

# BLUEMISSION AA

Building a coordination hub to support the mission implementation in the Atlantic and Arctic Basin

Collection of best practices of knowledge transfer and citizen engagement

D5.6 Report with best practices for increasing the participation of citizens and ensure that existing knowledge outputs and new knowledge, co-designed and co-implemented with citizens will be implemented in the mission.



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## Table of Contents

1.	Introduction .....	7
1.1.	Why Citizen Engagement? .....	7
1.2.	Highlights on Engaging Citizens (Prep4Blue Toolbox).....	9
1.3.	How to Use this Document .....	9
2.	Best Practices: Citizen Assemblies.....	12
2.1.	Introduction to Citizen Assemblies .....	12
1	Deliberative Polling .....	13
2	Citizen Juries .....	14
3	Consensus Conferences .....	15
2.2.	Summary .....	15
3.	Best Practices: Workshop .....	16
3.1.	Introduction to Workshops .....	16
1	Traditional Town Hall Meetings.....	17
2	Design Thinking, Scenario Planning & Participatory Budgeting Workshops .....	18
3	Citizen Panels or Focus Groups .....	19
4	Storytelling Workshops & Collaborative Mapping .....	20
5	World Café .....	21
3.2.	Summary .....	21
4.	Best Practices: Surveys .....	22
4.1.	Introduction to Surveys.....	22
1	Traditional Telephone Surveys, In-Person Surveys, Mail surveys & Online surveys .....	23
2	Panel Surveys & Online Panels .....	24
3	Push polls.....	25
4.2.	Summary .....	25
5.	Tips For Citizen Engagement .....	26
5.1.	Step 1: Preparation for Citizen Engagement.....	26
1	Define the Purpose and Strategic Objectives.....	26
2	Practicalities .....	26
3	Strategic Approach.....	27
5.2.	Step 2: Implementation.....	28
1	Before Citizen Engagement .....	28
2	During Citizen Engagement .....	28
3	After Citizen Engagement .....	28
5.3.	Step 3: Monitoring: Monitoring and assessing citizen management – best case practices: .....	29
1	Define Clear Objectives for Monitoring/Evaluation .....	29
2	Evaluate Feedback .....	29

3	Engage in Continuous Improvement .....	30
5.4.	Summary .....	30
	References.....	32

## List of Tables

Table 1 Advantages and disadvantages of citizen participation in Government decision-making. Source: Irvin and Stansbury (2004) .....	8
Table 2 Overview of best case citizen engagement practices presented in this document including brief description and references .....	10

# 1. Introduction

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The EU Mission Restore Our Ocean and Waters by 2030 aims to restore the health of one of our most precious common goods: our ocean and waters. BlueMissionAA aims to build a coordination hub to support the Mission implementation in the Atlantic and Arctic Basin. BlueMissionAA will focus on preserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems and biodiversity for increase climate resilience. BlueMissionAA wants to engage and empower citizens to contribute to the Mission and boost society uptake of new solutions by performing a systematic and meaningful involvement of all relevant stakeholders.

BlueMissionAA will develop capacity building activities that are designed and carried out to secure continuous citizen engagement throughout the project. These activities will follow well-known standards and best practices of the Citizen Science Community and will include bi-annual citizen assemblies and co-creation sessions and regular citizen science campaigns.

This report will present a collection of best practices of knowledge transfer and citizen engagement. Knowledge transfer is the process of sharing tacit and technical knowledge and encapsulates more than simple information sharing. This also includes knowledge spill-over, the process whereby knowledge intentionally or unintentionally is shared among stakeholders which may utilise that knowledge to create innovative and resilient processes. This is particularly relevant in the current climate, where ongoing resource degradation, climate change effects, and the need for sustainable long-term solutions are ever present (Aldieri et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2015).

## 1.1. Why Citizen Engagement?

The European Commission set itself specific targets with respect to engaging citizens in the Mission Implementation Plan (European Commission, n.d.). The Implementation Plan outlines that by 2030, "All European citizens have the opportunity to engage in the preservation and restoration of oceans and waters through participative means, volunteering, and citizen science" and that "All European citizens are empowered to be actors in the preservation and restoration of oceans and waters through social innovation, awareness raising, education, and training" (European Commission, n.d., p. 36).

Citizen engagement is a necessary element to ensure that government processes are fair, transparent, and ensure that the interests of the local community are represented in regional development plans. The demographics of citizens should be actively considered, as their personal and socio-cultural backgrounds impact citizens' values. Particularly marginalised groups should be targeted and actively sought out for citizen engagement to ensure that their voices are represented and incorporated in decision-making processes. However, the challenge is to ensure active citizen participation, which can be difficult in areas where a high level of expertise may be required.

This document will present a collection of best practices for increasing the participation of citizens and ensure that existing knowledge outputs and new

knowledge are co-designed and co-implemented with citizens in BlueMissionAA and the mission. The 1998 International Aarhus Convention states that citizens have a right and responsibility to be involved in public participation in decision-making to ensure and access justice in environmental matters (UNECE, 1998). Furthermore, the Aarhus convention points out that nongovernmental organisations play a significant role in promoting citizen involvement (Kasymova & Gaynor, 2014). Table 1 illustrates the advantages and disadvantages of citizen participation in government decision-making and provides some insight into why citizen participation should be prioritised.

Table 1 also highlights that the process of citizen engagement requires the building of partnerships, strengthening activist skills, and building strategic alliances. In short, successful citizen participation requires a coordinated approach that is built on encouraging and harnessing collaboration across citizens and other stakeholders. A one-size-fits-all solution to citizen engagement does not exist, as how citizens engage is context dependent.

