

Participatory Budgeting

Key questions for planning your process

Advocacy

In the **Advocacy** stage of participatory budgeting (PB), you will engage with local partners and make the case for PB to the public and elected officials, in order to gain the political support you need to win adoption. This set of nine questions will help you to identify the issues you'll address through PB, the partners you'll engage, and the outreach strategies you'll use.

1. What issues or challenges in your community do you hope to address?

Participatory budgeting (PB) processes can address a number of different community challenges, depending on either how the process is designed and/or the funding source used for the process. What are the most pressing issues or challenges in your community that you would like to change?

2. What are your goals for the process?

There are many possible benefits, but the outcomes depend on how the process is designed. The goals that you set can help you design a process that is more likely to help you meet those goals. What are the most important things that you want to achieve through the process?

3. Which marginalized communities do you hope to engage in your process?

Participatory budgeting can be a powerful tool to advance equity and inclusion when it is designed to achieve these goals. Identifying and engaging with the most marginalized communities while you are advocating for PB incorporates their voices and needs into the planning from the earliest stages.

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4. **Who will you partner with to ensure that the marginalized communities are fully included in your PB process?**

Building partnerships with organizations that work directly with the marginalized groups is best practice for building an inclusive process and will have an impact on broader participation. For example, studies of PB in the US saw greater voter turnout from marginalized groups when they collaborated with civil society organizations on the design and implementation of PB.

5. **Where will you implement your process?**

Participatory budgeting (PB) can be implemented in any institution and with any pot of money if the decision-makers agree and community members are interested.

6. **Who has the power to approve a new process?**

Decision-makers who have the power to approve a new process can include elected officials, city agency leaders or department heads, principals or university chancellors, and presidents or directors of organizations.

7. **Have you identified which funds you will use for a PB process?**

PB can be done with any pot of money that decision-makers and community members agree to. Designing your process so the goals of your process align with the types of projects and services that can be funded is really important. Most funding has restrictions on the types of projects or services it can pay for. In addition, research has shown that communities that allocated more money per capita through PB had higher participation rates and greater voter turnout.

8. **Which reasons will you use to persuade people to support a PB process?**

9. **What kind of outreach will you use to advocate for PB?**

To win approval for PB you will need to build political and community support by engaging a wide range of people through a variety of tactics. The outreach tactics you choose will depend on who you are trying to win over to support PB.



Planning

In the **Planning** stage of participatory budgeting (PB), you will work with community partners to develop the rules and organization of the process. This set of nine questions will help you to identify how key partners will be involved in planning and to develop a basic framework for the process.

1. What are your goals for the process?

There are many possible benefits, but the outcomes depend on how the process is designed. The goals that you set can help you design a process that is more likely to help you meet those goals. What are the most important things that you want to achieve through the process?

2. How is the broader community involved in planning the PB process?

Involving the broader community in the planning of your PB process ensures that the needs and voices of the whole community are included. This helps to identify strategies for recruitment and inclusive participation, and gathers additional resources and support for your process.

3. Which marginalized communities will you focus on engaging in your process?

Participatory budgeting can be a powerful tool to advance equity and inclusion when it is designed to achieve these goals. Identifying and engaging with the most marginalized communities while you are advocating for PB incorporates their voices and needs into the planning from the earliest stages.

4. Who will you partner with to ensure that the marginalized communities are fully included in your PB process?

Building partnerships with organizations that work directly with marginalized groups is best practice for building an inclusive process and will have an impact on broader participation.

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5. What roles will key actors have in the planning stage of the process?

PB processes typically have many different people and organizations involved in the process, each with different roles and responsibilities.

Increase collaboration to increase inclusion. Research has shown that PB processes that collaborated with civil society organizations on the design and implementation of PB saw greater voter turnout from traditionally underrepresented groups.

