

Citizens Councils

Reinventing public consultation to make more effective and legitimate policies

Smarter Consultation

Adding an informed citizens' voice to public decision-making

Citizens Councils help public bodies gain the legitimacy to act on difficult decisions.

Citizens Councils consist of up to 50 randomly selected citizens who meet numerous times over two to three months to advise public bodies on a specific policy dilemma.

They learn in-depth about a complex topic, hear from leading experts and relevant stakeholders, and deliberate with one another to find common ground and report their public judgement back to public bodies.



Citizens Ballot

Fair and transparent random selection

Participants are chosen through a Citizens Ballot, an innovative new method unique to Populus.

It is a two stage random selection and stratification process. First, around 15,000 invites are mailed out randomly. Those who respond are then sorted according to age, gender and geography or housing tenure.

The aim is to select a diverse, representative group of people, even if one demographic responds disproportionately to the invite



Benefits

Public support

People get invested and are ready to stand behind government on a decision when they have spent months working on a solution, ensuring policies endure the long term.

Public trust and legitimacy

Public bodies gain legitimacy and support for hard decisions by giving ordinary citizens who will be affected by their decisions the chance to hear all the information, discuss with one another and report back their views.

Cost-effective public engagement

Public bodies save a lot of money in the long run by being pro-active with a demanding consultation process before an issue becomes a controversy.

Citizens Councils help avoid the costs associated with evading a hard decision or remedial spending if a 'behind closed doors' decision proves unpopular by getting the public to stand behind their difficult choices.

Diverse views from a wide cross-section of society

The public is more likely to trust a process and outcome as legitimate when anyone looking at the group can see 'someone like me.'

Citizens Councils are the best way of reaching everyday people.

The outcome will be reflective of the community's views and is less likely to be hijacked by activists.

Informed recommendations

Recommendations from Citizens Councils are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-relevant).

Helps government craft effective policies because Citizens Councils result in pragmatic advice rather than a wish list of impossible desires.

Benefits: A tried and tested public consultation method

Over 50 examples of this from Canada and Australia

Canada

Updating Ontario's condominium legislation

30-year community plan for Vancouver

Privacy concerns over British Columbia's digital services plan



Municipal infrastructure investment in Calgary

Long-term transport investment in Toronto area

Australia

Victoria's obesity strategy

Melbourne's 10 year, \$5 billion (AUD) budget

Alternative forms of energy generation in New South Wales



Continuation of South Australia's nuclear opportunities

Outputs

Learning Materials

- Information pack, expert presentations and stakeholder submissions presented accessibly
- Available for the public

Recommendations

- SMART recommendations written in the words of participants
- Presentation of ideas by participants
- Report sections written by Populus outlining the context and methodology

Media coverage

- Extensive media coverage through press releases and interviews with key newspaper, radio, TV and social media outlets
- Journalists can be invited to attend deliberative events and/or final recommendation presentation



Why Populus

Expertise

Populus has in-depth knowledge of the robust methodology needed for this innovative and ground-breaking new form of public consultation.

The team includes one of the UK's leading experts on deliberation, specifically on processes like Citizens Councils.

Our in-house design agency BrandCap guarantees that all materials are professional, visual and accessible.

Mission

Populus was formed with a simple idea in mind: in order to succeed, organisations must first understand what matters most to the people who matter most to them.

Citizens Councils help public bodies understand what matters most to citizens, allowing them to make more effective and legitimate policies.

Quality

All aspects of the Citizens Council – recruitment, facilitation, materials and media relations – are done in-house by Populus' senior team to ensure full control from start to finish.

The Citizens Ballot is rigorous and transparent, safeguarding the highest level of confidence.

All facilitation is by experienced members of the Populus team.