How to work on your network

How to build local partnerships with organizations, artists, start-ups, and more

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Written by Daan Sonnemans (Fab City Foundation)

Summary

How to Work on Your Network to build strong, local partnerships with organizations, artists, schools, and start-ups.

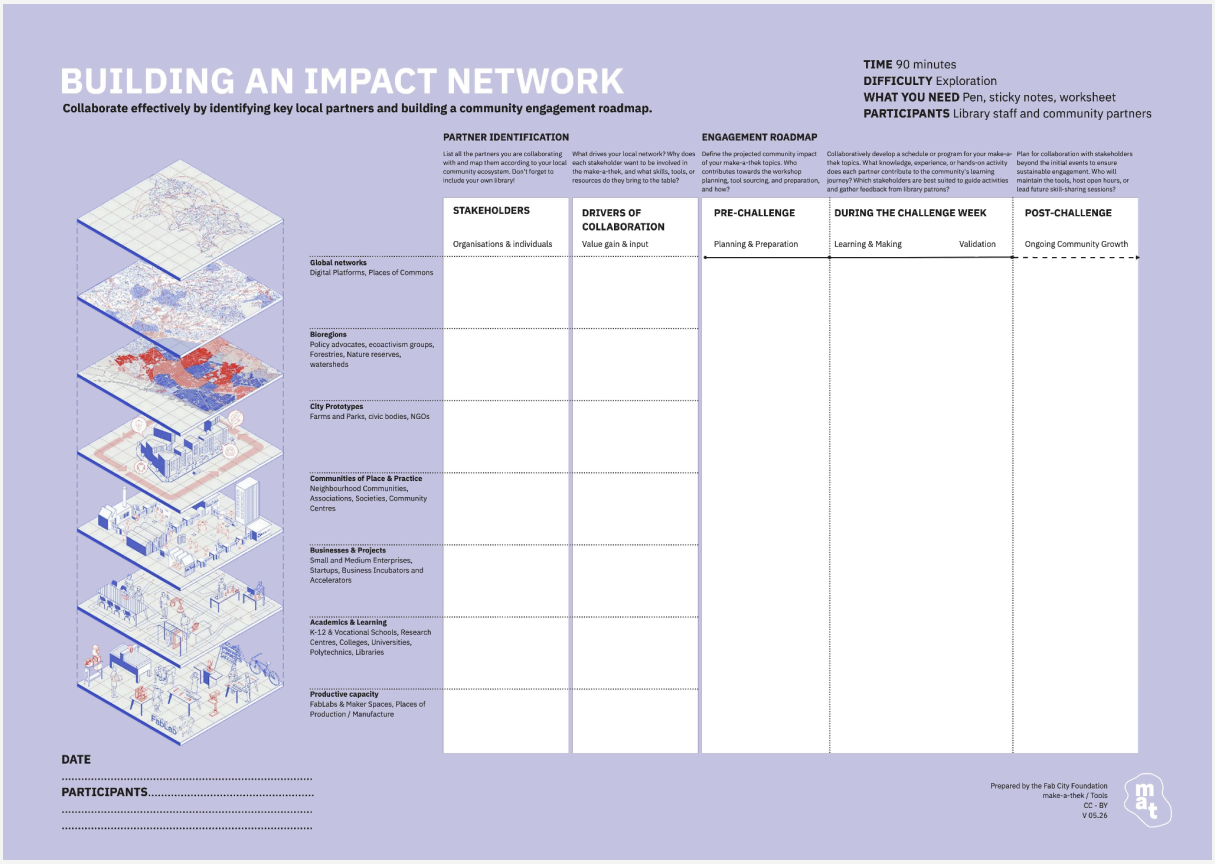
Creating a make-a-thek isn't something you do alone. The strongest libraries grow with their local communities - and that means having a systematic approach to partnerships.

How to use this resource

Print the worksheets below on A3 or larger and use **sticky notes** or use the worksheet on Miro to co-map your ecosystem with your team or community.

Steps to activate your network

1. **Identify potential partners**
   Use the *Building an Impact Network* worksheet to list relevant stakeholders, from local associations and small businesses to schools and fablabs, or even global organisations.



