



SCHOOL for  
THINKTANKERS

## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

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## 1. WELCOME

Dear participant,

We are happy to welcome you to the 2026 School for Thinktanks. In this document you will find useful information that will help you prepare for the course. Please take the time to read it, make notes and plan ahead to make the most of the programme.

- If you have any questions, please contact:

**Camila Ulloa**

Project Lead

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We look forward to getting to know you. Get ready for a week of rich discussions and reflections with experienced thinktankers, trainers and colleagues from around the world!

**The School for Thinktanks team**

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## 2. INTRODUCTION

The School for Thinktankers is designed to prepare aspiring and current think tank leaders to strengthen or prepare for leadership roles. A think tank leader cannot rely solely on being a great researcher; they also must be managers, networkers, and communicators. Unfortunately, many researchers and thinktankers do not get the opportunity to build these skills during their careers, and by the time they are ready to take on leadership roles it is (almost) too late. The School for Thinktankers seeks to remedy this problem by creating a space to learn about the many dimensions of working in, and leading, a policy research institution. The School also welcomes those who engage with think tanks or would like to learn more about the sector such as funders, academics, journalists and development practitioners.

Taught by senior thinktankers and expert practitioners, the programme has a practical approach. It is designed to:

- Inspire, prepare and strengthen think tank leaders.
- Build a community of think tank leaders to support and learn from each other.
- Encourage participants to reflect on their own organisation and how to support its development.



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Our approach to the development and delivery of the School for Thinktankers:

- Relies on evidence and practice – we draw on learning theories and the knowledge gained from past on-site schools, online courses we've conducted, research projects we've led, and insights shared from practitioners in OTT's wider community.
- Encourages participants to reflect critically on their experience and the lessons shared in the programme.
- Assists participants in addressing ongoing professional challenges.
- Enables participants to experiment with new approaches in their workplace.
- Promotes engagement between participants, trainers, and course facilitators to form a sense of community, as learning and improvement are a social process in which conversation and feedback are vital.
- Provides participants with guidance and supervision from a range of experienced thinktankers and experts.

### 3. STRUCTURE AND DELIVERY

This section outlines the different components that make up the School for Thinktankers.

#### WEBSITE

All course materials and links are available on the website [www.ott.school](http://www.ott.school) in the [School for Thinktankers 2026 course page](#) (password: **SFTT2026OTT**).

#### DELIVERY

The programme is delivered in person in Barcelona. The school will be conducted at Fundació Bofill, our partner institution in the city.

1. **Fundació Bofill**  
[Carrer de Girona, 34](#)  
Barcelona



We will also visit the following institutions:

2. **[Barcelona Centre for International Affairs – CIBOD](#)**  
C/ Elisabets, 12  
08001 Barcelona
3. **[Fundació "la Caixa" / L'Observatori Social/Palau Macaya](#)**  
Paseo de Sant Joan, 108  
08037 Barcelona

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#### COMMUNICATION

We will use WhatsApp for day-to-day communication and engagement (you will receive an email with the details). All participants will be part of the WhatsApp group, so please take advantage of the platform and use it to connect with your new network.

For any emergencies you can also contact Camila via WhatsApp.

## PREPARING FOR THE SCHOOL

We encourage participants to:

- Take the time to read the Background Notes and other materials provided, and explore the [OTT website](#) to reflect on how the concepts we will discuss relate to your own work.
- Note down any questions or thoughts which might be useful for discussions at the school and/or for your personal learning journals.
- Actively use Slack for questions, comments or resources you would like to share with others.
- Review the profiles of your peers and trainers and start connecting with them (on Slack and social media).
- Attend each session, as the richness of the experience stems from engagement with fellow participants and trainers.

## ABOUT YOURSELF/PARTICIPANT'S PRESENTATION

We have a session for participants to get to know each other and the work that each of you do. As you will see on the website, all attendees have remarkably interesting profiles, are based across the world, and focus on different issues. To get to know each other better, please prepare a **3-minute presentation**. Do stay within the 3-mins to give other participants an opportunity to also share. Your presentation will be followed by a quick Q&A with the other participants. It can cover the following sections:

- **About me:** your role, country, and the field you work in.
- **Why we (your organisation) exist:** Your organisation's mission or what it aims to do. You can also use a short, success story/moment to highlight your work. If you're not affiliated with an institution, you can share about a new project or research idea that you're working on (or would like to).
- **A challenge we want support with OR a collaborative opportunity we want to partner on:** use this last point strategically as a call to action where other participants have a clear idea of how they can connect with you or support you.

If you'd like to use a PowerPoint presentation, **please upload it onto this [Google Drive folder](#) by 30 January 2026**. You are also welcome to speak freely without using a PowerPoint presentation. You can bring a small poster that can be placed in the learning room, flyers or other printed material that you'd like to share with the group. See on the next page an example of a participant's speech – with a little bit of assistance by ChatGPT (a good conversation starter about AI and think tanks!). You don't have to follow the exact format. You can do what feels natural to you but try to incorporate the 3 areas highlighted.



### EXAMPLE OF A PARTICIPANT'S SPEECH

#### Section 1: About me

Hi everyone, my name is [Your Name], and I'm a director of the Community Climate Innovations think tank. I've been working in the field of environmental sustainability ever since I saw how repeated natural disasters worsened the poverty situation in my country without any real policy solutions.

