



How to use Pol.is for Consensus Building in your community

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ACTIONISM

The challenge: Traditional consultation and decision-making processes often fail to capture genuine consensus or engage participants meaningfully. Conventional surveys and discussions can be dominated by a few vocal voices, whilst quieter participants remain unheard. This leads to false consensus, poor engagement, and decisions that don't reflect the true priorities of the community. Face-to-face meetings and workshops frequently struggle with unequal participation, making transparent and democratic decision-making difficult to achieve.

The Action: Pol.is facilitates large-scale, open-ended conversations whilst identifying areas of genuine consensus through collective intelligence. Unlike traditional approaches, it enables groups—whether face-to-face or online—to engage people in active decision-making through an inclusive and scalable platform.

The system allows participants to respond to statements and suggest their own ideas whilst mapping out areas of agreement and divergence in real time. This helps decision-makers and facilitators understand diverse group perspectives without forcing artificial consensus.

For face-to-face and place-based groups, Pol.is provides:

- Real-time input gathering from participants in meetings, workshops, and community events
- Discovery of unexpected areas of agreement that traditional discussions might miss
- Opportunities for quieter voices to contribute without speaking-up pressure
- More transparent and democratic decision-making that fosters greater trust and engagement

How to get started as an organiser within your community - Set up Seed Statements

Seed statements are the starting points for discussion in Pol.is. Well-crafted seed statements help frame the conversation, encourage diverse perspectives, and guide participants towards meaningful engagement.

- Define the purpose – Clarify the topic or issue you want to explore. Your seed statements should align with the key themes you want participants to consider.
- Start with a range of perspectives – include statements that reflect different viewpoints or aspects of the topic. This ensures a balanced discussion and encourages thoughtful responses.
- Keep statements clear and neutral – Avoid leading or overly complex wording. Each statement should be short, specific, and open-ended to invite a range of opinions.
- Use a mix of statements – Include factual statements, opinion-based statements, and those that encourage new ideas, such as "One way we could improve community engagement is...".
- Limit the number to start – A set of five to ten initial statements is enough to spark conversation. More statements will emerge organically as participants contribute.

How to use it as a participant:

It's really easy to use - your community just keep agreeing or disagreeing with the statements they're shown and then add their own.

Step 1: Direct your participants to the URL of the Pol.is you've set up for your community

Step 2: Review Ideas

- Read through existing ideas and statements.

Step 3: Agree, Disagree, or Pass

- Vote on each statement by selecting agree, disagree, or pass.

Step 4: Add Your Own Ideas

- If you have something new to suggest, submit your own idea.

Step 5: Explore Results

- Watch as Pol.is groups similar thoughts and shows consensus.

By integrating Pol.is into participatory processes, groups move beyond passive consultation to create inclusive, data-driven, community-led decisions that genuinely reflect participant priorities.