6. Will your process be implemented in-person or virtually?

PB has been implemented in-person through meetings, idea collection events, and taking PB to the people to participate (voting at grocery stores, transit stops, parks, etc). PB has also been implemented virtually (or online) through specific platforms or by using a variety of online tools and social media to engage people. Many places adopt both in-person and virtual strategies. The strategies you choose to design your process should reflect your goals and the best ways to engage any marginalized populations. If you are considering incorporating a digital participation platform, review the Guide to [Digital Participation Platforms](#) to choose the right platform for your process.

7. Which funds will you use for the PB process?

8. What are the restrictions on the PB funding?

Most funding has restrictions on the types of projects or services it can pay for. Some PB processes also add additional criteria or restrictions around the funding such focusing the PB process on climate change or community safety.

9. How long is the full cycle of the PB process?

PB processes occur annually but vary in length depending upon the design of each phase of the process. The length of the full cycle includes every phase (Idea Collection, Proposal Development, and Vote). You will determine the specific length of time for each phase as you progress through the playbook.

Idea Collection

In the **Idea Collection** stage of participatory budgeting (PB), participants will submit ideas for projects that they would like to be funded. This set of seven questions will help you to identify who can submit ideas, where they'll do it, what outreach strategies you'll use, and the role of key actors.

1. Who can propose project ideas?

The Idea collection phase can reveal a wide range of community needs that are eligible for project proposals. Opening up your idea collection phase so that as many people can participate as possible provides an abundance of ideas, uncovers community needs, and creates a more inclusive process.

2. Is there a minimum age to propose an idea?

Many PB processes do not include an age requirement during the idea collection phase to create more inclusive processes and to ensure that all community perspectives, needs, and ideas are collected and given a voice.

Research has shown that when youth and children are involved in civic activities they show greater civic engagement as adults later on in life.

3. Where will people submit ideas?

PB processes have implemented a wide range of strategies to collect ideas from people.

- Identify how people and the marginalized communities you are focused on in your community are most likely to engage.
- Next, select the idea collection strategy that matches how you will reach them. For example, if people engage more at their local public school, plan an idea collection event there.

Many PB processes implement multiple idea collection strategies to ensure participation from as many people as possible.

4. What kind of outreach will you do to collect ideas?

To gather a wide range of ideas for PB, you will need to conduct outreach to the broader community and promote idea collection to as many people as possible. This

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outreach should explain how to submit ideas, and can also include collection of ideas. In addition, you will need to conduct outreach to gather ideas from the marginalized communities you are focused on in your community.

Many PB processes use multiple outreach tactics. Research has shown that collaborating with civil society organizations and using different modes of communication increases participation in PB.

5. How will you document and share ideas?

6. What roles will key actors have in the Idea Collection stage of the process?

PB processes typically have many different people and organizations involved in the process, each with different roles and responsibilities.

Increase collaboration to increase inclusion. Research has shown that PB processes that collaborated with civil society organizations on the design and implementation of PB saw greater voter turnout from traditionally underrepresented groups.

7. What is the timeline for the Idea Collection Phase?

The Idea Collection timeline includes how long you will need for the logistical planning of idea collection events/meetings/mail/email/social media; outreach for your idea collection; and time for people to submit ideas.

Idea collection can take a few months or a month depending on how much capacity you have to conduct a wide range of idea collection strategies

Proposal Development

In the **Proposal Development** stage of participatory budgeting (PB), participants will use the ideas submitted during the Idea Collection stage to generate feasible project proposals that can be included on the ballot. **In some places around the world this phase is divided into two stages: proposal development and feasibility analysis. The questions below include feasibility analysis (criteria for project decision-making, project pricing and researching, and roles and responsibilities, etc.).**

This set of 11 questions will help you to identify who can develop project proposals, how they'll do it, what outreach strategies you'll use, and the role of key actors.

1. Who is eligible to develop project proposals?

The proposal development phase gives the power to participants to co-create project proposals for the ballot with government staff and other experts. Opening up participation creates new spaces for people to develop civic skills.

