Introduction to Participatory Budgeting

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Why participation in budgeting?

• Budgets are *policy without the rhetoric*

• **Money talks,**
  so people pay attention

• Public budgets are *taxpayer money*
A Ladder of Budget Participation

Participatory budgeting
Citizen boards or councils
Focus groups & town meetings
Online games
Hearings & deputations

Community control
Limited participation
Consultation
Informing
Tokenism
What is participatory budgeting?

A democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget.
What is participatory budgeting?

- Making **real decisions about real money** (NOT a consultation)
- **An annual cycle** (NOT a one-off event)
- Usually for **discretionary funds** (NOT the whole budget)
How does participatory budgeting work?

1. Brainstorm Ideas
2. Select Delegates
3. Develop Proposals
4. Vote on Proposals
5. Implement Projects
Where has participatory budgeting worked?

Porto Alegre, Brazil - 1989

Latin America, Europe, Asia, Africa, North America

→ 3,000+ PB processes in the world!

Cities, States, Counties, Public Housing, Schools, Community Organizations
Porto Alegre, Brazil: 1989-present

- 1.5 million residents, in Southern Brazil
- As many as 50,000 people participate annually in deciding how to spend $200 million (up to 20% of budget)
- After eight years, sanitation coverage nearly doubled, the number of students in schools doubled, and bus service expanded to neglected areas.
Participatory Budgeting in North America: Experiences So Far

- 2001: City of Guelph, Ontario
- 2001: Toronto Community Housing
- 2006: Plateau Borough, Montreal
- 2009: 49th Ward, Chicago
- 2011: New York City
• Second largest public housing provider in North America: 164,000 tenants

• Since 2001, tenants have allocated $9 million per year in discretionary capital funds through participatory budgeting
Chicago’s 49th Ward: 2009

- 49th Ward: 60,000 residents, NE Chicago
- Pot of money: Alderman Joe Moore’s $1.3 million discretionary budget
- Funds for capital projects only
- First PB Cycle: April 2009 – April 2010
- Second Cycle: May 2010 – May 2011
- Third Cycle started October 2011
Organizing for PB

Red = Mainly community organizing
Blue = Mainly elected official organizing
Purple = Community & elected official
Why Participatory Budgeting?
Deeper Democracy
More Informed Decisions
Fairer Spending

LET ALL CHILDREN PLAY!
Vote for a park that includes the disabled

WHY A DISABLED PARK?

Lack of parks, playgrounds, and recreation areas

Needs: Accessible playgrounds, splash pads, and

access to green spaces for children with disabilities

WHAT'S IN A PLAYGROUND?

Not just for children, but for all!

Access to all areas of the park

Making CHV 13 Play Ground Accessible for All

Three Big Points:

1. More play areas for all children
2. Accessible playgrounds for children with disabilities
3. Safe environment for all!

Children - waiting
For special needs to play
ground - Please allow your
vote for CHV 13

All kids want the same,
But not everyone can
All can play

Making CHV 13 Play Ground Accessible for All

This needs money. It is not often that we have

a chance to vote on a park. Come out and vote for

CHV 13. Put your children's interests first!

MAKING CHV 13 PLAY GROUND ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL

ALL KIDS WANT TO PLAY

ALL KIDS WANT TO PLAY WITH THEIR CHILDREN
Accountability & Transparency
Connects Officials with Residents
What’s Next for PB in North America?

- City-wide PB
- PB with universities, schools, housing authorities, CDBGs, coalitions
- PB for revenue
- Online and mobile participation
- Core support materials for local groups
- Connections across PB processes