



COMMUNITY FORUM REPORT 2018

BRINGING PARTICIPATORY
BUDGETING TO THE
PORTLAND METRO REGION

ABOUT THIS REPORT

On April 14th, 2018 a collective of over 100 community members, civic leaders, and government officials gathered to explore the potential of bringing Participatory Budgeting to the Portland-Metro Region.

Our objective is to share and disseminate participants feedback so that we may create and implement a practical and inclusive PB process in the Portland Metro region.

Sincerely,

Participatory Budgeting Oregon Steering Committee Members,
Olivia Alsept Ellis, Amanda Hudson, Jim Labbe & Tyler Wilkins

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Participatory Budgeting (PB) Oregon would to thank the the City of Portland, the Oregon Community Foundation, the City of Gresham, Metro Regional Government, and Multnomah County for the funding they provided to host this event.

Healthy Democracy was the fiscal agent for the event and Robin Teater (Executive Director) and Linn Davis (Program Manager) provided critical support in planning, organizing and hosting the Community Forum. Lastly, we would like to thank the Rosewood Initiative for the use of their facility and in helping with outreach for the event in East Portland.

A special thanks to Amanda Hudson & Tyler Wilkins for authoring this report.

For more information on Participatory Budgeting Oregon go to: PBOregon.org



ABOUT THE FORUM



Bringing Participatory Budgeting to the Portland-Metro Region

A community forum organized and hosted by



OUTREACH

The Forum was a free event that provided food, childcare, public transit, and language interpretation. The outreach efforts targeted community members who were traditionally underrepresented in government decision-making, specifically communities of color, low income people, people with limited English proficiency, etc. We held the event in East Portland with the hope of making it more accessible to these communities.

Our strategy for outreach was to personally contact organizations, community leaders, and elected officials. With the support from Healthy Democracy we were able to contact over 40 organizations. We targeted recruitment on elected officials, local government staff and community leaders who would be likely to play a role in the successful implementation of PB.

FORUM GOALS

1. CREATE AN OPPORTUNITY...

For local elected officials, government staff, diverse community leaders and underrepresented groups to discuss and explore the potential benefits and challenges of bringing participatory budgeting (PB) to the Portland-Metro region.

2. GENERATE IDEAS...

Interest, and momentum for experimentation with a PB in our region.

3. IDENTIFY AND CONNECT...

A core constituency for bringing PB to the Portland Metro Region, especially among groups underserved and underrepresented in local decision-making.

4. SUPPORT AND INFORM...

Future implementation of PB in the Portland-Metro Region by learning from the successful experiences and practices in other communities.

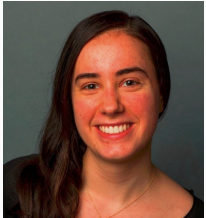


5. HAVE FUN...

GUEST SPEAKERS



Dr. Brian Wampler is a professor of Political Science at Boise State University. His research and teaching focuses on Brazil and Latin American democracy, participation, civil society and institution building.



Becky Scurlock and Jess Juanich are former members of the Seattle Youth Commission, and members of the steering committee for Seattle's Youth Voice, Youth Choice--a youth focused Participatory Budgeting project.



