VERMONT AFTERSCHOOL
PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING GUIDEBOOK

Vermont Afterschool

VYP
VERMONT YOUTH PROJECT

Imagine a community where Everyone...

Has a say in its future

Feels connected and engaged

Is heard and feels their voice matters

Is your community ready?

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What is Participatory Budgeting?

Participatory budgeting (PB) is a democratic process that allows the community to decide how to spend a portion of a budget. People collect ideas about their community needs, develop project proposals, and vote on projects to fund. The process was first developed in the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil in 1989. In Porto Alegre, as many as 50,000 people have participated each year to decide as much as 20% of the city budget. Since 1989, PB has spread to over 3,000 cities in Latin America, North America, Asia, Africa, and Europe. In the US and Canada, PB has been used in Toronto, Montreal, Guelph, Chicago, New York City, and Vallejo (California). Most of these PB processes are at the city level, for the municipal budget. PB has also been used, however, for counties, states, housing authorities, schools and school systems, universities, coalitions, and other public agencies

PB can look a bit different everywhere that has it, but the spirit of democracy and community engagement is always there! This guidebook will go through the PB process more generally, so it can be adapted to the needs of the community. There is no one right way to run a PB process and implementation will always depend on a number of factors. Therefore, it is best to focus on your institution's and community's capacity when deciding how the process should look.
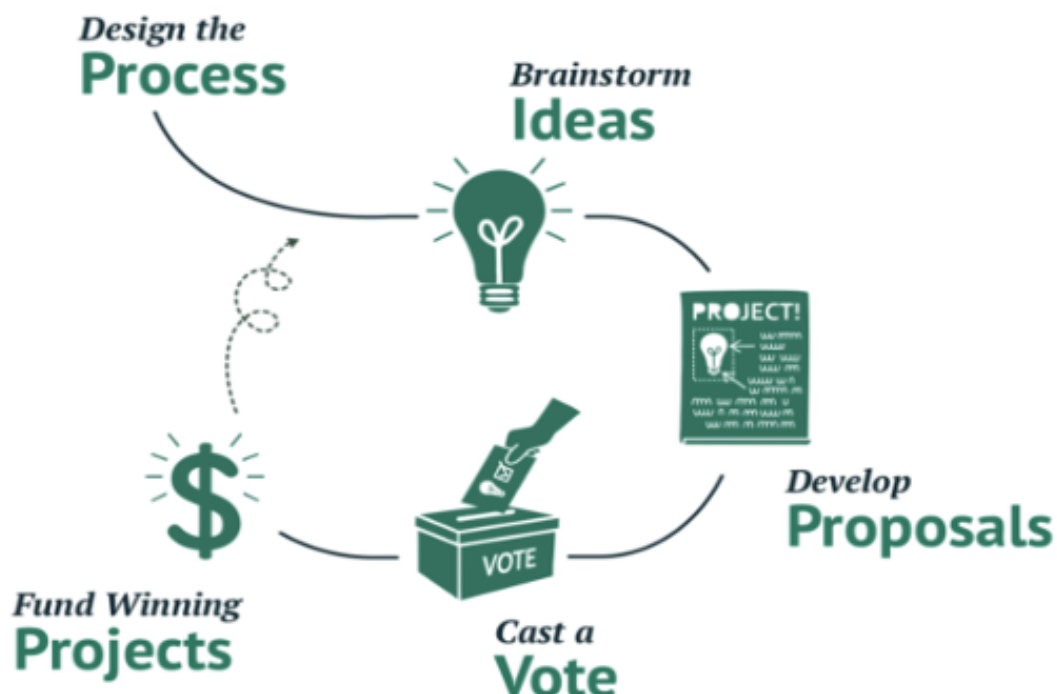
Benefits & Objectives of PB

Gain insight into community needs and priorities

Community members gain knowledge around budgeting, decision-making, and teamwork

PB builds trust and leads to better decisions that are more widely supported by the community

Community members engage in healthy debates that allows them to better understand the needs of others

Community members feel empowered and know they have a voice in decision-making

How Communities Can Participate in PB

PB Step 1:
Read the Participatory Budgeting Guidebook and connect with Vermont Afterschool for future workshops and support.

