ParlAmericas

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Canada

About ParlAmericas

ParlAmericas is the institution that promotes **PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY** in the **INTER-AMERICAN** system

ParlAmericas is composed of the 35 **NATIONAL LEGISLATURES** from North, Central and South America and the Caribbean

ParlAmericas facilitates the exchange of parliamentary **BEST PRACTICES** and promotes **COOPERATIVE POLITICAL DIALOGUE**

ParlAmericas mainstreams **GENDER EQUALITY** by advocating for women's political empowerment and the application of a gender lens in legislative work

ParlAmericas fosters **OPEN PARLIAMENTS** by advancing the principles of transparency, accountability, citizen participation, ethics and probity

ParlAmericas promotes policies and legislative measures to mitigate and adapt to the effects of **CLIMATE CHANGE**

ParlAmericas works towards strengthening democracy and governance by accompanying **ELECTORAL PROCESSES**

ParlAmericas is headquartered in **OTTAWA, CANADA**

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Toolkit Co-creation Plan

Update of the Working Document
The ParlAmericas International Secretariat updates the document to reflect the discussions at the 1st Co-creation Meeting.

2nd Gathering of the Open Parliament Network (OPN) in San Jose, Costa Rica
Round table discussions during the Gathering serve as a basis for the first draft working document.

Update of the Working Document
The ParlAmericas International Secretariat updates the document to reflect the discussions at the 2nd Co-creation Meeting.

March 2017	April 2017	June to July 2017	September 2017	September 2017	September to October 2017

1st Co-Creation Meeting: Citizen Participation Toolkit in Bogota, Colombia
Parliamentarians and civil society representatives from Latin America discuss the draft working document focusing on citizen participation mechanisms.

2nd Co-Creation Meeting: Citizen Participation Toolkit in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
Parliamentarians and civil society representatives from the Caribbean discuss the draft working document focusing on citizen participation mechanisms.

Online Consultation and Validation Process
The final draft text is published online in Google Docs allowing parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, and civil society representatives to comment and add additional suggestions.

Update of the Working Document and Final Review by the OPN Executive Committee
The ParlAmericas International Secretariat updates the document to reflect comments received online and presents the final draft for review and approval by the Open Parliament Network Executive Committee.

Launch of the Toolkit
The toolkit is launched at the 3rd Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network in Lima, Peru.

Invitation to Member Parliaments to Review the Final Draft
The ParlAmericas International Secretariat sends a copy of the final draft for review and input by parliaments.

October to November 2017

November 2017 to January 2018

February 2018

February to March 2018

April 2018

Design of the Toolkit Publication
The ParlAmericas International Secretariat designs the publication.

Research and Compilation of Laws and Regulations on Citizen Participation in the Americas and the Caribbean
The ParlAmericas International Secretariat compiles examples of laws and regulations on citizen participation in the legislative process.

Contributors

Parliaments

Barbados	Belize	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Ecuador	Grenada	Guyana	Honduras

Jamaica	Nicaragua	Panama	Peru	Saint Lucia	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Suriname	Trinidad and Tobago

International and Civil Society Organizations

APATHYISBORING L'APATHIEC'ESTPLATE

CIUDADANO INTELIGENTE.ORG

NDI NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

DIRECTORIO LEGISLATIVO

Red Latinoamericana por la Transparencia Legislativa

PROJEKTA Governance, Participation and Gender Equality

NIA National Integrity Action

GIFT GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR FISCAL TRANSPARENCY

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TRANSPARENCY INSTITUTE

CITIZENS FOR A BETTER BAHAMAS

CongresoVisible.org

Transparency Institute Guyana Inc. Promoting transparency and accountability and eradicating corruption.

fundar Centro de Análisis e Investigación

Congreso Transparente.org

Introduction

Objective

Citizens across the world have been demanding opportunities to exercise their democratic rights to participate in the governance decisions that affect them, beyond the election of parliamentary representatives. This participation is at the core of the openness agenda; it does not aim to reduce or replace the functions of parliamentarians, but to enhance them. Parliamentarians in the Americas and the Caribbean recognized this call for action and committed to improving opportunities for citizens to participate in legislative decision-making by adopting the **ParlAmericas Road Map towards Legislative Openness**. They have also created various spaces for citizen contributions within legislative decision-making processes.

This toolkit provides a sampling of existing practices for parliamentary engagement with citizens across the Americas and the Caribbean to insight reflection on the integration of such opportunities throughout legislative processes. It aims to engage legislators and civil society in a constructive dialogue to support the evolution of such practices while also acknowledging and mitigating challenges and risks in their implementation.

Using this toolkit

This toolkit has been designed as an easy-to-navigate compilation of current trends and practices related to citizen participation in the legislative process with corresponding links to examples. The examples provided within this toolkit are not intended to be an exhaustive list of all available resources, nor are they presented as validated best practices. For toolkit users interested in exploring a particular mechanism in greater depth, the ParlAmericas International Secretariat can facilitate connections with corresponding parliaments to discuss their experience, including the advantages and disadvantages, with the mechanism in question.

The toolkit is divided in three parts:

The first part provides an overview of the style of possible citizen engagement within the various stages of the legislative process and looks at how strategies for citizen participation can be developed by political actors.

The second part provides examples of how citizen participation initiatives are being applied throughout the region. These are organized under two broad types of engagement: (1) engagement to educate citizens on the role of parliament and encourage citizens to use mechanisms that are available to them; and (2) engagement that allows citizens to participate in different stages of the legislative process.

The third part explores the issue of regulatory frameworks.

Defining Citizen Participation

The Participation Ladder demonstrates the varying levels of citizen participation that can be applied. While it is represented in the form of a ladder, some levels of participation may be more effective than others at different stages of the legislative process, and the objective of a citizen participation strategy should not necessarily be to empower citizens in every situation.

This toolkit focuses on the application of mechanisms **to consult, involve and collaborate** with citizens. This toolkit will not focus on mechanisms to inform citizens, which are a basic

Citizen participation[1]

Active involvement of citizens in legislative decision-making processes allowing them to contribute to decisions that may have an impact on their lives

requirement to enable all other forms of effective participation, and mechanisms for direct democracy that empower citizens to make decisions themselves.

Importance of Citizen Participation

In addition to meeting citizens' expectations that their views should be considered, citizen participation can contribute to:

- **Strong collective intelligence** that provides a better analysis of potential impacts and broader range of considerations throughout the legislative process for overall higher quality outcomes

- **More inclusive and representative** parliamentary decision-making

- **Increased trust and confidence** of citizens in parliament

- **Strengthened legitimacy** of, and co-responsibility for, decisions and actions

- **Improved understanding** of the role of parliament and parliamentarians by citizens

- **Opportunities for citizens** to communicate their legitimate interests

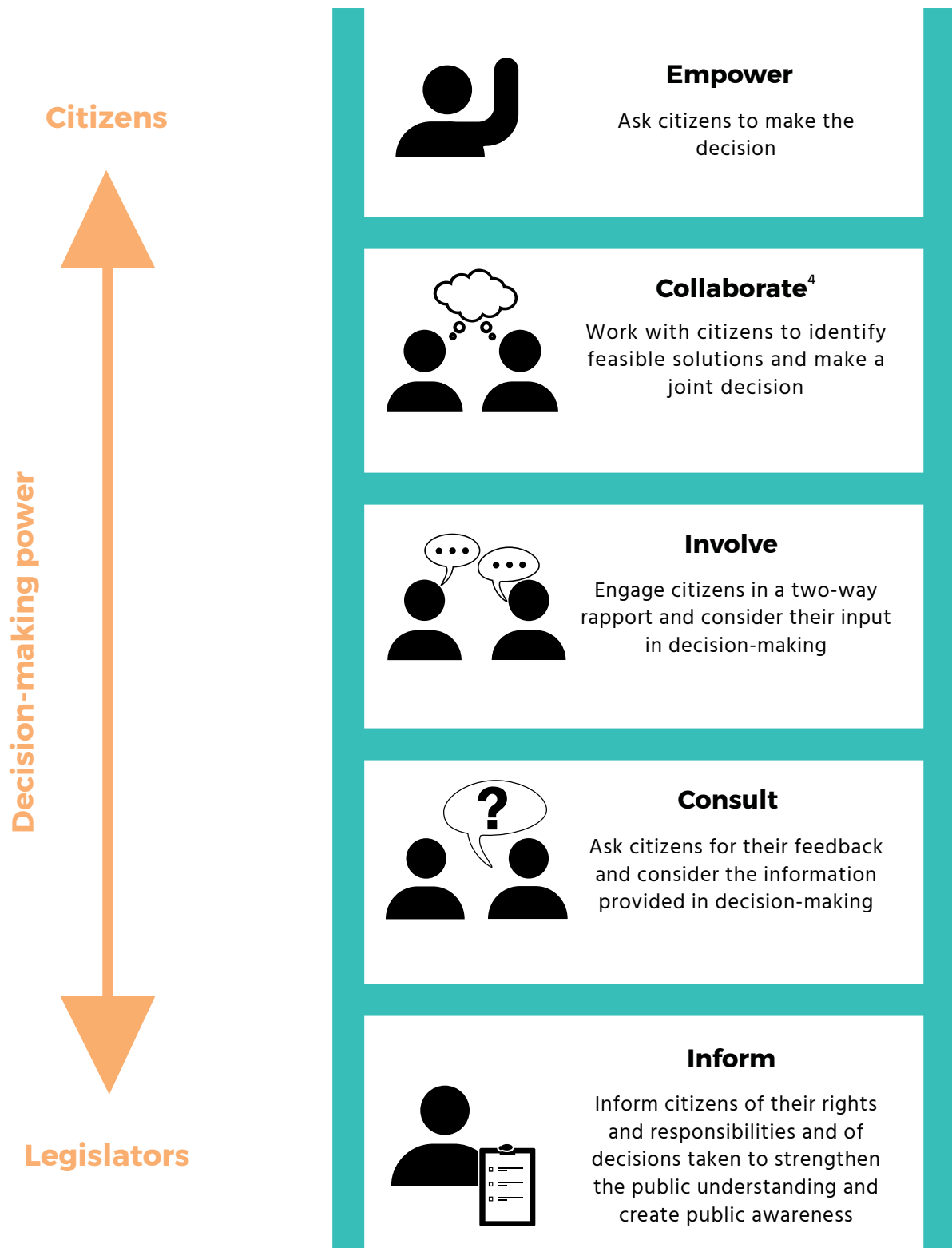- **More accountable** and transparent parliaments

Differentiating citizens from civil society organizations[2]

Civil society organizations (CSOs) can be defined to include all non-market and non-State organizations outside of the family in which people organize themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain. Examples include community-based organizations and village associations, environmental groups, women's rights groups, farmers' associations, faith-based organizations, labour unions, co-operatives, professional associations, chambers of commerce, independent research institutes and the not-profit media.

