



SME4SMARTCITIES

Deliverable 5.1.7a: The Innovation Zone Playground Guidebook

Project Acronym: SME4SMARTCITIES
Project title: Mediterranean SME working together to make cities smarter
Website: www.enicbmed.eu/projects/sme4smartcities
Date: 28/09/2023
Responsible Partner: P3 TAU
WP: WP5



This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union under the ENI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the **Urban Innovation and Sustainability Lab, Dept. for Environmental Studies, Porter School of the Environment and Earth Sciences, Tel Aviv University** and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union or the Programme management structures.

Revision History

Revision	Date	Author	Organization	Description
0.1	14.19.2022	Nir Shimony	TechForGood	Initial structure
0.2	19.09.2023	Nir Shimony	TechForGood	Working Draft
1.0	28.09.2023	Nir Shimony	TechForGood	Published



Municipal Leadership Work Plan

Written by Nir Shimony, Founder & CEO, TechForGood

The Playground logo: Nir Shimony

nir@techforgood.co

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
The Fundamentals.....	5
1. The Concept in a Nutshell	6
2. Objectives	7
3. Vision and mission.....	8
4. Fundamentals in detail.....	9
Practical guidebook.....	13
1. Introduction to the three phases of the work plan.....	14
2. Setting the Foundation.....	14
Research	14
Secure Municipal Support	15
Area Setup	16
Build a Community	17
3. Innovate.....	18
Stakeholder diversity.....	18
Services portfolio.....	20
Additional issues.....	23
1. Impact.....	24
Initial Impact KPIs:	24
Utilizing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):	24
2. Funding.....	25
3. Personnel.....	26

Introduction

This document is part 2 of the “Establishing an Innovation Zone” guide. Its primary objective is to present a comprehensive work plan that delineates the pragmatic strategic steps and methodologies necessary for the establishment of a replicable, scalable, and influential Urban Impact Innovation Playground.

The Playground is the portfolio of suggested activities for the Innovation Zone. To engage stakeholders in the Innovation Zone and to facilitate a proactive community, the Playground provides a set of collaboration and co-creation activities. While the "Public Room" is the physical meeting hub, the “Playground” is the actual engagement and the activities that take place.

The Playground constitutes a designated local zone expressly created to showcase and facilitate co-creation and co-innovation among diverse stakeholders within the realm of urban sustainability and impact. It envisions a localized space wherein opportunities abound for both experiencing and cultivating an urban ecosystem forged through collaborative efforts involving cities, industry players, entrepreneurs, academic institutions, local businesses, artists and creators, schools and the local resident community. Furthermore, it is purposefully designed to function as a high-impact pilot zone, often referred to as a beta site, to catalyze transnational cooperation endeavors.

1. The Concept in a Nutshell

We envision the Playground as a dynamic physical space where impact-driven startups and established companies can innovate, test, and implement cutting-edge solutions to various impact-related urban challenges.

The Playground will be made of outdoor and indoor facilities. It will be equipped with the necessary infrastructure and resources to support these activities, as well as various content-related activities (meetups, incubators, conferences and accelerators), designed to add value to those who use the playground. The Playground will also be a place for education and collaboration, where students, researchers, and entrepreneurs can come together to learn about and develop new solutions to urban challenges.

