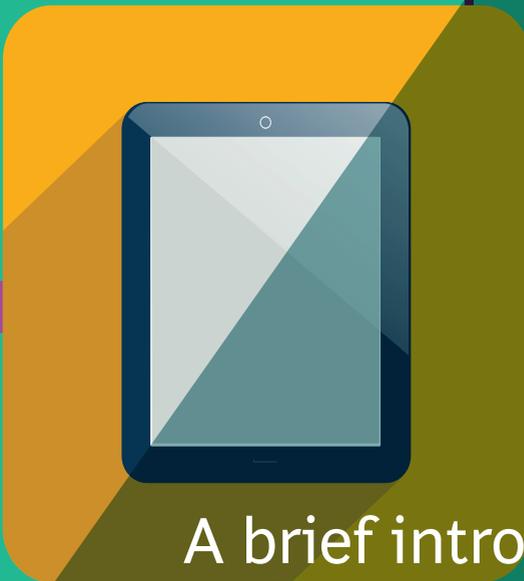




Centre for
Public Impact
A BCG FOUNDATION



A brief introduction to...
Crowdsourcing



Crowdsourcing

Ideas and tasks



What is crowdsourcing?

Crowdsourcing is the establishment of channels where citizens are encouraged to influence the work of government by actively sharing their ideas, opinions and skills. It harnesses the information, knowledge, perspectives, experiences and talents of individual citizens and feeds them into the design and delivery of government policy.

Crowdsourcing is also an increasingly popular form of citizen participation – a third pillar of the Open Government approach, together with transparency and collaboration – enabling citizens to engage with their government without intermediaries.

While it is not a novel idea, improved technology and expanding access have dramatically diminished the transaction costs, so that practically anyone can participate online and in a timely manner.

What does it seek to achieve?

Crowdsourcing enables citizens to shape the public agenda and provide input into formal democratic processes on an ongoing basis, rather than only at election or referendum time. It empowers citizens by expanding a citizen's influence beyond the traditional realm of activist and lobbying groups.

Although its openness to all views may suggest that crowdsourcing does not value expertise, it should be noted that citizens – who constantly consume public services and are directly affected by public policies – are experts in everyday life. Accordingly, crowdsourcing doesn't seek to make experts redundant but rather to complement their input by tapping into citizens' collective intelligence, to build on their valuable experiences and insights, and to align the allocation of government resources with citizens' priorities.

Keys to success



For many governments, crowdsourcing requires a cultural shift in the interaction between them and their citizens. Investments are required to do crowdsourcing well and lower barriers to participation.

Photography by Andreas Fidler

What are the key success factors?

- ✓ A user-friendly participation platform
- ✓ An informed and motivated citizenry
- ✓ A transparent process for analysing citizen input and feeding it into the work of government
- ✓ A clear added value relative to internal processes or traditional outsourcing

Things to look out for

Four specific challenges related to crowdsourcing, as well as potential mitigating factors.

Issue	Main challenges to address	Ways to mitigate
Digital divide	A significant portion of society is not an active user of the internet	Offline events that extend outreach to such audiences User-friendly digital platform
Social divide	Some citizens are better equipped than others, with resources such as time, money and education, and can more easily participate in crowdsourcing activities	Making crowdsourcing platforms accessible to people from diverse backgrounds
Uptake	Citizens may be lacking awareness or motivation to participate	Clear and timely communication of the crowdsourcing process and its outcome
Quality of information	Government needs to verify the validity of crowdsourced information before it acts on it	Assessment against other input or against reliable administrative data

Approaches

and tools



6

Crowdsourcing ideas

Establishing channels, mostly online, through which citizens can share their ideas and opinions



Online petitions:

websites where citizens can initiate and sign petitions on any issue of interest or concern in order to elicit a response from government.

Example:

On the large-scale petitions platform, Change.org, citizens and organisations can initiate and sign local, national and global petitions. See: Centre for Public Impact, *Pushing people power through civic tech – in government and beyond*



Participatory budgeting:

enabling and encouraging citizens – experts on the problems in their own communities – to work with local budget-holders to identify priorities and allocate available resources accordingly, in a process of shared decision-making.

Example:

In 2017, Portugal launched the first nationwide participatory Budget. More than 2,500 citizens attended participatory Meetings and submitted over 1,000 ideas. After a technical assessment, citizens voted on 599 projects at the national and regional level. The 38 most voted projects are now at implementation stage. See: Huffington Post, *Portugal announces the world's first nationwide participatory budget*



Platform for sourcing ideas:

platforms for citizens to make proposals about ways of improving their communities, most frequently in terms of municipal development. These are subsequently voted on by citizens and considered by governing bodies.

