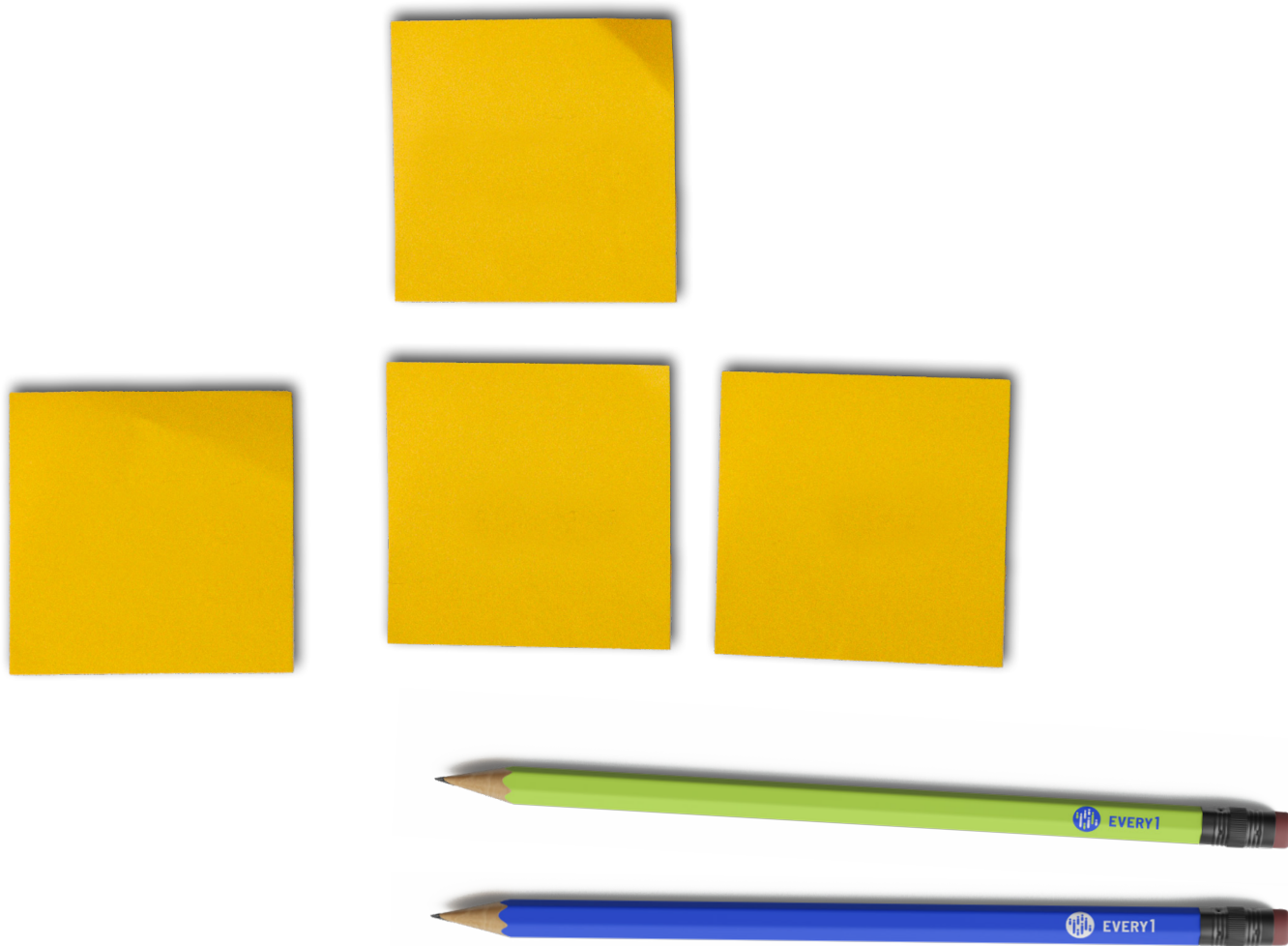


COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT FOR ENERGY COMMUNITIES

A practical guide for impactful community engagement



Funded by
the European Union



EVERY1

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A practical guide for impactful community engagement**

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Author **Every1**

Written by **Francesca Van Daele (Th!nk E)**

Reviewed by **Lorenz Van Damme (Th!nk E)**

Design **Francesca Van Daele (Th!nk E)**

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INTRODUCTION

As we embark on this journey together, it is essential to understand the underlying purpose behind our development of this comprehensive design thinking set, which includes both this handbook and a companion workbook.

As you progress, you'll encounter a series of steps—each designed as an individual workshop. During each step participants will engage with various exercises and activities to develop their personas and corresponding communication strategies. We have included suggested timeframes to help you manage the duration of each session.

