An Evaluation and Oversight Framework for Participatory Budgeting in Boston

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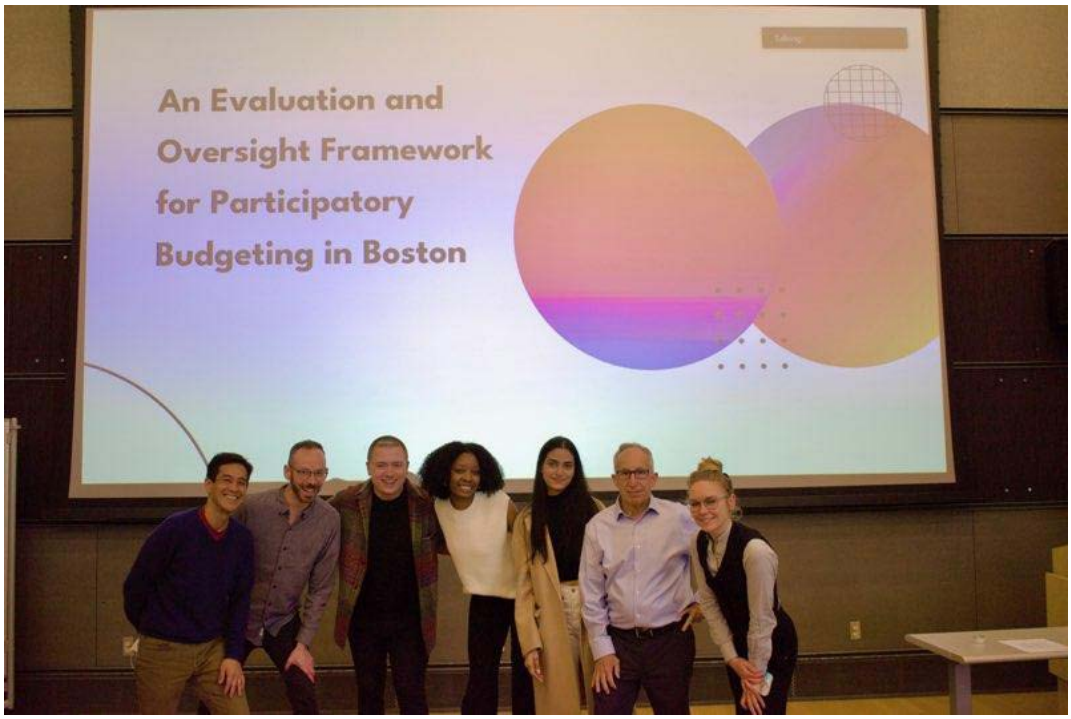

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Executive Summary

In the fall of 2021, Boston voted in a new process to democratize the city's budget. The existing budgeting process, which determines how **nearly $4 billion is spent annually**, has been extensively criticized for its lack of transparency, for putting too much power in the hands of Boston's mayor, and for systematically neglecting the needs of working-class communities of color. By contrast, the new process will give everyday residents the ability to directly influence how municipal funds are spent. This process, called participatory budgeting (or "PB"), operates on an annual cycle through which residents discuss their neighborhoods' needs, propose and deliberate on potential solutions, and ultimately vote on which projects should be funded with city dollars. Scheduled to be implemented in Boston by the summer of 2023, this new process represents a shift in budgeting power toward Boston's most marginalized communities, who have an opportunity to claim public investment in the areas they themselves deem most important. In this way, PB provides the city with a chance to reckon with centuries of systemic injustice by redistributing money and power toward working-class BIPOC neighborhoods.

To achieve this goal, a coalition of grassroots organizations called the Better Budget Alliance has worked hard to define a vision for the city's participatory budgeting process. For the Better Budget Alliance (or "BBA") it is clear that a successful PB process should:[1]

- Address historic funding inequities by directing public investment equitably into working-class communities of color
- Respond specifically to the stated needs of these communities, and fund restorative institutions rather than harmful ones
- Be highly accessible to members of the public, and ensure a high level of transparency surrounding its process, outcomes, and governing structures
- Create opportunities for residents to practice engaging in civic issues, build relationships and deliberate with neighbors, and learn about municipal systems in ways that allow them to advocate for their needs in other political forums
- Give decision-making power to the people and communities historically excluded from municipal budgeting processes, including incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, immigrants, and youth

For the purposes of this report, we use the term **"budget justice"** to encapsulate these principles and describe the BBA's vision for a PB process. Because this report is written in partnership with the Center for Economic Democracy, a core member of the BBA, budget justice is the lens through which we examine participatory budgeting throughout this document.

The practice of participatory budgeting is not new. PB was introduced in 1990 in the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil. Following a long history of authoritarian governance, the Brazilian Workers Party instituted an important shift when it claimed political power through the city's municipal election in 1989.[2] The Workers Party implemented the first ever participatory budgeting process as a way to provide everyday residents with democratic control over public funds. Since the implementation of PB in Brazil, there have been nearly 800 PB processes globally, with over $400 million allocated in total.[3] Broadly speaking, PB has changed the material conditions of marginalized communities by directing more government dollars towards schools, health services, transportation, libraries, and public housing when compared with non-PB budgeting

processes.[4] These observable benefits have prompted adoption of PB in cities across the world, where an estimated 400,000 people have directly participated in PB processes.[5]

Porto Alegre's PB process, the first example of PB in the world, provides specific insight into the potential of participatory budgeting as a transformative democratic tool. Tarson Nuñez, who led Porto Alegre's Planning Office at the time PB was implemented, speaks about the value of PB both through its budgeting outcomes and its use as an educational tool[6]. According to Nuñez, PB in Porto Alegre was revolutionary in part because it incorporated social need explicitly into its model for funding allocation. In practice, this looked like neighborhoods with the worst streets receiving the greatest amount of investment in road improvement and repair, as just one example. Nuñez also observed PB's transformational impacts on everyday residents, who grew more familiar with the workings of municipal government and came to expect more from their elected officials with each passing cycle. Perhaps most importantly, PB allowed previously disenfranchised communities to engage meaningfully in broader conversations about the city's budget, and even how the city accrued revenue. Together, these factors represented a radical departure from how things had been done before, a departure that equipped residents with both decision-making ability and knowledge as vital forms of power.

> Broadly speaking, PB has changed the material conditions of marginalized communities by directing more government dollars towards schools, health services, transportation, libraries, and public housing when compared with non-PB budgeting processes.

New York City's PB process also demonstrates the remarkable potential of participatory budgeting, largely by showing how PB can scale in a city over time. In 2011, four city council members in New York launched the PB process as a way to allocate funds within their districts.[7] As elected officials observed participatory budgeting gaining in popularity, more and more city council members began to implement this process in their respective districts, spreading the use of this democratic tool across the city.[8] As a result, communities began to gain real power over the allocation of public funding. In 2011, the total PB budget was approximately $6 million, used to fund 27 projects.[9] In 2019, over $39 million was allocated for 145 projects, and more than 118,000 New York residents participated in the voting phase.[10] Currently, New York is on its 11th cycle of PB.

Since implementing PB in 2011, NYC's PB Office has refined their goals in order to achieve a truly democratized process. PB has engaged marginalized groups in local politics and has created a new platform with which to elevate these communities' voices. In particular, it brings attention to young people, people of color, immigrants, low-income people, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, and more. For example, of the 50,000 people who voted in NYC's fourth PB cycle, more than 25% stated they have previously experienced barriers to voting in regular elections.[11] In fact, one in ten were not US citizens, impeding their ability to vote in municipal elections altogether.[12] This direct involvement in decision-making has resulted in an evident shift in budgeting priorities. Specifically, PB voters influenced an increase in spending to schools, public housing,

and street improvements.[13] Research has also demonstrated that PB participants expressed increased trust in their government due to a feeling of connectedness and enhanced understanding of politics.[14] This provides evidence of a PB spillover effect, which inspires people to more deeply engage within their communities and build new networks, organizations, and community economic opportunities.[15] Overall, PB in NYC has created a more inclusive civic process in order to reach more equitable outcomes.

These examples highlight the extensive potential that PB has to transform how the City of Boston engages with its communities. The radical nature of PB highlights a divergence from traditional representative democracy in the US, specifically by allowing everyday people to directly influence a major policy decision that impacts their day-to-day lives. Boston has the opportunity to embed aspects of participatory democracy throughout its political system, acting as the forerunner of a progressive wave of municipal democratization in the country. Implementing PB in Boston will enable marginalized communities to have a voice in budgeting decisions, and also provide these communities with a learning opportunity to understand how to get involved in political affairs. Incarcerated individuals, immigrants, youth, and many other underrepresented groups will be given the autonomy and power to change their communities. As participatory budgeting continues to gain popularity across the nation, Boston has the opportunity to demonstrate the full potential of this democratic tool.

In addition to illustrating the transformative potential of PB, these experiments have also revealed some important lessons about participatory budgeting's potential challenges. An examination of PB around the world highlights the fact that PB processes are not created equally, and that the ability of PB to address the material needs of a community depends on factors related to overall funding, PB governance, and the ability of municipal departments to receive and implement PB outputs. In addition, the case of Porto Alegre teaches us that participatory budgeting processes are not immune to corruption or co-optation by conservative groups, and that sustained pressure from community-based organizations, like the BBA, has an important impact on PB outcomes. Furthermore, cases from several US cities illustrate logistical challenges inherent in PB, like the difficulty of engaging residents in a new participatory process and the phenomenon of "participation burnout" observed by many municipalities. Together, these and other lessons teach us that although participatory budgeting possesses great democratic potential, it does not inherently create more just outcomes compared to traditional budgeting processes. Rather, PB should be designed and implemented intentionally around the goals it aims to achieve, in this case the goals outlined by the BBA.

Because there have been so many PB processes around the world, Boston has an opportunity to learn from hundreds of examples as it designs and implements its own participatory budgeting process. In addition to considering the process design of PB, the city also stands to benefit from thinking through two commonly overlooked dimensions of PB governance: **oversight and evaluation**. In this context, **"oversight"** refers to an independent committee of residents tasked with defining the specific goals of Boston's PB process each year, setting the rules under which PB is conducted, and taking responsibility for various aspects of the PB process. **"Evaluation"**, which is closely related to oversight, refers to

the methods and actors involved in determining whether Boston's PB process is meeting its stated goals. Together, effective oversight and evaluation are vital to the success of participatory budgeting, particularly because they are what enable a PB process to adapt and evolve year after year. If Boston's new PB process is an experiment in participatory democracy, then oversight and evaluation are how we determine the experiment's results and put those lessons into action.

How a municipality integrates oversight into its PB process has important implications for budget justice. Specifically, empowered oversight committees representing working-class BIPOC communities and other marginalized groups hold significant power to shape PB processes around those communities' needs. According to PB officials in the City of Denver, where budget justice is an explicit goal of the city's new PB process, an oversight committee reflective of the city's diverse population is given great power to shape participatory budgeting. Because the oversight committee possesses deep knowledge of the needs of Denver's most marginalized communities, they are given managing authority over the PB process and funds with which to carry out their responsibilities. This stands in sharp contrast to the City of Cambridge, where budget justice is not a stated vision for the PB process. This is reflected in the fact the city does not utilize a steering committee, relying instead on a municipal PB office to increase civic participation in the process. While this difference may seem insignificant, our research shows that oversight teams representing BIPOC and other marginalized communities make an important difference in the PB process.

Together, effective oversight and evaluation are vital to the success of participatory budgeting, particularly because they are what enable a PB process to adapt and evolve year after year.

For these reasons, we provide several recommendations related to the structure and responsibilities of an empowered oversight committee. These recommendations, which are outlined in greater detail at the end of this report, include:

- Define a clear mandate for the oversight committee, which includes governing the PB process, overseeing the city's Office of PB, owning the annual evaluation process, and remaining accountable to the Better Budget Alliance.
- Establish a committee structure wherein committee members are well-paid, agree to take on a year-long commitment, are provided with term limits, and where internal working groups are established to facilitate decision-making and action.
- Ensure that the oversight committee disproportionately represents working-class BIPOC communities and other marginalized identities, and that committee members collectively possess the skill sets necessary to carry out the functions of oversight.
- Empower the oversight committee by providing it with sufficient funding, bestowing it with independence from other governmental authorities, granting it authority to regulate itself and the PB process, and priming city agencies to receive inputs from the PB process.

Evaluation, a function of oversight, is also critical in the realization of budget justice. Specifically, evaluation is necessary to determine if a PB process is meeting its goals and objectives, in this case the principles set forth by the BBA. Our research on the topic of PB evaluation shows that most US cities have not conducted extensive evaluations of their PB processes, although many have measured levels of resident participation and participant demographics. One notable outlier is New York City, where participatory action research led by the Urban Justice Center yielded valuable findings about the city's process from 2011 - 2015.[16] In the case of NYC, these evaluations of PB's successes proved invaluable for scaling the program over time. Additionally, by evaluating the program's challenges in close partnership with grassroots community groups, researchers were able to turn their evaluation findings into highly actionable recommendations that were used to make PB more accessible, transparent, and just. Our research shows us that evaluation does not have to be something that only happens once a program is complete. Instead, It can and should be integrated into every part of a program, even while that program is still being designed.

Evaluation can and should be integrated into every part of a program, even while that program is still being designed.

Based on our investigation into PB evaluation, we propose several recommendations for how participatory budgeting might be evaluated in Boston. These recommendations, which are outlined in greater detail at the end of this report, include:

- Start evaluation at the beginning of the PB process, not after the PB cycle is complete.
- Contract with a technical evaluation partner for the first several cycles of PB to augment the oversight committee's expertise with specific skills related to community-engaged research.
- Utilize an approach to evaluation that centers and pays grassroots community researchers and aims to create highly impactful and actionable outcomes.
- Establish a research board that helps professional researchers and academics lend their skills to research agendas set by community stakeholders.
- Evaluate not only the participatory dimensions of PB, but also the budgeting outcomes of the PB process and how effectively city departments interact with the program.

At this moment in time, Boston has an unprecedented opportunity to implement a PB program that forwards the principle of budget justice. As this report is being written, the BBA is drafting a PB process grounded in the core principles outlined earlier in this section, principles of justice, democracy, and a fundamental redistribution of wealth and power. Supporting this work is the administration of Mayor Michelle Wu, a politician who is deeply committed to transformative policy addressing social and racial injustice in the city. To this end, the Mayor's 2023 budget proposal includes $2 million just to run an impactful PB process, meaning the BBA's vision for PB will be well-resourced.[17] What's more, the fact that oversight and evaluation are being considered at the very beginning of this process create possibilities to integrate these practices in ways that have not been explored in any other US city. These and other conditions mean that Boston is poised to implement a dynamic and transformative participatory budgeting process that serves as a

model for other cities around the nation and the world, a process that improves on itself year after year and empowers Boston's most marginalized communities to define and meet their own material needs. Put simply, participatory budgeting provides all Boston residents with a chance to practice the world they wish to live in.

Audience Guide

While this report is conceived as a comprehensive whole, we believe it may provide discrete value for four different audiences. Since it is quite a long document, we put together this guide to highlight the parts of the report, and the resources we reference, that we believe will be most useful to each audience.

Our first intended audience are **the writers of Boston's PB ordinance:** members of the BBA's research team and city counsel staff.

We direct you first and foremost to:
1. Defining the Vision for a summary of the values and desires for PB held across the BBA.
2. Empowering Effective Oversight where we present recommendations for the mandate and structure of the oversight committee.
3. An Approach for Embedded Participatory Evaluation where we outline recommendations for building ongoing evaluation into the PB cycle.
4. Appendix A: Breakdown of Oversight Responsibilities and Working Group Design for a formal proposal for organizing and delegating oversight responsibilities.

For a deeper exploration of considerations for establishing PB in the city, we direct you to:
1. The History of PB for a quick summary of where PB developed and how it has spread.
2. Understanding the Critiques of PB for a summary of critiques of PB and how institutional design can address those critiques.
3. Celina Su's article "Beyond Inclusion: Critical Race Theory and Participatory Budgeting"
4. Oversight of US Participatory Budgeting in Practice to get a sense of what Oversight has looked like in other US cities.
5. Appendix E: MOU for PBNYC Steering Committee for the official contract signed by steering committee members in NYC.

Our second intended audience are **the members of the Better Budget Alliance**.

We direct you first and foremost to:
1. Defining the Vision for a summary of the values and desires for PB held across the BBA.
2. History of PB for a quick summary of where PB developed and how it has spread.
3. The BBA's proposal for PB to see how the BBA's proposal (as of May 2022) compares to existing PB processes in the US.
4. Role of the Better Budget Alliance in Oversight for a few suggestions on how the BBA can understand its essential place ensuring PB leads to Budget Justice.

Our third intended audience are **the members of Boston's PB Oversight Committee** once it is established.

We direct you first and foremost to:

1. Our Introduction and History of PB as well as Celina Su's article "Budgeting Justice" in the Boston Review as an introduction to the transformative potential of PB.
2. Defining a Vision for PB in Boston for a summary of the values and desires for PB held by BBA members.
3. Oversight Committee Powers and Responsibilities where we detail our recommendations for the many roles the oversight committee should play in the PB process.
4. Role of the Better Budget Alliance in Oversight for a discussion of the partnership with the BBA that is needed to ensure PB leads to Budget Justice.

For a deeper exploration of our research on Oversight of PB processes:

1. Understanding the Critiques of PB for a summary of critiques of PB and how effective oversight can address those critiques.
2. Celina Su's article "Managed Participation: City Agencies and Micropolitics in Participatory Budgeting" for an investigation into the relationship between PB and city agencies in NYC.
3. Oversight Committee Structure to see the recommendations we made for setting up this Committee.
4. Oversight of US Participatory Budgeting in Practice to get a sense of what Oversight has looked like in other US cities.
5. Enabling Ongoing Evaluation for our comprehensive recommendations on how to embed evaluation in the PB process.
6. Appendix B: Oversight and Evaluation Mapped for an outline of what PB can oversight might look like over the course of a PB cycle.

Our fourth intended audience are **the oversight committee members and/or technical partner responsible for evaluation**.

We direct you to:

1. Enabling Ongoing Evaluation for our comprehensive recommendations on how to embed evaluation in the PB process.
2. Alexa Kasdan and Erin Markman's article "Participatory Budgeting and Community-Based Research: Principles, Practices, and Implications for Impact Validity" for a practical explanation of how they ran a participatory action research evaluation for PB in NYC.
3. Appendix B: Oversight and Evaluation Mapped for a draft evaluation plan for a PB cycle, with ideas for research questions, indicators and research methods.

For more Evaluation-related material we point you to:

1. Appendix C: Data Collection and Research Methods for a summary of the research methods we have seen used for PB research and a plan for designating data collection responsibilities.
2. Appendix D: MOU for PBNYC Research Board for the contract used by PBNYC for their research board.
3. Evaluation of US Participatory Budgeting in Practice for a summary of and reflection on PB evaluations across the US.

Additionally we hope that our report will be useful to the directors and staff of the Office of PB in Boston in its entirety.

Opening

Image Source: Participatory Budgeting Project

Introduction

In the summer of 2020, following the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer, protestors and legislators throughout the City of Boston came together to fight for justice in the city's budget. These advocates called on Mayor Marty Walsh to reallocate 10% of the city's police funding, a total of over $40 million, with demands supported by three major arguments. First, that Black Bostonians experience police surveillance, stop-and-frisk encounters, and police brutality at disproportionate rates compared to their white neighbors.[18] Second, that police presence is not an effective strategy for preventing violence and crime before it happens. Third, that the root causes of violence and crime would be better addressed if the police department's **$414 million budget** were spent on other projects and programs, including minority-owned businesses, affordable housing, and nonviolent approaches to harm prevention. Although calls to defund the police received widespread public support and the endorsement of 8 of Boston's 13 city councilors, Mayor Walsh ultimately decreased police spending by just 2.4% that year.[19,20]

This story highlights several commonly cited issues with the city's budgeting process, especially a lack of transparency, the ability of the mayor to make unilateral budgeting decisions, and a systematic failure to incorporate the needs and interests of working-class communities of color into budgeting outcomes. These factors, which have fueled efforts to transform Boston's budgeting process for decades, become even more important when one considers the immense size and impact of Boston's total budget: a total **of $3.8 billion** annually. The budget is not just used to pay police officers. It determines which neighborhoods receive investment in the form of schools, libraries, streets, parks, and fire departments. The city budget pays for programs ranging from waste management to youth services. It even informs how our government operates, determining which departments exist, how large they will be, and how much they're able to do. If the city's budgeting process lacks transparency, if it is ultimately decided by just one person, and if it fails to respond to the needs of marginalized communities, then it is clear that this process cannot be truly democratic, or by extension, truly just. Because of this, it is easy to see how injustice touches every aspect of the city shaped by the municipal budget.

Boston is not the only city where unjust budgeting practices dominate. Celina Su, who has been involved with New York City's budgeting process for over a decade and teaches on participatory democracy at the City University of New York, argues that larger patterns of disenfranchisement permeate many municipal budgets. She observes that city budgets are typically devised, negotiated, and approved by mayors, city councilors, and municipal bureaucrats who are often accountable to wealthy constituents and corporate influences, and rarely, if at all, to people below the voting age, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals, and non-voting immigrants.[21] Those who do participate in local electoral politics are likely to find that "public policy is governed by racial hierarchies and neoliberal logics of [austerity], competition, deservingness, respectability politics, and individual responsibility", logics that come into play, for example, when predominantly white neighborhoods receive more public investment in trees and green spaces, when streets and public infrastructure are repaired more reliably in white neighborhoods, and when schools with white students receive disproportionate levels of funding.[22][23] As evidenced by these examples, it is common for city governments to divest from

services, projects, and programs that benefit marginalized constituents and invest instead into institutions that cause them harm. To have their voices and needs reflected in city budgets, marginalized groups are forced to resist at their own personal risk.[24]

The knowledge that city budgeting processes commonly perpetuate patterns of racial and social injustice raises an important question: what does a just budgeting process look like? The concept of **budget justice** is used by numerous community groups, nonprofit organizations, and activist coalitions seeking reinvestment in communities that have been systematically neglected, dispossessed, and intentionally harmed by unjust budgets.[25] Often it refers specifically to the reallocation of resources away from police departments and toward programs that allow historically marginalized communities to meet their own needs.[26] Pulling from Su's writing on the the topic and incorporating the perspectives of Better Budget Alliance members, we define budget justice through these core themes:

- It ensures that both budgets and budgeting processes are transparent and accessible to the public.
- It includes divesting from harmful institutions and programs as well as investing into restorative institutions and programs.
- It acknowledges that budgets which prioritize the needs of marginalized communities are not created by powerful policymakers, and instead vests power directly in those communities to make budget decisions.
- It explicitly requires the meaningful and direct control of public resources by working-class Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Immigrant communities who have previously experienced disinvestment, displacement, and active harm at the hands of the state.
- It facilitates "new modes of democracy", beyond just voting, which provide communities with opportunities to deliberate on the needs of their communities and the best pathways to address them.[27]
- It ensures that budgeting processes are integrated with existing grassroots organizing and "ecologies of care", especially in marginalized communities.

This definition of budget justice also relates to several definitions of justice put forward by Mayor Michelle Wu. In her 2020 plan for a Green New Deal, Mayor Wu writes:

> ***"Justice is achieving equitable power sharing, restructuring unjust structures, and creating a city that intentionally supports us all. Distributive justice ensures no community is unequally harmed by our choices and all share equitably in resources across the city. Procedural justice lifts up the voices, ideas and power of historically marginalized communities into processes for decision-making and implementation. Reparative justice aims to bring neighborhoods and communities into a state of shared well-being by addressing the impacts of existing or historical harms. Finally, transformative justice reforms and replaces the systemic ways that racism, class exploitation, discrimination and***

What is Participatory Budgeting?

