



NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
PARTICIPATORY
BUDGETING   



THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
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NOTES:



ABOUT THIS RULEBOOK

This booklet was originally developed by the Citywide Steering Committee for Participatory Budgeting^{*1} in New York City (PBNYC) in July 2011 and is revised annually. While Participatory Budgeting is inspired by experiences elsewhere, the PBNYC Steering Committee created these guidelines and rules to reflect the unique needs, issues, and interests of New York City’s communities and the structure of the NYC process.

This rulebook remains a work in progress; together with the community, we will continue to develop and improve the process as it unfolds in future years.



INTRODUCTION BY THE COUNCIL MEMBERS

As members of the New York City Council who represent diverse districts, we are pleased to embark on the sixth cycle of a new form of democracy: Participatory Budgeting in New York City. Through this exciting initiative, **we are putting budget decisions directly in the hands of people those decisions impact the most: the residents of our districts.**

Cycle 3 of PBNYC was **transparency, grassroots democracy, local empowerment and inclusion*** at its best. Between September 2013 and April 2014, over 17,000 people across 10 City Council districts decided how to spend around \$14 million in public money, funding over 50 community projects.

¹ * Denotes terms that can be found in the Glossary at the end of the Rulebook

In Cycle 4 of PBNYC, 14 additional districts joined the process. Residents came together to exchange and debate ideas, teamed up to turn ideas into proposals, and then decided at the ballot box which projects would receive funding. **This process makes budgeting more transparent and accessible, and it opens up participation to people who have never been involved before.**

Participatory Budgeting requires elected officials to collaborate with constituents, and the Participatory Budgeting in New York City 2016-2017 Rulebook was developed through a similar democratic process. The work of a Citywide Steering Committee, representing a wide spectrum of New Yorkers with different backgrounds and ideologies, **this rulebook was put together through compromise and consensus.** We want to thank everyone who participated, especially Community Voices Heard and The Participatory Budgeting Project, for their thoughtful work, bringing us all together and structuring the decision-making process.

We are proud to present this rulebook to you and are excited to launch Cycle 6 of this innovative new democratic practice for NYC.

Let the participating begin!

NOTES:

*Equality

Being equal in rights, status, and opportunity.

*Equitable

The quality of being fair and impartial.

*Facilitator

Someone who helps a group of people understand their common objectives and achieve them, without taking a particular position in the discussion.

*Grassroots Democracy

Political processes where as much decision-making authority as practical is shifted to the organization's lowest geographic level of organization.

*Implementation

The process of putting a decision or plan into effect.

*Inclusion

The act of including something, someone, or a group of people; making sure that everyone's voice is heard.

*Infrastructure

The basic equipment and structures (such as roads, school buildings, parks) that are needed for a city to function.

*Marginalized Groups

A group that is treated as insignificant or peripheral.

*Participatory Budgeting (PB)

A democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget.

*Quorum

The number of members required to be present in order to make official decisions.

*Transparency

Openness and honesty about the way decisions are made.

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. **PB gives people real power to make real decisions over real money.** The process was first developed in Brazil in 1989, and there are now over 1,500 participatory budgets around the world, most at the municipal level.

WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING?



PBNYC enables New York City residents to propose and vote on projects to fund with Council Member discretionary funds. Discretionary funds are resources that the Council Members typically allocate* as they desire.

Residents in each participating district will decide how to spend at least \$1 million dollars of Council Member discretionary funds. Discretionary funds fall into two categories:

- **Capital* Funds:** These funds can be used for physical infrastructure* projects that benefit the public, cost at least \$35,000 and have a lifespan of at least 5 years. For example, local improvements to schools, parks, libraries, housing, and other public spaces.
- **Expense* Funds:** In some districts, residents may also decide how to allocate expense funds. Allocation of expense funds may go toward programs or services, or one-time expenditures on small infrastructure projects, provided by non-profit organizations or City agencies.

The Council Members submit the projects receiving the most votes to the City to be allocated in the budget at adoption in June and are then implemented* by City agencies.

Our Goals: Why PB?

We aim for PB to have the following impacts:

1. Open up Government

Allow residents a greater role in spending decisions, and inspire increased transparency in New York City government.

2. Expand Civic Engagement

Engage more people in politics and the community, especially young people, people of color, immigrants, low-income people, the formerly incarcerated, and other marginalized groups*.

3. Develop New Community Leaders

Build the skills, knowledge, and capacity of community members.

4. Build Community

Inspire people to more deeply engage in their communities, and to create new networks, organizations and community economic opportunity.

