CitiObs

CitiObs - ENHANCING CITIZEN OBSERVATORIES FOR HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT, AND INCLUSIVE CITIES

DELIVERABLE 1.4

"Citizen-led Action" Toolkit

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Abstract:	This document introduces the Citizen-led Action Toolkit, and the process followed for its creation. The Citizen-led Action Toolkit aims to provide tools to support citizens and communities within Citizen Observatories that are motivated to take action in the context of environmental protection. It provides a selection of co-creation tools to help devise, organise, and deliver a citizen-led action, or series of actions, that can make an impact and bring about positive change.		

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CITIOBS

CitiObs is a four-year project funded under Horizon Europe by the European Commission. CitiObs will consolidate and apply tools and practice-based knowledge for co-creating data, knowledge and local action via Citizen Observatories (COs): these tools will enhance existing and new citizen observatories to engage people from a diverse range of communities, add value to environmental observations in the urban context, increase and validate citizen observations of the urban environment as part of the existing in-situ Earth Observation systems, co-create inclusive local actions for sustainability and ensure that CO data contributes to research and policy development towards the objectives of the European Green Deal. To ensure broad use, the CitiObs tools and approaches will be developed in co-creation with COs in 5 Frontrunner cities, finetuned with 30 Implementer cities and showcased to 50 Fellow cities.

CitiObs will support citizen observatories in distinct cities to create/enhance/or scale up inclusive and diverse citizen observatories, fostering in particular an active role of citizens in the observation of the urban environment using low-cost sensor technologies and wearables, with a particular focus on air quality and related environmental measures. CitiObs will formalise, valorise and legitimise the role of citizen observations.

The CitiObs methodology of using a large-scale demonstration, co-design and coaching approaches with CO stakeholders (citizens, scientists, policy/decision makers) in 5+30+50 cities in Europe explicitly builds on the Responsible Research & Innovation (RRI) dimensions as founding principles. Ethics consideration will be addressed consistently across all Work Packages.

- WP1. Social dimensions of Citizen Observatories for transition governance

- WP2. Tools, Technologies, and Data Services for Citizen Observatories

- WP3. Co-creation of data and actions for healthy, sustainable and resilient cities with Citizen Observatories

- WP4. Impact creation, Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation

- WP5. Project management

- WP6. Ethics

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GLOSSARY

Term	Definition	Reference
Citizen Observatory (CO)	A Citizen Observatory (CO) is a community-based environmental monitoring and information system that invites individuals to share observations, typically via mobile phone or the web. There are several definitions, but the main commonalities are the participation of citizens in environmental monitoring and governance, the bi-directional flow of data and information, the enhancement of earth observation systems with citizen-generated observations 'in situ', and the use of modern mobile and web technologies to do so. (WeObserve Cookbook)	We Observe Glossary
Creative practitioner	A 'creative practitioner' (in this document often referred as simply 'creative') is an individual working as an artist. The definition of an 'artist' includes visual, performing, literature or media artists.	Embedded Artist Toolkit
Cultural organisation	A 'cultural organisation' is defined as any organisation, venue, office, studio, festival or educational institution operating in the arts and cultural sector. This includes, but is not limited to, organisations within the performing arts, fine arts, music, literature, and film and TV.	Embedded Artist Toolkit

New European Bauhaus (NEB)	A European Commission initiative aiming to foster a sustainable, inclusive, and beautiful future by connecting design, sustainability, accessibility, affordability, and investment, and serving as a set of values that the toolkit aligns with.	New European Bauhaus

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background and purpose of the document

CitiObs is a four-year project funded under Horizon Europe by the European Commission. CitiObs aims to consolidate and apply tools and practice-based knowledge for co-creating data, knowledge and local action via Citizen Observatories (COs). The main purpose of these tools is to enhance existing and new COs to engage citizens and marginalised communities, add value to environmental observations in the urban context, increase and validate citizen observations of the urban environment as part of the existing in-situ Earth Observation systems, co-create inclusive local actions for sustainability and ensure that CO data contributes to research and policy development towards the objectives of the European Green Deal. To ensure broad use, the CitiObs tools and approaches will be developed in co-creation with COs in 5 Frontrunner cities, fine-tuned with 30 Implementer cases and showcased to 50 Fellow cities.

CitiObs aims to support COs in distinct cities to create/enhance/or scale up inclusive and diverse COs, fostering an active role of citizens in the observation of the urban environment using low-cost sensor technologies and wearables, with a particular focus on air quality and related environmental measures. CitiObs will formalise, valorise and legitimise the role of citizen observations.

WP1 *Social dimensions of COs for transition governance* provides the basis for consolidating, testing and refining the tools, approaches and guidance that will strengthen the social dimensions of COs. As part of this work, existing approaches are being consolidated for inclusive (multi-stakeholder) engagement to ensure the diverse and representative inclusion of citizens across the dimensions of gender, sociocultural origin, religious affiliation, literacy levels, social status and age, and to engage women, disabled groups and ethnic minorities in particular, in the activities of the COs (from co-creation of monitoring tasks, to data-gathering and co-design of local actions & social innovations).

A first iteration of this toolkit was developed during the first year of the project (August 2023), which was made available for real-world tests with *the CitiObs Frontrunner Cases (FRCs).* Cases were provided with detailed mentoring by CitiObs teams, which supported the implementation of citizen-led actions, and to collect feedback that then helped improve its content and presentation. One of the most salient proposals within the first version of the toolkit was the interaction between COs and the creative sector for the co-creation of citizen-led actions, which was tested with the

Barcelona and the Netherlands FRCs. A second iteration of the toolkit was done in 2025 after the mentoring process with these cases, which was made available in an online website.

1.2   Purpose of the toolkit

This toolkit aims to provide tools that primarily support **citizen communities within COs that are motivated to take action in the context of environmental protection**. To do so, it provides a selection of co-creation tools to help **citizens devise, organise, and deliver an action, or series of actions, that can make an impact and bring about positive change.** The co-creation methodologies and envisioned actions present a **strong alignment with the *New European Bauhaus* (NEB)** enriching and inclusive spirit[1], and it proposes collaborations between COs and creatives and artists communities and individuals to bring these actions further.

1.3   Structure of the document

This document is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the methodology followed to create this toolkit, drawing from previous works and identifying relevant tools, resources and guidelines. Section 3 presents the initial version of the *Citizen-led Action toolkit* and Section 4 concludes with a reflection on the production process as well as implications for subsequent CitiObs activities.

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[1] New European Bauhaus: https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/index_en

METHODOLOGY

The development of the Citizen-led Action Toolkit followed an action research methodology led by Fab Lab Barcelona[i]. This approach positioned research and design as iterative and intertwined processes, enabling learning through doing and reflection in collaboration with the COs of CitiObs. Action research was operationalised through design research methods such as participatory input collection, co-design workshops, and in situ observations conducted during the implementation of tools within the COs. These processes collectively shaped the analytical framework that guided the toolkit's structure and content.

2.1 Participatory input collection

The work for the preparation of this initial version of the *Citizen-led Action Toolkit* started by working collaboratively with other CitiObs project partners. Task 1.4 started in M1 (January 2023), during the kick-off plenary meeting in Oslo, where consortium members were presented with the toolkit main goals and were requested to provide input in order to align their diverse experience and background with that of the task leaders. Being a toolkit that seeks to consolidate a bottom-up, yet diverse approach for the co-creation of citizen-led actions, during a collective working session, all project partners were asked to share their own views and experience in the topic of *citizen-led action*, especially sharing examples of actions that they have been part of or been aware of, with the particular focus of environmental protection. A total of 15 examples were collected (see Table 1). A living document was also prepared for input for the project members to include other examples during the project. The examples collected show the wide diversity of *actions* (although not necessarily *citizen-led*), CO types, and contexts in which these actions took place. This initial example recollection helped in providing special focus on the importance of the *citizen-led* aspect, while it also highlights the need to embrace the diversity of these actions, as inherently expected to derive from the wide variety of COs and contexts.

Table 1. (Creative) Action examples collected during Oslo Kick off meeting workshop

Type	Name	Description	Project and link
Campaign	The Keep Sweden Tidy Foundation	A non-profit organization that promotes recycling and	Hall Sverige Rent https://hsr.se/

		combats litter through public awareness campaigns and environmental education.	
Dialogue	Leiden 2022 - European City of Science	In the Plekberaad of Leiden 2022, the young project team organises a dialogue about the future of Leiden	Ministry of the Future https://leiden2022.nl/newsroom/plekberaad-leidenaren-over-de-toekomst
Collective action	Community based mosaic	Participants made small pieces that contributed collectively to an overall mosaic design. Connected to the collective effort was a crowdfunding campaign and workshops. The final product was recognized by the mayor	-
Event	Co-Mobility	Mimes guiding traffic	https://comobility.edu.pl/en/about-the-project/
Event	Urban Heat embodiment	Dance and poetry recital in Warsaw and Madrid	-
Experience	Pollution Pods	Participation in the pollution pods so that people can smell pollution	https://www.climart.info/pollutionpods
Action	Gronland streets	The streets are closed for one day (17 MAY)	-
Action	na	Large scale graffiti - Oslo SPORVEIER vs. graffiti Community	-
Art Piece	iFLINK	Production of an art sculpture for visualizing air	IFLINK https://iflink.nilu.no/en/home/

		pollution with colours in Dranmen	
Collective action	Green Kayak Copenhagen	Take garbage from the canals	https://www.greenkayak.org/about-us/
Competition	Youth4Rine	Photo competition to highlight and map flood risk, targeting youth in the Rhine Basic	Youth4Rine https://www.youthfortherhine.org/
Venue	De WAR in Amersfoort	A place for arts, science and innovation. They organize a grassroots conference in citizen science (Koppelting)	https://www.dewar.nl/
Crafts	Ser-vies	Ceramics with glaze made with particulate matter	https://ser-vies.nl
Reference	Saint George on a Bike	AI created an interpretation of Saint George on a Bike	https://saintgeorgeonabike.eu

2.2 Literature and Toolkit Review

A literature review of previous works was conducted with supporting input from Work Package 1 (WP1) partners. This review was conducted to define the citizen-led action co-creation and implementation processes and tools, and to review other sources in order to draft how the collaboration with creative networks and individuals will take place. Therefore, this review process draws from three very distinct sources (detailed in Annex 1):

- Projects that worked in the field of creation, analysis, and support of COs
- Projects and experience on co-creation processes (some of which overlap with the previous ones)
- Resources, such as toolkits and methodologies, which involve creatives and creative practices to support environmental protection initiatives

The review followed a systematic approach, sources were first identified through project documentation and partner expertise during the participatory input collection, based on relevance to citizen-led action, methodological similarity to CitiObs (e.g. co-creation and participatory design), and availability of open-access outputs. Selected resources were then categorised according to their thematic focus and type (project report, toolkit, methodology), and analysed using a comparative framework. This framework examined each source's purpose, process design, participant roles, and transferable elements for adaptation within CitiObs. Key insights were documented in a shared matrix in Miro, allowing partners to cross-reference findings and identify methodological gaps or opportunities for integration.

Key references that were identified and analysed came from previous EU funded projects such as the Ground Truth 2.0[2] Co-design Methodology and Impact Reports [1.], the WeObserve[3] Cookbook, toolkit, and the GROW Observatory[4] project results [4.]. The clear connection to the CitiObs theme (e.g. by having a strong citizen science focus, or for having similar methodologies such as co-creation at their cores) and the fact that one or multiple consortium partners were part of those studies, made these references a clear source of information and experience. In other words, this toolkit builds upon the results made available by previous research projects, from which it draws knowledge and lessons learned, but it also has direct access to that knowledge as some CitiObs members played an active role in the creation of those materials.

Similarly, in terms of co-creation references and tools, key references were identified in the SISCODE[5] [5. And 6.] and CENTRINNO[6] toolkits [7.], as well as the Ground Truth 2.0, WeObserve, Making Sense and DSI Scale[7] projects, although many other toolkits are used and are referenced throughout this document. Their work with communities and their diverse approach serves as inspiration for the creation of the *Citizen-led Action toolkit*.

Finally, for understanding how the involvement of creatives communities, such as artists, but also potentially other local (maker)spaces, a review was conducted on various sources, primarily the

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[2] Ground Truth 2.0 Project Website: https://gt20.eu/

[3] WeObserve Project Website: https://www.weobserve.eu/

[4] Grow Observatory Project Website: https://growobservatory.org/

[5] SISCODE Project Website: https://siscodeproject.eu/

[6] Centrinno Project Website: https://centrinno.eu/

[7] DSI Scale Project Website: https://dsi4eu.github.io/

culture/SHIFT methodology [17.], the Cultural Adaptations toolkit for Embedded Artists Projects [29.] and The Library of Creative Sustainability [8.]. These toolkits and materials were reviewed for refining how the involvement of creatives would be shaped under the CitiObs context, and how the *Distributed Design Platform* can support these collaborations.

2.3   Collaborative Design of the Toolkit Structure

In the early stages of the toolkit writing, alongside with this literature review, various iterations of the outline and structure of the toolkit were done in collaboration with WP1 members. A first version was drafted based on common items identified from toolkits such as the Making Sense, SISCODE and CENTRINNO toolkits. Building on this first draft, several rounds of refinement were conducted with the support of other WP1 partners, resulting in the consolidated structure presented in Table 2. These rounds of refinement included the collection of feedback on the toolkit's structure, content, and language during the plenary meeting held in Barcelona, during June 2023 (Figure 1), as well as the creation of a first draft in summer of 2023, aligned with the timing for other WP1 deliverables (D1.1 and D1.2). An internal review of the complete first draft was conducted by selected WP1 reviewers and their feedback was incorporated, resulting in several key improvements. The final structure is organised into five main areas, covering key areas of the process: (1) Let's begin, (2) Working with creatives, (3) Planning for impact, (4) Reflection of citizen-led actions and involvement of creatives throughout the processes, and a selection of examples in a final (5) Need inspiration? section. The design of the toolkit seeks to guide the reader through a logical sequence of steps while allowing them to freely navigate to sections most relevant to their needs. This first version of the Citizen-led Action Toolkit served as a baseline to be tested and iterated throughout the project timeline. Developing an initial version at an early stage allowed the task leads to better understand the needs of potential users, including both the Frontrunner and Alliance cases — the former being established COs already active within CitiObs, and the latter newly engaged ones joining to expand the project's reach and impact across Europe. Through their complementary perspectives, these groups provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by both mature and emerging COs. Their feedback helps the shaping the toolkit and how it responds to diverse levels of experience, supporting replication, adaptation, and growth of citizen and community-led environmental action in different contexts.

