PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN NORTH AMERICA
2014-2015: A Year of Growth
About the Participatory Budgeting Project

Our Mission
The Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP) empowers people to decide together how to spend public money. We create and support participatory budgeting processes that deepen democracy, build stronger communities, and make public budgets more equitable and effective.

PBP has empowered more than 100,000 people in 10 cities to directly decide how to spend more than $98 million in public funds on 440 community projects.

What is Participatory Budgeting?
Participatory budgeting (PB) is a different way to manage public money. It is a democratic process in which community members decide how to spend part of a public budget.

Participatory budgeting gives people real power over real money.
Local communities make budget decisions through an annual cycle of meetings and voting. Most PB experiences follow a basic process: residents brainstorm spending ideas, volunteer budget delegates develop proposals based on these ideas, residents vote on proposals, and government officials fund the top projects. After funding, the process starts again, and PB becomes part of how government works.

PBPs Work
Our main program areas are:

1. Technical Assistance and Training
We help governments, institutions, and organizations to implement participatory budgeting processes and campaigns.
   • Advise, design, and implement PB processes
   • Advise and support advocacy, organizing, and educational campaigns to launch and expand PB processes

2. Participation Lab
We research and develop new tools and practices to make participatory budgeting and democracy work better.
   • Games and exercises
   • Materials
   • Trainings
   • Videos
   • Tech tools

3. Network Building
We bring together policy practitioners and community organizers to help participatory budgeting grow.
   • Conferences
   • Building and supporting networks of practitioners, organizers, officials and researchers
   • Talks, articles and other public education that expands PB networks and interest

Our approach has been recognized by the White House as a model for civic engagement, and we have been awarded Penn State’s Brown Democracy Medal as the top innovation in advancing democracy around the world.

History of Participatory Budgeting
The Brazilian city of Porto Alegre started the first full participatory budgeting process in 1989. Since then, PB has spread to over 3,000 cities around the world, and been used for counties, states, housing authorities, schools, universities, and other institutions.

The Participatory Budgeting Project was founded in 2009 to support the growth of PB in North America. In 2009 we launched the first PB process in the US, with Chicago Alderman Joe Moore. In 2011 we launched PB in New York City, North America’s largest PB process. We have since grown to 15 staff in four cities, including offices in Brooklyn and Oakland.
Where is PBP working?
Since the first PBP experiment in Chicago in 2009, PBP's work has dramatically expanded the scale of participatory budgeting in the US and Canada. This map is a snapshot of a growing PBP movement.

Implementing PBP
PBP has directly launched or supported the following processes:
- City / Level of PBP
  - Boston, MA / City
  - Cambridge, MA / City
  - Chicago, IL / District
  - Chicago, IL / School
  - Dieppe, NB / City
  - Hamilton, ON / District
  - Long Beach, CA / District
  - New York City, NY / District
  - San Francisco, CA / District
  - San Jose, CA / School
  - St Louis, MO / District
  - Toronto, ON / Housing Authority
- Valley, CA / City

Supporting Organizing for PBP
PBP has directly supported organizing efforts in these cities:
- Albuquerque, NM / Exeter, CA
- Austin, TX / Salina, CA
- Baltimore, MD
- Buffalo, NY
- Denver, CO
- Detroit, MI
- Edmonton, AB
- Ferguson, MO
- Fredericton, NB
- Greensboro, NC
- Hartford, CT
- Lawrence, MA
- Los Angeles, CA
- Madison, WI
- Miami, FL
- Montreal, QC
- New Haven, CT
- Oakland, CA
- Pittsburgh, PA
- Richmond, CA

Inspiring PBP
"PBP’s public education work has inspired these PBP processes:
- Clarkston, GA / City
- Halifax, NS / District
- Hinton, AB / City
- Phoenix, AZ / School
- Saint-Basile-le-Grand, QC / City
- San Antonio, TX / University
- San Juan, PR / District

The Growth of PBP
Each dot represents one district, city, or institution in the US & Canada. PBP has inspired 97 PBP processes.
Impacts

Participatory budgeting transforms people, communities, and government. It helps them learn about the needs of their larger community and work towards a greater common good. They learn to find common priorities and value perspectives and experiences of people with different life situations and in different cultural environments. PBP helps communities build the civic infrastructure necessary for deepening democracy. Major impacts of our work include:

More Civic Engagement

Participatory budgeting has increased participation in political and community organizations, community boards, school boards, and block associations.

