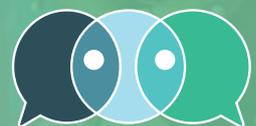




Centre for  
Public Impact  
A BCG FOUNDATION

# Finding a more human government



Finding **LEGITIMACY**  
A global conversation

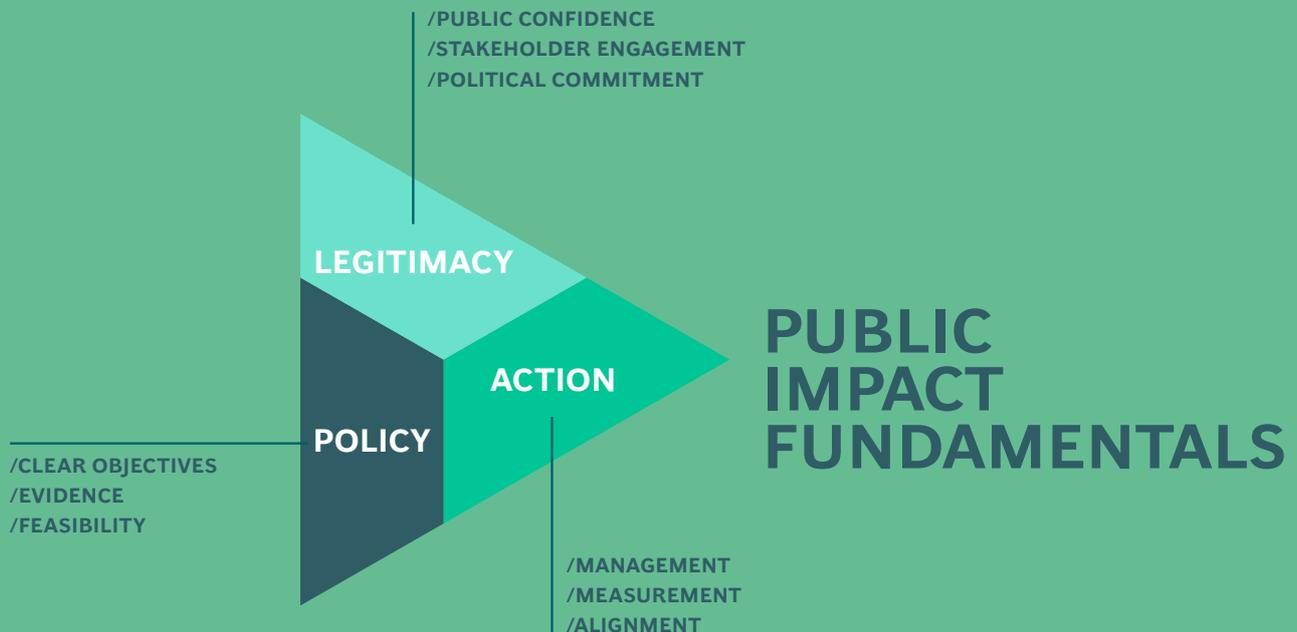


# Centre for Public Impact

A BCG FOUNDATION

The Centre for Public Impact is a global not-for-profit foundation, funded by The Boston Consulting Group, dedicated to improving the positive impact of governments.

We bring together world leaders to learn, exchange ideas and inspire each other to strengthen the public impact of their organisations. Sharing insights from around the world, our global forums highlight what has worked and where challenges require new approaches.



## Foreword

In 2017 the Centre for Public Impact embarked upon a worldwide project to find out how governments can strengthen their legitimacy. Amidst the turbulence and unpredictability of recent years, there are many contemporary accounts of people feeling angry, cynical or ambivalent about government. While much has been said about the personalities of leaders and the rise of populist parties, what's less clear is what governments could really do to strengthen legitimacy, a concept most agree remains integral to worldwide stability and peace.

To find out what legitimacy means to people today and how it could be strengthened, we decided to break out of the usual circles of influence and ensure our project heard directly from citizens from around the world. People were open and honest about the struggle for someone in government to understand and to listen. Some shed tears while others felt angry about how their voices and identities seemed undervalued. Everyone, however, wanted to show how it was still very possible to build a stronger relationship and understanding between governments and people, even if the day-to-day actions of government were not always popular.