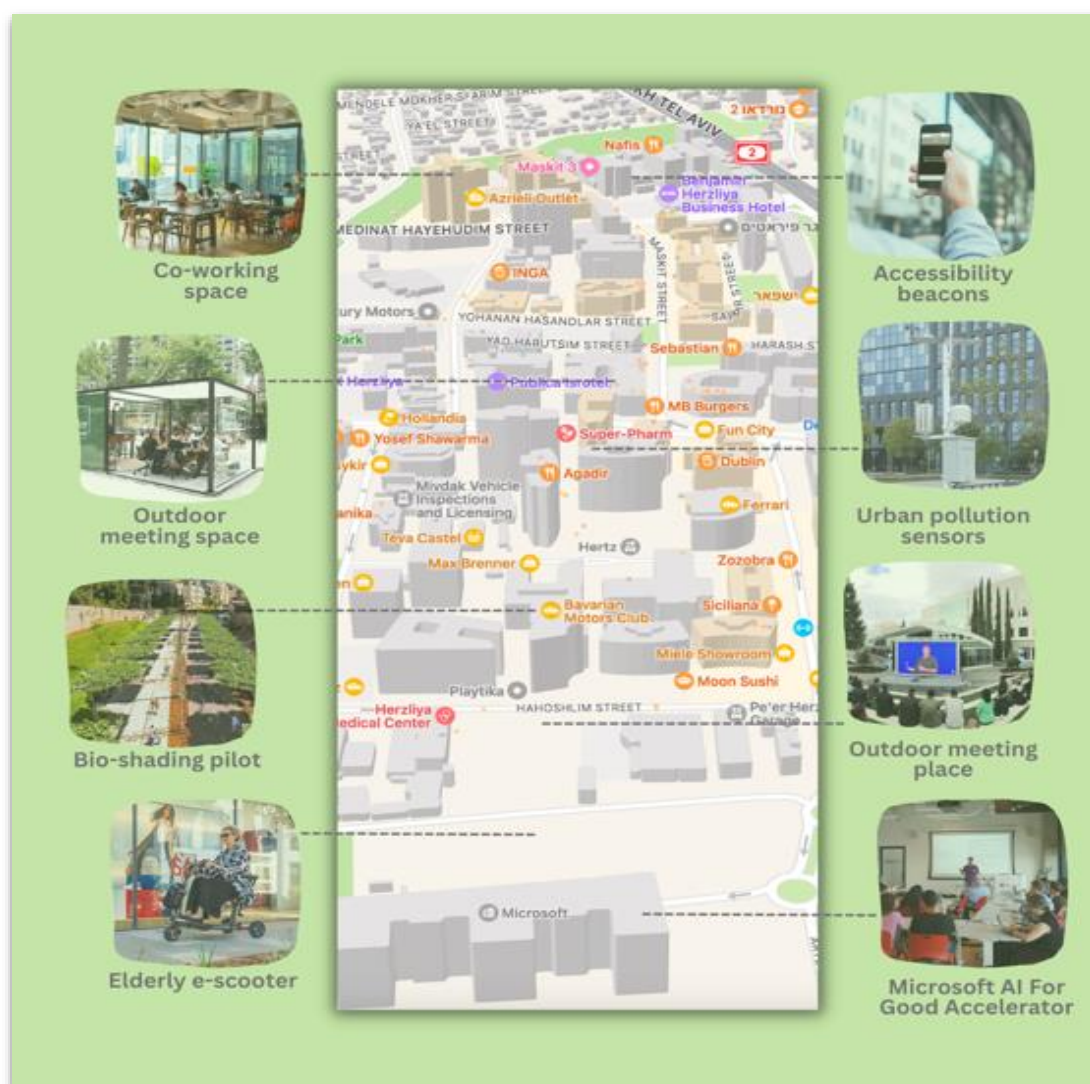


Image: ideas for engagement activities across the Innovation Zine. Source: TechForGood

These initiatives will foster innovation, catalyze collaboration, and provide an educational nexus, ultimately aiming to make a profound positive impact on Herzliya, strengthen the relationships between existing tenants, and build a robust value proposition for various other businesses.

2. Objectives

As we embark on our mission to transform the urban environment and create positive change, our objectives within the Impact Innovation Playground are designed with clear, practical goals in mind. These objectives reflect a strong commitment to sustainable city development, innovation, and collaboration among different groups. We want to make sure that our efforts can be easily replicated, and measured for their success, and that they include education and public engagement elements. Importantly, we aim to make a positive and long-lasting impact on the environment and society. These objectives serve as the foundation for our work in addressing the complex challenges faced by cities today.

The detailed objectives can be described as follows:

Replicable Model Creation: Develop a comprehensive blueprint and operational model for the Impact Innovation Playground that can be replicated in different urban settings worldwide. The goal is to establish a framework that can be easily adapted to varying geographical, cultural, and economic contexts.

Addressing Urban Challenges: Act as a dynamic platform for addressing urban challenges. The Playground will serve as a testing ground where startups and companies can develop and implement innovative solutions to real-world urban issues, with a particular emphasis on economic, social, and environmental challenges.

Fostering innovation: innovation is at the heart of any transformational and scalable change. The Playground will provide the necessary environment, tools, network, facilities, and access for entrepreneurs who develop solutions to social and environmental urban issues.

Facilitating Collaboration: Foster collaboration among key stakeholders, including startups, established companies, academic institutions, and municipalities. The objective is to create a vibrant ecosystem where knowledge sharing, partnership formation, and cross-sectoral collaboration are encouraged to drive innovative solutions.

Local SME growth: The Playground is designed to be a place where local SMEs can access the resources and support, they need to develop and grow their businesses. By creating a community of innovation and collaboration, The Playground can help SMEs thrive, grow, and connect to a greater cause.

Measurable Impact: Achieve measurable impact in multiple dimensions, including economic growth, job creation, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and technological advancement. Implement key performance indicators (KPIs) to track and assess the effectiveness of initiatives and projects within The Playground.

Education and Skill Development: Offer educational programs and resources that empower students, researchers, entrepreneurs, and the wider community to understand urban challenges and develop solutions. Provide hands-on experience and training opportunities to prepare the next generation of impact innovators and encourage the involvement of local businesses who can contribute to achieving the goals of The Playground.

Public Engagement and Thriving Community: Promote public awareness and engagement by hosting events, workshops, and educational activities that allow the broader community to participate in discussions and initiatives related to urban sustainability. Encourage citizens to become active contributors to the city's development, as well as enhance their benefit beyond the geographic boundaries of The Playground.

Global Network Establishment: Build the Urban Impact Innovation Playground as part of a broader global network of similar initiatives. Cultivate partnerships and collaborations with other cities and organizations to share best practices, knowledge, and resources for sustainable urban development.

Inspiration and Shared Knowledge: Serve as a source of inspiration and leadership in the field of urban impact innovation, as well as a source of any knowledge that is developed and collected within The Playground.

3. Vision and mission

Vision and mission statements are essential elements of any organization's strategic planning process, as well as for strategic long-term projects like The Playground. They serve distinct purposes and provide different perspectives on what the organization aims to achieve. Here are explicit definitions of both:

Vision: a concise, aspirational statement that outlines the long-term goals and desired future state of an organization. It articulates the overarching purpose and direction the organization aspires to achieve. A well-crafted vision statement inspires and guides stakeholders, and partners by describing what the organization hopes to become or accomplish in the distant future. Vision statements are typically more abstract and forward-looking.

