



HOW TO ORGANISE 3D CONSULTATIONS: A PRACTICAL GUIDE



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I. A guide to the guide

This guide offers an overview of Decentralised Distributed Deliberative Consultation (3D Consultations), including what they entail, how they operate, their suitability for specific policy-making processes, and who is involved in the process. It also provides a step-by-step approach to explain how to carry out 3D Consultation processes.

Its objective is to better equip organisations, local governments, or policymakers with the necessary information to envision 3D Consultation as an additional tool to support and empower citizens to co-create effective policies. It's equally valuable for activists and citizens eager to understand how these consultations operate and bring fellow community members into the co-creation of policies.

II. What is this guide about?

a. What are 3D Consultations?

A 3D Consultation consists of a Deliberative Consultation¹ process that has been distributed and decentralised to enhance inclusivity and representativeness by empowering diverse local entities to lead the process and entailing an indirect invitation for a democratic forum. It involves engaging and training local actors to conduct Deliberative Consultations independently, often supported by microgrants provided to these entities.

By engaging participants at a grassroots level, this approach increases the likelihood that the voices and perspectives of a broader range of stakeholders, particularly those from underrepresented, marginalised, and vulnerable communities, are heard and considered. This leads to more grounded, inclusive, and representative policy outcomes.

This approach, which fosters engagement and informed dialogue, is particularly effective for gathering feedback and developing policies that resonate with and address the needs of various stakeholders at multiple levels, especially local and hyperlocal.

In this context, the three-dimensionality of the method encompasses:

1. **Informed Deliberation**, providing participants with comprehensive and in-depth information in a simplified version of the topic at hand to make it more palatable to all types of audiences, thereby representing an educational process that enables more informed and balanced discussions and decisions.
2. **Openness & Accessibility**, offering various engagement pathways to provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to participate in the decision making process, regardless of their level of expertise and previous experience with public policy making and/or other decision making processes, to enable their collaboration, engagement, and feedback.
3. **Inclusivity**, providing means for the expansion of the outreach efforts to enhance further the spread and permeation of the decision making process, ensuring a

¹ For more information on Deliberative Consultations, please consult The [Deliberative Consultation Guide](#)

wider reach and a more diverse discussion through the inclusion of more voices in the conversation, specifically those from underrepresented groups.

b. How do 3D Consultations work?

3D Consultations are informed, facilitated discussions that lead to an in-depth understanding of the topic by participants and provide more relevant feedback, facilitated directly and independently by local actors who are trained and often funded through microgrants. Central actors conduct and centralise the organisation of these decentralised processes.

In addition to increasing community engagement by promoting awareness and participation, nurturing a sense of ownership among community members, and enhancing reach and range by accommodating multiple engagement formats within the same consultation process, 3D Consultations also ensure diversity and breadth. They achieve this by enabling the engagement of participants who would not otherwise be reached in a centralised Deliberative Consultation process.

c. Why 3D Consultations?

Deciding whether to host a 3D Consultation requires careful consideration of several key factors, ensuring that it is both effective and appropriate for the context at hand.

3D Consultations involve training various local actors, focusing on empowering them to independently organise consultations, and often allow for delving into regional and local-level policy issues. Hence, Decentralised Deliberative Consultations are especially suitable in the following situations:

- **Empowerment of local actors and communities.** The decentralised and local structure enables the direct involvement of actors and communities in discussions on issues that directly affect them, fostering a stronger sense of ownership and relevance. It boosts community self-organisation and engagement, by facilitating community-driven problem-solving and decision-making and enabling communities to take charge of their own development and governance.
- **Fostering inclusivity.** This approach emphasises the importance of grassroots, bottom-up participation and the inclusion of voices from all levels of society, particularly those that might be overlooked in traditional top-down policy-making processes. It allows for the involvement of numerous participants, including a wide and granular range of stakeholders, particularly in areas where centralised efforts might not penetrate effectively, including often underrepresented groups, to contribute to decision-making processes.
- **Local needs and contexts.** As these consultations are locally organised, addressing issues deeply rooted in specific local or community contexts, the discussions are more aligned with the specific needs and contexts of the community, making them more relevant to the immediate concerns of the participants. This ensures that the policies formulated are relevant and embody the diverse perspectives and needs of different communities.

- **Broad spectrum of insights.** The decentralised, grassroots approach enables a broad spectrum of local insights and creates a familiar environment that encourages participants to feel comfortable, at ease, and open, thereby nurturing the quantity, authenticity, and diversity of contributions. It enriches the consultation process, by ensuring that a wide range of experiences and perspectives are considered, and leading to more comprehensive and robust solutions.
- **Structured engagement.** In situations where a controlled and organised discussion environment is necessary to ensure targeted deliberation on specific topics or issues, this structured approach helps in maintaining focus and achieving depth in discussions, which is often crucial for effective policy-making.
- **Enhancement of policy implementation.** By engaging communities directly, these consultations gather rich, varied insights, leading to policies that are more attuned to the real-world contexts and challenges faced by different groups. It ensures that policies are not only developed with a broad base of input but are also more likely to be accepted and effectively implemented at all levels.
- **Possibility of offering microgrants.** 3D Consultations can be appropriate in certain resource-constrained environments, as they rely on local networks, often necessitating fewer centralised resources, which makes them a practical choice. However, in many cases, they may depend on the provision of microgrants, as microgrants play a key role in enabling local entities with scarce resources to host consultations.

d. Who is involved in 3D Consultations?

