

About this Handbook

This booklet was developed by the New York City Participatory Budgeting Steering Committee, based on workshops and discussions with community members in July 2011. While participatory budgeting is inspired by experiences elsewhere, we want the New York City process to reflect the special characteristics of the local community. We thus generated these initial guidelines and rules based on our understanding of community needs, issues, and interests. This handbook is only a starting point, and we intend for it to remain a work in progress. We expect to continue developing and improving the process as it unfolds and in future years, together with other community members. Maybe you will even help!

About the City-Wide Steering Committee

At the start of this initiative, the participating Council Members asked the Participatory Budgeting Project and Community Voices Heard to help facilitate the process - PBP as the technical assistance lead and CVH as the community engagement lead. Together with the project leads, they formed a Steering Committee to guide the first year of PB. The four Council Members agreed on an initial invite list of city-wide partners - organizations that were committed to improving city spaces and governance, or that could contribute research, policy, or organizing expertise. Each Council Member also invited a few local groups and community boards, to ensure that district perspectives were represented. The following organizations agreed to join the initial Steering Committee:

Council Member Brad Lander	Pratt Center for Community Development
Council Member Mark-Viverito	Project for Public Spaces
Council Member Eric Ulrich	Right to the City Alliance
Council Member Jumaane Williams	VOCAL-NY
Community Voices Heard	Celina Su, Brooklyn College, CUNY
The Participatory Budgeting Project	Jessica Gordon Nembhard, John Jay College, CUNY
Building Movement Project	Mimi Abramovitz, Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College, CUNY
Center for the Study of Brooklyn	Andreas Hernandez, Marymount Manhattan College
Center for Urban Pedagogy	Ayse Yonder, Pratt Institute
Common Cause NY	The Children's Aid Society (8th District)
Community Development Project of the Urban Justice Center	Little Sisters of the Assumption (8th District)
Dēmos	Union Settlement (8th District)
East Flatbush Village, Inc.	Flatbush Development Corporation (45th District)
Fiscal Policy Institute	Rockaway Task Force (32nd District)
Hester Street Collaborative	Fifth Avenue Committee (39th District)
Manhattan Institute	Manhattan Community Board 11 (8th District)
New York Civic	Manhattan Community Board 7 (8th District)
New York Civic Participation Project	Queens Community Board 14 (32nd District)
New York Immigration Coalition	Brooklyn Community Board 7 (39th District)
New Yorkers for Parks	Brooklyn Community Board 12 (39th District)
NYC Independent Budget Office	

Introduction by the Council Members

New York City is about to experience a new kind of democracy. Over the next several months, we will undertake an exciting initiative to put budgeting decisions directly in the hands of the people those decisions will impact most – the residents of our districts.

Participatory budgeting is grassroots democracy at its best. Residents of our diverse districts will come together, exchange and debate ideas, work together to turn ideas into project proposals, and then decide what ideas get funded at the ballot box. The process will make budgeting more transparent and accessible. It will open up participation to people who have never been involved before. And it will make budgeting more effective, because who knows better what is needed in our communities than the people who live there.

Just as participatory budgeting requires elected officials to collaborate with our constituents – and give up some power to them (something we are not usually too good at doing) – this NYC Participatory Budgeting Handbook was developed through a similarly democratic process. Working with a Steering Committee representing a wide spectrum of New Yorkers, in background, geography, and ideology, this handbook was put together through compromise and consensus. It represents a lot of work and earned respect by some of our city's elected and grassroots leaders. We want to thank everyone who participated, and especially Community Voices Heard and the Participatory Budgeting Project, for their thoughtful work bringing us all together and structuring the decision-making process.

We are proud to present this handbook to you and are excited to dive into this new democratic practice for New York City.

Let the participating begin!

New York City Councilmembers:

Brad Lander
District 39, Brooklyn

Melissa Mark-Viverito
District 8, Manhattan/Bronx

Eric Ulrich
District 32, Queens

Jumaane Williams
District 45, Brooklyn

What is Participatory Budgeting?

Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget.

PB gives ordinary people real decision-making power over real money. The process was first developed in Brazil in 1989, and there are now over 1,000 participatory budgets around the world, most at the municipal level.

Participatory Budgeting in New York City

Starting in 2011, New York City Council Members Brad Lander, Melissa Mark-Viverito, Eric Ulrich, and Jumaane Williams are using participatory budgeting to allocate part of their capital discretionary funds. Discretionary funds are resources that the Council Members can allocate at their discretion, as they desire. Capital funds can only be used for physical infrastructure projects on city-owned or non-city-owned land.

