

REAL MONEY, REAL POWER

A REPORT ON THE FIRST FIVE YEARS OF THE
PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROJECT



April 2014

Participatory Budgeting gives people real power over real money

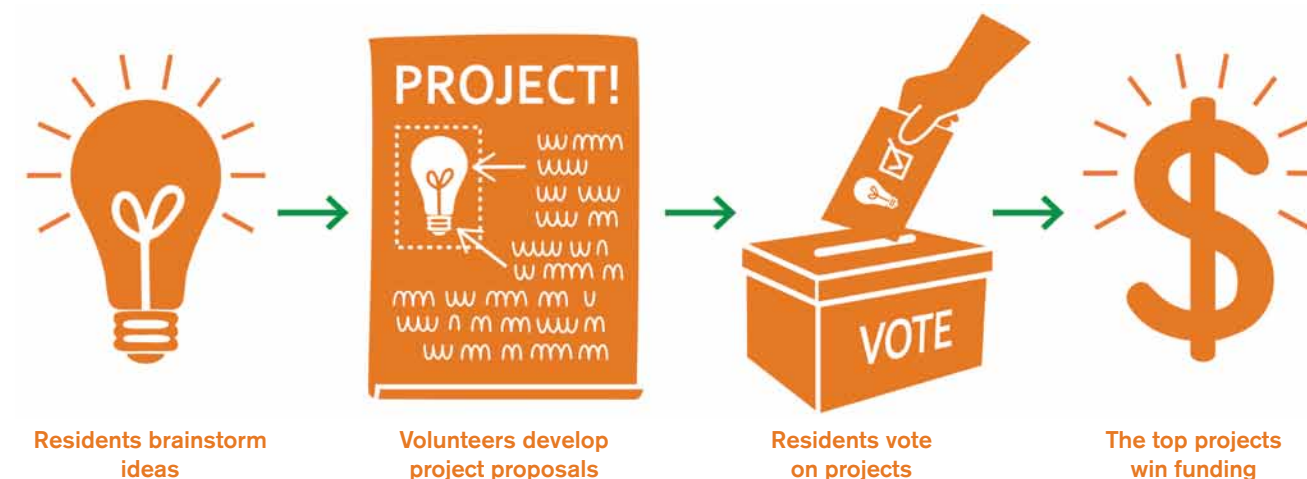
Table of Contents

- 2 What is Participatory Budgeting?
- 3-4 About the Participatory Budgeting Project
- 5-6 Where is PBP working?
- 7-8 PBP's Work: Technical Assistance
- 9 PBP's Work: Public Education
- 10 PBP's Work: Research and Evaluation
- 11-12 Impacts
- 13 PB Stories
- 14 PBP's Supporters

What is Participatory Budgeting?

Participatory budgeting (PB) is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget. It enables taxpayers to work with government to make the budget decisions that affect their lives. PB has been used for cities, counties, states, schools, universities, housing authorities, and other agencies.

It begins with hundreds of people attending public assemblies to brainstorm spending ideas that could improve their communities. They select volunteer "Budget Delegates" to represent their neighborhoods. With guidance and training from PBP and other experts, the Delegates transform the initial ideas into concrete project proposals. Thousands of people then vote on the proposals they want to see in their communities. The government or institution then funds and implements winning projects. A typical PB cycle looks like this:



History of Participatory Budgeting

The Brazilian city of Porto Alegre initiated the first full-scale participatory budgeting process in 1989. Since then, as many as 50,000 people have participated each year, to decide as much as 20% of the city's budget. Participatory budgeting has spread to over 1,500 cities in Latin America, North America, Asia, Africa, and Europe.

The Chicago Alderman Joe Moore and the Participatory Budgeting Project launched the first PB process in the United States in 2009. New York City piloted PBNYC in 2011, developing the nation's largest PB process.



About the Participatory Budgeting Project

Our Mission

The Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP) works to empower 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.

Our Work

Founded in 2009, PBP is the first and only organization in North America whose sole focus is to advance participatory budgeting. We organize trainings and conferences to educate the public, provide technical assistance to develop participatory budgeting processes, and conduct research and evaluation to help participatory budgeting grow. We have worked with local partners to launch the initial participatory budgeting processes in the US and Canada, **empowering more than 46,000 people to directly decide how to spend more than \$45 million in public funds.**

PBP's headquarters are in New York City, and we have field offices in Chicago, Boston, and Oakland.

