



FACT SHEET

GUN LAWS AND
PARLIAMENT

GUN CONTROL



DEFINITIONS

WHAT IS ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP?

You can be an active citizen in your own community, nationally and globally. Being an active citizen means you are interested in improving the lives of others, questioning the way things are done and taking action to make a difference. Active citizenship is also about improving your own life. Ask yourself, “What matters to me?”

Source 1: [What is active citizenship?](#)
[2_Active citizenship](#)

WHAT IS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION?

Public participation in government is when the public shares input, takes part in and contributes to government law and policies.

“Public” includes citizens in their personal capacity, civil society organisations, interest groups, private sector/business companies, trade unions and academic institutions – all people and institutions outside of the government sector.

Source: [Corruption Watch](#)

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Advocacy is the act or process of supporting a cause. As an active citizen, you can advocate for positive change in your community. Anyone can be an active citizen, including you! It doesn't have to be someone else advocating for you.

Once you decide to become an active citizen, then you need to know the ways you can make your voice heard in South Africa. One way is understanding how Parliament works.

Advocacy ensures that people, especially those who are most vulnerable in society, are able to use their voice on issues that are important to them and to have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives.

Advocacy also helps to:

- Defend and safeguard people's rights
- Advocacy is less about advocating on behalf of others and is more about disadvantaged groups and people becoming their own advocates
- Advocacy helps people realise their power, and use it to participate effectively in making and shaping public decisions

Source: UNICEF

DO MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC HAVE ACCESS TO PARLIAMENT?

Yes!

The Constitution says there must be public access and involvement in Parliament.

This means that the public can get involved in lawmaking, oversight and other processes of Parliament. In other words, South Africa's democratic system not only protects the rights of citizens to elect their representatives, but also allows citizens to have a say in matters that affect them.

This is how:

- Members of the public have the right to attend the meetings of Parliamentary Committees and all sittings of the National Assembly and the National Council Of Provinces (NCOP).
- Members of the public also have the right to contact any Member of Parliament (MP) or member of the NCOP to inform them of their views.
- All MPs are members of the Parliamentary Committees and are actively involved in the work of those committees. MPs can therefore raise issues you have brought to their attention in those committees.
- Most areas in the country have one or more constituency offices where citizens can directly contact their MPs. Constituency offices are usually listed in the local telephone directory.

DEFINITIONS

DIRECT WAYS OF INFLUENCING PARLIAMENT

- Anybody over the age of 18 can participate in Parliament simply by voting in the [elections](#)
- Attending [meetings](#) and [debates in Parliament](#)
- [Making submissions](#), representations and [petitions to Parliament](#) or contacting MPs

INDIRECT WAYS OF INFLUENCING PARLIAMENT

- Keep yourself informed
- Read, listen to and watch news on diverse media organisations
- Read Bills and Acts
- Join a political party
- Lobby or protest outside Parliament

Source: [What Parliament Does](#)

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED:

Parliament has oversight over the various government departments. For example, each government department has to get approval from the Portfolio Committee on its plans and budgets for each year and then has to account to the Committee on progress. There is usually a Portfolio Committee for each department, such as the Portfolio Committee of Police, Social Development and Basic Education.

One of the most important roles of Parliament is that it passes new laws or amends them. It also plays a role in giving input and guidance into policy matters.

When a new law is brought to Parliament it is called a Draft Bill and is given a unique number to track its progress through Parliament. If an existing law is being changed it is called a Draft Amendment Bill. A Bill is always published in the Government Gazette; this means it is available to the general public.

Once the Draft Bill is before Parliament, the public is then invited to make written submissions. This is an opportunity for citizens to tell government what they want and how they think the law can improve their lives or how they think the law is damaging to their lives and that of their community.

One of the ways that the public can make their voices heard is by making submissions to the National Assembly Committees – also known as the Portfolio Committees, the National Council of Provinces Committees or Joint Committees.

It is important that a submission is easily read and understood by the Members of Committees.

CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

➤ You can phone your MP or write to him or her at the following address:
Box 15, Cape Town, 8000 or
Telephone (021) 403 2911

Source: Parliament for us

WHAT IS A SUBMISSION?

- A submission is the presentation of views or opinions on a matter or piece of legislation under consideration by a Committee of Parliament. Legislation is another word for the law.
- Submissions may be presented in your language of choice.
- Submissions are usually in written form. They can be reinforced through oral representation to the committee, if the person or group who has made the submission is invited to make an oral presentation to the Portfolio Committee in Parliament.
- Making a submission is a powerful opportunity for any member of the public to propose changes or suggest possible actions to the laws passed by Parliament or any other matter being considered by Parliament.

