

## Open Government Partnership Civic Participation Subgroup

### **Status update:**

To ensure a fair, open and transparent process, a track-changed version is available to show the changes since Johnny's circulation yesterday evening in appendix 1.

Due to time commitments, I will consider this in the context of the commitment template on Monday.

Below is the current version of text co-developed by sub-group members.

### **DRAFT Ambition**

Our ambition is to co-design an emergent framework that provides guidance for government, public bodies and local government to achieve a process of deliberative engagement for citizens in the formation of public policy and programmes in Ireland.

We aim to create a framework that will promote a process for civic engagement that is:

- Designed with integrity;
- Is fair, transparent, representative and can be trusted;
- Is inclusive, especially of marginalized communities,
- Based on sound deliberation and judgement, with participants having an equal chance to speak, listen carefully to others, and weigh different options and trade-offs;
- Informs and influences recommendations and actions and
- Results in outcomes that have a positive impact for the public and on decision-making at all levels and .

It will: -

- Enhance the ability of government, public bodies and local government, to better consult and engage citizens to meaningfully participate in shaping policies and programmes that affect them;
- Better inform policy-making and to enhance the level of successful implementation and respond to community concerns;
- Support and heighten the quality of interactions between civil society and government, public bodies and local government;
- Provide a commitment to routinely and proactively engaging citizens and civil society in open dialogues and constructive feedback and;
- Facilitate greater participation amongst diverse communities to ensure representation of Irish society
- Coordinate events with citizens and communities of interest on specific issues of importance to communities.
- Generate greater trust in the process of civic engagement

### **DRAFT Commitment:**

To progress the Participatory Governance Framework ambition, this first commitment will:

Strengthen engagement and governance by:

- Establishing the Civic Forum which will be an avenue for high-level engagement with Civil Society (Lead: DRCD).
- Strengthening and deepening the Social Dialogue processes with the active participation of the various parties, including Civil Society (Lead: D/Taoiseach, with support of the relevant Departments/Agencies )

Enhance civic participation by:

- Securing Government approval for an agreed set of values and principles for collaborative working with the Community and Voluntary Sector (Lead: DRCD).
- Updating the Public Consultation principles and guidance for Government Departments, public bodies to reflect the new values and principles and communication (Lead: DPER).
- Co-developing a participatory process, with early stakeholder engagement and review of 'status quo', to inform co-developed agreed SMART recommendations for Round Table consideration (Lead: Round Table Civic Partition sub-group).

#### **Public problem that the commitment will address**

##### **What is the visible problem?**

Community and voluntary organisations and individuals perceive public consultation processes to be ineffective (or untrustworthy) for a variety of reasons, including the lack of timely feedback on progress or transparency on why certain proposals were progressed and others were not

The same voices get heard in consultation processes and other voices, often within marginalised communities, do not, leading to disengagement with the process and distrust in the product of the process

##### **What are the underlying causes?**

Guidance for public engagement processes may be outdated and need to be updated to reflect the scale, depth and reach of public engagement that would achieve better public policy outcomes;

Where guidance is available, there may be a lack of awareness within Government departments of how to implement it;

Staff in government departments are very busy and may not have the time to implement good practice guidance, as well as financial constraints, for public consultation and other types of public engagement;

Guidance and other supports may not be available to stakeholders, including in marginalized/ minority communities on how to provide input into consultation processes;

Government departments may not be aware of, or see the relevance of, good practice developed in other departments, nationally and internationally when designing public engagement processes;

A culture that recognises the value of genuine consultation and the contribution it makes to evidence driven policy formation, is not necessarily developed across all Government departments;

Lack of appreciation within public sector that active participation is an output in itself, not simply an activity to enable output/outcomes

Poorly designed consultation processes may be dropped due to embarrassment about the quality of the process.

#### **DRAFT Suggested impacts arising**

##### Overall:

Initial step towards the ambition of a Participatory Governance Framework.

##### Specifically:

###### (i) Values and Principles:

- The high-level concepts will support consultation, inclusion and participation of communities, particularly disadvantaged communities, in public policy and decision-making at all levels.
- It will secure a renewed partnership between government and the community and voluntary sectors focused on the shared vision for communities in Ireland.
- Government approval of the shared Values and Principles provides a foundation for partnership and collaborative effort at all levels and between all stakeholders.