Our Approach

Building on decades of experience around the world, we understand participatory budgeting as a democratic process in which local people directly decide how to spend part of a public budget. We approach our work in three main ways:

1. We build real power over real money

We develop processes that let people make real decisions, moving beyond consultation. We facilitate grassroots democratic decision-making over:

- The design of the budgeting process
- What proposals go on the ballot
- What gets funded

2. We transform democracy

We work to rebuild the relationship between government and the people. We change how government works and how people can engage in democracy, by crafting processes that:

- Build individuals' skills and knowledge, to develop new community leaders
- Bring neighbors together across divides, to build stronger communities
- Connect residents, experts, and officials, to make better decisions together

3. We address inequality

We recognize that many people face obstacles to participating in government, and we work to ensure that everyone has an equal voice, regardless of age, race, financial resources, or other issues. To level the playing field of participation and make public budgets work for everyone, we:

- Prioritize engaging underrepresented groups, such as youth, people of color & low-income people
- Partner with local organizations that are already engaging marginalized communities
- Provide people with the tools to make fair and equitable spending decisions

To learn more about PBP's work, please visit www.participatorybudgeting.org



Staff

Josh Lerner, Executive Director
Meg Wade, Operations & Training Manager
Pam Jennings, Project Coordinator, NYC
Isaac Jabola-Carolus, Project Assistant, NYC
Maria Hadden, Project Coordinator, Chicago
Ginny Browne, Project Coordinator, Oakland
Aseem Mulji, Project Assistant, Oakland
Aaron Tanaka, Lead Organizer, Boston
Ashley Rose-Salomon, Youth Organizer, Boston

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Christopher Wilson, Esperanza Academy

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Gianpaolo Baiocchi, Research Associate
Joanna Duarte Laudon, Research Associate
Lize Mogel, Development Associate
Madeleine Pape, Research Associate
Daniel Schugurensky, Research Associate
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Sondra Youdelman, Community Voices Heard



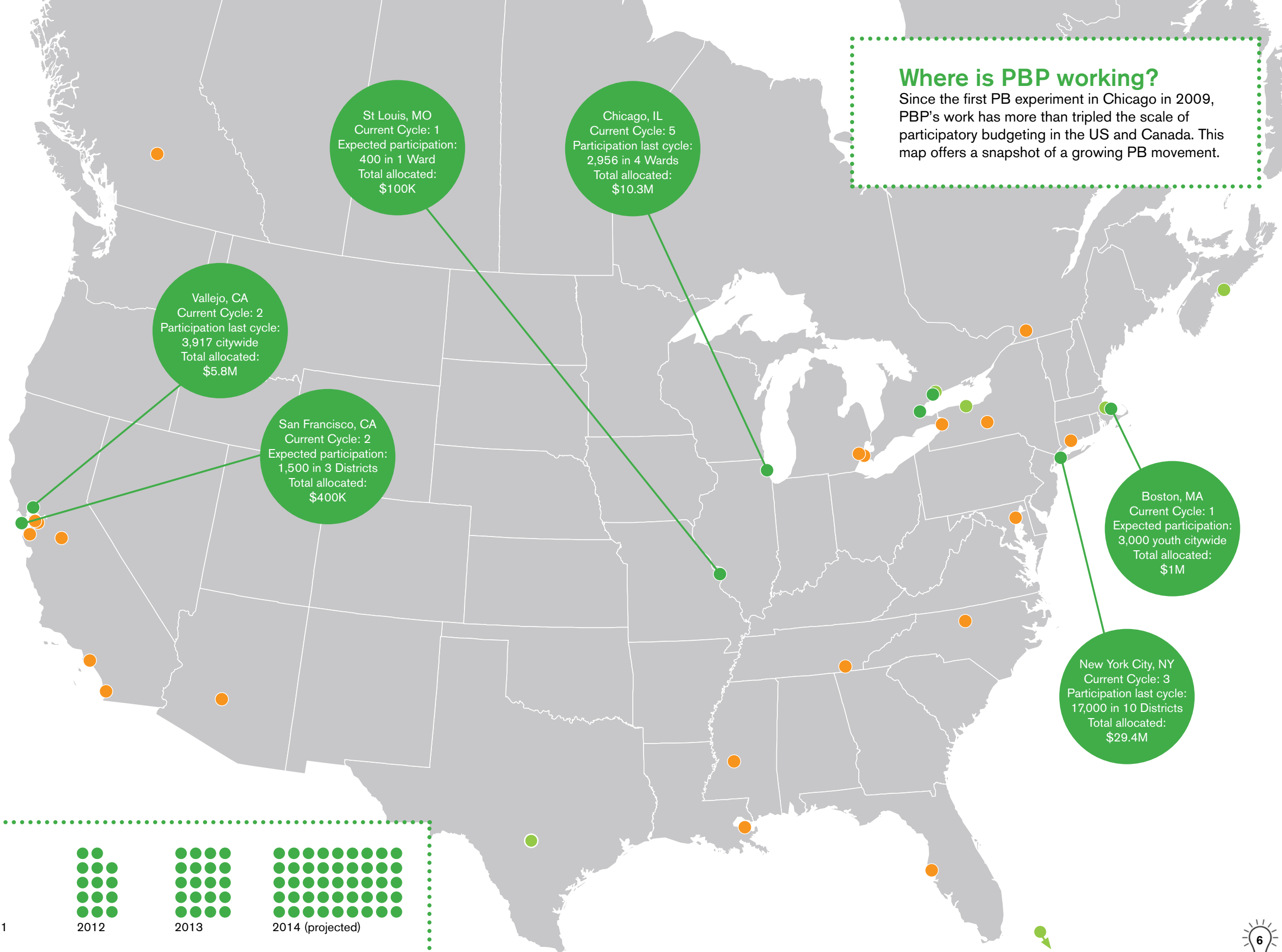
- IMPLEMENTING PB**
 PBP has directly launched or supported the following processes:
- City / Level of PB**
- Boston, MA / City
 - Brooklyn, NY / College
 - Chicago, IL / District
 - Hamilton, ON / District
 - New York City, NY / District
 - San Francisco, CA / District
 - St Louis, MO / District
 - Toronto, ON / Housing Authority
 - Vallejo, CA / City

