



Participatory Budgeting

Ten Actions to Engage Citizens via Social Media



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Foreword

On behalf of the IBM Center for The Business of Government, we are pleased to present this report, *Participatory Budgeting: Ten Actions to Engage Citizens via Social Media*, by Victoria Gordon, Western Kentucky University.

Participatory budgeting, an innovation in direct citizen participation in government decision-making, began 25 years ago in a town in Brazil. It has since been adopted by 1,000 other cities worldwide and by some U.S. cities as well.

Participatory budgeting offers promise in improving citizen engagement. But critics claim that participation rates are not high enough to be of any value and may actually undermine the broader public interest. However, the use of social media in the participatory budgeting process holds promise for increasing participation in community life for citizens—especially among younger citizens who are comfortable engaging digitally.

Dr. Gordon's report offers an overview of the state of participatory budgeting, and the potential value of integrating social media into the participatory process design. Based on her research, she finds: "All interviewees agree social media platforms could effectively encourage participation in the participatory budgeting process and in the actual budget voting process. However, to date, social media use in the participatory budgeting process has been limited and sporadic. There is a great need and great potential to increase and expand social media platform uses to expand and encourage participation."



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Lori Feller

Dr. Gordon's report details three case studies of U.S. communities that have undertaken participatory budgeting initiatives. While these case studies are relatively small in scope, they provide insights into what potential users should consider if they want to develop their own initiatives. She also identifies several nonprofit organizations with participatory budgeting experience that have been helping communities by sharing best practices and technologies.

Based on her research and observations, Dr. Gordon recommends 10 actions that leaders can take to create an effective participatory budgeting infrastructure, increase citizen participation, and assess the process's impact. A key theme in her recommendations is to proactively incorporate social media strategies.

We hope that government leaders interested in exploring the use of participatory budgeting find this report of high value.



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Executive Summary

Public participation in local governance has the following goals:

- To inform
- To consult
- To involve
- To collaborate
- To empower citizens

Participatory budgeting empowers citizens by placing budget decision-making in their hands.¹ This report defines and describes the participatory budgeting process in the United States and how participatory budgeting works in practice in three communities: the 49th Ward in Chicago, Illinois, the 6th Ward in St. Louis, Missouri, and the city-wide participatory budgeting initiative focused on youth (Youth Initiative) in Boston, Massachusetts.

Conversations with participatory budgeting leaders illustrate the potential value of citizen participation and explore social media platforms' current role in the participatory budgeting process and their potential for expansion. Findings and recommended actions show how to:

- Create the infrastructure necessary for the participatory budgeting process
- Increase citizen participation
- Assess and increase participatory budgeting's impact

Creating the Participatory Budgeting Infrastructure

Action One: Communities that use participatory budgeting need institutional social media platform policies. For example, policies should empower a sufficient number of community leaders with the administrative authority to update social media platforms.

Action Two: Communities engaged in participatory budgeting should understand that actively managing social media platforms is real, important work, not an afterthought. Participatory budgeting will require investment in training both citizens and staff on the use of social media platforms.

Action Three: Communities should plan for, develop, and use social media platforms to complement other forms of communication available for citizen engagement and mobilization. Communities should explore and expand ways that people can opt in to participate and to submit initial project ideas online.

1. International Association for Public Participation. 2007. IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation.

Increasing Citizen Participation

Action Four: Communities should build on existing and active social media platforms that citizens in the community are currently using. If citizens respond to e-mail blasts, use them. If youth are using Instagram, use it. Communities should be encouraged to try new approaches.

Action Five: Communities should identify ways to turn passive observers on social media platforms into active participants.² Communities should understand that social media platforms are not top-down processes, but collaborative,³ two-way forms of communication.⁴ Citizens should be able to connect across neighborhoods and districts and see the impact of the whole process.

Action Six: Communities should identify who is being left out and work to include excluded populations in the participatory process.

Action Seven: Communities should understand that message content counts. Communities should remember that citizens might not all respond in the same way to a particular alert, message, etc. Participatory budgeting leaders should have a variety of “scripts” prepared and use as appropriate. They should remember to ask, “Why does this matter?”

Assessing and Increasing the Impact of Participatory Budgeting

Action Eight: Communities should identify best practices, share and exchange information with other communities, and support further research efforts.

Action Nine: Both communities and the academic realm should research and develop “technology that might help spread participatory budgeting more broadly, such as voting apps or databases through which communities could share information.”⁵ Communities should explore potential for electronic or digital vote tallying.

Action Ten: Communities should solicit feedback from all stakeholders and incorporate changes into social media platform use policies, procedures, and practices as necessary.

2. Jenkins, H., Ford, S. and Green, J. 2013. *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

3. Nalbandian, J., O'Neill, Jr., R., Wilkes, J. M. and Kaufman, A. July/August 2013. Contemporary challenges in local government: Evolving roles and responsibilities, structures, and processes. *Public Administration Review*, 73 (4): 567–574.

4. Neshkova, M. January/February 2014. Does agency autonomy foster public participation? *Public Administration Review*, 74 (1): 64–74.

5. Scola, N. May 15, 2014. The White House brings participatory budgeting in from the fringe. *Next City*. <http://nextcity.org/daily/entry/participatory-budgeting-cities-white-house> (accessed 5/22/14).

Understanding Participatory Budgeting

Participatory Budgeting in the United States

Participatory budgeting was first practiced in Brazil in 1989 and has been implemented in more than 1,000 cities worldwide. It is a relatively new concept in the United States. Proponents suggest that, when adopted, it can be helpful in making citizens feel connected to each other and their communities. It can instill a sense of ownership, trust, and connectivity. Participatory budgeting is one form of participatory governance, which Schugurensky defines as collaborative public action involving citizens in both deliberation and decision-making. Participatory budgeting takes participatory governance into the resource allocation process.⁶ A 2013 White House report says participatory budgeting allows "...citizens to play a key role in identifying, discussing, and prioritizing public spending projects, and gives them a voice in how taxpayer dollars are spent."⁷

One of participatory budgeting's most important features is the sense of democratic legitimacy that it generates. According to Kavanagh, Johnson, and Fabian: "When a budget process is seen to have democratic legitimacy, it gives elected officials permission to resist narrow bands of self-interest that seek to overturn resource allocation decisions that are based on the greater good."⁸ Other benefits or outcomes of participatory budgeting include:

- Budget transparency
- A more educated citizenry
- Greater efficiencies
- Instilling a sense of social justice
- A greater sense of community⁹

Critics point to limited participation as one reason why participatory budgeting may not be an effective mechanism for increasing direct citizen input into the local government budgetary process. Mikesell and Mullins write that participation rates are not high enough for the process to be of any value, and that those who participate might only be interested in their own

6. Schugurensky, D. January/February/March 2012. The fourth dimension of civic engagement: Participatory budgeting from Brazil to the USA. *PA Times International Supplement*, 5–6. Note: Some sources report that over 1,500 entities have implemented participatory budgeting in some form.

7. The White House. December 5, 2013. The open government partnership: Second open government national action plan for the United States of America. http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/us_national_action_plan_6p.pdf (accessed 2/7/14).

8. Kavanagh, S., Johnson, J. and Fabian, C. n.d. Anatomy of a priority-driven budget process. The Government Finance Officers Association.

9. Lerner, J. Summer 2011. Participatory budgeting: Building community agreement around tough budget decisions. *National Civic Review*; Hadden, M. and Lerner, J. December 3, 2011. How to start participatory budgeting in your city. <http://www.shareable.net/blog/how-to-start-participatory-budeting-in-your-city> (accessed 7/18/12).