Finally, before providing guidance on how to carry out a Policy Hackathon, it is necessary to identify the key roles involved in the process:

- **Convening Body:** The entity responsible for initiating and coordinating the consultation process, as well as training and supporting community organisers on their journey to organising their own consultation process. In some cases, this might be the same entity/organisation as the Organisers for the centralised Deliberative Consultations on a broader consultation process.
- **Community Organiser:** The entity hosting the consultation process locally. This could be any organisations, entities and/or individuals (including civil society organisations, academic institutions, community-based organisations, coworking spaces, libraries, or individuals) empowered through training and resources to organise consultations independently.
- **Facilitators:** Trusted and trained individuals responsible for guiding and managing the consultation process activities, ensuring smooth communication and active participation among participants.
- **Speakers:** Designated persons who will share perspectives to further elaborate on the consultative session.
- **Participants:** The stakeholders who participate and contribute their ideas and insights to the process.

III. The 3D Consultation Process Step-by-Step

This section of the Guide will provide suggestions for activities to be carried out during 3D Consultation processes. Policymakers should bear in mind that there is no one formula for the activities that should be carried out and that 3D Consultations should take the most adequate form to the specific policy-making process. Therefore, the decision ultimately rests in the Convening Bodies and Community Organisers' hands. All activities should be goal-oriented and suitable to address the consultative process at hand.

a. Decentralising a Consultation Process

As any other tool, 3D Consultations require following certain preparatory steps, in order to identify the relevant policy issues and objectives of the event, delineate the current stage of the policy-making process, map stakeholders and identify which relevant actors are currently included and excluded from the policy-making process, as well as assess resource availability and define resource allocation. It is also important to consider whether a broader consultation process, such as centralised Deliberative Consultations, is in place. In that case, identify which stakeholders have been included or excluded from these processes and how the 3D Consultations can enhance the reach and inclusivity of the consultation.

b. Orchestrating a 3D Consultation

As a result of the preparatory steps, each 3D Consultation will vary according to its objectives, to the topic being addressed, and to its main audience. The two main elements to be considered by Convening Bodies when coordinating a 3D Consultation are (i) the selection, engagement, and training of the Community Organisers, who will be responsible for hosting the consultative process in their respective communities; and (ii) the possibility of providing microgrants to enable the Community Organisers to host the consultation process.

i. Identifying, Selecting, and Training Community Organisers

3D Consultations are initiated and organised by Convening Bodies, and carried out by Community Organisers who possess the necessary skills and attributes to carry out a successful Deliberative Consultation and who are also aligned with the consultation's objectives. Therefore, a key element to consider is which actors are suitable to be responsible for hosting the process in their respective communities.

When selecting Community Organisers for a 3D Consultation, the key factors to consider are:

- **Active engagement in the community** and having a **strong network**. This ensures they can effectively mobilise participants and resources.

- **Proven skills in planning, coordinating, and executing events** or projects. This includes attention to detail and **the** ability to manage logistics efficiently.
- **Genuine interest** in the **consultation's** objectives. Enthusiasm can be infectious and inspire others to participate actively.
- **Good communication skills.** Effective communicators can articulate the consultation's goals clearly and motivate others. They should also be good listeners, capable of understanding and addressing community concerns.
- **Ability to creatively overcome challenges and limitations,** such as budget constraints. You want to choose organisers who are able to do more with less.
- Aim for a mix of Community Organisers who bring **different viewpoints and experiences.** This diversity can enrich the consultation process.
- **Respect and trust within the community.** This credibility can enhance participation and the legitimacy of the consultation.
- **Time and willingness to commit** to the responsibilities involved in the consultation process.

The Convening Body will also be responsible for engaging and providing the necessary training to Community Organisers before the consultations begin to ensure a level playing field among all involved actors, as well as for supporting the Community Organisers throughout the process.

ii. Providing Micro Grants to Community Organisers

Microgrants are an important tool in empowering Community Organizers, particularly in resource-limited settings. They are small financial grants given to Community Organisers to support their initiatives, projects, or activities. These grants are typically less in amount compared to traditional grants, but they can be highly impactful, especially for grassroots activities like 3D Consultations. By enabling a wider range of groups to participate in the consultation process, microgrants contribute to a more equitable and diverse dialogue.

The key considerations when defining and distributing microgrants are:

Criteria for Micro Grant Eligibility. Define clear and fair criteria for micro grant eligibility. Focus on the need for diversity, representation, and the potential impact of the consultation.

Amount of Support. The financial support will depend on various elements such as the scale and scope of the consultation, the resources available to the Convening Body, and the cost of living of the place in which the 3D Consultation will be organised.

Prioritisation. When awarding microgrants, preference should be given to Community Organisers who demonstrate a strong connection to the community, have a clear plan for the consultation, and show potential for meaningful engagement.

Application Process. Straightforward and transparent application processes encourage wider participation and ensure fairness. Consider making the application process accessible online, with clear instructions and support available for applicants who may need assistance.

Decision-Making Process. Fair and transparent decision-making process for awarding microgrants builds trust and credibility in the consultation process. Set up an impartial committee or use a scoring system based on the predefined criteria to assess applications. Ensure the decision-making process is documented and communicated to all applicants.

Disbursement of Funds. Timely and efficient disbursement of funds is crucial to enable organisers to plan and execute their consultations effectively. Establish a clear timeline for fund disbursement and communicate this to grant recipients. Consider using digital payment methods for efficiency and traceability.

c. Launching a 3D Consultation

From this point on, the process of conducting 3D Consultations at the local level follows the same step-by-step structure of that of a Deliberative Consultations².

² For more information on Deliberative Consultations, please consult The [Deliberative Consultation Guide](#)