Between October 2011 and April 2012, the four Council Members will invite residents to directly decide how to spend at least \$1 million of their discretionary capital funds in each of the four districts – a total of around \$6 million. Residents of each district will propose and vote on local infrastructure projects, such as improvements to schools, parks, libraries, and housing. The Council Members will then submit the projects with the most votes to Council.

Council Member Offices

- Participate in the Steering Committee and the local District Committee, and assist with their responsibilities
- Provide information on the budget funds and past spending
- Secure spaces for assemblies and meetings, in accessible and ADA-compliant locations whenever possible
- Provide cost estimates for project proposals
- Offer feedback and technical assistance on project proposals
- Serve as a liaison between budget delegates and city agencies
- Facilitate and oversee online participation by residents
- Coordinate outreach to city-wide and local media
- Serve as spokespeople for city-wide and local media
- Coordinate the public vote
- Deliver final budget priorities to the City
- Oversee any necessary changes to approved projects, with the Monitoring Committees
- Deliver regular updates to budget delegates and the public during all stages of the PB process

Research & Evaluation Team

External researchers and Steering Committee members are collaborating to study, document, and evaluate the PB process.

- Coordinate and monitor research and evaluation of the PB process
- Compile reports and background information on each district
- Develop reports and materials to summarize the evaluation of PB
- Develop proposals and recommendations for scaling up PB in NYC

Project Leads

(Community Voices Heard & The Participatory Budgeting Project)

- Participate in the Steering Committee and the District Committees, and assist with their responsibilities
- Offer technical assistance on the PB process
- Coordinate evaluation of the PB process
- Help develop and implement outreach plans for each district
- Help with press outreach
- Facilitate communication and information exchange between the groups involved in the PB process

City-Wide Steering Committee

A Steering Committee coordinates the PB process across the participating districts. The committee includes the participating Council Members, the project leads, community boards and community-based organizations from the participating Council districts, and city-wide organizations focused on good government, research, policy, organizing, and community education. Interested delegates will also be able to join the Steering Committee after the final vote. A full list of Steering Committee members is included at the end of the handbook.

- Design and oversee PB process
- Help raise support funding
- Help create online participation tools
- Create and distribute educational and promotional materials about the PB process
- Serve as spokespeople for city-wide and local media as called upon regarding the Citywide Steering Committee role
- Mobilize broad, inclusive, and proportional community participation
- Facilitate budget assemblies and delegate meetings
- Facilitate budget delegate orientations
- Evaluate the PB process
- Revise rules to the PB process
- Encourage PB for other districts and budgets
- Monitor project implementation
- Identify and recruit groups to support the PB process at the city & district level
- Ensure that the district-level PB process is inclusive and consistent with the core principles
- Provide orientation to new Steering Committee members

Community Boards

Community Boards that overlap with the participating Council districts provide support and connect PB with the planning process.

- Participate in the Steering Committee and the local District Committee, and assist with their responsibilities
- Provide background information on neighborhood needs & project ideas
- Offer feedback and technical assistance on project proposals
- Identify community needs and potential projects to be prioritized

Principles: What is this for?

Participatory budgeting has many goals, but for the New York City pilot process we especially intend to uphold three core principles:

1. Transparency

Budget decisions and decision-making should be open and accessible to the public. Shining a light on the entire budget process helps taxpayers scrutinize spending and contribute more productively to budget discussions.

2. Equality

Every person should have the same power - one person, one vote. Giving each community member the same power to propose and vote on spending ideas makes governance more democratic.

3. Inclusion

All voices in the community should be included - especially those of community members who feel disillusioned with the political process or face obstacles to participating. By making every effort to reduce obstacles to participation, we hope to prevent the 'usual suspects' or groups with more resources from dominating, and to generate projects that better reflect community needs.

Additional Principles

Alongside these three core principles, we intend for the PB process to inspire greater civic participation, build community, and educate and empower residents. We aim to deliver better budget decisions - spending that is more responsible and efficient, and that results in more sustainable and livable neighborhoods.

We ask everyone involved to help uphold these principles during all stages of the process.

Timeline: What happens when?

The PB process involves a series of meetings that feed into the city's annual budget cycle. For 2011-2012 the process has six main steps, starting in October 2011 and continuing into 2012.

Oct-Nov 2011

Neighborhood Assemblies (First Round)

At public meetings in each district, the Council Members present information on the budget funds, and residents brainstorm project ideas and select budget delegates.

