



## TOOL | HOSTING A CITIZEN JURY

**TIME REQUIRED: 4-6 Months**

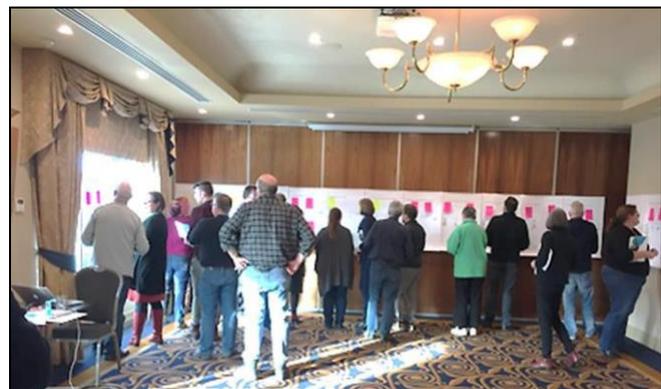
A Citizens' Jury is an innovative means of involving everyday people in decision-making about complex problems, which are typically dominated by experts. Citizens' juries assist elected representatives to make informed decisions that include an accurate assessment of citizens' views.

### USING THIS TOOL WILL HELP YOU:

- Provide a transparent process that brings together experts, ordinary citizens, service providers, interest groups and decision-makers
- Explore a complex issue with high stakes outcomes
- Explore an issue when there are competing vested interests

### TOOL DESCRIPTION

A citizen jury is a small group of randomly selected community members who agree to participate in a 40-hour, in-depth, deliberative process around a given topic and develop recommendations to the convening body. The success of citizen juries is based on the premise that, if the public knows that 40 of their fellow citizens have reached consensus around a decision they have more trust in that decision than if it was made solely by someone in elected office or public service.



**Infrastructure Victoria - [Regional Citizens' Jury](#)**  
Source: [Max Hardy Consulting](#)

Citizens' Juries work because they can convey to the wider community that citizens like them are being given complete access to information, are studying detailed evidence and hearing from subject-matter experts of their own choosing. Time and time again, Citizens' Juries have been proven to show that everyday people can come together to weigh competing viewpoints, identify experts of their own choosing, navigate a diversity of information sources and reach agreement on fair outcomes that can be implemented by government and are trusted by the communities they impact. One interesting feature of citizens' juries is that they have typically resulted in considered and moderate recommendations that successfully blend competing claims and help reconcile antagonistic groups.

While powerful, citizen juries also have limitations that are important to keep in mind. These include:

- The cost of convening a group of people together for several days;
- The time and skill required to plan and implement an effective jury process;
- The extent to which a small number of citizens can accurately reflect the views of an entire community;
- The risk that not all participants will attend and/or cooperate with the process; and
- Ensuring the process has the credibility and necessary endorsement to see its recommendations put into action.

One advantage of Citizens' Juries is that they overcome some of the problems associated with other approaches of gathering input such as community questionnaires and public hearings because they provide an opportunity to learn how citizens think about an issue when presented with detailed information about the matter.

## CITIZEN JURY KEY FEATURES

Key features of a citizen jury include:

- A group of 12-40 randomly chosen citizens are brought into a panel that matches a profile of the community at large using selected criteria
- Providing a forum in which the panel can consider how best to deal with an issue of public importance
- Unfolds over a number of days during which the panel is given detailed, balanced information about the issue; hears a wide range of views from expert presenters (or 'witnesses'); and, is able to question the presenters and can seek out any additional information they might want
- Organized in consultation with an advisory committee, (and sometimes an additional stakeholder reference group), who is responsible for ensuring the integrity and credibility of the project and the high quality of witnesses
- Has a neutral facilitator who supports the panel by managing group dynamics to ensure that everyone has a fair say, the panel gets the information it needs and that it fulfils its terms of reference
- Has a chair to oversee contributions from the presenters and make sure they respond to the jury's questions appropriately (sometimes the role of chair and facilitator is combined)
- Deliberates in a variety of formats such as small group discussion, brainstorming and full panel discussion; and
- Concludes with the panel preparing a report which records its recommendations and any dissenting points of view.

## CITIZEN JURY ROLES

There are a several specific roles that are essential for the successful implementation of a citizen jury. These include:

