Running a PB Process From Start to Finish

A How-To Manual

Design the Process

Brainstorm Ideas

Fund Winning Projects

Cast a Vote

Develop Proposals

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROJECT
Please do not share this manual with any other bodies outside of staff members and volunteers helping your team implement PB. If you would like to adapt any of the tools and guides linked in this manual, please make a copy of them first. When providing any adapted tools or guides in this manual to your PB volunteers or community, please include attribution to the Participatory Budgeting Project.
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Introduction

Who & What is this Manual for?

Welcome! You’re part of a network of folks across the US and Canada doing participatory budgeting (PB) and engaging your community in real decision-making! This manual is for anyone implementing PB in their community, school, government agency, or organization. For those new to PB, it’s a practical, step-by-step guide on how to establish and manage a participatory budgeting process. People who have already coordinated a PB process may use this guide as a way to centralize all the materials needed and as a reminder of best practices. As you consider ways to strengthen and expand PB in your area or other areas, refer to the Organizing Toolkit for tips on building public support.

In the first part of this manual, you will find definitions, a timeline, critical principles, necessary conditions, and key players in PB and their roles. After the introduction, the manual is organized into 6 core sections describing what to expect during the different phases PB—these sections include detailed explanations of the goals, best practices, check-lists of tasks, and materials for each stage of the process. The next few sections in the manual discuss topics and resources that are relevant throughout all the phases of the PB process, such as arts integration and media outreach. In the end of the manual, you’ll find a discussion of common challenges of PB, Frequently Asked Questions, and a glossary of common PB terms.
This manual is meant to be modular, and can be read in any order. Before jumping in, we recommend checking out the Introduction, Phase 1 on designing the process, and the sections towards the end that apply across all phases of PB. As we describe the first four phases of PB in this manual, we’ll provide you a link to a corresponding technology guide, like this one: Key Technologies for Designing PB: From comprehensive platforms to project management tools. The chapters conclude with Resources sections containing relevant samples and template materials.

What is PB?

Participatory Budgeting is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget. It is a way to manage public money that enables community members to collaborate in making budget decisions that affect their everyday lives.

While every PB process is different, most follow a similar structure: a Steering Committee made of community volunteers and other stakeholders develops the rules that will guide the process, residents brainstorm spending ideas, volunteer Budget Delegates develop proposals based on these ideas, residents vote on proposals, and the top projects are implemented.

Different Attributes

Though most PB processes follow this basic structure, they may have different goals and rules, making each unique. For example, the City
of Boston runs a PB process specifically for young people that works to build youth leadership skills and develop lifelong civic engagement practices. In the PB process for residents at Toronto Community Housing Corporation, the public housing agency in Toronto, Canada, Budget Delegates both develop proposals and vote on behalf of their building’s tenants.

Now that we have described PB, the next section will cover a typical PB timeline along with the recommended time frames for each phase.
Suggested Timeline

It is recommended that a PB cycle take about 12 months to complete, including the time it takes to design the process.

PB process timelines vary. Your own timeline will depend on the budget cycle and when decisions need to be made for the money to be spent, along with community availability and other implementation decisions. And, your first year will likely take a few months longer because of the time it takes to assemble a Steering Committee and design the whole process. Whatever the case, it is important to budget enough time for each phase, as real community participation will depend on it.

Not allocating enough time for each phase will affect the community’s ability to participate, as well as the quality of proposals. If few community members participate, and Budget Delegates feel that they were not able to fulfill their commitments within the given time frame, they may not wish to participate in future cycles. This outcome could then affect political support for the process. The following timeline illustrates the number of months that should be allocated for each phase in order to have a successful PB process.
### Sample Timeline

The following is a timeline with sample months and due-dates. When planning your own timeline, consider holiday breaks, city budget seasons, and other factors that would affect participation.

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| June-August  | **Designing & Rulebook Development**: call for Steering Committee members is shared widely. Once the Steering Committee is formed they decide on the rules that will guide the process. Evaluation partner is chosen.  
**Info sessions and idea collection planning begins.** |
| August-Early October | **Idea Collection**: community residents come together at public meetings and online to brainstorm ideas. |
| October-February | **Proposal Development**: with the help of Facilitators, community data and city agencies, committees of Budget Delegates examine submitted ideas, determine the greatest community needs, and develop project proposals.  
**Deadline**: first draft of proposals are submitted to city agencies by December |
| February-April | **Finalize Proposals**: Budget Delegates complete proposals using agency feedback and everyone prepares for the vote.  
**Vote**: residents vote on the projects that will be funded. |
| May onward   | **Process Evaluation**: Participants and implementers reflect on the process and discuss what can be improved in the next cycle; evaluators analyze data and share report.  
**Implementation**: winning projects are built/purchased. |
Critical Principles

These are the core values of PB that make it an impactful process.

Diversity of Participants
Since different residents have various needs and ideas, the process should work to engage all of these diverse perspectives while still giving priority to those that are typically excluded or dismissed.

Diversity includes: age, racial background, immigrant status, former incarceration, stakeholdership other than residency (parent of child who goes to school, business owner), etc.

Direct Involvement
All residents should have the opportunity to be directly involved in making budgeting decisions.

Empowerment
We want to ensure those who have a stake in the decision get a say in the decision.

Accessibility
All stakeholders should be able to easily access every phase. Accessibility includes: location and timing of meetings, removing language barriers, and alternatives to displaying information online.

Transparency
Information about the process and results should be readily available and clear to all stakeholders.

Shared Responsibility
The process should build a common purpose and commitment between all stakeholders.
Necessary Conditions

To ensure the PB process is impactful, those implementing PB should be committed to ensuring the following conditions are present:

**Institutional Support & Capacity**
People or institutions who control the budget need to agree to let the public decide how all or part of the budget will be spent. Additionally, there should be sufficient funding to support resources and staffing in each phase of the process.

**Community Partnership & Engagement**
Community organizations need to be enlisted to facilitate outreach and to push the process forward. The PB process also requires commitment, time, and energy from residents.

**Commitment to Community-Driven Process and Community Leadership**
To ensure community ownership, transparency, and participation, community representatives should set the rules at the start of the process in coordination with city officials. The responsibilities of all parties should also be clearly defined. The rules should make it clear that the process will be community-driven. As such, city officials should accept the final outcomes decided on by the community.

**Commitment to Equity**
Areas with greater need should have a higher priority for funding to address those needs. There are tools and resources given to budget delegates to help them prioritize community needs. PB implementers should train committee facilitators to help Budget Delegates use a process that will lead to equitable outcomes.
Key Players & Their Roles

Key players needed to support a successful PB process

**Community Members**

Community members can be involved in the process to varying degrees, depending on their availability. Basic involvement includes submitting ideas and voting on final proposals, but it’s essential to engage community members in other ways as well. If they have more time, they can serve as members of the Steering Committee, as Budget Delegates, or as Facilitators.

**Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee is a group of community members and organizations who work in collaboration with government and decision-makers to decide on the rules that will guide the PB process. They also provide oversight to ensure the process continues to meet its goals. This starts off with a workshop referred to as “Writing the Rules,” which takes place before idea collection begins. The Steering Committee is one of the most essential driving forces in any PB process.

**District Committee**

Some processes may take place within a district(s) (as opposed to being city-wide), and will therefore need District Committees in addition to a city-wide Steering Committee to help manage the process locally. Like a Steering Committee, District Committees are comprised of local organizations and community leaders. In cases where districts opt into the process and there is a city-wide Steering Committee establishing the general rules of the process, District Committees make decisions specific to their district, such as designating voting locations and identifying community participation goals and priorities. They help provide local information that Steering Committees may not be able to provide.

**Budget Delegates**

Budget Delegates are volunteers from the community who research proposals submitted by community members during idea collection. Working in collaboration with city staff and agency representatives, they prioritize and develop projects. Feasible projects that best meet the needs of the community and support equity are submitted for a community vote.
**Facilitators**
Facilitators create safe spaces within idea collection events and Budget Delegate meetings, allowing community members to participate effectively. Facilitators play a key role in ensuring Budget Delegates stay on track to meet process deadlines and make decisions within the framework established by the Steering Committee.