5. Make Public Spending More Equitable*

Generate spending decisions that are fairer, so resources go where they are needed most.

Our Principles: How We Work

We strive to implement PB according to the following principles:

1. Empowerment*

Enable local people to decide how PB works in their communities and across the city.

2. Transparency*

Share information and make decisions as openly as possible.

3. Inclusion*

Make special efforts to engage people who face obstacles to participating, are often excluded, or are disillusioned with politics.

4. Equality*

Ensure that every person can have equal power over public spending.

5. Community

Bring people together across traditional lines of division, to work together for the good of the whole community.

*GLOSSARY OF TERMS

*Allocate

To distribute funds for a specific reason.

*Capital Budget

Funds used in the City of New York to build or improve physical spaces like schools, streets, parks, libraries, community centers and other public spaces. Capital funds can only be used for physical infrastructure projects that will last at least five years, cost at least \$35,000 and benefit the public. For example, repairing a basketball court in a public park would be a capital project. However, repairing a basketball court in your backyard would not be a capital project because it would not benefit the public. Similarly, paying for staff and referees to run a basketball league would not be a capital project because it would not be an improvement to physical infrastructure.

*Budget Delegates

Volunteers who turn ideas into project proposals for the vote.

*City Agencies

A city regulated organization that implements city projects and upholds the standards and ordinances of their respective fields.

*Empowerment

Giving power or authority to a person or group.

*Expense Budget

The Expense Budget pays for the day-to-day operating costs of the city, such as the salaries of teachers and police officers, supplies, contracted services with non-profits and debt service. This is like a household's annual budget that includes food, clothing, and childcare.

ABOUT THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Steering Committee Governance

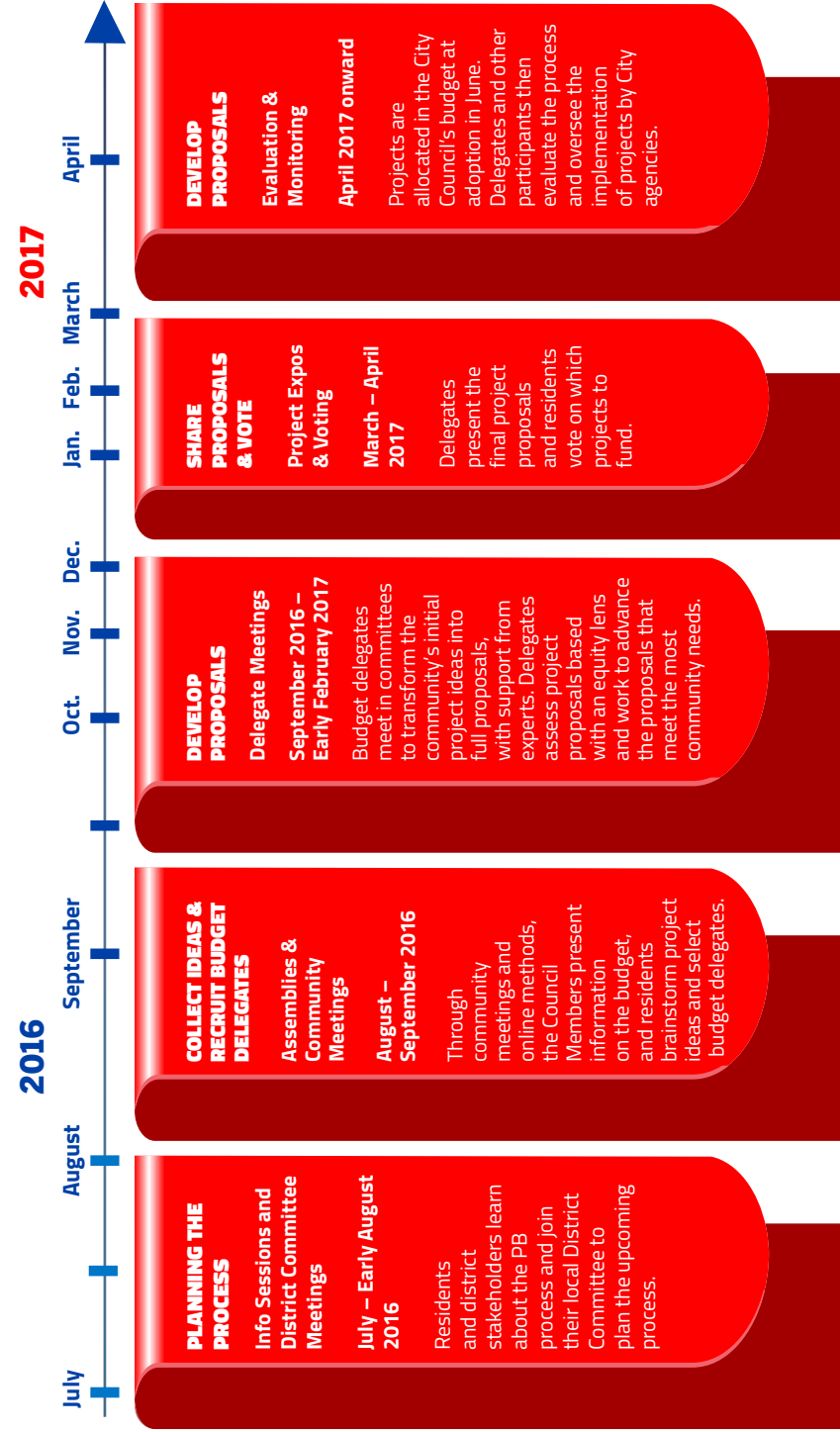
- The Steering Committee is convened and coordinated by the New York City Council Central Staff and co-chaired by two individuals who are a part of the Steering Committee member organizations
- Whenever possible, decisions are made by consensus at meetings
- For changes to or issues where there is no consensus, decisions are made by vote. Fifty percent quorum* is necessary for a vote to be valid, and a 66 percent majority of participating members is necessary for a vote to pass. For example, if there are 30 Steering Committee members, 16 need to be present in order to have a vote and 11 votes are needed in order for an item to pass. Voting may take place at Steering Committee meetings or online
- Each member organization, district committee member, budget delegate, facilitator, and Council Member office has one vote
- Working-groups are formed at various moments throughout the process to ensure that certain critical aspects of PBNYC are carried out efficient and effectively
- At the end of the PB cycle, candidates for the Steering Committee are recruited through an open call and are vetted by the Office of the General Counsel of the New York City Council.

