

# RAPID DEMO CRACY

How to make decisions with people, not for them.



New  
Citizen  
Project

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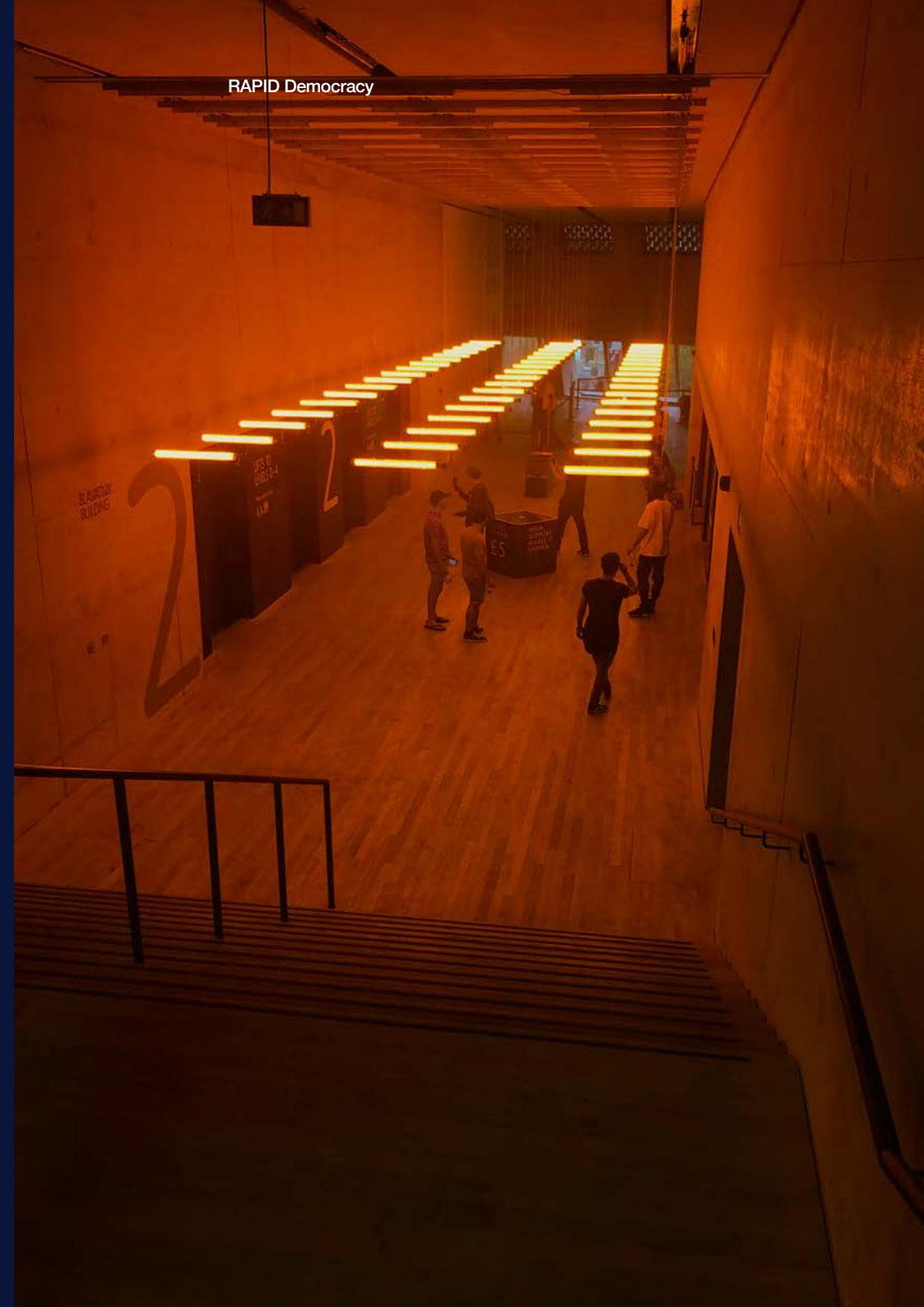
# ABOUT NEW CITIZEN PROJECT

We are a strategy and innovation consultancy with a belief that, given the right opportunity, people can and will shape the things that matter to them for the better. When we think of ourselves as citizens rather than consumers, we're more likely to participate, volunteer and come together to make our society stronger. That's why our mission at New Citizen Project is to catalyse

a shift to a more participatory, citizen-led society. We call it the #CitizenShift. Since 2014, we've worked with all types of organisations to create participatory strategies, cultures and projects, including innovative deliberative and participatory democracy processes, that invite people to step into their power as citizens.

#### A NOTE ON RAPID DECISION MAKING ©

As is made clear in this document, the original RAPID Decision Making © framework was developed in the context of organisational decision making by Bain & Company Inc, and is a registered trademark. RAPID Democracy is an approach that stands on the shoulders of this original work, adapting it to this new context, with the permission of Bain & Company Inc.



# INTRODUCTION

How will we respond to the climate emergency? What do we do about rising inequality? How do we address challenges of housing and homelessness? If something has to be cut, what should it be? Or could taxes be redesigned so cuts don't have to happen at all?

We live in a time when big decisions are piling up all around us, globally, nationally, locally, and even inside organisations. At the same time, trust in institutions and leaders - and especially in elected representatives - is falling through the floor. Often, the result is that the big decisions get ducked and postponed, or not made at all. Even when a big decision is made, there is often a major backlash and delay in implementation.

Perhaps we used to be happy to choose who would make big decisions for us and then leave them to it. But not any more.

We need a new way forward. The New Citizen Project team has been working over the last four years to develop and test a framework we call RAPID Democracy in

response to this challenge. For leaders and organisations, it is a structured, phased and inclusive process for decision-making that will help democratic institutions of all kinds - including membership organisations, local councils and national governments - to overcome popular distrust and increase both the quality and the legitimacy of crucial decisions. For members of the public, employees and citizens, the process offers more opportunities to participate meaningfully in making the decisions that shape their lives: to speak from their experiences, share their ideas, and develop their social and political agency.

RAPID Democracy is a simple framework that combines the best existing and emerging participatory processes, from open idea generation to citizens' assemblies, into a phase-by-phase process that can achieve real scale and visibility.

This report is an invitation to leaders of all kinds to collaborate with us to develop it further.

# RAPID DEMOCRACY

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# WHY WE NEED RAPID DEMOCRACY

What we at New Citizen Project think of as Consumer Democracy - thin, individualised, transactional - is in crisis. In Consumer Democracy, participation is almost entirely limited to voting in elections. People choose who to give their power to, from a limited set of

options, and are expected to make even this choice on the basis of narrow self-interest. Whether at the level of a membership organisation or a whole society, this simply can't work any more. And as this form of democracy fails, Strong Man leaders are on the rise.

**Democracy  
around the  
world and at  
every level is  
in crisis.**



# THERE IS HOPE:

**A richer, deeper democracy is emerging and taking shape.**

In this emerging form of democracy, people are involved in decision-making in many ways, contributing ideas, energy and resources to the process, not just votes.

At New Citizen Project, we call this Citizen Democracy. As citizens, people actually shape what the options are - and where appropriate even make the decisions, rather than simply choosing who decides for them. They contribute to the collective interest, rather than simply expressing their self interest.

Citizen Democracy is neither a new nor a Western invention. The processes and tools have a rich heritage throughout human history and across every continent, and they are re-emerging in many different ways and places today. And it's not just happening in national or local governments, but also within organisations across all sectors.

