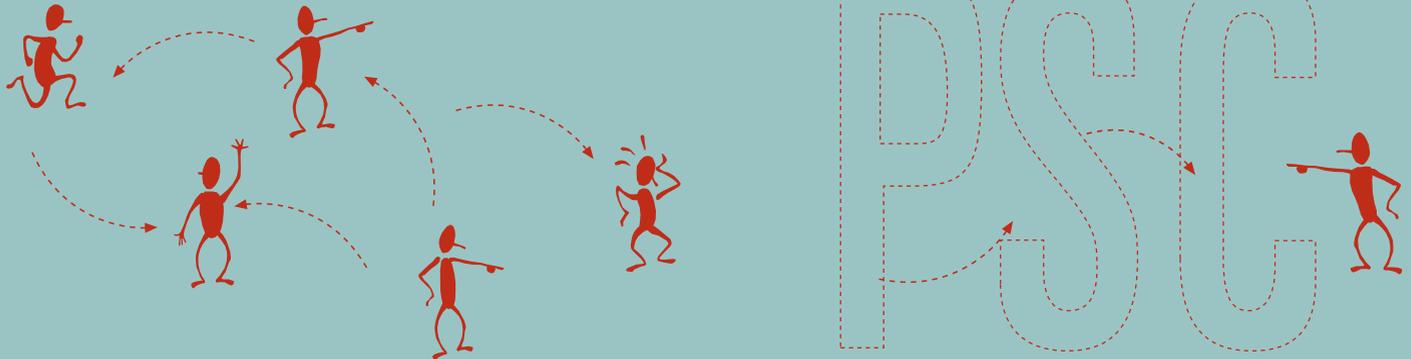


STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE



STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO HOLDING CITIZENS' FORUMS



STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

TO HOLDING CITIZENS' FORUMS

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Introduction

The Public Service Commission (PSC) has developed a toolkit containing an Instructional Video and a Step-by-Step Guide to the Implementation of Citizens' Forums.

The toolkit aims to give an overview of what Citizens' Forums are and how to organize and actually conduct them.

The Citizens' Forums concept

The PSC has undertaken to develop tools and methodologies that will promote the incorporation of the views and perceptions of citizens in the process of service delivery.

A number of different citizens' participation methods used in other countries were explored, including citizens' juries and the traditions of democratic public action in India, Nicaragua and the Philippines.

Given the rich tradition of popular participation in South Africa, the PSC, working in cooperation with the National Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration, developed an approach called "Citizens' Forums" that allows for significant participation by representative citizen groupings in service delivery improvement.

Citizens' Forums involve public service institutions working with citizens to propose practical measures to improve service delivery.

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The approach is programme-specific: i.e. it does not look at a department in its entirety. It is not just a problem identification exercise but a solution-seeking consultation as well.

Citizens are invited to participate in assessing particular programmes and to suggest practical improvements. Participants are directed away from just being critical to also making practical recommendations for dealing with identified challenges.

Citizens' Forums are educational and empowering and also address the challenge of cultural diversity, socio-economic inequalities and meaningful public participation in South Africa. People from diverse backgrounds are able to contribute to effective policy implementation and improved service delivery.

If used correctly the Citizens' Forum can serve as a powerful mechanism to complement other participatory approaches such as Izimbizo i.e outreach events for national and provincial Cabinets in which the President and provincial Cabinet members engage citizens at grassroots level in service delivery issues.



Aims and Objectives of Citizens' Forums

Aims

Citizens' Forums aim to achieve:

- Improved citizen participation in the processes of service delivery decision-making and policy formulation.
- Better understanding of community social and economic needs.
- Effective and efficient use of public resources and improved service delivery.
- Sustainable economic and social transformation.
- An empowered, informed and educated citizenry.
- Partnerships between different spheres of government and citizens.
- Improved governance and greater accountability.

Objectives

The purpose of conducting Citizens' Forums is to evaluate the delivery of particular services throughout the country, and to enable the active involvement of people affected by government programmes in service delivery improvement processes.

