



TOOL | CITIZEN JURIES

A Citizen Jury is comprised of a group of citizens who are representative of the general public who meet to consider a complex issue through gathering evidence, deliberating, and making a final decision.

OVERVIEW

As a Citizen Jury, Jurors can ‘cross examine’ ‘expert witnesses’ who provide differing perspectives on the issue or subject matter before reaching agreement or producing a short report of recommendations and action items. Typically, an advisory panel, with expertise in the specific area, considers the jury’s findings and determines what, if any, recommendations should be taken forward.

STRENGTHS

- Participants – organizers and jurors – usually find the experience empowering and satisfying
- Can accommodate large numbers of people to participate
- Power issues are reduced
- Deliberation results in an informed and collective view

WEAKNESSES

- Witness selection, briefing and information considered could be open to bias
- Jury could be manipulated
- The sponsoring body must be committed to accepting the results, otherwise the process loses credibility

WHEN TO USE

Citizen Juries require both time and a high level of skill as participants are asked to analyze complex issues. It is a useful technique to combat potential power struggles or conflict between the organizing body (eg. Municipal government) and citizens or even between citizens. Consider live streaming citizen jury sessions or have them open to the public for transparency.