

Upstream Innovation Workshop (remote) Facilitator's Guide

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Introduction

It is now widely recognised that a systemic, circular economy approach is the only solution that can match the scale of the plastic pollution problem. More than 850 organisations have united behind the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's vision of a circular economy for plastic, where we eliminate the plastic we don't need, innovate towards new materials and business models, and circulate all the plastic we use. Businesses accounting for more than 20% of global plastic packaging use have set ambitious 2025 targets towards this vision.

With 2025 just around the corner, it is time to deliver solutions — and these workshop resources are here to help you explore solutions with your colleagues, suppliers, factories and beyond. The workshop has been designed for both people new to the topic of packaging circularity, as well as seasoned circular economy practitioners. It considers upstream innovation for packaging through the lens of plastics, but many of the findings are applicable to other packaging materials.

The workshop is based on the [Upstream Innovation Guide](#). We would encourage you to familiarise yourself with its contents before reading this facilitator's guide.

At the time of launch of these resources, the coronavirus pandemic is changing the way we work. Many of us continue to work from home, and we are all adapting the way we meet and collaborate. We have therefore designed these resources to be effective when used remotely. As upstream innovation requires collaboration between different teams, suppliers and even brands, our ambition is that this flexible approach will be beneficial now and into the future.

We hope you find these resources useful during our collective journey towards a circular economy for plastic.

Preparations

This facilitator's guide is here to help you give a presentation on upstream innovation and run a remote workshop to explore the opportunities it presents. This guide will help:

- Decide who and how many people to invite
- Arrange the practicalities for putting on the digital workshop
- Make the information relevant and personalised to your audience
- Provide guidance to facilitate each of the activities in the workshop using Miro (a free, online collaborative whiteboard platform)

Facilitators and group size

We would recommend having two facilitators to run the workshop. A lead facilitator can run the workshop, with the other facilitator providing support in Miro. (Miro is simple to use, even for new users - and this guide will help you and your co-facilitator learn the basics). A group size of 6-12 is the sweet spot for running this style of workshop. More than 12, and it will be hard for everyone to input. Less than 6, and you may lack the diversity of thought and range of expertise needed.

Audience

The activities have been designed for a broad audience. The introduction to upstream innovation is designed to bring everyone up to speed. A workshop would be well suited to marketeers, product designers, product managers, packaging engineers and material technologists. As with any ideation, a diverse range of roles and expertise will create the best ideas.

Schedule and timings

We have created a range of assets you can pick and choose from to design sessions that meet your needs. We would suggest a two part approach: a ~45 minute broadcast to the team introducing upstream innovation, and 2.5hour+ online workshop in Miro to explore the opportunities for one or two strategies. These sessions could be on the same day, or following days.

If you want to explore all of the strategies, a few shorter sessions over a few days would allow you to slow the pace, and have a deeper and more reflective exploration. If the group is not familiar with using a digital whiteboard like Miro, factor in at least 15 minutes upfront for everyone to get familiar.

PREP

We've created a useful spreadsheet to help plan the workshop. It automatically adjusts the time plan when you change each activity, or add in extra breaks. [Click here to download.](#)

Part 1: Introducing upstream innovation

We've created a slide deck to help you introduce upstream innovation. There is a [Google Slides](#) or [PowerPoint](#) version available for download.

Before diving into the presentation, it's important to set the scene for the group. Make sure everyone knows why they have been invited, what the purpose of the session is, and what will happen in the upcoming workshop. If the group isn't familiar with one another, do a round of introductions. The presentation will take between 30-60 minutes to give. It includes the following sections:

What is the challenge?

These slides give a very quick intro to the plastic packaging problem. If the audience knows this really well, move straight onto the next section.

What is upstream innovation?

It's important from the outset the group understands the session isn't about collection or recycling technology innovation - it's about fixing the problem at the source.

Why explore upstream innovation?

We've added some examples next to each reason to pursue upstream innovation. However, the section will have the most impact if you're able to make these reasons relevant to your organisation.