The culmination of all sessions will result in **persona and communication fiches**, which will serve as valuable assets when developing communication materials or determining the most suitable strategy. We encourage you to keep the workbook organized in a **ring binder**, as you'll also be invited to complete exercises using A3 sheets during the workshops. These sheets can be folded and added to the binder, keeping all your materials in one place for easy reference.

The idea behind this handbook is for you to lead workshops independently, without the presence of professional facilitators. This approach gives you the freedom to proceed at your own pace and use your own resources. The ultimate goal of this design thinking set is to equip your energy community with the tools necessary to communicate more effectively with your target audiences.



Remember to assign the secretary

During each workshop, we need to ensure everyone is on track. Therefore, one person will get assigned with the role of secretary. During the workshop, the secretary will lead the team through each session, guided by reading what's outlined in the workbook.

The secretary will be responsible for tasks such as taking notes, documenting decisions, or handling logistic duties when preparing the workshop. Moreover, this person will keep an eye on time, ensuring everything stays on schedule. In short, the secretary ensures that the sessions runs smoothly.

DESIGN THINKING



It's easy to feel stuck when tackling complex challenges, especially in areas like energy transition and community engagement. Energy communities are made up of diverse individuals with different needs, values, and motivations, making it difficult to create a one-size-fits-all communication strategy.

Design thinking is a powerful, user-centered approach that helps navigate these complexities. It is not just a mindset but also a process that encourages creativity, experimentation, and continuous feedback to develop strategies that truly resonate. Instead of relying on rigid solutions, this process allows for flexible, iterative problem-solving—helping energy communities to create meaningful connections, engage stakeholders effectively, and drive real impact.



STEP 1

DEFINING THE COMMUNITY

Objective

The objective of this first step is to gain a deep understanding of your energy community—who is involved, what is already happening, and where you want to go in the future? This phase consists of several exercises designed to help you map out the key stakeholders, identify existing services, and uncover future opportunities.

By going through the exercises, this first step helps to create a **strong foundation** for designing a communication and engagement strategy that is inclusive, relevant, and impactful.





30 minutes

Exercise 1: Current and future services

The first exercise might seem simple, but it is a fundamental step in the process. By exploring and documenting existing services and initiatives, you create a baseline that will inform the development of future strategies.

The goal of this exercise is to establish a clear understanding of the current state of the community and set a vision for its future.

Revisit and refine:

You are free to adjust and update your lists throughout the next exercises and steps. We encourage you to add new services or remove those that may no longer align with your vision.

- 1 The first question aims to explore and document what's already being done within the community - what services are currently in place? Which initiatives or projects have you initiated?
- 2 The second question seeks to identify where you want to go in the future - what specific services do you hope to offer?