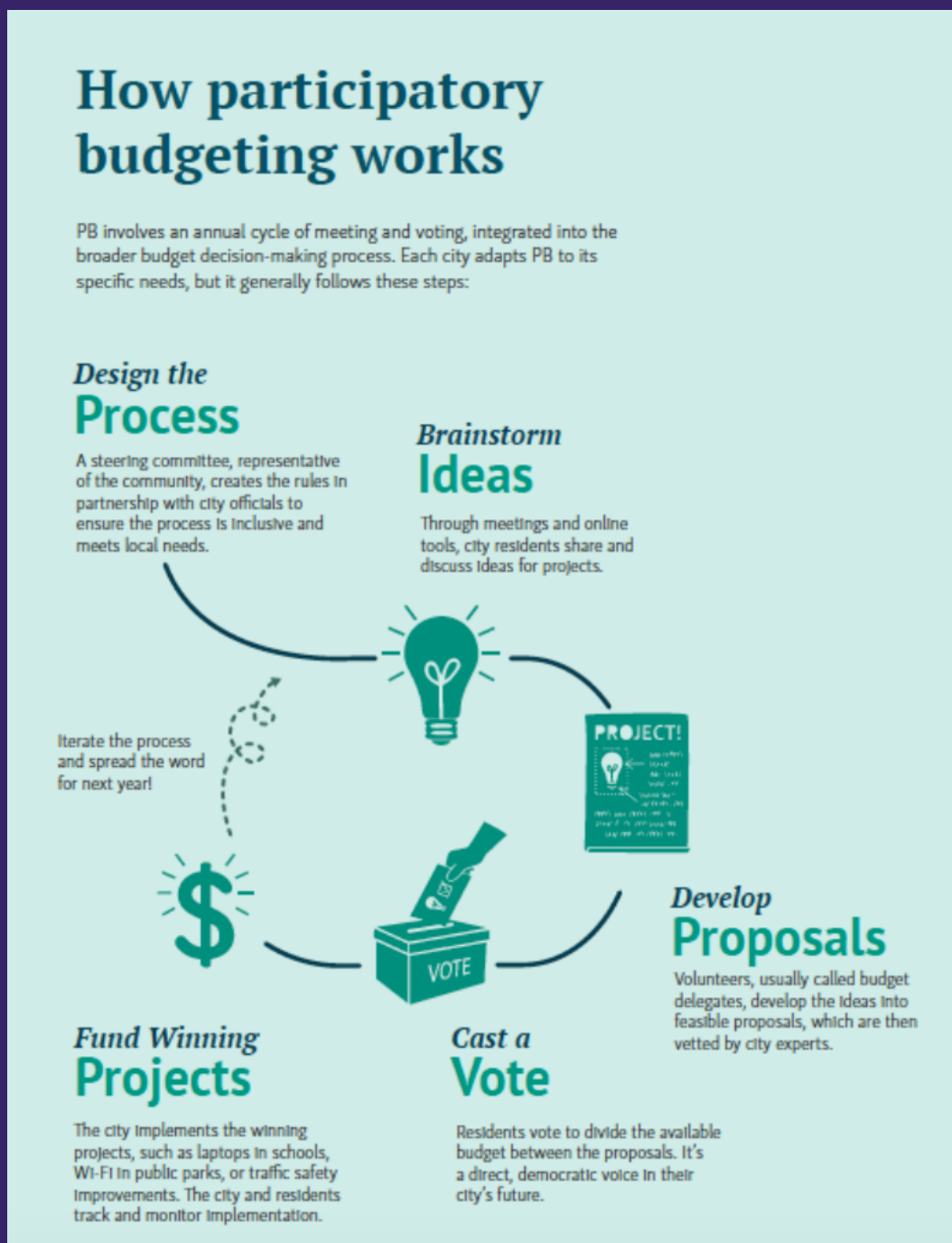
Amy Nguyen is the Community Programs Strategic Advisor for the City of Seattle. She is the program manager for Seattle's participatory budgeting program, Your Voice, Your Choice.



Jamal Fox is the Property and Business Development Manager for Portland Parks & Recreation and Commissioner with the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs. He was elected to the City Council for Greensboro, NC, and helped implement their PB process from 2015-17.

WHAT IS PB?