The White House Conference on Participatory Budgeting

The White House has become interested in participatory budgeting as a way to manage resources more effectively. The White House invited about 50 community leaders from across the country to meet in Washington, D.C., on May 13, 2014, to discuss participatory budgeting and its potential for use and expansion.

The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy hosted the event, which focused on two vital issues: "...research methods necessary to understand how participatory budgeting works now and how technology can broaden PB's impact."

According to the Office of Science and Technology Policy blog posting on June 2, 2014, "attendees shared their experiences with participatory budgeting, learned about work already underway across the country, and brainstormed new ways to expand outreach and engagement, improve city processes, and create projects that can help transform neighborhoods."

Sources: Scola, N. May 15, 2014. The White House brings participatory budgeting in from the fringe. Next City. <http://nextcity.org/daily/entry/participatory-budgeting-cities-white-house> (accessed 5/22/14).

Overmann, L. and Graubard, V. June 2, 2014. Promoting innovation in civic engagement: Celebrating community-led participatory budgeting. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/06/02/promoting-innovation-civic-engagement-celebrating-community-led-participatory-budget> (accessed 7/6/14).



Courtesy of the Participatory Budgeting Project

narrow viewpoints, not the broader public interest.¹⁰ Observers point out the challenges of participatory budgeting, which include:

- Educating members of the public to see beyond their specific, short-term projects to focus on the community's more general long-term planning needs
- Understanding that government remains the primary actor as the provider of funds and in making sure promises are kept
- Understanding that some broader problems may need federal or state government involvement and may not be solved in one budget cycle¹¹

Other observers say the "high transaction costs for participants ... may outweigh the potential benefits of participation for citizens and policy makers."¹² Transaction costs for citizens may include time and money, for example, in terms of lost wages or the cost of child care.¹³ Academics also contend that involving citizens only slows down the process because citizens

10. Mikesell, J. and Mullins, D. Winter 2011. Reforms for improved efficiency in public budgeting and finance: Improvements, disappointments and work in progress. *Public Budgeting and Finance*, 31 (4): 1–30; Gordon, V. December 2012. *Striking a balance: Matching the services offered by local governments with the revenue realities*. ICMA.

11. Wampler, B. 2007. A guide to participatory budgeting. In A. Shah, (Ed.), *Participatory budgeting*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank; Gordon, V. op. cit.

12. Nabatchi, T. 2010. Addressing the citizenship and democratic deficits: The potential of deliberative democracy for public administration. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 40 (3): 376–399.

13. Ibid.

do not have sufficient budget expertise or are not educated on the nuances of the process.¹⁴

Despite these criticisms, since 2009, several major U.S. cities and smaller political jurisdictions have joined Chicago to explore participatory budgeting in their communities. Among the 20 or so cities that have begun to experiment at least on a limited basis with participatory budgeting are:

- Rochester, New York
- New York, New York¹⁵
- Vallejo, California¹⁶
- Boston, Massachusetts
- St. Louis, Missouri
- Greensboro, North Carolina
- Chicago wards other than the 49th

Participatory budgeting is gaining momentum, as reflected in the actions of Mayor Rahm Emanuel of Chicago, who announced in October 2013 that he would create a managerial position in the city's Office of Management and Budget to support aldermen who use participatory budgeting.

According to Emanuel, "... Participatory budgeting is the effort to facilitate management of public funds through the engagement of residents in their communities. It is a democratic process in which community members have the direct ability to decide how to spend part of a government budget, through a series of meetings and ultimately a final binding vote."¹⁷ This new approach to budgeting will require a change of thinking about the role of city staff and how they work with both elected officials and community representatives within the realm of traditional institutional and budgetary restrictions.¹⁸

Participatory budgeting is expanding into other arenas, and has been implemented by schools, nonprofits, state agencies, and other governmental bodies.¹⁹ For example, participatory budgeting has been adopted on a limited scale by student government organizations at universities and by public housing tenants to make informed resource allocation decisions.²⁰ The box, *Frequently Asked Questions about Participatory Budgeting*, presents answers to questions that communities must know before implementing participatory budgeting.

14. Neshkova, M. January/February 2014. op. cit.

15. Chen, K. May 10–16, 2012. Participatory budgeting: A democratic practice new to Harlem and New York City. *The New York Amsterdam News*, 13; Kasdan, A. and Cattell, L. No date. A people's budget: A research and evaluation report on the pilot year of participatory budgeting in New York City. Community Development Project at the Urban Justice Center with the Participatory Budgeting NYC Research Team.

16. Cha, A. E. May 23, 2012. Vallejo, Calif., once bankrupt, is now a model for cities in an age of austerity. *The Washington Post*. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy> (accessed 7/17/12); York, J. Vallejo tries participatory budgeting with citizens. *Times Herald*. <http://www.timesheraldonline.com/news> (accessed 7/18/12); York, J. April 19, 2012. Vallejo approves public budgeting process for portion of new sales tax revenue. *Times Herald*. <http://www.timesheraldonline.com/news> (accessed 6/5/12).

17. Office of the Mayor. October 23, 2013. Press Release. <http://www.cityofchicago.org> (accessed 3/24/14).

18. Musso, J., Weare, C., Bryer, T. and Cooper, T. January/February 2011. Toward "strong democracy" in global cities? Social capital building, theory-driven reform, and the Los Angeles neighborhood council experience. *Public Administration Review*, 71 (1): 102–111.

19. Office of the Mayor. November 14, 2013. Press Release. City moves forward with youth participatory budgeting process. <http://www.cityofboston.gov/news> (accessed 7/6/14).

20. The Participatory Budgeting Project. <https://docs.google.com/a/participatorybudgeting.org/document/d/1Yr> (accessed 7/10/14).

Frequently Asked Questions About Participatory Budgeting

Questions to Ask	Steps to Take
Could participatory budgeting work in our community?	Political will and permission from those controlling the budget are prerequisites.
How do we put participatory budgeting on the agenda?	Organize public events to explain what participatory budgeting is.
Who should be at the table for initial discussions?	Find interested organizations—private, nonprofit and governmental; experts at local universities, churches, neighborhood groups, schools, community leaders.
How do we pitch participatory budgeting to attract interest?	Stress the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democracy—it is a way for politicians and constituents to connect. It is a way to bring new people into the political process. Many participants report they have never been involved in any community or government activity before participatory budgeting. • Transparency—this could shine a spotlight on potential corruption and waste. • Education—citizens become more active and more informed. • Efficiency—confers the benefit of local residents' neighborhood expertise, and their interest in seeing projects through to completion. The citizens will have a sense of ownership. • Social justice—everyone has a voice. Underrepresented groups participate and often projects are directed to those who truly need the most help. • Community—regular meetings build camaraderie and community.
How do we deal with resistance?	Address these commonly heard concerns and criticisms head on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are doing the elected officials' job. • There is no money. • The process will be stolen by the “squeaky” wheels, the loudest and most active.
Where will the money come from?	Elected officials normally start by committing some discretionary funds, usually set aside for infrastructure.
How much money do we need to get started?	Any amount will work. It depends on the type of projects that will be undertaken. The point is that the citizens have real power over real money that will address real community needs.
What other resources will we need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time, patience, and a lot of planning. • You may need external experts, and you will have to do a lot of outreach and educating. To enrich participation you may need to offer child care, or take the meetings out to the neighborhoods, or have meetings on the weekends when people are available. And food never hurts. It takes real work. It will not just happen. • Talk to experts such as The Participatory Budgeting Project. • Attend a conference, such as the annual International Conference on Participatory Budgeting.
What will our community really get out of this process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency. • More efficient budget process, with citizens helping to make tough choices. • Educated citizens who are committed to the community and reenergized to participate in their government. • Citizens will trust their elected officials and view their government as valuable.