Table 2. Toolkit Draft Version baseline structure and status 2023

Let's begin	Includes a set of (co-creation) tools that help navigate the initial steps in terms of co-creation, driving the energy of the community, bringing together their ideas, defining objectives for the action and mapping of resources.
Working with creatives	Tailor made approaches for finding, engaging and working with creatives, leveraging the Distributed Design Platform.
Planning for impact	Including planning tools, advice and guidelines that help keep track of important aspects during the citizen-led action implementation.
Reflection	A set of tools that help reflect on the process followed by the community, identify future steps and points to improve.
Action Gallery	Which includes a compilation of curated citizen-led action experiences, and that serves as a living repository for anyone looking for inspiration for their actions

Figure 1. Participants provide feedback for the Citizen-led action toolkit in Barcelona's meeting, June 2023

2.4   Testing and Mentoring

Throughout 2024, the toolkit was actively tested to assess its usability, readability, and suitability across different contexts represented by the CitiObs cases. In addition, along with other CitiObs toolkits, the Citizen-led action toolkit was transferred to an online website to make it available in a web format, available at action.toolkit.citiobs.eu. The toolkit uses an open source front-end generator (Gitbook), and is stored in the project's GitHub repository[8]. Gitbook was selected as a platform due to its collaborative features, as well as more advanced PDF exports and simple management (instead of creating a dedicated website). To ensure feedback could be collected systematically, several feedback mechanisms were put in place. These included follow-up emails or meetings to better understand how the cases interacted with the toolkit, direct participation in the implementation of tools at case sites, online webinars to present the toolkit and gather real-time feedback, GitHub issues, feedback collection via Gitbook metrics and comments, and structured documentation of observations. All feedback collected through these mechanisms, whether direct or indirect, was recorded and systematised in a shared tracking document.

Feedback collection

Notes from CitiObs teams	Feedback from FRC	Next steps for next iteration	Links
	FRC BCN: Possibly there is a need to add a tool for faciliators of the session. To ensure that during a brainstorming sessiong everyones voice can be heard (if		
Brainwriting			
Oscar: Too generic, adapt to be more focused on environemtnal		Suggestion from Oscar: Make tool called "jam sessions"	
Problem Definition Framework			
Oscar: I am not sure if this should be left here		Review the tool. Either adapt or add new one	

Notes from CitiObs teams	Feedback from FRC	Steps for implementation	Links
Generally speaking I think th Nesta toolkit has some other tools that we could use and adapt for this section: https://media.nesta.org.uk/docu	FRC BCN: There is a level of "inclusivity" when choosing the "type of action". Actions that are more related to tech (i.e. AI) could actively scare of some		
Brainwriting			
	FRC Barcelona used a "collective ideation" canvas for	Potentially adapt for CitiObs context with insights from FRC	https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVK

Figure 2. Feedback collection document - example screenshot, August 2024

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[8] Citizen-led action toolkit repository: https://github.com/CitiObs/citizen-led-action-toolkit

In 2024, a first co-creation session was held with the Barcelona FRC to implement citizen-led actions in the context of the CO. This session led to the first implementation of the toolkit through a series of workshops where toolkit resources were tested together with the CO members, along with local creatives in Barcelona. In addition, two online workshops were conducted with CitiObs Frontrunner and Alliance cases throughout 2025 (July and October) to share the toolkit with the practitioners and to exemplify how to use a selection of tools, such as the Open Calls for creatives and the Social Media campaigns. These workshops were planned as practical exercises in which the cases were clustered based on interest and used the tools in the toolkit together. Examples of the results of the work during the workshop is shown in Figure 3.
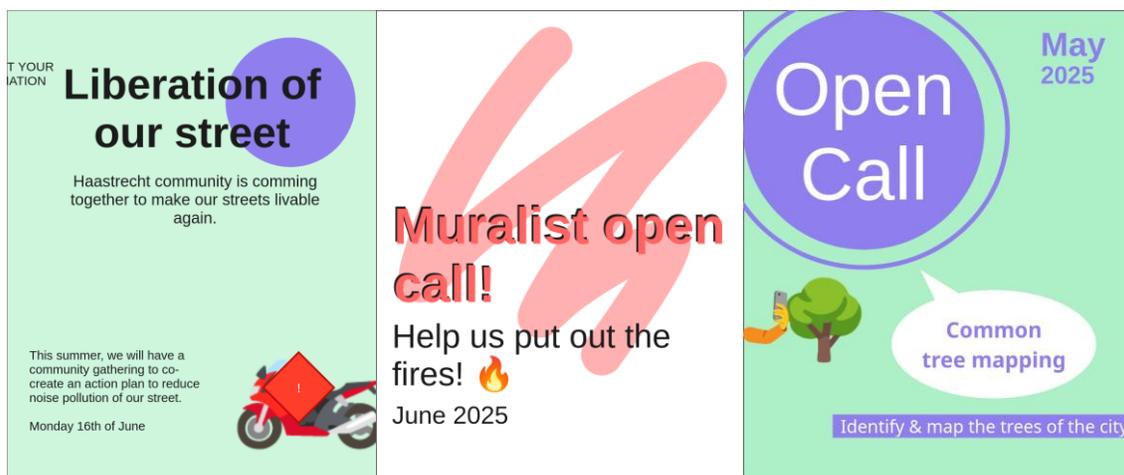
Figure 3. Visits and visitors for the online toolkit, 2025

The session in April 2025 was structured in three parts: the first provided an overview of creative collaborations for community and citizen-led actions; the second offered a practical, interactive session on the toolkit's "Working with Creatives" section. Participants learned how to identify and engage with creative or artistic organisations and communities. Group exercises enabled peer learning and sharing of experience. The third part of the webinar facilitated an open space for FRCs and ACs to exchange insights, questions, and ideas for future collaboration. The Webinar is available on the CitiObs YouTube channel[9].

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[9] Community-led Creative Action Workshop: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9W22Z5j9iNI

2.4.1. Case specific mentoring

Mentoring for FRC Barcelona specifically focused on supporting the local CO in collaborating with creatives to develop their citizen-led action. This mentorship, which took place between May and November 2024, involved identifying useful tools through ongoing (online and in-person) meetings and included launching an open call for creatives via the Distributed Design Platform social media. The FRC was guided in onboarding creatives and followed the CO through several stages, from ideation to prototyping and implementation. Continuous contact was maintained to address emerging needs, alleviate potential pressure points, and collect feedback on the tools used. A second round of mentoring helped FRC Barcelona identify creative reflection tools from the toolkit, designed to facilitate the conclusion of its first citizen-led action. The case is captured as part of the Citizen-led Action toolkit in the "Need Inspiration" section[10].

Figure 4. FRC Citizen-led Action co-creation session in Barcelona, Credits: Manuela Reyes

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[10] Need inspiration section in the Citizen-led action toolkit: https://action.toolkit.citiobs.eu/need-inspiration/

The Netherlands Case, similar to the Barcelona Case, was accompanied by continuous mentoring. The Netherlands Case encompasses both the Frontrunner Case in Rotterdam and the Alliance Cases in Haastrecht and Eindhoven. Mentoring activities took place between March and October 2025, combining online sessions and guided exercises aimed at supporting the case in identifying the objectives of its Citizen-led Action. With the support of RIVM, the case continues to explore (as of the submission date of this delivert) how continuously collected data, when combined with CitiObs tools and a creative approach, can help reduce noise around streets passing through residential neighborhoods. Through this first implementation in Haastrecht, best practices can be identified and applied in other locations across the Netherlands, such as Rotterdam and Eindhoven.

A key component of the mentoring process involved a "skills, resources, and tools mapping" exercise, designed to identify gaps within the implementation teams and articulate the forms of expertise required for each site. To address these skill gaps, an open call was issued through the Distributed Design Platform, seeking a local artist to collaborate with the Haastrecht team. The open call was launched in June 2025. The selected artist, appointed in July, has since joined the collaborative online ideation and planning sessions with the case representatives. The artist's role is to contribute to the ideation and realisation of a science–art installation, fostering dialogue between creative practice, environmental observation, and community engagement. Furthermore, a collaboration is being established with a local makerspace, which will provide access to fabrication facilities for the implementation of the installation and offer practical making skills to support the case.

2.5   Feedback Collection and Evaluation

Feedback was gathered on three levels. First, at the level of the overall structure, focusing on its coherence and navigation. Second, at the level of individual tools, to assess their usability in different contexts and identify gaps where new tools might be needed. Finally, at the level of general language and accessibility, ensuring that the toolkit as a whole could be clearly understood by different audiences.

2.5.1 Evaluation criteria

To guide the feedback collection and analysis, several evaluation criteria were defined to assess the toolkit's quality and relevance across contexts. Usability focused on how easily users could apply the tools in real settings, including the clarity of instructions and adaptability to different project scales. Inclusivity evaluated whether the language, examples, and proposed processes were accessible and relevant to diverse participants, including those with varying levels of experience in design or citizen science. Adoption examined the extent to which the toolkit could be integrated into ongoing Citizen Observatory practices, assessing both the perceived usefulness and the likelihood of continued use. Finally, replicability considered whether the tools and methodologies could be adapted or transferred to new contexts without requiring significant external support.

2.5.2 Highlighted feedback

Overall, the structure of the toolkit was well received. However, several users reported that the length of the document could feel overwhelming. Some expressed uncertainty about where to begin or how to navigate the content effectively.

Three key insights were identified regarding the tools themselves:

1) **Adaptation for citizen science contexts:** Many of the tools included in the toolkit are widely used in design, creative practices, or other disciplines. However, some had not previously been applied in citizen science. Given the novel approach of this project, a recurring suggestion was to adapt these tools to better fit the specific context of citizen science. This could be achieved by adjusting the wording or by including practical examples demonstrating their use in relevant settings.

2) **Refinements to communication tools:** Tools related to communication and outreach were tested extensively by the Frontrunner case in Barcelona. While these tests provided valuable insights, much of the feedback came from the perspective of those receiving communication requests rather than the users creating them. For example, the Barcelona case used a form (Typeform) to collect information for dissemination through institutional social media channels. However, some submissions contained incomplete or unclear information, missing details such as image credits or logos. In response, the form

descriptions were revised to improve clarity and ensure users could provide complete, relevant information.

3) **Identification of missing tools:** Gaps were identified where additional tools could better support COs. These included templates for outreach emails to creatives and practical Social Media communication templates with step-by-step guidance. This need was particularly evident as many COs had limited prior experience working with creatives and expressed challenges in creating visually appealing content to attract their engagement. Participants also highlighted that communication remains a significant barrier, particularly when seeking to reach broader audiences.

Throughout the 18-month implementation process of the toolkit, the mentoring of the CitiObs cases, through webinars, and workshops, all collected feedback was reviewed and prioritised (Table 3). This process informed an action plan that guided the development of the next iteration of the toolkit.

Table 3. Simplified action plan for feedback integration, 2025

Language accessibility	High priority
Overall length of the toolkit	High priority
Userfriendlyness	High priority
Update tools for citizen science context	Medium priority
Update tools with feedback of users	Medium priority
Add tools used by cases that were part of the Creative action process, but from external sources	Low priority
Adding of new tools based on identified gaps	Low priority

The first step in this phase of work focused on improving the clarity and accessibility of the toolkit. Efforts were made to simplify the language, refine the structure, and enhance navigation for users. A multilingual team at IAAC reviewed the entire toolkit, revising titles and texts while introducing concise bullet points to support faster navigation. In parallel, visual materials were developed for each section to create a more engaging and user-friendly experience. During this process, the overall length of the texts was reduced, with the aim of making the content more direct, clear, and easier to understand.

In addition, a series of illustrations and photos were created and collected to improve the userfriendliness of the content, adding an additional layer that could serve to engage with the creative collective as well. An example of these illustrations is shown in Figure 5.
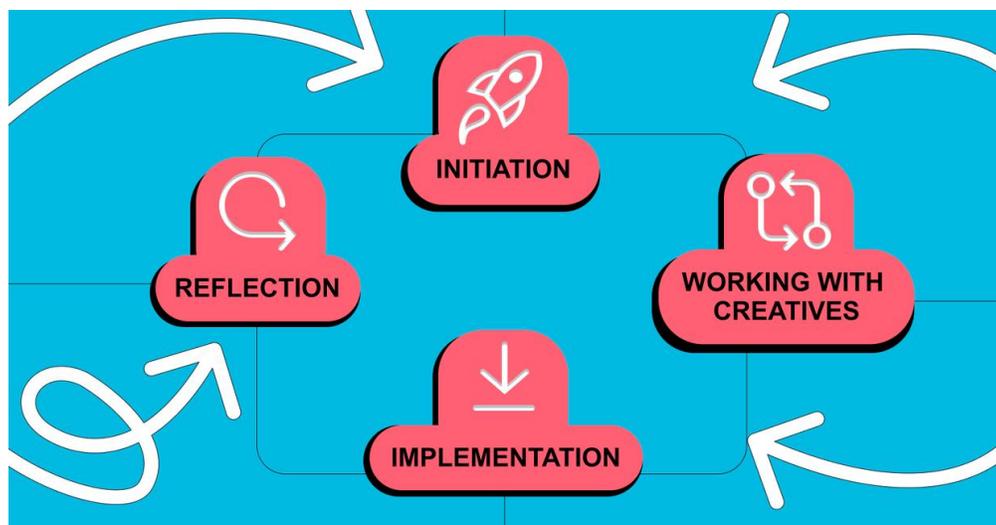
Figure 5. Example illustration for revisited toolkit

2.6 Toolkit metrics

In terms of traffic, the online citizen-led action toolkit[11] received a total of 2638 visits (out of which 1848 were not categorised as bots) in the 2025 period (January to October), mostly from desktop devices. European countries with larger amounts of visits were Spain (1103 visits from 95 visitors), the Netherlands (175 visits and 20 visitors), Norway (133 visits and 18 visitors) and Greece (91 visits and 15 visitors), those being countries were CitiObs FRC and Alliance Cases were active. Figure 6 shows the distribution of visits (events) and visitors in 2025. The visits coincided with the workshops with Front runner cases, and presentations of the toolkit in online events

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[11] Online site: https://action.toolkit.citiobs.eu

Figure 6. Visits and visitors for the online toolkit, 2025

In the same period, the toolkit most visited pages, besides the welcome page, were the "Working with creatives" with a total of 137 visits from distinct 57 visitors, along with the inspirational page with 112 visits from 83 different visitors. No feedback was provided on the pages themselves through the mechanism provided by Gitbook. Usage of the search feature was not relevant, as only few interactions were recorded, while the "Ask AI" feature did not receive any relevant interaction.

