



Good Practice Principles for Deliberative Processes for Public Decision Making

Introduction

The [OECD's Recommendation on Open Government \[OECD/LEGAL/0438\]](#) provides, with respect to citizen participation in government, that Adherents should:

“

8. grant all stakeholders equal and fair opportunities to be informed and consulted and actively engage them in all phases of the policy-cycle [...]

“

9. promote innovative ways to effectively engage with stakeholders to source ideas and co-create solutions[...]

Representative deliberative processes (referred to as “deliberative processes” for shorthand) are one of the most innovative methods of fostering citizen participation in government.

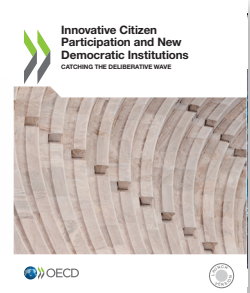
The OECD has collected a wealth of evidence as to how deliberative processes work across different countries. While there are a wide variety of models, analysis of the evidence collected reveals a number of common principles and good practices that may be of useful guidance to policy makers seeking to develop and implement such processes.

The OECD has drawn these common principles and good practices together into a set of Good Practice Principles for Deliberative Processes Public Decision Making (hereafter, “good practice principles”). These good practice principles could provide policy makers with useful guidance as to the establishment of deliberative processes and the implementation of provisions 8 and 9 of the Recommendation on Open Government.

Methodology



Read the report for further information on deliberative processes for public decision