- **The Project Manager** – The Project Manager is responsible for the organization of the entire citizen jury process with the support of an advisory committee. This includes: encouraging stakeholder participation; correctly selecting the jury; identifying the presenters; providing background information and support to all participants; manage the event itself; address issues that may arise throughout the process; and, provide reports and/or evaluations of the process. A good project manager treats all participants fairly and impartially and avoids influencing the jury's decisions and recommendations.
- **The Advisory Committee** – This is a group of a maximum of ten individuals knowledgeable on a topic who represent a range of perspectives. Their role is to oversee the process and ensure its independence and credibility. The Advisory Committee advises on the jury's terms of reference, agenda and witness/expert selection. They help avoid bias throughout the project.
- **The Facilitator** – The facilitator is a neutral resource who manages the group dynamics of the jury. The facilitator ensures all jury members understanding and feel comfortable in their role, introduces them to methods for assessing and challenging expert knowledge; focuses the jury's attention on key questions and ensures the jury completes its work within the time available. Ultimately the facilitator is accountable to the Project Manager.
- **The Jury Chair** – An independent Chair manages the expert presentation and discussion sessions of the jury. The Chair is the timekeeper and ensures that presenters stay focused on key issues. The Chair is responsible to both the Project Manager and the jury. The role of the Chair and the facilitator are sometimes combined.
- **The Jury (Panel) Members** – The task of jury members is to respond to the question laid out in the Citizen Jury terms of reference and, at the end of the process, present the views and recommendations of the jury panelists on the issue being presented. Over the duration of the process, the jury members listen to presentations; debate issues; and, write a report of their recommendations and conclusions.
- **Witnesses/Expert Presenters** – Witness/Expert Presenters give brief presentations to the jury panel and answer any further questions that jury members may have. They may be called again by the jury panel at a later stage during the process to clarify issues arising. Presenters also provide a brief, written summary of their presentation as a reference to the panel.
- **Evaluator** – The evaluator observes the proceedings of the citizen panel to evaluate the effectiveness of the process and to provide an evaluation report at the end of the process. The evaluator does not participate in the jury process in any way other than to observe.
- **Observer** – In keeping with the spirit of transparency which is central to the process, the citizen jury should be as open as possible with any interested individual being allowed to observe. Observers are part of a non-participative audience who listens to and watches the proceedings of the Citizen Jury. During some panel sessions, the jury may ask observers to leave.

## HOSTING A CITIZEN JURY

Once it has been determined that a Citizen Jury IS the right process to use, the funding has been secured and a project manager has been appointed, there are a number of essential elements of the process that must be completed to ensure a successful design and implementation. These steps are outlined at a high level below and they include:

- **Setting Up the Project** – The tasks involved in project set-up include securing of funding, appointment of a project manager and development of a comprehensive project plan to implement the citizen jury. This includes defining a Terms of Reference for the citizen jury and appointing the key roles as outlined in the above section.
- **Identifying Key Stakeholders** – Stakeholders play to primary roles in a citizen jury: presenters and advisory committee members. The project team identifies and invites key stakeholders to participate in one of these two roles. A strong Advisory Committee includes a mix of skills and expertise best suited to the specific citizens' jury project. Their role is to help ensure that high-quality presenters are chosen to inform the citizen jury panel.
- **Recruiting & Selecting the Citizen Jury** – A transparent method to select members of the citizen jury is confirmed and citizen jury panel members are selected. Ideally citizen jury panel members are selected at random, but, in some cases, criteria are used to ensure that there is a match to the demographic profile of a community. Recruitment of potential jurors can be done via newspaper ads, mail-outs to a general mailing list and/or randomized telephone dialing. Once an initial "jury pool" has been created, a short-list of potential participants is developed. The jury list usually includes a few additions in the event of last-minute withdrawals or changes.
- **Defining the Citizen Jury Terms of Reference** – A Citizen Jury Terms of Reference clearly outlines the roles of various participants in the process. It also provides the Jury Advisory Committee and Jury Panel Members with a clear statement of what they ARE and ARE NOT responsible for and what tasks they are expected to complete. Typically, the organization initiating the citizen jury will also include its own commitment that it will take the jury's findings into account in its decision-making and/or publicly explain why it cannot.
- **Appointing an Independent Evaluator** – The independent evaluator plays an important role in ensuring to the public and decision-makers that they can trust the recommendations and outcomes of the jury and respect the legitimacy of the jury's process. Often, the results of the independent evaluation of the jury process is included in the final report of the panel.
- **Defining the Task and/or Jury Question** – Typically, the jury's task is outlined as a question or series of questions that the citizen jury panel is asked to address and answer through their deliberations. The question(s) are developed by the project manager in partnership with the Advisory Committee and must be viewed as unbiased and acceptable to all stakeholders.

- **Developing Background Information** – An important task for the Project Manager is to provide the citizen jury panel with detailed and impartial background information regarding the issue being considered. This background material should: define the issue; outline the question(s) being considered by the jury panel; provide information regarding potential criteria for assessing options; and, details on where to seek further information if jury members want to do their own, more in-depth research. In some situations, independent journalists or writers are retained by the project manager to assist in developing the needed material for citizen jury panelists.
- **Organizing Event Logistics** – A typical citizen jury requires 4-6 months of planning. Citizen Jury logistics include: securing a venue, accommodation, transportation, meals, AV requirements as well as providing separate spaces for hearings and/or jury discussions and deliberations.
- **Communicating Jury Outcomes & Next Steps** – Building public awareness of a Citizen Jury process is a good way to generate wider public interest in the issue(s) being explored however publicity for the Citizens' Jury needs to be done with sensitivity to minimize the risk that jurors will be lobbied by special interests. Once the jury has completed its deliberations however, its findings and recommendations are typically shared via a public form and formally submitted to the decision-making body in the form of a final report.

Fortunately, there are several, well-documented summaries of successful citizen jury processes that can serve as case studies to help inform the design and implementation of a citizen jury process. Anyone considering this methodology would be wise to review these for inspiration and to reveal important success factors.

## LEARN MORE

Check out the following resources to learn more about hosting Citizen Juries:

- <https://participedia.net/en/methods/citizens-jury>
- <https://www.epa.gov/international-cooperation/public-participation-guide-citizen-juries>
- <https://www.newdemocracy.com.au/what-is-a-citizens-jury/>
- [http://www.activedemocracy.net/articles/cj\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.activedemocracy.net/articles/cj_handbook.pdf)

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