Table 1 Advantages and disadvantages of citizen participation in Government decision-making. Source: Irvin and Stansbury (2004)

	Advantages to citizens participants	Advantages to government
Decision process	Education (learn from and inform government representatives)	Education (learn from and inform citizens)
	Persuade and enlighten government	Persuade citizens; build trust and allay anxiety or hostility
	Gain skills for activist citizenship	Gain legitimacy of decisions
Outcomes	Break gridlock; achieve outcomes	Break gridlock; achieve outcomes
	Gain some control over policy process	Avoid litigation costs
	Better policy and implementation decisions	Better policy and implementation decisions
	Disadvantages to citizens participants	Disadvantages to government
Decision process	Time consuming (even dull)	Time consuming
	Pointless if decision is ignored	Costly
Outcomes	Worse policy decision if heavily influenced by opposing interest groups	May backfire, creating more hostility toward government
		Loss of decision-making control
		Possibility of bad decision that is politically impossible to ignore
		Less budget for implementation of actual projects

This report is building on Prep4Blue's Toolbox of approaches on 'engaging citizens with Mission Ocean and Waters'. The Toolbox presented a guidance on methods for

facilitating, monitoring and assessing citizen participation levels and for rolling out a European wide network of assemblies of citizens<sup>1</sup>.

## 1.2. Highlights on Engaging Citizens (Prep4Blue Toolbox)

In the Toolbox, three steps to engage citizens were identified: 1. Preparation; 2. Implementing citizen engagement; 3. Monitoring and evaluating citizen engagement. This three-step process requires practitioners to consider the purpose, the practicalities, and the evaluation of citizen engagement. Thus, citizen engagement requires a thorough consideration of why and how to best engage with citizens.

Highlights on the three-step process (Bjørkan et al., 2023, p. 28):

Citizens can be mobilized to participate in Mission Ocean in three steps that can be separated analytically but not necessarily in practice: preparation, implementation and monitoring/assessment.

- Note that all steps are interrelated and are likely to take place simultaneously.
- Who to engage and why will vary depending on the context – there is no single solution and engagement demands preparation.
- The implementation of different engagement methods will vary depending on the context and citizens may be called upon for a variety of reasons such as their knowledge, for their input on data, methods or results.
- It is important to monitor how citizens are engaged and the outcomes of the engagements to enable shared learnings on the process, to inform the direction of the research or the initiative, to improve accountability, and ultimately to inform policy and practice in the space.

The above suggests that each citizen engagement will be unique, as this depends on the context (geographically, culturally, etc.) and on who participates in the citizen engagement process. The below briefly outlines main considerations practitioners should consider prior to engaging in citizen engagement.

## 1.3. How to Use this Document

Several different approaches to citizen engagement exist. Against the backdrop of BlueMissionAA's overarching goal to support the implementation of the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030 in the Atlantic and Arctic basin, the below will present three best<sup>2</sup> practice methods that support knowledge transfer and citizen engagement. Firstly, this report will present best practice approaches to citizen assemblies. Secondly, best practice approaches to workshops will be presented, and thirdly, best practice approaches to surveys. As such, this report provides an overview of citizen engagement methods. An update of this report will be provided

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<sup>1</sup> The full report can be retrieved here: [https://prep4blue.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/PREP4BLUE-Toolbox-for-Citizen-Engagement\\_V1.pdf](https://prep4blue.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/PREP4BLUE-Toolbox-for-Citizen-Engagement_V1.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The term best practice insinuates that any suggested practice is superior to alternatives. However, the scientific field of citizen engagement is still in its exploratory phase, which means that in some cases evidence to prove best practice may be limited. Thus, we suggest to think of the documented practices as either good or smart practices until more evidence is available.

in October 2024 (D5.7) which will focus more on citizen engagement practices and BlueMissionAA has implemented the presented methods, lessons learnt from our engagement with citizens, and other reflections on knowledge transfer and citizen engagement in support of implementing the EU Mission.

The presentation of best practice approaches is written with practitioners in mind. Each best practice presentation starts with a brief basic description of what each practice entails. This is followed by 'best use' recommendations. Each section is concluded with a more in-depth understanding, including references and exemplar cases. Table 2 shows an overview of all practices and 'best use' recommendations presented in this document.

*Table 2 Overview of best case citizen engagement practices presented in this document including brief description and references*

	<b>Citizen assemblies</b>	
	Brief description	References
Deliberative poll	Inclusive and structured approach to engage a diverse group of randomly selected citizens	Fishkin and Luskin (2005); Devaney et al. (2020); Farrell et al. (2019)
Citizen jury	Randomly selected citizens evaluate public policies, resource allocation and address complex, controversial issues	Smith and Wales (2000); Stewart et al. (1994)
Consensus conferences	Combining citizen panels and expert panels, citizens deliberate on specific topics where participants possess general knowledge of the subject matter	Van Bouwel and Van Oudheusden (2017); Einsiedel and Eastlick (2000); Andersen and Jæger (1999)
	<b>Workshops</b>	
	Brief description	References
Traditional town hall meetings	Common and accessible form of citizen engagement, especially in smaller communities to discuss local issues and ideal for awareness raising campaigns	Grant et al. (2008); Ward (2008); Ryan et al. (2006)
Design thinking, scenario planning, participatory budgeting workshops	These methods can be effective when ample resources are available focusing on problem-solving and future-oriented approaches	Brown and Katz (2011); Andersen and Jæger (1999); Allegretti and Herzberg (2004); Lehtonen (2022)