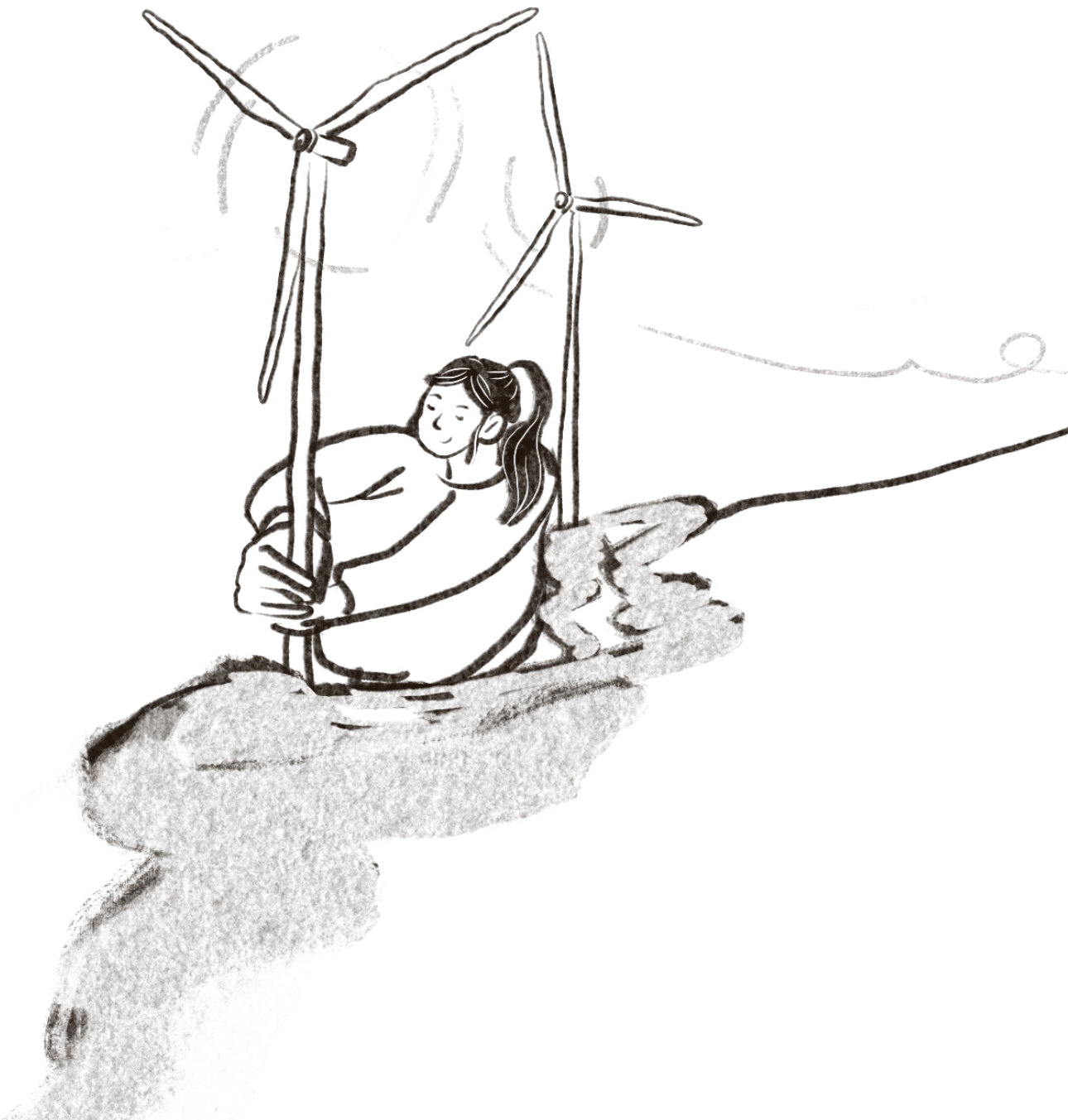
Encourage participation from everyone by having each person add something to the list, ensuring even introverted individuals also contribute.

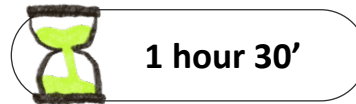


What do you need?

- Workbook templates
- Markers to write

[DOWNLOAD MATERIALS](#)



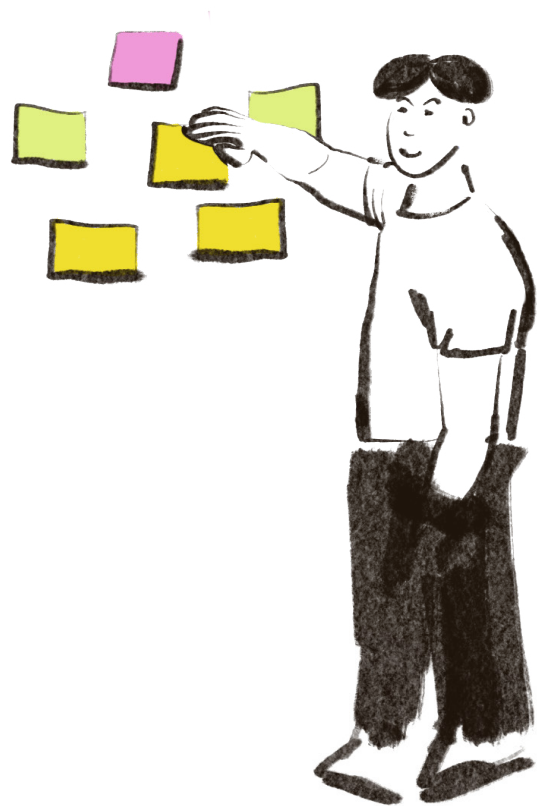


Exercise 2: Actors

/1 Write down each **current and potential future service** on an A4 or A3 page. Write the name of the service at the top and leave plenty of white space.

/2 Hand out post-it notes to the participants and have them all individually go around each of the services to write down which **actors** they think can be involved (one colour of post-it) and which actors they think are absolutely needed (another colour of post-it).

/3 After everybody has passed by each service group the participants in groups of two. Give each group a set of stickers. Each group now passes by each service and puts a sticker on each actor of whom they think that they can already be **easily reached**.



What do you need?

- A4 or A3 format paper
- Colored post-it notes
- Markers for writing
- Stickers

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/4 Before proceeding write on each post-it the service it is linked to. Rank the actors **in order of importance** to involve. Do this by hanging the post-its from left to right on a wall (left being most important in this case).

