

Application

Participant: Denmark Team

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS:

As you consider which initiative to put forward for the Open Government Awards, please consider the following questions:

(1) Does the initiative seek to improve a public policy or service?
 Yes No

(2) If yes, does the initiative seek to improve the ability of citizens to provide feedback and/or to make decisions in the design or implementation of a policy or service? For examples of initiatives, see: <http://www.opengovguide.com/topics/citizen-engagement>
 Yes No

If you have answered "Yes" to BOTH of these questions, please proceed with your application.

A. THE TEAM

The following information is required to capture a basic understanding of those responsible for your initiative and any partnerships that have helped you to meet your goals.

INITIATIVE NAME (required)

Provide the name of the initiative that your team is submitting for consideration by the judges of the 2014 Open Government Awards (under the inaugural theme, Citizen Engagement). If the initiative is operating under one or more alternate name(s), provide the name that is most commonly recognized.

Statutory elected Senior Citizens' Councils

THE NOMINATION (required)

Begin by describing how this initiative was selected. For example, mention any nomination or consultation process held with civil society partners or others when selecting the initiative. Please offer your explanation of this process in 200 words or less.

Senior Citizens' Councils has been selected as the Danish nominee initiative for Open Government Awards through an open nomination process in which everyone - citizens, organisations, companies, and public authorities - was invited to nominate initiatives. From the pool of nominee initiatives, representatives from civil society organisations, Danish Red Cross and Transparency International Denmark, have selected one initiative. Danish Red Cross and Transparency International Denmark give the following reasons for their choice:

"Senior Citizens' Councils in local authorities is a socially innovative initiative that supports senior citizens' participation in and influence on decisions and actions in their communities. The Councils is an concrete example of Danish politicians' commitment to citizen participation and user-influence, and it is a uniquely Danish institution.

Senior Citizens' Councils are based on Danish social legislation and are tied to the local politicians and local government. The Councils have proven efficacy and have a real impact on local government policy relating to the elderly. Also worth noting is that the work of the Senior Citizens' Councils steer clear of any technology barriers; indeed the Councils actually contribute to finding ways to ensure that senior citizens are not left behind when it comes to digitisation and the introduction of welfare technology."

GOVERNMENT POINT OF CONTACT (required)
 Provide the name and title of a single point of contact for the purposes of communicating with your team. The person should be the most senior individual responsible for overseeing the application submission. Provide the phone number(s), email address(es), and physical address of your designated point of contact. You may provide alternate contact information, if it is a direct means for reaching the designated point of contact.

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CIVIL SOCIETY POINT OF CONTACT (strongly recommended)
 We strongly encourage applicants to submit a joint application from a government agency and a civil society partner. If submitting a joint application, please provide the name and title of a single point of contact at the partner organization. If not, please be sure to focus on the "validation of claims" in Section B (see pg. A-3).

(The SCC and their national association, Danske Ældreråd (the National Association of Senior Citizens' Councils (NASCC), in English) collaborate with many civil society organisations. Two of these organisations, 'Ensomme Gamles Værn, EGV Foundation, Social Inclusion of Older Adults' and 'Danske Seniorer, Association of Seniors in Denmark' have made statements on the veracity of the claims made in this application.)

OTHER PARTNERSHIPS (optional)

If you are partnering with one or more other government agencies, private sector entities, media, or other organizations, please list each partner. In 250 words or less, provide a brief narrative of the partnership, including the roles that each partner assumes in the initiative.

In 1999, the SCC established their national association, Danske Ældreråd, the National Association of Senior Citizens' Councils (NASCC), in English. This national organisation supports councils in their work, advise on specific issues, and provide training and counselling. NASCC's members are the 98 SCC of the 98 municipalities in Denmark.

The organisation is supported by the Danish Government with DKK 1,000,000 a year (approx. EUR 134,000) and is backed by the Danish Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs.

B. THE INITIATIVE

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is prepared to celebrate a range of successful applicants to the Open Government Awards. This year's theme is "citizen engagement." To qualify for recognition, we need to understand the various elements of success for your initiative and its sustainability over time.

PROBLEM DEFINITION (required)

In 200 words or less, please identify the specific problem your initiative intended to solve. Why was this problem important to solve at a particular time and for the particular context in which you are working?

First established as the elderly's own initiative to support the elderly in the community
 Mutual understanding and respect across generations is crucial for the cohesive force of any society. The initiative of Senior Citizens' Councils (SCC) is a good example of a Danish democratic involvement of elderly people in creating and maintaining 'active ageing'.

The status and role of elderly people vary across cultures - in Western culture, the elderly are often at risk of being left out of the decision-making process because people of working age are regarded as 'more valuable' and 'more useful'. In Denmark, only few 70+ year-old citizens are elected for decision-making bodies in government and municipalities and, thus, the elderly have gone without representation.

