



Participatory **Reframing Method**

The Making of a Policymakers' Edition

Participatory Reframing Method: the Making of a Policymaker's Edition

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I. Introduction

At a time when governments across Africa are increasingly relying on data to guide decisions and deliver public services, the [Policymakers' Edition](#) is the result of a collaborative effort to make gender-transformative data governance more practical and actionable, building on [Gender Data Futures: A Handbook on Transformative Data Governance](#), developed by Pollicy (the 'Handbook').

While the original Handbook provides a comprehensive foundation, its structure and language were designed for a broad audience. Building on this strong basis, i4Policy led a co-creation process that brought together policymakers, and data and gender ecosystem stakeholders from across the region to adapt the Handbook into a version tailored specifically to policymakers working to strengthen gender-responsive data governance across the region.

Engaging stakeholders in shaping the Policymakers' Edition of the Handbook through a collaborative "translation" process to restructure and reword the original content into a format that speaks directly to policy making realities, institutional constraints, and decision-making environments. The process brought together policymakers, data and gender ecosystem stakeholders. Participants reviewed the original Handbook from a policymaker's perspective, identifying where concepts required clarification, simplification, or reframing to support action.

Through virtual co-creation workshops and a co-authoring workgroup, they collectively reshaped the structure, learning journey, and key messages of this edition to ensure relevance and usability. This collaborative work was complemented by structured consultations that gathered targeted feedback on draft sections and invited another group of stakeholders to review and validate the near-final version.

The result is a more accessible, context-responsive, and practice-oriented edition that preserves the ambition and substance of the original Handbook while making it directly usable for policy development, implementation, and reform.

II. Method Description

Given the wealth of available resources, often accompanied by limited time to explore them in depth, the proposed Participatory Reframing Method seeks to synthesise and adapt existing content to the interests and realities of specific target audiences. The aim is to capture and sustain their attention by presenting material that is both relevant and applicable to their practical contexts.

Through this approach, the co-creation of a Policymakers' Edition ensures that the Handbook's content is closely aligned with the needs and working realities of policymakers. It refines the language, tone, and framing to resonate with their professional expertise, decision-making responsibilities, and operational environments. In doing so, complex concepts and recommendations are translated into formats that are more accessible, actionable, and relevant to policy processes, increasing the likelihood that the insights can inform real-world policy design and implementation.

At the same time, the idea is that the process itself becomes a meaningful participatory exercise, as participants leave with a genuine sense of shared ownership, recognising that the document reflects their collective voice, perspectives, and lived realities, aware that their insights have helped make the resource more meaningful, accessible, and valuable for their stakeholder group.

The Process

The Participatory Reframing Method was implemented in five stages, described in details below:

1. Participant Recruitment

The recruitment of participants followed a selective process, combining open calls for applications with targeted invitations. Particular emphasis was placed on engaging women, especially in the co-authoring phase, but also in the co-creation phase (both explained in more detail below), with the commitment that at least 50% of participants in each phase would be women.

Outreach took place primarily through LinkedIn posts and targeted emails sent to a list of previously mapped stakeholders. Communications clearly outlined the profile of participants sought, highlighted the importance and objectives of the work, and specified the expected time commitment, including hours required for online document review and participation in virtual meetings. The approach prioritised the quality rather than the quantity of participation, emphasising from the outset that the process would require active and sustained engagement.

An additional incentive for participants was the opportunity to be acknowledged as co-authors or contributors in the resulting version of the Handbook, recognising their substantive role in shaping the final resource:

- a. Contributors: participants who took part in at least two of the core engagement activities, namely the digital consultation on the Handbook and the co-creation sessions.
- b. Co-authors: represented an additional level of engagement for those willing to take on a more active role in shaping the Policymakers' Edition. This required participating in key moments of the process, including the launch and mid-process meetings, as well as actively contributing to the drafting and refinement of the Edition's content.

2. Participant Onboarding

This was the first activity for selected participants: taking part in a digital consultation hosted on the Citizen Engagement Platform. The consultation served as the onboarding phase for participants and their initial point of engagement with the original resource, the Handbook. It provided an entry point for participants to familiarise themselves with the material and begin engaging critically with its content.