Mission Statement: a clear statement that explains the fundamental purpose and reason for a project's existence. It defines what the project does, for whom it does it, and how it does it. A mission statement provides a practical and immediate focus, describing the project's current activities and the value it brings to its stakeholders. It is more specific and grounded in the present.

Urban Innovation Playgrounds should all have a shared vision and mission statement, regardless of their geographic location and their social or environmental focus.

This vision and mission statement of The Playground should be thoroughly discussed between stakeholders. We offer the following as an initial draft, that needs to be carefully crafted in the future:

Vision:

Our vision for the Urban Impact Innovation Playground is to create vibrant, sustainable urban ecosystems that inspire and empower communities to co-create and implement innovative solutions. We envision a world where cities are resilient, inclusive, and environmentally responsible, driven by collaboration between

industry, academia, and government, making a lasting and positive impact on the environment and society.

Mission Statement:

Our mission is to establish a dynamic and replicable model for Urban Impact Innovation Areas that serve as catalysts for sustainable urban development. We provide a platform for startups, companies, researchers, and communities to collaborate, prototype, and test solutions to real-world urban challenges. Through knowledge, community engagement, and measurable impact, we aim to nurture the next generation of impact innovators and contribute to the creation of resilient, livable cities worldwide

4. Fundamentals in detail

In an ever-evolving urban landscape, The Playground is a practical and dynamic concept that seeks to enhance cities by fostering innovation, collaboration, and sustainable solutions. It's a real-world initiative, seamlessly integrated into the existing fabric of urban infrastructure, where ideas are not just discussed but implemented and tested in the hustle and bustle of everyday life. The Playground isn't just about grand visions; it's about tangible improvements in urban living. It serves as a model for cities to address their unique challenges while also contributing to a global dialogue on urban sustainability. At its core, it's a community-driven effort, where established businesses work alongside entrepreneurs, and the digital realm connects people and ideas. Additionally, The Playground is a launchpad for startups and a source of inspiration for students and schools, nurturing the practical side of innovation.

Following are the basic concepts that translate the idea of The Playground into a tangible urban innovation environment:

A Beta Site for Urban Solutions

At its core, The Playground functions as a 'beta site,' where novel ideas evolve into practical urban solutions. Imagine a startup developing a new waste management system. Within The Playground, they can conduct real-time tests, refining their solution to be more efficient and environmentally friendly. Data collected from these trials are analyzed, and the system is iteratively improved.

Furthermore, this 'beta site' concept fosters collaboration and knowledge exchange. Researchers, innovators, and stakeholders converge to brainstorm and co-create solutions. Interdisciplinary teams work together, leveraging expertise from various domains, resulting in well-rounded and comprehensive urban solutions.

Physical Infrastructure and Municipal Integration

The Playground seamlessly integrates into the existing municipal infrastructure, turning parts of the city into experimental zones for urban innovation. Imagine a bustling city zone, where lampposts are not just sources of light, but also smart devices embedded with sensors that monitor environmental parameters, optimizing energy consumption and reducing the city's carbon footprint. Sidewalks are transformed into energy-generating pathways, showcasing the potential of sustainable urban planning.

This integration allows startups and established companies to utilize the city's existing resources for testing and implementing their innovative solutions. Urban sustainability-focused ventures can experiment with renewable energy systems, waste management technologies, and water conservation strategies within a real-world urban environment. The Playground becomes an expansive testing ground, promoting the efficient use of municipal resources and encouraging sustainable urban practices.

A Vibrant Community Ecosystem

Central to The Playground's success is the vibrant and diverse community ecosystem it cultivates. It acts as a magnet, attracting a rich tapestry of stakeholders, including local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), local large-scale corporates, startups, academic institutions, and local residents.

Imagine The Playground hosting a dynamic event where local residents, entrepreneurs, and students come together to discuss solutions for reducing air pollution. Startups pitch their innovative air quality monitoring devices, academic researchers share their findings, and residents provide valuable insights based on their daily experiences. This collaborative interaction forms the essence of The Playground—a space where diverse perspectives converge, sparking creativity, and fostering a culture of inclusivity.

Co-creation

The Playground is a dynamic environment where collaboration and co-creation thrive at the core of its mission. Within this innovative space, the spirit of co-creation is exercised as stakeholders from various backgrounds converge to tackle urban challenges collectively. The Playground will regularly publish a list of urban challenges and invite groups of stakeholders to address them. Co-creation means that for example a group of entrepreneurs, local residents, urban planners, and local merchants can design, create, pilot, and implement an accessible pedestrian-friendly street. This can be achieved through co-creation workshops, hackathons, financial support from local corporate residents, and deep involvement from the municipality. This is just one example of enabling participants to collectively shape urban solutions that are not only impactful but also culturally relevant and sensitive to the needs of the community. It is a living testament to the power of collective ingenuity, where the whole is indeed greater than the sum of its parts.

Local Benefits and Global Impact

The benefits of The Playground extend to the local residents, enhancing their daily lives in various ways. Improved waste management means cleaner neighborhoods; renewable energy projects contribute to reduced pollution, and smart transportation initiatives lead to less congested roads. The local economy flourishes as The Playground attracts businesses and investments, generating job opportunities and promoting entrepreneurship.