Participatory budgeting is a process in which community members democratically determine how to spend a pot of public money. Since its beginnings in the city of Porto Alegre in Brazil in 1989, participatory budgeting has been used to make budgeting decisions in over 7,000 cities around the world, as well as in regional governments, schools and other public institutions. There are five key components that are shared by participatory budgeting processes across diverse contexts:

1. A yearly cycle for the participatory process that is designed and overseen by a committee of stakeholders
2. Citizen brainstorming of ideas for government projects
3. Community-led development of feasible project proposals coming out of the initial ideation
4. Direct democratic decision-making concerning which projects to fund
5. A mandate for timely government implementation of the selected ideas

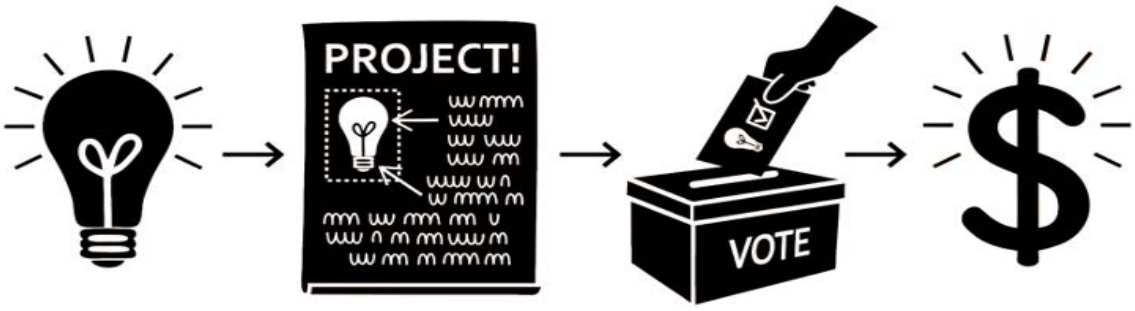


Figure 1: What is Participatory Budgeting

oppression continue to produce disparities."[28]

Together, these principles reflect a considerable shift away from traditional budgeting processes, which are described in more detail in the section of this report outlining Boston's budget. However, models have already emerged that aim to put the ideals of budget justice into practice. One in particular, called **participatory budgeting**, has become more popular over the past 20 years as a means of integrating social justice and direct democracy into municipal budgeting.

In its most ideal form, participatory budgeting (or PB) represents an opportunity for marginalized groups to claim power over municipal budgets, redistribute wealth across the city, and create "new modes of democracy" through which participants build new relationships and coalitions, practice non-hierarchical forms of decision-making, and contribute their lived experiences directly to the creation of public policy.[29] In the words of Celina Su, PB represents a method through which "community members themselves articulate the criteria we wish to live by, forwarding new logics of collective care and community control."[30]

Despite the powerful vision on which PB processes are built, there are many ways that participatory budgeting can fail to reach its goals. PB can be co-opted by wealthy and politically powerful individuals, and turned into a political performance without any real control by community residents. The budgets allocated to PB processes are often small fractions of a city's total budget, giving participants an illusion of power while distracting them from a much larger political contest. Municipalities can also cherry-pick the aspects of a PB process they want to include, creating a guise of democracy without incorporating any of the mechanisms that made the first PB processes revolutionary. As Su puts it, "Some researchers have argued that PB has morphed from an empowering and democratizing process into a politically malleable, innocuous set of procedures that reflect subtle domination by elites or legitimize pro forma decisions by policymakers. Indeed, PB can be misused to reinforce existing racial hierarchies."[31]

To avoid these pitfalls, PB should come out of a broader grassroots push for budget justice, and should be co-designed with and accountable to this grassroots movement. It must also be given independent scope and power, and set up for self-reflection and iteration. One way to accomplish these goals is to establish an oversight committee (sometimes also referred to as a steering committee) with significant authority, and to embed ongoing and community-driven evaluation into the design of the process. A successful evaluation uses a wide array of indicators and methods, at multiple points in the process, to determine how well a project is achieving its goals. The data is then shared with decision-makers, as well as the public, along with recommendations for improving the process. In US cities, varying approaches to evaluation have allowed PB advocates to push for increases in the amount of funding controlled by PB, directly engage marginalized groups to determine whether PB outcomes and processes reflect their needs, and identify larger lessons beyond the scope of any individual city's PB process. Although effective evaluation and oversight will not singlehandedly prevent a participatory budgeting process from failing to meet its goals, they are necessary components of any process that seeks to improve over time. As articulated by Erin Markman and Alexa Kasdan of the Community Development Project's Urban Justice Center, "It is crucial that the process is documented and evaluated so we can ensure that PB lives up to its core principles."[32]

To this end, the work of our field project is to **recommend a framework for oversight and evaluation that can be used to hold Boston's participatory budgeting process accountable to the visions of the communities that worked to make it a reality**. Specifically, this framework will be delivered to the Better Budget Alliance, a coalition of budget justice advocates who made possible the charter amendment creating Boston's Office of Participatory Budgeting. To accomplish these objectives, this report will pull from a wide body of evidence, and organize this information in the following sections:

- Two **opening** sections which provide information about the history of PB globally, explores PB's transformative potential, and gives context related to Boston's budget and the local movement for PB.
- An overview of our **research question and methods**, which outline the main goals of this report and the approaches we took to coming up with our recommendations.
- An analysis of the **common critiques** related to PB.
- An exploration of **oversight in practice**, which details how PB oversight has been tried in other cities and chronicles lessons learned from those attempts.
- An exploration of **evaluation in practice**, which details how PB evaluation has been tried in other cities and chronicles lessons learned from those attempts.
- A section on **defining a vision** for PB in Boston, which weaves together the stated visions and goals of grassroots participants involved in Boston's charter reform with a broader literature on budget justice.

Building on these sources of information, we go on to make recommendations for oversight and evaluation of the emerging PB process in Boston. Broadly, we characterize these recommendations in three groups:

- Recommendations on the role of the BBA in relation to Boston's PB oversight committee.
- Recommendations on how to create an empowered, effective, and accountable oversight committee.
- Recommendations on how to embed evaluation into the PB process in a way that stays accountable to community stakeholders and the vision for budget justice.

It is crucial that the process is documented and evaluated so we can ensure that PB lives up to its core principles

The History of PB

Porto Alegre

Porto Alegre is a city of approximately 1.5 million residents in Southern Brazil. The city was long dominated by authoritarian politics and the marginalization and government neglect of the popular classes. In the late 1980s, the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, or PT) won control of city government with the support of grassroots community organizations. This grassroots civil society, which had been experimenting with participatory decision-making in neighborhood organizing, convinced the new government to adopt the world's first participatory budgeting process as their primary means of transforming the city. The PT proceeded to establish a system of direct democratic control over capital investment, which explicitly sought to redistribute municipal resources, revolutionize the political culture of the city, and ultimately eliminate social and economic exclusion. In other words, PB was invented with the explicit goal of achieving budget justice.[33]

During its heyday, PB in Porto Alegre was incredibly effective at redistributing investment and services, reducing corruption, and increasing trust in government.

In Porto Alegre the PB process was initiated by the executive branch of city government (the mayor's office) which allowed it to evolve flexibly over the first number of years. During its peak effectiveness in the 1990's, PB allocated a large proportion of the city's capital budget - estimated to be as high as 100% in some years - through its neighborhood and thematic assemblies and municipal budget council. The council was directly elected by assembly participants and provided centralized oversight over the PB process and the implementation of projects by city agencies.[34]

During its heyday, PB was incredibly effective at redistributing investment and services, reducing corruption, and increasing trust in government. Although the PB process was officially responsible only for capital budgeting, in practice, neighborhood assemblies and the budget council's input informed a wide array of decision-making, including policy formation, revenue generation strategies and even personnel reviews. From 1989 (before the start of PB) to 1997, the coverage of Porto Alegre's sewer and water system went from 49% of the population to 85% and 98% respectively. Over the same time period, the number of students enrolled in elementary and secondary schools doubled. Backdoor dealings and patronage-based spending decisions were almost entirely eliminated. The city did benefit from a large increase in federal and state transfers and during this period, enabling PB's investments. However, part of the 48% increase in government revenue has been attributed to an increase in local tax compliance due to the transparency of PB's spending allocation. PB was also widely seen as effective in centering underserved and marginalized citizens in decision making, democratizing civic organizations and improving government administrative abilities.[35]

Despite these successes, observers noted that the PB process struggled to move beyond neighborhood-specific demands to long-term planning and large-scale infrastructure. Then, in 2004, the PT lost control of the mayor's office to center left (and more recently, center right) parties. The new leadership kept the official features of

Participatory Budgeting in place but dramatically cut investment in neighborhood assemblies while eliminating term limits for the Budget Council, which observers believe allowed its members to be co-opted. Over time, the PB apparatus was relegated to its own agency of government, rather than a central facet of all decision-making. Additionally, both the portion of the budget that PB controlled and the completion rate of budgeted projects plummeted. In 2017, the PB process was temporarily suspended and it has not yet been reinstated. Observers believe that the flexibility and self-control that PB had received from executive initiation (without a constitutionally enshrined mandate) also made it susceptible to this hollowing out and eventual cancellation as the commitment of political leaders waned.[36]

As it took off in Porto Alegre, the PB idea first spread throughout PT-led cities in Brazil in the 90s. It was next popularized by political networks and NGOs to the rest of Latin America. In the 2000s, it was spread by international development agencies (primarily the World Bank) to communities in Asia and Africa, and, at the same time, European cities began experimenting with it. As it spread around the world, especially in the international development context, its deliberative process was often separated from explicit goals of redistribution and community control.[37] We discuss this dynamic at length in the "Critiques of PB" section.

PB in the United States

Participatory budgeting first came to the United States in 2009 through a process set up to allocate the Alderman's discretionary budget in Chicago's 49th Ward. The activists involved in this project had learned about PB through the world social forum, and after it kicked off they formed the Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP), a non-profit dedicated to spreading and supporting PB throughout Canada and the US.[38] With the help of PBP, PB then spread to four city council districts in NYC in 2011, and the first citywide process was started in Vallejo, California in 2012.[39] Since that time, PB has spread to dozens of cities and hundreds of schools. As of 2021 these processes have included 402,000 people in allocating over $300 million across more than 1,600 projects.[40]

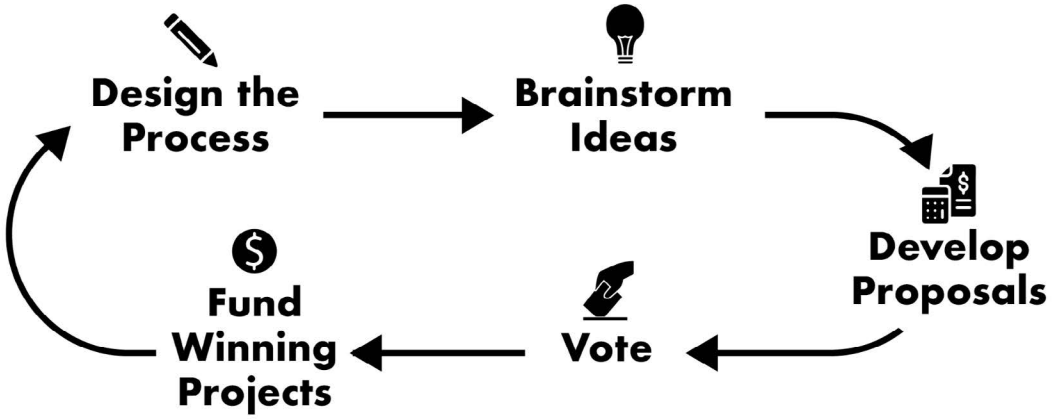


Figure 2: Typical U.S. PB Process

In the United States, the prototypical municipal participatory budgeting process allocates a small percentage of a city's discretionary public funds that can be spent on capital or other one-time projects. Project ideas are shared through online platforms and in-person assemblies. Volunteers (often referred to as Budget Delegates) take those ideas and work with city agencies to develop some of them into feasible proposals. Residents vote on the proposals and the projects that come out on top are implemented in the subsequent capital cycle.[41] It looks something like this:

As the pioneer of PB in the US, Chicago has made major advances in chartering this form of deliberative democracy. In 2009, Alderman Joe Moore set aside $1.3 million to fund projects at the discretion of the public. Motivated by the activists who started PBP, Moore supported the formation of a steering committee and began structuring a formal process for PB. The first cycle resulted in 36 budget proposals from the community, with a voter turnout of 1,652 residents, considerably exceeding expectations. Since then, PB has helped fund numerous civic projects, including streets & sidewalks, parks & environment, biking & transit, arts & culture, and libraries & schools.[42] Chicago has focused on ensuring marginalized groups are involved in the process. A notable example is the Ideal School Project, which PB Chicago initiated to gain input from students about the PB process. PB Chicago designated $25,000 into a PB fund set aside for the Sullivan High School and had the students engage in a formal PB process. A total of 378 students, which accounted for 70% of the student population, voted on 3 project ideas. Ultimately, the winning idea resulted in a new recreation room for the students.[43] Now, in their 12th cycle, Chicago's committee continues to strengthen the process. Especially following the pandemic, a major priority is to continue to reduce barriers to participation and increase civic engagement through ongoing evaluation.[44]

Similarly, New York City is an exemplar of PB in the nation. Since its pilot program in 2011 with 4 city council districts, the process has grown through increased funding, expanded reach, and a refinement of the process with every cycle. During the 2016 cycle, 30 out of 51 council members allocated $37 million of their discretionary capital funds towards PB.[45] Most recently in 2022, the residents of District 1 have been granted the opportunity to participate in PB for the first time. Residents are excited to vote on projects ranging from planting new street trees, purchasing new computers for the community middle school, or digitizing the catalog system for the library.[46] Interestingly, PB in NYC has revealed certain differences in the prioritization of public investments. A 2020 study identified that priorities shift when citizens are directly involved in the decision making process for budgeting. Districts that implemented PB demonstrated a larger allocation of discretionary funds towards education, public housing, and traffic projects than districts that did not.[47] The adoption of PB and the subsequent shift in funding priorities suggests that the process plays a role in more accurately reflecting the needs of the community. It highlights that councilors may normally be unaware of or deprioritize certain needs, especially those important to marginalized communities.[48]

As of 2021, PB processes in the US have included 402,000 people in allocating over $300 million across more than 1,600 projects.

Although there are a range of actors who have pushed for PB across US cities, most processes established in the 2010s were championed by academics, activists, city councilors or city administrators looking to develop more inclusive and democratic governance. Although many of these advocates hoped that PB would lead to more progressive and just outcomes, they framed PB as a politically neutral innovation for increased government transparency, citizen engagement, and inclusion and equity. To date, no city in the US has approached Porto Alegre in the scale of its process, the percentage of the city budget controlled by it, or its attempt at redistributive allocation of funds across the city. Additionally, no city has explicitly given its PB process the charge to increase social justice in the city, or required that PB funded projects demonstrate how they decrease economic or racial disparities.

A new generation of PB in the US is weaving budget justice directly into its goals.

However, a new generation of PB processes are weaving explicit budget justice goals into their structures. In both Boston and Seattle, PB has emerged in the last few years out of grassroots agitation for divestment from the police and racial and economic justice. Seattle's process is set to commence this year and has been given control over money explicitly divested from the police, with the intention that PB serve as a means to invest in working class Black, Brown, Indigenous and Immigrant communities. In Boston, the Better Budget Alliance is similarly committed to co-creating a process with the city that centers budget justice. This vision for just budgeting comes out of decades of activism in the city for community control of development, anti-displacement, environmental justice and prison abolition. We now turn to a fuller discussion of this context for PB's emergence in Boston.

Boston's Budget and the Movement for PB

To frame our recommendations for the oversight and evaluation of Boston's PB process, it is necessary to first provide some context related to Boston's budget. This section will briefly discuss how Boston's budget works, the historic debate surrounding the budgeting process, and the political movement toward participatory budgeting and municipal charter reform. Finally, we will explore where the PB process is now, and describe the factors animating this team's research.

Boston's Budget

Like many cities, Boston has two budgets: an operating budget and a capital budget. The operating budget funds the day-to-day operations of the city, including public safety and public education, as well as payments for the city's liabilities, which primarily consist of pensions and payments (a.k.a. debt service) for municipal bonds. It is allocated through a yearly budgeting process and its expenses must be balanced with the city's annual recurring revenues.

The operating budget for FY22 is $3.76 billion. The operating budget fiscal year runs July to June, so FY22 refers to revenue and expenses from July 2021 to June 2022. In FY22, just under $2 billion (51%) has been spent on city employee salaries, a bit over $300 million on pension payments (8%), and a bit over $200 million on debt service (5%). The departments with the largest budgets are the Public Schools at $1.3 billion (35%), the Police Department at $400 million (10%) and the Fire Department at just shy of $280 million (7%). Projections for FY 2022 expected that 73% of the city's revenue would be sourced from property taxes, 11.6% from department revenues and excise taxes, and the rest from state aid and other outside sources, like the federal American Rescue Plan Act.[49] The budget grew just 4.2% from FY21 to FY22, but it has ballooned by a third since FY2015 ($2.82 billion).

The capital budget funds projects to develop or improve the city's physical assets, including schools, libraries, government buildings, streets and bridges. It is funded through grants and the issuance of municipal bonds. The city of Boston has a AAA bond rating, which means it can issue investor-grade bonds at a low interest rate. The capital budget is allocated through a five year capital plan. The FY22-FY26 capital plan totals $33 billion dollars and includes 350 projects.[50]

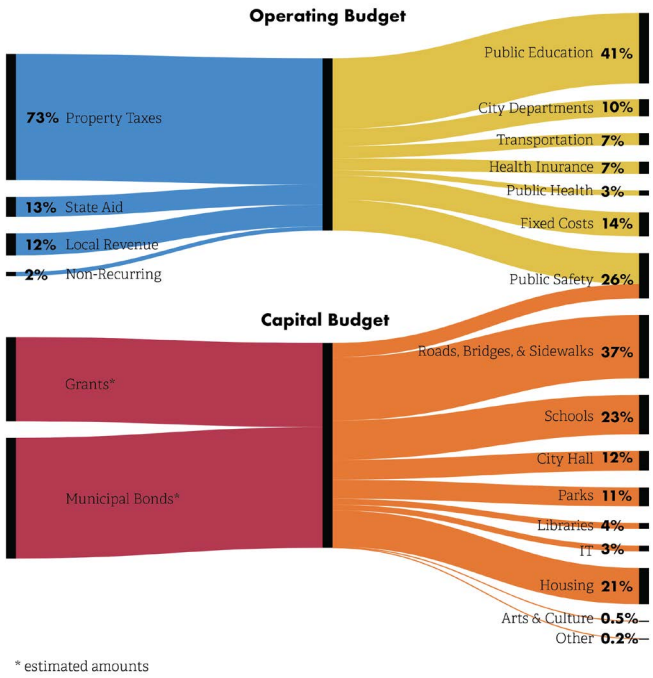


Figure 3: Boston's Budget: Revenues and Expenses

Since 2014, one million dollars of the capital budget has been allocated each year to a participatory budgeting process called Youth Lead the Change, which allows youth in the city to propose, develop and vote on capital improvements in the city. In 2019, the process was revised to a two-year project cycle to give more time for the design and implementation of proposals. Each two-year cycle generates three projects with a total budget of about $2 million dollars.[51]

Operating Budget Process

Historically, the process for creating and approving the operating budget has placed most of the power in the hands of Boston's mayor. Each year, departments submit their requested budgets for the upcoming fiscal year in the late winter and early spring. The Mayor and Finance departments then put together a proposed budget to present to the city council. The council can vote to approve or deny the budget in total; however, in the past they have not held the power to amend individual sections of the budget. Functionally, this gave the mayor's office vast discretionary power over the budget, with little space for legislators, community organizations, or citizens to provide meaningful input or provide oversight. This system of government is commonly referred to as a **strong-mayor system**.

Historically, the process for creating and approving the operating budget has placed most of the power in the hands of Boston's mayor.

This process for creating the city's budget has been deeply contested for decades. The strong-mayor system was established in 1909 with the direct goal of keeping political power out of the hands of a growing Irish population, and its component parts work together to prevent outside groups from seriously impacting budget outcomes.[52] Critics have observed that this process allows the mayor to craft the initial budget proposal entirely behind closed doors, thereby obfuscating the rationale that goes into funding certain projects and not others.[53] Additionally, city councilors have complained that simply approving or denying the city budget puts them in an "all or nothing" situation, wherein they must accept whatever meager funding is offered for their programs or risk losing it all.[54] In this way, councilors are not able to truly advocate for the needs of their constituents, or to debate the budget in a detailed and nuanced fashion.[55]

Critics of the strong-mayor budgeting system also argue that this system does not effectively meet the needs of Boston's working-class communities of color. Before the swearing in of Mayor Kim Janey in 2021, all 53 of Boston's mayors had been white men. In 2020, after the murder of George Floyd and the nation's subsequent racial justice reckonings, budget reform advocates observed that the city budget had long played an important role in the disinvestment and dispossession of Boston's Black and Brown neighborhoods. By exacerbating the impacts of urban renewal projects that displaced countless families of color and failing to invest in housing and community development projects over the course of the 20th century, the City of Boston has systematically neglected or intentionally destroyed entire communities. Modern city legislators regularly allude to these histories, and argue that the concentration of budgeting power in the hands of white men continues to result in the deprioritization

of Boston's predominantly Black and Brown neighborhoods. Giving more budgeting power to the legislative body, they argue, would allow the city to more effectively and equitably address the needs of numerous marginalized groups.

In 2021, the City of Boston approved a charter amendment that creates two important changes in this longstanding budget process. First, it establishes an Office of Participatory Budgeting as well as an external PB oversight board, and requires a participatory budgeting process to be in place by Fiscal Year 2024. Second, it gives city councilors the ability to edit and veto specific line items within the mayor's proposed city budget. While this report focuses on the participatory budgeting component of the charter amendment, the second component also represents an enormous shift in political power and a historic departure from one of the most contested elements of Boston's budgeting process. This change assures the councilors a more significant role in the process, with the ability to demand transparency and involvement for themselves and their constituents.

Although this charter amendment was introduced by Councilor Lydia Edwards in the summer of 2020, the movement surrounding charter reform has a deeper history.[56] In 2018, over 25 individuals from around the city came together to form the Boston Charter Reform Study Group.[57] This group of activists, researchers and legal experts came together with the knowledge that many of the city's political systems – including the budget – had long been controlled exclusively by white men and had failed to meet the needs of working-class communities of color and other marginalized groups.[58] The group's research centered around creating a more democratic and equitable city charter as a pathway to shifting power dynamics within the city. This study group laid the groundwork for the campaign surrounding participatory budgeting, and was convened by an organization that would prove critical in this campaign's success: the Center for Economic Democracy.

The Center for Economic Democracy

The Center for Economic Democracy (CED) is a movement-building organization based in Boston, MA. The organization's mission is to advance visions and practices for a just and sustainable world after capitalism.[59] Founded in 2012 as the Economic Justice Funding Circle (EJFC), CED provides a space for Boston's grassroots leaders and funders to develop shared vision, strategy and practice for transformational movements in Massachusetts and beyond.[60] The organization's program areas span multiple interconnected issues areas, including the solidarity economy, transformational philanthropy and wealth redistribution, cooperative investment ecosystems, and environmental justice.[61] CED convenes, supports, and sponsors numerous projects across these areas, including Boston's Solidarity Economy Initiative, the Mass Redistribution Fund, and the Boston Ujima Project, and the United Frontline Table.[62]

Participatory budgeting has long been an important facet of CED's vision, and the organization has established numerous connections with PB processes in the Boston area and beyond. PB was introduced in Boston when the Boston Workers Alliance (BWA) partnered with City Councilor Tito Jackson to host a forum on the topic, which resulted in calls for PB to be implemented in the city. Aaron Tanaka, previously the executive director

of BWA and CED's founder, was contracted by the City of Boston in 2014 as the lead community organizer for Youth Lead the Change, Boston's first youth-oriented participatory budgeting process.[63] In 2015, CED helped launch the Boston Ujima Project, a cooperative business, arts and investment ecosystem that uses democratic process to redistribute invested funds into low-income communities of color.[64] As previously mentioned, CED also has led study groups on participatory budgeting, democratic municipal processes and municipal charter reform. Together, this involvement with various projects related to participatory democracy equipped CED with the analysis, experience and relationships necessary to move the Yes On 1 campaign forward.

On November 2, 2021, Boston voters passed Question 1 with a 67% vote to amend the Boston City Charter, making Boston's budget process more transparent, accountable, and democratic.

