

Informing and involving citizens in PB processes

Involving citizens during all PB stages:

- Launching
- Running
- Evaluating

How do we pitch participatory budgeting to attract interest? Stress the following:

- **Democracy**—it is a way for politicians and constituents to connect. It is a way to bring new people into the political process. Many participants report they have never been involved in any community or government activity before participatory budgeting.
- **Transparency**—this could shine a spotlight on potential corruption and waste.
- **Education**—citizens become more active and more informed.
- **Efficiency**—confers the benefit of local residents' neighbourhood expertise, and their interest in seeing projects through to completion. The citizens will have a sense of ownership.
- **Social justice**—everyone has a voice. Underrepresented groups participate and often projects are directed to those who truly need the most help.
- **Community**—regular meetings build camaraderie and community

Creating the PB Infrastructure:

- Communities that use participatory budgeting need institutional social media platform policies. For example, policies should empower a sufficient number of community leaders with the administrative authority to update social media platforms.
- Communities engaged in participatory budgeting should understand that actively managing social media platforms is real, important work, not an afterthought. Participatory budgeting will require investment in training both citizens and staff on the use of social media platforms.
- Communities should plan for, develop, and use social media platforms to complement other forms of communication available for citizen engagement and mobilization. Communities should explore and expand ways that people can opt in to participate and to submit initial project ideas online..

Creating the PB Infrastructure – tips on using social media:

- social media platforms can be used in conjunction with other communication tools in building and strengthening the participatory budgeting infrastructure
- a balance must be struck between procedural regulations of social media platforms and the need for constant, consistent, timely, and accurate updating of social media platforms.
- Social media platforms can be effective in participatory budgeting, but are underused to date.
- Security is a major concern when expanding the use of social media platforms and introducing electronic or digital voting into the participatory budgeting process.

Increasing Citizen Participation in PB process ⁶

- Communities should build on existing and active social media platforms that the community uses. If citizens respond to an e-mail blast, use it. If youth are using Instagram, use it. Communities should be encouraged to try new approaches.
- Communities should identify ways to turn passive observers on social media platforms into active participants. Communities should understand that social media platforms are not just top-down processes, but collaborative, and a two-way forms of communication. Citizens should be able to connect across neighbourhoods and districts and see the impact of the whole process.
- Communities should identify who is being left out and work to include excluded populations in the participatory process.
- Communities should understand that message content counts. Communities should remember that citizens might not all respond in the same way to a particular alert, message, etc. Participatory budgeting leaders should have a variety of “scripts” prepared and use as appropriate. They should remember to ask, “Why does this matter?”

Assessing and Increasing the Impact of PB

7

- Communities should identify best practices, share and exchange information with other communities, and support further research efforts.
- Both communities and the academic realm should research and develop technology that might help spread participatory budgeting more broadly, such as voting apps or databases through which communities could share information. Communities should explore potential for electronic or digital vote tallying.
- Communities should solicit feedback from all stakeholders and incorporate changes into social media platform use policies, procedures, and practices as necessary.

Using a combination of traditional citizen engagement approaches with multiple social media platforms works best

- phone calls, flyers, and door knocking. telephone calls personally inviting citizens
- use the people that are already engaged so that they share, retweet posts increasing the forum.
- Social media channels:
 - Facebook - upcoming public events and opportunities ;
 - Twitter – articles, news;
 - Instagram - news, pictures, for young people;
 - SMS – for those whom is more difficult to engage
- You may need external experts, and you will have to do a lot of outreach and educating. To enrich participation you may need to offer child care, or take the meetings out to the neighbourhoods, or have meetings on the weekends when people are available. And food never hurts. It takes real work. It will not just happen

Social media outreach to citizens will not guarantee 9

PB process

- Social media platforms alone will not guarantee citizen participation. **Content** of the messages sent via social media platforms matters, and the **sender** matters, too.
- when city managers make telephone calls personally inviting citizens to meetings, it significantly increases the number of attendees.
- A lot of the folks doing social media around participatory budgeting do it from the perspective of someone who is already interested in the process. This is as opposed to thinking about the folks they are trying to reach who are not inherently interested in it yet. So, a lot of the content we find tends to be something such as “there was a participatory budgeting meeting” ... exciting for the staff person organizing it but it doesn’t really get at “why should someone else care?” Need to lift up the idea of **why it matters**, not just that an event is happening. Having a quote or a picture of someone having a meaningful experience at the event and talking about what they learned is better. That is what has a greater impact.

Special efforts are required to include underrepresented or excluded populations in the participatory budgeting process

- overlook populations with limited availability and access to social media platforms, including the elderly, the poor, the less educated, and new immigrants
- Targeted outreach efforts may be required and participatory budgeting meetings may need to be scheduled to accommodate the specific needs of these underrepresented populations.

Reference

<http://www.businessofgovernment.org/sites/default/files/Participatory%20Budgeting%20Ten%20Actions%20to%20Engage%20Citizens%20%20Social%20Media.pdf>

•