OPEN GOV HUB'S CROWD-SOURCED GUIDE TO GREAT EVENTS

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This guide was produced in response to a real problem all of us see but don’t always acknowledge or talk about.

Despite good intentions and serious efforts from event organizers (ourselves included), we've all been there. We've all found ourselves at one time or another sitting in the middle of an event wondering why we are really there, frustrated we're not getting much out of it.

Even during some of the most high-profile events, this happens. We see missed opportunities for meaningful learning and connections, despite being in the room with many brilliant minds.
Introduction

WHO WE ARE

This Guide to Great Events was produced by the team at Open Gov Hub.

Open Gov Hub is a unique meeting place where many different organizations, ideas and resources come together to encourage more transparency, accountability and civic participation around the world. We are both a virtual and physical hub in Washington, DC, and the world’s first coworking community and network focused on this theme of open government.

Because collaboration is integral to our mission, we frequently host a variety of events and meetings designed to stimulate new ideas and connections between people and organizations for greater shared impact. In fact, we organize an average of 3 events/week (150 events per year!), so we know a few things about planning them! But we also see the need to diversify our event formats and challenge ourselves (and our peers) to reach a higher standard with these activities, which is why we produced this guide.

After all, we all expend so much time and energy organizing and attending events, so why not think critically about how - through higher-quality events - we can have more impact?
Introduction

WHO THIS IS FOR

Part of the impetus that helped lead us to produce this public guide was a recent blog post from one of our members, Michael Jarvis of Transparency & Accountability Initiative, lamenting some missed opportunity for deeper learning and more high-impact events during the World Bank's Annual Meetings ("Liberate Us from the Tyranny of Panel Discussions" by Michael Jarvis, April 24, 2018).

Building on existing conversations, this blog caught the eye of many people, including the Open Government Partnership team, who asked if some of us might come together and crowdsource good practices in hosting more effective events which they could then share with all the session organizers at the upcoming OGP Global Summit with 2,000 global attendees in Tbilisi, Georgia this July.

We knew this was a valuable opportunity to make progress on raising the bar for better events, so we reached out to our Open Gov Hub member community (with 40+ international organizations and 200+ people) to crowdsource ideas for great events.

First and foremost, we hope this will be a living resource for ourselves and the rest of the global open government community we are part of, but also for related fields of people working in international development, human rights, data, social justice, research and advocacy. And given the universality of using events as a means for all our work, we also hope it may be beneficial for folks in completely different fields.

At the same time, we hope that by making this resource public it can help inspire and inform the event-planning efforts of many others - from organizers of large annual global conferences with thousands of participants, to those of us just wanting to know how to plan a better five-person team retreat.

We plan to update this guide periodically based on feedback. If you have any thoughts to share please reach out to us at info@opengovhub.org or find us on Twitter @OpenGovHub.
As organizers of events, we know we can all do better. What does it take to organize great events? We think it starts with committing to 15 core principles.

**We Pledge To ...**

1. **START WITH THE WHY.**
   Always start event planning first and foremost with a clear goal or you want to address, then match the event type to best fulfill it. Make explicit at the beginning what you want your audience to walk away with.

2. **HAVE REAL CONVERSATIONS.**
   Too often, we know events can be a series of disconnected remarks. It is up to the organizers to connect the dots for participants. To do this well not only requires active management of the conversation during the event but also preparation before. And instead of stale, prolonged welcome remarks, why not begin each event with a provocative, stimulating question?

3. **TAP THE WISDOM IN THE ROOM FROM THE 1ST MINUTE.**
   Maximize the opportunity for the event to help all its participants to learn, grow and benefit from it as much as possible. You can ask audience feedback before the event begins, start with a quick audience SMS poll, have them discuss in small groups what brought them to the event, and more. Also collect questions in rounds to hear from many different audience members.
We Pledge To ...

**THROW OUT THE CHAIRS. Use creative, innovative and interactive event formats as much as possible.**

Remember that Panels don’t need to always be the default! Explore 15 event types and other activities that can be incorporated into many event types below.

**PLAN HOW IT WILL BE INTERACTIVE.**

Create space for meaningful audience participation. Too often audience participation is rushed, dominated by only a few voices, or superficial with questions and comments going unaddressed. Even if you are running a traditional event format like a panel, there are many creative ways you can make it interactive - from icebreaker games to pairing people to discuss an idea with their neighbor or small groups, to having audience members write responses to a prompt on a flipchart or whiteboard, and more. And be sure to tell people at the beginning what you expect from them and how you will help them to engage (ex: “please write on sticky notes and add to this board throughout, please interrupt, etc.”)