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>CONSUMER</b>	<b>CITIZEN</b>
<b>DEPENDENT</b>	<b>INDEPENDENT</b>	<b>INTERDEPENDENT</b>
<b>TO</b>	<b>FOR</b>	<b>WITH</b>
<b>OBEY</b>	<b>DEMAND</b>	<b>PARTICIPATE</b>
<b>RECEIVE</b>	<b>CHOOSE</b>	<b>CREATE</b>
<b>COMMAND</b>	<b>SERVE</b>	<b>FACILITATE</b>

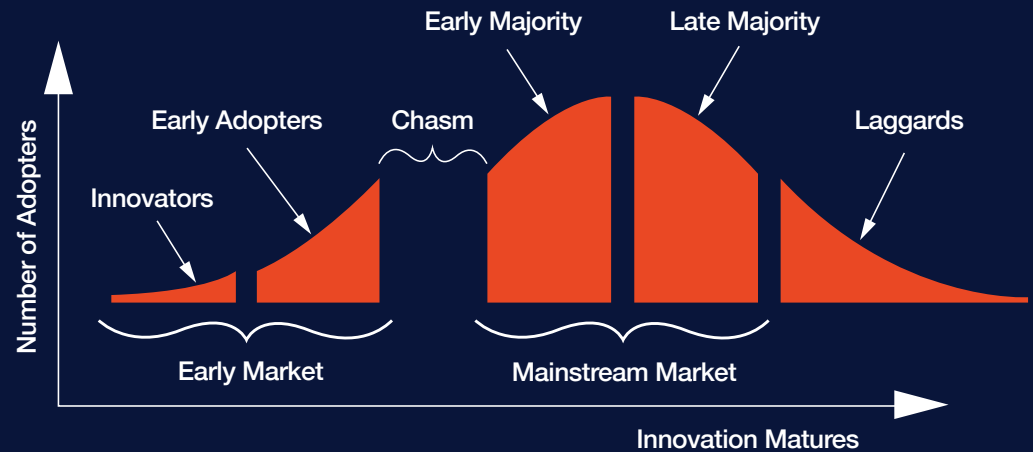
Source: 'This is the #CitizenShift' by New Citizen Project, 2015



# CITIZEN DEMOCRACY IS TAKING SHAPE, BUT IT HAS NOT YET TAKEN HOLD.

As we identified in a recent collaboration with the Apolitical Foundation, the situation is a bit like the classic “innovation adoption curve”. There are many innovators and early adopters creating exciting examples of a whole new way of doing things, but there’s still a jump required to arrive fully in the mainstream. What’s holding us back?

Part of it is fear. At the New Citizen Project, we believe that governments, institutions and democratic leaders must trust people if they are to be trusted in turn. But that does not mean simply throwing everything open and it is important to acknowledge that fear is not entirely unjustified: “mob rule” is a real threat in a time of misinformation amplified by social media.



# The fact is, it is not enough simply to call on democratic leaders to “trust people.” People in positions of power must be equipped to do so.

People in positions of power need support to provide safety and structure for the process of rebuilding trust. They need a framework that can make this kind of approach more easily intelligible, so they can adapt it for their needs, and have confidence walking the path. The RAPID Democracy model sets out to do just that. It offers a clarifying framework to help democratic leaders develop, design and deliver decision-making processes

that tap into the transformative potential of Citizen Democracy while aligning with existing representative and executive responsibilities.

With RAPID Democracy, democratic leaders can rebuild public trust in organisations and institutions, unleash citizens’ agency and creativity, and make better, more legitimate, and more robust decisions on the issues that matter most.



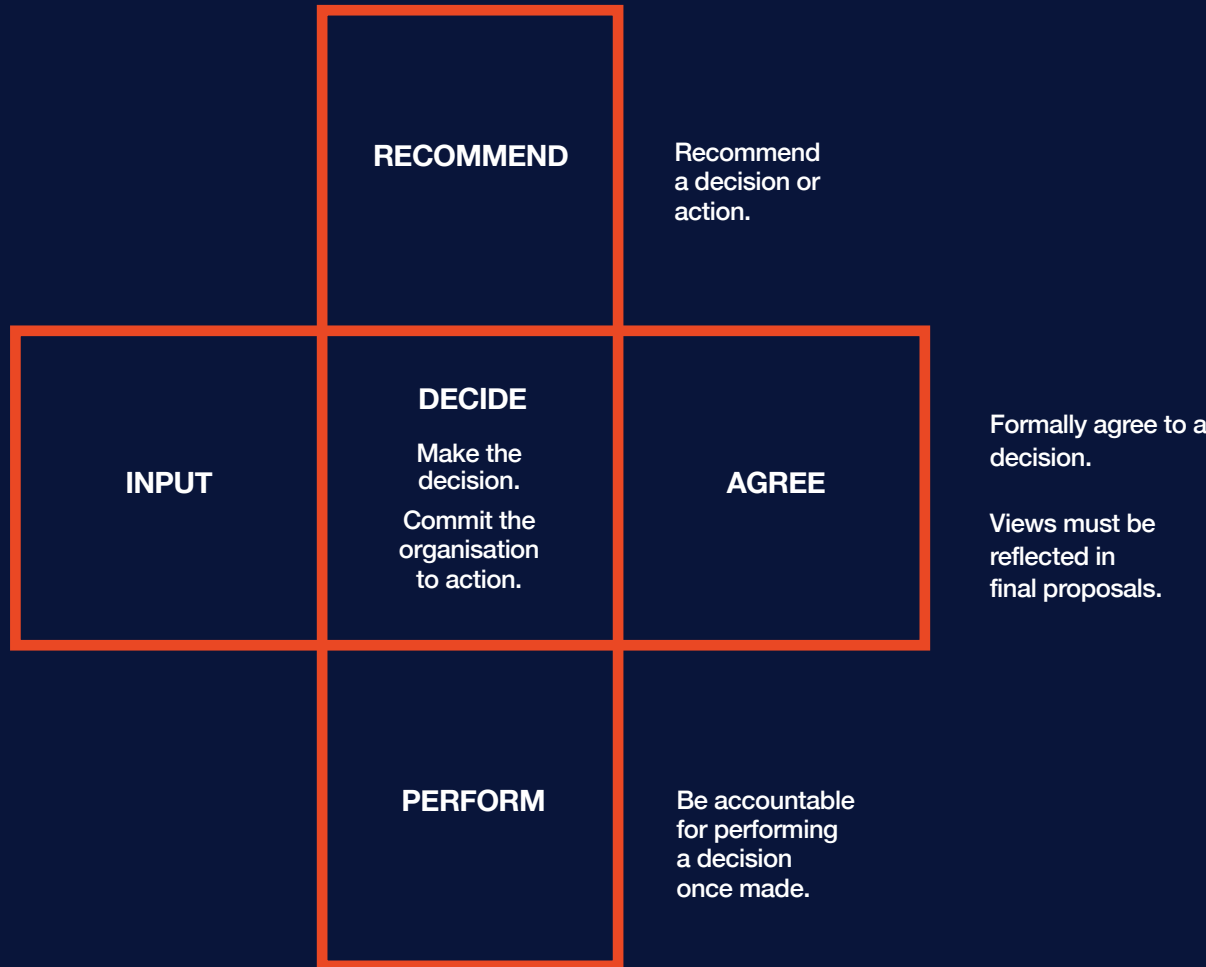
# THE INSPIRATION: RAPID DECISION MAKING®

In 2006, Paul Rogers and Marcia Blenko, Partners at the business consulting firm Bain & Company, published an article in the Harvard Business Review entitled *Who has the D?: How Clear Decision Roles Enhance Organisational Performance*. They wanted to show how organisations can become more decisive, and therefore more successful, by clarifying decision-making roles and assigning responsibilities.

The Bain team argued that when too few people hold too much power in the decision-making process, things go wrong. The result is not only that the decisions made are worse, since

they draw on too few points of view and succumb to “groupthink”; but also that even where good decisions are made, the legitimacy of those decisions declines, as people feel less valued and less engaged; and indeed that the will and energy for implementing those decisions diminishes.

In response to these opposing risks, RAPID Decision Making® separates out five distinct roles in any decision-making process - Recommend, Agree, Perform, Input and Decide - and argues that it's vital to be clear on exactly who is playing each role. And that they won't all be the CEO...