CITIZEN-LED ACTION TOOLKIT

This section introduces the Citizen-led action toolkit. As mentioned in previous sections, the toolkit material is available in a dedicated website[12]. The following sections are a static version of the toolkit, which will be iterated in terms of content beyond this deliverable via online edits.

Introduction

This toolkit aims to provide tools to support **citizens and communities within COs that are motivated to take action in the context of environmental protection**. In order to do so, it provides a selection of co-creation tools to help **devise, organise, and deliver a citizen-led action, or series of actions, that can make an impact and bring about positive change.**

The main purpose of the *Citizen-led action toolkit* is to provide **tools for co-creating diverse and collaborative citizen-led actions within COs** that are by no means restricted to a generic definition. It also aims to establish links with the *New European Bauhaus* principles by providing tools that are aligned with its enriching and inclusive spirit. Keeping this in mind, this toolkit also provides resources which can help to foster relationships between COs and other communities in the local context, especially creatives, artists, local (maker)spaces and the cultural communities in the areas where the COs are based. This is brought about by providing tools and facilitating these connections through the *Distributed Design Platform*[13]. The *Distributed Design Platform* is a networking hub, with an established member base of different European-based cultural and creative institutions, that connects makers, designers, and creatives. The annual programming of the *Platform* offers capacity building, networking, knowledge sharing activities and high-quality editorial content.

Focus on Citizen-led Action

This toolkit highlights the importance of these actions being primarily *citizen and community led*, and it provides tools for these initiatives to have an impact in their local context without having to rely on external processes normally led by other stakeholders in the COs. This approach builds

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[12] Citizen-led action toolkit site: https://action.toolkit.citiobs.eu

[13] Distributed Design Platform: https://distributeddesign.eu

upon the *Ground Truth 2.0 (GT2.0) Co-design methodology,* and the results from its *Demonstration Cases*.

In addition, this toolkit acknowledges the diversity of COs, both in their variety of forms and processes, and, while keeping a focus on citizen communities within those COs, it provides co-creation tools that can result in widely different actions, including artistic interventions and displays, protests, public forums and presentations, among many others. No matter the final shape and form of these actions, or whether they target change around space usage, increased environmental protection or visibility of a problem that concerns the community, this toolkit's main focus are the citizens involved in the participatory processes taking place in the COs.

Connection with creative initiatives and networks

Keeping that above-mentioned strong citizen-led focus in mind, this toolkit also provides resources which can help foster relationships between COs and other communities in their local context, especially creatives, artists, local (maker)spaces and the cultural communities in the areas where the COs are based. The main goal is to promote the collaboration of these diverse communities in the co-creation and implementation of the citizen-led actions, and the potential enhancement, impact and broader outreach of the results. This is brought about at two levels: firstly, by providing tailored guidance for engaging with creatives and facilitating the connections with the creative sector in general, and secondly, by leveraging on existing networks such as the Distributed Design Platform[14] (led by Fab Lab Barcelona | IAAC). Through this network, the Citizen-led Action Toolkit aims to make use of already existing resources to create opportunities for cross-fertilisation between the initiatives while providing a strong link with the New European Bauhaus, as the Distributed Design Platform is an official partner of the initiative[15] and its values are strongly aligned with those of the NEB[16].

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[14] Distributed Design Platform: https://distributeddesign.eu

[15] New European Bauhaus Partners: https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/about/official-partners_en

[16] New European Bauhaus About Page: https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/about/about-initiative_en

Welcome banner. Credits: Manuela Reyes & Janina Schroeter

3.1 Welcome

Welcome to the *CitiObs Community-led Action Toolkit*! This resource is for citizen communities within COs who are motivated to take action in environmental protection. It's packed with easy-to-use tools to help your group come up with ideas, plan, and carry out your own projects – big or small – that can actually make a difference and lead to positive change.

Throughout this toolkit, you'll see the terms *"Citizen-led"* and *"Community-led"* used interchangeably. This is intentional. We recognise that meaningful action can start in many ways, sometimes from a motivated individual, and other times from a collective effort. *"Citizen-led"* highlights personal initiative and responsibility, while *"Community-led"* emphasises collaboration and shared ownership. Both are valid pathways to impact, and this toolkit is designed to support both ends of that spectrum. From solo changemakers to organised community groups.

Want to get started? Keep reading!

3.1.1 Don't know how to take action? You are in the right place.

If you want to take action but you don't know how, this toolkit is designed to help you. It provides a selection of co-creation tools to help you devise/create, organise, and deliver actions that can make a positive change, allowing you to go beyond planning, sensing, and awareness towards concrete action.

Think of this as a collection of helpful areas divided into 6 sections – Let's begin, Working with creatives, Implementation, Reflection, and Need inspiration, which you can explore in any order that suits your needs. You can use it by simply browsing through the different sections that interest you most, kind of like choosing what you need when you need it.
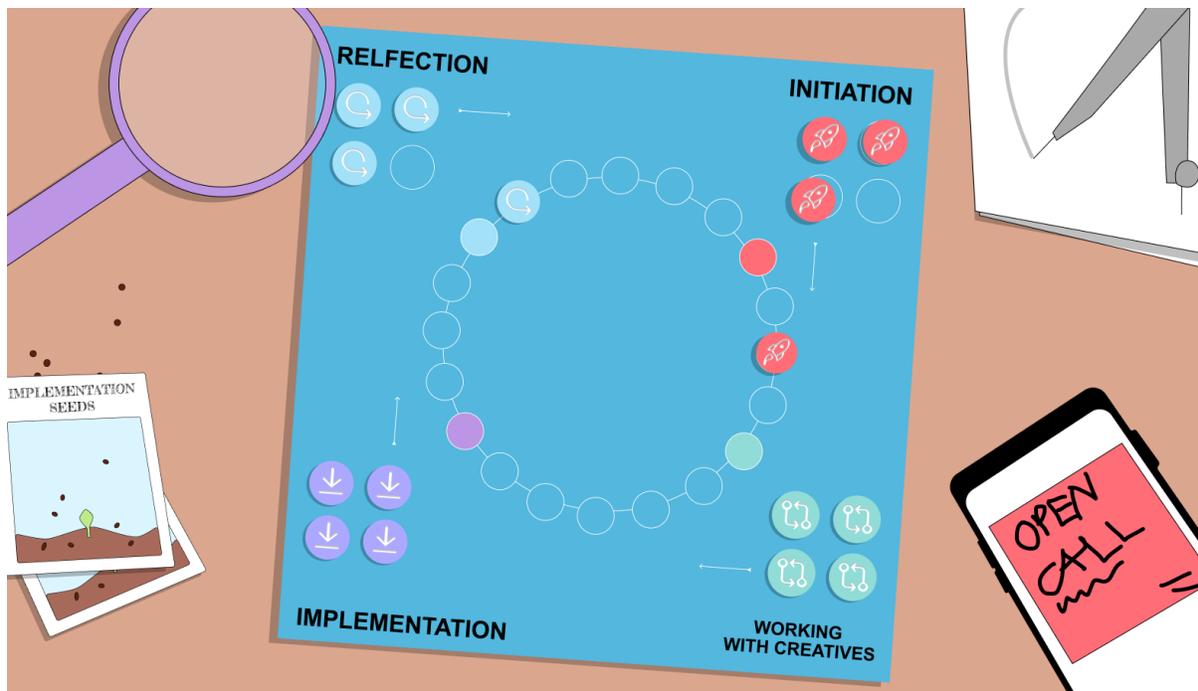
Graphic Credits: Janina Schroeter

This toolkit sits **at the intersection of creativity and community-driven initiatives**, showing how collaborating with creatives adds value to your projects by bringing innovative and engaging approaches. It is built on an important set of values of being open, sharing and making sure everyone feels included, helping you feel empowered to make change, working together creatively to go beyond functionality, and aiming to improve our environment through regenerative making and design principles.

We've kept things simple and action-oriented. In this Toolkit, you will find:

- **A step-by-step process** for planning and launching a community-led creative project
- **Real examples** of how communities have worked with creatives to drive change
- **Tools & templates** to help you get started right away
- **Tips** on finding and collaborating with creatives—even if you've never worked with one before

By providing guidance on finding and involving creatives, particularly through connections like the Distributed Design Platform, this resource aims to nurture collaborations that enhance the impact and reach of your community-led actions. Those special tips for working with artists and other creative people will make your actions become more impactful.

3.1.2 Why a toolkit?

This toolkit aims **to empower you and your community to move beyond just awareness and planning towards concrete actions that lead to positive environmental change**. Keeping this in mind, this toolkit also provides resources which can help to foster relationships between COs and other communities in the local context, especially creatives, artists, local (maker)spaces and the cultural communities in the areas where the COs are based. This is brought about by providing tools and facilitating these connections through the Distributed Design Platform.
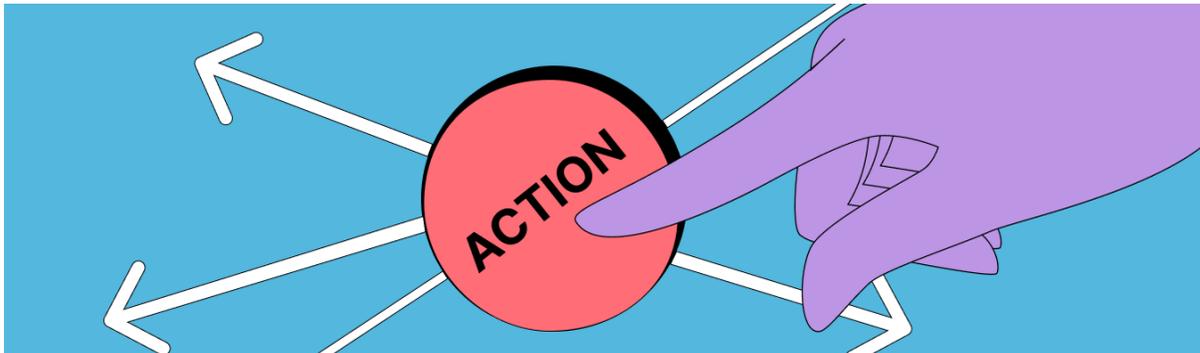
Graphic Credits: Janina Schroeter

What can you get out of this toolkit?

You might be wondering, why this toolkit in the first place? Well, it was created for COs, groups of motivated individuals eager to protect their environment and enact positive change, who may lack the specific guidance and tools to translate their passion into effective action.

By using this toolkit, you gain access to methods and resources that can drive energy and enthusiasm within your group, help you narrow down ideas and define the scope of your action, and map the resources you need and have available. More importantly, it also provides guidance on how to collaborate with creatives, which can significantly amplify the reach and impact of your projects with innovative and engaging approaches.
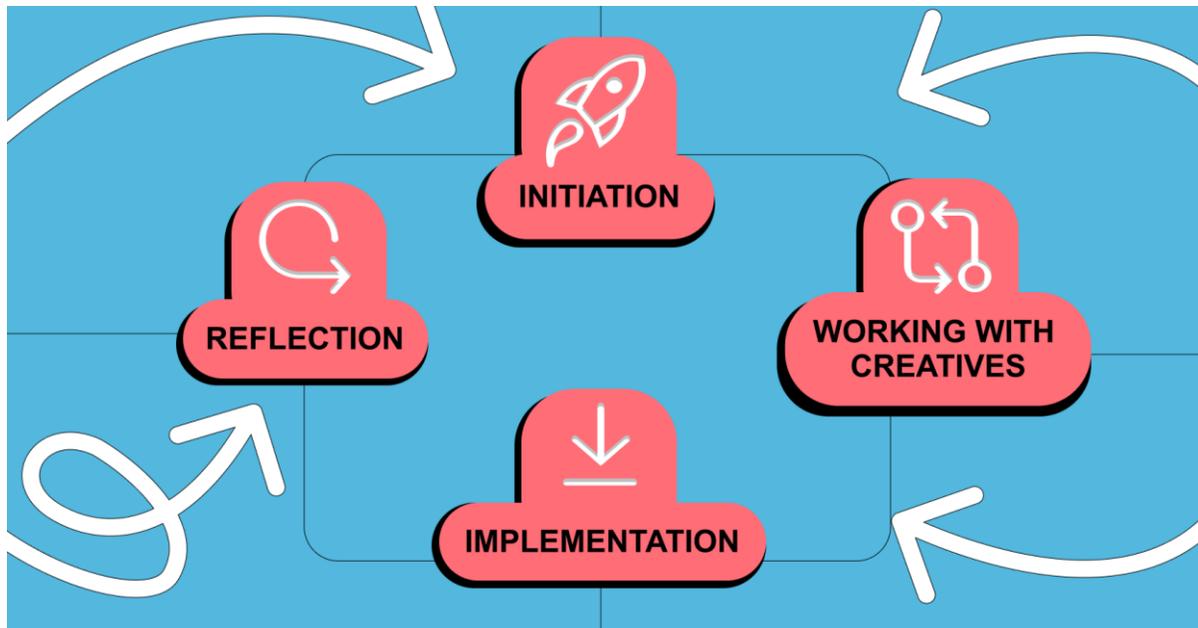
Graphic Credits: Janina Schroeter

3.1.3 How to navigate this toolkit?

Readers can use this toolkit freely by navigating through each section, without any particular predefined order. However, even if readers can jump into different sections as needed, the toolkit follows a logical sequence that progressively builds upon tools that can help navigate a generic community-led action co-creation process.

