

# 15 Key Metrics for Evaluating Participatory Budgeting: A Toolkit for Evaluators and Implementers

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*Developed by Public Agenda and the Participatory Budgeting Project together with the North American Participatory Budgeting Research Board, and with generous funding from Democracy Fund.*



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# Toolkit Attachments

Key PB Metrics Research Instruments:

- Idea Collection Participant Survey Template
- Voter Survey Template
- Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers

# See Also

*Library of Additional Participatory Budgeting Research Instruments*

# Comments

*With any questions or feedback, please contact Chloe, Carolin or David at Public Agenda at [research@publicagenda.org](mailto:research@publicagenda.org) or 212-686-6610, extension 143.*

# Introduction

Evaluation is a critical part of participatory budgeting (PB) in the U.S. and Canada. Systematic evaluations of PB processes are helping implementers, participants and other stakeholders better understand PB's growth, reach and impacts in individual communities and across North America.

In this toolkit, we describe *15 indicators ("metrics")* that capture important elements of each PB process and the PB movement in North America overall. These metrics were developed with the goal of encouraging and supporting some common research goals across PB sites and, in turn, meaningfully informing local and national discussions about PB in the U.S. and Canada. The North American Research Board, Public Agenda (PA) and the Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP) drew on previous evaluations of PB in the U.S. and around the world, the academic literature on PB as a democratic innovation and the experience of local evaluators in the U.S. and Canada to develop these metrics.

This toolkit also includes a set of *Key PB Metrics Research Instruments* to support local evaluations and to facilitate the collection of data that address the key PB metrics. To create these instruments, Public Agenda and PBP adapted surveys originally developed and used by local evaluators in various PB sites across North America.

The Key PB Metrics Research Instruments are the following:

- 1. Idea Collection Participant Survey Template*
- 2. Voter Survey Template*
- 3. Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers*

By sharing a common set of metrics and instruments, individual PB sites contribute collectively to a better understanding of PB as a whole. At the same time, these metrics and related research instruments should not distract from or diminish local evaluators' capacity to pursue research questions that are most relevant to their local PB processes. While we hope local evaluators share our belief in the value of some common research objectives and will find these materials useful, we want to stress that these materials are only recommendations. Local evaluators may decide to adopt or not adopt all or part of them as best fits their goals and capacities.

Public Agenda will continue to support local evaluators by providing research templates and instruments, by providing one-on-one troubleshooting, by making connections among local evaluators and by helping with quantitative data analysis.

Moreover, Public Agenda will prepare a yearly research report that draws together available data from across all PB sites in North America for the key metrics summarized in this document. This report will be written for and disseminated to a broad audience. It will highlight the work of local evaluators and collaborative efforts across sites. Public Agenda will invite all local evaluators to review the report and provide feedback before its publication.

Public Agenda looks forward to working with local PB evaluators across the U.S. and Canada to inform both PB processes locally and the national conversation about PB in the U.S. and Canada.

***See also: Library of Additional Participatory Budgeting Research Instruments***

For evaluators who are interested in further data collection, such as conducting qualitative interviews with participants and observing meetings, we have compiled a selection of additional research instrument templates. These instruments have been used previously in PB evaluations in the U.S. They do not directly inform the key PB metrics, but local evaluators may find them useful as they develop additional research questions. This ***Library of Additional Participatory Budgeting Research Instruments*** currently includes *additional demographic questions for participant surveys, sample budget delegate surveys, qualitative interview guides and sample meeting observation sheets.*

# How to Read the Key PB Metrics

The 15 Key PB Metrics, outlined in the rest of this document, describe PB's potential impacts in three areas:

## Civic and Political Life:

- a) To what extent does PB engage a significant and growing number of residents, including those who cannot or do not participate in mainstream political life? (*Metrics 1, 2, 3, 4, 5*)
- b) To what extent does PB foster collaboration between civil society organizations and government? (*Metric 6*)
- c) Is PB associated with elected officials' political careers? (*Metric 7*)

## Inclusion and Equity:

- a) Is PB engaging traditionally marginalized communities? (*Metric 8*)
- b) Through what means does PB facilitate participation? (*Metric 9*)
- c) Is PB fostering equitable distribution of resources? (*Metric 10*)

## Government:

- a) How are the number of PB processes and dollar amounts allocated to PB changing from year to year? (*Metrics 11, 12*)
- b) What is the implementation rate of winning PB projects? (*Metric 13*)
- c) Are additional resources being allocated to projects or needs identified through PB? (*Metric 14*)
- d) What is the cost to government of implementing PB? (*Metric 15*)

Each metric is described with:

- A title and a description of how it contributes to a better understanding of PB.
- An indication of whether data collection depends on *primary* or *secondary data sources* or both.

***Primary data sources*** means data collection needs to be conducted by local evaluators at key points during the PB process.

