5 Checklist for designing and planning a citizen participation process

This checklist can be used by any public authority as step-by-step guide through the design and implementation of a participatory process. Further and detailed information about every step is included in the various sections of the guidelines.

Step 1: Identifying the problem to solve and the moment for participation

Where in the project or policy cycle are you? Please select one:

☐ issue identification stage

☐ policy or project formulation stage

☐ decision-making stage

☐ implementation stage

☐ evaluation stage

What is the problem that citizens (or stakeholders) could help tackle?

How can citizens and/or stakeholders help you solve this problem?

Step 2: Defining the expected results

What type(s) of inputs would you like to receive from participants? Please select one or more:

☐ Ideas and proposals

☐ Broad opinions

☐ Expertise or technical advice

☐ Informed recommendations

☐ Concrete actions

☐ Feedback or alerts

☐ Direct decision

☐ Evidence

☐ Other:

How will you use these inputs to solve the problem you have identified? Please select:

☐ Only for consultation

☐ We will use it for inspiration

☐ We will use it to inform our decision

☐ We will implement some of the inputs

☐ We will implement all the inputs

☐ Not sure yet

Step 3: Identifying the relevant public to involve and recruiting participants

Given the policy issue or public challenge at stake, what groups should be reflected among the participants? Please select one or more:

☐ Representative sample of citizens

☐ A non-representative but diverse group of citizens

☐ A group of citizens with specific skills

☐ Experts and technical profiles

☐ Stakeholders representing diverse opinions (NGOs, business unions, etc.)

☐ Residents of a specific area

☐ A specific group of citizens

☐ Broader public

☐ Other:

Based on needs indicated above, which recruitment method will you use? Please select one:

☐ Open call

☐ Closed call

☐ Civic lottery

How many people should be involved?

How will you ensure – and maintain – the interest of participants throughout the process?

Step 4: Choosing the participation method

Determine which method most closely matches your needs, yields your desired type of inputs, and is feasible given your timeline and resources:

☐ OPEN MEETINGS / TOWN HALL MEETINGS

☐ PUBLIC CONSULTATION

☐ OPEN INNOVATION: CROWDSOURCING, HACKATHONS, AND PUBLIC CHALLENGES

☐ CITIZEN SCIENCE

☐ CIVIC MONITORING

☐ PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

☐ REPRESENTATIVE DELIBERATIVE PROCESSES

More practical guidance for every method is provided in **Chapter 4**.

Step 5: Choosing the right digital tools

Will you use an online platform and/or a digital tool?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, how would you envision participants using the digital tool in the context of your participatory process?

☐ Proposing new projects, ideas, or suggestions.

☐ Deliberating to agree on shared decisions.

☐ Voting on suggested ideas or projects.

☐ Prioritizing potential options.

☐ Drafting strategies, policies, or legislations.

☐ Sharing information or data to fill an existing gap.

☐ For communication purposes.

☐ Other:

Indicate what digital tool(s) will be used:

How will you ensure that everyone has access and is able to use those tools?

Step 6: Communicating about the process

Think about establishing a strategy to communicate before, during, and after the participation process.

Determine which channels you will use to communicate with participants:

☐ Email

☐ Online private channel (Facebook, Discord, etc.)

☐ Online public channel (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

☐ Instant messaging applications (WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal, etc.)

☐ Other:

Determine which channels you will use to communicate with the broader public (citizens who are not directly involved in the participation process):

☐ Website

☐ Social media

☐ Traditional media, such as newspapers, television, radio

☐ Printed materials

☐ Open meetings

☐ Other:

Ensure constant, clear, and understandable communication that does not use technical language. If possible, translate the materials into all the spoken languages, and use different formats (videos, infographics, etc.) to appeal to different audiences.

Step 7: Implementing the participation process

Tip 1: Timeline

How much time do think will be needed to implement your participatory process properly?

What are the main steps, and how much time do they take?

Does the timing of the participation process align with the decision-making process?

Tip 2: Resources

How many staff (internal/external) will you need to implement the process? How many are available in your organisation?

What is your estimated budget?

Which technical resources will be needed to implement your process? Can you use existing platforms or tools?

Tip 3: Partnerships with non-governmental stakeholders

Map all potential partnerships with non-governmental stakeholders that could support the implementation of your participatory process.

Which actors could be considered allies in increasing the impact of the process?

  ☐ Civil society organisations:

  ☐ Private sector entities:

  ☐ Academia

  ☐ Media:

  ☐ Other:

Tip 4: Accessibility and inclusion

Does everyone have an equal opportunity to access and participate? <u>Think about different personas such as parents, people with disabilities, sexual minorities, etc.</u>

What can be done to enhance inclusivity and accessibility to the participatory process?

Tip 5: Thinking as a citizen

<u>**Review the process planned from a perspective of a participating citizen. Verify that every step is clear, inviting, inspiring confidence and trust.**</u> Some guiding questions:

- How to raise awareness about the opportunity to participate?
- How to transform awareness about the participation opportunity into interest?
- How to move from interest to actual participation and capture commitment?
- How to keep participants engaged until the end of the process?
- How to ensure they stay informed about how their input impacted public decisions?
- How to maintain their interest for future opportunities?

Step 8: Using citizen input and providing feedback

Who will respond to the participants' inputs and recommendations? What form will this take?

How will you recognise and celebrate the work of the participants?

How will you communicate the response to the recommendations? And when?

Step 9: Evaluating the participation process

How are you going to evaluate the participation process? When will the evaluation happen?

What methods will be used?

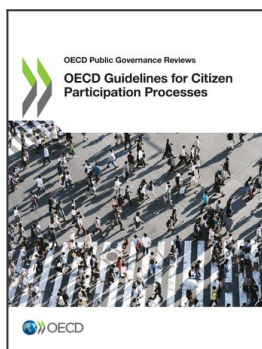**What criteria will you be using for evaluation?**

Who will be responsible for the evaluation?

Step 10: Fostering a culture of participation

Think about sharing lessons learned with colleagues or an existing community of practice.

What can be done to make organising citizen participation processes easier in the future?

Can this process be institutionalised to make participation a habit?