The aim of this paper is not to provide the definitive model for legitimacy. Instead, we have sought to be open about what we heard, stay true to people's views and shine a light on the common themes that could help governments have better conversations about building legitimacy into all their systems and with the support of their citizens.

We gathered case studies to show how this was already happening and found positive examples in places we didn't expect. The importance of governments showing their human side – even in our age of AI and robotics – emerged as such a key priority, and is why we called this paper *Finding a more human government*.

This is a conversation that has only just begun. We will be taking our findings into governments worldwide while encouraging others to listen to what people are saying through our #FindingLegitimacy conversation online. We want to understand what it takes for governments to be more caring.

Why not join us on this exciting journey? We invite people, young and old, from all parts of society, to offer their view on what can be done and is being done already to strengthen legitimacy. To see what others are saying, do take a look at our website [www.findinglegitimacy.centreforpublicimpact.org](http://www.findinglegitimacy.centreforpublicimpact.org) and take part in the conversation #FindingLegitimacy.



**Nadine Smith**  
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Programme Manager

# Why we care about government legitimacy

One of the toughest questions for governments today relates to their legitimacy – how to think about it, how to understand it, and how to strengthen it. Many argue that we live in a time when government legitimacy is weak, a time when the relationship between government and people is changing, illustrated for example by low levels of trust, low voter turnout, and a polarisation of politics.

To start a conversation about the topic of legitimacy, we released a discussion paper in 2017 *What drives legitimacy in government?* in which we explored four elements variously thought to be constituent parts of government legitimacy: trust, values, fairness and democracy. Since then, we have conducted more research, sought best practice, and talked to civil servants, government experts and, very importantly, citizens around the world. This paper seeks to share what we have learned about the state of legitimacy today and how it affects the day-to-day lives of people and government.

## 1. Government legitimacy – a complex problem

In our first discussion paper, we defined legitimacy as the “broad reservoir of support” that allows governments to deliver positive outcomes for people. Government in this context encompasses

“ Why are people unwilling to pay tax? Because they do not trust government to deliver positive outcomes with that money. They do not see what the government is doing for them.”

*Attendee at the citizen conversation in Brussels*

the political class and the public administration, across all levels. However, our conversations revealed that measuring people’s support for government is more complex than it may seem – government legitimacy is more than the degree of public support for the political party or parties in power. Strong legitimacy means that there is a strong relationship between government and all sectors of society. The nature of this relationship varies across different countries and at different levels of government.

Around the world, the challenge for politicians and public administrations is the same: weak legitimacy, defined as a broken or at least fragile relationship, has a direct impact on how well the government works and how well government achieves better outcomes for people.

When people are dissatisfied with government, they can become frustrated with all that relates to government, the civil service and public services. Some manifest their anger and others become disengaged, a phenomenon affecting

younger people and marginalised groups of society in particular.

But it is not just civil society that feels detached from government. We have talked to civil servants across the world who share this feeling of frustration. In many cases, they don't know how to even start building relationships with citizens, especially those who already feel a sense of anger towards government. These civil servants also agree that major challenges exist, especially in reaching more diverse and marginalised groups in society or breaking through the increasingly crowded space that is today's permanently switched on world.

There is a lot to gain from taking legitimacy seriously. When government legitimacy is strong, it can lead to the positive feedback that allows government to operate smoothly and have a greater impact on people's lives. This is because underlying levels of legitimacy affect the way people interpret their government's actions, whether they are successful or not.

If their interpretation is that the government is taking appropriate decisions and acting in the right way, this

will strengthen legitimacy and, in turn, lead to more favourable attitudes in future. When legitimacy is strong, people are more likely to take a positive view of the government's action, leading to a firmer bedrock of public support for government initiatives and a greater willingness to cooperate in making them successful.

Conversely, if legitimacy is weak – that is, if support for government is weak – the margin for error is small. For example, during stable periods of economic prosperity, with no crises, a fragile relationship matters less. However, the lack of support will be felt more strongly when a crisis occurs and uncertainty increases. What government does to respond to situations like these – economic crises, natural disasters or threats of terrorism – can be seen as inadequate and untrustworthy, leading people to doubt the credibility of government action. For policymakers this is a precarious position to be in because, once the downward spiral starts, people stop engaging with government – something that is very difficult to reverse.