Citizen panels and focus groups	Methods for in-depth discussions involving dedicated participants who actively engage in the process	Crosby et al. (1986); Brown (2006); Davies (1999); Kallbekken and Aasen (2010)
Storytelling workshops and collaborative mapping	Powerful tools to incorporate citizen experiences into public deliberations, building narratives that help participants empathise with personal stories	Lowery et al. (2020); Carton and Thissen (2009); Brink and Wamsler (2018)
World Café	Valuable tool for citizen participation and organisational change processes, involving small discussion groups well-suited for topics with a wide range of public opinions	Brown (2010); Löhr et al. (2020); Fouché and Light (2011)
	<b>Surveys</b>	
	Brief description	References
Traditional telephone surveys, in-person surveys, mail surveys, and online surveys	Valuable tools for collecting comprehensive information from a random sample of citizens, particularly useful for topics where the general public can provide input with limited knowledge about the issues	Milbrath (1981); Robbins et al. (2008); Pellizzone et al. (2015)
Panel surveys and online panels	Effective methods for longitudinal and in-depth research where committed participants are regularly surveyed over an extended period	Klick et al. (2021); Kussel and Larysch (2017); Andor et al. (2020)
Push polls	Surveys designed to influence public opinion often through leading questions	Fox (1997); Murphy et al. (2021)

Finally, the last section of this report will build on Prep4Blue's three-step process and will present additional considerations on how to best engage with citizens. The presented tips and tricks of citizen engagement may be considered as a starting point for citizen engagement.

## 2. Best Practices: Citizen Assemblies

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### 2.1. Introduction to Citizen Assemblies

Citizen assemblies provide a structure that supports bottom-up governance, i.e., a process that ensures that citizens co-design and co-create approaches to complex topics. Citizen assemblies are larger-scale deliberative processes where citizens are randomly selected to discuss and deliberate on various policy issues resulting in potential recommendations, referendums, or policy proposals (Devaney et al., 2020; Warren & Pearce, 2008). Citizen assemblies are a long-term process and require strategic approaches to ensure that the process is fair, transparent, and yields actionable results.

In the below sections, best practice approaches to citizen assemblies are introduced and presented. These include: 1) Deliberative polling; 2) Citizen juries; and 3) Consensus conferences. These best practice approaches are not mutually exclusive and may be used in conjunction with each other and with other types of citizen engagement, depending on the context, time and budget constraints, etc.

A brief description of each type of citizen assembly is presented including a recommendation on what these approaches are best used for. Additionally, a brief synopsis of where the best practice comes from and exemplar cases of how these practices have been utilised in real-life contexts is provided.

## 1 Deliberative Polling

**How to use this method** Deliberative polling is the approach by which a random sample of citizens is selected, stratified by age, gender, background, education, and/or other selection criteria. These selected citizens will be brought together for a structured deliberation on a particular topic. Participants are given access to balanced information and experts to help them form informed opinions. They engage in discussions, ask questions, and provide feedback, often culminating in a vote or policy recommendation. Deliberative polling requires trained facilitators and moderators that engage with the citizens and ensure that rules of engagement and/or code of conduct is maintained while also encouraging a healthy debate.

### Best used for

- Public engagement (to promote active citizen participation)
- Research (insight for political behaviour)

**Where the best practice comes from** Deliberative polling is a process where citizens opinions are gauged to understand what they think, know, and discuss about a specific topic (Fishkin & Luskin, 2005). In the exemplar Irish model, a wider public was presented with expert witnesses and over a period of twelve weekends between 2016 and 2018 debated five topics. Climate change and challenges and opportunities of Ireland's aging population each received two weekends, while Ireland's constitutional ban on abortion received five weekends, and the manner in which referenda were held and nature of fixed term parliaments each received one weekend. The results of this process were more far-reaching recommendations, than originally anticipated (Devaney et al., 2020). In the Irish context, 99 random citizens were selected stratified across their backgrounds, age, gender, etc. An expert advisory group gave presentations on climate change and policy, and discussions were facilitated by trained facilitators. At the same time, public submissions to the topics were invited. Based on the expert presentations, the deliberations, and public submissions, policy recommendations were made (Farrell et al., 2019).

## 2 Citizen Juries

**How to use this method** Citizen juries are smaller groups of randomly selected citizens who represent the public. Juries meet over a few days or weeks to deliberate on a specific issue. This requires careful planning and organisation. The selected citizen jury listens to expert testimony, engages in discussions, and ultimately produces recommendations or decisions. Citizen juries can vary in size and scope, depending on the issue at hand. Typically, a citizen jury of 12-25 citizens, depending on the scale of the project. In Germany, so-called 'Planning Cells' consist of 25 members that are divided into smaller groups, each deliberating different aspects of the planning process.

### Best used for

- Public policy evaluation including environmental issues, healthcare, etc.
- Resource allocation and community development
- Complex and controversial issues where no common ground among policymakers and the public can be found – citizen juries may support the identification of potential solutions.

**Where the best practice comes from** Citizen juries provide a pathway into institutional design as this best practice allows for inclusivity, deliberation, and citizenship (Smith & Wales, 2000). Citizen juries have seen great success in the German Planning Cells (Stewart et al., 1994), where citizens are engaged in the planning process to determine the best use of public spaces. Whilst experts and public bodies have come up with potential solutions on how to develop new public buildings, the citizens provided different solutions that resulted in more green spaces and public parks, which contributed positively to public health.

### 3 Consensus Conferences

**How to use this method** Consensus conferences involve citizens deliberating on a specific topic, often with the aim of reaching a consensus or shared perspective. Consensus conferences include elements of citizen juries and town halls (presented in section 3.1.). In essence this includes citizen panels and expert panels to deliberate specific topics together. Participants learn from experts and engage in discussions, deliberating on key questions that have been formulated and developed by a citizen panel, before issuing policy recommendations.

#### Best used for

- When citizens have a general knowledge of the topic but should not have any personal interest, e.g., commercial interest or otherwise, in the process.
- Can be used for technology development and innovative solutions in public processes.