HOW TO WRITE A SUBMISSION

There is no set format for a submission to a Committee but it should be well thought out and easy to read. An individual and a group/organisation can make submissions. Usually, but not always, an organised group makes submissions.

Here are a few suggestions:

- **Heading** – Head your submission with the name of the Committee to which it is addressed and the full title of the Bill with its unique number or topic.
- **Who is it from?** – Write your full name or give the full name of the organisation you represent.
- **Contact details** – Include a contact address and daytime telephone number. If you do not want these private details to be publicly released with your submission, state this clearly in a covering letter and do not include it in the submission itself.
- **Do you wish to appear before the Committee?** – Be clear about whether you would like the opportunity to address the Committee in person. If you represent an organisation and you would like other members to appear with you before the Committee, either for support or to speak, include their names and roles.
- **Your organisation** – If you are writing on behalf of an organisation, give brief details of the organisation's aims, membership and structure. Make sure that you have the permission to do so and also include your position within the organisation.
- **Who else supports you?** – Write about how widely you have consulted with others and other organisations during the writing of the submission. Your submission may have more impact if it has many supporters.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

When writing a submission to a Committee, you will usually be making comments in relation to a Bill or topical issue.

Here are a few basic principles that apply:

- **Language usage** – Use respectful language. A submission that uses abusive and disrespectful language will not be considered.
- **Relevant** – Stick to the point. Your submission must be relevant to the matter being discussed. A Committee may decide not to entertain a submission that is not relevant.
- **Clear** – Arrange your sentences and paragraphs in a logical order. Try to present a clear argument. A submission that jumps from one issue to another and back again or mixes unrelated issues together may be confusing.
- **Concise** – Be simple and direct. Do not write more than is necessary. The Committee wants to know what you think and the evidence or arguments you have that support your view.
- **Accurate** – Be accurate and complete. Gather and research all relevant information thoroughly. Make sure that your facts are correct. A submission with many errors will not have much impact.
- **Conclusion** – Conclude the main points of your recommendations at the end of the submission or in an executive summary at the beginning.
- **Sending your submission** – Your submission should reach the Committee by or before the closing date for submissions, and must be sent to the relevant Committee Secretary.

PRESENTING ORAL SUBMISSIONS

If the Committee has decided to hear your submission in person, the Committee Secretary will contact you to make arrangements to hear your oral submission.

Oral submissions give you a chance to reinforce what you have said in your written submission and allow the Committee to clarify points raised in the submission. These are known as Public Hearings. Sometimes public hearings can also be held in Provinces before the hearings in Parliament.

GUIDELINES FOR MAKING ORAL SUBMISSIONS

The format for the presentation of oral submissions varies between Committees and also depends on the nature of the business.

Follow the same guidelines as for written submissions. Here are a few tips:

- **Preparing for your oral submission** – As Committee meetings are generally open to the public and the media, it might be a good idea to attend one of these meetings before you present your oral submission. On the day of your oral submission, arrive early. Be sure to plan your presentation so that you are able to present all relevant points and leave enough time for questions.
- **Visual aids** – Parliament's Committee rooms are fitted with audio-visual equipment and your oral submission may have more impact if it is reinforced with audio-visual aids.

- **Language** – You may present your oral submission in any of the official languages of South Africa. Inform the Committee of your language choice before the time so that Parliament may make the necessary interpreting arrangements.
- **Questions** – Be prepared for questions from Members of the Committee. It is a good idea to think about possible questions that may be asked and practice answering them.
- **Time allocation** – You can discuss the amount of time allocated to you with the Committee Secretary, beforehand. The Committee makes the final decision on the time allocated for oral presentations. Usually oral submissions are between 10 to 12 minutes. Make sure you stick to the time allocated to you because if you do go over time the Chairperson of the Committee will interrupt you and ask you to stop. It is better to leave some time for questions.

Source: [How to make a parliamentary submission](#)

KEEP IN MIND

- These submissions are recorded at the Public Hearing and transcribed
- The relevant Committee/s looks at the evidence or opinions shared at the Hearing and discuss it
- If the view is supported by many people and if it has merit, the idea or concern stands a good chance of being included into the work of the relevant Committee/s
- The Committee/s will make the final decision about the merit of an issue

DID YOU KNOW?

