



Scotland Open Government National Action Plan - Financial transparency

August 2021



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1. Introduction



1.1 Acknowledgments

We acknowledge the active presence of **14 participants** for bringing their insights, knowledge, experience and contribution for the Scottish Open Government National Action Plan in a fruitful, constructive and open exchange of perceptions, opinions and ideas about financial transparency.

We would like to acknowledge the organizing team, consisting of Doreen Grove, Amy Watson, Maddie Fleming, all working for Scotland Open Government. And Anthony Zacharzewski, Annie Cook, Jana Deschepper, Sophie Kiesouw of Democratic Society, as facilitators team that contributed along the organisation, implementation, selection of participants and carrying out of the workshops.

We would like to thank the contribution of the senior government officials, Brian Taylor, Niall Davidson, Jonathan Waite, Lynn Wisener and Simon Steele.

We are thankful for all the help from every individual and organisations that supported us in preparing and reaching out to participants.

We would like to give a special thanks and gratitude to all participants of the workshops, for their time, contribution, ideas and inspiration.

1.2 Context & Purpose Scotland Open Government National Action Plan

The Scottish Government is working with civil society to write a new National Action Plan for Open Government. In five 'idea generation workshops' in July 2021, a broadly representative group of volunteers will help shape the new plan with their ideas and ambitions on open government.

The input will lead to making Scottish Government more open, transparent and accountable to its citizens and communities.

The workshops are happening online via a Zoom video conference call and take about 2.5 hours. Part of the workshops have been organized in the morning, part of them in the evening to ensure people have other commitments during daytime could make it to the evening sessions.









Workshop dates



- Health: 20 July, 9.30 - 12.00, all ages welcome
- Climate: 20 July, 18.30 - 21.00, all ages welcome
- Financial Transparency: 29 July, 9.30 - 12.00, all ages welcome
- Participation: 29 July, 18.30 - 21.00, all ages welcome
- Data: 30 July, 9.30 - 12.00, all ages welcome
- Special event for young people under 18, all 5 themes: 2nd August, 6pm-7.30pm

1.3 Agenda and questions of the workshops

Agenda for the workshop

- 09:40 Scotland Open Government introduction 
- 09:50 Introduction in break out rooms 
- 10:00 Financial transparency: what has happened & what could we do (Learning) 
- 10:15 Q&A - clarifying questions ?
- 10:25 Coffee break** 
- 10:40 Idea generation round one (30 min) 
- 11:15 Idea feedback/cross fertilisation (10 min) 
- 11:25 Idea generation second round (25 min) 
- 11.50 Next steps, how to stay involved 

Framing questions

1. How can Government decisions around **finance** be done more openly, ethically, transparently, participatively (i.e with people), and be held to account?
2. Considering what you've heard and discussed so far, what would be the most important ideas for you to take forward in Scotland's new Open Government National Action Plan?



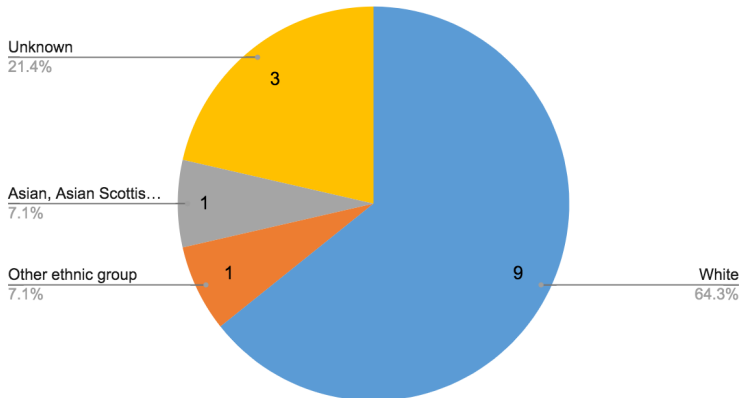
2. Outcomes

2.1 Description of Participants and Selection criteria

A total number of 33 participants have registered to the financial transparency workshop, among the total number of participants, **14** participated in the event.

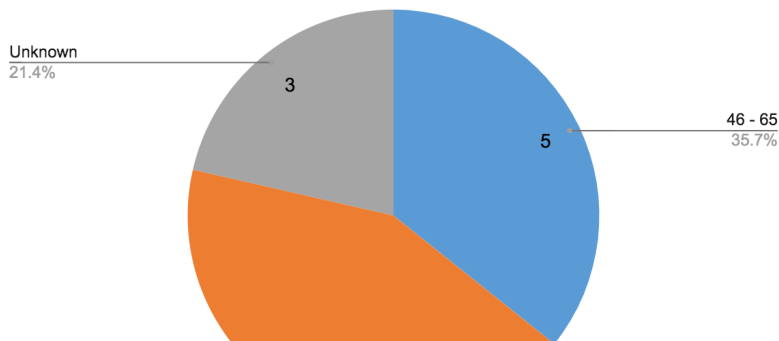
Participants were recruited through promotional information on social media through Democratic Society channels, as well as through direct mailing done by Open Government Scotland. Participants were located in, amongst others, the following areas: Aberdeen, Arbroath, Brechin, Edinburgh (3 participants), Glasgow, and Refrewshire.

