

Welcome to the AWUF 2025 Playbook

This learning format playbook introduces all the bold & immersive formats designed to spark deep learning, dialogue, and meaningful connections at AWUF 2025. From fireside chats to masterclasses, shark tanks to debates, project labs to leadership lunches – each format is a carefully crafted space for insights to emerge. Whether you are a speaker, expert, facilitator, or host, this guide will help you prepare with clarity, presence, and purpose. This playbook invites you to lead with experience, engage with openness, and help shape conversations that matter.

1. Fireside Chats – Sharing INSIGHTS

Fireside Chats are relaxed, insight-driven dialogues that surface personal reflections and lived experiences. Without slides or scripts, speakers reflect on challenges, turning points, and lessons learned. Guided by a thoughtful moderator, the format invites honesty, depth, and connection – offering audiences insight that feels human, memorable, and quietly transformative.

2. Master Class – Sharing WISDOM

Master Classes are built around lived experience. Each one is shaped by real case studies and guided by someone who has navigated complexity firsthand. These sessions are structured for deep learning—anchored in turning points, trade-offs, and takeaways. Participants engage, reflect, and walk away with insights that can be applied to their own work. This is where knowledge becomes wisdom—through storytelling and practical exchange.

3. Shark Tank – Sharing IDEAS

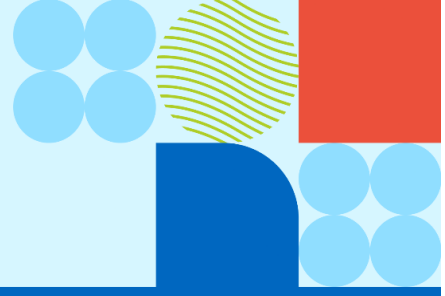
Shark Tank is a space for bold ideas with real potential. In these sessions, teams pitch solutions, models, or prototypes to a panel of senior leaders -- our “sharks” who offer mentoring, connections, or visibility. The audience plays an active role through live feedback and support. It’s fast-paced, energizing, and focused on helping great ideas gain momentum and support to grow.

4. Debate – Sharing PERSPECTIVES

The Debate format brings powerful perspectives to the surface. Two speakers explore a central question from different angles, guided by a skilled moderator. The tone is reflective and full of insight. This is a space where tension reveals nuance, and different viewpoints become a pathway to deeper understanding. Debates help uncover risks, reframe assumptions, and sharpen thinking around complex development challenges.

5. Project Lab – Sharing SOLUTIONS

Project Lab is a hands-on space for working through real project challenges. Project teams bring live issues, and experienced experts help explore options, offer clarity, and guide next steps. The setting is small, focused, and highly collaborative—designed to support reflection and constructive problem-solving. Project Lab helps teams walk in with questions and walk out more equipped, more confident, and ready to move forward.

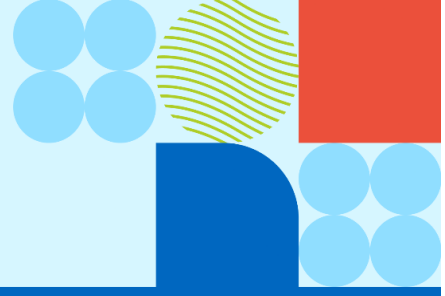


6. Leadership Lunch – Sharing EXPERIENCES

Leadership Lunch offers time and space for meaningful conversation. Around small tables, participants reflect on leadership, learning, and lived experience. Guided by a host, each conversation unfolds through personal stories, powerful questions, and shared insight. These are conversations that deepen connection, build trust, and leave participants with clarity, perspective, and renewed purpose.

7. General Speaking Tips

Whether you're giving a keynote, leading a panel, or sharing a story in a small group; how you speak & deliver shapes how you're remembered. These tips will help you prepare with clarity, deliver with presence, and connect with your audience in a way that truly resonates.



AWUF 2025 Fireside Chat

Welcome to the Fireside Chat format—an invitation to pause, reflect, and listen more deeply. You’ve been invited to speak or moderate because your experience has the power to inspire, challenge, or illuminate. In this format, we step away from formal speeches and slide decks, and return to something more timeless: real conversation. Whether you’re sharing a hard lesson, a personal turning point, or a quiet insight from the field, your voice matters. This space is designed for curiosity, and connection.

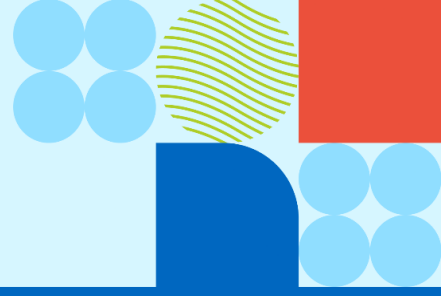
How to use this Playbook

This playbook is a guide to help you prepare, participate, and host Fireside Chats with confidence and clarity. It outlines the purpose of the format, what makes it effective, and how to shape the experience—whether you’re a speaker, a moderator, or supporting the session design.

Use it to understand the flow of the conversation, how to build presence without slides, and how to prepare stories or questions that matter. While the format is informal, the intent is strong: to bring forward the lessons and moments that stick.

Topics covered in this section:

1. What is a Fireside Chat
2. Why fireside chat and who is it for?
3. Core elements of a Fireside Chat
4. Designing your session
5. Flow of the session
6. Roles & responsibilities
7. How to prepare for a fireside chat



1. What is a Fireside Chat?

A Fireside Chat is an informal, dialogue-style session designed to surface insights, reflections & stories in a conversational setting. Instead of prepared speeches or slide decks, it features an open conversation—usually between 1 moderator and 2–4 speakers—focused on a set of guiding questions. It’s an honest, engaging & rich exchange where leaders share from experience, think aloud, and connect with the audience in a way that feels real and memorable.

Fireside Chat create space for reflection and real talk. The flow includes a series of pre-agreed prompts to guide the conversation, with space for natural storytelling, follow-ups, and possibly a short audience Q&A

2. Why Fireside Chat & Who is it for?

Fireside Chats create space for the kind of insights that don’t always fit into formal presentations—reflections, lessons, and personal turning points that shape how people lead, decide, and grow. This format works because it replaces formality with connection. It’s where the human side of leadership and experience comes forward.

This format is ideal for:

- Senior leaders or changemakers with lived experience to share
- Practitioners who have navigated real dilemmas, trade-offs, or pivots
- Moderators who listen deeply and guide with curiosity
- Audiences who value story, nuance, and reflection over formality

Fireside Chats are especially powerful when the goal is to inspire, humanize, and build credibility through shared experience.

3. Core Elements of a Fireside Chat

1. Real-Time Reflections

Speakers reflect on insights through challenges & lessons gained from personal experiences and share relevant actionable knowledge.

2. A Well Prepared Moderator

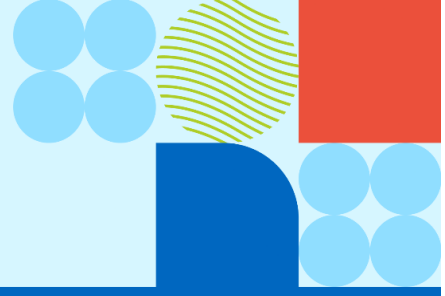
The moderator in a fireside chat navigates the flow of the conversation by inviting deep thinking from the speakers and follows the energy of the exchange with thoughtful, open-ended questions.

3. No Slides, No Speeches

The absence of visual aids or formal remarks keeps the session grounded in voice, expression, and connection.

4. A Focused Theme or Question

Each conversation is anchored in a guiding question or theme—framed around knowledge, leadership, change, challenge, or growth.



5. Audience Participation

The audience is not just passive—it plays a vital role in shaping the tone and depth of the session. By listening attentively, asking thoughtful questions, or building on what was shared, participants can help steer the conversation in meaningful directions. A well-timed question or reflection often opens up new layers of insight for everyone in the room.

4. Designing Your Session

Five Steps to Shape a Fireside Chat

Step 1 – Define the Core Theme

Choose a question or theme that invites reflection. It could be about navigating complexity, leading through uncertainty, or what shaped the journey of a leader or a project.

Step 2 – Invite the Right Voices

Select speakers with complementary perspectives—different sectors, regions, roles—but united by relevance to the theme. Openness and the chemistry between the speakers matter as much as their roles and contributions.

Step 3 – Craft a Question Journey

Moderators should prepare 6–8 guiding questions. Start broad, then go deeper:

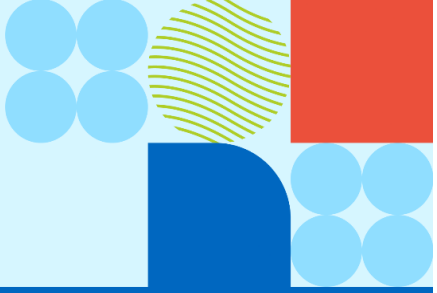
Eg., *What's a lesson you learned the hard way? OR What shifted for you after that moment?*

Step 4 – Set the Tone in Advance

Hold multiple 30–60 mins preparatory calls with speakers. Help speakers feel prepared to share from experience.

Step 5 – Leave Space for Reflection

Include closing moments where each speaker can share a final insight or takeaway. Make sure to invite the audience to reflect or ask questions.



5. Flow of the Fireside Chat Session

Segment	Time	Details
Welcome & Framing	5–10 mins	Moderator opens the session, introduces speakers, and sets a warm, reflective tone. Frames the theme and invites openness.
Opening Reflections	10–15 mins	Moderator poses a grounding question; each speaker responds. This helps set context and build connection with the audience.
Guided Conversation	30–35 mins	Moderator leads with 4–6 thoughtful, open-ended questions. Speakers respond freely, sharing stories, lessons, and honest reflections.
Audience Participation	15–20 mins	The moderator opens the floor for audience questions, reactions, or comments. The audience may steer the conversation deeper or offer insights of their own.
Closing Reflections	10 mins	Each speaker shares one final takeaway, insight, or question to leave with the audience. Moderator closes with a short synthesis or thank-you.