ANYBODY OVER THE AGE OF 18 CAN PARTICIPATE INDIRECTLY IN PARLIAMENT SIMPLY BY VOTING IN THE ELECTIONS.



The **Bill of Rights** guarantees the right to assemble, demonstrate, picket and present petitions as long as this is done in a peaceful way and the protesters are unarmed.



Public participation makes up one third of the key functions of Parliament. The other two are oversight and passing legislation.



THE WORD “PARLIAMENT” COMES FROM THE FRENCH WORD “PARLER”, WHICH MEANS “TO SPEAK”.

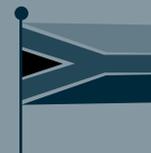
Democracy is not an event that occurred in 1994. It is a **process** to which all of us can contribute by making our voices heard in Parliament, in the provincial legislatures and in broader society.

Although **ordinary citizens may not submit bills to Parliament**, they may lobby MPs or Committees to introduce legislation that deals with their concerns.

LOBBY MEANS TO PERSUADE.



IN SOUTH AFRICA, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IS CONSTITUTIONALLY ENTRENCHED.



SOURCE 1. Did you know this about Parliament?
2. Corruption Watch

RESOURCES

- > Before you participate in Parliament, it is important to understand how government works. There is specific language used when government wants to bring about a change. Government makes changes in society through policies and bills.
- > A detailed look at policy and the law making process



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What is the difference between a policy and a law?

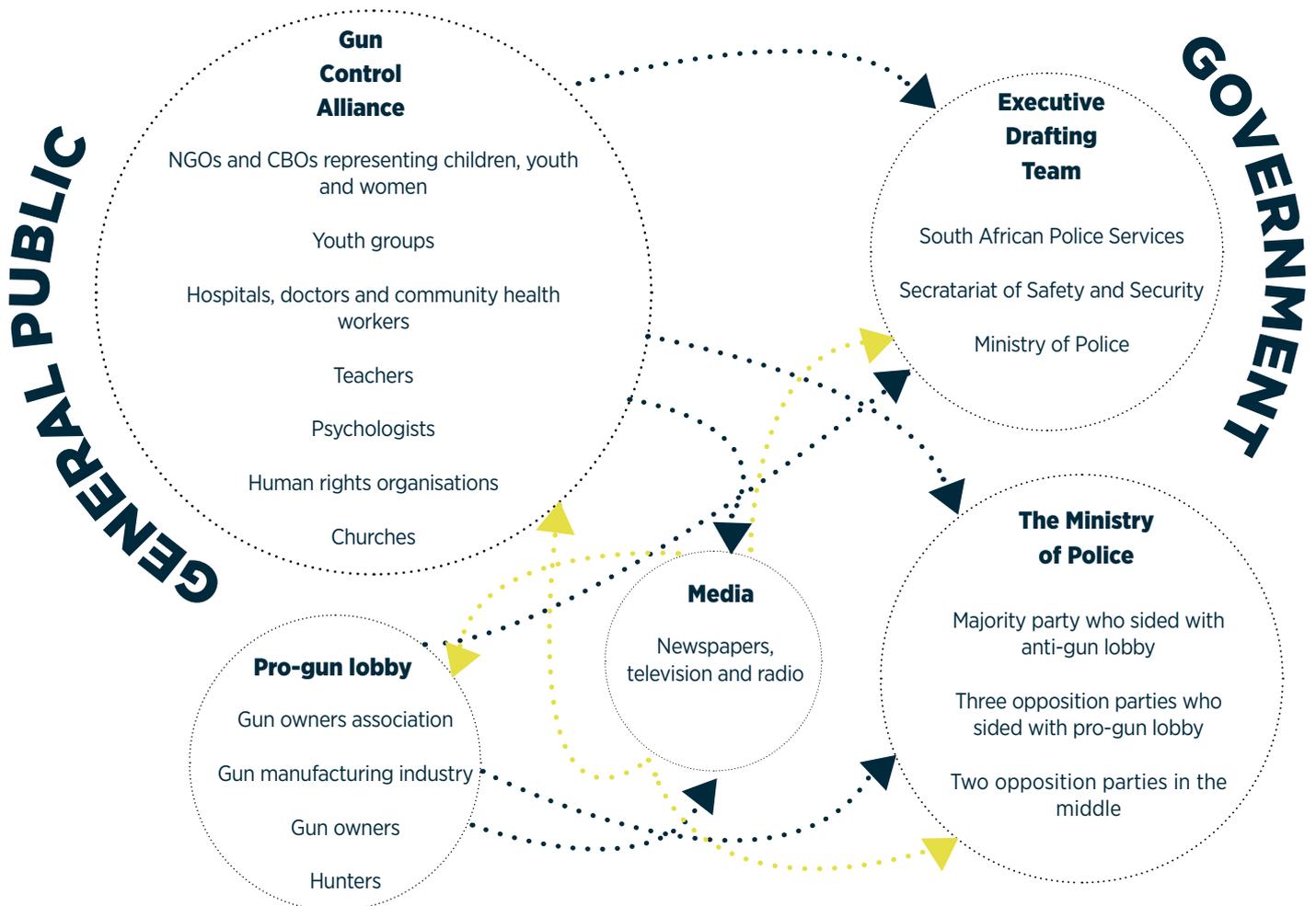
A policy outlines what a government ministry hopes to achieve and the methods and principles it will use to achieve them. It states the goals of the ministry. A policy document is not a law but it will often identify new laws needed to achieve its goals.

