



PARTICIPATORY  
BUDGETING PROJECT

# IMPACT REPORT

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**2019**





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*Image credit - cover photo and background on pages 3-4:  
Alison Boulier, City of Vancouver Participatory Budgeting Process*

## NOTE FROM OUR ED

Dear Community,

Great pride and humility bubble up inside me as I write this note in my new role as Executive Director of the Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP). 2019 marked a monumental year for PBP. Organizationally, we turned 10 years old and successfully transitioned our leadership to a national Black-led organization committed to equity.

I am filled with deep gratitude for the support thus far for this shift and the work that I know is to come to grow our work while we dismantle oppressive systems. It will be hard, and it will require us to evaluate and re-evaluate how we show up in our work to advance equity across the country.

Participatory budgeting (PB) in North America is in a vastly different place than it was just one decade ago. In the last year alone, we launched a national campaign called Democracy Beyond Elections to expand participatory democracy, disseminated new digital PB tools to hundreds of policymakers and community leaders, and empowered young leaders across the country to shape their reality by launching PB in schools in over a dozen cities and towns.

**As we plan for the next iteration of our work, building community control over public budgets has never felt more urgent.** A global pandemic coupled with nationwide movement demanding justice for Black lives has shed a new light on a real reality: our most impacted communities are under-resourced and overpoliced. People across the country are leaning into conversations and demands in ways that will have lasting implications for decades to come.



***“Reimagining what’s possible is one important step to moving to real community control.”***

**This moment marks a turning point for our country and PBP to recommit to who and what we stand for.** We commit to demanding real community power over the budgets, policies, and decisions that impact their lives.

We commit to being in service of our partners on the ground by creating explicit pathways to learn and co-craft our strategies alongside them.

We commit to PB as a tool to reach communities most impacted by the issues to decide where resources should go, identify solutions, and implement change.

Reimagining what’s possible is one important step to moving to real community control - and it won’t be easy. It will require all of us to play our role. We thank our hardworking staff, board members, donors, and supporters like you who have consistently shown up for us over the years.

We can’t wait to continue building with you all.  
Elevate,

**SHARI DAVIS**  
Executive Director

## OUR MISSION

We empower people to decide together how to spend public money. We create and support participatory budgeting (PB) processes that deepen democracy, build stronger communities, and make public budgets more equitable and effective.

## OUR WORK



### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

We provide direct support to PB processes in order to grow and improve PB. We train governments, schools, organizations, and residents, empowering them to implement high-impact processes.



### PARTICIPATION LAB

We develop and test innovative strategies, design solutions, and civic engagement tools that make PB easier and more effective.



### NETWORK BUILDING

We build relationships with government officials and staff, organizers, and researchers to increase demand and support for PB.

**\$386M**

in public funding  
allocated through PB

**739K**

PB participants  
across the US &  
Canada.

**800+**

Community PB  
processes

*Empowering communities with*

*Real Money.  
Real Power.*





## OUR TEAM



**SHARI DAVIS**  
Executive Director



**MELISSA APPLETON**  
Program Director



**KRISTINA BANKS**  
Finance & Operations Director



**ELIZABETH CREWS**  
Director, Democracy Beyond Elections



**KRISTANIA DE LEON**  
Network Building Manager



**INGRID HAFTEL**  
Manager, Democracy Beyond Elections



**KIM IZAR**  
Development Manager



**ANTONNET JOHNSON**  
(Mellon/ACLS Public Fellow),  
Participation Design Strategist



**RAHEL MEKDIM TEKA**  
Communications Manager



**LOREN PEABODY**  
Research Fellow

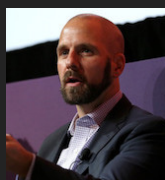


**JULIA SILLEN**  
Operations Coordinator

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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**CYNDI TERCERO  
-SANDOVAL**  
Phoenix Union High School  
District | Phoenix



## EXPANDING PUBLIC POWER OVER LARGER BUDGETS AND DECISIONS

### *Impact & Outcomes*

We supported hundreds of community leaders and legislators to re-imagine what democracy could look like in 2019.

We formally launched Democracy Beyond Elections, a national campaign to expand participatory democracy in the United States, with over 50 organizations. We identified 38 new partner sites ready to grow PB in their communities through a national expression of interest RFP. We supported groundbreaking PB pilots, including the largest per capita PB process in North America in Atlanta.

Most importantly, we focused heavily on listening and responding to what our partners on the ground need to serve their local stakeholders and historically underrepresented community members. We heard that more and more grassroots coalitions are pressuring their elected officials to implement PB in their city budgets, that PB can advance key issues affordable housing, streets & transportation and climate resilience, and that there is an urgent need to re-imagine community safety.



