

# CITIZENS' ASSEMBLIES

## FRAMING THE QUESTION

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

#### 1. You are not designing a consultation

This is not about asking participants as individuals what they might like or want. Deliberation is different. It aims to determine what a group of people can agree to and produces a set of well-informed recommendations that can form the basis of future policy decisions, rather than generating a list of top-of-mind opinions.

#### 2. The trickier the better

Governments use deliberative processes when they face complex or controversial issues and decide to delegate to a group of citizen representatives the task of weighing different factors, exercising good judgment, and proposing a solution.

#### 3. Be specific

Successful deliberative processes are relatively narrow in their focus and address specific issues that are clearly defined.

#### 4. Be timely

It is essential that you frame the inquiry based on the time and resources available. Do not be overly ambitious about what you think people can consider in the time available. You must allow sufficient time for learning and deliberation to the question posed.

#### 5. Purpose and mandate

Deliberative processes are most effective for making choices when selecting between options (trade-offs), or to establish priorities among competing possibilities. Deliberative processes are less effective for generative or loosely defined tasks like brainstorming or visioning.

#### *Reference*

*March 2019, MASS LBP How to commission a Citizens' Assembly or Reference Panel*

