



REAL SOLUTIONS FOR NEW YORK CITY: PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

Promoting Civic Engagement Through Participatory Budgeting

A Blueprint for Justice & Opportunity for Immigrant New Yorkers

In the last 20 years, citizen participation in decision-making on some aspects of municipal public spending has been introduced in many cities around the world and in the United States. Participatory budgeting (PB) is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget. PB has been implemented in over 1,200 budgets worldwide, most at the municipal level. Chicago recently became the first municipality in the United States to adopt PB.

This year, New York City followed Chicago in becoming the second U.S. city to adopt this process by pioneering the most ambitious participatory budgeting initiative to date in the United States. Council Members Jumaane D. Williams, Brad Lander, Melissa Mark-Viverito, and Eric Ulrich launched a pilot participatory budgeting project for New York City's tax dollars in four districts in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. Each of the four participating Council Members has allocated a portion of their capital budgets for district residents to decide how to spend collectively. Residents of participating districts introduced their own proposals for how to spend infrastructure dollars and vote on community priorities in public meetings. A total of \$6 million in discretionary Council capital funds were allocated to the PB process. Projects selected by PB participants in the inaugural year included planting 100 new trees on blocks with few or no trees, playground improvements, school renovations, pagers for volunteer fire departments, and resources for local branches of public libraries.

THE FACTS ABOUT PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

- ✓ Participatory Budgeting has been implemented in 1,200 budgets worldwide.
- ✓ Council Members allocated \$6 million in discretionary capital funds to PB projects in the inaugural 2012 year.
- ✓ 6,000 New Yorkers voted in the participatory budget process in four Council districts this year.

Engaging Noncitizens and Underrepresented New Yorkers

The PB process in New York City is open to all district residents, regardless of their immigration status, thereby making PB a pioneering model of civic engagement for immigrants in New York. Participatory budgeting also engages New Yorkers that are underrepresented in traditional political processes. In District 8, Latinos were 39% of voters in the 2009 City Council elections. However, 47% of PB voters identified as Latino. Likewise, In District 45, Black or African Americans were 79% of voters in 2009 City Council elections. However, 85% of the district's PB voters identified as Black or African American.¹

Detailed Recommendations:

1. **Promote Civic Engagement by Extending Participatory Budgeting (PB) to Additional City Council Districts.** In the first year of PB in New York City, four Council districts allocated \$6 million to PB, engaging 6,000 participants in the process. Next year, PB should be expanded to additional Council districts to build upon the success of PB's pilot year in promoting civic engagement and involving underrepresented New Yorkers, including immigrants, in civic life.

For more information on this issue, please contact Jackie Vimo, Director of Advocacy: (212) 627-2227x248 or jvimo@thenyic.org

¹ <http://readme.readmedia.com/Council-Members-Community-Declare-Results-of-Groundbreaking-Participatory-Budgeting-Vote/3796135>