**Canvassers/Outreach Workers**
Canvassers are volunteers who reach out to community members and encourage them to come to assembly meetings and vote on project proposals. Canvassers should have a commitment to diversity, and it may be helpful for them to have ties to members from underrepresented communities to ensure their participation.

**City Staff**
City staff members oversee and implement PB in city processes. These staff members also provide information to participants and the public to make sure everyone has the information they need to be involved. As implementers, they coordinate idea collection assemblies, sort ideas collected into thematic committees, coordinate agency briefings, vet project proposals, and organize voting events.

**City Agencies**
Relevant city agencies will vet proposals that Budget Delegates submit before they go to the ballot for a vote in order to ensure they meet PB eligibility criteria and are feasible. City agencies also provide cost estimates for proposals.

**Community-Based Organizations and Nonprofits**
Nonprofits and community based organizations can provide additional support for PB processes related to their area of expertise. Examples include organizing/outreach, data provision during the proposal development phase, and arts integration during voting events. Most importantly, implementers should engage these organizations who have existing community ties, to help with outreach and mobilize the community. These organizations should also serve in the Steering Committee.

**Evaluators**
Local Evaluators collect and proved crucial feedback on the Process.
Phase 1: Designing & Rulebook Development

Setting the Foundation for a Successful Process

- **Design the Process**: 3 months
- **Brainstorm Ideas**: 3 months
- **Develop Proposals**: 5-6 months
- **Plan the Vote & Vote**: 2-3 months
- **Fund Winning Projects & Evaluate the Process**
Goals

No process can run smoothly without a carefully implemented designing phase. Allotting enough time for planning (about 3 months) will help implementers and participants meet deadlines and ensure there is enough time to conduct the tasks needed to have an inclusive process. Below are a few preliminary goals to successfully lay the foundation for PB in your community.

- **Assemble an oversight team** who will help carry the work forward.

- **Develop a preliminary timeline and workplan** for each stage of the process. It should allow enough time to meet deadlines and conduct careful outreach. The timeline should be developed by the staff implementing PB, taking the Steering Committee’s suggestions into account.

- **Assemble a Steering Committee** that is representative of the community & includes members from underserved areas.

- **Communicate decision-making roles** to the Steering Committee & public.
Designing

Executing an effective designing phase in PB involves setting up the systems to help ensure that the implementation of each stage of the process will run smoothly both *internally* and *externally*.

**Remember to...**

- **Secure *enough* staff to carry this work forward.** We recommend at least one full-time implementer, a canvasser/outreach coordinator, and support from your Communications office (if available) to help with PB advertising.

- **Put out a call for Steering Committee members** 1-2 months before Writing the Rules takes place. Send the posting to local organizations and city departments who work with underserved populations to identify key individuals who can represent these voices. *Remember that it is important to include members from underrepresented communities not only in idea submission and the vote, but also in places where they have decision-making powers, such as the Steering Committee.*

- **Identify and set-up communications infrastructure.** Will you use the city website & social media, or launch your own? Begin thinking about branding (every website & social media account needs a catchy logo and consistent messaging)!

- **Identify a research and evaluation partner** now so they are available to begin their research as early as the first Steering Committee meetings. Work with them to generate a Research Partnership and Data Sharing Agreement. See more about Evaluation in the Phase 5 section.

- **Choose an Information Management System.** Consult the Information Management Tips.
• **Draft a disability accommodations statement** outlining your plans for making your PB process accessible to people with disabilities (you can find ideas in online accessibility guides, like this one about conference accessibility). Before developing your plan, check with your local jurisdiction for legal requirements about disability accommodation.

• **Identify a point person in each city agency** who will review and provide cost estimates for projects during proposal development.

• **Decide how many projects will be allowed on the ballot.** Make sure your ballot feels readable and doesn’t contain so many projects that the length will discourage residents from voting. For most cities, we recommend putting 10-15 projects on the ballot and allowing voters to choose up to 5. This gives voters a wide enough range of choices while avoiding overwhelming them.

### Info Sessions

It is integral to get internal support and external interest for PB early in the process. Holding internal and public info-sessions during the designing phase will help attain buy-in and cooperation for PB endeavors from other city staff/departments, and bring participation from the community.
Internal info-sessions for city staff and departments should provide an overview of the phases of the process and what they should expect. Invite any city staff or departments who you will need cooperation and input from. Examples may include City Council if they need to approve the Rulebook, department staff who will vet project proposals, and the Communications Department. It may also be helpful to have someone from the Budget Department in attendance to explain how PB funding will work. These sessions should be open to anyone employed by the city.

Alert city staff of important dates that you will need their help or engagement (such as help from Communications staff to design outreach materials).

Public info-sessions should encompass an introduction to PB (what it is, benefits, and timeline), as well as key points for the public to participate (submit an idea, become a Budget Delegate, vote). Aim to invite the general public, as well as local organizations who can help you get participation, especially from underrepresented communities. Use the PB Info Session PowerPoint presentation as a starting point for your presentation content—and we always recommend adding photos and other visuals.

Implementing

The designing stage of PB is the only phase that continues without a clear end point—one can continue planning details for the phases ahead. Below are some pivotal tasks to complete before idea collection begins that will help ensure the process is off to a good start.

Remember to...

- Create press release and share it! Use this template as a starting point.

- Hold an internal team launch meeting to strategize about key goals & timeline. Decide on decision-making structure (which decisions will be made internally, which will be made by the Steering Committee) and communicate during Writing the Rules. You can refer to the Steering Committee Guide for examples.
of decision-making roles and other collaborations between cities and Steering Committees.

- **Develop a Steering Committee Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or agreement** and share with members to have transparency about expectations and commitments. While not all cities provide MOU’s for members to sign, it is a helpful practice for Steering Committee members that are not city staff to communicate expectations. Refer to the **Steering Committee MOU** template for guidance.

- **Hold Writing the Rules session** once Steering Committee has been formed; ensure you have enough Facilitators to support discussions and lead the decision-making process (at least 3 Facilitators).

- **Develop a Rulebook** based on the decisions made by the Steering Committee during Writing the Rules (usually ready two weeks after Writing the Rules takes place); publish on website once ready.

## Technology in PB

Digital technologies can be used throughout the PB process to streamline and facilitate individual tasks, organize the administration of goals, and effectively track the work of entire phases. It is important to keep the goals and reasons behind using a particular tool in mind to ensure that it is being used effectively and for its intended purpose.

Although digital technology can be used to strengthen engagement in the PB process, it cannot replace in-person outreach efforts.

Below are a few goals for the use of technology, as well as several ideas to incorporate digital and online tools to facilitate and strengthen PB implementation.

- More efficient and effective project management
- More ways to collect and manage ideas from a broader population
- Streamlined, and more efficient collaboration between Budget Delegates during Proposal Development
- Increased inclusivity and equity of outcomes in a process
• More ways to vote

• Faster, more effective vote counting & processing

• Reducing administrative burden associated with data entry

As we describe each of the four main phases of PB in this manual, we’ll provide you a link to a corresponding technology guide. For planning whether and how you’ll use technology in Phase 1, refer to the guide, *Key Technologies for Designing PB: From comprehensive platforms to project management tools*. This guide recommends digital tools and overviews the criteria you should use in choosing one.

