to the bioeconomy. Participants collaboratively define activities to engage citizens and create ideas on how the topic can be communicated to different target groups.



An illustration showing various hands and workshop tools. At the top, a hand holds a pencil, another points, and a third points to a tablet. Below, a hand holds a pen over a notepad, another points to a document with bullet points, and a third points to a document with lines. Tools include pens, pencils, a ruler, and a watch.

EXAMPLES OF CO-CREATION WORKSHOP METHODOLOGIES

There exists a broad range of different co-creation methodologies. The following pages give an outline of selected methodologies which are used in the BLOOM hubs for developing outreach activities tailored to the local needs, drivers and barriers of each hub.

OPENER

Openers and ice breaking activities are very important for the team building in the workshop. As we want our participants to develop prototypes or detailed strategies, this stage of the workshop needs sufficient time and is crucial for the further process in the workshop. It is important to always choose an appropriate method for starting a workshop and warming up the participants. The focus of the methodology differs, depending on whether participants already know each other. If participants do not know each other, there is the need for a methodology addressing introduction and getting to know each other, like “Sociometry” or “Joint poster”. If participants do already know each other methods to gather expectations and fears can be applied, like “Dreams and Nightmares”.

Based on Birgit Baumann’s “*Blossoming Workshops and Seminars Guarantee to Succeed*” (2015) this section provides a list of methodologies which we see fit as openers for the BLOOM co-creation workshops.

Sociometry/Constellations

Goals: Getting to know each other, find commonalities, supports communication, supports getting background information about the group.

Group size: No limitation.

Room requirements: The room needs to be large

enough for constellations in a row, or for clustering the participants.

Timing: 10-20 min

Summary: You ask questions which can e.g. be connected to the content of the workshop, which are answered by constellations of the participants. This can be in a row or also in clusters.

Sociometry or Constellations are perfectly suitable for starting an event and as ice-breaker. Team building is supported and communication between the participants stimulated. To successfully implement this method it is important to carefully choose the questions. Each question or topic should follow a specific aim. Personal questions help to break the ice and can be followed by questions targeting the content of the workshop – in our case bioeconomy, but also outreach or science communication.

Examples for questions can be the following:

- Origin of participants. Geographically cluster them.
- Gender of participants
- Size of shoes
- Highest education
- Theoretical knowhow about bioeconomy/outreach and science communication
- Practical experience with bioeconomy/outreach and science communication

Lego

Goals: to experience the concept of co-creation and what it really means to work together as well as to exercise collaboration, action, change, leadership and performance

Group size: max. 12 per group; number of groups not restricted

Room requirements: the room should offer enough space to have (multiple) roundtables

Timing: 45-60 minutes max for part 1 & 2

Summary: Participants will build a Lego structure together and will then elaborate guidelines for successful team work.

In step 1, participants are given secret assignments. They will then have to build a structure with the Legos together. The personal task is to be kept secret from the other participants and there must be absolute silence. In step 2, the team evaluates the performance and develops guidelines for successful team/group work based on the experiences they just made.



Joint poster

Goals: getting to know each other, finding commonalities; document results and summarise

Group size: maximum 20 participants

Equipment: pin walls or flip charts (one per break out group)

Room requirements: sufficient room for break out groups to work on their own flip chart/ pin wall.

Timing: 15-20 min (10 minutes to create the poster and 10 minutes for presenting all posters)

Summary: Collaboratively creating a poster, which highlights the commonalities, but also individualities of each small break out group.

This method helps to identify first common

grounds within the group, but also to identify individualities. Small groups of 4 to 5 people find together and create a poster highlighting the commonalities and individualities on private and professional level. At the end of the session the groups give a short presentation of their posters (1 – 2 min each). All posters should be placed clearly visible in the room.

Fast networking

Goals: break the ice and bring quick interaction and activation, activate existing knowledge, provide a good overview, provide focus on the topic

Group size: up to 80

Equipment: cards with questions, writing pad for each participant, flip charts

Room requirements: sufficient space for walking around and interviewing each other. This can also be done outside.