The Yes On 1 Campaign

Yes On 1 is the political campaign that succeeded in reforming Boston's charter and establishing a municipal Office of Participatory Budgeting. The campaign began in earnest after the racial justice uprisings that took place during the summer of 2020, through which calls for police accountability exposed deeper problems with Boston's budgeting system.[65] By this time, CED had named participatory budgeting as part of a broader strategy related to municipal democracy, just economy, and local charter reform.[66] Boston councilor Lydia Edwards, who had participated in the study group co-convened by CED, introduced the charter amendment to change the City of Boston's budget by instituting an Office of Participatory Budgeting and giving city councilors the ability to veto or modify line items of the mayors' budget.[67] CED, along with several other core campaign supporters, agreed that this was the right moment to push for a better budgeting process, and put their political support behind this project.[68]

The campaign was carried forward by a coalition of community, labor, civil rights, environmental justice and faith organizations largely coordinated by CED.[69] An amendment to the Boston City Charter passed unanimously in the City Council in 2021, after also receiving the support of three sequential mayors: Walsh, Janey, and Wu.[70] The amendment was signed by Mayor Kim Janey and certified by Attorney General Healey to be included in November's Municipal Election as Question 1. Question 1 had two main reforms:

1. Give Boston City Councilors the power to approve and amend line items of the Mayor's budget
2. Require PB by 2024; creating an independent office of PB and an oversight committee that would set up this process to allow Boston residents to propose and vote on parts of their annual budget

On November 2, 2021, Boston voters passed Question 1 with a 67% vote to amend the Boston City Charter, making Boston's budget process more transparent, accountable, and democratic.[71] The vote ensured that Boston will have a participatory process by 2024. CED is currently working with local stakeholders, including staff and members of Community-Based Organizations and elected

officials, to develop the ordinances for creating an independent PB office, holding the PB fund, designing the PB process, and a process for evaluation.

Campaign Partners

Numerous campaign partners proved vital in convening the charter reform study group, identifying the right moment to push for charter reform, and building the political movement that led to the approval of Boston's charter amendment. While several of the key organizations are listed here, over 25 campaign partners contributed to the success of the Yes On 1 campaign.

Families for Justice as Healing is led by incarcerated women, formerly incarcerated women, and women with incarcerated loved ones. Their mission is to end the incarceration of women and girls. The approach they take to work is ReImagining Communities. They are leading work to shift resources away from the criminal punishment system and into Black and Brown communities so they can have housing, healthcare, education, economic development, and community-led organizations.[72]

Right to the City Boston is a multi-issued alliance, made up of grassroots-based-building organizations representing low-income, POC/ immigrant communities, who work collectively for social, economic, and racial justice. Right to the City Boston has a vision that includes strong working-class neighborhoods and communities of color. They envision a Boston where there is equal access to quality education, affordable housing, economic opportunities, accessible transportation, a healthy environment, and public resources for all.[73]

The Chinese Progressive Association is a grassroots community organization working for full equity and empowerment of the Chinese community in the Greater Boston area and beyond. Their mission is to improve the lives and working conditions of Chinese Americans and to involve ordinary community members in making decisions that affect their lives.[74]

New England United 4 Justice (NEU4J) is an organization committed to promoting social, economic, and racial justice in the Greater Boston Region. They have a strong grassroots organizing model that centers the leadership and voices of low-income residents in the neighborhoods they serve. They engage with and empower families to speak up and become a part of the solution to improve the City, focused on worker rights, childcare, housing, and voter protection and engagement.[75]

Where we are now

In the months following the passage of Boston's charter amendment, the Yes On 1 Campaign rebranded itself as the Better Budget Alliance (BBA). In the late fall of 2021 they began working with city councilors to develop the ordinance that would establish the office of PB and the oversight committee, as well as key guidelines for the PB process. They are also exploring the creation of a trust that would hold the money allocated to PB. CED is coordinating this ordinance development process in close collaboration with a research team consisting of the steering committee of the BBA, city council staff, representatives from the Participatory Budgeting Project, and our team from Tufts.

As this ordinance development process continues, Mayor Wu's proposed 2023 budget proposed a **$2 million** line item for the Office of PB, a doubling of

the $1 million that was included by Mayor Janey in the 2022 budget.[76] This significant investment has the potential to build the most well-resourced PB apparatus in the country. To commence the official development of the PB process, the city plans to hire a director of the Office of PB this summer.

The BBA's Proposal for PB

While the ordinance is still being developed, there are some key points in the BBA's proposal, as of May 2022, that we reference in our findings and recommendations. In this section we describe a high-level summary of the PB process that the BBA envisions, highlighting a few of the significant innovations vis-a-vis other processes in the US.

PB in Boston broadly follows the roadmap of other processes in the US, including a yearly cycle of deliberation, brainstorming, and voting that results in feasible projects and programs which are then delivered by city agencies or city vendors. Money will be allocated to the PB process each year from the city's operating budget, as well as from the capital budget every five years. Ideally this money will be held in a designated trust, enabling money that is allocated each year to be spent on a flexible timeline (E.G. $2 million of the PB funds allocated to fund a program in a specific department for four years at $500,000 per year). This pot of money will be designated to a set number of issue areas each cycle (likely three to start), some of which will be allocated citywide and some of which will be allocated to each city council district. The request is for a yearly allocation beginning at 1% of the city budget and eventually scaling to 5% as the process iterates and institutionalizes.

The BBA envisions a stipended oversight committee with representatives from each district in the city who will convene and oversee the process across the city. The Office of PB will partner with the oversight committee to provide technical and administrative support. Both the Office of PB

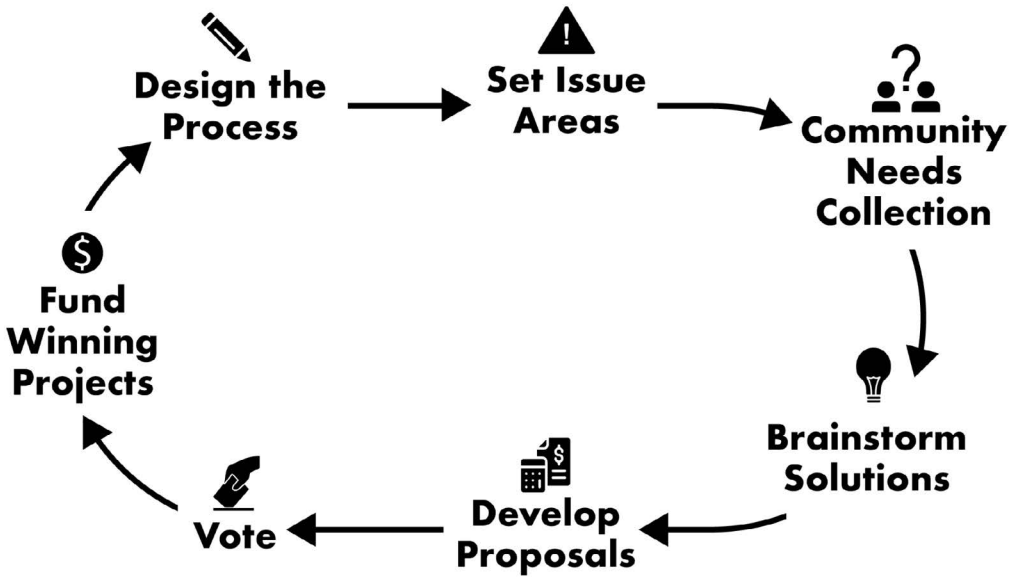


Figure 4: Proposed Boston PB Process

and the oversight committee will have an explicit mission to see that that process is widely inclusive and decreases racial and economic disparities.

One of the key innovations that the BBA envisions for Boston's process is a strong role for community organizations. Together with the oversight committee and the office of PB, these community partners are the third leg in building a robust and just PB process. The BBA specifically envisions two formal, grant funded roles for community organizations. The first is the **Community Engagement Partner (CEP)**. CEPs will receive grants to provide community education and outreach to generate participation in assemblies and voting. They will also replace formal budget delegates in the role of working with residents and city agencies to refine budget ideas into feasible project proposals. The hope is that these partners will be more connected to the community than city officials, have more capacity than oversight committee members for dedicated outreach, and bring more resources to bear for proposal development than volunteers. The second is the **Community Assembly Partner (CAP)**. CAPs will receive grants to run the various assemblies throughout the cycle and create spaces for deep deliberation. In recent years, a number of organizations in the BBA have run People's Assemblies and Summits for their membership and other residents in the city to prioritize campaigns, or in the case of the Ujima Project, to make business investment decisions.

One of the key innovations that the BBA envisions for Boston's process is a strong role for community organizations.

The second key innovation that the BBA envisions for Boston's process is a formal stage for needs collection and prioritization before idea generation.

Running effective and inclusive deliberative assemblies requires discrete expertise that the BBA believes can best be provided by community organizations, leveraging this existing experience in deliberative democracy.

The second key innovation that the BBA envisions for Boston's process is a formal stage for needs collection and prioritization before idea generation. While other city processes include discussions of need in idea generation assemblies, the hope is that a formal prioritization of needs as a discrete step will ensure that ideas become proposals which respond directly to well-documented prioritized community needs. This change is represented in an additional change, the re-framing of the 'idea generation' phase into a 'solutions creation' phase. While idea generation emphasizes the ingenuity of residents to brainstorm innovative projects, solution creation directs this ingenuity towards proposing solutions to democratically prioritized needs. Assemblies for prioritizing community needs and possible solutions also create discrete outputs separate from the finally budgeted projects. The hope is that these assemblies can provide guidance not just for the development of specific PB project proposals but also for city counselors and the Mayor in determining priorities for the broader city budget.

Here is what the resulting cycle looks like:

Presented here at very high level is a hypothetical description of how the process that the BBA has defined so far would proceed:

1. **Planning:** The oversight committee and the Office of PB determine partners, refine the rules, begin public education, and set issue areas.
2. **Needs Assessment:** Community Engagement Partners engage residents in sharing their priority needs, and work to turn out residents to district-based needs assemblies. The Community Assembly Partners run in-person assemblies as well as online voting to create a prioritized list of concrete needs per district and citywide.
3. **Solutions Creation:** Community Engagement Partners run solutions workshops to generate ideas for how government action can solve the identified needs. They also turn out residents to solutions assemblies, where Community Assembly Partners run a deliberative process to prioritize the most popular solutions culminating with in-person and online voting.
4. **Proposal Development:** Residents volunteer at assemblies to champion the top voted solutions and turn them into proposals. Community Engagement Partners support these volunteers, connecting them to city council offices and department staff to refine the solution into a feasible proposal.
5. **Voting:** Like in other cities, in-person and online voting determines which proposals will get funded in a given cycle. The funded projects would then be implemented by city departments.

Research Question & Project Goals

Our team's research was designed to answer the following question: **How can oversight and evaluation be implemented to hold PB accountable to the vision and goals of community stakeholders?** We worked closely with the Center for Economic Democracy and its partner organizations to define our approach to answering this question. Through this process, we identified two key goals for our research.

Our first goal was to articulate a vision for Boston's Participatory Budgeting process based on a review of PB literature and interviews conducted with community stakeholders involved in establishing PB in Boston. These stakeholders included staff and members of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) who partnered with CED in the Yes On 1 campaign. This documented vision can be used by CED in its advocacy for a PB process that centers budget justice and connection to community needs. Our team also developed structural recommendations for evaluation and oversight processes that can be presented by CED to both the city's Office of PB and the PB Oversight Committee. By integrating our synthesis of the community's vision into the evaluation and oversight of the PB process, our team has generated a set of recommendations for evaluation and oversight that can be used to keep Boston's PB process accountable to the goals of Yes On 1.

Our research process included a literature review, case studies, and stakeholder interviews.

Our Understanding of Evaluation

Evaluation is a broad concept with many meanings in the context of municipal government. It can be used to refer to personnel evaluation, policy evaluation or program evaluation, and each of these have subcategories and definitions. For the purposes of our research we define it as a program evaluation of the PB process and its budgeted projects.

There are myriad approaches to program evaluation and ways of categorizing them. In this report we have explored a wide-angle evaluation that includes four categories: formative, implementation/process, outcome/effectiveness, and impact. Formative evaluation helps ensure that an activity is feasible and appropriate before it is implemented. Process/implementation evaluation explores the functioning of a program to determine if it was implemented as intended and what could improve its delivery. Outcome evaluation measures program outputs to determine if they are achieving their stated objectives. Impact evaluation takes a wider angle to analyze the overall impact of the program.[77]

Methods

Our team used a variety of methods in our data collection and analysis process that helped to inform and build the recommendations. The methodology consisted of both primary and secondary research on participatory budgeting processes, oversight, and evaluation. Our research

process included a literature review, case studies, and stakeholder interviews. Our goal was to develop an understanding of the background and history of PB, as well as to gain insight into the community's visions and goals for PB in Boston. This strategy allowed us to acquire a holistic view for a framework for oversight and evaluation.

Literature Review

The first step of the research process involved conducting an extensive literature review through a variety of different resources, including practitioner publications, peer-reviewed journal articles, and news articles. The literature review explored the history of PB, theories for understanding it, and evaluation methods that are applicable to it. We paid particular attention to research exploring the potential for and limitation of PB in seeking budget justice.

Case Studies

The next step in our research process entailed investigating PB in other cities and countries. Following our literature review, we identified a few key locations to further investigate through a case study analysis. We chose the following locations:

- Cambridge, MA
- Chicago, IL
- Greensboro, NC
- Denver, CO
- New York, NY
- Detroit, MI
- Durham, NC
- Toronto, CA
- France, Germany, UK

We chose these specific locations because of their relevance to Boston and/or the accessibility of information concerning them (did they have a public evaluation report, were they still active, were practitioners accessible for interviews, etc). Within the US, New York and Chicago are two of the oldest and largest cities in which PB was implemented and offer a rich history of PB. Therefore, they are useful reference points for Boston and were used to inform many aspects of this report. To round out our case studies, we also selected cities that had both published evaluations and rulebooks, as well as practitioners to interview. We established a specific set of criteria that would address various points relating to our research question. Following our case studies, we compiled the data into a table consisting of quantitative core metrics from each city.

Interviews

In addition to a literature review, we conducted interviews with a variety of stakeholders who have been involved with PB both within and outside of Boston. Our initial outreach strategy was based around recruiting individuals who would fall into one of two categories: context or content experts. The 'content' and 'context' terminology describes the different types of expertise we expected to encounter. Content experts are researchers, evaluators, and practitioners who have technical knowledge and skills related to PB. Context experts include members of the Yes On 1 campaign base which includes community members and staff from CBOs who have relevant lived experiences, as well as deep knowledge of Boston communities and politics. The terminology of 'content' and 'context' experts is pulled from the Participatory Budgeting Project.[78] Overall, we conducted 38 interviews.

Our interview processes took the following forms:

- Collaborative conversations with researchers, practitioners, and evaluators of participatory budgeting around the country. The purpose of these conversations was to refine our understanding of methods for overseeing and evaluating participatory budgeting as we worked toward creating our own framework.
- Interviews with members of the Yes On 1 steering committee as well as organizations identified as campaign supporters. The purpose of these interviews was to more fully understand why staff members supported this campaign, as well as to acknowledge their hopes and visions for participatory budgeting.

We devised a list of interview questions based on several overarching topics. The topics varied depending on who we were interviewing, as seen in the table below.

Analysis and Recommendations

Following the interview stage, we compiled and analyzed the data by identifying common themes. We used the structure of the interview questions above to organize our notes and data into relevant sections. The findings and conclusions from our interviews with the Yes On 1 Campaign members inform how we ultimately defined the vision and goals of PB in Boston. The data collected from both researchers and practitioners helped us develop our background understanding of overseeing and evaluating PB, which in turn formed the basis of our recommendations for community-accountable oversight and evaluation of PB. Based on the knowledge gathered from case studies and interviews, we developed structural considerations for the oversight committee and recommendations for enabling ongoing evaluation.

Table 1: Interview Topics

Yes on 1 Supporters	Researchers, Practitioners, Evaluators
Yes On 1 Involvement	PB Involvement
Experience with Boston Budget	City Background
Budget Justice	Successes/ Best Progress
PB Hopes and Fears	Failure/ Needs Improvement
PB Concerns	Oversight and Institutionalization
PB Insights	Evaluation Structure
PB Values Outcomes and Oversight	Hypotheticals

Research and Findings

Image Source: Participatory Budgeting Project

Understanding the Critiques of PB

Introduction

A voluminous literature of boosterism, reflection, analysis and critique exists concerning the theory and practice of participatory governance in general, and participatory budgeting in particular. Rather than a broad attempt at summarizing or categorizing theoretical perspectives on PB, this section of our report has three specific objectives:

1. To introduce a theoretical framework and criteria for analyzing the transformational potential of PB's institutional design
2. To explore some critiques of participatory budgeting's potential to bring about budget justice and draw connections between institutional design and budget justice
3. To place these criteria for institutional design that might support Budget Justice in the context of Boston

Process and Scope/Power - Two Distinct Aspects of PB

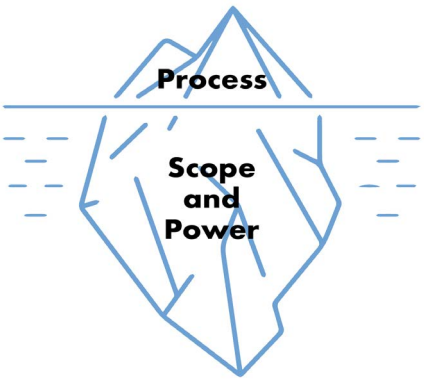
In this report we examine strategies for oversight and evaluation that can be added to the BBA's process proposal (see Where We Are Now in section titled Boston's Budget and the Movement for PB for a full process description) in order to keep PB accountable to the goal of budget justice. To do this, we have searched for key differences in institutional design between PB in Porto Alegre, where it led to redistributive and transformational outcomes, and PB in most other places, where it has primarily resulted in increased civic engagement and government transparency.

To help understand these differences, we found a helpful framework in "Participatory Budgeting as if Emancipation Mattered," by Gianpaolo Baiocchi and Ernesto Ganuza, wherein the authors define two distinct dimensions of PB: communication and empowerment.[79]

The **communication dimension** is the PB process itself: the assemblies, proposal development, and voting that together represent a democratic methodology for residents to crowdsource ideas, deliberate and make budget decisions. We will refer to this as the ***process*** of PB.

The **empowerment dimension** is the institutional position of PB: the level of autonomy participants have to determine the scope of PB, the amount of money allocated to it, and the character of the relationship between city agencies and the PB process. We will refer to this as the ***scope and power*** of PB.

Baiocchi and Ganuza contend that the initial PB experiment in Porto Alegre had a fully formed vision for both dimensions. Its innovative institutions defined and iterated on a process for intensive, inclusive and democratic community production of budget ideas, proposals and priorities. The PT



government in Porto Alegre also empowered the PB process such that it was the exclusive access point for community input into the budget, it had a wide scope of authority vis-a-vis the total city budget, agencies adapted their processes to center its logic, and it was given the ability to self-regulate. Although PB wouldn't be an experiment in deep democracy without the innovative **process design** prototyped in Porto Alegre, Baiocchi and Ganuza suggest that responsibility for its widely touted role in the city's equitable development lay as much in the **scope and power** it was given.

The PT government in Porto Alegre also empowered the PB process such that it was the exclusive access point for community input into the budget, it had a wide scope of authority vis-a-vis the total city budget, agencies adapted their processes to center its logic, and it was given the ability to self-regulate.

Baiocchi and Ganuza argue that the PB policy idea which has spread all around the world consists primarily of the process design, largely stripped of the empowered institutions that were so central to PB's scope and power in Porto Alegre. This is not to say that PB has been fully disempowered in its more recent instantiations. Rather, the relative level of PB's scope and power has been context dependent and mostly unexamined, whereas its process design has been honed into the toolkits shared around the world - thoroughly researched and universally evaluated. The authors posit that the source of this bias lies in the nature of policy diffusion, and **the desire of technocratic authorities to depoliticize an anti-capitalist political party's scheme for dispensing control of city resources to marginalized communities into a set of "good governance" best practices**.

Participatory budgeting in the US has largely taken off in communities with left-leaning politics. However, before Boston and Seattle, its proponents have not presented or established it as an empowered vehicle for redistribution, but instead touted its innovative **process design** as a tool for transparent and inclusive governance - a worthy aim, but not one that can serve as a tool for comprehensive budget justice. In our attempt to understand how Boston's PB process might play a role in these transformative outcomes, we have found it helpful to remain aware of the de-politicized process design bias in the discursive space that surrounds PB outside of Brazil. If the potential for PB to bring about budget justice is visualized as an iceberg, we see the relative scope and power in the institutional design of PB as the part under the water. It's much bigger, but unexamined.

In their analyses of PB in Porto Alegre, Baiocchi and Ganuza identify some questions that are useful in determining how empowered PB is as an institution of participatory governance and redistribution. We have synthesized these into three key criteria for measuring the scope and power of a given participatory budgeting experiment.

The first criterion for evaluating the scope and power of PB **is the relative importance of PB as a decision-making forum**. Key questions to get at this criterion are:

1. How much money does PB control, both in absolute terms and relative to the overall city budget?
2. Are there limits on how the money can be spent and how important is this decision to overall justice in the city?
3. Is the PB process the primary forum for civic participation in budgeting decisions or is it one of multiple fora available to citizens who wish to influence the budget?

The second criterion is **how much power the PB process actually holds** in shaping the budget outcomes it is purported to control. Key questions to get at this criterion are:

1. Have government agencies undertaken reforms to effectively receive participatory inputs and collaborate with the process?
2. What discretion do government officials have over decisions that are "made" by the participatory process?
3. How much public accountability is there around the fidelity of government to the decisions of PB, and are there any enforcement mechanisms?

The third criterion is **the grassroots independence of the PB process and its ability to self-regulate**. Key questions to get at this criterion are:

1. To what extent is the governance body of PB independent from the sway of elected officials and corporate/wealthy interests?
2. To what extent are decisions about PB's design transparent and accountable to marginalized communities?
3. Are residents (or the PB governance body) able to directly debate and determine the social justice criteria that will order the process?

Baiocchi and Ganuza present the analytical heuristic of communication (process design) vs empowerment (scope and power), and the criteria for analyzing scope and power as part of a response to blanket denunciations of participatory budgeting. In the next section, we will explore some common critiques of PB's value in the fight for budget justice and explore ways that a different approach to the scope and power of PB could address these.

Critiques of PB's Relevance for Budget Justice

The most profound critique of PB is that it is **political theater which distracts residents from organizing to gain real power in the political system**. There are two aspects of this critique. For one, in a city like New York, where PB allocates only .002% of the capital budget, any effort influencing that small amount might take away from political organizing that could impact the other 99% of the budget. Additionally, in NYC many districts' PB processes have ended up choosing between items that are objective necessities - "derelict" sinks in public kindergarten bathrooms, for example, versus disability access to library branches, air conditioning for schools that are open on 90 degree days, or improvements to make a playground safer. This calls into question the broader culture of austerity in American politics, where public revenue is limited and public amenities are rationed.[80]

This critique highlights the importance of the first criteria of empowered institutional design: **the relative importance of PB as a decision-making forum**. To avoid becoming a distraction, PB processes are stronger when they control sizable pots of money that have social justice salience for

residents and which are additive to existing city services (e.g. through divestment in policing or the bringing on of new progressive revenue sources).

A second major critique of PB is that **residents don't really have the power to determine the projects or programs that make it to the ballot**. This also has two dimensions. In these instances, city agencies have too much power to determine the process and other participatory fora may compete with PB for decision-making access. Researchers exploring PB in the US have found that city bureaucracies are unequipped and sometimes resistant to collaborating with PB.[81] Taking an idea and turning it into a feasible project is a complex process which requires agency representatives to provide technical support and cost estimates, which gives them a lot of discretion to influence the project design and the ability to block ideas they don't approve of through stonewalling. In New York, Celina Su reports that

> ***"[some] budget delegates complained that their original ideas, which spoke to dire community needs, were often sidelined and replaced by questionably needed projects that appeared easy to implement."[82]***

Additionally, PB ideas may be rejected on the basis of competing participatory governance inputs. A budget delegate in Cambridge's process was disallowed from developing a popular proposal for a new protected bike lane because the city was reviewing complaints about bike lanes in other neighborhoods. The delegate wonders if "submitting formal complaints [is] a more effective way to get things done around the city than through something like Participatory Budgeting."[83]

This critique highlights the importance of the second criteria of empowered institutional design: **how much power the PB process actually holds**. Effective PB design involves training and formal requirements for city agency collaboration with the PB process and legal requirements for PB decisions to be prioritized over other participatory avenues (like direct complaints or agency outreach). This is what distinguishes PB as an avenue for direct community allocation of city resources from an avenue for agencies to crowdsource suggestions for creative action.