***Secondary data sources*** means data collection can be conducted after the PB processes using publicly available sources, by either local evaluators, Public Agenda or PBP.

- Specific variables that inform the metrics and (where applicable) recommended survey items or questions. Recommended survey items and questions correspond to those in *key PB metrics research instruments*.

Additionally, some metrics include further notes on measurement and analysis issues.

# Summary Table of the Key PB Metrics

<i>Metric</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Primary Source (Local Evaluators)</i>	<i>Secondary Source (PA, PBP)</i>
<b>Impact on Civic and Political Life</b>			
<b>1. # of PB participants and % of eligible residents who participate.</b>	Indicates PB's reach and ability to engage the targeted population.	Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers: # of participants at idea collection events, # of people submitting ideas online, # of active budget delegates, # of voters	Comparisons with # of PB-eligible residents in PB voting area
<b>2. # and % of PB voters who are eligible to vote but did not vote in the most recent local election.</b>	Indicates PB's potential to engage residents who don't participate in the mainstream political process.	Voter Surveys: <i>Did you vote in the [specify year and type of last local election]? A: I am not eligible/ No, but I am eligible/ Yes, I voted/ I am not sure</i>	Comparisons with citizen voting age population (CVAP) data
<b>3. # and % of PB voters who are ineligible to vote in local elections.</b>	Indicates PB's potential to engage people who are excluded from standard forms of political participation owing to age, immigration status or other reasons.	Voter Surveys: <i>Did you vote in the [specify year and type of last local election]? A: I am not eligible/ No, but I am eligible/ Yes, I voted/ I am not sure</i>	
<b>4. # and % of participants who report prior civic engagement or participation.</b>	Indicates PB's potential to attract otherwise less civically engaged residents.	Idea Collection Participant and Voter Surveys: <i>In the past 12 months, have you worked with other people in your neighborhood to fix a problem or improve a condition in your community, not including work you may have done related to participatory budgeting? A: Y/ N/ I am not sure</i>	
<b>5. # and % of participants who report being new or returning to PB.</b>	Indicates both growth and retention of PB participants and various patterns of participation over time.	Idea Collection Participant Surveys: Participated or not in any way in previous PB year Voter Surveys: Voted or not in previous PB year	
<b>6. # of nongovernmental and community-based organizations involved in PB.</b>	Indicates the extent to which PB engages civil society. Also an indicator of variation in how processes are implemented.	Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers: # and names of organizations that helped with outreach, were on steering committees, received funding to help implement projects	
<b>7. # and % of elected officials reelected.</b>	Helps to assess over time PB's association with officials' political careers.		Media
<b>Impact on Inclusion and Equity</b>			
<b>8. # and % of participants who are of low SES and/or people of color; and relative to demographics in jurisdiction and most recent local election.</b>	Indicates PB's potential to engage communities that are marginalized in the traditional political process.	Idea Collection Participant and Voter Surveys: Race/ethnicity, Income, Education, Gender, Age	Comparisons with local population and voter demographics in local elections

<i>Metric</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Primary Source (Local Evaluators)</i>	<i>Secondary Source (PA, PBP)</i>
<b>Impact on Inclusion and Equity cont.</b>			
<b>9. Accessibility indicators for idea collection phase, project development phase and voting.</b>	Captures aspects of the process implementation that increase access during the idea collection phase, the project development phase and the voting phase.	Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers: # of assemblies and other idea collection events, online idea collection, outreach methods; # and type of budget delegate committees; # of reg. voting sites, # of mobile voting locations, online voting, outreach methods Idea Collection Participant and Voter Surveys: <i>How did you first hear about today's [event/vote]? (Check all that apply) [...]</i>	
<b>10. Allocation of PB funds by project type (to be compared with the allocation of comparable funds prior to PB).</b>	Describes how PB funds get allocated across types of projects. Informs study of differences in allocation and of equity in the distribution of PB funds.		#, % and \$ of winning projects by project category; #, % and \$ of PB ballot items by project category; #, % and \$ of projects by project cat. prior to PB
<b>Impact on Government</b>			
<b>11. # of new, continued and discontinued PB processes from year to year.</b>	Tracks growth and sustainability in PB processes over time.		Count of active PB processes: count first-time, continued and discontinued processes
<b>12. Amount and % of funds allocated to PB projects.</b>	Tracks the money allocated to PB projects in any one year.	Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers: \$ amount allocated to PB projects; source budget and total amount in source budget for same year	
<b>13. Project completion rates and final project costs.</b>	Highlights the # and % of <i>winning ballot projects</i> that are completed and how much money was spent on them (compared with how much was allocated).		Public records: projects' implementation status, total costs of implementation (and as % of \$ amount allocated at outset)
<b>14. Amount of additional money allocated to projects and needs identified through PB.</b>	Indicates PB's potential to bring additional funds to communities and/or to allocate funds differently by raising the importance of an issue.	Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers: <i>Can you think of a project that was or projects that were identified or developed through the PB process that subsequently received funding allocations from sources other than the money allocated directly through PB? How much money and from where has it come?</i>	
<b>15. Dollar amount spent on PB implementation.</b>	Makes transparent how much money is spent on implementation and how that compares with the funds allocated to projects, with quality indicators of the process and with outcomes.	Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers: <i>Can you provide an estimate of the \$ amount spent by the [district/city/county] on each of the following during the implementation of PB? [...]</i>	

