



# Wisdom Council / Citizens' Council / Bürger:innenrat



Randomly selected citizens who convene regularly to find improvements and solutions for issues of public matter, ultimately presenting the results to the public.



Information  
Ideation  
**Consultation**  
**Co-Decision**



**<15 people**  
15-30 people  
30-100 people  
100-250 people  
> 250 people



**Preparation:**  
1-3 months for invitation of the participants etc.  
**Implementation:**  
1-3 days  
**Follow-up:**  
1-3 days for analysis and documentation



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Resources for a workshop



**At least one person** for preparation, moderation and documentation

## The Method: What is it, when to use it and what outcome to expect

Wisdom Councils are deliberating events that take place repeatedly and where stakeholders of communities or organizations (e.g. NGOs, cities, schools, governments) together discuss an issue to find a unified perspective. Participants are selected from the respective circle randomly each time and results are promoted to the interested outside, enabling circle-wide dialogue. It aims at not only improving a situation but transforming it over time.

Wisdom Councils are great for especially problematic, complex, re-occurring, and/or unsolvable issues that hold many perspectives and affect many in the circle.

Wisdom Councils create a space of respect, support, appreciation and sharing with emotions. It results in one shared perspective and strengthened self-organization.

## The Process: How to conduct it in an in-person setting or online using a PC/laptop with video option

The method follows three steps:

- 1. Preparation:** Participants (traditionally 12 persons) for the upcoming Wisdom Council are chosen randomly from the respective circle so they represent the larger population.
- 2. Convening:** The Wisdom Council receives an issue to work on or set one themselves, convenes, helped by a Dynamic Facilitator, starts the choice creating, going through breakthroughs and shifts, seeking win/win answers and unified perspective. Contributions are made authentically, involving emotions. The facilitator notes each comment into one of four categories, each shown on a separate poster or space on a virtual whiteboard: **Statements** – for any comments on the issue, **Ideas** – for any solutions, **Concerns** – for any questions and challenges towards the solutions, and **Data** – for all comments, info, data that cannot fit into one of the others. The work continues until a unified perspective on the issue is found.
- 3. Presenting:** The result and unified statement is shared with the larger circle, asking for feedback, and may be worked on at the following Wisdom Council.

### Blended participation

Especially when conducted digitally, the moderation is very important. It can be part of a bigger change process which happens on- and offline but needs to be facilitated accordingly. In any case, the results and rationale must be shared with all participants, virtually and if necessary offline.

### Digital communication

Digital communication is great for a randomized selection of participants (e.g. from the register of a municipality or a contact list). The results need to be communicated with the relevant group to ensure that everyone is reached, digital communication should be combined with offline communication.

### Good to know

- Similarities with and sometimes alike with Citizen Assembly, Citizen Jury, and other mini-publics, depending on nation of origin and context
- Consider to select 8-20 people per each Council
- Approach it as a choice-creating process and building resonance than 'just' decision-making
- Usually, it's moderated with Dynamic Facilitation: <https://participedia.net/method/1692>
- Each participant's contribution should be valued and the facilitator is protector and promoter of this
- 12 principles: <https://www.wisedemocracy.org/12-principles-of-wisdom-council.html>
- Read further:
  - <https://participedia.net/method/6227>
  - <https://www.wisedemocracy.org>
  - <https://www.buergerrat.net/english-version/>