Steering Committee Co-Chairs - 2016-2017

Catherine McBride, Red Hook Initiative
Aaron Jones, Community Voices Heard

TIMELINE: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN?

The PB process involves a series of meetings that feed into the City's annual budget cycle. The 2016-2017 cycle has five main steps, starting in July 2016 and continuing into 2017.



RULES: HOW DOES IT WORK?

Collect Ideas & Recruit Budget Delegates*: Neighborhood Assemblies, Informal Idea Collection and Online

- Each district will collect project ideas and recruit budget delegates through all of the following methods:
 - At least three public assemblies
 - At least four special meetings for underrepresented community members (e.g. youth, non-English speakers, seniors, public housing residents, etc.). Informal idea collection at public events and spaces where there is a high concentration of underrepresented community members. At these events, volunteers and district staff should explain the PB process to attendees and collect ideas and recruit delegates via paper forms or tablets.
- Anyone is welcome to propose project ideas.
- People can volunteer to serve as budget delegates if they:
 - Live in the district, work in the district, own a business in the district, attend school in the district, or are parents of children who attend school in the district, and
 - Are at least 14 years old. District Committees may decide to lower the minimum age of budget delegates.
- Districts should aspire to have a minimum of 60 delegates who should represent the district's demographics and geography.
- District offices must provide the following information at idea collection and events
 - PB Process including project eligibility
 - Previously funded projects (if applicable)
 - Status of previously funded projects (if applicable)

Develop Proposals: Budget Delegate Meetings

- All delegates must attend an orientation session and sign a delegate agreement.
- Each delegate committee will have one or two trained facilitators.
- At the delegate orientation sessions, each budget delegate will join a committee to discuss and develop project proposals for a certain issue area or demographic group.

Outreach Service Providers

- Conduct limited amount of outreach targeted at hard-to-reach populations in participating districts for vote and neighborhood assembly turnout, as coordinated by Central Staff, in consultation with the City Council districts.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee guides and supports the PB process across the participating districts. *See the end of the rulebook for more information about the Steering Committee and a list of members.*

- Design and guide PB process
- Attend PB events and meetings in participating districts during each stage of PB
- Provide specialized support for the PB process, including with research, organizing, media, online engagement, social media, policy & budgeting, data visualization, and design
- Promote the PB process through the press, social media, and other networks, using protocol agreed-upon by the Steering Committee
- Help raise support funding
- Create and distribute educational and promotional materials about PB
- Mobilize broad, inclusive, and proportional community participation
- Provide assistance at budget assemblies, delegate meetings, and/or budget delegate orientations
- Evaluate and revise the rules of the PB process
- Encourage PB for other districts and budgets
- Identify and recruit groups to support PB at the city & district level
- Ensure that the district-level PB processes are inclusive and consistent with the core goals of PBNYC
- District Committee representatives on the Steering Committee will also serve as the voice of the local processes

Work with Council Member Offices to get updates from City Agencies about the status of project implementation

Research & Evaluation Team

Researchers document and evaluate the PB process.