**Where the best practice comes from** Consensus conferences are deliberations between the public and experts to enable a specific outcome, as such, it is best used in cases where citizens have general knowledge and understanding of the topic at hand but are not interested in commercial gains as they may influence the process in a way that is not transparent (Van Bouwel & Van Oudheusden, 2017). Consensus conferences has been utilised in technology assessment in Denmark particularly for IT research, human genome mapping, among others (Einsiedel & Eastlick, 2000). This approach allowed ordinary Danish citizens to be involved in the process of technology development where citizens could dialogue with experts (Andersen & Jæger, 1999).

## 2.2. Summary

In this section, a closer look at forms of citizen assemblies was taken. A variety of approaches exist including deliberative polling, citizens' juries, and consensus conferences. What form of citizen assembly is best suited for a region and/or topic depends on the aims and goals of citizen engagement, context, budgetary constraints, etc. A hybrid version of each of the above also exist – for example, a citizens' jury might be followed by a larger citizen assembly to deliberate on the same issue or to refine recommendations. This also depends on the parameters in which the citizen assembly may take place, i.e., resource intensity (budgetary and within the planning mechanism), time sensitivity, political agenda, etc.

## 3. Best Practices: Workshop

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### 3.1. Introduction to Workshops

Workshops are another way of involving citizens in the democratic process. This approach allows for the inclusion of a broader public to openly discuss specific issues.

Which approach of workshops may be best suited depends on the purpose of the workshop and on how one chooses to record and disseminate the information gathered from the workshop. In the below sections, best practice approaches to workshops are introduced and presented. These include 1. Traditional town hall meetings; 2. Design thinking, scenario planning, and participatory budgeting workshops; 3. Citizen panels or focus groups; 4. Storytelling workshops and collaborative mapping; and 5. World Café. These workshop types are not mutually exclusive and may be used in conjunction with each other or other types of citizen assemblies, depending on context, time and budgetary constraints, etc.

A brief description of each type of workshop is presented including a recommendation on what these approaches are best used for. Additionally, a brief synopsis of where the best practice comes from and exemplar cases of how these practices have been utilised in real-life contexts.

## 1 Traditional Town Hall Meetings

**How to use this method** Town hall meetings are a common form of citizen engagement where community members gather to discuss local issues with elected officials or government representatives. Town hall meetings are among the easiest ways and often also one of the first experiences for citizens to engage with public bodies. However, town hall meetings require educational grounding. Without this, there is a risk that the town hall will not yield desired results. As such, town halls should include experts to present relevant knowledge and information for citizens. Town hall meetings should also provide an opportunity for citizens to provide testimonies. These meetings can be open forums for citizens to express their concerns, ask questions, and provide input. This requires adequate advertising to the general public through message boards, local newspapers, etc., to ensure that they are aware and can participate in the process. There is also a need to document the discussions to ensure a transparent process, where citizen input is included in policy making.

### Best used for

- Small(er) communities where citizens are familiar with the process and trust the process.
- Raising awareness about public issues, including public health, climate change, etc.

**Where the best practice comes from** Traditional town hall meetings have a long history particularly in smaller communities where this process allows for citizens to engage in public deliberation processes (Grant et al., 2008). These processes allow for citizens to actively engage and provide input in an open forum (Ward, 2008). In Alaska, this approach was used to get a better understanding on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders to inform citizens and raise awareness of this emerging public health issue (Ryan et al., 2006). This forum provided an opportunity to identify citizens' needs and how to best support and address them.

## 2 Design Thinking, Scenario Planning & Participatory Budgeting Workshops

**How to use these methods** Different methods to workshops exist, the following three include a problem-orientated deliberation process where citizens are identifying potential solutions through different mechanisms.

**Design thinking approaches** involve empathising with users, defining problems, ideating solutions, prototyping, and testing. This method encourages participants to design innovative solutions to specific challenges. Design thinking is a resource intensive practice as it requires a considerable amount of time which can be challenging when considering multiple stakeholders. Yet, this technique allows for stakeholders from different backgrounds to come together and create a common value proposition, i.e., identify common needs and goals and ways of achieving these. Design thinking is thus especially useful when identifying competitive advantages for innovative solutions.

**Scenario planning workshops** explore possible future scenarios and their implications. Citizens are engaged in discussing potential futures and their preferences for different outcomes. This approach can be valuable for long-term planning and decision-making. Scenario planning workshops bring together stakeholders including policymakers, business representatives, experts, and citizens – these stakeholders collaborate to work through a set of pre-defined scenarios. The aim for the stakeholders is to critique and comment on the scenarios to then identify a vision or strategy for themselves.

**Participatory budgeting workshops** is an inclusive approach that involves citizens in the allocation of public funds. Participants discuss and prioritise projects or initiatives they want to see funded in their community. It can be led to a more inclusive and transparent budgeting process. This is an approach that has become increasingly more popular in Europe where citizens are requested to submit their proposals on public spending to help decisionmakers and policymakers to decide how to best spend public funds.

### Best used for

- When resources (time and budget) are available
- Topics must be well-defined, i.e., stakeholders understand why they are deliberating certain issues such as for example strategy development, assessing budgets, etc.

**Where the best practice comes from** Applications of design thinking workshops (Brown & Katz, 2011), scenario planning workshops (Andersen & Jæger, 1999), and participatory budgeting workshops (Allegretti & Herzberg, 2004; Lehtonen, 2022) can be observed in Germany, France, Finland among others. However, low levels of citizen engagement and transparency of whether and how proposals are implemented in policymaking and public spending illustrate a need for more active collaboration across regional stakeholders and citizens.

### 3 Citizen Panels or Focus Groups

**How to use this method** Smaller groups of citizens are convened for in-depth discussions on specific topics, similar to the citizen jury. These panels and groups consist of people dedicated and willing to actively engage in the process. Citizen panels and focus groups provide detailed insights and feedback that can inform decision-making processes, they are cost-effective and flexible approaches that allow a selected group of people to deliberate specific topics in a limited debate. These approaches allow for a larger degree of representation of participants, particularly in topics where a higher degree of expertise or knowledge is required. The difference between citizen panels and focus groups is that the former provides an opportunity for ongoing deliberation of evolving ideas whereas the latter provides a one-time snapshot of a discussion.

