

OPEN APPLICATION

Seeking partners to collaborate with DemocracyNext

We are seeking expressions of interest from cities around the world to work with DemocracyNext to make systemic changes to how decisions about urban planning are made, with deliberative and sortition (lottery)-based approaches such as Citizens' Assemblies as a key pillar of change.

The ultimate goal is to help cities be able to make fair decisions that garner legitimacy about the future of our cities related to urban planning issues such as housing, transportation, mobility, environmental impacts, and others.

Using the proposals outlined in DemocracyNext's paper *Six ways to democratise city planning* as a starting point, **the goal is to collaborate with 3 cities over the next 2 years** to adapt the proposals to each context, designing how Citizens' Assemblies can be embedded in each unique place to broaden and deepen citizen participation and deliberation in urban planning decision-making.

Briefly, a collaboration with DemocracyNext will involve our team:

- Guiding each city through a learning program
- Running context-building/knowledge-sharing workshops
- Coordinating an Assembly design workshop with relevant stakeholders and local actors
- Providing ongoing advice and guidance throughout implementation of the Citizens' Assembly
- Coordinating knowledge-sharing and learning between the cities in the cohort
- Conducting research and evaluation
- Promoting and disseminating activities and learnings

Who can apply?

- Municipal governments
- Civil society organisations
- Developers

Key Dates

- **12 March** - Deadline to submit Expression of Interest ([Application form here](#))
- **20 March** - Shortlisted cities informed
- **Week of 25 March** - Interviews with cities
- **3 April** - Invitation to shortlisted cities to make a full application
- **3 May** - Deadline for full applications
- **Week of 13 May** - Second stage interviews
- **31 May** - Cohort of 3 cities chosen

For more information join us for:

Proposal launch event:

[13 February](#) - (8:00-9:30 PST, 11:00-12:30 EST, 17:00-18:30 CET) or

[14 February](#) - (9:30-11:00 CET, 13:30-15:00 IST, 19:30-21:00 AEDT)

'DemNext Office hours' - General information about Citizens' Assemblies:

[19 February](#) - (17:00-18:00 CET, 8:00-9:00 PST, 11:00-12:00 EST) or

[20 February](#) - (10:30-11:30 CET, 14:30-15:30 IST, 20:30-21:30 AEDT)

Information call for cities interested in applying to partner with DemNext:

[21 February](#) - (9:00-10:00 GMT, 10:00-11:00 CET, 14:00-15:00 IST, 20:00-21:00 AEDT) or

[21 February](#) - (9:00-10:00 EST, 14:00-15:00 GMT, 15:00-16:00 CET, 19:00-20:00 IS)

Further details and all relevant information can be found in the following document



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1. Who are DemocracyNext?

We believe in a more just, joyful, and collaborative future, where everyone has meaningful power to shape their societies. We work to shift who has power and how we take decisions in government and in institutions of daily life like workplaces, schools, and museums.

DemocracyNext is a non-profit and non-partisan research and action institute. We are an international knowledge hub on deliberative democracy. We create tools and resources to build the field and experiment with innovative governance approaches. We advise on the design and establishment of new democratic institutions, processes, and spaces, including Citizens' Assemblies.

We want more people to see the democratic potential of sortition (selecting decision makers by lottery), deliberation, and participation for strengthening trust, reducing polarisation, and improving decision making. We believe that these principles enable us to be with complexity, channel our collective wisdom, and find common ground.



Claudia Chwalisz
CEO & Founder



Lucy Reid
COO



Ieva Česnulaitytė
Founding Head of
Research and Learning



James MacDonald-Nelson Project Lead -
Urban Design and
Planning



Ansel Herz
Communications
Director

2. About DemocracyNext's project on democratising city planning

As the global urban population is set to more than double by 2050, with nearly seven in 10 of people living in urban areas, cities, and how decisions are made about their future, presents a huge opportunity to consider how we foster democratic innovation and empower people to shape the places they call home.

We recognise that local governments and other key actors in shaping the built environment are finding it difficult to tackle some of the most pressing and complex challenges facing cities today. Around the world, urban areas are facing similar issues related to housing affordability, the widening gap of social and economic inequality, vulnerability to climate change, population increase, rapid urbanisation, and mobility challenges. These challenges are pressing and complex, and will require the collective agency and intelligence of everybody to find better, more inclusive, paths forward. We see a huge opportunity to re-consider how people living in urban areas can be empowered to shape the places they call home.