However, the impact of The Playground reaches far beyond the immediate locality. Successful urban solutions born within The Playground are not confined to its premises. They are meticulously documented, refined, and scaled to address similar challenges faced by cities globally. The success stories of The Playground become beacons of impact, demonstrating the potential for sustainable urban development on a global scale.

Thematic focus

The Playground is not limited solely to urban sustainability. One of the core objectives of The Playground is to become an international global network of 'Playgrounds' that share the same methodology and tools but address different social and environmental issues. The Playground could potentially be an area where topics like accessibility, waste management, housing and green building, cultural preservation, public safety, aging population, food security and so many more are developed, tested, and scaled to the whole world.



Image: Imagining an international global network of 'Playgrounds' that share the same methodology and tools but address different social and environmental issues. Source: TechForGood

Digital Presence and Outreach

The Playground extends its reach beyond the physical boundaries through a robust online presence. An interactive website showcases ongoing projects, success stories, and upcoming events. It also provides publicly available data for collaborative use by researchers and developers. Social media platforms buzz with updates, engaging a global audience interested in urban sustainability. The digital face of The Playground is more than just informative; it's an invitation to a worldwide community passionate about sustainable urban development.

Through webinars, virtual tours, and engaging content, The Playground's outreach amplifies its impact, sparking interest and inspiring change well beyond the confines of its physical location. The online community has become a breeding ground for ideas, discussions, and collaborations, further fueling the global movement toward sustainable urban living.

Support for Startups and Education

At the heart of The Playground is its unwavering support for startups and educational institutions. The Playground hosts dedicated accelerator programs, offering a nurturing environment where startups receive mentorship, funding, and networking opportunities. Imagine a startup specializing in urban agriculture participating in a Playground accelerator program. They gain access to mentorship from successful entrepreneurs, receive funding to scale their operations and connect with potential partners. They test their solution within the physical area of The Playground and provide immediate benefits to businesses and residents of the area.

In addition to fostering startups, The Playground invites schools and educational institutions for visits and workshops. Students engage with real-world urban challenges, encouraging innovative thinking from a young age. It's an opportunity for the youth to be inspired, develop problem-solving skills, and envision a future where they play a vital role in shaping sustainable cities.

To summarize the fundamentals of The Playground, it emerges as a beacon of hope in the pursuit of sustainable urban transformation. With a seamless blend of physical infrastructure, a dynamic community, and a digital footprint, it encapsulates a vision where cities are not just spaces that we inhabit but thriving ecosystems that sustain and inspire us.

Through relentless experimentation, collaboration, and a commitment to making a global impact, we envision a future where cities optimize resources and enhance the well-being of all inhabitants. It is a testament to what is achievable when innovation and sustainability converge, shaping cities that are not just smart, but compassionate and environmentally conscious.

1. Introduction

This section is a hands-on practical guidebook that serves as the cornerstone for establishing a thriving Urban Impact Innovation Playground (Playground). By defining the scope and objectives with precision, we lay the groundwork for a transformative journey. This step is the compass that ensures every subsequent action aligns with the overarching vision of replicable, scalable, and impactful urban development. From selecting the urban area to engaging stakeholders, promoting inclusivity, building the content, and formalizing partnerships, this section provides the essential roadmap for turning the Playground concept into a tangible reality that fosters innovation, sustainability, and collaboration within an urban area and community.

2. Setting the Foundation

Research

Before establishing an Urban Impact Innovation Playground, it's imperative to clearly define the scope and objectives of this transformative endeavor. Research is a fundamental step that sets the tone for the entire project and ensures alignment with your overarching goals. The SME4SMARTCITIES guide "Establishing an Innovation Zone" and its playbook presents the action plan and outlines specific criteria for defining the scope and for choosing the right place for the innovation zone and hence for the Impact Innovation Playground in it. The following sections elaborate on good practices to apply when conducting this action plan

Urban Area Options. Begin by carefully studying the potential urban area where the Playground will be located. Consider factors such as population density, existing infrastructure, and the unique urban challenges faced by the community. This selection should reflect a commitment to creating a positive and lasting impact on the chosen locality. It is highly valuable to conduct a SWOT analysis of the area and an impact vs. effort matrix.

Choosing The Theme. Outline the specific objectives of the Playground. Emphasize the core principles of replicability, scalability, and impact across a spectrum of urban challenges. Whether it's fostering sustainability, enhancing economic opportunities, or promoting innovation, clarity on objectives is essential.

Ownership Decision. In order for the Playground to be a successful, sustainable, and impactful project, it needs a distinct owner. Each playground should develop its own ownership model. For example - a playground can (and should) be a municipal project, that is led by the local municipality. This is mainly due to the fact that municipalities are probably the entities that will gain the most from the Playground. A municipality is best positioned to assemble a cross-sector collaboration of players. The ongoing day-to-day running of the Playground can be delegated to a third-party organization that has the expertise in managing innovative communities and cross-sector innovation activities.

Map the Stakeholders. As the co-creation element is at the core of the Playground, mapping the potential stakeholders, including local SMEs, municipal units, local corporates, academic units that are focusing on the Playground's theme, and other external potential partners. Also at this stage, it is highly important to

research the startup ecosystem. Are there any startups that address issues related to the Playground's theme? At what stage are startups? Etc.