PB Step 2:
Hold idea development workshops in your community to solicit ideas and opinions about PB, community needs, and project ideas

PB Step 3:
Make decisions on how the the PB process will be implemented and run. Make an outreach plan to ensure the entire community will be involved.
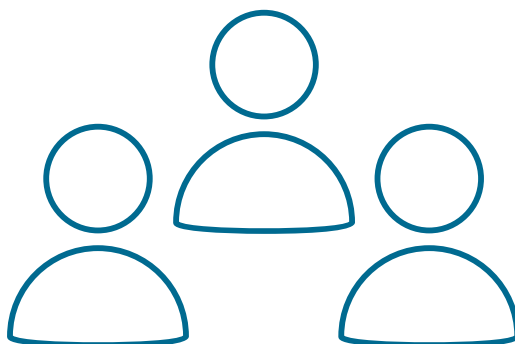
PB Step 4:
Solicit ideas or project proposals from the community. Review, categorize, and consolidate projects for the community to vote on.

PB Step 5:
Have community members vote on projects.

PB Step 6:
Fund the winning projects and keep the community updated on project developments.

Step 1

✓ Read through this guidebook and discuss the material with your organization, school, or council that wants to implement PB

✓ Start thinking about the capacity of your team and community to implement PB and how the idea proposal and voting process should look. You should try to get feedback from your community about the process, but it is important to consider now. Also, consider what support you would need from outside institutions like Vermont Afterschool.

✓ Reach out to Vermont Afterschool for support, additional resources, and questions. We have workshops and materials to help your community successfully implement a PB process!

Step 2

Spread the word about PB in your community and hold an idea development workshop!

Within this workshop, you should explain what PB is and the general process, ask community member for their opinions on how the process should look, and get them to start brainstorming project ideas

It may be beneficial to have several idea development workshops throughout the process to ensure everyone in the community has the opportunity to participate

The workshops should focus on community needs and how to develop an idea into a project proposal.
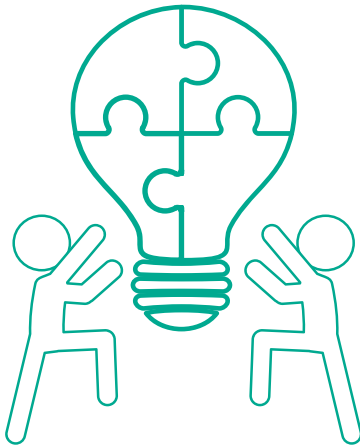
Vermont Afterschool can support and run idea development workshops in your community and provide additional materials

Step 3

Now that you have some feedback from the community on how they would like the PB process to run, it is important to make decisions on the solicitation and voting process

The next few pages of this guidebook will describe various ways the PB process can go. It is up to your team to make decisions on how it will work best in your community

Consider the capacity your team and the community has to implement these ideas when making your decision. For example, if your community has limited internet access, do not make voting a complicated online process

Finally, create an outreach plan to educate your community about the process and how they can participate. Be as clear and accessible as possible!

Vermont Afterschool can support your team make these decisions through workshops and additional materials
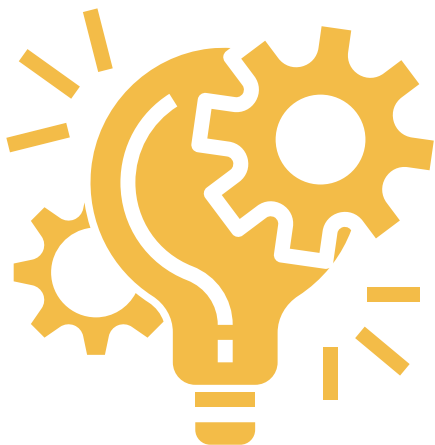
How Will You Solicit Ideas and Proposals?

The first decision that needs to be made is whether the PB process is decisive or advisory. Decisive means that the outcome of the process is fixed and your team is committed to acting on the results. An advisory PB process allows the community to suggest what the organization, government, or council should focus on and have that help shape the yearly budget. For example, a local government putting $1,000 towards a rec center because it was the top vote is decisive; however, the community voting that a local government should focus on third space development for youth and having that be represented in the yearly budget is advisory.
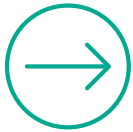
It is important to decide on any themes or focus areas for your process. For example, if you want the proposals to only focus on third space or substance misuse prevention, it is important to communicate that as clearly as possible in order for all the proposals to be relevant. In the case of the advisory option, there could be several themes and the community can vote on which ones they feel your team should focus on. A focus area is not necessary, but can be helpful in soliciting specific projects or ideas

Next, you will need to consider whether a solicitation option or application option is best for your community. The solicitation option involves getting the community's ideas and creating projects yourselves to then be voted on. Whereas, the application option asks community members to apply with complete project proposals to be voted on.

How Will You Solicit Ideas and Proposals?