For this reason, we convened an International [International Task Force on Democratising City Planning](#) in recognition of these problems, with a desire to propose systemic changes for addressing them.



A conceptual illustration of how Citizens' Assemblies, key actors and stakeholders, wider citizen participation strategies work together in an ecosystem. Illustrator: [Mona Ebdrup](#)

With the Task Force, we learned from numerous inspiring examples of participatory and deliberative processes around the globe. We then considered and explored how the system could change to make meaningful and informed public deliberation and participation, such as Citizens' Assemblies, the norm in urban planning decision making.

At the heart of this paper are three types of Citizens' Assemblies with rotating Members selected by lottery (sortition) - city-wide, community, and ad-hoc. These representative and deliberative Assemblies are envisioned to be a core part of a much wider participatory ecosystem that involves digital surveying, participatory data collection and map-making, citizen science, and community-driven initiatives like placemaking, public dialogues, and design workshops.

We have thought about Citizens' Assemblies holistically, as an intrinsic part of a city's decision-making processes. This means there should be a direct connection to the relevant public authority and other key actors, including managers, urban planners, developers and investors, civil society groups, architects, and researchers.

To read the paper, please click [here](#)

3. Reasons to collaborate

We're seeking partners that are motivated and have the capacity to collaborate with DemocracyNext to design and implement systemic changes to city planning decision-making over the next 2 years. In our proposal we identified six possible 'entry points' or 'scenarios' which are listed below:

01



If you are a city or a region...

about to initiate a major infrastructure project, initiate an ad-hoc Citizens' Assembly to shape project objectives and key design goals that are more aligned with the community's wants and needs.

02



If you are a developer...

in the early stages of a large urban development project initiate an ad-hoc Citizens' Assembly to generate higher quality, community-supported design strategies and site programming that, in turn, enables the creation of places where people can connect, live, and thrive.

03



If you are a city...

about to develop your next long-term plan, a significant urban policy, or a financial plan consider initiating this process with an ad-hoc Citizens' Assembly to develop a citizen-driven vision for the city, a multi-year budget, or a planning policy that is aligned with and reflects the needs, values, and desires of the city's residents.

04



If you are a city or a region...

frustrated with the status quo of legally-required public consultation, commit to improving the quality of mandatory public engagement by implementing an ad-hoc Citizens' Assembly for a significant urban development project instead.

05



If you are a member of an existing community board or neighbourhood association...

and want to increase the membership's representativeness of the community, consider changing how people are chosen to be part of the board or association by using sortition to select a portion of new Members. OR

If you are a municipality or a civil society organisation...

and you are in a city where community boards do not exist, consider creating new sortition-based Community Assemblies to represent each district, borough, ward, or neighbourhood.

06



If you are a city...

that is already familiar with Citizens' Assemblies, how they work and their benefits, but want to implement them to find solutions to city-wide challenges in an ongoing way, consider implementing a City-wide Citizens' Assembly that convenes on a regular basis to tackle ongoing, systemic, city-wide challenges by forming recommendations that shape key urban policies, the city's long-term vision, amendments to this vision, and significant development projects.

4. What will a collaboration with DemocracyNext look like?

We are seeking applications from cities around the world who are interested in piloting the ideas outlined in DemocracyNext's proposal, Six ways to democratise city planning: Enabling thriving and healthy cities. The basis for this collaboration is to implement a new model for citizen engagement that is guided by the models outlined in the proposal.

We would like to work with a cohort of 3 cities to contextualise and implement how Citizens' Assemblies can be used systematically to broaden and deepen citizen participation and deliberation in urban planning decision-making processes. This will require tapping into the knowledge and expertise of each particular city in order to adapt these general proposals. This means that the approach will be different in each place, as the logical entry point and the available resources for initiating a Citizens' Assembly will differ in each city.

4.1 Practically, what will DemocracyNext provide?

Experience

DemocracyNext brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in designing Citizens' Assemblies and connections to an extensive network of international experts in the field of Deliberative Democracy.