We also suggest taking a look at this guide to *Text Message Outreach*. This guide covers how mobile phone texting can be used as an outreach tool throughout all phases of the PB process. Texting can serve as an effective supplement to online tools, especially when there are groups in your community who may have low or no access to the internet.
## Resources

### Implementing

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<tr>
<td><strong>Key Technologies for Designing PB: From comprehensive platforms to project management tools</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>This guide offers tips on how to use technology and digital platforms to help manage important materials throughout the PB process.</td>
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<td><strong>Text Message Outreach Guide</strong></td>
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<td>This guide covers how mobile phone texting can be used as an outreach tool throughout all phases of the PB process.</td>
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<td><strong>Press Release Template</strong></td>
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<td>Adapt this template to your city’s context and send to news outlets as your PB press release!</td>
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<td><strong>Steering Committee Guide</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>This guide contains information about decision-making, roles, and composition, as well as best practices for having a fruitful collaboration between implementers and Steering Committees.</td>
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<td><strong>Steering Committee Decision-Making in North American PB Processes Table</strong></td>
<td>Implementers</td>
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<tr>
<td>This table shows the decisions that are in the purview of Steering Committees and city staff in North American PB processes.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Steering Committee Memorandum of Understanding Template</strong></td>
<td>Implementers Steering Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adapt this template to reflect the commitments you would like your Steering Committee to make as members. Steering Committee members will sign this.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research Partnership and Data Sharing Agreement</strong></td>
<td>Implementers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adapt this template to establish an informed external partnership around research, evaluation, and data sharing.</td>
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<td>Writing the Rules Facilitation Plan Sample</td>
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<td><strong>Implementers</strong></td>
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<td>This facilitation plan sample illustrates the range of topics that can be discussed during Writing the Rules, as well as the format that in which decisions are made. Refer to the plan to get an idea of what to expect, and adapt to your own context if you are leading the session.</td>
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<th>Writing the Rules Participant Handout Sample</th>
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<td><strong>Implementers</strong> Steering Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>This handout is given to Steering Committee members present during Writing the Rules to follow along with the conversation. Adapt by providing background information relevant to the decisions they will make to facilitate their decision-making process.</td>
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<th>New York Rulebook Sample, Chicago Rulebook Sample</th>
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<td><strong>Implementers</strong> Steering Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Refer to this sample and share with Steering Committee members to know what your own Rulebook may look like.</td>
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<th>Information Management Tips</th>
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<tr>
<td>Information management should begin early in the PB process, as there is information to collect throughout each phase. To prevent data getting unwieldy, consult this sheet to select a data management strategy.</td>
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<td>In this article, you will find in-depth discussion of the benefits and challenges of PB, as told by PBP leaders and illustrated through cases across North America.</td>
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<th>Guide to Creating Accessible Slide Presentations</th>
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<td><strong>Implementers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Information Sessions</td>
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| **Info Session Coordinator Plan**  
Implementers  
This coordinator plan provides a template for conducting Steering Committee info-sessions. |
| **Info Session Powerpoint Template**  
Implementers  
Use this template as a format to model general public info sessions. |
| **Info Session Sign-in Sheet**  
Implementers  
Use this sign-in sheet during info sessions to gather attendant contact information. You can rely on this information later for volunteer appeals. |
| **Info Session RSVP Template**  
Implementers  
Use this RSVP google form to get an idea of who and how many people to expect during your info-sessions. |
| **Info Session Invite Sample**  
Implementers  
Use these sample texts to create your own info-session invites for public-facing info sessions. The first is for an info session about PB, the second is for a Steering Committee info session. |
Phase 2: Idea Collection & Budget Delegate Recruitment

Soliciting Community Improvement Ideas & Underrepresented Voices Through Assemblies & Mobile Events

- Design the Process: 3 months
- Develop Proposals: 5-6 months
- Fund Winning Projects & Evaluate the Process
- Brainstorm Ideas: 3 months
- Plan the Vote & Vote: 2-3 months
Goals

Idea Collection is the phase where initial ideas for local improvements are collected from the community.

- **Get participation from as many underrepresented community members as possible** in order to maximize their voices in the PB process. This is critical—comprehensive outreach and hosting more idea collection events in traditionally underserved communities will help ensure that underrepresented voices are included in a meaningful way, and not just at the end of the process during the vote.

- **Educate participants about PB** and the ways they can get involved. This is often people’s first experience with the process!

- **Recruit** Budget Delegates and Facilitators!

Planning

Planning all the logistics that go into the idea collection phase well before it begins will ensure well-attended and inclusive idea gathering events. Plan for both larger idea collection assemblies in targeted areas and smaller, informal pop-up events in high traffic/accessible areas. Knowledge about the culture of the community should be used to identify the format of idea gathering that may work best, as well as the locations.
and times. Consult the Steering Committee, and refer to the checklist of tasks mentioned in the Idea Collection Assembly Guide and the Informal Idea Collection Guide to plan these events. Refer to the Key Technologies for PB Idea Collection guide for tips on how to make idea collection more efficient using online idea-gathering tools.

Remember to...

- Conduct outreach in multiple languages and through diverse avenues.

- Outsource your idea collection! Prepare a Partner Idea Collection Toolkit for community organizations and schools so they can hold their own idea collection events.

- Schedule idea collection events in as many communities and accessible locations as possible so they are well attended and inclusive. Refer to the Outreach Toolkit for best outreach practices.

- Arrange to have food, interpreters and/or a kids’ corner to ensure an inclusive experience and to facilitate attendance.

- Modify and print agenda/assembly materials—find these materials in the Idea Collection Assembly Guide.

- Recruit volunteers for assemblies. Use the Assembly Volunteer Sign-Up Sheet to keep track of volunteers.

- Plan how you will categorize project ideas for the purposes of idea entry and committee development. Consult the Categorizing Ideas Tip Sheet for reference.

Training

Before holding idea collection events, it’s important to train the volunteers who will be helping to gather ideas. Lack of training may result in low energy events and less fruitful discussions during needs identification. Brief volunteers at least a few hours before the event.

Familiarize volunteers with the steps in the Idea Collection Assembly Guide. Refer to the Assembly Facilitator Training Guide and provide the Small Group Discussion Guide to orient the Facilitators who will be guiding the idea collection discussions. Facilitation skills are particularly important during idea collection events, as it’s participants’ first exposure to PB.
Implementing

It is helpful for coordinators and volunteers to refer to the Idea Collection Assembly Guide before and during neighborhood assemblies, and the Informal Idea Collection Guide for mobile/informal idea collection events. These guides provide a step by step overview of how to run the idea collection session’s activities. Allow enough time before neighborhood assemblies to make sure that the technology for the presentation such as the projector and computers are working.
Remember to...

- **Coordinate and brief volunteers** before the event starts. Distribute copies of the Idea Collection Assembly Guide or Informal Idea Collection Guide so they have it as a reference.

- **Arrive about 45 minutes early to set up** the space and test the projector for the presentation.

- **Educate participants** about PB and how they can get involved throughout the next stages of the process.

- **Recruit Budget Delegates!** Idea Collection events, especially formal assemblies, are great places for Budget Delegate recruitment. If someone is passionate about a submitted idea, let them know they can have a role in deciding whether that and other ideas will go to the ballot for a vote. Distribute the Budget Delegate Sign-Up Form to record their contact information.
## Resources

### Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assembly Volunteer Sign-up Sheet</strong></td>
<td>Implementers</td>
<td>Use this planning grid to ensure there are enough volunteers to staff each idea collection event and keep events organized with volunteer contact information readily available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outreach Toolkit</strong></td>
<td>Implementers</td>
<td>The Outreach Toolkit provides an overview of best outreach principles and strategies, placing particular emphasis on engaging under-represented communities. Refer to the toolkit through the idea collection and vote phases of the PB process, to ensure an effective engagement strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Categorizing Ideas Tip Sheet</strong></td>
<td>Implementers</td>
<td>Consult this tip sheet for help on categorizing project ideas. Doing this during the Idea Collection phase will help enter project ideas into your information management system in an organized manner, and will help you prepare committee sorting for the proposal development phase.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### Implementing

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<tr>
<th><strong>Partner Idea Collection Toolkit</strong></th>
<th>Implementers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This sample Idea Collection plan can be customized so that partners, like schools and community organizations, can hold idea collection events with ease.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Budget Delegate Sign-up</strong></th>
<th>Implementers, Volunteer Assembly Facilitators, Idea Collection Event Volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distribute this form at assemblies to recruit Budget Delegates.</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Idea Collection Survey Template</strong></th>
<th>Implementers, Idea Collection Event Volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modify these surveys to fit the context of your particular community and administer to idea collection participants both at assemblies and at informal idea collection events.</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Idea Collection Assembly Powerpoint Template</strong></th>
<th>Implementers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use this PowerPoint template for the presentation portion of idea collection assemblies.</td>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th><strong>Small Group Discussion Guide</strong></th>
<th>Implementers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This guide provides step-by-step instructions for Facilitators at idea collection assemblies guiding the idea gathering discussion, as well as a description of their role.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Assembly Sign-in Sheet</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Implementers</strong> Idea Collection Event Volunteers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use this sign-in sheet to collect the contact information of those that participated in the assembly/informal idea collection event. This form will facilitate outreach during the vote, as those who submitted ideas can easily be contacted.</td>
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<td><strong>Volunteer Assembly Facilitators</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>This document should be used to train Facilitators who will be running the small group discussions at idea collection assemblies.</td>
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Phase 3: Proposal Development

Building Capacity For Budget Delegates to Research and Develop Proposals

- Design the Process: 3 months
- Brainstorm Ideas: 3 months
- Develop Proposals: 5-6 months
- Plan the Vote & Vote: 2-3 months
- Fund Winning Projects & Evaluate the Process
Goals

During proposal development, volunteers (usually called Budget Delegates) work together in facilitated committees to develop concrete proposals for the ballot. They prioritize ideas collected during the Idea Collection phase, and work with city agencies to develop project proposals. Below are the top goals for this phase. Achieving these priorities will ensure high quality proposals that meet the needs of the community.