BUILDING AN IMPACT NETWORK

Collaborate effectively by identifying key local partners and building a community engagement roadmap.

TIME 90 minutes
DIFFICULTY Exploration
WHAT YOU NEED Pen, sticky notes, worksheet
PARTICIPANTS Library staff and community partners

PARTNER IDENTIFICATION

List all the partners you are collaborating with and map them according to your local community ecosystem. Don't forget to include your own library!

What drives your local network? Why does each stakeholder want to be involved in the make-a-thek, and what skills, tools, or resources do they bring to the table?

ENGAGEMENT ROADMAP

Define the projected community impact of your make-a-thek topics. Who contributes towards the workshop planning, tool sourcing, and preparation, and how?

Collaboratively develop a schedule or program for your make-a-thek topics. What knowledge, experience, or hands-on activity does each partner contribute to the community's learning journey? Which stakeholders are best suited to guide activities and gather feedback from library patrons?

Plan for collaboration with stakeholders beyond the initial events to ensure sustainable engagement. Who will maintain the tools, host open hours, or lead future skill-sharing sessions?

	STAKEHOLDERS Organisations & individuals	DRIVERS OF COLLABORATION Value gain & input	PRE-CHALLENGE Planning & Preparation	DURING THE CHALLENGE WEEK Learning & Making / Validation	POST-CHALLENGE Ongoing Community Growth
Global networks Digital Platforms, Places of Commons					
Bioregions Policy advocates, ecoactivism groups, Forestries, Nature reserves, watersheds					
City Prototypes Farms and Parks, civic bodies, NGOs					
Communities of Place & Practice Neighbourhood Communities, Associations, Societies, Community Centres					
Businesses & Projects Small and Medium Enterprises, Startups, Business Incubators and Accelerators					
Academics & Learning K-12 & Vocational Schools, Research Centres, Colleges, Universities, Polytechnics, Libraries					
Productive capacity FabLabs & Maker Spaces, Places of Production / Manufacture					

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2. **Understand the value exchange**
   What can your library offer (space, visibility, new audiences)? What could partners contribute (expertise, tools, materials)? Write this in the *Drivers of Collaboration* column.

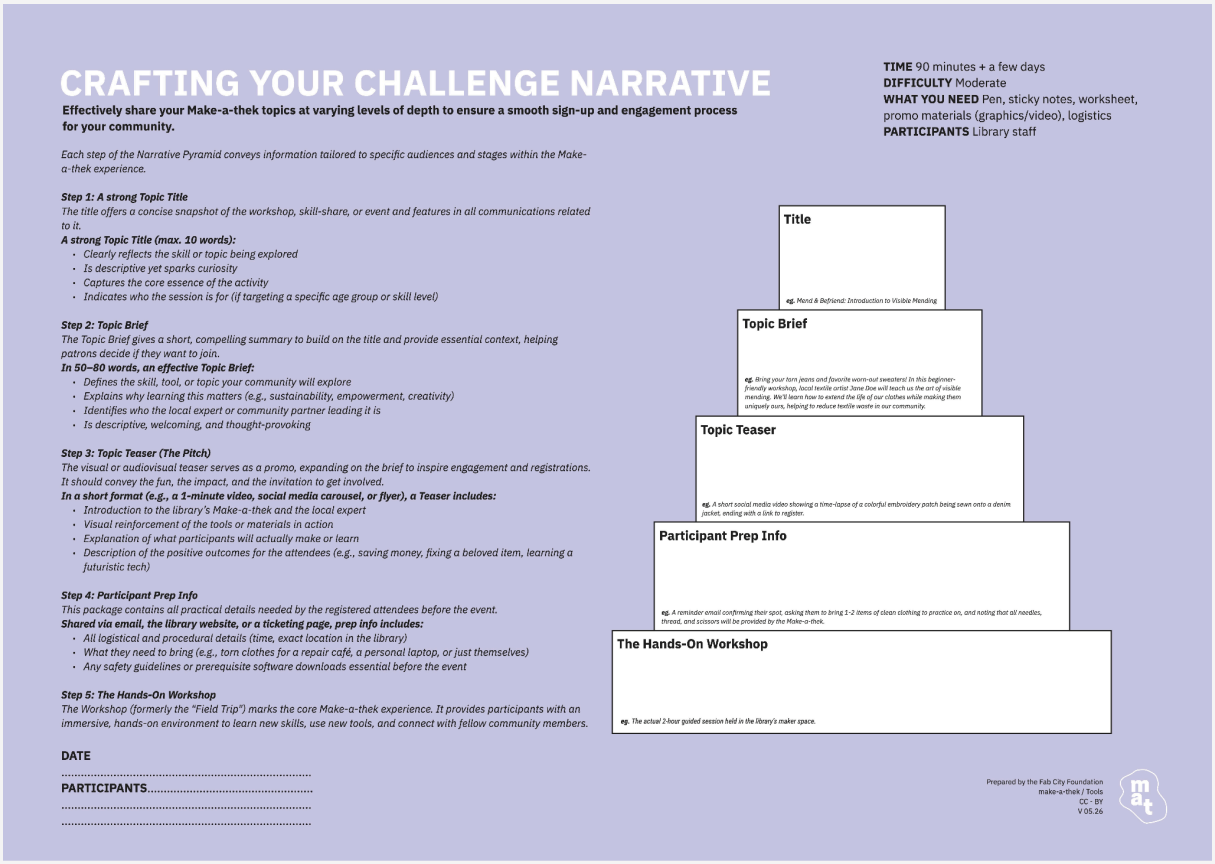
3. **Plan the collaboration timeline**
   Use the *Engagement Roadmap* to define when and how you'll involve them:

