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Convening and commissioning

Both political and executive buy-in are essential. Without it, resources, regulation, and impact will be difficult to secure and unsustainable. To secure that support it is vital to be able to illustrate how it will work and how it can be of benefit for the organisation, and for politicians. It is often important to be able to demonstrate that power is not a zero-sum game and that deliberative democracy can support representative democracy. Nothing convinces better than seeing deliberative assemblies in action.

Delivering

Our current models of governance and policy making are not set up to embrace alternative processes like citizen assemblies or juries. While public servants may see the benefits of involving the public, it is not an important skill in their recruitment. This means staff are neither confident or competent to commission or deliver deliberative processes.

In Scotland after delivering two full Citizen Assemblies there was strong political support to consider how that way of working could be embedded in the Government's reform programme. In 2021 an Expert Working Group on the Institutionalisation of Participatory and Deliberative Democracy [IPDD] was formed {reports here⁸}. Made up of practitioners, academics and public servants with strong national and international involvement it met to share learning to consider:

- Scale and scope – what would be included
- Agree Standards, values and principles to be followed
- Advise on the governance to ensure credibility, transparency and external oversight
- Advise on resources and infrastructure to drive the change (both inside government and in civil society)

The most important difference between single assemblies and an institutionalised process is the governance requirements. The report's recommendations centre on establishing infrastructure that supports high quality,



8. [Report of the Institutionalising Participatory and Deliberative Democracy Working Group \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/institutionalising-participatory-and-deliberative-democracy-working-group-reports/supporting-document-standards-values-and-principles/pages/12_to_14.aspx)
[Institutionalising Participatory and Deliberative Democracy Working Group report: supporting document - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\) - standards values and principles](https://www.gov.scot/publications/institutionalising-participatory-and-deliberative-democracy-working-group-reports/supporting-document-standards-values-and-principles/pages/12_to_14.aspx)
[Institutionalising Participatory and Deliberative Democracy working group recommendations: Scottish Government response - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/institutionalising-participatory-and-deliberative-democracy-working-group-reports/scottish-government-response/pages/12_to_14.aspx)



routine involvement of people in decisions affecting them, with a focus on ensuring the engagement of people furthest from government. In particular the Working Group recommended that such change needed a skilled team to drive the range of changes necessary and uphold the values and principles.

Their report makes 19 recommendations across two key themes: embedding a range of participatory and democratic innovations, which can be used as a basis to establish routine use of Citizens' Assemblies in Scotland. Work has progressed on some of the recommendations but the fiscal position has led to a re-prioritising how this work is done. This experience emphasises the need to

- have buy-in and strong leadership in all parts of the system.
 - Have a clear articulation of the benefits for all actors and a clear plan of how decisions are made and by whom - who makes decisions and who can influence them
 - Set out the standards values and principles for your jurisdiction and say how deliberation can improve the Policy Cycle to meet the priorities of elected politicians and the public
 - Recognising roles and responsibilities - Understanding the infrastructure needed, set out the size of teams needed, the training and skills development required across the system, as well as the potential cost of initial investment alongside the potential for cost savings.
- Agree what skills are required in house and what are better commissioned from experts
 - Ensure that the resources you have available matches your ambition at all points even if that means starting small and growing capacity.
 - Set out the oversight and scrutiny system that might include Parliament, Auditors, independent expert oversight groups specifically appointed for the task with clear reporting lines
 - Provide guidance and training for policy officials and other stakeholders so they understand the costs, the timescales and the need for impact. This will help to identify skills gap and training needs both inside and outside government.
 - Finally, understand that this way of working is relatively new and untested – so research and evaluation must be core to ensuring democratic innovations are learning and evolving effectively.(Resisting the temptation to mark your own homework)

In Scotland doing this in depth work, which built on the views we had heard in our first citizen assembly, led us to identify particular gaps and enabled the group to identify priority actions over three time frames to build deliberation into our system of working. Although we are not there yet, work is underway to make progress and the report may help others to work out their route.