Laws set out standards, procedures and principles that must be followed. For example, South Africa's gun law regulates who can own what weapon for which purpose. If a law is not followed, those responsible for breaking them can be prosecuted in court. Laws must be guided by current government policy.

Source: Parliament: How laws are made

TO GET YOU THINKING

ROLE PLAYERS IN THE FIREARMS CONTROL BILL PROCESS



Source: A Children's Institute Case study. 'From Fieldwork to Facts to Firearms Control Research and advocacy towards firearm control legislation in South Africa: A case study'. By Maylene Shung-King, Paula Proudlock & Lori Michelson, June 2005



THIS DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATES THE ROLE PLAYERS WHO MADE INPUTS INTO THE FIREARMS CONTROL BILL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

Role players included:

- the gun control alliance
- the pro-gun lobby
- the media
- the executive (government) drafting team
- the portfolio committee on safety and security

Choose from the above list of role players and answer the questions below.

What kind of information do you need?

How will you get the necessary information and what process will you follow?

In what ways will you verify the information?

If the information you receive goes against your beliefs what are some of the guiding principles in this country's constitution that you will use to help you form an opinion?

GUN LAW AND PARLIAMENT: MYTHS AND FACTS

MYTHS

You have to speak English in Parliament

A payment is required to access Parliament

FACTS

You can choose any of the 11 official languages that you are comfortable with speaking in order to communicate in Parliament

Parliament does not require a fee in order to enter the building

GUN LAW AND PARLIAMENT: MYTHS AND FACTS

MYTHS

You must have an academic qualification and be educated if you want to speak to MPs

FACTS

Your background does not matter when it comes to participating and contributing to Parliament. It will be beneficial to understand the issues up for discussion but you do not have to be an expert

IF YOU WANT TO GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT BILLS OR ACTS

- Printed (hard copy) Bills and Acts not older than 3 years are available from the Government Printing Works at minimal cost. The contact information is:

E-mail: montjane@gpw.gov.za

Tel: (012) 334 4500

Fax: (012) 323 0009

Postal address: Private Bag X85, Pretoria, 0001

Street address: 149 Bosman Street, Pretoria

- Printed (hard copy) Bills and Acts older than 3 years are available from the National Library of South Africa:

E-mail: infodesk@nlsa.ac.za

Tel: (012) 321 8931

Fax: (012) 325 5984

Postal Address: PO Box 397, Pretoria, 0001

Street Address: Corner Vermeulen and Andries Streets, Pretoria

INTERNET RESOURCES

- How laws are made in South Africa:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAmw4xCMOWk>
- What is the Legislature?:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-l8wvVmojOQ>
- What is the Executive?:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zil8nnV17Uc>
- Why do we have the Separation of Power?:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXXv3QrH4qs>
- How to write a submission to parliament
- How to interact with parliament

RADIO PRODUCTION GUIDE

GUN LAWS AND PARLIAMENT



PREPARING FOR THE SHOW

WAYS TO TALK ABOUT CONTRIBUTING TO STRICTER GUN LAWS

- What are the ways you can become an active citizen?
- In what ways does advocacy bring about productive change in communities?
- In what ways can ordinary South African's influence how government makes laws and policies about guns?

CHOOSE AN ANGLE

In what ways can an ordinary South African influence how government makes laws and policies about guns?"