/5 Start with the crucial actors for the current services: Any of these actors that are not easy to reach yet should be first on the priority list. To place these in an order:

- Go through each post-it one by one.
- Hold it on the right side of the list, everybody that thinks the current actor on the post-it is more important than the one on the left of it raises their hand. If more than half of the people raise their hand move the post-it one place to the left. *Repeat this until less than half of the participants raise their hand.*
- Put the post-it on this position in the list. Whenever an actor is already on the list (because they are needed for multiple services) check if it is indeed fully the same actor (e.g.: for the actor municipality there might be different departments involved), if it is a different part/subdivision of the actor make this clear on the post-its. If it is fully the same actor only keep the highest rated one.

/6 The next services to be listed are these for the current services, list the actors that could be involved to expand on these, and for the potential services list the crucial actors.

/7 The last group to be addressed is the “could be involved”-group for the potential services.

/8 Write down the list and add it to the workbook binder.



2 hours

Exercise 3: Value Proposition Canvas

This exercise will help you to define your value proposition by aligning your services with the needs of the community members. Participants will identify how their community's offerings provide solutions by creating gains (benefits) and relieving pains (challenges).

The goal is to achieve a strong fit between the services provided and the actual needs of the members, ensuring that the energy community delivers real value.

/1 Take the list with actors that you created during **step 1, exercise 2**. And take the ones that were marked as **opportunities for improvements** where contact or relationship is not running smoothly. We will use these actors to fill out the Value Proposition Canvas (print on A3 or bigger).

/2 Divide the team in **two groups** and assign the value map to one group and the customer profile to the other. Each group has 45 minutes to brainstorm. That is about 15 minutes per segment (Gain creators/Pain relievers/Services and Gains/Pains/Customer jobs).

/3 Each group will now **present** their **results**, with a maximum of 30 minutes per group. The goal is to foster group discussion, rather than having the groups simply present their findings in a monologue.

/4 Once the exercise is complete, you can **add it to the workbook** by folding it in half and placing it in the ring binder. Additionally, you can include the value proposition canvas in your workbook.

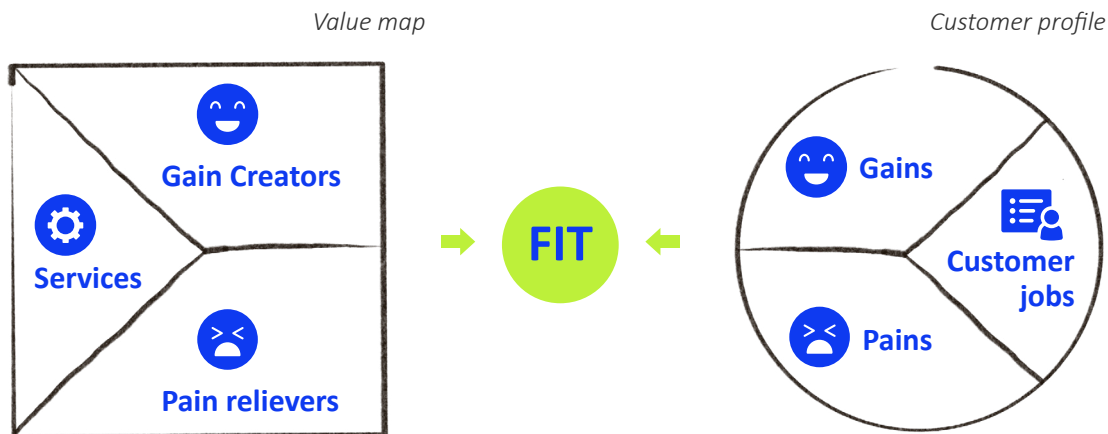
Be critical:

Engage in a group discussion and challenge yourself to think critically. When groups present their findings, ask critical questions, even when the answer seems obvious. Ensure the answers have been thoroughly discussed before copying them onto the canvas.

What do you need?

- Workbook template
- Markers

[DOWNLOAD MATERIALS](#)



What specific benefits do our services provide to enhance member satisfaction?

- Outline how your energy community creates value for its members.
- Consider cost savings, access to renewables, etc.

What are the main motivations for members to join the energy community?

- Identify the key benefits members seek.
- Consider financial savings, energy security, sustainability, and community engagement.

What specific services do we provide to help members achieve their energy goals?

- Define the core offerings of your energy community.
- Think about infrastructure, digital tools, training, or advocacy.

What are the frustrations or barriers that prevent members from fully benefiting from the energy community?

- List the biggest challenges or risks for members.
- Think about costs, regulatory barriers, etc.

How do our services make it easier for members to participate and succeed?

