

Citizen Juries

Engagement range	Control
Difficulty level	Medium to hard (reasonable level of skill in community engagement required)
Cost	Medium to high (\$1,000 to \$10,000)
When might you use it	To develop community capacity To develop action plan To communicate an issue
Number of people required to help to organise	Depends on the audience size and level of complexity but generally will need two-three people to organise and help run.
Size of audience	Best suited to medium audience, 11–30 people
Timeframe	Up to six months
Issues/resources to think about	Venue; Catering; Staffing; Moderator/facilitator; Overhead projectors; Data projectors; Screens; White boards; Props for working in groups (pens, paper, pins, etc.)
Innovation level	Medium to high

Description

Citizen juries involve the wider community in the decision-making process. Participants are engaged as citizens with no formal alignments or allegiances rather than experts. Citizen juries use a representative sample of citizens (usually selected in a random or stratified manner) who are briefed in detail on the background and current thinking relating to a particular issue, and asked to discuss possible approaches, sometimes in a televised group.

Citizen juries are intended to complement other forms of consultation rather than replace them. Citizens are asked to become jurors and make a judgement in the form of a report, as they would in legal juries. The issue they are asked to consider will be one that has an effect across the community and where a representative and democratic decision-making process is required.

Citizen juries can be used to broker a conflict, or to provide a transparent and non-aligned viewpoint. Citizen jurors bring with them an intrinsic worth in the good sense and wisdom born of their own knowledge and personal experience.

Citizen juries provide the opportunity to add to that knowledge and to exchange ideas with their fellow citizens. The result is a collective one, in which each juror has a valuable contribution to make.

Objective

- To draw members of the community into participative processes where the community is distanced from the decision-making process.

Desired Outcome

- A considered report with recommendations for future actions or directions.

Uses/Strengths

- Can be used to draw members of the community into participative processes where the community is distanced from the decision-making process or a process is not seen as being democratic.
- Strives to improve representation in participative processes by engaging a cross section of the community in the jury.
- Can be used to moderate divergence and provide a transparent process for decision making.
- Provides a transparent participatory process which can be seen to be independent and credible.
- Provides a public democracy mechanism.
- Provides citizens with an opportunity to develop a deep understanding of the issue.
- Involves ordinary citizens.
- Pinpoints fatal flaws or gauges public reaction and opinion.

Special Considerations/Weaknesses

- Jury members need to be representative of the community in consideration.
- Setting up involves selecting jurors and experts and planning the timing, as it takes up to four days to run the jury.
- Moderators may be required, and would need to be hired.
- Everyone involved needs to be clear about the results and how they will be used. Ahead of the event, time needs to be allowed to engage jury, hire facilitator, put together briefing or background papers and contact 'experts'.
- Allow up to four days for the jury to consider its 'verdict'.
- The commissioning body must follow recommendations or explain why.

Step by Step Guide

1. Select a broadly representative group of approximately 8-12 people. Determine a question important to the issue being considered or develop a series of options for the jury to consider.
2. Brief jurors on the rules of the proceedings, and allow them two four days to come to a recommendation.
3. Provide expert witnesses to brief the jury who can be cross-examined and who can spend time discussing the issue with the jury.
4. Engage independent moderator(s) to assist the process of deliberation.
5. At the agreed time, arrange a presentation from the panel and/or collect the jury's report, which should outline their recommendations.
6. Publish the report and recommendations (this would normally be done by the commissioning body).
7. If the recommendations of the citizen jury are not followed up, publish the reasons for not following up (this would normally be done by the commissioning body)