Sources: Gordon, V. December 2012. Striking a balance: Matching the services offered by local governments with the revenue realities. ICMA.

Hadden, M. and Lerner, J. December 3, 2011. How to start participatory budgeting in your city. <http://www.shareable.net/blog/how-to-start-participatory-budeting-in-your-city> (accessed 7/18/12).

How Participatory Budgeting Works in Practice

Case Study One: 49th Ward, Chicago, Illinois

Chicago's northernmost ward, the 49th Ward, has a five-year history with participatory budgeting. Under the leadership of Alderman Joe Moore, the 49th Ward is believed to be the first political jurisdiction in the nation to adopt this approach to budgeting. Alderman Moore was introduced to the concept at a 2007 professional conference. He brought the concept home to his community members.²¹

In an interview with the author, Alderman Moore said, "It comports with my own philosophy of inclusion and giving people the power to make real decisions that affect their lives, and politically I felt it would be popular in a community such as mine that has a strong history of community activism, and people expressing their views in a very vigorous way."²² Alderman Moore invited his constituents to participate in the decision-making process for the portion of the city's budget earmarked for each ward's infrastructure projects. He started by telling the citizens, "I'm not just asking for your opinion—I'm asking you to make real decisions about how we spend money."²³

In a 2010 *Chicago Tribune* op-ed,²⁴ Alderman Moore makes his case for participatory budgeting. He gives three reasons to adopt it. First, it is time to do things differently. Second, citizens don't trust their elected officials or government to do what is right. Third, citizens don't believe they have the power to effect change. Alderman Moore writes, "We need a new governance model, one that empowers people to make real decisions about policy and spending decisions ... In an experiment in democracy, transparent governance, and economic reform, I'm letting residents ... decide how to spend my entire discretionary capital budget ... The process is binding. The projects that win the most votes will be funded ... Hundreds of residents ... many of whom have never before been involved in a civic activity, have become engaged in the participatory budgeting process ... They know they have the power to make decisions, and that their government is not just hearing them but actually following their mandate. Empowering people to make real decisions openly and transparently is the first step toward restoring public trust in government."

In a 2012 interview with the author, Alderman Moore was excited to report that several other Chicago wards were following his lead and adopting participatory budgeting. When asked what he was most proud of with regard to the participatory budgeting process in the 49th Ward, Alderman Moore replied, "The process is what I am most proud of, and that there are a diversity of projects chosen by the people that are different from when I made the decisions."²⁵

This is consistent with research by Guo and Neshkova, who state that "public involvement is ... a way to inject democracy into decisions made by bureaucrats—who are appointed, operate with delegated authority, and judge on the basis of their specialized knowledge."²⁶ Further, these researchers found that public involvement is based on "the underlying logic ... that citizens

21. Gordon, V. 2012. Striking a balance: Matching the services offered by local governments with the revenue realities. ICMA.

22. Moore, J. July 5, 2012. Personal interview.

23. Lerner J. and Antieau, M. April 20, 2010. For the first time in the U.S., the city's 49th Ward lets taxpayers directly decide how public money is spent. <http://www.yesmagazine.org> (accessed 7/18/12).

24. Moore, J. March 31, 2010. Alderman Joe Moore's Op Ed on the 49th Ward participatory budgeting project. Spending out in the open for 49th Ward. *Chicago Tribune*. <http://www.ward49.com/participatory-budgeting> (accessed 6/5/12). Also available at <http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2010-03-31/news>.

25. Moore, J. op. cit., Personal interview; Gordon, V. op. cit.

26. Guo, H. and Neshkova, M. 2013. Citizen input in the budget process: When does it matter most? *The American Review of Public Administration*, 43 (3): 331–346.

possess local knowledge and better understand the needs of their communities ... and they can ... offer innovative solutions to reflect the unique combination of political, economic, and cultural factors in their communities."²⁷ This is particularly important for a community like the 49th Ward, where there is great ethnic diversity and in which more than 80 languages are spoken²⁸ by the 57,000 residents.

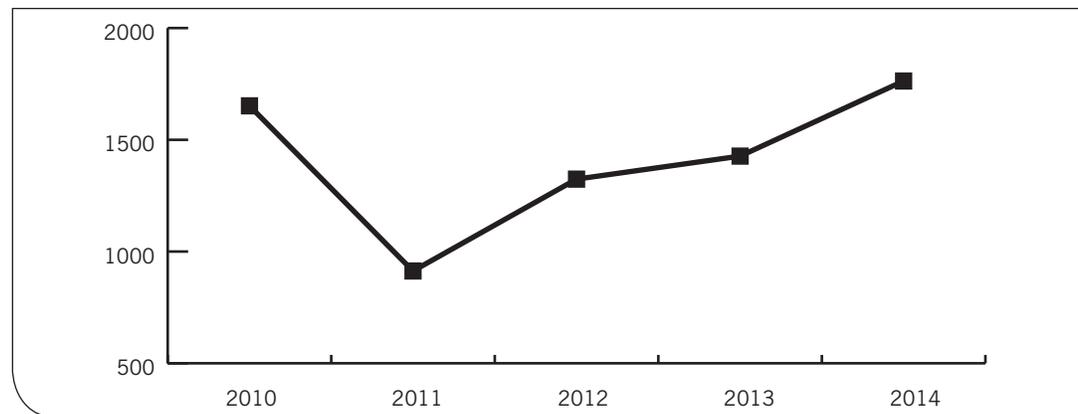
Since adopting participatory budgeting in 2009, citizens in Chicago's 49th Ward have voted on how to spend part of the \$1.3 million in discretionary funds made available to each ward annually for capital improvements. Usually about \$300,000 is reserved for contingencies or cost overruns. There are parameters on the type of projects that can be proposed and restrictions on how the funds can be spent. Each proposed project is subject to final approval by the city or other relevant agencies operating in the ward, but generally, all projects have preliminary approval before going on the ballot.²⁹

In Chicago's 49th Ward, the general steps taken annually include neighborhood assemblies at which ideas for possible projects are collected. At each neighborhood assembly, those in attendance are asked to volunteer to serve as community representatives. A leadership committee, consisting of individuals who served either on last year's steering committee or as a community representative, oversees the process.

The neighborhood assemblies are open to any 49th Ward resident. Once concrete and viable projects are further developed, community representatives who serve on steering committees begin the process of narrowing down the original list into a final list of the most promising ideas. Eventually, this final list is voted on by a ward-wide assembly of citizens. Depending on the scope of the project, projects may take up to three years to complete.³⁰

In the 49th Ward, anyone aged 16 and older can cast a ballot, regardless of citizenship or voter registration status.³¹ Proof of age and residency within the ward is required on voting day. Participation rates since 2010 can be seen in Figure 1.³²

Figure 1: 49th Ward Participation Rates since 2010



27. Ibid.

28. Lerner, J. Summer 2011. op. cit.

29. Moore, J. op. cit., Personal interview; Gordon, V. op. cit.

30. Fortino, E. October 2, 2013. 49th Ward residents kick off first 2014 participatory budgeting meeting. <http://www.progressillinois.com> (accessed 10/6/13); Lerner, J. Summer 2011. op. cit.

