

Sustainable idea generation workshop

Methodology toolkit for youth workers by



Workshop overview

Basic Information

Title: Sustainable Idea Generation Workshop

Duration: ~2.5–3 hours

Group size: 10–30 participants per group

Target group: Youth (16–30), beginners to intermediate

Facilitator(s): 1–2 people

Learning objectives

By the end of the workshop, participants will:

- Understand sustainability beyond environmental topics (systems thinking)
- Identify real-life problems connected to sustainability
- Transform problems into practical business ideas
- Evaluate ideas based on feasibility and long-term impact
- Build and present a simple sustainable project

Materials Needed

- Sticky notes
- Markers
- Flipchart / whiteboard
- Printed templates (real-life problem + mini project)
- Timer (phone or visible countdown)
- Optional: visual cards for sustainability pillars

Useful Resources

- [Workshop materials](#)
- [Photos and outputs from previous workshops](#)

Workshop flow

1. Introduction of the Workshop

This workshop focuses on helping participants understand sustainability in a broader and more practical way, and then use it to generate real, testable business ideas. Instead of theory, the workshop is built around experience, discussion, and creation.

Participants move step by step:
from understanding sustainability → identifying real problems → creating solutions → building a simple project → presenting it.

Each part follows the same logic:
short introduction → guided task → sharing → reflection.

2. What is Sustainability Really?

This part expands participants' understanding of sustainability from a purely environmental topic to a concept of long-term system stability (business, society, personal life).

The facilitator starts with a simple task:
participants write 3 words they associate with sustainability (5–7 minutes) and place them on a flipchart. Usually, answers focus on nature, recycling, and environment, which creates a natural starting point.

The facilitator then introduces the broader concept of sustainability through 5 pillars:

- Planet
- People
- Money
- Personal
- Rules

This is followed by a short discussion using guiding questions such as:

- Can a company make money but hurt people?
- Can unfair rules destroy a business?

The goal is not to lecture, but to shift perspective.

3. What Happens When One Is Missing?

In this section, participants explore what happens when one sustainability pillar is missing. The aim is to show that imbalances create real-life problems.

Participants work in small groups and imagine a world where one element (e.g. fair rules, stable income, healthy environment) does not exist.

They discuss:

- What jobs would look like
- What cities would look like
- What daily life would look like

Then each group defines one concrete problem people would face.

The facilitator should guide participants away from abstract answers (e.g. "inequality") and push them toward specific, real-life problems (e.g. "freelancers don't get paid on time").

4. Your Real-Life Moment

This part connects sustainability to participants' own lives. The goal is to move from general problems to personal experience.

Participants individually complete a simple structure:

- I want to...
- But I cannot because...
- This makes my life...

Afterwards, they share in small groups and select one problem that:

- at least two people experience
OR
- they know someone who experiences it regularly

The facilitator helps validate whether the problem is real, frequent, and meaningful.

5. From Problem → Business Idea

Now participants transform the selected problem into a potential solution.

They rewrite the problem into a simple opportunity:

“How could we help [who] to [what]?”

Then they generate multiple ideas quickly (e.g. 8 ideas in 8 minutes).

The goal is quantity over perfection. Ideas should stay specific and practical, not abstract.

6. Is This a Good Idea?

In this phase, participants evaluate their ideas and select one to develop further.

They answer simple validation questions:

- Would people use it?
- Would someone pay for it?
- Does it help people?
- Can it work long-term?
- Is it realistic and legal?

The facilitator challenges unclear ideas and pushes participants toward:
real users + real value + realistic execution

7. Build Your Mini Project

Participants now structure their idea into a simple project.

They fill a basic framework:

- Problem
- Idea
- Target user
- Why would they pay
- Long-term benefit

This step turns abstract thinking into something clear and communicable.

8. Pitch

Each group presents their idea to others.

Typical format:

- 3-minute presentation per group
- Focus on: problem → idea → user → value

This is not about perfect presentation, but about clarity and logic.

9. Reflection

The workshop ends with a short reflection to consolidate learning.

The facilitator asks:

- What did you learn?
- Would you try this idea in real life?

This helps participants connect the experience to real-world action.

Facilitation Notes

This workshop works best when it stays practical and grounded in reality.

The facilitator should actively intervene when participants move into:

- abstract/global problems
- unrealistic solutions
- ideas requiring government or large-scale systems

Instead, guide them with questions like:

- Who would pay for this?
- Can you test this next month?
- Is this a real problem in your daily life?