• Provide guidance, information, and resources to support Budget Delegates and Facilitators.

• Discuss equity and create a clear approach to assessing community needs.

• Provide enough training and support so capable Facilitators can effectively guide budget delegate committees through proposal development.

Planning

Proposal Development is the longest stage in PB with the most collaboration from different groups. Planning is crucial to ensuring a successful proposal development phase. It is important to dedicate enough time for Delegates, Facilitators, and city staff to be briefed and trained. Refer to the Key Technologies for PB Proposal Development guide for tips on how to use online platforms to aid the decision-making process and more effectively explain proposals to the community.

Remember to...

• Create a proposal development timeline. Make sure to consult the Steering Committee on dates that might conflict with community events. Check with city agencies to ensure they have enough time to vet proposals. Refer to the sample timeline for support.

• Identify point-people in each city agency to lead project vetting.
• **Develop a call for Facilitators** and share widely to ensure you are getting members from underrepresented communities to lead committees. Refer to the Call for Facilitators template for sample text.

• **Develop sorting process** for ideas so they both fall into thematic committees (i.e., schools, parks, environment).

• **Train Budget Delegates and Facilitators.** Refer to this Budget Delegate and Facilitator Training Powerpoint Sample.

• **Decide if you want to include a Local Research Report for your Delegates** to provide direction. See the Data for the People Template to get started.

• **Customize and share** the Budget Delegate Guide, Facilitator Guide, and Agency Cheat Sheet Sample, and develop maps and other support materials.

• **Develop project proposal submission form.** This is the way you’ll get all the information for the project proposals from Budget Delegates. Having a consistent system, even if it’s a simple form, makes it easier for volunteers to engage and for you to get what you need.
Training

Training volunteers during the proposal development phase is arguably the most challenging and most important part of the PB process. This is due to the complexity of the work of Budget Delegates and Facilitators, who will have diverse educational backgrounds and various levels of familiarity with local government.

Facilitators must be trained to manage group dynamics within committees, ensuring that everyone is heard and has the opportunity to participate. Facilitators must also have a thorough understanding of equity to guide Budget Delegates through community needs assessment and project ranking. Lastly, Facilitators will need to know how to direct questions from Budget Delegates towards relevant city staff. They must be familiar with the proposal development timeline, as they are responsible for keeping Budget Delegates on track.

Make sure Facilitators are trained thoroughly; a good training usually takes between 2 and 3 hours to complete. Show this Facilitator Training Video during the training to introduce what is expected of Facilitators. Make sure Facilitators have the Facilitator Guide and refer to it regularly.

Budget Delegates must also be trained to assess and prioritize ideas, taking community needs and equity into consideration. Since they will be responsible for developing proposals, they must be clear on the submission deadlines and the resources available to them. Show this Budget Delegate Training Video during the training to introduce what the role involves. Familiarize Delegates with the Budget Delegate Guide and make sure they use it on a regular basis.
Implementing

Now that Facilitators and Budget Delegates have been trained, city agencies briefed, and the timeline developed, PB implementers can focus on providing support for Delegates and Facilitators, as well as liaising between all parties involved in proposal development.

Remember to...

• **Provide a meeting space** for committees.

• **Administer pre and post surveys** for Budget Delegates at the beginning and end of the proposal development process to get feedback on whether they benefited from being Budget Delegates.

• **Hold weekly or bi-weekly Facilitator support calls** to help Facilitators work through problems they may be experiencing while guiding committees.

• **Ensure Facilitators and Delegates are discussing equity** while assessing proposals. The Idea Ranking Tool can support the conversations. Refer Facilitators to pg. 27 of the Facilitator Guide for information on how to structure this conversation.

• **Consider creating or having volunteers create a Local Research Report** with data and/or establish equity criteria that can help Delegates prioritize projects based on equity.

• **Hold agency briefings**. Having two rounds of agency briefings works best: one serves as a general info-session for Delegates, and the second provides space for Delegates to ask specific questions about their committees. Refer to the Agency Briefing Guide for more details.

• **Liaise and support communication** between agency staff and committees; field specific project questions from Budget Delegates and send to the relevant agency staff.
Data for the People

Data for the People is a framework to help PB volunteers use public health data to understand their neighborhoods in context.

As you conduct community data research using Data for the People, refer to these resources for guidance:

- A guide to finding and using community data through Data for the People
- A research spreadsheet template to help you organize the data you find
- A sample Data for the People research report. PBP used the Data for the People framework and the data resources shared above to prepare this report for PB in Greensboro, NC.

If you want more assistance creating a Local Research Report, consider asking a local school, volunteer, or PBP for support.
## Resources

### Planning

**Key Technologies for PB Proposal Development**
- **Implementers**
  This guide offers tips on how to incorporate technology and digital platforms into the proposal development and decision-making processes.

**Sample Proposal Development Timeline**
- **Implementers**
  Use this sample proposal development timeline to develop your own. This timeline will be shared with Budget Delegates and their Facilitators, and will be in the Budget Delegate Guide and Facilitator Guide.

**Call for Facilitators Template**
- **Implementers**
  This template makes it easier for implementers to quickly draft an appeal for Facilitators. It provides a description of the Facilitator role and the type of commitments they should anticipate.

### Implementing

**Data for the People**
- **Implementers Budget Delegates Facilitators**
  This webpage offers a framework to help PB volunteers use public health data to understand their neighborhoods in context.

**Agency Briefing Guide**
- **Implementers**
  Use this guide for an example of formats to hold briefings between government agencies and Budget Delegates.

**Sample Project Proposal**
- **Implementers Budget Delegates Facilitators**
  Use this completed project proposal form for an example of the questions that should be asked to submit proposals and the length of answers.
### Agency Cheat Sheet Sample from PB Cambridge

**Implementers** Budget Delegates Facilitators

Modify this cheat sheet with a list of your own local departments that will be relevant to your committees. Share with Budget Delegates and Facilitators.

### Budget Delegate Guide

**Budget Delegates** Facilitators

This guide will be a resource to Budget Delegates throughout the proposal development process. It contains an overview of the proposal development phase, the role of Budget Delegates, available resources, and tools to support their research. Adapt this guide to your own local process and share with both Facilitators and Budget Delegates.

### Field Research Worksheet Template

**Budget Delegates**

Budget Delegates should use this tool before site visits (to prepare research questions) and during site visits (to take notes). This tool will help facilitate productive field research.

### Committee Meeting Note-Taking Guide

**Budget Delegates** Facilitators

This guide should be referred to by the designated note-taker during each committee meeting to ensure appropriate note-taking length and quality.

### Idea Ranking Tool

**Budget Delegates** Facilitators

The Idea Ranking Tool is used by Budget Delegates to evaluate ideas submitted in a more objective manner. Ensure this tool takes part of your Budget Delegate and Facilitator trainings. It should be used during committee meetings.

### Facilitator Guide

**Facilitators**

This guide will help Facilitators structure committee meetings, as it has an overview of the proposal development phase, answers to typical problems experienced by Facilitators, as well as sample agendas. Facilitators should refer to this resource regularly to know what will be coming up in the weeks ahead, and develop agendas. Implementers should adapt the guide and distribute it during the Facilitator training.
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<td><strong>Budget Delegate Pre Survey</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Budget Delegates</strong>&lt;br&gt;Administer this survey to Budget Delegates before they begin their work to be able to track the effect that participating in PB may have had at the end of the process.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Budget Delegate Post Survey</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Budget Delegates</strong>&lt;br&gt;Administer this survey to Budget Delegates after they complete their work to be able to track the effect that participating in PB may have had at the end of the process.</td>
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<td><strong>Training</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Budget Delegate and Facilitator Training PowerPoint Sample</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Budget Delegates Facilitators</strong>&lt;br&gt;Adapt this PowerPoint presentation to your own process as an aid to deliver your Budget Delegate and/or Facilitator Training.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Budget Delegate Training Video</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Implementers</strong>&lt;br&gt;This video provides a brief overview of the what it means to be a Budget Delegate, and can be shown at the beginning of a Budget Delegate training or info session.</td>
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### Facilitator Training Video
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This video provides a brief overview of the what it means to be a Budget Delegate, and can be shown at the beginning of a Budget Delegate training or info session.