The good news is that there seems to be hope – both from people and governments – that this important, fragile, continuously evolving, and complex relationship can improve. In the conversations that we have held, we have seen citizens' and governments' evident desire to engage in dialogues about the drivers of legitimacy. The recognition that something needs to be done, as well as the willingness to invest

“*For government and citizens, strong legitimacy means governing in a way that gives citizens a clear path to connect with those who represent them, so they can have a say in how they live their lives. In summary, it means being excited again to go to the polls.*”

*Attendee at the citizen conversation in Mexico*

time and resources, has given us hope that current dynamics can be changed and that citizens and governments can be brought closer together.

## 2. Working together to build stronger relationships

A key challenge, which makes the conversation about legitimacy so difficult, is describing the core components of legitimacy in language that resonates with everyone.

Academic frameworks tend to be removed from how citizens think about government and how they feel about their relationship with government. To address this challenge, we reached out to citizens directly. We spoke with people young and old, from different backgrounds and with different levels of education. We brought them together to stimulate a discussion – between one another but also with public servants and academics. We heard the views of people from more than 20 different countries – and this global conversation continues to grow.

In these conversations, we heard that legitimacy, although closely connected to trust, is about more than that. It is broader, more complex and harder to disentangle. Strong legitimacy means very different things to different people. For some, it

is about fairness of processes, for others it is more about outcomes and whether government provides the services they need. There are many different definitions, and whilst we cannot identify with precision what the universal components of strong government legitimacy are, our conversations shed light on the fact that strengthening legitimacy is about building stronger relationships between government and people.

“*Legitimacy is not a one-off outcome; it is an ongoing relationship.*”

*Serge Dupont, Canada*

And although this relationship may have different components in different parts of the world and at different levels of government, it is a relationship that requires continuous effort and care. It requires government to recognise more explicitly that how people feel about their lives, their communities and their country should be an important aspect of how government makes decisions.

Having an emotional connection is part of this relationship, a feeling that those in authority work to make people's lives better. We also heard that strong legitimacy means that the government represents all parts of society and is able to bring them together, ensuring stability and community cohesion.

Our conversations have enriched our understanding of what government can do to build better relationships with

“*There is no one idea of legitimacy in a nation. Legitimacy can have a different meaning to groups within society.*”

*Participant at the citizen conversation in Brussels*

citizens. And this has encouraged us to look for exemplars from around the world. There are many outstanding cases of governments deploying different methods to strengthen their relationships with citizens, on a policy-by-policy as well as a systems level. There is a lot to learn from these cases, but – most importantly – the diversity of our exemplars illustrates that there is more than one way to strengthen legitimacy and more than one place from which to draw inspiration.

### **3. Why government legitimacy is more than just a communications problem**

A common misconception is that strengthening people's support for government simply requires communicating the right things in the right way. We have seen many governments increasing their expenditure on communications teams and working alongside PR and marketing agencies to project their image, to encourage compliance, and – for political parties, certainly – to control messaging. We have seen governments striving to use clearer language and enable easier access to government services online. We have seen new technologies being used to reach new audiences, and social media becoming the new norm of government communication.

While these efforts have doubtless made a positive difference in some respects, they have failed to resolve the much broader issue – that government, politics

and politicians remain alien to many members of society. In our conversations, we heard that government suffers from a lack of authenticity and an inability to show emotion, be human or demonstrate empathy. Policy communications via social media are often seen as contrived and one-way. By sticking to their governmental and party lines and sharing carefully crafted messages, government officials and politicians can sound wooden and uncaring.

In some cases, the lack of authentic communication can be offset by well-designed services. Positive outcomes and the provision of a “comfortable life” are powerful tools to quieten questions about government legitimacy. But it takes very little to disrupt this precarious balance: when citizens are dissatisfied, see better alternatives, or fall upon hard times, they seek to be heard. They demand corrective action, they want government to admit that they may have it wrong and need to adjust more readily and openly. In these circumstances, simply presenting positive data and facts rarely helps, particularly if these messages fail to match people's experiences or address their fears.

What matters today is not the quantity of communication channels or the availability of technological tools. What matters is how these are used. Strengthening legitimacy requires reading emotions correctly, on government having its finger on the pulse of how society is feeling about opportunities, security and quality of life.

“Policymakers should always be talking to the frontline people – if you’re talking about homelessness, you should be talking to homeless people. If you’re talking about violence, you should be talking to the victims. And to the perpetrators.”