# Detailed Descriptions of the Key PB Metrics

Metrics describing Impact on Civic and Political Life

## 1. Number of PB participants and percentage of eligible residents who participate.

*Description:* This metric indicates PB's reach and ability to engage the targeted population.

*Data sources:* Primary, secondary

*Variables:*

- Primary data sources (Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers):
  - # of participants at idea collection assemblies and other idea collection events (e.g., sign-up sheets or head counts)
  - # of people submitting ideas online (if applicable)
  - # of *active* budget delegates/community representatives/change agents (e.g., as reported by facilitators)
  - # of voters (i.e., ballots cast)
- Secondary data sources (Census and American Community Survey):
  - # of PB-eligible residents per voting area

*Notes:*

- **How to count *active* budget delegates:** Counting budget delegates can be difficult, as there can be substantial attrition throughout the project development phase. Many more resident volunteers typically attend budget delegate orientations and sign up for committees than continue to develop project proposals and participate in project expos. We encourage local evaluators to focus their count on individuals that can be considered *active* budget delegates and decide on a definition up front of how actively an individual would have to participate in order to be counted as such. A definition that has been used in previous PB evaluation and may work well across contexts is "delegates who have attended at least half of the meetings."

Methods for how to count active budget delegates may vary across sites. One option is for local evaluators to reach out to budget committee facilitators, elected official staff or others who helped with PB implementation for an estimate of how many active budget delegates participated in each committee. Another, although less reliable, option is to ask voters to indicate whether they participated in the process as a budget delegate.

We recommend a voter survey question (see bullet point below) that asks voters about other ways they participated in the PB process, primarily as a means to minimize double-counting participants when summing up participation numbers across the idea collection, project development and voting phases. Notably, the voter survey we recommend does not ask budget delegates how actively they participated, in order to keep the survey short. It may therefore lead to discrepancies between evaluators' counts of *active* budget delegates and the count of voters self-identifying as budget delegates.

- **Formula for counting participation while minimizing a double count:**

# voters + # participants at idea collection assemblies and other idea collection events + # of people who submitted ideas online + # active budget delegates MINUS voters who indicated on voter surveys prior involvement as budget delegates, idea collection assemblies or other idea collection events or submitted ideas online.

- Recommended voter survey question:

*Besides voting, how else have you been involved in participatory budgeting over the last [insert number of months process lasted] months? (Check all that apply)*

- I was not involved besides voting*
- I attended a meeting or event in [enter season or month during which idea collection took place] during which project ideas were collected*
- I submitted a project idea online*
- I was a budget delegate*
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_*

This formula will help minimize double-counting participants across PB phases, but it cannot be expected to lead to perfect counts. Participants may not accurately report their involvement in the idea collection and budget delegate phases on the voter survey. There may be systematic biases in who does and does not complete voter surveys. Counts of idea collection participants and delegates may be incorrect. Counts of participants for each phase of the PB process are therefore more reliable than a total count.

- **Estimating the percentage of eligible residents who participated (i.e., participation rate):**

We recommend a jurisdiction's total population size (based on the census and counting everyone old enough to participate in a respective PB process) as a basis for calculating a process's participation rate. The census, however, will underestimate the total number of residents eligible to participate in processes that allow residents from outside the jurisdiction to submit ideas or vote in a PB process—for instance, nonresidents who work in a PB jurisdiction or have children who attend school in a PB jurisdiction. Moreover, PB processes may have no age limits on participation in the idea collection phase but have age limits for eligibility in the voting phase, which technically changes the number of eligible residents across different phases in the PB process.

## 2. Number and percentage of PB voters who are eligible to vote but did not vote in the most recent local election.

**Description:** This metric indicates PB's potential to engage residents who do not participate in the mainstream political process.

**Date sources:** Primary, secondary

**Variables:**

- Primary sources (Voter Surveys):
  - Recommended voter survey question:
 

*Did you vote in the [specify year and type of last local election]?*

    - I am not eligible to vote*
    - No, I did not vote, but I am eligible to vote*
    - Yes, I voted*
    - I am not sure*
- Secondary sources (citizen voting age population [CVAP]):
  - Another way to describe this metric is as *the percentage of PB voters among residents who are eligible to vote in regular elections but haven't done so in the last election*. This percentage can be calculated based on i) CVAP; ii) voter turnout in the most recent local elections; and iii) the number of PB voters who report on the voter survey that they did not vote in the most recent local election but are eligible to vote (see suggested voter survey question for this metric above).
  - This method does not take into account variations in individual PB processes' voting eligibility criteria, which may extend voting to individuals who are not counted in the CVAP (e.g., people who not live in the district but who own businesses there or whose children attend a district school) and could therefore slightly overestimate *the percentage of PB voters among residents who are eligible to vote in regular elections but haven't done so in the last election*.