Although every PB process can and does look different, there are generally two main way it plays out:

A decisive, application approach

→ Complete project proposals are submitted for community members to vote on and the organization, government, or council is committed to implementing the winning projects

→ Example: a local government allows community members to submit project proposals that focus on sustainability. The winning project is community food gardens, which the government funds

An advisory, solicitation approach

→ Community members vote to prioritize themes or focus areas for the organization, government, or council to help inform priorities and create relevant projects

→ Example: A city government allows it's citizens to vote for themes the budget should focus on. From this vote, sustainability is chosen as a top priority, so the government creates policies and funds relevant projects

Please note:
The PB process can be changed and tailored to fit your community needs the best. These two approaches are just basic outlines and all of the decisions discussed above can be altered in many different ways. Other approaches and hybrid ideas are possible and might be more appropriate depending on the community's situation. PB is not a one size fits all process!

How Will Community Members Vote?

→ First, it needs to be decided who is eligible to vote. Consider the impact of the PB process and allow the relevant parties to vote. For instance, if it is a local government PB process, it makes sense to limit voting to community members. On the other hand, if it is a school PB process, it makes sense to include all students. But do parents get a vote? faculty and staff? These questions need to be answered to your team in a way that seems fair and will allow for those impacted to have a direct say.

→ Once you decide eligibility, you need to decide what the voting process will look like. There are many different types of voting, so be sure to do your research and pick a system that works best for your community. Here are some examples of types of voting you could look into:

- Each person gets one vote for one project. Project with the most votes wins!
- Each person can vote for more than one project (set a limit...say 3). Project with the most votes wins!
- Each person gets to vote for a single or multiple projects but can do so over multiple days of voting (one vote a day). This shows deeper support for a project if it can garner support over time.
- Rank choice voting: rank the projects and the bottom choice gets one point, second to bottom gets two points, and so on up to the first choice. The project with the most points wins!
- Comparison Voting: Projects are listed head-to-head and voted for in pairs. Each person gets a certain number of votes they can spread across projects as they see fit. For example, you get 5 total votes and you can either give them all to one project, spread them across 5 projects or somewhere in between. Project with the most votes wins!
- Knapsack voting: voters get to decide how they would distribute the total dollars available to each project. Much like the system directly above, but using dollar amounts, not votes. It also allows projects that do not all have the same budget levels to compete together.

→ Of course, you can have multiple winners (for example, the top three projects) for each of these systems as well. It all depends on how much money you're awarding and how much each project is asking for.
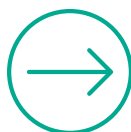
→ Finally, create the voting ballots; whether online or in-person, and spread it to eligible voters come voting time!

Step 4

✓ Send out the application to members of the community and encourage everyone to participate! We want to ensure participation is representative of the community as a whole.

✓ Review all of your applications and choose the ideas that are relevant, feasible, and within the budget. Depending on how your team decided to solicit ideas, you will need to categorize and consolidate the community applications.

✓ The next page has some questions you can use to help sift through the applications and figure out how to categorize the proposals.

✓ Once the finalists are chosen and categorized, make sure to communicate the projects to the community and give everyone enough time to consider each proposal before voting ends

It is important to understand any barriers to participation and create the most accessible process possible. For example, reach out to any historically marginalized groups in your community and work to support their needs. Another idea is to consider language barriers, transportation barriers, lack of internet access, lack of knowledge on writing proposals, etc.

Reviewing Applications

Before the community can vote on the proposals, they must be reviewed and sorted. Proposals needed to be reviewed for feasibility, categorized, and combined into one if there are multiple proposals for a similar idea. Here are steps your team can take to start the process:

1. Remove any that are not feasible with your budget, timeframe, financial requirements (spending money on things you can't spend money on), or everyone agrees are not possible for some other reason.
2. Then, begin to group them into categories, combining the repeated proposals into one. Each category will be taken on by a subgroup of the team and discussed in further detail. Keeping that in mind: you want the categories to not be too broad or too specific, so you have groups of 3-5.
3. Finally, once the groups are created, have each group prioritize each project based on specific criteria; such as, costs, timeline, benefits, if the proposal addresses an urgent need, and the popularity of the proposal.
4. After scoring each project, come back together to share your findings.
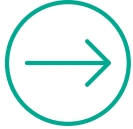
Once the proposals are categorized, scored, and combined, then choose the final proposals to be voted on. Remember, do not take an idea out of the running just because your team may not like it. At the end of the day, the community needs to make the decisions. Only take an idea out completely if it is not feasible.

Finally, add the project proposals to the voting form and start the vote! Make sure information about each project is easily accessible on the voting form, so people can easily research each idea and make an informed decision!

