Citizens Juries

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Tool summary

Citizen Jury is a participatory tool used to involve citizens regarding issues of local or national concern. They can be created by a government body or by a community organization, and are particularly useful for issues where there is a desire for a consensus but where detailed information needs to be weighed and evaluated. Much like a jury in a legal case, a Citizens Jury will receive background information about the issue, hear expert witnesses, and then make a considered "judgment". Used effectively, a Citizens Jury can have a direct impact on decision-making by contributing a well-informed, common-ground solution to a complex and often controversial public issue.

What is it?

The "Citizens Jury" concept was first mooted in the mid 1970s by Ned Crosby, founder of the Jefferson Center in the United States of America. Almost at the same time in Germany, Peter Dienel was developing a similar concept, called *Plannunszelle* or Planning Cell at the Research Institute for Citizens Participation and Planning Methods. Both of these evolved on parallel paths for a decade before finally hearing of each other's work and meeting in 1985. Gradually, word of their work spread and by the mid-1990s, use of the concept and process was well under way in many parts of the world such as the United Kingdom, Australia, India, Canada, and Brazil amongst other regions.

A Citizens Jury is a group of selected members of a community that makes recommendations to decision-makers on a complex issue after a period of investigation and deliberation on the matter. A Citizens Jury is one of the several deliberative methods of public participation_which can be used to improve the democratic process. The advantage of this process is that it is focussed, thorough, and as fair as one could expect, thus giving decision makers a kind of citizen insight on a particular issue that they may otherwise not understand.

It is a tool that can be used by a community organization that wishes to exert public pressure on a government body over a particular issue, or it can be used

as a means of cooperation with decision-makers where there is an openness for effective citizen participation.

In a Citizens Jury initiative, a randomly selected and demographically representative jury, usually consisting of anywhere between 12 to 25 individuals, meets (over three to five days) to hear evidence and make recommendations on an issue of public concern. Jurors are typically paid a stipend for their time. The jurors call and cross-examine witnesses who represent a range of perspectives and opinions. After hearing the evidence, the jurors take the time to deliberate together and develop a consensus on the question or questions they have been asked to address. On the final day of their hearing, Jury members present their recommendations to the public and to the media.

The Jury's sessions are usually overseen by an 'Oversight Panel' - a group of external observers or stakeholders who represent a diverse range of interests. The role of the panel is to monitor and evaluate the fairness and credibility of the entire process.

How is it done?

1. Preparations:

- Secure funding – If a non-governmental organization is taking the lead organizational role, ensure there is funding, ideally from more than one source to avoid any suspicion that organizers have an interest in seeing a certain verdict.
- Set up an Oversight Panel – It should be composed of a range of stakeholders with general knowledge of the issue. They will oversee the process, provide focus to the issue before the jury, and ensure overall fairness.
- Select 2 or 3 qualified and skilled moderators to guide the jurors and ensure each has time to make their voice heard.
- Jury selection – Identify potential jurors through random and scientific method, and place them all into a jury pool; categorize members of the jury pool on the basis of pre-determined variables, such as age, gender, race and occupation; track the jury pool using a grid containing the pre-determined variables. For the final jury selection, select identification numbers off the grid until all targets are met.
- Witness selection – Select expert witnesses who will provide a range of views, to ensure jurors are presented a balanced picture of the issue.
- Clearly define the issue facing the Jury.
- Prepare a plan to publicly convey the outcome of the Jury to the appropriate government body, and to invite media coverage. An effective

media strategy and a wider public dissemination of results is essential for achieving the desired impact through a Citizens Jury initiative.

2. Hearings:

- Set the agenda and timeframe of the hearings
- The first day of the hearings orientates the Jury to the Citizens Jury process and provides a general overview of the issue
- Subsequent days should be carefully planned to give the Jury time to hear from witnesses, ask questions, and deliberate.
- One of the principal purposes of a Citizens Jury is to raise public awareness and knowledge of the issue at hand. Where policy reform or government action is required to address the issue, mobilising public opinion and pressure is the key. Press coverage of the jury process and a wider public dissemination of findings is therefore essential for achieving impact.
- On the final day of the hearing, the Jury should publicize its findings and recommendations in a public forum and to the media.