Attendee at the citizen conversation in London

Without doubt, technology and social media channels have amplified government’s capacity to connect with people, read patterns of behaviour, predict shocks, and more. However, attempts to build legitimacy will fail unless government, the civil service and frontline workers can show that not only have they heard what people have to say, but that they are also responsive and genuinely care.

#### 4. So what can government do to strengthen legitimacy?

Our research and conversations have helped us to understand better why the relationship between government and people is such a difficult one and why, in many countries, legitimacy is weak. We have been able to get to the heart of why so many well-intentioned measures to engage citizens just seem to fail.

But we have also heard good examples, stories of citizens and government working closely together to achieve positive impact. Based on these conversations, as well as a detailed review of cases from all over the world, five patterns of government behaviour have started to emerge, which

we feel are fundamental to building stronger relationships with citizens and which deserve further examination and discussion.

We recognise that, at first glance, these emerging behaviours may sound simplistic. And without doubt, many of them have been part of government agendas for years. However, what we have found is that these behaviours are often misunderstood: they are seen as being easy to achieve, something that can be implemented quickly, or conversely, someone else’s responsibility.

Strengthening legitimacy, however, requires more than that. Governments need to ask themselves the right questions, from the front line to the top of the civil service, and rethink how they can build capacity and – in some cases – skills within public services, in order to foster and maintain relationships with people. There are many examples of governments who have done just that. With this document, we aim to start and stimulate a dialogue inside and outside government, which is directed towards achieving stronger legitimacy.

- Work together with people towards a shared vision
- Bring empathy into government
- Build an authentic connection
- Enable the public to scrutinise government
- Value citizens’ voices and respond to them

## Work together with people towards a shared vision

Working together with citizens, the government sets clear priorities and communicates a vision that reflects people's needs and that people can identify with.

### Questions for government:

1. To what extent are people in society aware of, and can relate to, government objectives? How do they contribute to developing a vision for the future?
2. Do our vision and objectives take into account the diverse needs of the society we are serving?
3. What measures have we put in place to ensure that our vision is taken seriously and embraced by all members of the public administration?

### What we found:

Defining a vision with targets and some form of monitoring process has become common practice in government. In fact, we often see multilayered strategies covering central, regional, local and even departmental levels. However, merely having a vision is not what matters to citizens. What matters to them is understanding their role within this wider vision, how their interests are accounted for, and what they can expect to see happen in the immediate future as well as in the long term.

People in society are diverse, and it is hard – if not impossible – to safeguard everyone's interests and needs. We heard that a vision needs to bring these interests together and clearly show how government intends to achieve public impact and positive outcomes for citizens. This involves making a conscious effort to engage in collaborations across political parties and stakeholder groups and to think carefully and holistically about impact: who will benefit, but also who is likely to lose out? What are the external pressures, and how can we mitigate them?

### Further reading

**Jamaica:** <http://www.vision2030.gov.jm/>

**Seoul:** <http://www.publictechnology.net/articles/features/lessons-seoul-how-egovernment-can-drive-citizen-engagement>

### Jamaica's strategic road map for prosperity and sustainable development

The government of Jamaica has developed "Vision 2030" – a strategic road map to help the country achieve its goals of sustainable development and prosperity by 2030. The road map is guided by seven principles which place the people of the country firmly at the forefront of the nation's development strategy. These include equity, social cohesion, and sustainability.

To be transparent about progress, the strategy's long term goals can be tracked on a dashboard available online for everyone. Implementation is in three-year, strategic programmes. At the end of each three-year cycle, progress in the achievement of the goals and outcomes is measured, and the public and private sectors, civil society and academia are invited to re-evaluate where they are on their journey. The Jamaican government has also invested in making the development plan available to the wider public by producing a popular version of the report, as well as making material available in video form and on social media platforms.

### Seoul's digital project

Seoul is commonly known as one of the world's smartest cities, one where technology has been used successfully for smart city development. In 2016, the city published its vision for becoming the world's leading digital city by 2020. Within this vision, the Seoul Metropolitan Government presented four main strategies, clearly describing each initiative.