Timing: 30 min

Summary: Participants have one question for interviewing the others. It is not the aim to interview in detail, it is much more the goal to interview as many people as possible within a few minutes.

Depending on the group size and on how many breakout groups can be formed, the number of questions is allocated. All participants get a writing pad with one question on it. Then they have around 5 minutes to swarm out and interview as many participants as possible. In the next step participants form groups with those having the same question on their writing pad, and collect the most important aspects and answers on a flip chart, which they present at the end.

Dreams and Nightmares

Goals: identify expectations and fears and make them addressable

Group size: up to 40 (from 10 people on it is suggested to work in small groups)

Equipment: pin walls, pins, moderation cards (2-4 different colours), pens

Timing: about 20 minutes

Summary: collecting dreams and nightmares and addressing them appropriately.

This method is easy to apply and works well to gather possible concerns and doubts to further address and clarify them. Depending on whether you want individual results or group results, the moderation cards are handed out to individuals or small break out groups. For collecting only dreams and nightmares regarding the co-creation workshop two colours are needed. Make visible which co-

four stands for dreams and which for nightmares. Also the question must be placed clearly visible. The question could be: “Which dreams and which nightmares do you have for this co-creation workshop?” According to Baumann (2015) it is highly important to address and answer the raised topics as well as possible during the workshop.

World Café

The world café can also be used as a method to enter a topic and works well in larger groups. It aims at gathering the collective knowledge. This method can be applied for different goals, such as getting to know each other and networking (this would be as an opener), but also to exchange views, ideas and expectations, or to collect solution approaches or to reflect on something. The world café setting needs space. Tables for small groups of 4 – 6 persons are prepared. All tables work on the same question. The tables are covered with paper and provide sufficient pens for the participants to write with. There can also be snacks or drinks provided to make a good atmosphere.

There are 3 rounds for exchange, lasting 15 minutes per round. Participants exchange and note their ideas and thoughts on the paper. After the first round all participants but one change the table to discuss the same question with other participants. The one person staying at the table has the role of the host and takes care of reminding the others to note their ideas and thoughts and summarizes for the new group what was discussed before at this particular table. This process is repeated a second time. Ensure that the question is clearly formulated and that people who know each other are sitting on different tables.

IDEATION

In the ideation phase we are already starting to work on identified topics. Here we suggest applying brainstorming methodologies, or future scenarios and visioning methods. This section provides insight in the future scenario method, the problem reversal technique and how to do the ideation in small break out groups.

Future scenarios

The future scenario technique works well to pick up specific challenges or topics to address and to work on first suggestions for solutions and on concrete measures. The questions are based on the specific content of the workshop. To get to the bot-

tom of challenges, Baumann (2015) suggests the following structure:

1. How do you perceive the current state of the art? (This needs to be outlined as detailed and specific as possible.)	2. What are the reasons for that? (Here we have a look at what caused this.)
3. Which suggestions for solutions are there to improve the situation? (In this section we do a brainstorming. This can also be creative.)	4. Which concrete measures can be quickly implemented? (This point addresses quick wins.)

The questions can be adapted to different needs. E.g. Scenarios could also address future goals and the process how to reach them and which obstacle might be faced:

1. Current State (This needs to be outlined as detailed and specific as possible.)	2. What do I want to reach? (In this section we need a clear outline about the goals or the future we would like to reach.)
3. What could be the measures to reach that? (In this section we do a brainstorming about first ideas for measures. This can also be creative.)	4. What obstacles could arise? (This point addresses the obstacles which need to be addressed.)

This method can also be used to work on already developed ideas:

1. What supports the implementation of idea xy? (Describe as detailed and specific as possible.)	2. What impedes the implementation of idea xy? (Describe as detailed and specific as possible.)
3. What possibilities are there to implement idea xy? (In this section we do a brainstorming. This can also be creative.)	4. Which concrete implementation steps are necessary? (In this section the generated possibilities are captured as concrete steps.)