**173 PB processes launched** or expanded in North America in 2019.



**Over \$55 million allocated** in 2019 to community-driven solutions through PB.



**150 policymakers, community leaders, and funders** involved in developing our Democracy Beyond Elections policy platform that centers equity and real community power.



*Community leaders gather at the Democracy Beyond Elections strategy convening on June 2019.*



## SPREADING PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN SCHOOLS

### *Impact & Outcomes*

Schools, school districts, and colleges around the world are using PB to engage students, parents, educators, and staff in deciding how to spend a part of the school budget. PB develops student leadership, supports student and school success, lifts up student and family voice, and involves the full school community in meaningful civic experiences.

From students using PB and participatory policy-making to re-imagine safety in Brooklyn high schools to launching PB in rural schools in Merced, California, we saw PB as a tool to center the voices of youth leaders across the U.S. PB in schools is a tangible solution that shifts the narrative around youth as future leaders towards recognizing them as leaders now.



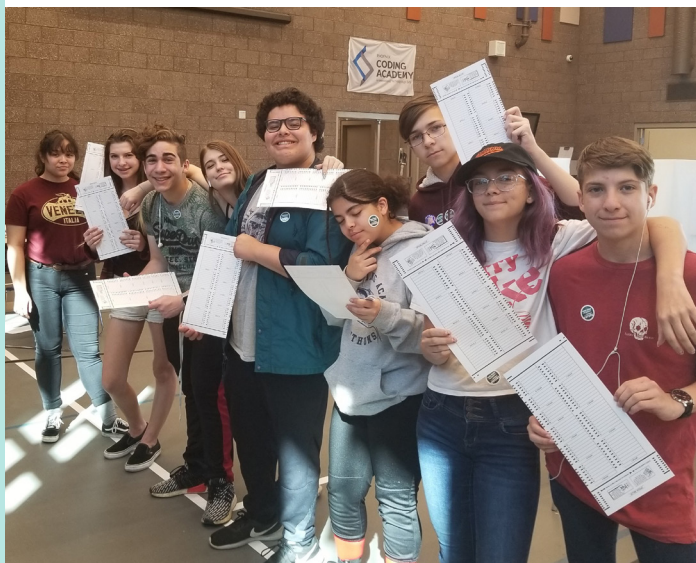
**147 public schools** across NYC launched PB through the Department of Education's Civics for All initiative.



**1,488 students** decided on how to make Brooklyn schools safer through "Safe Schools", our second year of a participatory budgeting and policy-making initiative through our partnership with Brooklyn Borough President, Eric Adams.



**Schools launched or expanded** PB in Schenectady NY, Merced CA, Central Falls RI, St. Louis MO, Chicago IL, Afton NY, Newburg NY, Phoenix AZ, Mesa AZ, Chandler AZ, Sunnyside AZ, and New York City NY, as well as the City University of New York, University of Manitoba, University of Connecticut Hartford, and Paolo Alto Community College.



*Phoenix Union High School District students preparing to submit their PB ballots.*



## IMPROVING THE DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY OF PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING AND DEMOCRACY

### *Impact & Outcomes*

To acknowledge the movement around PB and key issues like climate resilience and equity, we built new tools to better address these challenges. This includes PBcan.org, an interactive website to help imagine how PB can address concerns including affordable housing, transportation, climate resilience, and equity.

We've also been hard at work creating the first online course for educators on how to plan and run a successful PB process in their schools, rooted in principles of participatory

democracy and youth leadership. We anticipate offering the course, *Community Leadership through Civics in Action: Bringing Participatory Budgeting to Your School*, starting in summer 2020 and can't wait to share it widely with educators, school administrators, and others.

Stay tuned for a number of other materials that have been in the works and are slated for 2020 release, including a new resource on PB and equity, an evaluation toolkit for PB in schools, and a guide for PB in membership organizations.



**Counted over 181,800 PB voters** from schools, districts, cities, and organizations across North America.



**Developed a robust curriculum** for our online PB course and began testing our content with a focus group of educators.

Q ISSUES GET RESOURCES ABOUT



### PB can:

ADDRESS ISSUES THAT MATTER MOST TO YOUR COMMUNITY

What is Participatory Budgeting (PB)?

What kind of budgets are we talking about?