3. Evaluation and follow-up:

- Work with the media and the community groups to ensure a wider dissemination of Jury findings and recommendations.
- Follow-up with government authorities is crucial for the implementation of Jury's recommendations.
- Ask all jurors to complete an evaluation of the project, including the process, agenda and project staff.
- Invite jurors to return for a follow-up evaluation, in a public forum such as a press conference, to discuss how their recommendations have been handled by the government body in question.

A more detailed description of the Citizen Jury process can be found in the Citizen Jury Handbook, a publication of Jefferson Centre.

Benefits

- Provides an effective way to involve citizens from diverse backgrounds in developing a well-informed and thoughtful judgment on a public problem or issue
- Provides an opportunity for a group of representative citizens to put forward a fresh perspective on a difficult public issue
- The small size of the group allows for in-depth discussion of the issues and extensive consideration of all participant views

- Improves representation in participative processes by engaging a cross section of the community in the jury
- Brings legitimacy and democratic control to non-elected public bodies
- Creates informed and engaged citizenry
- Builds public awareness around a specific issue of concern.
- Frequently leads to increased public support for the resulting policy.

Challenges and lessons

- Only a small number of people can directly participate
- Involves considerable costs for participants and/or for those who organize the Citizens Jury
- Ensuring the Jury selection process is rigorous so that members are truly representative and persons with integrity
- The Jury needs access to relevant sources of information and needs to be able to obtain accurate answers from the witnesses they question
- The time and resource constraints of the process can limit the extent to which full diversity of opinions on a topic can emerge
- Recognizing that unless the authorities have given a prior commitment, they are not necessarily obliged to act on the Jury's recommendations.
- Highly controversial issues must be treated with care to avoid exacerbating tension or conflict.
- Citizens Juries often fail to provide opportunities for communities to evaluate the process.

Key resources

Jefferson Center, USA

http://www.jefferson-center.org

☞ Jefferson Center based in USA is one of the pioneering institutions in advancing Citizen Juries as a tool to promote participatory governance. Their website and particularly the Citizen Juries Hand Book is a treasure house of information and a comprehensive 'how to do' guide on citizen Juries.

Supplementary resources

Abelson, J, Forest, PG, Eyles, J, Smith, P, Martin, E. and FP Gauvin (2001) 'Deliberations about deliberation: issues in the design and evaluation of public consultation processes', McMaster University Centre for Health Economics and Policy Analysis, Research Working Paper 01- 04, June 2001.

http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6VBF-47VH0XJ-1&_user=10&_rdoc=1&_fmt=&_orig=search&_sort=d&_docanchor=&view=c&_searchStrId=1012241754&_rerunOrigin=google&_acct=C000050221&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=10&md5=09187c45759593c0fa53bcf695e4e7ca

☞ Drawing from an extensive critical review of literature, the article explores various deliberative methods for public involvement including Citizen Juries and general principles that can be used to guide the design and evaluation of public involvement processes for the health-care sector in particular.

Carson, Lyn et al - ,"Citizens Juries in Australia: A discussion about protocols". 2000.

http://www.activedemocracy.net/articles/protocol.pdf

☞ Set in the Australian context and aimed at practitioners of Citizens Juries, the article provides a detailed set of must and must not do's to ensure effectiveness of Citizen Juries

Center for Policy & Development, Australia

http://cpd.org.au/article/citizens-juries-basis-for-health-policy

☞ The article, “Citizens Juries: A basis for health policy whoever wins elections?”, authored by Gavin Moooney in October 2007 describes the advantages of Citizen Juries over other methods of participatory democracy particularly for public policy formulation.

Flynn, Brendan - “Planning Cells and Citizen Juries in Environmental Policy: Deliberation and Its Limits”, in “Public Participation and Better Environmental Decisions”, edited by Frans Coenen, 2009, pages 57-71:

http://www.springerlink.com/content/n654p2r71016v854/

☞ The article gives a brief background of the idea of Citizen Jury and then moves on to discuss some comparative experiences with Citizen Juries. This is followed by a more in-depth and critical evaluation of a trial Citizen Jury on waste policy held in Ireland which was administered by the author of this resource.