**When these five roles are clearly defined and allocated, the decisions that result will ultimately be more “rapid”.**

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a red circular sticker. The sticker has the text "I Voted" written on it in white, bold, sans-serif font. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with a person's face partially visible on the left.

I  
Voted

# THE RELEVANCE TO THE CRISIS OF DEMOCRACY IS CLEAR.

In the face of major challenges, too few of us are involved in the big decisions facing our societies in too few ways.

Elected representatives around the world hold too many aspects of the decision-making process too tightly, with power concentrated to an extent that is not only resulting in the declining quality and legitimacy that the Bain model identified in the corporate context, but is also personally unsustainable.

Many democratic leaders are working harder and harder, even as democracy and public trust declines.

So how might RAPID Decision Making<sup>®</sup> be repurposed for democratic contexts? How might we truly open up democratic decision-making, to bring in more ideas, insight and experience? How might we give democracy more room to breathe?

# RAPID DEMOCRACY PHASE BY PHASE



In recent years, the New Citizen Project team has been experimenting with adapting RAPID Decision Making® to the context of democratic participation. We've found it to be powerful in offering our partners in governments and other sectors a structured approach to engagement that makes them more comfortable in involving and trusting people to take part in decisions. It also encourages creative thinking about various participatory tools and technologies that can be employed at different steps, rather than reaching for off-the-peg solutions. We have adapted the framework, but the

critical point remains that decisions made in this way will draw on more diverse input, be more legitimate and so ultimately higher quality and more "rapid".

Our main tweak is to move from a framework that separates out the five roles to a linear framework that works through the five phases in turn. Below, we describe each phase, defining its purpose, key things to consider, and examples and tools from around the world that have inspired our thinking and practice.

# INPUT

<b>WHO?</b>	Everyone who has a stake in the question, of whatever kind.
<b>WHAT?</b>	Ideas and input invited and encouraged.
<b>WHY?</b>	All of us are smarter than any of us.

# PURPOSE:

“Input” comes first — this is where you’re looking for as many ideas, options and approaches as you can possibly gather for how to address a particular issue, right at the beginning of the decision-making process. This phase draws on the critical truth that “all of us are smarter than any of us”, and to recognise that there are many forms of expertise, all of which are needed. It’s an

opportunity to make sure that those who have a stake in the issue, including those with both lived experience and academic expertise, have a chance to shape the decision. It’s also a great opportunity to gather attention and energy for the decision-making process as a whole, opening up the process to reach and involve as many stakeholders as you can as early as possible.



# THINGS TO CONSIDER:

The scale of this phase should match the scale and complexity of the decision. For a relatively minor or simple decision, it's not necessary to run an all-out mass participation exercise, if only for logistical reasons: a smaller and more targeted campaign may suffice. For a major democratic decision affecting a whole nation, however, this should be a big and open exercise, gathering input from everywhere.

You'll want to reach out actively to different groups to get a really good and diverse mix of ideas. While this doesn't require recruiting representative samples (unlike in the Recommend phase, below), you'll want to take focused steps to make sure that everyone who may have something to contribute is able to do so. As well as the general public, input can be sought from academics, civil society

organisations, and especially from individuals and communities with lived experience relevant to the decision.

When inviting input during this phase, the questions and prompts should ideally encourage people to play an active role as problem-solvers: imagining solutions and drawing attention to the good things that are already happening, alongside sharing their hopes and fears.

Drawing from the insights of the Bain model, clear and honest contracting is essential in this phase. There is a need to manage expectations and be clear that not all input will be reflected in final proposals, but also an honest commitment and a process in place to ensure that all input gathered is meaningfully considered.



# REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES:

- **Better Reykjavik:** a simple online platform that offers citizens of the city the chance to put forward and discuss their ideas for how the city could be better.
- **People's Plan for Nature:** a joint effort by three UK charities (National Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and WWF), this deliberative process kicked off with a “National Conversation” that attracted over 30,000 responses from the public about their hopes and ideas for restoring nature.
- **Mexico City's crowdsourced constitution:** to create its first-ever constitution, Mexico City sought citizens' views and incorporated their proposals through channels such as the “Imagine Your City” survey, working groups, and petitions.
- **Greater Manchester's homelessness strategy:** the development of this strategy saw people with lived experience of homelessness, and of working with those affected, actively involved in developing ideas and interventions (including through a Legislative Theatre process, see below) - winning the International Observatory of Participatory Democracy's highest annual award as a result.

# TOOLS:

**Traditional tools:** surveys, “ideas walls” in public spaces, hackathons, town halls.

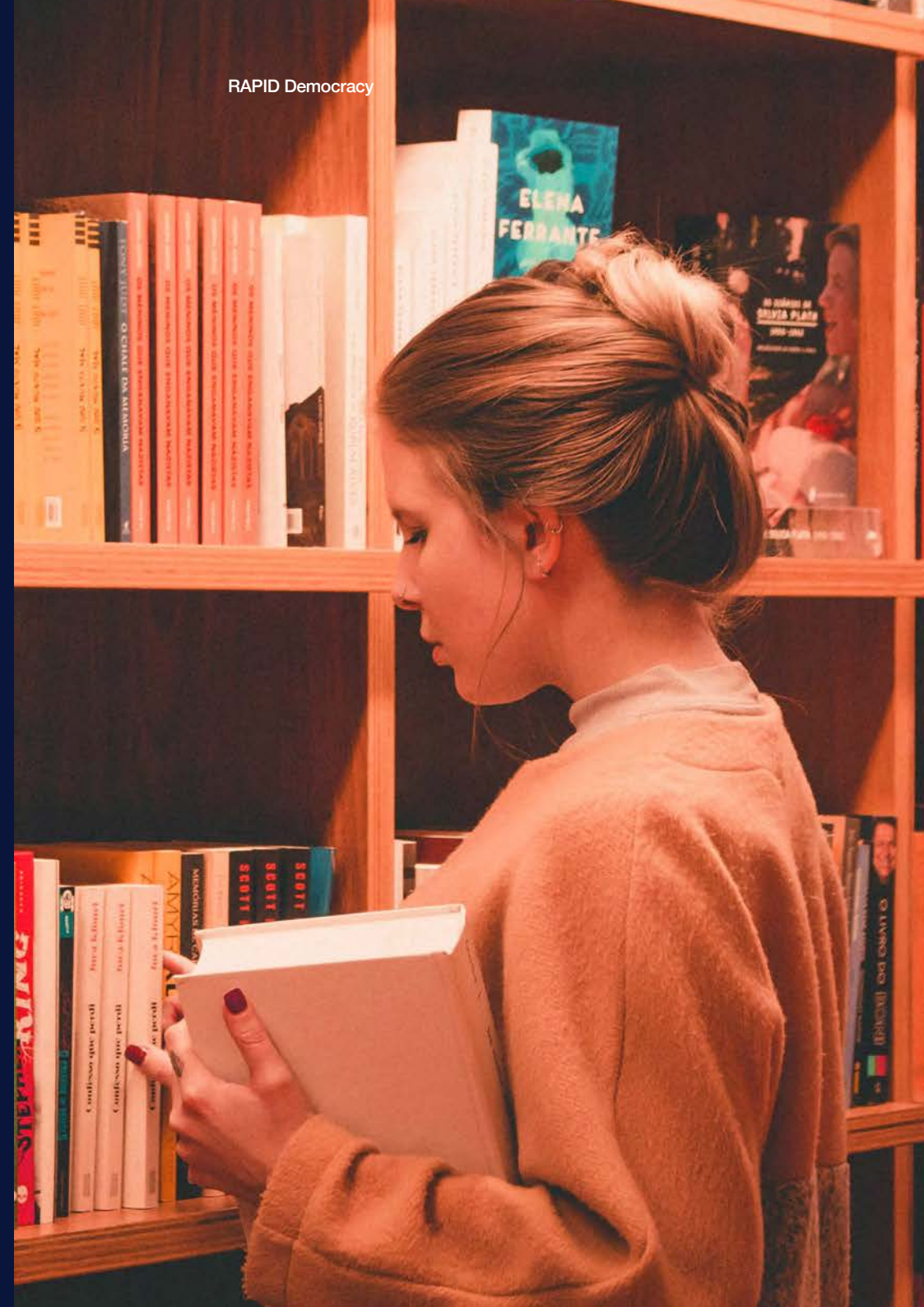
**Your Priorities:** an open source online idea generation, deliberation and decision-making social networking platform connecting governments and citizens since 2008 in thousands of projects (including Better Reykjavik).