- Identify ways to reduce or eliminate member concerns.
- Consider financing options, regulatory assistance, or access to information.

What specific needs, goals, or challenges do members have regarding their energy use and community participation?

- Consider practical, social, and emotional aspects.
- Identify the tasks members need to accomplish such as maintaining infrastructure, etc.

STEP 2

CRAFTING PERSONAS

What are personas?

Personas are powerful tools because they bring customers to life with specific characteristics, goals and challenges. In these ways, they help teams more effectively tailor products, services and communications to a diverse customer base.

You can best understand the concept of a persona as a way of turning the diversity and complexity of customers into **understandable and workable profiles** by personalising the target audience into fictional individuals. In other words, each persona is a vivid personality with certain desires, ambitions and frustrations.

Rather than seeing personas as strict profiles for specific groups, they should be seen as tools for understanding the key needs and motivations of customers. This is not to say that certain characteristics belong only to one specific target group.

Objective

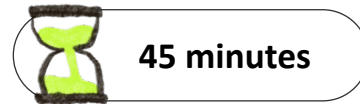
Personas can be consulted during brainstorming new ideas, testing services and evaluating marketing campaigns.

An effective use of personas, is not about demographic traits, but mainly about understanding **customer needs and expectations**. So don't stare blindly at the persona's age or occupation. Present the persona vividly, as if you were having a conversation and interacting with someone real. That way, you challenge yourself to delve into the persona's daily challenges and motivations. Then, by better understanding these aspects, you will be better able to respond to what really drives them and how best to reach them.

Validation

When developing personas, a common pitfall is relying on outdated assumptions. To avoid stereotypes, focus on real data and quick iterations. This process is built on three key stages:

- 1 Assumptions
- 2 Build
- 3 Test



Exercise 1: Assumption mapping

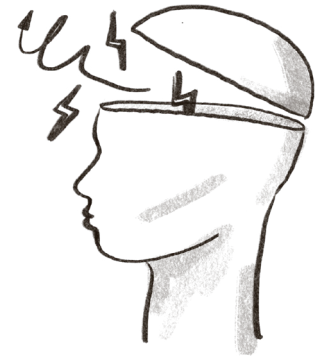
In this exercise, you will identify and prioritize key assumptions about target actors to determine what needs testing. Use insights from the previous exercise to spark discussion about existing assumptions.

The goal is to kick things off with a warm-up exercise that encourages sharing experiences and helps you start outlining the initial contours of your personas.

1/ Use this framework:

We believe our target actor is **[describe who they are]** who wants **[their main goal or need]** but struggles to **[their main pain point]**.

Example: We believe our target actor is **[a young single woman]** who wants **[to reduce the energy bill and make her house greener]** but struggles to **[find the right information and make hard decisions]**.

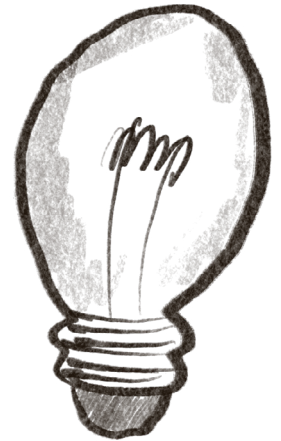


What do you need?