Huitema, David and Marleen van de Kerkhof (2007) “The nature of the beast: are citizens’ juries deliberative or pluralist?”, Policy Sci, November 2007, 40:287–311: www.springerlink.com/index/D543569N15320X48.pdf

☞ Drawing from the experiences of two Dutch Juries, the article presents a theoretical argument aimed at improving the understanding about the design of the Citizens’ Jury from the perspectives of both pluralist reasoning and deliberative democracy. International Institute of Environment & Development IIED), United Kingdom

http://www.iied.org/natural-resources/key-issues/food-and-agriculture/deliberative-democracy-citizens-juries

☞ The web link provides a description of IIED’s Citizen Juries project in India and Mali. In India, a Citizen Jury was set up in the state of Andhra Pradesh to interrogate the controversial farming policy of the state government, while in Mali, it was constituted to interrogate the issue of Genetically Modified Organisms in relation to the future of farming in Mali.

Pimbert and Wakeford (2001) ‘Deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment, PLA Notes, Number 40, Part 9 - Citizen Juries: reflections on the UK experience, by Clare Delap

http://www.planotes.org/documents/plan_04009.pdf

☞ This article gives an overview of the Citizens Jury approach as it has been adopted in the United Kingdom. Using examples from two Citizens' Jury processes in Scotland, it examines how Citizens' Juries can enable local people to make a difference to policy, but only if they are run in an open and public manner and if they address locally relevant issues

Plannunszelle, Germany
http://www.planungszelle.de/index.html

☞ Like Jefferson Center, Plannungszelle situated in Germany is another pioneering institutions concerned with Citizens Jury. Their website, though primarily in German has some useful information on Citizens Juries in English

Wakeford, Tom (2002) Citizens Juries: a radical alternative for social research, Social Research Update, Issue 37, 2002, University of Sussex: http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU37.html

☞ Tracing the evolution of the concept and method of Citizen Juries, the article provides a critical assessment of both the potentials and the pitfalls of Citizen Juries and argues that if used judiciously, Citizen Juries can offer a powerful participatory tool.

Vancouver Community Net, Canada

http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/compareparticipation.pdf

☞ The article describes Citizen Juries along with 17 other methods of public consultation, both deliberative and non deliberative while enumerating strengths and weaknesses of each method and a list of recommendations for their application

Case studies

AUSTRALIA: In the Far North Queensland in Australia, a Citizens Jury was initiated to consider management options for a hotly contested road in the region. A research report found that the policy preferences of the jurors changed considerably over the process, with a strong convergence towards consensus. The conclusions were based on reason and judgement, rather than symbolic cues that dominate the politics. The issue itself remained hotly contested and was not immediately resolved.

Source: Niemeyer, S & Blamey, R (2000) Deliberation in the wilderness: the far north Queensland citizens' jury, Australian National University, Canberra. http://cjp.anu.edu.au/docs/FNQCJ.pdf

INDIA: In 2001 in India, the Andhra Pradesh Coalition in Defence of Diversity, with numerous partners, organized a Citizen Jury to provide a voice for small farmers and rural people in the government's controversial plan to re-shape farming policy. The Jury, of which members were drawn from communities of small and marginal farmers, discussed the government's rural development plan that proposed to introduce production-enhancing technologies in farming and food processing, such as genetically modified crops. The jurors were able to interrogate a range of witnesses, including those from the government of Andhra Pradesh, a trans-national agrochemical company, Universities, local NGOs and government advisory panels. Although there was a diversity of opinion among the Jury participants, there was widespread agreement over the key issues of community control over resources and livelihood, and they issued a specific statement about the policy proposes that they favoured and those they opposed.

Source: http://www.indiatogether.org/agriculture/reports/teerpu.htm

BRITISH COLUMBIA,, CANADA: In 2004, residents in the Canadian province of British Columbia organized a Citizens Assembly in an effort to come up with a more representative system of voting. The Assembly was composed of a representative, non-partisan group of 160 people. It held public hearings and received more than 1,600 written submissions. It recommended a voting system that it believed would produce fairer result for voters and more political parties. The process was considered a success. However, two referendums (in 2005 and 2009) failed to achieve the 60% approval level set by the Legislature.

Source: http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca/public; http://www.fairvote.ca

Additional case study resources

http://activedemocracy.net/case_studies.htm

Analysis of two Italian citizen juries (Journal of Public Deliberation):
http://services.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1036&context=jpd

Britain: http://www.communityinvolvement.org.uk/CitizenJury.html

BBC Radio 4's Citizen Jury experience, September 2005:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/reports/politics/citizenjury_reading_20050908.shtml