A core component is the focus on empowering residents to be connected to technology by distributing secondhand smart devices to low-income families and creating 3,590 free public Wi-Fi spots across the city. Furthermore, to encourage citizen engagement the city developed its mVoting system, together with an app called Oasis through which people can submit proposals on issues affecting the city. These measures were crucial in helping strengthen public support for the initiative.

## Bring empathy into government

Government has an in-depth understanding of the people it serves and places their needs and experiences at the core of policymaking and service delivery.

### Questions for government:

1. What do we know about people's experience of government services, and what processes do we have in place that allow civil servants to experience public services from the user's perspective?
2. What capabilities do we need to bring into the civil service to ensure that staff at all levels think and design processes in a more people-centred way?
3. What barriers exist within the current administration that prevent us from improving services? What can we learn from other countries that have faced similar challenges about how to overcome these obstacles?

### What we found:

A deep understanding of people lies at the core of effective policymaking. However, most public administrations focus inwards and tend to think in terms of agencies and departments. In many instances, cost efficiencies and budget planning come before user needs when designing services for people. For citizens this leads to aggravation and frustration – no-one likes to provide the same information more than once.

Whilst some governments have responded to this by shifting towards a human-centred design approach, this has not yet become the norm. Many administrative processes are still considered cumbersome by the public. Governments should make a genuine effort to understand what people need at different stages of their lives, and what their interactions with government actually look like. This can't be done from the safe space of a government department. It can only be achieved by going out, speaking to people, and experiencing life from their perspective.

### Further reading

**Bangladesh:** <http://a2i.pmo.gov.bd/>

**New Zealand:** <https://www.ict.govt.nz/programmes-and-initiatives/government-service-innovation/>

### Empathy driving public services innovation in Bangladesh

In order to achieve high economic growth that is inclusive, collaborative and respectful of heritage, the Bangladeshi government established Access to Innovation (a2i), an innovation lab that seeks to ensure easy, affordable and reliable access to high-quality, digital public services. To understand and prioritise areas for improvement, senior civil servants acted as “secret shoppers” in order to see what life is like for citizens accessing points of service. Following this experience, they encouraged staff in their departments to develop bold, innovative solutions that enhance service to the public. In order to communicate these initiatives and get feedback from the public, the Prime Minister's Office maintains a website providing status updates, as well as communications about successes and failures. The website also provides access to policy briefs, infographics, and any external publications about a2i.

### Building public services around users in New Zealand

As part of the Better Public Services Programme, the New Zealand government asked parents about their experience of using public services when they had a baby. They found that new parents struggle when navigating multiple agencies to access the services and information they need, and that they end up providing the same information again and again – from registering with a midwife to enrolling their child in preschool. The New Zealand government recognises that the time after the birth of a child is one of the most challenging in a parent's life, so tasks that are normally easy can become very challenging. For this reason, the government radically redesigned the service, moving to an integrated model which builds an ecosystem around life events such as the birth of a child, giving a unified and ultimately more positive experience of government services to people.

## Build an authentic connection

Government representatives are able to establish emotional, authentic connections with people from all sectors of the population by empathising with their concerns and communicating in a way that feels real.

### Questions for government:

1. To what extent is our public administration representative of society?
2. Does public administration have the requisite skills and abilities to identify with those they serve?
3. What conditions can we create to make government representatives, such as civil servants, politicians and senior leaders, more approachable?

### What we found:

There is more to legitimacy than understanding what people want and providing them with a service that is built around their needs. Legitimacy is also about whether people can relate to those in power and whether they feel that politicians and civil servants are people like themselves, people who have similar concerns and who face similar day-to-day challenges.

Authenticity and approachability of leadership – demonstrating to people the human side of government – are therefore core components that enable a better connection with citizens. Being representative of civil society is closely linked to this idea: ensuring that government looks like the people it represents – across all services and at all levels of government – is a key enabler of strong relationships.

### Further reading

**Johnson, Z.D. & LaBelle, S.** (2017). An examination of teacher authenticity in the college classroom. *Communication Education*, 66(4), pp. 423-439.

### Authentic government leaders

“It would help if policymakers spent even one day connecting and listening to ordinary people.” It’s a sentence we heard many times in our conversations with citizens, and it’s as true of frontline staff as of government leaders. Some prominent contemporary politicians have learned and developed this skill: they are able to give people the feeling that they too are ordinary people who care about similar issues. Commonly cited examples are Barack Obama, Justin Trudeau, and Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, who all use social media not only to talk about political matters but also to share things they care about personally. And without doubt, Donald Trump is another example of someone who has connected strongly with his supporter base through what they believe to be his authenticity and shared values.