- INSPIRING PB**
 Our public education work has inspired the following processes:
- Halifax, NS / District
 - Toronto, ON / High School
 - Lawrence, MA / Middle School
 - Rochester, NY / City
 - San Antonio, TX / College
 - San Juan, PR / City

- ORGANIZING FOR PB**
 We have supported organizing campaigns for PB here:
- Baltimore, MD
 - Buffalo, NY
 - Chattanooga, TN
 - Detroit, MI
 - Greensboro, NC
 - Long Beach, CA
 - Ithaca, NY
 - Jackson, MS
 - Kamloops, BC
 - Merced, CA
 - Montreal, QC
 - New Haven, CT
 - New Orleans, LA
 - Oakland, CA
 - Phoenix, AZ
 - Richmond, CA
 - San Diego, CA
 - San Jose, CA
 - St Petersburg, FL
 - Windsor, ON

Where is PBP working?

Since the first PB experiment in Chicago in 2009, PBP's work has more than tripled the scale of participatory budgeting in the US and Canada. This map offers a snapshot of a growing PB movement.



St Louis, MO
 Current Cycle: 1
 Expected participation: 400 in 1 Ward
 Total allocated: \$100K

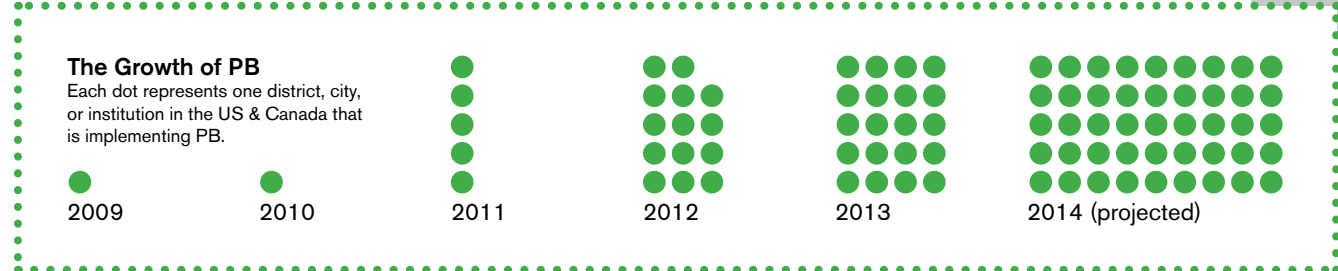
Chicago, IL
 Current Cycle: 5
 Participation last cycle: 2,956 in 4 Wards
 Total allocated: \$10.3M