#### Section 2: Why we exist

The Community Climate Innovations think tank exists because we envision a future where a better planet isn't a choice that's up for debate—it's an important, shared responsibility. So, we use evidence to spotlight the issues faced by climate vulnerable populations and devise community-informed solutions. Last year, we designed community forums where residents, from fishermen to educators, all came together to discuss solutions. This was a special moment for me, and for the first time, we were able to put together a policy solution that incorporated traditional knowledge and modern infrastructure.

#### Section 3: A challenge we want support with

However, no journey is without its challenges. One challenge we face is how to get the media to pick up our research and the issues faced by the communities we work with. What has your experience been like? What advice can you share?

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## LEARNING JOURNALS

We have developed a learning journal (available on the website) as a guiding tool to help you plan and reflect on your learning experience. We will use the questions in the journal throughout the programme to help you reflect, but we also encourage you to complete it on your own.

## CERTIFICATE

At the end of the training, participants who have attended the course will receive a certificate of participation.

## SHARE A LITTLE PIECE OF HOME

The School is a place to foster a community that learns, shares ideas and has fun together! If you'd like to bring something small from your country to share with the other participants, this would be a lovely and welcome gesture. This is completely optional and only if you would like to and are able to. For example, you can bring some goodies to munch on, key chains, fridge magnets or anything that you'd like to share with the others. It's a really great way to connect with everyone – and plus points if it has a story behind it!

## 4. PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

### INTRODUCTORY MEETING

Our introductory meeting will be held on Tuesday, 27 January 2026, online. A calendar invitation and a link to the online meeting will be sent to you by Camila. All participants are expected to attend the session. The agenda for the introductory meeting is given below.

TIME	TUESDAY 27 JAN ONLINE
14:00–14:30 GMT	Welcome and programme overview in Barcelona – led by <b>Enrique Mendizabal</b>
14:30–15:10 GMT	Learning objectives – led by <b>Camila Ulloa</b>
15:10–15:30 GMT	Tips and logistics – led by <b>Camila Ulloa</b>



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### PROGRAMME SCHEDULE IN BARCELONA

A draft of the programme is shared on the next page. While the times of the first and last date won't change, OTT may make select changes to some sessions. This could happen if a speaker is unable to attend due to an emergency, if another session may be more useful for participants or if we need to update a venue (e.g. dinner venue). **We recommend referring to the Programme Schedule document** that has been separately uploaded onto the website for the latest information. And when you receive access to Slack, we will share all updates on the channel.



Draft programme schedule in Barcelona

DATE	MONDAY 2 FEBRUARY	TUESDAY 3 FEBRUARY	WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY	THURSDAY 5 FEBRUARY	FRIDAY 6 FEBRUARY	
LOCATION	BOFILL	BOFILL	BOFILL	BOFILL	BOFILL	
FOCUS OF THE DAY	Contextualising think tanks across the policy ecosystem	Good governance & people management	Policy influence and partnerships for change	Communications for impact	Future-proofing think tanks	
	Good governance, people management, finance & operations.	Fundraising				
9:00 – 9:30 AM	Free	Institutional visit: Bofill Hub	Institutional visit/tour: La Caixa	OTT Activity 2025 SOS Report: What does it mean for the future of think tanks and think tank leadership? - Enrique Mendizabal and Camila Ulloa, OTT	Think Tanks and the future Krizna Gomez, Tala Strategies	
9:30 – 10:00 AM						
10:00 – 10:30 AM	Welcome & getting to know each other	Break		Break		
10:30 – 11:00 AM						
11:00 – 11:30 AM	Break	Strategic thinking and innovative leadership Mònica Nadal, Bofill	Break (in La Caixa)	Building an effective TT culture Sonja Stojanovic Gajic, Belgrade Center for Security Policy (former)	Break	
11:30 – 12:00 PM	Think tanks across the policy ecosystem Enrique Mendizabal, OTT		Policy relevant agendas Áurea Moltó, Elcano Royal Institute			Incorporating AI into the think tank’s DNA Ismael Gómez, OEI
12:00 – 12:30 PM						
12:30 – 1:00 PM						
1:00 – 1:30 PM	Lunch	Lunch		Lunch	Lunch	
1:30 – 2:00 PM						
2:00 – 2:30 PM	Communications in complex context - David Watson, former Chatham House (former)	Fundraising strategies for uncertain times Goran Buldioski, Hertie School	Lunch	Designing impactfull websites workshop John Schwartz and Alice Vulliamy, Soapbox	Identity of a think tank: Bofill case Marc Garriga, Fundació Bofill	
2:30 – 3:00 PM						Group activity OTT Team
3:00 – 3:30 PM			Break in CIDOB	Break	Group reflection activity and OTT wrap up	
3:30 – 4:00 PM						
4:00 – 4:30 PM	Break	Break	Institutional visit: CIDOB Measure impact and global influence Pol Morillas and Pol Bargués, CIDOB	Designing impactfull websites workshop John Schwartz and Alice Vulliamy, Soapbox	Closing ceremony	
4:30 – 5:00 PM	Finance and operations Fiorella Bianchi, OTT	Group activity OTT Team				
5:00 – 5:30 PM						
EVENING	Free	Networking mixer/ Group dinner	Free	Cocktail reception	Free	

## RECOMMENDED DRESS CODE

During the week: Business casual.

## MEALS

The programme includes coffee breaks to keep us refreshed and energised!

We will have a simple lunch at Bofill during the week. Dinner is not included in the school costs except for the group dinner on Tuesday, 4 February 2025. For more detailed information on how to prepare for your stay in Barcelona, please read our **Barcelona City Guide**.

## KEY CONTACTS

### On Think Tanks

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