





KNOCA is a European-based network that aims to improve the commissioning, design, implementation, impact and evaluation of climate assemblies, using evidence, knowledge exchange and dialogue. KNOCA documents climate assembly practice, identifies and disseminates best practice for impact and shapes future trends. You can find us and join KNOCA at https://knoca.eu/

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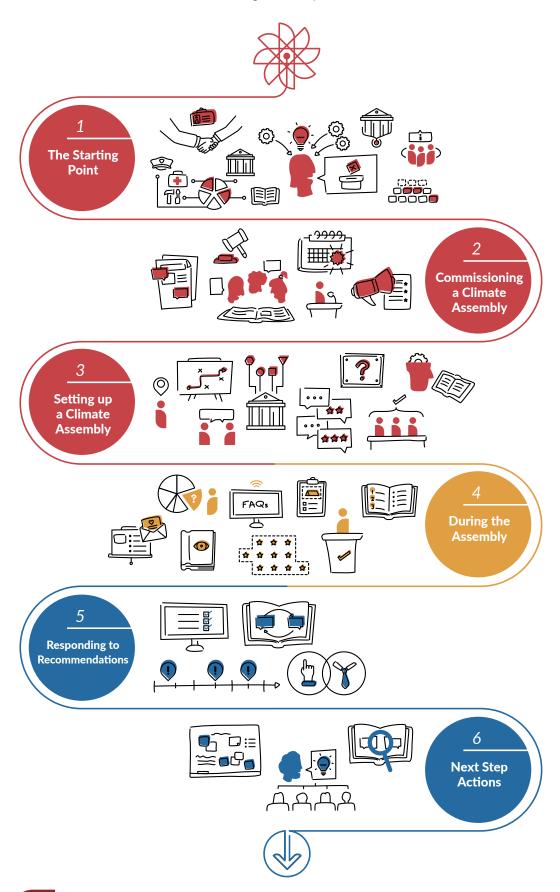
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This practical guidance is for policy officials who are thinking about organising a climate assembly.

It was co-produced for the <u>Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies</u> (KNOCA) through a series of workshops in March and April 2022, with input from 22 people with policy experience from 12 countries.

It outlines the different steps and considerations that officials should take into account and address, with a focus on six different stages of the process:



Executive Summary

This guide aims to provide practical steps for policy officials that want to organise a climate assembly. The focus is on what needs to be done within and by a public authority to increase the chance of success.

The guidance sets out what you need to consider, and at what stage of the process, to ensure an impact. It will complement further guidance produced by <u>Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies</u> (KNOCA) on aspects of the commissioning, design, implementation, impact and evaluation of climate assemblies.

The suggested steps touch on different parts of government and their effective implementation will require working with colleagues across silos. In addition to expertise in deliberative practice and climate governance, you may need to draw on communities of practice related to governance, organisational design and development, operations, research and analysis.

We acknowledge that a limited budget may require creative solutions that accomplish similar objectives but using other methods.



Key Steps

To begin, it's important that you understand the problem you are trying to solve so that you can determine whether an assembly is the right approach. It should be organised in connection with wider climate governance and build on existing plans to develop new policies and strategies. You will need resources to deliver, so ensure that what you have available matches your ambition.

Continuous engagement with elected representatives, policy officials and other stakeholders is crucial across all stages of the process to ensure buyin and support. Plan your engagements early on: to share learning about the process, to clarify questions or misconceptions, to prepare teams for responding to the recommendations, and to ensure that people understand their role and responsibilities during the process.

When you move on to commissioning the assembly, you will need to carefully consider **the mandate** and develop a **clear remit** as this will influence every decision to follow. You may find it helpful to **review case studies** of other processes and **meet with peers**.

Setting up the process may take some time. Ensure that you develop **robust** and **independent governance arrangements** to guide you throughout. At this point, you should have **set the question for the assembly** and will be preparing for external activities, so draw on advice and **develop your communications strategy**. Ensure that you think ahead about the process too. For example, you need to know about any **plans for ongoing opportunities for assembly participants** following the recommendation report, so you can account for that in your resource plans from the start.

Key Steps

Design of the process will be starting around this time, so ensure that you work closely with the design team and **share your assumptions**. You'll want to think about elements such as the **number and shape of recommendations**, so that what emerges from the process is useful for policy making. **Plan ahead for the final report** and ensure that everyone tasked with writing a response is prepared.