Nov 2011

Delegate Orientations

Delegates selected at the assemblies learn about the budget process, project development, and key spending areas, then form committees.

Fall 2011

Winter 2011/ 2012

Nov 2011- Feb 2012

Delegate Meetings

Delegates meet in committees to transform the community's initial project ideas into full proposals, with support from Council Member staff and other experts.

- Encourage people to participate!
- Monitor and provide input on the implementation of projects
- Evaluate the PB process
- Communicate delegate concerns and ideas to the District Committee and City-Wide Steering Committee

Monitoring Committees

Some budget delegates and Community Board members participate in monitoring committees, to ensure that approved projects are implemented properly.

- Monitor progress on approved projects
- Oversee any necessary changes to approved projects, with the Council Member offices
- Communicate with delegates and residents about progress on projects

District Committees

In each participating Council district, a District Committee composed of local organizations, institutions, and Community Boards manages the PB process locally. Interested delegates will also be able to join their District Committee.

- Determine the number of neighborhood assemblies, and help plan the assemblies
- Arrange food, childcare, and interpretation for assemblies and meetings
- Distribute educational and promotional materials about the PB process
- Develop outreach plans and mobilize residents to participate
- Serve as spokespeople for city-wide and local media, when called upon
- Mobilize broad, inclusive, and proportional community participation
- Facilitate budget assemblies and delegate meetings
- Provide guidance and background information to delegates
- Help resolve conflicts between budget delegates
- Monitor project implementation
- Evaluate the PB process
- Revise rules to the PB process
- Provide orientation to new District Committee members



The fiscal year for the city budget ends on June 30, 2013.

Roles and Responsibilities: Who does what?

There is a role for everyone in the participatory budgeting process, but different people have different roles and responsibilities, based partly on their stake in the community and their time commitment to the process. We encourage every community stakeholder to both participate and encourage others in the community to participate.

Community Stakeholders

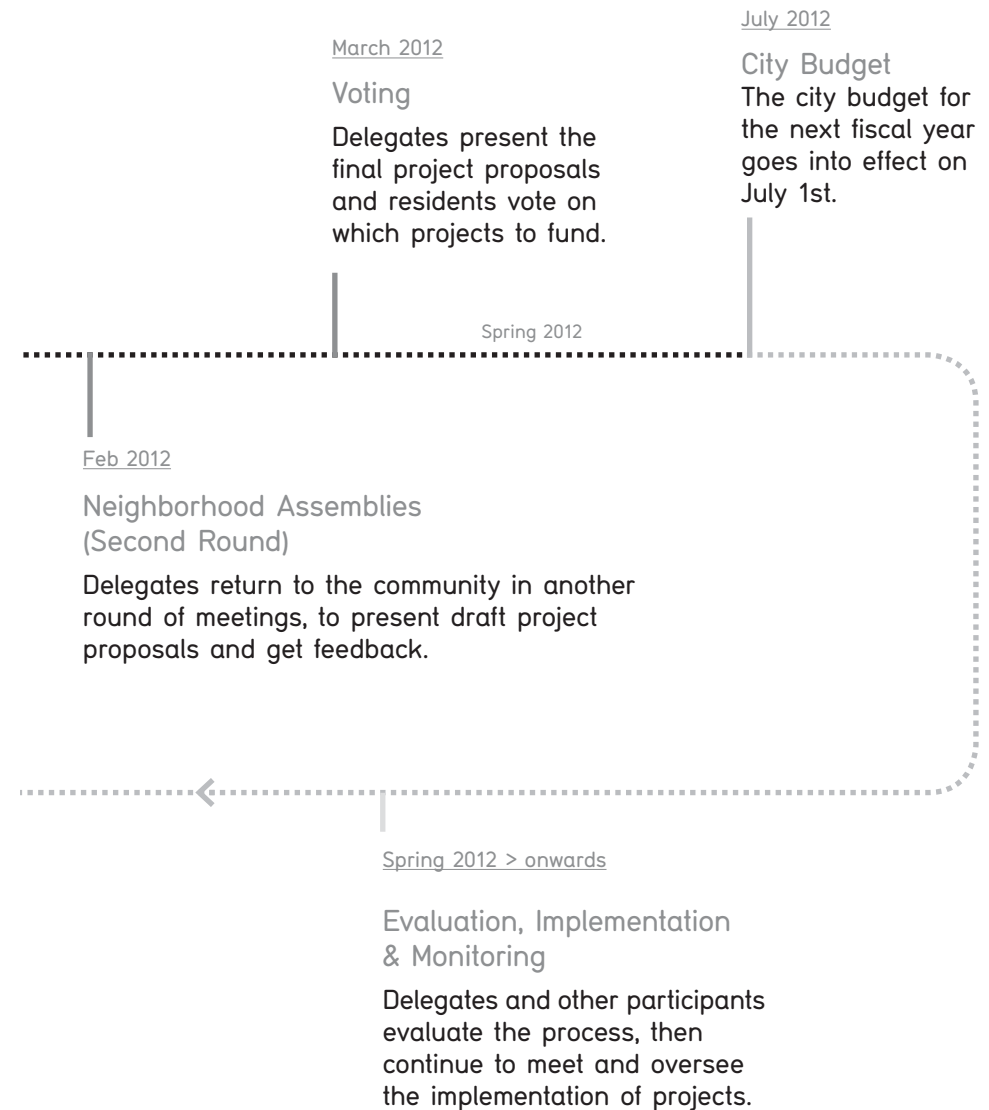
Anyone can participate in the process, even if they only come to one meeting.