- Coordinate and monitor research and evaluation of PBNYC
- When possible, observe Assemblies, Expos, Voting Sites, and other meetings to collect data and conduct interviews
- Develop reports and materials to summarize the evaluation of PB and assess achievement of the goals of PBNYC

City Agencies*

- Provide budget delegates with relevant background information about their agency and about the types of projects that are feasible
- Assess feasibility of project proposals
- Provide cost estimates for project proposals
- Offer feedback on project proposals
- Work with budget delegates to make desired projects feasible within City guidelines
- Implement winning projects
- Provide updates on project implementation status

Community Voices Heard

- Participate in the Steering Committee
- Provide technical assistance on best practices for outreach and engagement of traditionally underrepresented groups through coaching and citywide trainings
- Lead efforts to expand and deepen PBNYC
- As funds permit & grants prioritize, recruit, train, and deploy “boost organizers” & canvassers for targeted outreach for neighborhood assemblies, project expo and vote
- Pilot delegate engagement & retention program
- Leverage foundation funding to support the PB process

The Participatory Budgeting Project

- Participate in the Steering Committee
- Available for central/district staff questions
- Conduct facilitation trainings for committee facilitators
- Conduct process preparation workshops for district staff
- Develop operating manual and training curricula for district staff in conjunction with Central Staff
- Lead efforts to expand and deepen PBNYC
- Leverage foundation funding to support the PB process

- Potential issue committees may include but are not limited to:
 1. Transportation
 2. Public Health
 3. Public Safety
 4. Education
 5. Parks, Recreation & Environment
 6. Art & Culture
 7. Housing
- If some delegates feel that they face major obstacles to participating fully in issue committees, they may discuss with the Council Member’s office whether to form a demographic committee. Demographic committees are meant to ensure maximum participation from people who might not otherwise participate, not to divide or separate sectors of the community. These committees will develop projects that specifically address the needs of their demographic group. Potential demographic committees may include but are not limited to:
 - Youth
 - Seniors
 - Committees for non-English speaking communities in the district
- In cases where there is a significant geographic divide in the district (such as a body of water), delegates may chose to form geography-based committees.
- Districts may establish a limit for how many project proposals each committee will submit for the public vote.
- When prioritizing projects, delegates will consider criteria that include need, impact and feasibility.
- Delegates will use an equity matrix to assess various projects and work to ensure that projects that meet the most need and advance equity get prioritized to be on the ballot.
- Each committee will send its final project proposals to the district’s Council Member at least one month before the public vote.
- Agencies will return feedback through a form procedure to allow City Council Central Staff to oversee process.
- Delegates will adhere to guidelines for fair campaigning as outlined by the Steering Committee.

Project Expos

- At the Project Expos, budget delegates will present their project proposals to the community through a science fair format.
- Each district will hold at least one Project Expo and post project proposals online.
- Project Expos may be combined with the launch of the voting period.

Voting for Projects

- People can vote for projects if they live in the district and are at least 14 years old.
- Anyone who serves as a budget delegate will be eligible to vote if they live in a participating Council district, regardless of age.
- Districts may decide to lower the voting age to allow people under the age of 14 to vote.
- At the time of voting, voters must present proof that they satisfy the eligibility requirements. Acceptable IDs are listed on the next page.
- Each voter may cast five votes, one vote per project.
- Voting Locations:
 - o Each district will have at least six advertised voting locations, including:
 - At least two large voting events;
 - At least four mobile voting events in places with a high concentration of underrepresented community members, (eg. at senior centers, during lunch at schools in the district, etc.).
 - “Pop-Up” voting can also be held at subway stations and in high traffic areas to target hard to reach populations.
 - o Each district will also offer weekday voting in the Council Member office.
 - o Each district will offer absentee ballots to handicapped, out of town or limited mobility voters. Ballots can be mailed to district residents who request an absentee ballot. These ballots must be numbered and voter information must be tracked by the Council office to avoid duplicate voting. Ballots can be returned to the district office in person or by mail, and must be received by the end of vote week.
- “The aspiration is to provide full translation in as many languages as are represented in the district. At a minimum, the three languages most represented in the district will be translated. The Steering Committee will pursue additional resources for translation to support further translation. Each voter can only cast one ballot per cycle. To ensure the integrity of the vote, all voting sites will be administered by poll workers that have completed a PBNYC vote training, and all Council Member offices will use a standardized system of voter and ballot tracking.
- Budget delegates can manage vote sites, but they must be trained on the campaigning guidelines. A copy of the campaigning guidelines must also be available at each of the poll sites.
- If there is a tie for the last bit of funding, the Council Member will decide how to resolve the tie. Options may include attempting to draw on additional funds to implement both proposals or funding the cheaper of the tied projects.
- If the last bit of available funds does not cover the cost of the next highest vote-getting project, the Council Member will try to find additional funds to implement the project. If this is not possible, funds will be allocated to the unfunded project with the next most votes.