You can involve people during the assembly in different ways. Organise an **observer programme** and **invite policy officials and elected representatives** to engage with the participants or to hear recommendations directly. Proactively **publish information** about the process so that people can follow the work of the assembly.

You might want to bring together participants and policy officials to further discuss recommendations or to give feedback on the response, so that you are sure that you really understand what participants have said and feel. Ensure that you publish a response and share details including implementation timelines and challenges. We recommend that you establish a process for monitoring and communicate opportunities for participants to stay connected and involved.

You will have learned a great deal along the way and will hopefully have some fantastic new ideas for policy and action. Capture learning from the process and continue on your journey with deliberative democracy – there are many exciting possibilities.



Challenges

The development of this guide highlighted significant challenges that require further systematic exploration. Contributors broadly reflected that our current models of governance and policy making are not set up to fully embrace participatory processes like climate assemblies.

Additionally, governments do not yet have widespread knowledge and skills to know how to make the most of deliberative contributions. We need to more fully investigate how we 'do' policy making in ways that effectively integrate climate assemblies and other participatory and deliberative processes.

We understand that different options will work better in some contexts than others, but we hope that this is a helpful starting point and a useful reference document.

Please contact KNOCA with any thoughts on how the guidance could be enhanced: info@knoca.eu.



It is important to be certain that a climate assembly will have real opportunities for impact and the approach is the right one.



1.1 Understand the problem you are trying to solve

A climate assembly should address a complex problem that policy officials cannot normally resolve through their usual means. Is there a difficult decision or a problem that requires trade-offs that the government is struggling with now?

Assemblies are one approach to involving the public in climate governance, but there are a range of other approaches that you can use to involve them too, for example distributed dialogues, crowdsourcing, a co-design project, or participatory budgeting.





Step: organise a problem definition workshop. Facilitate a deliberative approach with a larger group of stakeholders, or bring together a smaller group of climate policy officials and key influencers. Inputs should include public opinion research on climate. Once you are clear on the problem, participation specialists with knowledge of a range of different approaches can support you to select the one that will help you to best address it.

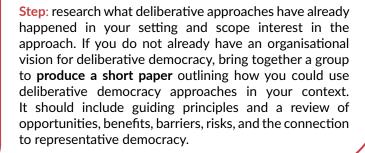


Step: review the input of previous public opinion research. Organise a **public engagement process** and invite the public to elaborate on key challenges. You can feed input into the problem definition process. You should explore where the agenda can be shaped by the public, and map other initiatives to connect with them throughout the process.

1.2 Share your vision for deliberative democracy

Articulating a vision for deliberative democracy in your context, whilst making a clear connection to policy creation and principles that underpin the work, will help you to situate a climate assembly in the work of government and make strategic connections. This will help you to 'set the scene' with the stakeholders you engage throughout the process. Documents should include the benefits, opportunities, barriers and risks of deliberative approaches to demonstrate a well-considered approach.







Step: organise a **working group** involving a range of internal and external stakeholders, including civil society, to develop a shared vision.

1.3 Ensure your approach builds on existing plans

There are a range of different activities led by elected and policy officials to develop new policies, strategies and to engage the public across different policy areas. This often happens in silos and the public are asked to engage multiple times. Policy rarely starts from a blank sheet. You need to understand what has come before, what is happening now and what is planned. It is important that you map current and future plans to understand how your process aligns with and enhances what is already happening. Remember that not everyone working on issues that impact climate will be working in defined climate roles, so you need to cast a wide net.



colleagues and stakeholders working on different policy areas to understand what work is already happening to engage the public in climate; what policies are currently in development; and any strategies or future plans that you should consider. This will include climate policy, but may extend to policy areas such as transportation, energy, economic development and agriculture. You should also review what legislation is in the pipeline.

Step: conduct a discovery process and meet with



1.4 Articulate the connection to wider climate governance

Building on your vision and discovery process, focus on how the climate assembly approach will fit into a broader system of climate governance. An assembly can complement other established stakeholder and citizen engagement, advisory bodies or commissions.





Step: undertake a desk review to produce a **brief summary** of the connections. If this is a challenging task, you can bring a small group together to **map the connections**.

1.5 Understand who you need to involve and keep informed

You need the buy-in of officials in government and other decision-making bodies. Ensure that a wide group of people are informed of the process at an early stage and kept informed as the process unfolds. You should understand their perceptions, expectations and how they can contribute. You may need to convene them early and throughout the process, including via peer-to-peer sessions, to address misconceptions and to involve them in producing evidence for the process, responding to recommendations, and to follow up actions.