Total Time: 75 – 90 mins

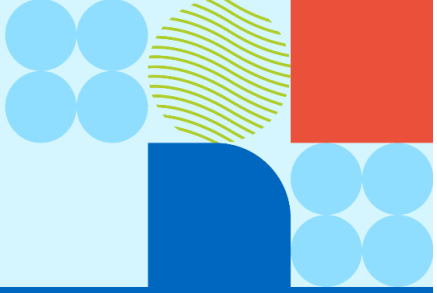
6. Roles & Responsibilities

Moderator

- Prepare 6–8 guiding questions in advance
- Start with a grounding prompt or question to open the space
- Keep time and flow, ensure the conversation covers a few key areas
- Follow the energy, listen deeply, and gently draw out quieter voices
- Close with a final reflection or takeaway from each speaker (if possible)

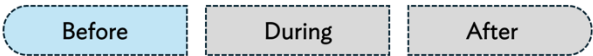
Speakers

- Prepare 2–3 big key messages & insights related to the theme, possibly wrapped around stories and real experience
- Speak from experience & expertise both but no slides & no scripts
- Share both what worked and what didn’t – authenticity builds connection
- Keep language simple and conversational
- Be generous: your reflection can unlock clarity for others

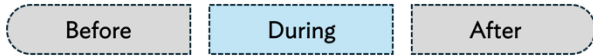


7. How to Prepare

Before the Session

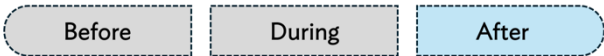


- Moderator and speakers may meet for a short prep call to align on key questions, flow and the overall tone
- Speakers should reflect on personal experiences or moments they’d like to share
- No slides or formal prep required—just real, reflective readiness



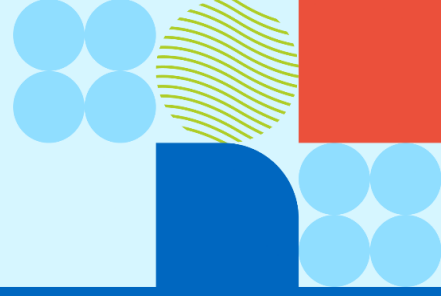
During the Session

- Set a calm, open tone early. The moderator starts with a simple opening question
- Allow natural rhythm
- Stay connected to the room to make sure everyone is listening into the conversation
- Keep things balanced: no one person should dominate
- Invite questions from the audience and also encourage them to fill out feedback forms.



After the Session

- Speakers are encouraged to reflect on what they shared and what they heard
- Optional: capture key takeaways for social posts, internal learnings, or audience follow-up



AWUF 2025 Master Class

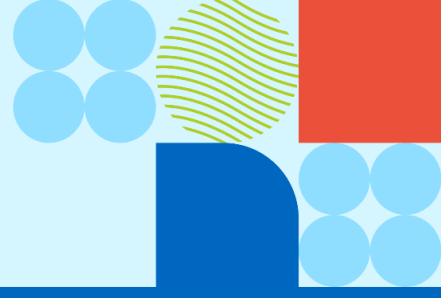
You've been selected because your work, insight, or experience has the power to inspire learning across the region. This playbook is here to support you as you prepare to lead a meaningful, memorable session. Whether you're sharing a project, a story, or a bold idea - thank you for being part of this important conversation.

How to use this Playbook

This playbook is your guide to preparing and delivering a great session in a format that goes beyond keynotes and panels. This Playbook introduces the Master Class format and walks you through what it is, why it matters, how to design it, and how to prepare for it. Use it to feel confident, focused, and supported. At any time, our team and coaches are available to guide you through this playbook step by step and offer whatever support needed to make it purposeful; and one of your best.

Topics covered in this section:

1. What is a Master Class?
2. Why Master Class & who is it for?
3. Core Elements of a Master Class
4. Designing your session
5. Flow of the Session
6. Roles & Responsibilities
7. How to Prepare (Pre, During, Post)



1. What is a Master Class?

A Master Class is a 3-hour, expert-led learning session focused on real cases or experiences in the field of water and urban development. It is not a traditional lecture or panel. Instead, it is an interactive and practical space where participants explore real decisions, reflect on outcomes, and connect lessons to their own work. The goal is to move beyond theory and into applied, experience-based learning.

2. Why Master Class & who is it meant for?

A Master Class is the right format when the goal is not just to inform—but to help others learn through experience. In water and urban development, solutions are rarely one-size-fits-all. That’s why this format focuses on real decisions, real trade-offs, and real lessons that others can apply in their own work.

Unlike a keynote or a panel, a Master Class creates space for shared thinking. The speaker brings a real case or experience. The audience brings curiosity, reflection, and questions. Together, they unpack the “why” behind decisions—not just the “what.”

This format is ideal for ADB staff, project leads, government partners, and field experts who have deep, practical experience. It works best with audiences who are experienced, open to learning, and looking for ideas they can take back to their own contexts.

The benefit -- Participants don’t just listen. They think, discuss, and leave with clearer ways to act, adapt, or approach similar challenges. This is the kind of learning that sticks—and can lead to real change in thinking and behaviour.

3. Core Elements of a Master Class

A strong Master Class has five core elements. These elements help shift the session from presentation to participation:

1. A real case study

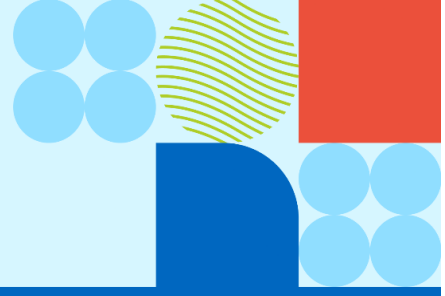
The session is built around a real experience—something that happened in a project, policy process, or partnership. It should be specific, relevant, and embedded with key lessons.

2. Turning Points

Every case involves moments of choice. The speaker identifies 2–3 critical decisions made during the experience—what we call “turning points.” These are shared with the audience to explore, challenge, and reflect on.

3. Structured Dialogue

The speaker does not lecture. Instead, the session flows through short inputs, audience reflection, and discussion. Participants think through the case, question assumptions, and learn from each other.



4. Expert Reflection

Only after the discussion does the speaker share what actually happened. They reflect on why choices were made, what worked, and what was learned—even what they would do differently.

5. A Clear Learning Objective

The session must be designed around a clear takeaway: What should participants understand, feel, or be able to do differently as a result of this session? That focus guides everything.

4. Designing Your Session

Designing a Master Class starts with a mindset shift to create a strong learning experience. This format is about helping others learn from your real-world experience. Your task is to guide people through a situation you've lived, and let them think through the decisions you had to make.

A strong session focuses on three things -- One real case, two or three key turning points, one clear takeaway. The goal is to make others smarter and more prepared for similar challenges

Steps to Design your Session

Step 1: Define your learning objective

Step 2: Case study

Step 3: Identify 2–3 Turning Points

Step 4: Build the structure

Step 5: End with clarity

Step 1: Define your learning objective

Before anything else, decide what you want people to learn. Ask yourself -- What do I want participants to think, understand, or do differently after this session? Keep it simple. Aim for one strong idea. This learning goal will shape your structure and your discussion.

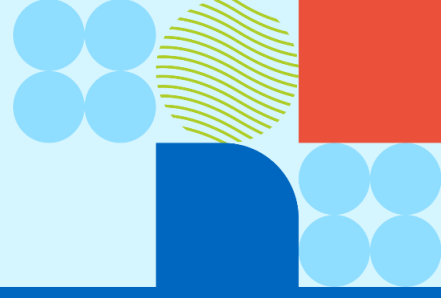
Eg.: "How can collaboration and trust be built between national and local government partners."

Step 2: Case Study

Choose and Shape Your Case - Pick one real, specific and lived example from your Project. Take a challenge, or process where something meaningful happened—and where others can learn.

A good case is:

- Relevant – ties clearly to your learning objective
- Realistic – not a perfect success story or disaster, but something with tension and learning
- Relatable – close enough to what others might face in their roles
- Recent – ideally from the last few years, to keep it fresh and current



Ask yourself:

- What really happened?
- What was hard about this situation?
- What's the one thing others could learn from how we handled it?
- Where were the turning points?

How to Tell the Case Well

- Focus on one case
- Give enough background for people to understand the situation, but be mindful & judicious about the time you utilise in doing so.
- Share who was involved, what the stakes were, and what decisions needed to be made
- Don't give away the outcome yet
- Tell the story like you would to a trusted colleague - not like you're presenting a report

Step 3: Identify 2-3 Turning Points

Every strong case has moments when something important had to be decided, adapted, or pushed through. These are your turning points—they are what bring the story to life and allow others to learn from your experience. **Think about** the kind of decisions or shift that others in water and urban development **sector** might also face -- a stakeholder pushback, a change in strategy, a delay, a political risk, a moment of uncertainty.

Ask yourself:

- What did we have to figure out?
- Where did we have to make a tough call with no perfect answer?

These critical decision points will form the core of your session. You'll bring them into the room & invite them to explore what they would have done. Remember, even one well-chosen turning point can drive a great Master Class. What matters is the quality of the discussion, not the quantity of examples.

Step 4: Build the structure

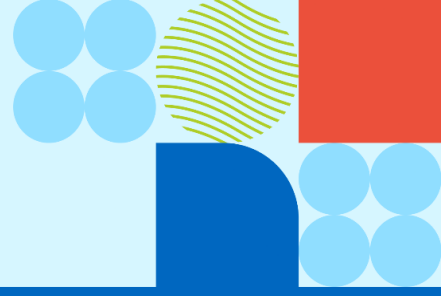
Once you've got your case and your turning points, organize your session into three simple blocks:

1. The Case (20–30 mins)

- Tell the story clearly.
- Give enough background so participants can step into your shoes.
- Don't give away the ending, yet.

2. The Turning Points (45–60 mins total)

- Introduce each Turning Point one at a time.
- Invite participants to think it through in small groups or plenary.
- Guide the conversation, but let them do the work.
- Don't tell them what you did, yet.