The third major critique of PB is that **it tends to favor those with social power**, both in terms of who participates in developing projects and whose needs are served by budgeted projects. Analysis of PB in other cities has revealed that, like in other participatory fora, participants tend to be whiter and more affluent.[84] The large discretion of budget delegates in most US PB processes also exacerbates this problem, as budget delegates are unpaid volunteers who have the luxury of significant time to dedicate to the process.[85] The voting process adheres to a market logic of choice and competition that advantages those with social and material resources.[86] Observations in New York reveal dedicated campaigns by well-resourced citizens to win support for projects in their neighborhoods.[87]

This critique highlights the importance of the third criteria for empowered institutional design: **the grassroots independence of the PB process and its ability to self-regulate**. A PB process that can address these concerns should be given the mandate to direct power away from those who already have it. In Porto Alegre, determining such social justice criteria took a number of cycles, and was only achieved because the governance body was given the freedom to do this iteration.

For good reason, much attention is paid to the process design of PB, and particularly the quality of its engagement and its deliberative assemblies. However, these key critiques do not point to problems primarily with deliberative process or engagement, but rather with the scope and power dimension of PB's institutional design.

Factors for Empowered PB Governance in Boston

In establishing PB with an empowered institutional design, Boston's PB has an advantage over many other PB processes in America and throughout the world. Specifically, the 2021 charter amendment enshrines PB in the city's constitution. Even in Porto Alegre in the 1990s, the model of a PB process with significant scope and power, PB was convened at the discretion of the mayor. However, no matter how PB is institutionalized, our research indicates its scope and power will be determined by four core factors:

1. The amount of money that is allocated to PB in the city's annual operating budget.
2. The level of independence that the PB oversight committee has from other governmental authorities and its legitimacy in the eyes of communities in the city.
3. The level of authority granted to the PB oversight committee to self-regulate itself and the process.
4. The receptivity of city agencies to inputs from the PB process.

Because of the nature of Massachusetts state law, **the amount of money allocated to PB** cannot be legislated by ordinance, and instead must be established in the mayor and city council's yearly budget. However, the other three items can be determined in the ordinance(s) that establish PB. The **independence of the oversight committee** from the rest of the apparatus of government is what enables it to provide legitimate oversight. In Boston, governance bodies like the oversight committee must be appointed by the mayor. This sets up a significant impediment to legitimacy through independence. One way around this is to legislate a matrix of **nomination limits, representational requirements, experience requirements, and transparency** into the process.

Limiting nomination of at least some members of the committee to qualifying, committee-based organizations, creates a pool of potential candidates for the mayor to choose from which will guarantee at least some individuals who are trusted by community leaders. Requiring representation of the diversity of the city ensures that no community feels that they cannot access the oversight committee. Meanwhile, requiring particular forms of experience, whether that be for an individual with data management and security "content" experience or "context" experience living in public housing, ensures that the body is capable of providing the necessary functions of oversight. Requiring transparency in the committee selection process ensures inspectability and accessibility to the outside forces who can provide political accountability (we give more details on how all this might be done in Boston in the Member Experience Requirements and Selection Process section of our Recommendations).

The **level of authority granted to the PB oversight committee to self-regulate** the process is what gives it the ability to iterate cycle to cycle, putting into practice what is learned through evaluation, and striving to push the process towards increasing

measures of budget justice. The ordinance establishing the PB process in Boston will be unique in that it will require specific components for the yearly process. In other cities, this process has been controlled primarily through the PB Rulebook which is written and rewritten by the governance body. It is an advantage of the Boston PB process that it will be instantiated through ordinance (in order to fulfill the charter amendment) rather than through the discretion of individual legislators or the mayor. Nevertheless, there is a balance between the level of detail that can and should be included in an ordinance (law) and the self-regulating authority that is granted to the Oversight Committee. In Porto Alegre, it took the Budget Council many cycles to refine the PB process, particularly the **social justice criteria** that determine what can be budgeted and how money is allocated across issue areas and districts. Our research suggests it is important that the ordinance not overly define the rules of the process or these social justice criteria, but instead empower the oversight committee to define them as is necessary to meet the goals of budget justice.

The **receptivity of city agencies** to PB will be a long-term project. Although many of Boston's departments will need to start this process immediately, the experiences of PB in Cambridge, New York and even Porto Alegre indicate that cooperation with PB may not be effective nor made a top priority by departments if PB directly controls or indirectly impacts only a small portion of the budget. In Porto Alegre there was initial resistance by technocrats to PB setting the city's investment priorities. However, after PB controlled a sizable portion of the budget for a number of years, departments adapted to this governance logic and observers reported that the satisfaction of at least some staff improved because their work received direct and consistent appreciation from the residents who directed it.

Boston can overcome the main critiques leveled at PB in other US cities through careful attention to the scope and power dimension of its institutional design.

Our research shows that Boston can overcome the main critiques leveled at PB in other US cities through careful attention to the scope and power dimension of its institutional design. We hope that our specific recommendations for empowering oversight and embedding evaluation in the process can serve these objectives and help Boston's PB to lead to a meaningful increase in budget justice. To ground these recommendations, the next two sections of this report take a deep dive into the oversight and evaluation strategies and structures in other US cities.

Oversight of US Participatory Budgeting in Practice

To better understand how oversight and evaluation of PB has been implemented in the US, our research explored case studies of these functions for several cities. This section will provide precedents for how oversight was conducted in other cities, analyze the goals of each city and how they informed oversight, and synthesize key takeaways that are relevant and specific to Boston's PB process.

In order to achieve PB goals, it is fundamental to establish clear responsibility, authority, and resources for the role of oversight. Our findings showed that there were many ambiguities and gaps as to how oversight was fulfilled or not fulfilled in the survey cities. This section is organized in two parts: the powers and responsibilities of the oversight group, and the degree of authority and resources available to the oversight group to fulfill their function.

Powers and Responsibility of Oversight

Oversight Committee Role and Structure

From our review of participatory budgeting processes, PB processes benefit greatly from a body that establishes, approves, and revises the parameters and goals of the PB process. This body may also ensure the development of an evaluation process, approve the details of this process, and have management authority to ensure its execution and the incorporation of its findings into subsequent cycles. In the standard PB model in the US, this body also writes and publishes a rulebook which enumerates these responsibilities.

We have observed several models of how cities delegate these responsibilities. They may be performed by a steering committee, city employees, city councilors office(s), or an evaluation/ management partner. The form of this structure is influenced by a number of factors, especially the goals, funding, and power of community groups.

The classic model that cities employ for these functions is an independent steering committee that holds the powers described, at least nominally. For example, in Greensboro and Durham, the PB rulebook states that the steering committee holds complete oversight responsibility.[88] However, in practice these committees act only in an advisory role, and the ultimate responsibility lies with city employees. In both cases the city PB office was created by the city to function as part of city government. As in the case of Greensboro, the city PB office refers to the function of administrating and overseeing PB. In many cases this is not a formal department, nor does it have a full time administrator. In Durham, PB office administrators consider themselves the "experts", use the board for advice, and seek the committee's input on community values. In both cases, there is limited funding for administering the PB process.

The classic model for oversight that cities employ for these functions is an independent steering committee that holds the powers described, at least nominally.

The Cambridge model diverges from those of both Greensboro and Durham. There is no steering committee, and the primary goal of their PB process is resident participation and civic engagement. PB administrators believe that if they hire a PB director with a background in outreach and civic engagement, then they can marshall community groups to participate in PB without the need of an oversight group. This is partially true, largely because Cambridge is a smaller city (116,000 residents), and outreach is a more straightforward process than in larger municipalities. Additionally, Cambridge has chosen not to explore the fulfillment of budget justice goals where an oversight group should participate. Thus, this hybrid model matches their goal of using PB as a vehicle for resident engagement and education, rather than a tool for achieving budget justice.[89]

A third model, used by Chicago, is organized around districts and wards. In this case, a city councilor has the option of participating in a PB process or not. They have total discretion on how much money to allocate, up to a specified amount. The steering committee includes Aldermanic staff for the participating wards (nine out of fifty), as well as community organizations, and is chaired by the city administrator. In this instance, the steering committee functions as a working group to ensure technical rules are consistent. Unlike other cities that have standing members, the Chicago committee changes from meeting to meeting. They agree on high level goals and technical rules such as voting age, but do not offer much additional support to individual wards. As noted, the real decision and top line oversight power rests with each Alderman. Each participating ward has a working PB Committee that adapts and manages the PB process in their district, which mostly consist of ward staff. Expertise related to the design, management, and evaluation of the process is provided by an administrator who is part of Great Cities Institute (GCI) at the University of Chicago. This office guides each ward on what to do and coordinates evaluation for each ward. They have comprehensive skills in both administering a PB process as well as evaluation research skills. Interestingly, the office is grant funded. Thus, no city funds are used for oversight and the city itself does not have an office administering PB. The GCI administrator reports this funding is adequate for a small staff and to perform their role.[90]

the steering committee functions as a working group to ensure technical rules are consistent.

Similarly, NYC also operates as a hybrid where funding decisions are made at the discretion of each councilor. Currently, 32 out of 51 precincts participate. NYC has a relatively organized framework because a citywide oversight group offers full support on how to design and manage the process. This oversight groups also provides guidance and works with each precinct to oversee the process, and are supported by a highly regarded evaluation partner.[91]

An outlier model is Detroit. This city's PB process was spearheaded by a for-profit investment group to revitalize neighborhoods and develop economic opportunity. With one district's approval and participation, they funded a pilot PB process to allocate discretionary funds in a small neighborhood of just 3600 residents. The investment group partnered with a group that managed and evaluated the entire pilot. Even though the pilot was successful by many measures, the PB process did not continue.[92]

Another standout city is Denver. The goals in Denver heavily incorporate the principles of budget justice which originated from the Mayor's office and community groups. As a result, the municipality plans to give strong powers to the oversight committee such as primary responsibility for defining goals and overseeing the evaluation. Designers of Denver's PB process see evaluation as best performed by a diverse group of residents. Their PB process will launch this spring.[93]

Membership and Competency

Steering committee membership criteria varies across cities. Denver has one of the most defined frameworks. Committee members are chosen based on their ability to demonstrate diverse competencies and reflect the diversity of the community. They also must submit a written application which is scored by the city PB office. Denver is also experimenting with paying committee members a small stipend to enable participation to be more accessible. They expect the steering committee to perform strong oversight, as described above. For this reason they are attempting to build a committee with the skills and knowledge to do this.

In Greensboro, volunteer committee members are appointed by city councilors, and are not required to demonstrate any specific qualifications. Attendance and commitment has varied cycle to cycle, and many members do not consistently attend meetings or lack knowledge of their communities. As reported by the city administrator, the oversight committee was envisioned as only an advisory group. Even given this limited scope, it has often failed to achieve this function. Since Greensboro has limited goals for PB, the administrator states she has less need for an oversight group. This reinforces our observation that cities without strong budget justice goals tend to invest less in powerful oversight committees sustained by community members.

In Chicago, the committee comprises members of various community organizations and Aldermen's offices. It is chaired by the administrator from the Great Cities Institute, who has professional competency in managing and evaluating PB. The working group mostly functions as a workshop where the administrator provides advice and guidance to each Alderman's office.
In the case of Cambridge and the Toronto pilot, there was no oversight committee. The Cambride administrator stated it was not needed to achieve the city's goals, which centered on resident engagement and education.

Building a committed oversight group requires funding and a thoughtful selection process.

Our key observation from this line of inquiry is that building a committed oversight group requires funding and a thoughtful selection process. Also, the need for a strong oversight group increases with a city's desire to incorporate the principles of budget justice.

Use of A Rulebook

All cities examined by this research team have a rulebook that is published on the city website. These rulebooks outline the stages of the process, the roles of stakeholders, technical guidelines, goals, and background information. In most instances, the roles of stakeholders were not outlined in

detail with clearly delineated expectations. Both Chicago and Cambridge assigned the primary responsibility of evaluation to three different groups. Thus, it was difficult to understand who had primary responsibility for certain functions. Often, these rulebooks hardly change from year to year. In Greensboro the rulebook was only published once.

There are numerous factors that explain why cities may not update and clarify their rulebooks. A lack of authority and resources within steering committees is a common reason. Other times, PB offices did not prioritize their rulebooks because very little had changed from the previous cycle. New York City is an outlier in this instance, as the city publishes a comprehensive updated rulebook for each PB cycle.

These rulebooks outline the stages of the process, the roles of stakeholders, technical guidelines, goals, and background information.

Role of City PB Office in Oversight

City PB offices in the US function as the chief oversight body for many cites. In Greensboro, the PB office guides all steering committee meetings and decisions. The same was reported by Durham. These PB city offices are knowledgeable and committed to the goals of PB in that municipality. They generally assume this governance role because PB was initiated by city officials as a mechanism of good governance. In these instances, steering committees serve as a mechanism to obtain community input rather than to take on a leadership and independent governance roles.

In Cambridge, the PB office manages the entire process and makes all decisions on oversight and evaluation. Since 2017, Cambridge has redefined the major goals of PB to promote civic engagement in its widest form. They are extremely focused on increasing participation rates and have hired a director with the outreach skills to accomplish this. Going forward, they will focus on outreach, education, ease of access, etc. They put less emphasis on the impact of funded projects on resident well-being or budget justice, and they have no plans to evaluate this aspect of PB.

In the Chicago hybrid model, the administrator is an employee of Great Cities Institute (GCI) at the University of Chicago. This office is grant funded, meaning no city funds are used and the city itself does not have an administration office. Their role is to inform the Alderman's offices on what is necessary to improve results in the next cycle. However, the key decision maker is the Alderman's office who decides on their level of participation.

In sum, a PB office has primary responsibility for oversight in most cities. This seems to originate with an absence of community groups driving the process coupled with a lack of government investment into PB administration. Many offices had only one or no full time people assigned to administer PB. The exception is when a PB process is managed by a Councilor's office, and the PB office functions as a central support for technical and evaluation components.

What is a PB Rulebook?

Every city has a different legal structure that governs participatory budgeting. However all legal systems have three key components: a constitution, law/legislation, and regulation.

A **constitution** sets up the scope and authority of a governmental body. In Massachusetts, the city charter is the constitution of the city. The 2021 charter amendment in Boston expanded the scope of Boston government to include participatory budgeting.

A **law** is a requirement of or prohibition of action within a specific jurisdiction, usually written and passed by legislative branches of government.[108] In Massachusetts cities, ordinances are the laws of the city. The ordinance establishing PB in Boston will set up the specific requirements for the office of PB, the PB process and the oversight committee.

A **regulation** is a standard or rule adopted by an administrative or executive body to govern how a law will be enforced.[109] The **PB Rulebook serves as a regulation for the process,** determining how the PB process will fulfill the requirements set out for it in the law.

Role of City Council

In the case of Chicago, Aldermen decide on whether to participate in PB, how much money to allocate (capped at $1.3 million), and coordinate the process within their district. TV interviews with these Aldermen confirm that their primary goal is to engage citizens in governance. Success of this goal varies significantly from ward to ward based on the amount of attention each Alderman gives to the effort. After nine cycles, only nine out of 51 wards use PB.This structure may serve to increase civic mindedness where it is used, but structurally it is not destined to transform citywide governance.

NYC also has a precinct-centered model where the city councilor makes all material decisions. However, councilors are supported by a city office that offers significant support and a comprehensive evaluation process. Currently, more than 66% of the precincts participate and this is growing every year.

In citywide processes, city councilor support is a necessary component. In multiple examples, the city's level of investment in PB is determined by the city council's political will. As an example, Greensboro academics and activists pushed for the process, but due to resistance from the city council, PB received a small budget allocation that has not increased over time.

In citywide processes, city councilor support is a necessary component. In multiple examples, the city's level of investment in PB is determined by the city council's political will.

Resources for Oversight

Budget for operations

An important outcome of our research is that no oversight group studied by this team had a direct budget, or direct control of funds held in a city account. This implies that anything requiring an expenditure had to be requested and processed through the city PB office. Procedurally, this is a standard city practice. However, it was not specified if these requests could be rejected by bureaucrats for arbitrary reasons. For example, it was unclear how much money was available in various municipalities for re-writing and publishing the rulebook, in addition to other administrative tasks. Even the most competent committee can be hamstrung by lack of administrative support. Without budgets, critical responsibilities of the oversight group are impossible. A case in point is conducting a formal evaluation. In Greensboro, the steering committee recommended a desperately needed evaluation. As the city administrator pointed out, there were no funds in the city budget for this task.

Among the cities studied, any funds used to operate a PB process came out of the city budget office, and typically were not clearly defined by the city's budget. Thus, it was not possible to do a comparative analysis of operational PB budgets between cities. However, some cities such as Greensboro noted they were significantly underfunded, and several other municipalities reduced the scope of their work to fit the budget.

Technical Competency

In addition to specific funding guidelines, PB oversight committees require specific resources and competencies in order to be effective. One vital element for the success of oversight committees is the existence of guidelines for decision-making. In our research, only Durham referenced having a chairperson who facilitated group decisions. By contrast, the Greensboro committee experienced regular power struggles due to an absence of rulemaking guidelines.

Working committees also require institutional knowledge, community connections, and some familiarity with governance. Denver used a scoring model to ascertain these competencies specifically to avoid the pitfalls of other cities. Even though their committee is newly formed, they are reporting positive results. Chicago also included seats for members of community organizations. These members had a deep understanding of community issues and how to represent underserved groups.

Our research also indicates the importance of paying committee members a stipend for their work.

Our research also indicates the importance of paying committee members a stipend for their work. Without any compensation for their time and labor, members of the Greensboro committee appropriately treated their responsibilities as optional and often missed meetings. In Detroit, committee attendance ran around 33%. To address this issue, Denver opted to compensate their committee members. In addition to implementing this policy as an issue of fairness and accessibility, the city believed that compensation added more gravity to the position that could attract more competent candidates.

Steering Comittee Structure and Composition

All cities reported that they sought inclusion and diversity on the steering committee. Success in this regard was evaluated by the number and background of candidates that applied. Attracting diverse applicants was considered so important in Denver that the position was prominently featured on the city's website. As a result they received more than 100 applications for 16 positions.

Many cities reported a need to include city bureaucrats and administrators as non-voting members on the steering committee. These include members of the city PB office and those in the city familiar with capacity and legal issues that might stand in the way of implementing programs or projects. Greensboro reported that 70% of the proposals generated by the PB process did not move into the voting stage because they were deemed infeasible by city departments. Durham cautioned that without buy-in from the city departments responsible for the implementation of certain projects, extra effort would be required to keep these projects on track.

Many cities also brought in an evaluation partner to guide both the city's PB office and the oversight group. Several cities included the evaluation partner as a non-voting member in the oversight committee, which offered two advantages. First, guidance was available to these municipalities' oversight committees on any number of issues related to evaluation. Second, the research partner

provided additional capacity with which to explore the city's main research questions.

Often, the committees had many other duties in addition to oversight. These tasks included outreach, organizing parts of the PB process including idea collection, proposal formulation, voting, and fundraising. In one sense, this provided the steering committee useful hands-on experience to help them make decisions. However they often filled in to perform process functions that may have been better performed by other stakeholder groups.

without buy-in from the city departments responsible for the implementation of certain projects, extra effort would be required to keep these projects on track.

Conclusion

In many cities, the PB office functions as the primary oversight body responsible for all aspects of the PB process, evaluation, and oversight as opposed to an oversight board. The main reasons for this are lack of funding and volunteer interest in performing this governance, or a belief that this function could be better served by city employees. In all the cities surveyed, the absence of strong community groups in the PB design process impacted how oversight was ultimately structured and conducted.

The district-centered model, where councilors "opt in", has some drawbacks when evaluated against the principles of PB. In this model, PB decision in that district rest with one person who possesses near total discretion. It is also the most competitively extractive. A councilor's use of funds for PB competes directly with allocating funds with other district priorities. These models also exist when there is insufficient community power to implement PB citywide.

Allocating operating funds to a PB process is part of Boston's radical approach. However, many PB city administrators have pointed out that there will be many practical issues with implementing this due to scope, legalities, lack of city structure and other impediments. On one hand, most of the city's budget cannot be replaced by PB in its current form. Most expenditures are required just to keep a city running. On the other hand, implementing budget justice requires a substantially meaningful PB allocation. The current case studies do not provide a complete working model on how to do this. However, the components of a successful oversight model are much clearer based on this research. They will provide a solid base to take Participatory Budgeting to the next level.

Evaluation of US Participatory Budgeting in Practice

Evaluation of the PB process is an essential component to determine if the process is fulfilling the stated goals of PB in a city. This section follows the structure of "Oversight in Practice", but focuses specifically on evaluation. To that end, it will synthesize how cities approach and perform evaluation and the key takeaways for Boston.

Evaluating the Goals of a City PB Process

Evaluation of the PB process is an essential component to determine if the process is fulfilling the stated goals of PB in a city.

All cities had stated goals of their PB process. In general, these ranged from four to six statements that embodied what a city was attempting to achieve. These goals provided the backbone for how evaluation was ultimately defined in each municipality. Each evaluation report was organized around the degree to which these goals were attained. In order to conduct evaluations, municipalities used two key evaluation methods that we discovered through our research.

Use of PBP Key Metrics andParticipatory Action Research

The first method described here is the PBP Key Metrics method[94], which is a toolkit developed by the Participatory Budget Project that measures a series of indicators shown in the table below. Using this approach, municipalities measure who is voting, demographics of voters, past voter history, distribution of approved projects and other information. An advantage of this approach is that results can easily be compared year to year to determine trends. Evaluation processes using these consistent metrics can also be administered by city staff on an annual basis and are less expensive than a more comprehensive evaluation from an evaluation partner.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is another approach. It is a method of inquiry that centers community members in the process of designing, conducting, and analyzing research. It involves researchers and participants working together to understand a problematic situation and change it for the better. It continually uses information collected in the process to revise the research as it progresses. A more complete definition is below. PAR offers advantages of getting deeper into research questions while not needing to wait for a new cycle. It is usually more expensive and requires a professional research team. The two methods (PAR and Key Metrics) are synergistic and can be performed concurrently.

PBP Key Metrics for Evaluating PB

Research Questions about PB Impacts

Impacts on Civic and Political Life:

1. 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?
2. To what extent does PB foster collaboration between civil society organizations and government?
3. Is PB associated with elected officials' political careers?

Impacts on Inclusion and Equity:

1. Is PB engaging traditionally marginalized communities?
2. Through what means does PB facilitate participation?
3. Is PB fostering equitable distribution of resources?

Impacts on Government:

1. How are the number of PB processes and dollar amount allocated to PB changing from year to year?
2. What is the implementation rate of winning PB projects?
3. Are additional resources being allocated to projects or needs identified through PB?
4. What is the cost to government of implementing PB?

Key Metrics

1. Number of PB participants
2. % of PB participants who are people of color
3. Number of nongovernmental and community-based organizations involved in PB
4. Number of community events and vote sites
5. Number of total PB processes
6. Amount of funds allocated to PB projects

Advanced Metrics

1. % of PB voters who are eligible to vote but did not vote in the most recent election
2. % of PB voters who are ineligible to vote in local elections
3. % of participants who report prior civic engagement or participation
4. % of participants who report being new or returning to PB
5. % of elected officials re-elected
6. % of participants who are low-income
7. Allocation of PB funds by project type
8. % of projects completed within 3 years
9. Amount of additional money allocated to projects and needs identified through PB
10. Dollar amount spent on PB implementation

Participatory Action Research

Referenced throughout this report, Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a method of inquiry that centers community members in the process of designing, conducting, and analyzing research. In recent years, PAR has largely been used in the field of public health. However, its applications span many fields, and from 2011-2015 it was used to evaluate Participatory Budgeting in New York City. The PAR process was led by researchers at the Urban Justice Center through the Community Development Project, and is detailed in a report which summarizes their approaches and lessons learned.[110]

In their report, the authors articulate several key principles of their PAR process. To quote the authors, they include:

- Broadly collaborative research planning and design, using a community-driven process and explicitly tying research goals and questions to broader community goals.
- Sharing findings on an ongoing basis, with collaborative identification of themes and recommendations, to promote community review of data and community-driven analysis.
- Returning research products to the community in accessible, utilitarian formats, and designing multiple products for different audiences as needed.
- Thinking of research as action-oriented and not intended to sit on a shelf but rather to be used in advocacy and organizing.
- Undertaking collaborative assessment at the conclusion of a research project, and planning and adapting for future research.