31. Moore, J. op. cit., Personal interview; Gordon, V. op. cit.

32. Ward 49. 2012. 2012 participatory budgeting report. <http://www.ward49.com/participatory-budgeting> (accessed 6/5/12 and 5/23/14).

Examples of Winning Projects in the 49th Ward of Chicago

- Street resurfacing
- Street lighting
- Sidewalk repairs
- Pedestrian safety engineering study
- Tree planting
- Installation of a water fountain in a park
- Installation of bike lanes
- Commissioning of murals painted on viaducts by local artists³³

49th Ward, Chicago, Illinois, Participatory Budgeting Process and Timeline

Step 1: Neighborhood Assembly Meetings (October)

At each neighborhood assembly meeting, attendees receive a brief overview of the participatory budgeting process and an overview of the city's infrastructure "menu" program, which allows each alderman to designate a portion of the city's budget to infrastructure projects within their ward. Meeting attendees are then asked to brainstorm ideas for possible uses of the infrastructure menu money.

At the conclusion of each meeting, volunteers are asked to serve as community representatives charged with developing proposals for spending the 49th Ward's infrastructure menu allocation, which is about \$1 million.



Courtesy of the Participatory Budgeting Project

Step 2: Community Representative Meetings (November through March)

The community representatives meet to develop detailed proposals to be presented at a ward-wide assembly in the spring. The representatives, at their discretion, may call additional neighborhood assembly meetings to solicit additional suggestions.

Step 3: Final Round of Neighborhood Assembly Meetings to Present Project Proposals to the Community (April)

The community representatives present their preliminary proposals at two neighborhood assemblies held in the north and south sections of the 49th Ward. Based on community input provided at the neighborhood assemblies, the community representatives may refine their proposals before submitting them to a final vote at the April election.

Step 4: Election to Determine the Infrastructure Spending Priorities (April/May)

Community residents, aged 16 and older, gather at a ward-wide assembly to deliberate and vote on the infrastructure spending priorities for the 49th Ward. Ballots are counted and winning projects are announced at a celebratory party sponsored by the alderman.

Step 5: Implementation and Monitoring of the Winning Projects (One to Two Years)

Source: Ward 49. <http://www.ward49.com/participatory-budgeting/#Intro> (accessed 7/6/14).

33. Fortino, E. op. cit.

As in most communities using participatory budgeting, voting in the 49th Ward is allowed over a period of a week so as to increase participation. The winning projects go through a final approval stage and are incorporated into the city's budget. Citizens can monitor and follow the progress of each project from inception to implementation, and on through to completion. If, for some unforeseen reason, a winning project cannot be undertaken, a project taken from the runner-up list is substituted. There is an annual evaluation of the previous year's process and needed procedural adjustments are incorporated into the process for the following year.

Case Study Two: 6th Ward, St. Louis, Missouri

The pilot year for participatory budgeting in the 6th Ward of St. Louis, Missouri, is 2014. Alderman Christine Ingrassia embraced the concept of participatory budgeting, initially proposed by one of her opponents, Michelle Witthaus, in the 2013 alderman race. As in Chicago, each alderman in St. Louis is annually allocated a small portion of money for capital improvements within the ward. Alderman Ingrassia agreed to set aside \$100,000, which is 40% of the ward's capital improvement funds, for the participatory budgeting pilot project.

In the 6th Ward, the participatory budgeting process begins in the early fall with a series of brainstorming sessions to identify project ideas. The project idea lists are then sent to one of the four committees—safety, streets, beautification, or parks—and each committee of volunteer delegates is charged with narrowing down the project list and identifying which are viable for further consideration. These delegates are given training and work directly with the alderman to gather all information necessary to create the formal proposal, set a budget, and connect with the proper city departments to make sure the project will be accepted and approved by the city for funding. Next, viable projects are presented at project expos in the spring; residents can ask questions and make suggestions about which projects should be on the ballot.

The viable projects are then voted on over eight days in April at multiple locations within the 6th Ward. The ballot contains the list of projects and a small description of the project and its anticipated costs; this ensures that all residents are well-informed before they cast their votes. Votes are then tabulated and results announced a few days later at a celebratory event.

As in Chicago, anyone aged 16 and older can cast a ballot for a project, regardless of citizenship or voter registration status. Proof of age and residency within the ward is required to vote. About four percent of the total 12,000 persons in the ward came out to vote in April 2014. 436 residents voted on the 12 projects presented on the ballot. Of those 436 voters, 37% were male and 63% were female. Of the voters, two were Asian; three Latino; 180 Caucasian; and 251 were African American.

St. Louis 6th Ward Winning Projects for 2014 (Total \$95,000 in estimated costs)

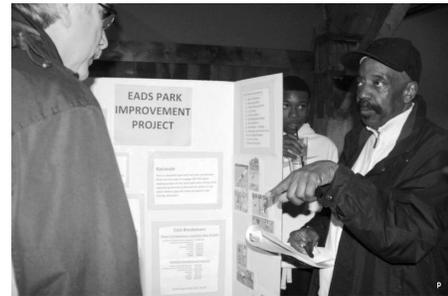
- Installation of street lighting
- Installation of mobile security cameras that can be remotely monitored and relocated as security needs change
- Installation of trash cans that include dog waste bag dispensers at bus stops and high pedestrian traffic areas

An evaluation of the pilot year participatory budgeting process will be conducted during the summer and changes will be incorporated into next year's process.

6th Ward, St. Louis, Missouri, Participating Budgeting Process and Timeline

Step 1: Brainstorming Sessions (Early Fall)

The process starts in the early fall with the 6th Ward hosting a series of brainstorming sessions throughout the community to let residents share their ideas on how they would spend \$100,000 to make neighborhood improvements.



Step 2: Narrowing Down the List (Late Fall)

In late fall, residents volunteer as delegates and narrow the list of ideas to create proposals for projects they want to see implemented during the delegate phase. These delegates create the formal proposals, set budgets, and connect with the proper city departments to make sure the project will be accepted and approved by the city for funding.

Step 3: Project Expos (Spring)

Once all the proposals have been created, another series of meetings called project expos is held throughout the community to give people a chance to hear about the formal proposals, ask questions, and suggest changes.

Step 4: Formal Proposals are Put to a Vote (April)

Voting is held over eight days in April in churches, schools, and other convenient locations to make sure that all residents ages 16 and older have a chance to vote on which projects they want to see implemented. Votes are tabulated and winning projects are announced a few days later at a celebratory event.

Step 5: Implementation

The projects with the most votes are implemented during the following fiscal year, and an evaluation is conducted during the summer before the process begins again the next fall.

Source: Participatory Budgeting-St. Louis. <http://pbstl.com/how-does-it-work> (accessed 7/6/14).

Case Study Three: City-Wide Youth Initiative in Participatory Budgeting, Boston, Massachusetts

Unlike the participatory budgeting processes in Chicago and St. Louis, which are specific to each ward, the process in Boston (population 646,000) is citywide and focuses strictly on youth. In April 2013, under the direction of former Mayor Thomas Menino,³⁴ the city committed \$1 million of its capital improvement budget to the participatory budgeting process. The intent of the citywide participatory budgeting initiative (hereinafter referred to as the Youth Initiative) is to engage young people in government, specifically in the allocation of and decision-making about the budget.