OPTIONAL PREP

If you have specific **targets, initiatives, pilots or products that relate to these reasons**, the slides have been designed so you can add these to replace the example on the right of the slide. Add a sentence or two at most, and an image if you have one. Alternatively, add your own 'why' slides to this section.

Introduction to each strategy, with case study examples

These slides can be used to give a quick introduction to the upstream innovation strategies. If you are only focussing on one or two strategies, it's up to you how in-depth you go.

PREP (ESSENTIAL)

There are over 40 case studies to help explain the models within each strategy. We would suggest selecting 1-2 case studies which you think will better resonate with the audience - and **right click and hide/skip all the other case study slides**.

Part 2: Facilitating the workshop

Getting started with Miro

The workshop is ran using 'Miro', an online collaborative whiteboarding platform. It is free and simple for participants to use. You (or the person facilitating the workshop) will need a [Miro account](#). You can read about Miro security [here](#). Miro works best on Google Chrome, or Firefox, and may be less responsive in Internet Explorer. You can read more about which browsers are best for Miro [here](#).

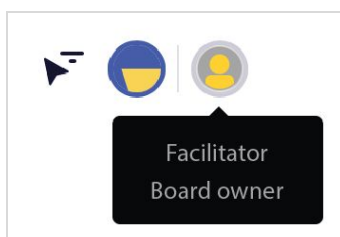
We have created a template pre-loaded with everything you need to run a workshop which you will need to add to your account. You can find the [template here on the 'Miroverse'](#). Click on '**Use Template**' and the board will be added to your account. **Please note, this may take a few minutes to complete.**

On opening the Miro template, everyone will see a 'Getting started with Miro' frame. This outlines the four basic things you need participants to understand how to do: **zoom** in and out, add a **sticky-note**, add an '**emoji**' and '**follow**'.

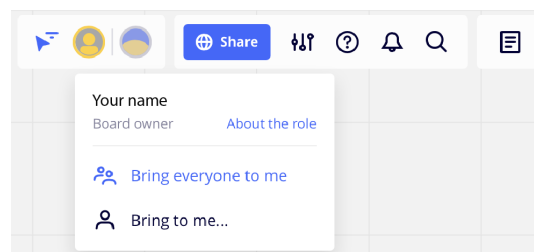
'Follow'

Miro is an infinite whiteboard space, and your participants can move around autonomously. However, just like in a real workshop, there will be times when you want to gain everyone's attention on one thing. To do this, ask everyone to click on your name/avatar at the top right of the screen. (If you have the paid version of Miro - you can do this automatically with the 'Bring everyone to me' function). Once participants have clicked on your name, it will bring them to your exact view. As you move around the Miro Board, so too will everyone following you. **As soon as participants click or move around themselves, they will stop following you (so if you're showing the group something, keep an eye on how many people are following you - and remind people to follow you again if you have lost anyone).** Read more about 'Attention Management' [here](#).

(Free version)



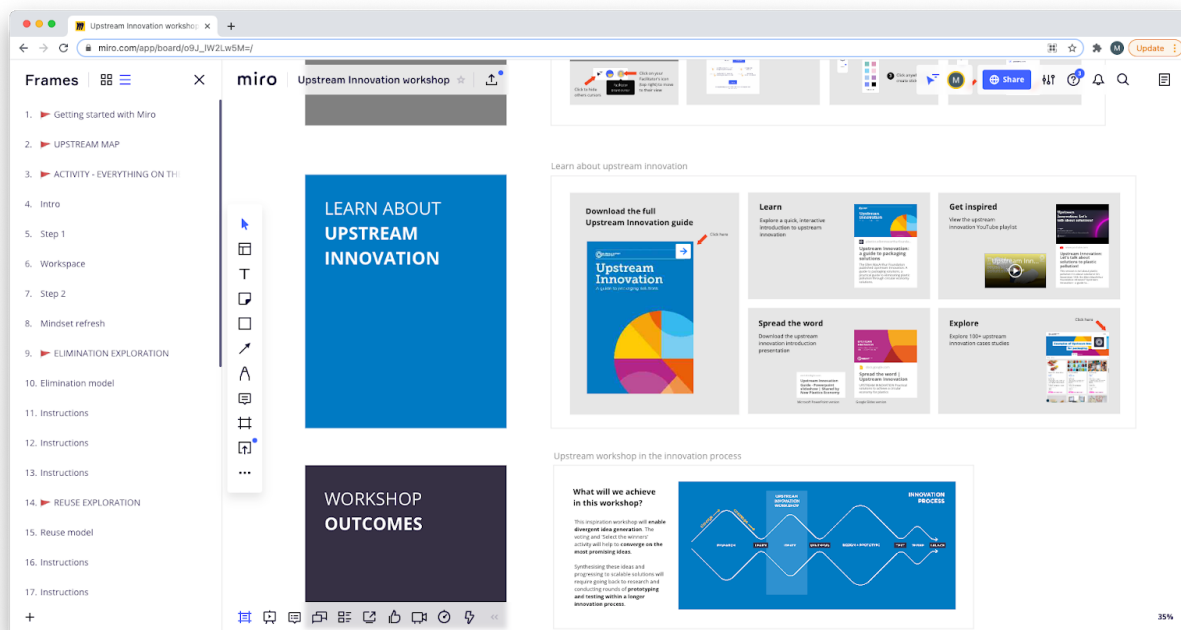
(Paid version)



