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Engagement, NetworkPlus

Virtual Sandpits: A How-To Guide

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This guide walks you through the tools, roles, and processes required to conduct a virtual sandpit. For in-person sandpits see: [EPSRC – What is a sandpit?](#) This guide is based on the events that transpired between 13-27 July 2020 during [SPRITE+ virtual sandpit](#), orchestrated by SRITE+ and [Knowinnovation](#).

This is not a hard code for how to run a sandpit but a guide to be taken and fine-tuned to suit the needs of an individual event.

This guide includes what you need to deliver the sandpit itself. It does not include preliminary work that goes into pre-sandpit announcements, calls, or applications, nor the work that happens after the Funding Panel have made their decision.

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High-Level Schedule

Session 0: Orientation	
1.5 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Familiarisation with the technology ○ Vision, scope, roles, and expectations for the sandpit ○ Get to know potential collaborators through random allocation ○ Discuss and expand your first ideas in random groups
Session 1: Explore the challenge space	
Part 1 1.5 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collate diverse ideas into coherent themes ○ Expand upon the ideas presented within themes ○ Advance and coalesce the discussion around the themes
Part 2 1.5 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allow participants to join themes of their choosing ○ Allow preliminary teams around themes to form
Session 2: Formation of groups	
Part 1 1.5 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify initial research questions within each theme ○ Solidify key research questions within each theme
Part 2 1.5 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identity research teams that would tackle the themes' research questions
Session 3: Work in progress and peer review	
Part 1 1.5 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Present "work in progress" per team ○ Get feedback on "work in progress"
Part 2 1.5 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implement feedback into the sandpit proposal ○ Finalise teams that would work on each proposal
Session 4: Final presentations	
3 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Present final proposals ○ Answer the funding panel's questions
Funding Panel deliberations	
1 hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Final decisions

Roles

Role	Function
Analyst	Monitors the event, collects data about it as it goes, compiles the intermediate results, and the final report with input from other roles, tools, and processes.
Director	Represents the sandpit organisation. Introduces and concludes every day of the sandpit. Provides focus/orientation for the sandpit.
Facilitator	Runs the foreground process of the sandpit, keeps everyone to time, reminds everyone how the process works throughout.
Funding Panel	Judges the sandpit project proposals. A diverse panel has a better chance at scrutinizing proposals from multiple points of view.
Mentor	Encourages participants to discuss diverse perspectives on the sandpit topic. Acts as a critical eye and a sounding board whom the participants use as an outsider to run ideas by. Connects participants across different groups.
Participants	Generate sandpit proposals, seek funding, assemble teams, and present their work to the funding panel.
Process Administrator	Knows and manages the background process of the sandpit – from invitations to participation, through to which documents need to be signed when.
Provocateur	Steers participants to explore more novel ideas through new and controversial perspectives. Can be in-place or pre-recorded.
Stakeholder	A potential end-user of the results generated by the sandpit projects. Injects their unique perspectives for the participants to work with. Joins projects of interest.
Technologist	Familiar with every piece of technology on which the sandpit relies (sandpit website, communication tools, data storage tools). Troubleshoots and guides participants on the use of technologies.

Everyone but the participants are referred to as the “admin team” during the sandpit.

Tools

Function	Implementation
<p>Central digital presence; includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agenda, 2. Sandpit process, 3. Video conference links, 4. Intermediate and final results, 5. Sandpit proposal pages per team, 6. Feedback pages per team, 7. Participant, mentor, stakeholder profiles, 8. Pre-reading materials related to the sandpit research theme, 9. Pre-recorded provocateur perspectives, 10. Glossary, 11. Security notices and policies, 12. Code of conduct, 13. Roles and responsibilities, 14. Guidelines on sandpit process and assessment, 15. Q&A page, 16. Links to other opportunities similar to this sandpit, 17. Hints and tips for successful virtual engagement for participants. 	<p>Interactive sandpit website (we used KiStorm provided by Knowinnovation)</p>
Feedback collection tool	Google Forms (google.com/forms/about/)
Real time audio/video conferencing during sandpit sessions (plenary)	Zoom (zoom.us)
Real time audio/video conferencing during sandpit sessions (individual groups)	Zoom (zoom.us)
Instant messaging (chat) during sandpit sessions	Zoom (zoom.us)
Real time audio/video conferencing between sessions	SpatialChat (spatial.chat), Wonder (wonder.me), Zoom (zoom.us)
Asynchronous text communication between sessions	Email
Collaborative-editing sandpit proposal templates	Google Docs (google.com/docs/about)
Final templates digital repository	Dropbox (dropbox.com)
Final presentation digital repository	Dropbox (dropbox.com)
Digital platform to sort research ideas into clusters	Well-Sorted (well-sorted.org)
Music-playing capability Suggested music: Claude Debussy – Claire De Lune	YouTube (youtube.com) Spotify (spotify.com)

Pre-Session Instructions

Roles you'll need: Process Administrator, Participants.

Tools you'll need: Asynchronous text communication between sessions, Feedback collection tool.

Process Administrator sends all successful applicants an email with the following instructions:

1. **Participants** should reply to **Process Administrator** to confirm attendance.
2. Academic **Participants** should inform their research office about attending a sandpit.
3. **Participants** should inform **Process Administrator** about any adjustments/help needed (e.g. captioning, audio description, support to overcome poor connection speeds, additional childcare costs).
4. **Participants** should visit sandpit website, fill in their profiles to the extent they wish, check other participants' profiles, agenda, and pre-reading materials. **Participants** should not pass the details of the sandpit website or conference call details to anyone else.
5. **Participants** should download the audio/video conferencing app that will be used during the sandpit sessions. If **Participants** cannot use workplace machines to download the app, they could use personal phones/computers to do so.
6. **Participants** should share their thoughts on the sandpit research topic using a link to the feedback collection tool provided in the email.
7. **Participants** will receive another email from **Process Administrator** connecting them randomly to another participant for an individual Random Virtual Chat.

Random Virtual Chats

Roles you'll need: Process Administrator, Participants.

Tools you'll need: Asynchronous text communication between sessions, Feedback collection tool.

Process Administrator randomly assigns **Participants** into pairs, and sends each pair an email with the following content:

1. **Process Administrator** explains that these random virtual chats attempt to replicate the serendipitous connections that usually take place in the margins of face-to-face events.
2. **Process Administrator** explains that the intention is that **Participants** take 30 minutes to meet each other virtually before the Sandpit and simply have a conversation around the topic of the sandpit.
3. **Process Administrator** explains that there is no obligation or expectation to participate, other than a chance to meet someone new and explore areas of shared interest. **Participants** are to arrange a time for a chat on their own, without involving the **Admin Team**.