In December 2013, the process began with Mayor Menino charging his existing Youth Council to develop a new steering committee composed of young residents, community-based organizations, and youth advocates to learn about participatory budgeting and to set guidelines for the actual voting process.³⁵ The entire participatory budgeting process has been fast-tracked

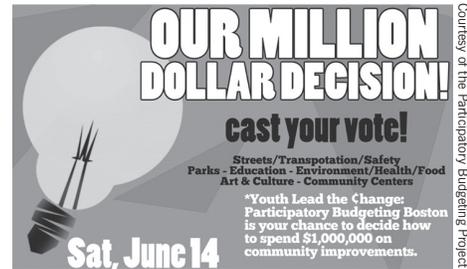
34. Office of the Mayor. November 14, 2013. op. cit.

35. Ibid.

City-Wide Youth Initiative, City of Boston, Massachusetts, Participatory Budgeting Process

Step 1: Idea Assemblies

Under the direction and guidance of a steering committee, the City of Boston Mayor's Youth Council sponsors eight idea assemblies across the city where hundreds of young people gather to generate project ideas on how \$1 million in capital funds are to be spent to meet community needs. Volunteers are asked to join the change agent committees.



Step 2: Narrowing the List

Change agent committees narrow down the list of ideas, and vet the project proposals.

Step 3: Voting

Persons of any age can participate in the project development, but only Boston youth ages 12 to 25 are eligible to vote on the projects over a week-long voting period.

Step 4: Implementation

The city implements the winning projects during the following fiscal year.

Step 5: Evaluation

The steering committee evaluates the process and suggests changes to the PB process for the next year.

Sources: Tanaka, A. May 2, 2014. Personal Interview.

City of Boston. [http://www.cityofboston.gov/images_documents/2014%20101%20days\(press%20release\)_v7_tcm3-44474.pdf](http://www.cityofboston.gov/images_documents/2014%20101%20days(press%20release)_v7_tcm3-44474.pdf) (accessed 7/6/14).

City of Boston. http://www.cityofboston.gov/images_documents/08%20capital%20planning_final_tcm3-37459.pdf (accessed 7/6/14).

to meet deadlines, and completed in only six months rather than in the recommended year-long process adopted by most organizations.

The Youth Council and the steering committee coordinated efforts to gather project ideas at eight idea assemblies. In 2014, about 400 ideas were proposed. These ideas were narrowed down to a more manageable list, and developed into viable projects by members of the change agent committees. The viable projects were then vetted and eventually 14 projects were placed on the ballot. Voting was conducted over a week in mid-June 2014. Polls were located at train stations, youth centers, and school buildings.³⁶

In a June 30, 2014, press release,³⁷ Mayor Walsh announced seven winning projects selected by 1,500 Boston youth voters ages 12 to 25. The 14 projects on the ballot were organized into four categories:

- Streets/safety

36. Office of the Mayor. June 30, 2014. Press Release. Mayor Walsh announces results of the nation's first-ever youth participatory budgeting initiative. <http://www.cityofboston.gov/news> (accessed 7/10/14).

37. Ibid.

- Parks/environment/health
- Community and culture
- Education

The steering committee will evaluate the participatory budgeting process and incorporate changes for next year.

Winning Projects in the Boston Youth Initiative

- Upgrades and repairs to playground and picnic areas
- Purchase of 30 laptops for three high schools
- A feasibility study for a skateboard park
- Installation of security cameras at a park
- Installation of new sidewalks and lights in two newly renovated parks

Social Media and Participatory Budgeting

The Importance of Social Media Platforms in Citizen Participation

A recent report³⁸ on measuring community engagement identifies six motivations for communities to engage citizens:

- Informing and educating the public
- Improving government decision-making
- Creating opportunities for citizens to shape policies
- Legitimizing government decisions
- Involving citizens in monitoring outcomes
- Enhancing citizens' trust in government

Participatory budgeting is a mechanism for addressing all the above motivations. Participatory budgeting has the objective of engaging citizens to help elected officials and administrators prioritize essential and non-essential municipal services.³⁹ Participatory budgeting helps officials set budget priorities. If the participatory budgeting process is implemented, it is critical to meaningfully engage citizens and keep them engaged.

Previous researchers have identified several barriers to meaningful citizen participation, including:

- Limited knowledge by citizens about government operations
- Citizen perceptions that their input is not wanted or valued
- Lack of trust and legitimacy
- Citizen apathy
- Time constraints
- A concern that citizen self-interests may get in the way of community interests⁴⁰

The participatory budgeting process is not without these challenges, but it can address and even overcome these barriers.

38. Thompson, A. and Allen, L. 2011. Measuring community engagement. *InFocus Report*. ICMA. These authors cite the following article—Cooper, T., Breyer, T. and Meek, J. December 2006. Citizen-centered collaborative public management. *Public Administration Review*, 66 (s1): 76–87.

39. Gordon, V. op. cit.

40. Yang, K. and Pandey, S. November/ December 2011. Further dissecting the black box of citizen participation: When does citizen involvement lead to good outcomes? *Public Administration Review*, 71 (6): 880–892; Ebdon, C. and Franklin, A. Spring 2004. Searching for a role for citizens in the budget process. *Public Budgeting and Finance*, 24 (1): 32–49; Franklin, A., Ho, A. and Ebdon, C. Fall 2009. Participatory budgeting in Midwestern states: Democratic connection or citizen disconnection? *Public Budgeting and Finance*, 29 (3): 52–73.

Social media platforms are one way to effectively engage citizens, and some cities are reaching out to constituents using Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, short message service (texting), Pinterest, LinkedIn, and blogs.

A recent report noted that three out of four people in the United States make use of some form of social media. These platforms can be cost-effective tools if used appropriately.⁴¹ It has also been reported that three-quarters of chief information officers at the local government level report using or planning on using Facebook or Twitter in outreach efforts.⁴² Many federal agencies are setting an example for municipalities by “using social media tools to inform the public about their programs, build relationships with customers and constituents, and solicit input about agency programs or activities.”⁴³ Social media tools can be “used to generate new ideas or approaches to solve problems, provide greater public access to leaders, educate the public, encourage collaboration, and make it easier to provide formal or informal feedback about plans, policies, or programs ... Most uses of social media ... focus on informing the public about issues, giving people a chance to ask questions, and building a relationship between citizens and governmental officials.”⁴⁴ Through experimentation with these social media platforms, municipalities can find what works best for their particular community and citizens.⁴⁵

Findings and Recommended Actions

Creating the Participatory Budgeting Infrastructure

Finding One: In many jurisdictions, adequate infrastructure for participatory budgeting is not currently in place.

Most political jurisdictions in the United States have limited experience with participatory budgeting. For participatory budgeting to be successful, cookie-cutter copies of the process do not need to be made by each jurisdiction, but communities should learn from each other and incorporate what works for their particular community needs.⁴⁶

To build capacity and develop the infrastructure necessary for participatory budgeting, there must first be the political and financial commitment from elected officials to see the process through. Decision-making power has to be shared with constituents if the participatory budgeting process is to be successful and meaningful.

Communities are increasingly reaching out to nonprofit organizations with participatory budgeting expertise for assistance to ensure that limited resources are used wisely. Zach Chasnoff, co-founder of Participatory Budgeting-St. Louis, has been working with the 6th Ward to implement participatory budgeting. He says, “The participatory budgeting project staff in New York are our technical assistance team on participatory budgeting, and they have done an amazing job of producing forms and finding ways to help streamline this whole process.” In discussing his role in assisting communities, Josh Lerner, executive director of The Participatory Budgeting Project, says:

41. Thompson, A. and Allen, L., op. cit.

42. Perlman, B. 2012. Social media sites at the state and local levels: Operational success and governance failure. *State and Local Government Review*, 44 (1): 67–75.