Different ways to talk about: "In what ways can an ordinary South African influence how government makes laws and policies about guns?"

- In what ways can public participation change how government comes up with new laws and policies?
- What are the ways you can be an advocate for reducing gun violence?
- What are the ways your community can contribute to the public participation process on gun laws and policies in Parliament?

FORMATS



VOX POP



Aim

To get many opinions on one topic.



Who do you talk to

Anyone in the community.



Question

In what ways can ordinary South African's influence how government makes laws and policies about guns?



AUDIO COMMENTARY



Aim

To get people's opinion about a topic that they care deeply about.



Who do you talk to

A community activist, or a youth activist campaigning or advocating for change on a particular issue



Questions

From your point of view, what does public participation mean?

What motivated you to become an activist and advocate for local issues?

What are the ways public participation can have an impact on new policies and laws introduced by government?

Can you describe the ways people in this community can get involved and raise their voice about issues affecting them?

FORMATS



PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT (PSA)



Aim

To create a public awareness message



Boy 1: Hey, what are you doing my friend? Are you actually writing a letter? Yoh, man that is so old school!

Boy 2: (Laughs) If Parliament had a WhatsApp group I'd be all over that!

Boy 1: Parliament? Are you a politician now?

Boy 2: Nah, man. I'm making a submission to Parliament about government making stricter gun laws.

Boy 1: That is so much effort, man. I've got other things to think about... like that party on Friday night. You going?

Boy 2: Hold up. Writing one letter to help make guns less available means we have a better chance of walking these streets and staying alive.

Boy 1: Yo! Did you hear the gunshots last night!

Boy 2: And that's exactly what I'm talking about. We talk about it but we don't do anything about it. It's time to do something. Making a submission to Parliament about this issue, is doing something.

Boy 1: Gimme that pen! I've got something to say!

Slogan:

Raise your voice. Public participation is your right!



HOW TO PRESENT YOUR SHOW



Use your produced radio formats, your research and the suggested script and questions to write your own script.

[INTRO:]

Host 1: It's just gone [TIME] and you're just in time for the [NAME OF SHOW] on [RADIO STATION]. My name is [NAME]...

Host 2: And my name is [NAME], and today's show is all about the ways we can influence government by raising our voice.

Host 1: You mean we are going to shout?

Host 2: (Laughs) You could try but I'm talking about much more effective way! For instance, how do we directly talk to government about the issues that matter to us? You see, Parliament is there for the people. And sometimes we forget that.

Host 1: True story! Public participation can make things happen, people! Don't get depressed. We can help make a difference if we know how.

Host 2: First let's hear more about this topic from the people on the street...

[INTRO VOX POP]

[VOX POP]

[OUTRO VOX POP}

Host 1: Mmmm, some interesting views!

Host 2: Yep, now let's take it further with the thoughts and views from an activist about public participation and how it can help our community.

[INTRO AUDIO COMMENTARY]

[AUDIO COMMENTARY]

[OUTRO AUDIO COMMENTARY]