- DemNext's founder and CEO, **Claudia Chwalisz**, was involved in designing the world's first permanent Citizens' Assemblies in [Paris](#), [Ostbelgien](#), and [Brussels](#) (on climate). With DemNext's Founding Head of Research and Learning, **Ieva Česnulaitytė**, she has also co-authored the OECD's flagship report [Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave](#) and led the development of the [OECD Good Practice Principles for Deliberative Processes](#). Claudia oversaw the development of the OECD [Evaluation Guidelines for Representative Deliberative Processes](#) (2021) and wrote the OECD paper on [Eight Ways to Institutionalise Deliberative Democracy](#) (2021). She also set up and co-ordinated the global OECD Innovative Citizen Participation Network.
- **James Macdonald-Nelson**, the Project Lead for Urban Design and Planning at DemocracyNext, a designer with degrees in landscape architecture, urbanism, and global development studies. Having studied and worked in spatial practice for 10 years in Toronto and then Berlin, mostly delivering large-scale commercial and residential development projects James has a deep knowledge of how the built environment is transformed, how decisions are made about our cities - and how often citizens are left out of these processes.
- **Lucy Reid**, DemocracyNext's Chief Operating Officer, worked for 16 years at the National Trust - Europe's largest conservation charity. Initially as a General Manager, and then Assistant Director of Operations for the Midlands & East of England. Lucy was regional co-lead for all things inclusion, as well as the region's urban programme. She led the creation of the National Trust's first holistic city strategy in Birmingham, which included partnerships with community and arts organisations, local authorities, national and international heritage organisations, on a range of place-based and creative work all of which were about civic pride.

Support

- We will provide support in capacity-building through a 3-stage learning program tailored to civil servants, decision makers, and planners to increase the knowledge and capacity of staff and decision makers to understand the elements of initiating and running a Citizens' Assembly. This will be done both virtually and in person.
- With each city, we will organise and co-host an in-depth context-building and knowledge-sharing workshop to map out key actors and stakeholders in the current system and better understand the specific challenges and opportunities in each city.
- We will coordinate an Assembly design workshop with all relevant stakeholders and local actors and will provide advice on how to contextualise the proposal.
- We will provide ongoing advice and guidance throughout implementation of the Citizens' Assembly.
- We will provide opportunities for knowledge-sharing and learning between the cohort of three-cities cohort. This will include the opportunity for a field visit to one of the three cities to observe progress and exchange experiences. This will include facilitated workshops to discuss specific challenges faced by cities in the cohort and identify potential solutions.
- We will hire a programme coordinator who will support the process on the ground (in close collaboration with DemocracyNext's project lead, James MacDonald-Nelson and the dedicated project manager within the city administration).

Research and Learning

- In each city, we will carry out research with local academic partners to evaluate and learn from the process of designing and implementing the Citizens' Assembly.

Promotion and Advocacy

- This collaboration presents an opportunity to visibly demonstrate to the world the kind of bold steps each city is taking to innovate how citizen engagement is done. Throughout the process we will ensure that each city is well promoted in order to inspire other cities. We will share what each of the cities have accomplished and learned with other cities interested in doing the same.

4.2 What kind of commitment do we expect from cities?

Political and administrative buy-in

- Demonstrable commitment to the project from senior stakeholders and an openness from key decision makers to explore/experiment.
- As part of the second stage of the application process, we need firm commitment from each city that decision makers will respond to the outputs of this collaboration and the Citizens' Assembly that takes place. Ideally, this commitment is from both the government and opposition as well as senior leadership in the public administration. This is necessary for this initiative to be successful, not becoming politicised and resulting in lasting change.

Available staff

- A dedicated project manager. This person should be well connected and should be able to work with the key stakeholders; they must have sufficient time to lead and coordinate the city's involvement at a local level.

Strategic partners

- This should include one or a group of organisations or people who will help deliver, advise, and collaborate on contextualisation and implementation of the proposal. This can include: an NGO/Civil society organisation with experience in citizen participation/deliberation or an explicit willingness to learn how; an urban developer; an academic partner (a local university or college).