**All Our Ideas:** a platform that enables groups to collect and prioritise ideas in a transparent, democratic way. This “Wiki Survey” tool combines the best of survey research with crowdsourcing and artificial intelligence to enable rapid feedback.

**Cortico:** an AI-powered tool that combines human listening with machine learning, with an emphasis on helping to bring unheard voices into the centre of a stronger public dialogue.

**Kitchen Table Conversations:** developed in Australia, a set of civic engagement tools revolving around small-group discussions that engages people in “the kind of open and honest dialogue that women have had around kitchen tables for centuries”.

**Legislative Theatre:** a practice invented in Brazil in which citizens, advocates and policy-makers come together for interactive theatre shows in which solutions to problems are creatively explored. Especially effective for ensuring people most affected by an issue feel ownership of the process.



# RECOMMEND

<b>WHO?</b>	A small group of people, selected by lottery, who are broadly representative of the community.
<b>WHAT?</b>	Sustained, facilitated deliberation over the question, drawing on all the Input, and producing a set of recommendations.
<b>WHY?</b>	Transforming public opinion into considered public judgement.

## PURPOSE:

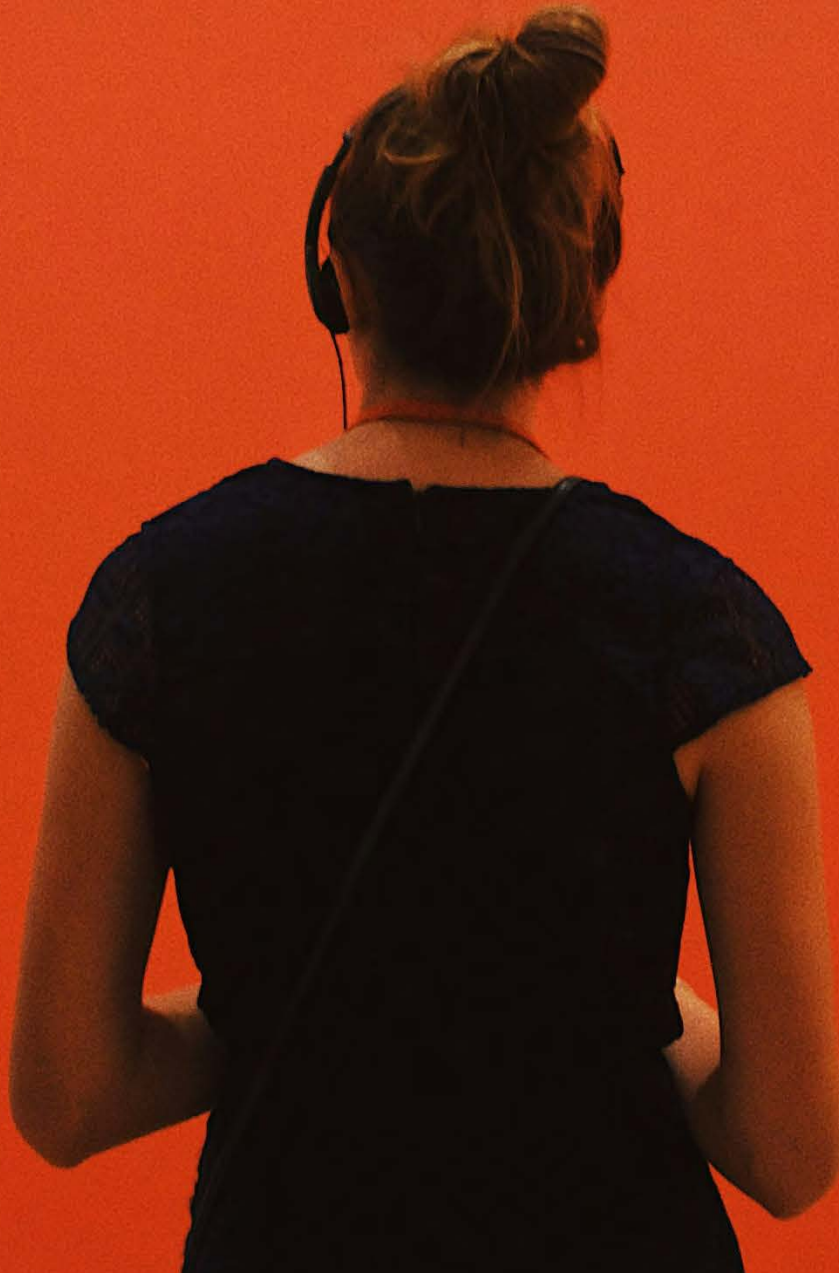
Once all the input has been collected, a group gathers for the next stage "Recommend" to digest what's been shared, consider expert advice, deliberate over the key issues, and formulate one or more specific recommendations.

Who makes up this crucial group? For this stage, our default recommendation is long-form deliberative processes such as citizens' assemblies (also sometimes known as citizens' panels, juries or councils). DemocracyNext defines a citizens' assembly as "a group of people selected by lottery who are broadly representative of a community

[and who] spend significant time learning and collaborating through facilitated deliberation to find common ground and form collective recommendations for policy makers, decision makers, and the community."

These smaller groups can really get into the detail of a complex issue over the course of a deliberative process, while also building the trust and connection needed to find common ground. As DemocracyNext CEO Claudia Chwalisz argues, it is this deliberative aspect that transforms public opinion into considered public judgement.





# THINGS TO CONSIDER:

For any meaningful or contested decision, this needs to be an intensive process with time and space allowed for engagement with all aspects. Access to expert views, facts and information, and a range of voices is essential.

It is vital that those who will be most affected by any given decision are meaningfully represented in this phase.

The best deliberative processes use high-quality creative facilitation to foster human connection, offer participants a variety of ways to engage with key information, and create opportunities for participants to discuss, deliberate and imagine a different future - not just respond to the information presented. Processes should also support participants emotionally as they grapple with challenging topics such as assisted

dying or the climate emergency, for example through the provision of quiet spaces and the use of trained counselling support.

While the most well-known citizens' assemblies have involved setting government policy, citizens' assemblies of various scopes and sizes have also been successfully run by charities, NGOs and businesses. Examples include the People's Plan for Nature, Shelter's citizen summit, and the Centre for Inclusive Trade Policy's citizens' juries on UK trade policy. A citizens' assembly is currently helping a Dutch pension fund to inform its investment decisions, and a cultural institutions such as Nottingham's New Art Exchange, Bonn's Bundeskunsthalle and Dresden's SKD have set up citizens' assemblies in order to become more democratic and relevant.

# WHAT IS SORTITION?

Sortition is a democratic process where individuals are randomly selected to participate in decision-making or governance roles, rather than being elected. This is usually achieved through random stratified sampling to ensure representation across different demographic groups, enhancing the

democratic process by involving a broader cross-section of the population in decision-making. Those selected to be part of the deliberative phase are paid for their time, to ensure the process is as inclusive as it needs to be. For more, [visit the Sortition Foundation](#).



# REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES:



● **Citizens' assemblies:** there have now been hundreds of citizens' assemblies held across the world, bringing together randomly selected citizens to deliberate over and make recommendations on topics such as climate change, food policy, reproductive rights, assisted dying, gender equality, artificial intelligence and pension reform, among others.