This method can be done with all kind of different questions as long as they always go from “problem talking” to “solution talking”. Future scenario technique works well in small groups. Flip charts that clearly show the questions and the process should be prepared before the session starts.

pants start to open up and successfully participate through these methods, particularly when they are given sufficient time to get adjusted and when they are well guided by the facilitators.

Brainstorming Matrix – Target groups

In this method the participants are provided a matrix with predefined rough target groups. Participants define them more closely. E.g. one target group could be women, and they can be well educated, marginalized, interested, hard to reach etc. The matrix helps the group to further decide which target group they want to address with the outreach activity or material they are about to design.

	Interes- ted	Educa- ted	Visitors	By- passers	Migrant	Etc...
Young people						
Families						
Elderly people						
Women						
Men						
Kids						

Avatar/Personas

In the ideation phase, persona development is a method to enter a deeper understanding. Personas are descriptions of archetypal users or stakeholders. Each persona description is based on a fictitious character whose profile represents the characteristics of an existing social group. It describes social and demographic characteristics, needs, desires, habits and cultural backgrounds (Graz READER 2016). The goals of persona development include: Giving space to other perspectives, maintaining the distance to one’s own perspective through empathic understanding and enabling new perspectives in the process. In a workshop session with persona development, the group discusses which persona should be dealt with – e. g. representatives from ministry, science or business - the participants agree on basis of the existing expertise on a representative of a particular stakeholder group (Köppen et al 2017).

Defining personas helps the team to have a shared understanding of the real users in terms of their

goals, capabilities, and contexts. Personas also help prevent „self-referential design“, where the designers or developers may unconsciously project their own mental models on the product design, which may be very different from that of the target user population. Personas also provide a reality check by helping designers keep the focus of the design on cases that are most likely to be encountered for the target users and not on edge cases which usually won’t happen for the target population.

Characteristics of a good persona:

A quick checklist of what makes a good persona (Ilama 2015). As a group, we agreed on the following criteria:

The persona

- reflects patterns observed in research
- focuses on the current state, not the future
- is realistic, not idealized
- helps you understand your target group

Moreover, it is important to reflect on the context, behaviour, attitude, needs, challenges, motivation and goals of the chosen persona.



Jani, 17 yr.



Alina, 27 yr.



Jarmo, 47 yr.



Riitta, 67 yr.

Personas created by participants of a co-creation workshop of the BLOOM Nordic Hub (Pictures: Diana Pitkänen)

Create your own persona:

- Choose a persona of a stakeholder group where you see certain barriers to approach them
- Give a realistic name to create a real relationship between your group and the persona

- Draw a picture of your persona
- Demographic information such as age, origin, marital status, ...
- Occupation and tasks of his/her profession
- Goals, expectations, wishes and/or needs (with regard to the question)
- Likes and dislikes that can influence a decision
- Recreational activities of the persona
- A quote to better express the character or desirable aspect of the persona

It is quite common to see a page or two of documentation written for each persona. The goal is to bring your users to life by developing personas with real names, personalities, motivations, and often even a photo. In other words, a good persona is highly personalized.

Prototyping

This technique comes from Design Thinking Processes (Plattner, Meinel, and Weinberg 2011) and is meant for generating ideas for very concrete tools, materials and activities which (in our case) the project partners from BLOOM but also other stakeholders can use to enhance knowledge on bioeconomy. The aforementioned brainstorming activities aim for a maximum quantity of ideas, without considering the practicality in the first instance. In a second step, the most promising idea is built as a prototype. This could either be a model, a theatre scene or even an interactive game or other form of demonstration to make the idea tangible, immediate and easy to understand for others. Characteristics of the prototype have to be elaborated in detail, so that main questions around the implementation (e.g. if the tool is applied at individual or institutional level, voluntary – mandatory, online – offline, multi stakeholder or single stakeholder use etc.) are already addressed (Marschalek & Schrammel 2017).

