Collaborative Planning

Collaborative Planning is a long-term participation method in which citizens are supported by a professional facilitator who helps represent their interests throughout planning processes. The aim is to empower people who have little influence or limited experience with participation, ensuring that their perspectives are included in planning and decision-making. The method is particularly suitable for complex or long-term urban development and planning projects.

Participation Depth	Participate
Project Phase	Onboarding
Goals	Understanding & Gathering Perspectives
Format	Digital, Analogue
Duration	Several Weeks, Several Months
Target Group	Directly Affected, Interested Public, Hard-to-Reach Groups, Organised Actors
Group Size	Large Group from 30
Characteristics	Activating, Structured

GOAL OF THE METHOD

The goal of Collaborative Planning is to provide professional support to citizens throughout participation and planning processes while ensuring that their interests are represented. The method particularly strengthens groups that are often excluded from participation and helps them become actively involved in planning and decision-making.

PROCEDURE

Preparation

1. Define the objectives and framework
At the outset, clarify:

- Which planning processes or topics will be supported?
- What is the role of Collaborative Planning?
- What opportunities for influence exist?
- How will cooperation with the public administration and policymakers be organised?
- Which groups require particular support?

It is also important to:

- clearly define responsibilities
-

communicate roles transparently

- set realistic expectations

2. Identify target groups
The method is especially intended for people who are often underrepresented in participation processes.

Examples include:

- young people
- older adults
- people with limited proficiency in the local language
- people with low incomes
- tenants and residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods
- single parents
- people with disabilities
- people with little or no previous participation experience
- small local initiatives

Important:

Actively reach out to these groups and reduce barriers to participation.

3. Establish communication channels
Collaborative Planning should remain easily accessible through reliable communication channels, such as:

- telephone
- email
- digital communication platforms
- face-to-face meetings
- open consultation hours
- neighbourhood offices

Important:

Be approachable, maintain a regular presence, and communicate in clear, accessible language.

4. Build trust
The method depends on developing long-term trust.

This requires:

- consistent contact persons
- transparent communication
- taking concerns seriously
- providing regular updates
- maintaining a visible presence within the neighbourhood or project area

Execution

1. Provide information and advice
Collaborative planners inform citizens about:

- current planning activities
- opportunities for participation
- their rights and opportunities to contribute
- political and administrative procedures

Technical information should always be explained in clear and understandable language.

2. Collect concerns and interests
Through conversations, meetings, or consultation sessions, participants share:

- problems
- concerns
- ideas
- wishes
- interests

Important:

Listen carefully, value different perspectives, and encourage participation from people who may be hesitant to speak.

3. Develop proposals together
Together with participants, collaborative planners help develop:

- solution ideas
- project proposals
- recommendations
- position statements

They provide both technical expertise and organisational support throughout the process.

4. Represent community interests
The jointly developed proposals are then presented to:

- the public administration
- policymakers
- advisory committees
- planning authorities

Collaborative planners act as intermediaries between citizens and public institutions.

5. Support dialogue and participation
Collaborative planners often also facilitate:

- public discussions
- participation activities
- neighbourhood networks
- working groups
- collaborative community projects

This helps establish long-term participation structures.

Evaluation

1. Document concerns and key issues

Regularly document:

- frequently mentioned problems
- conflicts
- barriers to participation
- community wishes
- project ideas

This helps identify developments and changing needs over time.

2. Provide feedback
It is essential to communicate transparently:

- which issues have been raised
- what is being pursued further
- which decisions have been made
- where limitations exist

This transparency helps build trust in the process.

3. Strengthen future collaboration
Experiences gained through Collaborative Planning can be used to:

- improve participation structures
- establish new partnerships
- make participation more inclusive
- reduce barriers over the long term

Source: https://partizipation.at/partizipation-anwenden/methoden/

WHEN USEFUL?

- certain groups have previously been underrepresented in planning processes
- working on long-term urban or neighbourhood development projects
- people need support in expressing and representing their interests

- facilitating dialogue between public administration, policymakers, and local communities
- building trust among stakeholders
- managing complex planning processes involving many actors
- providing continuous support throughout participation processes

WHEN NOT USEFUL?

- participation is limited to a single event or a very small project
- long-term resources are unavailable
- there is no genuine willingness to consider participants' proposals

TIPS

- Plan for long-term and continuous engagement.
- Ensure participation remains accessible and low-barrier.
- Use clear and understandable language.
- Maintain a regular presence within the neighbourhood or project area.
- Build personal relationships with participants.
- Communicate opportunities and limitations transparently.
- Support people in representing their own interests rather than speaking for them.
- Allow sufficient time for trust to develop.

NOT SUITABLE FOR

- situations where rapid results are expected
- projects without long-term resources
- processes without genuine opportunities for participation
- purely symbolic participation
- situations where the role of Collaborative Planning is unclear

View online: https://methoden.urbankit.de/en/methods/kooperationsplanung