###### (ii) Public Consultation Principles and Guidance update:

The guidance, is recognised current best practice, yet does not have legal force. It is intended to communicate this values and principles update to Public Sector Management Board and the Civil Service Management Board, to raise awareness; garner support and ensure impactful communication across the public service.

###### (iii) Round Table led participatory process:

- Gain evidence/insight to inform agreed SMART recommendations.
- Buy-in from stakeholder through early engagement.
- Demonstrate best practice in action.

(iv) D/Taoiseach to revert: Civic Forum established and contributing to and Social Dialogue DRCD's Civic Forum established and contributing to Government's overall efforts to enhance Social Dialogue and processes underway led by the Department of the Taoiseach to this end. The Civic Forum to provide avenues for high-level engagement with Civil Society as part of this

**Commented [BV1]:** I will check with my colleagues and come back to you.

## Appendix 1

To ensure an open, fair and transparent process please see a track-changed version below.

### Open Government Partnership Civic Participation Subgroup

#### DRAFT Ambition

Our ambition is to co-design an emergent framework that provides guidance for government, public bodies and local government to achieve a process of deliberative engagement for citizens in the formation of public policy and programmes in Ireland.

We aim to create a framework that will promote a process for civic engagement that is:

- ~~is~~ Designed with integrity;
- ~~is~~ fair, transparent, representative and can be trusted;
- ~~is~~ inclusive, especially of minority/marginalized communities that may need additional supports to participate, is
- ~~Based~~ on sound deliberation and judgement, ~~with~~ participants having an equal chance to speak, listen carefully to others, and weigh different options and trade-offs;
- ~~yields~~ ~~informs~~ and influences recommendations and actions ~~(evidence of impact on public decision making) and and~~
- ~~Results in outcomes that have~~ ~~has~~ a positive wide-impact ~~(themselves, for the wider public, and on decision-making at all levels and).~~

It will: -

- Enhance the ability of government, public bodies and local government, ~~from where they are at~~ to better consult and engage citizens to meaningfully participate in shaping policies and programmes that affect them;
- Better inform policy-making and ~~to enhance the level of successful~~ implementation and respond to community concerns;
- Support ~~and heighten the quality of~~ interactions between civil society and government, public bodies and local government;
- Provide a commitment to routinely and proactively engaging citizens and civil society in open dialogues and constructive feedback and;
- ~~Facilitate greater participation amongst diverse communities to ensure representation of Irish society~~
- Coordinate events with citizens and communities of interest on specific issues of importance to communities.
- ~~Generate greater trust in the process of civic engagement~~

#### DRAFT Commitment:

To progress the Participatory Governance Framework ambition, this first commitment will:

~~To~~ strengthen engagement and governance by:

**Commented [T2]:** While minority is more neutral than marginalized, I'm not sure it is best practice but happy to be convinced otherwise. For example, are older people or young people 'minorities'? I also suggest qualifying it in the context of communities that will require additional supports to participate in engagement processes.

**Commented [BV3]:** I agree that marginalized is better. The term minority doesn't really convey the idea of needing additional supports. And one could be a minority but highly influential policy lobby.

**Commented [CB(4R3):** For this draft version, let us progress with marginalized.

**Commented [BV5]:** Does the word impact imply effecting some sort of positive change or difference that would not have occurred in the absence of public participation? I can understand that this may be the gold standard but may not always be achieved for a variety of reasons (public wanting different things, political system not accepting certain things etc). The visible problem section below seems to indicate that there is a process flaw – lack of feedback – rather than an outcome deficit  
Would the word 'effects' be better, underlining that public input had been considered and responded to even if not incorporated?

