Participatory Budgeting Rochester

What is Participatory Budgeting?

Participatory Budgeting, or PB, is a democratic process, designed and led by community representatives, through which members of a community decide how to spend a portion of a budget.

Here in the city of Rochester and Monroe County, Participatory Budgeting is currently a pilot project of the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative. There is $175,000 allocated to the process.

How does Participatory Budgeting Work?

**Design the process**
A steering committee, representative of the community, creates the rules in partnership with government officials to ensure the process is inclusive and meets local needs.

**Brainstorm ideas**
Through meetings and online tools, residents share and discuss ideas for projects.

**Develop proposals**
Volunteers, usually called budget delegates, develop the ideas into feasible proposals, which are then voted by experts.

**Fund winning projects**
The government implements the winning projects, such as laptops in schools, Wi-Fi in public parks, or traffic safety improvements. The government and residents track and monitor implementation.

**Vote**
Residents vote to divide the available budget between the proposals. It’s a direct, democratic voice in their community’s future.

**OUTCOMES OF PB**
- Increased civic engagement
- Broader political participation
- New community leaders and more active residents
- Stronger relationships between government, organizations, and residents
- Fairer and more effective spending

Timeline

- **Design Process** (April-May)
- **Collect Ideas** (June-August)
- **Develop Proposals** (September-November)
- **Vote** (December)
- **Fund Projects!** (January-March)
How you can get involved

Below are important volunteer roles that members of the community can take on throughout the PB process.

Facilitators:
Facilitators create safe spaces within idea collection events and Budget Delegate meetings, allowing community members to participate effectively. Facilitators play a key role in ensuring Budget Delegates stay on track to meet process deadlines and make decisions within the framework established by the Rochester PB Community Leadership Team.

Canvassers/Outreach Workers:
Canvassers are volunteers who reach out to community members and encourage them to come to assembly meetings and vote on project proposals. Canvassers should have a commitment to diversity, and it may be helpful for them to have ties to members from underrepresented communities to ensure their participation.

Budget Delegates:
Budget Delegates are volunteers from the community who research proposals submitted by community members during idea collection. Working in collaboration with the RMAPI Staff and relevant agency representatives as needed, they prioritize and develop projects. Feasible projects that best adhere to the guidelines set by the PB Community Leadership Team are submitted for a community vote.

Community Members:
Community members can be involved in a number of ways! In addition to all the above listed roles, basic involvement also includes submitting ideas and voting on final proposals.

Community-Based Organizations and Nonprofits:
Nonprofits and Community-Based Organizations can provide additional support for the PB Process related to their area of expertise. Examples of this include organizing/outreach to the community, data provision during the proposal development phase, hosting idea collection events and assemblies, and assisting with arts integration during voting events.

Want to get involved?
Contact Graham Hughes with the RMAPI Backbone Staff
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