Working example: Improve It workshop

In this workshop, participants with genuine interest in getting tangible benefits of improved tools work in partnership with the facilitator to identify issues and misunderstandings in the tools according to their practices and suggest improvements, and then discuss which suggestions lead to a better engagement process. Each layer of the framework corresponds to one workshop

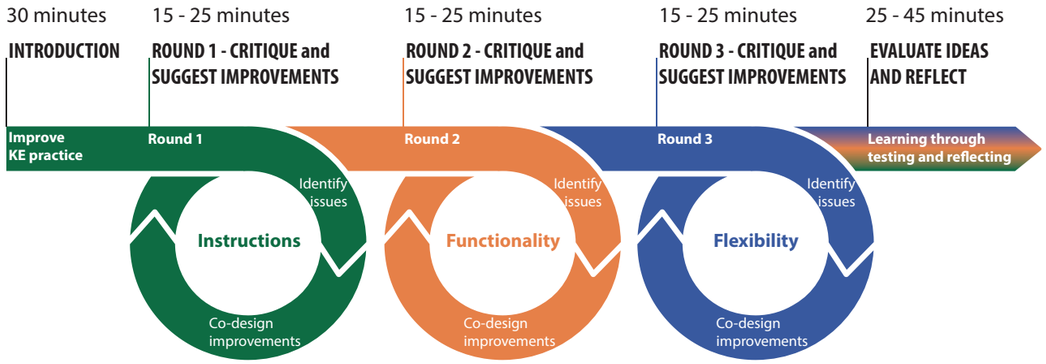
Duration
90 - 180 minutes

What you will need
Sharpies, scissors, tapes, Post-it notes, Worksheet with questions, and preselected tools

Participants
(6 or more) Designers, community members, partners, engagement practitioners, public sector workers

Seating arrangement
A station composed of a table with 3-2 chairs and designed to enable participants to easily circulate during the workshop,

Workshop instructions
- Remind participants look at the tools, and consider their practice and process in general.
- Encourage participants to scribble and take notes on the tool without being scared of ruining it
- Remember them that the other group should be able to understand your handwriting / notes
- After each round, ask participants to do a rotation and move to the next table until they return to their initial station.
- Remind participants to stay in the same group until the end of the workshop.



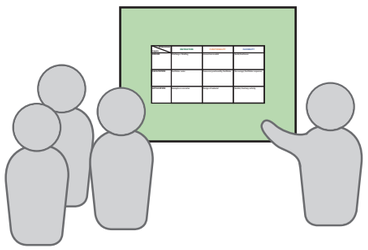
Improvement matrix

Dimensions / Layers	INSTRUCTION	FUNCTIONALITY	FLEXIBILITY
DESIGN Improve tools by giving workshop organisers more control over the activity, and flexibility in using and understanding tools	**Challenge / Briefing** How can you improve the briefing that instructs practiotioners on how the tool address engagement challenges?	**Interaction models** How can you improve the resources to enhance the job of facilitating creative engagement activities?	**(Build) Resilience** How can you improve the tool to encourage facilitators to deliver creative approaches to achieve the objective of engagement activities?
FACILITATION Improve tools by helping facilitators to design engagement approaches and providing indications of use and practical guidance to participants on how complete tools	**Facilitator notes** How can you improve the facilitation instructions of the tool?	**Resources produced by facilitator** How can you improve the resources to enhance the job of facilitating creative engagement activities?	**(Encourage) Facilitator responses** How can you improve the tool to encourage facilitators to deliver creative approaches to achieve the objective of engagement activities?
APPLICATION Improve tools by tailoring them to suit to your community needs and practice.	**Example or use notes** How can you improve the wording of the tool to be more appropriate for workshop participants?	**Design of material** How can you improve the tool visual communication to be more clear and friendly for workshop participants?	**(Enable) Contrary activity** How can you improve the tool to enable unexpected uses and adaptation by workshop participants?

Turn over this leaflet to see the insights into the Improvement Matrix layers, dimensions and components

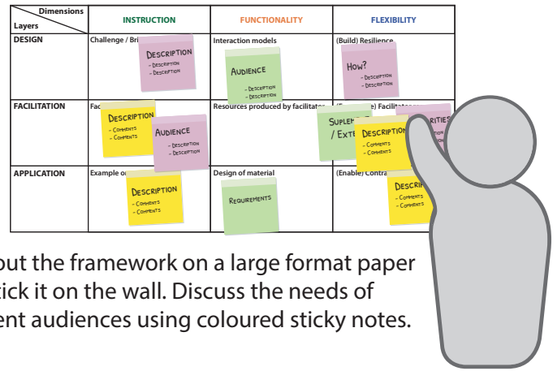
Suggestions for use

Teaching aid



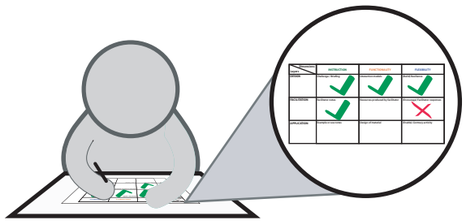
Use the framework as a memory aid to teach students on how to create better engagement tools

Populate the framework with infomation about a series of workshops



Print out the framework on a large format paper and stick it on the wall. Discuss the needs of different audiences using coloured sticky notes.