● **Shelter's 2024 General Election campaign:** the UK housing charity has co-created its next general election campaign with people from across the country who are affected by the housing emergency, holding a "citizens' summit" to prioritise policy solutions.

# TOOLS:

**DemNext's Assembling an Assembly Guide:** a simple and helpful 3-stage guide for designing and delivering a citizens' assembly.

**The OECD's Good Practice Principles for Deliberative Processes for Public Decision Making.**

**Polis:** an open-source, real-time system for gathering, analysing and understanding what large groups of people think in their own words, enabled by advanced statistics and machine learning. Used extensively by "civic hackers" working with the Taiwanese government to power the "vTaiwan" online deliberation space.

**Decidim:** a digital platform for citizen participation that helps citizens, organisations and public institutions self-organise at various scales, including participatory processes, assemblies and participatory budgeting. Used by city governments in Barcelona, Helsinki, Mexico City and New York City.

**The Strategy Room:** an immersive experience which uses facilitated deliberation, interactive polling and collective intelligence to identify the climate change policies that will best help each local area to reach net zero emissions.



# AGREE

<b>WHO?</b>	Everyone (but especially those particularly affected by the recommendations).
<b>WHAT?</b>	Consultation and confirmation.
<b>WHY?</b>	Building consensus and fleshing out the plan.

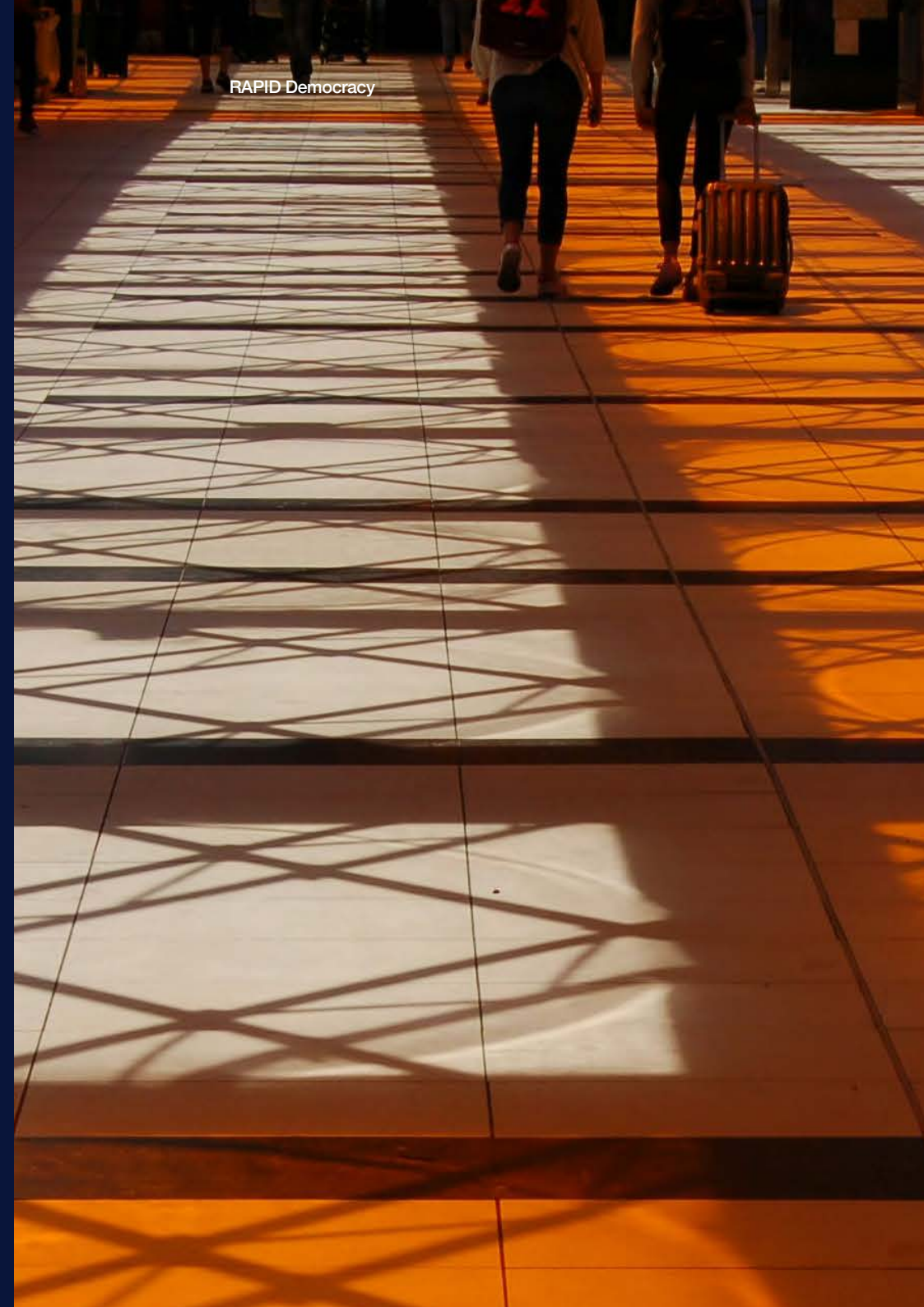
## PURPOSE:

Even after recommendations have been made, it is still vital to go back to the wider population affected by them (which could be a national or local population, the membership of an organisation, or important stakeholder groups) for feedback and confirmation before pressing ahead with a final decision and implementation.

The Agree phase ensures that key voices are not left out, and builds further consensus around the recommendations. It is the moment to address any unintended consequences that have not yet been spotted, and to flesh out the

recommendations into a more comprehensive, nuanced and realistic plan of action (i.e. to support the “Perform” phase).

This is where conventional consultation processes and techniques may come in. For example, if a citizens’ assembly makes a recommendation to “promote a shift to more climate-friendly diets”, further consultation with supermarkets, farmers, food businesses and institutional buyers such as schools and hospitals will help to understand the ramifications and develop a well-formulated plan to deliver it (while minimising any diluting or backtracking).





# THINGS TO CONSIDER:



Seeking “buy-in” to recommendations through two-way conversations with affected stakeholders makes it more likely that those stakeholders will actively help to deliver the eventual decision, rather than simply expecting others to do it.

Offering ways for supportive individuals and organisations to make a public commitment to the recommendations (e.g. a pledge or joint letter) will also make it more likely that they will deliver them, as well as encouraging others to do so.

It’s important to stress that this phase should not become an opportunity for system actors to block or frustrate the core spirit or intentions of the recommendations.

The methodological soundness of the Recommend phase and the democratic legitimacy of the resulting recommendations must be promoted and defended by the commissioning government or organisation. The Agree phase should not be mistaken for an outright veto - at most, it might result in the Recommend phase being revisited with new information. This phase is about refining and fleshing out, not preempting the decision.

The citizens involved in the Recommend phase can also play a role in reviewing, approving, rejecting or otherwise negotiating over any proposed changes or additions to their recommendations made during the Agree phase.

# TOOLS:

This is the phase that's most appropriate for conventional consultation processes, such as surveys, town halls, roadshows and community meetings. There are also several tools that can help to maximise meaningful participation at this phase.

**Commonplace:** an online citizen engagement platform that combines AI-driven insights and community input, with a focus on the planning and development of places.

**CitizenLab:** an AI-enabled platform offering multiple ways to consult communities, all in one place - sharing information, asking for opinions using a survey, or co-creating new ideas.

**Feedback Frames:** a simple, analogue in-person tool to quickly discover collective opinions. Participants rate ideas by dropping a token in a range of slots that are hidden (to remove bias), with results later revealed as a visual graph of opinions.