Time commitment

- At the beginning of the collaboration, DemocracyNext will lead the cohort of cities through a learning program which will require regular meetings.
- Throughout the process, we will also hold regular check-in meetings with each city and their strategic partners. The frequency of these meetings will likely increase as we approach the implementation of the Citizens' Assembly.
- Overall, we estimate this to be a minimum 2 year collaboration with the aim of documenting and learning from what works and applying learnings to considerations for making Citizens' Assemblies a regular form of citizen participation.

Financial commitment

- We expect a minimum financial contribution from cities in order to ensure that the process is fully supported by the partner city, however, we recognise this amount will vary depending on the context. (details outline below in section 5)

4.3 Who do we want to hear from?

- The application is intended for representatives from a mayor's office, senior planners and heads of planning departments, managers in a municipal engagement department, or city manager in general. The application must be made in partnership with an allied civil society organisation, and can include a developer.
- We are also interested in hearing from motivated urban developers, civil society organisations, or heads of neighbourhood associations/community boards who are interested in implementing these ideas. In these cases though, it's important to emphasise that political and administrative buy-in in the local municipality is fundamental to forming a collaboration with DemocracyNext.

4.4 What about cities that are not selected?

Are there still opportunities to collaborate for cities that are not selected? Absolutely! For cities that are not selected to be part of the first cohort in 2024, but who would like to stay updated and wish to learn from the experiences of the first cohort, it will be possible to do so. Progress will be shared regularly with cities who wish to stay informed via a newsletter and occasional learning calls to share what has been developed so far. There will also be opportunities to partner with us in the future to expand this work.

5. Funding and Resources

Cities will need to evidence that they are able to commit both the necessary staffing time and financial resources to collaborate with us on this programme. We will expect a minimum financial contribution in order to ensure that the process is fully supported by the partner city, or an indication of willingness to fundraise (potentially in partnership with DemocracyNext). The resourcing contribution required will vary depending on the context and size of the city, and the scale of the Assembly.

DemocracyNext has received funding from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in support of our work with cities. There is the possibility for small sub-grants to be made to support cities in NED's priority geographic regions.

<p><i>French Citizens' Assembly on End of Life (2023)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National level • 185 Members • 27 days of deliberation • Generous communications budget 	<p><i>4.2 mn EUR</i></p>
<p><i>Tolosa (Spain) Citizens' Assembly on Emotional Wellbeing (2022)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local level • 32 Members • 5 days of deliberation • Includes capacity building • Does not include project team staff costs 	<p><i>217.330 EUR</i></p>
<p><i>Petaluma (California, US) Fairgrounds Citizens' Assembly (2022)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local level • 36 Members • 12 days of deliberation • Includes interpretation costs • Partially includes project team staff costs 	<p><i>455.000 USD</i></p>
<p><i>Francisco Morato (Brazil) Citizens' Assembly on Waste Disposal (2022)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local level • 40 Members • 5 days of deliberation • Does not include venue hire 	<p><i>47.500 USD</i></p>

6. Key Dates - Application Period - Feb - May 2024

Feb 19/20 - DemocracyNext Office hours - Q&A session

Drop in for a group Q&A session with our DemocracyNext team members to ask any general questions you may have about Citizens' Assemblies. Be sure to also check out our [Assembling an Assembly Guide](#) - a step by step guide that walks you through the process of implementing a Citizens' Assembly from start to finish. You can register here:

[19 February](#) (17:00-18:00 CET, 8:00-9:00 PST, 11:00-12:00 EST)

[20 February](#) (10:30-11:30 CET, 14:30-15:30 IST, 20:30-21:30 AEDT)

21 February - Information call for interested cities

We will host a targeted call with interested cities to answer any further practical questions about the application process and how a collaboration with DemocracyNext would work. We will host two calls to accommodate different time zones. You can register here:

[21 February](#) - (10:00-11:00 CET, 14:00-15:00 IST, 20:00-21:00 AEDT) or

[21 February](#) - (9:00-10:00 EST, 15:00-14:00 CET, 19:00-20:00 IS)

12 March - Deadline to submit Expression of Interest

Deadline to submit initial expression of interest to partner with DemocracyNext.

Please fill out this [application form](#) by the end of the day on 12 March. **Questions found in the application form can be found below so applicants can prepare in advance**

20 March - Shortlisted cities announced

Cities that are not shortlisted will be invited to become part of a learning group to follow progress.

Week of 25 March - Interviews with shortlisted cities

During the week of March 25h, DemocracyNext will hold interviews with potential partner cities.