Checklist for the design of tools



Think about the tools you need to design to communicate with groups a particular type of work or knowledge exchange you are going to do.

Adapt the wording of the improvement matrix to suit your practice

How to run better workshops?

The improvement matrix framework

The Improvement Matrix is based on a review of the literature on co-design and participatory design practices, and my experience and background in designing and delivering workshops and tools. This framework aims at improving tools for participation in order to make better creative engagement practices and workshops.

The intended audience of this framework are people who work with groups of non-designers, and design researchers specialised in participatory approaches and tool design.

This framework consists of a matrix with nine components that prompts people to think, discuss and improve tools that are based on three overlapping engagement practices (Design, Facilitation, Application) and three dimensions used for improving tools (Instruction, Functionality, Flexibility).

This framework was designed and tested in collaboration with public sector practitioners in Lancashire, and design practitioners and delegates of the Design Research Society (DRS2018) and European Academy of Design (EAD2019) conferences. This framework was developed as part of larger research project called Leapfrog and Rosendy Galabo's PhD research project called Improve It at Lancaster University.

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Improvement Matrix framework

Research question

How can tools for knowledge exchange be improved?

How do practitioners improve tools using the instruction dimension?

Practitioners highlight the lack of clarity, language issues and restrictive aspects in the instructions, and then suggest improvements on how the tool should work, indications of use, and through adding, removing or changing the features to make the communication more appropriate for an organisation and audience. The improvement of tools involves providing clear visual design and instructions, indications of use, and friendly and clearer words for practitioners' practice.

How do practiotioners improve tools using the functionality dimension improve tools?

Practitioners highlight the lack of clarity, inappropriate design concepts, and restrictive aspects of the tool, and then suggest improvements by adding resources or changing the type of interactions / visual design and providing more practical guidance at the introduction and guidance during an engagement activity. The improvement of tools involves providing new ideas to address a challenge, adding or removing features to expand tool applications, clear and friendly graphic design and additional guidance and instructions to enhance the engagement of participants and practitioners in an activity.

How do practitioners improve tools using the flexibility dimension?

Practitioners highlight the restrictive aspects of the tool and suggestions of different uses, and then suggest improvements by simplifying / removing and adding / extending features, providing editable headings, formats and instructions, and designing activities as a group. The improvement of tools involves enabling wider tool applications through different features, and providing ideas that give practitioners more flexibility in understanding and use or generating ideas together as a group in order to build understanding in employing tools in creative activities.