Sandpit Processes: Session 0 (Orientation)

Roles you'll need: Director, Process Administrator, Technologist, Facilitator, Analyst, Mentor, Stakeholder, Participants.

Tools you'll need: Central digital presence, real time audio/video conferencing during sandpit sessions (plenary, individual groups), Instant messaging (chat) during sandpit sessions, Digital platform to sort research ideas into clusters.

Pre-meeting logistics	
Technologist	Set up the conference call, and the waiting room. Allow admin team in, but leave the participants who arrive early in the waiting room until the start of the sandpit session.
Admin Team	Brief, ~15-30 minutes prior to the sandpit session. Allows for Technologist to test tools and for Admin Team to brief, plan, and adjust course as necessary.
Sandpit introduction	
Technologist	Allow participants into the conference call.
Facilitator	Welcome participants, explain that they arrived to participate in the virtual sandpit.
Technologist	Explain that participants are set on mute on arrival, but can activate their microphones using the appropriate controls on their side.
Facilitator	Encourage everyone to use their cameras to see each other. Pass the word onward to the director.
Director	Explain what a sandpit is for the newcomers, compare it to other modes of funding.
Director	Explain how virtual sandpit is different from an in-person sandpit, including its short sessions, working with collaborators between sessions, and the tools available to the participants which will appear as necessary on the sandpit website.
Director	Orient participants as to what it expected of them during the sandpit (focus on novelty and collaboration, success criteria). Mention that even if they do not succeed here, they can apply with the newly formed teams to other funding calls.

Facilitator	Explain how the sandpit process works – how many sessions it takes, what work is expected between sessions, what the general process is within sessions.
Process Administrator	Explain how much money is available, and who the funding panel is in general terms (e.g. “the funding panel will consists of academics and non-academics”).
Getting to know each other 1 (Random groups, 15 minutes)	
Facilitator	Explain that participants will now be assigned randomly to separate conference breakout rooms, that they will have 10 minutes to make introductions, and to start discussing the topic of the sandpit.
Facilitator	Explain to the participants that the plenary session will remain open, and that if there’s anything at all that is confusing, popping into the plenary room is always an option to chat with the admin team and get directed to where they need to be. The link to the plenary session is the same which they clicked to get into the session they are now in, and should be prominently posted on one of the sandpit website pages.
Technologist	Allocate random breakout rooms to participants – 5-6 participants per room max. If possible, use automatic tools to send participants to those conference rooms. Your conference tools should ideally allow you to do this automatically, but if not – explain to the participants where they could find links to individual groups, and who goes where. An ideal place would be to have the names of the participants listed per group on the sandpit website, followed by a link to the specific conference room they have to attend.
Technologist	Send participants to the respective breakout rooms.
Admin Time	
Admin Team is now the only group in the plenary, and it has a chance to adjust. Participants may be arriving late, have technical problems, or may pop into plenary for other reasons, at which stage the Admin Team should be able to resolve participant issues and allocate them to a breakout room.	
Technologist	Send messages to the breakout rooms at half-interval (5 minutes), and 1 minute before the participants need to join back to the plenary.
Back to plenary	
Technologist	Bring participants back to plenary, either automatically or manually as technology allows.

Facilitator	Ask participants how they felt the first round went, with their reactions to be either thumbs up on camera, emoticons via the conference tool, or a chat functionality. In the interest of time, skip verbal feedback from participants.
Facilitator	Introduce the Admin Team , explain briefly what each of them does – director, process admin, technologist, facilitator, mentors, stakeholders, and of course, the stars of the show – the participants.
Facilitator	Share your screen and show participants how to navigate the sandpit website – what each tab/page does, and how to get there.
Facilitator	Direct participants to the website for provocateurs pre-recorded perspectives + pre-reading, which they could utilise after this live session.
Getting to know each other 2 (Random groups, 15 minutes) Same procedure as in Getting to know each other 1 (random groups, 15 minutes) .	
Admin Time	
Back to plenary: sandpit process introduced in detail	
Technologist	Bring participants back to plenary, either automatically or manually as technology allows.
Facilitator	Ask participants how they felt the first round went, with their reactions to be either thumbs up on camera, emoticons via the conference tool, or a chat functionality. In the interest of time, skip verbal feedback from participants.
Facilitator	Share your screen, and direct participants to the agenda page on the sandpit website. Go session by session, explaining at a high level what will happen.
Director	Encourage participants to browse pre-reading and provocateur pre-recorded videos.
Interim tasks and sign off	
Facilitator	Explain to the participants that between this and the next session they are invited to sort sandpit ideas into groups they would discuss next session. Share your screen to show the participants how to navigate to the tool that would help the participants group the ideas together, and how to do the sorting.
Director	Re-iterate when the next sandpit session is, and open up for a brief Q&A as time allows. Participants can post their questions in the chat.
Debrief	

<p>Admin Team</p>	<p>Discuss how the sandpit is going thus far. Share feedback and observations, good or bad. What might typically happen is that the main issues at this stage are technical ones – participants may experience difficulties connecting to the conference call, maintaining audio/video presence, or needing to dip in and out of the session due to other obligations. A logistical issue for the participants may be simply being lost transitioning between conference meeting rooms.</p> <p>Technologist may need to manually visit conference rooms and direct participants back to plenary when necessary.</p>
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Interim 0

Admin Team: Compile the clusters of topics based on how participants grouped them, set up pages with those clusters on the sandpit website, and decide whether all clusters are worth discussing in the next sandpit session. Name the clusters after a random colour.

Technologist: Include all ideas as comments under each cluster’s tab/page, so that participants in the next session could see every idea pertaining to their cluster.

Process Administrator: Send an email follow-up with the recap of the day and a reminder of actions to be completed by the **Participants** for the next session.

Sandpit Processes: Session 1 Part 1

Roles you'll need: Director, Process Administrator, Technologist, Facilitator, Analyst, Mentor, Stakeholder, Participants.

Tools you'll need: Central digital presence, real time audio/video conferencing during sandpit sessions (plenary, individual groups), Instant messaging (chat) during sandpit sessions.