3. Expert Reflection (30–45 mins)

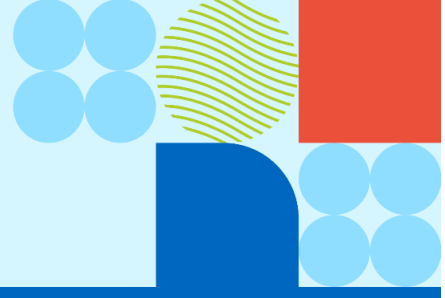
- After all the Turning Points are discussed, you share what really happened.
- Reflect on the choices, insights, and lessons.
- Be honest about what you learned - and even what you would do differently.

Step 5: End with clarity

Wrap up by returning to your learning objective. What's one mindset, method, or message you want people to walk away with? Keep it grounded with as less abstract summaries as possible. Think about what and how someone could apply after this session.

4. Flow of the Session

Part 1				
S. No.	Timing	Time	Details	By
1.1	0:00 – 0:10	10 mins	Welcome and Session Introduction	Facilitator/ Host
1.2	0:10 – 0:25	15 mins	Case Study Introduction	Speaker
1.3	0:25 – 0:30	5 mins	Introduction of Turning Point #1 and/or #2	Speaker
1.4	0:30 – 0:50	20 mins	Small Group Discussions	Participants
1.5	0:45 – 1:00	15 mins	Plenary Reflection (by participants or group leads)	Participants
1.6	1:00 – 1:10	10 mins	Master Class Lessons	Speaker
1.7	1:10 – 1:20	10 mins	Open Q&A & Wrap up of Part 1	
Break (20 mins)				
Part 2				
S. No.	Timing	Time	Details	By
1.1	1:40 – 1:45	5 mins	Reopening & Session Preview	Facilitator/ Host
1.2	1:45 – 1:50	5 mins	Introduction of Turning Point #2 and #3	Speaker
1.3	1:50 – 2:10	20 mins	Small Group Discussions	Speaker
1.4	2:10 – 2: 25	15 mins	Plenary Reflection (by participants or group leads)	Participants
1.5	2:25 – 2:35	10 mins	Master Class Lessons	Speaker
1.6	2:35 – 2:45	10 mins	Open Q&A & Wrap up of Part 2	Participants
1.7	2:45 – 2:50	10 mins	Final takeaways & Closing	Host
-	2:50 – 3:00	10 mins	Extra Time	



5. Roles & Responsibilities

A Master Class is a shared effort. It is a high-value learning experience - made possible by the clarity of each role. It's not a panel, not a lecture, and not a casual discussion. It's a deliberate format built around expertise, engagement, and learning.

a) Speaker

The speaker is at the centre of everything in the Master Class. You're here because you've done the work, faced the complexity, and learned something others can benefit from. Your role is to take the audience inside a real case or experience—something that challenged them, tested their thinking, and led to meaningful results. Through the Master Class, the speaker introduces one or more turning points where critical decisions were made. The audience is invited to step into these moments, reflect on the choices, and think through what they might have done.

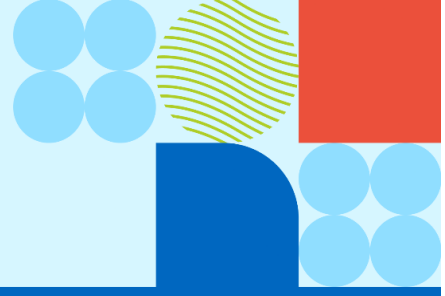
But this is not a free-form discussion. The speaker is here to lead with clarity and purpose. After the discussion, speaker will share what really happened — along with the lessons they've drawn from it. These lessons are not theoretical; they are grounded in practice and meant to shape how others think and act in their own work. The speaker is not a facilitator—they are the experts. Their job is not just to tell a story, but to impart real insight that others can take with them.

b) Host/Facilitator

The facilitator ensures the session flows smoothly and stays true to its purpose. They open the space, explain the format, and help manage the overall energy, time, and tone. A facilitator may step in to redirect the conversation or prompt participation - but they don't take the spotlight. Their role is to support both the speaker and the group, ensuring the session is focused and impactful. A good facilitator makes it easy for the speaker to lead, and for the participants to contribute meaningfully.

c) Participants

The participants are not passive listeners - they are co-learners. Everyone in the room is expected to engage actively, think critically, and reflect on how the case relates to their own work. Participants are encouraged to bring in their own perspective, ask hard questions, and challenge respectfully. This session works best when people lean in - not to show what they know, but to explore what they might not have seen yet. The more the audience engages, the more value they get - and the more powerful the session becomes.



6. How to Prepare (Pre, During, Post)

Preparing for a Master Class doesn't need to be complicated. You don't need slides, scripts, or a full speech. You just need clarity on your story, structure, and what you want others to take away. This section walks you through what to do—before, during, and after your session—so you can focus on sharing your experience with confidence. The session works best when the speaker, facilitator, and team are aligned around a few simple steps.

Before

During

After

Before the Session: Find your message and shape your story

A few weeks before the event, take some time to reflect on what you really want to share. Start by asking: What's the one insight I want people to leave with?

Once you have that, pick one real case that brings it to life. It could be from a project, policy, or partnership—anything where something meaningful happened and others could learn from it. Then, identify one to three turning points in that case when critical decisions had to be made.

Sketch your session using a simple structure:

Case → Discussion → Lessons.

You're guiding a learning journey. Keep it light. A few bullet points are enough.

Getting coaching support can help you focus your message, amplify your presence, and feel more at ease during your session. It's a chance to refine how you tell your story and connect with your audience—without worrying about getting everything perfect. Even a short session can make a big difference.

Invite early connection.

If possible, send a welcome message or short teaser to registered participants before the session. A small gesture builds anticipation and makes the room feel more connected from the start. Share materials, if any, with the participants already so they prepare well.

Before

During

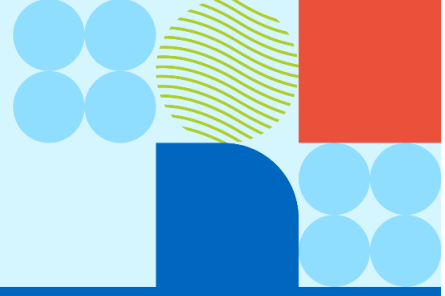
After

During the Session: Be real, stay focused and connected

Arrive early so you have time to settle in. You don't need to memorize anything—just know your case and your structure. Start by briefly sharing your story. Set the scene and explain what was at stake, while staying focused on the essence of the experience.

Then, introduce your first turning point. Ask the audience: *"What would you have done in this situation?"*

Let them discuss in small groups. Listen carefully. You might hear something you hadn't considered before. After the discussion, you can share what actually happened—and what you learned from it. Repeat this rhythm for each turning point.



Close your session by coming back to your key message. Leave the audience with one clear takeaway they can apply in their own work. Keep the tone conversational. You're not delivering a keynote—you're sharing real insight from the field. That's what makes it powerful.

Slides

Instead of heavy & complex PowerPoint slides, bring your story to life through real experiences, clear language, and memorable insights. If you use slides, keep them light and visual.

Consider bringing a meaningful object.

An artifact, a locally made item, or a symbolic object from your project can make your story tangible and unforgettable. It creates a visual and emotional anchor for your audience.

Before

During

After

After the Session: Reflect and carry it forward

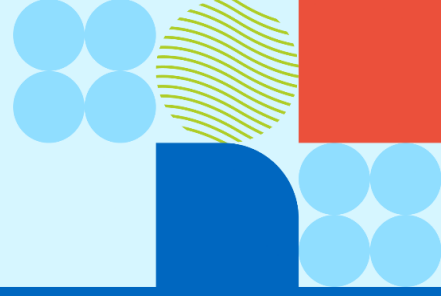
Once it's over, take a few minutes to reflect.

What came up in the room? What surprised you? What seemed to land well?

You're welcome to share feedback with the ADB WUD team, especially if you think the session could evolve for future audiences.

Also, save your notes. A good Master Class often gets invited again.





AWUF 2025 Shark Tank

The Shark Tank is fast-paced, forward-looking, and full of possibility. If you're here to pitch, you've got something bold—an idea, a prototype, a model, or a solution that deserves attention and momentum. If you're on the panel, you're here because your time, experience, and reach can open new doors. This is not about funding. It's about connection, mentoring, visibility, and belief. It's a space to turn promising ideas into shared possibilities—together.

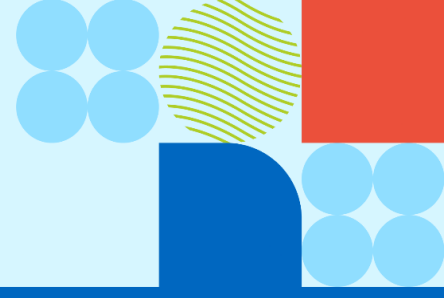
How to use this Playbook

This playbook will guide you in preparing for the Shark Tank format—whether you're pitching an idea or supporting one. It outlines how the session works, what makes a pitch memorable, what the panel (our “sharks”) are encouraged to offer, and how the audience can play an active role.

Use it to understand the flow, clarify your message, and show up ready to make the most of your 5 minutes on stage. Whether you're pitching or participating, this guide will help you prepare with focus, presence, and impact.

Topics covered in this section:

1. What is the Shark Tank Format?
2. Why Shark Tank & Who Is It For?
3. Core Elements of the Format
4. Designing Your Pitch
5. Role of the Sharks
6. Flow of the Session
7. Roles & Responsibilities



1. What is the Shark Tank Format?

The Shark Tank format is a fast-paced, idea-driven session where bold pitches meet powerful support. Inspired by the energy of the original Shark Tank show—but with a uniquely ADB tone—this version focuses on solutions, not funding, and on connection, not competition.

In each session, 3–4 teams or individuals will have a few minutes to pitch an idea. These might be project models, new tools, grassroots innovations, or digital prototypes. Each pitch is followed by rapid-fire reactions from a panel of senior experts—our “sharks.” Their investment isn’t financial. It’s something just as valuable: time (mentoring or support), connections (strategic networks), and visibility (amplification through platforms like LinkedIn, events, or newsletters).