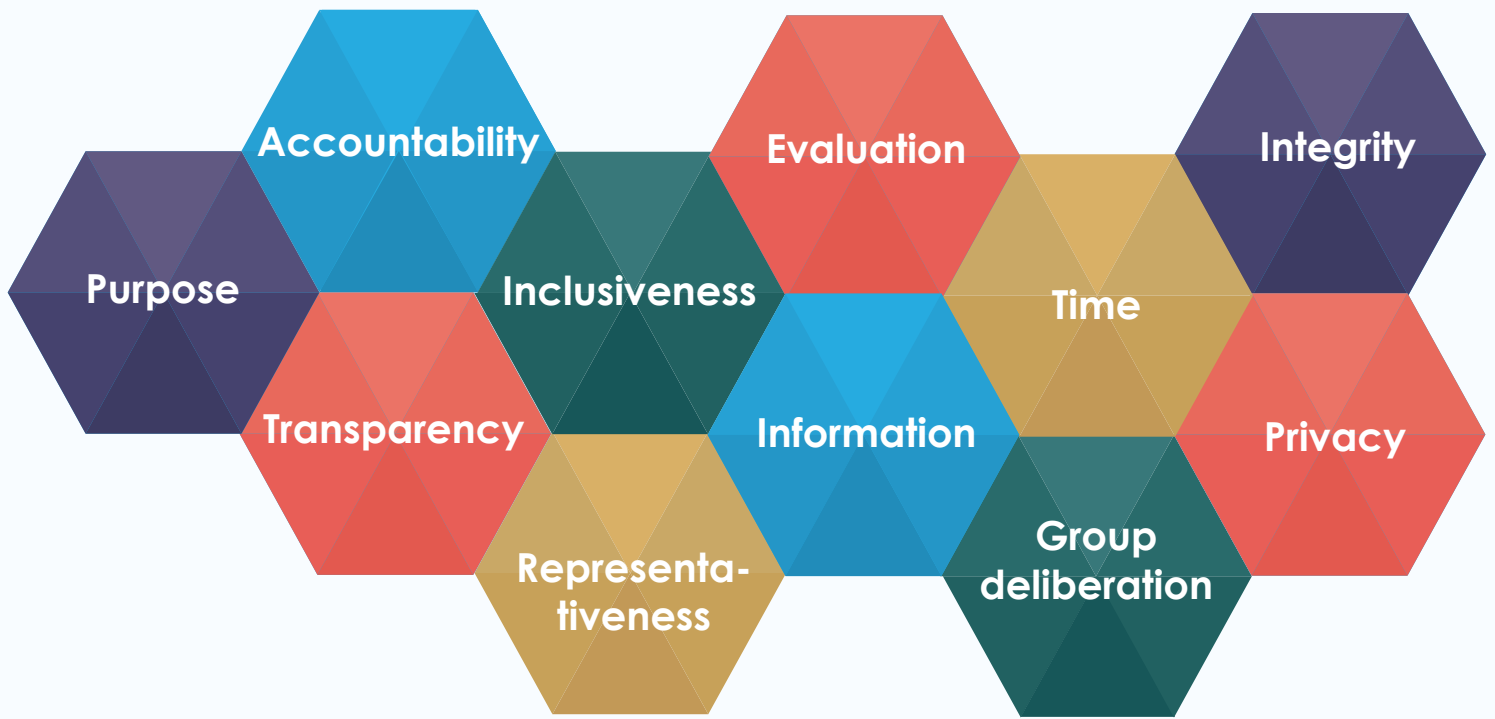
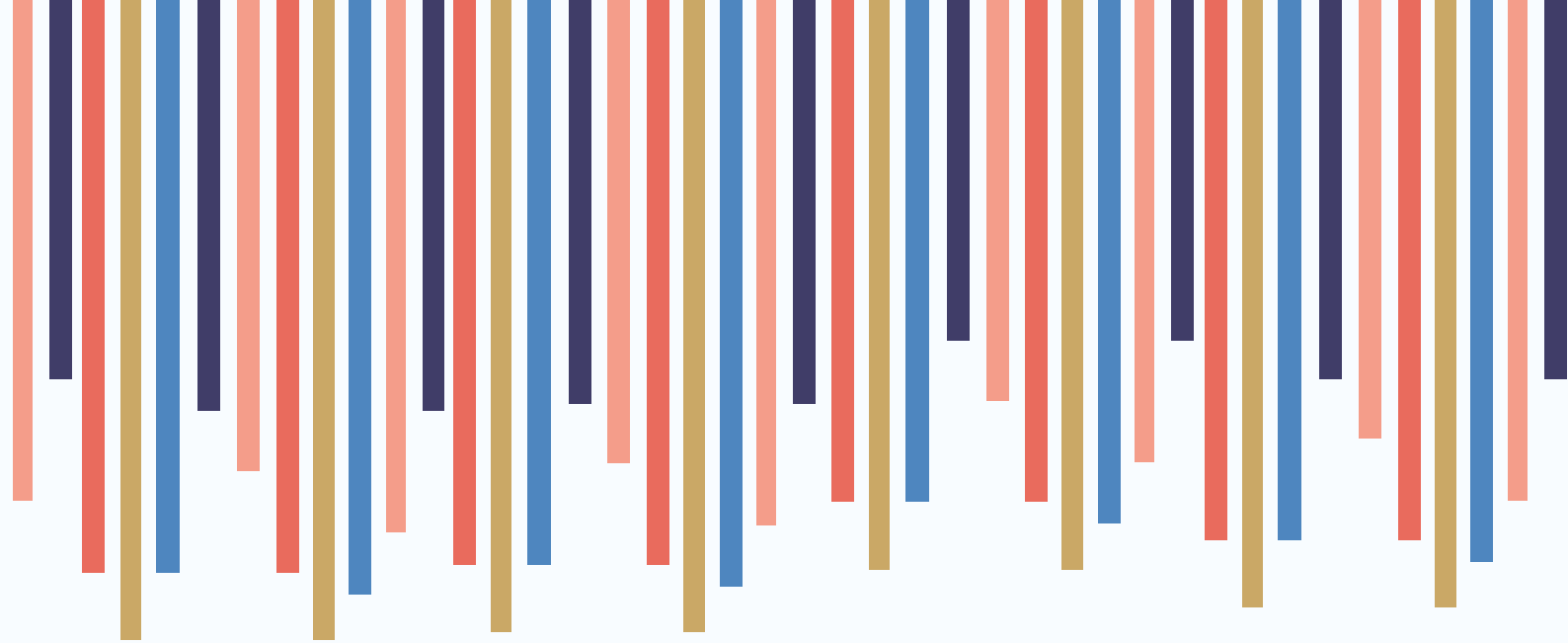
In addition to the comparative empirical evidence gathered by the OECD and from which they were drawn, the good practice principles have also benefitted from collaboration with an international group of leading practitioners from government, civil society, and academics who are members of the OECD's Innovative Citizen Participation Network and of the Democracy R&D Network.

The development of the good practice principles was informed by analysis of the evidence gathered by the OECD in its work on deliberative processes and to support the implementation of provisions 8 and 9 of the Recommendation on Open Government. In addition, the OECD evaluated existing literature where a number of organisations and academics have already defined some principles for deliberative processes.

As a first step, a mapping exercise was conducted to identify the commonalities and differences across countries' practices and between existing sets of principles, standards, and guidelines. For reference, the annex in this chapter includes an overview of existing principles, a table highlighting their commonalities and differences, and a summary of their common threads.