Pre-meeting logistics	
Technologist	Set up the conference call, and the waiting room for it. Allow admin team in, but leave the participants who arrive early in the waiting room until the start of the sandpit session.
Admin Team	Brief – 15-30 minutes prior to the sandpit session. Allows for Technologist to test tools, and for Admin Team to brief, plan, and adjust course as necessary.
Introduction of the day	
Technologist	Allow participants into the conference call.
Facilitator	Welcome everyone joining. Introduce the admin team and their roles in brief – Director, Process Administrator, Technologist, Facilitator, Analyst, Mentor, Stakeholder.
Director	Introduce yourself, explain what to expect on the day, encourage the participants to focus on the topic, the novelty, and the diversity of disciplines discussing the topic.
Facilitator	Explain that during the interim 0 ideas were grouped by the participants into clusters, and in this session participants will be randomly assigned to a cluster to discuss the respective emerging themes further, enrich each cluster with novel ideas, and to try and name their cluster with a descriptive name.
Facilitator	Explain that after a cluster discussion which would last ~30 minutes each cluster should elect a representative who would tell everyone what the name of the cluster is, and where the discussion is focused on in that cluster.
Facilitator	Share your screen, and show participants where on the sandpit website they could find the clusters, how they could access a cluster to read the ideas that were grouped under that cluster, and how they could add their own ideas to the cluster.

Cluster discussions 1 (30 minutes)	
Technologist	Allocate participants randomly to breakout rooms to discuss and add new ideas to the clusters which were determined at the interim 0. Name the breakout rooms by cluster colour names.
Technologist	Send participants to the respective breakout rooms.
Admin Time	
Cluster Presentations 1	
Technologist	Bring participants back to plenary, either automatically or manually as technology allows.
Facilitator	Welcome everybody back. Explain that now you would ask each group for the name of their cluster to be typed in the chat box, and to present a 1-minute summary of where the discussion is at in each cluster.
Facilitator	Call out each group in turn as they are listed on the sandpit website, remind them to put the cluster colour and the cluster name in the chat, and encourage 1 participant from the group to summarise where their discussion's at for that moment. Keep strictly to time, and interrupt the team gently if they overrun. Remind participants that in the interest of the entire community, it is best that everyone hears every presentation, thus the need to keep strictly to time. Some groups may want multiple participants to present, which is fine so long as the time limit is observed.
Facilitator	Thank every group, check that the cluster colours and names are typed in the chat, and move to the next group.
Technologist	As each groups types the name of their cluster copy that name and update the sandpit website clusters with those names.
Facilitator	After everyone has presented, thank everyone again, and explain that the participants will again be randomly allocated to a hopefully new cluster. Encourage the participants to read existing ideas, add new ideas in writing, and to refine the name of the group if necessary.
Cluster Discussions 2 (30 minutes)	
Technologist	Allocate participants randomly to breakout rooms to discuss and add new ideas to the clusters which were determined at the interim 0. Name the breakout rooms by cluster colour names.
Admin time	

Cluster refinement	
Technologist	Bring participants back to plenary, either automatically or manually as technology allows.
Facilitator	Welcome everybody back. Ask if any group had to refine the name of the cluster they were allocated to. Encourage the participants to type the new name and the associated colour of the cluster in the chat.
Technologist	Copy any new cluster names and update the sandpit website with those names.
Facilitator	Explain that the group will now have a 30-minute break. Encourage participants to get a lunch or a cup of tea, to move away from their computer, and stretch. Remind participants to be back exactly 30 minutes later at a given time.
Break	
Admin Team	Share feedback about how the process is going thus far. Be mindful, that participants in the plenary room may still be listening in. If you need to discuss something in private, use a separate breakout room.
Technologist & Facilitator	Take a break, but return to the plenary as participants may have technical questions.

Sandpit Processes: Session 1 Part 2

Roles you'll need: Director, Process Administrator, Technologist, Facilitator, Analyst, Mentor, Stakeholder, Participants.

Tools you'll need: Central digital presence, real time audio/video conferencing during sandpit sessions (plenary, individual groups), instant messaging (chat) during sandpit sessions, real time audio/video conferencing between sessions.

Reconvened	
Facilitator	Welcome everyone back. Explain why for the random group allocation in the first part of this session, but emphasize that random allocations allowed for new conversations to happen, and new ideas to mix and develop.
Director	Remind participants of the general topic of the sandpit, and that the conversations should now be focused more specifically on the topic.
Facilitator	Explain that this session is designed to cluster participants around the topics of their choosing, rather than by means of random allocation which happened in the previous part.
Voting with your Feet 1	
Technologist	Create separate conference rooms per existing cluster which participants could join to their preference. Create a "none of the above" tab, where participants could write comments about forming new clusters.
Facilitator	Explain to the participants, that the aim is to have about 5-6 participants per room. Clusters that get too big can be split into smaller sub-clusters, and clusters that have too few participants can generate more ideas on the theme and attract more participants to their cause after this initial split.
Facilitator	Let participants know that if they come up with a brand new cluster of ideas, it is possible to create a separate room for them to discuss that cluster, and to have a representation of that cluster on the sandpit website in the same space where established themes already reside.
Facilitator	Remind participants that they can switch clusters, so that if they end up in a conference room with a lot of participants, they can switch to a second-preference room. Encourage participants to visit multiple clusters at this stage to see how discussions are going in different rooms.

Facilitator	Let participants know that this conversation will be longer (~30 minutes), so they have more time both to discuss ideas in the clusters they choose, and to move around clusters.
Facilitator	Share your screen, and show participants where on the sandpit website they could find the clusters, how to navigate to the rooms within clusters, how they could add their own ideas to the cluster, and where "none of the above" tab resides if participants have new ideas.
Facilitator	Remind the participants that the plenary room that participants first arrived at will remain open, and that if there's anything at all that is confusing, popping into the plenary room is always an option to chat with the admin team and get directed to where they need to be.
Mentor	Pop into different rooms to encourage conversation, especially in rooms with few participants.
Director	Pop into different rooms to encourage conversation, especially in rooms with few participants.
Admin Team	Now the only one in the plenary, and has a chance to adjust. Participants may be arriving late, have technical problems, or may pop into plenary for other reasons, at which stage the Admin Team should be able to resolve participant issues and allocate them to a breakout room.
Process Administrator	Monitor sandpit organisation emails to see if participants cannot connect to the session for any reason. Advise them to use personal phones/computers and personal internet connections if their corporate network or policy prevents them from using corporate tools to join the session. Using an official app of the conference tool may allow for more functionality compared to using in-browser version of the same tool.
Technologist	Send reminders to participants to come back to plenary at: half-way point, 5-minutes before plenary, 1-minute before plenary.
Plenary 1	
Technologist	Bring participants back to plenary, either automatically or manually as technology allows.
Facilitator	Solicit comments about how the sandpit is going so far for a few minutes via thumbs up through their web cameras, chat, or built-in tools within the videoconferencing software. You could allow participants to use audio, but also encourage them to use the other methods instead.
Facilitator	Instruct participants to use the sandpit website, and put their name in a comment against a cluster they liked to work on the most.