Vallejo, CA
 Current Cycle: 2
 Participation last cycle: 3,917 citywide
 Total allocated: \$5.8M

San Francisco, CA
 Current Cycle: 2
 Expected participation: 1,500 in 3 Districts
 Total allocated: \$400K

Boston, MA
 Current Cycle: 1
 Expected participation: 3,000 youth citywide
 Total allocated: \$1M

New York City, NY
 Current Cycle: 3
 Participation last cycle: 17,000 in 10 Districts
 Total allocated: \$29.4M





PBP's Work: Technical Assistance

The Participatory Budgeting Project provides technical assistance to governments, public institutions, organizations, and community groups, to establish and strengthen PB processes. This support ranges from assistance with specific aspects of PB to playing the lead role in implementing the process. These five cities represent different scales and models of our work. In each city we served as lead technical assistance partner. Each process represents a new way of thinking about budgeting and a new relationship between government and the people. A common thread is the collaboration between local residents, community organizations, and city government—the building blocks of PB.

Chicago: A PB pioneer

Government partners: Joe Moore (Ward 49), John Arena (Ward 45), Rick Muñoz (Ward 22)
Lead community partner: Great Cities Institute-University of Illinois at Chicago

Chicago was the first US city to implement participatory budgeting, in Alderman Joe Moore's Ward in 2009. In 2012 the Participatory Budgeting Project and the Great Cities Institute partnered to expand PB to additional wards and pots of money, launching the broader PB Chicago initiative. Since then PB has been used in four additional wards, and the City's Budget Office is hiring a new PB Manager.

PBNYC: Scaling up

Government partners: Council Members Melissa Mark-Viverito (D8), Brad Lander (D39), Jumaane Williams (D45), Steve Levin (D33), Erich Ulrich (D32), Carlos Menchaca (D38), Mark Weprin (D23), David Greenfield (D44), Donovan Richards (D31), and Ben Kallos (D5).
Lead community partner: Community Voices Heard

PBNYC is the largest participatory budgeting process in the United States. The Participatory Budgeting Project's work inspired four City Council members to initiate it in their districts in 2011/2012. The widespread interest in and commitment to PB from elected officials, and its rapid growth over three years, makes it a model for the nation.

In Cycle 1 of PBNYC, more than 7,700 people in four Council Districts participated. This doubled during Cycle 2 (2012/2013) in which almost 14,000 people in eight Council Districts created proposals and voted to fund more than 45 projects, totaling almost \$10 million in public funds. Cycle 3 (2013/2014) grew to 10 Council Districts—two of which are new to PBNYC and 80% people of color—and 17,000 people. This cycle opened up more than \$14 million in public funds to direct, community-level decision-making.

PBNYC is poised to grow dramatically in 2014. More than 21 City Council Members have committed to implementing PB in their districts in 2014—nearly half of City Council. Mayor Bill de Blasio pledged during his campaign to help expand PB, and the new City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito is one of the original PB champions.

PB Vallejo: Rebuilding trust in government

Government partner: City of Vallejo, CA
Community partners: Better Vallejo, NAACP

In 2012 Vallejo City Council approved the first city-wide PB process in the US, as part of the city's return to fiscal stability and accountability after bankruptcy. The City of Vallejo contracted the Participatory Budgeting Project to implement the process.

The funds for PB came from a 1% sales tax approved by voters in 2011. Residents decided how to spend 30% of this revenue - over \$3 million in 2013. Winning projects included streets repair, parks improvements, equipment and improvements for school libraries, small business grants, improvements to senior center, and security cameras/enhanced street lighting.

City Council approved a second cycle to allocate \$2.4 million in 2014. The City also hired three full-time staff members to oversee the process, and the Participatory Budgeting Project continues to provide technical assistance.

Boston: PB by and for youth

Lead government partner: City of Boston
Lead community partners: Youth on Board, The City School

In 2013 The City of Boston initiated the first youth PB process in the US, for \$1 million in capital funds. The City contracted the Participatory Budgeting Project to support project implementation and recruited a Steering Committee of 30 organizations. Young Bostonians designed the process through the Steering Committee, and will develop and vote on projects between March and June 2014. The pilot year of PB Boston focuses on five underserved neighborhoods.