Citizens' Forums assist departments to assess policy outcomes – they help determine whether a department's actions are having a negative or positive impact on the community.

The results of Citizens' Forums should help departments to allocate resources to their service delivery improvement plans and to achieve their goals.

Furthermore, views and needs of the previously marginalized communities and the public service beneficiaries are taken into consideration.

A Step-by-Step Guide to holding Citizens' Forums

General notes

It must be noted that Citizens' Forums are a time-consuming and labour-intensive project, but that they deliver meaningful and powerful results.

Clear information on the subject to be discussed should be given before the commencement of a forum

and the purpose of the forum should be clarified.

Enough time to deliberate over the identified subject (between the information session and actual forum) should be allowed so that participants can make informed decisions.

It is important that the loop be completed. If Citizens' Forums are held but the rest of the process

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is left incomplete, the participants will feel frustrated and manipulated. This will have a negative impact on government /community relations.

Commitment from top structures in government must be ensured, as some recommendations emerging from the forums will have budgetary implications and may also have an impact on existing policies.

Care must be taken to avoid party-political dynamics and tensions. The forums should concentrate on service delivery improvement for all.

Skilled and experienced facilitators are needed to successfully host Citizens' Forums and to ensure that

everyone participates and is guaranteed an equal opportunity to speak. No set of interests should be allowed to dominate.

Facilitators should take care to ensure that the language used is user-friendly and appropriate.



It is usually a good idea to have translators present.

If possible, the group should not be too large, since it can become unwieldy and hard to manage, making it difficult to take collective decisions. Ideally, the group should consist of no more than 50 people.

Places that people find easy of access should be chosen for conducting forums.

Since people are being expected to contribute their time to the process, it may be a good idea to provide transport, if



necessary. Meals and refreshments could also be served.

The departments' responses to the recommendations emerging from the forums should be written down in a report format and feedback given to participants.

The facilitating agency should monitor the implementation of recommendations and also submit trend reports. The involvement of communities in this exercise is recommended.

Who should be involved?

Citizens' Forums need to be organized as a partnership between facilitating agencies such as the Provincial Standing Committees, National Portfolio Committees, NGOs and any structure involved in improving governance that will take responsibility for driving the process through to conclusion. Affected departments should be involved at an early stage for them to be encouraged to take ownership of the process.



Citizens' Forums should aim to involve everyone who uses or who is affected by a public service.

Excluding anyone is likely to reduce the desired impact of the Citizens' Forum.

In most areas there are community-based organizations (CBOs), often organized around a particular issue or by a certain group of people, such as women, young people or workers.

These CBOs are a potentially useful point of contact and should be consulted and invited to participate.

Steps to be followed:

Step One: Preparation

Preparations for holding a Citizens' Forum should include initial consultations with the affected political structures.

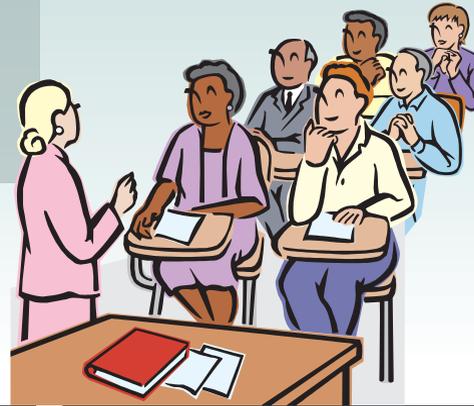
In a provincial context this is likely to be the Provincial Executive Committee and a relevant Standing Committee.

Presentations and briefings may be needed to inform and advise these parties as to what is intended and involved.

At these consultations the criteria for choosing the location of Citizens' Forums should be agreed upon. Separate consultations with Members of Executive Councils (MECs) and Heads of Department (HoDs)

may also be needed. Once these consultations have been completed, the site for the Citizens' Forum should be selected and the specific programme (i.e. the subject of the forum) should be agreed upon.

A steering committee should be formed that will take responsibility for organizing the event. This should include representatives from the affected department, local government, the facilitating



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agency and perhaps the Premier's Office. Pre-consultations at community level should be undertaken, where citizens can be informed about the forum and briefed about the programme under discussion.