**Commented [T6]:** To whom does 'themselves' refer? Policy makers?

**Commented [BV7]:** I agree, not clear. If civil servants are meant to be neutral in terms of policy choices, I'm not sure why these should be affected.  
Also the notion of a wide impact repeats some of the issues I state above

**Commented [BV8]:** Is this sub-clause necessary?

**Commented [CB(9R8):** Removed, as 'enhance' captures the sub-clause

**Commented [BV10]:** Better inform policy-making to boost the chances of successful implementation

**Commented [CB(11R10):** Reflected, with adaptation.

**Commented [BV12]:** Heighten the quality of interaction between....

**Commented [CB(13R12):** Reflected.

**Commented [CB(14):** Shana's input.

**Commented [CB(15):** Shana input.

- Establishing the Civic Forum which will be an avenue for high-level engagement with Civil Society (Lead: DRCD).
- ~~Establishing~~ **Strengthening and deepening the** Social Dialogue processes ~~with the active participation of the~~ various parties, including Civil Society, ~~actively participating~~ (Lead: D/Taoiseach ~~with support of~~)

~~To~~ enhance civic participation by:

- Securing Government approval for an agreed set of values and principles for collaborative working with the Community and Voluntary Sector (Lead: DRCD).
- ~~Update~~ **ing** of the Public Consultation principles and guidance for Government Departments, public bodies to reflect the new values and principles and communication (Lead: DPER).
- ~~A-Co-developing a~~ participatory process ~~will be co-developed~~, with early stakeholder engagement and review of 'status quo', to inform co-developed agreed SMART recommendations for Round Table consideration (Lead: Round Table Civic Partition sub-group).

**Public problem that the commitment will address**

**What is the visible problem?**

Community and voluntary organisations and individuals perceive public consultation processes to be ineffective (or untrustworthy) for a variety of reasons, including the lack of timely feedback on progress or transparency on why certain proposals were progressed and others were not

**What are the underlying causes?**

Guidance for public engagement processes may be outdated and need to be updated to reflect the scale, depth and reach of public engagement that would achieve better public policy outcomes ~~be transformative~~;

Where guidance is available, there may be a lack of awareness within Government departments of how to implement it;

~~Staff in government departments are very busy and may not have the time to implement good practice guidance, as well as financial constraints, for public consultation and other types of public engagement;~~

Guidance and other supports may not be available to stakeholders, including in marginalized/ minority communities on how to provide input into consultation processes;

Government departments may not be aware of, or see the relevance of, good practice developed in other departments, nationally and internationally when designing public engagement processes;

~~Staff in government departments are very busy and may not have the time to implement good practice guidance, as well as financial constraints, for public consultation and other types of public engagement;~~

Lack of appreciation within public sector that active participation is an output in itself, not simply an activity to enable output/outcomes

**Commented [NC16]:** Deepen or enhance? (we've always argue anything we do is supporting/building on work underway)

Also would say its "processes" as we would argue that there is a lot of dialogue ongoing across Gov

**Commented [CB(17R16):** Thanks Nigel & appreciate the clarification.

**Commented [BV18]:** I know it's important to claim wins but the process of social dialogue between Govt and some sectoral interests has already been underway for some time in the form of Labour Employer Economic Forum. Maybe say 'Deepen social dialogue process with various parties

**Commented [CB(19R18):** Happy to reflect the contribution of the other parties also.

**Commented [BV20]:** To achieve better public policy outcomes

**Commented [CB(21R20):** Aligns to better to outcomes / impacts.

Poorly designed consultation processes may be dropped due to embarrassment about the quality of the process.

**DRAFT Suggested impacts arising**

Overall:

Initial step towards the ambition of a Participatory Governance Framework.

Specifically:

(i) Values and Principles:

- The high-level concepts will support consultation, inclusion and participation of communities, particularly disadvantaged communities, in public policy and decision-making at all levels.
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- Government approval of the shared Values and Principles provides a foundation for partnership and collaborative effort at all levels and between all stakeholders.

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(iii) Round Table led participatory process:

- Gain evidence/insight to inform agreed SMART recommendations.
- Buy-in from stakeholder through early engagement.
- Demonstrate best practice in action.

(iv) [Check underway] Alignment of Civic Forum established and contributing to and Social

Dialogue  
DRCD's Civic Forum and the established and contributing to Government's overall efforts to enhance Social Dialogue and Pprcesses underway in led by the Department of the Taoiseach to this end. The Civic Forum will be aligned and to provide avenues for high-level engagement with Civil Society as part of this-

**Commented [T22]:** @Barry and @Kieran, is this okay to include here or would it depend on what comes out of the process currently underway in D/Taoiseach

**Commented [BV23]:** I will check with my colleagues and come back to you.