Ethnicity of participants



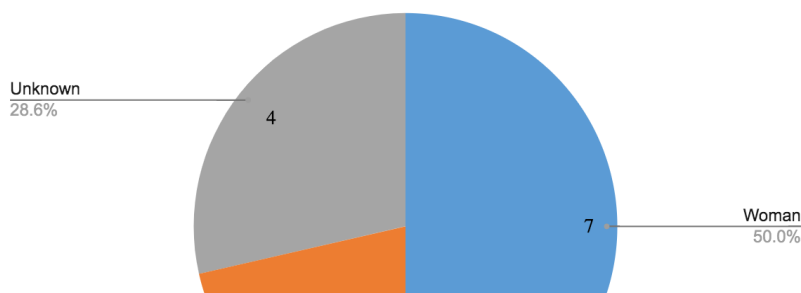
The majority of participants identified as white (9), 1 Asian, 1 other and 3 unknown/undeclared.

Age of participants



The age group of participants was: six participants were aged 25-45, five were 46-65 and 3 undeclared.

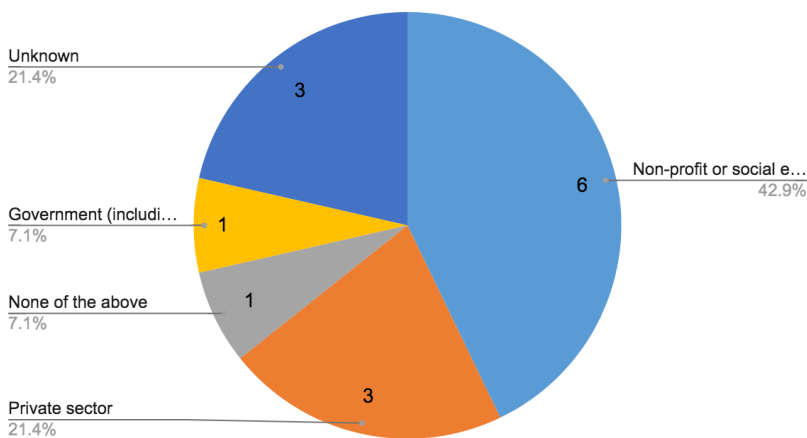
Gender of participants





The gender split of participants was 7 women and 3 men participating. Four participants were unknown, because they didn't register.

Work sector of participants



The majority of participants work in the non-profit or social enterprise sector (6). Second biggest group is working in the private sector (3).

What do citizen participation participants know about Open Government?

We asked participants at the beginning of the workshop "What do you know about Open Government?" of 14 participants, 11 completed the sli-do activity with the majority saying they "knew a wee bit"



What do you know about Open Government? 11 ...

Open what?

0%

Not that much!

36%

Yes, I know a wee bit

64%

I'd call myself an expert

0%

2.2 Outcomes and notes

Financial Transparency Summary Overview

Participants undertook a variety of discussions focused on financial decision making across government, the main discussion and key questions are summarised below, while the raw data of the break-out room discussions can also be found in the Appendix.

Overall, participants felt the most important ideas to take forward in Scotland's Open Government National Action Plan around **financial transparency** were mostly focussed on accessibility, education and awareness on financial information and financial decisions. Participants called for information on spending, policy objectives and commitments such as 1% of budgetary decisions being allocated through participatory budgeting and complex contractual information to be clearer, understandable and suitable for a variety of audiences with useful visuals, and through different formats such as through games. There were a series of questions on contractual decisions for example, if there is a role for more public involvement in public procurement. Participants felt Scottish Government's 1% commitment through participatory budgeting should also be increased.



Sunshine legislation (*which is where laws or regulation requires transparency and disclosure such as sharing meeting notes or records*) could have clearer information under what those duties are for finance under Open Government principles. In order for better decision making and accountability, there could be improved education and understanding around the layers and levels of government, how, where and why decisions are taken, including who is responsible and who made the decisions. Participants also called for more spaces for people to influence these decisions through both traditional and new methods of engagement.

