

Tool 46: Citizen Jury

Aim of the tool

Involve the public in a wider decision making process.

When to use it?

The convergence stage, when decisions need to be made about which ideas could work. They can also be used when co-creation with certain stakeholders is difficult.

What is Citizen Jury?

Citizen jury is a decision-making tool to involve the voice of the public in wider decision-making processes. It brings together a randomly selected and demographically balanced panel of citizens to investigate and decide upon an issue of public importance.

Citizen juries were developed to improve the quality of decision-making and to increase the legitimacy, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of policy formulation and implementation. They are commonly used for strategic planning, service prioritisation or technological choices.

They can be used alongside other research and public consultation tools like surveys. In situations where co-creation with certain stakeholders is difficult, these tools enable you to still obtain feedback on ideas that the MSP is considering or developing.

A citizen jury enables a thorough examination of an often contentious topic as participants usually meet 3 to 6 days. Participants are not expected to act as direct stakeholders to support the open atmosphere. The meetings can take place over the course of several weeks or months, depending on the issue at stake and the available information.

Before formulating their vision, the jury is given the opportunity to invite and interrogate professionals as expert witnesses. In doing so, collective group discussions alternate with interviews as the jury can request additional experts and information. Voting rounds can help the jury to formulate a shared vision.



Source: MinnPost

How to facilitate a citizen jury

Facilitating a successful citizen jury starts long before the actual meetings.

The jury usually consists of a group of 12–20 people, which need to be carefully selected to represent the perspectives of the broader community. When opting for a selection of the voting population, additional measures are recommended to include other groups of the population. To enable the jury to act like a realistic microcosm of the public, several provisions can be made, including an honorarium payment, easy access locations and crèche facilities.

Also during the meetings, inclusiveness and fairness throughout the process is key. Facilitators can guide the process by, among others, ensuring a working balance between the time allocated for group discussion and interrogation. Competent facilitators are also critical to make sure all the different voices are heard from the jury.

An oversight panel is usually appointed, composed of external observers or stakeholders with a relevant background related to the issue at stake. Bringing together a representative panel is another balancing act since they are appointed to ensure the fairness and credibility of the process. The oversight panel will not directly facilitate. But rather provides a critical check on the trustworthiness of all outcomes.

Monitoring what happens with the jury's view or recommendations is also crucial for the citizen jury to actually be a powerful participatory tool which truly links citizens to policy and decision making.

According to Wakeford (2002), the current challenge lies in making citizen juries part of longer-term initiatives particularly aimed at those currently excluded from political processes. To facilitate this, using complementary tools like grassroots forums can help to make the citizen jury a more bottom-up process from the very beginning.

Learn more

Environmental Mainstreaming Initiative (2009). Profiles of Tools and Tactics for Environmental Mainstreaming. No. 4. Citizen Jury: [www.environmental-mainstreaming.org/documents/EM%20Profile%20No%204%20%20Citizen's%20Jury%20\(6%20ct%2009\).pdf](http://www.environmental-mainstreaming.org/documents/EM%20Profile%20No%204%20%20Citizen's%20Jury%20(6%20ct%2009).pdf)

The Jefferson Center (2004). Citizen Jury Handbook: www.epfound.ge/files/citizens_jury_handbook.pdf

The World Bank Social Development Department. Sourcebook: Citizen Jury: www.worldbank.org/socialaccountability_sourcebook/Tools/Other/cj.html

Wakeford, T. (2002). Citizens Juries: a radical alternative for social research. Social Research Update. Issue 37: <http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU37.html>