- Offer feedback and technical assistance on project proposals, presentations, and ballot text
- Serve as a liaison between budget delegates and city agencies
- Determine eligibility of projects in collaboration with the city agencies
- Facilitate and oversee online participation by residents
- Coordinate outreach to city-wide and local media
- Serve as spokespeople for city-wide and local media
- Coordinate the public vote, in collaboration with the District Committee
- Oversee any changes to approved projects, with the District Committee
- Deliver regular updates to budget delegates and the public during all stages of the PB process
- Work with the Central Office to ensure that winning projects are moving forward and provide regular updates to district residents.

New York City Council Central Staff

- Coordinate central staff involvement and support district staff on as-needed basis
- Work with agencies to plan and hold presentations for budget delegates
- Supervise PB Fellows placed in participating districts
- Facilitate Council Coordinating Committee meetings of district staff
- Track district processes status
- Identify, recruit and deploy volunteers citywide for the vote
- Work with the Participatory Budgeting Project to develop operating manual and training curricula
- Create template work plan for district offices
- Convene Steering & Governmental Coordinating Committees
- Assist with vote count
- Conduct “train the trainer” sessions on budget eligibility, including capital and expense budgets.
- Connect staff to relevant capital budget staff at agencies
- Help cost out complex projects
- Create & implement strategic press plan
- Create and maintain PB page on official Council website
- Promote various events
- Contact for citywide & local media
- Design and printing of materials
- Provide limited technology & translation assistance
- Provide information on the state of previously funded projects annually on the PB website, to be updated as changes occur
- Assist with the agency feedback process by providing oversight into agency’s submissions when needed

- Determine the number of neighborhood assemblies, and help plan and carry out the assemblies
- Arrange food, childcare, and interpretation for assemblies and meetings
- Recruit volunteers for outreach, assemblies, and the vote
- Distribute educational and promotional materials about the PB process
- Develop and execute outreach plans to mobilize broad, inclusive, and proportional community participation
- Facilitate budget assemblies and meetings
- Provide guidance and background information to delegates
- Serve as spokespeople for city-wide and local media, when called upon
- With the Council Member staff, coordinate voting events
- Monitor project implementation
- Oversee any necessary changes to approved projects, with the Council Member offices
- Communicate with delegates and residents about progress on projects
- Evaluate and revise the rules of the PB process
- Provide orientation to new District Committee members
- Provide the following information at events:
 1. PB Process including project eligibility
 2. Previously funded projects (if applicable)
 3. Status of previously funded projects (if applicable)

Council Member Offices

- Allow residents of each district to decide how to spend at least \$1 million of City FY 2016 discretionary funds, and deliver final budget priorities to the City
- Designate a staff person who commits at least 50 percent of their time per year to PB, to attend regular coordinating meetings convened by the Central Staff and to coordinate PB in the district, in collaboration with the District Committee
- Keep website up-to-date with meetings and information about the PB process
- Participate in the Steering Committee and the local District Committee, and assist with their responsibilities
- Work with the City Council Central Office and District Committee to recruit and train volunteers and interns
- Work with the District Committee to coordinate and facilitate outreach to organizations, individuals, and special constituencies
- Provide information on the budget funds and past spending
- Secure spaces – in collaboration with the District Committee and Delegate Committee Facilitators – for assemblies, meetings and voting events, in accessible and ADA-compliant locations whenever possible
- Provide cost estimates for project proposals