### Agency Cheat Sheet Sample
**Facilitators Budget Delegates**
Familiarize Budget Delegates and Facilitators with the Agency Cheat Sheet during their orientations to ensure they are aware of the different governmental departments. This will help Budget Delegates and Facilitators begin to think about which departments will be relevant to their committees.

### Committee Facilitation Aid
**Facilitators**
Refer to this resource during the Facilitator training so that Facilitators are aware this support material exists to help them prepare for their committee meetings.
Phase 4: Expos & Voting

Engaging Community Members in the Vote

- **Design the Process**: 3 months
- **Develop Proposals**: 5-6 months
- **Fund Winning Projects & Evaluate the Process**:
- **Brainstorm Ideas**: 3 months
- **Plan the Vote & Vote**: 2-3 months
Goals

Like in the Idea Collection phase, organizing the vote entails both educating people about PB and engaging as many community members as possible—especially those from underrepresented groups. Relying on community volunteers such as the Steering Committee, and organizations that understand the culture and communal places in the area will help create an inclusive voting process.

- **Create deep and meaningful engagement.** Bring the vote to as many community members as possible, especially making it easy for those from traditionally underrepresented communities to participate.

- **Educate** individuals about PB, and how they can get involved in the vote and in cycles to come.

- **Help Budget Delegates communicate proposals** through different mediums.

Planning

Planning a successful voting phase involves understanding the particular demographics and culture of your community and crafting a plan that will reach as many participants as possible. Although the vote usually lasts for one or two weeks, **coordinating logistics for voting events can take between two and three months.** For tips on how technology can help with planning and executing this phase, refer to the [Key Technologies for PB Voting guide](#).

Remember to...

- **Schedule vote events** and announce them on the website; use the Steering Committee and community organizations to identify strategic locations. **Ensure voting locations are accessible** in terms of location and design.

- Decide whether digital or online voting options are needed. Refer to the [Key Technologies for PB Voting guide](#) for more information.

- **Decide on a strategy** to validate voter eligibility.
• **Recruit community volunteers** to serve as poll workers and staff vote events!

• **Develop and implement an outreach strategy.** Engage the Steering Committee in crafting an outreach plan that will engage a high number of people, including underrepresented communities. Consult the Steering Committee to draft simple outreach language. Answer the **Get Out The Vote Strategic Planning Prep Questions** to develop your voter outreach strategy.

• **Prepare ballots.** Ensure there is enough time for technicians to prepare digital ballots, as well as for printing and translation. Refer to **these ballot design guidelines** when creating yours, and look at **these ballot samples** for inspiration. **Translate ballots** into the most spoken languages in the area.

• **Prepare voter surveys** and translate them into chosen languages. Refer to the **Voter Survey** for reference.

• **Plan and advertise date to announce results of winning projects!**

**Training**

It is important to train all volunteers on their role, voting event format, and how to explain participatory budgeting to individuals who may not be familiar with the process.

There are two types of voting events: 1) large, main voting events in a science fair format where projects are displayed in poster boards and participants vote after viewing them; and 2) mobile voting events. The later take place
in common areas where many people are passing through or tend to congregate, such as subway stations or outside of community meetings. The main difference between the two is that mobile voting events will lack space, and because project displays are not present, most people will lack familiarity with the process and projects.

Ensure volunteers staffing the main expo voting events read the Main Voting Events Guide, and those helping with mobile assemblies understand the content of the Mobile Voting Events Guide, which will describe the setup of mobile sites. In both kinds of events, volunteers should be able to explain PB in the context of their community, how to fill out the ballot, and the importance of completing voter surveys. Implementers should therefore brief volunteers so they can explain the process to the public.

Implementing

You have now conducted significant outreach and ensured that underrepresented communities have heard about the vote. It’s time to develop a system to make sure expo and voting events go smoothly and are less taxing on staff and volunteers. Below are a few best practices. Refer to the Main Voting Events Guide and the Mobile Voting Events Guide for a list of implementation tasks and event format description.
Remember to...

• Get or procure refreshments for events!

• Coordinate kids’ corner for main voting events.

• Provide your contact information to volunteers if they are staffing events on their own.

• Set up at least 1 hour before large expo and voting events begin, and half an hour before for mobile events.

• Include a one-page cheat sheet of vote process instructions (both paper and digital) for volunteers at the vote table.

• Place signs and posters in strategically visible areas to draw attention to the event.

• Place your most outgoing volunteers outside of large voting events to draw in crowds.

• Clearly organize ballots and surveys; use different boxes or envelopes for each language.

• Invite voters to your vote results announcement. Ensure you have flyers announcing the event and distribute them during the vote.
# Resources

## Planning

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<tr>
<th><strong>Key Technologies for PB Voting</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Implementers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>This guide offers tips on how to incorporate technology and digital platforms into the voting process.</td>
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<th><strong>Get Out the Vote Communications Template</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Implementers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>This template is a good example of a communications toolkit that can be used to plan your communications strategy during the vote.</td>
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<th><strong>“Vote” Flyer Sample</strong></th>
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<td>This flyer sample can be adapted to your own process or used as a template for the information that should be included to advertise voting events.</td>
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<th><strong>Voting Events Fliers Sample</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>These flyers are good examples of how outreach materials can highlight the most important PB voting events in your community, while also being concise, bright, and playful.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Field Guides to Designing Voting Materials</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>These guides from the Center for Civic Design offer tips for designing effective, user-friendly voting materials. See especially <em>Volume 1: Designing usable ballots</em>.</td>
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<table>
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<td><strong>Implementers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These ballots can be customized or a different model can be chosen. Nevertheless, they can serve as examples of the different thematic categories, layout, and the number of projects that get voted on.</td>
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</table>
## Voter Survey Template

**Implementers**  Main Voting Event Volunteers  Mobile Voting Volunteers

Use this voter survey template to include in the ballots. This survey will help measure the success of the process in terms of participation, representation, and civic involvement.

## Implementing

### Main Voting Events Guide

**Implementers**  Main Voting Event Volunteers

This guide should be used during main voting events by implementers and volunteers to understand the format of the entire event, as well as their particular role within it. The guide provides an overview of all steps that should be taken and all materials needed.

### Vote Results Announcement Best Practices

**Implementers**

Use this resource to get information on 7 best practices that will ensure you prepare a successful vote results announcement.

### Sample Press Release

**Implementers**

This press release sample will help you draft a press release to alert the community that the vote is taking place.

### Mobile Voting Events Guide

**Implementers**  Mobile Voting Volunteers

Use this guide to make sure you have all the materials you need to execute a good mobile event, and help volunteers perform their roles.

## Training

### Main Voting Events Guide

**Main Voting Event Volunteers**

Distribute this guide to volunteers while briefing them before expo and voting events so they become familiar with the format and their roles. They should also have it on hand during voting events in case they forget any steps.
**Mobile Voting Events Guide**

**Mobile Voting Volunteers**
Distribute this guide to volunteers while briefing them before mobile voting events so they become familiar with the format and their roles. Because volunteers are often on their own (without main implementers) during mobile events, make sure to include a copy with the rest of the materials so they have it on hand during voting events in case they forget any steps.