San Francisco: Beyond capital funds

Lead government partners: Supervisor David Chiu (District 3)
Lead community partners: Coleman Advocates, Chinese Progressive Association, Chinese for Affirmative Action

Supervisor David Chiu initiated a pilot process in 2013 for \$100,000 in discretionary funds, with both capital projects and programs eligible for funding. Winning projects included a public awareness campaign to educate seniors about consumer scams, one-time back rent and homelessness prevention grants for up to 25 households, employment training and job matching for youth, and 500 new Chinese language books for public libraries. The 2014 process involves three districts, each allocating \$100,000.





PBP's Work: Public Education

Public education helps to raise awareness and understanding of participatory budgeting. The Participatory Budgeting Project organizes and delivers talks, workshops, and other public events for governments, institutions, organizations, and the general public. We also regularly publish articles, guides, and other educational materials.



The Participatory Budgeting Project and local partners organize an [International Conference on Participatory Budgeting](#) in North America to bring together PB practitioners, organizers, researchers, elected officials, and participants to exchange ideas, observe PB in action, and develop stronger relationships. The conference happens annually in a city that is implementing PB. The 2012 conference in New York City was hosted by the Pratt Institute and Hunter College and attended by 300 people. "Building a Democratic City," the 2013 conference in Chicago, was organized with the University of Illinois-Chicago's Great Cities Institute and attracted more than 200 attendees. The 2014 conference will be hosted by the California Endowment in the San Francisco Bay Area in September.

Participatory Budgeting Project staff and key PB practitioners give frequent [public presentations](#) about PB throughout North America. PBP and its community partners provide [trainings](#) to community groups, elected officials, budget delegates, and others to build their capacity to implement and participate in PB.

Advocating for PB: A State-wide PB Campaign in California

The Participatory Budgeting Project is partnering with the California Endowment to assist 14 low-income communities across the state in advocating for PB. These are part of an initiative that recognizes that building strong communities and providing adequate services for them is an important part of public health. Officials and organizations in Merced, San Diego, Oakland, Richmond, Long Beach, as well as several school districts, are taking the steps to initiate PB in their communities, with PBP's help.

PBP's Work: Research & Evaluation

To measure and deepen the impacts of participatory budgeting, we conduct and support rigorous research and evaluation. For existing participatory budgeting processes, we work with local partners and stakeholders to develop evaluation frameworks and tools, carry out research, analyze data, and disseminate findings. For cities and institutions considering new or expanded PB processes, we also conduct feasibility and scoping studies. To support these local efforts and maximize broader learning, we develop common research metrics, instruments, resources, and data archives.

For example, we support local research partners in conducting PB evaluations, which include tracking who participates, patterns of civic engagement, shifts in knowledge and attitudes, and concrete changes that occur in participating neighborhoods. Tools include:

- Surveys at neighborhood assemblies and voting sites, including exit interviews
- Comparisons of survey information to baseline data from the census and board of elections to assess how PB participation compares to neighborhood demographics and past civic engagement
- In-depth interviews and focus groups to gather more detailed information about how and why people participate, what they learned, how they changed from the process, and how it affected relationships between officials and community members
- Observations of participatory budgeting meetings to understand the dynamics of participation
- Tracking the implementation of projects and resources that come into participating neighborhoods to evaluate the long-term impact of participatory budgeting on specific communities

Participatory Evaluation at Toronto Community Housing

We carried out a two-year participatory evaluation of PB at Toronto Community Housing, engaging 25 public housing tenants and staff in documenting and identifying improvements for the process.





This is the process that made me say, 'I am going to be the voice of this community.' -Kioka Jackson, PBNYC Budget Delegate



PB was the best possible civics class that could be offered. -Morgan Pehme, City & State



I have seen excitement and involvement at all levels of public engagement. PB has brought together community members and City staff in a way that I have never experienced in my 30-year career in public service. -City Manager Dan Keen, Vallejo

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; increased community mobilization on other issues; and it may also increase voting rates in local elections.

Broader Political Participation

In each of the initial processes in the US, Steering Committees have decided that any resident at least 16 years old can vote in PB. This inclusive criteria enables historically marginalized populations such as youth, immigrants, and the formerly incarcerated to participate.

New Community Leaders and More Active Citizens

PBP's assistance develops residents' civic skills, knowledge, and attitudes. We promote PB 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 in PB by underrepresented groups helps to direct resources to communities with the greatest needs. There are fewer opportunities for corruption, waste, or costly public backlash, and more pressure to dedicate resources to public priorities.