**TIP:** Polleverywhere is one free program that event organizers can use to quickly get audience input via polls and live word clouds. Kahoot! (https://kahoot.com/) is a free game-based learning platform to get involvement and feedback.
We Pledge To ...

**MAKE SURE MODERATORS ACTUALLY MODERATE.**
Moderators should expect to need to perform a reasonable amount of preparation (say a few hours per event)- they steer the conversation and the more preparation, the better the results. Moderators should always ensure that audience members asking questions are actually asking questions (not long, open-ended comments). It is also the responsibility of a moderator (and the event organizers) to ensure that speakers know exactly how much time they have for remarks, and to hold them to it.

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**TIP:** If you’re moderating an event, try something different: within the first 5 minutes give the mic to someone who doesn’t expect it; it gets people to pay attention to the conversation (instead of playing on their phones), and sets a tone that this is event will be new, experimental and different from the norm.
INVITE THE OTHER. Seek diversity of backgrounds and perspectives that can better help you reach your event goal.

Any time you are discussing the issues of a specific community, someone from that community should be included as an expert. This includes avoiding “manels” (male-only panels) but also proactively seeking diverse backgrounds in terms of age, nationality, religion, etc. and people with diverse professional and personal life experiences and opinions (for example, include speakers from both government and civil society, or from different sectors). And on the flip side, avoid inviting speakers in a tokenistic way.

RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO OVERLOAD THE STAGE.

Resist the temptation to overload the stage or event program with too many voices or activities. Having too many speakers, panelists or activities in a short period of time means that the quality of event is sacrificed when presenters are not able to fully deliver what they came to offer or are rushed.

ALWAYS CUT PEOPLE OFF. Manage and respect time.

This is one of the most common core principles we see violated all the time. Time is everyone’s most precious resource, so we owe it to ourselves and all our participants to stick to the start and end times we’ve committed to, and avoid excessive or unnecessary welcome or other exposition remarks that take time away from addressing the real goal of the event.
PRINCIPLES

We Pledge To ...

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BE TRUE TO YOUR WORD. Be true to your event description: explore and answer what you said you would.

It can be very frustrating and disappointing if you attend an event, only to find that they didn’t actually address everything they stated they would. To avoid unmet expectations, let’s all be clear and explicit with ourselves and with our audiences about what we will do and hold ourselves to that. Better yet: write the goals of the event in place where all participants can see so we can all help hold each other accountable to it.

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DARE TO DEBATE.

Remember that we don’t always need to hear from people who view an issue in the same way. In fact, some of the best learning opportunities come from creating a space where people can respectfully explore disagreements. This helps stimulate new ideas and lets participants decide for themselves where they stand on an issue.
We Pledge To ...  

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**EXPLICITLY LAY THE GROUND RULES UP FRONT.** Be clear about how open or closed the conversation is.  
All participants should know if the event and conversation is totally open to the public and on or off the record or somewhere in between (ex: following the Chatham House rule that ideas from the event can be repeated and shared elsewhere, but without attribution to their speaker). And if the conversation is open, try to use technology to make it as accessible to as many people as possible (ex: by recording, live-streaming, and/or live Tweeting events).  

**TIP:** If you want the audience to carry the event conversation online, offer a simple. “Tweet cheat” handout with the Twitter handles of speakers; if you use a hashtags for the event or program make sure everyone has it, and if your event is a session as part of a bigger conference, be sure to use the universal hashtag for that conference (rather than making your own hashtag just for this session). This way, even people who didn’t attend the session can learn about what you covered.
Always use visuals. Use visuals often and wisely.
Many people are visual learners, so no matter the topic it is often very helpful to accompany what is being said with visual aids and other multimedia. Make sure the visual is relevant and doesn’t actually distract from the key point. But use these wisely and ensure presenters do not use presentations that are so long or slides that are so text-heavy that they are no longer beneficial. Let’s avoid death by Powerpoint!

TIP: Have no more than 3 bullets per slide, each with a short phrase. Make sure you don’t display any one slide or visual for too long; you will lose people’s attention and it will interrupt the flow of the presentation. If you play a video, display it as full screen, with nothing else on the screen. If you want to play a video, if possible mute it and as the speaker talk people through live what they are seeing.
We Pledge To ...