In addition to these principles, it is clear that several structural factors contributed to the success of this PAR evaluation. First, overlap between the city's PB oversight team and the research team ensured that evaluation outcomes were delivered smoothly, and integrated into future iterations of the PB process. Second, funding an anchor organization (the Urban Justice Center) proved invaluable for creating continuity and administrative capacity throughout the evaluation process. Third, including grassroots organizations in every part of the research process ensured that the evaluation research plan was closely tied to the goals of working-class Black and Brown communities.

As is evident from the key principles outlined by the researchers at the Urban Justice Center, there is considerable overlap between the values inherent in Participatory Action Research and those of Participatory Budgeting. For this reason, the PAR evaluation model used in NYC features prominently in the recommendations outlined later in this report.

Evaluation of Participation Goals and Distribution of Projects

Every city we examined paid careful attention to who participated in PB, and especially to who voted at the end of the cycle. These municipalities paid special attention to demographics which characterized the diversity and prior civic participation of voters. However, there were significant variations in the quality of research conducted. Some cities reduced the amount of demographic data collected in order to fit the task to the available resources. In addition, this data was not always analyzed or made available to the public. In these cases, the summarized raw data was discussed with the oversight group, but often without followup action. Municipalities where participation data was not reliably collected ultimately had a harder time understanding which communities they were engaging and which were left out of their processes.

Many city administrators expressed frustration about not having the necessary resources to expand and measure participation in their communities.

Each city also attempted to measure participation rates in an effort to scale PB over time, however limited skills and research budgets caused many municipalities to struggle with this task. Every municipality acknowledged that low participation rates might indicate a lack of interest and impact related to PB. For this reason, many city administrators expressed frustration about not having the necessary resources to expand and measure participation in their communities. Ultimately, this lack of evaluation stymied municipalities in their attempts to create plans for scaling PB, meaning that programs continued year to year without improvement in voting rates. In contrast, Cambridge specifically hired a city PB office director with community organization and communication skills to get the vote out. Through their evaluation of participation rates , Cambridge administrators plan to improve the efficacy of their outreach strategies and improve on future community engagement efforts.

In addition to measuring participation rates and voter demographics, numerous municipalities sought to analyze where winning projects were located spatially within the communities. Through this line of research, several cities learned that although their PB process proved democratic, selected projects were not always distributed in the neighborhoods of greatest need. Instead, these cities observed that projects in more affluent areas tended to receive the most votes. To address this issue, some cities are contemplating adding allocation guidelines in the rulebook that channel money to neighborhoods based on need. For example, Durham is considering adding a guideline that specifies that a fixed amount of money can only be used in designated underserved communities. This approach can also be used to specify causes rather than geographical areas, for example the city can specify project criteria that promote projects which will primarily benefit incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women and girls. Together, these examples show the value in evaluating where successful projects may be clustered, and whom they tend to benefit most.

Evaluation of High-Level Goals

Although each city identified high level goals for the PB process such as equity, justice and inclusion, municipalities struggled across the board to concretely evaluate whether the outcomes of PB aligned with these goals. No city explained how these goals applied contextually to their city, or what the operational subgoals or research indicators might be. This made it difficult to evaluate with any clarity if they were achieved. This research tells us that it will be a significant task to determine whether a vision for budget justice is being achieved through Boston's PB process. This may take several cycles of evaluation to get right.

Evaluation of the Process and General Administration

Each municipality researched by this team used evaluation to understand and improve how PB was administered across the city. Improvements were sought by all cities through surveys and informally at delegate meetings through observation. Although routine, these were important administrative details that could have a large impact. Commonly, this line of evaluation resulted in clearer forms, more accessible instructions, and improved language access throughout the process.

In addition, the evaluation of PB administration showed that several cities had major difficulty with advancing proposals that budget delegates had synthesized and developed for potential voting (and in some cases already voted on). For example the city of Greensboro reported that the city did not have the capacity, expertise, or legal ability to proceed with projects that had made it through the voting process. These projects were deemed infeasible by city bureaucrats and ultimately scrapped, creating tension between the delegate staff and the city. In municipalities where this occurred, the evaluation of PB administration highlighted that it is beneficial to involve key bureaucrats at all stages of the process.

Finally, the evaluation of PB administration has revealed that a lack of funding often leads to poorly administered processes, and points to several potential solutions. Although Greensboro hired dedicated PB staff, a lack of capacity limited the ability of these individuals to contribute to a successful PB process. To circumnavigate this issue, Chicago only held events for which the budget delegates and Aldermanic staff were able to attend. The City of Durham discovered that even a small transportation stipend attracted more qualified budget delegates to the PB process. By understanding the impact that limited funding would have on their processes, these municipalities were able to come up with creative solutions that ultimately enabled PB to prosper.

Although each city identified high level goals for the PB process such as equity, justice and inclusion, municipalities struggled across the board to concretely evaluate whether the outcomes of PB aligned with these goals.

Evaluation of Completed Projects

A final evaluation area employed by several municipalities explores the impacts of completed projects on communities where they were located. However, evaluators found these impacts difficult to measure, largely because impact was evaluated through the subjective responses of research participants. For example, in Cambridge many residents commented that although the projects were beneficial to the community, they did not feel their lives nor budget justice were achieved. In future evaluations, researchers might choose to ask more specific questions about the impacts that successful projects have on the community, so as to collect richer and more detailed accounts.

Conclusion

Boston has a unique opportunity to learn from other municipalities' approach to evaluation. In fact, the BBA has already begun to integrate these lessons into the Boston Process. Some especially important lessons include the use of an evaluation partner for the first several cycles of PB, fully finding evaluation as a vital part of the PB process, utilizing a PAR approach, and incorporating evaluation results into subsequent cycles. A more detailed list of recommendations is included at the end of this report.

Table 2: Comparison of PB Scope by City

	Cambridge	Chicago	Greensboro	Denver	Durham	Detroit	Toronto	NYC
Operating Budget	$748 million	$12.8 billion	$550 million	$1.49 billion	$504 million	$2.4 billion	$15 billion	$95.1 billion
Population of City	116K	2,710K	300K	755K	216K	675K	2,930K	8,419K
When PB Started	2014	2009	2015	2022	2019	2018	2015	2011
Money Allocated to PB	$1 million 0.1%	$1.3 million per ward	$0.5 million 0.1%	$1.7 million 0.1%	$2.4 million 0.4%	$.25 million 0.01%	1.87 million 0.01%	$39million 0.0004%
Citizen Participation Rate	7441 6.4%	1774 49th Ward 3.1%	3961 1.3%	Not Started	10,000 4.7%	655	2,500 0.8%	118,000 0.0008%
Number of Formal Evaluations Performed	One	One	One	Not Started	One	-	One	Eleven
City Wide or by Ward/ District	City Wide	Participating Wards 9 out of 51	City Wide	City Wide	City Wide	Ward	Ward	Participating Districts 32 out of 51

Defining a Vision for PB in Boston

In order to learn from on-the-ground experts on the topic of participatory budgeting, our team conducted 19 interviews with stakeholders from community-based organizations in Boston. These interviews were intended to develop a wide-angle representation of the motivations, hopes, fears, and perspectives of the campaign's supporters. Our team chose to interview these specific organizations because of their expressed support and participation in the Yes on 1 Campaign. It is our hope that this section helps define the vision for PB in Boston at this particular moment, creating a document that can be referenced by the independent office of PB, the PB oversight board, and the community stakeholders themselves. We also hope that by defining a clear set of goals based on community input, we can contribute to a process of oversight and evaluation that holds the PB process accountable to the goals of the community.

The organizations represented in our research fall into 6 categories:

1. Advocacy Networks
2. City Council
3. Community Development Corporations
4. Community Businesses
5. Community Organizations
6. Ward Committees

In these interviews we attempted to understand:

- Why organizations supported the Yes on 1 Campaign
- The organizations' experience of the Boston budget up to this point
- The organizations' definitions of a just city budget
- The organization's hopes for PB
- The organization's fears about PB
- General recommendations for how PB should be designed

Table 3: Organizations Interviewed

Advocacy Networks	Community Organizations
Center for Economic Democracy Boston Jobs Coalition MAssachusetts Voter Table Massachusetts Sierra Club Mass Budget Policy Center Progressive Mass	Chinese Progressive Association Families for Justice as Healing PILOT Action Group Student Immigrant Movement Union of Minority Neighborhoods Youth Justice & Power Union
Community Development Corporations	Ward Committees
JP Neighborhood Development Corporation Madison Park Development Corporation	Boston Ward 4 Boston Ward 15
City Council	Community Businesses
Boston City Council	Haley House

In the following sections we synthesize what we heard in these interviews. Broadly, respondents' answers reflect the themes outlined in Celina Su's writings on budget justice, as well as other literature on empowered governance and democratic budgeting.

Equitable Distribution of Resources

Inequality exists in almost every aspect of society in Boston. The median income of Black workers is only 45% of that of white workers. High school dropout rates for Hispanic students are 4 times that of white students, and twice as high as Black students.[95] *As is often cited, the median net worth of Black households is $8.*[96]

A report from the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation found that:

- *Closing the racial wealth gap, most significantly through better-paying jobs, could grow the Massachusetts economy by about $25 billion over five years.*
- *Increasing the high school graduation rate of Black and Hispanic students could result in nearly $1 billion in increased economic activity over five years.*
- *Increasing the college graduation rate for Black and Hispanic students would lead to jobs contributing $22 million in state and local taxes each year.*[97]

City budgets are not neutral. Without intentional intervention, they perpetuate patterns of racial and social intervention. Good intentions alone are not enough to close race and class disparities in Boston.

"PB is about putting your money where your mouth is."
- Chinese Progressive Association

To create more just outcomes, budgets must divest from harmful institutions and programs and invest in ones that are restorative. This is the goal of Boston's participatory budget: to be a mechanism for the meaningful redistribution of public money.

Community stakeholders unanimously agree that race and class disparities have existed in Boston for years. Marginalized communities have experienced disinvestments in their schools,[98] their businesses,[99] even their sidewalks.[100] Yes On 1 stakeholders agree that a just city budget should redistribute city resources and funds to those most in need, repairing harms that have been done in the past.

"People and resources have been stolen out of these communities and so power and resources need to be flooding back into those communities and that absolutely has to be a component of what's happening."
- Families for Justice as Healing

In the long-term, the organizations interviewed hope that PB will move the needle on racial justice, on everything from infant mortality rates, to net wealth and income, to how often streets are cleaned. **The hope is that there will be a higher prioritization of funding for the needs of Boston's most vulnerable residents, and the people and communities most directly impacted by systemic injustice.** Additionally, PB outcomes should have a tangible and meaningful impact on residents' lives. They must materially improve the lives of Black and Brown communities.

"Society will not progress unless the most vulnerable receive equity."
- Chinese Progressive Association

Budget Should Respond to Needs in the Community

In the fall of 2021, the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization stated the need for increased funding for the City of Boston Office of Reentry, which supports residents who have recently returned form incarceration. Recently, Mayor Michelle Wu proposed boosting the office's budget from $500,000 to $1.88 million,[101] following through on a promise she made while running for office. Pending approval by the city council, this increased budget will be implemented in the 2023 fiscal year. This simple story illustrates a core goal of community stakeholders: the budget should respond to the needs of marginalized communities.

In order to have meaningful outcomes, decision-makers should understand the needs of marginalized communities and the city budget should respond to these needs. Although the Boston Office of Budget Management put out a budgeting survey and held budget listening sessions, several interviewees felt that these actions were ineffective at best, and actively disingenuous at worst. In a participatory budgeting process, community members create the proposals and vote on the winning project, and ideally have the power to address and respond to needs in their communities. The PB process is only one mechanism for accountability to community needs, however, the goal is for Boston residents to experience PB as a legitimate way of articulating and deliberating on their needs, and ultimately having those needs attended to by the government.

In 2020, calls to defund the police started conversations about alternative forms of public safety. In Boston, the communities that are the most over-policed, namely Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan, also experience the most crime. However, people know what makes their communities feel safe, and participatory budgeting can create opportunities for implementing solutions that don't rely solely on higher rates of incarceration and police intervention. In addition, the city budget has a responsibility to overcome the deficit of trust with Black, Brown, Immigrant and Indigenous working class communities by allocating money so that all residents feel safe and can thrive. *Mayor Wu writes that "reparative justice aims to bring neighborhoods and communities into a state of shared well-being by addressing the impacts of existing or historical harms."[102]*

Boston is designing its PB process to begin with a needs assessment, which will require all project proposals to respond to specific community needs. This distinction from other PB processes can lead to outcomes that are more meaningful. In Vallejo, CA, filling potholes was repeatedly one of the winning projects, even though there should have already been a city fund for street repairs.[103] In Boston's recent budgeting listening tour, one of the loudest requests from attendees was for a dog park. While this project is not bad, it also may not reflect the deepest needs of marginalized communities, or create budget justice in the same way that Yes on 1 stakeholders hope this process will.

Importance of Budget Transparency & Accessibility

Boston residents and community groups feel a lack of transparency around how budgeting decisions are made or where there are opportunities to influence the budget. Up until the passing of the Yes on 1 Campaign, the mayor has had nearly complete control over the budget. City councilors could only approve or reject the budget, and had no input into the creation of the initial budget proposal. As a result, many decisions were made that residents couldn't see. Community groups noted that there is a difference between what they are told, and what actually happens. A few stakeholders felt that city councilors use the budgeting system as an excuse, not using their power to advocate for changes in the budget. Because of this lack of trust, they are hesitant to give city councilors power, instead emphasizing the need to put decision-making power directly in the hands of residents.

"From experience, [the budget] felt pretty inaccessible and complex. Wasn't sure how to get involved with a budgeting advocacy campaign before hearing this idea."
- Sierra Club

Many organizations have not been involved with budget advocacy prior to their work with the Yes On 1 campaign, and pointed out the confusion surrounding how to get involved in the budgeting process. The Youth Justice & Power Union (YJPU) has been involved with budgeting advocacy for years and describes the challenges associated with increasing funding for youth jobs. In the early 2000s, the municipal budget for youth jobs was slashed in half, and this budget has yet to be restored. In 2010, statewide cuts were made to the same budget. YJPU began calling for defunding the police at a time when they had a $325 million budget. This advocacy showed the organization how powerful budgets are, and how difficult it is to make change.

To achieve budget justice, there should be more education and understanding of the budgeting process. This education should happen early enough so that residents can have space for meaningful participation in the budgeting process. Additionally, the way the budgeting process is designed should encourage residents to participate. It should be accessible to a wide array of residents, and it should be very easy to get involved. When a resident has a problem, they should know exactly which meeting to attend, or which elected official to contact to have their voice heard.

"True budget justice would come when any layperson in Boston ,or MA or the U.S., would be able to understand how they can plug into how the resources they need are going to where they need to go."
- Mass Budget Policy Center

Shift Power to Community Groups and Residents

Yes on 1 stakeholders overwhelmingly expressed the desire to build community power and engage the minority and working-class residents of Boston. Their vision is a power shift from the status quo to the community by giving traditionally marginalized residents stake and equity in decision making.

Community-led budgeting decisions will start to break down histories and structures that have perpetrated violence in Boston, and in order for this to happen those most impacted by over-policing, carceral capitalism, unaffordable housing, and underfunded schools must be involved. These residents should be considered experts as much as those who have traditionally been considered experts. Full democratic control must center just policies, address community needs, and reverse damages that the current budgeting system has done over the years.

Budgets that prioritize the needs of marginalized communities should be created by the marginalized communities themselves. There need to be transfers of power directly into these communities to make budget decisions.[104] *Participants should be given opportunities for quality deliberation prior to a vote. Further, community-made decisions should be followed by government action. The fulfillment of the emancipatory dimension of PB requires a process that links community decisions to government action.*[105]

The oversight of PB is an important opportunity for creating community control. There was collective agreement among interviewees about ensuring equitable representation in the oversight committee. The oversight committee should be representative, if not over-representative, of minorities and working-class residents. Further, the committee needs to be made up of a diverse group of advocates and members with different types of expertise, drawing from people across the city with unique identities and experiences. This committee should avoid becoming an isolated group of people making decisions but should engage with the community wherever possible. True budget justice cannot be achieved in the traditional top-down style of leadership. The oversight committee should have long-term and widespread leadership and power over the PB process and should be able to build collective power among residents of Boston.

Increased Civic Engagement & Participation

Many interviewees agreed that the PB process should continually focus on increasing participation and voter turnout. Fair representation stems from having a diverse pool of voters, which can be achieved through increased accessibility. There should be a focus on engaging communities that have not had access to equal funding in the past, Black and Brown communities, and young voters. This would reiterate the idea of community control, as it puts agency in the hands of people who otherwise would not have a first say on how public money is spent.

> ***"This process is about bringing people to the table who haven't been there before."***
> ***- Mass Voter Table***

Creating visible change through participatory budgeting is a crucial goal because people want to be able to see the direct results of their efforts. This can be achieved through visible attention in the media, covering the story of how the projects are evolving. Outcomes should be discussed in public meetings, highlighting proponents of the process to demonstrate to voters that real progress is being made. Stickers should be put on every outcome that is paid for by PB, as a way to clearly promote the PB process.

Civic engagement through voting has been discouraging for many residents. However, PB creates opportunities for more meaningful

participation and building collective power for creating outcomes. PB should create tangible changes in communities that continue to make residents excited to be a part of the process. Community stakeholders want residents to dream big, and they want this process to inspire ingenuity. Residents should push the bounds on what types of outcomes are possible through PB, and through larger budget activism. A Progressive Massachusetts representative described PB as **"giving people on-ramps to civic involvement."**

According to Celina Su, the most meaningful and important impacts of the New York City PB process are not the winning projects themselves, but the spillover effects and changes prompted by the PB process. Through participatory budgeting, constituents have been trained to want, demand, and fight for more.

"If you created 150 new activists across the city who want to engage, that's gold."
- Better Budget Alliance Member

PB as a Means, not an End

At this moment, processes surrounding PB are beautiful, hopeful, and full of possibility. However, participatory budgeting should not be regarded as the end-all solution. Rather, it should be utilized as a complementary tool to involve the community in decision making, while continuing to create more engagement and larger changes in government. CED states,

"The PB process isn't the silver bullet- but it can be a stepping stone to bringing decision making directly to communities."

Participatory budgeting is best understood as a framework. The process facilitates "new modes of democracy", beyond just voting, that provide communities with opportunities to deliberate on the needs of their communities and the best pathways to address them. At this moment, the process should not distract from other advocacy or larger social issues that lie outside the scope of PB. The long-term goal for a people's budget that brings budget justice to Boston could be accomplished through PB, but only if the process iterates to center the values outlined above, and eventually scales up to control much larger portions of the city budget.

Obstacles to Look Out For

A common fear shared by many interviewees was the possibility of PB becoming extractive of community resources, leading to burnout. This could occur both at the city council level, as well at the community level. It is critical that the community partners are well-resourced and ensure that they have the time and capacity to carry out the necessary work.

Power imbalances could lead to PB being hijacked by politics. Despite being a democratic process, there is a risk that it becomes the domain of the city councilors or other interest groups and excludes ordinary residents. Politicians could use mechanisms to stymie the process, or for their own gain, and if this happened PB would only have the appearance of democracy. There need to be safeguards built into the process that will keep power in the hands of community members.

"We need to design a structure and process that allows the process not to be corrupted by a single interest in 10-15 years... Organizations come and go, we need to ensure that the process allows for greater community control over a long period of time."
- Center for Economic Democracy

Similarly, another fear is that PB will not end up benefiting the community. Fair doesn't always mean right, and residents could vote to support a project that perpetuates inequality. Additionally, some groups may not be able to participate in the voting process, resulting in the city council ignoring the genuine needs of the community.

Conclusion

The outputs of our interviews created the following six core goals for participatory budgeting in Boston:

1. Equitable Distribution of Resources
2. Budget that Responds to Needs in the Community
3. Budget Transparency and Accessibility
4. Shift of Power to Community Groups and Residents
5. Increased Civic Engagement
6. PB as a Means, not an End

These goals, as well as some obstacles to look out for, were influential in the development of our recommendations, giving us criteria against which to evaluate, and objectives for the oversight committee.

Recommendations

Image Source: Participatory Budgeting Project

Recommendations Index

Our survey of PB across the US has confirmed its promise as a democratic innovation and a tool for budget justice However, many incarnations of PB have struggled in one way or another, and most have not framed budget justice as a central and explicit goal. Lessons from these municipalities are invaluable for informing Boston's PB process as it strives to change the material conditions of the city's working class communities of color

This understanding informs our recommendations for the Better Budget Alliance, Boston's City Counselors, and the Mayor's Office as they move to initiate citywide PB over the next two years. In the next three sections we will present recommendations for 1) conceptualizing the ongoing role of the BBA in relation to the PB process and oversight committee, 2) structuring and empowering the PB oversight body, and 3) implementing an evaluation practice that holds PB accountable to the principles of budget justice.

The Role of the BBA in Oversight

1 **Frame PB in Boston as an experimental pilot.** Although Boston's PB process represents a historic opportunity for the city, it is also likely that early cycles will be limited in overall funding and full of lessons learned. Keeping these factors in mind may help the city to see PB as an experiment, rather than a "be all end all" solution.

2 **Need for outside accountability from the BBA.** No matter how well PB's process is designed, implemented, and governed, our research shows us that external pressure will continue to help hold PB accountable to the goals of working-class communities of color.

Empowering Effective Oversight

1 **Create a clear and central role for oversight.** Specifically, the oversight committee should serve as the governing body for PB, and be given an explicit mandate to push the process toward budget justice.

2 **Powers and Responsibilities.** This section outlines several powers and responsibilities that will empower the oversight committee to be most impactful in its pursuit of just and equitable outcomes.

3 **Oversight Committee Structure.** To support the oversight committee in carrying out its role most impactfully, this section outlines compositional, logistical, and organizational considerations for the committee.

Enabling Ongoing Evaluation

1 **An Approach to Evaluation.** This set of overarching recommendations is designed to help PB evaluators produce more impactful research.

2 **Technical Partner Vision.** A technical partner will provide valuable support to the oversight committee in designing and implementing an evaluation process, especially during early PB cycles.

3 **Research Considerations.** This section outlines several potential challenges that evaluators are likely to encounter, as well as specific ideas for overcoming them.

Role of the Better Budget Alliance in Oversight

Orientation to PB as an Experimental Pilot

1. Will need iteration over a number of cycles
2. Will need to scale over time

Organization and Agitation

1. To maintain political will
2. To push towards true budget justice

The Better Budget Alliance and its successful push to pass the charter amendment establishing PB in Boston is the most recent manifestation of decades of activism pushing for budget justice in the city. The task of this report is to come up with recommendations for oversight and evaluation of PB that can keep it accountable to this transformative vision.

While we didn't set out to compile best practices for the Better Budget Alliance in their advocacy and organizing, our research did uncover two recommendations for how the BBA can understand its role in ongoing oversight that pushes PB in Boston towards Budget Justice.

The initial implementation of PB should be understood as an experimental pilot project.