Following this, core principles and good practices required to achieve good deliberative processes that result in useful recommendations for the commissioning public authorities and a meaningful opportunity for citizens to participate in shaping public decisions were identified. A public consultation was conducted from 28 February to 20 March 2020, after which the good practice principles were amended and were discussed with the OECD Working Party on Open Government for approval.

The good practice principles are intentionally concise. They are intended to be the starting point for public decision makers wishing to commission deliberative processes and for practitioners wishing to design and organise them. A more detailed set of guidelines for implementing the good practice principles will be published as a follow-up to this report, with details about how to operationalise each of them.



Good practice principles for deliberative processes for public decision making

1

PURPOSE

The objective should be outlined as a clear task and is linked to a defined public problem. It is phrased neutrally as a question in plain language.

2

ACCOUNTABILITY

There should be influence on public decisions. The commissioning public authority should publicly commit to responding to or acting on participants' recommendations in a timely manner.

It should monitor the implementation of all accepted recommendations with regular public progress reports.

3

TRANSPARENCY

The deliberative process should be announced publicly before it begins. The process design and all materials – including agendas, briefing documents, evidence submissions, audio and video recordings of those presenting evidence, the participants' report, their recommendations (the wording of which participants should have a final say over), and the random selection methodology – should be available to the public in a timely manner.

The funding source should be disclosed. The commissioning public authority's response to the recommendations and the evaluation after the process should be publicised and have a public communication strategy.

4

INCLUSIVENESS

Inclusion should be achieved by considering how to involve underrepresented groups. Participation should also be encouraged and supported through remuneration, expenses, and/or providing or paying for childcare and eldercare.

5

REPRESENTATIVENESS

The participants should be a microcosm of the general public. This is achieved through random sampling from which a representative selection is made, based on stratification by demographics (to ensure the group broadly matches the demographic profile of the community against census or other similar data), and sometimes by attitudinal criteria (depending on the context). Everyone should have an equal opportunity to be selected as participants. In some instances, it may be desirable to over-sample certain demographics during the random sampling stage of recruitment to help achieve representativeness.

7

6

INFORMATION

Participants should have access to a wide range of accurate, relevant, and accessible evidence and expertise.

They should have the opportunity to hear from and question speakers that present to them, including experts and advocates chosen by the citizens themselves.

GROUP DELIBERATION

Participants should be able to find common ground to underpin their collective recommendations to the public authority.

This entails careful and active listening, weighing and considering multiple perspectives, every participant having an opportunity to speak, a mix of formats that alternate between small group and plenary discussions and activities, and skilled facilitation.

8

TIME

Deliberation requires adequate time for participants to learn, weigh the evidence, and develop informed recommendations, due to the complexity of most policy problems. To achieve informed citizen recommendations, participants should meet for at least four full days in person, unless a shorter time frame can be justified. It is recommended to allow time for individual learning and reflection in between meetings.

9

INTEGRITY

The process should be run by an arms' length co-ordinating team different from the commissioning public authority. The final call regarding process decisions should be with the arm's length co-ordinators rather than the commissioning authorities. Depending on the context, there should be oversight by an advisory or monitoring board with representatives of different viewpoints.

10

PRIVACY

There should be respect for participants' privacy to protect them from undesired media attention and harassment, as well as to preserve participants' independence, ensuring they are not bribed or lobbied by interest groups or activists. Small group discussions should be private. The identity of participants may be publicised when the process has ended, at the participants' consent. All personal data of participants should be treated in compliance with international good practices, such as the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

EVALUATION

There should be an anonymous evaluation by the participants to assess the process based on objective criteria (e.g. on quantity and diversity of information provided, amount of time devoted to learning, independence of facilitation). An internal evaluation by the co-ordination team should be conducted against the good practice principles in this report to assess what has been achieved and how to improve future practice. An independent evaluation is recommended for some deliberative processes, particularly those that last a significant time. The deliberative process should also be evaluated on final outcomes and impact of implemented recommendations.

11

Alessandro Bellantoni
alessandro.bellantoni@oecd.org

Claudia Chwalisz
claudia.chwalisz@oecd.org

Ieva Cesnulaityte
ieva.cesnulaityte@oecd.org



[@OECDGov](#)

[#OECD OG](#)

[#delibWave](#)



oe.cd/innovative-citizen-participation

medium.com/participo