Example:

Slovenia's e-participation platform, predlagam.vladi.si, enables users to make policy proposals, which are then debated and voted on by their fellow citizens. Successful suggestions are forwarded to the relevant department or agency for consideration, with some being adopted as part of government policy. See: Centre for Public Impact, *The predlagam.vladi.si portal: e-participation in Slovenia*

7

Approaches

and tools



Crowdsourcing tasks

Setting up online platforms through which citizens complete small and clearly-defined tasks that, taken together, expand government's problem-solving capacity and inform its actions.



Crowd-mapping:

gathering citizens' eyewitness testimonies, which are combined to form up-to-date geographical situational awareness and inform the allocation of government resources.

Example:

In 2007 the British NGO, mySociety, created FixMyStreet, a tool that enables local residents to report problems such as potholes, abandoned cars and overhanging foliage. Barnet Council in the UK collaborated with mySociety to set up its own version of the tool, and its citizens have so far reported over 30,000 issues. See: Centre for Public Impact, *FixMyStreet: local citizen engagement in the UK*



Crowd-processing data:

enabling citizens to perform simple tasks of aggregate public value, which are virtually impossible without mass participation and would most probably not be done without it.

Example:

The US National Archives has launched the Citizen Archivist website, inviting citizens to transcribe documents to make archived records publicly available online. See US National Archives, *Citizen Archivist Dashboard*

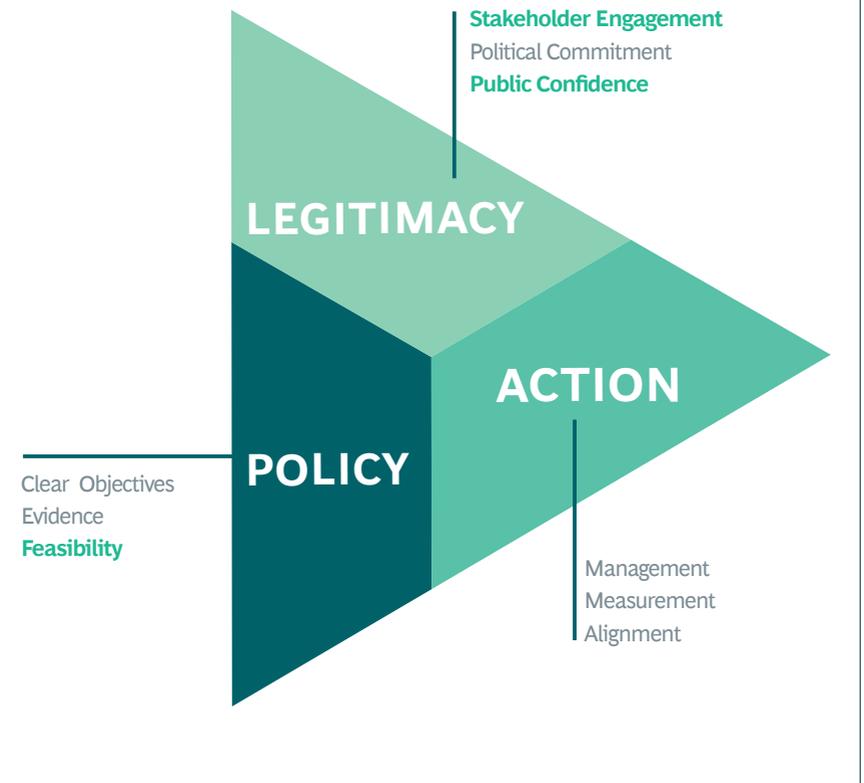
Fundamentals

The

How does crowdsourcing help achieve greater public impact?

CPI's Public Impact Fundamentals are a systematic attempt to understand what makes a successful policy outcome and describe what can be done to maximise the chances of achieving public impact. Below, we have highlighted the elements of the Fundamentals that are most likely to be positively influenced by crowdsourcing.

THE PUBLIC IMPACT FUNDAMENTALS



Further reading

The Centre for Public Impact,
The Public Impact Fundamentals, 2016

The Centre for Public Impact,
What drives legitimacy in government?
A global discussion paper, 2017

Tanja Aitamurto,
Crowdsourcing for Democracy: a new Era
in Policy-Making, Parliament of Finland, 2012

Helen Liu,
Crowdsourcing Government: Lessons from
Multiple Disciplines, Public Administration
Review, 2017

Anne Pordes Bowers and Laura Bunt,
Your Local Budget: Unlocking the
Potential of Participatory Budgeting,
NESTA, 2010



Centre for
Public Impact
A BCG FOUNDATION

Join the conversation

info@centreforpublicimpact.org

Follow us @CPI_foundation



June 2018

© Centre for Public Impact 2018