#### Best used for

- Citizen panels: Deliberation processes that enable feedback loops, i.e., for policy implementation and development over time. This is used to assess public preferences and opinions regularly.
- Focus groups: Strategy development and processes, i.e., processes that occur less frequently, such as through election cycles.

**Where the best practice comes from** A criticism of citizen participation is that the average citizen does not have adequate knowledge or capability to make decisions on complex public policy issues (Crosby et al., 1986), this may also include other issues such as infrastructure development, human-wildlife co-existence practices, etc. However, the issue is not the decision-making process in itself, rather it is the format that is chosen to present data and information and make it accessible to the public (Crosby et al., 1986). The aim of both citizen panels and focus groups is to follow a deliberative process where citizens can be educated, stimulate public discourse, and provide input to decisionmakers (Brown, 2006). Both focus groups and citizen panels have been used in a variety of environmental and sociocultural public deliberations including public perceptions of urbanisation in the UK where participants recognised that environmental values are not adequately reflected in policymaking (Davies, 1999) or designing environmental taxes that are politically and publicly feasible in Finland (Kallbekken & Aasen, 2010).

## 4 Storytelling Workshops & Collaborative Mapping

**How to use this method** One of the cornerstones of citizen participation is the citizen experience, i.e., the knowledge and experience unique to any citizen. The following techniques highlight how these personal experiences can be incorporated into public deliberations. Both approaches are used to build a narrative in which citizens can easily identify themselves and subsequently use this as a mobilisation tool. These narrative-driven approaches are powerful tools that can be used to mobilise and enable active citizenship. However, it can also be used for propaganda and political ideologies in direct conflict to sustainable development. If effectively utilised, these tools can tap into existing collective stories to mobilise and construct a new and inclusive story aligned with the sustainable development agenda.

**Storytelling workshops** can help build empathy, foster understanding, and illuminate the human aspects of complex problems as participants share personal stories and experiences related to a particular issue. Through storytelling a broad collective can be mobilised as they learn to identify and empathise with the 'hero/protagonist' of the story, and in 'cautionary tales' are able to avoid the mistakes that the 'hero' made.

**Collaborative mapping** can be a powerful tool for urban planning and community development as participants use maps or geographical data to identify community assets, challenges, and opportunities. The use of this method requires an in-depth understanding of socio-cultural and socio-economic issues that may be experienced by the citizens as they may have conflicting values and understanding of the use of space.

### Best used for

- Processes where personal experiences can influence how public space/funding is being used, for example for community gardens, restoration projects, etc.
- Processes where tacit and cultural knowledge as well as personal experience plays a significant role, i.e., how community space should be utilised and managed.

**Where the best practice comes from** The use of a narrative-driven approach that centralises the human experience invites participants to become part of the plot and supports them in identifying what role they may play (Lowery et al., 2020). The challenge is to create a narrative in which participants can see themselves, such as for example Greta Thunberg, the teenage climate activist that has transformed the debates around climate change globally (Lowery et al., 2020). Collaborative maps can be used as both, an aid for decisionmakers and a source of conflict as citizens and stakeholders may disagree on how the map is being drawn and used (Carton & Thissen, 2009). Collaborative mapping can also be used to identify areas most vulnerable to climate change as applied in Swedish municipalities to map existing adaptation interactions (Brink & Wamsler, 2018).

## 5 World Café

**How to use this method** The World Café method is a tool used for citizen participation and organisational change processes. This method involves setting up small discussion groups at different tables in a Café-like setting. The setting and ambiance are crucial, this needs to be neutral, inviting to allow open and honest topical discussions. The idea is to gain as many ideas as possible from all citizens and use these opinions to inform policy. Participants rotate between tables, discussing various aspects of a topic, i.e., each table will address one or two questions that have been prepared but can further develop through the process. This approach encourages diverse perspectives and the generation of ideas through conversation. The World Café method builds on a set of design principles including the setting of the context, creating a welcoming and hospitable space, exploring questions that matter to the citizens, encouraging active participation of all, cross-pollinating and connecting diverse perspectives which allows for knowledge sharing, listening for patterns and insights, and sharing collective discoveries.

### Best used for

- Topics where a wide range of the public have experience and opinions on the matter such as for example climate change, displacement, environmental degradation, public health issues, among others.
- Must have resources (time and budget) to create space for deliberations and healthy debates.

**Where the best practice comes from** World Cafés are a dynamic process whereby a large number of citizens engage in knowledge sharing (Brown, 2010). World Cafés are increasingly being acknowledged as a means for qualitative data collection as the high number of participant involvement grounds the research findings (Löhr et al., 2020). This approach allows for a narrative to emerge, i.e., participating citizens are able to shape and co-create the outcome as this is interlinked with their input and their engagement (Löhr et al., 2020). The design principles elaborated on above allow for a strategic approach to the World Cafés which ensures that the outcome of this method provides useful insights into specific topics (Fouché & Light, 2011). This method was implemented in Auckland at the “Café hear and now” where resource needs in a research environment were deliberated (Fouché & Light, 2011). The outcome of this World Café was that the participants’ ability to connect with others and gain a better understanding of the issues were nurtured, it also allowed the participants to reflect on their own role in this issue.

## 3.2. Summary

The above presents a brief overview of workshop types that may be taken for citizen engagement. A variety of approaches to workshops to enable citizen participation exists including but not limited to town halls, design thinking and scenario workshops, focus groups and citizen panels, storytelling, and World Café. What form is best suited to increase active citizen participation for a region and/or topic depends on the aims and goals of citizen engagement, context, budgetary constraints, etc.

