

Ideate

The Ideate stage is about being divergent and coming up with many diverse solutions and ideas that solve our social innovation problem statement.

You can gather ideas or solutions in a number of ways:

- Individually or working in small groups.
- Holding a formal idea generation session with 6 to 20 participants.
- Conducting a hack or large scale idea generation workshop (>20 participants).
- Crowdsourcing ideas from internal audiences (e.g. employees submit ideas through an idea submission platform or similar).
- Crowdsourcing ideas from external audiences (e.g. supporters, partners, beneficiaries submit ideas through an idea submission platform or similar).

Regardless of the method used to gather ideas, it can be helpful to push people's creative boundaries by using a number of tools to boost people's creativity. The following pages detail six tools that you can use to push people's thinking in different directions.

Be My Guest

Increase group creativity by bringing someone with a different perspective into your session. Use this tool in idea generation sessions where participants are used to working with each other.

Prior to your session reach out to people who could bring different or interesting perspectives to your problem at hand. These people can be subject matter experts, different team members, beneficiaries, partners, supporters, donors or contacts from tangential industries. They can be 'internal guests' (from within the agency) or 'external guests' (from outside the agency).

Once you have your guests at you session, introduce them to the group and explain why you thought they'd be a great person to invite.

What this tool will do

Bringing people with different perspectives into your idea generation is an engaging way to co-create solutions with your beneficiaries, donors, supporters, partners or key internal stakeholders. Co-creation not only yields amazing outputs but it also ensures early buy-in for potential social innovation solutions.

What this tool won't do

Although powerful, this tool does not ensure that stakeholder buy-in will last throughout the whole social innovation project. Through the Experiment stage, your idea may be iterated, hence buy-in may fade as the solution changes. To mitigate this risk, ensure you involve these key stakeholders in the Experiment stage too.

Mastermind

Tap into the power of the unconscious mind by sending your problem out to participants a week before your session. Use this tool when you have limited time for your session.

A week before your session, ask your participants to write down any ideas that solve the problem that come to them over the week and to bring them along to the session. This will not only leverage the group's unconscious mind but it also means there will be lots of ideas that solve your problem before you even begin your session.

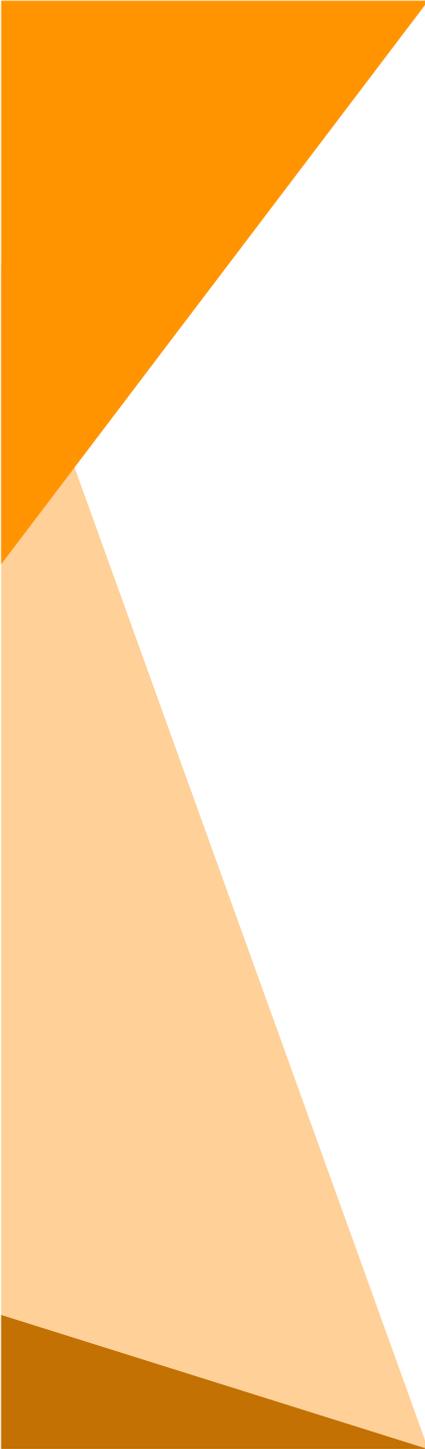
At the start of your session, ask people to bring out their notes where they have been capturing their ideas for the problem over the last week. Get people to share their ideas one-by-one around the table, capturing any good ideas in a template (see page 51 to 54) for template options.