- 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 PB.
- In NYC, a higher percentage of low-income residents voted in PB (40%), compared to the full population (34%) and previous local elections (29%).
- In Vallejo, targeted voting sites accounted for 83% of voters who were ineligible to vote in typical elections.
- In NYC, participants 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 PB. Most residents whose project ideas did not win funding were still satisfied with the process and wanted to participate again.
- In NYC, funds have been more likely to go to projects in low-income areas through PB than through other discretionary funding allocations.
- In NYC, for every \$5 million allocated through PB, an additional \$1 million in matching funds has been raised for priority projects.



PB Stories

Participants of our programs describe the impact PB has on them personally and the impact it has on their communities.



Mamnun Haq, PBNYC is a community leader who immigrated from Bangladesh more than 20 years ago. He says “The Bangladeshi community is often left behind and less likely to take part in civic engagement and election processes. I thought [PB] would be a great way to get them involved as well as work as a stepping stone to future civic engagement...”

Mamnun has been a budget delegate, district committee member, and most recently a member of the Citywide Steering Committee. He believes the most important impact of PB is in reaching people who don't usually engage: “It was heartwarming and inspiring to see members of varied immigrant communities come out and vote. Many [of whom] are not fortunate enough to be able to vote in local, state and federal elections.”



Jenny Aguiar, PB Vallejo is a high school student and a member of the PB Vallejo Youth Committee. She first heard about participatory budgeting when PBP gave a presentation at her school. She says “I was attracted by a sign that said “FREE PIZZA!”, but I stayed because I saw an opportunity to make a change. Before this, I had little to no experience in working with my community, but I had always been interested.”

Jenny was excited by how collaborative the process was, and how engaged her fellow delegates were in the process. Speaking about PB's impacts, Jenny says “In some parts of the Vallejo community there was a stronger sense of unity that has emerged from PB. A lot of the youth don't realize the power they can possess to make a better change in Vallejo by taking part in the PB process. I now know I have the ability to help not just this community, but many more, and it is in part due to getting involved in the PB process. I want to see Vallejo progress towards a better future where people can say they were proud to grow up here.”



Owen Brugh, PB Chicago is Chief of Staff to Alderman John Arena of Chicago's 45th Ward, and coordinates the PB process in his ward. The Alderman implemented PB as a way of educating the community about city budgets, increasing civic engagement, and generating new ideas about how to spend the public's infrastructure funds.

Owen says, “Usually, in an alderman's office, people contact us to fix an isolated problem. Through this process, we discussed not just what needed to be fixed, but what we wanted our community to be.” He describes the important impacts of PB on his community: “We were able to engage an entire area of our ward that was previously disengaged from government and cynical about elected leaders. It is wonderful to see some residents go from cynicism to self-empowerment in the course of a few months.”

PBP's SUPPORTERS 2009-2014

Foundations

The California Endowment
Chicago Community Trust*
Robert Sterling Clark Foundation*
Crown Philanthropies*
Davenport Institute*
Democracy Fund*

Field Foundation*
Fund for Democratic Communities
Robert R. McCormick Foundation*
New World Foundation*
New York Community Trust*
New York Foundation*

New York Women's Foundation
North Star Fund
Open Society Foundations
Scherman Foundation*
Tawani Foundation*
Woods Fund*
*Funding received via partner organization

Government & Institutions

City of Boston, MA
Buffalo, NY Council Member LoCurto*
Hamilton, ON Councillor Farr

Missourians Organizing for Reform & Empowerment
City of San Francisco, CA*

Toronto Community Housing
City of Vallejo, CA

Individuals

Champions (\$500 and above)

Anonymous
John Appel
Emily Carroll & Joseph Grant

Gerard Delgripo
Audria Jennings
Robin Kantor

Josh Lerner
Michael Lerner
Fred Lunn

Joe Moore
Helen Rosenthal
Chris Wilson

Erik Olin Wright

Leaders (\$100-to \$500)

Melody Allen
Daniel Altschuler
Ben Antieau
David Antieau
Molly Biklen & Jason Parkin
Marti Brown
Ken Browne
Douglas Carolus
John De La Torre
Joanna Duarte
Don Engel
Nikolaus Euwer

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Participatory Budgeting Project
388 Atlantic Avenue, 2nd Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11217
Twitter: @PBProject
www.participatorybudgeting.org