## 4. Best Practices: Surveys

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### 4.1. Introduction to Surveys

Which approach one chooses to conduct surveys depends on the context, time and budgetary constraints, technological abilities, etc. Surveys can be deployed to a wide range of people and as such can reflect the characteristics of a large population. They also provide a detailed and systematic approach to gathering data and as such can provide reliable data. However, survey designs need to be considered carefully, they need to be unbiased, free of any biases and communicated in a simple and easy-to-understand way. Surveys may also be best used for shorter, closed questions, and ideally not more than three open questions as otherwise the response rate may be greatly affected. As such, surveys are great tools for giving an overview of a topic from a large number of respondents. They may also be utilised in combination with interviews for a deeper dive on specific issues and topics that may have arisen from the survey output.

In the below sections, best practice approaches to surveys are introduced and presented. These include 1. Traditional telephone surveys, in-person surveys, mail surveys and online surveys; 2. Panel surveys and online panels; and 3. Push polls. These survey types are not mutually exclusive and may be used in conjunction with each other or other types of citizen assemblies, depending on context, time and budgetary constraints, etc.

The below will provide a brief description of survey types and includes recommendations on when and how these methods and approaches may be best used. Additional information, such as where the best practice comes from and how the practices have been utilised in real-life will also be presented.

## 1 Traditional Telephone Surveys, In-Person Surveys, Mail surveys & Online surveys

**How to use this method** Surveys are a useful tool to get a comprehensive amount of information in a relatively short time. They are among the most cost-effective tools but require precise and easy-to-understand materials which any citizen can respond to with limited information about the subject matter. To adequately represent citizens, surveys need to be free of biases and need to be inclusive of all genders, ethnicities, religious and cultural beliefs – unless the survey is targeting a particular demographic. Each survey utilises random sample selection and as such enables an accurate representation of the general public.

**Traditional telephone surveys** are conducted via phone calls where randomly selected individuals or households are contacted, often used for political polling and can be conducted using live interviewers or automated systems.

**In-person surveys** are face-to-face surveys where interviewers administer surveys with citizens in public spaces, at events, or through door-to-door canvassing. This approach allows for clarification of questions, it can be time-consuming and costly.

**Mail surveys** are mailed to a random sample of individuals or households, and respondents fill them out and return them by mail. This method can have a lower response rate but can be cost-effective for large-scale surveys.

**Online surveys** are administered via the internet, and respondents complete them using web forms. Online surveys can reach a wide audience quickly and are cost-effective but may have issues related to sample bias and digital access.

### Best used for

- Topics where the broad general public can respond with limited knowledge about discussed issues.
- Resource intensive, particularly time intensive, however can be the most cost-effective approach as many citizens can be effectively surveyed.

**Where the best practice comes from** Each of these survey forms can be used to gather information from the citizens about specific topics. Surveys are powerful tools because of the random selection of participants can be surveyed. As such survey results can help correct distorted interpretations that may occur when only a tiny fraction of citizens are being surveyed (Milbrath, 1981). Surveys also allow for direct participation in the democratic process in real-time (Robbins et al., 2008). Pellizzone et al. (2015) utilised a survey approach together with a focus group to explore public engagement with geothermal energy in Southern Italy. This study revealed that the participants believed that the EU, national government, citizens, and energy companies were partially competent to make decisions about energy choices. While the respondents believed that scientists and local administration were best suited to make these decisions. These results indicate that surveys can help identify the best vehicle to convey important messages (Pellizzone et al., 2015).

## 2 Panel Surveys & Online Panels

**How to use this method** Panels represent a group of carefully selected individuals that are committed to participating in the deliberation process over an extended period. They are used to track changes in behaviour and opinions.

**Panel survey** participants are recruited and regularly surveyed over an extended period, allowing researchers to track changes in opinions and behaviours over time. Panel surveys provide valuable longitudinal data.

**Online panel** Participants are recruited and maintain their involvement in a survey panel over time. Researchers can conduct surveys with the same group of individuals for multiple studies, allowing for more in-depth research.

### Best used for

- Longitudinal and in-depth approaches where the participants are committed to the process over time.
- Particularly useful for behavioural changes, such as for example single-use plastics, transition from oil and gas towards marine renewable energy, smoking indoors, etc.

**Where the best practice comes from** Panel surveys were used in Germany where thousands of households' attitudes towards climate change and energy consumption were surveyed four times between 2012 and 2016 (Klick et al., 2021). The results showed that individuals that experienced climate change effects, such as increased temperatures, were more likely to adapt their behaviour and install cooling technologies, such as air conditioning or green roofs (Kussel & Larysch, 2017). However, utilising the same survey results, the study showed that while support for green energy development increased, willingness to pay for this decreased over time (Andor et al., 2020). This method is resource intensive and requires a rigorous and consistent approach to ensure that the survey results can be used in research output and policy input.

### 3 Push polls

**How to use this method** Push polls are surveys designed to influence public opinion rather than gather information. They often contain leading questions aimed at swaying respondents' views and thus influence how participants respond to the questions. This may also influence behavioural change. However, this method is biased and can be misleading if not utilised effectively.

#### Best used for

- Influencing citizens when there is relatively little information available about any particular subject, or a specific outcome is desired.

**Where the best practice comes from** The use of push polls in political settings can be challenging, as their purpose is to influence public opinion and can therefore be used for propaganda or against the sustainable development agenda. North American election cycles have a long history of using push polls to influence public opinions, such as through the pro-tobacco push polls which took place in Texas in 1996 (Fox, 1997), or push poll results in the pro-republicans election cycle in 2016 (Murphy et al., 2021).