What this tool will do

Mastermind will not only allow you to tap into people's powerful unconscious mind, but it ensures that you already have many ideas on the table before you've even started your idea generation session.

What this tool won't do

Despite the benefit of Mastermind getting people to focus on the problem at hand before the session, often the ideas captured are the more obvious or practical solutions and not the most innovative or creative. To mitigate this risk, use a combination of other Ideate tools for the remainder of your session to push people's creative boundaries.



Imagine If

To ensure that assumptions are not constraining people's creativity, make people think divergently about the problem by reversing their assumptions. Use this tool when participants hold lots of assumptions around how the problem should be solved.

Prior to the session, identify assumptions that you think participants might have in how the problem should be solved (i.e. what kinds of solutions will work best). Once you have your assumptions, turn them on their head by making them the literal opposite.

Then pop the words "Imagine if..." before the reversed assumption, and the words "What ideas could we come up with then?" after. Capture each reversed assumption on a separate piece of paper.

Case study - In 2017, a [class of Melbourne year seven students](#) crushed the assumption that all prosthetics should be manufactured by prosthetic companies. Instead they asked 'Imagine if we as students could help produce prosthetics. What ideas could we come up with then?' This led them to partnering with e-NABLE to produce 3D printed prosthetic for just \$50.

In your session, bring your reversed assumptions out and pop them into the middle of the table. Instruct your participants to take a reversed assumption each, and working solo, come up with ideas that solve the problem from the new reality that the reversed assumption creates. Once they've exhausted all ideas from one reversed assumption, they can move on to another one. Ask people to share their ideas one-by-one around the table, capturing any good ideas in a template (see page 51 to 54 for template options).

What this tool will do

This tool helps idea generation participants to break free of any real or perceived constraints/assumptions and push their creative boundaries. Its effectiveness is dependent on the quality of your pre-work/preparation, however if done right, it often yields highly creative outputs.

What this tool won't do

Imagine If is one of the more difficult tools to use and without proper instruction, can result in ideas that are off-topic being generated. When using this tool, make sure that you're constantly anchoring participants to the problem you're solving so that ideas being created are in scope.

Hot Off The Press

Boost the diversity of ideas by sourcing inspiration from short articles that are tangential to your problem at hand. Use this tool when you want to steer people's thinking strategically (e.g. towards the latest trends, technologies, service designs etc.)

Before the session, use Google to hunt for short one-page articles on topics that are loosely related to your problem or types of solutions you're after. Pop the content of these articles, including an image, into a Word document with there being one article per page. Source enough articles for there to be two to three per person in your session. Print these to bring to your session.

In the session, place the articles in a pile on the table. Instruct participants to select one article at random, read it, and then to draw connections between the article's content and the problem at hand to come up with ideas. Once they've exhausted all ideas from one article, they can move on to another. Get participants to share their ideas one-by-one around the table, capturing any good ideas in a template (see page 51 to 54 for template options).

Case study – More than 3 million children in Africa suffer from blindness caused by deficiencies in vitamin A. In Uganda alone, studies estimated that 28% of children are deficient in vitamin A and at risk of losing their sight. When the [International Food Policy Research Institute](#) tackled this issue, they approached it differently to how aid agencies had previously been combatting it. Instead of providing children with vitamins, the institute sought inspiration from the locally grown food market to develop a new strain of sweet potato, coined ‘the orange sweet potato’. This OSP contained between four and six times the vitamin A of normal sweet potatoes. Initial research in Uganda and Mozambique showed that in children aged 12 to 35 months, OSP consumption caused vitamin A deficiency to decrease from 50% to 12%. The institute has now scaled up their scheme to reach more than 225,000 households.

What this tool will do

Hot Off the Press will allow you to fill knowledge gaps or steer participant thinking in a certain direction quickly and easily. Participants will easily create many futuristic ideas that are leveraging the latest trends, technologies or research.

What this tool won't do

Although this tool will help your participants take advantage of the latest trends, technologies, and research, it will not tell you which ones will yield the best ideas. It is up to you to choose where to steer people's thinking. To mitigate this risk, you can crowdsource possible article topics by asking participants before the session to nominate a few that they think will be the most helpful for your problem at hand.