43. Lukensmeyer, C., Goldman, J. and Stern, D. 2011. *Assessing public participation in an open government era: A review of federal agency plans*. IBM Center for The Business of Government.

44. Ibid.

45. Gordon, V. op. cit.

46. Lerner, J. Summer 2011. op. cit.

We share sample social media content, such as sample posts or tweets so they can put those out. We have done social media workshops, and that helps in guiding folks on how to effectively use social media for engagement.

What we are doing is working to make the process easier and less time- and resource-intensive. We find that probably the single biggest obstacle is that it does take a lot of time. There are ways to cut that down ... having the votes scanned digitally ... cuts down some time. SMS engagement can cut down time on calling citizens and on following up with people. So we are working on both using tech tools, and also on process design and training tools to make the workload less ... More economies of scale could be realized if some of that work was coordinated.

Sheree Moratto, a member of the Leadership Committee in Chicago's 49th Ward, describes her frustration with the existing infrastructure that prevents her from updating social media platforms during the participatory budgeting process:

Even as a member of the leadership committee, I don't have access other than posting comments. I don't have administrative access to any of the social media accounts related to participatory budgeting. The ward staff is not able to maximize the social media use either, which is not a criticism. They have other responsibilities too. Social media is just not being used adequately for participatory budgeting.

Josh Lerner has observed this frustration in other communities' experience with social media platform use:

Social media is a tool, and if people don't know how to use the tool or have time to use it, it does not get used effectively ... In order for social media to contribute to participatory budgeting, there needs to be both training and capacity for it to work, and recognizing it as work ... skilled work that requires someone who knows what they are doing, and has the time to do it. All too often that is not the case. Social media either is left to someone who does not have a lot of experience with it, or it is not even left to anyone, and is an afterthought.

Aaron Tanaka, a consultant to the city of Boston in implementing its Youth Initiative, discusses the need to find ways for more people to participate in generating project ideas for projects in the initial stages of participatory budgeting:

There is an online platform where people can submit their ideas for different projects, and in this case it maps the ideas onto a specific location. It is sort of a portal where people can submit ideas, and indicate their interests or likes so they can vote on them. People could submit ideas outside of actually coming to an idea assembly, and it had a function where people could vote on the projects online. It was not used at all. The flip side is losing the value of having people come in person to the idea generating sessions, because in the face-to-face process it is easier to get their actual contact information for future followups. The other issue is that meetings can be resource-intensive for us. So it is hard to balance which is better.

Lerner suggests that social media platforms can be used in conjunction with other communication tools in building and strengthening the participatory budgeting infrastructure:

Social media has been useful just as one more vehicle or avenue for outreach for engagement alongside many other approaches. There is traditional media, canvassing and door knocking, and organizing efforts. There are institutional outreach venues, but

social media adds to that and is often especially helpful with little reminders during the process. So, people may have gotten an e-mail, or may have gotten a phone call about a meeting and if they see us on Facebook or Twitter that is one more nudge to get them to go.

Finding Two: Restrictive policies prohibit the successful use of social media platforms in the participatory budgeting process.

Based on research, Perlman identified eight categories of restriction on public sector social media practices:

- Employee access
- Account management
- Acceptable use
- Employee conduct
- Content
- Security
- Legal issues
- Citizen conduct

Perlman finds that “it is not surprising that nearly all of these elements are restrictive and concerned with regulation of conduct and content, and that they do not speak to the issues of SMS (texting) innovation, use in policy networks, or citizen participation.”⁴⁷ Yet, actual online citizen participation is a primary measure of whether municipalities are doing a good job of engaging citizens.⁴⁸ As reflected in the interviews with participatory budgeting community leaders, a balance must be struck between procedural regulations of social media platforms and the need for constant, consistent, timely, and accurate updating of social media platforms. Tanaka describes this need for balance between procedure and practice:

I think it would be good to have from the very start a few people who are designated to do social media and who are carrying it out throughout the process. We had a social media working group on the steering committee, but just because of all of the other stuff happening, it is sort of hard to keep a consistent group of people focused on it. Second, there are additional complications around the city’s social media guidelines that draw parameters around who can access it, the content, and do the updates. I am not saying that is the reason we have not been able to keep up with updates, but it is another piece to negotiate through the process.

Sheree Moratto of the 49th Ward in Chicago raises another issue about the need for effective policies and procedures in social media platform use within the participatory budgeting process:

There are a couple of younger staff members who would be interested in seeing a broader use of social media for participatory budgeting and other ward initiatives. I think there are some approaches or ideas that might work regarding how to do it in such a way that updating things was not a daily thing—maybe do something for scheduling, for a calendar, and maybe write a script to plan this out a bit. We could

47. Perlman, B. op. cit.

48. Manoharan, A. and Bennett, L. Fall 2013. Opportunities for online citizen participation: A study of global municipal practices. *Journal of Public Management and Social Policy*, 137–150.

help people understand how social media sites could be a support for them rather than another layer of work. That is going to be the key.

Finding Three: Social media platforms can be effective in participatory budgeting, but are underused to date.

All interviewees agree social media platforms could effectively encourage participation in the participatory budgeting process and in the actual budget voting process. However, to date, social media use in the participatory budgeting process has been limited and sporadic. There is a great need and great potential to increase and expand social media platform uses to expand and encourage participation. For example, Lerner describes one important use of social media platforms:

Social media has been useful for connecting people across neighborhoods and across cities. One inherent feature of participatory budgeting is that it is very local. It involves people coming out in their neighborhoods to talk about improvements for their neighborhoods, but it is also a part of a broader movement and part of a broader planning and budgeting process. It is very open and it is easy for people to join. It is a low-cost form of engagement. It has also been useful for a deepening engagement between meetings so that people aren't just coming out to one or two meetings, or just voting once, but feel like they are connected to a broader process and to a broader community. So it is one more tool for community building, so that people can see the achievements of other participants, congratulate them, and share their own information.

Finding Four: Security is a major concern when expanding the use of social media platforms and introducing electronic or digital voting into the participatory budgeting process.

Significantly, no interviewees mention specific smartphone apps for exchanging information or the potential use of hand-held voting devices or clickers that might make early-stage consensus building quicker and more efficient. However, all interviewees mentioned the need to tally final votes more quickly, because most communities plan a culminating celebratory event around the announcement of winning projects.⁴⁹ Aaron Tanaka of Boston's Youth Initiative reports:

We need to use social media in the idea collection process, and I think it would be interesting to use it with online voting, but there is the challenge of age and geographic residency verifications ... I think the voting process is going to be the most public part of participatory budgeting, and that is the opportunity to really engage broader numbers of people and have them feel connected to each other across neighborhoods. We will have a week-long voting process, but no online voting. There will be an opportunity to look at proposed projects online. We don't have the technical capacity at this time to do online voting. The big issue is that it is hard to do an age verification process with online voting. We did try to use an online approach for people to propose ideas on, but to be honest it really did not get much traction.

This problem of verifying residency and age is severely limiting the potential of online or e-voting processes. Chasnoff of Participatory Budgeting-St. Louis also stresses the need for electronic voting and the importance of building security into the process:

49. Leighninger, M. 2011. *Using online tools to engage—and be engaged—by the public*. IBM Center for The Business of Government.

We are very interested in figuring out electronic voting mediums for next year, but we want to make sure it is done right. The counting process was arduous for us. We are even interested in a way to facilitate online voting—a trustworthy way.