## 4.2. Summary

In this section, a closer look at forms of surveys was taken. 1. Traditional telephone surveys, in-person surveys, mail surveys and online surveys; 2. Panel surveys and online panels; and 3. Push polls. Whilst these approaches are relatively simple to implement, they require some resources such as time and effort, but can provide valuable input into policymaking. What form is best suited for a region and/or topic depends on the aims and goals of citizen engagement, context, budgetary constraints, etc. It should be noted that some outputs of surveys require a contextualisation, i.e., there may be a need for using a workshop method or a citizen assembly method to make sense of the data collected from surveys.

# 5. Tips For Citizen Engagement

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Building on the three-step process of **preparation – implementation – and monitoring activities**, the below will offer insights on how to ensure good and smart citizen engagement practices. The following section will provide some tips and tricks on how to engage with citizens in a meaningful way and ensure that the output can be used for policy input and support the decision-making process. The presented tips and tricks are a cumulation of the extensive work by Bjørkan et al. (2023), Gerwin (2018), Reed (2008), and Reed (2016).

## 5.1. Step 1: Preparation for Citizen Engagement

### 1 Define the Purpose and Strategic Objectives

**State purpose** Each citizen engagement serves a purpose, this should be clearly articulated and defined before engaging with citizens. The main issues or topics and the desired outcomes that are expected from the citizen engagement should be discussed in preparation for citizen engagement. Establish monitoring and evaluation processes (see step 3 for more details).

**Stakeholder mapping** Prior to citizen engagement, relevant stakeholders and citizens should be identified and mapped. The stakeholder mapping should include citizens, community groups, experts, government representatives, and other relevant parties. The purpose of this exercise is to ensure that all stakeholder groups are included in the sampling and selection process of citizens.

**Geographic scale** Understanding geographic scale of citizen engagement is a precursor for engagement. Large-scale and international projects, such as BlueMissionAA and Prep4Blue may provide impetus for smaller scale projects and/or communities. As such, these large-scale projects may provide a roadmap and highlight generic opportunities for citizen engagement. Yet, citizen engagement is place-specific, i.e., how and why citizen engagement is used depends on the purpose and opportunities, including budgetary and time resources. Considering the geographic scale of citizen engagement is thus an important preparatory step.

### 2 Practicalities

**Set Budget** Citizen engagement activities are typically resource intensive, both in budgetary and in human resources terms. It is thus vital to set a reasonable budget for expenses such as venue rentals, materials, human resources, facilitators, and any other outreach or promotion efforts.

**Secure venue** Depending on the citizen engagement approach, an appropriate and accessible venue for the engagement must be secured. Prior to the engagement, ensure it can accommodate the expected number of participants comfortably and has the necessary facilities and equipment. This must be a neutral, accessible, and welcoming place to ensure that the participants are comfortable.

**Selection process** Depending on the scope and size of engagement, an appropriate selection process must be chosen, i.e., sample selection, stratified selection, etc. Ensure that a registration is also set up to record vital participant information subject to purpose of engagement.

### 3 Strategic Approach

**Facilitation** For any citizen engagement, skilled facilitation is necessary as the engagement of citizens requires trained personnel who understands when to talk and encourage discussions, when to listen, how to record and collect the data, and how to ensure a smooth process of engagement. Facilitators, this also includes interviewers, are communication guides and ensure that desired outputs are achieved. Training for facilitators should also be made available, if needed.

**Outreach strategy** Citizen engagement requires an outreach plan which will be bespoke to the citizen engagement approach. Depending on the approach taken, ensure that various communication channels such as social media, community meetings, flyers, local media including radios and newspapers are effectively utilised.

**Agenda and materials** Citizen assemblies and workshops require a detailed agenda outlining schedule, discussion topics, and activities. This may also serve as an opportunity to invite and engage citizens. Consider the timeline of the citizen engagement, i.e., hours or days – as time commitment from citizens plays a significant role. Prepare any necessary materials, such as background documents, surveys, presentation materials, and any materials used in the workshops (including pens and papers, etc.).

**Document knowledge** Each citizen engagement needs to be effectively recorded. Prior to citizen engagement, it should be discussed who will be responsible for recording the engagement – this also includes sharing free and informed consent sheets and allowing for their contributions to be used and saved for the purpose of this engagement –, how the engagement should be recorded including key points raised, decisions made, and any recommendations or action items, and how these recordings should be reported. This can and should be made available to all participants, stakeholders and the wider community.

**Evaluation** The monitoring and evaluation process of citizen engagement should be considered prior to the engagement, as this will define how evaluation takes place. In general terms, this step includes gathering feedback from participants to assess the effectiveness of the process and using this feedback to make improvements for future citizen engagement. More on this in Step 3.

## 5.2. Step 2: Implementation

### 1 Before Citizen Engagement

**Support local experts** Citizen engagement inherently is about understanding the local and regional experience. It can thus be beneficial to support local experts or community leaders who can act as knowledge hubs and mentors for others. The input from these experts needs to be neutral, non-bias, and not be viewed as belonging to a party, cultural or religious group, or race, etc. As such, these local experts need to represent the society of the region uniformly, and should not be excluding any minorities, vulnerable, or indigenous people and groups. Their contributions to the citizen engagement should be recognised and celebrated.

**Create collaborative projects** Opportunities for citizen engagement beyond assemblies, workshops, or surveys exist. This should be brought to the attention of the citizens, and they should be encouraged to collaborate on projects that require shared knowledge and expertise. This fosters teamwork and knowledge exchange. This could include citizen initiatives, such as beach clean ups, citizen science projects, education programmes, mentoring programmes, etc.

**Document knowledge** As mentioned in the previous section, a strategic approach to documenting knowledge should be established prior to community engagement.