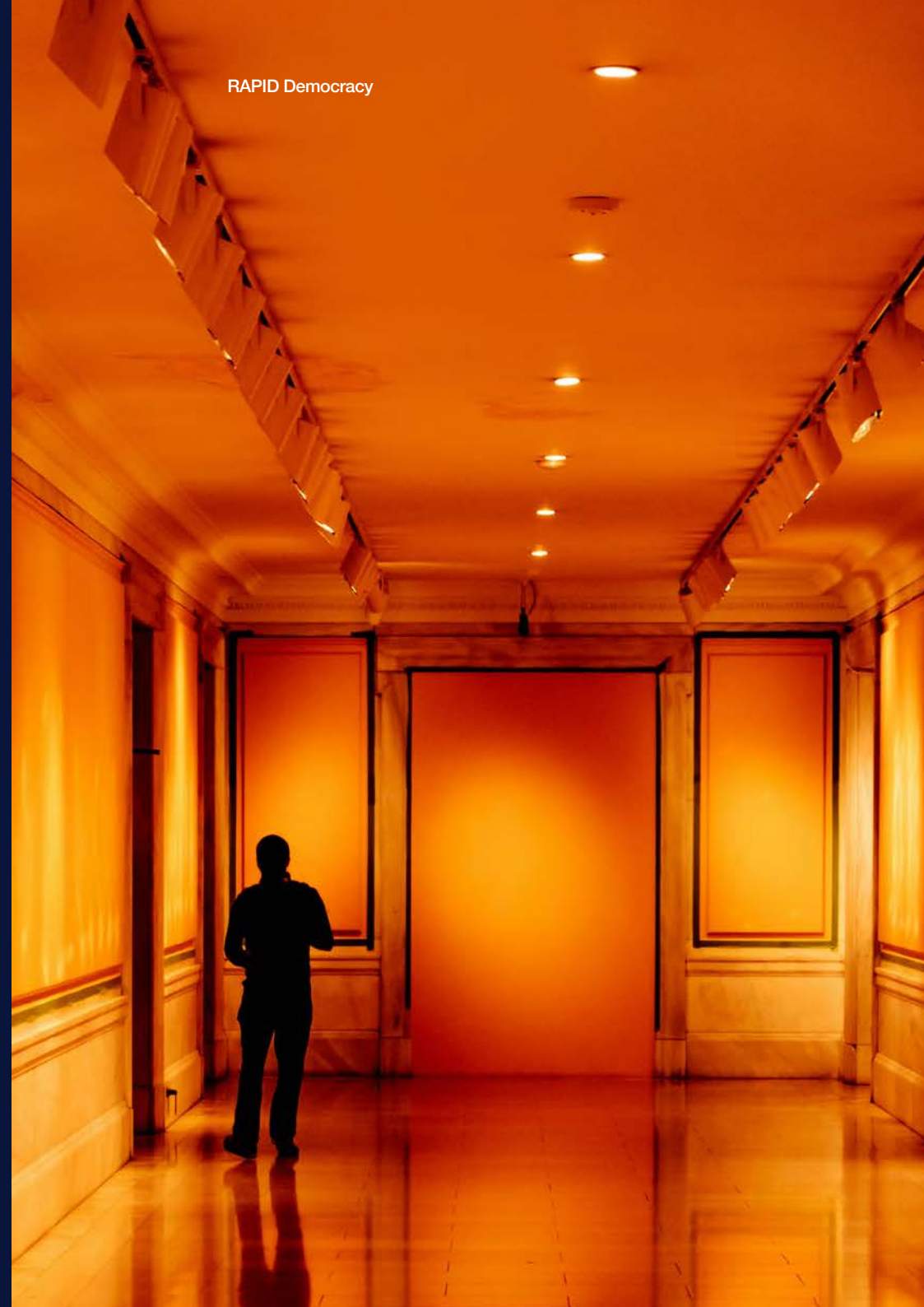
# DECIDE

<b>WHO?</b>	Democratic leaders (often elected representatives) - or in some cases, referenda
<b>WHAT?</b>	The moment of commitment to a course of action
<b>WHY?</b>	Directing governmental or organisational resources to implement the decision

## PURPOSE:

This is the central moment of the process: the moment of committing the nation, locality or organisation to a course of action.

As the Bain model emphasises, this remains the single most important act, and it's the appropriate role for the executive function to assume (although in some cases, it might involve a referendum). Separating the "decide" phase out from the other roles, however, creates more space for others to also have meaningful power.



# THINGS TO CONSIDER:



It's important to emphasise that this might not always mean adopting the recommendations - but having commissioned the process, it would at least mean giving a public response, including an explanation of why the recommendation was rejected or refined if that was the case.

In national and local politics, this is arguably the right role for elected politicians: this is, after all, the role of the "executive".

In a democratic organisation, this role could either be held by the executive leaders, the elected board of directors or trustees, or the AGM.

For the most significant decisions, it may be appropriate to hold a confirmatory referendum. In RAPID Democracy, however, a referendum only takes place at the end of a deliberative process, with clear agreement from the executive and a period of wider consultation about the ramifications of the decisions.

What matters most is that everyone is absolutely clear who is ultimately making the decision from the outset - whether that is an individual, a council or parliament, or the whole nation by referendum.

# REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES:

- In 2021, a **citizens' jury on the island of Jersey** voted 78% in favour of the introduction of legislation on assisted dying. Jersey's States Assembly then voted to become the first parliament in the British Isles to make the decision 'in principle' that assisted dying should be allowed, with legislation to follow.
- Following a 2019 **citizens' assembly on climate change in the borough of Camden**, the local council voted to adopt its proposals, deciding to declare a climate emergency.
- In 2017, South Korean President Moon Jae-In launched a **deliberative, non-binding poll to decide whether to continue building two nuclear power plants**. Moon's government preferred denuclearisation, but respected the outcome of the poll (which took place after a period of public education and deliberation) and decided to complete the plants.
- In 2018, **the Irish public voted overwhelmingly to overturn a constitutional ban on access to abortion by 66.4% to 33.6%**, breaking through a decades-old political impasse. Here, the Irish public was responsible for the "Decide" phase: the referendum followed on from a citizens' assembly, which produced the recommendation to overturn the ban; and the elected politicians agreed to accept that recommendation subject to this confirmatory referendum. This meant that every Irish citizen had a role to play, not just in the deliberation process, but in the actual decision.

# PERFORM

<b>WHO?</b>	Everyone
<b>WHAT?</b>	Delivering the decision or plan
<b>WHY?</b>	More ownership, more ideas, more resources driving change

## PURPOSE:

This is about implementing the decision that has been made and agreed upon, while continuing to maximise the participatory possibilities.

When more people feel ownership of a decision, it can increase the "people power" and resource at hand to actually enact it. This could be critical to achieving the desired outcome - just think of the difference that the armies of Olympic Games or "City of Culture" volunteers can make to the success of a city-wide event.





# THINGS TO CONSIDER:

The "Perform" phase is about doing things *with* the public, rather than doing things *for* the public. This invites governments and organisations to act as facilitators and enablers of broad and diverse collective action, not just deliverers of services.

For a big national decision, this might mean local governments working with citizens to explore locally specific consequences and manifest national policy in ways that feel appropriate to their places (e.g. through local nature conservation plans).

Governments or organisations can also provide funds for enacting the overarching decision that could then be allocated through participatory budgeting or matched crowdfunding to fund specific or local delivery projects.

# REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES:

- **“Games Makers”**: The 70,000 Games Makers of the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics contributed 8 million hours of support across over 850 roles to make the Games a success.
- **Participatory membership**: we’ve worked with membership organisations such as RSPB, Co-op Group, National Trust, the National Union of Students, Tate and the Soil Association to give members more opportunities to take action in support of their mission - doing things *with* members, rather than *for* them.
- **Lisbon Citizens’ Council** **“ambassadors”**: once Lisbon’s citizens’ assembly has met and produced recommendations (for example, on climate change responses, or the creation of a “15-minute city”), it then elects a group of ambassadors who work hand in hand with municipal teams to enrich the Council’s proposals and ideas - meaning that the city actually works with citizens to make recommended changes happen.
- **Crowdfund Plymouth**: set up to support community groups, start-up businesses, charities and social enterprises across the city, Plymouth City Council pledged £475,010 to 93 local projects through Crowdfund Plymouth in its first five years. For every £1 spent by the city, residents have donated more than double for an additional £1 million in support for communities.
- **People’s Bus / People’s Money**: As part of New York City’s People’s Money participatory budgeting process, the “People’s Bus” - a retired prison bus that’s been turned into a hub for art, culture and engagement - travels around the city spreading the word about the programme and collecting people’s ideas. It’s a great example of how to use creative and joyful approaches to bring democracy to where people are.