In Their Shoes

Increase the diversity of your group's ideas by getting everyone to solve the problem from someone else's point of view. Use this tool when you want people to think from a particular persona's perspective (e.g. a beneficiary's, well-known influencer's or partner's perspective).

Prior to the session, prepare cards of personalities including their name, a few key characteristics/attributes and a picture/photo. Personalities can include donors, supporters, beneficiaries, partners, stakeholders, well-known influencers, global brands/companies or demographic groups. Prepare enough cards for there to be at least one per person in your session. Print these to bring to your session.

In your session, stick all of your cards on the wall and ask your participants to choose one card each of a personality that is least like them. Give everyone a minute to get into the mindset of their personality, and then ask them to solve the problem from their personality's point of view (i.e. how would X solve this problem?). Ask people to share their ideas one-by-one around the table and capture any good ideas in a template (see page 51 to 54 for template options).

What this tool will do

This tool is a fun way to create ideas from many different perspectives. It can also be used to bring perspectives from hard-to-reach people/personas into the room, for example Daniel Flynn, Mark Zuckerberg or Ban Ki-moon.

What this tool won't do

Although you can use key stakeholder personas to bring their perspectives into the room, it is a sub-par replacement and true co-creation should always be aimed for in social innovation projects.

Crazy Eights

Rapidly generate many ideas by using a combination of time-boxing and solo work. Use this tool in idea generation sessions where you have limited time.

In your session, give each participant a sheet of A4 paper and ask them to fold it into 8 sections. Set a timer for eight minutes and ask each participant to work by themselves to sketch eight ideas that solve the problem at hand (one in each section of their piece of paper). When the timer goes off, ask everyone to stop sketching and to share their top three ideas one-by-one around the table and capture any good ideas in a template (see page 51 to 54 for template options).

What this tool will do

Crazy Eights is a fun way to very quickly generate dozens of ideas in your session. This is valuable as research has shown that when it comes to idea generation, you need quantity to get to the quality.

What this tool won't do

Crazy Eights allows for quick idea generation, however because it is not strategically steering people's thinking in a particular direction like some of the other tools do (e.g. Imagine If and Hot Off The Press), you may find that the ideas yielded here are not the most innovative or creative.

Idea Capturing Templates

In your session, you should ask people to capture ideas in a template to ensure that you're getting meaningful output and not half-baked thoughts. Use one of the following two templates to make sure you're capturing well-thought-through ideas:

Idea Tabloid

Ensure that you capture tangible ideas by using a newspaper-inspired Tabloid Template.

On an A4 piece of paper ask participants to draw up the template represented on this page, or bring printed versions to your session. Participants should capture every good idea created in the session.

<i>Title – Something that describes the idea in a nutshell</i>	
<i>Body – Dot points describing how the idea works in practice from the stakeholders point of view</i>	<i>Visual– An image or drawing to bring the idea to life</i>
	<i>Name</i> <i>Date</i> <i>Contact details</i> <i>Role / Relationship to us</i>

What this tool will do

This tool allows you to capture ideas in a tangible and fun way. Participants will be able to use this tool to quickly to capture the main elements underpinning the idea.

