Advocate Resource Guide

Last revised 4 April 2025

A. Audio & Video Material

1. Less-Pointed Video Introductions

These don't emphasize replacing elections.

- Our YouTube playlist of civic assembly explainers, which includes:
    - Civic Assembly Explainer – by the City of Fort Collins (CO)
    - What Are Democratic Lotteries? – by Healthy Democracy
    - What is a Citizens' Assembly? – by Democracy Creative
    - What is a Citizens' Assembly? – by MASS LBP
- Our YouTube playlist of civic assembly mini-docs, which includes:
    - 2022 Petaluma Mini-Doc, in Panelists' Words – by Dana Berman Duff, for Healthy Democracy
        - One-minute cut (good for throwing into a presentation)
    - 2024 Deschutes Civic Assembly Mini-Doc – by Wahoo Films, for Healthy Democracy and partners
- How to restore trust in politics – by *The Economist*
- Deliberative Engagement Part 1: What is it? – by MosaicLab
- A compilation of 3 recent Citizens' Assemblies – from the Sortition Foundation
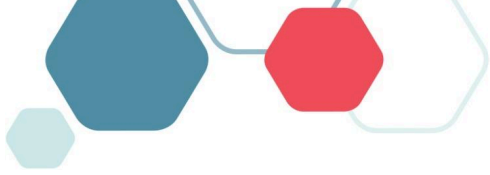- Why Have a Citizen's Assembly? – by Extinction Rebellion UK

2. More-Pointed Video Introductions

These do emphasize replacing elections.

- "Goodbye Elections" Trailer – by Of By For (first video on this page)
- TEDx Talk: "What if we replaced politicians with randomly selected people?" – by Brett Hennig of the Sortition Foundation

3. Other Videos

- Most recent version of our simplified intro-to-civic-assemblies presentation – in this case by Linn Davis (Healthy Democracy) at a meeting of the LA Charter Reform Commission, Oct. 8, 2025 (video should start at the 1h59m40s mark).
- Creating Inclusive and Deliberative Local Democracies – Alex Renirie (Healthy Democracy) & Terri Harding (City of Eugene) at the 2023 League of Oregon Cities Conference
- Deliberative Democracy: Involving Citizens in Democratic Decisions – featuring Claudia Chwalisz of the OECD, at Innocracy 2019
    - Watch from the beginning through about the 10m30s mark for an overview of global trends.
- Promising Practices Webinar: Tackling Tough Issues through Citizen Panels – hosted by the National Civic League

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- [What if the People Governed? How Citizens' Assemblies Can Restore Trust in LA City Government](#) – hosted by Public Democracy LA and partners
- [How Can Citizen/Civic Assemblies Depolarize & Resolve Tough Public Issues? Insights with Peggy Flynn](#) – American Public Trust, May 2024
    - Great introduction for city managers.
- [How to Fix Democracy with David van Reybrouck](#) – Humanity In Action
- [Citizens' Assemblies: Public Information Session](#) - Democracy Creative
- [Citizens' Assemblies in Brazil](#) – Delibera Brasil
- [Citizens' Assemblies – Reinvigorating Civic Engagement](#) – City Club of Central Oregon (April 2024)
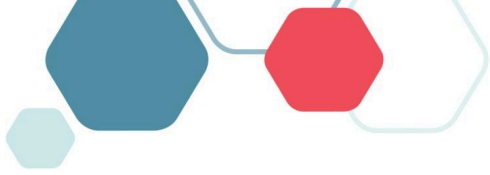- [Deliberative Engagement Part 1: What is it?](#) – MosaicLab

4. Podcasts
- [Our faith in democracy is at an all-time low. Can citizen assemblies help?](#) – HD's Linn Davis on *The Excerpt* from USA Today, Jan. 15, 2025
- [Episode 32: Citizens' Initiative Reviews](#) – Linn Davis on the *Facilitating Public Deliberations Podcast* by the newDemocracy Foundation, Oct 23, 2020
- [Episode #14: Creating a Healthy Democracy for Everyone](#) – Alex Renirie, Kacey Bull, and Linn Davis on the Omni-Win podcast, Sept. 28, 2022
- [Everyday People Creating Policy](#) – Alex Renirie and Linn Davis on the Great Battlefield Podcast, Jan. 16, 2023
- [A Radical Proposal for True Democracy](#) – Hélène Landemore on the Ezra Klein Show, Feb. 23, 2021
- More podcast appearances, webinars, and presentations are on the HD website [here](#).