Facilitator	Encourage participants to delve into clusters they might not have complete technical expertise in, and see how they would approach it.
Facilitator	Remind participants that the plenary room that participants first arrived at will remain open, and that if there's anything at all that is confusing, popping into the plenary room is always an option to chat with the admin team and get directed to where they need to be.
Voting with your Feet 2	
Facilitator	Explain to the participants, that the aim is to have about 5-6 participants per room. Clusters that get too big can be split into smaller sub-clusters, and clusters that have too few participants can generate more ideas on the theme and attract more participants to their cause after this initial split.
Cluster refinement	
Facilitator	Let participants know that if they come up with a brand new cluster of ideas, it is possible to create a separate room for them to discuss that cluster, and to have a representation of that cluster on the sandpit website in the same space where established themes already reside.
Facilitator	Remind participants that they can still switch clusters, so that if they end up in a conference room with a lot of participants, they can switch to a second-preference room.
Facilitator	Let participants know that this conversation will still be ~30 minutes, so they have more time both to discuss ideas in the clusters they choose, and to move around clusters.
Facilitator	Remind participants that the plenary room that participants first arrived at will remain open, and that if there's anything at all that is confusing, popping into the plenary room is always an option to chat with the admin team and get directed to where they need to be.
Mentor	Pop into different rooms to encourage conversation, especially in rooms with few participants.
Director	Pop into different rooms to encourage conversation, especially in rooms with few participants.
Technologist	Send reminders to participants to come back to plenary at: half-way point, 5-minutes before plenary, 1-minute before plenary.
Admin Team	Now the only one in the plenary, and it has a chance to adjust. Participants may be arriving late, have technical problems, or may pop into plenary for other reasons, at which stage the Admin Team should be able to resolve participant issues and allocate them to a breakout room.

Process Administrator	Monitor sandpit organisation emails to see if participants cannot connect to the session for any reason. Advise them to use personal phones/computers and personal internet connections if their corporate network or policy prevents them from using corporate tools to join the session. Using an official app of the conference tool may allow for more functionality compared to using in-browser version of the same tool.
Plenary 2 and Send-Off	
Technologist	Bring participants back to plenary, either automatically or manually as technology allows.
Facilitator	Provide some info on what happens next – participants are to attach their name against a particular cluster before the next sandpit session. Participants can attach their name against multiple clusters, provided they have enough time and energy to engage with multiple teams, and develop multiple ideas at the same time.
Facilitator	Reiterate that the sandpit website is online 24/7 for participants to add comments, visit, watch and read existing material, read through existing participant profiles.
Facilitator	Encourage participants to leave notes for each other, and check on each other's profiles.
Facilitator	Encourage participants to leave their name/email in the comments as well for easy identification as to who wants to connect with whom.
Facilitator	Remind participants that the Admin Team can facilitate conferences between interested participants outside of sandpit sessions, with more details on the sandpit website.
Facilitator	Reiterate for participants to use Q&A page to leave questions – general to the sandpit Admin Team or specific to particular people.
Facilitator	Encourage participants to get in touch with the Admin Team if participants have any questions.
Director	Conclude the day, encouraging participants to connect, and work between sandpit meetings. Compliment participants on the work they've done thus far, and say your goodbyes for the day.
Debrief	
Admin Team	Discuss how things are going thus far, what needs to change, immediate feedback from mentors.

Interim 1

Technologist: Set up a separate webpage on the sandpit website with cluster names and prospective teams per cluster based on the comments **Participants** left in the clusters they want to work in. Include the cluster name, and the names of **Participants**.

Technologist: Set up conference rooms for the **Participants** who want to use them to communicate with each other between sandpit sessions.

Technologist: Set up collaborative-editing sandpit proposal templates so that participants can start capturing their thoughts in a structured manner.

Process Administrator: Set up a page with other funding opportunities similar to the sandpit, but do not make it visible yet.

Mentor: Send a note to the **Process Administrator** about your preferred availability between this and next sandpit session.

Process Administrator: Set up a page with dates and times when **Mentors** are available to chat about sandpit projects.

Process Administrator: Send an email follow-up with the recap of the day and a reminder of actions to be completed by the **Participants** for the next session.

Sandpit Processes: Session 2 Part 1

Roles you'll need: Director, Process Administrator, Technologist, Facilitator, Analyst, Mentor, Stakeholder, Participants.

Tools you'll need: Central digital presence, real time audio/video conferencing during sandpit sessions (plenary, individual groups), Instant messaging (chat) during sandpit sessions, collaborative-editing sandpit proposal templates.

Pre-Meeting Logistics	
Technologist	Set up the conference call, and the waiting room for it. Allow admin team in, but leave the participants who arrive early in the waiting room until the start of the sandpit session.
Admin Team	Brief – 15-30 minutes prior to the sandpit session. Allows for Technologist to test tools, and for Admin Team to brief, plan, and adjust course as necessary.
Introduction of the Day	
Technologist	Allow participants into the conference call.
Facilitator	Welcome participants. Remind them that facilitated meetings outside the sandpit have been happening, and anyone needing assistance in setting those up can address the Admin Team for that, and/or use the sandpit website.
Facilitator	Explain that the process of this day may be a bit confusing, but the Admin Team is there to support them. Thank the participants who identified which clusters they wanted to work on, and encourage the rest to make their decisions.
Facilitator	Run through the agenda for the day with the participants. State that after every cluster discussion there should be a short report about what the team's research questions are at that moment. Set expectations about a "work in progress" presentation that would need to be delivered during Session 3.
Facilitator	Introduce mentors, and their role in the process. Hand over to the Director for the introduction to the day.
Director	Encourage participants to continue working, and express interest in the clusters formed thus far. Remind the participants that the funding panel will be looking for novel proposals, focused on the sandpit-specific topic. Emphasize that ideas participants may have had prior to the sandpit would not work in this context – the proposals should reflect that the projects could only have formed because of the sandpit with the teams that were assembled out of sandpit participants.