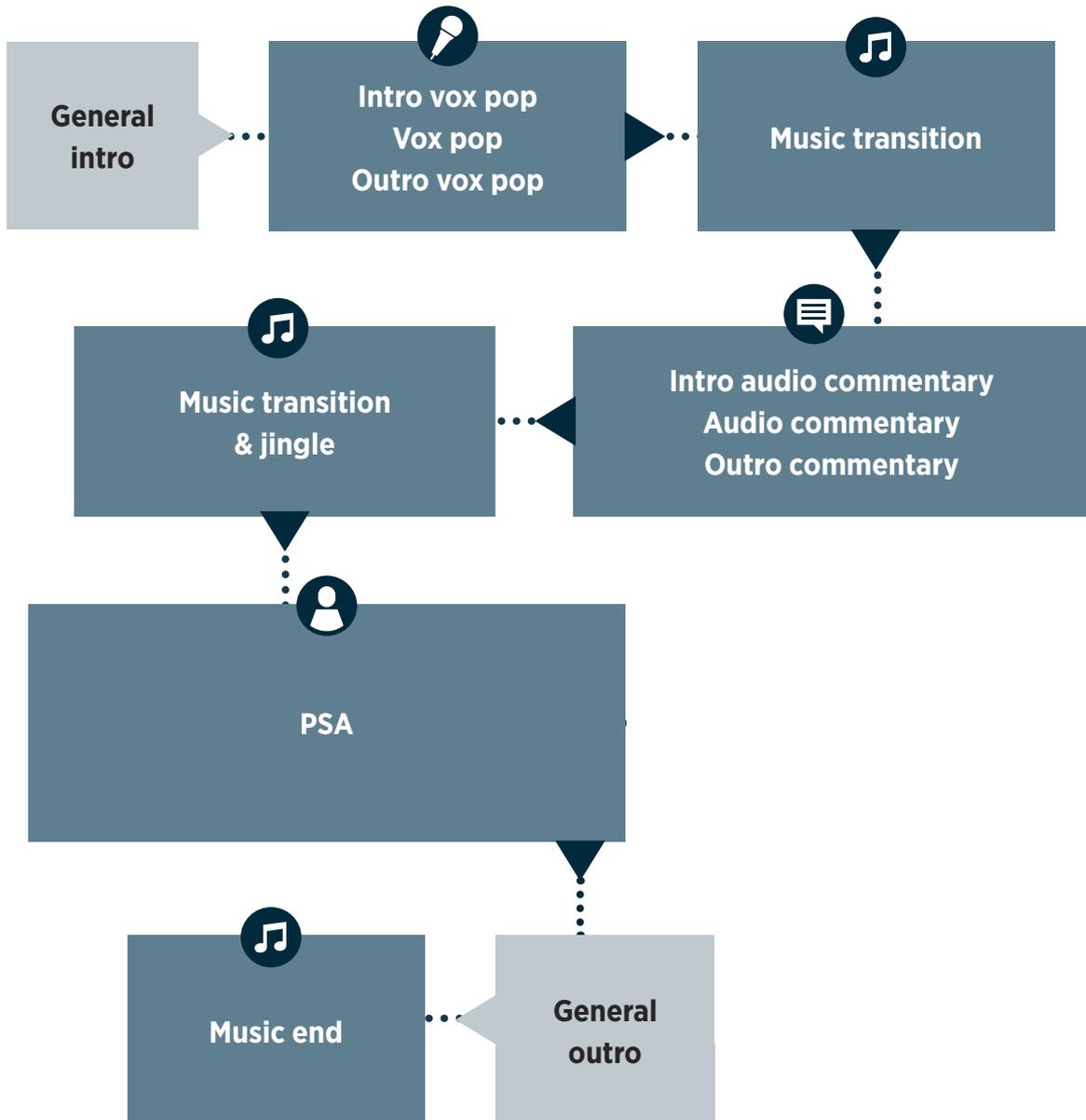
[OUTRO:]

Host 1: Today, we've learnt so much about public participation and what it means! It's empowering to know that we all have a voice in the decisions that government makes.

Host 2: Exactly! Now that I know how to make my voice heard, I'm definitely going to make sure I become more informed about what goes on in Parliament.

Host 1: Next week on [DAY] at [TIME] we'll be talking all about [NEXT WEEK'S SHOW TOPIC]. Until then, it's bye from us!

SHOW OUTLINE



ETHICS AND CONSENT

This may be a sensitive topic for some, so make sure you inform your audience to respect those who share personal stories in the space.

OUTREACH OUTLINE FLOW

When you create your outreach outline, be aware of the flow and the energy that certain activities generate. You don't want to start with a bang and end on a whisper.

OUTREACH GUIDE

GUN LAWS AND PARLIAMENT



PREPARING FOR YOUR OUTREACH

DIFFERENT WAYS TO TALK ABOUT GUN LAWS AND PARLIAMENT

- What are the ways you can become an active citizen?
- In what ways does advocacy bring about productive change in communities?
- In what ways can ordinary South African's influence how government makes laws and policies about guns?

CHOOSE AN ANGLE

In what ways can ordinary South African's influence how government makes laws and policies about guns?

Different ways to talk about: "In what ways can ordinary South African's influence how government makes laws and policies about guns?"

- In which ways can public participation change how government comes up with new laws and policies?
- What are the ways you can be an advocate for reducing gun violence?
- What are the ways your community can contribute to the public participation process on gun laws and policies in Parliament?

REMINDER

Gun violence can be a sensitive and triggering topic. The resource sheet can be used to help refer affected people to hotlines, supportive services and more information.

You can also find the contact information of professional support services such as a social worker or counsellor in your community and share the details at the outreach with their permission.

Remember to repeat support service information throughout your event and to post it on social media.