Sheree Moratto cautions that because the 49th Ward in Chicago includes residents who are not computer savvy, the ward must “figure out ways to make this process accessible to the broadest community that we can, and this will entail multiple formats of voting in order to be really effective.”

Josh Lerner reports that The Participatory Budgeting Project has:

developed a digital scanning system. It was developed internally together with some staff at (New York) City Council that we work with. Basically bar codes were embedded in the ballots, and then people could scan in the projects from each ballot. So, it cut the time for vote counting down dramatically. This is the first time this year we are using it. We have talked about having ... the whole sheet scanned, like in a Scantron form, which would be even quicker.

Recommended Actions for Creating the Participatory Budgeting Infrastructure

Action One: Communities that use participatory budgeting need institutional social media platform policies. For example, policies should empower a sufficient number of community leaders with the administrative authority to update social media platforms.

Action Two: Communities engaged in participatory budgeting should understand that actively managing social media platforms is real, important work, not an afterthought. Participatory budgeting will require an investment in training both citizens and staff on the use of social media platforms.

Action Three: Communities should plan for, develop, and use social media platforms to complement the other forms of communication available for citizen engagement and mobilization. Communities should explore and expand ways that people can opt in to participate and submit initial project ideas online.

Increasing Citizen Participation in Participatory Budgeting

Finding Five: Using a combination of traditional citizen engagement approaches with multiple social media platforms works best.

The interviewees used a combination of traditional citizen engagement approaches (phone calls, flyers, and door knocking) with multiple social media platforms to garner the highest participation. Zach Chasnoff of St. Louis’ 6th Ward reports traditional ways of contacting people like phone calls, but notes that:

With regard to social media, what worked the best was getting on the neighborhood forums. There are a lot of people who care about what is going on in the neighborhood. They will jump in if there is something that really concerns them, but mostly they just ... monitor Facebook and look for updates on things that are going on. We used the people that we had already engaged—the really active people—and they would “like” and “share” and “post” our messages around and they boosted our profile online. Through that approach we would get newer people who were paying attention to those forums. The neighborhood group forums were the best for us. Then Twitter is

a funny thing. Twitter was probably the worst use of social media for us. For example, if we were posting from Participatory Budgeting-St. Louis and we were trying to get the word out on an event, I think we had very little response from that. But when we had news articles or we had pictures to post, and we could put them on Twitter, and then send them around using @president of board of aldermen, or @participatory budgetingNewYork, or @ and the name of a reporter I had established a relationship with, then I think we got more responses. And we got shares and retweets.

Aaron Tanaka of Boston's Youth Initiative says:

There are four channels that we use in terms of social media platforms—Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and a mobile comments texting application which is a mass texting service where people can opt in and sign up for updates ... we have been most successful just importing people into it. It is harder to get people to sign up on their own. It has not been as successful in getting people to opt in as they would like. Facebook is the main platform that we use for telling people about upcoming public events and opportunities and the rest is done on Instagram and Twitter.

Additionally, Lerner states that many cities have been:

using SMS engagement for texting, and we think that has really big potential for engaging people. It would be especially important for people who don't participate as much in general, those who use texting a lot; and it has proven to have a very high response rate and usership rate.

Finding Six: Special efforts are required to include underrepresented or excluded populations in the participatory budgeting process.

Communities undertaking participatory budgeting should be aware that it is possible to inadvertently leave out populations without access to digital technologies.⁵⁰ There must also be recognition of what the organization loses when participants are not gathered in person—such as the ability to collect pertinent contact information.

During the participatory budgeting process, a community may overlook populations with limited availability and access to social media platforms, including the elderly, the poor, the less educated, and new immigrants.⁵¹ Targeted outreach efforts may be required and participatory budgeting meetings may need to be scheduled to accommodate the specific needs of these underrepresented populations.⁵² Zach Chasnoff from the 6th Ward in St. Louis gives two examples of outreach activities to those who may not be digitally connected:

There is one small group of Somalians that live on one block in the 6th Ward. Here were language barriers. It is not a huge part of the ward, but it is significant and we can't just leave a block of people out of the process. When we were doing door-to-door canvassing, we really stayed in that neighborhood a lot. We tried to re-knock on doors, and find out when the English-speaking people would be home. We need to try to better incorporate people on those blocks in the process.

We are also working on solving an issue for next year that we noted during the delegate process. Our numbers for African-American participation were through the roof

50. Processing power, Participatory politics. 2013. *The Economist*, 406: 63–64. <http://search.proquest.com> (accessed 3/28/14).

51. Ibid.

52. Lerner, J. Summer 2011. op. cit.

for our neighborhood assemblies where they brainstormed ideas, and also through the roof on the actual votes that were cast. However, in our delegate phase it was largely white males who came out, and in this phase is where a lot of the hard work is done. What we flagged as the underlying issue was that it is also the most time-consuming phase of the process. It takes several months of meetings, site visits, and sitting down and talking. Next year we need to increase low-income and minority representation and participation in the delegate phase, where the ideas turn into concrete projects.

Sheree Moratto of Chicago's 49th Ward acknowledges that involving youth is a special challenge for the 49th Ward. She states:

I think that [reaching out to] youth needs an entirely different process. You cannot take an adult process and say we are going to do the same thing. It is completely antithetical to everything that they stand for, so that to me needs ... work. I don't think that pulling them into the process that currently exists with social media would have an impact. I think they need their own program.

Tanaka provides an example based on his experience with Instagram in Boston:

My sense is that young people tend to use Instagram more than anything else. It is a trend. Instagram is sort of an image-based medium, but it is narrower in scope in terms of what you can do with it, which is why you don't get meeting announcements.

Lerner shares his experiences with multiple social media platforms:

Twitter is more open and easy to spread the word. With Facebook, people may or may not see your posts; with Twitter, anyone who follows you will see it. We have used Instagram in a few places too, and that has been very popular, especially with young people. I think Instagram is really about usage, and the young people are using Instagram at increasingly high rates, and often are using it more than Facebook.

Despite understanding which social media platforms young people might respond to, even in Boston where the focus is on youth, Tanaka acknowledges that segments of the youth population are not well represented in the participatory budgeting process. For example, they reached out to the LGBT community, homeless youth, and to court-involved youth, but did not have significant response or participation from these groups.

Finding Seven: Social media outreach to citizens will not guarantee participation in the participatory budgeting process.

Social media platforms alone will not guarantee citizen participation. Content of the messages sent via social media platforms matters, and the sender matters, too. Information overload is partially responsible. However, if the recipient believes the sender to be trustworthy, he or she will be more likely to participate.⁵³ A recent study by Hock, Anderson, and Potoski found that when city managers make telephone calls personally inviting citizens to meetings, it significantly increases the number of attendees. This approach is not without costs in terms of time and money.⁵⁴

53. Jenkins, H., Ford, S. and Green, J. op. cit.

54. Hock, S., Anderson, S. and Potoski, M. March/April 2013. Invitation phone calls increase attendance at civic meetings: Evidence from a field experiment. *Public Administration Review*, 73 (2): 221–228.

Lerner describes a common mistake in timely development of message content:

A lot of the folks doing social media around participatory budgeting do it from the perspective of someone who is already interested in the process. This is as opposed to thinking about the folks they are trying to reach who are not inherently interested in it yet. So, a lot of the content we find tends to be something such as “there was a participatory budgeting meeting” ... exciting for the staff person organizing it [but it] doesn’t really get at “why should someone else care?” So we have encouraged them to lift up the idea of why it matters, not just that an event is happening. Having a quote or a picture of someone having a meaningful experience at the event and talking about what they learned is better. That is what has a greater impact.