The consultation also aimed to gather initial insights on how the Handbook could better serve policymakers. Participants were invited to review the resource in terms of clarity, usability, and relevance to policy practice. In addition, they contributed to analysing and restructuring the table of contents, assessing the overall structure and learning flow in order to better align the resource with policymakers' needs and support a more effective and intuitive learning journey.

3. Co-Creation Sessions

The first co-creation session was designed as an immersive, interactive experience aimed at bridging the gap between theoretical frameworks and the practical realities of policymaking. To foster an environment of creativity, participants engaged in roleplaying exercises that allowed them to approach the Handbook from the specific perspective of their professional roles. This strategic approach was instrumental in identifying the precise information needs and operational pain points of policymakers, ensuring the subsequent edition would be both relevant and usable.

A primary focus of the workshop was the simplification of core gender concepts, reframing complex terminology into easily understandable language tailored for busy public-sector professionals. Furthermore, the session successfully transitioned theoretical checklists into actionable policy instruments by converting static questions into direct orders and measurable actions. This collaborative transformation ensures that the Policymakers' Edition serves as a practice-oriented guide for integrating gender-transformative principles into measurable government performance and departmental tasks.

The second co-creation session was designed as a direct response to the granular feedback and thematic priorities identified during the initial co-creation workshop. By synthesizing participants' inputs, this session focused on architecting a comprehensive learning journey that addresses the specific operational challenges and strategic interests of policymakers. The objective was to ensure the Edition's pedagogical structure not only

facilitates knowledge retention but also aligns with the high-level decision-making environments and institutional constraints unique to data governance policymaking.

4. Co-Authoring Working Group

Contributors who wished to take on a deeper level of engagement and remain actively involved in the process were invited to join a Co-Authoring Working Group. Members of this group continued contributing by directly participating in the drafting and development of the Policymakers' Edition.

The co-authoring process was structured through a combination of synchronous meetings and asynchronous collaborative work. It began with a kick-off meeting, during which the overall process, objectives, and timeline were presented in detail. Building on the results of the co-creation stage, this session aimed to ensure that all participants shared a common understanding of the purpose of the edition, the drafting approach, and the expectations regarding their contributions and level of engagement.

Following this initial meeting, participants worked collaboratively in smaller drafting groups, each assigned specific sections of the Edition to develop and review. Much of this work took place asynchronously, allowing contributors to review materials, propose revisions, and draft content at their own pace while remaining coordinated through shared documents and the mid-process check-in meeting.

This structure was designed to maintain the participatory spirit established during the consultation phase, while enabling more focused collaboration on the written content. Ultimately, the goal was to ensure that the final version of the resource genuinely reflects the perspectives, language, and practical needs of the stakeholder group it is intended to serve.

5. Consultation & Final Refinement

This consultation marked an important step in validating the final version of the Edition. It offered an opportunity for additional stakeholders (who had not previously been involved in the drafting process) to review the resource from a policymakers' perspective. Participants were invited to assess aspects such as readability, clarity, relevance, and the practical applicability of the content, helping to ensure that the Handbook effectively meets the needs of its intended audience.

The objective of this phase was to broaden the range of perspectives and insights informing the final version, while still maintaining a focus on the quality and relevance of feedback rather than the quantity of participants. Although an open invitation to participate in the consultation was shared through LinkedIn, the individuals who ultimately engaged in the process were primarily stakeholders who had been directly invited via email, ensuring that feedback came from participants with relevant expertise and experience in the field.

III. Activity Report

Part I - Contributions

1. Open Calls and Direct Invitations

The recruitment followed a selective process, leveraging a combination of open calls for applications through LinkedIn and targeted invitations through emails to ensure the engagement of key stakeholders.

Communications clearly underscored the strategic importance and core objectives of the initiative, highlighting the value of the contributions requested from the community, as well as explicitly detailing the expected time investment, including specific hours required for the online document review process and participation in virtual co-creation meetings.

Participants also benefited from the opportunity to be formally recognized as contributors or co-authors within the final edition, acknowledging their substantive role in shaping the resource.

In total, we received 157 applications and sent email invitations to 30 mapped stakeholders.