OUTREACH FORMAT



GUEST SPEAKER



Aim

A guest speaker is someone who can share expert knowledge about the impact statement or tell a personal story related to the impact statement.



Some questions for the guest speaker to think about ahead of time:

- Why is public participation important in a democracy like South Africa?
- What impact can public participation have on decisions government makes with regards to laws and policies?
- What are the ways ordinary South Africans can get involved in the public participation process?



PANEL DISCUSSION



Aim

A panel discussion involves a group of people discussing one topic in front of an audience. There is usually time for questions from the audience afterwards.



Who is on the panel?

A youth activist, community worker and/or governance expert



Examples of opening questions for the panel:

- What does it mean to be an active citizen?
- In what ways does active citizenship lead to public participation and how can it work to keep democracy alive and well?
- What are the ways we can advocate for active citizenship in our communities?



ROLEPLAY



Aim

To provide a scenario that allows the audience to “act out” a point about the impact statement.

Decide how many characters are needed and set the scene for the ‘actors’ to play out the statement. It is really is an improvisation, and the audience ‘actors’ make it up as they go along.

Examples of scenarios



Thembi is frustrated by yet another fatal shooting in her community. She recently joined the Concerned Mothers group in her community so that she could contribute her time to helping young people stay in school and off the streets. Still she feels like she wants to do more about the increasing gun violence but doesn’t know where to start. On the TV one night, Thembi sees a public service announcement about introducing stricter gun laws in the country. She quickly grabs a pen to take down the details of making a submission to Parliament. The next day she convinces the Concerned Mother’s group to make a written submission to Parliament for stricter gun laws. The group has to work out what they will write in their submission.

Lusanda is a local youth activist and wants to see her community safe from gun violence. She has led marches to raise awareness about gun violence and she has spoken at schools to help young people understand the impact of gun violence. She feels that most people in her community support marches only when there is a recent incident of violence and then they go back home and live their lives. She talks to a fellow activist in the community about her worry and together they work out a plan to advocate for people in their community to become active citizens about the issue of gun violence.



IMPACT JINGLE



Aim

A jingle is a short song or tune that is easy to sing along to and remember, and it has a clear message.

HOW TO PRESENT YOUR SHOW



Use your outreach formats and your research to write your own script. Use this example as a guide to create your own script for your outreach activity.

[INTRO:]

Host 1: It's just gone [TIME] and my name is [NAME OF HOST 1] and I am a [TITLE OF HOST] from [NAME OF ORGANISATION]. Thank you all for being here at the [NAME OF VENUE] today.

Host 2: And my name is [NAME OF HOST 2], and today's event is all about how we can take part in public participation processes and let government hear our voices when they draft laws and policies.

Host 1: That's right! Today we are going to talk you through the ways you can inform government about your views when they come up with laws and policies.

Host 2: Remember, a healthy democracy depends on active and informed citizens! Let's hear from our guest speaker about this topic.

[INTRO GUEST SPEAKER]

[GUEST SPEAKER]

[OUTRO GUEST SPEAKER]

Host 1: That was so very interesting and really gives us hope that each and every one of us can make a difference.

[IMPACT JINGLE]

Host 2: Okay, now we get to the part where we hear your voices out there and appreciate the acting talent in the room!

Host 1: Don't be shy! This is your chance in the spotlight...

[INTRO ROLEPLAY]

[ROLEPLAY]

[OUTRO ROLEPLAY]

Host 1: Let's keep our energy levels up people. Here is some music to help you get out of your seats.

[INTRO MUSIC]

[MUSIC]

[OUTRO MUSIC]

Host 2: Okay guys, now that we've injected some energy into us, listen up! We have a panel of very interesting people here today who are going to share more about our topic.

[INTRO PANEL DISCUSSION]

[PANEL DISCUSSION]

[OUTRO PANEL DISCUSSION]

[IMPACT JINGLE]

Host 1: Wow! I've learned so much today!

Host 2: Me too! I learned that I can take part in shaping laws and policies in this country.

Host 1: Thank you guys for attending, for listening and just being awesome!

Host 2: Next up it's the final performance of the day. [INTRO PERFORMERS]. Don't forget to catch us next month on [DAY] at [TIME] and [VENUE]. We'll be talking all about [TOPIC FOR NEXT SHOW].