In each section, when possible, links to existing resources are provided. The overall toolkit is also meant to be iterative, and it provides reflection tools that can help better define future steps and reflect on the results achieved.

Conceptually, this toolkit is divided into the following parts:

(1) **Welcome!**

(2) **Initiation**

(3) **Working with Creatives**

(4) **Planning for impact**

(5) **Reflection**

(6) **Need inspiration?**

To provide a good place to start, the *(2) Initiation section* aims to provide tools that help collaboratively shape the actions by the CO, focusing on the active role of communities within the CO. This is done by providing a curated selection of different co-creation tools, as well as resources from various projects and practitioners experience.

The *(3) Working with Creatives section* is dedicated to the connection with —and involvement of— creatives in the co-creation process and implementation of the actions.

The *(4) Planning for Impact section* provides guidelines, based on previous experience and other tools, on how to plan, produce and deliver a community-led action.

The *(5) Reflection section* provides guidance forconsidering planning more complex citizen-led actions using a reflection activity or impact measurement that later supports the value of the action. If your action is smaller or one-off, it's OK to skip this step.

Finally, the *(6) Need Inspiration section* provides a compilation of previous projects and examples that may inspire COs in their actions, linking with the previous sections when relevant.

3.1.4 What are our cross-cutting values?

Below, we list a set of cross-cutting values which this toolkit aims to set as a baseline for a shared vision between the content and tools of the following sections. These values align with the New European Bauhaus values and those of the Distributed Design Platform.

While the toolkit presents the values in a general sense, it acknowledges that they may need to be further defined and contextualised based on the unique experiences and characteristics of each CO initiative. It encourages readers to tailor the implementation of the values to their specific local contexts, considering the needs and aspirations of their communities.

What are *cross-cutting values*? Just like the rules of a game that everyone agrees to follow, no matter what part of the game they're playing. They help make sure the work stays true to its purpose, no matter what stage you're in or who is involved.

Openness

Openness refers to the mentality and approach to share and make processes transparent, replicable, and accessible. It enables the iterative and replicable nature of actions. This openness extends to various strategic priorities, including open design, open science, open technology and data, and being open to the world, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange.

Inclusivity

Encouraging a dialogue across cultures, disciplines, genders, and ages is essential for fostering inclusivity, diversity, and a comprehensive understanding of complex issues. By promoting cross-cultural exchange, interdisciplinary collaboration, and inclusivity in all aspects, we create an environment where diverse perspectives and experiences can enrich discussions, inspire innovative solutions, and facilitate collective learning.

Empowerment and changemaking

Empowerment involves taking control and the increased responsibility for yourself and your environment. Fostered through collaborative approaches and openness, empowerment ultimately aims to improve quality of life through changemaking. Our focus on these values goes beyond technological solutions, seeking transformation in individuals, communities, institutions, and cultures by shifting thinking, attitudes, values, and consciousness. We embrace community-led change as a powerful force for creating meaningful impact.

Co-creation &participatory practices

Co-creation is a collaborative approach that involves individuals working together on equal footing to develop projects using various methods and tools. It emphasises the use of diverse resources and ideas to create new actions. This process fosters meaningful participation and agency among communities, enabling them to actively contribute to the design process while promoting inclusive and diverse solutions.

Beautiful

Being inspired by art and culture, and going beyond mere functionality, allows for the exploration of creative and imaginative solutions that respond to deeper human needs and aspirations. By integrating artistic and cultural elements into design and innovation processes, we can tap into the emotional and aesthetic dimensions that resonate with individuals and communities, creating meaningful and transformative experiences.

Regenerative

Regenerative making and design principles aspire to renew and restore the systems that we are part of, rather than just replacing or devaluing them. This involves creating reciprocal relationships and embedding a regenerative design culture from the beginning, with a focus on net positive benefits for both the environment and society.

3.1.5 Roots and potential connections

The community-led approach embedded in this toolkit builds upon the **Ground Truth 2.0 (GT2.0)** co-design methodology, and the results from its *Demonstration Cases,* by using them as a starting point or basis for involving the community. It also incorporates the lessons-learned and experiences from the GT2.0 project's practical application. Essentially, the toolkit applies the key understanding gained from GT2.0 that citizens are often motivated for direct environmental action, and is specifically tailored to help support these action-oriented efforts, regardless of whether they fit a traditional scientific data collection model.

Image Credits: Manuela Reyes

More than giving support to engaged communities, **this toolkit also acknowledges the diversity of COs, both in their variety of forms and processes**, and, while keeping a focus on

communities within those COs, **it provides co-creation tools that can result in widely different actions**, including artistic interventions and displays, protests, public forums and presentations, among many others. No matter the final shape and form of these actions, or whether they target change around space usage, increased environmental protection or visibility of a problem that concerns the community, this toolkit's main focus are communities involved in the participatory processes taking place in the COs.

Keeping that strong community-led focus in mind, this toolkit also provides resources which can help **foster relationships between COs and other communities in their local context**, especially creatives, artists, local (maker)spaces and the cultural communities in the areas where the COs are based.

The main goal is to promote the collaboration of these diverse communities in the co-creation and implementation of the community-led actions, and the potential enhancement, impact and broader outreach of the results.

This is brought about at two levels:

(1) by providing **tailored guidance for engaging with creatives** and facilitating the connections with the creative sector in general
(2) by **leveraging on existing networks** such as the Distributed Design Platform (led by Fab Lab Barcelona | IAAC)

The Distributed Design Platform acts as an exchange and networking hub that brings together a diverse member base from cultural and creative institutions, connecting makers, designers, and creatives. Through this network, the *Community-led Action Toolkit* aims to make use of powerful and already existing resources to create opportunities for diverse forms of community-led actions, while providing a strong link with the New European Bauhaus, as the Distributed Design Platform is an official partner of the initiative and its values are strongly aligned with those of the NEB.

3.1.6 Give your feedback

We welcome your feedback to this toolkit via email or on Github. Please use the following structure for your feedback, to help us understand and make it actionable for the toolkit team, using the form link provided: **I'm submitting a …**

This is the category of your feedback. You need to choose whether you are reporting a problem you found or requesting that new content be added. This helps the team understand the fundamental nature of your submission right away.

- **problem report**

  You found something that isn't working correctly, is confusing, or seems wrong.

- **new content request**

  You think something is missing or could be added to make the toolkit better.

- **What is the current behavior?**

  This is where you describe the situation as it is now.

  - If you are submitting a problem report, you should explain what you are currently seeing or experiencing that is incorrect or problematic.

  - If the current behaviour is a problem, please provide the details of where you found it (which page and section). This is crucial for problem reports as it helps the team locate the exact part of the toolkit you are referring to.

- **What would you improve?**

  This is where you propose your solution or suggestion. You explain what you think should be changed or added.

- **What is the motivation / use case for changing the behavior?**

  This explains why your suggestion is important or how it would be used. This provides context for your feedback and helps the team understand the benefit of implementing your proposed change or adding the new content.

- **Other information**

  This is a space for any additional details that might be relevant but don't fit neatly into the categories above.

3.1.7 Using this work

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Bertolaso, J., González, Ó., Guy, J., Schroeter, J., Trevisan O., Verderau M. and Williamson S., (2023) Citizen-led Action Toolkit, Fab Lab Barcelona

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Initiation banner. Credits: Manuela Reyes & Janina Schroeter

3.2 Let's begin

This first part of the toolkit is aimed at helping take the first steps towards collaboratively defining community-led actions, focusing on:

- the active role of communities within the CO for **coming up with ideas**

- **setting the scope** of the intervention or action

- **mapping the resources** needed and available

This is done by providing a curated selection of different co-creation tools, as well as resources from various projects and practitioners experience.

3.2.1 Driving Energy

How do we drive enthusiasm within the CO?

The urgency of environmental issues is often a powerful reason for communities to get involved. However, keeping that motivation high over the long term in a CO can be challenging. The goal of this section is **to help your community feel empowered** to brainstorm ideas and step up to lead and take collective action.

Taking action doesn't need to wait until you're collecting data. Whether you're just starting out or already deep in community science processes, you can integrate meaningful action at any stage.

A vital first step is to create an inclusive environment where people feel welcome to contribute ideas, share perspectives, and participate actively. This kind of supportive space is essential for creativity and collaboration to thrive.

Why does this matter?

Communities are more likely to stay engaged when they feel empowered and involved in shaping the response to the issues they care about. While environmental concerns often trigger participation, maintaining momentum requires deliberate strategies. Here, we **explore ways to keep that momentum alive**—recognizing the long-term effort it takes to sustain engagement.

How can this be done?

Designing settings where ideas can be shared, refined, and acted upon is key. Whether online or in person, **giving participants time and space to contribute** in a judgment-free atmosphere strengthens collective energy and encourages innovation.

Below are two practical tools to kick-start this process:

(1) Brainwriting jam sessions

Brainwriting sessions are simple yet powerful ways to **spark open discussion and surface diverse perspectives**. Connected to a community gathering, participants can write down ideas on a large piece of paper or post-it notes using different coloured pens, within a set timeframe. The session can be self-organised or led by a facilitator, but the key is to ensure a judgment-free atmosphere where all contributions are welcome. Afterward, ideas can be evaluated using a pre-agreed method—like a voting system—to identify the most feasible, impactful, or intriguing suggestions. This method works just as well in person as it does online using tools such as [Miro](#), [Coggle](#) or [Mural](#). Some steps that may guide the conversation are:

(a) Create a mind map and discuss about an existing issue

(b) Give ideas for working around that issue – what can we do directly?

(c) Capture the ideas on post it notes and consolidate them

[More information](#) including brainstorming.

(2) Problem Definition Framework

Before jumping into solutions, it's critical to **clearly define the problem**. This framework helps teams break down an issue from multiple angles, allowing them to understand the broader context and related challenges. It provides a structured, time-efficient way to

analyse a specific problem using key criteria. This clarity helps align the group's focus and makes it easier to generate targeted ideas and define relevant objectives—ensuring that your efforts are actually addressing the root environmental concern.

Development Impact & You by NESTA Practical tools to support & trigger social innovation (pages 41-42) [11.]

(3) Host a Community Activation

Sometimes it can be challenging to engage people in a co-design process—especially when the topic, though important, feels too large or abstract, such as environmental protection, air quality, or noise pollution in cities. One effective way to spark interest and participation is to host a community lunch, social gathering, or similar informal event. This can be done in a simple and welcoming way: one big table, some homemade food, and a space to talk, share ideas, and express doubts. The Community Action Guide from the Make-a-thek project offers a practical example of how people can be brought together to collaboratively discuss shared interests. The guide includes useful resources such as sample agendas, facilitation tools, and suggestions on who to involve and how.

Take a look at the Community Activation Guide by GIG for the make-a-thek project.

3.2.2 Narrowing down

How can we narrow down ideas and start taking action?

Once your CO has gathered a range of ideas, it's time to shift gears – from generating possibilities to taking steps toward real action. This stage is all about collectively choosing the most relevant paths forward and keeping up the energy by **moving toward practical outcomes**. Using tools from this section, especially when paired with Resources Mapping, your community can assess feasibility, make decisions together, and start shaping clear next steps.

This is also the moment to **bring in creative collaborators** – local artists, designers, or makers – who can introduce fresh thinking and facilitate new ways of selecting and refining ideas. These tools are designed to spark creativity, support collaboration, and make sure that the final direction reflects the community's values and capacity for change.

Why is it relevant?

Narrowing down ideas helps turn early enthusiasm into tangible progress. It keeps momentum alive and **builds clarity around what to work on next**. This process invites diverse voices to find common ground and ensures the final idea is both representative and action-oriented. Involving external stakeholders or creatives at this stage can strengthen ideas with fresh insights and broaden support.

See [Working with Creatives](#) for more.

How can this be done?

Now that your CO is moving into a "decision-making mode", it's time to **explore six practical tools that help refine ideas, prioritise efforts, and imagine real-world impact**. These methods are designed to spark discussion, weigh options, and guide your group toward action that feels both meaningful and feasible.

(1) Creative Strategy Canvas

Inspired by Walt Disney's creative process (via the expert Robert Dilts), this tool helps teams look at an idea from three angles: the Dreamer (imagination), the Realist (practicality), and the Critic (evaluation). It's a powerful way to filter ideas and guide the group toward one that's ready for action.

Try the [Disney Creative Strategy Canvas on Miro](#)

(2) SCAMPER method

SCAMPER stands for: Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put (to another use), Eliminate, and Reverse. Each prompt pushes teams to reimagine an idea from a different perspective, unlocking creative solutions and refining potential actions. Each letter represents a specific question or prompt that encourages individuals or teams to think critically and creatively about how they can manipulate or transform an idea to generate new possibilities and solutions.

