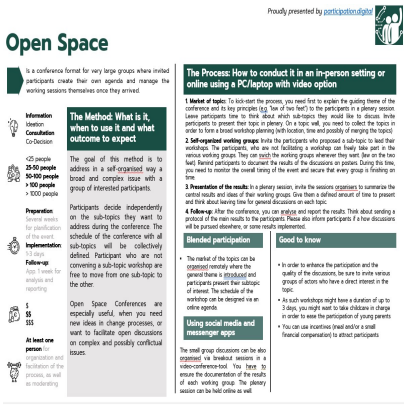

Open Space

Description

Open Space

Open Space is a conference format for very large groups where invited participants create their own agenda and manage the working sessions themselves once they arrived.

Level of participation

Information
Consultation

Duration of participation process

Preparation: Several weeks for planification of the event
Implementation: 1-3 days
Follow-up: App. 1 week for analysis and reporting

Target group size

25-50 people
50-100 people
>100 people

Costs

$$

Human resources needed

At least one person for organization and facilitation of the process, as well as moderating

The method: what is it, when to use it and what outcome to expect

The goal of this method is to address in a self-organised way a broad and complex issue with a group of interested participants.?

Participants decide independently on the sub-topics they want to address during the conference. The schedule of the conference with all sub-topics will be collectively defined. Participant who are not convening a sub-topic workshop are free to move from one sub-topic to the other. ?

Open Space Conferences are especially useful, when you need new ideas in change processes, or want to facilitate open discussions on complex and possibly conflictual issues.

The process: how to conduct it in an in-person setting or online using a PC/laptop with video option

1. **Market of topic**s: To kick-start the process, you need first to explain the guiding theme of theconference and its key principles (e.g.”law of two feet”) to the participants in a plenary session. Leave participants time to think about which sub-topics they would like to discuss. Invite participants to present their topic in plenary. On a topic wall, you need to collect the topics in order to form a broad workshop planning (with location, time and possibly of merging the topics)?
2. **Self-organized working groups:**Invite the participants who proposed a sub-topic to lead theirworkshops. The participants, who are not facilitating a workshop can freely take part in the various working groups. They can swich the working groups whenever they want. (law on the two feet). Remind participants to document the results of the discussions on posters. During this time, you need to monitor the overall timing of the event and secure that every group is finishing on time. ?
3. **Presentation of the results:**In a plenary session, invite the sessionsorganisers to summarize the central results and ideas of their working groups. Give them a defined amount of time to present and think about leaving time for general discussions on each topic.?
4. **Follow-up:**After the conference, you cananalyse and report the results. Think about sending a protocol of the main results to the participants. Please also inform participants if a how discussions will be pursued elsewhere, or some results implemented..

Blended participation

The market of the topics can be organised remotely where the general theme is introduced and participants present their subtopic of interest. The schedule of the workshop can be designed via an online agenda.

Digital communication

The small group discussions can be also organised via breakout sessions in a video-conference-tool. You have to ensure the documentation of the results of each working group. The plenary session can be held online as well. ?

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Good to know

- ?In order to enhance the participation and the quality of the discussions, be sure to invite various groups of actors who have a direct interest in the topic. ?
- As such workshops might have a duration of up to 3 days, you might want to take childcare in charge in order to ease the participation of young parents?
- You can use incentives (meal and/or a small financial compensation) to attract participants ?

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