[1] Road Map towards Legislative Openness, ParlAmericas
[2] NGOs and CSOs: A Note on Terminology, United Nations Development Programme

Participation Ladder [3]

Citizens

Decision-making power

Legislators

Empower
Ask citizens to make the decision

Collaborate [4]
Work with citizens to identify feasible solutions and make a joint decision

Involve
Engage citizens in a two-way rapport and consider their input in decision-making

Consult
Ask citizens for their feedback and consider the information provided in decision-making

Inform
Inform citizens of their rights and responsibilities and of decisions taken to strengthen the public understanding and create public awareness
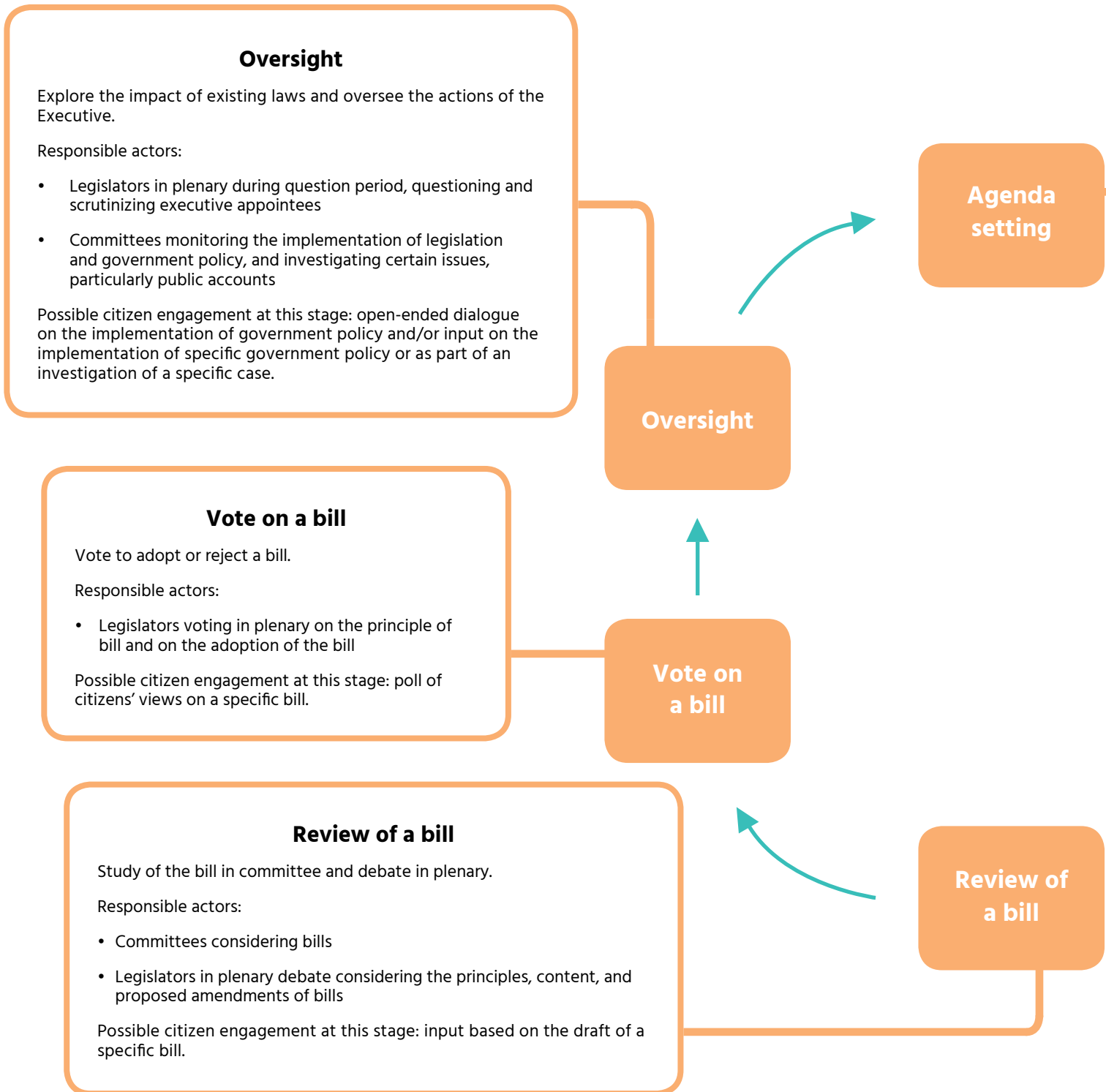
[3] Based on an adaptation of the Ladder of Citizen Participation by Sherry Arnstein (1969) by Citizen Lab
[4] Co-Creation is an emerging form of collaboration originating from the Open Government Partnership

Overview of Citizen Participation

There are opportunities to engage citizens at various stages of the legislative process and these can be coordinated by various actors who are responsible for the process at any given stage. Considering the type of input sought at each stage and the responsibilities of corresponding actors can help determine an appropriate methodology and combination of mechanisms to effectively obtain citizens' input.

Oversight

Explore the impact of existing laws and oversee the actions of the Executive.

Responsible actors:

- Legislators in plenary during question period, questioning and scrutinizing executive appointees
- Committees monitoring the implementation of legislation and government policy, and investigating certain issues, particularly public accounts

Possible citizen engagement at this stage: open-ended dialogue on the implementation of government policy and/or input on the implementation of specific government policy or as part of an investigation of a specific case.

Vote on a bill

Vote to adopt or reject a bill.

Responsible actors:

- Legislators voting in plenary on the principle of bill and on the adoption of the bill

Possible citizen engagement at this stage: poll of citizens' views on a specific bill.

Review of a bill

Study of the bill in committee and debate in plenary.

Responsible actors:

- Committees considering bills
- Legislators in plenary debate considering the principles, content, and proposed amendments of bills

Possible citizen engagement at this stage: input based on the draft of a specific bill.

Agenda setting

Oversight

Vote on a bill

Review of a bill

in the Legislative Process

Agenda setting

Establishment of specific issues as public policy priorities.

Responsible actors:

- Political parties developing policy platforms

- Legislators representing constituents

- Committees defining their agenda

- Presidency or board of directors of parliament defining plenary agenda

- Parliamentary caucuses[5]

- Cabinet and public institutions determining government legislative priorities

Possible citizen engagement at this stage: open-ended dialogue allowing the identification of issues and suggestion of legislative solutions.

Content development of a bill

Content development of a bill

Determination of the main components of specific legislation.

Responsible actors:

- Cabinet and public institutions proposing bills

- Legislators proposing bills in parliamentary systems

- Committees tasked with creating a report as the basis on which a bill will be drafted

Possible citizen engagement at this stage: input on a specific issue and suggestion of legislative solutions.

Drafting of a bill

Drafting of a bill

Legal drafting of the text of a bill.

Responsible actors:

- Cabinet, public institutions, and the relevant legal departments drafting bills

- Legislators and legislative counsel of the chamber drafting private members' bills in parliamentary systems

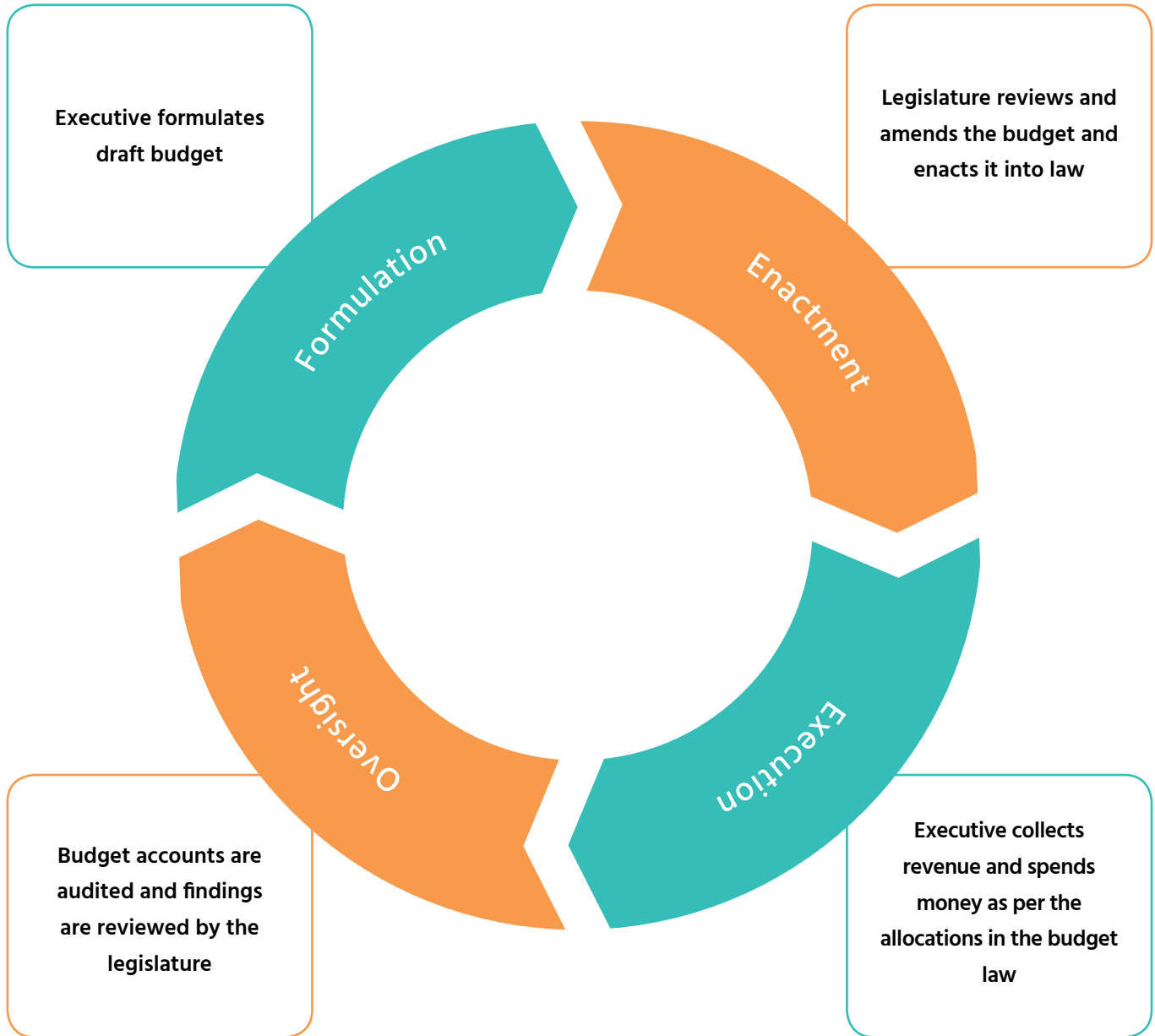- Committees and legislative counsel of the chamber drafting bills in committee