### 3. Number and percentage of PB voters who are ineligible to vote in local elections.

*Description:* This metric indicates PB's potential to engage people who are excluded from standard forms of political participation owing to age, immigration status or other reasons.

*Data sources:* Primary

*Variables:*

- Primary sources (Voter Surveys):
  - Recommended voter survey question:

*Did you vote in the [specify year and type of last local election]?*

- I am not eligible to vote*
- No, I did not vote, but I am eligible to vote*
- Yes, I voted*
- I am not sure*

*Notes:*

- **Additional question regarding ineligibility to vote in local elections:** Some local evaluators have included a question on their voter surveys about the *reason* why a PB voter may not be eligible to vote in local elections (such as age, immigration status, etc.). (For example, these questions were included on voter surveys in PBNYC 2014-15 and Chicago 2014-15.) The *Additional Demographic Questions for PB Participant Surveys* document in the [Library of Additional Participatory Budgeting Research Instruments](#) includes this question.

## 4. Number and percentage of participants who report prior civic engagement or participation.

*Description:* This metric indicates PB's potential to attract otherwise less civically engaged residents.

*Data sources:* Primary

*Variables:*

- Primary sources (Idea Collection Participant Surveys and Voter Surveys):
  - Recommended idea collection participant survey question and voter survey question:

*In the past 12 months, have you worked with other people in your neighborhood to fix a problem or improve a condition in your community, not including work you may have done related to participatory budgeting?*

- Yes, I have done that*
- No, I have not done that*
- I am not sure*

## 5. Number and percentage of participants who report being new or returning to PB.

**Description:** This metric indicates both growth and retention of PB participants and various patterns of participation over time. (This metric is not applicable to PB processes in their inaugural cycle.)

**Data sources:** Primary

**Variables:**

- Primary sources (Idea Collection Participant Surveys and Voter Surveys):
  - Recommended idea collection participant survey question:

*Did you vote or participate in any way in participatory budgeting last year [if district/city/county has a longer history of PB: a previous year]?*

    - Yes
    - No
    - I am not sure
  - Recommended voter survey question:

*Is this the first time you have voted in a participatory budgeting process, or did you vote in a participatory budgeting process last year [if district/city/county has a longer history of PB: a previous year]?*

    - First time
    - I voted in participatory budgeting last year [in a previous year]
    - I am not sure

## 6. Number of nongovernmental and community-based organizations involved in PB.

**Description:** This metric indicates the extent to which PB engages civil society and fosters collaborations between civic society and local government. It is also an indicator of variation in how processes are implemented. Organizations may include nonprofits, community groups, religious institutions, business improvement districts, parent-teacher associations, political clubs, etc.

**Data sources:** Primary

**Variables:**

- Primary sources (Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers):
  - # and names of organizations that helped with outreach—*we recommend including only organizations that district/city/county offices partnered with (through contracts and on a volunteer basis) for the purpose of outreach, including organizations that hosted an idea collection meeting or were a voting site*
  - # and names of organizations represented in steering and district committees
  - # and names of organizations that received funding to help implement projects—*these are typically organizations that are listed as “implementing bodies/organizations” on project proposals*

**Notes:**

- **Differentiating among diverse community-based organizations (CBOs):** By tracking the names of CBOs that were involved in each PB process, Public Agenda will over time be able to develop meaningful categories for coding these organizations (e.g., in terms of their causes, mission or population they serve) and analyze these codes vis-à-vis other key metrics, such as the demographics of participants or the types of projects that win funding through PB. The codes will serve as an indicator of the groups or issues that different PB processes attract.
- **Comparing relative CBO involvement across sites:** One could divide the total number of organizations involved in outreach, steering committee and implementation by the total number of residents in each PB site.
- **Why limit the count of organizations involved in outreach only to those who formally partner with city staff?** This count provides an indicator of the degree to which civil society and local government collaborate on and share efforts around the implementation of PB. Greater collaboration may be associated with greater sustainability of PB overtime and with better outcomes. It is important to note however that this fairly narrow count of nongovernmental and community-based organizations involved in outreach is likely to underestimate the actual involvement of civil society in PB, especially involvement of organizations that are not formally partnering with local government but are promoting PB independently, for reasons such as furthering their mission or helping their members or constituents.

## 7. Number and percentage of elected officials reelected.

*Description:* This metric can help to assess over time PB's association with officials' political careers.