The community should be asked to identify issues of concern around the programme. Subsequent follow-up meetings arranged by district managers may also be held to ensure a common understanding of the process.

Activities should be undertaken to promote the forum and to solicit ideas for discussion. These activities could include presentations on radio talk shows, advertisements in the local press and other promotional efforts. People should be specifically invited to participate either in their individual capacity or as members of a group.

Local groups may wish to prepare separate submissions for presentation at the Citizens' Forum or they could choose to be part of a district submission. It may be advisable to report back to the senior political structures, such as the Provincial Executive Committee or relevant MEC, on progress in preparing for Citizens' Forums so that they are fully briefed and can therefore be supportive.



Step Two: Holding a forum

Forums usually take place over two days, with the first day being dedicated to hearing submissions and presentations from the community and to developing a shared understanding of the specific services under discussion and the challenges that are being faced. The sessions last eight hours, usually starting at 8h00 and finishing at 16h00. (See page 19 for a forum agenda format.)

A panel, which includes representatives of the facilitating agency and experts on local and technical matters, (i.e. the subject that is being discussed) is appointed at the start of the first day. A panel should consist of no more than five members. A representative of the facilitating agency should chair and facilitate the process.

A high degree of participation from the floor should be encouraged during the first day.

Questions should be invited and people should be encouraged to seek clarity on any matters they wish to have elucidated.

The first day should end with the identification of a number of broad themes that will serve as a framework for discussion on the following day.



On-site visits are recommended at the end of the first day, where possible, so as to obtain information relating to service delivery from front-line staff.

The second day should start with a recap of the previous day's discussion and agreement as to whether the themes are appropriate and useful.

Participants should then be divided into small groups, with each group discussing one of the themes. Each small group should discuss positive and negative features of the theme. For each negative feature or practice identified in the group, a simple, practical recommendation for improving performance should be made.

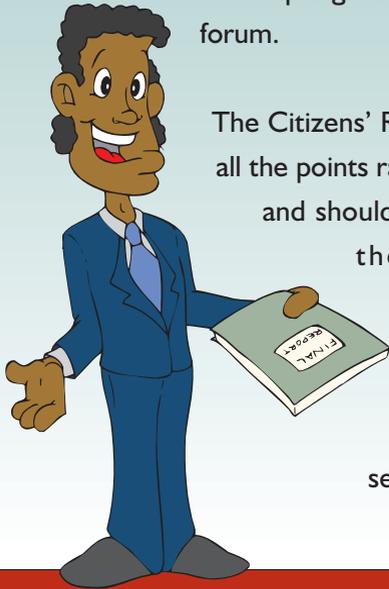
A plenary report-back session should then be held at which each group's recommendations are presented and the next steps to be taken are agreed upon.

The final session of the forum should involve the identification of actions for service delivery improvement that will be included in a monitoring agreement.



Step three: Drawing up a Citizens' Report

The facilitating agency now has the responsibility for compiling a detailed report on the forum.



The Citizens' Report should cover all the points raised at the meeting and should reflect as much of the discussion as possible.

A draft of the report should be sent for comment to

the interest group representatives and to those who have registered as individuals through the participating department's district offices. These comments should be included in the final version of the report.

The report should then be used to report back to the higher political structures, such as the MEC or Provincial Executive Committee.

See page 20 for a Citizens' Report format.



Step Four: Identifying agreements with the Department

A workshop should be held with the department concerned, at which the recommendations contained in the Citizens' Forum report are individually considered.

A decision should be made to accept or reject each recommendation. Reasons should be given for rejecting any recommendations. Usually recommendations are rejected because they fall outside the department's mandate due to legal and/or policy implications.

For recommendations that are accepted time frames should be determined and the people and structures

responsible identified.

The final agreements reached between the department and the facilitating agency should be formatted into a formal plan that can be easily monitored.