Even with the expansive vision for that process proposed by the BBA, It will likely take a significant effort and a number of cycles to get the PB process to embody true procedural justice. Boston has a rich ecosystem of organizations with experience running deliberative forums, but the Oversight committee, the Office PB and community partners will need to hone those experiences into best practices that are adopted citywide. Additionally, voter turnout is already low for local elections, and other cities in the US have struggled to consistently engage more than 5% of residents in PB (some have struggled to get beyond 1%). Lastly, there will be a significant learning curve for city agencies in engaging effectively and transparently with PB proposals and approved projects. The effort to run PB will never be minimal, but our research shows it will be especially intense over the first few cycles while stakeholders iterate on the process, build a culture of engagement and deliberation, and institutionalize the incorporation of PB outputs into city governance.

Then, even with significant citizen engagement and an established path for departmental incorporation of PB outputs, the allotment of only a few percentage points of the city budget to PB's control means that PB is not likely to be the primary forum for residents, advocacy, and interest groups to deliberate on overall budgeting priorities. The scope and importance of the budget issues that are subject to PB will be small enough relative to the overall city budget that budget justice across the city will not be fully realized through the PB process alone. This means that any investment of time by community members or organizations in PB will be additional to their existing advocacy for budget

priorities (as well as electoral and policy advocacy). City departments, even those that are excited to receive participatory inputs, may only be structured to engage with PB projects as a side component of their primary responsibilities, rather than as the main source of direction for their programming. With only a small fraction of the city budget under its control, PB is unlikely to reach its fullest potential to increase budget justice or catalyze a transformation of government to truly center co-creation of programs and projects with citizens.

Higher allocations of the budget to participatory control increase the salience of PB, its potential to impact social justice, and its influence on city agencies. In Porto Alegre, where PB was used formally for capital project decision-making, PB's allocation peaked in the 1990s at around 15% of the city's total budget, which represented the majority of the city's funds not dedicated to personnel and maintenance. At this level, PB did become the primary forum for community input in capital investment, the budget decisions it controlled directly impacted the lives of all residents, and agencies evolved to effectively receive participatory inputs and work collaboratively with PB stakeholders on projects.

In Boston, like in other cities around the world, PB is likely to attract a lot of initial attention because of its novelty, transparency, and citizen engagement, but if its allocation remains limited to a few percentage points of budget, even a well-designed and well-implemented PB process may either end up taking more effort from the community than it gives in return, or struggle to garner significant community engagement. In Greensboro, NC, PB was established citywide in response to organizing, primarily by academics. The city council actively opposed the process and only allocated ~0.2% of the city's operating budget (100K per district) to the project. This number has not been increased over subsequent cycles and participation has remained low. The danger of an initial attempt at PB that doesn't have a plan for iteration or scaling is why framing the first few cycles of PB a "pilot project" is so important. We believe that if the PB experiment is successful at generating more just outcomes at its initial scale, it will need to be expanded to control more money directly (possibly including money explicitly divested from the police, as in Seattle) and also to influence broader policy priorities for city councilors and the mayor, comprehensive planning processes, and departmental service delivery.

Consistent "outside" organizing and agitation is just as important as an effective "inside" committee for oversight.

While an effective official oversight body is indispensable, our research indicates it is also not solely sufficient to keep the PB process aligned with budget justice. The ongoing accountability provided by the base-building, public education, and advocacy efforts of the Better Budget Alliance is just as important as the formal governance of PB. Observers of Porto Alegre's process consider this to have been one of the key features that led

to success. An organized movement can mobilize citizens to participate in PB and give it a try as an avenue to pursue their hopes for more just outcomes. It can work to protect the oversight committee and the process from being co-opted by reactionary, corporate, or status-quo forces. At every step of the process, an organized movement can push for community-led decision making and rules that forward budget justice. Lastly, it can develop the political will in the city for expanding PB beyond an experimental pilot.

Although this report focuses on the need for an empowered and well designed official oversight committee to provide governance for the process, this body cannot serve these important functions of "outside accountability" that an organized Better Budget Alliance can provide. In our recommendations for the oversight committee we highlight the importance for this body to communicate transparently with the Better Budget Alliance (and the broader community), to enable the BBA to perform this role.

No matter how empowered the oversight committee is, it can still be derailed from its mission of budget justice. Given political history, a government process with redistributive aims is likely to experience resistance. Here are a few dangers that should be kept in mind:

1. Co-option by reactionary/unrepresentative citizen groups or loyalists to a mayor who is opposed to PB or Budget Justice
2. Members that do not bring sufficient capabilities to the table to accomplish oversight, resulting in responsibilities being undone and/or overreliance on "professionals" in the PB office
3. Remuneration causing members to shy away from critical action towards the office of PB or other city agencies in order to maintain a paycheck
4. Nomination requirement causing members to shy away from critical action towards community partners
5. City agencies/PB office not responding to oversight actions

These threats highlight why accountability to the BBA is a necessary component of the oversight committee's mandate and why the BBA's organizing and maintenance of political will is as significant for effective "oversight" as the role of the formal board. Community and electoral activism can help to ensure that these dangers are avoided.

Empowering Effective Oversight

Participatory Budgeting needs dedicated governance. It is a multifaceted process with innumerable actors and moving pieces. In most places where PB has been implemented there has been a citizen body that convenes and stewards the process cycle to cycle. In Porto Alegre there was a centralized Budget Council, and in the US most cities have had a steering committee. The Office of PB in city government cannot provide this governance in a way that would be credibly insulated from mayoral outreach. Additionally, it makes intuitive sense for the governance of a participatory process to be provided by community members rather than bureaucrats, as this arrangement creates opportunities for lived experience ("context" expertise) to steer the implementation of PB, rather than solely professional experience ("content" expertise).

It is clear that in Boston the independent oversight committee mandated by the 2021 Charter Amendment is well-suited to serve this governance role. However, it is a major undertaking to effectively provide this ongoing governance cycle to cycle and so the investment in, design of and mandate given to this committee should go beyond the common understanding of an "oversight committee" in other arenas of city government. In this section we present recommendations for structuring the oversight committee to effectively deliver this governance with enough scope and power to guide the PB process towards meaningful budget justice while staying accountable to the community.

Our structural considerations are broken into two categories: the official powers and responsibilities that the committee needs to provide PB governance, and the nuts and bolts of designing the committee to fulfill this mandate. We conclude by highlighting the aspects of oversight committee design that can lead to empowered governance and potential pitfall of oversight.

Oversight Committee Powers and Responsibilities

Powers and Responsibilities

1. Own the rulebook
    a. Set cycle goals
    b. Set issue areas
    c. Allocate money across the city
    d. Set criteria for assemblies, voting, and projects
2. Oversee the office of PB
3. Oversee contracted community partners
4. Ensure the safety and inclusion of PB spaces
5. Own evaluation
6. Convene reflection and iteration
7. Set long term vision for PB
8. Develop best practices for city department engagement with PB
9. Resolve conflicts between community members and department staff
10. Share the findings of the community needs and solutions assemblies widely
11. Create space for celebration
12. Ensure transparency about process decisions and project statuses
13. Remain accountable to the BBA
14. Self-define its internal structure

To effectively govern PB in the city, the oversight committee needs a clear mandate to center budget justice. In this section we outline the specific oversight powers and responsibilities that we believe the city council should grant the committee, through ordinance, to fulfill this mandate for PB.

Convene the PB Cycle and Own the Rulebook

The oversight committee is the convener of the PB cycle. The first aspect of this mandate is to **edit and publish a PB rulebook** before the start of each new cycle. Although PB in Boston is legislated through ordinance, this ordinance only sets the requirements that need to be met for the process, the specific rules that are necessary to fulfill those requirements should be owned by the oversight committee and maintained in a public rulebook. Whereas the ordinance is written as legislation, the rulebook should be written in accessible language and published online in an accessible format. In other cities the rulebook contains the following features:

1. The values that guide the PB process
2. Cycle specific goals for the process
3. Cycle specific scope
    a. Issue Areas
    b. Allocation across issue areas and districts
4. Cycle timeline and the definitions of each stage
5. Project Criteria
    a. Minimum and maximum project costs
    b. Type of projects (life span requirements, etc)
    c. Social justice criteria
    d. Number of projects to be voted on
6. Participation requirements for assemblies, idea collection, and voting
    a. Residency definition
    b. Age threshold
7. Accessibility, Inclusion and Safety Commitments
    a. Explanation of how in-person and online participation in assemblies and voting will be made accessible
    b. Expectations for participation in deliberative assemblies and definition of safe space
    c. Formal complaint/grievance process
8. Voting procedures
    a. Voting period
    b. Voting collection processes
    c. Progressive weighting factors
    d. What to do with a tie, what to do with last projects that cannot be fully funded
9. Processes for developing solutions into proposals
    a. Who will be responsible
    b. How they will do it
10. Data Usage and Transparency Definitions
    a. How process data will be kept safe
    b. How data will be shared

While some of these rules will be legislated in the ordinance, many details should be controlled by the oversight committee to enable nimble iteration on the process cycle to cycle in response to community needs, participant feedback and the results of evaluation. The committee should undergo a formal process of refining the rulebook on a yearly basis in collaboration with the Office of PB and the BBA. There are four key areas of discretionary rulemaking that are worth a deeper examination: cycle goals, issue areas, allocation, and social justice criteria.

Cycle Goals

In a previous section we shared the key metrics that the Participatory Budgeting Project proposes for tracking participation level and quality in PB. These metrics, and others determined by the cycle-specific evaluation plan (discussed in the next section), should inform specific cycle goals that are published in the rulebook. While there are numerous broader goals of PB, we are specifically referring to process goals here. We recommend that these be **S.M.A.R.T. goals** (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-based) e.g. setting a target of 10% more aggregate assembly participants for a given stage of the cycle than the previous stage in the same cycle. PB in other US cities has struggled to track their progress because their goals were nonspecific or unmeasurable.

Issue Areas

The BBA's proposal for PB in Boston includes the selection of specific issue areas for PB projects at the district level and citywide each cycle. Setting the number of issue areas and defining them is a useful discretionary tool for the oversight committee. This is a core governance function including the ability to widen and narrow the scope of PB to respond to funding levels, as well as to respond to the readiness of various city agencies for participatory projects. Nevertheless, this prioritization of issue areas should ideally have input from the needs identification done by participants early on in the process.

Allocation

Freedom to allocate money across issue areas and districts is one of the key discretionary powers that enables the oversight committee to embed distributive budget justice in the process. In a city like Boston with significant spatial inequality, an equal allocation of resources across districts would not represent an equitable distribution. In Porto Alegre, the Budget Council established objective criteria that were used to determine this allocation, but this formula was refined over time as outcomes were observed. As the independent governance body, the oversight committee is best situated to own this important function, share its logic transparently, and adapt it as is necessary to serve the goal of increasing budget justice.

Proposal (Social Justice) Criteria

Another way that PB practitioners have sought to embed explicit budget justice in participatory budgeting is to establish social justice criteria for proposals. The BBA's design for the Boston process is unique in its inclusion of a participatory needs assessment as a defined stage of PB. The needs that are identified and prioritized by this process can be formalized into specific problems/ challenges to which PB solutions and the proposals they become will respond. This is one way to ensure that project proposals reach towards the just outcomes that community members prioritize. Social justice might also be embedded in project criteria by requiring that proposals explicitly serve underserved communities. Determining the optimal method to ensure justice considerations in all project proposals will take iteration over a number of cycles, which is why we recommend that this task be delegated to the oversight committee.

Oversee the PB Process, Community Partners, and the Office of PB

In each stage of each cycle there will be differing needs for oversight. While the oversight committee will not run assemblies or be directly responsible for community outreach, they are responsible for ensuring the quality of these activities.

The first aspect of this oversight is their relationship with the Office of PB. They should assist in **drafting office staff job descriptions and play a role in hiring the director of the office**. They should receive activity and expenditure reports from the Office of PB. They should be included in the personnel evaluation process for the Office of PB staff. They should also have significant input on any technical partners/vendors brought in to the process, including any software.

The second aspect of this oversight is through their relationship with the community partners contracted to run aspects of the process. The oversight committee should work with the office of PB and the partners to **develop a set of best practices for resident engagement and assembly facilitation** and facilitate training in these best practices for new partners. They should also work with the city councilor from their district, the office of PB, and their districts' Community Engagement Partners to develop **outreach goals and engagement plans for their district**. These goals and best practices are an essential component for ensuring the quality and consistency of partners, and their effectiveness in reaching the most marginalized community members.

Lastly, the oversight committee has the ultimate responsibility for **ensuring the safety and inclusion of PB spaces**. They should create ground-rules for participation in deliberative spaces and have a clearly defined and accessible process for receiving complaints and resolving conflicts. A process with so many players and moving parts is bound to generate community concerns and conflicts, and the oversight committee must serve as the clearinghouse for collecting and responding to these concerns and conflicts.

Own and Champion Evaluation, Reflection, and Long Term Vision

All of the stakeholders we have talked to in other cities have identified ongoing evaluation as an essential input to effective rulebook and process iteration. In the Enabling Ongoing Evaluation of this report we lay out a robust vision for embedding evaluation in the process. What we want to get across here is that **evaluation should be understood as a function of oversight** and should be owned by the oversight committee. In other cities, even with paid partners responsible for multiple cycles of evaluation, the value of evaluation was not apparent to all stakeholders nor was it always utilized to inform decision-making.

This is why we recommend situating evaluation within the oversight committee. We recommend bringing on a technical partner to help design and deliver an evaluation plan for the initial cycles, but over the long-term, refining the evaluation plan and coordinating research implementation should be owned by the oversight committee. As the governance body, the oversight committee should also have ultimate power over what is evaluated,

own evaluation data, and determine how the evaluation is utilized.

Evaluation leads to another key mandate for the committee: reflection. In other cities, path dependency has been a significant barrier to PB's growth and development. By path dependency, we mean that the first way that PB was implemented in the first cycle becomes a pattern that is hard to change, with a rigidity to modification or expansion that might improve outcomes. The oversight committee should approach PB as a pilot project that is open to iteration and hopefully will be scaled. To keep this nimble and open approach the committee should create space for reflection about the process and evaluation findings, both for themselves as well as the office of PB, partners, participants, the mayor and the city council. These reflection points are the moments when the committee can refine the rulebook and best practices or propose changes to the PB ordinance.

The committee should also create and maintain a long term plan for PB in the city. This plan should involve goals for scaling the process and milestones around engagement. If growing Boston's PB process to involve more people and more money is a central goal of this effort, as we believe it should be, then establishing evaluation metrics and oversight powers related to this goal will be necessary in the pursuit of its achievement. Other municipalities have not established specific goals related to the scaling up of PB, which may play a role in the fact that these PB processes have remained small in proportion to the municipality's overall budget. Establishing a long-term plan for PB in the city includes setting goals for growth of PB participation over time, goals for city agency engagement with the process, and a vision for how PB would shift investment patterns across the city.

Oversee Intragovernmental Relationships and PB Outcomes

In all cities that have established PB, one of the most complex aspects of the process is determining the relationship between PB and the rest of city government. Agencies are necessary partners in proposal development, in order to ensure that projects are feasible and that costs are correctly estimated. And of course, agencies will be responsible for delivering the projects and programs. This relationship may be especially complex in Boston, since PB will likely be allocating operating funds as well as concretely defined capital investments. As such it is a key function of the oversight committee to oversee these PB-agencies relationships and the delivery of PB projects.

We recommend that that oversight committee work with the office of PB to **develop best practices for agency engagement with PB proposals and projects**. In the first few cycles it may make sense to select issue areas owned by city departments which are willing to pilot these engagements with the PB process in order to develop checklists and training for the rest of city government in subsequent years.

The committee should also be given the power to **resolve conflicts that arise between community partners stewarding project proposals and agency staff**. And departments should be mandated to provide the oversight committee and the public with regular updates about project progress through an online portal and respond to follow-up requests made by the committee.

If the multi-faceted, well-funded, and community-partner-run process that the BBA is designing comes

to fruition, PB will be the most robust participatory program in the city of Boston. Although the process will culminate in funding specific government programs and projects, this is not its only output. The needs collection outreach and assemblies will surface and prioritize a full range of a given district's needs. The solution brainstorming process (online and in assemblies) will generate a wide range of solutions to these needs. Both needs and solutions will intentionally go beyond what PB projects are able to address. The hope is that both PB projects *and* the city's broader budget can respond to these needs and get inspiration from the solutions. It is a key responsibility of the oversight committee to **ensure that needs and solutions are presented to city councilors, the mayor, and city departments**. They should work with the office of PB to publicize a synthesized version of the outputs from these stages on the PB website. Ideally, city councilors will attend needs and solutions assemblies, but it will also be valuable for oversight committee members to testify at council hearings about the needs identified in their district (or for their issue area). They can connect directly with government staff to present the needs and solutions that are relevant to their departments' work.

Voting for projects creates an opportunity for residents who were not involved in assemblies or idea development to weigh in on their priorities. However, it also means that many project proposals that individuals or community partners have committed significant time to developing will not move forward. In New York city, observers felt that this created a competitive culture around the process, which we liken to the TV show Shark Tank. The BBA's vision for the Boston process centers collaboration and deliberation over competition, but there will still be projects that don't get funded. In order to avoid this proposal development effort feeling like a waste to participants, we recommend that the oversight committee **keep an online portfolio of unfunded projects from previous cycles and support participants and community partners seeking to advocate for these projects outside of PB**.

Oversee Communication and Ensure Transparency

How PB is presented to the public is essential to its success. There will need to be a great deal of education around the process and its goals as PB begins, at the start of each new cycle, and as part of ongoing outreach and engagement. Although much of this work will be done by the office of PB and Community Engagement Partners, the oversight committee should be responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of this communication. Practitioners in other cities identify two key functions of communication that are often overlooked: celebration/recognition and transparency/accountability.

The end of the PB cycle should be a moment for celebration. The effort put into PB is monumental and the oversight committee should be **responsible for creating space to celebrate the completion of this work**. In other cities, celebratory spaces have also provided an opportunity for connection across districts and reflection. **PB project completion should also be recognized and celebrated**. Other cities have experimented with three methods for accomplishing this. One is to have up to date web app listing and documenting completed projects/active programs. Another is to develop a PB Boston logo that can be emblazoned on PB funded projects or included in materials for PB funded programming. A third is to have ribbon-

cutting ceremonies for PB projects. In NYC, some PB projects served as pilots of ideas that eventually caught on citywide. To facilitate this, the oversight committee can work with the office of PB on **case studies showcasing select PB projects** and the community's usage of/engagement with them.

The oversight committee should be tasked with **ensuring a high degree of transparency and accountability to the community and the BBA**. It should ensure that its internal processes and decision-making is transparent. It should ensure that all rules and processes, as well as key PB metrics, data sets, and yearly evaluations are shared with the public on a clear website. In Seattle, the nascent PB process is part of a broader set of divest/invest policies, and so the PB oversight committee has committed to remaining accountable to the community activists that won these policies through regular meetings and progress updates. Such transparency and accountability is also appropriate in the Boston context to enable the BBA to serve as an outside force pushing PB to serve the goals of budget justice and community control. We recommend that a working group of the Oversight Community be dedicated to explicitly looking for ways to increase transparency, and meet at least monthly with the BBA to update the coalition on progress and receive feedback. This transparency working group should also ensure that all PB information (rulebook, committee meeting minutes, process outputs, project progress reports, etc) is published on the website and up-to-date.

Self-Define its Internal Structure and Roles

The last mandate for the oversight committee is to own, refine, and share the design of its internal functions. We present a proposal for the committee's operation in the next section. Here it is sufficient to say that although some of these nuts and bolts may be included in the ordinance establishing PB, it is appropriate to leave some of this up to the committee to self-regulate. Once again, this discretionary authority is recommended to keep the committee nimble and capable of iteration and adaptation.

Oversight Committee Structure

1. Members receive appropriate stipend
2. Committee and working groups have defined chairpeople
3. Decision-making processes are clearly defined and transparent
4. Responsibilities for individual members, the whole committee and each working group are clearly defined
5. Compositional requirements for the membership include:
   a. Diverse lived experiences
   b. Relevant content experience to accomplish mandate
6. Compositional requirements are transparent and refined yearly
7. The members selection process includes a CBO nomination requirement
8. Members have term limits

To deliver on the vision for the oversight committee detailed in the previous section, much thought and care must be put into its administrative details, member selection process, and the design of its internal functions. In this section we will discuss the compensation and time commitment of membership, the design of its internal functions,

a proposal for standing working groups, and the selection process for and required capabilities of members.

Time and Compensation

To fulfill the responsibilities of a PB governance body, membership on the oversight committee will require a significant time commitment. We recommend that the Office of PB chart out a yearly schedule of expected time commitment and that the initial oversight committee refine this schedule during the first cycle. Overall, committee members should likely expect a commitment of at least five hours a week and as much as full time at certain points in the cycle. This expectation should be set upfront and membership should be stipended at an **appropriate hourly wage**. Other cities have struggled to deliver oversight functions because their steering committees were made up of unpaid volunteers. Practitioners in other cities reported that steering committee members inconsistently attended meetings, were unable to work on tasks outside of meetings, and often ended up relying heavily on city staff for decision-making.

Internal Structure to Facilitate Decision-Making and Action

Clearly defined roles and responsibilities are essential for effective committees. PB Steering committees in other cities have struggled with unclear expectations, unclear working group responsibilities, and administrative difficulties. To avoid these difficulties we recommend a structure of working groups with explicitly defined responsibilities (detailed in Appendix A). We also recommend that the committee and the working groups each have a chairperson (or a few co-chairs) each cycle. The chairperson should oversee administration, including meeting calendars and agenda creation, as well as ensuring clear delegation of follow-up tasks. The full committee and the working groups should also have secretarial and technology support from the office of PB. As a part of the yearly rulebook refining process the committee should review and define its internal decision-making process. These, and any votes that it makes about procedural concerns should be made publicly available.

Member Experience Requirements

The composition of the committee will determine its legitimacy and ability to fulfill its role. The BBA has discussed an oversight committee with at least two members from each district and some citywide members, ranging from 21-30 members. The key criteria for membership is representation across districts and identities in the city with **over-representation of working class Black, Brown, Indigenous and Immigrant communities** with a history of lower engagement. Additionally the committee should have **diverse expertise and experiences** that enable it to perform its powers and responsibilities. The list of experience requirements should be transparently refined on a yearly basis by the oversight committee as a self-regulating function.

Here is a draft list of experiences and expertise that should be represented in the oversight committee. Each of these qualities below should ideally be represented by at least one oversight committee member.

1.

1. Lived experience of homelessness and/or displacement/eviction
2. Lived experience of the criminal justice system
3. Lived experience in public housing
4. Lived experience of being differently abled
5. Age 65+
6. Under age 18
7. Experience in Boston's Black and Latinx communities
8. Native speaker of every language spoken as primary language by more than 1% of city residents (Spanish, Chinese, Portuguese/Cape Verdean Creole, French, Vietnamese right now)
9. Minority small business owner
10. Experience with committee processes (at first, to help the committee define itself)
11. Experience with running deliberative forums
12. Experience with mediation and conflict resolution
13. Experience with voter engagement and turnout/ community organizing
14. Experience with software (data security, user interface design)
15. Experience with community research
16. HR experience
17. Experience with municipal budgets

The process used to select the committee will determine its legitimacy in the eyes of residents. It should have transparent and inclusive nomination and selection with **legitimate community based organization (CBO) nomination** for all of its members. In 2021, the Boston city council passed the BERDO 2.0. ordinance, which establishes a state-of-the-art building performance standard for large buildings in Boston to get all buildings to net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The ordinance creates a payment-in-lieu of compliance mechanism that will be deposited in an Equitable Emissions Investment Fund. This fund will be spent on carbon abatement projects which will be recommended by a Review Board.[106] This Review Board has yet to be established, but the nomination process that was designed for its members could serve as an effective model for the PB Oversight committee.

The ordinance requires that 2/3 of board members be nominated by community based organizations. In the ordinance, a Community-Based Organization is defined as "a not-for-profit organization that is driven by community residents, that is the majority of the governing body and staff consists of local residents, the main operating offices are in the community of service, priority issue areas are identified and defined by residents, solutions to address priority issues are developed with residents, and program design, implementation, and evaluation components have residents intimately involved and in leadership positions."[107] The ordinance also indicates that "The Regulations" will establish exactly which organizations qualify for this nominating privilege.