Explore the [SCAMPER Method Canvas on Miro](#)

(3) Fast Idea Generator

Need a burst of new ideas, or want to stress-test existing ones? The Fast Idea Generator helps your group look at a problem from multiple angles, just like SCAMPER, but with a sharper focus on applying those ideas in varied scenarios. It's a quick, structured way to push thinking further and consolidate concepts.

Try it via [NESTA's guide](#) (pages 87–89)

(4) Opportunity Matrix

This tool helps communities make smart, strategic choices. By plotting each idea on a matrix that measures attractiveness (including environmental or cultural value) and feasibility, your group can quickly see which ideas are:

- Ideal (high impact, easy to implement)
- Challenging (great ideas that need support)
- Safe (easy wins, but less inspiring)
- Best avoided (low value, hard to realise)

It's a powerful way to **prioritise efforts and stay aligned with what matters**.

Explore the [Opportunity Matrix on Smartdraw](#)

(5) Co-creation Assemblies Guide

When you're ready to prototype real interventions, Co-creation Assemblies bring diverse stakeholders together—especially those with different or even opposing views—to propose, shape, and test actions collaboratively. These sessions reveal how people perceive the problem from their own context and how potential solutions tie into the community's identity. It's a dynamic way to move from ideas to prototypes with collective ownership.

Find full guidance in the [Citizen Sensing Toolkit](#) (page 130) [3]

Useful resources

How to inspire action and drive impact?

Whether you're designing your own CO or deepening an existing one, these tools and references can help you align vision with action, connect community efforts to policy, and shape meaningful interventions for the future.

Atlas of Weak Signals

This forward-thinking toolkit helps you scan for subtle trends—emerging opportunities, potential threats, and unexpected signals—that can influence future innovation, research, and community action.

➔ Use it to shape long-term strategy or to spark unexpected ideas. Perfect for strategic foresight and early-stage visioning.

Citizen Science Projects: How to make a difference

Ready to start your own community science project? This course walks you through how to design, launch, and grow a community-led initiative that tackles global challenges and drives local impact.

➔ Ideal for community leaders, educators, and engaged communities alike. *Find out more on how to develop an action plan*.

Engagement activities and their impact in policy development

Want to connect your CO's work to real policy change? This report reviews activities that have successfully influenced policymakers, offering a roadmap for how public participation can feed into decisions at higher levels.

➔ A must-read for anyone working at the Observatory – Policy Interface.

You may also be interested in…

- Our section on how to define objectives for the CO actions
- Our section on working with creatives

3.2.3 Defining the scope of our action

How can we collaboratively define what we would like to do?

COs can trigger a variety of positive changes. Their impacts can range from changes in public awareness and understanding to changes in people's individual behaviour, or directly improving and taking care of the environment. All these are of great importance, and while many COs aim for one or more of these changes, each type may require different forms of deliberate action to be achievable (check this WeObserve Cookbook resource for further information). Before embarking on the implementation of our citizen-led action, we should collectively define and agree on its scope in terms of the **objectives** of the citizen-led action, its desired **outcomes** (the desired changes that should result from the project, which are related to the overall challenge being addressed), the **scale** (local, regional, national…), the **duration** and its **outputs** (the things that are done or created in the course of the work, which may be physical or practical (such as a workshop).This involves a collective reflection process by the CO, linking them with the identified environmental problems or needs that require attention, and aligning them with the impacts sought by your CO.

Why this matters

Before you rush into action, step back and take a moment to plan. Defining the scope of your community-led initiative is not just a planning step — it's the backbone of long-term impact. Whether your CO aims to shift awareness, spark behavioural change, or directly address an environmental issue, clarity on your objectives, outcomes, and scale will ensure your energy is well-placed and your progress is measurable.

What does "scope" really mean?

Defining the scope means agreeing on:

- **Objectives**: What are we trying to achieve?
- **Desired outcomes**: What changes should this action trigger?
- **Outputs**: What will we produce or do (e.g. workshops, media, campaigns)?
- **Scale**: Is it local, regional, national?
- **Duration**: How long will it take?

This collective reflection links your CO's **intentions with real-world environmental issues** — and with the kind of change you actually want to see. Different goals demand different strategies, resources, skills, and tactics. So yes, it's worth the time to get this right.

How do we frame it?

Start with these key questions, using these prompts to lead your group into a productive conversation:

- What are we seeking to **achieve**?
- What are the **aims** of our project? (e.g., empowerment, participation, visibility)
- What **outcomes** do we want — both tangible and intangible?
- What will we **create**, document, or deliver?
- What's the best **scale** and timeline for this?

If your action is more ambitious, check out the section on <u>Impact measurement</u> to plan for broader outcomes.

(1) SMART+C objectives Guide

An upgraded version of the SMART framework — with a twist. The "C" stands for **Challenging**, ensuring your goals are ambitious enough to be inspiring, not just achievable. This tool helps teams stay focused, realistic, and driven.

➔ *Use when you need to move from vague goals to clear, trackable objectives.*

(2) [Developing a Strategic Plan](#)

The Community Tool Box by the Centre for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas is a practical step-by-step for shaping your community-led project with long-term vision and real-world traction.

➔ *Ideal for groups that want to align values, resources, and priorities for the long haul.*

(3) Identifying a Shared Issue ([WeObserve Cookbook](#)) [2]

If your group is still figuring out what problem to address, this resource helps surface shared concerns and turn them into action-ready objectives.

➔ *Best for early-stage initiatives or communities just starting to come together.*

(4) Mapping the issue

A tool that breaks down big challenges into sub-issues and underlying causes, helping you design actions that address root problems, not just symptoms. *From States of Change – Tool Compendium (page 17).*

➔ *Use this when your issue feels complex or layered, and you need clarity on where to focus.*

Useful resources

WeObserve Cookbook

Essential reading on how COs can drive different types of change — public awareness, behaviour shifts, environmental impact — and how to structure actions for each.

Co-Evaluation Tool (University of Dundee)

Originally built for evaluating community knowledge, this tool is also a great guide for shaping and categorizing your objectives upfront.

You may also be interested in…

- Our section on how to choose an idea to put into action
- Our section on impact monitoring of the actions

3.2.4 Mapping resources

How can we map the resources needed and available for our community-led action?

Before you can bring a community-led action to life, you need a solid understanding of what you have, and what you don't. This means **taking account of your community's strengths**: spaces, data, tools, networks, skills, and communication channels. It also means **acknowledging gaps**: which competencies are missing? Where do you need support? Getting clear on this early helps you avoid burnout and blind spots later. If certain skills are lacking, such as communication, visual storytelling, or facilitation, you might consider teaming up with creatives or tapping into other local collaborators.

More on that in the next section *Working with Creatives*

Why does this matter?

Mapping your resources is not just a planning formality—it's how you ensure your community-led action is **realistic, strategic, and resilient**. Without knowing what you're working with, you can easily overpromise and underdeliver. Plus, understanding your team's skills and gaps helps you reach out to the right people, build stronger networks, and create more sustainable outcomes. Later in the process, this clarity will help you identify potential partners—like cultural organisations, local governments, or NEB members—and make your case when asking for support.

How can you do it?

The tools shown below will guide you through a **clear, structured resource-mapping process**. These frameworks will help you visualise what you have, what you need, and who can help. The goal: build a dynamic, interconnected system that reflects your community's unique strengths and potential. Don't just think in terms of physical stuff—include skills, relationships, and local know-how. For help connecting with artists and creatives, check the next section on *Working with Creatives*.

(1) Context Canvases

These help you understand the broader picture—your challenge, the network around you, and the resources your CO already holds. Start with the Challenge and Lab canvases to identify the immediate needs and existing assets.

[Toolbox for co-creation Journeys - SISCODE Project](#) *(pages 17 and 18) [6.]*

(2) Ecosystem Mapping

Move beyond traditional stakeholder lists. This tool maps motivations, capacities, and resources—not just who's involved, but how they can contribute. It helps you design an ecosystem, not just a project.

[Ecosystem mapping - Danish Design Center](#) *[14.]*

(3) Skill Mapping

Who brings what to the table? This tool lets you visually map out the skills and competencies in your team. You'll spot strengths, uncover gaps, and plan how to fill them—whether by training, recruiting, or partnering.

[Skill mapping tool - DSI4EU Guide for developing DSI ideas](#) *(page 5. section 1) [24.]*

Useful resources

- [Blending the physical and the digital from the Fab City Hub Toolkit](#) [7.] This toolkit explores the importance of blending physical and digital environments to set up spaces for innovation, maximise their effects, optimise the performance of both environments, create stronger human connections, and humanise digital tools.
- [Development Impact & You - NESTA Practical tools to support & trigger social innovation](#) (page 24) [11.] This is a tool which clearly outlines a sequence of stages that any partnership may go through, highlighting the essential requirements for success in each phase.

You may also be interested in...

- [Our section for defining a plan for your action](#)
- [Our section on working with creatives](#)

Collaboration banner. Credits: Manuela Reyes & Janina Schroeter

3.3 Working with creatives

Connecting and collaborating with local creatives can bring new ideas for how to work towards taking action for a more sustainable future. The arts and creative practices can create emotional connections and inspire people to get involved and take action, making a stronger impact, and broader reach. With this approach, innovative engagement methods can be experimented with to generate new narratives and inspire transformative change and with the help of an artistic perspective.

Knowing where and how to look will speed up outreach and make collaboration more intentional, strategic, and ultimately more impactful.

3.3.1 Creative Radar: Finding creatives to work with

Where can we find local creatives to collaborate with?

Partnering with local cultural, artistic, and creative communities can strengthen citizen-led actions. Artists and creatives bring new perspectives, amplify underrepresented voices, and increase the visibility and emotional impact of your initiative. And the good news? Many creatives are just as concerned with the climate and social issues as you are.

This section offers practical ways to **identify and connect with artists, designers, and cultural practitioners, locally and across Europe, through networks** like the New European Bauhaus and Distributed Design Platform.

Why does this matter?

Initially identifying **where to find creatives** can seem like a challenging exercise. Therefore, knowing **different methods to find creatives and creative nodes,** ranging from small scale to larger networks, is an important first step in the outreach process.

Finding the right creatives matters

Finding the right creatives can feel overwhelming, especially without existing ties to the cultural sector. But creatives don't only exist in galleries or design firms—they're in **local associations, grassroots collectives, and emerging networks**. Knowing where and how to look will speed up outreach and make collaboration more intentional, strategic, and ultimately more impactful.

How to get started?

To start, clarify what role creatives should play in your CO. Use the *culture/SHIFT framework* to guide your thinking:

- **What kind of role are you looking for?**

    - Conceptual and strategic thinker?
    - Workshop facilitator or community engager?
    - Someone producing specific creative outputs?

- **Who should they work with?**

    - CO members, specific communities, or the general public?

- **What level of experience is needed?**

    - Do you need a seasoned professional or is it an opportunity for emerging talent?

- **What creative skills are essential?**

    ○ Workshop design, graphic facilitation, participatory art, speculative design, etc.

    ○ Experience with specific groups (e.g., children, policy-makers, academic settings)?

Once you've defined your needs, start mapping potential partners:

Step 1: Identify Creative Nodes

Look for hubs and networks that gather creative talent:

- **Local community**

    ○ Cultural associations, design schools, fab labs, community art centres.

- **European networks**

    ○ **Distributed Design Platform**: A go-to place for makers, designers, and digital creatives → explore Distributed Design Talent.

    ○ **New European Bauhaus Dashboard**: Find projects and people combining sustainability, inclusivity, and aesthetics → visit NEB Platform.

Step 2: Run a Stakeholder Mapping

Use the *Stakeholder Map by SISCODE Project* to evaluate the relevance and dynamics of local creatives and organisations.

This framework was designed to help you understand the following:

- Local creatives' influence and reach
- Existing collaborations
- Shared values and motivations

Useful resources

- European Creative Hubs Network – Explore hubs with social, cultural, and economic impact across Europe.

- culture/SHIFT Framework – A practical toolkit to start working with creatives.

You may also be interested in...

- Our section on how to choose an idea to put into action
- Our section on impact monitoring of the actions
- Where can we find creatives to work with

3.3.2 Creative power: Leveraging creative approaches

How can we involve creatives in our community-led action?

Involving local creatives in citizen-led actions can aid in combining different approaches and dynamic practices to create impactful experiences for diverse audiences (more on this in this section). There are many other ways we can build these connections depending on our needs and expectations: simply by reaching out to already known local groups or by creating open calls or hackathons. However, the focus here is to provide tools for COs to define what is expected from external collaborators, what level of experience is required, and what skills are needed. Then, tools and guidelines are provided aiming to support the process of reaching out to creative individuals and communities and promote a mutually beneficial relationship between the participants

Why is it relevant?

Understanding the terms of the collaboration with external communities, especially with a focus on artists and creatives, is an important step as it involves external potential collaborators who might have different dynamics than those of the CO. This process can happen naturally in many

cases, but it's important to keep it in mind so that collaborations can be fruitful at both personal and collective levels.

How can this be done?

You can use the stakeholder analysis tool to find a node near you. Alternatively, you can reach out to one of the existing networks and directly reach out to creatives and organisations through there.

Make sure that you have clear idea about when, how, and for what you would like to involve the creatives in your citizen-led action journey. Ideally creatives are part of this journey as early as possible, as they add value and quality to the work. A briefing document in the form of a one-page PDF can help to summarize your ideas and make clear to new team members what the objectives and expectations are.

Have in mind that the creatives' support will add value to your citizen-led action. The creatives' participation should not have as the only objective "making things pretty". If you cannot offer monetary support or compensation, try to find other alternative reciprocal (mutually beneficial) exchanges that benefit you and the creative practitioners (that go beyond just visibility of their work).

This conversation should be held closely with the creatives, to ensure that expectations are clearly agreed upon.

Below we provide six ways of reaching out to communities outside of the CO, with a focus on creative talents and collectives.

(1) Collaborating with the Distributed Design Platform

The Distributed Design Platform is a digital hub for a community of creatives in Europe and beyond. The Platform has 17 members in Europe and over 2600 creatives that are actively working on changing the creative paradigm through their practice.