Possible citizen engagement at this stage: input on the text to be included within a specific bill.

[5]Parliamentary Caucuses or Groups: A group made up of all parliamentarians from the same political party or a group of legislators from different parties committed to advancing an issue (i.e. Gender Caucuses) or enhancing regional representation

Budget Cycle

The budget process is a critical component of the legislative function. While the budget is formulated and drafted as legislation by the Executive, legislators can make modifications in accordance with the country's legislation, as well as approve it.

The budget is quite technical due to its overarching and financial nature. Opportunities to engage citizens are nonetheless possible throughout its four phases[6]:

Executive formulates draft budget

Legislature reviews and amends the budget and enacts it into law

Formulation

Enactment

Oversight

Execution

Budget accounts are audited and findings are reviewed by the legislature

Executive collects revenue and spends money as per the allocations in the budget law

While this toolkit provides some examples of participatory budgeting, readers interested in this topic are invited to consult the **Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency's Public**

Participation Principles Guide which provides a comprehensive overview of strategies and mechanisms available to integrate public participation at every stage of the financial process.

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[6] Graphic based on Making The Most of the Budget Cycle: the Budget Formulation Stage (2017), International Budget Partnership

Developing a Citizen Participation Strategy

Separate citizen participation strategies can be developed by each responsible actor for distinct stages and/or issue-based processes. Such strategies need to consider any existing laws and regulations - including parliamentary standing orders - which may govern citizen participation. They can include a plan to promote opportunities for participation and provide incentives, in addition to identifying specific methodologies and mechanisms to be applied. Citizens can also be involved in the development of these strategies to create a sense of co-ownership and ensure that the strategies meet their expectations.

Political parties can focus on improving opportunities for citizens to contribute to the development of policy platforms.

Legislators can focus on improving their relationship with constituents by making themselves accessible and actively engaging in dialogue, including through constituency offices.

Committees can focus on inviting citizens to contribute to a specific issue or bill being studied when adopting their agenda.

Parliament, through its committee responsible for procedures, citizen participation or internal management, can create opportunities for citizens to contribute at an institutional level (i.e. citizen proposals, citizen questions to the plenary or a committee, parliamentary portals, etc.) and create a menu of mechanisms that legislators and committees can apply in their work; parliament can also motion for committees to engage with citizens and allocate resources to support these efforts.

Parliamentary caucuses can focus on integrating citizens in defining their priorities and in the collection of frontline data.

In practice

Methodology for Public Consultation on Active Transparency, Council for Transparency of Chile: Methodology for public consultation including tutorials for "active transparency", which includes online surveys, an expert workshop, witnesses (interviews) and focus groups.

Assessing the Expectations of Citizens to Develop a Pilot Participatory Budget Project, Caribbean Open Institute and Mona School of Business and Management, University of the West Indies: Mobile surveys and focus groups were held to better understand what the budget means to citizens in their daily lives, and how a participatory budget project could be implemented to meet their expectations.

Stakeholder Consultation Tools, European Commission

Principles of Citizen Participation

The following is an adaptation of the **Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency's Principles of Public Participation in Fiscal Policy**. These principles are intended to guide parliaments and parliamentarians in the development of strategies to enhance citizen participation in the legislative process.

Openness

Provide full information on, and be responsive with respect to, the purpose, scope, constraints, intended outcomes, processes, timelines, and actual results of participation, in addition to next steps.

Respect for self-expression

Allow and support individuals and communities, including those that are directly affected, to articulate their interests in their own ways, and to choose the means of engagement that they prefer, while recognizing that there maybe groups that have standing to speak on behalf of others.

Transparency

Provide all relevant information to support each instance of public engagement, highlighting and informing key choices and trade-offs, identifying potential social, economic, and environmental impacts, and incorporating a diversity of perspectives; provide timely and specific feedback on public inputs and how they have been incorporated or not in bills.

Inclusiveness

Pro-actively use multiple mechanisms to reach out to and provide a safe space for all citizens, including those from traditionally marginalized groups, and voices that are seldom heard, without discrimination on any basis including nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age or caste; recognize that different participation channels maybe more appropriate for different stakeholder groups; and consider public inputs objectively and irrespective of their source.

Reciprocity

All state and non-state entities taking part in public engagement activities should be open about their mission, the interests they seek to advance, and who they represent; should observe any agreed rules for engagement; and should cooperate to achieve the objectives of the engagement.

Proportionality

Use a mix of engagement mechanisms that are proportionate to the scale and impact of the issue being considered.

Accessibility

Facilitate public participation in general by disseminating draft bills, committee reports, and all other relevant data, in formats and using mechanisms that are easy for all to access, understand, and to use, re-use and transform; present information in a way that is relevant to citizens' frame of reference.

Sustainability

Conduct on-going and regular engagement to increase knowledge sharing and mutual trust over time; institutionalize public participation where appropriate and effective; and regularly review and evaluate past experience to improve future engagement.

Complementarity

Ensure that mechanisms for public participation and citizen engagement complement and increase the effectiveness of existing governance and accountability systems.

Timeliness

Allow sufficient time in the various phases of the legislative process for the public to provide input; engage early while a range of options is still open; and, where desirable, allow for more than one round of engagement.

Resources to Support Citizen Participation

Both financial and human resources are important components of a citizen participation strategy, and the lack of such resources can be a limiting factor. The application of new technologies are being explored to reduce some of the costliness of in-person mechanisms, however these can only be complimentary to human interaction. A digital divide still exists throughout the hemisphere, and moving to a completely digital system of participation would not be an inclusive approach. Additional ideas of cost-effective in-person mechanisms have been discussed throughout this toolkit, for example, the use of "pop-up" constituency offices in countries where constituencies are quite large or the cost of permanent infrastructure is not possible.

To support legislators' efforts to further engage with citizens, parliaments can also provide services and training to legislators and committees on best practices and mechanisms available. This can include workshops and guides for legislators and staff on best practices to engage with citizens, and/or a parliamentary office with expertise on the subject to provide non-partisan advice and support.

In practice

Technical Legislative Capacity Building, National Assembly of Nicaragua: Exchange of experiences with other parliaments for parliamentary staff, including seminars, workshops and conferences on the process to develop legislation, schedule of debates, system for legislative information, effectiveness of laws, among others.

Educating Citizens and Promoting Participation

Citizens' expectations of legislatures and legislators are often outside of their functions and authority, which can hamper the effectiveness of citizen participation processes. While this is a challenge that can be addressed within the formal education system, parliaments and parliamentarians can also undertake efforts to educate citizens on their roles, functions, achievements and impact on citizens' lives. This creates a foundation for citizens' participation to be effective. Going further, parliaments and parliamentarians can also undertake efforts to raise citizens' awareness of engagement opportunities and provide incentives to encourage citizens to participate in legislative processes. The following mechanisms can be applied to both educate citizens about the role of parliament and promote opportunities for citizens to participate in the legislative process:

Awareness Raising Programs and Campaigns

Parliaments can undertake awareness raising campaigns to educate citizens on the function of parliament and expose them to existing participation mechanisms and/or promote participation in a specific process. These can include print or online advertisement through traditional or social media, or by mailing flyers or other documentation. Campaigns can also be established in collaboration with civil society organizations.

In practice

Parliamentary Training Institute, Chamber of Deputies of Argentina: Diploma in legislative management available for parliamentary staff and the general public, including various courses on the functioning of the legislative process and the role of citizens in the legislative process.

Awareness Raising Campaign for Freedom of Information Bill, Citizens for a Better Bahamas: In the lead up to parliamentary debates about a new Freedom of Information Bill, this civil society organization went to traditional and social media to inform citizens about the importance of this bill and explain its impact on their daily lives, to increase citizen participation in town hall meetings.

Legislative Route, National Assembly of Ecuador: Bus containing on-screen interactive resources that travels across the country creating a participative space for citizens to learn about the functions and the management of the National Assembly.

Our House E-Book, National Assembly of Guyana: Electronic book to inform citizens about the role and work of the National Assembly to garner citizens' interest in the legislative process; a version for children also exists.

Gatherings and Thematic Forums, National Assembly of Nicaragua: Spaces coordinated by the National Assembly and universities in the country through agreements to convene parliamentarians and the university community to discuss legislative work.

Awareness Raising on New Laws, Senate of Paraguay: Activities such as workshops, seminars, public hearings and in-person meetings organized by the Citizen Services Office to disseminate information on new laws.

CrossTALK Magazine, Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago: Official newsletter of the Office of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, aiming to strengthen citizens' understanding of the work of parliament, build interest and promote interaction.

Parliament Week, Parliament of the United Kingdom: Annual festival that engages people from the across the country with Parliament and encourages them to get involved; events are organized by the Parliament and NGOs.