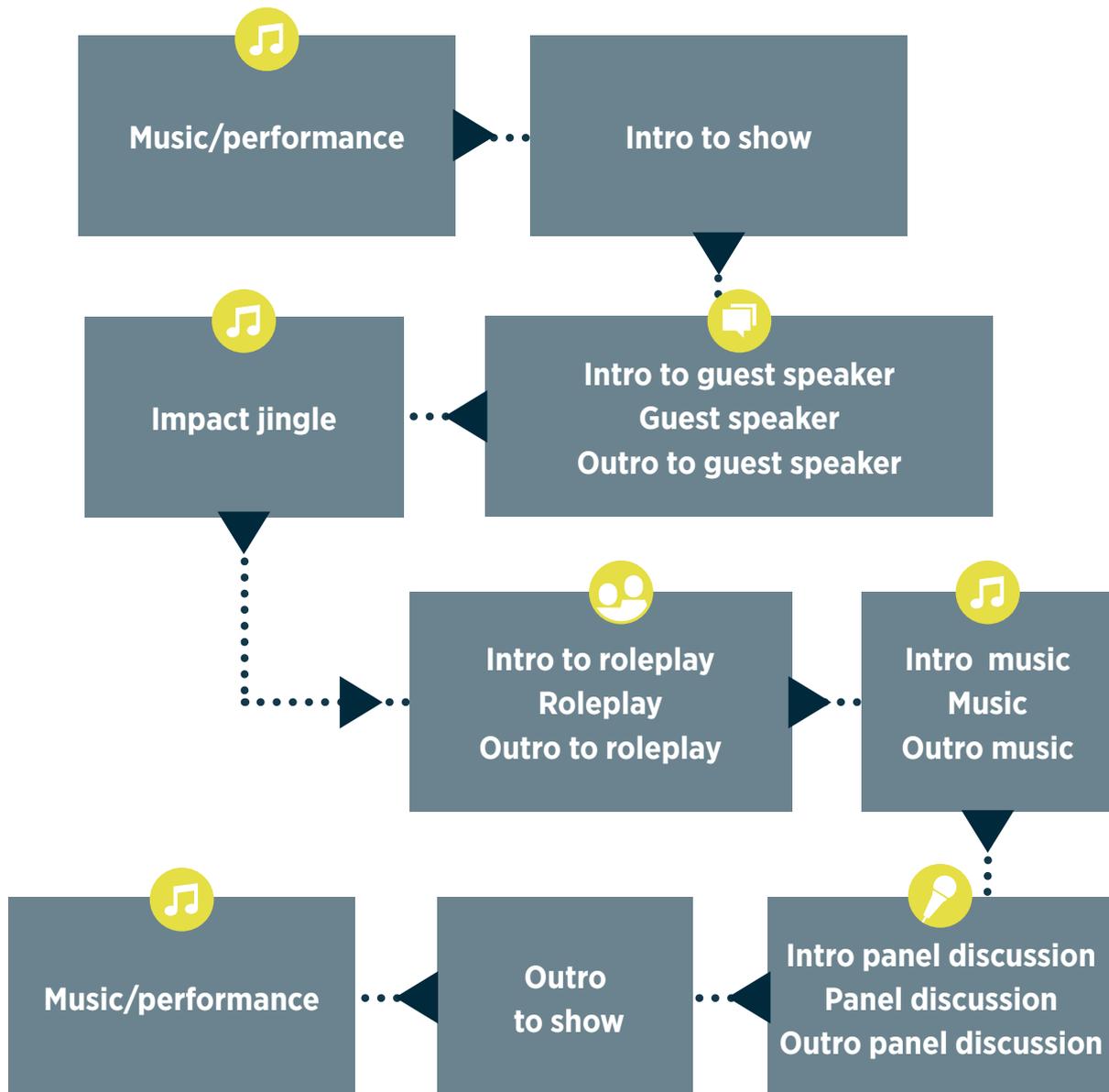
Host 1: Thank you once again for joining us and we hope to see you next time! Until then, it's bye from us!

[MUSIC/PERFORMANCE]

SHOW OUTLINE

An outreach outline is a map to help you stay on track during your event. It is a list of the items and the order in which they will happen in the outreach activity. Allocate an amount of time to each item so that you keep to the time allocation of the outreach activity.

Below is an example of an event that is one hour long.



If any incorrect information comes up in any of your formats, like the quiz, role play or panel discussion, you must correct it. Don't let your audience leave with myths.

Once you've finalised your script, your performance artists, your outreach outline and prepared all your formats, it's time to start your live event!