Step: conduct a stakeholder mapping exercise as part of your discovery process to understand who you might need to involve at different stages of the process. If possible, identify and engage who is sceptical about the process. Develop a stakeholder engagement plan and start to contact people early to warm them up to your approach and address any misconceptions¹, prepared with documents outlining key information and case examples to share.

¹ See the KNOCA Briefing on Attitudes of Climate Policy Actors

1.6 Engage with elected representatives

A climate assembly may have emerged following a steer from elected representatives, but it is important to understand the perception and misconceptions of political actors across the political spectrum and to bring them on the journey. Targeting policy advisors and assistants may be beneficial as they work closely with elected representatives.





Step: organise regular **briefings for elected representatives and their aides** to provide more information about the plans, respond to questions and address misconceptions.

1.7 Ensure resources match ambition

Climate assemblies involve multiple choices and design can take different forms. In considering the possible components, it is important to understand the resource implications of different choices and to budget accordingly. You should consider how continuation activities, including what happens beyond the report publication and response, will be supported at this early stage.

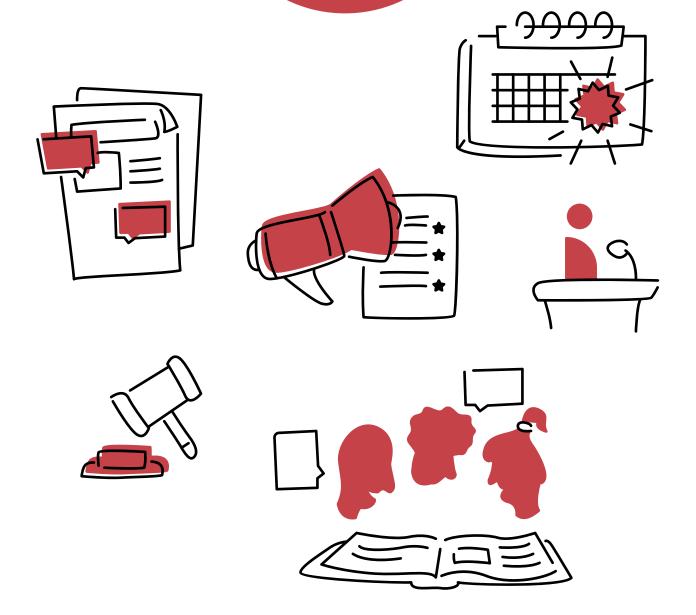




Step: hold a budget planning session to ensure you understand the choices and account for all stages and costs. If you do not have this expertise within the government, call on external advice.

2

Commissioning a climate assembly



2.1 Review case studies and meet with peers

There is a rich base of learning from climate assemblies that have happened across the world. They have often been informed by meetings between policy officials, who have exchanged honest reflections and explored questions together.



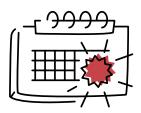


Step: research other processes and contact officials to arrange conversations. KNOCA has many relevant resources and can facilitate peer-to-peer learning.

2.2 Decide the most impactful timing

Assemblies must be held before any decision-making points and certainly not after decisions have been taken. Options to consider include:

- alignment with budget setting processes
- when developing strategies and plans (depending on your topic)
- before or after elections.





Step: review the policy cycle and upcoming events, including the schedule for legislative bodies, to determine when best to schedule the climate assembly process.

2.3 Set the mandate

It is important to know where the mandate for the assembly is coming from. This happens before remit setting and provides the impetus for the actions to follow. The mandate can be established by government or parliament, through legislation or local motions. It could also be triggered via existing public participation mechanisms where they exist, such as standing assemblies or petitions. It is critical that the powers of the assembly are made clear from the outset (most tend to be advisory, though they can be decision-making). The mandate should be clearly communicated throughout the process to ensure expectations are aligned.





Step: organise a **meeting** between policy officials and legislative officials to outline options and document the process for setting the mandate, highlighting any key decisions that need to be taken.

2.4 Set a clear remit

You do not have to set a specific *question* at this stage - that can come when you set up the assembly - but you do need to know the *broad remit*. This will guide everything to follow, so parameters or expectations need to be made clear at this stage. For example:



- should the assembly make recommendations on a specific aspect of climate policy?
- do you want to source proposals for a wider series of actions that help to tackle the climate crisis?
- are there timeframe considerations, for example due to emissions reduction targets or legislative process?
- will it focus on actions the government or public sector can take, or also for example local organisations and communities?
- will you include cross-border impacts / climate justice?
- what are the links to current or planned legislation?