### 2 During Citizen Engagement

**Engagement rules** Meaningful citizen engagement requires a welcoming and safe space for interaction. A set of rules of engagement, i.e., open communication where ideas but not people are challenged. This ensures that discussions will evolve around topics rather than individuals. Engagement rules also include the encouragement of a healthy debate rather than the assertion of opinions. Emotions – particularly for storytelling or collaborative mapping – should be validated and should be understood to be directed at ideas rather than at people personally.

**Promote storytelling** In general, encourage citizens to share their personal stories and experiences as a means of transferring knowledge. Stories can be a powerful way to convey information and build connections, even when the storytelling approach is not the main approach taken in this instance. Citizen engagement is about the citizens and their experiences, storytelling and elements thereof can help build a narrative to provide input to decisionmakers and policymakers.

**Facilitate networking** Citizen engagement is also about creating opportunities for networking with another, within and outside of their community to enable knowledge sharing. This can lead to valuable connections and knowledge exchange, sharing experiences, and providing input on what works and does not work in community engagement.

### 3 After Citizen Engagement

**Evaluation** Collect feedback from participants and make adjustments to improve the process (more details in next section).

**Report** The findings, input, and recommendations of citizen engagement should be reported and made available to all citizens, stakeholders, and relevant representative parties. This requires careful preparation of the input and in-depth understanding of what was conveyed during the engagement.

## 5.3. Step 3: Monitoring: Monitoring and assessing citizen management – best case practices:

### 1 Define Clear Objectives for Monitoring/Evaluation

**Establish objectives** Citizen engagement initiatives have clear objectives which should have been established prior to engaging with citizens. Similarly, monitoring and evaluation should be considered prior to engagement. The main questions that should be asked before engaging are “*What are you trying to achieve and what are the desired outcomes?*”

**Test pilot** Citizen engagement initiatives should ideally be piloted. These test pilots can provide valuable learning in terms of language use, misunderstanding of questions, biases, etc. Furthermore, this learning approach can also help save resources in the long-run as potential errors can be caught and addressed early in the process.

**Determining Key Performance Indicators** (KPIs) can help with measuring success of meaningful citizen engagement. This can include the number of participants, feedback quality, increased awareness, policy changes, community satisfaction levels, etc. This may also include the tracking of participation rates over time, as trends in level of participation may influence the outcome. Comparing KPIs with existing benchmarks in the field of citizen engagement can support the evaluation process, as it provides some insights of good and smart practices.

**Participatory evaluation process** Much like citizen engagement in the deliberative process, citizens should also be included in the evaluation process. The aim of this process is to evaluate how the output can be (best) utilised in policymaking, i.e., ensuring that the outcomes of citizen engagement are used in the deliberative process. See Bradley Cousins (2003) for more detailed account on how to ensure participatory evaluation.

### 2 Evaluate Feedback

**Assess feedback quality** Ideally, all citizen engagement will result in meaningful insights and recommendations within the deliberative public process. However, not all processes will result in this. Thus, feedback quality from citizen engagement should be continuously and regularly assessed, this is also to ensure that the citizens' concerns are being addressed.

**Analyse demographics** Whilst random sampling for citizen engagement should provide an appropriate sample of the population, the demographics of participants should be examined to ensure that citizen engagement efforts are inclusive and representative of the community and its diversity. The initial stakeholder mapping should help support this analysis. If underrepresented groups are identified, steps should be taken to increase their involvement.

**Conduct feedback sessions and external evaluation** Additional efforts to solicit feedback through surveys, focus groups, public meetings, and online discussions are encouraged. The feedback mechanisms ensure that citizen engagement is consistent and accessible. These surveys and feedback sessions should be user-friendly and easy to engage with, to encourage citizen response. External feedback can also help assess engagement efforts from impartial parties, this can help gain valuable insights and recommendations from external reviewers and assessors.

**Evaluate transparency and accountability** In the previous section, reporting post-citizen engagement has been raised as an important issue. However, the uptake and engagement with the output should also be monitored and evaluated. This can also feed into the KPIs of citizen engagement. It also provides for accountability for decision-makers to act on behalf of their citizens and their input.

### 3 Engage in Continuous Improvement

**Use data and insights** While the output of citizen engagement can be used for accountability for decisionmakers and policymakers, it can also be used to make improvements to engagement strategies. Citizen engagement approaches should be based on the learnings and adaptation of community needs. They may be regionally, and culturally specific and thus one-size-fits-all approaches should be avoided. Rather, regionally and culturally specific approaches should be adopted and adapted over time.

**Share outputs** In the previous section, documenting outcomes and provide access to information was mentioned as a valuable and necessary step of citizen engagement. This also applies to the monitoring and evaluation of citizen engagement. The sharing of this output builds trust and demonstrates the commitment to improvement, both for the process and for increasing citizen engagement in the deliberative process. With this, citizen feedback should be continuously encouraged to ensure that the process is accessible, inclusive, and engaging participants.

**Iterate and adapt** Citizen engagement – and its evaluation – is an ongoing process. While the results may be a snapshot of a particular moment in time, engagement is continuously and thus requires practitioners to iterate and adapt engagement strategies based on the feedback and data. This may include optimisation of online platforms or archives to ensure that these are accessible and easy to use for citizens. It may also include updated outreach strategies relevant to the topic/issue including social media strategies, etc.

## 5.4. Summary

Citizen engagement is not one size-fits-all and good and smart practices of knowledge transfer and citizen engagement requires bespoke approaches to the cultural, socioeconomic, and geographic demographics. This document has shown that several practices of citizen engagement exist, which practice may be best suited for any one citizen engagement depends on the purpose of the engagement, the desired output, and resources including budgetary constraints. Regardless of these constraints, this document has also shown that citizen engagement practices exist that require relatively few resources but can still be effective in terms of generating recommendations, providing policy input, and supporting decision-making. Finally, each form of citizen engagement requires careful consideration of the preparation, implementation, and monitoring.



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