To make the experience as easy as possible for participants, as a Facilitator, you will need to learn two other simple features:

‘Frames’

‘Frames’ are like individual pages in a Miro board. Where we have added instruction slides to the Miro space, each slide is in a ‘frame’. To see a list of all the frames in the Miro Board, and to jump between them - click the Frames icon (see below). **To show everyone certain slides, ask everyone to ‘follow’ you, and then simply click through the slides you want to show.**



Locking objects

We have already locked everything we don't want participants to move, delete or interact with! If you add any new elements, make sure you **lock them before sharing the link**. To do this, select the object(s) and click the padlock. See how to do this [here](#).

The workshop activities

The information below gives an overview of the different workshop activities. You will need to have the Miro board and the 'Frames' panel open to read this section. **Look out for the PREP sections for things you need to do before hosting the workshop. There is also a checklist to help you plan the workshop at the end of this guide.**

Welcoming the group

1. Before diving in, it's important to again set the scene for the group. Make sure everyone knows why they have been invited, what the purpose of the session is, and what the outcome will be. Explain who each facilitator is, and what they will be doing.
2. Next, explain the basics of Miro: **zoom, and how to make a sticky note, how to add an emoji, and how participants can 'follow' you.** Use the instructions on the 'Getting started with Miro' frame to do this.
3. Lastly, it's time to break the ice and get the group warmed up for ideation! You may have done introductions when you gave the presentation, but if not - make sure to do this now. Read the instructions on the frame and ask anyone who hasn't already added a sticky note to do so.
4. Once people have added their sticky note and an emoji, do a round of introductions and ask participants to share their expectations for the workshop. Ask people to nominate the next person to introduce themselves - this will help the segment flow.

Activity: Everything on the table

This activity is **only to be used if you are rethinking a very specific product or range, and if you are planning to focus on the Elimination strategy.** If your exploration will be more open and span a range of products, **jump straight to the next activity.**

This activity has been designed to help the whole group get to grips with the current 'essential functions' before diving into thinking about elimination - which requires rethinking these functions. Getting all the choices 'on the table' will allow us to then re-evaluate what's necessary, and reimagine the product, packaging and system for upstream innovation.

PREP

You will need to add a photo of the packaging for this activity, disassembled into components where possible. **Lock the photo** once you have added it to the board.

All the instructions needed for the activity are on the slides. Once you are ready to begin, using the 'Frames Panel', click the '🚩 ACTIVITY - EVERYTHING ON THE TABLE' frame, and ask everyone to 'follow' you. **If anyone is struggling with Miro, you can share your screen at this point too.**

Make sure the group doesn't get too detailed at this stage - this should be a high level review about packaging functions - which will be a useful segway to tackling elimination exploration in the next activity. The last slide has a quick refresh on the mindset. As you move into ideation, this is a good opportunity to stress that it's important to park the constraints of costs and logistics in the ideation phase.