Step: organise a **remit definition workshop**. This would benefit from involving a wider group of people with knowledge of the topic area. See further KNOCA guidance on setting a remit.



Step: the specific **question** may be decided at this point, although it is better to wait until a steering committee is in place to ensure a balanced approach (see next section).



Step: provide a **long-list of topic areas** that you could focus on and involve the public in deciding priority areas.

2.5 Decide who will respond to the recommendations

It is crucial that you have a clear and documented plan for receiving the report of the assembly, responding to the recommendations, and scrutinising any follow-up action in the immediate and longer term.





Step: organise a first workshop to develop broader governance arrangements for the climate assembly, leaving with certainty about who will be responsible for responding to the recommendations and for scrutinising the actions to follow. Ensure the outcome is documented and agreed through the appropriate channels.

2.6 Develop key messages

Craft a clear set of messages which capture the plans for the assembly to use in presentations and meetings with colleagues and external stakeholders. Here the expertise of communications specialists will be helpful. It is very important that you do not communicate unrealistic expectations about what the process will achieve or address.

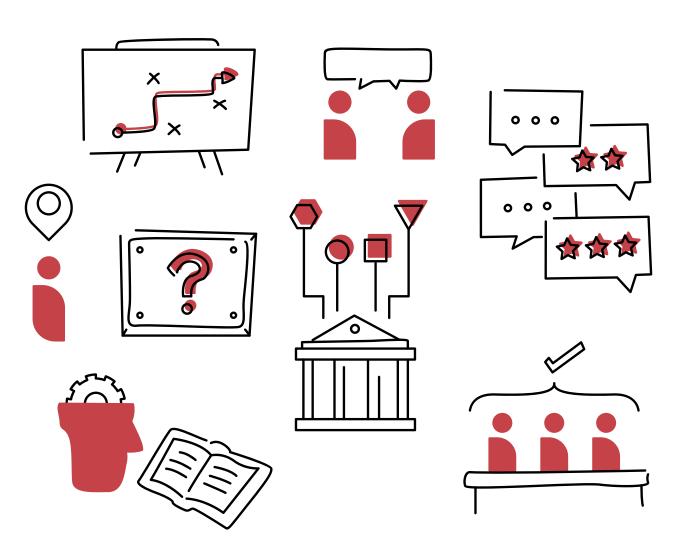




Step: circulate a version-controlled **key messages document** to colleagues and post on organisational platform, accompanied by a slide deck with more information.



This stage involves bringing together a team to deliver the assembly process, who may work independently from you. They might commission external expertise to support aspects of the delivery including recruitment, design and facilitation.



3.1 Enable learning about deliberative approaches to policy making

Climate assemblies and other deliberative approaches are a new way of working for people making policy. Often, new delivery teams are brought together and it may be their first time working on such a process. Analysts may not be familiar with the expected outputs from the process, and people might not know how to use them as a form of evidence.





Step: ensure the delivery team completes in-depth training on climate assemblies and deliberative approaches to policy making, so they develop a rich understanding of the approach before making key decisions. If you are looking to bring in an external provider to support you in the design and delivery of the assembly, then this could be something you ask them to provide.



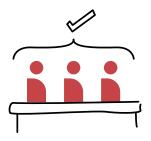
Step: organise learning sessions and try to reach as wide a group of policy officials as possible. Give space for questions and exploration. You might want to partner with an external deliberative practice organisation to do this, or find ways to make it part of existing training programmes. KNOCA regularly organises learning sessions for public authorities and has a wealth of introductory materials.

3.2 Continue building buy-in with public officials and elected representatives

You need to find the best ways to keep key colleagues and stakeholders informed and engaged throughout the process, working at all levels and across policy areas. This requires regular points of contact and communication.



Step: organise short, regular 'show and share' sessions or emails to update people on the progress of the work, opportunities and challenges, and give space for questions and exploration. Post links on your intranet. You can take a quick barometer check after meetings to check how people are feeling.



3.3 Establish an advisory body

It can be helpful to have an advisory body in the early stages of the process that can act as a sounding board and provide guidance as you are getting started.

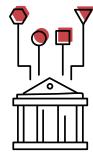


Step: convene a **time-bound advisory group** during set up of the process that combines technical, subject matter, and deliberative process expertise.