Technologist	Remind participants to have sandpit website visible using split screen or similar. So that they can see notifications from the website. Share your screen and demonstrate how that could be set up. Remind participants that plenary remains open for then to pop in, ask questions and resolve issues.
Technologist	Share your screen and demonstrate how to navigate to the clusters participants would like to work in. Within each cluster there should be a link to a separate conference call for all interested participants to join.
Identifying Key Research Questions (45 minutes)	
Technologist	Help anyone lost to get to the conference room of their choosing.
Admin Team	Now the only one in the plenary, and it has a chance to adjust. Participants may be arriving late, have technical problems, or may pop into plenary for other reasons, at which stage the Admin Team should be able to resolve participant issues and allocate them to a breakout room.
Mentor	Pick a separate conference room each, and drop in to help the fledgling teams.
Technologist	Monitor the conference rooms and notify the Admin Team if certain rooms are continuously empty.
Technologist	Message conference rooms at half-interval, 5-minutes cut off, and 1 minute cut off.
Back to Plenary – Presentations	
Technologist	Bring participants back to plenary, either automatically or manually as technology allows.
Facilitator	Remind participants that they now have to present where they are up to in their conversations. Ask a representative from each group to say a few words about what where they are with the research questions. After each group presents, ask them what kind of additional expertise they need for their ideas to flourish, to facilitate multidisciplinary approach.
Facilitator	Remind participants that there are people profiles on the sandpit website, so that everyone can pick and choose whom they want to talk to about their research questions.
Facilitator	Remind participants that the teams and clusters are still flexible, and amendable to change, merge and split.
Final Words before the Break	

Facilitator	Tell participants they could take a rest for 30 minutes, and use facilitated conference rooms if needed. Remind participants about what happens when they are back – that there will be another long theme discussion, where participants could join and develop their research questions further.
Technologist	Take a break, but return to the plenary as participants may have technical questions.
Facilitator	Take a break, but return to the plenary as participants may have process questions.
Technologist	Facilitate a separate breakout room for e.g. Mentor and the Director to discuss how the sandpit is going thus far.

Sandpit Processes: Session 2 Part 2

Roles you'll need: Director, Process Administrator, Technologist, Facilitator, Analyst, Mentor, Stakeholder, Participants.

Tools you'll need: Central digital presence, real time audio/video conferencing during sandpit sessions (plenary, individual groups), Instant messaging (chat) during sandpit sessions, collaborative-editing sandpit proposal templates.

After the Break	
Facilitator	Welcome everyone back. Remind participants that they can always return to the plenary, and be directed to where they need to go.
Director	Encourage participants to form multidisciplinary teams. Share positive feedback gathered from the mentors during the break.
Facilitator	Explain to the participants what next: they will again go to their clusters of interest to continue to refine their research questions that they need to formalise their teams, and to keep an open and fluid mind. Ask the participants not to dominate the conversation, and allow everyone to express themselves.
Technologist	Make proposal template links visible in each cluster.
Facilitator	Explain that participants can work collaboratively using proposal templates, and that the templates are framed in way that focuses previously discussed ideas and research questions into a sandpit proposal.
Facilitator	Remind the participants that they have to present their "work in progress" during the next sandpit session. Remind participants that the proposal template is available 24/7, much like the rest of the sandpit resources so teams can work on their projects at any time, including between the sandpit sessions.
Facilitator	Explain to the participants that the next hour should be dedicated not only to the research discussion, but also to planning and admin, including how to develop the projects further outside of today's sandpit session.
Technologist	Encourage participants to put all the important info into the proposal template, as it will be the definitive document. Whatever participants put into the chat function of the conference may get lost or not be automatically saved, but what participants put into the template will be automatically saved and there for them to work on.
Formalising Teams and Questions (1 hour)	
Technologist	Help anyone lost to get to the conference room of their choosing.

Admin Team	Now the only one in the plenary, and it has a chance to adjust. Participants may be arriving late, have technical problems, or may pop into plenary for other reasons, at which stage the Admin Team should be able to resolve participant issues and allocate them to a breakout room.
Mentor	Pick a separate conference room each, and drop in to help the groups.
Technologist	Monitor the conference rooms and notify the Admin Team if certain rooms are continuously empty.
Technologist	Message conference rooms at half-interval, 5-minutes cut off, and 1 minute cut off.
Final Plenary of the Day	
Technologist	Bring participants back to plenary, either automatically or manually as technology allows.
Facilitator	Ask each group to present again as to where their discussion, planning, and project is at. Encourage other participants to feedback by leaving comments under the respective cluster on the sandpit website – while other groups present or if something comes to their mind later.
Facilitator	After each group presents, ask them whether they needed any additional resources or expertise, so that others may potentially join/switch teams.
Facilitator	Remind participants that they can visit each other’s template proposals, and encourage teams to welcome new members. Specify, that the finalized teams have to pitch their ideas to the funding panel for the sandpit money in 2 sandpit sessions. From this point on, there is a need to refine research questions into possible projects.
Facilitator	Remind participants that during the next sandpit session they are expected to present their “work in progress”, strictly no more than 5 minutes per group. Presentations are intended only to gather feedback from other participants, mentors, and stakeholders, they will not be judged by the funding panel.
Facilitator	Remind participants to check their own profiles on sandpit website for notes from others. Remind participants that the Q&A page is there for new questions and answers, and that the Admin Team can still facilitate conference calls between sandpit sessions. The sandpit website has all the specifics about that.
Facilitator	Explain to the participants that between this and the next sandpit sessions there will be mentor clinics – mentors will be available for a chat at particular times. There will also be a funding clinic, where Participants can ask questions about how funding for this sandpit works.

Process Administrator	Share your screen to show participants how to navigate to the portion of the sandpit website where mentors published when they are free to discuss sandpit projects.
Technologist	Remind the participants that template proposals are dedicated documents that the admin team will see as the ones containing most up to date information on team's progress, and so to keep all notes in there.
Facilitator	Keep an eye on the plenary chat for questions, and direct the right people within the admin team to answer them at this point.
Process Administrator	Keep an eye on the plenary chat for questions, and direct the right people within the admin team to answer them at this point.
Director	Conclude with thanks, point teams to template proposals, point participants to non-academic stakeholders. Say goodbye for the day.
Debrief	
Admin Team	Discuss how diverse teams are in terms of seniority and discipline. Check how to involve project partners and stakeholders more if they seem uninvolved. Check to see what else the admin team can do for the fledgling teams, including additional mentors for mentor clinics.

Interim 2

Director: Check and approve sandpit guideline pages to be made public on the sandpit website.

Process Administrator: Enable sandpit guidelines web page, which include key dates, assessment criteria, types of things the sandpit can fund, and references to the full funding guide in PDF, terms of reference, templates for presentations to the funding panel, and the project proposal form, which **Participants** would have to use after their project was agreed in principle. Include an email where **Participants** could write to ask any further questions.

Process Administrator: Keep an eye on the comments on the Q&A page – questions from **Participants** may continue to trickle in.

Mentor: Conduct your mentor clinic at the agreed time.

Analyst: Tally up how diverse the fledgling teams are in terms of technical/social disciplines per team, how many people there are per team, and who is mentioned in multiple teams.

Technologist: Set up a separate page on the sandpit website to capture feedback as groups present their work in progress during Session 3. The page should list every project identified thus far, and feature a comment section to guide feedback in the following 3 categories:

1. Pluses – what do you really like about this proposal? Be specific.
2. Developments – How might they build on what they have done? What other things might they consider?
3. Concerns – What worries you about their proposal? Phrase it as a question ("How to...?", or "How might you...?")

