

Designing events to foster innovation

Experiences with open innovation events in Grow2Build



Meet
2

Know Grow Go



WAGENINGENUR

For quality of life

Grow2Build

Fostering innovation

Innovation towards sustainability requires new ideas to be conceived, explored, developed and realized. For this to happen, it is key that the right people meet and get know each other, that ideas are allowed to develop and germinate, and finally that people take concrete action to make the innovation reality. In practice these processes occur spontaneously in various settings. However if fostering innovation in a specific direction, for example towards sustainability is the endeavor, carefully designing events can provoke and stimulate these processes.

The EU-Interreg IV project Grow2build aims to improve the supply chain for hemp and flax based building materials. In the frame of this project Wageningen UR has organized eight interactive open innovation events. In these events people met, explored bottlenecks and opportunities and provided input to translate ideas for biobased building into concrete plans. An understanding of the situation at hand is the basis for determining which action is needed to bring a certain inno-

vation process further. This is the starting point for designing an open innovation event. In this brochure the Dutch experiences with open innovation events in Grow2Build are presented in three categories which follow the flow of an innovation process. In the box these categories are explained.

Categories of open innovation events

Meet2Know events bring people together, provoke unexpected encounters and stimulate new viewpoints and provide a podium to explore possibilities to work together.

Meet2Grow events serve to analyze a situation to identify opportunities and bottlenecks of a certain technology or concept and elaborate ideas for collaboration.

Meet2Go event serve to translate ideas into concrete plans or provide expert input for the realization of a concrete plan.

In practice open innovation events often serve a combination of these purposes. Nevertheless the typology of events on the basis of its main purpose- Know, Grow and Go- provides a helpful framework to share the experiences of Wageningen UR in Grow2Build.

In this brochure for each category the most important characteristics are explained and relevant experiences in Grow2build events are illustrated. Furthermore some recommendations are shared how to organize an event to serve that specific purpose. Together these experiences illustrate how to design events that foster innovation.



Meet2Know

Provoking the unexpected

Innovation arises where different worlds, people and ideas meet. This occurs spontaneously in various settings. The project Grow2Build has organized a number of open innovation events to stimulate these processes to take place. These events were aimed at provoking new encounters of people and ideas.

For this type of event it is important that the group of participants is heterogeneous, to enable different networks to meet. Diversity can be found in sectors, age, geographical distribution or professional disciplines. The theme should be chosen in such a way that it is recognized by the diverse participants and thus creates connection in the diversity. For this type of event a general theme works better than a very specific subject. The theme 'Opportunities for biobased construction' is an example of a general theme that emphasizes the joint effort.

The program should be exciting and challenging, the atmosphere provides safety and trust. Thus creating a safe basis to leave the comfort zone, meet new people and

explore new ideas. An innovative speaker from another region, country or sector can stimulate participants to identify new opportunities and start thinking in possibilities. A Grow2Build tour visiting different construction sites with a diverse group of people had a similar inspiring effect.

The events were designed to provoke new encounters between people who do not normally meet and to allow them to recognize new possibilities. During these events the focus gradually shifts from contact to content. One of the events started for example with the invitation to walk around and ask a person unknown to him/her why he/she was interested in biobased construction. Later in the event content became more prominent, when participants joined in groups conform a sort of world-café setting to analyze a specific aspect of biobased construction.

In Meet2Know events the aim is to enable participants to meet new people in a safe setting and explore new opportunities.

Example of an open innovation event

Opportunities for biobased construction

Grow2Build has organized an open innovation event where product developers, architects and construction advisors met each other to explore the possibilities for biobased construction. The aim was to foster cross sectoral relations as a basis for the development of new concepts and ideas. In a dynamic carousel participants met each other at 5 tables to discuss various themes. A host summarized the most important conclusions and all participants could indicate which challenges were most important to them. There was plenty of room to meet informally and to exchange contact details.



Meet2Grow

Allowing ideas to flourish

For ideas to flourish, inspired people need time and space to share and nurture their ideas. To let this happen, it is important that people can sit together to share ideas, present their competencies, set an agenda and combine networks and skills. Grow2Build organized events with the specific aim to jointly the state of the art in innovation in biobased solutions and explore new ideas and elaborate them.

The most important aspect in designing these Meet2Grow events is providing a clear challenge and a structure for participants to work effectively. In these events the focus shifts towards the content. The design of the event should be specifically tailored to the phase of development of the ideas. For example to create coalitions around a promising idea, a pitch podium is a first step where participants can show what they have to offer or invite potential partners to join in a new project. A Group Decision Room can be used to have a brainstorm for example to set an agenda for action. For this type of event the participants are

