

Better Regulation Executive

DEPARTMENT FOR BUSINESS
ENTERPRISE & REGULATORY REFORM



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Citizens' Juries and Deliberative Forums

Citizens' Juries aim to give ordinary citizens a stronger role in democratic decision-making. A jury is made up of a small panel of 12 - 15 lay people who are not experts on the topic under discussion, nor members of interest groups or other key stakeholder organisations. Over the course of a day or more, the jury hears 'evidence' from a range of experts before discussing the issues amongst themselves and reaching a conclusion on the policy options available.

Citizens' juries are a useful gauge of public opinion and may also indicate how public views may change when presented with all available information and a broad range of options and arguments.

Citizens' juries are usually only used to assess public opinion on high profile or contentious issues. However, you should remember that the views of 15 people will not be representative of the entire public spectrum and that you will have to consider the jury's views alongside those obtained through more far-reaching consultation methods. You should also be aware that citizens' juries can become very expensive: you may have to pay for the time / expertise of your chosen speakers and will probably have to pay expenses - and for the time - of your jurors. And since they are spending a considerable amount of time getting involved in policy-making discussions, it is important too that you manage the expectations of your jurors carefully.

Like citizens' juries, **Deliberative Forums** seek the views of a random sample of people and allow them to formulate opinions about policy options having heard presentations and arguments from a range of experts and key stakeholders. Deliberative forums are run for a much larger audience - usually at least 100 people are invited. They are often high profile and reported on by local or even national media. For these reasons, deliberative forums are really only appropriate for consulting on big, far-reaching issues.

Deliberative forums can again be useful to gain an indication of public opinion as well as to chart changes in opinion. There is evidence to show that in many cases, participants' original perceptions about a policy idea alter markedly having heard a broad range of ideas, options and arguments. Think carefully about how you might measure changes in opinion and how you might record the views of those attending.

Again, it is vital that you manage the expectations of those participating in your forum and give them feedback as the policy develops.

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