*Data sources:* Secondary

*Variables:*

- Secondary sources:
  - Elected official ran for same office; ran for different office; did not run
  - Elected official won or did not win in primary
  - Elected official won or did not win in general election

## 8. Number and percentage of participants who are of low socioeconomic status (SES) and/or people of color; and relative to demographics in the jurisdiction and in the most recent local election.

**Description:** This metric indicates PB’s potential to engage communities that are marginalized in the traditional political process.

**Data sources:** Primary, secondary

**Variables:**

- Primary sources (Idea Collection Participant Surveys and Voter Surveys):
  - Recommended idea collection participant and voter survey questions:

*Do you identify as: (Check all that apply)*

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino/a
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

*Do you identify as: (Check all that apply)*

- Female
- Male
- Transgender
- Different gender identity: \_\_\_\_\_

*What is your age?*

- Under 18
- 18–19
- 20–24
- 25–34
- 35–44
- 45–54
- 55–64
- 65+

*What was your total household income in [LAST YEAR]:*

- Under \$10,000
- \$10,000–\$24,999
- \$25,000–\$49,999
- \$50,000–\$74,999
- \$75,000–\$99,999
- \$100,000 or more

*Highest level of education:*

- Less than high school diploma*
- High school diploma, GED or equivalent*
- Some college, no degree*
- Associate's degree*
- Bachelor's degree*
- Graduate or professional degree*

- Secondary sources (Census and American Community Survey, Voter files):
  - District/city/county population demographics: race/ethnicity, gender, age, household income and education
  - Demographics of voters in most recent local elections: race/ethnicity, gender and age

*Notes:*

- **Demographics of budget delegates:** Survey research during the proposal development stage and with budget delegates can be tricky. As an alternative, voter surveys can be used to get an estimate of budget delegate demographics. The recommended question that asks voters whether they participated in other ways in PB will identify budget delegates (albeit self-identified ones, which may differ from what evaluators may consider *active* budget delegates—see Metric 1).
- **Additional demographic questions:** Some local evaluators have included additional demographic questions on their idea collection participant and voter surveys to assess participation of traditionally marginalized communities, including questions about their primary language use, country of origin, etc. (For example, these questions were included on idea collection participant and voter surveys in Cambridge 2014-15, Long Beach 2014-15, PBNYC 2014-15 and Chicago 2014-15.) The *Additional Demographic Questions for PB Participant Surveys* document in the *Library of Additional Participatory Budgeting Research Instruments* includes examples of these questions.

## 9. Accessibility indicators for idea collection phase, project development phase and voting.

**Description:** A list of variables that captures aspects of the process implementation that increase access during the idea collection phase, the project development phase and the voting phase.

**Data sources:** Primary, secondary

**Variables:**

- For idea collection phase: Primary sources (Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers, Idea Collection Participant Surveys):
  - # of PB idea collection meetings/assemblies
  - # and type of “mobile” idea collection opportunities (e.g., tables at community events, tables on the street, etc.)
  - Online idea collection opportunity or not
  - What outreach methods were used to invite people to propose project ideas (in person or online)? (Check all that apply): *Email, Flyering, Social Media, City/District PB Website with updates, Canvassing, Door knocking, Newsletters, Phone Banking, Text message, Radio/TV/Newspaper, Other: \_\_\_\_\_*
  - Recommended question for idea collection participant survey:
 

*How did you first hear about today’s assembly? (Check all that apply)*

    - Television, newspaper or radio*
    - Online or social media, such as Facebook or Twitter*
    - From my [council member, alderman, supervisor, etc.]*
    - Someone came to my door*
    - A mailing was sent to my house*
    - I got a text message*
    - I got a phone call*
    - The school*
    - From a friend or family member*
    - From a community group: \_\_\_\_\_*
    - I passed by the PB idea collection site*
- For project development/budget delegate phase: Primary sources (Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers):
  - # of *active* budget delegates
  - # and type of budget delegate committees

- For voting phase: Primary and secondary sources (Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers, Voter Surveys):
  - # of regular voting sites (e.g., in district office, libraries)
  - # of mobile voting locations
    - Definition: *tables with a few volunteers, voting materials and a binder of project proposals in busy public spaces, such as subway stations, parks, markets or other common areas frequented by district residents*
  - Online voting or not
  - How many days did the vote last?
  - What outreach methods were used to invite people to vote (in person or online)? (Check all that apply): *Email, Flyering, Social Media, City/District PB Website with updates, Canvassing, Door knocking, Newsletters, Phone Banking, Text message, Radio/TV/Newspaper, Other: \_\_\_\_\_*
  - Recommended question for voter survey:
 

*How did you first hear about today's vote? (Check all that apply)*

    - Television, newspaper or radio*
    - Online or social media, such as Facebook or Twitter*
    - From my [council member, alderman, supervisor, etc.]*
    - Someone came to my door*
    - A mailing was sent to my house*
    - I got a text message*
    - I got a phone call*
    - The school*
    - From a friend or family member*
    - Community group: \_\_\_\_\_*
    - I passed by the voting site*

*Notes:*

- **Additional accessibility measures:** Some local evaluators have used additional accessibility measures in the past, such as whether or not idea collection events had language translation, child care, food, transportation, etc. (For example, PBNYC 2014-15 used an idea collection event observation sheet that included these and other questions.) The *Event Observation Sheets* included in the *Library of Additional Participatory Budgeting Research Instruments* include these measures.