# TOOLS:

**Spacehive:** a platform to enable **matched crowdfunding** and community fundraising, allowing institutions to partner with citizens to fund and deliver ideas that support common priorities. Spacehive has helped raise £30m to support 2000 local projects.

**Participatory Budgeting:** once an overall plan of action has been decided, participatory budgeting can be a way to keep citizens engaged in decision making about how to prioritise

resources in the “Perform” phase. The Participatory Budgeting Project has an excellent **resource library** for this.

**The Participation Playbook:** Developed by People Powered and 60 partners, this online interactive playbook synthesises global knowledge and best practices in participation, creating a “choose your own adventure” tool that can help to maximise on-the-ground citizen participation in an agreed plan of action.



# RAPID DEMOCRACY IN ACTION



In developing the RAPID Democracy framework, the New Citizen Project team has taken a "learning by doing" approach. So far, we have designed and delivered three significant projects along the way, imperfectly but with increasing confidence.

In this section, we share those projects in more detail, showing how the framework informed the project design, and reflecting on what it might look like for each to live out the ideal of RAPID Democracy more fully.

# THE PEOPLE'S PLAN FOR NATURE

The People's Plan for Nature is a plan created for the people of the UK, by the people of the UK, comprising 26 calls for action to protect and fundamentally change how we value nature. It was created through a participatory process convened by the RSPB, WWF and National Trust. The recommendations are addressed to

government, businesses, charities and NGOs, communities and individuals. The sponsoring NGOs and a growing number of other organisations have responded to the recommendations, and various advocacy and action toolkits are being developed to bring the Plan to life.



## Phase: Input

## How did it work?

A “National Conversation” offered an open call for people’s ideas on how to save nature and what it means to them, attracting around 30,000 responses through a digital campaign and in-person events in 74 locations across the UK, from art centres to football stadiums.

## What might have made it better?

This could have been expanded to involve more intensive input-gathering activities based on more cultural and community partnerships, such as programmes with schools and libraries, or even popular institutions like the Premier League. This would have allowed us to uncover even more tangible ideas for action and tell deeper stories about them to inspire the assembly members.

This might have included going out to visit and spend time with community projects around the country, but also interviewing academics and other experts as to what they believe needs to be done - or even a series of legislative theatre processes around the country.

## Phase: Recommend

## How did it work?

The People's Assembly for Nature brought together 100 randomly-selected citizens for four weekends to hear evidence and develop recommendations. Ideas and insights from the "Input" phase were creatively blended into their deliberations, through an art exhibition and online "inspiration database". Bringing more voices and forms of expertise into the room.

## What might have made it better?

With greater resources, it might have been possible to hold multiple assemblies, perhaps one in each of the four nations of the UK (as nature policy is devolved); and to provide toolkits and training to enable people in local communities to follow the process in parallel (as with the Community Assemblies that were part of the Global Assembly on climate change in 2021). A documentary crew could have followed the assembly process, making its work more visible and engaging more people in the process.

## Phase: Agree

## How did it work?

The original ambition was to generate public backing for the recommendations of the People's Assembly For Nature - with attention driven by David Attenborough's Wild Isles TV series - with this in turn creating a challenge to government and system actors at all levels to decide to adopt the recommendations. However, generating mass awareness of the People's Plan for Nature proved difficult.

## What might have made it better?

In an ideal world, we might have asked the People's Assembly to first publish draft recommendations, followed by a period of consultation in which we would go back out to those who participated in the National Conversation (and beyond). Their feedback could have then been brought back into a further, final meeting where the recommendations would be finalised, building both awareness and legitimacy.

## Phase: Decide

## How did it work?

The convening organisations have published the decisions they have taken in response to the recommendations - and others, including the Church of England, have started to follow suit.

## What might have made it better?

We might have been able to build greater momentum if the coalition of convening organisations had been bigger and more diverse, ideally including businesses and councils as well as more NGOs, so that more organisations felt they had a stake in responding. Also, it could have been clearer and simpler steps for such organisations to take in order to both “Agree” and “Decide”.

## Phase: Perform

## How did it work?

Aviva supported a £1m “Save Our Wild Isles Community Fund”, operating on the basis of matched crowdfunding. This enabled a wide range of community organisations to do more in their local area, at the same time as the convening NGOs were implementing their own decisions.

Meanwhile, the “Nature Neighbourhoods” programme has supported 18 community groups, giving each one up to £25,000 to run a two-year partnership project to create localised plans for nature. It’s organised by the convening NGOs and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and Co-op.

Toolkits are also being produced to enable changemakers inside businesses and other organisations to lead for change in line with the recommendations of the People’s Plan, building grassroots momentum.

## What might have made it better?

Once the recommendations were launched, it quickly became clear that there was a lot of energy among businesses and communities to get behind the Plan and start to take action. In retrospect, we could have created even more momentum from the outset had we built in more lead time to develop the toolkits and other resources ahead of the launch, ready to harness the energy that it created.

People’s Plan  
for Nature

New  
Citizen  
Project



# JERSEY'S CLIMATE CONVERSATION

In 2021, commissioned by the States Assembly of Jersey, New Citizen Project acted as the lead delivery partner in a mass participation process to develop recommendations for how all stakeholders on the island could work together to attain carbon neutral status for the island, and

on what timescale. The Climate Conversation's central recommendation was to commit to a target of carbon neutrality by 2030. The States Assembly has adopted a roadmap of policy measures aimed at delivering this goal, and significant action is now taking place across the island.



## Phase: Input

## How did it work?

An island-wide conversation was organised over six weeks and across six topics relating to climate change. Each week, islanders were posed a question and invited to share their thoughts, ideas and solutions via an online platform. Islanders could use the online platform to comment and upvote on others' suggestions.

The Climate Conversation was also promoted via an array of attention-grabbing activations. A diverse cohort of Conversation Ambassadors was recruited across the island, such as local radio DJs and climate activists, who launched the conversation and invited people to get involved. Knitters made jumpers for Jersey's statues to spark conversations about climate-friendly heating and cooling, while an artist created a mural of Jersey's "climate stripes", showing the effects of global warming.

## What might have made it better?

The launch of the Input phase was affected by COVID restrictions, which meant that the mechanisms for sharing ideas were largely limited to the online platform and social media. Deeper and wider-reaching conversations and input-gathering may have been possible via more in-person outreach, including targeted convenings of specific groups from the island, using "conversation menus" to inspire kitchen table conversations.

To build on the creative activations deployed, media partnerships might have helped to ensure a steady drumbeat of attention and visibility.

## Phase: Recommend

## How did it work?

The Citizens' Assembly brought together 45 randomly selected citizens for a total of 14 sessions between March and May 2021. The Assembly's co-designed sessions were held online and independently facilitated. Expert witnesses on climate, economics and technology presented to the group. States Assembly members also attended to watch citizens deliberate and better understand the process.

At the end of the process, Assembly members voted on and prioritised a series of recommendations. This included adopting 2030 as a target date for carbon neutrality, banning the new registration of petrol and diesel cars by 2025, retrofitting buildings and supporting community energy initiatives, among others.

## What might have made it better?

The recommendations mostly focused on what Jersey's government could do to achieve carbon neutrality, rather than on what Jersey's citizens, businesses and organisations could do. Adjusting the process by which recommendations are formed may have mitigated this.