In Chicago, the majority of active participants reported no previous involvement or low levels of previous involvement in civic activities and organizations.

In NYC, a third of active participants reported participating more in local organizations after PBP.

Broader Political Participation

Each PBP process supported by PBP has decided to expand voter eligibility to make participation more inclusive, enabling youth as young as 12, non-citizens, and the formerly incarcerated to vote.

PS engages young people in the democratic process. The voting age for PBP in Boston and Cambridge is 12. In Dieppe, Canada, anyone in 6th grade and up can vote.

In NYC, 29% of voters in 2014’s PBP cycle were low-income residents, while only 21% of low-income residents voted in the 2013 local elections.

New Community Leaders and More Active Citizens

PBP’s assistance develops residents’ civic skills, knowledge, and attitudes. We promote PBP as a school of democracy and citizenship, as participants go through months of deliberation and decision-making.

Stronger Relationships Between Government, Organizations, and Residents

PBP connects officials with constituents, enabling them to work together and build trust. We also forge new relationships between organizations focused on different issues and communities.

Fairer and More Effective Spending

PBP connects local knowledge with technical expertise, leading to more informed and responsive spending decisions. High participation by underrepresented groups helps direct resources to communities with the greatest needs. There are fewer opportunities for corruption, waste, or public backlash, and more pressure to dedicate resources to public priorities.

PB participants overall report significant increases in skills such as public speaking, negotiating, building agreement, and contacting officials—and those with low incomes and less education learn the most.

In Vallejo, the majority of active participants said their view of city government improved after PBP. Most residents whose project ideas did not win funding were still satisfied with the process and wanted to participate again.

PB brings in additional funding beyond the money directly allocated through the process. In Chicago, more than $1.6 million in additional funding was leveraged for community projects identified through PBP.

Ushuaia, a philosopher, this way: "The best impact was the way PBP brought the people together to engage and make group decisions. PBP encourages people to drop their biases and biases and make a change, we have to come together for a common good. This has impacted me tremendously because I never thought that this was possible for neighborhoods like mine."

Throughout the PBP process, I had a strong feeling that I was making a difference and that my opinion counts.

Our research has demonstrated the importance of building the PBP process around existing community assets and civic infrastructure; as well as how critical traditional community organizing is for engaging more marginalized populations. When PBP incorporates these existing networks into the process it simultaneously strengthens the PBP process and the fabric of the community overall.

PB has helped me to flourish in my love of participation with lift, improved my confidence level when speaking publicly and to capitalize on the need to be ready at all times and all places. For you never know when you will be called upon to "shine," and I am still "shining."
SUPPORTERS 2014/2015

Foundations
Lily Auchincloss Foundation
The California Endowment
Chicago Community Trust*
Robert Sterling Clark Foundation*
The Crown Family*

Nathan Cummings Foundation*
Democracy Fund
Fund for Democratic Communities
Robert R. McCormick Foundation*
New York Community Trust*

New York Foundation
New York Women's Foundation
North Star Fund
Rockefeller Foundation*
Scherman Foundation*
*Funding received via partner organization

Government & Institutions
City of Boston, MA
City of Cambridge, MA
Clean Air Coalition, Buffalo
Google
Hamilton, ON Councillor Farr
City of New York, NY

New York City Council Speaker Mark-Viverito
New York City Council Member Kallos
New York City Council Member Lander
New York City Council Member Levin
New York City Council Member Levine
New York City Council Member Menchaca
New York City Council Member Richards

New York City Council Member Rodriguez
New York City Council Member Torres
New York City Council Member Ulrich
New York City Council Member Williams
New York City Council Member Weprin
City of Seattle, WA
City of Vallejo, CA

Individuals
Champions ($500 and above)
Anonymous
Ken Browne
George Chiorus

Gerald Delgiprro
William Jennings
Joe Moore
Christopher Wilson

Leaders ($100 to $499)
Melody Allen
David Antieau
Alderman John Arena
Hala Audi
Steven Ausbury
William Back
Eve Baron
Gene Beasley
Vittorio Benedetti
Arla Berman
Molly Biklen
Deanna Bitetti
Justin Blinder
Andrea Bonilla
Martin Brown
Douglas Carolus
Alina Chatterjee
John Chin

Ana Maria Cruz
John De La Torre
Meghan Faux
Will Friedeman
David Gepner
Ari Gerzahn
Rhoda Giovannitti
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