## 10. Allocation of PB funds by project type (to be compared with the allocation of comparable funds prior to PB).

**Description:** This metric describes how PB funds get allocated across types of projects. It is one step toward studying differences in the allocation of funds through PB compared with traditional methods of allocation and one step toward considering equity in the distribution of PB funds. The metric can also highlight differences between the distribution of ballot items across project types and the distribution of winning projects across project types (e.g., are winning projects representative of the distribution of projects that are on the ballot or not?).

**Data sources:** Secondary

**Variables:**

- Secondary sources (ballot items):
  - # and % of winning PB project by project category
  - # and % of PB money allocated to each project category
  - # and % of PB ballot items by project category
  - # and % of money proposed in each project category (based on ballot items)
- Secondary sources (public record searching, contacting of district/city/county staff):
  - # and % of projects by project category that were funded through the same source money in years prior to PB
  - # and % of money allocated to each project that was funded through the same source money in years prior to PB
  - *(If the entire budget source was not given to PB)* List of projects that were funded through the same source money in same year of PB

**Notes:**

- **Project category** refers to a coding scheme for PB projects that Public Agenda is currently using. It categorizes projects into one of the following codes: *Culture & Arts / Libraries / Community & Social Services / Schools / Parks & Recreation / Streets & Sidewalks / Transportation & Traffic*
- **Context of the money:** The local context for this metric is important given that the amount of money allocated to PB and the projects that are eligible for PB funding will vary across PB sites. See Metric 12.
- **Analyzing spatial equity:** Another way to think about project diversity and equity is to consider where in the community projects are located and whether the location benefits some community members more than others. Such a spatial equity project would use geographers' and planners' tools to estimate characteristics of the population most likely to benefit from the project. That can then be compared with spatial analyses of projects funded prior to PB or with projects funded in matched comparison districts/cities/counties. Such data collection efforts are, however, beyond the scope of the key metrics.

## 11. Number of new, continued and discontinued PB processes from year to year.

**Description:** This metric tracks growth and sustainability in PB processes over time. It will track the number of processes implemented each year overall and track the number and proportion of individual PB processes that continue vs. discontinue over time.

**Data sources:** Secondary

**Variables:**

- Secondary sources (PBP, Public Agenda):
  - Count of all PB processes that have a vote in a given year
    - Definition: *“a process where community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget.”*
  - Categorize each process as districtwide, citywide, countywide or agency-specific
  - First-time process or continued from previous year
  - Count of discontinued processes

## 12. Amount and percentage of funds allocated to PB projects.

**Description:** This metric tracks the money allocated through PB in any one year. It indicates the actual amount of money committed to PB projects by officials—can be compared with actual money spent (Metric 13) and with the amount spent on implementation (Metric 15).

**Data sources:** Primary

**Variables:**

- Primary sources (Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers):
  - o Exact \$ amount allocated to PB (by district for district-level processes, citywide for city-level processes, by county for county-level processes)
  - o Name of the source budget for the money (e.g., council member discretionary funds, tax increment financing [TIF], youth programming, etc.)
  - o Total \$ amount in the specified source budget for that year
  - o Exact \$ amount allocated to PB as a percentage of the total \$ amount in the specified source budget for that year
  - o Questions to understand the context of the money:
    - *How can the money for this PB process be spent? What are the project eligibility criteria? For example, can the money be spent on projects other than capital projects? If so, what other types of projects can be funded with that money?*
    - *Are there any other particulars or factors about this money source that you think are important to note?*

**Notes:**

- **Comparing relative PB allocations across sites:** One could divide the exact \$ amount allocated to PB by the total population size in respective PB districts, cities or counties.

### 13. Project completion rates and final project costs.

**Description:** This metric highlights the number and percentage of *winning ballot projects* (i.e., ballot projects that are awarded funding from the pot of money dedicated to PB) that are completed within a two-year time frame (and every year thereafter). It will also enable us to measure the costs of implemented projects and the proportion of those costs to the total dollar amount that was originally allocated (see Metric 12).

