Competition

A Competition is a participation method in which citizens are invited to submit their own ideas, proposals, or projects on a specific topic. The aim is to generate creative ideas, encourage participation, and actively involve people in planning or design processes.
Prizes, public recognition, or the possibility of having ideas implemented can provide additional motivation for participation.

Participation Depth	Participate, Have a say
Project Phase	Concept Development
Goals	Developing Ideas
Format	Analogue, Digital, Hybrid
Duration	Several Weeks, Several Months
Target Group	Directly Affected, Interested Public, Hard-to-Reach Groups
Group Size	Small Group up to 15, Medium Group up to 30, Large Group from 30
Characteristics	Playful, Creative

GOAL OF THE METHOD

The goal of a Competition is to generate new ideas, perspectives, and creative solutions while motivating people to contribute actively to shaping their community. At the same time, the method raises awareness of a topic and provides an accessible way for a broad range of people to participate.

PROCEDURE

Preparation

1. Define the objective and theme
Begin by considering:

- What is the focus of the competition?
- What type of submissions are expected?
- How will the submitted ideas be used afterwards?

Examples include:

- ideas for public spaces
- mobility solutions
- design concepts for a neighbourhood
- proposals to improve community life

Important:

The theme should be clearly defined while leaving sufficient room for creativity.

2. Identify the target group
Consider:

- Who should participate?
- Should the competition be open to everyone or focus on specific groups?

Examples include:

- young people
- schools
- universities
- community organisations
- neighbourhood groups
- professionals
- the general public

Adapt the language, communication channels, and participation requirements to the intended audience.

3. Define the participation rules
Establish early:

- the submission deadline
- accepted submission formats
- length or scope of submissions
- evaluation criteria
- data protection requirements
- intellectual property and usage rights

Important:

The rules should be transparent, concise, and easy to understand.

4. Develop the evaluation process
Consider:

- Who will evaluate the submissions?
- How will the winners be selected?

Possible approaches include:

- an expert jury
- public voting
- a combination of both

Evaluation criteria may include:

- creativity
- feasibility
- sustainability
- public benefit

5. Plan prizes and recognition
Recognition does not necessarily have to be financial.

Possible forms include:

- cash prizes
- vouchers
- public exhibitions
- publication of the ideas
- public presentations
- symbolic awards

Important:

All participants—not only the winners—should receive recognition for their contributions.

6. Promote the competition
Use communication channels such as:

- social media
- websites
- local media
- public events
- schools
- community organisations

Providing examples or inspirational projects can help participants better understand the type of submissions being sought.

Execution

1. Launch the competition
At the start of the competition, communicate publicly:

- the competition theme
- participation rules
- submission deadlines
- the evaluation process

Participation should be as simple and accessible as possible.

2. Collect submissions
Participants submit their ideas during the designated submission period.

Submissions may include:

- digital entries
- written proposals
- drawings
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images

- physical models

Submissions can be collected through:

- online forms
- digital platforms
- email
- printed submissions

Important:

Participants should be able to ask questions and receive clarification throughout the submission period.

3. Review and evaluate submissions
After the submission deadline, all entries are collected and assessed.

Evaluation should follow the predefined criteria and be carried out by:

- the jury
- the public
- or both

Important:

The evaluation process should be transparent and understandable.

4. Announce the winners
The results can be presented:

- at a public event
- on social media
- through an exhibition

Most importantly:

All submitted ideas should be acknowledged and appreciated, not only the winning entries.

Evaluation

1. Document the results
Prepare a summary of:

- submitted ideas
- recurring themes
- winning entries
- particularly innovative approaches

The documentation should be made publicly available.

2. Inform participants
Thank all participants and provide information about:

- the competition results
- the next steps
- possible implementation of submitted ideas

Providing feedback strengthens motivation and trust.

3. Use the ideas
The submitted proposals can:

- inform planning processes
- be further developed
- become the basis for public discussions
- be explored in greater depth through workshops

Important:

Clearly communicate how the submitted ideas will be used after the competition.

4. Evaluate the competition
Review the process by considering:

- Which target groups were reached?
- What worked particularly well?

- What challenges emerged?

These insights can improve future competitions and participation activities

Source: https://mobilitaetsplanung-hessen.de/methodenkoffer-partizipative-planung/

WHEN USEFUL?

- collecting creative ideas and proposals
- raising awareness of a specific topic
- involving a large number of people through an accessible format
- engaging new target groups
- addressing open-ended questions with room for creative solutions
- making different perspectives visible

WHEN NOT USEFUL?

- strict technical or legal requirements leave little room for creativity
- unrealistic expectations about implementation could arise
- the topic requires intensive discussion or conflict resolution

TIPS

- Keep participation simple and easy to understand.
- Clear evaluation criteria help build trust in the process.
- Providing examples or inspiration can reduce barriers to participation.
- Public recognition often increases motivation to participate.
- Communicate transparently how the submitted ideas will be considered and developed further.

NOT SUITABLE FOR

- topics with no genuine scope for action
- confidential or highly conflict-sensitive processes
- purely technical planning tasks
- situations requiring rapid decision-making

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