



# SIMULATION PROTOTYPE

**What:** This kind of prototype is for getting the details right for a refined, or close to final, concepts. This means that your solution is almost ready for a pilot implementation in the live context.

**Why:** Prototyping is a set of quick and small-scale tests that build your understanding of your concept. It is used when you have a clear hypothesis about a new solution, but you are still unsure how exactly the new solution should be designed for implementation.

A simulation prototype re-enacts a scenario through roleplay. Physically walking someone through your proposed solution – especially if the solution is related to a specific location or service related – lets them immerse themselves in the experience and invites them to provide specific feedback. Using this method, you can collect detailed feedback to refine and validate your solution.

Simulation prototyping is especially great for engaging your stakeholders to gain their support before you bring your concept to life.

**When:** Prototyping is particularly relevant in the design and planning stage in the project cycle when seeking to validate a new concept, for example, in the project inception phase. But it can also be a powerful tool during implementation if new concepts are added to existing projects.

**NOTE:** Simulation prototyping might not be appropriate, or safe, for all kinds of project or participants. Consult your protection, gender, and inclusion and community engagement and accountability focal points or advisors if in doubt.

If you are unsure of which kind of prototype would be best to test your concept, check out the [Which prototype tool](#) here.

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## Step 1

### PREPARE THE EXERCISE

Before you start your simulation prototype exercise, you need a plan of what you want to test and should have the following at hand:

- A well-defined solution that you now want to test against whether it solves the challenge at hand appropriately. By well-defined, it is meant that you:
  - o Have a clear outline of the problem and needs the solution is to address.
  - o Have a clear hypothesis about how the solution will address the problem or needs and for whom.
- A clear idea of what elements of your solution you want to test.
- A few learning questions you want to answer when testing your concept assumptions. For example: We want to test the relevance of the solution; we want to test how the solution ideally should be implemented; we want to get feedback on certain aspects of the solution and the sequencing of the activities planned as part of the solution.

## INFORMATION

**PHASE**  
TEST

**TIMEFRAME**  
LONGER

**MODE**  
FACE-TO-FACE

**PARTICIPANTS**  
5 - 20

**FACILITATION LEVEL**  
ADVANCED

**MATERIALS**  
FLIPCHART, PAPER, MARKER  
PENS, AND STICKY NOTES

- You have identified who you need to test the solution with. Depending on what you are testing through simulation, the number of test participants can vary from a few to a lot. When choosing who should take part in the simulation, consider protection, gender, and inclusion principles – in particular dignity, access, and safety considerations. Always consider whether there may be any aspects related to the age, gender, and diversity of participants that might put them at risk of harm (children, people with disability, older people, etc.). Check with your community engagement and accountability advisor and your protection, gender, and inclusion advisor if you are in doubt.
- Participants should be made aware of the potential risks of participating in the simulation and that negative emotions might be triggered. Adult participants need to provide informed consent. For anyone below the age of 18 (adolescents or children), written informed consent must be obtained from the guardian or caregiver for the child/adolescent to participate.
- Plan the time and place for the simulation so that it is as convenient as possible for test participants. Remember to assess this through a protection, gender, and inclusion lens, including applying dignity, access, participation, and safety principles, when planning.
- Plan how you will give feedback to test participants.
- Arrange for one or two from the project team to observe as the exercise unfolds. Critical information can be found in the unsaid about how the concept works.

**Note:** Those conducting or facilitating the simulation should be trained in psychological first aid and the survivor-centred approach, and must know how to safely deal with potential disclosure of sexual and gender-based violence or protection issues. Ideally, you have all of this written down in a test plan. Prepare to have relevant and updated information on services available and know which agencies or national institution provide these services (service mapping and referral pathways).

You can learn more about how to answer the above questions and find a test plan template under the [Which prototype? tool](#).  
Allow at least 120 – 240 mins for this step.