The audience plays a vital role too—voting in real time, sharing reactions through Mentimeter, and even offering their own support if they feel inspired.

The Shark Tank is a space to unlock energy, surface fresh thinking, and move ideas forward. It’s not just about what the pitch is—it’s about what it could become with the right support behind it.

2. Why Shark Tank & Who Is It For?

Shark Tank is designed for ideas that are ready to be shared—and shaped. In the world of water and urban development, many bold, creative, and impactful concepts don’t always make it into the spotlight. This format gives them a stage.

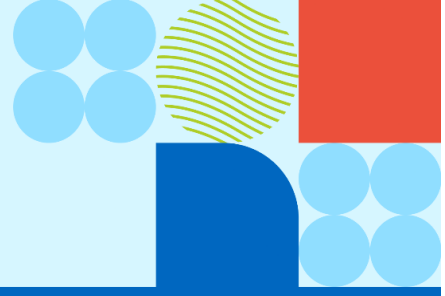
It works best when a team or speaker has something concrete to propose—a solution, model, tool, or prototype—with the potential to scale, evolve, or inspire. It could be a local initiative ready for regional replication, a smart pilot looking for partners, or a community-driven idea that needs visibility.

This format is also a great fit for speakers who are comfortable presenting with clarity and passion—and are open to feedback. It’s not a pitch for money. It’s a pitch for momentum.

Shark Tank is for:

- Innovators and implementers with something real to show
- Ideas that could benefit from expert attention and strategic connections
- Speakers who can communicate their pitch in a short, sharp, story-led way
- Audiences eager to support and amplify what they believe in

The format invites possibility, not perfection. It’s about moving ideas from promising to powerful—with help from the people in the room.



3. Core Elements of the Shark Tank Format

A successful Shark Tank session isn't just about the pitch—it's about momentum. These five elements make the format work, keeping it tight, engaging, and high-value for everyone involved.

1. A 5-Minute Pitch with Purpose

Each team or individual has up to five minutes to present an idea. This isn't about listing features—it's about telling a focused story. The best pitches share a clear problem, a bold solution, and what support could help move it forward.

2. A Panel of Strategic Supporters ("Sharks")

The panel includes senior experts or leaders who respond in real time. Their feedback is constructive, sharp, and generous. Instead of funding, they offer one or more of the following:

- **Time** (mentoring or guidance)
- **Connections** (to relevant partners or platforms)
- **Visibility** (amplification through LinkedIn, newsletters, or events)

3. Real-Time Audience Engagement

Using Mentimeter, the audience can vote, react, and even offer their own support—just like the sharks. This makes the room come alive and turns every participant into a potential partner.

4. Structured Timing

Each pitch segment is 15–20 minutes total:

- 5 mins pitch
- 7–8 mins shark reaction + discussion
- 2–3 mins audience voting and live comments
- 2–3 mins wrap-up and recap

This structure keeps the pace brisk, the energy high, and the ideas flowing.

5. A Spirit of Possibility

Unlike the TV show, this isn't a dramatic showdown. The tone is generous, forward-looking, and rooted in collaboration. It's about helping good ideas get better—and helping them go further.

4. Designing Your Pitch

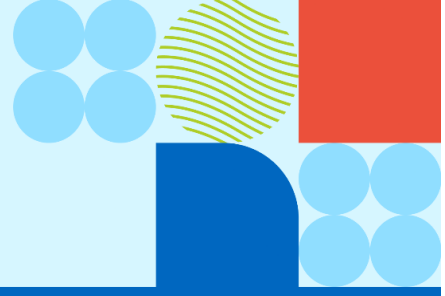
Five Steps to Shape a Sharp, Memorable Pitch

Step 1: Start with the Problem

Open with a real-world problem you care about. Make it relatable. What challenge are you addressing? Why does it matter right now—in your community, sector, or region?

Eg.: "Urban waste management in secondary cities remains under-resourced, under-designed, and underestimated..."

A clear problem builds urgency and helps people connect instantly.



Step 2: Share Your Bold Idea

What's your proposed solution, model, product, or project? Keep it simple, clear, and confident. Focus less on technical detail—and more on the potential impact.

Eg.: *"We've developed a locally built sensor-and-dashboard system that tracks groundwater levels in real time..."*

Help the audience see the shape of your solution.

Step 3: Tell the Story Behind It

Where did the idea come from? Who's already using it, testing it, or asking for it? Share a moment, a pilot, or a field story that brings it to life.

Eg.: *"When we tested this tool in a village in Indonesia, we didn't expect the school principal to become our biggest champion..."*

This is where your pitch becomes memorable.

Step 4: Ask for the Right Kind of Support

Let the sharks—and the audience—know what kind of support could help you go further:

- **Time** (mentoring, guidance, expertise)
- **Connections** (introductions to governments, funders, or platforms)
- **Visibility** (spotlight in newsletters, LinkedIn, or conferences)

"We're looking for mentorship in how to scale this responsibly, and help with connecting to municipal-level actors."

Be clear and specific.

Step 5: Close with Vision

End your pitch by painting a picture of what's possible. What could this idea look like if it reaches its full potential?

"Imagine a future where every mid-sized city in Asia has real-time water data flowing into local decision-making."

A bold closing leaves a lasting impression.

5. Role of the Sharks

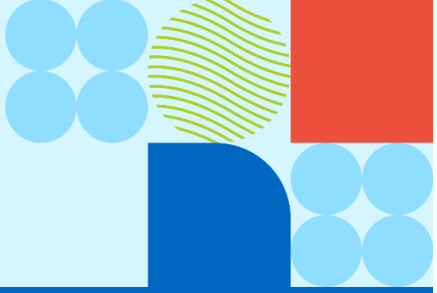
In this format, sharks are not investors. They're amplifiers. Their role is to listen deeply, ask sharp questions, and offer meaningful support that helps the idea grow.

Sharks are typically senior leaders, experts, or decision-makers who bring credibility, networks, and influence to the table. Their feedback is not just commentary—it's catalytic. A few minutes of the right insight or connection can open doors the speaker didn't even know existed.

What Sharks Can Offer

Each shark is encouraged to offer one or more of the following forms of support:

- **Time:** Offer mentorship, advisory support, or a follow-up conversation to help the speaker improve or refine their idea.
- **Connections:** Recommend relevant contacts, platforms, or partner organizations that could help the idea grow.



- **Visibility:** Use your reach to help spread the word—whether through a LinkedIn post, a mention in a newsletter, or inviting the idea into another forum.

You don’t have to say yes to every pitch. But if something resonates, your support—however small—can make a real difference.

Tone and Presence

- Be clear, curious, and constructive.
- Ask questions that deepen—not derail—the idea.
- Focus on what’s promising, and where there’s potential to sharpen.
- Speak not just as an evaluator—but as someone who wants to see bold ideas succeed.

It’s a moment to help unlock the next step in someone’s journey.

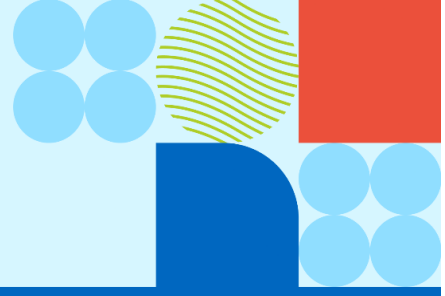
6. Flow of the Session

Each pitch in the Shark Tank format is a high-energy micro-session designed to spark momentum. The full cycle—pitch to response to audience input—runs in approximately **15–20 minutes per idea**, keeping the pace sharp and the energy up.

Here’s how a typical pitch session unfolds:

Segment	Time	Details
Host Introduction	5 min	The moderator/host sets up the pitch: names the speaker(s), frames the idea briefly, and sets the energy in the room.
Pitch Presentation	5–7 mins	The speaker/team delivers their pitch—following the five-part structure (problem, idea, story, support ask, vision). No slides required. Optional: bring an artifact or visual element.
Shark Panel Interaction	8–10 mins	The sharks respond with curiosity and clarity. They ask questions, offer insight, and explore how the idea could go further. Tone is generous, constructive, and focused.
Audience Engagement (Mentimeter)	2 mins	The audience votes, reacts, or offers support through Mentimeter. They may rate the pitch, choose their favorite, or indicate what kind of support they’re willing to offer.
Shark Offers / Commitments	2–3 mins	Each shark has a chance to make a support offer (Time, Connections, Visibility) and briefly explain why the idea resonated.
Closing by Host	1 min	The host wraps up the round, thanks the speaker and sharks, and sets up the transition to the next pitch.

- Session Duration: 3–4 pitches per session = 60–80 minutes total
- Slides: Optional, and preferably as less as possible. But speakers are encouraged to use visuals, props, or artifacts instead of complex and heavy PPT slides.
- Mentimeter: Set up in advance for live voting and input
- Support: Not every idea needs to “win”—every idea can gain traction through thoughtful offers and visibility



7. Roles & Responsibilities

Shark Tank works when everyone knows their role—and shows up with presence, purpose, and a spirit of generosity. This isn't a competition. It's a co-creation moment between the idea, the panel, and the room.

Pitcher / Speaker / Team

The speaker's role is to present a focused, compelling pitch that shows what the idea is, why it matters, and where it could go next. They're encouraged to:

- Share one strong idea, framed with clarity and confidence
- Use a real story, example, or field insight to bring it to life
- Be specific about what kind of support they're looking for (Time, Connections, or Visibility)
- Invite the audience and sharks into the possibility of what comes next

Speakers aren't expected to be perfect. They're here to be clear, real, and open.