Citizen Participation Offices and Communications Departments

A citizen participation office or communications department can have various mandates, from educating citizens on the role of the parliament, to disseminating information on the work of the parliament, and collecting direct input from citizens into the legislative process.

In practice

Citizen Participation Office, National Assembly of Nicaragua: Parliamentary unit that provides information on the legislature and its work, as well as promotes spaces for dialogue with citizens.

National Directorate for the Promotion of Citizen Participation, National Assembly of Panama: Parliamentary unit with a mandate to promote the submission of citizen proposals and opinions on governmental oversight.

Citizens' Assistance Office, Senate of Paraguay: Parliamentary office responsible for strengthening the legitimacy of the Congress through free access to public information and citizen participation, and for coordinating public hearings.

Citizen Participation Office, Congress of Peru: Parliamentary office with a mandate to inform citizens on parliamentary functions and processes, and channel citizen participation through legislative proposals, opinions, requests, etc.

Corporate Communications Department, Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago: Parliamentary department with a mandate to deliver outreach programs, create publications and educational material, and provide services to Members of Parliament to establish and maintain effective channels of communication with citizens.

Parliamentary Websites

As a hub of information, parliaments' websites can include a section to educate citizens about their role, work and impacts on citizens, as well as another explaining the mechanisms by which citizens can participate in the legislative process. Parliaments can also advertise these pages online and through social media to attract visitors.

In practice

How Laws Are Made, National Assembly of Belize: Website explaining the legislative process and the role of key governmental and parliamentary actors.

How Parliament Works and Participate, Parliament of Canada: Webpages presenting the functions and history of the Parliament, educational resources, activities for youth and for teachers, and descriptions of ways through which citizens can participate in the legislative process.

About the Chamber of Deputies and Frequently Asked Questions, Chamber of Deputies of Chile: Webpage presenting the functions and history of the Congress and providing answers to frequently asked questions.

Assembly Tab on Website, National Assembly of Ecuador: Webpage presenting the functions and history of the Congress and providing answers to frequently asked questions.

Mission, Vision, Values and Principles of the National Assembly, National Assembly of Nicaragua: Webpage presenting the mission, vision, values and principles of the National Assembly, in addition to other information about parliamentary work.

Educational Programs for Children and Youth

Learning about the role and value of parliament at an early age can prepare children and youth to become politically active citizens. Such programs can be virtual or in-person, and include interactions with parliamentarians, games, simulations of parliamentary processes, prizes, and interactive materials tailored for children and youth.

In practice

Youth Parliament, Parliament of Barbados: Simulation of parliamentary sessions held in parliament and live streamed, to provide personal development opportunities for young people to gain a better understanding of parliamentary procedures.

"Delibera" Student Tournament, Congress of Chile: Inter-school competition where teams of students (12-17 yrs) assume the role of parliamentarians, propose legislation and deliberate to solve relevant issues.

Project Assembly in my High School, National Assembly of Ecuador: Inter-school competition where teams of students (12-17 yrs) assume the role of parliamentarians, propose legislation and deliberate to solve relevant issues.

Model National Assembly, University of the Americas, Ecuador: Simulation of National Assembly sessions, including committee and plenary sessions, where university students assume the role of legislators; various universities across Ecuador participate in this initiative.

"Our House" Children Book, National Assembly of Guyana: Book produced to educate children on the National Assembly's role and the work that it undertakes; an adult version also exists.

"Congreso Infantil", Congress of Honduras: Simulation of parliamentary sessions in the National Congress, held with the support of UNICEF, where children (9-14 yrs) elected from their schools from across the country assume the role of parliamentarians.

Educational Programs, Congress of Peru: The Citizen Participation Office organizes diverse programs to promote the involvement of citizens in public processes, including university programs, virtual courses and "Democratic Tuesday" conferences.

Educational Program with Games, National Assembly of Suriname: Project with the goal of familiarizing the youth with the work of the Parliament in a playful manner through three games: Webwalk, a boardgame and Quartet.

Democracy Challenge Game Show, Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago: TV quiz show where youth (18-25 yrs) are challenged to answer questions about the parliament and democracy for prizes.

America's Legislators Back to School, Congress of the United States: Educational program starting in September and running throughout the school year where elected officials in all 50 states meet with their young constituents to answer questions, share ideas, listen to concerns and impart a greater understanding about the legislative process to host activities and citizen participation projects to build a direct relationship with citizens; parliamentarians can also utilise these spaces to work with citizens.

Town Hall Meetings

While town hall meetings can be held to invite citizens to participate in a particular legislative issue, they can also be useful mechanisms to educate citizens on the role and functions of the parliament, to explain the day-to-day impact of legislative issues to citizens' lives and to share the ways in which citizens can get involved.

In practice

Town Hall Meetings and Public Forums to Inform Citizens, National Integrity Action, Jamaica: In-person meetings and forums held in several towns to educate citizens on the role of parliament and on various governance issues, including important local government reforms.

Tours of Parliament and Attendance of Sittings

Guided tours of the offices of parliament accompanied by commentary on the history, role and processes of this institution, and the opportunity to attend sessions of the plenary and/or committee meetings can be educational for citizens and contribute to building their interest to engage in the legislative process.

In practice

Guided Tours, Chamber of Deputies of Argentina: Guided tours offered to individuals or schools to teach about the history and functions of the parliament; a virtual tour is also available.

Guided Tours and Watching Proceedings, Parliament of Canada: Guided tours offered regularly to individuals and schools, and ability to attend and observe parliamentary sittings on a first-come, first-served basis.

Guided Tours and Witnessing Sittings, National Assembly of Ecuador: The project "Open Door Assembly" offers guide tours of the National Assembly to citizens and a virtual tour is available on the website; citizens can also attend sittings by submitting a request.

Guide Tours for Citizens, National Assembly of Nicaragua: Guide tours primarily for elementary and secondary school students, universities, social organizations, State institutions, among others; legislators also interact with visitors during these visits.

Visiting Parliament and Witnessing Sittings, Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago: Guided tours offered to individuals and schools and conducted by parliamentary officers knowledgeable about the operations of the parliament, and ability to attend and observe a parliamentary sitting.

Supporting the Work of Independent Civil Society Organizations

Parliamentarians can contribute to building a strong and independent civil society by promoting and supporting the work of civil society organizations, including parliamentary monitoring organizations, by participating in their activities, contributing to their projects and encouraging citizens to work with them.

In practice

Equal Voice, Canada: Non-governmental organization mandated to promote equal representation of women in Canada's Parliament, in provincial/territorial legislatures, and on municipal and band councils; parliamentarians actively participate in activities and events to promote the organization's work and contribute expertise through a multi-partisan Advisory Board.

Citizens' Initiative for Participation and Good Governance, Projekta, Suriname: Parliamentary monitoring initiative in which a civil society organization worked with citizens to build a Manifesto for the future, and is monitoring progress on the implementation of the government and parliament's commitments in relation to the manifesto; National Assembly Members have participated in activities discussing the project and in the presentation of its reports.

Incentives for Participation

Parliaments can provide incentives to citizens to encourage their participation. These can include awards, prizes, public record of input, or even providing online users special benefits based on the frequency they use a particular participation mechanism.

In practice

"e-Democracia Portal", Congress of Brazil: Portal allows users to obtain different benefits, with corresponding symbolic prizes, based on frequency of contributions.

National Prize Colombia Participates, Government of Colombia: Prize awarded to organizations annually for their involvement in citizen participation processes at various levels of government.

Media

Through its own parliamentary television and radio channels, collaboration with State-owned or private channels, online or printed newspapers, and new digital platforms such as YouTube and podcasts, the parliament can develop content to inform citizens of its role and functions and mechanisms that are available for citizens to participate in its work, as well as live-stream its proceedings.

In practice

"Radio Cámara", Congress of Chile: Congressional radio station that transmits legislative proceedings and discusses the work of the Congress; similarly, both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate live stream sessions.

Legislative Media, National Assembly of Ecuador: National Assembly Radio that specializes in legislative issues to educate, inform and allow citizens to participate, and **Legislative Television** that specializes in legislative activities and disseminating the work of the National Assembly.

The European Parliament in 40 Seconds, European Parliament: YouTube video explaining the function of the European Parliament, promoted by the parliament through its various social media accounts.

Public Broadcasting Corporation, Jamaica: Public television channel that provides live broadcasts of parliamentary sittings, with interpretation for the hearing-impaired.

Parliamentary Channel, National Assembly of Nicaragua: Media offering live and delayed transmission of plenary sessions, informative programs and internal and external events of the National Assembly.

Television Channel, Congress of Peru: Congressional television channel with open signal also available on the website, radio channel available online and a free newsletter on Congressional activities.

Live Streaming of Parliamentary Proceedings on YouTube, Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago: YouTube parliamentary channel that live streams and archives parliamentary sessions; this is also available on the **ParlView website.**

Social Media

Parliaments can disseminate educational information or updates on their work through social media accounts, as a cost-effective practice, particularly through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snap Chat which are the most widely used across the world. Facebook pages can be customized to include features specific to the parliament, and Facebook Live is a free feature that can be used for educational and awareness-raising purposes and allows for sharing of live videos and receipt of live comments from viewers.

In practice

Promoting Citizen Participation Mechanisms, Senate of Colombia: Tweets invite citizens to participate in Senate debates through the mobile application Mi Senado.

Facebook Live Streaming of Plenary and Committee Sessions, Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica: Live streaming of plenary and committee sessions through Facebook Live.

Livestreaming on Social Media, National Assembly of Ecuador: Livestreaming of plenary and committee sessions in Facebook and Twitter, in addition to social media posts informing citizens about the legislative agenda.

Social Networks, National Assembly of Nicaragua: Dissemination of news and interviews related to the work of the legislature through Facebook, Twitter and the Assembly TV channel in YouTube.

Social Networks, Senate of Paraguay: Live streaming of ordinary and extraordinary plenary sessions, in addition to parliamentary activities with citizen participation; the Congress also has YouTube, Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Facebook, Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago: Facebook page in which the Parliament promotes its work and encourages citizens to view live streams of sessions, visit parliament and participate in exchanges with parliamentarians; the Parliament is also active on Twitter, Instagram and Google+.