B. Reading & Multimedia Material

1. Short-Form Introductions
- Healthy Democracy's [Introductory Packet](#)
    - We sometimes use only pages 1-4 (separated out [here](#)) as our introduction to new contacts, but this depends on the contact; for some wonky contacts, the whole meal deal is appropriate right off the bat.
    - There used to be a version of this packet with a sixth page, outlining several different types of Assemblies, their costs, and their uses. That page was so outdated, however, that it's currently more of a liability than an asset. We know it was super useful, though, and we'll try to create something to replace it as soon as we're able.
- [What Makes a Civic Assembly Different](#) – by Healthy Democracy
    - You'll see versions of this table in the proposals to cities in section B3 below; we finally realized we should split it out as a separate generic document!
- Democracy R&D's ["Democracy Beyond Elections"](#) introductory page
    - A slick and snappy overview from the international network of organizations we belong to.
- A very brief intro to [Citizens' Assemblies](#) – by People Powered
- [Slideshow Summary of Catching the Deliberative Wave Report](#) (2021 Update) – by the OECD
- [Citizens' assemblies: are they the future of democracy?](#) - by Eva Talmadge, The Guardian, Feb. 2023
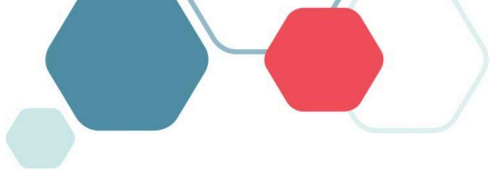
- [How fair is a fair? People-powered decision-making at the Petaluma Fairgrounds](#) – by Alex Renirie & Peggy Flynn, Western City Magazine

2. Long-Form Introductions
- ["An Introduction to Deliberative Democracy for Members of Parliament"](#) – from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy
  - Despite the name, a great intro for all types of folks in all types of countries. Includes some basic principles, as well as some specific case studies from around the world.
- [A Movement That's Quietly Reshaping Democracy for the Better](#) – by Claudia Chwalisz in Noema Magazine
  - Among the best broad, narrative introductions to developments around the world right now.
- ["Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave"](#) – from the OECD
  - The first big international report from an intergovernmental organization on lottery-selected democracy. It's overwhelming but great for nerds. And there is some good excerpt-able material in Chapter 5.
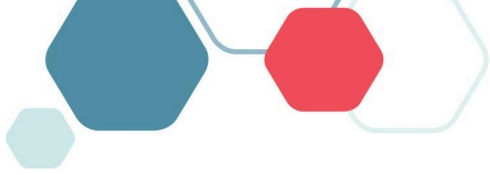
3. Sample Proposals/Contracts
- [2023 Healthy Democracy proposal to the City of Santa Monica (CA)](#)
  (>> [Abbreviated version](#) with only project introduction, rationale, and FAQ.)
  - Our most ambitious proposal to date – written by HD, culminating several months of collaborative design work with City staff.
  - Unfortunately, the project didn't move forward for reasons related to entrenched local political actors who felt that it diluted their power. But the proposal, in our view, is as solid as any we've ever done ourselves or seen elsewhere (at least for a one-shot, single-issue Assembly).
  - Although the project didn't move forward, it is still significant: It would have been the largest Civic Assembly in the US by miles. But more importantly, its power was about as strong as one could get while still being *advisory*. The Assembly was set up to be the center of the project's universe – everything from technical research to other public engagement inputs were set up to flow to and through the Assembly primarily (and to staff/Council secondarily). The Assembly wasn't filling in gaps in engagement; it wasn't parallel with other "inputs." It was near the top of the org. chart, immediately under City Council, with everything else below. One more detail: usually, we're fitting Assembly proposals around some existing technical consultant work that's already been done or is already in progress. In this project, the City delayed the technical RfP and asked us to help write it so that the technical work fit into the Assembly's schedule and values, not the other way around. Which is how it should be done. But it's not. This is emphatically *not normal* in the best possible way.
  - Moreover, the project's key initial design work was planned to be *directed* by the Assembly, with the (very expensive) design team – again, hired on an RfP that we helped write to fit the Assembly's needs – working as equals (or even arguably as subservient) to the Assembly. Again, this is the exact opposite dynamic to even the most "innovative" local processes (including our other stuff) – where, at best, the public and the consultants each separately serve the City government (but where, more often, the public serves the consultants, who serve the City).
  - *[Further annotation to come.]*