### Learning from the classroom – the authenticity of teachers

Academic research has shown that teachers who have an authentic teaching style are more positively received by their students. The study is based on around 300 US college students who were questioned about their perceptions of authentic and inauthentic teacher behaviour and communication. Authentic teachers were seen as approachable, passionate, attentive, capable and knowledgeable, while inauthentic teachers lacked those qualities.

Authentic teachers showed a willingness to share details of their life, and displayed their humanity by telling personal stories, making jokes, and admitting to their mistakes. They also demonstrated care and compassion towards their students by treating them as individuals and attending to their needs both academically and personally, for example by emailing those absent from class due to illness to ask how they were. By making efforts to engage with students beyond their expected roles in the classroom, teachers can impact students’ perceptions of them and of their courses. Students who participated in the study reported higher levels of learning and deeper understanding when the learning experience was one that they described as authentic.

## Enable the public to scrutinise government

Government acts in a transparent and accountable manner, enabling the public to access the evidence that supports its decisions.

### Questions for government:

1. Are we making a continual effort to enable the public to scrutinise our work across all areas?
2. Whom do we appoint to make decisions and how do we communicate these decisions publicly?
3. What is our approach to sharing data openly, providing not only data but information as well?

### What we found:

Relationships are based on trust. To build and maintain trust, government has to ensure that accountability mechanisms are in place. Many governments around the world have responded to the global quest for more transparency in government by opening up data and reporting publicly on parliamentary votes, to name only two of the most common initiatives.

However, what seems to be ignored is that, in most cases, the data that is made public will only ever be used by a very small proportion of citizens. Opening up data is only one step towards accountability and transparency: what is needed – and what people ask for – is information rather than data. Citizens are looking for clear, accessible and direct answers to their questions. They need to understand who makes a decision, when, how and based on what kind of evidence. The government needs to avoid working within their own echo chambers and instead give people the opportunity to understand the role and capability of government. This also enables people to have realistic expectations of what government can achieve.

### Further reading

**Colombia:** Citizen's Visible Audits in Colombia - Case Study on the CPI Observatory. <https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/case-study/citizen-visible-audits-cva-colombia/>

**Kansas City:** KCStat Dashboard. <https://kcstat.kcmo.org/>

### Scrutinising public projects in Colombia

In 2008, the Colombian government launched the Citizen's Visible Audits (CVA) programme, an initiative aimed at involving citizens in monitoring public projects and reducing corruption. To ensure that infrastructure works such as sanitation, water, and school-building projects benefit their local communities, local governments organise public gatherings at which citizens can scrutinise projects directly. In these meetings, the community has the opportunity to voice its concerns and interrogate the firm responsible for implementation.

The CVA programme builds citizens' capacity to monitor and audit, and it holds local governments and contracting firms accountable for honouring commitments, so that projects are completed in a timely and efficient manner.

### Monitoring Kansas City, Missouri through open government performance management

Aiming to build closer relationships with its citizens and enable participation and transparency in decision-making processes, Kansas City launched KCStat, a data-driven, public-facing initiative directed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of city services. KCStat focuses on measuring the city's progress towards achieving its Five-Year Citywide Business Plan. Key performance indicators against each goal are presented online and are updated on an ongoing basis, enabling citizens to monitor progress.

The platform increases transparency about how the city plans to address high-priority issues, and allows citizens to scrutinise the work of the mayor and city manager. In addition, the mayor and his team moderate a monthly KCStat meeting on one of the goal areas, during which additional data is presented and decisions are discussed.

## Value citizens' voices and respond to them

Government cares about citizens' views, encourages participation, and takes the time to seek views from a diverse range of voices.

### Questions for government:

1. Are all citizens given a fair and equal opportunity to take part in and influence decision-making processes?
2. Are we only consulting people to show we can tick a box or because we genuinely want to listen, and do so without bias? What can conversations with citizens bring about – are we willing to change course?
3. Who is the best person to carry out this conversation? Is government the right channel for the conversation at this stage, or would an intermediary be able to connect better with citizens on our behalf?