Information Visualization

The way in which information is displayed and provided to citizens can impact their ability to understand it, as well as their interest in accessing it. This is particularly important in the case of budgetary and financial data which can be quite complex for individuals without this particular skillset.

In practice

Financial Visualization Tools, Parliamentary Budget Office of Canada: Series of online tools created to allow parliamentarians and citizens to estimate the potential revenue impacts of adjusting federal tax rates and the impact changes from the previous year's budget on federal monthly benefits, disposable income and payable income taxes; one of these tools also allows citizens to monitor government spending.

Openparliament.ca, Canada: Website developed by civil society presenting information on the work of parliament in an easily accessible format.

Budget Visualization Tool, Congress of Chile: Tool developed by the Library of Congress to visualize budgetary allocations, including historical information.

Fiscal Observatory, Faculty of Administration and Economy of the University of Santiago de Chile and Foundation Contexto Ciudadano: Project that develops initiatives designed to generate citizen oversight of public expenses and promote stronger accountability in Chile; includes a series of visualizations, data, indicators and tools on the allocation and expenses of public resources.

Congreso Visible, University of the Andes, Colombia: Website developed by academia presenting information on the work of the Congress of Colombia in an easily accessible format.

Transparency Tab on Website, National Assembly of Ecuador: Webpage providing access to all of the information of the National Assembly, including budgetary, financial, distributive and process data by year.
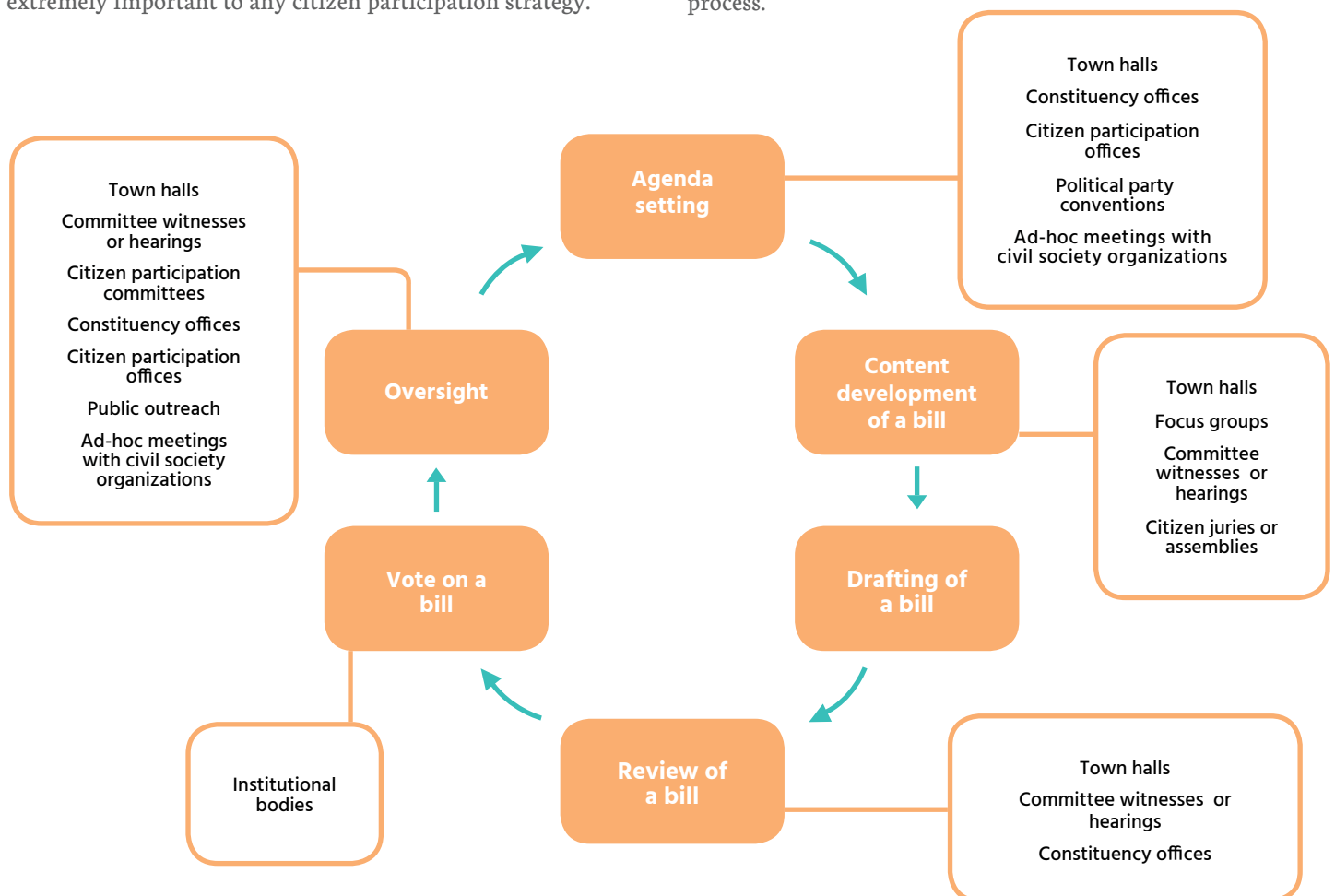
Citizen Participation Opportunities

Opportunities for citizens to participate in the legislative process most commonly take the form of citizen petitions that contribute to agenda setting, contributions of witnesses in committee meetings to inform studies and the development or review of a bill, and direct interaction between citizens and their legislative representatives. The rise of digital tools and social media are presenting new opportunities and channels for the public to engage in legislative processes, adding to traditional practices. However, it is important to remain conscious of differences in citizens' access to information and communication technologies. An inclusive citizen participation strategy incorporates in-person and digital mechanisms to maximize opportunities and their ability to include various stakeholders. The following mechanisms can be applied to provide opportunities for citizen participation:

In-person Activities

In-person activities provide a level of interaction and relationship building that other mechanisms cannot, and are extremely important to any citizen participation strategy.

The following diagram provides an overview of where specific in-person mechanisms can be helpful within the legislative process.

Agenda setting

Town halls
Constituency offices
Citizen participation offices
Political party conventions
Ad-hoc meetings with civil society organizations

Content development of a bill

Town halls
Focus groups
Committee witnesses or hearings
Citizen juries or assemblies

Drafting of a bill

Review of a bill

Town halls
Committee witnesses or hearings
Constituency offices

Vote on a bill

Institutional bodies

Oversight

Town halls
Committee witnesses or hearings
Citizen participation committees
Constituency offices
Citizen participation offices
Public outreach
Ad-hoc meetings with civil society organizations

Citizen Participation Offices
Responsible actor: Parliament
Participation level: Consult

Citizen participation offices can provide a point of contact for citizens to get information, share concerns and submit citizen proposals. A citizen participation office can be located within the parliament; several offices can also be established in locations outside of the capital to facilitate access to citizens.

In practice

Parliamentary Academy, Chamber of Deputies of Chile (Consult): Parliamentary unit whose mission is to develop training activities and promote social participation on political and parliamentary matters of national interest.

Citizen Evaluation of the Law, Chamber of Deputies of Chile (Consult): Parliamentary department responsible for monitoring the impact of legislation and for collecting feedback from citizens on its implementation through various means such as public forums.

Centre of Extension, Senate of Chile (Consult): Parliamentary unit whose mandate is to develop educational activities for citizens, bring senators closer to communities, and bring citizens closer to the legislative process.

Coordinating Unit for Citizen Attention, Senate of Colombia (Consult): Parliamentary unit with a mandate to inform citizens on the work of the Senate, receive citizen opinions and complaints and arrange visits to the Senate.

Citizen Participation Department, National Assembly of Costa Rica (Consult): Parliamentary department with a mandate to channel citizen participation through legislative proposals and consultations, and promote educational activities on the role of parliament.

Houses of the Assembly, National Assembly of Ecuador (Consult): 20 offices of the parliament located in different regions of the country and 2 located outside of the country to host activities and citizen participation projects to build a direct relationship with citizens; parliamentarians can also utilise these spaces to work with citizens.

General Coordination for Citizen Participation, National Assembly of Ecuador (Consult): Parliamentary unit with a mandate to establish, deliver and evaluate strategies for citizen participation in research and training to strengthen legislative and oversight processes.

Ad-hoc Meetings or Workshops with Civil Society Organizations
Responsible actor: Legislators, Parliament
Participation level: Involve

Citizens can be invited as witnesses to appear before Parliamentarians and parliaments can establish partnerships with civil society organizations to receive briefings or workshops hosted by these organizations on their area of expertise, so as to build parliamentary skills and knowledge on a particular subject.

In practice

Briefings with Members of the National Assembly, Suriname (Involve): Projekta, a civil society organization, has held various briefings with Members of the National Assembly on governance topics such as corruption prevention, access to information legislation and gender equality; such briefings have also been helpful prior to Members' participation in international meetings.

Institutional Bodies

Responsible actor: Parliament, Committees
Participation level: Involve, Empower

Parliaments can assign the mandate of listening to citizen concerns and disseminating information about new laws to an institutional body. Citizens or representatives of key civil society groups can also be integrated into these bodies on a temporary or permanent basis.

In practice

Composition of the Senate of Belize (Empower): Senate includes four members representing: 1) the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Business Bureau; 2) the National Trade Union Congress and Civil Society Steering Committee; 3) the Council of Churches and Evangelical Association of Churches; and 4) Non-Governmental Organizations, respectively, who are appointed on the advice of the group they represent.

Committee on Citizen Participation and Social Oversight, National Assembly of Ecuador (Involve): Committee whose mandate is to require transparency of public information; it engages in general meetings, forums, hearings and working meetings with citizens and civil society organizations; it also applies the concept of "legislator for a day" where citizens are selected to join the committee's proceedings.

Public Outreach

Responsible actor: Parliament
Participation level: Consult

Parliaments can implement institutional public outreach programs to share information about their work with citizens, to undertake in person surveys, and to collect feedback to share with parliamentary committees or in plenary.