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END WITH 3 TAKEAWAYS. Summarize and read out takeaways.
We could all use a little help being reminded at the end of the event what some of the key ideas are. By having someone summarize takeaways, this also equips participants to be able to more easily share those ideas with others who weren’t at the event. This is a key responsibility of the moderator, but could also be done by an audience member or someone else if planned in advance. Depending on what your audience expects, consider distributing a one page overview of key ideas in advance. (Here at the Open Gov Hub, many people told us they regretted not being able to attend our events, so last year, we started producing monthly “In Case You Missed It” ICYMI roundups, which include 3 quick takeaways from all our public events each month).

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REMEMBER THAT FEEDBACK IS YOUR FRIEND. Solicit honest feedback immediately and incorporate it into your future efforts.
While people are still in the room is the single best time to get their feedback about their experience at the event. Always budget at least 5 minutes at the end of a program to get feedback - this could be through a short poll through SMS, handouts at every chair, the moderator asking a few people in the audience to share their feedback, or in other creative ways.
Toolkit of Event Types

Here is an overview of many different types of event formats with objectives, group size, and do’s & don’ts for each.

OVERVIEW

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PANEL

A group of experts who are asked questions by a moderator on a specific topic.

GOAL
Showcase a few different perspectives on a big, challenging or complex topic

SIZE
Audience can be as small as 20 people up to 1,000s; There can be 2-6 panelists (not including moderator)

DO’S
- As each panelist to initially answer the same, overarching question
- Ask panelists to provide concrete examples or case studies to illustrate their point
- Be sure to have an active, prepared moderator who will facilitate effectively
- Connect panelists to each other to communicate in advance
- Have panelists introduce themselves and say something brief about their relationship to the topic

DON’TS
- Have more than 2-3 panelists (unless you have enough time to have multiple perspectives)
- Have extended welcome remarks
- Have a homogenous panel
- Let any panelist talk for more than 10 minutes at a time
Toolkit of Event Types

**WORKSHOP**

Any workshop by definition must be interactive. It should also be giving participants the ability to learn concrete new knowledge or skills. Workshops should be hands-on workshops, allowing all participants to share their experiences and actively facilitated.

**GOAL**

Have participants acquire a new knowledge base or skill set

**SIZE**

Less than 50

**DO’S**

- Make it interactive through many varied exercises
- Choose activities that will resonate with your particular audience.
- Have a way to record outcomes and lessons learned.
- Create a feedback loop so participants can help create a better workshop for next time.
- Have active facilitator that ensures everyone in the room is engaged and can contribute

**DON'TS**

- Talk at the participants
- Ignore real-time feedback from participants
- Forget to keep a close eye on time (building time for transitions between activities and breaks)

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**ROUNDTABLE**

Discussions with and among equals (attendees seated around tables), facilitated by a host(s). They can include some time upfront for presentations. The host should bring targeted questions to be discussed at the tables.

**GOAL**

Cultivate new discussion on a complex issue with everyone's perspective equally valued

**SIZE**

No more than 10 people per discussion table; up to 100 in the room

**DO’S**

- Keep the discussion at each table focused on pre-determined questions
- Distribute handouts so all participants know what they should do at each table
- Curate list of diverse invitees
- Have a clear agenda

**DON'TS**

- Invite people not intimately familiar with the topic. This process involves focused work and in-depth conversation, so each invitee should bring some knowledge to the table.
Toolkit of Event Types

HACKATHON

An event where a group of people work together for an extend period of time to collaboratively solve a predetermined problem, build a new tool (often technology-related but does not need to be), or complete set tasks; Hackathons are most common but other variations include Mapathons and Designathons

GOAL
Bring unusual suspects together to build something entirely new, or complete numerous tasks for an existing initiative

SIZE
Depends on size of space and number of issues you’re trying to work on; as few as 25-500+

DO’S
- Achieve a preset, specific goal by the end of the hackathon so participants feel accomplished.
- Have a clear process and objectives
- Encourage friendly competition and award prizes

DON'TS
- Create a task that is too hard to accomplish in the set time.
- Forget to invite people with diverse skillsets and experiences (ex: technologists, NGOs, government, and more)

INNOVATION SPRINT

A cross between a workshop and hackathon that is characterized by many rounds of rapid prototyping

GOAL
Have a group develop a new tool or solution to a preset problem, or give in-depth feedback on an existing prototype

SIZE
20-60 people, broken into small groups and seated around tables

DO’S
- Invite diverse participants
- Send materials in advance so they can come with ideas
- Use a stopwatch to manage multiple rounds of prototyping

DON’TS
- Allow any one person in any group dominate the conversation and ideation
- Forget to use sticky notes! Have participants write different types of ideas on different colors, and categorize them in rounds as a group
Toolkit of Event Types

**KNOWLEDGE CAFE**

The audience is divided into small groups that have an open discussion on key questions around the session theme. Each table has a host, and one overall facilitator leads the dynamic and report backs from each table to the full group.