COs have the unique opportunity to collaborate with the Platform coordinators to strengthen their outreach to creative practitioners and identify/build collaborations for their citizen-led actions. This

opportunity will be uniquely tailored to each CO's approach/needs. Four possible ways for the collaboration are:

1. Co-designing an open call for creatives
2. Publishing the citizen-led action on the Distributed Design Platform
3. Maximising editorial outreach through a curated blog post
4. Highlighting the citizen-led action outcomes in the digital exhibition space

(2) Co-designing an open call for creatives with the Distributed Design Platform

The Platform has a yearly outreach to over 60,000 people through its digital presence. You can collaborate with the Platform coordinator to strategically publish your CO's open call. Together with the coordinator you will develop how to best communicate your open call, highlighting benefits and incorporating visually captivating elements.

→ **Reach out** to info@distributeddesign.eu

*See **example** of the Open call by Frontrunner Case Barcelona for their Citizen-led Action*

(3) Publishing your citizen-led action on the Distributed Design Platform

Over 30 digital and physical creative events take place annually within the Platform. Promoting your actions can support your outreach and impact.

Use this template to submit your community-led action to the DDP.

(4) Maximising your editorial outreach through a curated blog post

This is a great opportunity to share outcomes, insights, and give visibility to collaborators. Blog posts also support your documentation and impact strategy.

Template available to guide your blog post creation.

(5) Highlighting your community-led action in the Digital Exhibition on the DDP website

This exhibition space showcases creative works and emergent profiles with values like open design, inclusion, and environmental impact. Works can include installations, murals, artifacts, or exhibitions.

→ Reach out to: info@distributeddesign.eu to check suitability.

Submit your project to the Digital Exhibition here.

(6) Enhancing your Social Media outreach

Work with the Platform coordinator to develop communication strategies for your open calls and events. Open calls through social media are especially effective at encouraging participation.

Example here, a collaborative campaign by Pakhuis de Zwijger.

Submit your activity here to enhance your outreach.

Useful resources

How Work Works – An Inventory of Effects
A collection of insightful articles about artistic work.

culture/SHIFT *(pages 15–20)*
A step-by-step guide for implementing projects with creatives.

You might also be interested in …

- Why can working with culture and art-related groups enhance Citizen-led actions?
- How can we involve creatives in our actions?

3.3.3 Creative flow: Exploring existing creative initiatives

What are existing examples in which creative collaborations took place in community-led actions?

Creative culture and art communities spark innovation, imagination, and originality when facing local and global challenges, inspiring with their unique perspectives and creative processes. COs can benefit from the involvement of creative minds in their activities since they can facilitate new ideas and unconventional solutions. This will result in dynamic, engaging outcomes and amplified lasting impact that may resonate with more diverse audiences. This section highlights why creatives and artists can be of great help for these processes because *"Artists are not a luxury; they are a necessity for transformation"* (New European Bauhaus).

Useful resources

These resources provide inspiration by showing how others have successfully connected art and creativity to environmental sustainability and awareness:

[*Paradise Now! A climate justice handbook*](#)

Developed during a 2022 residency with Deveron Projects in Scotland, this handbook is a toolkit for young people, climate activists, and educators. It includes worksheets, comic strips, manifestos, artworks, and social media ephemera for engaging with artists in climate justice actions.

[*The New European Bauhaus Initiative*](#)

Offers inspiration through the NEB Prizes, spotlighting creative ways to address environmental and social issues with aesthetic, inclusive, and sustainable solutions.

[*Culture/SHIFT methodology*](#) – *Creative Carbon Scotland*

Describes a proven methodology for fostering collaboration between artists and climate-related organisations. It shows how cultural work can serve as a catalyst for systemic environmental change.

[*The Library of Creative Sustainability*](#)

A rich, digital library for policy-makers, researchers, and local organisations to find case studies and practical insights on integrating artists into environmental projects.

You might also be interested in …

- [Why can working with culture and art-related groups enhance Citizen-led actions?](#)
- [Where can we find local creatives to work with?](#)

Planning for Impact Credits: Manuela Reyes & Janina Schroeter

3.4   Planning for impact

During this phase, the form of the community-led action is developed more fully, considering all the participants and developing a plan for addressing the environmental challenges at hand.

This section will start by providing guidelines on how to develop the citizen-led action plan and continue by providing guidelines on aspects to keep in mind when working on developing and implementing steps of the project.

3.4.1 How can we develop a community-led action plan?

Your action plan is where ideas meet reality. It's a roadmap that outlines what your community (CO), creatives, and other partners will actually do, when, and how. It helps everyone involved get on the same page, understand their roles, and move forward with confidence.

This stage is often iterative – it's normal for things to evolve as you learn more and engage deeper. That's why we recommend revisiting your scope and goals here. Adjusting now can save confusion later.

> 💡 **Tip**
>
> You can mark the launch of your action plan with a small event or meeting – something simple to build excitement and invite broader community support.

Why does this matter?

Creating an action plan is not just about logistics—it's a tool for building trust, clarity, and collaboration.

Here's what it helps you do:

- Define realistic activities, timelines, and expectations
- Align everyone's roles, especially when working with creatives or external partners
- Identify key resources and gaps, using your mapping results
- Keep the momentum going by making the path ahead visible and shared

It also provides a visual snapshot of your goals, helping you and your group feel grounded and motivated.

How to do this?

This step is about working together to map out:

1. What needs to happen?
2. Who does what?
3. When and with what resources?

If you're working with creatives, this is a critical moment to build mutual understanding. You'll need to:

- **Schedule one or more induction meetings** so creatives can learn about the community and its context
- **Allow time** for the creative to do research and development
- **Involve them early on**—ideally since the Initiation stage—to support co-creation

Below you will find a few resources you can use to map this out:

(1) Experimentation Canvas

The purpose of this tool is to outline the essential components that are necessary for implementing our community-led action. It is recommended to use it as a guide to plan our community-led action. The canvas provides insight into all crucial aspects of experimentation – from idea development to testing and assessments – in a visually compelling format. It must be customized for each selected solution.

Explore the [Toolbox for co-creating journeys from the SISCODE Project](#) (pages 34 and 35) [6.]

(2) Developing an Action Plan Guide

This section provides a guide for developing and utilising our citizen-led action plan. The guide provides useful information such as:

- What is an action plan?
- Criteria for a good action plan.
- Why is it important to develop one?
- How to do it?

Including practical tools such as the Action Plan Form, Action Planning Tips and links to other complementary resources. This guide has been developed as part of The Community Tool Box (Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas), an online resource for those working to build healthier communities and bring about social change.

Take a look at how to [develop an Action Plan](#) [12.]

Useful resources

- [Guidelines for managing expectations in community actions](#) [27.] Simple guidelines to have in mind when working together and planning citizen-led actions.

- [Collective intelligence canvas - Fab City Hub Toolkit](#) [7.] This tool seeks to promote and

facilitate the creation of an action plan as it outlines the main phases, activities, and dynamics required to activate a community.

You may also be interested in...

- [What do we have to consider when our action takes place?](#)

3.4.2 How can we boost the visibility of our citizen-led action?

This section highlights key methods that can be collectively developed with the CO participants and creatives to enhance visibility. A creative communication strategy that uses different communication channels, both online and offline, can effectively promote community-led action and help to both engage locally and potentially tap into broader networks such as the *[Distributed Design Platform](#)*.

Remember, a multi-faceted creative approach is key to increasing visibility. Your community-led action can reach a broader audience by combining a strong social media campaign, connecting to existing creative networks, offline communication efforts and online digital presence.

Why is it relevant?

Visibility helps create awareness and generate interest among community members, potential participants, and stakeholders. It allows for effective communication of the community-led action's objectives, benefits, and unique features, ultimately attracting more individuals to engage and participate. Increased visibility leads to broader support, collaboration opportunities, and potential partnerships, further enhancing the action's success.

How can this be done?

This section provides a range of tools that can serve as guides and sources of inspiration for enhancing the visibility of your community-led action that can be collectively developed with

creatives and artists. Whether you are seeking guidance on social media campaigns, offline communication in the neighbourhood, establishing an online digital presence, or connecting with the communication channels of the Distributed Design Platform, these resources will equip you with insights and tools to make your action more visible and impactful.

(1) Digital Presence

Based on the *Citizen Sensing Toolkit* from the *Making Sense Project*, digital presence tools can take different forms: sometimes it can be a dedicated website, but in other cases this might not be necessary and already existing platforms such as blogs or Instagram can be used to boost the visibility of the action campaign. Regardless of the platform used, the aim is to document the ambition of the community, the progress towards the goals, as well as the most important collective events and outcomes. Creative practitioners are important team members who can support creating creative and purposeful online presences. A digital presence can serve as a good reference for explaining the community efforts, but also recruit new participants.

Take a look at the [Citizen Sensing: A Toolkit](#) (page 120) [3.]

(2) Amplify your activities through the Distributed Design Platform

Organisations and groups can leverage the extensive reach and visibility of the Distributed Design Platform channels to effectively share their actions and open calls with a diverse audience. Your CO can gain the opportunity to showcase your work, connect with a global community of designers, makers, and creatives, and attract potential collaborators by submitting your open calls and community-led actions to the platform. Through the platform's communication channels, such as its website, social media accounts, and online exhibitions, CO's can effectively promote their activities, projects, and open calls to a wide range of target audiences.

→ *Get in touch with info@distributeddesign.eu to amplify your action.*

(3) Publishing your citizen-led action on the Distributed Design Platform
Over 30 different digital and physical creative events and activities take place each in the context of the Distributed Design Platform yearly. And your citizen-led action can be one of those. After your planning and development phase you are invited to share your citizen-led action prior to when it takes place on the Distributed Design Platform. Promoting your

action can support the outreach of your activity and with that your desired impact.

→ *Here is a template to submit your citizen-led action to the Distributed Design Platform.*

(4) Maximising your editorial outreach through a curated blog post
After your citizen-led action has taken place you can share the actions outcomes, insights and impact through the Distributed Design Platform blog. To this date, the digital editorial outreach of the Distributed Design Platform reached over 60.000 people through the website and blog posts, over 1.300 people through the newsletter and more than 27.000 accounts on Social Media. This is a great opportunity to share your work and give visibility to your collaborators. A blog post can support your documentation process and can be part of your impact strategy.

→ *Here is a template on how to write a blog post.*

(5) Highlighting your citizen-led actions outcomes in the digital exhibition
There is a need for emerging talents to be able to represent themselves and their works in digital environments that share their values towards open design, collaboration, social inclusion and positive environmental impact in order to contribute to the development of resilient, professional practices for the European cultural and creative sector. The Distributed Design Platform Online Exhibition is a space in which digital and physical works, creative citizen-led actions and emergent creatives profiles intersect. The key aim of this online exhibition is to bring visibility and promotion to creative works by creating high-quality publications. You and your creative collaborators can submit your citizen-led action outcomes (after it took place) that took shape as a e.g. in an installation, mural, artwork, artifact, exhibition, or similar in the Distributed Design Platform Online Exhibition.

→ *Here you can submit your creative citizen-led actions outcomes.*

Reach out to info@distributeddesign.eu, lead of the Distributed Design Platform, in case you would like to discuss if your proposal is a suitable fit for the Online Exhibition.

Useful resources

- Communication in Citizen Science. A practical guide to communication and engagement

in citizen science - SCivil [20.] This guide provides useful approaches and offers different methods for engaging volunteers and communicating effectively your citizen science project.

- WeObserve Cookbook - I want to achieve impact with CO results by communicating the CO results effectively [2.] This section of the Cookbook provides relevant content and tools for communicating your CO, such as good practices, papers and guidelines, among others.
- Fab Lab BCN Communication Handbook [15.] s a basic, helpful guide developed by *Fab Lab Barcelona | IAAC*. Drawing from their expertise in design, dissemination, communication, and outreach for education, research, and innovation projects, this handbook offers valuable insights and practical advice for those seeking to engage with communities, stakeholders, and audiences in purposeful projects through communication channels.

You may also be interested in...

- Our section on working with creatives
- Where can we find local creatives to work with?

3.4.3 What to consider when our citizen-led action takes place?

Planning can help streamline these processes but there may be some aspects to keep in mind while implementing the citizen-led action (see our section for planning the CO actions). This section provides a set of recommendations that will help the CO during the process.

How can this be done?

The resources available in this section have the objective of facilitating collaborative work and aiding in the implementation of citizen-led actions. Below there are some guidelines to keep in mind:

- **Document the process:** If the resources and time allow for it, it's recommended to document the production preparation and execution implementation processes of the citizen-led action. This can be done through audiovisual recording and communication but

also by documenting practical, functional, and operational aspects. This documentation serves as a research resource to make the learning from these co-creation processes visible and enables knowledge sharing to make these citizen-led actions improvable and replicable.

- **Catch-up with the group**: coordinate periodic meetings with the participants involved (e.g. creatives) to help keep everyone up to date, maybe on schedule with programmed activities to celebrate successes, and to address any issues that may arise. Depending on the length and scale of your project, these periodic meetings can be on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis.

- **Ensure collaborative work**: try to involve the community in the process, and aim for activities that generate trust and synergies, adding value to knowledge and experiences, and empowering all participants to take ownership of the citizen-led action. The value of citizen-led actions frequently resides in the collaborative production and collective practice processes, as well as the experience of realising a joint action, rather than solely the planned outcomes.

- **Embrace flexibility:** In some cases, the planned results may differ from the actual results achieved, but if the collective outcomes are satisfactory to the group, embracing flexibility will help manage the group motivation and avoid unnecessary frustration.

- **Plan for *what happens after***: In case you alter the public space, you may need to consult whether that's possible in your local context and make decisions based on that.