Sharks / Panellists

Sharks bring experience, reach, and credibility. Their job is to listen closely, ask thoughtful questions, and make offers of support if they see potential. They're encouraged to:

- Offer one or more forms of support: Time (mentorship), Connections (introductions), or Visibility (amplification)
- Share feedback that's sharp but supportive
- Reflect the values of partnership, generosity, and insight

Host / Moderator

The host sets the tone and guides the flow. They introduce each pitch, manage timing, and keep the session moving. Their presence keeps the space energized and connected. They also:

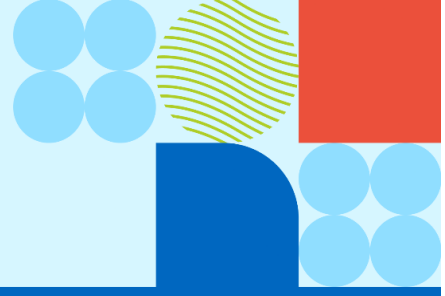
- Explain the Shark Tank Learning Format, explain the roles and the offerings (time, connections and visibility)
- Frame the session at the beginning (and each pitch as needed)
- Facilitate transitions and audience input (especially through Mentimeter)
- Encourage audience feedback and remind everyone to complete the feedback form

Audience

The audience brings energy and insight. They are invited to:

- Vote or rate pitches live via Mentimeter
- Offer support themselves (Time, Connections, Visibility) through the platform
- Respond in real time, sparking ripple effects beyond the session

Every person in the room has the power to move an idea forward.



AWUF 2025 Debate

You've been invited at AWUF 2025 Debate because your perspective matters—and your voice has the potential to challenge, clarify, and inspire. This isn't about competition. It's about expanding how we think, listen, and lead across the water and urban development space.

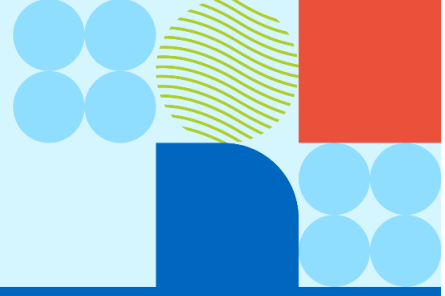
How to use this Playbook

This playbook is your guide. It walks you through the essentials of a great debate—from framing your argument, to managing the flow, to preparing with confidence. Use it to feel ready, focused, and supported. You don't need to follow every word—you just need to bring your experience, your clarity, and your curiosity to the stage. ADB will be with you throughout the process, and coaching support is available if you'd like to sharpen your delivery, refine your argument, or simply talk things through.

We're excited to hear what you have to say.

Topics covered in this section:

1. What is a Debate?
2. Why Debate & Who Is It For?
3. Core Elements of a Debate
4. Designing Your Debate Session
5. Framing Your Argument
6. Flow of the Session
7. Roles & Responsibilities
8. How to Prepare (Pre, During, Post)
9. Tips



1. What is a Debate?

At AWUF, a debate is a structured conversation designed to explore contrasting perspectives on a topic that matters. Two speakers take the stage to present different approaches, priorities, or interpretations – each grounded in their own experience and work.

This format brings sharp thinking, curiosity, and energy to the room. It allows real disagreements to surface and encourages the audience to reflect, reframe, and engage more deeply with the issue. Debates are most powerful when they create space for insight – not certainty. The goal is to expand understanding and reveal what might otherwise remain hidden, stuck, or unspoken.

2. Why Debate & Who Is It For?

A debate creates the right kind of intellectual tension. It's a format that welcomes opposing ideas and turns them into insight. In the context of Water & Urban development, where decisions often involve trade-offs, complexity, and competing priorities, this format helps everyone see the bigger picture.

Debates help surface real-world disagreements—about project design, policy choices, partnerships, technologies, or timing. They make space for ideas that are still evolving, contested, or quietly resisted. For ADB and its stakeholders, this is a chance to listen more deeply, test emerging thinking, and sharpen collective understanding.

This format is best suited for speakers who are willing to take a clear position, stay respectful in disagreement, and speak from experience. It works well when the topic is timely, meaningful, and has no one-size-fits-all answer.

The most valuable debates are the ones where both sides feel heard, and the audience leaves with better questions, not just answers.

3. Core Elements of a Debate

A good debate at AWUF is about creating space for clarity, challenge, and reflection. Here are five elements that make the format work:

1. A Framing Question

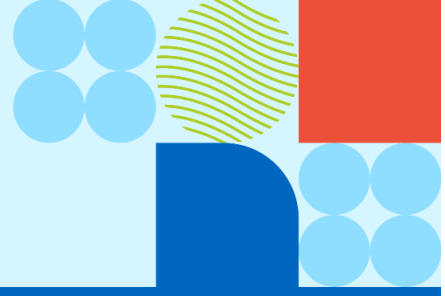
The debate is anchored by a clear, focused question or proposition. It should be open-ended enough to allow differing perspectives, but specific enough to invite concrete responses. The audience should know what's at stake—and why it matters now.

2. Two Distinct Perspectives

Each speaker brings a grounded, experience-based viewpoint. These perspectives may differ in strategy, values, priorities, or timing. The contrast is what creates depth – not opposition for its own sake.

3. A Structured Flow

The session follows a clear sequence: opening context, main arguments, short rebuttals, and closing



reflections. This structure gives both speakers room to be heard and helps the audience follow the conversation.

4. A Skilled Moderator

The moderator plays a key role in setting the tone, introducing the topic, managing timing, and synthesizing insights. Their presence keeps the debate thoughtful, on track, and audience-friendly.

5. An Invitation to Reflect

The debate is not just for the speakers—it's for the room. The best debates leave the audience thinking, talking, and asking better questions long after the session ends.

4. Designing Your Debate Session

Five steps to shape a thoughtful, high-energy exchange

Step 1: Define a Clear Debate Question

Step 2: Select Two Distinct Perspectives

Step 3: Set the Tone

Step 4: Build a Simple, Balanced Flow

Step 5: Focus the Experience

Step 1: Define a Clear Debate Question

Start with a strong, relevant question or proposition. The best questions spark curiosity and invite multiple viewpoints. They're timely, connected to real decisions in water and urban development, and framed to allow speakers to take clear, contrasting positions.

Step 2: Select Two Distinct Perspectives

Choose speakers who bring different lenses to the topic—based on their roles, experiences, or beliefs. The contrast can be in values, methods, or priorities. Both perspectives should be grounded in real-world work and offer the audience something to think about.

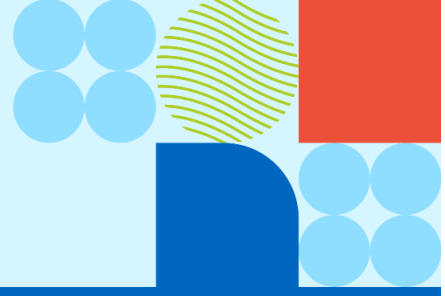
Step 3: Set the Tone

Brief the speakers to approach the debate as a space for learning, not for “winning.” They're invited to be bold, but also respectful and curious. The most powerful moments come from honesty, reflection, and well-articulated tension.

Step 4: Build a Simple, Balanced Flow

Structure the session so both speakers are heard clearly, and the audience can follow the exchange. A strong flow includes an opening by the moderator, short individual arguments, brief responses, and a final wrap-up that draws out the insights.

Step 5: Focus the Experience



Keep the session tight and clear. No slides. No introductions. No complex setup. Just a sharp exchange of ideas, guided by a strong question and a skilled moderator. The clarity of the format is what makes it powerful.

5. Framing Your Argument

Each speaker in a debate brings a lens, a lived perspective, and a way of seeing the issue that others may not have considered. The goal is to share that perspective with clarity and conviction, backed by real-world insight, meaningful evidence, and a vision others can connect to.

Here are a few ways to shape your argument with impact:

Lead with Experience

Start with something you've seen, done, or been part of. The most compelling arguments may with a story – whether it's your own or something you've observed closely in your work.

Eg.: "In a recent urban planning project in Indonesia, we faced a turning point that reshaped our approach..."

Stories help people understand not just what you think, but why you think it.

Support Your View with Credible Sources

Anchor your points with insights from research, publications, or credible media. Referencing peer-reviewed studies, reports, or field data builds trust and gives weight to your message.

Eg.: "A recent ADB study found that trust in digital tools increases when communities are part of the design process..."

A well-placed fact or citation can bring precision to your argument and help it resonate more widely.

Paint a Vision

Help the audience imagine the future you're advocating for. A clear, vivid vision allows people to empathize, reflect, and engage more deeply with your point of view.

Eg.: "Imagine a city where every public service is co-designed with its users..." OR

"What if climate adaptation plans were built not around risk, but around local knowledge?"

A good argument makes sense. A great one also inspires.

Focus on One Big Idea

Choose one main message that you want the audience to walk away with. A focused argument is easier to follow, and more likely to stay with your listeners.

Eg.: "Access isn't the issue—alignment is." OR "It's not about more data, it's about better decisions."

Support your point with one or two examples, and let that message carry your time on stage.

Speak Clearly and With Purpose

Your voice is here to help others see something they may not have seen before. Be clear, grounded, and generous in how you share your view. The more focused your delivery, the more thoughtful the conversation becomes.



6. Flow of the Session

A good debate feels dynamic but grounded. It gives each speaker space to make their case, reflect, and respond - while keeping the energy moving forward. This format is designed to bring out contrast, clarity, and insight in 30-35 minutes.

Here’s a suggested flow for the session:

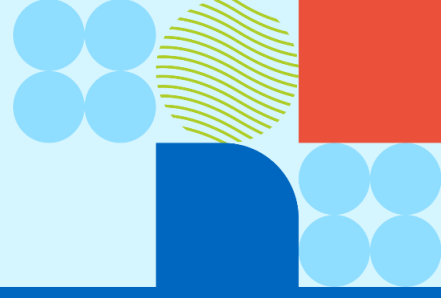
Segment	Time	Details
Opening by Moderator	5 mins	Introduce the topic, why it matters, and frame it as a space for curiosity and learning.
Speaker 1 – Main Argument	8 mins	Presents their perspective
Speaker 2 – Main Argument	8 mins	Presents the opposing or alternate perspective
Preview by the moderator	2 mins	The moderator will present an overall view of what has been debated so far and where is the overall understanding so far.of the debate so far
Speaker 1 – Rebuttal / Response	5 mins	Responds to Speaker 2
Speaker 2 – Rebuttal / Response	5 mins	Responds to Speaker 1
Moderator Wrap-Up	2 min	Summarizes key insights, invites continued reflection, and thanks speakers

Total Time: 30-35 mins

Important:

- The question should be shared with the speakers in advance. This allows them to prepare with clarity and intention.
- No slides or visuals are required. This is a conversation, not a presentation.
- The moderator’s role is key. They help create an atmosphere of thoughtful exchange and ensure the timing stays balanced.
- Each speaker gets equal time. This balance helps keep the format fair, sharp, and well-paced.