Studies indicate that the impacts of PB are more significant among participants with fewer prior experiences of civic engagement and political participation.

2. Is there a minimum eligible age to develop project proposals?

Many PB processes have no age requirement for the proposal development phase. Research has shown that when youth and children are involved in civic activities they show greater civic engagement as adults later on in life.

3. How will people develop proposals?

PB processes have used a variety of strategies to develop proposals for the ballot including virtually through online forums, participants creating proposals through regular deliberative meetings, conducting feasibility analysis, or using a request for proposal process.

Research to consider when designing your proposal development phase includes that:

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- Participants have shown greater gains in civic learning and positive changes in attitude towards government with greater intensity of participation (e.g. frequency of meetings, opportunities to deliberate and make decisions)
- PB redirects spending to low-income communities when it uses equity criteria for determining which projects go on the ballot.

4. Where will people meet to develop project proposals?

People may meet in-person, virtually, or both to develop project proposals. Some PB processes include multiple spaces for proposal development (virtual and in-person) to encourage wide participation. In-person locations need to be accessible and inclusive spaces for all participants. Select below where people will meet to develop proposals.

5. Will you create issue-based or demographic committees for proposal development?

For proposal development, you can group participants in committees based around specific issues (e.g. parks, schools, arts & culture, or the environment) or specific demographic groups (e.g., youth, an immigrant or refugee population, or for a specific language) to create safe and inclusive spaces for participation. You can also choose to decide what these committees are after idea collection, based on categories that emerge from the ideas from participants.

6. How much information is needed for a full project proposal?

Project proposals typically provide information to other community members about the project and the community issue that is being addressed so they can make informed decisions while voting.

7. How will proposals that are not selected for the ballot be addressed?

PB processes can promote trust in government and public institutions. Increasing transparency by documenting and sharing all project proposals publicly helps to build a sense of trust and accountability.



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8. How will you engage the broader public in the proposal development phase?

Engaging the broader public in proposal development can serve multiple purposes including serving as a way to gather feedback and finalize project ideas prior to the vote, add an additional layer of accountability by providing an opportunity for the community to ask questions about proposed projects and increasing transparency about the projects proposed for the ballot.

9. What kind of outreach will you do for proposal development?

To ensure broad and inclusive participation in how you share the project proposals with the broader public, you will need to conduct outreach to as many people as possible.

Many PB processes utilize multiple outreach tactics to reach marginalized communities and to engage as many people as possible. Studies have shown that using multiple modes of communication increases participation.

10. What roles will key actors have in the Proposal Development stage of the process?

PB processes typically have many different people and organizations involved in the process, each with different roles and responsibilities. Select roles and responsibilities that different actors will have in the proposal development phase including feasibility analysis, researching project proposals, and gathering cost estimates for projects.

11. What is the timeline for the Proposal Development Phase?

The proposal development timeline includes how long you will need to narrow down the ideas collected during idea collection; research and create full project proposals; logistical planning and outreach for project expos, and holding your project expos. Research has shown that the duration of participation affects learning for participants: the longer the engagement, the stronger the impact.

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The proposal development phase can take several months or a month depending on the complexity of the issues, your deadlines, and how much capacity you have to facilitate discussions.

Voting

In the **Voting** stage of participatory budgeting (PB), participants will select the project proposals they want to be funded. This set of 11 questions will help you to identify who can vote, where and when they'll do it, what type of ballot you'll use, and the role of key actors.

1. Who is eligible to vote on the PB ballot?

The voting phase gives direct decision-making power on real money to participants. Opening up participation in voting creates new spaces of civic engagement and political participation to marginalized communities and to people who do not normally participate.

Studies indicate that the impacts of PB are more significant among participants with fewer prior experiences of civic engagement, leadership, and political participation.

2. Is there a legal status requirement to vote?

Many PB processes have no legal status requirement for voters. Not having a legal status requirement creates a more equitable and inclusive process by providing people who can not participate in other forms of political participation with a voice in their community.