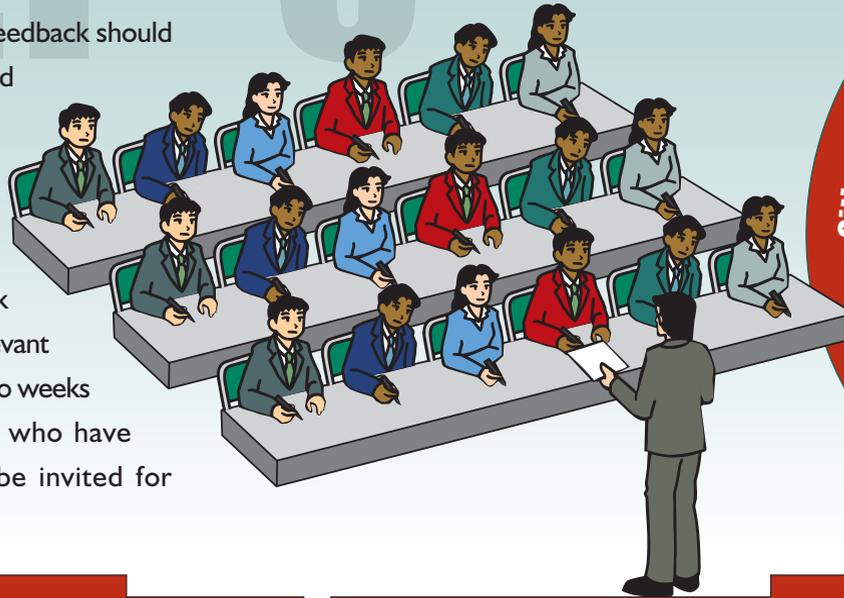


Step Five: Giving feedback to the community

A meeting should now be held at which feedback is given to the community on the agreements reached.

The people involved in giving the feedback should come from the department and should have a clear understanding of the specific service delivery processes and the Citizens' Forum project. Invitations to attend the feedback sessions should be delivered to relevant communities on time, i.e. at least two weeks before the event. Only people who have previously participated should be invited for

continuity purposes and to avoid creating situations where the forum is re-opened.



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Step Six: Monitoring and evaluation

The facilitating agency should monitor and evaluate the implementation of the recommendations to which the department has committed itself.

This should involve both a qualitative and a quantitative analysis of the impact of the implementation of the recommendations.

After a reasonable time has elapsed (at least twelve months after the feedback sessions) the facilitating agency should return to the community and investigate whether the commitments made by the

department have been kept. The specific items previously agreed upon should be researched. The department should also be visited to determine what changes have taken place after implementing Citizens' Forum recommendations.



A report reflecting trends should be compiled, based on the findings of the field visits. The report should be widely circulated to all parties who participated in the process.

The facilitating agency should also consciously reflect on what has been achieved and carefully consider the usefulness of the whole Citizens' Forum process.

The success of a Citizens' Forum is determined by the extent and quality of a department's implementation of the recommendations emanating from the forum.

It may be a good idea to link the recommendations reached at the Citizens' Forum to departmental service delivery improvement plans and their

performance management systems to ensure implementation.

Potential Risks

Citizens' Forums have the potential to make a positive impact on service delivery, but also carry several risks, which need to be tightly managed.

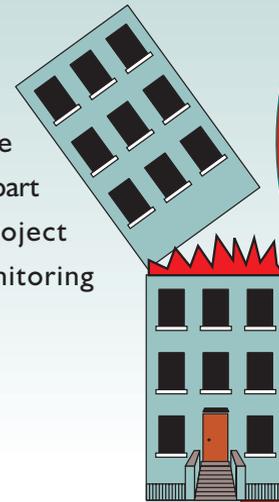
These include:

- The size of the group involved in the forum becomes too large to manage. In such cases, individuals attending the meeting may elect to disrupt the process. By the same token, powerful groups or individuals may dominate the debate, thus undermining genuine participation.

- The forums become complaints sessions; with individuals trying to impress that government only imposes programmes that are detrimental to their interests.
- Forums being hijacked or becoming a floor for party politics talks.
- Forums are convened in areas where communities are not cohesive, leading to lack of cooperation, particularly when it comes to implementation of decisions that require further community input.
- Raised expectations amongst the public leading to later disillusion because of lack of clarity by the facilitating agency as to the nature of involvement.