This structure can be slightly adjusted depending on the energy in the room, but keeping it tight ensures the debate remains focused, high-value, and engaging from start to finish.



7. Roles & Responsibilities

A successful debate relies on clarity – not just in ideas, but in how the session is held. Each person on stage has a role that brings structure, energy, and insight to the conversation. When each role is played with clarity and intent, the debate becomes more than a dialogue—it becomes a moment of insight.

Speakers (2 People)

Each speaker brings a clear point of view, shaped by real experience and grounded in work they know well. Their role is to share that perspective with focus, confidence, and openness.

Speakers are encouraged to offer clarity and provoke reflection by:

- Framing their viewpoint around one strong idea
- Using real examples, stories, or data to support their case
- Engaging with their counterpart's ideas respectfully and thoughtfully
- Reflecting, clarifying, and guiding the audience into deeper understanding

Moderator (1 Person)

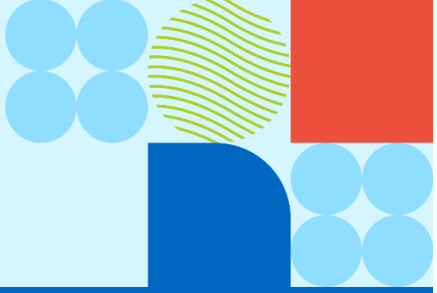
The moderator sets the tone, holds the structure, and makes the session flow. They begin by introducing the topic and speakers, then guide the conversation through each segment of the debate.

A good moderator:

- Frames the question with purpose and neutrality
- Keeps the timing on track
- Encourages a tone of curiosity, reflection, and respectful exchange
- Wraps up the session with a short synthesis and thank-you

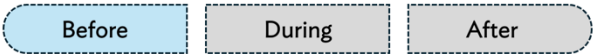
The moderator also plays a key role in engaging the audience. They can invite participants to share their thoughts using tools like **MentiMeter**—to answer a poll, express agreement, or simply drop a message about what they're thinking or feeling. This adds energy and inclusiveness to the room.

Note: Before closing, the moderator should also **remind the audience to fill out the feedback form**, and explain why their input matters for improving future sessions.



8. How to Prepare (Pre, During, Post)

Preparing for a debate doesn’t require a script or a presentation. What matters most is knowing what you believe, why it matters, and how you want to express it. This section walks you through a simple, three-part preparation path to help you feel clear, ready, and confident on stage.



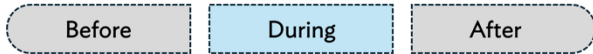
Before the Session: Clarify and shape your viewpoint

Take time to reflect on the core question and what you want to bring to the table. Start by asking yourself:

- What’s the one big idea I want to stand for?
- What story, project, or example from my work can illustrate this?
- Is there a statistic or study that can strengthen my message?
- What vision or shift do I want the audience to consider?

You don’t need to map out every word—just outline your core idea, a few key points, and one example or data point that helps make your perspective real.

If you’d like, coaching support is available to help you shape your argument, refine your delivery, or simply talk it through in a safe space. A short session can make a big difference.

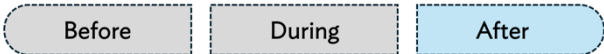


During the Session: Be focused, grounded, and prepared

Arrive early and connect with the moderator to review the flow. Once you’re on stage, stay centred on your message. Speak clearly, stay focused on your main idea, and listen closely to your counterpart’s points.

You’ll have time to respond, reflect, or clarify your position. Keep the tone grounded. Use this as a space to share, not to prove.

The best moments in a debate often come from a well-placed example, a thoughtful pause, or a surprising connection - not from speaking quickly or trying to cover everything.

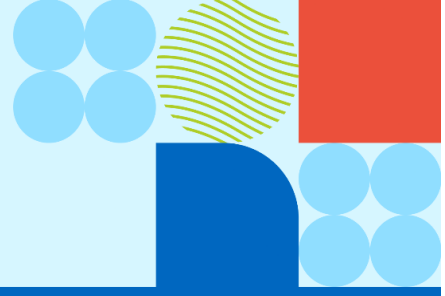


After the Session: Reflect and carry it forward

After the debate, take a few moments to reflect.

What came up that surprised you? What ideas did the audience seem to respond to? Would you frame anything differently next time?

If you’d like to capture your reflections or feedback, our team is happy to hear from you. These insights may help shape future dialogues—and your next opportunity to speak.



9. Tips

Tips for Speakers

1. Go for clarity, not complexity

Aim for one or two core ideas, a few strong points, and one compelling example. The clearer your message, the more the audience will remember. Don't worry about listing everything you know.

2. Speak from the field, and not just theory

Our audience respects lived experience. The more grounded your message is in what you've seen or done, the more it will resonate.

3. Invite people to see

You're here to help the audience see something new. That might mean reframing the issue, challenging a popular belief, naming a difficult truth or asking questions that have not been asked before.

4. Build the energy with your tone

Passion doesn't have to mean speaking louder. It can mean speaking slower. Or pausing. Or using a powerful image. What matters is presence.

5. It's okay to leave space.

A well-placed pause can give your audience time to catch up—and catch on.

Pro Tips for Moderators

1. Set the tone early.

Establish that this is a space for exploration, not opposition. The tone you set in the first two minutes will shape the whole conversation.

2. Balance time with presence.

Keep track of who's speaking more, but also who's reaching deeper. Your job is to manage time as well as the energy.

3. Use Mentimeter to bring the room into the debate.

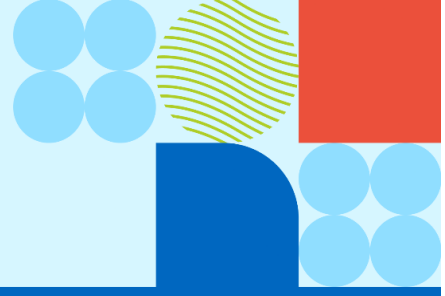
Encourage the audience to vote, share reactions, or post their reflections in real time. Read out a few live comments—it keeps the format fresh and participatory.

4. Keep the audience engaged beyond the debate.

Remind them to fill out the feedback form before they leave the room. Let them know their input will directly shape future formats and conversations.

5. Reflect!

Your closing is more than just summarising or announcing who's right. It's about naming the richness of the discussion and pointing to what's still emerging.



AWUF 2025 Project Lab

The Project Lab is one of the most focused and personalized learning formats at AWUF 2025. This space is built for project teams and seasoned experts to come together in a room that's honest, hands-on, and committed to solutions.

Whether you're bringing a challenge or offering your expertise, you're here because something matters. Project Labs are not about broad discussions or polished presentations. They're about going deep into real project issues—what's not getting fixed, what's stuck, what's unclear, what's slowing you down—and getting the insight you need to move forward. This is where problems get diagnosed, ideas get tested, and projects get fine-tuned.

You walk in seeking clarity, and you walk out ready to act.

How to use this Playbook

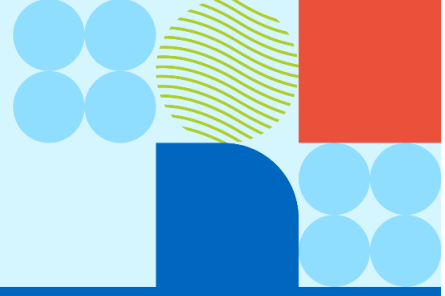
This playbook is designed to help you prepare for the Project Lab learning format, whether you are part of the project team or one of the expert voices invited to support them.

Each section outlines what this format is, how it flows, what makes it work, and how to make the most of your time in the room. You'll find preparation steps, role guidance, timing cues, and tips for getting into the right mindset.

This session is intimate, collaborative, and focused. Use this playbook to arrive prepared—not with slides or summaries, but with openness, clarity, and a willingness to work through what's real.

Topics covered in this section:

1. What is a Project Lab
2. Why Project Lab & Who Is It For
3. Core Elements of a Project Lab
4. Designing Your Project Lab
5. Flow of the Session
6. Roles & Responsibilities
7. How to Prepare (Pre, During, Post)
8. Tips



1. What is a Project Lab?

The Project Lab is a space for real-world project challenges to be explored—with clarity, care, and expert attention. It's where project teams come to surface issues they're wrestling with, and where experienced practitioners—our project experts—offer fresh perspective, grounded insight, and practical ideas for the road ahead.

This format isn't a panel. It isn't a presentation. It's a conversation. One that's focused, honest, and designed to fix a broken piece or move an uncertain part of a project toward clarity and momentum. The aim is to get better and transform.

The term **Lab** is intentional. It signals a place of experimentation, diagnosis, and improvement. This is where teams come to fine-tune strategy, adjust implementation, rethink design—or simply get a second set of eyes on a problem they've been carrying for too long.

Whether you're a project team seeking clarity, or an expert offering your insight, this is where shared wisdom becomes action—and where experience meets experimentation, with purpose.

2. Why Project Lab & Who Is It For?

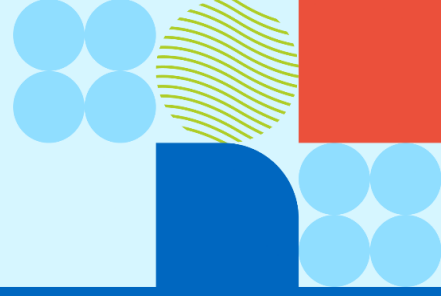
Many of our projects reach a point where something important needs rethinking. It could be a project design issue, an implementation hurdle, a stakeholder challenge, or something that just isn't landing as expected. The Project Lab exists for these moments, i.e. when a team needs clarity, ideas, and a fresh perspective.