Q&A

- **Q:** How do Open Government principles fit in with other legislative requirements including FOI and consideration of how widespread OG principles could apply across the public sector?
A: Being more ambitious and setting an example for others to adopt OG practices. Transparency on public contracting and grant making, encouraging public bodies to apply Open Government and Open Contracting principles to their procurement activity; include transparency clauses in their terms and conditions; and provide data on how contracts they are placing are maximising local impact.

Discussion Break-out groups

Accessibility

- information on spending should be clear and understandable for a variety of audiences, using visual graphs and pie charts
- Information should be as jargon free and user friendly as possible
- information should also be accessible in other formats (website, app, games) and languages
- Linking policy objective to spending

Decision Making and Accountability

- Understanding the layers of government and where decisions are taken
- Want to be able to see the line down to neighbourhood level, including who's responsible and who made the decisions



- How are different views aired, from the public, civil society, business
- How can we influence decision making using both traditional forms of engagement and new digital tools

Sunshine legislation

- Understanding the links and differences between open governance, freedom of information and greater transparency and accountability
- Being clearer on the duties under legislation and those under Open Government principles
- Changing attitudes towards open governance

Portals and procurement

- How are contractual decisions taken and explained. Best value or local benefit. Is there a role for more public involvement in contracting?
- What consideration is taken for the role of human rights in procurement?
- How are customer/client relationships managed
- Does financial/contractual dependency influence outcomes
- Online portals should be linked to wider and related policies to demonstrate outcomes.
- Portal should enable public to engage with information at differing levels of complexity - from raw data to information with interpretation

Participatory budgeting (PB)

- More awareness on PB needed, how to get involved for both government officials and citizens
- Raise of 1% of budget to higher commitment on PB

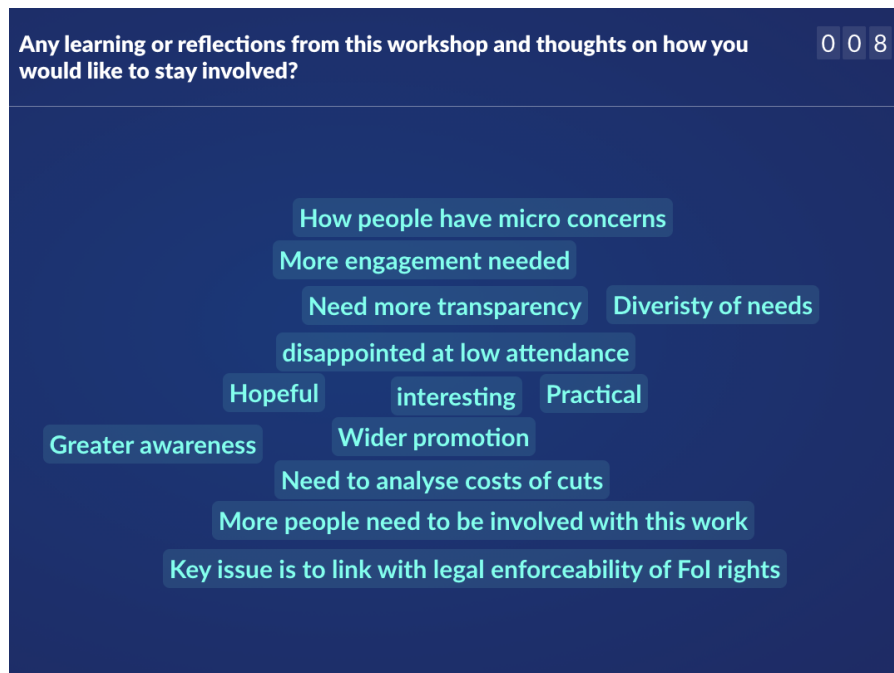
3. Feedback by participants



To conclude the workshop we asked participants through sli-do "Any learning or reflections from this workshop and thoughts on how you would like to stay involved?"

8 participants completed the sli-do whilst a few left some feedback in the chat.

- Civil society needs resources to participate in transparency and scrutiny
- Key issue is to link with legal enforceability of FOI rights
- Greater awareness
- More people need to be involved with this work
- Need to analyse costs of cuts
- Need more transparency
- How people have micro concerns
- Diversity of needs
- disappointed at low attendance
- Practical
- interesting
- Wider promotion
- More engagement needed
- Hopeful



Participants gave feedback through a feedback questionnaire. Participants appreciated the ability to put forward ideas in an interactive discussion.



Participants were also positive about the mix of people and concise and helpful presentations. The session was called 'upbeat', where generally everyone was encouraged to participate and with a good structure.

One participant mentioned sessions are too long and could be shortened. There was fairly low attendance and some participants expressed their disappointment that not more people joined.

4. Appendix

Group A Jamboards



Group B Jamboards