The expert evidence shared with the Assembly members was also published online, enabling people to follow the process at home. This could have been extended to include more opportunities for public deliberation alongside the assembly process, such as conversation toolkits for schools, businesses and community groups to review, discuss, capture and share their responses to the unfolding evidence.

## Phase: Agree

## How did it work?

Recommendations were written into a report that was presented to and discussed by the Government of Jersey. Assembly members also presented their recommendations directly to States Assembly members in an online meeting.

The Government of Jersey then published a formal response using clear and simple “traffic light” colour-coding to what it could and couldn’t endorse. Crucially, it provided a rationale for rejecting any “red lights”, and explained which adjustments might allow it to fully support any “amber lights”.

Based on the government’s response, Jersey’s civil service drew up a carbon neutrality roadmap that was put out for public consultation. This led to a few tweaks and changes, such as the target date for petrol and diesel cars being put back to 2030.

## What might have made it better?

It may have been possible to engage more ideas and energy towards realising the recommendations had the consultation phase been more deliberative, collaborative and facilitated. For example, groups of system actors (such as businesses) could have been convened to discuss the recommendations together, rather than making individual submissions.

Also, explicitly going back to those who had contributed to the Input phase to update and consult may have helped keep more people involved and interested in the overall process.

## Phase: Decide

## How did it work?

The States Assembly voted to adopt the carbon neutral roadmap on 29 April 2022.

## What might have made it better?

There are always pros and cons to holding a referendum, but an island-wide vote might have been a way to generate even more legitimacy, giving every islander the chance to formally endorse and commit to the final decision.

## Phase: Perform

## How did it work?

Jersey's government has now begun a phased roll-out of the carbon neutral road map, including:

- The launch of a low carbon heating incentive supporting islanders with the switch from oil and gas to low carbon alternatives
- An e-bike incentive scheme with £32,000 of vouchers redeemed by summer 2023
- Active travel initiatives including a 'love to ride' campaign, which achieved some of the highest take-up figures across the British Isles
- A commitment to decarbonise government.

## What might have made it better?

The impressive array of measures and policies introduced by the government could have been complemented by resourcing further participatory processes that invite citizens to co-create and deliver solutions together.

Existing collaborative networks like Jersey's existing Eco-Active Business Network, facilitated by the government and comprising members drawn from local people and businesses, could act as a focal point and catalyst for this kind of citizen-led innovation.

For more information check out [this blog](#).

# THE BODY SHOP'S YOUTH COLLECTIVE ADVISORY BOARD

The RAPID Democracy framework can help structure participatory decision-making inside organisations as well as across whole societies, as our work with The Body Shop demonstrates. In 2022, we supported the creation of the Youth Collective Advisory Board as part of the organisation's governance structure, bringing together young people from across the business with the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to co-design this new institutional infrastructure. While this structure was not explicitly designed using the RAPID framework, the stages of the process closely align with the RAPID phases, providing a useful illustration of how RAPID Democracy can be used flexibly within

organisations. All members of the Youth Collective Advisory Board are aged 18-30. Six of its twelve members are Body Shop staff, six external. They apply in response to an open call, are selected on the basis of a combination of application assessment and demographics to ensure representation, and serve an 18-month term. ELT remains the decision making body, setting questions for the Youth Collective Advisory Board at each of its quarterly meetings - and with the opportunity to request further, more reactive input on up to four issues across the term. The Youth Collective also has the opportunity to propose questions for future RAPID cycles.



## Phase: Input

## How did it work?

The Body Shop's Executive Leadership Team (ELT) sets a quarterly question: for example, "How might the Body Shop restructure the content and approach of its social media strategy to resonate more with its Gen Z audience?" In response, the members of the Youth Collective Advisory Board start by gathering input and discussing ideas as a group, collectively and without facilitation.

## What might have made it better?

Ideally, the Youth Collective would be enabled to go out to their wider peer network within the business to gather further input on the topic in question. If more time were available, Youth Collective members could carry out further research, both individually and via a regular series of topic-specific breakout discussions.



## Phase: Recommend

## How did it work?

The Youth Collective is brought together in a facilitated session to discuss their ideas and responses. Once they have formulated their recommendations they then formally respond to the ELT - where challenges and questions are welcomed from the ELT. For the social media strategy, the Youth Collective's input challenged the channel strategy as a whole and suggested a restructuring of how the social media team operated.

## What might have made it better?

Depending on the area of focus, there could be an opportunity for Youth Council members to call in members of the ELT, experts, and people with lived experience during the Recommend phase in order to clarify any questions or gain further input on draft recommendations before making final recommendations.

## Phase: Agree

## How did it work?

In this case, there is no distinct “Agree” phase, as the responses are passed straight to the ELT for decision.

## What might have made it better?

Ideally, there would be an opportunity for the Youth Collective to share their considered responses with their peers in order to attract wider feedback and ideas, including from different local markets.

## Phase: Decide

## How did it work?

ELT considers the Youth Collective's suggestions and responds, differentiating the ideas into 'what we like and will take forward', 'what we like and already do', 'what we like but can't do [with reasons explained]', and 'what we do not agree with and therefore won't take forward'. In the social media example, The Body Shop rejigged its approach by hiring a content creator and making more space for regular user-generated content. It also created joined-up focus groups across all of The Body Shop's markets to ensure a truly global tone of voice.

## What might have made it better?

After receiving the Youth Collective's recommendations, the ELT could hone its response further by engaging focus groups (including their own senior leadership teams and topic experts) before making a final decision. Again, this would require making more time available for the process.

## Phase: Perform

## How did it work?

The Body Shop then puts the agreed recommendations into action. An 'initiative tracker' assigns leaders for each action, along with timeframes and further details, allowing for total transparency and accountability. The Body Shop's new social media strategy changed the content focus and shifted to a more playful, tongue-in-cheek tone of voice. And by emphasising user-generated content, it allowed fans of the brand to participate. The worldwide focus groups also gave more voice to customers and colleagues in stores across its global footprint, enabling more diverse content.

## What might have made it better?

The Youth Collective could also be assigned to work directly on the topics to which they have contributed. For example, each project lead could have a "co-lead" drawn from the Youth Collective, or by someone within the Youth Collective age bracket, i.e. aged between 18-30.

For more information check out: [this blog](#).

Our aim in this report has been to give you a taste of the adaptability of the RAPID Democracy framework, and its potential to help leaders and organisations make the big decisions with people, not for them. This is where the work begins though - not where it ends! We're putting it out into the world now because we're excited to work with more partners to develop the framework and apply it to more contexts - and also to see what others might do with it. In the context of a very real democratic crisis, we think a test-and-learn approach is the only way to go.

As such, we want to end with some suggestions and invitations for what YOU might want to do next...

## 1. Tell us what you think.

We'd love to hear your reflections, both to build the framework and to challenge it. If you think there's something in it, we'd love you to post the link to this report on LinkedIn with your thoughts - and please tag New Citizen Project when you do. If you want to get into a bit more depth, feel free to email us at [hello@newcitizenproject.com](mailto:hello@newcitizenproject.com). We'd love to hear from you.

## 2. Invite us to talk or write about the framework.

We're keen to spread the word as much as possible, so if you'd like us to share more, please get in touch by email.

## 3. Come to a RAPID Democracy Open Workshop.

We'll be running regular workshops that are open to anyone to join, where we get into a bit more detail on the five phases, and then workshop a case study together. Dates will be regularly updated on the New Citizen Project website.

## 4. Invite us to run a RAPID Democracy Bespoke Workshop.

We have developed a one-day workshop, which sees us work with you to convene a group of stakeholders and co-create a first draft of a RAPID Democracy Process Plan. The cost of these sessions varies depending on the amount of pre-work you'll need us to do, and on what your intended next steps will be - get in touch for more information.



# WHAT NEXT? YOU TELL US...

# New Citizen Project

For more information about this, or any of our work, please visit [newcitizenproject.com](http://newcitizenproject.com) or email us [hello@newcitizenproject.com](mailto:hello@newcitizenproject.com)

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