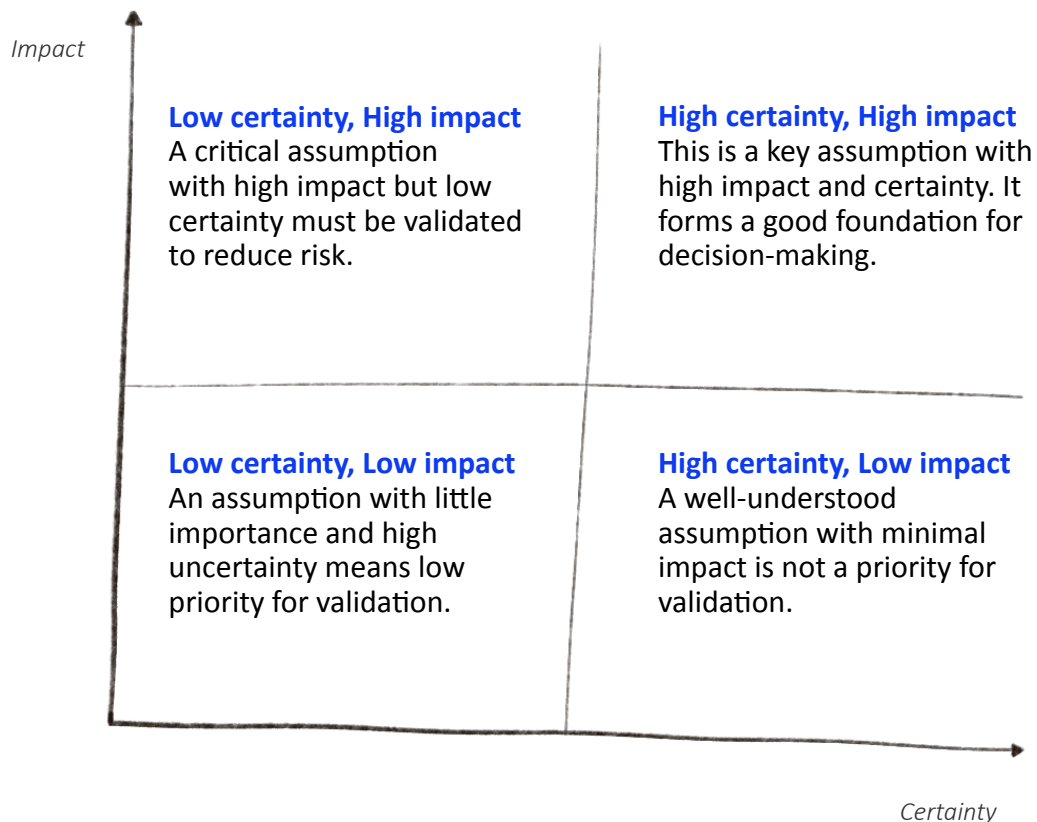
- Workbook templates
- A4 or A3 format paper
- Colored post-it notes
- Markers for writing
- Stickers

[DOWNLOAD MATERIALS](#)

We recommend creating 3 to 5 personas, with most representing residents of the community. Additionally, include at least one persona that represents an organisations, such as schools or companies.



/2 Next, write these assumptions on post-its and place them onto the matrix. The high-impact, low-certainty assumptions are the riskiest and need validation first. Write down the top 3 assumptions to test for each emerging persona.





1 hour 30'

Exercise 2: Empathy map

This exercise will help you fine-tune the personas. The empathy map distinguishes different characteristics of the different target groups. This way, they become lively people to whom you can really tailor your communication, strategy and possibly even offer.

1/ What do they think? This includes their internal beliefs, assumptions, hopes, and doubts. What are their private thoughts or expectations about renovation? Do they believe it will be expensive, time-consuming, or worth the investment?

2/ What do they feel? What emotions are they experiencing? Are they excited, anxious, frustrated, or hopeful? What motivates them or holds them back? Do they have past experiences—good or bad—that influence how they feel about renovating now?

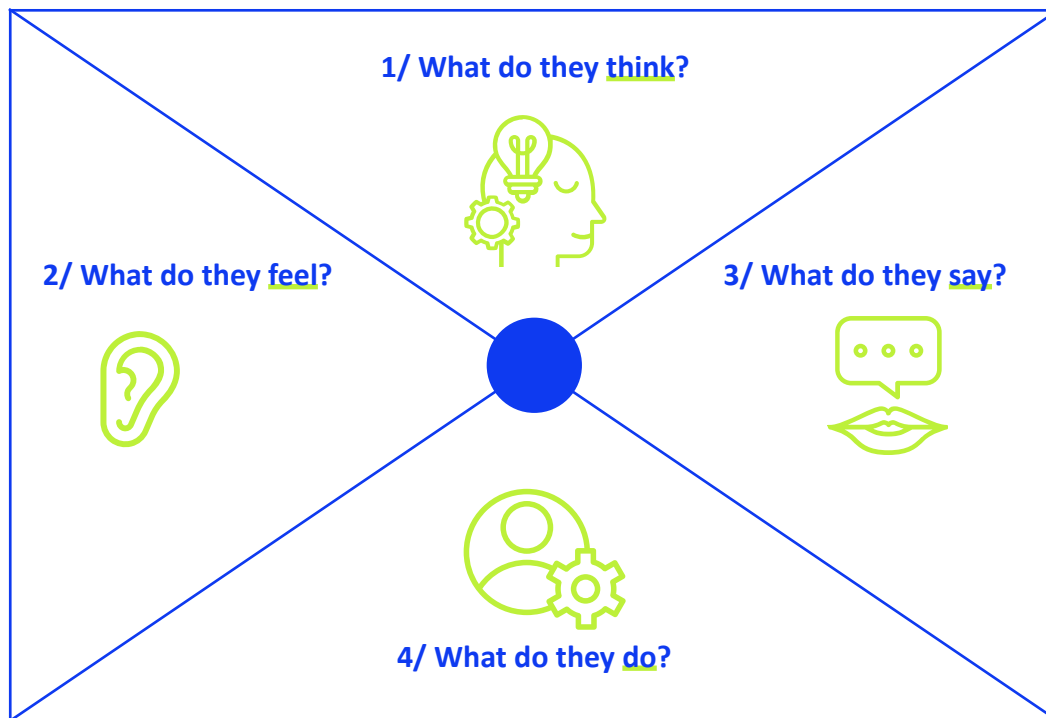
3/ What do they say? What do they express openly in conversations? What do they talk about with friends, family, or colleagues? What opinions, concerns, or stories do they share? How do they describe their renovation goals or challenges?