**Data sources:** Secondary

**Variables:**

- Secondary sources (public record searching, contacting of district/city/county staff):
  - Status of each winning ballot project (ballot projects that are awarded funding from the pot of money dedicated to PB): completed, in process, not completed (after two years and to be updated thereafter)
  - Total costs of implemented winning ballot projects
  - # of completed winning ballot projects as percent of total # of winning ballot projects by cycle
  - Total cost of implemented winning ballot projects as percentage of \$ amount allocated to PB (by district for district-level processes, citywide for city-level processes, by county for county-level processes)
 

**and/or:** Total cost of implemented winning ballot projects as percentage of source from which PB budget was taken (e.g., if a council member allocates a portion rather than all of the discretionary funds to PB)
  - Qualitative data to collect: reasons projects were not implemented

## 14. Amount of additional money allocated to projects and needs identified through PB.

**Description:** This metric indicates PB’s potential to bring additional funds to communities and/or to allocate funds differently by raising the importance of an issue. It is the amount of matching or external funds invested in projects or needs that were identified and/or developed during the PB process. Funds could come from other officials, other district/city/county budgets and/or third parties. (Does not include money provided to organizations to implement PB: e.g., foundation grants.)

**Data sources:** Primary

**Variables:**

- Primary sources (Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers):
  - Description of each project/need/area that received additional funds (including projects that were on the ballot but did not win) and how the PB process inspired it (qualitative)
  - \$ amount allocated for each PB-inspired project
  - Source of extra money for each PB-inspired project (e.g., officials’ discretionary funds that were not part of the PB process, other district/city/county budgets, other officials, third parties)
  - Questions for evaluators and implementers: *Can you think of a project that was or projects that were identified or developed through the PB process that subsequently received funding allocations from sources other than the money allocated directly through PB?*

*Can you think of areas of need that were highlighted through PB that subsequently received funding from sources other than the money allocated directly through PB?*

**Notes:**

- **Context of the money:** This metric is most valuable with more context of the fiscal structure and the budget context of the respective PB process (see Metric 12).
- **Project categories and comparing across sites:** The described projects and needs can be coded retrospectively into the same project categories we use for Metric 10. One may then calculate the total \$ amount of additional money allocated and by project type.
- **Causality attributions:** These data alone do not allow for causal attributions—that is, it is not clear what might have happened to these additional resources without PB. The data depend on staff or implementers identifying PB as the primary reason for the allocation of certain additional funds. However, anecdotal evidence is growing regarding this issue, and capturing it systematically is important, even for purely descriptive purposes.

## 15. Dollar amount spent on PB implementation.

**Description:** This metric will help make transparent how much money is spent on PB implementation and how that compares with the funds allocated to projects, with quality indicators of the process and with outcomes.

**Data sources:** Primary

**Variables:**

- Primary sources (Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers):
  - *Can you provide an estimate of the total amount of money spent by the [district/city/county] on each of the following during the implementation of PB?*
    - On technical assistance consultants? \$\_\_\_\_\_*
    - On organizing help, other than technical assistance consultants (e.g., canvassers, contracts with community organizations)? \$\_\_\_\_\_*
    - On IT services? \$\_\_\_\_\_*
    - On event space, food, language support, transportation, photocopies and other materials for events? \$\_\_\_\_\_*
    - Other expenses? Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_, \$\_\_\_\_\_*
  - *Can you estimate how many [district/city/county] staffers (full-time, part-time, interns, etc.) worked on PB and how many hours they worked in total?*
    - # of staffers: \_\_\_\_\_*
    - Total # of hours worked: \_\_\_\_\_*
  - *How many weeks or months did the PB process run from kickoff to vote?*  
*\_\_\_\_ weeks **or** \_\_\_\_\_ months*

**Notes:**

- **Comparing across sites:** To get a better sense of the size of the implementation costs and to compare relative dollar amounts spent on PB implementation across sites, one may divide the estimated amount spent on PB implementation by the total population size in respective PB districts/cities/counties.

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## About

### Public Agenda

Public Agenda is a nonprofit organization that helps diverse leaders and citizens navigate divisive, complex issues. Through nonpartisan research and engagement, it provides people with the insights and support they need to arrive at workable solutions on critical issues, regardless of their differences. Since 1975, Public Agenda has helped foster progress on K-12 and higher education reform, health care, federal and local budgets, energy and immigration. Find Public Agenda online at [PublicAgenda.org](http://PublicAgenda.org), on Facebook at [facebook.com/PublicAgenda](https://facebook.com/PublicAgenda) and on Twitter at [@PublicAgenda](https://twitter.com/PublicAgenda).

### The Participatory Budgeting Project

The Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP) is a non-profit organization that empowers people to decide together how to spend public money, primarily in the US and Canada. We create and support participatory budgeting processes that deepen democracy, build stronger communities, and make public budgets more equitable and effective.