   - **Preparation**: meetings, shared goals
   - **Co-design**: events, workshops, installations
   - **Follow-up**: documentation, shared storytelling, feedback sessions

Funded by the European Union

make-a-thek has received funding from the European Horizon Europe programme under grant agreement No. 101177660.

4. **Frame your story**
   Want people to join your journey? Use the *Challenge Narrative Worksheet* to clearly communicate your vision and invite others in. Important note! Different stakeholders might require different communicative language, know your audience and how to address them!



CRAFTING YOUR CHALLENGE NARRATIVE

Effectively share your Make-a-thek topics at varying levels of depth to ensure a smooth sign-up and engagement process for your community.

TIME 90 minutes + a few days
DIFFICULTY Moderate
WHAT YOU NEED Pen, sticky notes, worksheet, promo materials (graphics/video), logistics
PARTICIPANTS Library staff

Each step of the Narrative Pyramid conveys information tailored to specific audiences and stages within the Make-a-thek experience.

Step 1: A strong Topic Title
The title offers a concise snapshot of the workshop, skill-share, or event and features in all communications related to it.
A strong Topic Title (max. 10 words):
- *Clearly reflects the skill or topic being explored*
- *Is descriptive yet sparks curiosity*
- *Captures the core essence of the activity*
- *Indicates who the session is for (if targeting a specific age group or skill level)*

Step 2: Topic Brief
The Topic Brief gives a short, compelling summary to build on the title and provide essential context, helping patrons decide if they want to join.
In 50–80 words, an effective Topic Brief:
- *Defines the skill, tool, or topic your community will explore*
- *Explains why learning this matters (e.g., sustainability, empowerment, creativity)*
- *Identifies who the local expert or community partner leading it is*
- *Is descriptive, welcoming, and thought-provoking*

Step 3: Topic Teaser (The Pitch)
The visual or audiovisual teaser serves as a promo, expanding on the brief to inspire engagement and registrations. It should convey the fun, the impact, and the invitation to get involved.
In a short format (e.g., a 1-minute video, social media carousel, or flyer), a Teaser includes:
- *Introduction to the library's Make-a-thek and the local expert*
- *Visual reinforcement of the tools or materials in action*
- *Explanation of what participants will actually make or learn*
- *Description of the positive outcomes for the attendees (e.g., saving money, fixing a beloved item, learning a futuristic tech)*

Step 4: Participant Prep Info
This package contains all practical details needed by the registered attendees before the event.
Shared via email, the library website, or a ticketing page, prep info includes:
- *All logistical and procedural details (time, exact location in the library)*
- *What they need to bring (e.g., torn clothes for a repair café, a personal laptop, or just themselves)*
- *Any safety guidelines or prerequisite software downloads essential before the event*

Step 5: The Hands-On Workshop
The Workshop (formerly the "Field Trip") marks the core Make-a-thek experience. It provides participants with an immersive, hands-on environment to learn new skills, use new tools, and connect with fellow community members.