- Participative processes may be highly successful in one area or context, but unsuccessful in another.
- Lack of follow up on the proposals made, thus discrediting the Forums as a real platform for participatory governance.

A risk management framework should be developed and become part and parcel of the project management and monitoring system.



Conclusion

It is believed that this document will give the best guidance to the institutions planning to conduct forums on their own.

For better understanding, this guide should be used with the Citizens' Forums Instructional Video.



CITIZENS' FORUMS FOR SERVICE DELIVERY

DATE
VENUE
TIME

DAY ONE

Programme Manager -

1. Registration
2. Welcome by the Mayor
3. Opening by the Member of Parliament
4. Outline of the process by the facilitating agency
5. Presentation of the programme to be discussed – Departmental representative

TEA BREAK - 10H30

6. Overview report – community representative
7. Community presentations (hearings) based on previously identified challenges
8. Break away groups

LUNCH BREAK - 13H00

9. Plenary report back
10. Summary of events
11. Site visits (where possible)

DAY TWO:

1. Registration
2. Opening (outline process for the day/recap)

TEA BREAK – 11H00

3. Group Discussions

LUNCH BREAK - 13 H00

4. Group discussions
5. Presentations – Group representatives
6. Consolidating recommendations – facilitator
7. Citizens' Report process and way forward
8. Closing remarks

FORMAT FOR A CITIZENS' REPORT:

NAME OF THE FACILITATING INSTITUTION

Report on a Citizens' Forum:
Focusing on service delivery

- Remember to attach an attendance list to this Report

Case study
number:

Date meeting was
held:

Name of area
and province:

Background and
introduction:

The following information should be included in this section:

- ☞ Regional information based on social and economic development, e.g. poverty level, literacy rate, employment opportunities, population details, etc.
- ☞ Process followed in identifying specific subjects for discussion at the forum.
- ☞ List of organized communities that attended and how they came to know about the forum.
- ☞ Departments represented on the panel of discussants and programme facilitators (chairpersons).
- ☞ First day's proceedings leading to identification of broad themes in preparation for the following day's workshop.
- ☞ List of identified broad themes. It is recommended that the broad themes should range between three and five in number.
- ☞ Outline of the second day's proceedings.



<i>Theme</i>	+	<i>What positive practices or experiences were noted?</i>	-	<i>What negative practices or experiences were noted?</i>
Themes should be addressed individually. <u>Theme 1</u> <u>Theme 2</u> <u>Theme 3</u>	✍	In bullet form, write down all positive experiences identified by participants whilst in contact with service providers or whilst at the service delivery point.	✍	In bullet form, write down all negative experiences identified by participants whilst in contact with service providers or whilst at the service delivery point.

Service Delivery Improvement Recommendations	
<i>Recommendation:</i>	<i>Made by:</i>
✍ List recommendations made under each theme. <u>Theme 1</u> <u>Theme 2</u> <u>Theme 3</u>	✍ Indicate who actually made the recommendation (e.g. youth organization).



Service delivery improvement agreements: Items to be monitored

What needs to be monitored	By whom	How often and when
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidated list of recommendations per theme addressed. <p>Theme 1 Theme 2 Theme 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who should implement the recommendation (e.g. Department of Health). 	<p>E.g. quarterly, continuously, half-yearly, etc.</p>

Way Forward

Area	Responsibility	Time line
<p>List all activities to come after the forum is held. The following should be included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback to the MEC Feedback to the provincial EXCO Workshop with the department whereby the recommendations will be refined. Feedback to the community Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of recommendations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitating agency Facilitating agency Facilitating agency and relevant department Facilitating agency and relevant department Facilitating agency and relevant department 	<p>Give time indication when each activity will be undertaken. Be realistic as far as possible, since this is a long process that involves many role players.</p>

Report completed by: _____ **Contact details:** _____
(Name and position)

Date: _____



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