3.4 Ensure robust and independent governance arrangements

You should put in place governance arrangements for the assembly that reflect a range of interests and expertise. It is important that governance is transparent and easy to understand as you will need to explain it many times throughout the climate assembly. You need to do this before launching the design and recruitment stages. KNOCA has extensive guidance on different approaches to governance.



Step: organise a workshop to develop governance arrangements for the climate assembly, leaving with certainty about how you will make decisions throughout the process and who holds responsibility. Ensure the outcome is documented and agreed through the appropriate channels.



Step: Create a visual of the governance structure.



3.5 Set the question

The question can be set during the commissioning or set-up stages. A benefit of doing it at this stage is that you can involve your governance bodies. You should set a question that people can really respond to. Like the remit, which establishes the broad area of focus, this will frame the entire process to follow.





Step: organise a **question definition** workshop. This can involve members of your governing bodies and a wider set of stakeholders.



Step: test your question(s) with stakeholders and members of the public. You could do this through a survey, focus groups, workshops or a dedicated public engagement platform.

3.6 Have a dedicated point of contact

Your entire delivery team should by now be able to explain your general approach, but it is helpful to have at least one dedicated person who can explain climate assemblies to different stakeholders inside and outside of government and communicate across silos.





Step: ensure you have at least one person with deep knowledge on deliberative approaches and climate assemblies that can be an internal and external **point of contact**.



3.7 Plan ongoing opportunities for assembly participants

Build in time and resources early to enable climate assembly participants to continue meeting after they have made their recommendations. Be aware that many participants will be eager to continue their engagement after the assembly has generated its report. Prepare for members to engage in ongoing dialogue with officials through formal or informal mechanisms. Assembly participants might benefit from some training and support for this stage, but you can explore that with them later if resources are set aside.



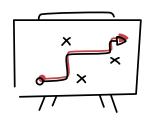


Step: Create a document that sets out opportunities for continued participant engagement. If you build opportunities into formal government or parliamentary business, ensure that you have written confirmation in place.

3.8 Develop a communications and public relations strategy

Building on key messages developed earlier, you should have a communications strategy in place before the assembly begins and ensure you have access to the expertise needed to do this well.

Inviting media will enhance the profile of the climate assembly and provide public opportunities to learn about different aspects of the process. Done well, this may catch the attention of policy officials and enhance public discourse on the topic.



Policy officials might have existing sites of engagement with stakeholders that you can make connections to throughout the process, either to provide information or to invite input. The aim is to increase buy-in.



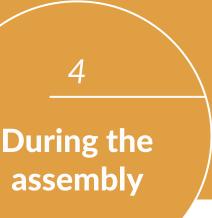
Step: Draw on expertise in communications and public relations to **develop a communications and public relations strategy**. If you do not have expertise in-house, you might want to commission external expertise.



Step: Prepare a **media briefing** and **identify key media partner(s)** to bring on the journey, highlighting key moments of interest along the way.



Step: Identify opportunities to attend external events to talk about the climate assembly, which could involve participants, or invite input at specific stages. Provide briefings to policy officials so they can lead this too. The events could, for example, be regional or community council meetings. Prepare engaging materials for external engagement in a variety of formats.





4.1 Understand assumptions of the design team and policy officials

People who are brought in to facilitate assemblies are not always directly involved in policy making. It is important that facilitators of the process are aware of the links to policy and the powers for action. Remember they will be designing a learning journey for participants and developing templates for recommendations. People who make policy may be working with this kind of evidence for the first time. It is important they share their learning and assumptions about the process and outputs at the start, with enough time to influence the design. Advising design teams on the alignment of the topic with the policy agenda can help them to frame the topics and prompt questions so they fit into topics that are on the agenda in the near future.





Step: Organise a policy design session to bring together process designers with policy officials to share their assumptions, learning, and understanding of how the assembly can connect with the process of policy making. Circulate a written record of the conclusions for reference.



Step: Share information and policy updates with the design team throughout.

4.2 Consider the number of recommendations

The remit will give direction whether you need to cover a lot of ground during the assembly, or take a deep dive into more specific targeted issues. It is possible that the process will produce a large number of recommendations. You need to determine your limits to ensure that response and action does not become overwhelming for policy makers, especially if there are trade offs to consider. You should think ahead and consider what would be practicable, considering design choices that will help produce a manageable set of recommendations.