**Poll Worker Training Plan**

**Main Voting Event Volunteers**
This Training Plan is from the PBNYC Cycle 6 and includes an agenda for a training session for poll workers. This training plan also includes the information that is given to PBNYC poll workers regarding the voting process and the goals of PB.
Phase 5: Process Evaluation

*Using Data to Plan and Improve the Next Cycle*

- **Design the Process**: 3 months
- **Brainstorm Ideas**: 3 months
- **Develop Proposals**: 5-6 months
- **Plan the Vote & Vote**: 2-3 months
- **Fund Winning Projects & Evaluate the Process**
Goals

Evaluation is important to assess whether inclusion and other goals were achieved, to identify improvements for the next PB cycle, and to secure funding for its continuation. Process evaluation takes place both internally and externally. Internal evaluations are done with the oversight team that implemented PB. Here, staff reflect on the effectiveness of the methods used to implement each PB phase. External evaluations occur in the form of public feedback sessions and surveys where participants debrief weaknesses and strengths in the activities carried out during each stage.

- Remain impartial when facilitating public feedback sessions.
- Increase process transparency by sharing evaluation results including quantifiable data collected during each stage of the process.
- Create an action plan for making improvements that address the concerns voiced during public feedback sessions, internal evaluations, and participant surveys.¹

1 Charts such as the one above may help the public understand the positive impacts of your PB process.
Planning

Preparing for process evaluation should take place during the planning phase. Please see the Planning section for recommendations on Evaluation Partnerships and Data Sharing Agreements. Many evaluators will want to begin gathering data on a process during idea collection all the way through the vote phase.

Remember to...

• **Choose an evaluation partner during the planning stage** of PB, before idea collection begins. Evaluation is critical; we believe it’s worth funding. But researchers at local universities may also be interested in partnering and often provide this work pro bono.

• **Go over the long term research plan with evaluation partner** and arrange for them to be present at a few events during each stage of the process.

• **Read and share the Key Metrics for Evaluating Participatory Budgeting Toolkit** developed by Public Agenda, PBP, and the North American PB research board with evaluation partners during the planning phase to ensure they are using high quality surveys.
Implementing

Like in the other phases of PB, the key to implementing the process evaluation phase is to allow enough time for outreach so that many participants will attend public feedback sessions and complete questionnaires.

Remember to...

• **Hold internal oversight team evaluations.** Reflect on what went well and what could be improved for all phases of the process, as well as systems used to implement each phase. Refer to the Internal Team Debrief Template.

• **Hold a Steering Committee feedback session.**

• **Hold public feedback session** a few weeks after the vote has taken place.

• **Send a questionnaire to participants before holding the public feedback session** in order to have quantifiable data on public opinion. Use the results to enrich the discussion during the session. Refer to the Public Feedback Survey Template.

• **Refer to the Public Feedback Evaluation Facilitation template** to design the session.

• **Discuss plan and deadline for report submission with evaluation partners.** Remember that a good report will include data collected from all stages of the process.
## Resources

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<thead>
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<th>Planning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metrics for Evaluating Participatory Budgeting Toolkit</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Implementers Evaluator</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use this toolkit (as early as the planning phase) developed by Public Agenda to develop participant surveys to evaluate each stage of the process. This toolkit contains the 15 most important metrics for evaluating PB, so leaving particular questions out of surveys should be done carefully.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Idea Collection Survey Template**                                    |
| **Evaluators**                                                         |
| Use this survey template to develop your survey for idea collection event participants. |

| **Voter Survey Template**                                              |
| **Evaluators**                                                         |
| Use this survey template to develop your voter survey.                 |

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<tr>
<td><strong>Public Feedback Survey Template</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Implementers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Use this template to develop your public feedback survey.</td>
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| **Public Feedback Session Facilitation Template**                     |
| **Implementers**                                                      |
| Use this template to help structure your public feedback session. The format can be adapted to better suit your process. |

| **Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers Template**            |
| **Implementers**                                                      |
| This template is for evaluators and implementers (staff implementing PB) to answer implementation process questions. Each item in this questionnaire informs a key PB metric. The 15 Key PB Metrics are further described. Public Agenda, in collaboration with local evaluators and implementers, compiles data from each PB site across the U.S. and Canada to analyze the growth, reach and impacts of PB in individual communities and across North America. |
| **Internal Team Debrief Template** |
| Implementers |
| Use this as a template facilitation plan to debrief the methods used to implement each stage of the PB process with PB oversight team (internal staff, not community volunteers). |

| **Process Evaluation Report Sample** |
| Evaluators |
| This PB process evaluation is a sample report that illustrates the content, format, and key takeaways that can be shown to evaluation partners to describe the final output required. More content and subjects may be explored in your own evaluation report, but this sample covers the basics that evaluations should include. |
Phase 6: Project Monitoring: From Funding to Completion

Ensuring Projects are Implemented, Tracked, and Shared With the Public

Goals

It is easy to forget monitoring the completion of winning projects and communicating their progress due to the large number of actors involved. Winning ideas are carried out by different city agencies, and staff coordinating the PB process are not typically involved in project completion. For PB to gain traction and give ownership of the process to the community, it is important to communicate the status of winning ideas, and design ways for Delegates and community members to remain involved in the completion and monitoring of funded projects.

- **Monitor status of winning ideas.**

- **Regularly communicate the status all winning ideas** to the public in a clear and simple format. Refer to the project monitoring chart sample (below) as a template and use it for your website.

- **Gain further support for PB** by communicating what can be made possible through the process.

- **Incorporate community input** during project monitoring. You may want to create a Project Monitoring Committee to ensure projects serve their intended purpose, and to make decisions over left-over funds or shortfalls.
Planning

Once projects have moved into the purview of the agency that will carry them out, it may be useful to establish a communication agreement. This agreement will be updated every time the project reaches a new development stage.

Remember to...

- Communicate with the city agencies so that you understand the process and timeframe for project completion.
- Publish a brief description of how the projects will be completed on the PB website.
- Communicate to city agencies that you will want a PB marker indicating that the project was made possible by participatory budgeting.  

![Project Tracking Chart]

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2 This project tracking chart was developed by the City of Cambridge and is a good sample for communicating your city’s project progress.
Implementing

Because city agencies will be responsible for making projects come to fruition, the work of PB implementers once projects have reached this stage in the development process is to communicate with the public. Your goals here should be focused on maintaining transparency so that the community can hold city agencies accountable.

Remember to…

- **Continue to update project status on website.** Refer to the Cambridge Project Status sample (above).

- **Ensure there are PB markers on the completed projects** that state that they were made possible through PB.

- **Once developed, attend or hold project launch and invite the community and the press.** This is an opportunity to showcase the importance of PB and to gain public traction.\(^3\)

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\(^3\) An example of a PB marker in the city of Boston indicating that the project was made possible through PB
Arts Integration in PB

*Making PB Fun by Partnering with the Local Arts Community*

**Goals**

PB is a community-led process. As such, working with local artists to infuse art into PB can make the processes more engaging, strengthen community ties, and produce a higher participant turnout.

- Produce engaging PB events
- Increase participant turnout
- Strengthen community ties and collaboration
- Provide deeper engagement with PB
- Get design support
- Increase accessibility by communicating projects in additional ways other than in writing
Planning & Idea Collection

During idea collection, it may be useful to partner with local artists or design organizations to make visually appealing outreach materials, or to design a process logo that captures the spirit of the local community. These artists can also collaborate with the Steering Committee to strengthen community ties as they work towards a shared purpose.

Engaging local artists at this stage of the process can also bring representation from the arts community into idea collection, further increasing community engagement in PB. Additionally, partnering with local arts organizations can bring different sources of funding to the PB process. Some artists may be able to illustrate ideas for idea collection assemblies, or model proposals for vote expos and ballots.

Some cities have brought local performers such as singers and dancers to perform during idea collection events to draw attention and encourage community members to participate.

PB processes are strongly rooted in a sense of community and place, and art can help reinforce and communicate these values.

Proposal Development

The arts community can bring a lot to the proposal development process by helping Budget Delegates communicate their ideas. They can provide design and communication expertise, as well as resources that the process may otherwise lack.
In some cities, implementers have partnered with local organizations to provide workshops to help Budget Delegates communicate their ideas through video, social media, and print. In Boston, Budget Delegates were trained in social media use, video creation, and photoshop.

Many cities bring in a local artist to facilitate a poster-making workshop where Budget Delegates work together to visually communicate their projects on cardboard displays. Other cities hold a celebration (Delegate Mixer) to support the work of Budget Delegates and allow them to get to know other delegates who worked in different committees. In NYC’s process, delegates got the opportunity to silkscreen the process logo onto tote bags while celebrating their work.