Activity: Strategy cards

Pick a strategy or strategies you want to explore (Elimination, Reuse or Material Circulation). On each of the 'Exploration' frames in Miro, there are some cards that are designed to be springboards for discussion and idea generation. Each card presents a way of rethinking the product, packaging or business model. To use the cards, you need to first create some 'how might we' questions to help focus the ideation on the business area or product category you are interested in.

PREP (ESSENTIAL)

1. Choose an area of the business or product category you want to focus on, and frame the ambition as a 'how might we' question (see example below). It's up to you how narrow or wide you make the questions - but think about what will be helpful for the group and your desired outcomes. We'd recommend 1-2 questions for a session. Type these into the Miro board in the boxes provided.

Some examples of a 'how might we' question:

- How might we eliminate single use plastic in [specify product category and/or market]?
- How might we introduce a reuse 'refill on the go' offering for [specify product category and/or market]?
- How might we scale up our reuse 'return on the go' solution for [specify product category and/or market]?
- How might we secure material circulation of [specify product category and/or market]?

- Once you've created some questions, take a look at the cards in Miro. Pick out the cards you think will best help answer each of your 'how might we' questions. Click on the most relevant cards, and move them down into the space next to each 'how might we' question. We'd recommend 1-3 cards for each 'how might we' question.

For some example 'how might we' questions, the corresponding cards to prompt discussions could be:

<p>How might we eliminate packaging for our personal care range?</p>	<p>INNOVATIVE ELIMINATION</p> <p>By rethinking how the product is provided</p> <p>How might rethinking the way the product is provided to the user eliminate the need for packaging? Can a set amount of the product be dispensed (at home, in a restaurant, in the workplace) to eliminate the need for packaging? How might this enhance the user experience?</p>	<p>INNOVATIVE ELIMINATION</p> <p>By changing where information is provided</p> <p>Is the packaging larger than necessary, or exist only to communicate information? How might information be provided to the user without using packaging? How could users assess information digitally in novel ways? How might the information be provided at a shared point of sale?</p>
<p>How might we scale up a reuse return on the go solution for beverages in Asia?</p>	<p>RETURN ON THE GO/FROM HOME</p> <p>By standardising packaging design</p> <p>What products or ranges have common packaging needs? If packaging was interchangeable between product lines or even brands, how might this optimise reuse and reduce costs for the whole value chain? How might differentiation be created in new, innovative ways?</p>	<p>RETURN FROM HOME/ON THE GO</p> <p>By creating an incentive to return the packaging</p> <p>What mechanisms might encourage users to return the packaging for reuse? If using a deposit, how might the incentive be strong enough, without putting customers off? How might a reward or a penalty encourage repeat purchasing? How might customer loyalty be recognised?</p>
<p>How might we secure material circulation of packaging for dairy products in North America?</p>	<p>PLASTICS RECYCLING</p> <p>By reducing use of dyes, pigments and inks</p> <p>How might innovative, alternative ways of using colour and branding be achieved, while keeping the plastic as pure as possible? How might differentiation be realised in new ways? How might showing more of the product itself reduce the need for coloured plastic?</p>	<p>PLASTICS RECYCLING</p> <p>By ensuring packaging is collected and sorted</p> <p>Does your packaging recognisably fit into a known recycling stream? How might communication on the packaging increase collection rates? How might efforts upstream enable advanced sorting of packaging downstream?</p>

3. Once you have your questions and cards, it's time to test them. Ask a few colleagues to make sure the questions aren't too wide or too narrow, and test they flow into the cards you want to explore. The questions might need a few iterations.

In the workshop, make sure everyone is following you, and go to the 'Instructions' frame. These explain how to run this activity. Stress that this isn't the time to second guess your ideas - we are going for quantity. If there is cynicism about an approach, leverage the case study which the card is connected to.

You can encourage participants to add [images to the board](#). As ideas are being added, **it's the job of the co-facilitator to group and move similar ideas together and add black sticky notes with the heading for the clusters of ideas. Move any questions to be around the 'questions' bubble.**

Once you are out of time, or have exhausted the ideas of the group, follow the steps on the last instructions slide for reviewing, voting, and discussing. We would recommend asking each participant to add 4-5 emojis for each time you vote.

