

Script For In-Person Community Assembly

This script has been written to help you organise a community assembly.

Please note that this script is written in such a way as to ensure that those who are new to people's assemblies are fully supported throughout. If you are an experienced PA facilitator and are working with those who understand how PAs work, understand their history and the hand signals, you may wish to skip over certain sections. In short, please adapt this script to the needs of your situation and your audience.

Important Things to Consider

- Before you attempt to facilitate a People's Assembly, please make sure you have at least attended one. But remember: it's not rocket science. Give it a go. You'll be great!
- This script is just a starting point. As you do more, you'll figure out your own way of saying what's here. Don't feel that this is the only way in which a People's Assembly can be facilitated, although this method is based on many years of experience in PA's by people from all over the World.
- Other things to note:
 - The two facilitators should be of different genders if at all possible.
 - Ensure radical inclusivity. Allow time at the start of the assembly to get everyone familiarised with using the tech. Think about the language you are using. Is it academic or vernacular? Are you communicating in a way that speaks to everyone within your community?
 - Remember that all voices are valued equally. Trust the process, and allow all people to speak, even if you are not sure you're going to like what you hear.
 - We welcome all people, but not all behaviours: if someone says something that makes you feel uncomfortable (i.e. they may have been racist or sexist), then name the feelings triggered by that behaviour... for example, "what you said just then made me feel very uncomfortable". Do not judge the person: saying "you are a racist" or "you are a sexist" or whatever in this situation is more likely to lead to an escalation, and is likely to put the person into a defensive mode that will make further conversation more difficult.
 - People's assemblies are widely used in action groups and civic democracy groups. For example, the [Peoples Assemblies book on the Rebel Toolkit](#), provides loads more hints, tips and background information on PAs.

Script

- **Input Phase**

- Introduction (Facilitator 1)
- Hand Signals (Facilitator 2)
- Introduce the Concept of a People's Assembly (Facilitator 1)
 - History
 - Inclusivity Statement
 - Testify
- Three Pillars (Facilitator 2)
- Framing the topic: What is the point of this people's assembly? (Facilitator 1)

- **Deliberation Phase**

- Breakout Room - Technical Advice
- How Does a People's Assembly Work? (Facilitator 2)
- Discussion

- **Integration/Output Phase**

Input Phase

FACILITATOR 1: Introduction

- Welcome everyone.
- *Facilitators introduce themselves, perhaps say a little of your background and experience with PA's and Community Organising or Projects - Brief but inspiring! If you want to bring people into the space, perhaps do a short visioning exercise, inviting people to imagine something or think about what brought them to the space.*
- Explain that People's Assemblies have three 'phases':
 - Input (includes introduction)
 - Deliberation (discussion)
 - Integration (Feedback)

- **Input Phase**

During the input phase, we explain the process and structure of the assembly, we introduce the hand signals, and frame the focus of the assembly, as well as what will happen with the outcomes from the assembly.

[If you are having more input here than just presenting the topic for discussion, such as speakers, video etc you will explain that here too]

- **Deliberation Phase**

During the Deliberation (discussion) phase, you will be placed in small groups for *[insert chosen length of deliberation phase]* minutes and discuss the question/topic of this assembly.

- **Integration Phase** At the end of the Deliberation phase, the groups will come back into the full assembly and feedback what was generated in their small discussion group.

Facilitator 2: Hand Signals

[Demonstrate the hand signals used in assembly to allow people to use them during the introduction and input phase of the assembly.]

- We use hand signals to facilitate a discussion in which all voices get heard, no one dominates and we don't speak over each other. We will outline the hand signals you will need to take part today. Don't worry if you can't remember them as they will be repeated later in the session.

HAND SIGNALS

[As you verbally outline the hand signals, physically show them to ensure people fully understand them].