In practice

Public Outreach with Parliament Caravan, Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago (Consult): Outreach program where parliamentary staff travel to various locations across the country to speak with citizens and conduct surveys to obtain feedback on the work of parliament; the results are in turn provided to relevant committees.

Dialogues on Approved Legislation, National Assembly of Nicaragua (Consult): Dialogues on approved legislation held by the National Assembly enabling citizens to understand the legal frameworks and their implications.

Town Hall Meetings
Responsible actor: Legislators, Ministers
Participation level: Involve

Town hall meeting are often held by legislators in their constituencies, or by the Executive, where citizens are invited to participate in a dialogue with legislators and/or public servants to share their concerns and ask questions. Civil Society Organizations can also collaborate to promote attendance and provide support to organize these meetings. The debates can center on general concerns for agenda setting or oversight, or specific legislation according to its stage of development or review. Different methodologies, such as round table discussions, the world café and others, can also be applied to provide opportunities for citizens to interact with each other and work towards building consensus on potential legislative solutions.

In practice

Town Hall Meetings on Freedom of Information Bill, Citizens for a Better Bahamas (Involve): Town hall meetings held in partnership with government to present draft legislation and gather citizens' feedback to develop additional recommendations, which are then considered by cabinet.

Public Hearings on Bills or Other Matters of Public interest, Senate of Paraguay (Involve): Meetings held in departmental (provincial) capitals by initiative of parliamentarians or citizens to present bills, listen and collect input, suggestions or modifications brought forward by citizens.

Good Governance and Accountability for Prosperity Town Halls, St Kitts and Nevis (Involve): Town hall meeting held annually by the Prime Minister and Members of the Federal Cabinet to provide an opportunity to citizens to ask questions and receive answers in relation to government policy.

Focus Groups
Responsible actor: Committes
Participation level: Consult

Parliamentary committees or the Executive can arrange facilitated discussions with demographically diverse focus groups on specific legislative proposals or within the scope of studies on issues of interest. These can help highlight citizens' main concerns in relation to the issue at hand and gauge public opinion on proposed reforms.

In practice

Gender Aware Beneficiary Analysis of the Public Assistance Programme, Saint Lucia (Consult): As part of efforts to establish a social protection platform with gender equity and child sensitivity as core principles, the Ministry of Social Transformation, Local Government and Community Empowerment worked with UN Women to perform an analysis of the Public Assistance Programme using focus groups to propose amendments to relevant legislation.

Committee Hearings and Witness, Specialist or Interested Person's Appearances or Submissions

Responsible actor: Legislators
Participation level: Involve, Consult
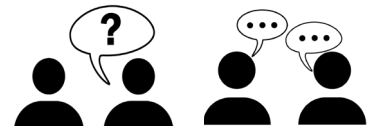
Citizens can be invited as witnesses to appear before committees and provide their input on the subject being debated. This can take place when the committee is developing or reviewing a legislative proposal or performing a study on a priority issue. Witnesses can be proposed by the committee or an open invitation can be made that allows citizens to communicate their interest in appearing as a witness. Due to practical considerations, the committee generally limits and determines the final list of witnesses.

In practice

Witnesses Appearing Before a Committee, House of Commons of Canada (Involve): Witness selection is determined by the relevant committee of the House of Commons, however when holding meetings in the form of "town halls", committees often reserve a period of time during which audience members are given an opportunity to ask questions or make brief comments without having to formally arrange for their appearance in advance.

Witnesses Appearing Before a Committee, Congress of Chile (Involve): Witness selection is determined by the relevant committee, and interested individuals can register with the secretariat of the committee to express interest in participating or to watch the proceedings.

Thematic Days, Chamber of Deputies of Chile (Involve): Days for which a theme is assigned by a committee to provide a space for legislators to interact with citizens; each committee must host two Thematic Days within each legislative period.

Project Legislator for a Day, National Assembly of Ecuador (Involve): Citizens are invited to assume the role of a parliamentarian for one day and participate in a committee meeting without voting rights but with time reserved for them to make an intervention.

Citizen Consultation on Bills, National Assembly of Nicaragua (Consult): National Assembly committees have the ability to undertake consultations with citizens, an obligatory mechanism once approved by the committee; inputs contribute to the work of the committee on the thematic area.

Citizen Juries or Assemblies

Responsible actor: Cabinet, Parliament
Participation level: Involve, Empower

A citizen jury or assembly consists of a randomly selected and demographically balanced panel of citizens to study an issue in depth, discuss different perspectives on the issue, and recommend a course of action or craft their own solutions to address the issue. Its findings can be binding or not.

Citizens Juries, Jefferson Center

In practice
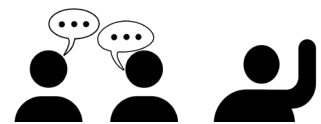
Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform, Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Canada (Empower): Assembly of randomly selected citizens (one from each electoral district) examined the electoral system and provided a recommendation on reform, which was presented in a province-wide referendum.

Constituency Offices and Constituency Weeks

Responsible actor: Legislators
Participation level: Involve

Legislators can set a regular date and time for constituents to drop by their constituency office or to call and share their concerns. Parliaments can also provide legislators a travel budget to allow them to travel between their district and the capital, as well as within their district to reach citizens who are unable to travel to the constituency office through the concept of a "pop-up" constituency office. Parliaments can implement measures to ensure these offices function in a non-partisan manner as an extension of the parliament and not the political party so that they function as a space that is welcoming to all citizens. Some parliaments also designate weeks in which parliamentary work is recessed so parliamentarians can focus on representational duties in their constituency.

In practice

Pop-up Constituency Offices, Parliament of Canada (Involve): Temporary constituency office set up for a limited amount to time by a Member of Parliament to facilitate interaction with constituents and enable public outreach activities.

District Week, Chamber of Deputies of Chile (Involve): Last week of each month where legislators return to their districts to engage with constituents and discuss any issues or concerns, as per Standing Orders; the same takes place in the Senate .

Representation Week, Congress of Peru (Involve): Five business days each month where legislators return to their districts to address complaints and facilitate mediation among citizens and public institutions, as per Standing Orders.

Constituency Offices, Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago (Involve): Members of Parliament are provided a budget to establish a constituency office, which must have cross-partisan appeal and be located in an accessible space; budget for sub-offices may also be provided in constituencies with a large, geographically dispersed population.

Members Representational Allowance, Congress of the United States of America (Involve): Members of Congress are provided with an allowance for personnel, and official office expenses and mail to fulfill their representative duties; funds cannot be used for personal or campaign related expenses.

Guide to Manage Political Representation, Congress of Peru
A Legislator's Guide: Communicating with Distressed Constituents, Congress Fundation

Political Party Conventions, Policy Meetings and Constituency Associations

Responsible actor: Political Parties, Legislators
Participation level: Involve

Political party conventions can serve different purposes, but usually take place to elect a leader, and to debate and approve policy platforms. Political parties can undertake efforts to increase participation of party members and other citizens in the development of their electoral platforms. Legislators can also hold regular policy meetings in their constituency in collaboration with their constituency association.
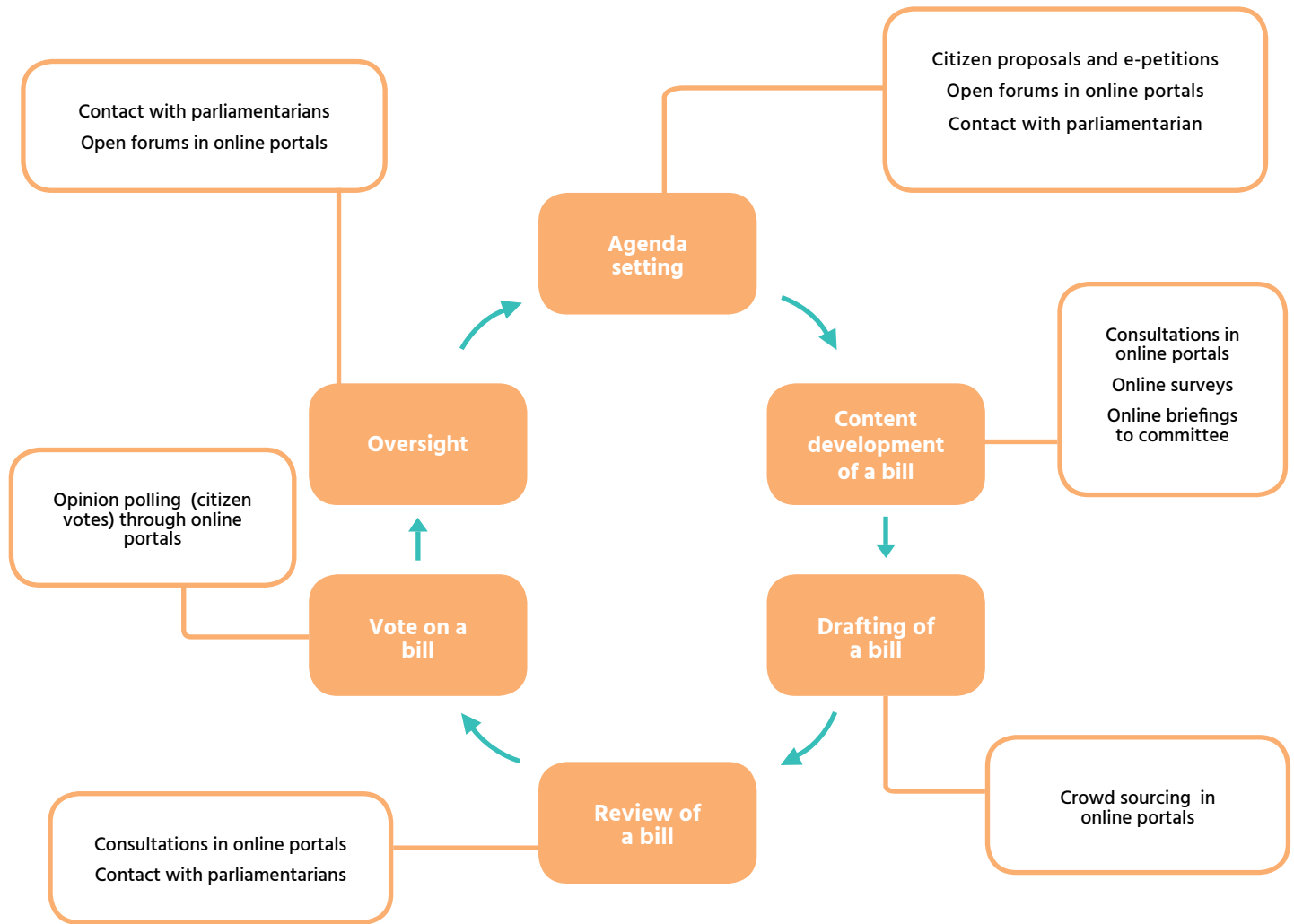
Best Practices for Effective Parties: Three training modules for political parties, National Democratic Institute

Digital Tools

Many of the aforementioned forms of citizen participation have been made more accessible through digital mechanisms, and new tools that have been developed to collect and synthesize extensive citizen input, with support of algorithms to identify commonalities among a sea of comments. Digital tools can also be helpful to allow citizens to participate remotely and in some cases anonymously if fear of retaliation is a concern. The following diagram provides an overview of where digital mechanisms can be helpful within the legislative process.