2. Onboarding through Consultation

The initial digital consultation, hosted on the Citizen Engagement Platform (CEP), served as an formal onboarding phase and the primary point of entry for co-creation participants to engage with the original Handbook. This gateway allowed participants to immerse themselves in the material, fostering a critical engagement with the existing resource. The objective was to extract insights into how the Handbook could be adapted to better serve the institutional realities of the public sector. Participants played a substantive role in reviewing the content for clarity, usability, and professional relevance, while also analysing the table of contents in a way that aligns with the strategic needs of policymakers. The process also included a comprehensive review of the structural flow and pedagogical framework of the Table of Contents.

In total, 6 expert stakeholders contributed to this phase, including 4 women and 2 men, representing a diverse group of 4 civil servants and policymakers, 1 data governance stakeholder, and 1 gender ecosystem specialist.

3. Co-Creation Process

The primary objectives of the co-creation sessions were to pinpoint critical areas of interest, establish a language that resonates with professional and institutional realities, and architect a content structure that is both responsive and intuitive for the target audience. That was done by conducting a granular analysis of the Handbook's sections, as described in detail below.

Session 1:

The first co-creation session was designed as an interactive experience aimed at bridging the gap between theoretical frameworks and policymaking practical realities. To foster an environment of creativity, participants engaged in roleplaying exercises that allowed them to approach the Handbook from the specific perspective of policymakers. This strategic approach was instrumental in identifying the precise information needs and operational pain points of policymakers, ensuring the subsequent edition would be both relevant and usable.

A primary focus of the workshop was the simplification of core gender concepts, reframing complex terminology into easily understandable language tailored for busy public-sector professionals. Furthermore, participants worked on transforming theoretical checklists into actionable policy instruments by converting static questions into direct actions. This collaborative transformation ensures that the Policymakers' Edition serves as a practice-oriented guide for integrating gender-transformative principles into measurable government performance and departmental tasks.

The session was composed by the following activities, which directly reflected the Handbook's structure:

- **Introductions and Icebreaker.** Welcoming participants, introducing the session objectives, and creating an engaging environment through a short icebreaker activity.
- **Presentation and Validation of the Onboarding Consultation Findings.** Presentation of the key findings from the onboarding consultation, followed by a short validation exercise to confirm whether the results accurately reflected participants' perspectives and priorities.
- **Simplifying Key Ideas.** Interactive exercise designed to make Key Concepts more accessible for busy policymakers. Participants worked in small groups and were asked to translate 2–3 concepts each into one clear sentence supported by seven keywords, with a focus on clarity, conciseness, relevance, and persuasive communication.
- **Policymaker Roleplay.** Participants engaged in a roleplay exercise to identify priority Strategic Goals and better understand policymaker pain points. Acting from the perspective of policymakers, they reviewed and re-wrote content excerpts, focusing on the most important information needed to support decision-making and implementation.
- **From Checklists into Action.** Facilitated full-group discussion aimed at transforming the Handbook's checklist-style guidance into more actionable policy tools. Participants explored which checklist questions were most useful, which felt unrealistic, and how they could be reframed into direct actions, measurable commitments, or key performance indicators for government departments.
- **Wrapping Up.** Closing session to reflect on the main insights generated, capture final observations, and outline the next steps in the co-creation process.

Session 2:

The second co-creation session built directly on the reflections and insights generated during the first session. In line with our strong commitment to participation, the session was designed to be fully responsive, incorporating and adapting to the priorities, questions, and themes raised by participants in the earlier discussion.

During this session, participants were invited to co-design what an ideal learning journey for policymakers would look like when engaging with the resource. Their inputs informed the structuring of content and have been directly reflected in the final organisation of the Edition.

Participants also had the opportunity to engage more deeply with the practical challenges policymakers may face when implementing the Strategic Goals outlined in the Handbook. These discussions helped surface key barriers, contextual constraints, and areas requiring further clarification. As a result, the final draft was refined to better anticipate these challenges and to propose more grounded, actionable implementation pathways and options.