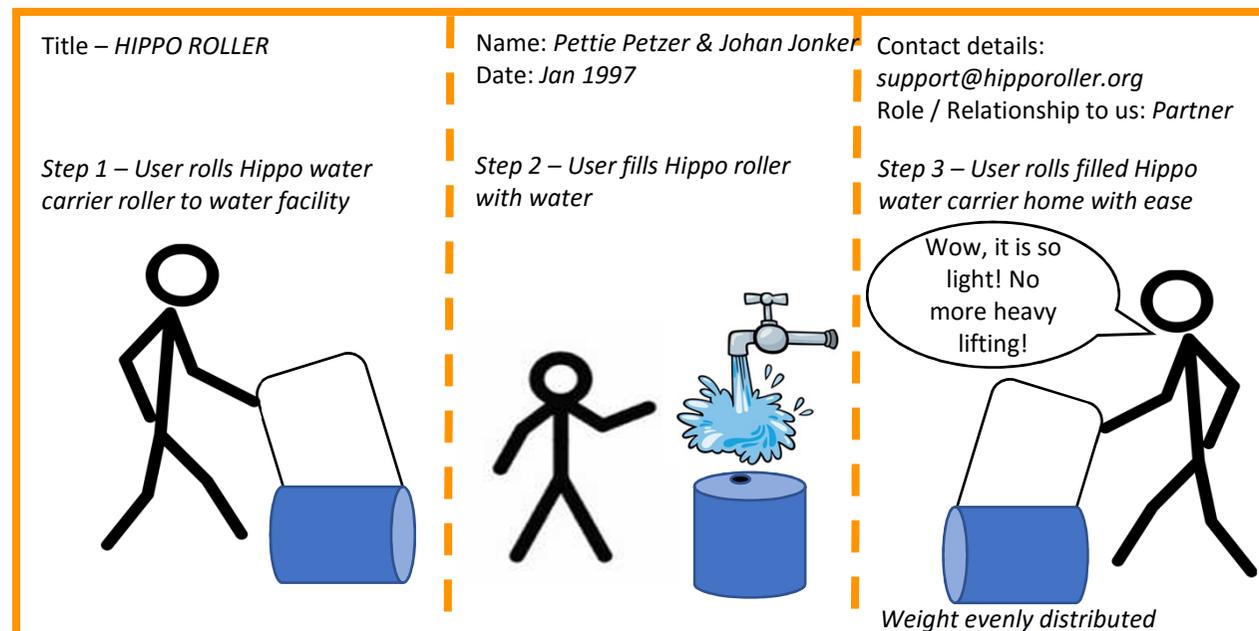
What this tool won't do

When using this tool, participants can get caught up making the title catchy and the image appealing, leaving little time to flesh out throw the idea works in practice. Hence, this tool can sometimes give a lack of clarity around the finer idea details.

Storyboards

Ensure that you capture tangible ideas by sketching out the stakeholder journey.

On an A3 piece of paper, ask participants to divide it into three sections as per the dotted lines below. This will now represent the three biggest stages of the idea's stakeholder's journey. Using sticky notes and sketches, describe in each section what your stakeholders sees as they interact with your social innovation idea. It should look like a movie and be self-explanatory. See below for an example storyboard.



Case study (above) - The [Hippo Roller](#) was created by two South African engineers Pettie Petzer and Johan Jonker. It was invented in response to the huge need to transport large volumes of water long distances in Africa. Often water transportation was the job of women and children, meaning that there was not only potential spinal cord injury risks, but they were also missing education and economic opportunities because of the long journeys. The Hippo Roller allows women and children to transport up to five times the amount of water than traditionally carried, and its cylindrical form allows them to do this with minimum weight to push (10kg as opposed to the traditional 20kg weight). The Hippo Roller has been distributed in over 20 countries and with 50,000 rollers sold, they have reached close to half a million people.

What this tool will do

Like, Idea Tabloid, this tool allows you to capture ideas in a tangible and fun way. However, where Idea Tabloids lack some detail, this tool ensures that the stakeholder journey is captured in full.

What this tool won't do

Although this tool allows all idea details to be captured robustly, it does so at a cost – it can be quite time consuming to use. If using this tool, ensure that you've scheduled an idea generation session that goes for 2 hours or more, otherwise you'll spend more time using the idea capturing template than actually coming up with ideas.

By the end of your session/s, you should have a number of ideas, all captured succinctly on a template. You now need to decide which idea to take forward to the next stage, Experiment.

To do this, gather all key project stakeholders into the room and:

1. Run through all of the ideas you're deciding between, holding up each template, talking to it and then sticking them one-by-one to the wall.
2. Then, give each person three post-it notes and ask them to place the post-it notes on the three ideas they think best solve the problem statement.
3. Count the post-it votes and see which idea has the greatest number. If there is a draw, remove all of the post-its from the ideas with the most votes. Place these ideas separate from the rest of the display and repeat step 2, asking people to cast only 1 vote for the idea that they think best solves the challenge.

What this tool will do

This decision-making tool will allow you to make a complex group decision within a couple of minutes. It enables each and every person to contribute to the decision in a way that minimised seniority bias.

What this tool won't do

Using this tool will not ensure senior leader or stakeholder buy-in as although they will cast votes, the decision ultimately goes with the majority. To balance this, you can shortlist the top 2 to 3 voted ideas and allow senior stakeholders to make the ultimate decision from these.