Integrating art into the proposal development phase infuses some fun into the work of Budget Delegates at a time where they may be suffering from burnout. It also helps to create more visually compelling project expos!

**Expos & Vote**

Integrating art into expos and voting events can help to both communicate project ideas that are on the ballot and draw in more voters. Partnering with local art organizations and artists can also help form or strengthen existing relationships and grow support for PB in future cycles.

Some cities have partnered with art programs at local universities, working with students to design visually-appealing flyers (like these from Toronto) to advertise events and to explain the ballot choices to the community.

Some cities also have brought in local artists to perform during expo and voting events to infuse energy into voting. Examples include spoken word artists, live DJ’s, and singing and dancing performers.
The presence of performers can also draw in passers-by who otherwise might not have voted. Moreover, bringing local performers into expo and voting events helps give PB a culturally relevant, community-focused feel. Community storytelling experts may also help delegates communicate their proposals in a more personal manner during expo voting events. This may help make PB more accessible to community members of all ages and backgrounds, as they may be able to better identify with the project need through storytelling.

Arts integration into PB can help make PB more accessible, interactive, and can strengthen community bonds by integrating local artists and enabling them to collaborate with community members towards a shared purpose.
Media & Communications

Using Every Outlet as an Opportunity to Communicate PB!

Goals

Media and communications are an important part of conducting outreach. As such, the same strategy of “meeting people where they already are” applies. Use of social media, news outlets, and popular communication platforms can increase the visibility and cultural relevance of your process. In order to use communication platforms well, some research should be done about which platforms community members of all demographics frequent. Using these platforms should not be your sole method of conducting outreach, but their use is a good opportunity to make PB relevant to your community.

- Make PB relatable and culturally relevant to community members
- Increase participation
- Invite more youth into the process
- Meet people where they are
- Create a brand: communicate how you would like PB to be portrayed.

Planning

During the designing stage of PB, implementers should set up the systems they will use for both internal and external communication. It is useful to make email listservs composed of different groups to send PB updates and event invites. Both internal and external emails should
invite people to spread the word about PB through their own social media outlets.

Implementers should also research the social media and communications platforms their communities are using. It may be helpful to ask the Steering Committee and local organizations for suggestions on which platforms to focus on. The Steering Committee can also be helpful to draft, like, and share social media posts throughout each stage of the process. For more tips on how to use social media effectively, refer to this Best Practices for Social Media guide.

It is important to keep goals to engage particular communities at the forefront of your communications strategy. If targeting youth is a goal, then it will be helpful to ask young people, as well as youth-serving organizations which platforms they recommend, along with appropriate language to engage this audience. Effective ways to enlist the help of young people in your network to draft culturally relevant social media updates include meme creation challenges among your Steering Committee.

When choosing social media platforms, it is also helpful to understand how they are used since community members may engage with each platform differently and for diverse reasons. For example, Facebook posts may not do well during weekend evenings, while Instagram posts during this time may be quite popular. You might want to post PB updates during week days, but create humorous posts on Snapchat and Instagram during evenings and weekends. Similarly, the tone of posts should vary according to different user demographics.

The most important communications tasks to complete during the designing phase of PB are to decide which platforms you will have a presence on, post invites to assemblies and applications for Steering Committee on these platforms, and ensure there is information about PB on the city website that social media posts link to. Lastly, make sure you send a press release to local newspapers inviting them to cover the launch of PB and what this event will entail!
Idea Collection

Once you have chosen the social media and newspaper platforms that you will advertise PB through, it is time to start making regular invites to idea collection assemblies, and inviting the community to become Budget Delegates.

Make sure the tone and length suits each platform. It may be useful to start by making event flyers and sharing them on your selected social media platforms. **Ensure that initial posts take place at least one week in advance of the events, and then post reminders about specific events closer to the dates they are taking place.**

**Enlist the Steering Committee and other community based organizations to share and repost your events with their networks.**

Social media can be very useful for idea collection. **Some cities have even used social media platforms to hold idea collection challenges.** You may want to collect ideas by starting a hashtag on twitter and instagram that people can use. During physical assemblies, you may want to take photos of a few participants with their ideas on flipchart paper, and post them on instagram. Event reminders can also be sent via snapchat, which works well for reaching youth.

Whatever the platform chosen, it is important to list the date, time, and location of each event or Budget Delegate application invite information clearly.
Proposal Development

Proposal development can be a quiet time for external communications in PB, but social media can actually be used to maintain public energy towards the process during this time.

The work of Budget Delegates tends to happen behind the scenes within committees, and voters are often curious about the way in which ideas are selected. Social media is an opportunity to show them! Tweet, snap, and post pictures with stories introducing Budget Delegates from particular committees. Posting status updates on proposal development may also be helpful.

The proposal development phase is a chance to add faces to names and to give the community ownership of the process, as it is for the community, and led by the community.

Vote

The communications strategy employed during the vote should be relatively similar to that employed during idea collection; however, because the vote is the culmination of the process, posts should be even more energetic. Below are a few recommendations for advertising the vote.

Before events: PBP has seen success in cities that have urged people to pledge to vote before voting actually begins, as they may feel more committed if they sign their name on a document or form. Social media can be used to advertise the pledge and redirect them to an electronic document they can sign. They can then can receive a reminder email before voting begins.
It is also useful to post flyers and advertisements indicating the dates, times, and locations where people can vote. Because voting is the culmination of the PB process, it is beneficial to write a press release for newspapers to invite the community to vote.

**During events:** Take pictures of vote sites, particularly in busier areas where people look like they are having a good time. If there are performances during expos, post them! Sharing these photos on social media is a visual way to remind people the vote is taking place and show them that their neighbors are engaged in the process.

**After events:** Use your social media and email listservs to invite people to the results announcement event. It is useful to share the same flyers you may have had available during voting events. If people recognize the poster from these events they will be more likely to read it.

**Once winning projects are implemented (often years after the vote), you may want to share pictures of completed projects.** This helps provide energy to the process and show why PB is important.

Social media platforms and email communications present opportunities to brand your process, articulate the values that guide it, and make it relatable to the community.

In developing your communications plan and implementing it, you will likely learn about your community’s culture! Remember to rely on
community members for tips on what is culturally relevant. Cities that have put Steering Committee members in charge of their social media have seen a lot of success in terms of views and engagement.

A communications strategy is not a substitute for other forms of outreach; rather, it will strengthen your outreach efforts. Refer to the Outreach Toolkit to develop an effective outreach plan.⁴
Challenges of PB and Ways to Address Them

Time intensive

Including more decision-makers in a process requires substantial time commitment from city officials and community volunteers. Setting up a PB process also requires significant time and should not be rushed. We believe it’s worthwhile to invest time in PB as a community engagement tool. At the same time, following the tips in this manual, working from existing template materials, and being smart with technology will help ensure that everyone’s time is spent efficiently.

Shifts power and may threaten status quo

Some city officials and other members of the community can feel threatened by PB. Some community members may even attempt to co-opt the process by better organizing their resources, leading to the overrepresentation of particular groups in the process. Partnering with community organizations that can reach marginalized groups will help ensure greater participation. It is important to have members of underrepresented groups as members of the Steering Committee in order to have their voices present early in the decision-making process.
It may also be helpful to remind elected officials that if implemented carefully, PB can help raise the needs of all members of the community (particularly those from underrepresented groups), and can therefore increase their base of support.

**Requires effort in outreach & engaging community**

Many community members are not accustomed to participating in city decisions. There must be a strategic effort to reach a diverse base of community residents through multiple channels.

Relying on community organizations that already have relationships and access to the population to spread the word about PB has proven particularly useful.

**Community may be hesitant to participate/feel it’s not their job**

Elected officials are paid to make the type of decisions that often come up during PB processes. Community members who are not used to being involved in PB work may initially be hesitant to make these types of decisions. However, officials are not often aware of all the different priorities and needs of the community; this is an opportunity for everyone to make their voices heard and influence real change. It is important to make this clear in the messaging during outreach for the process.
The North American PB Network

If you’re running a PB process, we hope you’ll join the North American Participatory Budgeting Network! The PB Network connects cities and public agencies who are implementing PB and are seeking to improve their work through peer-to-peer learning and collaboration. The Participatory Budgeting Project launched the North American PB Network and continues to support its members and growth.

