

Foreword

Citizen and stakeholder participation is an essential element of an open government, and is recognised as such by Provisions 8 and 9 of the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (2017). Open government is defined by the OECD as “a culture of governance that promotes the principles of transparency, integrity, accountability and stakeholder participation in support of democracy and inclusive growth”. The concept is based on the idea that citizens and the public should be enabled to see, understand, contribute to, monitor, and evaluate public decisions and actions. Open government can increase the legitimacy of public decision making and improve its outcomes, by informing and involving citizens - including those usually underrepresented - and by answering to people’s real needs. In the long term, open government reforms can help foster trust in government and reinforce democracy.

Citizens¹ today are more informed than ever and are demanding a say in shaping the policies and services that affect their lives. In response, public institutions at all levels of government are increasingly creating opportunities to harness citizens’ experiences and knowledge to make better public decisions. The global landscape for citizen and stakeholder participation is evolving constantly, becoming richer with new and innovative ways to involve citizens and stakeholders in public decisions. At the same time, differences of involving these two groups have become apparent, as individual citizens require participation methods designed to provide them with time, information, resources, and incentives needed to engage, while stakeholders (any interested and/or affected party, such as institutions and organisations) have a lower participation threshold, dedicated resources, and clear interests to participate.

Many of the existing resources in the field focus on stakeholder participation. These guidelines aim to fill a void by providing practical, hands-on support to organise citizen participation processes in particular, highlighting specific considerations and providing dedicated methods with an emphasis on ensuring quality, inclusion, and impact. The content of these guidelines is based on evidence collected by the OECD over the years, the OECD *Handbook on Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-Making* (2001), the OECD Recommendation on Open Government (2017), the OECD *Handbook on Open Government for Peruvian Public Servants* (2020), the OECD *Report on Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave* (2020), the OECD and DG REGIO *Citizen Participation in Cohesion Policy Guidelines and Playbooks* (2022), as well as existing resources from academia and other organisations.

The guidelines walk the reader through ten steps to design, plan, and implement a citizen participation process, and detail seven different methods that can be used to involve citizens in policy making. To illustrate these methods, the OECD gathered good practice examples through an open call. As part of this document, the OECD suggests nine guiding principles that help ensure the quality of these processes.

The OECD *Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes* is a tool for any individual or organisation interested in designing, planning, and implementing a citizen participation process, such as policy makers,

¹ 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.

practitioners, as well as civil society organisations, citizens, the private sector, or academia. The OECD looks forward to further collaboration with Member and Partner Countries in the implementation of the good practices and principles included in these Guidelines. This document was approved by the Public Governance Committee via written procedure on September 2, 2022 and prepared for publication by the OECD Secretariat.

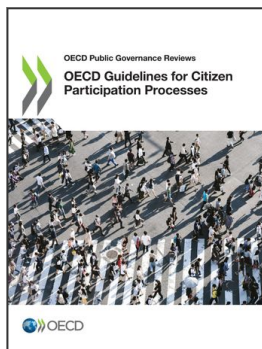
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