Vermont Afterschool can support your team review applications through workshops, handouts, and resources

Step 5

Finally, the community can vote for their favorite projects! Spread the word as much as possible. Voters get to have a real voice in the budget and a powerful say in the future of their community

Remember to always keep accessibility in mind! Every group in the community should get a say, not just the privileged and powerful. Continuously tailoring your outreach strategizing to accomplish this goal is essential

Continue to encourage voting and create plans to help those who may have trouble
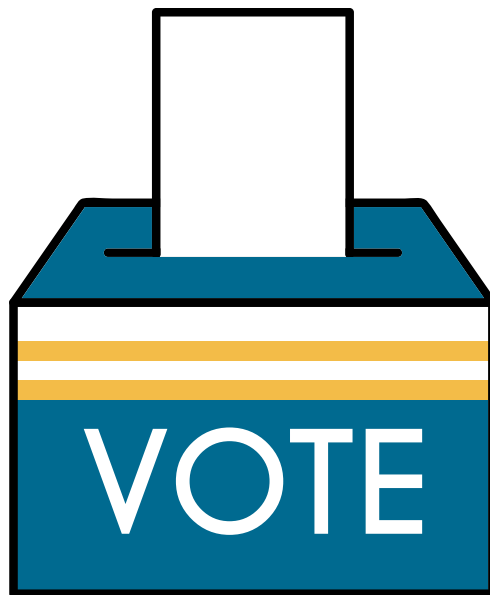
VOTE

Vermont Afterschool can help you strategize an outreach plan throughout the whole process and create campaign materials to encourage participation
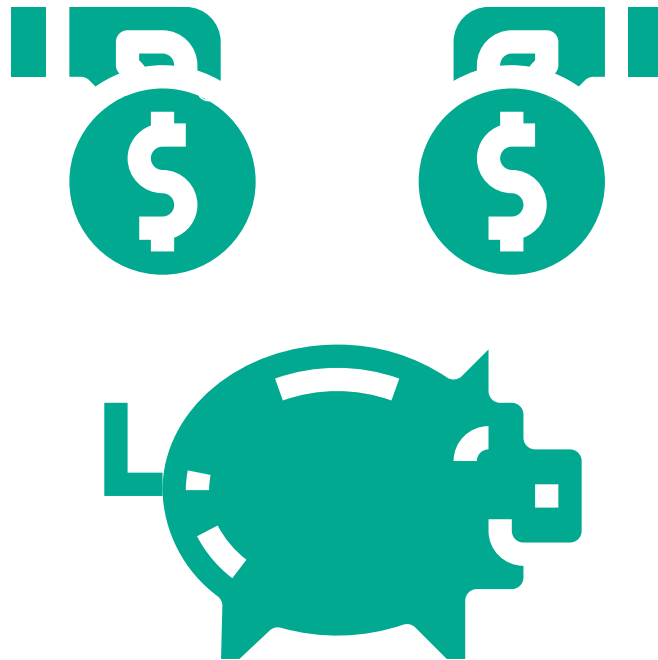
Step 6

✓ Once the community has voted, fund the winning projects!

✓ Communicate the winning projects to the community and make them aware the timeline. It may take time to fully realize the projects, so it is a good idea to share an expected timeline and update the community on significant developments later on

Consider getting feedback from the community about the process. Next year you could change the process to better meet the needs of community members

Is Your Community Ready?

Before beginning the PB process, here are some considerations:

✓ 1. What is your community's capacity to implement PB and the resulting projects?

✓ 2. How much of the budget can go toward PB?

✓ 3. How can we make sure the process is accessible and participation is representative of your community as a whole?

✓ 4. PB can be complex and it is okay to start with a smaller process and build it out over time

✓ 5. PB takes time and work to implement and requires a lot of communication with community members. Make sure your team is able and willing to put in the work

VTA Support to PB Communities

PB Workshops to help create the process in your community

Check Ins with VTA when needed

Opportunities to connect with other PB communities through trainings and meetings

Worksheets, handouts, and resources available

Media and Promotion: VTA can create promotional materials for your PB process
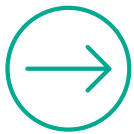
VYP Youth Councils & PB