### The North American Participatory Budgeting Research Board, 2014-15

- Alexa Kasdan, Community Development Project of the Urban Justice Center
- Ana Paula Pimentel Walker, University of Michigan
- Benjamin Goldfrank, Seton Hall University
- Brian Wampler, Boise State University
- Celina Su, CUNY, Brooklyn College
- Daniel Schugurensky, Arizona State University
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- Thea Crum, Great Cities Institute, University of Illinois-Chicago

### The Democracy Fund

The Democracy Fund invests in organizations working to ensure that our political system is responsive to the public and able to meet the greatest challenges facing our nation. [www.democracyfund.org](http://www.democracyfund.org).

# Key PB Metrics Research Instruments and Evaluation Timeline

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This part of the toolkit includes a set of *research instruments* to support local evaluations and to facilitate the collection of data that address the key PB metrics. To create these instruments, Public Agenda and PBP adapted surveys originally developed and used by local evaluators in various PB sites across North America. The Key PB Metrics Research Instruments are the following:

- 1. Idea Collection Participant Survey Template*
- 2. Voter Survey Template*
- 3. Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers*

The idea collection participant and voter survey templates contain several questions for which local evaluators may need to adapt wording or fill in blanks to reflect the specifics of the PB process(es) they are evaluating; for instance, the question on whether participants voted in the most recent local election may be adapted to spell out more concretely which election the question refers to. We have highlighted in the templates where survey questions may need to be adapted before use.

If you have questions or require support in adapting these documents for your local context, please contact Chloe, Carolin or David at Public Agenda at [research@publicagenda.org](mailto:research@publicagenda.org) or 212-686-6610, extension 143.

For more a detailed description of the 15 Key PB Metrics on which these instruments are based, go to <http://www.publicagenda.org/pages/participatory-budgeting-research-and-evaluation>.

## *A Suggested PB Evaluation Timeline*

Ideally, evaluation and data collection activities are integrated into each of the main phases of a PB process. Below is a timeline that illustrates when information about specific aspects of the PB process is best collected. The evaluation portion of the timeline focuses on data that directly inform the key PB metrics. Local evaluators may find it helpful to adapt this timeline to reflect additional or other evaluation objectives and data collection goals they may have.

## **IMPLEMENTATION PHASE**

### **Planning:**

Implementers define process goals, write or revise the process Rulebook and establish roles and responsibilities.

### **Idea collection:**

In large community meetings and online, residents learn about the available budget funds, brainstorm initial spending ideas and volunteer as budget delegates.

### **Proposal development:**

Delegates meet in committees to review project ideas, consult with technical experts, develop full project proposals and prepare project posters and presentations.

## **EVALUATION COMPONENTS**

### **• Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers:**

- Steering Committee, or not
- List of community-based organizations (CBOs) on Steering Committee (if applicable)
- Dollar amount allocated for PB projects
- Name and size of the source budget for PB
- How the money can be spent / project eligibility criteria

### **• Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers:**

- Number and types of idea collection events that took place, including mobile and online
- Number of participants/attendees, in person and online
- Outreach methods
- List of CBOs officially helping with outreach
- Idea Collection Participant Surveys:**
  - Q: How did you hear about today's assembly?
  - Prior civic engagement
  - Prior involvement with PB
  - Voted or not in most recent local election

### **• Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers:**

- Opportunity to volunteer as a budget delegate, or not
- Number of active budget delegates (if applicable)
- List of budget delegates committees formed (if applicable)

## **IMPLEMENTATION PHASE**

### **Vote:**

The public votes for which projects to fund, and the winning projects get added to the budget.

### **Project implementation:**

The government funds the winning projects.

## **EVALUATION COMPONENTS**

- **Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers:**
  - Voting eligibility criteria for the process
  - Number of regular and mobile voting sites
  - Online voting, or not
  - Number of days the voting period lasted
  - Number of ballots cast (in person and online)
  - Outreach methods
  - List of CBOs that officially helped with outreach
- **Voter Surveys:**
  - Q: How did you hear about today's vote?
  - Prior civic engagement
  - Prior voting in PB
  - Voted or not in most recent local election
  - Race/Ethnicity, Age, Gender, Income, Education

- **Questionnaire for Evaluators and Implementers:**
  - Number of days or months the whole process lasted
  - List any project or projects identified or developed through the PB process that received funding from other sources than the money allocated to PB
  - List of CBOs responsible for implementing projects
  - Estimate of the total dollar amount spent by government on: technical assistance; organizing help; IT services; space, food, materials, transportation to events; etc.
  - Estimate of number of government staffers who worked on PB and the total number of hours worked

### ***See also: Library of Additional PB Research Instruments***

For evaluators who are interested in further data collection, such as conducting qualitative interviews with participants and observing meetings, we have compiled a selection of additional research instrument templates. These instruments have been used previously in PB evaluations in the U.S. They do not directly inform the key PB metrics, but local evaluators may find them useful as they develop additional research questions. This ***Library of Additional PB Research Instruments*** currently includes *additional demographic questions for participant surveys, sample budget delegate surveys, qualitative interview guides and sample meeting observation sheets.*