If you have more 'how might we' questions, take a break and then repeat the process for these too.

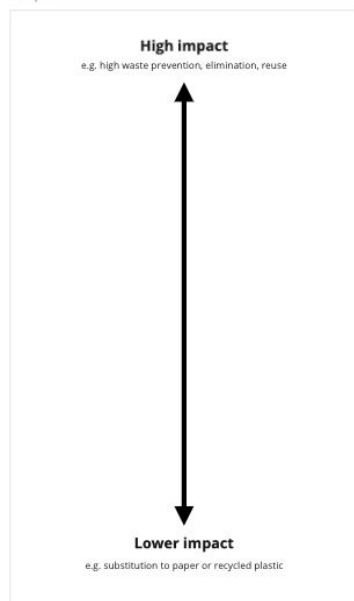
Activity: Select the winners

This activity is to help hone the most promising ideas, and provide an opportunity for reflection and prioritisation. Do this once you've completed the ideation for the 'how might we' questions.

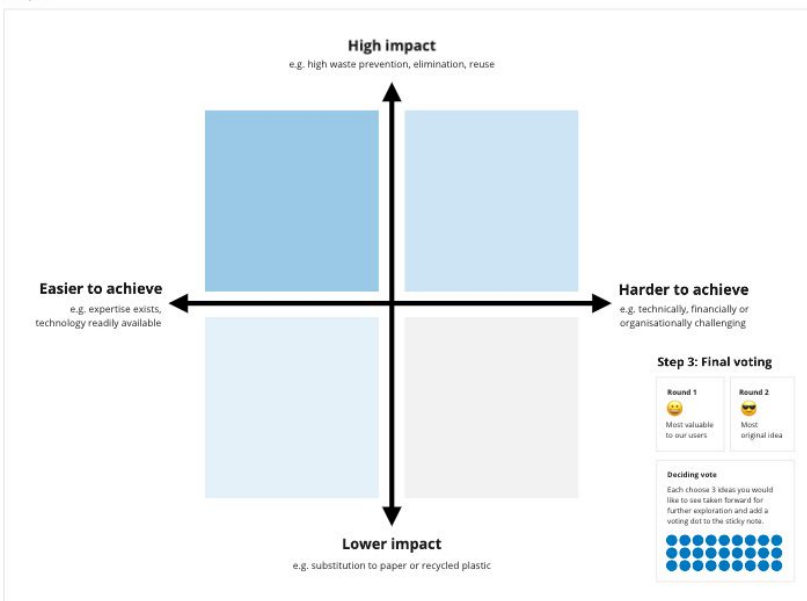
During a break, go through the ideas and pick the ideas that have the most 'votes' (8-12 ideas would be best). Copy these down to the 'Select the Winners' frame. Some sticky-notes might need an edit once they are moved out of their original context. Others might need to be combined into one sticky-note.

Once you've regathered the group, and the sticky-notes with most votes are at the edge of the 'Step 1' frame, place each idea on the spectrum with input from everyone in the group. Once you've added a few, you might need to adjust the placement, as the position will be relative to other ideas. Once this has been completed, move the sticky notes to the Step 2 frame into the middle of the matrix. Open up discussion to the group, and allow participants to start moving the sticky-notes left or right in the matrix.

Step 1



Step 2



Step 3

Next, we would recommend three quick rounds of voting.

Round 1: Which ideas provide the most value to the user? (using the 'grinning' emoji to vote)

Round 2: Which ideas are the most original? (using the 'sunglasses' emoji to vote)

Round 3: Deciding vote: each participant chooses 3 ideas they would like to see taken forward for further exploration. (by taking the blue dot and placing it on the sticky note)

TIP: Before round 3, select all the blue dots, right click, and choose 'bring to front'. This will make sure the final voting dots will be visible when placed on a sticky note.