The session was structured as follows:

- **Introduction.** Opening of the session with a brief recap of key insights from the first session, followed by reflections to reconnect participants with the process and frame the objectives of the next stage.
- **Survey Exercise.** Interactive ranking exercise through a Google Form poll to identify which sections of the content participants believe may be most challenging for policymakers to understand or engage with.
- **Survey Results Discussion.** Facilitated discussion based on the survey results, using a “Table of Contents” exercise to assess the flow of the learning journey, identify priority themes, and explore what is most relevant from a policymaker’s perspective.
- **Triggers, Myths, and Barriers.** Collaborative group activity in two breakout groups to identify common triggers, myths, misunderstandings, and barriers linked to the Key Concepts and Strategic Goals. Participants also explored possible responses, solutions, and constructive ways to address criticism or resistance.
- **Conclusion and Next Steps.** Summarisation of key takeaways, reflection on outcomes from the session, and outline the next steps in the co-creation process.

Part II - Co-Authoring Workgroup

Following the conclusion of the co-creation sessions, which focused on building the foundation of the Policymakers’ Edition, participants were invited to engage more deeply in the process by joining a co-authoring phase.

In this stage, selected participants took on an active role in transforming the insights and inputs generated during the co-creation sessions into the first draft of the resource. This

involved translating discussions, reflections, and collective outputs into structured, policymaker-relevant content.

The objective of this phase was to maintain the participatory spirit of the process while ensuring that the final resource genuinely reflects the perspectives, language, and practical needs of the intended audience.

A total of 5 stakeholders participated in the co-authoring stage: 4 women and 1 man, including 2 policymakers, 1 gender expert, and 2 data experts.

Workflow Overview

Participants were divided into workgroups, with each group taking responsibility for specific sections of the Policymakers' Edition. This structure allowed contributors to focus on priority themes while working collectively towards a coherent final resource.

The co-authoring process followed the steps below:

- **Kickoff Meeting.** The process began with a kickoff meeting where participants were introduced to the objectives, methodology, and timeline of the co-authoring phase. During this session, detailed guidance was provided on expectations, drafting instructions, and collaboration processes to ensure alignment among contributors.
- **Initial Drafting.** Workgroups developed first drafts of their assigned sections, drawing on the outputs and recommendations generated during the co-creation sessions. All content was grounded directly in the *Gender Data Futures Handbook*, which served as the core source material for the Policymakers' Edition. Participants worked collaboratively within a shared Google Document, using Suggesting Mode for edits made outside their allocated sections and Comments for observations or recommendations.
- **Mid-point Check-in** A mid-point meeting was organised to assess progress on the first draft of the assigned sections. This session provided an opportunity for participants to share updates, discuss emerging ideas, and address any initial challenges related to content development, structure, or coordination.
- **Finalisation and Editorial Review.** The i4Policy team consolidated the different contributions and carried out a final editorial review to ensure stylistic consistency, coherence, flow, and quality control across the full document.

Part III - Draft Consultation and Final Refinement

Following the completion of the first full draft of the Policymakers' Edition, the document was published on the Citizen Engagement Platform (CEP), opening a stakeholder consultation phase. This stage created an opportunity for another group of stakeholders to review the draft, provide feedback, and suggest improvements before the resource was finalised.

To ensure relevant and high-quality participation, invitations were shared with a previously mapped list of stakeholders from the data governance, gender, and policymaking ecosystems. In addition, a webinar was organised to guide targeted stakeholders on how to navigate the Citizen Engagement Platform (CEP), where participants were also invited to contribute to the consultation process.

In total, 6 stakeholders provided comprehensive inputs through the CEP platform, including 3 women and 3 men from the data governance and gender ecosystems.

The feedback received during this consultation phase was carefully reviewed and directly integrated into the final version of the resource, resulting in the completed and co-created Policymakers' Edition.

IV. Conclusion

The Participatory Reframing Method offers a practical pathway for developing content that speaks directly to specific stakeholder groups. By collaboratively translating and adapting existing resources into the language, priorities, and realities of targeted audiences, the method can help make important knowledge more accessible, relevant, and actionable.

In doing so, it has strong potential to widen the reach and usefulness of policy resources by ensuring they resonate with those who are expected to apply them in practice.

The completed outcome of this process, the co-created **Policymakers' Edition**, can be accessed here: <https://inclusivity.i4policy.org/policy-makers-edition/>.