

U lyk 2 text 4 PB?

Participatory Budgeting Outreach & Engagement Through Texting

Thinking about using texting in your outreach?

Using texting may help you engage PB participants, especially youth, in all stages of the process: idea collection, delegate or facilitator recruitment, and the vote in particular. However, it's not simple to do well. Text messaging, also known as SMS or texting, is one tool the Participatory Budgeting Project has helped organizations use as part of their PB outreach strategy. Below are some tips to use it effectively.

The basics: What using SMS in outreach looks like

A few automated text tools we like:

Twilio.com
Textit.in
mGov.com
TurboVote.org

- ❑ Collect *names and numbers* of people who are willing to get texts, or plan to provide an existing list of names and cell numbers.
- ❑ Select an *automating service to send texts for you*, based on your goals, budget, and capacity.
- ❑ Write the *content of the texts*, mindful of the deadlines, meeting dates or vote dates you want to engage people around and provide in a text.
- ❑ Set up the *order and rules* for what triggers a text or series of texts to be sent, called the *flow*.

Before you start:

- ❑ **Start early!** Learning a new tool takes time, and you'll need more time than you may think to do SMS right.
- ❑ **Cost.** SMS done well isn't cheap - find a budget and get all cost info before you sign up.
- ❑ **Who are you aiming to reach?** Get focused for maximal success, and start reaching out if the people you want to reach are not in your leadership network.
- ❑ **Know your other outreach plans.** SMS complements in-person and email outreach to help you better reach some communities, but is not a replacement for all other strategies.

TOP TEXTING TIPS:

Have people **sign up to get on the text list at in-person meetings**
— You'll get a more responsive list.

Hey! This is Hadassah from PBP, and I want you to **make it personal!**
The [Mobile Commons Case Study](#) found that sending a personalized text message increased response rates by 250%.

Make sure you **set aside extra work time** to plan outreach, set up the text flow, review, and learn to use your SMS system.



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Types of texting services to choose from

There are two basic formats of SMS automation that texting services provide:

Type of SMS automation service	Service that does this
<p>Personalized responsive SMS Where the recipient can respond to provides details and then receives personalized information. This format is more planning intensive, as you need to have many different replies prepared based on the answers you expect to serve. This format may also be more engaging, as it's more specific.</p> <p>For example: "Text your address to get a list of local voting locations."</p>	<p>Twilio.com Textit.in</p>
<p>One-way messaging Information broadcasting with no auto-replies or back and forth communication.</p> <p>For example: "Hey! There's a PB vote going on in your city this week. Here's how you can vote to help decide how to spend money in your community: http://example.com"</p>	<p>TurboVote.org mGov.com</p>

Things to watch out for

[Text Marketer](#) clarifies your work: 160 character max, keep it simple, remind audience who you are, and have a strong call to action.

- ❑ Ensure that your text **content is relevant and readable**. It should come out of input from the communities you want to reach out to, whether that is leadership internal to your organization or with your external partnerships.
- ❑ ~~Do you want to receive our messages~~ TEXT YES > ~~Opt in~~ confirm TEXT YES > ~~Do I seem like creepy spam~~ TEXT YES

Craft your opt-in and language so you **don't come across like spam**. Our team in Boston found it's important to sound like you're a person and not a bot.

- ❑ **Experiment and test!** One staffer said they wished they had sent more texts. But, be mindful a that there is a "sweet spot" between a useful number of messages and annoying message chains. This amount depends on your specific community of recipients and outreach goals.
- ❑ Don't forget to **get started early**. ;)