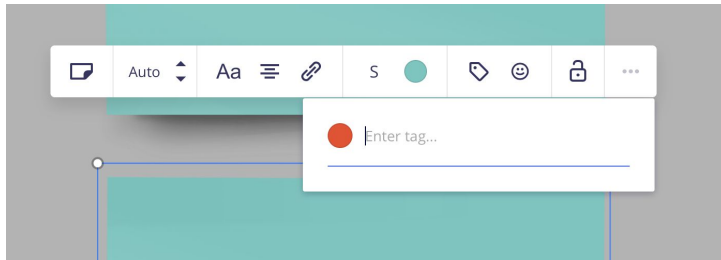
Once this is complete - open up discussion to what has been learned during the session. Which quadrant are the ideas in? Do any of the most voted for ideas align with current initiatives or working groups? What are the barriers or blockers?

Step 4

Once you have discussed the voting, choose up to 3 of the most exciting ideas that the group would like to take to Step 4. Make a breakout group for each idea, and ask participants to fill out the template for each idea. This should take around 10 minutes.

Come back together, and ask each group to briefly present their idea. Participants should provide feedback in the sticky notes provided.

Next, discuss what would be the three action steps that need to be completed to progress each idea. These should ideally be something that can be achieved in the next 2 weeks (e.g. setting up a meeting with the project team, making a prototype, reaching out to a third party). You can click on these sticky-notes, click the tag icon in the toolbar, and assign the names of people who will go and find the answers or conduct an experiment.



Next steps

The Miro board can stay live and be assessed by the group after the session.

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation has lots of other resources about the circular economy and circular design, including the [Learning Hub](#), [Circular Design Guide](#), and [case study library](#).

We would love to hear how you used these resources, and to gain your feedback on how to make them easier to use, more impactful or more tailored to your needs. You can provide feedback [using this form](#).

Quick facilitation tips

Especially in a fast paced remote workshop, it's important to ask participants to 'speak up, but speak briefly'. [IDEO's brainstorming rules](#) can be a helpful reference. We've found playing some music while participants are adding ideas can work well in a digital workshop!

It's also important to monitor the group's energy and dynamic. Confusion, disinterest in the topic or fatigue can cause low energy. Clarify the activity, move on, or take a break. Breaks are even more important when everyone is at a screen, so don't let any segment run for longer than an hour. For a workshop to be effective, you will often need these key elements:

Motivation

Everyone involved needs to feel that they are gaining something or have something to contribute.

Communication

The facilitator should ensure everyone feels able to clearly communicate their ideas to the group.

Openness

Successful collaboration requires flexibility with the ownership of ideas, and candidness across teams.

Tenacity

The facilitators and participants need a high tolerance for uncertainty and persistence to reach outcomes even when the end result isn't clear.

Checklist for the lead up to a remote workshop

Use the following checklist to plan the lead up to your workshop. This details only the essential preparations you need to do.

One month before:

- ☐ Familiarise yourself with the [Upstream Innovation Guide](#)
- ☐ Make an account with Miro and add the [Miro template](#)
- ☐ Get comfortable using Miro (we would recommend using Chrome or Firefox) and navigating using 'Frames'
- ☐ Decide the focus of your workshop
- ☐ Add your 'how might we' questions to the Miro board, and drag the relevant cards next to each one, and test with colleagues
- ☐ Pick 6-12 relevant participants and send calendar invites for the presentation and the workshop (and check that everyone you have invited will be able to use the Miro platform)
- ☐ Ask a colleague to be a co-facilitator, and share this guide with them

One week before:

- ☐ Lock any new objects added to Miro
- ☐ If you are doing the 'Everything on the table' activity, add image of packaging item in focus to Miro
- ☐ Send out the Miro link, asking everyone to make sure they can assess Miro and to add their name with a sticky-note to the 'Getting started with Miro' frame
- ☐ Rehearse the Upstream Innovation presentation
- ☐ Hold a planning meeting with your co-facilitator

3 days before:

- ☐ Check who has added their names to the Miro board, and send follow up emails to anyone who hasn't assessed the board
- ☐ Read over this guide again
- ☐ Print this guide, if you can't fit everything on your screen