3. Is there a minimum eligible age to vote?

Many PB processes have no age requirement and/or have a voting age that includes youth and children in the PB vote. Research has shown that when youth and children are involved in civic activities they show greater civic engagement as adults later on in life.



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4. How will PB voters prove their eligibility to vote?

Some PB processes that have eligibility requirements to vote, such as living in the area, ask for documentation. Other PB processes do not require documentation or proof. Removing as many barriers to participating as possible will create a more inclusive process. If documentation is required, include a wide variety of options so more people can participate.

5. Where will people vote?

PB processes have implemented a wide range of ways for people to vote and many use multiple forms of voting and locations to encourage participation. PB provides an opportunity to be creative, create new community spaces, and have some fun. Think about where people who do not normally participate are engaged and bring the vote to them.

6. What type of voting ballot will you use?

PB processes typically use one of three different types of voting methods for the ballot including approval voting, ranked voting and knapsack voting.

- In approval voting, each voter selects (votes for) a specific number of their favorite projects from the ballot.
- In ranked voting, voters select a specific number of their favorite projects from the ballot and then order them according to their preference (e.g. 1st choice, 2nd choice, ect).
- In knapsack voting, each voter selects as many of their favorite projects as they want as long as the total cost of all of the projects selected does not exceed the available budget (e.g. fits in their knapsack).

7. Will you have the ballot translated into other languages?

8. What kind of outreach will you do to get out the vote?

To ensure broad and inclusive participation in the PB vote, you will need to conduct outreach to as many people as possible. Many PB processes utilize multiple outreach tactics to reach marginalized communities and to engage as many people as possible the vote.

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Research has shown that collaborating with civil society organizations can increase voter turnout of traditionally underrepresented groups and using multiple and different forms of communication increase participation in the vote.

9. What roles will key actors have in the Voting stage of the process?

PB processes typically have many different people and organizations involved in the process, each with different roles and responsibilities. Which roles and responsibilities will different actors have in the vote phase?

10. What is the timeline for the Voting Phase?

The vote timeline includes how long you will need for the logistical planning for the vote including creating and conducting your get-out-the outreach campaign, holding your voting events and providing time for people to help spread the word and vote. The voting phase can take several weeks or a month depending on how much capacity you have to conduct multiple forms of voting and/or voting events.

11. When will the vote take place?

Most PB processes allow one to three weeks for voting.

Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation

In the **Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation** stage of participatory budgeting (PB), key actors will implement the funded projects, monitor project implementation, and evaluate how the PB process went. This set of five questions will help you to identify who will be involved and to develop a framework for monitoring and evaluation.

1. What roles will key actors have in the Project Implementation stage of the process?

PB processes typically have many different people and organizations involved in the process, each with different roles and responsibilities.

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2. Who will monitor project implementation?

Throughout project implementation it is common for PB processes to involve residents and those involved in developing the project proposals in monitoring to increase transparency and accountability.

3. How is project implementation monitored?

Monitoring projects often includes regular tracking of implementation progress as well as making on-going decisions about the execution of or changes to projects.

4. How will winning projects that can not be implemented be addressed?

PB processes can promote trust in government and public institutions. Building trust has been found in processes that have increased transparency and accountability, particularly during the implementation phase when changes to winning projects can and do occur.

Sometimes a winning project can not be implemented as it was originally designed after it has won. This can happen for a variety of reasons including the cost estimates can go up making it no longer feasible, the organization that was selected to implement it is no longer able to, or unexpected engineering challenges are discovered during implementation.

Sometimes the project will need to be changed and other times it will not be possible to implement the project. Most scenarios will have cost implications to the overall PB budget.

5. Will you evaluate the PB process?

Most PB processes conduct evaluations to document their process, measure how well they have met their goals, and determine the impact they have had on participants and the community.