The guidelines should urge participants to leave 1 issue per comment and prepend it with the first letter of the type of feedback they are providing: P for pluses, D for developments, and C for concerns.

Technologist: Set up a separate final templates digital repository shared folder for the participants to upload their final proposal documents in PDF, to have a definitive copy that the funding panel can look at, compared to project proposal templates, which may see editing done at any time.

Process Administrator: Send an email follow-up with the recap of the day and a reminder of actions to be completed by the Participants for the next session.

Sandpit Processes: Session 3 Part 1

Roles you'll need: Director, Process Administrator, Technologist, Facilitator, Analyst, Mentor, Stakeholder, Participants.

Tools you'll need: Central digital presence, real time audio/video conferencing during sandpit sessions (plenary, individual groups), Instant messaging (chat) during sandpit sessions, collaborative-editing sandpit proposal templates, music-playing capability.

Pre-Meeting Logistics	
Technologist	Set up the conference call, and the waiting room for it. Allow Admin Team in, but leave the participants who arrive early in the waiting room until the start of the sandpit session.
Admin Team	Brief – 15-30 minutes prior to the sandpit session. Allows for Technologist to test tools, and for Admin Team to brief, plan, and adjust course as necessary.
Introduction of the Day	
Technologist	Allow participants into the conference call.
Facilitator	Welcome everybody. Explain how the work will pan out today. The day is made of 2 parts: 1. Teams present their "work in progress" and receive feedback; 2. Teams implement feedback they received, finalise team members, and prepare to present their final proposals during the next sandpit session. In first part, it is a quick feel for what each group is working on, and for participants to give feedback to each other.
Facilitator	Remind Participants that the timing for the presentations needs to be tight (5 minutes), and that the presentations are a "work in progress" rather than the final ones.
Facilitator	Check all teams present, and if each would present by calling out a team's name, and asking a team member from that team to confirm verbally. Some teams from the previously identified may have decided not to proceed further, and participants probably merged with other teams.
Director	Say a few encouraging words, and that mentors can help identify end-users and project partners to work with participants on their proposals.
Facilitator	Explain that peer feedback is an integral part of the sandpit. Explain that the sandpit works more as a collaborative enterprise rather than a "dragon's den" style system where projects are torn apart.

Facilitator	Establish a limit on presentation time – 5 minutes, and explain that there will then be a few minutes for other participants to provide feedback on the dedicated sandpit website pages.
Facilitator	Share your screen and demonstrate how to navigate to the sandpit website, and to the specific page where all projects are listed. Show where the space for the feedback is. Explain how pluses, developments, and concerns-style comments work. The emphasis should be on helpful comments (“how might you overcome...”) rather than on reactive ones (“you will never make this idea work”).
Technologist	Clarify that having names next to feedback is not necessary, unless you want to be contacted to discuss a given comment further. Clarify that all comments will be transferred to the proposal templates by Technologist , so that participants could have everything in one document, rather than scattered across the sandpit website pages.
Facilitator	Some of the teams may dip in and out of the session due to other obligations, so be prepared to re-arrange the order in which teams present. They will most likely ask for this, but do check with the Participants if anyone needs to leave during the session for any reason, and arrange presentations order accordingly.
Work in Progress Presentations 1	
Facilitator	Go through each team, as they are listed on the sandpit website page for feedback. Ask who would present from that team. Once selected, remind them that they have 5 minutes to present. Explain that presentations will run strict to time, and that presenters will be interrupted if they run overtime.
Technologist	Participants may wish to share their screen to show their slides, allow them to do so.
Facilitator	Once a team presented, direct everyone to the sandpit website page for feedback for that particular team, and explain that everyone now has 3-4 minutes to leave their comments/feedback on that presentation and the project.
Technologist	Set some gentle music (e.g. Claude Debussy – Clair De Lune) to guide participants to leave comments. Once the music stops, it would serve as an indicator for the participants to stop leaving comments, and direct their attention to the next presentation.
Facilitator	Give a 30-second warning for participants to wrap-up their comments.
Facilitator	Explain that after all teams present, there will be time for each team to go to their separate breakout rooms to reflect on, and implement feedback left in the comments.

Facilitator	As teams present, and feedback piles up, compliment the participants on leaving substantial quantities of feedback.
Facilitator	Remind participants to get in touch with Mentors who can provide support. Remind participants that the Admin Team can also provide support.
Break	
Facilitator	Announce a break for 30 minutes once 1.5 hours from the beginning of the session have expired. Explain that the teams which have not yet presented will be given an opportunity to do so after the break. Encourage Participants to stretch, have some tea or lunch, and generally rest before the next session takes place.
Technologist	Take a break, but return to the plenary as Participants may have technical questions.
Facilitator	Take a break, but return to the plenary as Participants may have process questions.

Sandpit Processes: Session 3 Part 2

Roles you'll need: Director, Process Administrator, Technologist, Facilitator, Analyst, Mentor, Stakeholder, Participants.

Tools you'll need: Central digital presence, real time audio/video conferencing during sandpit sessions (plenary, individual groups), Instant messaging (chat) during sandpit sessions, collaborative-editing sandpit proposal templates, music-playing capability, final templates digital repository.

Work in Progress Presentations 2	
Facilitator	Welcome everyone back, and explain that the rest of the teams will now present, 5 minutes each, and that there will be the same 3-4 minutes after each presentation for the Participants to leave comments to each team on their dedicated feedback pages.
Facilitator	Remind Participants to leave 1 piece of feedback per comment, and to prepend it with an appropriate letter for the type of comment: P for pluses, D for developments, and C for concerns.
Facilitator	Once a team presented, direct everyone to the sandpit website page for feedback for that particular team, and explain that everyone now has 3-4 minutes to leave their comments/feedback on that presentation and the project.
Technologist	Set some gentle music (e.g. Claude Debussy – Clair De Lune) to guide participants to leave comments. Once the music stops, it would serve as an indicator for the participants to stop leaving comments, and direct their attention to the next presentation.
Facilitator	Give a 30-second warning for participants to wrap-up their comments.
Facilitator	Explain that after all teams present, there will be time for each team to go to their separate breakout rooms to reflect on, and implement feedback left in the comments.
Facilitator	As teams present, and feedback piles up, compliment the participants on leaving substantial quantities of feedback.
Facilitator	Remind Participants to get in touch with Mentors who can provide support. Remind Participants that the Admin Team can also provide support.
Teams go back to implement feedback	