Draft value proposition. Gather input and feedback through surveys, meetings, and roundtables to ensure that the Playground addresses their needs and concerns, but also to ensure their engagement. Transparency in defining the needs fosters trust and community buy-in.

Paperwork drafting. Consider formalizing the partnership with the municipality and other stakeholders through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or partnership agreement. This document should clearly delineate roles, responsibilities, and resource allocation to ensure a cohesive and cooperative effort.

Articulate impact KPIs. Establish initial metrics and indicators for measuring the Playground's impact. Define how success will be evaluated, considering economic, social, and environmental dimensions. This will guide ongoing assessments and optimizations.

Secure Municipal Support

Securing robust municipal support is a cornerstone of the successful establishment of an Urban Impact Innovation Playground. It involves forging a collaborative partnership between the Playground project and local municipal authorities, aligning visions, and harnessing the resources and influence of the municipality to drive the project's success.

Engage Municipal Leadership. Initiate the process by engaging with municipal leaders, including mayors, city council members, and urban planners. Present the Playground concept and emphasize its potential to address urban challenges while contributing to the city's long-term goals. Make sure all municipal innovation units are on board, as their involvement is an important pillar of the Playground.

Alignment with Local Urban Development Goals. Demonstrate how the Playground aligns with the municipality's urban development objectives. Highlight its capacity to enhance sustainability, stimulate economic growth, and improve the overall quality of life for residents. Ensure that the Playground is perceived as a valuable asset in achieving these goals.

Formal Agreements and Commitments. To solidify municipal support, work towards formal agreements. These could include Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), partnership contracts, or official endorsements from the municipal government. Such agreements should outline the roles and responsibilities of each party and establish the municipality's commitment to the project.

Resource Allocation. Work with municipal authorities to allocate resources, which may include funding, access to existing infrastructure, access to data, permits, and any necessary regulatory support. The municipality's investment in the Playground is a clear indicator of its commitment to the project's success.

Collaborative Decision-Making. Establish a collaborative decision-making framework and mechanism that involves the municipality in key project decisions. This ensures that the Playground's development remains in sync with the city's overall urban planning strategies.

Community engagement. Encourage the municipality to actively involve the local community in the Playground project. Community entities range from local SMEs, residents, local corporations, industry leaders, local NGOs, and more. Host meetings, workshops, and public consultations to gather input and feedback. This inclusive approach strengthens community engagement and garners support for the project from the grassroots level.

Area Setup

The selection of the urban area for the Playground is a pivotal decision that lays the groundwork for the entire project. It's a process that demands careful consideration of various factors to ensure that the chosen location aligns seamlessly with the project's goals and has the potential to catalyze positive change within the community.

Infrastructure assessment. Evaluate the existing infrastructure in the candidate areas. Look for elements that can be repurposed or integrated into the Playground, such as vacant spaces, disused facilities, or underutilized urban zones. This approach maximizes resource efficiency.

an international global network of 'Playgrounds 'that share the same methodology and tools but address different social and environmental issues



Image: A Playground sign that can be placed at the entrance to the Innovation zone's meeting hub. Source: TechForGood

Municipal Data Integration. One of the key value propositions of the Playground to different stakeholders is the ability to integrate into various municipal systems and data sources. Mapping the data integration points is the first step, then embedding them into the Playground's value proposition to different stakeholders ensures maximizing the value generated.

Build a Blueprint. In practice, every public area of the Playground as well as every local business and building has the potential to become an asset for the Playground. Analyzing the value of these assets and forming a blueprint for the use of both Playground management and the different stakeholders is a valuable step in setting up the playground.

Branding. Good branding is part of the essence and identity of the Playground. A strong brand conveys vision, values, and uniqueness. It builds credibility, fosters recognition, and attracts stakeholders. Effective branding is the linchpin that transforms the Playground from a concept to a recognized, trusted, and influential force for urban change. It is important to brand the Playground as part of setting up the physical infrastructure, so the area is distinct and recognizable. It is also necessary to create a brand book and branding assets that will be used across all engagement points of the Playground.



Image: A Playground logo on a cup at the Innovation zone’s meeting hub – an idea to increase engagement.
Source: TechForGood

Online Assets. As our goal for the Playground is to have an impact way beyond its physical boundaries, it is important to set up its online infrastructure as well as its physical one. As part of the setup phase, we need to build the Playground’s website and social media pages.

Build a Community

Value proposition. Define a compelling value proposition for the Playground community. Highlight the benefits of joining, such as access to resources, the opportunity to pilot and showcase solutions, mentorship, and collaboration. Clearly communicate how participation aligns with individual and collective goals for urban innovation and sustainability, and of course, the specific Playground selected themes.

Onboarding mechanism. Develop a seamless onboarding process for new community members. Create a section on the Playground website where startups, SMEs, corporates, and entrepreneurs can easily register, access information, and connect with mentors and peers.

Advisory board and other governance groups. Assemble an advisory board comprising representatives from various stakeholders, including the municipality, local businesses, academia, and experts. Establish clear roles and responsibilities for this governance group to provide guidance and ensure accountability.

Mentoring and b2b matching, pilot showcasing. Design a structured mentorship program to connect startups with experienced mentors. Facilitate B2B matching to foster collaborations among businesses within the community. Set up a platform for pilot showcasing, allowing innovators to demonstrate their solutions to potential clients and investors.