EXPLORE HOW PB CAN HELP:

Support  
Affordable  
Homes



Improve  
Streets &  
Transportation



Strengthen  
Climate  
Resilience



Deepen  
Equity &  
Inclusion



Homepage of PBP's new interactive tool, PBcan.org





## BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATION THAT MODELS OUR VALUES

### *Impact & Outcomes*

We are committed to creating an equitable workplace, in which courageous conversations about power, privilege, risk, and identity have a meaningful impact on PBP practices, including decision-making. In 2019, we took measurable steps towards modelling our values internally.

This looked like establishing an internal equity committee, composed of staff from different cultural and social identities, investing in our professional development to attend new management courses, and preparing our staff and board for an executive leadership transition.



**60% of our staff** identify as women of color



**Invested in our staff** by raising all staff salaries to meet our current pay scale



**PBP's Executive Director, Shari Davis, was awarded an Obama Fellowship** in 2019, due to the innovation and impact of PBP's work.



*PBP staff and board members gather in upstate New York for the annual fall planning retreat on December 2019.*



*You get to put that power of choice into the hands of the student, who gets to choose where the money goes. This is what WE want, not what other people are choosing for us.*

– Monica, Gotham Academy student

Image: Brooklyn Borough President, Eric Adams with youth PB voters

***Students decided 10 times more funding than in any other school participatory budgeting (PB) process.***

## PB SPOTLIGHT

### *Piloting Youth-Led PB to Improve School Safety*

Young people need safer and more supportive schools. This past spring, we partnered with the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice and Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams to engage students at two Brooklyn high school campuses in deciding how to spend over \$1 million and new policies to make their schools safer and more supportive. That's 10x more funding than in any other schools PB process!

1,488 students crafted spending and policy proposals to be implemented by the school administration. They then voted on the proposals. Funded projects included launching a campus safety council, investing in de-stressor activities, and bathroom renovations.

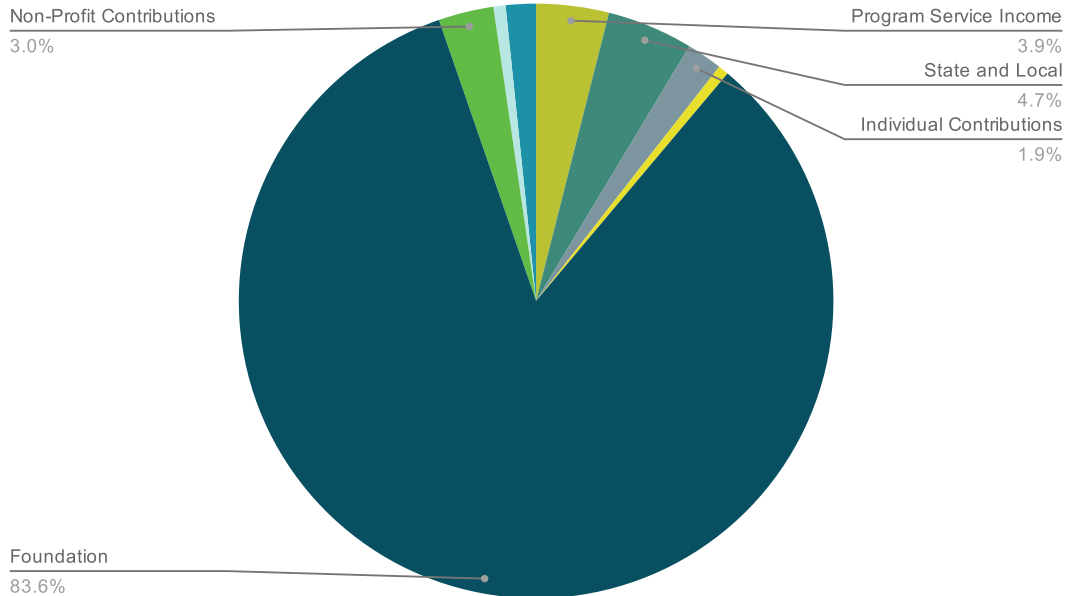
Following the process, over 400 students signed up for the campus council to implement their school projects and 95% of voters said the winning projects would lead to safer and more supportive schools.

