



# PAPER PROTOTYPE

**What:** Prototyping is a set of quick and small-scale tests that builds your understanding of your concept. Paper or cardboard prototyping is a cheap, quick, and easy way to express your concept. It could be a sketch of a flyer or service process, a built paper mock-up of a new service like a handwashing station, process or a product or a new way to communicate. The possibilities are numerous. If you can draw a stick man, a rectangle, an arrow or fold a piece of paper, you can make a paper prototype.

**Why:** is used when you have a clear hypothesis about a new solution but are still unsure how exactly the new solution should be designed for implementation. Bringing your idea to life visually can help clarify key features of your concept and understand how people would experience the new concept. If you are in doubt of which kind of prototype that is best to test your concept, check out [the Which prototype? tool](#).

**When:** Prototyping is particularly relevant in the beginning of the project cycle when seeking to validate a new concept, for example, in a project inception phase. But it can also be a powerful tool during implementation if new concepts are added to existing projects. You can use this exercise with relevant stakeholders, inviting them to co-design the concept with you.

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## Step 1

### PREPARE THE EXERCISE

Before you start your prototype exercise, you need a plan for what you want to test. You should have the following at hand:

1. A well-defined concept that you now want to test whether it solves the challenge at hand appropriately. By well-defined is meant that you:

- Have a clear understanding of the problem and needs to address.
- Have a clear hypothesis about what needs the concept or idea should address and for whom.
- The concept can still be quite rough as the objective for this kind of prototype is to understand and validate the overall concept, hereunder the assumptions made of the proposed solution ability and likelihood of impactfully addressing the identified needs.

2. A clear idea of what you want to test about your concept.

3. A set of learning questions you want to answer to test your concept assumptions. For example, we want to test the relevance of the concept idea; we want to test how the concept should be implemented; we want to get feedback on certain aspects of the concept.

4. One or two member(s) from the team as observer(s) and to take notes of the test, as a lot of information can be drawn from observations of reactions, interactions, etc.

5. Identified which stakeholders should test the concept and have briefed them on task, time, and place (remember to consider protection, gender, and inclusion

## INFORMATION

**PHASE**  
TEST

**TIMEFRAME**  
60-120 MINS.

**MODE**  
FACE-TO-FACE

**PARTICIPANTS**  
4 - 10

**FACILITATION LEVEL**  
BASIC

**MATERIALS**  
FLIPCHART, PAPER, MARKER  
PENS, STICKY NOTES (IN  
DIFFERENT COLOURS),  
SCISSORS, GLUE, TAPE

aspects).

6. A plan of how you will give feedback to the test participants.

It is recommended that you have all of this written down in a prototype test plan. You can get help on how to answer the above questions and find guidance of how to fill out a test plan template under the tool [Which prototype? tool](#).

Allow 60–120 mins for preparation in advance of the exercise.

#### **Facilitator tips**

If contextually and ethically appropriate, you can use the prototyping session as an opportunity to co-design your concept with the communities you work with and for. Consider this when selecting who to do the prototyping.

Consider meeting in a more creative spot than the office meeting room.

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## **Step 2**

### **TIME TO SKETCH AND/OR BUILD**

Introduce the participants to the timeframe and the purpose of the exercise:

- What are we going to do today?
- Why are they invited?
- What are their roles (if the participants are not familiar with each other)?
- What is the timeframe?

With the test goals in place, move on to the sketching. Start by sketching out your concept on a flip chart/or build a concept with the participants.

If the concept idea is still quite rough, you could first to let the group sketch out the idea on their own and then take turns to present it. Then, consolidate all ideas on a flip chart.

If the creativity is really flowing, you can also encourage people to make use of scissors, glue, tape, coloured sticky notes, and other useful aids – only your creativity sets the limits.

If your idea/solution is digital, there are several apps you can use to make simple prototypes, such as, [PoP](#) (Prototyping on Paper) or [Proto.io](#).

Allow approximately 30 minutes for this step.

#### **Facilitator tips**

A lot of people are not used to drawing – for some it can even be very uncomfortable. Encourage the participants along and ensure them that this is not about being good at drawing, but rather about conveying an idea. A paper prototype is a sketch, and it can be refined along the way. Let people know that it can be an advantage that the prototype is crude, as test participants are more likely to give honest feedback, if they understand that the concept is still to be refined.

To help people loosen up, you could ask one of the participants to name an animal that you should draw using only 10 seconds. Seeing your doodle will probably lift the spirit.

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## **Step 3**

### **TEST THE CONCEPT WITH STAKEHOLDERS**

With the sketching or building done, show the visualised concept to the chosen test stakeholders to get their feedback based on the prepared learning questions.

Get one or more from the group to observe and take notes of the test, as a lot of information can be drawn from observations of reactions, interactions etc.

Hand out sticky notes and pens to the test stakeholders to capture their feedback.

Go through the learning questions one by one.

If appropriate, you can invite the test participants to co-create the concept with you. This will, in most cases, improve the concept and you will create a co-ownership, which can be extremely valuable for the future uptake of your concept.

At the end, remember to thank all test stakeholders for their time and feedback. Ensure to inform them about how their inputs will be used, the next steps and what they can expect.

Allow 30–45 minutes for this step.

#### **Facilitator tips**

Always be sure to manage expectations when testing prototypes with stakeholders outside of your project team. Especially if inviting stakeholders to co-design, it is important to be clear on what can be possible 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.

If in doubt, check with your protection, gender, and inclusion advisor and community engagement and accountability advisor if testing with communities is appropriate and assess if there are certain aspects to pay particular attention.

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## **Step 4**

### **Wrapping up the test**

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

- Is more sketching/building and feedback needed? Or has your concept been validated sufficiently, and you are now ready to move on with developing your concept?
- Consider doing one more round asking participants how they feel about the drawing now, and how they feel the exercise went?

When further developed, it can be beneficial to test the concept again through a more advanced prototype, such as a simulation, or a physical prototype like a digital mock-up (if a digital concept), or a constructed small-scale prototype (e.g., a new type of handwashing station).

**Next step:** Discuss what should be next steps with the exercise participants and, ideally, identify who should undertake the next steps and when, including identifying who will provide feedback to the test stakeholders when.

Allow approximately 30 minutes for this step.

#### **Facilitator tips**

It can be helpful to take on different roles in the team when processing the feedback. Have one participant act as the concept champion ('selling' the values of the concept); and 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). This can help you cover important aspects of how to move on with the concept.