Step: Discuss the number of recommendations and what is manageable, sharing expectations with the design team as soon as possible. Consider how you and your colleagues in different parts of the authority might respond and discuss any risks.

4.3 Consider the shape of recommendations

Climate assemblies can produce recommendations that touch on a range of specific, systematic or ethical actions. Recommendations that are too short and vague are unhelpful for policy makers and can leave too much room for interpretation. Providing a rationale for why change is necessary is important for contextualising each recommendation and leaves less room for misinterpretation. Remember, that there is flexibility in design. The design team can consider a number of things: a maximum number of recommendations, formats that provide clear rationales for each recommendation, how to indicate priorities, or how to connect the assembly to a next step (for example preferendums).





Step: Discuss the shape of recommendations and be clear on the minimum level of information you need to inform policy, sharing expectations with the design team as soon as possible. Consider how you and your colleagues in different parts of the authority might respond to a range of specific, systematic or ethical proposals.

4.4 Involve policy officials and politicians

There are many opportunities to involve policy officials and politicians directly in a climate assembly process, particularly to increase buy-in and the precision of recommendations. Opportunities include:

- two-way discussion with participants at a particular stage
- providing or presenting evidence, including contextual information
- sharing reflections as part of a panel
- giving feedback on recommendations
- road testing draft recommendations
- or even as joint participants in the deliberations, although this points towards a different model of deliberative engagement.

Be clear on the ask and ensure that assembly participants are informed of plans or proposals to involve politicians and policy makers at the earliest opportunity. You need to be thoughtful about the dynamics that this can generate.

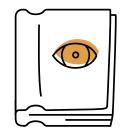


Step: Map opportunities for involvement as part of the early design stages. Develop a briefing and guidelines for participation for officials and politicians.



4.5 Organise an observer programme

Witnessing how a deliberative process happens turns it from an abstract concept into a powerful learning opportunity. This step may be of particular importance for key decision makers, especially if they are sceptical. You can enable people to watch the process of a climate assembly live, or organise 'show and share' sessions for people to learn in more detail about how the process works. However, it is important that observers do not disrupt the assembly process, so you may want to put in place rules and guidelines.





Step: create a process for people to register to observe the assembly sessions, along with guidelines for observers that set expectations and ensure the programme does not disrupt the assembly process.

4.6 Publish Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Throughout the process, people will look to you for information. It is best to anticipate some of those requests and to proactively publish information. This is also important for transparency. Build on key speaking points developed earlier in the process and share details about the organisers, governance, who is involved and how they were selected, and inputs into the process. You should include an explainer of what a climate assembly is and how it works.





Step: hold an internal session to outline anticipated questions and your response. Review what other assemblies have provided. Create a space on your website and a document for circulation. Update with information as you identify common questions throughout the process.

4.7 Ensure reports are planned, clear and concise

You need multiple layers of reporting for different audiences, including short reports for ministers, public reports, further detail with evidence and justifications. Templating these early on is helpful and will ensure you are getting the information needed for policy making through the process. You want the style and format of your reports to be consistent and easy to understand, so plan for this in the coordination of responses.





Step: look at examples of reports and decide the type and style of report that will be most effective in your context. Prepare report templates. Establish the process for report writing and coordination of the response.

4.8 Brief officials tasked with writing responses

You need to engage early with the people who are likely to have recommendations land on their desk for response and action, to build their understanding and support. Do this before recommendations have been finalised, so they have time to get to grips with the process and what is required of them.





Step: refresh stakeholder mapping (done earlier in the process) and identify who will respond to recommendations. Organise briefings with them to talk through what to expect, address any misconceptions, and to share your expectations and templates.

4.9 Invite policy officials to hear recommendations direct from participants

You can invite officials to hear presentations of draft or final recommendations. This will help them to better understand what has been suggested and the reasons why.