→ In year 2 of VYP, each community has a youth council to engage youth and support youth voice in the VYP process. You will have the opportunity to develop skills, have a voice in community change, and go through a participatory budget process.
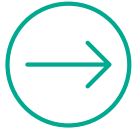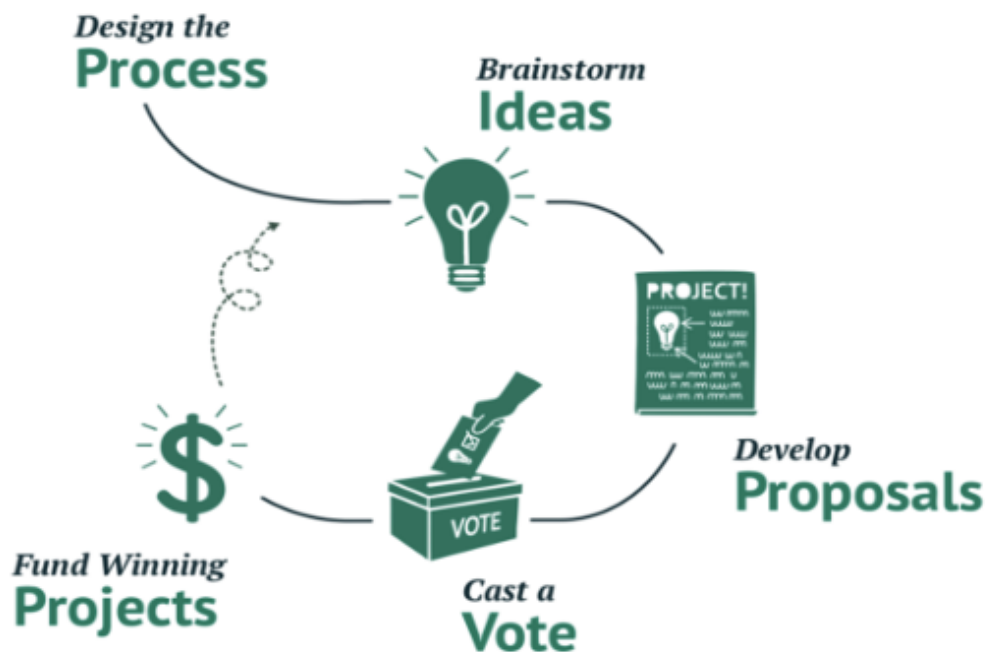
→ For the year 2020-2021, Vermont Afterschool provided each community $5000 for the youth to fund youth-led projects through a PB process. $3000 of this will support ideas relating to the key survey data findings and $2000 of this will support accesible third space opportunities.

→ The youth councils will use PB to empower youth and fund projects that better their community. VTA is providing each youth council with support and helping them throughout the entire process through workshops, application forms, and handouts.

→ For more information on our work with youth, please visit: http://www.vermontafterschool.org or contact the VYP state lead.

Design the **Process**

Brainstorm **Ideas**

PROJECT!

Develop **Proposals**

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Fund Winning **Projects**

Cast a **Vote**

Handouts & Marketing Materials

Please reach out to learn more about ways VTA can support your community and provide you with handouts, resources, and marketing materials. We ask that you give us two weeks notice with materials requests when possible.

Examples of materials that can be created for your community

- Workshops to understand and implement PB, facilitate idea development, and conduct an outreach plan

- Project proposal applications

- Handouts and worksheets to help make PB decisions and review applications

- Event Flyers

- Marketing materials to encourage participation and voting

- Posters for events and presentations
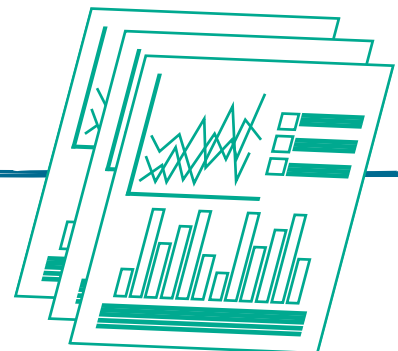
Additional Readings & Resources

The Beginner's Guide to Participatory Budgeting by Citizen Lab
https://www.citizenlab.co/ebooks-en/the-beginners-guide-to-participatory-budgeting

The Participatory Budgeting Project's (PBP) Website
https://www.participatorybudgeting.org/

A Ted Talk by Shari Davis, the founder of PBP
https://www.ted.com/talks/shari_davis_what_if_you_could_help_decide_how_the_government_spends_public_funds

Two videos to get you excited about PB
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHhm6W0sD7M&t
https://vimeo.com/220012828

A few examples youth focused PB processes
https://rsyp.org/what-we-do/youth-operational-board/proposal-form/
https://cfcbr.org/youth-philanthropy-grants/
https://www.wsfoundation.org/strategic-initiatives/youth-grantmakers
https://northfieldhci.org/grants/youthbank/

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