As a protest against the lack of involvement in local decision-making processes, senior citizens organisations established in the 1990s by voluntary means local cooperation forums in municipalities and named these forums Ældreråd, SCC.

In 1990, citizen involvement was a completely new mode of collaboration for politicians and civil servants. But since then, citizen involvement has developed into a legitimate form of cooperation, contributing constructively to promoting and supporting politicians' and administrations' focus on senior citizens' needs and wishes.

TARGET POPULATION (required)
 In 100 words or less, please identify the target population who may benefit from this initiative. Highlight your understanding of the needs or demands of the target population that were addressed by your initiative.

A growing and diversifying elderly population
 Approximately 20% of the Danish population is elderly (will be about 27% in 2030). Senior citizens today are physical well-functioning until high up in age and many of them want to contribute to society. With a diverse elderly population, it is important to ensure that society's systems and services are developed in collaboration with representatives of the elderly. SCC work for **all** senior citizens in the municipality.

The 98 SCC in Denmark comprise around 1000 members, all of whom have a broad knowledge of elderly people's way of living - their needs, dreams, and potentials.

INITIATIVE DESIGN (required)
 In 350 words or less, describe your initiative's goals and objectives. Focus specifically on how the initiative was designed to meet those objectives. For example, identify stage(s) of the policy/service design or implementation when you solicited citizen participation. What kind of participation did you seek from citizens (e.g., feedback, consultation, joint decision-making, monitoring of activities, etc.)? Explain why this particular approach was best suited to achieve the initiative's goals. How did you encourage citizens to participate? Describe any innovations in the design of the initiative.

The link between citizens and decision-makers
 In 1997, legislation came into force mandating that a Senior Citizens' Council be established in each municipality, that direct elections to the councils be held, and granting every 60+ year-old the right to run as a candidate and to vote. SCC are elected for four years by direct election among, and by, all 60+ year-old citizens. The candidates elected are in their 60s, 70s and 80s and equally split between men and women. The turnout for elections is just over 50% and rising and the number of candidates running in the elections is also rising - both evidence of an increased interest in the SCC. The object of the SCC is to work as an intermediary between city councils and local senior citizens.

According to Danish law, city councils are obliged to consult the local Senior Citizens' Council before a final decision is made on any issue relevant to the elderly population. Typical matters would be primary health care, traffic planning, infrastructure, cultural policy, and the standard of public service for the elderly and for the disabled people. Most important, however, is the SCC potential influence on the city council's proposal of the municipal budget for the following year.

SCC help increase citizens' engagement in local decision-making on elderly policy by ensuring that dialogue and cooperation between the elderly and the local council are promoted, maintained and expanded. The SCC are not interest groups which work unilaterally to promote the immediate interests of their constituents; rather the decisions which the SCC influence can reach many years into the future and are thus also important for future generations of elderly people. SCC are an example of Danish democracy and innovative engagement of elderly people from civil society.

SCC make visible their work to local senior citizens through citizen hearings and debates, local newspapers and news website. The Councils have taken the initiative to mark the UN International Day of the Elderly on October 1st and organise various types of public meetings for dialogue with local politicians on the future of aging policy.

INITIATIVE OUTCOMES (required)
 In 250 words or less, describe the intended outcomes and the actual outcomes that the initiative achieved. Who were the ultimate beneficiaries, and what benefits did they experience? For example, list any concrete improvements in policy, services, behaviors, or power relations between the government and citizens. Try to present your case from the perspective of the various stakeholders involved (e.g., your agency, citizens, Civil Society Organizations, media, et al.). If there are any baseline indicators or standards to measure the outcomes of the initiative, such as the breadth of depth of engagement, please describe them in detail.

Playing a key role in local decision-making
 When SCC were first established, the initiators were campaigning for more formalised dialogue between politicians, civil servants and senior citizens. They wanted influence on local elderly policy and that local politicians would seek their counsel.

Today SCC work for a better standard of public service, better traffic planning, better infrastructure and better opportunities for active ageing, and they counsel local politicians on the use of welfare technology and digital solutions (including telemedicine), care housing, local transport and policies on specific issues such as dementia, etc.

In addition to consulting the local SCC in formal decision-making processes, many local city councils involve the SCC earlier in the process, such as in the planning phase of construction of new care housing, relocation of bus stops, developing special measures for people with Alzheimer's, etc. The Council members are critical, but also view every issue as a whole and respect that it may be necessary for politicians to prioritise and make tough choices. SCC are aware of latent conflicts between the generations and seek to avoid this through dialogue with youth organisations.

A national survey among SCC chairmen, civil servants and local politicians show that all three parties generally agree that hearing statements from SCC are taken seriously by city councils and that SCC have a real impact on local politicians' decisions. Most importantly, the SCC have proven their worth, merit, and legitimacy - as emphasised by the civil society organisations in the initiative selection board.