- **Make a point:** One index finger pointed upwards.
 - The facilitator will stack, but they can choose to stack out of order to ensure RADICAL INCLUSIVITY and ensure all voices are heard.
- **Agreement:** Wavy hands for agreement.
 - This is to help note taker, who can record the level of agreement, and to make sure people are not interrupting others...remember it's all about ACTIVE LISTENING.
- **Clarification:** Create a c shape with one hand.
 - This is to ensure all are able to fully participate. It is useful if people do not understand anything, particularly important if unfamiliar terms and acronyms are used.
- **Direct point:** Two index fingers pointing upwards.
 - This is not for responding, this is just for extra added information that is directly relevant to what is being said – people must be careful not to misuse this to jump ahead in the queue!
- **Technical point:** Create a t-shape with your hands.
 - This is used for technical information such as breaks or timings.
- **Round up:** Create a circle with both hands.
 - Do this after 2 minutes to make sure that those who are more comfortable speaking don't go on and on...remember: RADICAL INCLUSIVITY.
- **Speak up:** Move your hands upwards with their palms facing upwards.
- **Temperature check:** Jiggle fingers at a level that corresponds with feelings i.e. upwards - support, horizontally - ambivalent, downwards - don't support.
 - This can be used to quickly check the feelings of the group.

FACILITATOR 1: Introduce the concept of a People's Assembly

What is a People's Assembly?

A people's assembly is a structured way for a group of people to discuss issues, generate ideas and/or make decisions collectively in a manner in which all voices are heard and valued equally and no one person, or group, is able to dominate the process.

People's assemblies are 'self selected' meaning that anyone can choose to take part. They are not to be confused with Citizens Assemblies which are randomly selected from the population by the process of Sortition, to make sure it is representative in terms of key characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, education level and geography. Citizens' Assembly members would learn about critical thinking before they hear balanced information from experts and stakeholders. They would then spend time deliberating in small facilitated groups, similar to the break-out groups we're going to use in this People's Assembly.

People's Assemblies have been used throughout history and all over the world as a means to enable people to come together and achieve real social change:

- In Ancient Athens, for example, a people's assembly known as the ekklesia, which was open to all male citizens regardless of class, was where major decisions such as going to war, military strategy and the election of public officials were made.
- More recently, in Rojava, Kurdistan, people's assemblies have been at the centre of a democratic revolution. Decisions are made by the community, and the role of the elected representatives is simply to carry out these decisions. The community itself is the seat of power.
- In Spain, the Spanish municipalist movement, known as the Indignados or 15-M movement, used PAs to discuss and protest against the government's austerity policies. At the movement's peak, 80 assemblies were being held each week alone in Madrid.
- In 2014 the Y'en a Marre movement in Senegal helped oust the incumbent and corrupt President by mobilising the youth vote using people's assemblies and hip-hop.
- Closer to home there are the examples of Frome, Torridge and others, all of which are councils that have been reclaimed to some degree by residents in local elections. When councils are run by residents we see decisions get made that prioritise the needs of that community. To give a couple of brief examples, Frome has a Library of Things. This came from a small start up grant of £9000, which enabled over 300 things such as power tools, musical instruments, to be gathered for the whole community to borrow for a small fee. They also repurposed derelict buildings, solar panels sprung up everywhere, a local NHS initiative to prescribe volunteering plus the councils investment in civic and volunteer groups, this led to a 22% reduction in A&E attendances.

Inclusivity Statement

Before we start a People's Assembly, we like to read out this inclusivity statement

"We value all voices equally in the assembly, as the aim is to hear the wisdom of the crowd gathered here and not to have the assembly dominated by individual voices or groups. We recognise that confident speakers are not always right and that those who are not confident speakers will often have the most useful ideas or opinions to put into the discussion. This is why we value all voices equally and we ask you to do the same. We do

not tolerate any calling out, abuse or shaming. We welcome all people but not all behaviours.”

We want to hear your voice, if you want to speak, no matter what. Whatever age you are, wherever you are from and whatever you do.

The whole process will take about an hour and a half*, and we’d love you to stay for the whole of that, but feel free to go or come as you like or need.

*[*If you have the time, it’s good to do a TESTIFY at this point. It’ll add about 15-30 minutes to the overall length of the PA, but gets people talking about why they are at the PA before the main section of the assembly...]*

Testify

Before we get into the section of the People’s Assembly where you will all be able to talk through our specific issue in a facilitated way, we first like to give anyone who would like an opportunity to talk about what has brought them here today.

- QUESTION: What has brought you here today?
 - *Offer the floor to anyone who wants to speak. Ask for a woman to speak first (to ensure that we don’t have a succession of men, men and more men).*
 - *Allow as much dead air as is necessary for people to build up the courage to come and talk!*
 - *FACILITATOR 2 is timing and doing the ‘round up’ signal as necessary.*
 - *After 15-30 minutes, move into the remainder of the PA...*
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