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Title
eg. *Mend & Befriend: Introduction to Visible Mending*

Topic Brief
eg. *Bring your torn jeans and favorite worn-out sweaters! In this beginner-friendly workshop, local textile artist Jane Doe will teach us the art of visible mending. We'll learn how to extend the life of our clothes while making them uniquely ours, helping to reduce textile waste in our community.*

Topic Teaser
eg. *A short social media video showing a time-lapse of a colorful embroidery patch being sewn onto a denim jacket, ending with a link to register.*

Participant Prep Info
eg. *A reminder email confirming their spot, asking them to bring 1-2 items of clean clothing to practice on, and noting that all needles, thread, and scissors will be provided by the Make-a-thek.*

The Hands-On Workshop
eg. *The actual 2-hour guided session held in the library's maker space.*

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5. **Start small and grow**
   Begin with one collaboration (e.g., co-hosting a lab), then build trust to create a long-term relationship.

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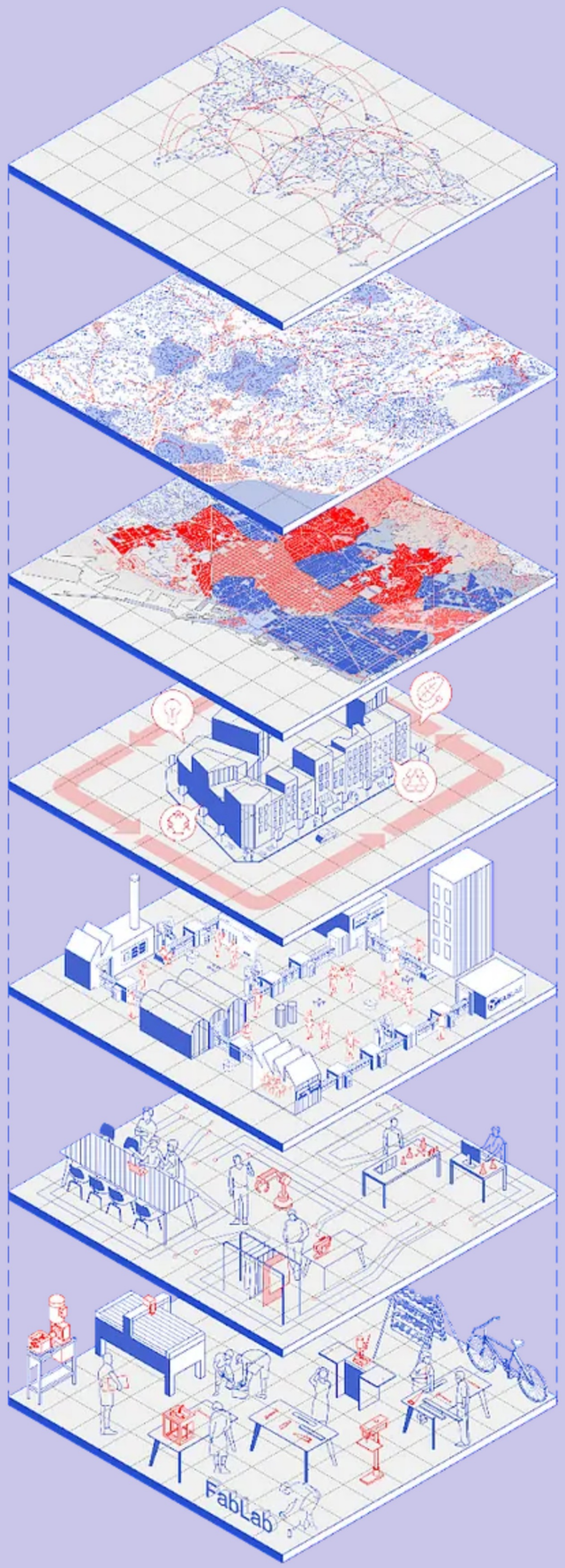

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