Contact with parliamentarians
Open forums in online portals

Citizen proposals and e-petitions
Open forums in online portals
Contact with parliamentarian

Agenda setting

Oversight

Content development of a bill

Consultations in online portals
Online surveys
Online briefings to committee

Opinion polling (citizen votes) through online portals

Vote on a bill

Drafting of a bill

Crowd sourcing in online portals

Review of a bill

Consultations in online portals
Contact with parliamentarians

Citizen Proposals and E-petitions

Responsible actor: Committees
Participation level: Involve

Parliaments can adopt procedures to manage the receipt of legislative proposals from citizens and their presentation to the plenary. The submission of these proposals through an electronic process can also facilitate information sharing, while co-existing with practices to allow their submission on paper to ensure that the process remains inclusive of citizens with unequal access to digital tools. Such procedures generally include criteria for the presentation of citizen proposals in-plenary sessions, such as requirements for an endorsement by one or more parliamentarians and/or a certain number of supporting signatures by citizens.

www.change.org

In practice

E-petitions, House of Commons of Canada (Involve): Online platform to create electronic petitions that are presented to the House of Commons and tabled for a government response following a process to gain citizen and parliamentary support.

Citizen Initiatives, Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica (Involve): Legislative proposals written by citizens with technical support from the Citizen Participation Office; requires the support of 5% of registered voters for presentation in the Assembly.

Legislative Proposals, National Assembly of Ecuador (Involve): Legislative proposals presented by civil society require signatures of support from at least 0.25% of people registered to vote or 1% in the case of constitutional reform; proposals can be submitted online on the website of the Assembly.

Citizen Initiatives, National Assembly of Panama (Involve): Legislative proposals written by citizens presented to the National Directorate for the Promotion of Citizen Participation; proposals can either present a subject for regulation along with an explanation or take the form of a bill.
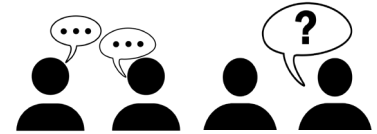
Online Portals and Mobile Applications

Responsible actor: Parliament
Participation level: Involve, Consult

Online portals and mobile applications can be a convenient tool to host various electronic participation mechanisms and to share the work of parliaments in a simple language. The various functions of these platform allow them to be useful at different stages of the legislative process. To contribute to the agenda setting stage, open forums, online events or chats can be used by citizens to present concerns on any topic and to propose solutions. Crowd sourcing functions can also be integrated to allow for direct contributions to drafting of bills, along with interactive functions that can enable the submission of questions to committees or plenary sessions while they are live streamed. Finally, polling functions can be included for users to provide a vote of opinion on proposed bills or issues.

In practice

Deliberation and Public Interaction, Legislature of Buenos Aires City (Consult): Past initiative by the city legislature in partnership with an NGO that used the open sourced software **DemocracyOS** to allow citizens to rank bills in order of priority and to comment on the 3 most popular bills; these top 3 priorities were then debated in plenary and presented for a vote in parliament.

"e-Democracia" Portal, Congress of Brazil (Involve): Online portal providing a space for citizens to present legislative topics for online discussion or to comment on specific legislative proposals. Legislators can consult this portal regularly for citizens' views.

"Senador Virtual", Senate of Chile (Consult): Online portal providing citizens with some of the draft bills being debated in the Senate and allowing them to vote on entire bills or on specific aspects of each bill, while submitting comments.

"Mi Senado", Senate of Colombia (Consult): Mobile application that allows citizens to connect with senators, track their attendance, view plenary agendas and bills, live stream sessions, vote on proposed bills, see results in real time and have those results displayed in plenary sessions for senators to see.

Supporting Participatory Budgeting with a Website and Mobile Application, Caribbean Open Institute and Mona School of Business and Management, University of West Indies, Jamaica (Involve): Pilot project to expand the involvement of citizens in the allocation, monitoring and oversight of constituency development funds through a website and mobile application that will demonstrate budget allocations and allow for voting on proposed allocations.

Virtual Legislative Forums, Congress of Peru (Consult): Online mechanism through which citizens and institutions can submit their opinions or suggestions regarding bills being analyzed in standing committees.

"De Nationale Assemblee" Mobile Application, National Assembly of Suriname (Consult): Mobile application that facilitates access to parliamentary information and the provision of feedback to members of the National Assembly.

ParlView, Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago (Involve): Webcasting service that provides live streaming of parliamentary proceedings and allows for citizens to submit questions to committee secretaries during public hearings.

Madison Project: Crowdsourcing Legislative Platform, OpenGov Foundation United States (Involve): An experimental open source tool allowing citizens to access a law as it is being written, leave comments, annotate specific content, and interact with other civic-minded participants.

Electronic Contact with Parliamentarians

Responsible actor: Legislators
Participation level: Involve

Through email and personal websites, legislators can engage in dialogue with constituents on issues of concern, which guide agenda setting or input into specific legislation. This relationship can be more effectively managed with the help of appropriate technology such as case management software.

Tips for Elected Leaders Websites, Samara

Making MPs More Digital, Doteveryone

Online Briefings to Committee

Responsible actor: Committees
Participation level: Involve

Citizens can be given the opportunity to submit briefings to committees when they are studying specific issues or bills. This can be helpful if witnesses, specialists or interested persons are not able to physically attend a committee meeting. Briefings can also help support more effective participation by witnesses. Briefings are usually circulated to committee members for discussion in committee, and then become part of permanent records.

In practice

Submitting Briefs to the House of Commons, House of Commons of Canada (Involve): Submission written by citizens or organization that provides opinions, comments and recommendations on a subject being studied by a parliamentary committee.

Online Consultations

Responsible actor: Committees, Legislators
Participation level: Consult

Online surveys can be a useful tool for committees to obtain citizens' views in the context of a study, to develop the content of a bill, or to strengthen understanding among legislators about the views of their constituents. Such surveys can also be administered by mail or phone where this is most convenient for citizens.

In practice

Electronic Consultation, House of Commons of Canada (Consult): E-consultation by the Special Committee on Electoral Reform as part of a study.

Online Surveys, Government of Mexico (Consult): Online surveys developed by the Government of Mexico to obtain citizens' opinions on priority issues, including topics of pre-draft legislation.

Traditional and Social Media

Traditional media such as television and radio, and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Snap Chat also provide avenues for citizen engagement in the legislative process. The following diagram provides an overview of where specific media can be helpful within the legislative process.
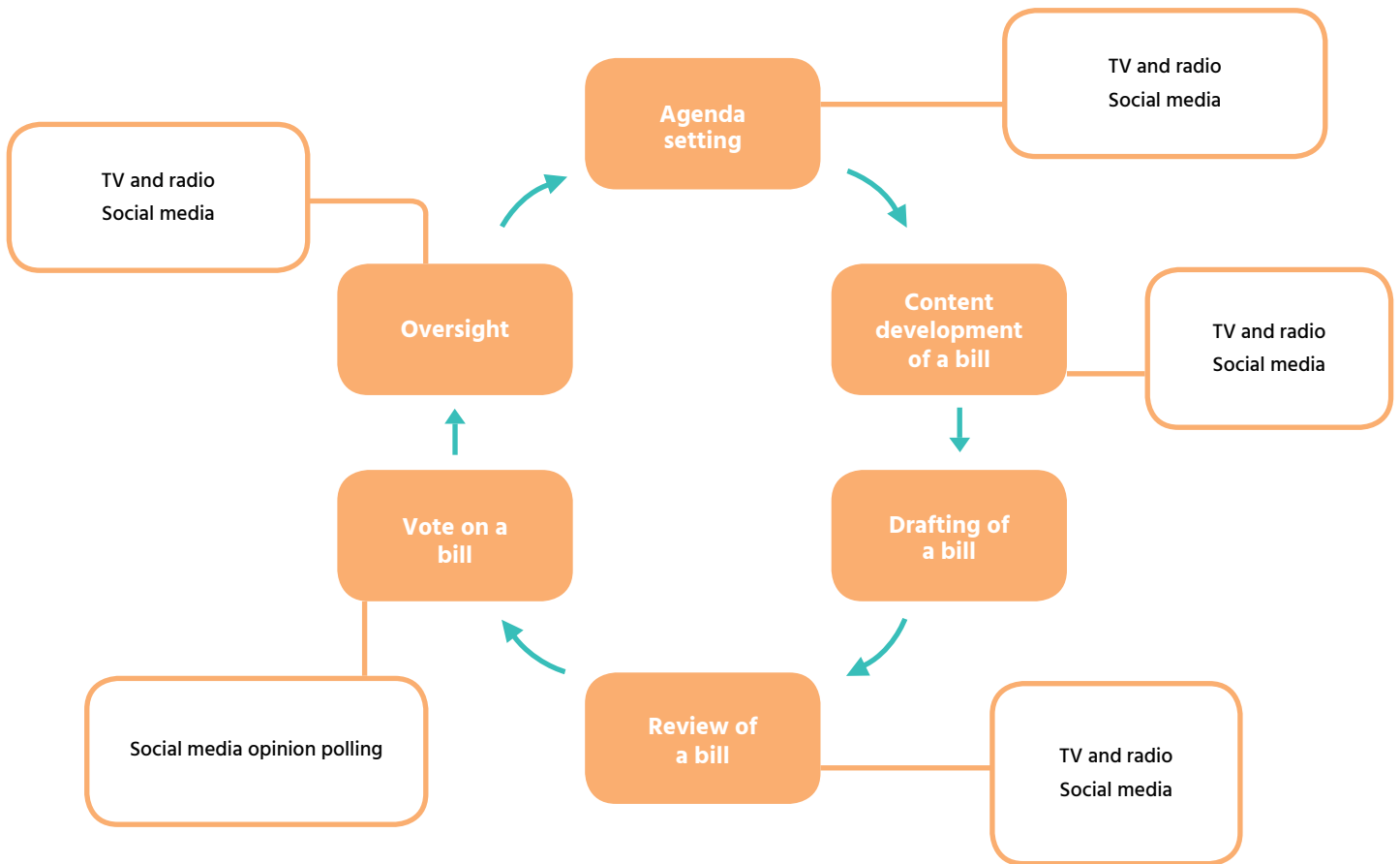
Social Media