- Identify local problems and needs
- Propose project ideas
- Provide input and feedback on project proposals
- Monitor and provide input on the implementation of projects
- Provide feedback for the PB evaluation
- Develop and seek out proposals to present to the delegate committees
- Encourage people to participate!
- Volunteer to be budget delegates, if they are at least 16 years old and live in the district, work in the district, own a business in the district, attend school in the district, or are parents of children who attend school in the district
- Vote on project proposals, if they are at least 18 years old and live in the district

Budget Delegates

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

- Research local problems, needs, and projects
- Learn about the budget funds and the budget process
- Discuss and prioritize initial project ideas
- Develop full project proposals, with technical assistance from experts
- Update residents on project proposals and solicit feedback
- Prepare project posters and presentations
- Serve as spokespeople for city-wide and local media, when called upon



Rules: How does it work?

Neighborhood Assemblies

- Each district will have at least 5 first round assemblies, including any special assemblies for large non-English speaking communities in the district.
- Anyone is welcome to attend the neighborhood assemblies and propose project ideas.
- Participants can volunteer to serve as budget delegates if they:
 - 1 · live in the district,
 - work in the district,
 - own a business in the district,
 - attend school in the district **or** are parents of children who attend school in the district **and**
 - 2 · are at least 16 years old

Delegate Meetings

- All delegates must attend a delegate orientation session in their district.
- At the delegate orientation sessions, each budget delegate will join a committee, to discuss and develop project proposals for a certain issue area or demographic group.
- Potential issue committees may include but are not limited to:
 - Transportation
 - Public Health
 - Public Safety
 - Education
 - Parks, Recreation & Environment
 - Art & Culture
 - Housing
- If there are a sufficient number of delegates who feel that they face major obstacles to participating fully in issue committees, they may form demographic committees. Demographic committees are meant to ensure maximum participation from community members who might not otherwise participate, not to divide or separate sectors of the community. The demographic committees will develop projects that specifically address the needs of their demographic group. Potential demographic committees may include but are not limited to:
 - Youth
 - Committees for non-English speaking communities in the district

- There must be a minimum of five people to form a delegate committee.
- Delegates may not form geographic committees (committees for only part of their district).
- Each committee will decide how many project proposals it submits for the public vote.
- Each committee will send its project proposals to the district's Council Member at least one month before the public vote.

Voting for Projects

- People can vote for projects if they live in the district and are at least 18 years old.
- At the time of voting, voters must present proof that they satisfy the eligibility requirements. Accepted IDs include, but are not limited to: driver's license, state ID with current address, Medicare card, utilities bill, voter registration card, consulate ID, or student ID.
- The City-Wide Steering Committee will decide the number of votes people may cast when the approximate number of projects on the ballot is known.
- Voters may cast one vote per project.
- Each voter can vote on one occasion. Voting opportunities will take place on multiple days and in multiple locations in each district.

Implementation & Monitoring

- After the vote, any interested budget delegates and Community Board members will form a monitoring committee in each district to monitor the implementation of projects and address any problems that arise.
- If an approved project cannot be implemented for some reason, the funds allocated to it are awarded to the unfunded project with the next most votes. If the funds are not enough to cover the next unfunded project, the Council Member will try to find additional funds to cover the remaining costs. If this project still cannot be funded, the money goes to the next highest vote getter that can be covered by the available funds.