- City staff's excellent Info Item to Council, explaining why they feel this project – and taking a non-traditional path on democratic engagement generally – is important. See pages 4-5, in particular, for some of the best written case-making by public officials we've seen. (An "info item" is a type of short memo that staff sometimes write to council members in the weeks or months preceding the release of a "staff report," which serves as staff's official recommendation of a particular policy or program. The staff report in this case is also solid, but it's more nuts-and-bolts.)
- 2022 Healthy Democracy & City of Petaluma (CA) Project Contract
(>> Abbreviated version with only project introduction, budget, and questions for Council.)
  - Our complete contract from our largest project, which is a beast – but also includes quite a bit of useful detail about each part of a typical lottery-selected project at the local level. (Be sure to mention to folks, however, that this was the most extensive [and expensive] Civic Assembly ever conducted in the US. It contained lots of bells and whistles, which is why it's a good example to show what Assemblies can do, but it won't be the right scale in every context. That said, there are examples 10x this expensive outside the US, so it's also not nearly as major as an Assembly project could be, either.)
  - This can be very useful for folks on staff who want to get quickly to the details. This document alone will probably answer 80% of their questions.
  - The main proposal starts on page 5 and includes:
    - A pretty good Executive Summary – that could also be excerpted.
    - Lots of detailed policy and procedure language about the selection and process.
    - Roles and responsibilities between City and us,
    - A great FAQ about the process and other comms materials,
    - The itemized project budget, and
    - A list of key political decisions to be made not by us or by City staff but rather by City Council, publicly.
  - The proposal contained in this document was approved unanimously (including the full budget) by Petaluma City Council on Feb. 28, 2022, hence why it became part of this final contract.

4. Case Studies & Other Project-Specific Materials
- 2025 Fort Collins (CO) Hughes Civic Assembly – by Healthy Democracy
  - [Case Study coming soon]
  - Project Website – including some of the usually substantial local news coverage this project received.
- 2024 Deschutes County (OR) Civic Assembly on Youth Homelessness – by Healthy Democracy
  - [Case Study coming soon]
  - Project Website – including the notable article in *The New Yorker* on this project.
- 2022 Petaluma (CA) Fairgrounds Advisory Panel – by Healthy Democracy
  - Case Study
  - Article
  - Section 2 (pg. 10-12): HD & City of Petaluma Project Contract
  - Project Website – find the Panel's final reports at the top of the page; find other docs at the bottom, including this project's excellent Invitation Mailer, and its Demographic

Profile & Notes (the most detailed document we've ever produced on the specifics of a project's democratic lottery).

- 2018 Vancouver (Canada) Flats Arterial Community Panel – by CNDP
- 2015-2017 Toronto Planning Review Panel – by MASS LBP
- 2021 Paris Creates a Permanent Citizens' Council – by FIDE, et al.

5. Other Materials

- Concepts for Lottery-Selected Democracy in City Charters – by Healthy Democracy
  - This is our first draft of an ongoing project: an evolving white paper on the various systemic reforms we see most possible to be implemented into city/county charters in the United States. Please always introduce this as a "work in progress," combined with a request for feedback. (We'd love feedback on everything, but especially on the bleeding-edge stuff like this.)
- Guide for eight ways to institutionalise deliberative democracy – OECD
- FIDE's Organising a Democratic Lottery – Really good step-by-step guide, with easy to understand graphics, values/tradeoffs associated with each decision point, and case study examples. Also has great strategies for reaching hard-to-reach populations, specific recommendations for the invitation mailer, and policy recommendations for streamlining the lottery process.
- Pew study demonstrating strong demand for Citizens' Assemblies in the US

6. Practitioner Guides

- 'Assembling an Assembly' Guide – by DemocracyNext
- Facilitating Deliberation: A Practical Guide – by MosaicLab

7. Best Articles & Opinion Pieces

- Can Citizens' Assemblies Heal America's Broken Democracy, Atmos Magazine (May 2024)
- Citizens' Assemblies Are Upgrading Democracy - Fair Algorithms are Part of the Program – Scientific American (2023)
- The Case for Abolishing Elections, Boston Review (Nov. 2022)
- It's like jury duty, but for getting things done, Boston Globe
- Why picking citizens at random could be the best way to govern the A.I. revolution, Fortune (June 2023)
- Seattle, here's something we haven't tried: A people's assembly, Seattle Times (Feb. 2023)
- A Random Group of People Could Solve Seattle's Problems Better Than Its Politicians, The Stranger (Feb 2023)
- The public is ready for citizens' assemblies – civil servants should embrace this
- The U.S. is lagging in democratic institutions, Washington Post (Dec. 2022)
- Los Angeles doesn't need a city council. Abolish it, SF Chronical (Oct 2022)
- Opinion: Doug Hamilton: Community assemblies are a democratic way of better civic decision-making, Daily Camera (June 2022)
- Can randomly selected citizens govern better than elected officials? – Vox (Jan. 2022)
- What Biden's Democracy Summit is Missing – Foreign Policy (Dec. 2021)