



OECD Guidelines for **Citizen Participation**

Ten steps to organize a participatory process

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#OECDparticipation

What is citizen and stakeholder participation?

Citizen and stakeholder participation includes “**all the ways in which stakeholders (including citizens) can be involved in the policy cycle and in service design and delivery**” (OECD, Recommendation on Open Government - 2017)

Stakeholders

- Any interested and/or affected party, including institutions and organisations, whether governmental or non-governmental, from civil society, academia, the media, or the private sector.

Citizens

- Individuals, regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, religious, and political affiliations. The term is meant in the larger sense of ‘an inhabitant of a particular place’, which can be in reference to a village, town, city, region, state, or country depending on the context. It is not meant in the more restrictive sense of ‘a legally recognised national of a state’. In this larger sense, it is equivalent of people.

OECD ladder of participation

1.

INFORMATION

- Initial level of participation
- One-way relationship
- On-demand provision of information
- Proactive measures to disseminate information

2.

CONSULTATION

- More advanced
- Two-way relationship
- Requires provision of information plus feedback on outcomes of process

3.

ENGAGEMENT

- When stakeholders (including citizens + civil society) are given opportunity and necessary resources to collaborate during all phases of the policy-cycle and in service design + delivery

Why should you involve citizens?



Citizen participation is good for democracy



Citizen participation can help public authorities solve problems or address specific situations



Citizen participation can help public authorities take better decisions and provide services that respond to citizens' needs



Citizen participation is good for inclusion and diversity



Citizen participation is good for policies, services, and projects



Citizen participation is good for legitimacy and facilitates implementation

Myths

Myth #1: Citizens are not capable of understanding the complexity of an issue or project.

Myth #2: Citizens are unreliable and will not commit fully to the participation process.

Myth #3: Citizens will develop either a wish list or a list of grievances.

Ten steps to plan and implement a citizen participation process



01

Identifying the **problem** to solve and the **moment** for participation

Is there a genuine problem that the public can help solve?



02

Defining the expected **results**

What do I
expect
from
citizens?

- Opinions and ideas
- Informed recommendations
- Feedback on services
- Project proposals
- Budgetary priorities

- Enables clarity among citizens about what's expected of them and how you will use their input
- Helps to identify the right public to involve + choose the participation method (Steps 3&4)
- Manages citizens' expectations and enhances their trust in the process and its result

03

Identifying the relevant group of people to involve and **recruiting participants**

Different types of groups can participate:

- **Citizens:**
 - - a broad group or a representative sample of a community.
 - - a specific geographical area or of a sectoral group;
- **Stakeholders:** NGOs, unions, universities, experts, businesses, etc.

It is important to reach to participants from **diverse backgrounds** to increase inclusion and representation.

Different strategies for recruiting participants exist, including:

- **Open calls:** openly recruit participants to an in-person meeting or online consultation/forum.
- **Closed calls:** recruit specific members of a community with expertise or experience needed to address the policy issue at stake.
- **Civic lotteries:** recruit based on random sampling from which a representative selection is made to ensure that the group broadly matches the demographic profile of the community.

04 Choosing the **participation method**



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Choosing the right **digital tools**

The question about digital tools should only arise after the first four steps outlined above. **It should not be the starting point** when planning or designing a citizen participation process.

Using digital tools for participatory processes, **public authorities must take into account some considerations:**

1. Keeping in mind the existing “digital divides”
2. Using digital tools requires resources
3. The technological choice

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Communicating about the process

Quality communication is a prerequisite to organising a successful participatory process.

When communicating about any participatory process, it is helpful to:

1. Distinguish communication with the participants and the broader public.
2. Prepare a communications strategy that follows all the steps of the process.
3. Consider which channels are appropriate to reach your audience.
4. Promote the use of plain language and avoid technical jargon.

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Implementing a participatory process



Implementation of a participatory process **largely depends on the method chosen**, but some **general considerations** apply to all:

5 General Tips

1. Preparing an adequate timeline
2. Identifying the resources needed
3. Partnering with non-governmental stakeholders
4. Ensuring inclusion and accessibility
5. Thinking as a citizen

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Using citizen input and **providing feedback**



Taking into account the results of the process

- Inputs must be given careful consideration and be used as promised
- Process can either:
 - Be purely consultative
 - Partially integrate certain recommendations
 - Integrate all the inputs received
- There must be **clear justifications** and arguments if certain results are not used or implemented
- Must be clear and **transparent from the beginning**, and to communicate with participants and the wider public about the decisions taken.

Evaluation allows us to **measure** and **demonstrate** the **quality** and **neutrality** of a process to broader public

- Evaluation can:
 - **Increase trust and legitimacy** in citizen participation
 - **Be an opportunity for learning** by providing evidence and lessons about what worked, and what did not
 - **Give a basis for improvement** of design + implementation of future processes
- **Evaluations should be planned for from the very start of process**
- Type of evaluation depends on method + scale of process

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Fostering a **culture** of participation

Participation requires a change of mindset putting citizens at the heart of any public action.

- Moving from ad hoc practices to **institutionalised mechanisms**
- **Flexing citizens' democratic muscles** and civic readiness
- **Civic space** is a prerequisite for effective participation



Thank you

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