Facilitator	Once the last team had a chance to present and collect feedback, direct everyone to their respective sandpit webpages, where the video conference rooms remained open. Explain that teams now have 40 minutes to address the feedback each team has received.
Technologist	Confirm that all feedback has been transferred from the sandpit website pages for feedback into the respective teams' proposal templates.
Facilitator	Clarify that the final day's presentation would be about 10 minutes, but leave the rest of the admin announcements on the matter to the end of the session.
Implementing Feedback	
Director	Once participants left for their own conference rooms, and only the Admin Team remains in the plenary, discuss which teams need the most help with their proposals based on the presentations, and allocate Mentors to those groups accordingly. Then pop into every team's video conference after 10-15 minutes to see how they are doing, and to encourage them to continue.
Facilitator	Discuss with the Admin Team how to approach the final day, and if there are any changes needed compared to the published schedule. Confirm the order of presenters with the Admin Team . Allow a 15-minute break after every 3-4 teams present for the Funding Panel to consolidate their thoughts before proceeding to the subsequent teams' presentations.
Technologist	Amend the agenda to include any changes. Create a presentation schedule for the final day.
Technologist	Set a separate page for the final proposal document uploads, and the final presentations. Set up a final templates digital repository shared folder for the Participants to upload their final proposals.
Technologist	Send half-time, 5-minute, and 1-minute warnings to the participants, so that they return the plenary session on time.
Plenary and Send-Off	
Technologist	Bring Participants back to plenary, either automatically or manually as technology allows.
Facilitator	Ask Participants for some feedback on how the sessions were going, and whether the feedback that teams have received was helpful.
Facilitator	Explain what is expected from the participants now, and how the final sandpit day will unfold. Tell the Participants when the deadline for the proposal submission is, and that the expected submission should be in PDF, uploaded to the specific final templates digital repository folder. Share your screen, and show how to submit the document by following a final templates digital repository link.

Facilitator	Show the participants the presentation schedule for the final day, and where on the sandpit website it is located. Clarify that it is not mandatory for all teams to be there for all presentations, but suggest that a full team should be present during their own presentation so that the Funding Panel can ask clarifying question, and each team has the best chance to respond to them.
Facilitator	Ask the Participants to attend at the start, and at the end of the next session's meeting for useful announcements and updates.
Facilitator	Keep an eye on the plenary chat for questions, and direct the right people within the Admin Team to answer them at this point.
Process Administrator	Keep an eye on the plenary chat for questions, and direct the right people within the admin team to answer them at this point.
Director	Say a few words about the Funding Panel – who will be on it, and where to find more information about each of them
Technologist	Place the info about the Funding Panel on the sandpit website.
Process Administrator	Clarify that the formal costing/budget need not be completed by the final sandpit day. There will be a window of another 2 weeks after teams know who was successful to submit costings. For the presentation day, teams only need to have a realistic estimate of costings.
Director	Clarify that slides are not necessary for presentation. Clarify that the maximum presentation length is 10 minutes, after which presenters will be interrupted. Clarify when a hard deadline for the final proposals to be uploaded as PDFs to the final templates digital repository folder is. Remind Participants that there is a sandpit clinic happening on the day as well, and when.
Facilitator	Remind Participants that there is a Q&A page on the sandpit website where they could submit their questions, and read already answered ones.
Director	Close off the meeting. Reiterate that teams are not expected to work on weekend, and also that the real time audio/video conferencing between sessions remain open for participants to meet and chat.

Interim 3

Director: Conduct a sandpit Q&A/clinic at a convenient time (30 minutes).

Technologist: Establish a page on the sandpit website for the final proposals and presentations. Include project names, and list team members. Allow comments on each of the team's pages, so that stakeholders could reach out to them by leaving a comment. Upload all submitted PDF project proposals to the sandpit website for the funding panel to easily access.

Technologist and Process Administrator: Publish current opportunities in other similar events, so that participants can reapply their teams/projects should they not get funds from this sandpit.

Technologist: Create a final presentation digital repository shared folder for teams to upload their presentations to.

Process Administrator: Send an email follow-up with the recap of the day and a reminder of actions to be completed by the **Participants** for the next session.

Sandpit Processes: Day 4 (Final)

Roles you'll need: Director, Process Administrator, Technologist, Facilitator, Analyst, Mentor, Stakeholder, Funding Panel, Participants.

Tools you'll need: Central digital presence, real time audio/video conferencing during sandpit sessions (plenary), Instant messaging (chat) during sandpit sessions, final presentation digital repository.

Pre-Meeting Logistics	
Technologist	Set up the conference call, and the waiting room for it. Allow Admin Team in, but leave the participants who arrive early in the waiting room until the start of the sandpit session.
Director	Brief the Funding Panel (~45 minutes before the session). Explain what their role is, and when they are expected to make a decision. Direct them to the sandpit website, where they can access final proposal submissions by the sandpit teams. Explain that they will have 5 minutes after every presentation to ask clarifying questions only, and to avoid any comments, or discussion.
Admin Team	Brief – 15-30 minutes prior to the sandpit session. Allows for Technologist to test tools, and for the Admin Team to brief, plan, and adjust course as necessary.
Facilitator	Run through logistics on the day, emphasize the need to run precisely on time, given that some teams may not show up until their presentation slot. The Funding Panel members may also have a tight schedule.
Presentations	
Technologist	Allow Participants into the conference call.
Facilitator	Welcome everybody. Emphasize the new connections and collaborations built during the sandpit.
Facilitator	Emphasize that participants have to be on time with their presentation, that the day is not about the debate, but about the Funding Panel understanding what the proposals are.
Director	Explain how the Funding Panel works. Introduce the judges of the Funding Panel . Explain to the participants that the judgement will be made after everyone presents.

Facilitator	Explained that during every presentation you will interject at 8 minutes to announce a 2-minute cut off point.
Technologist	Explain to the participants that they now have a link to the final presentation digital repository shared folder, which should be used to upload their final presentations, so that the Funding Panel can use them to make their judgements. Share the final presentation digital repository link to upload presentations to in the conference chat.
Facilitator	Explain that there will be no feedback from participants. The participants are just an audience, who are free to go and come back when their team presents. Explain that the presentations will be run strictly on time in the interest of every team and the Funding Panel .
Facilitator	Start with the first team on the list. Check if it is ready to present, check with the Funding Panel if they are ready to listen, and hand over to the team's presenter.
Facilitator	If the presenter is too quiet, or have other problems that can be easily rectified – encourage them to do so, e.g. moving closer to their microphone. With every presenter, interject at 8-minute mark, saying that the presenter has 2 minutes to finish. Once a team finishes, encourage the participants to give the team a round of virtual applause. Compliment the team for finishing on time, or interrupt them as necessary. Once the team ends their presentation, encourage them to stop screen sharing.
Facilitator	Ask the Funding Panel if they have any questions to the presenting team. Keep them to the 5-minute limit. Discourage anything but clarifying questions, as some funders may try to make comments or announce their opinions of the team. Interject, and ask the Funding Panel member as to whether they have a clarifying question instead. Prevent the team from responding or engaging in a debate either. The 5-minute limit for questions from the Funding Panel , and the specifics of only allowing clarifying questions serves as focus to the Funding Panel to only ask questions necessary to make their funding decisions.
Facilitator	Once the Funding Panel had their time, encourage the team to upload their presentation to the final presentation digital repository on the link provided by the Technologist in the chat box. Then move on to the next team.
Facilitator	Challenge if any background noise bleeds into the conference. If the noise continues, mute everyone but the presenter.
Facilitator	Once 3-4 teams present, announce a 15-minute break.
Technologist	Provide a separate breakout room for the Funding Panel and the Director to convene and discuss their issues.