3 April - Invitations sent to selected shortlisted cities to make full application

DemocracyNext will be available for one-on-one calls with cities to answer any questions.

3 May - Deadline for full applications

Details of what is expected in the full application will be communicated to selected shortlisted cities.

13-25 May - Second stage interviews

31 May - Cohort of 3 cities chosen

7. Estimated project timeline - May 2024 - November 2025

This is an estimated timeline which has some flexibility to adapt to each city's policy making/project development cycles.

June - October 2024: Setting the scene - capacity building, mutual learning, understanding of context

- Call with cohort of cities together and calls with individual cities
- 3 stage learning program begins
- DemNext team will travel to each city
- Context workshops - understanding the cities (led by the cities), understanding the 'field' and potential participation / facilitation partners, understanding the issue, stakeholder mapping

October - December 2024: Before the Assembly - designing the assembly, securing wide buy-in

- Groundwork to set up the Assembly begins
- Securing political support building (wider)
- Assembly design workshops (with stakeholders, civil servants, civil society organisations)

January - September 2025: During the Assembly - implementation of the assemblies

- Citizens' Assemblies in each city implemented

September - November 2025: After the Assembly

- Follow-up; evaluation and lessons learned; dissemination of results; next steps towards democratised urban planning

8. Questions to prepare when submitting Expression of Interest

To help cities prepare to submit an Expression of Interest, the application questions are listed below. You can access the [online application here](#).

Expression of interest

Please answer the questions below to show your interest. If selected, you'll be asked to fill in the full application. You can find the preliminary list of questions for the full application below.

Note: even if you don't have experience with deliberative engagement, or will require help to get political buy-in to run such a process, or if applicants would need to secure the necessary resources, please don't hesitate to apply. If you feel that there is a meaningful opportunity in your city to pilot Citizens' Assemblies in urban planning, we'd like to hear from you!

About you:

1. Name(s) of applicant(s)
2. City
3. Country
4. Email address
5. Phone number
6. LinkedIn profile link (where applicable)
7. Organisational affiliation (could be municipality, developer, civil society organisation etc)
8. Specific department and/or role (could be planning department, chief city planner, head of... etc)

About your interest:

9. What excites and inspires you most about the Democratising City Planning proposal?
10. Please briefly explain what city planning problem you're tackling and how citizen deliberation would be a helpful solution.
11. How would this work fit into your city's strategic priorities?
12. How would you describe the commitment of the administration and the political leadership to carry out this work?
13. Briefly explain what competences (if any) you/your team has with commissioning, overseeing or implementing participatory or deliberative processes.
14. Is there an existing and available budget for citizen engagement or similar? If so, would you be able to tap into some of this to support this work?

9. For cities that are shortlisted and selected to make a full application in April, you will be asked to answer the following list of questions:

Context:

1. Please elaborate on what urban planning problem the city is facing.
2. Of the '6 ways' outlined in the proposal, is there a scenario / scenarios that applies best to your city?
3. What do you see as the main benefits and opportunities of this project?
4. What would be the headline risks to your involvement in this project?

Partnerships:

5. Can you identify a list of potential NGO or civil society partners who will help carry out this work? (for governmental and developer applicants)
6. If you are a CSO or an urban developer making this application, can you identify a potential government partner who will take on board citizen recommendations?
7. Do you have a working relationship with them already?
8. Have you delivered any projects in collaboration with them? If so, can you please describe one of them.
9. Can you identify a potential research/academic partner?

Resources:

10. Who would be leading this work from your city (name and title)?
11. How would this work fit into you or your team's existing role/projects?

Existing competences:

12. Tell us about any participatory or deliberative practices you/your team has been a part of organising in your city (include any links to further materials).
13. What impact did it have?

Commitment and timing:

14. Which stakeholders would need to be on board for this project to be possible?
15. Are there any particularly important upcoming milestones in your city (ie. an election, a major vote on a key topic in the city, a strategic moment in a policy-making cycle)? If so, can you tell us what they are and why they are significant, and what impact they would have in your participation or the continuation of this project (if any)?

Systemic change:

16. Do you have a commitment to explore how citizen deliberation could become a more permanent way in which urban planning related decisions are taken in your city?