**GOAL**
- Facilitate dialogue with a large group and increase individual participation, assuming each participant has an equally valuable contribution to the topic.

**SIZE**
- Large groups of 50+ that you break into small cafe tables with 4-12 participants each.

**DO'S**
- Pose a question or share a problem that needs to be solved and allow 15-20 minutes for discussion.
- Have participants switch tables after 15 minutes and repeat the question or pose a new one.
- Have groups share their insights with everyone.
- Encourage active notetaking, including by a host who stays at the same table for all rounds.

**DON'TS**
- Go through this process more than 2-3 times
- Forget to leave enough time for meaningful report-backs from each group
- Hesitate as facilitator to cut people off to ensure there is time for all groups to report back

**DEBATE**

Pits two different perspectives against each other with rounds of conversation and rebuttals

**GOAL**
- To explore two conflicting viewpoints in an engaging way that allows the audience to decide where they stand on the issue

**SIZE**
- No limit

**DO'S**
- If you have multiple speakers, alternate who gives initial comments and rebuttals (so people see many ways to understand each side of the issue)

**DON'TS**
- Be unprepared.
- Try to have a debate on a highly nuanced topic; instead there should be a clear for/against position
Toolkit of Event Types

BROWN BAG LECTURE (BBL)

Informal presentations where participants are encouraged to bring their lunch (also called “Lunch and Learns”)

**GOAL**

To inform people about new work and ideas, and have the presenters get honest feedback on their ongoing work.

**SIZE**

Since these occur during the workday at an office, it will likely attract smaller groups, anywhere from 5 to 30 or so people.

**DO’S**

- Maintain the spirit of the brown bag concept by keeping things informal and conversational. If the group is small, allow interruptions for questions and dialogue.

**DON’TS**

- Make brown bags longer than an hour or hour and a half. If people are taking time off during the workday, longer time periods are excessive.

DEMOS

Short interactive, hands-on presentations where participants can test and give feedback on a new tool (often but not limited to tech tools)

**GOAL**

To get feedback on a specific tool or prototype that is a work in progress

**SIZE**

No limit

**DO’S**

- Come prepared with specific problems or questions you want participants to answer
  - Set up one or more demo stations

**DON’TS**

- Prevent participants from having a real, hands-on experience
- Have each demo last more than 5 minutes, so multiple people can experience it
- Forgot to test the tech in advance!
Toolkit of Event Types

TOWN HALLS

Large group conversations designed to seek consensus

GOAL
Inviting all members of a community to have a say in decisions that affect the community as a whole

SIZE
20-500

DO’S
- Have preset questions to answer
- Use small groups for participants to decide their positions
- Have an active notetaker

DON'TS
- Call it a townhall if it is only actually a presentation without enough time for the audience to weigh in on decisions

IGNITE TALKS

Fast-paced presentations of exciting new ideas or lessons learned. Ignite Talks are structured, 5 minute rapid fire powerpoint presentations where 20 slides auto advance every 15 seconds

GOAL
To tell an exciting success story, showcase a great idea, or share a lesson learned (including from failure)

SIZE
No limit.

DO’S
- Have minimal words on your slides
- Practice! It really is rapid fire

DON'TS
- Don’t try to cover more than one key idea or story
## Toolkit of Event Types

### UNCONFERENCE

A large gathering like a conference, but the participants make up the agenda collaboratively on the spot

**GOAL**

To create a more participant-led event and focus on peer-to-peer learning

**SIZE**

50+

**DO’S**

- Give participants autonomy and allow them to self-organize
- Collect and post the ideas from the breakout sessions to be shared

**DON'TS**

- Don’t overstructure the format! The participants are meant to create it.

### OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY

An event style that has a big circle of chairs, a bulletin board of ideas from participants, a marketplace of breakout sessions for participants to explore and learn from, and lots of back and forth between the main plenary area and the breakout sessions. Similar to an unconference, the agenda is created by the participants.