Members of this learning community share information, tools, resources, and best practices. The PB Network aims to deepen the impacts of PB by:

- Increasing performance on key evaluation metrics to improve the overall quality of PB
- Growing the number and size of PB processes across North America
- Identifying and promoting innovative new practices and ideas
- Supporting cities and public agencies to effectively address and solve challenges with PB
- Strengthening a community of practice that supports PB practitioners in their work

Network members co-create and participate in a variety of interactive activities like webinars and convenings. The Network offers many opportunities to lift up excellent examples of participatory budgeting in practice. Being a member is a great way to connect with folks across the US and Canada who are also leading PB, and to take your work to the next level!

Visit the North American PB Network webpage to read more information on the network and to download our PB Network information sheet.
Organizing Toolkit

A Guide for Organizing and Starting PB in Your Community

The Organizing Toolkit is a resource for individuals who want to start a PB process in a new area or expand and strengthen PB where it already exists. The toolkit helps implementers get organized and prepare for the process by providing background on what is needed to begin or expand PB.

The toolkit outlines the following:

• Could PB work in your community?
• Building Support
• How to make the case for PB to elected officials and community members
• Common arguments against PB (and how to address those concerns)
• How could PB work?

After going over initial information the toolkit outlines how to organize two public events:

1. Community Forum
2. City Council/Government Briefing

Executing public events to inform the public is key to the success of PB. This toolkit includes both best practices and also follow up items to ensure that your public events are the best that they can be. This kit is designed to help communities organize their movement and get access to funds. Using this toolkit allows for greater success when approaching elected officials and those with access to the budgets that can be used to start a PB process.

It is important to note that PBP also created the Scoping Toolkit which is for implementers to use to start the PB process. The organizing toolkit is more for the use of communities to gain support for their hopeful PB process.
Guide to Participatory Budgeting in Schools

Schools, school districts, and universities use participatory budgeting (PB) to engage students, families, and educators in deciding which school programs and improvements to fund using a portion of a school budget. PB in schools enhances transparency in school spending and introduces students to civic engagement by doing democracy.

We created a Guide to PB in Schools to help educators bring PB into their classrooms. The Guide consists of a step-by-step plan for implementing PB in schools over the course of 18 lesson plans and includes information on the type of support needed to do PB as well as possibilities for funding PB (i.e. district-wide funds, principal’s discretionary funds, PTA funds, etc.). PB in schools presents an opportunity for young people to organize an entire civic engagement process and improve their school in meaningful and impactful ways. Students who participate in school PB develop as leaders and build new skills by investing in their school and broader community.

Check out our PB in Schools video to see student power in action!
FAQs

Why do PB?

Different people get excited about PB for different reasons, but these six benefits of PB attract the most interest:

**Deeper Democracy**: Ordinary people have a real say—and they get to make real political decisions. As a result, PB tends to engage many people who are otherwise cynical about government. Politicians build closer relationships with their constituents and community members develop greater trust in government.

**Transparency & Accountability**: Budgets are policy without the rhetoric—what a government actually does. When community members decide on spending through a public process, there are fewer opportunities for corruption, waste, or backlash.

**Public Education**: Participants become more active and informed citizens. Community members, staff, and officials learn democracy by doing it. They gain a deeper understanding of complex political issues and community needs.

**More Informed Decisions**: Budget decisions are better when they draw on residents’ local knowledge and rely on their oversight. Once they are invested in the process, people make sure that money is spent wisely.

**Fairer Spending**: PB provides broader access to decision making, which helps level the playing field. When people spend months discussing project ideas, they are more likely to end up prioritizing projects that address the most pressing community needs.

**Community Building**: Through regular meetings and assemblies, people get to know their neighbors and feel more connected to their city. Local organizations spend less time lobbying and more time deciding policies. Budget assemblies connect community groups and help them recruit members.

What needs to be in place for PB to work?

At the most basic level, you need political will from above and community support from below. You need someone with control over budget money (an elected official, agency head, department director,
etc.) to agree to let the public decide how to spend part of the budget. And you need community organizations, in particular those working with marginalized communities, to engage people and to push the process forward.

**Could PB work in my city?**

Participatory Budgeting processes are carried out in cities of all sizes, from those with less than 20,000 inhabitants (e.g. Icapuí and Mundo Novo in Brazil, or Grottomare, Italy) to mega-cities like Buenos Aires or São Paulo. They exist in rural municipalities (like Governador Valadares, Brazil) and totally urbanized ones (Belo Horizonte). They also occur in cities with scarce public resources, like Villa El Salvador in Peru, and in European cities with higher levels of funds.

**Isn’t it the job of elected officials to decide how public money is spent?**

Voters elect politicians to improve their community, not just to make decisions. If elected officials share the responsibility of budgeting with residents, they can better address local needs and desires. PB helps officials do their job better by putting them in closer touch with their constituents and by injecting local knowledge and volunteer energy into the budget process.

**Won’t the usual suspects and groups with the most power dominate the process?**

This is a valid concern for any kind of public participation, and PB is not immune. But if you reduce the barriers to participation for marginalized groups, invite them to both plan and lead the process, and do targeted outreach in underrepresented communities, you can prevent any one sector from taking control. For instance, low-income community members are more likely to participate if PB is done with money that especially matters to them – such as money for housing, jobs, and schools. Regardless, when people are given real responsibility to make budget decisions, they tend to rise to the occasion and think about the broader community. For additional information on designing an inclusive process, take a look at [this article](#) in the Journal of Public Deliberation.
Is PB legal?

In order to be implemented, PB usually does not require legal changes to budgetary authority. The Mayor, City Council, or other authority retain legal power to approve budget decisions – but they make a political commitment to honor the PB vote. Once the process is established and the initial kinks are ironed out, some governments have sought to revise their charters to make PB legally binding.

What pot of money does the community allocate?

PB usually starts with “discretionary funds”—money that is not set aside for fixed or essential expenses and that is instead allocated at the discretion of officials or staff. While this is typically a small part of the overall budget, it is a big part of the funds that are available and up for debate each year.

There are many sources of discretionary money. It could come from the capital budget (for physical infrastructure) or the operating or expense budget (for programs and services) of your city, county, or state. City councilors or other officials could set aside their individual discretionary funds, as has been done in Chicago and New York. These officials may also have control over special allocations like Community Development Block Grants or Tax Increment Financing (TIF) money. Alternatively, housing authorities, schools, universities, community centers, and other public institutions could open up their budgets.

The funds could even come from non-governmental sources like foundations, community organizations, or grassroots fundraising, if this money is oriented towards public or community projects. Some PB processes mix funds from different sources, to build up a bigger budget pot.

How much money is enough to do PB?

Almost no pot of money is too small to start. PB has worked with a few thousand dollars and with many millions of dollars. Most processes involve 1-15% of the overall budget. PB usually starts as a pilot project with a small budget. If the process is successful, it can build political will to increase the pot of money.

How much money you need depends on what it will be used for. If students are allocating the money to school activities, a couple thousand dollars will go a long way. If residents are deciding on significant physical
improvements for public parks, streets, and buildings, you’ll probably want at least a million dollars. These capital projects typically require more money than programs and services, since they are built to last multiple years.

Regardless, you’ll want funds that are renewable from year to year, so that PB isn’t just a one-year fling. And in the long run, the more money, the more you can do!

**What other resources are necessary to implement PB?**

Creating a new experiment in democracy is not easy. It requires months of planning to design a sound process and to build community buy-in. Successful PBs draw on the expertise and resources of dozens of organizations and agencies. Bringing all these people to the table is not easy—and getting them to agree on a plan is even harder.

Once the process gets going, it needs an extensive outreach and communications effort. Without the financial and human resources to conduct outreach, print materials, and run scores of public meetings, community participation will be limited. Usually the elected official, city, or agency pays most of these expenses. Foundations and other funders can also help cover costs—especially at first, when the work is greatest.
Glossary

Allocate

To distribute funds for a specific reason.

Capital Budget

Funds used 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 5 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 (see also, Expense Budget).

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 its respective field.

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 (See also Capital Budget).
Equality

Being equal in rights, status, and opportunity.

Implementer

The individuals coordinating and carrying out the tasks needed to run the PB process. These are usually paid full-time staff.

Implementation

Carrying out the PB process.