Responsible actor: Legislators, Committees, Parliament
Participation level: Consult, Involve

The most commonly used social media platforms are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snap Chat. Legislators can use all of these applications to interact with their constituents online and answer their questions. Facebook Live can be used to hold online "town-halls" that are live streamed, where the legislator can receive comments/questions from citizens in real-time. Polling options can also be used to get a sense of constituents' views on a particular issue.
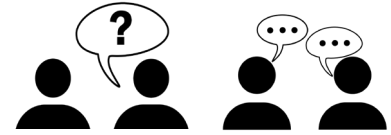
Best Practices for the Use of Social Network by Parliamentarians, ParlAmericas
Social Media Guidelines for Parliaments, Inter-Parliamentary Union
About Twitter Polls
Polls on Facebook

In practice

Custom Facebook Applications, European Parliament (Involve): Customized applications within the European Parliament's page allow users to access parliamentary information and chat with Members of the European Parliament.

Television and Radio

Responsible actor: Legislators, Parliament
Participation level: Consult, Involve

Legislators, on their own behalf or as members of a committee, can participate in television or radio shows where citizens have the opportunity to call in to ask questions and interact with them. These shows can be broadcast on various media outlets or can be hosted by the parliament.

In practice
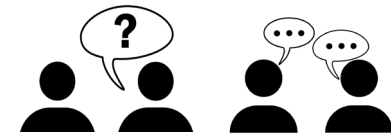
Quality 100.7 FM, Barbados (Consult): Radio station that broadcasts parliamentary sittings live and also hosts programs that allow citizens to call in and provide feedback to the Parliament.

Radio Programs With You Always and Open Doors, National Assembly of Ecuador (Involve): National Assembly Radio programs that provide spaces for dialogue with citizens in addition to disseminating information on activities and issues discussed in the National Assembly.

Governing with the People, Presidency of El Salvador (Involve): Television and radio program where the President of El Salvador interacts with citizens to discuss issues and national policy. Ministers and public servants often accompany the President to provide accurate answers on relevant matters.

Exploring Co-Creation Models

Co-creating solutions with citizens is an emerging methodology for collaboration that is promoted by the **Open Government Partnership** for problem-solving and policy development within the Executive branch of government. Some parliaments have now applied this methodology as part of their agenda-setting process, particularly around the issues of transparency, accountability, citizen participation and ethics, to co-create action plans with civil society organizations, and improve citizen trust in parliament. This type of collaboration may also be useful in the development of parliamentary reforms for citizen participation or in the development of a specific citizen engagement strategy. Parliaments can also consider whether the co-creation methodology could be effective at other stages of the legislative process.

An effective co-creation involves early and direct involvement of stakeholders in co-developing the process, joint decision-making, and joint monitoring of impacts of decisions or outputs that emerge from the co-creation. A co-creation process can also include wider citizen participation beyond the initial stakeholder group through broader two-way consultations. The following are a summary of the steps to undertake a co-creation process promoted by **Open Government Partnership Participation and Co-Creation Standards** that have been adapted for parliamentary actors:

In practice

Open Parliament Action Plan, Congress of Chile (Collaborate): National action plan for legislative openness co-created by Congress and civil society organizations.

Action Plan for an Open and Transparent Congress, Congress of Colombia (Collaborate): National action plan for legislative openness co-created by the Congress and civil society organizations, national government entities and international organizations.

Plan of Priority Actions for Legislative Openness, Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica (Collaborate): Legislative openness in the Action Plan for an Open Government co-created by the Congress and civil society organizations.

National Assembly's Action Plan for the Open Government Partnership, National Assembly of France (Collaborate): National action plan for legislative openness co-created by the National Assembly and civil society organizations, with citizen input.

Permanent Parliamentary Council on Open and Transparent Governance, Parliament of Georgia (Collaborate): Permanent Council composed of the Speaker of Parliament, one Member of Parliament from each political party and one representative for independent members, whose role is to co-create, co-implement and co-monitor legislative openness action plans in partnership with an Advisory Group of civil society and international organizations.

Open Parliament Action Plan, Congress of Guatemala (Collaborate): National action plan for legislative openness co-created by Congress and civil society organizations who formed the Alliance for an Open Congress.

Open Parliament Action Plan, Congress of Paraguay (Collaborate): National action plan for legislative opennessco-created by the Congress and civil society organizations who formed the Alliance for Open Parliament - Paraguay.

1- Announcing the co-creation process

- Publish co-creation process details on the parliamentary website, including the point of contact and a document repository that provides a historical record of the subject being addressed.

- Communicate information about the subject at hand to stakeholders to guarantee that they are informed and prepared to participate in the process.

- Facilitate a mechanism for direct communication with stakeholders to respond to questions about the process.

2- Creating a multi-stakeholder forum to oversee the process and foster co-ownership

- Create a forum composed of even representation from parliamentarians and non-governmental representatives that meets on a regular basis in person or remotely.

- Appoint a parliamentary entity or representatives to the forum that have the authority to either adopt proposals or present proposals to parliament.

- Select non-governmental representatives through a fair and transparent process.

- Jointly develop the forum's tasks, membership and governance (i.e. frequency of meetings, agenda setting, how decisions are made, how conflicts are managed, the level of detail of minutes, etc.).

- For more information, consult **Designing and Managing an OGP Multi-Stakeholder Forum**.

3- Providing opportunities for wider citizen participation

- Develop an appropriate methodology for wider citizen participation which includes an appropriate combination of open meetings and online engagement, involves groups throughout the country (where relevant), considers strategies for the inclusion of traditionally marginalized groups, and is open for an adequate duration.

- Provide information about participation opportunities to the public with sufficient forewarning.

- Conduct outreach and awareness raising activities to enhance participation.

- Implement the devised methodology for engagement, documenting the process and bringing information collected to the multi-stakeholder forum.

4- Making joint decisions

- Proactively communicate and report back on decisions, activities and results to the parliament and the public.

- Allow opportunities for parliamentarians to discuss with other members of the multi-stakeholder forum about the parliament's priorities and the political feasibility of adopting actions proposed by citizens/civil society.

- Review drafted decisions with the multi-stakeholder forum, discuss any comments, record the final decisions and clearly articulate the reasoning behind these decisions.

5- Monitoring implementation

- Hold meetings of the multi-stakeholder forum to monitor the implementation of the decisions and deliberate on how to improve any issues.

- Produce an assessment report.

Regulatory Framework for Citizen Participation

The legal nature of citizens' right to participate in the legislative decision-making process is worth being considered when developing a strategy for this purpose. Such a right can be provided directly from the constitution or derive from another constitutional right, and it can be enforceable or not. It can also be strengthened through legislation and regulations governing citizen participation in the legislative process.

Within the Americas and the Caribbean, existing regulatory frameworks, including parliamentary standing orders which govern citizen participation in the legislative process, are generally limited to legislative initiatives submitted by citizens and parliamentary committee consultations. A chart providing a comparative analysis of such frameworks was developed in the publication **Regulatory Frameworks for Citizen Participation in the Legislative Process in the Americas and the Caribbean.**

Civil society organizations at the first co-creation meeting to develop this toolkit advocated for the adoption of legislation and regulations to further guarantee citizen engagement in the legislative process and establish rules and procedures for such engagement. Legislation would strengthen citizens' right to participate as it can be legally enforced, would require the adoption of regulations, and be harder to modify. It could encourage the parliament to incorporate citizen participation throughout the legislative process and make it mandatory in some cases. Corresponding regulations could clarify the instances and mechanisms through which citizens could contribute, determine who is responsible for administering engagement processes and clarify how contributions are to be considered.

In exploring this question, parliamentarians, citizens and civil society can consider the following questions:[7]

Should an instrument governing public consultations be legally binding (law or regulation), or would a "softer" instrument, such as a code of conduct, better serve the purpose?

Should an obligation for public consultations entail only laws, other general acts, or any public policy document?

Should an obligation for public consultations pertain to executive bodies (consultations during the drafting process), or also to legislative bodies (consultations after a draft is submitted to Parliament)?

Is it necessary to introduce a minimum and broader scope of consultations?

Is it necessary and justified to stipulate exemptions to public consultations obligation?

What sanctions for the breach of consultation obligations will appropriately reflect the legal nature of an instrument chosen to govern public participation?

Who is the other party in consultations: should these be extended to commercial private law bodies (companies), or only citizens and CSOs, including associations of employers?

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[7] Citizen Participation in Legislative Processes: A Short Excursion through European Best Practices (2008), The European Center for Non-Profit Law

ParlAmericas

International Secretariat of ParlAmericas
710 - 150 Wellington St., Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5A4 Canada

Telephone: + 1 (613) 594-5222 | Fax: + 1 (613) 594-4766

www.parlamericas.org | info@parlamericas.org