This format creates space for real-time learning, not as theory, but as applied intelligence. It brings together those who are closest to the work—the project teams—with seasoned experts who have worked across regions, institutions, and complex environments. These experts are here to listen, reflect, and offer grounded guidance that helps move things forward.

The Project Lab is especially valuable for:

- teams with a live challenge or decision point
- teams working on projects in early or mid-stages
- teams facing friction or uncertainty in the field
- teams preparing for rollout or realignment
- experts who can bring strategic, institutional, or technical insight based on long-term experience

When the conversation is real, specific, and purposeful - what emerges is not just advice, but momentum. Teams walk out of the Project Lab better equipped, more focused, and ready to act.



3. Core Elements of a Project Lab

A Project Lab is a well-designed learning experience. It creates space for teams to be real about what needs to be fixed or resolved, and for experts to respond with depth and clarity. The following five elements make the format effective, focused, and valuable for everyone involved.

1. A Real, Live Challenge

Each Lab begins with a project team sharing a live challenge they're navigating. This could relate to design, execution, monitoring, stakeholder alignment, or internal decision-making. The issue must be real, specific, and something the team genuinely wants help with.

2. A Focused, Intimate Setting

This format works best in small, enclosed spaces that invite an dialogue. The energy is not public or performative but rather personal, deep, and intentionally limited in size to foster trust and direct exchange.

3. Expert-Led Conversation (Not a Panel)

Instead of PowerPoint presentations or back-and-forth fireside chat, the format is built on dialogue. A small group of experienced "Project Experts" or "Lab Leads" guide the conversation by listening, offering reflections, and carefully challenging assumptions. Their role is to diagnose and suggest.

4. A Session Built Around Progress

This learning format is not just for airing problems - it's about moving forward. The experts offer suggestions, reframe questions, and open up new ways of thinking. By the end, the project teams should feel more equipped, clearer in direction, and ready to take action.

5. Time for Reflection and Reset

The Project Lab closes with space for the project team to reflect on what they heard and share how they plan to take things forward. This helps consolidate insight into intention, and gives the experts feedback on what landed well.

4. Designing Your Project Lab

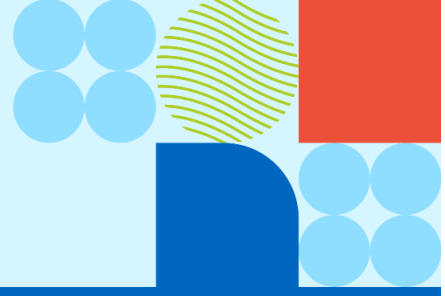
Five Steps to Shape a Project Lab That Works

Step 1: Start with the Right Challenge

Select a challenge that is current, unresolved, and important. It could relate to project preparation, implementation, monitoring, stakeholder dynamics, or something that's simply stuck. The more specific and real the issue is, the more powerful the Lab will be. This isn't about presenting a perfect project - it's about opening up something that matters.

Step 2: Frame the Question Clearly

Once you've identified the challenge, distil it into two or three clear guiding questions for the Lab. These should help the experts zero in on where their insights are needed most. Framing the question clearly sets the tone for a focused, relevant conversation.



Step 3: Prepare to Present with Openness

The project team will have 10 minutes to present. There's no need for a slide deck—just a clear narrative:

- What's the project about?
- Where are things now?
- What's the challenge?
- What kind of support or guidance are you hoping for?

Your goal here is to unlock better ways forward.

Step 4: Choose the Right Experts

Invite 1-2 experienced project professionals who bring depth, diversity of thought, and a constructive mindset. Their role is to reflect, diagnose, and guide – not to critique or evaluate. The best experts or “Lab Leads” are generous with their knowledge and grounded in real-world experience.

Step 5: Design for Depth, Not Speed

Leave space in the session for thoughts to breathe and for ideas to brew. This should be a thoughtful, well-paced exploration. Design 60-75 minutes of structured conversation, but leave the final 15 minutes for quiet, informal exchanges, one-on-one conversations, or spontaneous follow-ups. That's where some of the best insights are likely to appear.



5. Flow of the Session

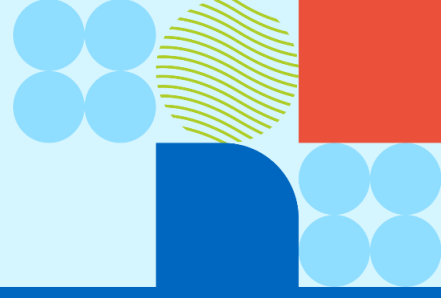
Total Session Time: 90 minutes (75 mins structured + 15 mins open space)

The Project Lab is structured to support reflection, diagnosis, and forward movement. Each part of the session is designed to bring clarity to the challenge – and give space for new perspectives to emerge. Here’s a suggested flow for the session:

Segment	Time	Details
Opening & Framing	5 mins	Facilitator opens the Lab, sets the tone, and explains the purpose of the Lab. Introduces the project team and experts.
Project Team Presentation	10 mins	The team presents their live challenge. No slides required—just a clear narrative: What’s the project, what’s the challenge, what do they need help thinking through?
Expert-Led Dialogue	45 mins	The experts respond with reflections, diagnostic insights, and guiding questions. The discussion is focused, generous, and rooted in experience—not critique. The project team may jump in to clarify or deepen the discussion.
Team Reflection & Response	10 mins	The project team reflects on what they heard. What resonated? What surprised them? What feels useful? This is their time to process and speak openly.
Moderator Wrap-Up	5 mins	The moderator offers a short synthesis: key takeaways, recurring themes, or next steps. Encourages the team to continue the conversation and reminds all participants of the final reflection space.
Open Reflection Time	15 mins	Reserved for one-on-one exchanges, deeper personal conversations, or spontaneous follow-up between experts and project teams. This is where some of the most valuable connections are made.

Important:

- The session feels more like a working studio than a public discussion.
- There are no formal presentations or evaluations; only constructive exploration.
- The tone is respectful & practical and the setting is intimate & confidential. Everyone is here to help something move forward.



6. Roles & Responsibilities

The Project Lab works best when everyone comes into the space with intention. Whether you're bringing a project challenge or offering expert support, this is a format built on listening, reflecting, and showing up with care.

Project Team

The project team anchors the session. They bring a real challenge and a willingness to think aloud, be curious, and explore. Their role is to:

- Share the project's context and the issue they're working through
- Be open about what's unclear or difficult
- Ask guiding questions to draw out insight
- Reflect on what they hear and consider how to apply it

It's a learning moment, designed to help teams walk out with sharper thinking and stronger next steps.

Project Experts (Lab Leads)

The experts serve as guides! They listen closely, ask thoughtful questions, and share ideas from experience. Their role is to:

- Offer diagnostic observations, not just direct answers
- Share what they've seen in similar contexts—what's worked, what hasn't, and why
- Provide pathways, reframes, or ideas the team might not have considered
- Stay focused on support—not critique

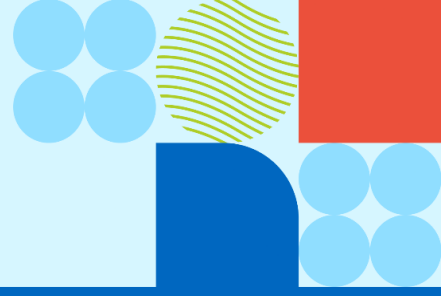
The best experts leave the team feeling lighter, clearer, and more prepared.

Facilitator / Moderator

The facilitator holds the room. They set the tone, manage timing, and guide the energy of the session. Their role is to:

- Frame the purpose at the beginning: honest, helpful, non-judgmental dialogue
- Keep the session balanced, moving, and focused
- Help manage transitions between voices
- End with a short reflection or synthesis, and invite the room into quiet follow-up time

Their presence creates a space that feels grounded, open, and generous.



7. How to Prepare (Pre, During, Post)

Preparing for a Project Lab is about clarity. You don't need slides or reports – you need a real issue, a willingness to explore it openly, and the focus to make the most of the conversation.

Here's a simple, three-phase guide to help you prepare with purpose – whether you are part of the project team or one of the expert voices.

Before

During

After

Before the Session: Shape the story, set the tone

For the project team:

- Choose and submit a challenge that is specific, timely, and meaningful to your work
- Prepare a short narrative (not a presentation) covering:
 - o What the project is about
 - o What the current status is
 - o What's stuck, unclear, or difficult
 - o What kind of insight or guidance you're hoping for
- Discuss internally: Are you ready to explore this issue openly, in a room of peers?

For the experts:

- Review the submissions on the topic by the project teams
- Reflect on similar situations from your own work that might offer useful lessons
- Bring a mindset of generosity, curiosity, and solution-focused thinking

Before

During

After

During the Session: Be present, focused, and generous

For the project team:

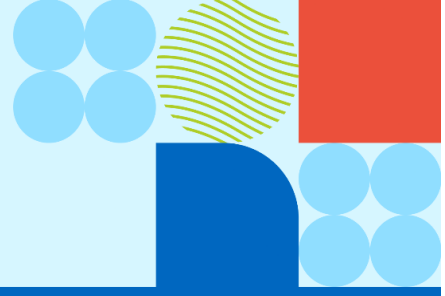
- Share your challenge clearly and briefly – leave space for the experts to ask questions and dig deeper
- Be open to hearing things you may not have considered
- Keep notes as you go – what's resonating, what's becoming clearer?

For the experts:

- Focus on what might help the team move forward
- Share options, and not necessarily only instructions
- Feel free to ask clarifying questions or probe beneath the surface

For the facilitator:

- Keep the space safe and constructive
- Encourage deep listening and honest exchange
- Manage time so the final reflections don't feel rushed
- Ensure that the participants fill out the feedback survey



Before

During

After

After the Session: Reflect, record, and carry it forward

For the project team:

- Note down 2-3 key takeaways: What shifted for you? What will you try next?
- Follow up with any experts you connected with for further support
- Take a moment to thank the group or share what you're walking away with - it helps everyone feel the value of the session

For the experts:

- Share a final thought with the facilitator or ADB team - what stood out, or what might help shape future Labs
- Optionally, make yourself available for a follow-up conversation if the team requests one

8. Tips

The Project Lab is about real challenges, real thinking, and real-time support. It works best when everyone in the room shows up with openness, and a shared goal of making something better.