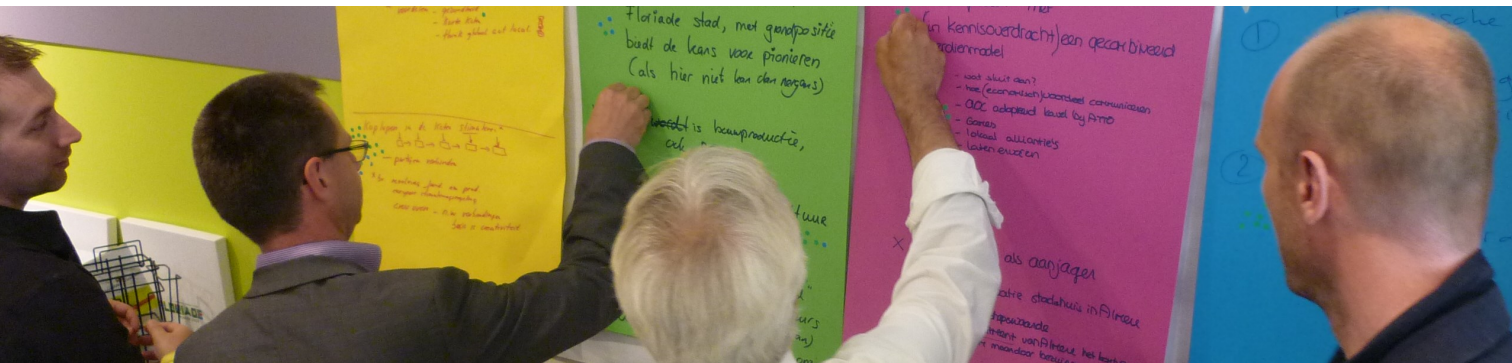
invited on the basis of their motivation to contribute to the problem or challenge at hand. The structure of the event should allow for divergence in the beginning and convergence towards the end. One of the Grow2build events started with an innovation café: participants could share their ideas on what needs to be done to promote the use of biobased construction materials. Thereafter participants were invited to indicate their interest with stickers. This provided insight which ideas need follow up and who wants to make an effort to realize it. The result was an agenda for action and a starting point for future cooperation.

In Meet2Grow events it is important to provide structure for people to combine their knowledge and expertise to make ideas grow.

Example of an open innovation event

Brainstorming about transforming a military compound

Grow2Build has organized a Meet2Grow event around the biobased transformation of a former military compound. The design of the event allowed participants to exchange ideas and skills and define possibilities for the use of biobased materials in the development of the compound. In a pitch podium some participants offered their services and participants could indicate their interest in working together. Besides feeding the concrete plans for the compound this event deepens the insight in the possibilities of biobased construction and the bottlenecks for wider adoption.



Meet2Go

Enriching action

When ideas have grown into a concrete plan, an open innovation event can be designed to gather input from various experts, to test the plan or find participants for the realization of the project. In this phase the realization of a concrete product or the design for a specific location is the central task. It is important that the challenge is as specific as possible and results will be actually used in practice. The central activities are expert consultation and partnership in planning and design. Besides planning also room should be made for further research, demonstration and testing of specific ideas.

In this type of events it works best to have a smaller group of participants, who are selected on the basis of the knowledge, skills and expertise they can bring in. In these events clarity about responsibilities, the phase of the design and the possibilities for participants to contribute is crucial for success. For example in the design of the biobased innovation pavilion it was clear that the job was assigned to a certain architect. The

Example of an open innovation event

Designing a biobased innovation pavilion

A Meet2Go event was organized around the design of an eye-catching innovation pavilion using biobased construction materials. Selected contractors, builders, product developers and architects involved in biobased construction were invited to contribute their ideas and expertise in the design process and to offer their services. The main architect shared his ideas in three scenarios. The participants enriched the scenarios with existing biobased solutions (now), possibilities in development (new) and options for the future (next). Finally, each one indicated how they would like to stay or become involved in the further process.

Meet2Go event should be designed to allow participants to provide their specific contributions in a meaningful way. Since participants might be competitors in a market, it is the challenge in meet2Go events to create a creative instead of competitive setting in which participants can share their ideas without too much reservation deserves due attention. This can be reached by inviting people on a personal title by providing clarity what can be expected. Working on scenarios or strategic questions is a way to invite creative cooperation and stay out of competitiveness.

In Meet2Go events the challenge is to invite selected participants and provide structure and challenge for each one of them to bring in expertise in the development of the innovation.

"The event brought ample expertise together and provided a smart structure, this generated an enormous richness in knowledge and ideas. This is valuable in my design process"

Duzan Doepel, architect.



Grow2Build

Open innovation events in a nutshell

Grow2Build has organised three types of open innovation events to foster innovation in the supply chain for biobased construction. Below some characteristics of each type are summarized:

	Meet2Know	Meet2Grow	Meet2Go
Purpose	Encounter of people and ideas	Exploration of ideas and possibilities	Development of plans
Participants	Heterogeneous group	Self selection	Selected for knowledge and skills
Content	General theme	Specific subject	Concrete challenge
Challenge	Safe setting and exciting program	Structure for divergence and convergence	Provide clarity to bring in expertise
Techniques	Speed date, world cafe, group work, inspiring speaker, brief encounters	Brainstorm, pitch podium, speakers corner, Group Decision Room, feedback of jury	Design session, action planning, sharing dreams & nightmares, pitch podium

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