**GOAL**

This format is best used when there’s a lot of complexity, urgency, and a need for diversity of opinions and inputs on a topic

**SIZE**

This style is good for large groups

**DO’S**

- Maintain an active structure

**DON'TS**

- Overstructure the format! The participants are meant to create it
- Use this format to explore a mundane, discrete, or non-urgent issue
Toolkit of Event Types

FISHBOWL

A great format for getting lots of people to discuss a topic by setting up an inner circle and outer circle. The inner circle has an open conversation with two to four lead discussants in which a moderator facilitates. The moderator then engages different audience members in the outer circle to join the discussion; an open format include a hot seat where audience members can join in at any tip.

GOAL
To create more interactive discussion that highlights a few experts but also engages audience members’ knowledge on the topic, allowing many attendees to feel heard

SIZE
25-200

DO’S
- As a moderator, come prepared with at least 5 guiding questions and know your end goal, but be prepared for the conversation to move in different directions and adapt accordingly
- Center the discussion on one clear idea that you want participants to think about in advance
- Explain clearly how the hot seat works at the beginning

DON’T’S
- Invite too many inner circle participants, who may dominate the conversation
1. **Again, make sure your moderator actually moderates.** This is a key ingredient for panel success.

2. **Let audience members write their questions by distributing notecards on all seats.** This helps people capture their ideas as they come, rather than feeling anxious about waiting for Q&A at the end.

3. **Add an open, “guest” chair to the second half of a panel.** This is characteristic of the fishbowl event format, but can be introduced to any panel as well. Give clear rules for who can participate and when, and encourage audience members to come fill the open seat if they have a relevant new idea to add. To keep the conversation flowing, you can ask them to leave the seat after that issue has been covered, or even have one of the panelists vacate their seat, so there is always one open seat.

4. **Ask each panelist to bring at least 1 specific case study or example.** These could be examples of the challenges they faced with a particular issue and the solutions they tried (whether they failed or succeeded). Even if their situation is not exactly relevant to the whole group, it’s better to have specific examples so people can glean lessons for their organizations.

5. **Make sure no single panelist talks for more than 10 minutes at a time.** The value of panels is having an expert-level moderated conversation to uncover new ideas on a complex topic. Make sure this can actually happen by ensuring that no one voice dominates.

6. **Start with a poll or icebreaker.** This warms up the room and catches audience members’ participants from the beginning by requiring them to interact with each other. The simplest idea is to start the panel by asking people to turn to their neighbor and share what brought them to the event today, and having a few people report back to the group.

7. **Incorporate breakouts or small groups.** These create space for peer-to-peer learning. Even if many people attend panels to hear from experts on the stage, they may often learn the most from smaller group conversations with fellow individuals interested in that topic.

8. **Make sure your panelists spend time preparing.** One organization shared that every slide their director presents represents about three hours of preparation time. Panelists should not come and speak off the cuff but take time to prioritize their thoughts in response to the event goal/prompt. Time will always be limited, and the more each panelist prepares, the more everyone will benefit from the session.
Doing Better

BETTER WORKSHOPS

1. **First, if you call it a workshop, make sure it's actually a workshop!** By definition, workshops must be interactive. Make sure this is the case to avoid disappointment and frustration by your participants.

2. **Set a shared purpose for the group.** Tell everyone this from the beginning, to make it easier for participants to learn whatever new knowledge or skill is the focus of the workshop.

3. **Set clear norms from the beginning.** A few valuable norms that a facilitator can set for just about any workshop include:

   - **Step Up, Step Back** - encourage all participants to be conscious of how much they are contributing to the conversation; encouraging talkative folks to take a step back, and more introverted folks to take a step up
   - **Respect Time** - start and end on time.
   - **Limit Use of Tech** - set clear expectations as a group about what participants are allowed to use.

4. **Remember discussion and dialogue are not the same:** the facilitator’s job is to ensure the workshop reaches its goal, just like a panel moderator’s job is to ensure the panel reaches its goal. Facilitators should remember that dialogue has a specific end goal for that group to reach, rather than an open-ended discussion. Stay active to keep the conversation on track, confirming that everyone in the group reaches whatever consensus is desired.

5. **In general, keep in mind that a direct instruction approach is best.** In other words, “Show, try, apply.” As the facilitator of the workshop, start by introducing the idea, then give a rationale for that concept and why it should matter to them, then demonstrate how that idea can address the problem at hand, then interactively guide the participants to pick up and apply the idea. Then participants meaningfully engage with the concept and make it their own, leaving them equipped to immediately put it into practice.