Curated content schedule. Develop a content schedule that includes high-level thematic areas for each year. This ensures a cohesive and focused approach to addressing urban challenges. Plan annual workshops, accelerators, exhibitions, and conferences that align with these themes, fostering innovation and knowledge sharing.

Event schedule. Create a diverse event calendar, including regular meetups, hackathons, and community-driven initiatives. These events should cater to various interests and skill levels, promoting engagement and collaboration within the Playground.

Set launch date. Establish a launch date for the Playground and work backward to create a timeline for all preparatory activities. Ensure that all physical infrastructure, community engagement programs, and online platforms are ready to go by this date to make a memorable and impactful debut.

3. Innovate

The Playground forms an urban sandbox for cross-sector collaboration, co-creation, and innovation. As the Playground is through with setting the foundation, the essential partnerships, and the physical and online infrastructures, it is time to innovate. The basic concept of the Playground is that innovation exists everywhere - in public places, in private offices, in co-working spaces, and at local shops. Practically everywhere. The mission of the innovation stage is to curate the processes of innovation and collaboration that take place in the Playground.

Stakeholder diversity

The Playground is a vital urban hub that attracts and unites diverse stakeholders. It fosters collaboration among startups, SMEs, academia, corporates, and government entities, driving urban innovation and sustainability. By providing a shared space for these stakeholders to connect, the Playground accelerates solution development for urban challenges. This collaborative ecosystem nurtures innovation and fosters a sense of community, leading to impactful co-creation that benefits cities and society. The diversity of the different stakeholders and their engagement with the Playground depends on the value they generate. Following is a list of potential stakeholders:

Startups: The Playground provides startups with an urban pilot area with access to infrastructure, data, mentorship, resources, and collaboration opportunities, allowing them to rapidly develop and scale their

innovations and showcase them in a real environment. It offers a supportive ecosystem for experimentation and growth while facilitating networking with potential clients and investors. Startups also gain from various scale-up opportunities offered by the Playground like accelerators and incubators.

SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises): SMEs benefit from the Playground by gaining exposure, access to larger corporate partners for collaboration, and mentorship to enhance their business strategies. It offers a platform for SMEs to access resources that scale their operations.

Corporates: can engage with startups and SMEs at the Playground for innovation scouting, exploring disruptive technologies, and potential collaborations. They can tap into a pool of innovative solutions and startups to stay competitive in their industries. Corporates can also use the playground to test new solutions, introduce new services, expose their work, and enhance employee engagement.

Academia: can participate in research collaborations, gain access to real-world urban challenges, and leverage the Playground as a platform for applied research. It enriches academic programs, fosters knowledge transfer, and provides students with practical experience.

Local Residents and Community: The playground contributes to the local community by creating job opportunities, enhancing the urban environment, and offering educational programs. It fosters community engagement and pride by showcasing local talent and innovations. It also attracts new tenants and creates shared value for current and future residents.

Investors: can discover promising startups and projects at the Playground's demo days and pitch competitions, providing them with opportunities for early-stage investments and potential high returns.

Municipalities: The Playground helps municipalities address urban challenges and supports economic growth by attracting businesses and talent. It contributes to sustainable urban development, improved policies, and a more livable city.

Experts and Mentors: Can actively engage with startups, SMEs, and academia to share their knowledge and contribute to the success of innovative projects. They play a critical role in nurturing and guiding the next generation of entrepreneurs.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): NGOs can partner with the Playground to address social and environmental challenges in urban areas. It provides a platform for collaboration and the implementation of innovative and impactful projects.

Students and Researchers: Students and researchers benefit from educational programs, hands-on experience, and access to real-world urban challenges. They gain skills and knowledge that prepare them for careers in impact innovation.

Global Partners and Organizations: Can collaborate with the Playground to expand their network and leverage the impact of innovative solutions developed within the Playground for broader global initiatives and sustainability goals.

Media and Public: The Playground's activities, events, and innovations are often showcased to the public and media. It raises awareness about urban challenges and innovative solutions, inspiring a broader audience to engage with urban sustainability.

Services portfolio

The Playground’s offering to different stakeholders depends on the diversity of services it offers. The first step should be to create a list of potential activities that take place at the Playground over a certain period of time. Once we have a list, we need to validate each activity's relevance to the different stakeholders and facilitate participation and innovation.

Note that not all activities should be offered at once. The timing of different Playground activities should be embedded into a detailed work plan. It is also important to continuously monitor the effectiveness of each activity in terms of its value to participating entities and measure the overall impact.

Following is an initial list of suggested activities for the Playground:

Accelerator. A program that provides startups with intense mentorship, resources, and funding over a fixed period to help them rapidly grow and scale their businesses.

Incubator. A support program that nurtures early-stage startups by providing them with office space, mentorship, and resources to help them develop their ideas and products.

Mentorship Program. Curating connections between experienced individual members from the Playground network (mentors) and less-experienced ones (mentees), either SMEs or entrepreneurs, to provide guidance, support, and knowledge transfer.

Local Pilots. The focal point of the Playground. Pilots involve testing and implementing innovative solutions or technologies within the Playground to assess their feasibility and impact. Pilots utilize the physical indoor and outdoor facilities of the Playground and integrate them with necessary municipal systems and data sources.