Outreach & Engagement

- Outreach plans should be developed for the Neighborhood Assemblies, the Project Expo(s), and the Vote. They should include both broad-based outreach to reach all parts of the district, and targeted outreach to ensure to make special efforts to engage populations traditionally disenfranchised.
- Fliers should be translated into the various primary languages in the district.
- Leading up to the Assemblies and the Vote, districts should host at least three group outreach days (street/subway/door) and at least two group phone banks.
- All public events should be publicized at least two weeks in advance, online and through publicly displayed posters and fliers.
- District offices will recruit community organizations and coordinate with them for outreach for events.
- Outreach should include social media and traditional press, including local ethnic media outlets.
- District offices should utilize their newsletter and/or send a mailer to constituents.
- Data (contact information) should be tracked and managed for continued follow up communications and announcements.

Evaluation, Implementation & Monitoring

- After the vote, each district will hold at least one evaluation meeting.
- In each district, the District Committee will monitor the implementation of projects and address any problems that arise.
- The City Council will designate a Monitoring Committee to oversee the progress of winning projects, provide regular updates to the districts, and address issues that arise during implementation.

Acceptable IDs for Voter Eligibility

Voters must prove that they live in the district and are 14 years or older.

In order to facilitate broad participation, voters may present a wide array of proofs of ID, including but not limited to one or more of those below:

- A document with name and current address from a local, state, or U.S. government agency such as a state driver's license or non-driver ID, consular ID, passport, EBT card, military ID card;
- Voter registration card;
- Municipal ID;
- Utility, medical, credit card bill with name and current address;
- Current lease;
- Paycheck or paycheck stub from an employer or a W-2 statement;
- Bank statement or bank-issued credit card statement;

- Student ID;
- Employee ID;
- Permanent Resident Card (Green Card) or other Immigration Documentation;
- Residency Letter or Identification issued by a homeless shelter, halfway house, etc;
- Passport or other ID issued by a foreign government;
- Social Security Card or Social Security benefit statements or check;
- Employment Authorization Document;
- Medicare or other insurance document with address;
- Tax forms;
- School records (or naming the parents of children attending school and the parents' address);
- Title to any property (automobiles, house, etc.) with address;
- Birth or marriage certificate;
- Union Membership Card.

Eligible voters may sign an affidavit confirming their age and residency in the district if they are unable to present the required forms of ID.



There is a role for everyone in Participatory Budgeting, but different people have different responsibilities, based on their stake in the community and their time commitment to the process. We encourage everyone to both participate and encourage others to participate.

Community Members

Anyone can participate, even if they only come to one meeting or only vote.

- Identify local problems and needs
- Propose project ideas
- Provide input and feedback on project proposals
- Monitor and provide input on the implementation of projects
- Provide feedback for the PB evaluation
- Volunteer to be budget delegates, if they are at least 14 years old and live in the district, work in the district, own a business in the district, attend school in the district, or are parents of children who attend school in the district

- Vote on project proposals, if they are at least 14 years old and live in the district

Budget Delegates*

Budget delegates do the extra work necessary to turn ideas into real projects.

- Research local problems, needs, and projects
- Agree to put the needs of the community above their personal interests
- Learn about the budget funds and the budget process
- Discuss and prioritize project ideas based the criteria of need, impact and feasibility
- Develop full project proposals and posters, with assistance from experts
- Update residents on project proposals and solicit feedback
- Serve as spokespeople for city-wide and local media, when called upon
- Monitor and provide input on the implementation of projects
- Evaluate the PB process
- Communicate delegate concerns and ideas to the District Committee and Steering Committee

Facilitators*

Facilitators help residents participate effectively in neighborhood assemblies and budget delegate meetings. They are neutral parties that do not advocate for particular projects.

- Attend at least one facilitator training
- Facilitate group discussions and meetings, and ensure that all participants are able to contribute
- Serve as the main point of contact between Council Member staff and delegates, helping to coordinate communication and resolve conflicts
- Remain neutral throughout the process, but work to ensure that the principles of PBNYC are adhered to and make efforts to ensure that the delegate committees advance equity.
- Connect delegates with information and resources
- Strive to keep delegates engaged throughout the entire process
- Ensure that notes are taken at meetings and distributed afterward
- Support delegates with the tools they need to research, assess and develop proposals, based on criteria that include feasibility, need and impact

District Committees

Each participating Council Member convenes a District Committee that meets regularly to provide oversight and assist with planning throughout the process. The district committee is composed of local organizations, institutions, community leaders, and former budget delegates, to manage PB locally. The make-up of the District Committee should be representative of the entire district, both geographically and demographically.