# FINANCIAL REPORT

Jan 1, 2019 - Dec 31, 2019\*

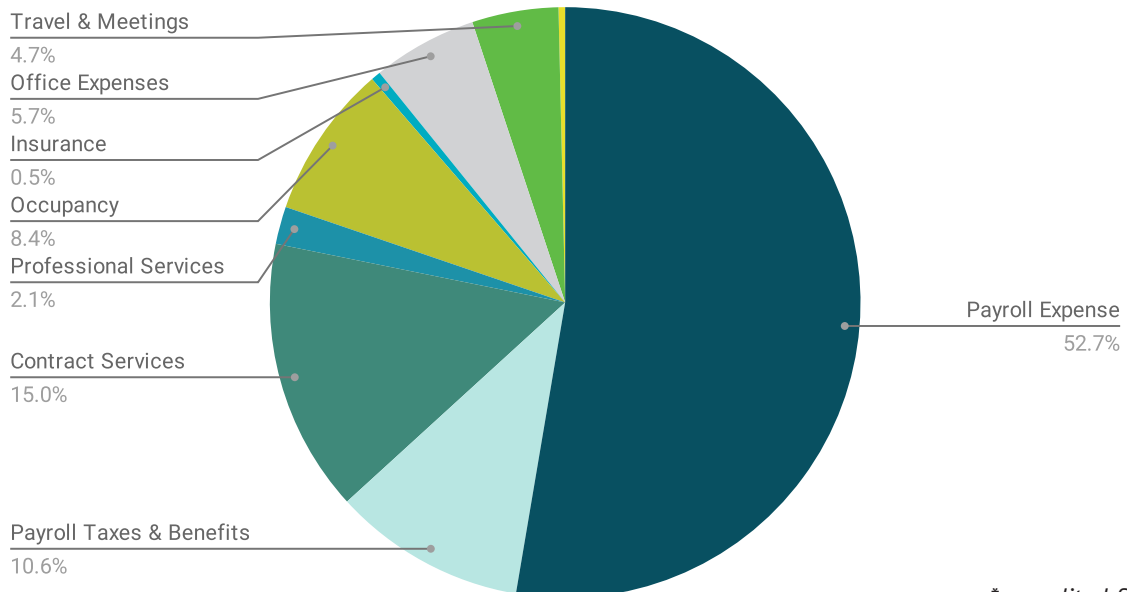
## Income

Income: \$1,410,449



## Expenses

Expenses: \$1,155,494



\*unaudited financials

# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS!

## Partners

Arts & Democracy  
 Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams  
 Building Healthy Communities Merced  
 Building Stronger Families Providence  
 Center for Court Innovation  
 Center for Popular Democracy  
 Center for the Future of Arizona  
 City of Eau Claire WI  
 City of Vancouver BC  
 NYC Civic Engagement Commission PB Advisory Committee  
 Civic Hall  
 Coro NY Leadership Center  
 Creative New Jersey  
 Drug Policy Alliance  
 Generation Citizen  
 Ideas42 NYC Behavioral Design Center  
 Jefferson Center  
 Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice  
 Kounkuey Design Initiative  
 Long Beach Forward  
 New Jersey Policy Perspective  
 New York City Council  
 NYC Department of Education Civics for All  
 New York State Education Department Office of Accountability  
 NYC Civic Engagement Commission  
 NYC Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice  
 NeighborhoodStat  
 PBNYC Citywide Committee  
 People's Action  
 Sustainable Jersey  
 TakeRoot Justice  
 The Nonprofit Partnership  
 Theatre of the Oppressed NYC

## Funders

American Council of Learned Societies  
 Brooklyn Community Foundation  
 Butler Family Fund  
 Democracy Fund  
 Ford Foundation  
 Mertz Gilmore Foundation  
 New York Community Trust  
 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
 Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society  
 TD Charitable Foundation  
 The California Endowment  
 The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation  
 The James Irvine Foundation  
 JPB Foundation

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 Erin Sanborn  
 Daniel Schugurensky | Arizona State University  
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 David Vlahov | Yale University  
 Ny Whitaker | Events by Ny  
 Sondra Youdelman | People's Action





*Real Money. Real Power.*

*Join us.*

## LOOKING FORWARD

*2020 is a monumental year for participatory budgeting. We are looking forward to building this next phase of our journey.*



**Build and launch new participatory pilots** that shift policies and spending towards communities most at need.



**Deepen partnerships with grassroots organizers and elected officials** by disseminating tools to expand PB in cities and towns across the US.



**Continue executing our two-year strategic plan** that prioritizes building an organization centered in equity and sustainability.

***Follow our work!***



ParticipatoryBudgetingProject



pbproject






## PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROJECT

New York | 540 President St, 1st Floor | Brooklyn, NY 11215

Oakland | 344 20th Street | Oakland, CA 94612

[info@participatorybudgeting.org](mailto:info@participatorybudgeting.org)

347-652-1478

 @PBProject  ParticipatoryBudgetingProject  pbproject