4/ What do they do? What actions do they take? How do they behave when making decisions, gathering information, or engaging with others? Are they proactive, hesitant, vocal, or reserved? What patterns can you observe in their choices or behavior?

What do you need?

- Workbook exercises
- A4 or A3 format paper
- Colored post-it notes
- Markers for writing
- Stickers

[DOWNLOAD MATERIALS](#)



Based on all these four categories answers, you can extract their:

5/ Goals & Motivations What drives their engagement? Are they looking to lower energy bills, contribute to sustainability, or something else? By identifying their goals, you can align your messaging with what truly matters to them.

6/ Frustrations What challenges do they face? Do they struggle with unresponsive contractors or complex technical explanations? Understanding these frustrations helps you anticipate their needs and improve communication by proactively building trust.

Have a look at exercise 3 from step 1 for reference, where you also defined the gains and pains.

Exercise 3: Test and validate

To test, validate and refine your personas, you first need to determine how to validate the information you've filled out on the persona sheet. Here are a few methods you can use:

1/ Door-to-door interviews:

- 1 Take the personas fiches and go door-to-door with them
- 2 For each persona, try to interview at least two people from that group
- 3 Pay special attention to the communication channels and needs
- 4 After the interviews, adjust the personas based on the feedback received

2/ Social media post or poll

- 5 Use social media to ask your target audience directly about their challenges or pain points. For example, what barriers they face when considering energy upgrades
- 6 This not only helps gather insights but also sparks conversation and builds community engagement

3/ Intake conversations or forms

- 7 Use your intake forms or initial consultations as a way to refine your personas.
- 8 Make sure you can document it somewhere in the system
- 9 Ask questions like: Why did you contact us? or What do you hope to achieve?

Set a timeline:
Collectively decide when to come back together to analyze the responses. We recommend a timeframe of 1 to 4 months.

4/ Analyse the responses to gather more detailed insights into your personas and adjust them accordingly. This is an opportunity to better understand and empathize with the various personas.

You might ask questions like: Do they prefer face-to-face interactions, or are they more engaged online? Are they already knowledgeable about energy topics, or do they need more foundational information? How do they typically behave - do they ask lots of questions or prefer to research independently? Gaining insight into their mindset will help you tailor the tone and style of your communication effectively.



STEP 3

COMMUNICATION MATRIX

Objective

Each stage, goal, and target audience requires a customised communication tool, and this can feel overwhelming at first. With so many communication tools available, especially when trying to **balance online and offline strategies**, it's easy to get lost. The key is to start simple. Focus on what you know about your audience, set clear goals, and gradually incorporate the tools that best suit your target audience's needs.

By now, after completing the previous steps, you should have a clear understanding of your personas. The next step is to match the right communication tools for each persona.

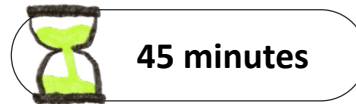
These exercises are designed to familiarise you with the steps you should follow every time you plan a communication strategy. In the beginning, it may feel like a lot to consider, but with time, it will become naturally integrated into your process. Note that brainstorming sessions with two or more people are much more effective than working alone. Collaborative thinking sparks creativity and allows you to build on each other's ideas, making the process more successful.

Goals and priorities

You cannot achieve all your goals at once. So it is important to set priorities. These priorities should be based upon each persona. As each of them need to achieve their own targets. In this section, you will be guided to find out which personas can be reached through which ways, and make sure that your overall **communication strategy** diversifies in terms of reach.

This workshop should not be done with the whole team, but we suggest a minimum of two participants, preferably those that will be involved in executing or planning the communication outreach. The idea is to not overdo things, but be very pragmatic and doable.

Note that this can be **frustrating at first**. As you need to build your community with your communication. And building this takes time. So take your time and do not overrush. If you proceed, you will succeed. The goal is not to reach as many people as possible, yes it is also, but you especially want to **engage** them, and reach people who are interested in participating in your energy community.



Exercise 1: Communication goals

Before diving into the exercise, there are a couple of questions that should open the floor for discussion. Take your personas that you created during previous step (sheet templates we still need to provide).