Recommended Actions for Increasing Citizen Participation in Participatory Budgeting

Action Four: Communities should build on existing and active social media platforms that the community uses. If citizens respond to an e-mail blast, use it. If youth are using Instagram, use it. Communities should be encouraged to try new approaches.

Action Five: Communities should identify ways to turn passive observers on social media platforms into active participants.⁵⁵ Communities should understand that social media platforms are not just top-down processes, but collaborative,⁵⁶ and a two-way forms of communication.⁵⁷ Citizens should be able to connect across neighborhoods and districts and see the impact of the whole process.

Action Six: Communities should identify who is being left out and work to include excluded populations in the participatory process.

Action Seven: Communities should understand that message content counts. Communities should remember that citizens might not all respond in the same way to a particular alert, message, etc. Participatory budgeting leaders should have a variety of “scripts” prepared and use as appropriate. They should remember to ask, “Why does this matter?”

Assessing and Increasing Participatory Budgeting’s Impact

Finding Eight: Assessment is critical to the success and expansion of participatory budgeting. Interviewees acknowledge a clear need to use social media platforms more in the participatory budgeting process, but they recognize that they have a responsibility to do this securely. Lerner describes practical ways that communities can increase the use of social media platforms in engaging citizens:

One is to train local staff, and that is a role where a technology company could contribute. There is a need for technical assistance for bringing in experts to train city staff and organizations on effective use of social media. Another idea would be to provide financial resources to enable there to be central staff to support local processes, and that is one thing that we are trying to build up—recognizing that a lot of the social

55. Jenkins, H., Ford, S. and Green, J. 2013. *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

56. Naibandian, J., O’Neill, Jr., R., Wilkes, J. M. and Kaufman, A. July/Aug 2013. Contemporary challenges in local government: Evolving roles and responsibilities, structures, and processes. *Public Administration Review*, 73 (4): 567–574.

57. Neshkova, M. Jan/Feb 2014. Does agency autonomy foster public participation? *Public Administration Review*, 74 (1): 64–74.

media outreach and challenges and strategies are actually similar across participatory budgeting processes in each city. It is not very efficient to be reinventing the wheel in each city and figuring out what works and what doesn't, and more economies of scale could be realized if some of that work was coordinated. Having one person who is effective coordinating efforts— that would be less time expended and more impact realized. Our focus is really on realizing that it is a support role that could have a big impact, and that can reduce the cost of the process and can reduce the time involved if there is someone who can do it well.

The interviewees all mention the need for data collection and assessment so that ongoing process improvements can be made. There is a clear need to continually review new technologies and software to assist in participatory budgeting. For example, Chasnoff states:

Software programs allow you to do blasts with text messaging, and in the neighborhood assembly phase we did send out some texts. I don't know if the texts were more effective than the e-mail blasts When we next do a survey for people coming to the neighborhood assemblies, a relevant question on the survey would be, "How did you receive information about this meeting?"

One outcome of the May 2014 White House event on participatory budgeting was the realization that communities need to share more than just examples of success. Concrete demonstrations are needed, along with identification and agreement on the types of assessment data to start collecting so that meaningful comparisons can be made among communities about what works and what does not.⁵⁸ To build participatory budgeting capacity as suggested by the interviewees, it is very important to "measure, monitor and make adjustments."⁵⁹ As stated by the St. Louis 6th Ward Alderman Christine Ingrassia, the participatory budgeting community is small, but the White House event has brought participatory budgeting leaders together so that they can talk "about the challenges and potential of participatory budgeting."⁶⁰

Recommended Actions for Assessing and Increasing Participatory Budgeting's Impact

Action Eight: Communities should identify best practices, share and exchange information with other communities, and support further research efforts.

Action Nine: Both communities and the academic realm should research and develop "technology that might help spread participatory budgeting more broadly, such as voting apps or databases through which communities could share information."⁶¹ Communities should explore the potential for electronic or digital vote tallying.

Action Ten: Communities should solicit feedback from all stakeholders and incorporate changes into social media platform policies, procedures, and practices as necessary.

58. Scola, N. May 15, 2014. The White House brings participatory budgeting in from the fringe. Next City. <http://nextcity.org/daily/entry/participatory-budgeting-cities-white-house> (accessed 5/22/14).

59. Krzmarzick, A. March 15, 2013. Social media matures into viable, valuable communications tool. <http://www.astd.org/Publications/Magazines/The-Public-Manager> (accessed 5/10/14).

60. Scola, N. op. cit.

61. Scola, N. op. cit.

To Learn More About Participatory Budgeting

Organizational Resources

The Participatory Budgeting Project, 388 Atlantic Avenue, Second Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11217, Phone: 347-554-7357, Website: participatorybudgeting.org.

Deliberative Democracy Consortium, 1050 17th Street, Suite 250, Washington, D.C. 20036. Website: www.deliberative-democracy.net.

International Association for Public Participation USA, 6732 Zinnia Street, Arvada, CO 80004. Website: www.iap2usa.org.

Publications on Participatory Budgeting

Hadden, M. and Lerner, J. December 3, 2011. How to start participatory budgeting in your city. <http://www.shareable.net/blog/how-to-start-participatory-budeting-in-your-city> (accessed 7/18/12).

Kasdan, A. and Cattell, L. n.d. A people's budget: A research and evaluation report on the pilot year of participatory budgeting in New York City. Community Development Project at the Urban Justice Center with the Participatory Budgeting NYC Research Team.

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Appendix: Qualitative Methodology

Many scholars agree that citizen participation in the budgeting process is beneficial and important, but has not been adequately studied.⁶² Further, many scholars agree that research on social media's impact on governance is also limited and has not been adequately studied. Perlman found that “the promises of SMS—greater connectivity among citizens themselves in the coalescence of policy preferences, faster iteration, and communication of these preferences between citizens and representatives, and higher citizen participation in representative forums—have been touted but not yet delivered or well-studied.”⁶³ This research project attempts to address one small aspect of the gap in these interrelated bodies of literature by understanding the use of social media platforms in the participatory budgeting process. This project uses a qualitative approach for gathering data, due to the very limited number of cities in the U.S. that have adopted the use of participatory budgeting. Further, most communities, with the exception of the 49th Ward in Chicago, have a very short history and limited experience with participatory budgeting, which further supports using a qualitative approach for this project.

The in-depth interview approach provides a diverse, rich level of investigation that cannot be achieved through a survey instrument. The nature of qualitative research demands that the researcher let the interviewee's words speak for them. The text—the transcribed words—is the data with which the researcher works. It can be bulky and cumbersome and the researcher must be careful not to overweigh or underweigh her understanding of the words.⁶⁴

Without overstating the results, at the very least, there is value in the lessons learned from listening to specific participatory budgeting experiences. Although the results of this research cannot be reliably generalized, the results can be shared with others so they can make informed decisions about adopting and implementing participatory budgeting within their own communities, and understand how they could most effectively use social media platforms in the participatory budgeting process.

62. Guo, H. and Neshkova, M., op. cit.

63. Perlman, B. op. cit.

64. Miles, M. and Huberman, A. 1994. *An expanded sourcebook: Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

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Acknowledgments

The author wishes to thank the IBM Center for The Business of Government for the opportunity to explore this important topic. The author would also like to thank the individuals who contributed to this project by sharing their experiences with the participatory budgeting process.

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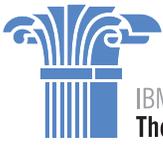
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