Second, we recommend that the **selection process be transparent**. Some ideas for this are to post the full list of nominees with a summary of why each selected nominee was chosen. Nominee resumes, nominating organizations, and a score sheet could also be published with these summaries. Nominee privacy concerns will of course need to be balanced with this transparency, but an open process is necessary to provide inspectability by the BBA and residents into why specific decisions are made.

Lastly, it is incredibly important that committee members have **term limits**. One of the major problems faced by PB steering committees in the US, and by Porto Alegre's Budget Council during its diminishment after 2004, was the bureaucratization of the steering committee. Term limits will

encourage participants with fresh ideas for PB to join the committee and help to keep the body from becoming disengaged or unable to iterate and make needed changes to keep pushing towards greater impact and budget justice. However, this consideration should also be balanced with the need for a body with such a robust set of responsibilities to maintain institutional knowledge from cycle to cycle. One idea for the oversight committee term that could possibly accomplish both goals is to make them two cycles long, with half the committee selected each year. This means that there would never be a single year when the entire committee turns over. Additionally, to add a bit of margin for the development of experience in the role, members could possibly be given the opportunity to stand for a second term if they are renominated.

Enabling Ongoing Evaluation

This section describes our structural recommendations for enabling effective ongoing evaluation of PB in Boston. As we discussed earlier in the report, evaluation has many meanings. Here we take it to mean a program evaluation of the PB process and its budgeted projects, or designing and conducting research to assess implementation, outcomes, and impact. Evaluation is an essential, although often undervalued, aspect of government programs. Because of the novel premise of PB, most cities who have established it in the US have undertaken some sort of evaluation in the first number of years. Nevertheless, these evaluations have often started too late, had too little funding for too short a period, or suffered from a lack of definition in their goals.

In Boston we believe that ongoing evaluation will serve a number of key goals. To begin with, during the first few cycles, evaluation insights are needed to inform iteration and improvements to the process as it develops. Second, evaluation, especially of the aspects of PB run by the office of PB and grant-funded community partners, will provide the necessary data for the oversight committee to oversee these stakeholders and develop best practices for their roles. Third, in other cities, evaluation data has been essential for activists and elected officials to understand the value of PB, make decisions about its scale, and ensure it is meeting community goals. Lastly, rigorous evaluation can help identify how PB is or is not contributing to greater budget justice in the city.

In this section we will first discuss how evaluation can be structured so that it becomes embedded in the yearly PB cycle and remains accountable to community members. Then we will discuss our vision for the role of a technical research partner in the initial setup of evaluation. Last, we will list PB research considerations that we have collected from our conversations with evaluators of PB in other cities. Additionally, in the final section of recommendations we will chart out a draft evaluation plan across the PB cycle.

An Approach for Embedded Participatory Evaluation

1. Evaluation is owned by evaluation oversight working group
2. Start early, a few months to a year before the first cycle commences
3. Employ a technical partner for first the three years
4. Use Participatory Action Research Principles
5. Create a yearly cycle research plan with clear goals
6. Institutionalize evaluation planning meetings at the beginning of each stage
7. Create multiple research outputs designed for impact
8. Provide grants for community research partners for outcomes research
9. Establish an academic research board

Start Early

When most people think of an evaluation - say of a class they took, a service they paid for, or a product they purchased - it is often understood as best completed after-the-fact. However, **effective PB evaluation must start early**, ideally well before the first PB activities commence. There are three main reasons for this. The first is a basic truism of program evaluation: research plans and data collection processes need to be designed into a program, rather than undertaken post-hoc. Second, designing

evaluation while the process is taking shape can help the process to define clear and SMART goals (that can be evaluated), and this goal setting process will likely impact process design as well as evaluation design. And third, evaluation planning that includes community input and centers community concerns takes time to complete.

To achieve the fullest benefits from evaluation, we recommend that the City of Boston bring on **a technical evaluation partner with a three year contract** - covering the year before the first PB cycle, and the first two full cycles. As we mentioned in the previous section, evaluation is best positioned as an ongoing function of the oversight committee. However, research design, especially for research done in collaboration with community, requires a high level of specialized expertise to get right. It would be unfair and ineffective to ask the oversight committee members and/or community researchers to design this process from scratch. It could be beneficial to maintain an ongoing technical evaluation partner after the first three years, but practitioners and evaluators who have worked on multiple PB processes believe that the most important moment for this technical support is in the initial cycles. We discuss the role of the technical partner, and how they could work themselves out of a job after three years, in the next section.

PAR

The first task of the technical partner will be to work with the oversight committee to **set the approach to evaluation of the PB process**. In our "Evaluation in Practice" section, we discussed the key metrics for evaluating PB that the Participatory Budgeting Project and the National PB Research Board put together. These metrics answer important research questions about the impact and effectiveness of PB. However, though they represent an important baseline set of statistics that the office of PB and community partners should track, they are not sufficient to fulfill the goals of evaluation we presented in the introduction. We believe that **participatory action research (PAR) should be the evaluation methodology** used for PB in Boston. In PB, responsibility for the process and its outcomes is shared by a wide set of stakeholders with goals that will evolve over time. Given these realities, evaluators can best serve the process by involving partners and participants in the design and delivery of research, and PAR is a proven framework for doing so.

We recommend that the evaluation design in Boston follow a similar pattern to what New York City's technical evaluation partner CDP (now called TakeRoot Justice) established. The first aspect of this process was the **co-creation with stakeholders of a cycle research plan**. This would occur during the early stages of the cycle, when the oversight committee is refining and publishing the rulebook. The way we envision it, the evaluation working group of the oversight committee (and the technical partner, while they are contracted) would have a handful of brainstorming sessions at the beginning of the cycle - involving the cycle's funded community partners and representatives of the Better Budget Alliance and other interested community organizations - to codesign research questions for this cycle. This would enable the evaluation to serve the needs of multiple stakeholders - it can help Community Engagement Partners with outreach strategies, assess the quality of deliberation in assemblies, and improve the accessibility of PB marketing and education - while also tracking progress towards the oversight committee's primary cycle goals.

The second aspect of PAR evaluation design for PB includes **evaluation planning meetings at the beginning of each stage of the process**. Each step of the PB process serves a different role, and may have specific research questions and methodologies to get at those questions. The stage planning meetings allow stakeholders playing a key role in that stage to come together and refine the research instruments and observational strategies that will be used during the subsequent stage.

The third key aspect of a PAR evaluation design for PB is **the generation of multiple research outputs that impact the PB process**, influence the rulebook for the following year, and inform best practices for all stakeholders involved in PB. Some of the research questions should be designed to help stakeholders improve in future stages of the same cycle (e.g. an examination of participation in needs collection assemblies informing the process for a solutions brainstorming assembly). This requires the evaluators to complete quick analysis of research data and deliver these immediate findings and recommendations to stakeholders in the midst of the process. Then at the end of the cycle, evaluators should put together a public cycle report that answers the questions laid out in the cycle evaluation plan. The oversight committee's reflection activities after the end of a cycle can process this report and its findings, as well as intermediate findings from mid-cycle to inform modifications to the rulebook and other aspects of the process for the next cycle. Other cities indicated that the common failure to make changes to the process based on evaluation findings eroded trust and investment among participants who engaged in the research process.

Long-Term Evaluation and Community Research Partners

The technical research partner will help to embed evaluation in the process from the start and establish the cycle of evaluation alongside the cycle of the PB process. Over the long term, the vision is that the oversight and evaluation working group can facilitate the continuation of the PAR process, and deliver some of the ongoing qualitative and observational research, while the Community Engagement and Assembly Partners and the office of PB will continue to collect key data points. This ongoing evaluation can keep the process nimble and adaptive - continuing to improve the quality of the work.

However, the benefits and equity implications of PB projects and the overall impacts of PB in the city require longer-term evaluation. We envision that this long term evaluation can best be completed through **multi-year micro-grants for Community Research Partners**. Organizations or individuals in the community interested in answering a specific research question about PB that is not covered by the ongoing evaluation of the process could apply for grants to complete such research, and their outputs could be shared publicly.

Research Board

In NYC, CDP also established a research board, composed of academics and other researchers interested in doing research on PB. We recommend that the evaluation technical partner and the oversight committee also **establish a research board in Boston that meets 2-6 times a year**. This would be the landing space for professional researchers and academics interested in PB in

Boston. Anyone interested in researching PB could be required to participate to ensure that there is coordination of research with the official evaluation process and avoid research fatigue from participants. Additionally, these researchers can provide technical expertise to the evaluation oversight committee and community research partners by reviewing research plans and instruments and providing professional research advice.

Vision for the Role of the Technical Partner

1. Champion evaluation and demonstrate its value
2. Build out the yearly process of research design and delivery
3. Demonstrate a wide array of research methodologies
4. Demonstrate evaluation that serves community partners goals
5. Design the cycle report
6. Design and facilitate reflective exercises for the oversight committee
7. Train and equip the oversight committee, community partners and others in research best practices
8. Work themselves out of a job in 3 years

As mentioned in the previous section, our recommendation is that the city bring on a technical research partner for at least three year to embed a PAR evaluation process in the broader PB process. In this section we list the key tasks for this technical partner.

The first and most important role of the technical partner is to **champion evaluation and demonstrate its value**. In other cities, path dependency has been a significant barrier to PB's growth and development. By path dependency, we mean that the way that PB was implemented in the first cycle becomes a pattern that is hard to change, with a rigidity to modification or expansion that might improve outcomes.

One way to help avoid path dependence is with the steady stream of performance data and reflective insights generated by evaluation. Yet even in New York, where a technical evaluation partner was involved for six cycles, city councilors and the steering committee struggled to maintain enthusiasm for evaluation, despite the key role it played in establishing the value of PB and helping concretize its goals and improve its process. The technical partner should understand demonstrating the value of ongoing evaluation as a key part of its mandate.

The second role of the technical partner is to **build out the yearly process of participatory research planning and delivery**. As mentioned above, devising an evaluation plan that acknowledges the expertise of all parties involved will require a high level of experience that we cannot expect the community partners or oversight committee members to have. Tasking a technical partner with this work will help establish a baseline process that all parties can utilize and build on for years to come.

The third role of the technical partner is to use the PAR process to **demonstrate the wide range of methodologies needed to get at pragmatic and transformative research questions**, and practices for workshopping research instruments with stakeholders and academics. With the evaluation working group, the office of PB, and the BBA, they can develop a set of best practices for administering these methodologies, as well as helping incorporate

data collection practices into the functions of the office of PB and the expectations of Community Assembly and Engagement Partners.

The fourth role of the technical partner is to **demonstrate how evaluation methods can help community partners to improve their work**. While many community partners are fully capable of articulating their own research questions and methods, the technical partner can provide them with resources and best practices for evaluation with maximal impact.

The fifth role of the technical partner is to **design the initial cycle research report and reflective exercises for the oversight committee** as it attempts to incorporate research findings into the rulebook and best practices. The technical partner should have knowledge on how to organize and communicate evaluation findings for maximizing impact validity. In addition to setting a pattern for ongoing evaluation reporting, sharing this expertise with community partners and oversight committee members will equip these stakeholders with valuable skills for communicating the impacts and shortcomings of PB.

PB evaluators from other cities do not believe that an ongoing technical evaluation partner is necessary to deliver meaningful evaluations. As we have mentioned repeatedly, over the long term, **evaluation should be owned by the evaluation working group of the oversight committee and community research partners with support from an (academic) research board**. This participant ownership of evaluation will hopefully facilitate the incorporation of evaluation data into the PB process, and lessen the sentiment by oversight committee members that "those researchers are telling us how to do our job." Nevertheless it is recommended that **at least one member of the oversight committee be required to have experience with research methods** and the capability and capacity to translate academic research knowledge to the broader committee. Additionally, the sixth role of the technical partner is to explicitly **train and equip community members and the oversight committee in research methodologies**, and create training materials for future community researchers of PB. This explicit training will increase the sustainability of the PAR evaluation process once the technical partner is gone by ensuring that there is a quorum of empowered researchers on both the oversight committee and within the community.

Research Considerations

1. PAR research is time intensive, so only the top priority questions should be pursued
2. Trust of instruments and evaluators by the community should not be presumed
3. Qualitative and observational research methods should be considered when possible
4. Evaluators should have access to decision-makers
5. The oversight committee needs to maintain a clear vision for the role of evaluation
6. Evaluation of outcomes is hard but necessary; community evaluation partners (described in the previous section) may play a key role here
7. Evaluation of the PB scope and power dimension is essential, specifically
   a. Oversight committee processes and effectiveness
   b. City department interactions with PB
8. Research fatigue should be avoided through coordination and prioritization
9. Surveys should be incorporated into official PB materials (ballot) and processes (assemblies) if possible

Over the course of our research, we talked to a wide range of PB practitioners and evaluators. In this final piece of our evaluation recommendations we attempt to synthesize assorted tips, tricks, best practices, and warnings for evaluating participatory budgeting.

Time and Trust

To begin with, it is important to share that all evaluators emphasized that quality **PAR research is quite time intensive**. Significant attention should be paid to who is going to deliver data collection and data analysis at each stage, how they are going to do it, and on what timeline, before committing to evaluation plans. Researchers in New York in particular (where the most rigorous US PB evaluation took place) cautioned against committing to more research questions and methodologies than there are concrete plans to deliver, as this can undermine the trust of community members and stakeholders who engaged in research planning in the value of the approach.

In this same vein, **trust of evaluation instruments and evaluators by the community should not be presumed**, as marginalized communities have a history of interaction with extractive and condescending researchers. It is therefore essential to clearly communicate the value of evaluation and how to use data that is collected during the PB process and within explicit research activities (interviews, observations).

Lastly, while **qualitative and observational/ ethnographic research methods** are especially time consuming, they **should be considered wherever possible for their ability to illuminate narrative and experience**. Researchers in NYC found that participants and stakeholders in the process were often willing to participate in interviews and focus groups if they felt that their voice would be heard and their stories faithfully represented.

Access and Vision

Participants in other cities' research activities were also more willing to participate in research if they saw their voices and perspective taken into account by process decision makers. This points to the need for **evaluators to have clearly defined communication paths to stakeholders who can incorporate findings into decisions**. In multiple cities where PB evaluation has taken place, the absence of relationships and clear channels of communication between evaluators and PB stakeholders resulted in an adversarial dynamic where PB administrators questioned why they were being criticized and told what to do.

Additionally, as we have mentioned before, **the oversight committee needs to maintain and champion a clear vision for how evaluation serves the process** and ensure that all stakeholders (the office of PB, city agencies, city councilors, community partners) understand the value of evaluation for their roles. This will facilitate openness to evaluation findings and trust by community members that evaluation can have an impact.

Evaluation of Outcomes, Scope, and Power

As described in the Evaluation in Practice section of this report, there are well-defined footholds for research into the key components of the PB process, including both its quality (diversity, inclusion, deliberative intensity, etc) and its outcomes (increased citizen engagement and knowledge). Although evaluation of these facets of PB is incredibly important, there should also be **significant attention should be paid to the difficult tasks of evaluating how empowered and significant the PB process is in determining city priorities and understanding the impact of PB funded projects and their differences from the rest of government spending**.

Projects and programs take a long time to come to fruition, and may not have explicitly defined S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and time-bound) goals attached to them. This long timeframe and lack of clarity on how to evaluate project outcomes means that they are often neglected in formal PB evaluations. Nevertheless, the **outcomes of projects and, specifically, the extent to which they lead to greater justice in the city is of central importance to the goal of budget justice**. This is why we recommend that project outcomes be a specific focus of mini-grants for community research partners, since the oversight committee could not possibly have the resources to undertake ongoing evaluation of all PB projects.

Additionally, evaluation of project effectiveness will be easier to design if project proposals include defined goals. This may be easier to accomplish in Boston than in other cities if proposals directly respond to community-defined needs, as the BBA's vision for the Boston PB process recommends. As such our recommendation is that the final funded project/program outline, along with the scope, include the specific needs it is attempting to address in order to facilitate evaluation of its effectiveness.

Lastly, as we have emphasized throughout this report, the success of PB at achieving transformative goals largely rests in the scope and power it is given and the growth trajectory of these aspects of institutional design. This is an area for ongoing evaluation and reflection that has been almost entirely absent in other US cities and the narrative around PB in the broader culture. Like the evaluation of outcomes, this is also a difficult nut to crack - largely because it's hard to envision an evaluator having the consistent access needed to do this research and political space to publicize findings. Still, we have two main suggestions for specific targets for such research if it is possible:

- Observation and analysis of the rulebook development process and oversight committee internal processes to determine their level of independence from the rest of city government, their freedom to self-regulate, their accountability to grassroots groups (e.g. the BBA) and their decision-making and working group effectiveness
- Observations of proposal development interactions between community partners/ volunteers and city staff to determine how willing and equipped departments are to collaborate with and community and receive participatory inputs

Research Fatigue and Survey Design

PB attracts research interest due to its novelty and the various disciplines who may be interested in facets of its function. **Researchers in other cities consistently highlighted the importance of avoiding research fatigue**, where participants are inundated with requests for research and start ignoring the requests (or even worse, are dissuaded from participating in PB). Having a research board in which all academic researchers interested in Boston PB must participate can help to coordinate and prioritize research activities. Research fatigue should also inform prioritization of formal evaluation research questions and simplification of instruments.

Lastly, during assembly and voting **it is ideal if methods to collect demographic and survey data are seamlessly incorporated into processes**, with clear indications of what the data will be used for and explanation of the value of sharing the data. In New York, researchers found that direct incorporation of the voter survey into the voter ballot significantly increased participation in the survey and simplified the process of collecting and processing the data. This is one of the key reasons why evaluation should be "embedded" in PB, research that is additional to the process requires extra staffing to collect and may be more fatiguing to participants than data collection which is incorporated into the flow of an assembly, an online interaction, or a ballot.

Conclusion

To conclude our report, we highlight key themes from our **research findings** and **recommendations** for the stakeholders in Boston who are designing the ordinance and who will implement PB.

From our conversations with members of the Yes On 1 Campaign, there is a clear desire for PB to bring about government transparency, budget literacy, and increased civic engagement, just as it has in other US cities. However, for PB to realize the vision **for budget justice outlined by the BBA, it will also need to effectively redistribute both public funding and budgeting power**. It must directly address Boston's systematic investment in building and maintaining segregated affluence and ongoing neglect of the needs of the new majority - working-class Black, Brown, Immigrant and Indigenous communities.

During its heyday, Porto Alegre's PB process was effective at achieving similar goals. Yet, in the US, a truly empowered and justice-oriented PB process has not yet been attained. Budget justice has not been an explicit goal, administration of the process has not been adequately funded, and the pot of money designated to PB to allocate has not been sufficiently large.

However, Boston is well-positioned to join Seattle in establishing PB in this manner. This is because, like in Porto Alegre, PB has emerged here as part of a broad and powerful grassroots movement for justice in the budget and in all of city government. **The grassroots movement is essential for the just design of PB requirements, ongoing accountability to goals, and the maintenance of political will for the project.** Indeed, drafts of the BBA's proposal for the PB process include significant innovations, including grants for community partners and an explicitly defined stage for community needs assessment. Additionally the $2 million which the mayor has proposed for the Office of PB in the 2023 FY budget is an unprecedented investment in resourcing the process.

If sustained and well-spent, we believe this investment is adequate to build a structure for PB that includes important components lacking in other cities. As a plan for allocating these resources is developed we know that the largest portion will be spent on staffing the office with qualified personnel and providing grants to community organizations. We also recommend designating a sizable portion to stipends for the PB oversight committee and to a three-year contract for a technical evaluation partner.

In our recommendations we detail how to structure and empower a well-resourced oversight committee to serve as the governing body of PB, with responsibility for convening, stewarding, evaluating, and iterating on the process cycle to cycle. Here are a few key considerations:

- The oversight committee should own the PB rulebook that serves as the "regulation" for PB, and be responsible for incorporating evaluation findings and community feedback into it through yearly iteration.
- The committee should be given a mandate to center budget justice, especially in the parameters that determine allocation of resources across the city, the criteria for project proposals, assembly and voting weights.
- The committee should oversee the process and the key stakeholders, ensuring safety, access, and inclusion throughout the cycle.
- The committee should own and champion evaluation, and set a long-term vision for PB's growth and evolution. The committee should

ensure transparency and accountability and oversee city department engagement with PB.
- Members should be expected to make a substantial time commitment to the process and be well-compensated for their labor.
- Membership should consist of working class Black, Brown, Indigenous and Immigrant residents at a level higher than their demographic proportion of city residents.
- Membership should contain a diverse range of lived experiences and skills necessary to fulfill the functions of oversight.

Program evaluation can be technocratic and inaccessible, but if done well, it can also provide essential data for the BBA and the oversight committee to hold the process accountable to a transformative vision for budget justice. In our recommendations we detail how to approach evaluation in order to achieve these goals. Here are a few key considerations:

- Over the long term, evaluation should be owned by a working group of the oversight committee.
- Evaluation should be initiated and "embedded" in the initial cycles of PB by a technical partner.
- Participatory Action Research should be the guiding philosophy of evaluation. A PAR process would include community partners and the BBA in research agenda setting and prioritize "impact validity" in which its findings are incorporated into regular reflection on and changes to the process and stakeholder best practices.
- Dedicated grants should be considered for community evaluation partners, especially to explore longer term research questions around the impacts of funded projects.
- Evaluation should not be limited to the process itself, but also target the effectiveness of the oversight committee and the engagement of city departments with PB.

With the grassroots accountability of the BBA, a well-designed process that includes community expertise, a professional office of PB, an empowered oversight committee, and embedded evaluation, the PB process could become a significant institution in the city. Over the first handful of cycles, the process might iterate and evolve with the help of evaluation findings and community partners. Its social justice criteria might be developed and refined to be seen as fair and also redistributive of money and power. Participation in the process might grow as residents feel heard and see results. City departments might evolve to effectively collaborate with and receive direction from the process. Eventually the process might be scaled to control more money directly (including money explicitly divested from the police) and also to influence broader policy priorities for city councilors and the mayor, comprehensive planning processes, and departmental service delivery.
In short, PB could become a significant force for budget justice in the city. We hope that this report can help the BBA, the Office of PB, and the oversight committee to build out an institution with a vision for achieving this goal.

Notes

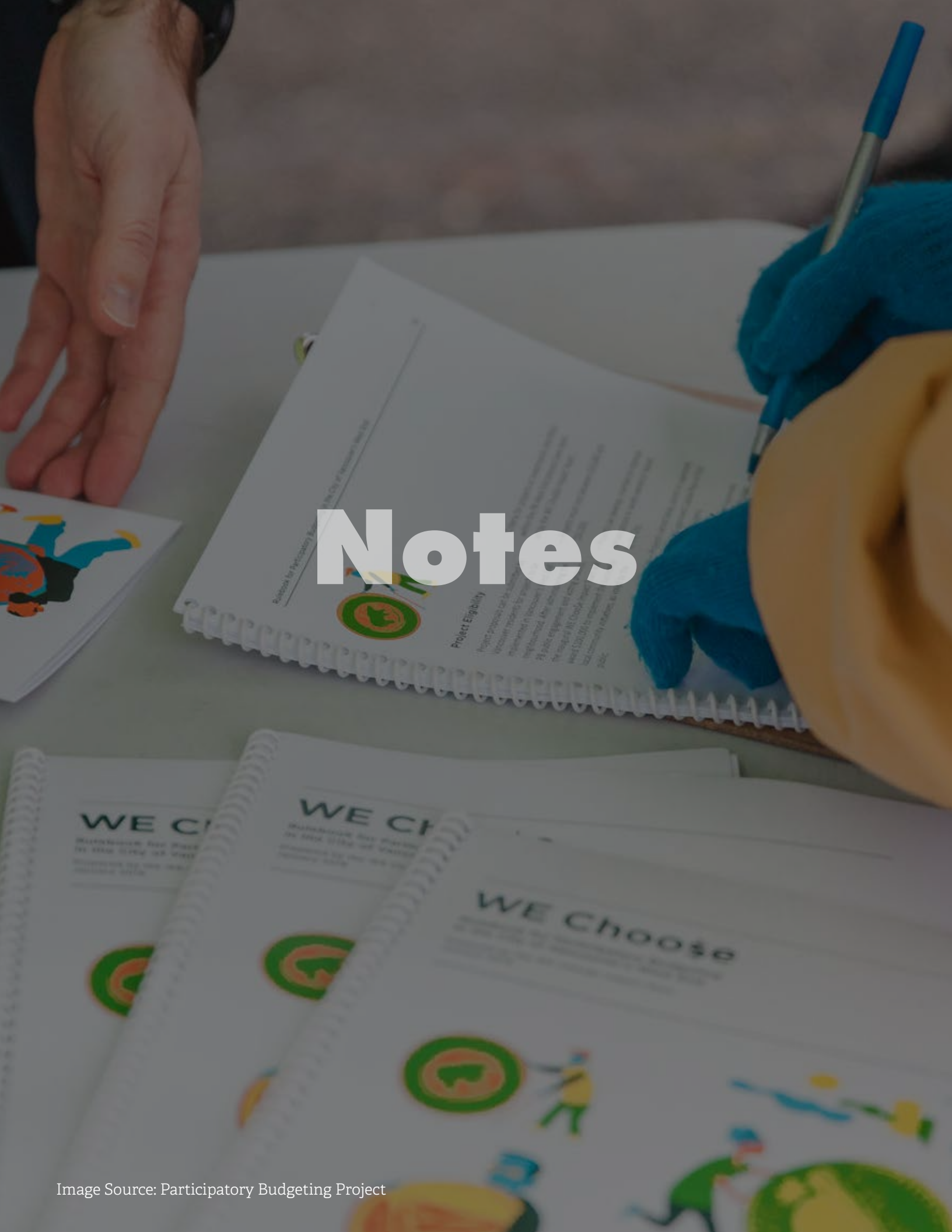


Image Source: Participatory Budgeting Project

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Appendix A: Breakdown of Oversight Responsibilities and Working Group Design

To better conceptualize and visualize how the powers and responsibilities can be delivered by the oversight committee, we have developed a draft proposal for the committee's ongoing working groups as well as a list of whole committee and individual member responsibilities.