1/ Assess your organisation capacity: what resources do you have for communication?

- 1** Capacity to create content (write blogs, take images, post social media posts, etc.)?
- 2** Network to reach out to or local events where you can set up booths or stalls?
- 3** Budget for paid ads, flyers or other material?
- 4** Have you established a relationship with the municipality or other local authorities?
- 5** Avoid overcommitting to tools that might not be feasible at the start!

2/ What are the top three goal(s) per persona in the next six months?

- 6** Raise awareness about energy-saving solutions?
- 7** Attract new members or partners?
- 8** Engage and educate the community on sustainable energy?
- 9** Promote specific projects or group renovation offers?



45 minutes

Exercise 2: Communication channel priorities

Before diving into the exercise, there are a couple of questions that should open the floor for discussion. Take your personas that you created during previous step (sheet templates we still need to provide).

The goal here is to highlights which tools should be prioritized for each persona, helping you focus on the most effective communication channels while taking into consideration both the goal and resource fits.

- 1/ In this table, list all your personas in the leftmost column.
- 2/ List the available communication tools across the top row, ordered from the easiest to the hardest to use (e.g., tools you are most familiar with should be on the left).
- 3/ For each cell, indicate the Goal Fit and Resource Fit of each tool for each persona. The total number should range between 2 and 6 as you will use a scale from 1 to 3 per fit:
 - 1 = Low fit (either goal or resource fit is weak)
 - 2 = Medium fit
 - 3 = High fit (strong alignment with both goal and resource fit)

No inspiration?
 If you are in need of inspiration regarding different communication tools, feel free to take a look at the communication fiches in the next section.

For example, a Goal Fit score of 1 combined with a Resource Fit score of 3 would result in a total score of 4.

	Tool 1	Tool 2	Tool 4	Tool 5
Persona A	5	6	4	4
Persona B	4	3	3	2
Persona C	6	2	3	3
Persona D	2	5	2	6

- 4/ Next, highlight the left-most tool with the highest score. This shows you the tool you can prioritize for this persona. Then, move to the next persona and repeat the exercise.

STEP 4

CUSTOMIZED COMMUNICATION FICHES

This last step marks the final stage of this communication toolkit and results in tailored communication fiches, designed to suit the unique needs of your organisation's personas.

By completing the exercises in **steps 1, 2 and 3**, you now have the insights needed to make informed decisions about which tools to use, for which personas, and how best to engage them. This foundation allows you to adapt the fiches in a way that reflects your organization's goals, capacity, and audience dynamics.

The fiches provided here are starting points - basic templates to help you get going. We've also included blank templates so you can create your own. Don't hesitate to get creative: sometimes, the most unexpected or quirky communication methods are the ones that truly capture attention.

This is especially true for energy communities, where communication isn't just about delivering information—it's about building relationships and fostering a sense of community. The way you communicate plays a big role in how people connect, trust, and participate.

So take these fiches as your base, then adapt, experiment, and personalize them to match the tone, tools, and storytelling style that works best for your audience.

Each fiche is a short, practical guide that offers inspiration and direction on how to use a specific communication tool effectively.

They give you:

- 1 A brief overview of the tool.**
- 2 Its typical tone and style.**
- 3 The personas or audience types it best serves.**
- 4 Tips for success, including content types, frequency, and potential pitfalls.**

Exercise 1: Communication fiches

On the right, you'll find a list of all the communication fiches provided for this toolkit. These are designed for printing and adding directly into your workbook.

Before printing, take a moment to reflect on the tools you identified in **step 3, exercise 1**—you should only print the fiches for the communication tools you plan to work with. This helps keep your workbook focused, relevant, and tailored to your organization's actual strategy.

These fiches are not meant to limit you—they are designed to spark ideas and help you align each tool with the real-world needs and resources of your organization. Think of them as jumping-off points: you're encouraged to adapt, mix, or create your own (we've included blank fiches for that purpose).ca

Especially for energy communities, where engagement goes beyond information sharing, your communication tools need to build trust, inspire action, and create a sense of belonging. The right mix of tools can help transform passive recipients into active participants.

What do you need?

- Communication fiches
- Markers

[DOWNLOAD THE FICHES](#)



Online

- Facebook
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Google
- X
- Blog
- Newsletter
- Booklets, brochures, E-books

Offline

- Billboard posters
- Municipality magazine
- Advertising letters

PR

- Press releases
- Booths at fairs or expos
- Interview/opinion in newspaper
- Local media appearances (radio/tv)
- Partner with influencers/local celebrities
- Partner with local authorities

Events

- Online webinars
- Information event
- Workshops