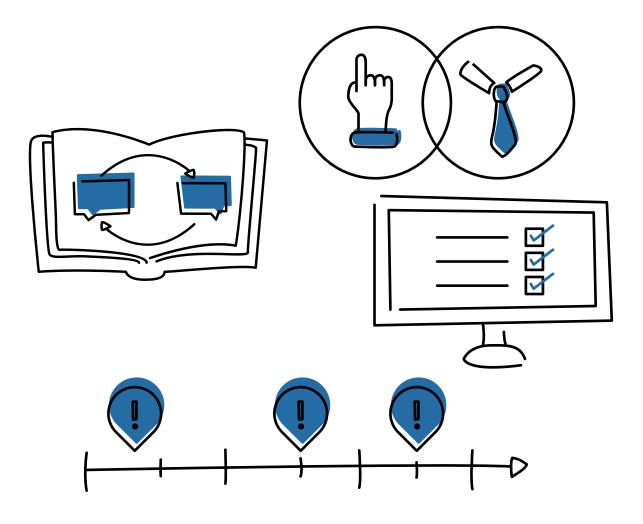




Step: include a session in the assembly plan that involves policy officials. The session could be an active listening exercise, giving their reflections, or be direct interaction with assembly participants (for example giving input on draft recommendations). They should also be invited to join the observer programme.



The suggestions in this section build on what has already been suggested in earlier stages. By this point, you should already have a plan for how you are going to respond, and the processes in place for a well coordinated effort.



5.1 Bring together participants and policy officials

Ensure that spaces have been created for continued dialogue or a feedback loop for deliberative processes, and that elected and public officials fulfil their commitment to attend.





Step: organise a **roundtable** as a starting point where participants can share the recommendations and why they thought they were important.

5.2 Share implementation timelines and challenges

It is best to be open and honest about any challenges you might have in implementing the recommendations of the assembly. You should share the reasons in your response. There may be opportunities to further discuss these issues with participants as part of ongoing engagement and to find workable concessions.

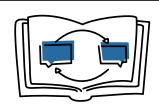




Step: develop a **roadmap for implementation** of recommendations that you take forward to clearly show the sequence and timing of action, highlighting where there are challenges.

5.3 Publish the response

Ensure your response is open and accessible to the public. This should be available for anyone that wants to view it. You may want the report to sit alongside an archive of the process, ensuring long term availability of materials and information.

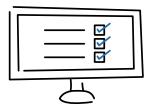




Step: add the response to your website and promote through your communication channels. Ensure it will be accessible long term.

5.4 Establish a process for monitoring

Anyone should be able to follow the journey of the climate assembly recommendations and how they translate into policy and action. Someone needs to be assigned to undertake a regular follow up, taking into account that policy change can happen longer term.



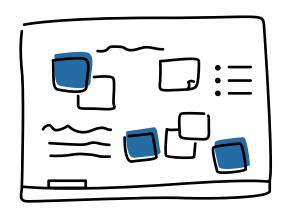


Step: develop a set of common indicators and use a digital tool to keep track of progress. Share progress on a webpage that is regularly updated by a responsible officer who coordinates a process to collect updates and information from across policy teams. If you are a member of the Open Government Partnership, you could build expectations for monitoring into your action plan.

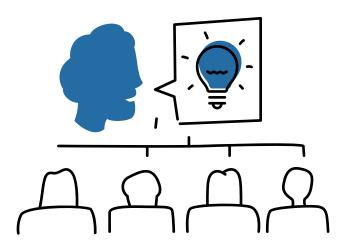


Step: Work with assembly participants or civil society organisations to **establish a joint mechanism for review** on the progress of actions, setting expectations together.









6.1 Enable participants to evaluate the response

Create opportunities to bring participants together to review and evaluate your authority's response, and to engage in next step discussions.

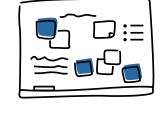


Step: build participant activities into your **evaluation plans** and ensure **continued resources** to bring participants together after the process has concluded.



6.2 Capture learning from the process

You will no doubt learn a lot throughout the climate assembly process, so it is important to reflect on how it went and to capture the learning to improve future processes.



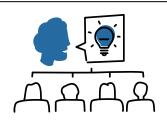
Step: organise a retrospective session that brings together a group of people involved throughout the process. Talk about what worked well, what didn't work well, and what needs to be improved to ensure better impact on policy. Publish a note for policy colleagues on what you would do differently next time.



Step: engage with KNOCA to ensure that learning is spread, and add a case to Participedia (https://participedia.net).

6.3 Continue building institutional capacity

Exploit opportunities to build learning and knowledge sharing into your organisation longer term, bringing people together across silos to nurture a community of practice around deliberative approaches.



Step: Establish an exchange or secondment programme with other departments or governments. Make the case to organisational learning and development colleagues and build public involvement into continued professional development. Establish participation champions in the organisation and facilitate a practice network.



For further guidance on commissioning, design, implementation, impact and evaluation of climate assemblies, visit https://knoca.eu/