Technologist	Take a break, but return to the plenary as participants may have technical questions.
Facilitator	Take a break, but return to the plenary as participants may have process questions.
Final Plenary	
Facilitator	Once all teams complete their presentations, Thank the community and the Funding Panel for all their work. Remind the Participants that the sandpit website is still there for people to meet afterwards, as well as facilitated real time audio/video conference rooms. Hand over to the Process Administrator to explain the next steps for the participants.
Process Administrator	Explain what happens next: you will be in contact with each team about the outcomes of their proposals, including detailed info on how the funds will be awarded.
Director	Reiterate when the Funding Panel will meet to make funding decisions. Explain that everyone will get feedback whether successful or not. Encourage Participants to check other opportunities published on the sandpit website.
Director	Remind the participants to keep in touch beyond the sandpit. Announce any upcoming calls from the sandpit organisation where participants can also take part. Thank all participants, the Admin Team , and the Funding Panel . Close off the session.
Debrief	
Admin Team	Shares their first impressions on the entire sandpit.

What Worked, Tips & Suggestions

Tools

Remind **Participants** about the **online tools** available to them, including Q&A and facilitated meetings they could join at any time. Encourage **Participants** to propose when they are available for a chat, and for others to leave comments as to whether they would like to join. **Admin Team** could monitor and facilitate those meetings depending on your tools to see how utilised the resource is.

Have a countdown clock in the breakout rooms, so that everyone knows in advance how much time they have left to discuss issues. This will keep the sandpit running to time, which is important, given that the virtual sandpit is one of the many virtual meetings your **Participants, Mentors, Funding Panel, Stakeholders** might have on the day.

Provide facilities for the **Participants** to comment on each other's ideas. Continuous feedback is one of the pillars of a sandpit.

Give **Participants** virtual space to create their own profiles on the sandpit website. Not only will it help the participants to get to know each other, it also serves as means of communication between sessions, where **Participants** are likely to email each other, rather than use the sandpit website or conference calls.

Enable email and/or browser notification when someone comments on **Participant** sandpit profile page or on project pages. This will keep **Participants** up to date on comments and time-sensitive communications like establishing a conference call.

Consider adding visual collaboration tools, e.g. [Mural](#). Some **Participants** work better with image-based tools, rather than text-based ones

Encourage **Participants** to use any tools they need to accomplish their task. If the sandpit does not provide every tool **Participants** need – it is okay, so long as they do use the tools provided for the purposes those tools exist (e.g., the sandpit proposal template).

People Management

Remind **Participants** of good behaviour: listening as well as talking, not narrowing down too quickly, meeting new **Participants**. Explicitly point **Participants** to the code of conduct published on the **sandpit website**.

Allow time for **Participants** to get to know each other personally and professionally. This could help participants find common language, especially across diverse academic/industrial disciplines. Observing participants as they get to know each other helps the **Admin Team** to see if there are any dominating characters within teams, and intervene to allow everybody to voice their ideas.

Encourage **Participants** to write their thoughts down. This allows for concise expression of ideas, and leaves a persistent trail.

Visit **Participant** breakout rooms as they discuss their ideas, but do not propose topics for conversation. This allows to identify individuals or groups that need extra help from

Mentors, monitor discipline diversity and idea development. Knowing this early allows for slight steering if necessary.

Remind **Participants** what the sandpit is about, and what they need to focus on every time they come into the new session and after each break. **Participants** can easily deviate from the sandpit topic, especially if they come to the sandpit with preconceived projects.

Monitor the teams as they form, and suggest **Participants** from different background to balance the teams, especially when working with multidisciplinary projects/themes. Unbalanced teams may have a narrow view on the theme (see: [tunnel vision](#)), or perceive aspects of a given theme they are less competent in as simple to resolve (see: [Dunning-Kruger effect](#)).

Process Management

Do not recruit too many **Participants** into the sandpit. 35-40 participants is optimal.

Consider who you can allocate funds to. Being able to fund only academics could create uneven field for non-academic **Stakeholders**.

Make your **Funding Panel** as diverse and representative of the **Participants**, **Stakeholders**, end users, and the research topic of the sandpit as possible. Due to diversity of disciplines, the panel can be hard to organise.

If you contemplate recording any part of the sandpit – seek explicit permission from all involved before the sandpit. This helps to set expectations, and provides the **Admin Team** a means to capture parts of the sandpit.

Consider gaps between sandpit sessions. This allows **Participants** to gather their thoughts and develop ideas. Allow at least a full day between sessions to facilitate this.

Consider where your **Participants** may come from, and set up session times to facilitate sufficiently broad time zones.

Be strict on enforcing breaks. If **Participants** cannot stop discussing issues, ask them to note their thoughts down rather than keep talking, or to go into a separate chat or a breakout room. The **Admin Team** could facilitate both options.

As the sandpit progresses, expect **Participants** to “vote with their feet” and abandon initial ideas.

Hold back sandpit admin details until later into the sandpit. Some **Participants** may be trying to optimize their project to secure funding, rather than focusing on the novelty of the project itself. It may also become apparent that **Participants** came into the sandpit with pre-conceived projects – not having access to the admin details gives chance for new ideas to form.

Use live Q&A and **Mentor** clinics in addition to the static Q&A pages. Some **Participants** prefer to receive answers directly from organisers, and will strive to ask those questions during the sandpit sessions. Having a separate live Q&A before the final sandpit proposal presentations could help those **Participants** present their project in the best possible light, while not spending time answering those questions during the sandpit sessions themselves.

Links in This Guide

- [EPSRC – What is a sandpit?](#)
- [Call for Participants to Attend the SPRITE+ Virtual Sandpit on Trust, Identity, Privacy, and Security in the post-Covid Digital Economy](#)
- [Google Forms](#)
- [Zoom](#)
- [SpatialChat](#)
- [Google Docs](#)
- [Dropbox](#)
- [Well-Sorted](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [Spotify](#)
- [Mural](#)