Image Source: TechForGood

Hackathons. Intensive, time-bound events where individuals or teams collaborate to solve specific problems or create new software or hardware solutions.

Challenge Prizes. Challenge prizes are competitions that offer rewards, often monetary, to individuals or teams who can solve particular problems or achieve predefined goals. They generate meaningful value for participating startups and enable corporate engagement.

Annual Conference. The annual conference is an opportunity to gather various local and international stakeholders to discuss industry trends, share knowledge, and network, often featuring keynote speakers and workshops. It generates a holistic impact for the Playground, for the municipality, and for all engaged stakeholders.

Research Collaborations. Addressing certain social and environmental issues requires cross-sectoral collaborations. Research collaborations involve partnerships between academic institutions, entrepreneurs, and even corporations to conduct joint research projects, to leverage synergies for the greater good.

Networking Mixers. Networking mixers are social events where individuals from various backgrounds come together to connect, build relationships, and exchange ideas. They are the heart of the Playground’s network and can be conducted on a regular basis.

Demo Days. Demo days are events where startups or entrepreneurs showcase their products or services to potential investors, partners, or the public. These create a unique opportunity for the Playground’s entrepreneurs to build business relationships and raise capital for their ventures.

Tech Showcases. We envision the Playground as an urban living lab where advanced technological solutions and sustainable practices are tested, developed, and scaled. Tech showcases are real-life exhibitions or presentations that highlight emerging technologies, products, or innovations in a specific field or industry.

Playground Tours. Local and international delegations, students, and others can get the opportunity to take guided tours through the Playground.

As mentioned above, these are just a few examples of potential activities of the Playground, that generate value for the different stakeholders. When assessing each activity, it is necessary to review the value of each activity, as shown in the table below. In this case, we assess the value for Startups, SMEs, Corporations, and Academia.

	Startups	SMEs	Corporates	Academia
Accelerator	V	V	V	
Incubator	V		V	V
Mentorship program	V	V	V	
Local pilots	V	V	V	V
Hackathos	V		V	V

A5.1.7a: The Innovation Zone Playground Guidebook

	Startups	SMEs	Corporates	Academia
Challenge prizes	V	V		
Annual conference	V	V	V	V
Research Collaborations		V	V	
Networking Mixers	V	V	V	V
Demo Days	V		V	
Tech Showcases	V	V	V	V
Playground Tours	V	V		

1. Impact

The success and effectiveness of the Playground are intrinsically tied to its ability to drive substantial and sustainable impact in the realms of urban innovation, sustainability, and collaborative co-creation. To accomplish this, it is imperative to meticulously define and rigorously measure impact, not only to monitor progress but also to refine strategies and outcomes continually. While we can establish initial impact Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as a starting point, it is vital to acknowledge that each Playground's KPIs should be finely tuned to align with its distinct context, goals, and stakeholders. This tailoring process should ideally result from intensive brainstorming and collective input from all involved parties, fostering a sense of shared ownership and commitment to the Playground's mission.

Initial Impact KPIs:

Startup Success Rate: This KPI quantifies the percentage of startups that have thrived and achieved significant growth or successfully launched innovative products or services as a direct consequence of their involvement with the Playground. This indicator serves as a testament to the Playground's ability to nurture and propel nascent entrepreneurial ventures toward success.

Collaboration Index: The Collaboration Index assesses the depth, frequency, and effectiveness of collaborations among a diverse spectrum of stakeholders within the Playground. It encompasses partnerships between startups, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), large corporations, academic institutions, and government entities. A high Collaboration Index indicates robust synergy and knowledge sharing, driving collective progress in addressing urban challenges.

Job Creation/Economic Development: A fundamental measure of socioeconomic impact, the Job Creation KPI quantifies the number of employment opportunities generated within the local community directly attributable to the Playground's activities and partnerships. This indicator underscores the Playground's role as a catalyst for economic development and community empowerment.

Investment Attraction: The Investment Attraction metric quantifies the total amount of funding and investment secured by startups, SMEs, and projects affiliated with the Playground. It reflects the Playground's prowess in attracting capital, fostering innovation, and bolstering the growth of urban-focused enterprises.

Sustainability Impact: A cornerstone of the Playground's mission, the Sustainability Impact KPI delves into the environmental and social ramifications of solutions developed and implemented within its ecosystem. This includes gauging reductions in carbon emissions, improvements in resource efficiency, and enhancements in community well-being. It is a testament to the Playground's commitment to advancing sustainable urban development.

Utilizing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

As a universally recognized framework for addressing global challenges, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as a pivotal reference point for the Playground's impact assessment. By aligning its KPIs with specific SDGs, the Playground not only measures its impact effectively but also actively contributes to broader global sustainability endeavors. Relevant SDGs for the Playground include:

SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure: By emphasizing its role in fostering innovation and the development of sustainable urban infrastructure, the Playground directly contributes to SDG 9, which seeks to build resilient infrastructure and promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization.

SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities: The Playground underscores its commitment to advancing SDG 11 by enhancing urban sustainability, resilience, and inclusivity. It serves as a catalyst for creating more sustainable and livable cities.

SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals: The Playground's commitment to fostering collaboration across diverse sectors aligns perfectly with SDG 17, which emphasizes the significance of forging partnerships to achieve shared sustainability objectives. It positions the Playground as a focal point for cross-sector cooperation.