6. **Build in many, varied activities to the agenda.**

7. **Build in time for networking.** Some of the greatest value of attending events comes in enabling people to connect with others with shared interests and needs. Especially if your workshop has 20+ participants, or participants are in the same group all day, make sure to incorporate some time for everyone to get to know each other.
FINAL THOUGHTS

At the end of the day, the goal of any event or meeting should be for its participants to learn. Here are a few final tips about how to maximize adult learning to keep in mind.

1. People need to be engaged to learn. People must feel engaged and have a specific understanding of what the event is about. This should not be vague. A facilitator should tell them what will be happening and what they’ll be learning, then the event should happen, then they should wrap up by telling them again what happened and what they learned. They should have specific takeaways they can bring to their organizations and their work. Being engaged is a key way to ensure effective learning, which is why activities like breakout groups and plenty of opportunity to brainstorm and ask questions is so important. Even simple activities like Kagan Structures can be used with adults to make a big difference - these are simple tools used by teachers that enable many more individuals to engage and enjoy learning more in the process than traditional approaches.

2. Less is More. People have limited ability to absorb lots of information, especially during an all day workshop or multi-day conference. Make it easier for them and easier for yourself as an organizer by cutting back the amount of material you want to cover, to only focus on the absolute essentials. Then explicitly tell participants what you want them to learn or get from the session at the beginning, and summarize at the end. It’s better to focus on the most important takeaways and ensure people learn them, than inundate them with too much information.

3. Don’t forget to build in break time. In order for a new idea to truly stick with someone, they need a bit of time to process and reflect on it, eventually making it their own. If participants are overwhelmed with too much content, without any down time to briefly process and reflect, they are less likely to remember later on what was covered.

4. Games are great for adult learning too. Though they may sometimes seem silly, introducing simple games can stimulate greater adult participation in any event or meeting. Friendly competition is a great motivator, and even small incentives help people avoid distractions and be more present and active. Multiple choice quizzes, pictionary and pub trivia-style games are just some of the many activities you can use. There are also free tools (like https://www.playfactile.com/) to make online Jeopardy games for your group.

5. You can’t have a conversation with more than 10-12 people. Any time you want several people to be able to contribute equally to a single conversation together, the size of each group cannot exceed 12 people, and the ideal sweet spot for a small group size is 6-8 people. This is a key rule of thumb to keep in mind for workshops and roundtables but also larger conferences, panels and other events when you make ask the audience to break up into smaller discussion groups.
6. The more you prepare then adapt your content for your specific group, the better your results. As an event facilitator or organizer, you should prepare the content assuming that your participants will have the highest level of knowledge about your topic, but teach it to the person with the lowest level. Be prepared to adjust your plan once you get an idea of who is in the room in the beginning. And be prepared to address questions from participants from any level in between.

7. Always use a parking lot, to keep track of the off-topic ideas that are important to revisit later. A parking Lot is a designated space to track new ideas that naturally will come up in conversation, but may not be directly relevant to the focus of your event. The more you capture the unexpected ideas that come up, the more material you will have to work with later.

8. People need to feel heard to stay involved. Provide as many outlets as possible for people to share their ideas. This can be done as simply as distributing notecards in advance to all audience members at a large panel event, or sticky notes on tables during a workshop and giving participants a designated place to share their ideas and a structured way to categorize them throughout the day. It is also important to create space for feedback before, during, and after the event, and close the feedback loop by reporting back to participants how you plan to implement their suggestions.

9. Set clear expectations from the start. When people are told at the beginning what the explicit goal of an event is - whether building a new skill in a workshop, exploring a complex issue through a panel, comparing two countering viewpoints in a debate, or more - they can more easily focus on achieving that and avoiding distractions from it.

10. In general, start with larger discussion groups at the start of an event, then end with two people partnering up. This is simply because at the beginning of an event is when participants will probably have the least to say, but as the event proceeds they will develop more and more ideas that it is easiest to go in depth into with just one partner.

11. Humor helps people open up and connect. Humor can be a powerful tool for learning in general, and also has the added benefit of creating a shared experience between participants (even if they started off at different levels of seniority, etc.) It also helps stimulate unusual and creative thinking, and signals to participants that out of the box ideas are encouraged.

We hope you’ve enjoyed and benefited from this Open Gov Hub Guide to Great Events!
Please let us know your thoughts by emailing info@opengovhub.org!