To do so, participants are provided with a variety of materials starting from pens and coloured cards, through cords, pins, and placing pieces, to other creative materials such as play dough. These materials support a creative out of the box thinking and support participants in visualising places, activities, stakeholders and also processes. The result of this method is a first prototype, which should be tested afterwards.

The prototyping is usually done in small break out groups. It is important to allocate sufficient time for this task, as not all participants might feel com-

fortable in using these materials from the early beginning on. Experience shows, that as soon as one person starts to model something others join and the process runs its course.

After the first prototyping work is done, it is useful when each group gets feedback from the other groups. Therefore a feedback loop is applied, where one person per group stays at the table while the others split up and visit other groups. The person staying at the table explains each detail to the visitors and gathers their feedback and ideas. After this process, each group has another 15 minutes to adapt or add ideas to their prototype.



CLOSERS AND ENERGIZERS

In this phase it is important to appreciate the achievements of the participants in the workshop and complete the workshop with so called closers (Baumann 2015). Closers guarantee that participants retain the workshop and its content in the longer term. Some closers can also be used between the workshop phases to end a specific phase but also as energizers in between. They allow a repetition of the content, are creative and are supposed to be fun.

Alphabet

This method serves also as energizer helping at the same time to repeat all insights or most important topics. It can also be used for introducing a specific topic. You divide the group in small groups (3-4 persons) and ask them to write the alphabet letters vertically on a flipchart (probably in two columns, a-m and n-z). After that the small groups list all terms, words and associations that were used in the workshop or regarding a specific topic as fast as possible. The fastest group wins a small prize.

Drawing the learnings

This method is actually based on trainings and supports neuro-didactic learning. In this method you ask the participants to draw what was most important for them or what was the take away message for them. However, it is also possible to draw feedback to the workshop or use the method to start day two.

Ball of wool

This method is very effective in gathering feedback and stimulating closing thoughts and sharing learnings from every individual participant of the workshop. You will need a big ball of wool for this activity. In turns every participant is asked to share their thoughts and learnings, while holding the ball. Once they finished they throw the ball to a random other participant, letting it unroll, while it flies through the air. This is to be continued until everyone has had a say, resulting in a huge net that has formed between the participants. This method aims to show that despite the various backgrounds and opinions that got represented in the workshop, together they make a good and strongly interlinked network.

Fishbowl

This method is good for a workshop in which the participants have worked together in different groups. First of all, each group has to select a representative which is then going to discuss in their sense. Each representative will get a chair in the “fishbowl”, a circle of chairs in the middle of the room, to discuss outcomes, learnings, etc. of the various groups. To start the discussion you may want to prepare some initiating questions. There will also be an extra chair for others to jump into the discussion, offering possibility to give additional input, but leaving it open to the participant how long he or she wants to be in the discussion. In this method, saying and sharing closing thoughts, learnings or key outcomes is not mandatory for every participant while still providing a good summary and wrap-up due to the representatives.

TV news

This is a very fun closing method. Divide the group in small groups (editorial teams) and ask them to prepare a news story or a TV-spot. They have 25 minutes to prepare and should include all what normally is included in news. Questions such as: what happened, what did we get out of it, what was particularly exciting, what will stay in our memo-

ry, what did we develop and what do we expect to reach, etc. There are no creative boundaries there. The elaboration of the news-spot provides already a good reflection on the workshop. After the presentations you can discuss overlaps and where the experiences were different and why. It is advisable to make videos and/or a lot of pictures of the presentations.

30 Seconds of Feedback

This is a fun and energizing method to close a workshop. Every participant has to give feedback within 30 seconds, not more and not less.

Closing words

In this last phase of the workshop it might also be important to decide and talk about the role of the group after the co-creation workshop and the future if another meeting is planned. If everything has gone well, workshops result in a feeling of solidarity or team spirit and participants might want to continue with their collaboration.



RESOURCES

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