



## TOOL | CITIZEN PANELS

A Citizens' Panel involves ongoing panels of about 1,000 - 2,000 people who are representative of the local community. The participants of the panel are surveyed several times a year by mail, telephone or online.

### OVERVIEW

A Citizens' Panel aims to be a representative, consultative body of local residents. Participants are usually recruited through random sampling as well as other means to ensure recruitment includes socially excluded and hard to reach groups. It is important to be clear at the recruitment stage about what is expected of each Panel member, and what their membership is likely to consist of in terms of type of contact and time commitment to the process.

### STRENGTHS

- Involves decisions about spending and devolving real power
- Has the ability to be a very public process and can therefore convey legitimacy beyond the immediate participants
- Participants can acquire a deeper understanding of the work of the organizing body

### WEAKNESSES

- If managed poorly, can create unrealistic expectations amongst participants
- Isn't as successful where central targets and restricted budgets limit the amount of power that can be given to citizens
- When meetings are open to all, there is the risk of certain groups dominating the process

### WHEN TO USE

This method offers a more inclusive approach to engaging with individuals who may not typically take part in such efforts. When scaled down, it can be effective and attract those who traditionally avoid going to meetings. Those who cannot attend regular meetings due to physical, social or psychological issues should be encouraged to take part in this process.

### HELPFUL LINKS

- Aberdeen Community Planning Partnership: Aberdeen City Voice  
<http://www.communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/Internet/CityVoice/CityVoice.asp>
- Glasgow Community Planning Partnership - [www.glasgowcpp.org.uk](http://www.glasgowcpp.org.uk)
- Powys Citizen's Panel - [www.powys.gov.uk](http://www.powys.gov.uk) (Council and Democracy Have Your Say tab)