INITIATIVE SUSTAINABILITY (required)
 In 200 words or less, please describe any plans for scaling up and/or sustaining the initiative in the future. Base your description of the strategy on information provided in the previous sections, such as how you intend to leverage your current success and increase your reach or capacity. Address any threats or operational challenges to your initiative and describe how you intend to manage those risks on a regular basis.

A unique Danish invention
 Denmark is recognised as a country that contributes to the development and dissemination of participatory democracy and the SCC is one successful and well-integrated example of this having evolved from a bottom-up grass-roots initiative to being a statutory mechanism in local government nationwide.

Being a member of a Senior Citizens' Council is a much-coveted position: On average, turnout for SCC elections is 50 % and often there is a contested election. Many of the members of the SCC have a large network and deep roots in the local community.

In 1999 the SCC established their national association, Danske Ældreråd, the National Association of Senior Citizens' Councils (NASCC), in English. This national organisation supports councils in their work, advise on specific issues, and provide training and counselling. NASCC's members are the 98 SCC of the 98 municipalities in Denmark, and the organisation is supported by the Danish Government with DKK 1,000,000 a year (approx. EUR 134,000) and is backed by the Danish Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs.

Inspired by the work and success of the SCC, the Danish Parliament has subsequently passed legislation on, respectively, Councils of the Disabled and Integration Councils in municipalities.

VALIDATION OF CLAIMS (required)
 While it is strongly encouraged that each initiative includes partners, such as Civil Society Organizations, private sector agencies, media entities, etc., it is not a requirement. However, you are required to secure and upload documents from one or more credible nongovernmental actors who can attest to the veracity of any claims made in your application.

You are only allowed to upload one file. If you have multiple documents, please zip them into a single file first. The file types that are allowed to be uploaded have an extension of .ZIP, .PDF, .DOC, .DOCX, .XLS or .XLSX.

VALIDATION OF CLAIMS.pdf

C. THE PITCH

The following information allows each applicant to make their strongest (and final) case for consideration.

BEST CASE (required)

In 250 words or less, please present the most compelling facts for why your initiative should be recognized. This is an opportunity to distinguish your initiative, based on any factors that you have not had the opportunity to describe in the previous sections. What is your best argument for why your initiative has achieved a meaningful outcome? What elements of the initiative make it different and better than others, that have been tried and tested? Be creative and concise.

Senior Citizens' Councils - working for Local Citizen Engagement and Democracy
 Statutory elected SCC is a unique institution. Some other countries have similar initiatives but only in Denmark are council members elected by, and among, the local senior citizens in a democratic and transparent process.

SCC is an example of a new statutory mechanism - grown from a voluntary initiative - to involve citizens in local government decision-making. Citizens who, otherwise, would not have a say.

SCC are competent partners - **and opponents** - to politicians and civil servants because

1) they are **backed** by The Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs;

2) Council member are elected, giving them **legitimacy**, and unpaid, driven by **enthusiasm**;

3) it is a legal requirement that each SCC and local city council **together** write articles of association describing the tasks of the SCC;

4) there is a **political desire and will** to involve citizens in local government processes in order to further develop and support democracy and to find the best solutions;

5) the model of statutory elected SCC **has inspired legislation** on other local citizens' councils, e.g. for the disabled and for immigrants.

VIDEO SUBMISSION (recommended)
 OGP does not offer a venue for applicants to meet our judges during the application process. In order to provide the opportunity for making a personal connection, you are encouraged to upload a short video to complement your application. You may also depict an individual participant in your initiative and describe his or her experience. We do not need to know actual names or personal details. Take this opportunity to tell a story, to connect with our panel of experts, so that they might better understand your attention to specific needs.

Video submissions should follow these guidelines:

Maximum length of 3-4 minutes.
 Please focus on personal presentations; it's not necessary to develop a sophisticated or polished video.

Here are some logistical and technical suggestions:

Video cameras, digital cameras, and phones are easy ways to record a video.

Laptop and desktop computers can typically record video through Skype or other software.

If possible, set to a low resolution to reduce file size. This will enable an easier video uploading process.

If you are having difficulty uploading the video file, try logging out of the application and logging back in using another internet browser.

Here are general suggestions for delivering a high-quality video pitch:

Include the following:

Introduce yourself and your initiative.

Focus on describing your intended benefits and/or services and how they have been effective.

What is unique about your initiative, partners, or technical approach?

Keep your content relevant and language simple.

Demonstrate passion through your words and enthusiasm.

*If the burden of developing a video presentation is either prohibitive or might not reflect the best characterization of your initiative, then you are **not required** to submit one, and the judges are instructed not to discount your application because it may not include a video. We hope that this option offers a new and inventive way in which you can best express the results of your work.

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