### What we found:

Enabling and encouraging a dialogue with citizens through different channels and taking time to listen to citizens' voices is another key driver of legitimacy. Government needs to recognise that listening to citizens requires more than just an engaged dialogue. It requires turning what is heard into action, engaging with those who are hard to reach, and making an effort to represent and balance different interests in decision-making.

We heard from citizens that they are tired of being consulted, tired of being asked to contribute to a debate whose results appear predetermined. Demonstrating action, and explaining action, is the easiest recipe for avoiding a perception of over-consulting citizens.

### Further reading

**Melbourne:** <https://participedia.net/en/cases/city-melbourne-peoples-panel>

**South Korea:** <https://govinsider.asia/smart-gov/exclusive-inside-south-koreas-massive-new-inclusion-initiative/>

### City of Melbourne People's Panel

In 2014, Melbourne City Council commissioned a citizens' jury of residents and business owners to make recommendations about an AUD5 billion financial plan for the council. Forty-three randomly selected citizens met for a period of six weekends to set the long-term direction of city's fiscal policy in what became known as the "Melbourne People's Panel".

They were given open access to information and financial data about the city council, along with briefings by experts, senior bureaucrats and councillors. Like a jury, they deliberated and delivered a verdict – in the form of a report covering priority projects, services, revenue and spending. Almost all their recommendations were subsequently adopted by the city government, including allowing debt ratings to fall to AA, selling off non-core assets, and lifting developer contributions.

### Large-scale participation initiative in South Korea

To establish a more open dialogue with its citizens, newly elected South Korean President Moon launched a 100-day government programme called "Gwanghwamoon 1st Street". His administration invited people to submit suggestions to the newly created People's Transition Office (PTO) and its local branches, or through the Gwanghwamoon 1st Street website.

In just 49 days, citizens submitted 180,705 suggestions to the new government. Of these, over 1,700 of the very best proposals were integrated into government policies. These included building public libraries, fire stations and police stations in more accessible areas. Alongside the open call for policy suggestions, the PTO conducted a series of public debates on controversial and previously undiscussed topics, including the agreement made with Japan on rehabilitating "comfort women" – women and girls forced into sexual slavery during World War II.

## 5. From words to action

Our assessment of the five behaviours can help government understand the issues they need to address in order to build stronger relationships with their citizens.

These behaviours give more substance to the existing understanding of legitimacy, offering a more comprehensive way to describe how governments should think about engaging with citizens today. They introduce a language that encourages a wholesale change in how public officials can be empowered and public institutions reorganised to be more connected to citizens. They aim to stimulate decision-makers to think about how they can trust, train and encourage civil servants to build relationships with people that allow for the discussion of hard topics, as well as the acknowledgement of failure. They also aim to highlight government's need to learn from other people's experience and develop the skills the civil service requires in order to help strengthen legitimacy.

Action to strengthen legitimacy works best when tailored to a government's specific situation and its existing relationship with citizens. This means that some behaviours may be more important than others and that the scale of intervention may differ. For example, situations where levels of legitimacy have reached a critical threshold may require radical interventions rather than a policy-by-policy approach. Similarly, situations where communities are marginalised or disenfranchised may require government to make reconciliation a priority, before committing to further actions in order to strengthen legitimacy.

The five behaviours point towards a more human government. This transition is only possible if the public administration, along with politicians at all levels of government, shows commitment and buy-in. Taking government legitimacy seriously means not being afraid of changing internal processes or upskilling or giving permission to public servants to demonstrate empathy and to discover what is and what is not working.

Strengthening government legitimacy is easier said than done. At CPI, we recognise that this is a major challenge, a challenge that governments will need to address one step at a time, but we believe that there is a lot we can learn from one another, from global good practices, and even more from speaking to citizens.

### Where you come in

Our mission to deepen our understanding of legitimacy continues and we aim to bring new and diverse voices to the table and help governments understand and act on the demands of their people.

To make your voice heard and find out more about the Finding Legitimacy project, here's what to do:

- Email us at [legitimacy@centreforpublicimpact.org](mailto:legitimacy@centreforpublicimpact.org)
- Visit our website [www.findinglegitimacy.centreforpublicimpact.org](http://www.findinglegitimacy.centreforpublicimpact.org)
- Comment on Twitter using [#FindingLegitimacy](https://twitter.com/hashtag/FindingLegitimacy)
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February 2018

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