Here are a few pro tips to help you get the most out of the session—along with answers to questions that often come up.

Tips for Project Teams

1. Share the story and the facts both

Give the room enough context to feel the challenge - not just what's happening, but why it matters to you.

2. Be specific about where you want insight.

The clearer your question, the more helpful the expert guidance will be.

3. Stay curious even if you feel challenged.

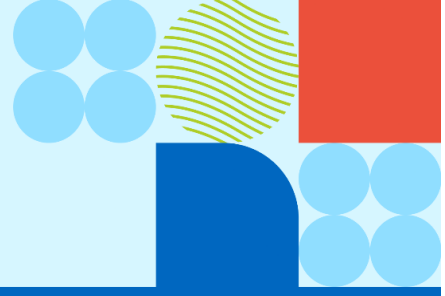
Some of the most helpful insights may sound unfamiliar at first. Treat them as invitations, not critiques.

4. Listen for patterns.

If you hear the same reflection from more than one expert, pause. There may be something there to explore further.

5. Capture your takeaways.

Even two or three phrases or ideas that land well can shape your next steps in a meaningful way.



Tips for Experts (Lab Leads)

1. Start with what you're hearing.

Sometimes, simply naming the tension or contradiction in the challenge can help the team see it more clearly.

2. Offer more options than prescriptions.

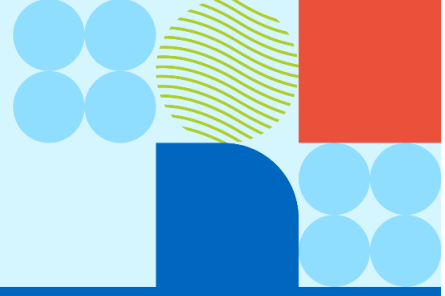
Share how you've seen similar issues play out—what worked, what didn't, and why.

3. Speak with empathy and clarity.

Your experience & knowledge is valuable. When shared with humility and insight, it becomes a gift.

4. Test Solutions

If the project team already has a solution in mind, that's okay. Use the session to test their approach, surface blind spots, or explore possible outcomes.



AWUF 2025 Leadership Lunch

The Leadership Lunch is a unique opportunity to engage in deep, insightful, and intimate conversations with a small group of peers. Inspired by the Jeffersonian dinner model, this format allows each table of 8–10 participants to explore leadership, challenges in water and urban development, and personal insights over lunch.

The focus is on storytelling, listening, and shared learning—not formal presentations or slides. The goal is to walk away with clarity, fresh perspectives, and stronger connections—with no pressure to “win” the conversation, only to share and learn.

1. Why This Format Works

The Leadership Lunch is designed to foster trust and open dialogue. By creating an intimate environment, we encourage deep sharing, critical thinking, and personal reflection. Unlike panels or workshops, this format is about shared experiences—offering each participant the opportunity to contribute, listen, and learn in a space that feels safe and energizing.

Conversations like these often unlock insights that formal sessions miss. The format doesn’t chase answers—it invites exploration, honesty, and perspective.

2. What to Expect at Your Table

Each table will host 8–10 participants, with designated hosts. There are no slides, no presentations—just a set of thoughtful prompts and space for meaningful conversation. The AWUF secretariat will ensure that we keep track of time.

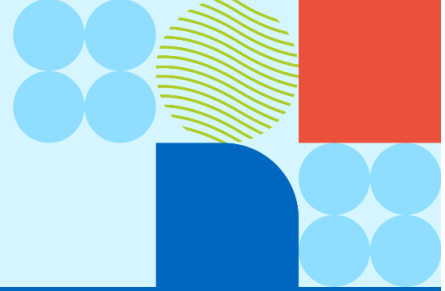
- The host’s role is to guide the conversation and ensure everyone has a voice and gently encourage flow if needed.
- Prompt cards will be placed at the table and you may opt to prepare additional prompt cards or questions to help steer the conversation.
- The tone is reflective, generous, and grounded in experience.

3. How to Be a Great Participant or Host

For Hosts:

You are the guide and guardian of the conversation. Your role is to:

- **Set the tone: Begin with a warm welcome.**
“Thank you all for joining today’s conversation. This is a space to reflect openly on leadership and share experiences. There are no right answers—only stories, questions, and learning.”
- **Use an icebreaker to get started:**
“What inspired you to work in the development space?”
“What’s a leadership moment that shaped you recently?”



- **Invite thoughtful contributions using the prompt cards or your own questions:**
“What’s a challenge you’re currently navigating as a leader or team member?”

One of the most important roles of the host is to help the conversation move beyond surface-level sharing. Here’s how to guide it gently toward depth:

- **Ask “why” or “how” one more time to invite reflection:**
“That’s interesting—what made that moment so impactful for you?”
- **Follow up with reflective questions, not just factual ones:**
“Has that moment changed how you approach leadership?”
- **Invite specificity:**
“You mentioned the project was difficult—what made it so?”
- **Model vulnerability:**
Share a challenge or moment of doubt from your own experience—it encourages others to do the same.
- **Use silence with intention:**
A short pause often invites deeper answers than quick replies.

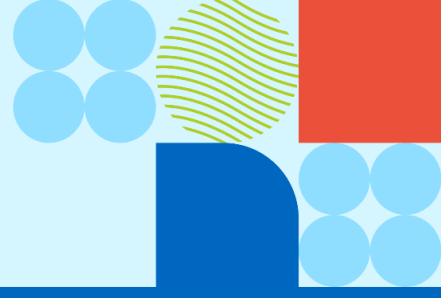
For Participants:

- Be open and curious
- Share from experience, not theory
- Make space for others
- Reflect, listen, and ask follow-up questions

4. Session Flow (Suggested for Hosts)

This flexible timeline can help guide the pace of the conversation without making it feel rigid: Hosts are encouraged to adapt this flow to the rhythm and energy of the table.

Segment	Time	Details
Welcome & Ice Breakers	5-10 mins	Set the tone, introduce each other, get everyone speaking comfortably
Round 1: Sharing	20 mins	Respond to the first question or prompt as a group
Round 2: Deeper Reflection	20 mins	Explore leadership tensions, dilemmas, or breakthrough moments
Final Thoughts	20 mins	Invite each participant to share a personal takeaway or insight
Host Wrap-Up	10 mins	Close with thanks, reflection, and encouragement to stay connected



AWUF 2025 General Speaking Tips

1. Bring your experience & expertise

The most powerful talks & conversations from stage don't just inform—they resonate. Audiences connect deeply when you share real moments: a challenge you faced in the field, a moment that changed your perspective, or a story from someone whose life intersected with your work. Facts and frameworks matter as much as how people remember what you felt, what you learned, and why it mattered.

Even in formal settings, bring in personal stories or on-the-ground reflections. These will make your message land and make your presence even more relatable and credible.

2. Think about your audience

It is crucial to know the curiosity, interest and mindset of the audience that's going to listen to you on-stage, because everyone thinks and believes differently. Your audience is likely to be busy and overloaded with information, and they will value clarity over complexity.

Your content has the possibility to open an opportunity for dialogue for your audience. They care about insights, real stories & moments, and models and practices that can help them deliver value to their stakeholders.

3. One big idea & message

Take some time to pen down what exactly you want your audience to walk away with. Is it inspiration, information, insights or something more? Before you step up, ask yourself: If people can remember just one thing, what should it be? Your message should be clear, specific, and repeatable.

Avoid overloading your content with too many takeaways. Clarity creates impact. Revisit your key message during your content, and end with a paragraph that sticks.

4. Start strong

Don't ease in - invite them in. The first 30-60 seconds are your moment to hook the room. Open with a surprising fact, a provocative question, or a short story - something that creates instant relevance. Make people feel something early, and they'll want to follow you through.

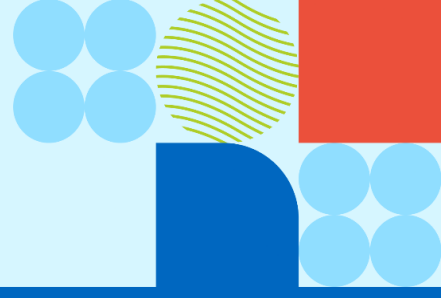
5. Slide Design

Slides should be designed to support your content and enhance people's understanding. Use a PowerPoint only if necessary. Keep the slides simple, visual, and focused. Avoid cluttered text, dense data, or bullet-heavy slides.

Use powerful images, short quotes, or one big message per slide. If possible avoid reading off your slides.

6. Conversational Language

Your aim is to make people interested and build their understanding & knowledge. Build a clear and conversational language, like you're explaining your work to a curious friend. Avoid repeating institutional words, overly technical terms, or acronyms. If you must use one, explain it plainly. The simplicity of your content will help opening up people's horizons.



7. Rehearse. Then rehearse again.

Rehearsal isn't about memorizing – it's about refining your flow, timing, and comfort. Practice out loud. Record yourself if you feel like. Do a mock run with a trusted colleague or friend. Rehearsing helps you catch what's unclear, unstructured, or unnecessary. The best speakers sound natural because they've practiced enough to relax into it.

8. Bring presence through energy, voice, and connection

How you speak is as important as what you say. Vary your pace. Pause with intention. Let your voice reflect your message stay present, grounded, and engaged. Connect with your audience. Make eye contact. Treat your time on stage like a conversation.

People connect to people more than slides, data and talking points. Be there with them!

9. Leave room for interaction when possible

Depending on your format, don't hesitate to engage the audience – through questions, a quick show of hands, or a moment of reflection. Even in structured sessions, interaction can invite deeper attention and participation. A well-placed question or a moment of collective silence can shift the room.

10. Finish purposefully

Don't just end with a recap but instead end with purpose. What do you want them to reflect on, question, or do differently? Whether it's a call to action, a vision for what's possible, or one question they can carry forward; finish with a moment that matters. That's what makes your content last long after it ends.