Below, we feature tools that enable us to recognize and value the diversity of the action participants, fostering trust and synergy among them. Additionally, we included a guide outlining potential issues that may arise during the citizen-led action implementation, along with a hands-on task management tool that helps organise ongoing work and ensure task completion. It also offers guidelines and considerations for co-creation processes.

(1) Implementation Issue Mapping

Issue Mapping is a process of identifying and analysing the potential challenges that may arise during the implementation of our citizen-led action. It involves creating a visual representation of the issues that need to be addressed, along with potential solutions and strategies for overcoming them. For citizen-led actions, issue mapping is crucial because it helps to ensure that the action is well-planned and executed, and that potential problems are identified and addressed early on.

Take a look at [the collective intelligence design playbook - NESTA](#) (page 76) [25.]

(2) Critical Task Canvas

The *Critical Tasks Canvas* serves as a means to ensure that the citizen-led action implementation is feasible within the given timeframe and budget. This is particularly crucial when aligning individual work with others and requires focus. It is a tool similar to others in the planning section, but in this case the approach is less strategic, and more focused on the production of the action itself. The canvas provides a shared reference point for the team to monitor progress and concentrate on the current tasks. Developing a routine for organising ongoing work begins with the Critical Task Canvas as the initial step.

Take a look at the [NESTA Practical tools to support & trigger social innovation](#) (page 116) [11.]

Useful resources

- [Library of resources for prototyping - DSI4EU Guide for developing DSI ideas](#) (section 5) [24.] *The Library of resources for prototyping p*rovides links to different frameworks that can support the prototyping process, connecting to other reference projects and institutions. Some of them are related to useful topics such as tinkering, electronics, coding, digital fabrication, etc.

You may also be interested in…

- [How do we make our actions replicable?](#)
- [How can we boost the visibility of the action?](#)

3.5 Reflection

A crucial part of any community-led or citizen-led action is the thoughts and considerations put into it. It allows us to pause, look back, and ask: "*Did we create the impact we hoped for? What*

worked well? What could be done differently next time?". This chapter is about deepening our understanding, improving future actions, and making the invisible impacts of our efforts more visible and shareable.

To effectively do this, we need to measure and manage impact in a thoughtful way. This includes:

- Tracking outcomes with clear indicators
- Reviewing the results
- Adjusting our approach where needed

Impact reflection also allows us to communicate our progress with transparency and purpose, whether to our community, potential funders, or broader networks.

In this section you'll find tools and guidance to support the reflective phase of your action. Whether your initiative is large and ongoing or small and temporary, reflection helps to give meaning to your work, amplify its relevance, and prepare the ground for what's next.

3.5.1 How can we measure the impacts of our citizen-led action?

If your community-led action is quite ambitious, long-term, or you're hoping to secure more support in the future, it's a good idea to measure its impact. This will help you show the value of your work and guide improvements over time. If your action is smaller or a one-off activity, you can skip this step or keep it simple — just reflect on what worked well and what could be improved. When thinking about impact, consider:

1. **The change you want to see:** What environmental challenge are you addressing, and what kind of difference are you aiming for?
2. **Who is affected:** Who benefits from these changes, and how might their experience shift?
3. **How to track it:** What signs or indicators will help you see if the change is happening?

You can use simple tools — like feedback forms, photo diaries, or check-in sessions — to capture progress. For more structured projects, you might want to set specific indicators or goals and review them regularly

Why is it relevant?

Measuring impact helps you understand whether your action is making the change you hoped for. It shows what's working, what needs adjustment, and what kind of difference your community is actually experiencing. It's not just about numbers, it's about learning, celebrating progress, and communicating results to others who care about your cause.

How can this be done?

Start by mapping out how your action is expected to create change. A tool called the *Theory of Change* can help you connect your goals, activities, and resources. Basically, how one thing leads to another. From there, you can track your results, make adjustments as needed, and share your story with others. Measuring impact doesn't have to be complicated. It's about learning from your experience, showing what matters, and keeping your community motivated to keep making change.

(1) Theory-of-Change CANVAS

This canvas is essentially a roadmap that details the steps required to achieve a particular goal, in this case to protect the environment. It is a useful tool enabling us to determine whether the community-led action is contributing towards the intended impact and if there are any alternative paths to consider.

Take a look at the Theory of Change Canvas by NESTA

(2) Guide to developing an evaluation plan

An evaluation plan outlines the methods and strategies that will be used to assess the effectiveness and impact of our community-led action. The plan typically includes a description of the action, its objectives, and the intended outcomes. By developing an evaluation plan, you can ensure that the community-led action is on track and can identify areas where changes may be needed to ensure that it achieves its intended outcomes.

Take a look at how to Develop an Evaluation Plan with the Community tool box [12.]

Useful resources

- [Capturing and communicating impact of citizen science for policy: A storytelling approach](#) [23.] This article addresses the issue of impact communication in CO's, as well as the application of storytelling, a powerful tool to generate connection and links with our action.
- [The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Theory-of-Change Guidance](#) [22.] This guide provides: a definition of the theory of change and an explanation of its purpose; a step-by-step methodology, presenting in greater detail each of the four key steps required in the process; links to useful tools and references are provided.
- [Report and Assessment of Impact and Policy Outcomes Using Community Level Indicators](#) This report evaluates the use of Community Level Indicators and explores ways that it is used to address key challenges related to impact measurement in community-driven projects.

You may also be interested in…

- [What do we have to consider when our action takes place?](#)

3.5.2 How can we reflect on the citizen-led action results?

Reflection is cultural as well as technical. Consider holding team debriefs, gathering testimonials, journaling your journey, or using storytelling as a collective sense-making tool. **Ask yourselves what surprised you, what challenged you, and what inspired you.** Make space for honest conversations and collective learning.

Why is it relevant?

Because reflection fuels growth and a healthy environment for collaboration. It helps us connect action to meaning, see unintended outcomes, and carry wisdom into future collective efforts. It is also part of care, for ourselves, our communities, and the ecosystems we engage with.

How can this be done?

Use simple formats such as team reflections, community feedback circles, or visual storytelling. Revisit your Theory of Change and ask if your assumptions held true. Celebrate things you have achieved, even small ones, and acknowledge what didn't go as planned. That's where learning starts.

Examples

- A group photo exhibition showing before-and-after environmental changes with personal stories from participants.
- A shared digital diary or Miro board where team members post reflections anonymously.
- An open community forum to share results, receive feedback, and discuss future ideas.

Here is a selection of tools that can help you in the process:

(1) Starfish model

The *Starfish* model reflection tool is a visual framework used to facilitate reflective discussions and gather feedback on a specific project, event or action. It encourages participants to provide insights based on their experiences and perspectives, focusing on five key aspects represented by different parts of the *starfish* metaphor: *Start, Stop, Continue, More of, and Less of.*

Take a look at the The Starfish Model by Visual Thinkery

(2) Feedback collection of participants

Feedback collection from participants can take various forms dependent on the depth of the collected feedback desired. Feedback can be collected online, through email, or in-person, and are most effective during or directly after an action. Examples of formal collection frameworks are surveys and questionnaires that structure the data collection and information from participants in a systematic manner. Informal and/interactive feedback collection could take the shape of e.g. a bullseye feedback, or a feedback wall on which sticky notes or comment cards are collected on which participants can share their experience and feedback about the action.

Several tools exist for this, for example Survicate, Surveymonkey, Mentimeter

(3) Spark, Solve, Sustain

Spark, Solve and Sustain is a framework to help you evaluate a process with a group of participants by transforming insights into concrete actions points. It helps groups or individuals to reflect and learn from mistakes and successes that were encountered. The action points and insights can then be directly integrated into the planning of the next citizen-led action of the CO.

Take a look at the Spark, Solve, Sustain framework by Butterflyworks

Useful resources

● https://eu-citizen.science/projects and https://citimeasure.eu/comparability-tool/ These two platforms provide several examples and inspiration through a catalogue of different citizen science projects. Engaging in peer exchanges within COs enables initiatives to share experiences, challenges, and best practices with other organisations or individuals working in similar fields.

3.5.3 How can we make our citizen-led action replicable?

If your action makes an impact in your context and you want to scale it or inspire others to do the same, the tools and reflections you used during this process will be essential. Replication is about transferring not only actions but also values, methods, and learnings.

Why is it relevant?

Replication strengthens impact and expands reach. It shows that local knowledge and grassroots innovation can be shared, adapted, and multiplied. It also invites collaboration across contexts and builds a stronger, more resilient network of action.

How can this be done?

1. Document your process clearly (include challenges and pivots)
2. Share open-source tools or templates
3. Create a simple guide or "starter kit" for other groups
4. Connect with networks that can help spread your work (*e.g.* other COs or environmental coalitions)

This section builds upon other sections of this toolkit, such as *How can we boost the visibility of our action?* and the *What do we have to consider when our action takes place?*. Using the digital presence channels, the community could think of sharing the tools employed online, or even publishing the work formally. An additional tool could be to share any design or work in open repositories listed below.

(1) Open repositories

Virtually anything can be shared in open repositories. However, if your citizen-led action involves some sort of technical design, open repositories such as *GitHub* or *Wikifactory* are great places where you can share your designs, devices or code.

There are many ways of documenting, examples are github.com, wikifactory.com

Image Credits: Manuela Reyes

3.6   Need inspiration?

If you're looking for ideas or simply a spark of inspiration, you're in the right place. In this section, we've created **a compilation of inspirational experiences and transformative actions** by COs, often collaborating with artists and creatives who have imaginatively merged their talents with scientific inquiry. These stories highlight the original ways in which art and science can intertwine to inspire curiosity, build community, and deepen our collective understanding of both the natural world and the human experience.

From groundbreaking initiatives to unexpected partnerships, the gallery serves as **a living repository** for anyone seeking inspiration for their actions, through examples celebrating the profound impact that citizen-led action and artistic expression can have, all while cultivating curiosity, fostering collaboration, and promoting a deeper appreciation for the interplay between art, science, and our shared human experience.

Initial examples collected during the toolkit's development showcase the diversity of potential actions, including:

- Campaigns
- Dialogues
- Collective actions, such as community-based mosaics or taking garbage from canals
- Events like dance and poetry recitals or mimes guiding traffic
- Experiences like participating in pollution pods to smell pollution
- Actions like closing streets or creating large-scale graffiti
- Art Pieces, such as sculptures visualizing air pollution
- Crafts, like ceramics made with glaze containing particulate matter
- Competitions, such as photo competitions mapping flood risk

These examples demonstrate the wide variety of forms citizen-led actions can take, often integrating creative approaches to address environmental problems.

Case study #1 Barcelona

Case study name	RUT at Plaça de la Virreina
Issue	Noise pollution

Participant size	25
Location	Plaça de la Virreina, Barcelona, Spain
Short description	In Barcelona, the CitiObs project addressed the persistent challenge of noise pollution in Plaça de la Virreina, a lively square in the Gràcia district where vibrant social life coexists with residents' need for quiet. To mediate this tension, FRC Barcelona launched a community-led process through the CitiObs Citizen-led Action Toolkit. The approach combined quantitative noise monitoring data with qualitative insights and creative methods to generate a holistic understanding of the issue. Through a series of co-creation workshops at the Ateneu de Fabricació de Gràcia, local residents, professionals, and creatives collaborated to design an innovative awareness tool: Rut, a fictional, AI-powered character that personifies the community's experiences. Rut communicates the realities of urban noise in a playful, empathetic, and engaging way. Encouraging reflection among visitors while safeguarding residents' anonymity. The case demonstrates how data-driven citizen science and creative practice can jointly foster dialogue, empathy, and collective solutions for complex urban challenges.
Long description	Plaça de la Virreina, in Barcelona's Gràcia district, is a microcosm of urban conviviality and contestation. Its terraces and shaded benches draw residents and visitors alike, offering a space where everyday sociability and urban density overlap. Yet the square's vibrancy also generates tension: the same sounds that animate public life become sources of disturbance for those who live nearby. The question of how to balance shared vitality with domestic tranquillity exposes a broader dilemma in contemporary cities - how to sustain publicness without eroding liveability. FRC Barcelona approached this tension through a citizen-led and creatively mediated inquiry. Drawing on earlier work from the CO within the TANIA project, residents began by mapping patterns of noise across the square using Smart Citizen sensors placed on balconies and collecting perceptual data through the Diagnóstico Ciudadano survey. This dual focus (combining quantitative monitoring with qualitative testimony) acknowledged that urban sound is not merely a technical problem but a social and cultural phenomenon, unevenly distributed and experienced. Two open calls followed. The first invited community proposals for mitigating noise impacts; the second, developed with CitiObs and the Distributed Design Platform, sought creative practitioners to collaborate with residents on implementing a chosen idea. Co-creation sessions were

	then hosted at the Ateneu de Fabricació de Gràcia, a public digital fabrication lab that served as both workshop and civic forum. Here, neighbours, designers, and facilitators collectively developed Rut, a fictional, AI-generated character embodying the community's concerns. Rut acted as a symbolic mediator—communicating the complexity of urban noise in an accessible, affective form while maintaining participants' anonymity. The project concluded with collective reflection sessions, again held at the Ateneu, using the Starfish Reflection Tool to evaluate the process. Participants identified both the strengths and limitations of the experiment, situating it within an ongoing conversation about how data, design, and community imagination might coalesce in the governance of shared urban space. Rather than offering a definitive solution, the intervention foregrounded negotiation itself as a form of civic practice—an exploration of how citizens can reclaim agency in shaping the sensory and social ecologies of the city.
Partners	Citizen Observatory LAB CSU (Laboratorio Ciudadano de Salud Urbana) for the local project TÀNIA, an initiative led by Lichen Innovación Social and ISGlobal (Instituto de Salud Global Barcelona).
Types of stakeholders engaged	Citizens, creatives (designers and makers), bar owner, local community organisations, scientists
Tools used	- Smart Citizen Kit - Creative Radar - Citizen Diagnosis - Creative Power: Co-designing an open call for creatives with the Distributed Design Platform - Collective Ideation - Starfish model
Impact & Learnings	The Barcelona initiative provided a critical testing ground for examining how citizen-led action can contribute to collective urban knowledge and experience. Rather than treating participation as an instrument for behavioural change, the project framed it as a process of mutual learning—one in which residents, designers, and researchers negotiate their distinct forms of expertise. By integrating digital monitoring tools with creative and social practices, the case study revealed how technical data gains meaning when situated within lived experience and local narratives.

