

How to Run a People's Assembly - Step-by-Step

This is the basic framework for creating and running a People's Assembly. This 'Quick Start Guide' is essentially all you need to run an assembly.

Roles

Each assembly needs:

- Lead Facilitator(s). Ideally two with a gender balance. Responsible for the overall running of the assembly, time keeping, and the delivery of all relevant information.
Lead Facilitators would benefit from having completed [general XR Facilitation training](#). There are also recordings of People's Assembly specific training that can be found here: [People's Assembly facilitation training one](#), or [People's Assembly facilitation training two](#).
- Assembly Note Taker. Responsible for recording the results of the Feedback phase of the assembly and responsible for feeding the assembly results into wherever they are destined to go.

Each breakout group needs:

- A Facilitator. Facilitates discussion using [hand signals](#), ensures no one dominates, keeps an eye on the time, maintains radical inclusivity and active listening.
- A Note Taker. Summarises the most popular points, ideally as bullet points. Aims to boil them down to a few key points or ideas from the discussion. Looks for wavy hands to signify agreement.

Phases of a People's Assembly

There are three main phases of an Assembly: Setup, Deliberation and Integration (feeding back). Setup can be broken down further into Introduction and Input which can be of varying lengths depending on the purpose of the assembly.

Ideally the Setup phase should be no more than 30 mins in total. Unless it is an emergency assembly to make a rapid decision all assemblies should begin with something to unite all of those present.

Phase 1: Introduction & Setup (approx 30 mins)

Introduction

- Introduce and explain the [hand signals](#) so that they can be used throughout all parts of the assembly. - Lead Facilitators introduce the Assembly agenda, including where the results of this assembly will go.
- Talk through [the three pillars](#) and ask for help from the crowd to remove any barriers to engagement that may be identified.
- Read out the 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.

Setup

This can be as simple as the Lead Facilitators framing the question for discussion and why the assembly has been convened, or asking the gathered crowd for suggestions as to what they would like to deliberate on (known as People's Choice). Or it can involve a longer and more in depth Input section such as a live panel of experts, or video input.

Using People's Choice to Decide the Assembly Question(s)

Lead Facilitator asks for suggestions from the crowd on what they would like to discuss, and the Assembly Note taker records them. Ideally looking for three or four suggestions maximum or the process can be very long and drawn out! The crowd are then asked to vote using the 'Temperature Check' method. The Lead Facilitator reads them out one at a time and looks for the most 'Wavy Hand' signals to show the overall preference.

Inviting participants to share why they are there

Invite people to take the microphone for two minutes maximum and share their feelings about what has brought them to join the assembly or action that day, to share what is in their heart. In an open public assembly, this section can be drawn out as long as people volunteer to speak. It opens the space for people to connect emotionally, but shouldn't be used as a 'soap box' on the issues about to be discussed. Ideally ask for a woman to speak first (it has been shown that this will greatly increase the level of engagement of female participants. The rate of engagement and uptake for males isn't affected in the same way), and allow as much dead air as is necessary for people to build up the courage to come and talk. Be strict with timing but ensure that people speaking are supported and made completely safe in their sharing. Ideally work with two facilitators so that one facilitator 'guards' mic, whilst one sits in front of speaker with timer and gives 'round up' hand signal as they approach 2 mins.

Phase 2 : Deliberation (approx 40 mins)

5 mins intro, 25 mins deliberation, 10 mins note feedback

Introducing the topic

- Lead Facilitator clarifies discussion topic or question, including making clear how many points are to be fed back from each 'breakout group' (usually between 3 and 5 depending on the size of the assembly).
- Lead Facilitators divide the assembly into 'breakout groups' ideally of between six to eight. Facilitators need to try and ensure this is roughly the size of each group and encourage people to sit in groups with people they don't already know.
- Each Breakout Group has one Facilitator and one Note Taker as explained above.
- Clarify duration of deliberation (discussion in breakout groups) phase and stick to timings throughout an assembly, as many people who are attending have work or family responsibilities that have to be respected.
- Recap hand signals here.

Breakout Groups

- It is good practice for the Facilitator to restate the discussion topic or question and for the Note Taker to write it down. This enables people in the group to refer back to the original point for discussion to make sure the group stays focused and on subject.
- It is also good to start by going around the group and stating names, and making space for anyone to highlight any barriers to engagement that they may have that the small group can work together to try to work around.
- **Breakout Groups discuss topic for 25 mins.**
- 10 mins before end of Deliberation Phase
 - Lead Facilitator calls time for the end of the discussion time.
 - Note taker feeds back their summary of the discussion to identify the key points and agree with the group that the points they have recorded as most popular are an accurate representation.

Phase 3: Intregation (approx 20 mins)

- Lead Facilitator calls assembly note takers to the front of the Assembly.
- Each Note Taker feeds back key points
- Crowd uses wavy hands to indicate support
- Assembly Note Taker records the points that get the most overall approval from the entire assembly, or just records the points as they are fed back. It's nice to do this on a white board or a large piece of paper so that the assembly participants can see it.
- If there is a need to vote on something as the results of the Assembly you can do a 'Temperature Check'. The Lead Facilitators reads out the different options to be voted on and the members of the assembly cast their 'vote' using 'wavey hands' for the option they like the best. The Assembly Note Taker and Lead Facilitators watch for the most wavy hands and that gets taken forward. [Read more about using an assembly to make a decision on a specific proposal here.](#)
- Assembly Note taker feeds results of the Assembly to wherever they are destined to go, such as central online results, or sent to Coordinators etc. This is determined prior to the assembly and will have formed part of the framing of the process in the Setup phase.

Finishing up (approx 10 mins)

- Appreciation for Facilitators and Note Takers
 - 'Shout Outs' are an invitation for those gathered to call out brief notifications such as upcoming actions or events. These should be short and arranged with the facilitators beforehand if possible.
 - Lead Facilitator to summarise the results of the Assembly if necessary, and thank everyone for participating.
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