#### **Facilitator tip**

*If contextually appropriate and safe, you can use the prototyping session as an opportunity to co-design your concept with the communities we work with and for. Consider this option when selecting the simulation participants.*

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## **Step 2**

### **PLAN THE SIMULATION**

A simulation requires thorough planning for its maximum value in the project design process. A simulation script outlining roles (what is to be done, by who, and when) should be developed for everything to run smoothly. Outline any props needed and specify the exact place of where the simulation should take place.

Virtual reality (VR) tools are becoming increasingly accessible and are a great way to simulate an experience. If this is possible in your context, and safe for participants, consider employing this.

When developing the simulation plan, make sure to consider important safety or context-specific considerations to ensure that the exercise does not do any harm (e.g., re-traumatisation) or raise unrealistic expectations. Check with your community engagement and accountability advisor and your protection, gender, and inclusion advisor if you have any doubts.

When executing the simulation, have one or two from the project team observe how the exercise unfolds in terms of how the participants respond to the exercise as well as to observe to gather insights for the solution design. Critical information can be found in the unsaid about how the concept works.

Assign a member from the project team as note taker to ensure relevant observations and feedback given are well captured.

Rehearse/talk through the simulation before next phase with the project team and those who are to support conducting the simulation. If possible, it can be a good idea to rehearse the exercise with your community and engagement and protection, gender and inclusion advisor.

Ensure to discuss and agree with everyone taking part of the simulation, hereunder test participants, how much time it is reasonable to spend doing the simulation, respecting participants time and at the same time getting the information you need to test and validate your solution.

#### **Facilitator tip**

*Ensure that the instructions for the team and simulation test participants respectively are completely clear, so that everyone understands exactly what to do and to avoid any obstructions during the simulation.*

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## **Step 3**

### **SIMULATION TIME**

With your plan and script in place, it is time to execute the simulation prototype.

During the simulation, have the note taker fill out observations and the feedback given.

It is difficult to pre-define how long time the actual simulation takes as it depends on the scope of the simulation.

#### **Facilitator tips**

*Always be sure to manage expectations and be aware of emotional well-being when testing prototypes with stakeholders outside of your project team. Especially when inviting stakeholders to co-design, it is important to be clear on what is realistic to achieve within the project scope when ideas for adjustments come up. Also keep in mind that it may be necessary to manage expectations with stakeholders beyond the test participants.*

*Be very aware not to cause unintended harm. Make sure to Inform participants taking part in the simulation that the simulation may trigger some negative emotions. Stress that participation is completely voluntary, and participants can stop at any point during the exercise. If you or your team assess that simulation participants are responding negatively to the exercise, stop and evaluate how or whether to continue.*

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## **Step 4**

### **WRAPPING UP THE TEST**

Now that you have tested your concept with the chosen stakeholders, it is time for you and your team to process the inputs and decide on next steps.

- Is further testing needed? Or do you assess that your solution is now robust enough for a longer-term pilot test in a real implementation context?
- Have you assessed the feasibility and sustainability of the concept internally and externally? If not, you can use the [Assumptions Mapping tool](#) to guide and decide how to move ahead.

A debriefing with all participants is important to capture reflections, feedback from participants, and to ensure emotional well-being among participants after the exercise. If any of the simulation participants show signs of not responding well to the exercise, consult them and discuss whether referral or counselling is needed. Be ready to refer the participant upon informed consent.

**Next step:** Ensure feedback is given to those who took part in testing your concept, so that they are aware of how their inputs will be used and the next steps.

#### **Facilitator tips**

*It can be helpful to assign different roles to the project team members when processing the feedback. Have one being the 'solution champion' (the person focusing on the values of the solution); one as the 'critical friend' of the project (who constructively questions the challenges and barriers identified both from an internal organisation perspective and from the external stakeholder perspective); and one focusing on the debriefing and well-being of the participants. This can help you cover important aspects of how to move on with the concept.*