	Structured feedback loops were used not simply to optimise tools but to question the assumptions embedded in their design. This iterative approach allowed participants to adjust both methodology and process in response to community insights, contributing to a more reflexive model for future Citizen Observatories.

The Barcelona experience illustrates how community-centred experimentation can inform broader debates on urban governance. It points toward a form of citizen science grounded in care and shared responsibility. It also offered insight into how emerging technologies can be mobilised playfully—as tools for storytelling that surface local experiences and collective memories rather than merely transmitting data. |
| Links & documentation | https://citiobs.eu/citizen-led-interventions-to-reduce-noise-by-the-frontrunner-case-in-barcelona/ |

Timeline

Month	March-April	May-July	August	September	October	November
Activity	Ideation and open call	Co-design and prototyping	Summer break	prototyping	Implementation of action	reflection

CONCLUSION

This deliverable outlines the process followed in developing the *Citizen-led Action Toolkit*, which provides practical tools for citizens and communities to initiate and strengthen environmental protection actions. The toolkit highlights the intersection between Citizen Observatories COs and the creative sector, offering a framework through which both can collaborate meaningfully. By positioning creativity as a driver for citizen-led innovation, it creates opportunities for COs and practitioners to work together using purposeful, practice-based content.

The toolkit has been developed through an iterative process, building on a solid foundation of experience from previous projects and gradually refined into a set of actionable resources. Its implementation as an open-source online platform enables continuous improvement and wider accessibility, ensuring that contributions can evolve alongside community needs. Testing through CitiObs cases, complemented by webinars and workshops, has provided valuable feedback that shaped the content, usability, and structure of the toolkit. These early insights have confirmed its relevance while identifying areas for further adaptation and contextualisation.

Looking ahead, the toolkit is conceived as a living resource that will continue to evolve through future testing, community input, and real-world applications. It is expected to support ongoing and new CitiObs cases (5+30+50) and extend its use beyond the project's lifetime. In practice, the toolkit aims to enable replication of citizen-led approaches and inspire creative partnerships across sectors. By combining practical tools with adaptable methods, it aims to help citizen, communities and creative actors alike to take informed, collaborative, and impactful action for environmental protection.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1 - Identified reference projects and approaches

In this section, we detail the main results of the above-mentioned reviews.

The Ground Truth 2.0 Project (EU Grant Agreement No 689744) delivered the demonstration and validation of 6 scaled-up COs in real, operational conditions. These COs were co-designed following the project's self-developed methodology in the demonstration cases. The results from some of the Ground Truth 2.0 (GT 2.0) cases showed that citizen communities in these COs may have more pressing motivations for triggering positive change, or to directly take action to protect the environment and that these processes may not need involving longer (citizen science) pathways that include data collection or data analysis in order to take action to protect the environment. In summary, the results from GT 2.0 demonstration cases show that *citizen-led action* may or may not take place after a citizen science process, and the CitiObs Citizen-led Action toolkit aims to support these citizen communities in the co-creation and implementation of those actions.

The *Making Sense Project* (EU Grant Agreement No 688620), during which the *Citizen Sensing - A Toolkit* [3.] was produced, provided an overall participatory sensing framework (Figure 7), providing a foundation that aimed to introduce steps that community organisers, project teams, community members or individual citizens, could use as a reference guide when developing and delivering a citizen sensing project. In particular, the *Citizen Sensing toolkit* is aimed at supporting community action, providing practical tools and recommendations for those carrying out these activities to go beyond data collection; the CitiObs *Citizen-led action toolkit* draws inspiration not only from the tools provided in this project, but also from the co-creation aspects that it tested during its pilot demonstrations.
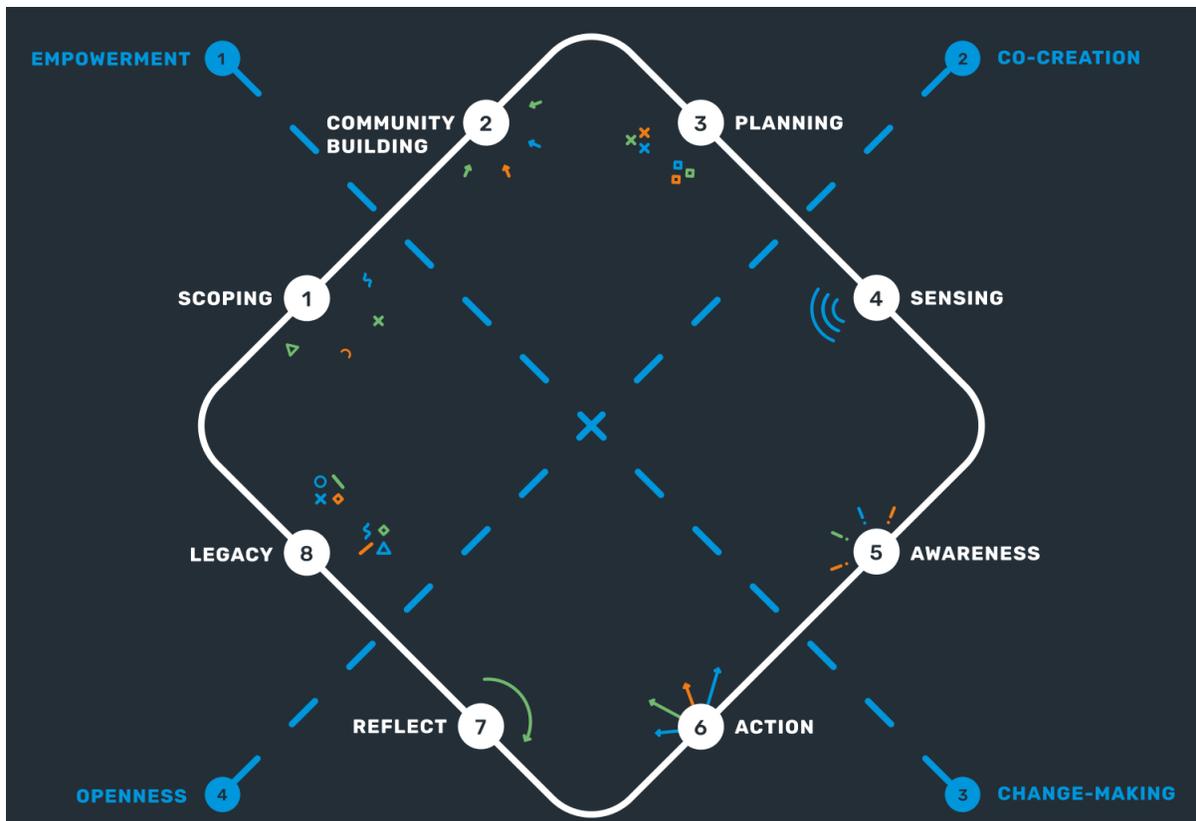
Figure 7. Citizen Sensing Framework - Making Sense Project

A similar approach to the *Making Sense Project* was also reflected upon by the authors of [4.], which focused on the benefits of COs potential to go beyond data collection and their potential contribution to actions for the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs), based on the *GROW Observatory Project* (EU Grant Agreement No 690199) case studies. They focused on the positive results linking environmental challenges with positive narratives. In their case, these narratives were sustainable food growing and large-scale climate action, in which COs can offer a platform that enables communities to link a simple variable (such as soil moisture), to locally relevant and tangible information motivating change through concrete actions to facilitate the implementation and advancement of SDG goals and targets. Following a similar approach to that of the GROW case studies, the *CitiObs Citizen-led Action toolkit* aims at providing COs with resources that can help them co-create their own narratives from a community perspective while, in some cases, drawing from data collected with simple variables (such as Particulate Matter with inexpensive sensors), and at the same favouring relationships with other collectives such as creatives and artists ones in an innovative but impactful approach.

The *WeObserve Project Cookbook* (EU Grant Agreement No 776740), provides a complete reference guide to help COs and practitioners access existing resources that can help them in setting up and/or running a CO. It is organised in various sections, from which the CitiObs *Citizen-led Action toolkit* integrates knowledge from pertinent sections on topics related to impact achievement and effective communication for CO results, among others. Nevertheless, and similarly to the *WeObserve* recommendations, the *Citizen-led action toolkit* also acknowledges that (1) there is no single formula for achieving these impacts, and (2) that while it is possible to trigger some specific changes, it is also important to realise that many changes are beyond the immediate control of the CO.

The *SISCODE* project (EU Grant Agreement No 788217) aimed to bridge the gap between the theoretical concepts of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) and practical implementation in society. Through desk and field research conducted across 10 real-life experiments in Europe, the project explored the interaction between citizens and stakeholders, resulting in valuable firsthand knowledge. In SISCODE, co-creation is described as a collaborative and iterative process that engages various actors and stakeholders in the generation, implementation, and evaluation of products, services, policies, and systems. One of the reasons why SISCODE was chosen as an inspiration for the *CitiObs Citizen-led action toolkit* is its non-linear approach, which emphasises the active participation and involvement of multiple parties, and how it fosters collective effort to achieve better outcomes and meet the diverse needs and expectations of stakeholders. In particular, the *SISCODE Interactive Guidebook* [5.] and the SISCODE Toolbox for co-creating journeys [6.] are used as a reference for the CitiObs *Citizen-led Action toolkit*, as both provide tangible support for those seeking to enhance the responsibility of their initiatives and processes through co-creation.

Centrinno, a Horizon 2020 project (EU Grant Agreement No 869595), seeks to revitalise neglected industrial historic sites and areas by transforming them into locally productive, sustainable, and inclusive hubs. The project focuses on developing strategies and solutions for *Fab City Hubs* (*FCHs*), which serve as testbeds for sustainable manufacturing in urban environments in nine pilot cities. The *Fab City Hubs (FCH) Toolkit* [6.], developed through iterative processes and co-design with the pilot cities, serves as a practical and dynamic resource that outlines the necessary steps to conceive, establish, and operate *FCHs*, merging theoretical insights with real-world experimentation. The toolkit methodologies, case studies, types of tools, and approach on how to address challenges, e.g. inclusivity and network building, were reference

points for the creation of the *Citizen-led action toolkit.* Likewise tools, such as the *Collective Intelligence Canvas*, have been directly added to the *Citizen-led action toolkit.*

The culture/SHIFT [17.] methodology works on "supporting collaborations between artists and climate change organisations through [the] culture/SHIFT programme to harness the role of culture and creativity in tackling the climate emergency". This project has developed some guiding principles that aim to underpin the process for the collaboration between these organisations. The methodology describes (Figure 8) a series of steps that aid in defining the overall scope of the project, the parties involved, and guidelines for the artists recruitment process, action plan development and final delivery. The *CitiObs Citizen-led action toolkit* adapts from this approach and adapts
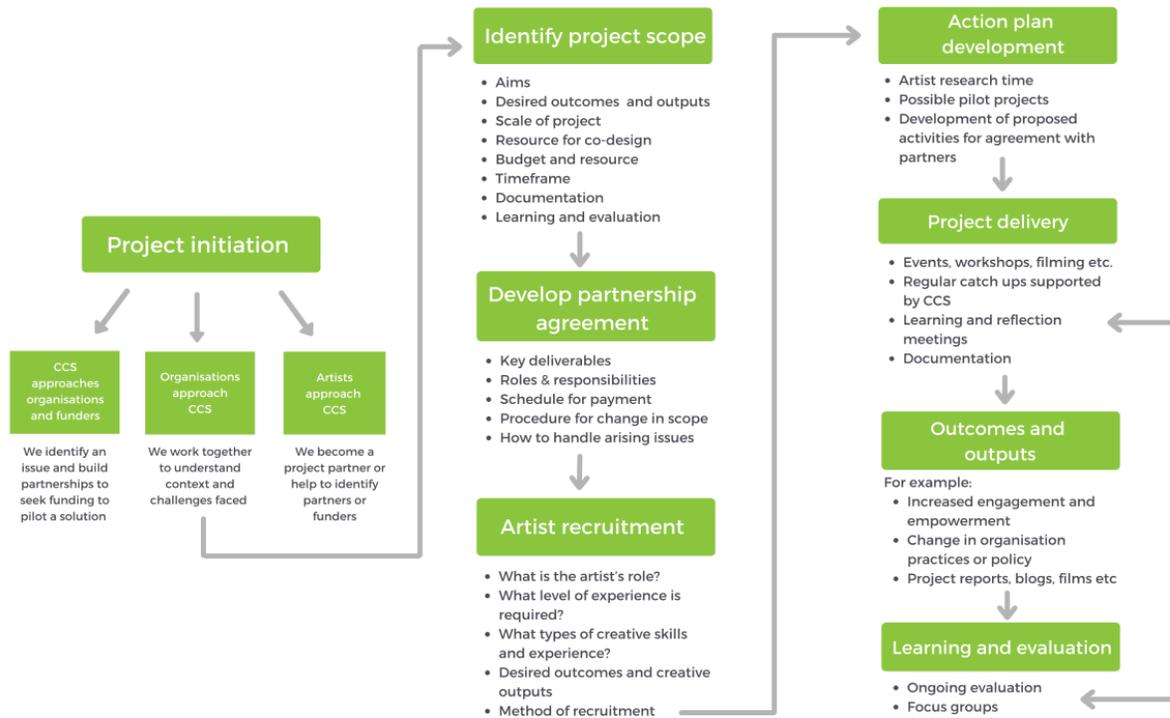

Figure 8. *culture/SHIFT methodology diagram*

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