By employing the SDGs as a guiding framework for impact assessment, the Playground not only demonstrates its commitment to global sustainability but also showcases its role as a powerful force for positive change. This approach underscores the Playground's ability to transcend local boundaries and contribute to a broader global narrative of urban transformation and sustainable development.

Once again, specific KPIs, as well as relevant SDGs should be developed on a case-by-case basis, depending on the focus themes of the Playground and on the stakeholders who are involved.



Image: The UN Sustainable Development Goals

2. Funding

Sustainable funding is the bedrock upon which the operational viability of the Playground rests. A robust business model is crucial to ensure the Playground's continuity and effectiveness as a hub for urban innovation and collaboration. By diversifying revenue sources and capitalizing on its unique value proposition, the Playground can not only cover its operational costs but also reinvest in its mission of fostering positive urban transformation.

Membership Fees: A cornerstone revenue source lies in the establishment of a Membership Network. Local and international corporates, keen to be part of the Playground's ecosystem, can pay membership fees. In return, they gain access to a plethora of benefits such as participation in innovation projects, beta testing their solutions within the Playground, exclusive investment opportunities, access to lectures and workshops, and networking events like meetups and roundtable discussions. The membership fees provide a consistent stream of income while creating a dynamic, engaged corporate community invested in the Playground's success.

Annual Conference: Hosting an annual conference on urban innovation and sustainability can attract participants from diverse sectors. Charging participation fees for attendees, exhibitors, and sponsors can significantly contribute to revenue generation. The conference can serve as a showcase for the Playground's achievements and a platform for knowledge exchange.

Event Fees: Beyond the annual conference, the Playground can host various events such as hackathons, pitch competitions, and thematic workshops. These events can generate revenue through registration fees, sponsorship packages, and exhibitor fees.

Government Grants: Seek grants from government bodies that support initiatives promoting innovation, sustainability, and economic growth. These grants can provide essential financial support for specific projects and research endeavors.

Corporate Sponsorships: Forge strategic partnerships with corporations that align with the Playground's mission. Corporate sponsors can provide financial backing for programs, events, and infrastructure development in exchange for branding visibility and the opportunity to engage with the Playground's ecosystem.

Incubation and Acceleration Services: Charge startups and SMEs for access to incubation and acceleration programs, mentorship, and co-working spaces. Revenue can be generated through monthly fees or equity stakes in the startups supported by the Playground.

Consulting Services: Leverage the expertise and knowledge generated within the Playground to offer consultancy services to external organizations seeking innovative solutions to urban challenges.

Licensing Innovations: If the Playground incubates and develops proprietary technologies or solutions, revenue can be generated by licensing these innovations to external parties.

Educational Programs: Collaborate with universities and educational institutions to offer courses, training programs, and workshops related to urban innovation and sustainability. Tuition fees and revenue-sharing agreements can be established.

Online Presence: Monetize the Playground's online platform by offering premium features, access to exclusive content, and data analytics services to stakeholders interested in urban innovation trends and insights.

Co-Working Facilities: Rent out office spaces, meeting rooms, and prototyping labs within the Playground to external businesses and organizations, generating consistent rental income.

Sponsorship of Local Projects: Partner with local projects and initiatives to sponsor urban sustainability initiatives, strengthening community ties and enhancing the Playground's brand image.

By strategically tapping into these diverse revenue streams, the Playground can not only cover its operational costs but also ensure its long-term sustainability as a catalyst for urban innovation, sustainability, and collaboration. This multifaceted approach helps the Playground remain resilient and adaptable to the evolving needs of its stakeholders and the urban challenges it aims to address.

3. Personnel

The Playground's operational structure is designed to orchestrate seamless collaboration, innovation, and sustainable growth. At its core, a dedicated General Manager plays a pivotal role in overseeing the day-to-day operations, steering the Playground toward its strategic goals, and ensuring that all stakeholders are aligned with its mission. This leadership figure brings a wealth of experience in the innovation ecosystems and serves as the driving force behind the Playground's success.

Additionally, a Partnerships Manager is entrusted with cultivating and nurturing relationships with key stakeholders, including startups, SMEs, corporates, academia, and government entities. This role involves forging strategic partnerships, fostering collaboration, and identifying opportunities for synergistic ventures that amplify the Playground's impact.

A Community Manager plays a crucial role in curating an inclusive and vibrant community within the Playground. This role involves engaging with startups, SMEs, academia, and other stakeholders to facilitate

networking, knowledge exchange, and a sense of belonging. The Community Manager fosters an environment where ideas flourish and innovation thrive.

To complement these roles, a third-party management company may be enlisted to operate and manage the startup accelerator within the Playground. This external entity brings expertise in acceleration programs, mentorship, and support services, ensuring that startups receive the guidance and resources needed to thrive.

Furthermore, a liaison officer within the municipal government serves as a critical bridge between the Playground and local authorities. This liaison ensures that the Playground's activities align with municipal goals, regulatory compliance, and the urban development agenda. They facilitate the integration of the Playground into the local community and help leverage municipal resources to support its initiatives.

This multifaceted operational structure is carefully crafted to navigate the complexities of urban innovation and sustainability, fostering an environment where stakeholders can collaborate, ideate, and drive positive urban transformation.