Whole Committee Responsibilities

1. Edit and publish the rulebook for each cycle
2. Refine internal committee operations rules
3. Maintain a long term plan for PB
4. Support personnel/vendor decisions for the Office of PB and Technical Partners

Member Responsibilities

1. Provide final approval of outreach goals and plan for their district or issue area, and participate in outreach and assemblies in their district/issue area
2. Support Community Engagement Partners and citizens as they develop project proposals
3. Be accessible to community for questions and concerns about process and projects
4. Work with partners and residents to get answers about budgeted project implementation from city agencies

Working Group Responsibilities

Working Groups	Responsibilities
Outreach and Inclusion	1. Own best practices and training for Assembly and Engagement Partners. 2. Ensure language access and general accessibility and equity in outreach 3. Receive complaints, hold space for conflict resolution
Research and Data	1. Own evaluation design and administration 2. Convene a research board 3. Recruit community evaluation volunteers 4. Work closely with Office of PB and community partners on tracking of key metrics, data collection and data management 5. Approve ballot and survey instrument designs 6. Design and run reflection sessions
Communication	1. Oversee community education and PB recognition 2. Oversee Office of PB's official press releases and PB website(s)
Accountability	1. Own process and decision-making transparency 2. Communicate regularly with community stakeholders, particularly the Better Budget Alliance, about the process and project progress
Budget Justice	1. Ensure that marginalized communities continue to be centered in the process and its outcomes. 2. Affinity space for members to discuss strategies for connecting with residents from marginalized communities and identities to understand their experiences with the PB process and work to improve it.

Appendix B: Oversight and Evaluation Mapped

In order to illustrate how oversight and evaluation could fit into the PB cycle, we have developed a visual representation outlining each stage of the process. The map is a culmination of the entirety of our research, taking into account our structural recommendations for oversight and recommendations for enabling ongoing evaluation. The map highlights the critical points where stage planning meetings should occur, when to conduct data collection, and when to evaluate and analyze data.

Oversight and Evaluation Mapped

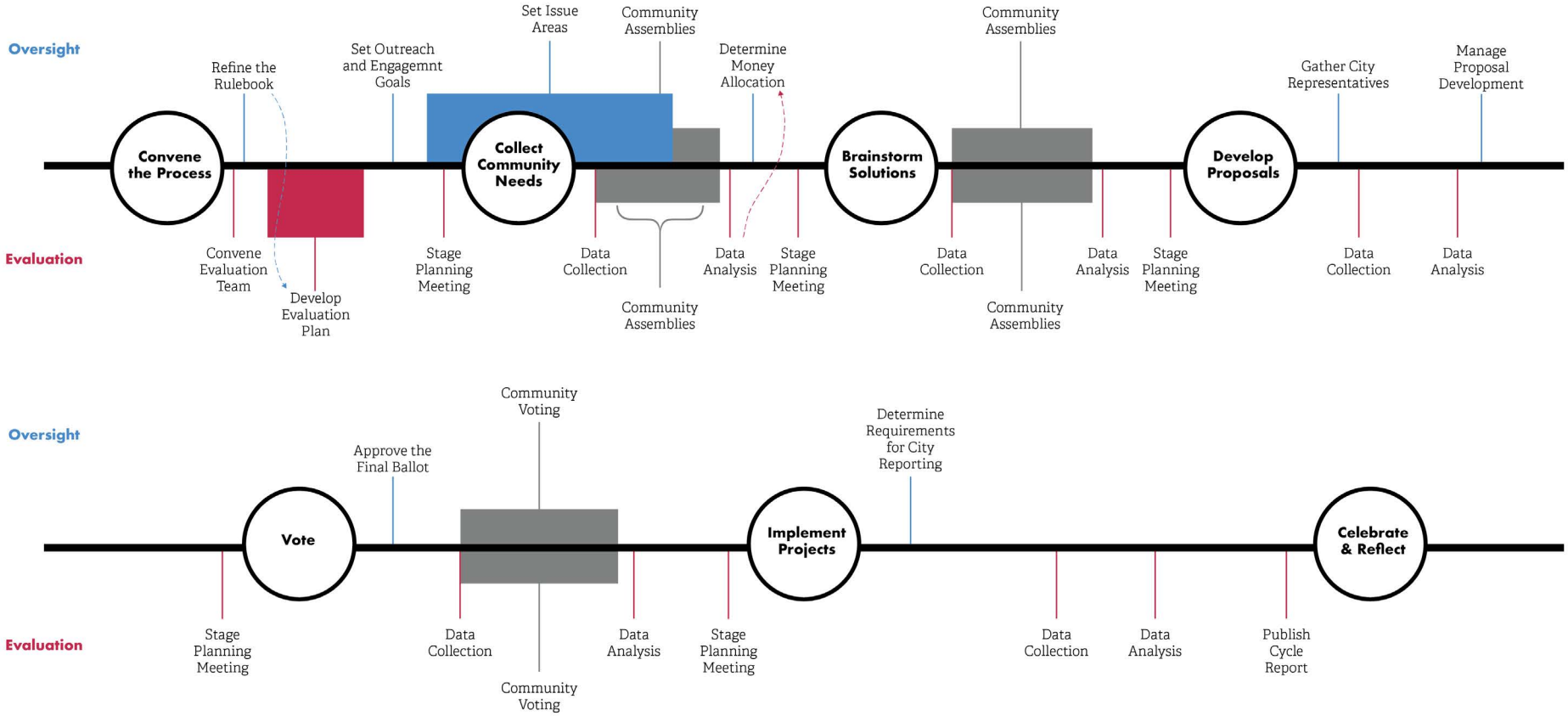

Figure 5: Oversight and Evaluation Mapped

Zoom-Ins: Stages of the Process

Convene the Process

Stage one begins with convening the evaluation team, which consists of the oversight committee working group, the technical partner, and community partners. An important aspect of this phase is to start building meaningful and trustworthy relationships with the members. A valuable advantage of bringing together various stakeholders is the potential to create a network of supportive community groups. The members convening will come from diverse backgrounds. It is crucial that the committee pays attention to the composition and power distribution of the research team to ensure an equitable and fair inclusion throughout the process.

The evaluation team must work together to develop an evaluation plan that will be implemented throughout the cycle.

At this time, the oversight committee must refine the rulebook. This includes setting the PB process goals and objectives, as well as setting the social justice criteria for project proposals.

Research Topic	Goals	Indicators	Methods
Research team Composition and Power Distribution	Equitable distribution in oversight committee to ensure community members have an equal voice and are not dominated by academics	What % of the research planning meeting participants are members of grassroots orgs? Are community researchers' questions reflected in the research plan?	Demographic tracking of research plan meeting participants Observation-based analysis of the research team meeting to determine parity of evaluation plan
Does the rulebook reflect values of budget justice?	The inclusion of SMART goals related to budgeting justice in the PB rulebook	Do the goals and processes outlined in the PB rulebook reflect the values of community partners?	Observation of the PB rulebook update process

Perceived justice of process convening decisions	Transparent and just allocation formula, social justice criteria, and issue area selection	Community agreement that allocation is fair	Focus group that is presented some key metrics about equality and issues in the city and then is shared the allocation methodology and asked how they feel about it

Collect Community Needs

During this stage of the process, the team should organize stage planning meetings and community assemblies to gather ideas for projects from the community. There will be sufficient data collection, analysis, and delivery throughout.

By the end of this stage, the oversight committee should have finalized the issue areas, which will help inform where to allocate the PB budget. This will be determined by the selected issue area and by district.

Brainstorm Solutions

Following the community needs collection stage, community assemblies are held and residents collectively brainstorm and share possible solutions to the defined community needs.

During stage planning meetings and community assemblies, the team should deliberate on the most effective and efficient ways to address the various issue areas. The evaluation team should collect, analyze, and deliver data in this stage.

Develop Proposals

After collecting possible solutions to community needs, suitable solutions are developed into actionable proposals.

The evaluation team will gather qualitative data from agencies and community members throughout the process.

The oversight committee is responsible for gathering representatives from each city agency to ensure technical support for project proposals. They will oversee the management of the process inputs.

Research Topic	Goals	Indicators	Methods
Connection of proposals to community needs	Proposals respond to community needs and have clear goals for how they will meet those needs	Proposals direct connection to expressed community needs SMART goals for project performance Adherence of proposals to social justice criteria	Analysis of project proposal language
City agency and community partner collaboration	Increase city agency capacity to engage with participatory inputs Increase community partner capacity to work with city agencies on proposals	Participants in proposal development attitudes Proposal fidelity to solutions assembly brainstorming	Comparison of assembly artifacts to proposals Interviews with agency staff Interviews with community partners developing proposals

Voting

After the proposals have been finalized, the voting stage can commence. The community will convene to vote for where they believe the budget should be allocated.
Similar to the previous stage, the stage planning meetings, data collection, analysis, and delivery should be evaluated.

The oversight committee should manage the approval of the final ballot.

Implement Projects

Once the highest voted ideas have been selected, the project implementation stage can begin.
Again, evaluation will occur in multiple steps: the stage planning meetings, data collection, analysis, and delivery. Additionally, the evaluation team must work on publishing the cycle report.

The oversight committee needs to define and explain the requirements for city reporting, which will inform the final cycle report.

Research Topic	Goals	Indicators	Methods
Sharing progress with community	Maintain open and transparent communication with community about project progress	Participants are aware of progress and up to date	Share in community meetings Update website
Implementation timelines	Projects/ programs are delivered and in a timely fashion	Program timeline matches initial proposed plan	Analysis of previous cycle's projects expected and actual delivery/ commencement date
Projects fulfilling needs and SMART goals	Projects meet community needs and their own pre-defined goals	Project outcome metrics	Data collection on project outcomes Comparison to goals and needs
Project/ program comparison with city's budget priorities	Determine the differences between the city budget and the PB budget	Relative funding levels in different areas. Outcomes of PB prioritizing the needs of working-class Black and Brown people and neighborhoods more effectively than the non-PB city budget	Coding and data analysis of PB projects/ programs and city programs

Reflection

The final stage is arguably the most critical. The reflection stage allows for a designated time dedicated solely towards reflecting and assessing the progress of the process.

At this time, the evaluation team will publish the completed cycle report.

The oversight committee will commit to recognizing the successes and shortcomings of the cycle.

This is a well deserved opportunity to acknowledge the accomplishments achieved by the PB team and the community.

Research Topic	Goals	Indicators	Methods
Relationship Value of PB	Participants develop new relationships that lead to new coalitions or help them discover existing coalitions	Did you build relationships through PB that led to new groups, or did you discover an existing group, or did your group gain new members through PB? Do you understand the needs of your community better? Did you expand your social networks through PB? Do you feel more comfortable contacting your elected official?	Surveys of assembly participants at the end of the cycle
Educational value of assemblies	Participants develop knowledge of municipal finance to organize more effectively for needs	Can you explain how the city budget works? Has this changed from before PB? Did you learn something in the PB process that you used later?	Surveys of assembly participants at the end of the cycle

PB Participation Growth	PB engagement grows in size each year	Overall neighborhood participation levels in any activity Number of community organizations involved in the process	Crunching data collected across the cycle
Effects of PB on city governance beyond PB projects	Understand the broader impact of PB	Influence of needs collection and solution brainstorming on city agencies and city counselors and city budget outside PB Amount of additional money allocated to PB generated projects PB funded projects that are scaled or spread	Surveys of city counselors and agency heads

Zoom-Ins: Assembly and Outreach Evaluation

A key component of the process is to ensure sufficient outreach to the community throughout the entirety of the PB process. This can take the form of citywide community education and marketing. It is also critical to evaluate the performance of the Community Engagement Partners' activity and the Community Assembly Partners' activities.

Research Topic	Goals	Indicators	Methods
Citywide Community Education and Marketing			
Website engagement	Increase diversity and magnitude of engagement in PBs online resources	Increased clicks on the PB website/apps Increase in usage by different languages	Google analytics or other software to analyze online engagement

Intelligibility of public information	Ensure that public resources (website, marketing materials, etc) are intelligible to citizens Ensure that residents understand the scope of PB - the amount of money it controls, how its allocated, what types of projects/programs are eligible	Citizens clearly communicate the goals, scope and process of PB	Online surveys of education materials Focus groups with citizens
Cost effectiveness of outreach	Spend money effectively to garner engagement in the process	Cost per vote/assembly participant	Tracking of assembly participant and voters and comparison with outreach and engagement costs
Vote Turnout	Increase PB voting each cycle to eventually reach the level of primary elections	Level of voting Demographics of voters Non-participant attitudes	Voter survey Surveys of non-participants Comparative analysis of data from other elections
Engagement of non-voters (eligible and ineligible)	PB would engage eligible non-voters and residents who cannot vote in city governance	% of PB voters/assembly attendees who did not vote in the most recent election % of PB voters/ assembly attendees who are ineligible to vote in local elections	Assembly and voter surveys

Engagement over time and across various fora of civic participation	Engagement over time and across various fora of civic participation	% of PB voters/assembly attendees who have participated in a previous PB activity/a previous PB cycle. % of PB voters/assembly attendees who have never participated in other non-voting forms of civic engagement	Assembly and voter surveys
Reasons for not engaging	Investigate reasons why citizens don't engage with PB to help improve communication	Do you know about PB? Did you know where to go online or in person to participate? Why didn't you participate	Door knocking Phone call Sidewalk canvas surveying
Community Engagement Partner Activities			

Participation and inclusiveness of district process	Ensure growing engagement in PB ideation, assemblies and voting by district residents, especially from marginalized communities in the district.	Participation rates and demographic distribution of participation that meets or surpasses district specific targets	Tracking of assembly participation and a moment in the assembly to capture identities of residents (age, primary language, ethnicity, disability, parent, income levels, public housing, formerly incarcerated) Tracking of Engagement Partner outreach activities and comparison to engagement plan Voter Survey
Community Assembly Partner Activities			
Quality of Deliberation	Increase the quality and inclusivity of deliberative space	Subjective measures of "being heard" at assemblies Are multiple forms of expertise being legitimized? Specifically the expertise of working-class Black and Brown people, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, immigrants, young people	Qualitative interviews with randomly selected attendees assessing their experiences in the deliberative process Observation of assemblies. Did people with different forms of expertise have as much influence in shaping the conversation?

Appendix C: Data Collection and Research Methods

Data Collection Needs

In order to enable ongoing evaluation, the office of PB should establish (and the oversight committee should govern) a database to centrally store participation data, partner activity and process outputs.

As part of their grant requirements, **Community Engagement Partners** should track their work in a standardized fashion, as well as administer research that overlaps with their activities. Here are a three key pieces of data that they might be best suited to track:

1. Metrics around engagement activities that they performed
2. Assembly participation and demographics
3. Summaries of the proposal development process for each proposal

As part of their grant requirements, **Assembly Partners** should also track their work and key metrics coming out of assemblies. Here are a three key pieces of data that they might be best suited to track:

1. Summaries of assemblies
2. Assembly participation and demographics
3. Assembly outputs (needs, solutions, voting decisions, etc)

Lastly, **the office of PB** should be responsible for aspects of the process. Here are pieces of data that they might be best suited to track:

1. Website engagement data
2. Process expenses
3. Vote tallies
4. Voter survey data

Incorporating data collection into the mandates for these three entities will help to simplify ongoing evaluation and free up the technical partner, the oversight committee and community research partners to focus on research activities that go beyond these basic data collection activities.

Research Methods Menu

In order to achieve effective and efficient data collection throughout each stage of the process, it is important to implement the most relevant and suitable type of research methodology. Listed below is a menu of different approaches referenced in the map that can be implemented depending on the nature of the data to be collected.

1. **Assembly observation** can serve for understanding the qualities and intensity of deliberation
2. **Assembly participant interviews** can be used to understand participant experiences in the deliberation processes
3. **Participant surveys** capture identities of participants as well as attitudes and experiences. Surveys can be used both at community assemblies and voting locations
4. **Non-participant street surveys** can capture understanding of PB and attitudes towards it from the broader public
5. **Agency interviews** can capture the experiences of city employees of working with PB
6. **Community partner interviews** can elucidate the experience and attitudes of partners towards PB.
7. **Website engagement data and surveys** can elucidate the online experience of PB education materials and deliberation.

Appendix D: MOU for PBNYC Research Board

PBNYC RESEARCH BOARD 2013-2014

September 2013

The following Memorandum of Agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of members of the Research Board Participatory Budgeting in New York (PBNYC). The Research Board will help design and oversee research of the PB process. The Community Development Project (CDP) at the Urban Justice Center will serve as the Research Lead. In this capacity, CDP will plan and lead research meetings, as well as oversee research instrument design, collection and analysis of the neighborhood assembly and voter surveys.

ROLES OF RESEARCH BOARD MEMBERS

1. Provide feedback at critical stages of the research.
2. Provide input about research process, instrument design and research products.
3. Access raw PBNYC data for analysis.
4. Create alternative research products (articles, reports, blog posts, etc), with permission from the rest of the Research Board and CDP.
5. Receive recognition in the final PBNYC Year 3 report, with other Research Board members.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESEARCH BOARD MEMBERS

1. Participate in a total of 4-5 Research Board meetings or calls between Sep 2013 and August 2014.
2. Assist with the development of research instruments.
3. Attend PB events and assist with data collection.
4. Provide resources and capacity for the PBNYC research process, via student volunteers, access to space at academic institutions, funding or other resources connected to academic institutions, data analysis support, data entry, etc.
5. Research Board members may and are encouraged to elect to take on a concrete project within the larger research process (ie. interviews of budget delegates, analysis of suggested projects, etc). This information and analysis should be then made available to the rest of the Research Board. While CDP will advise on these concrete projects, CDP will not oversee or coordinate the work.

TIME PERIOD

Research Board membership will last for the third PBNYC cycle, Sep 2013 to August 2014.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Since the PBNYC research is part of a larger effort to expand and improve PB in NYC, we want to be strategic

about when and how we release and publicize the data. Therefore, Research Board members will not share raw data or analysis in any form with anyone outside the Research Board without first getting prior approval from the Community Development Project at the Urban Justice Center.

TERMINATION

Research Board members can terminate this agreement without cause, but must provide written notice. In addition, the Community Development Project at the Urban Justice Center may terminate this agreement based on prolonged nonparticipation or lack of compliance with this Agreement.

I have read this Memorandum and do hereby agree to the above agreements.

Signature Print Name Date

Appendix E: MOU for PBNY Steering Committee

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

PBNYC Cycle 6, 2016-17

The following Memorandum of Agreement outlines the role and responsibilities of members of the city-wide steering committee for Participatory Budgeting in New York (PBNYC). The steering committee will help design and oversee the PB process for the current cycle and into the next year. The steering committee consists of a number of citywide and local non-profit organizations working in good government, research, planning and policy, community organizing and outreach, community education, and urban infrastructure issues; Council Members; District Staff; District Committee Members; and Facilitators and Delegates who have participated in PBNYC for at least one full cycle -- all of whom are choosing to serve on this oversight body. It is a space of co-ownership and mutual decision-making -- a unique government and community partnership -- where key stakeholders work collaboratively to continue the success of a new vision of governing. Steering committee members are committed to active participation in supporting the process of Participatory Budgeting in New York City.

ROLE OF STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

1. Contribute to major decisions, in collaboration with the City Council, regarding the overall PB process and rules which apply across participating districts and continue to review rules annually. Decisions may include: Big picture visioning, rule changes (e.g. eligible voters, process timeline, eligible resources, etc.), and collaborations with new partners or vendors (like D2.1 and Textizen, etc.).
2. Address and advise on key challenges, opportunities, and questions that emerge during the implementation of the process.
3. Organize opportunities for sharing learnings across districts as well as from other PB processes elsewhere.
4. Harness energy and expertise of key partners.
5. Explore expansion opportunities for PBNYC.
6. Liaise with others in their category (e.g. Council Members, district staff, District Committee members, volunteers, etc.)
7. Advocate for necessary staffing and resources to ensure principles of PB are adequately upheld.
8. Evaluate the process.
9. Discuss policies affecting the implementation and expansion of PBNYC.
10. Advise on and contribute to an accountability structure for project implementation.
11. Propose, review and select candidates for the steering committee who will be vetted and approved by

City Council staff.
12. Recommend technology proposals and pilots from outside vendors.
13. Contribute to the design of the PBNYC paper and digital ballot as well as other PBNYC related materials where necessary.
14. Convene working groups (for designated working group leads) to provide specialized support for the PB process. Working group priorities for Cycle 6 are Equity and Inclusion, District Support, Advocacy, Technology, Research and Data.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

1. Meetings will take place an average of once a month, with an additional meeting at the end of the cycle for rulebook planning. Members are expected to participate fully in meetings and in electronic votes. In the event that a member misses 3 meetings or votes, the co-chairs will follow up to determine continued participation as a voting member.
2. Attend at least one PB event or meeting in participating districts during each stage of the PB process. (For this cycle, this includes but is not limited to idea collection events, delegate meetings, volunteer trainings, and vote sites).
3. Steering committee members are strongly encouraged to actively participate in at least one steering committee working group.
4. Provide specialized support for some element of the PB process (e.g. research, organizing, media, online engagement, social media, policy & budgeting expertise, data visualization, design, outreach, on-site support, district committee support, etc.), based on the member's expertise and resources. Members are strongly encouraged to actively participate in at least one working group.
5. Promote the PB process through the press, social media, and other networks, using protocol agreed-upon by the steering committee.
6. The steering committee will vote for two Co-Chairs annually who will coordinate regular meetings, facilitate dialogue and consensus-building among diverse stakeholders, and serve as the liaison between committee members and the City of New York.

DECISION MAKING

Steering committee members of Cycle 5 voted on the following decision making structure to be implemented in Cycle 6: Quorum will be set at 50% +1 of full steering committee - meaning 50% +1 of the SC members must participate in a decision. Decision making after quorum is met will be ⅔(or 66%) of participating members - meaning that ⅔(or 66%) of the members participating in a vote must agree for a decision to stand.

TIME PERIOD

Steering committee membership will last for the sixth PBNYC cycle, from July 2016 -June 2017.

TERMINATION

Steering committee members can terminate this agreement without cause, but must provide written notice. In addition, the steering committee Co-Chairs may terminate this agreement based on prolonged non-participation or lack of compliance with this Agreement. I have read this Memorandum and do hereby agree to the above agreements.

I have read this Memorandum and do hereby agree to the above agreements.

Signature Print Name Date