Layers \ Dimensions	INSTRUCTIONS	FUNCTIONALITY	FLEXIBILITY
DESIGN Designers' practice	**Challenge / Briefing** **Activity:** Designers look at the briefing that instructs practitioners on how the tool can address engagement challenges, and then suggest improvements to the manner the tool could be used to solve a contextual challenge. **How?** Designers will evidence the lack of clarity in the instructions and restrictive aspects of the tool, and then generate ideas on how to improve the instructions such as: • Additional instructions and examples to inspire different uses and to show how the tool might work. • Additional features to stimulate discussions or to enable a more open and flexible system **How does this component improve the KE design practice?** By improving this component, a tool is improved to have a clear design concept and instructions, and enable more flexibility in personal understanding, and on how to use tools in practice.	**Interaction models** **Activity:** Designers look at how the tool design concept addresses an engagement challenge, and then suggest ideas to improve the interactions required to enable creativity in a group of participants. **How?** Designers will evidence the unclear inscturions, and the impractical, unrealistic and inappropriate design concepts, and then generate ideas on how to improve the concept such as: • Different resources to creatively and collaboratively address an engagement challenge • Additional guidance (e.g. prime exercises or roles) **How does this component improve the KE design practice?** By improving this component, designers can provide new tool ideas and features on how to collaboratively address an engagement challenge and also improve the usability of the tool.	**(Build) Resilience** **Activity:** Designers look at how the tool design concept accommodates unforeseen applications, and then suggest ideas to improve the resilience of the tool. **How?** Designers will evidence restrictive aspects of the tool, and suggest ideas to improve the flexibility such as: • Editable content (e.g. electronic format) • Extended features • Additional information to contextualise the tool (e.g. time duration) **How does this component improve the KE design practice?** By improving this component, designers can expand applications of the tool and provide ideas that give users more control and flexibility in understanding and use, providing practitioners more space to think about their engagement challenges.
FACILITATION Facilitators' practice	**Facilitator notes** **Activity:** Facilitators look at the guidelines on how to use a tool to support them to enable participants to creatively engage in a KE activity, and then suggest ideas to improve these guidelines. **How?** Facilitators will evidence the lack of clarity of the tool, and then suggest ideas to improve the instructions such as: • Indications of use of the resources for different audiences • Deletion of unnecessary resources or instructions **How does this component improve the KE design practice?** By improving this component, a tool can indicate uses of the resources that are suitable for different audiences or that need a more specific design.	**Resources produced for facilitators** **Activity:** Facilitators look at how the resources can support creative abilities among individuals in engagement activities, and then suggest improvements on how to better use resources to guide participants to achieve an agreed objective. **How?** Facilitators will evidence the lack of clarity and restrictive aspects of the tools, and then suggest ideas to improve facilitation such as: • Practical guidance on how to engage participants through the process • Different interactions that are appropriate to a wider audience (e.g. different inputs) **How does this component improve the KE design practice?** By improving this component, the addition of new resources and further guidance to a tool can improve the action of engaging with participants in an activity.	**(Encourage) Facilitator response** **Activity:** Facilitators look at how the tool can accommodate different approaches to facilitation, and then suggest improvements on ways they could enable creative exchange in multiple situations using the tool. **How?** Facilitators will evidence different ways to facilitate an activity, and suggest ideas on how to improve the flexibility such as: • Setting a new activity with a group • Sharing approaches that work **How does this component improve the KE design practice?** This component can improve the facilitation practice by simplifying the tool, discovering and discussing how to apply the tool in different activities, suggesting creative ways to use the resources.
APPLICATION Engagement experts' practice	**Example or use notes** **Activity:** Experts will look at the wording of a tool, and then suggest appropriate written communication to improve participants' understanding and engagement in an activity. **How?** Experts will evidence the lack of clarity and innapropriate wording on a tool, and suggest new wording in the tool to instruct participants such as: • New wording: Catchy headlines, actual words used in the process, general or specific words, straightforward words • Change communication style and uses: Less words and additional words **How does this component improve the KE design practice?** By improving this component, a new wording makes a tool more user-friendly and appropriate for an organisation, and wider or specific audiences.	**Design of material** **Activity:** Experts will look at visual communication and elements of the tool, and then suggest improvements on how the graphic design is presented to participants of an activity. **How?** Experts will evidence the innapropriate and restrict graphic elements of the tool (features, appearance, format, and images), and suggest improvements to the visual communication such as: • Different visual design • Additional captions / headings **How does this component improve the KE design practice?** By improving this component, a tool provides additional features to expand applications, and a more clear and friendly graphic communication and documentation, supporting and enhancing practitioners' engagement practice.	**(Enable) Contrary activity** **Activity:** Experts will look at how a tool encourages unexpected uses by participants, and then suggest improvements to the design in order to support different responses from participants. **How?** Experts will evidence the restrictions to unexpected uses and different applications, and suggest improvements to the flexibility such as: • Additional flexible features • Different formats • Editable content **How does this component improve the KE design practice?** By improving this component, a tool provides more appropriate and catchier captions and graphic communication, making a tool more adaptable to many situations and easier for individuals to assimilate the information in the tool.

How do practitioners improve tool within the design layer of practice?

Practitioners improve tools by providing more open and flexible design concepts that give KE designers more control over the engagement process and also flexibility in using and understanding tools. Improving tools through the design layer of practice involves extending features, providing more instructions, new ideas to address challenges in order to give more flexibility to practitioners.

How do practitioners improve tool within the facilitation layer of practice?

Practitioners improve tools by helping facilitators to design engagement approaches and providing indications of use and practical guidance to participants on how complete tools throughout a KE activity. Improving tools through the design layer of practice involves providing indications of uses for different audiences, practical guidance using a tool, additional features that are appropriate to a wider audience, and setting and sharing activities as a group.

How do practitioners improve tool within the application layer of practice?

Practitioners improve tools by tailoring them to suit their community needs and practice. Improving tools through the application layer of practice involves changing the visual and written communication and providing flexible features and formats in order to make them more appropriate to their organisation and communities they work with.