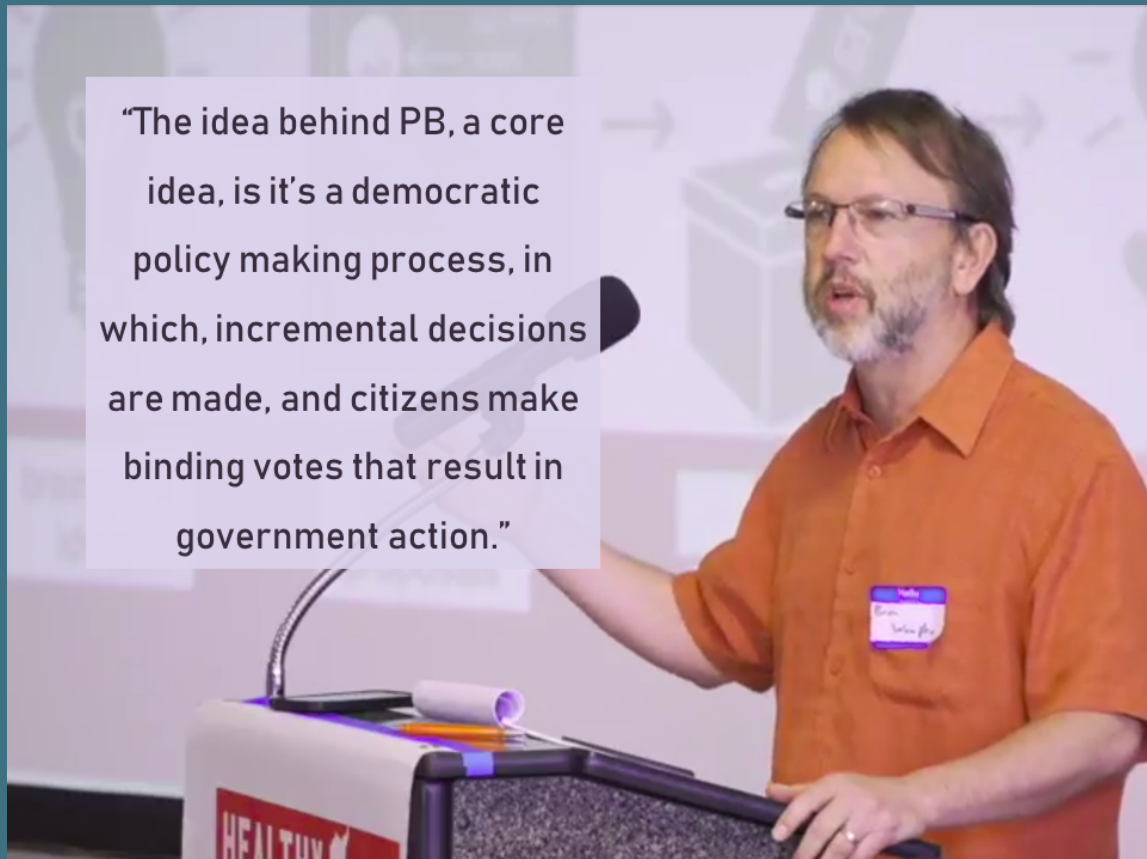
Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a process that allows the public to propose, design and issue a binding vote on projects that are financed through public funds.



(Participatory Budgeting Project, 2017).

SPEAKER SNAPSHOT: BRIAN WAMPLER

Dr. Brian Wampler provided a history and explanation of PB's origins, benefits, and common principles.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Research shows PB:

- Influences broader political participation
- Develops community leaders
- Builds stronger relationships between people, organizations, and government

For effective program design:

- Create set of rules that ensures more resources go to underserved neighborhoods.
- Program areas can focus on trust building, identifying vulnerable groups and how to draw people in.

QUICK HISTORY

PB originated in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 1989, after the fall of a 30-year military dictatorship. The goal was to provide citizens with opportunities for direct participation and oversight in government decision making, to implement transparency practices to deter corruption, to improve infrastructure and services, and to change political culture so that average citizens could be “democratic agents” (Gilman, 2016).

Over 3,000 PB projects implemented to date from across the globe (Wampler, 2018). PB has only recently surfaced in the US when in 2009, Chicago Alderman, Joe Moore, made history by using a portion of his ward’s discretionary funds to conduct a PB process. Since then, monumental PB processes have been implemented in many major US cities including New York, Phoenix, Greensboro, and Seattle and have allocated close to \$50 million funding (Participatory Budgeting Project, 2017) . The Obama White House even named PB as a key element in their Open Government Initiative. As Gilman (2016) states, “participatory budgeting stands on the cusp of becoming a major national trend with the potential to shape how public budgets are decided in the United States” (p. 2).

SPEAKER SNAPSHOT: BECKY SCURLOCK & JESS JUANICH

Seattle first implemented PB in 2015 with the Youth Voice, Youth Choice program. As two of the twenty delegates, speakers Becky Scurlock and Jess Jaunich, shared their experiences of working with Seattle Department of Neighborhoods and other City staff to develop 19 proposals in a citywide PB \$700,000 process. In May 2016, more than 3,000 youth ages 11-25 voted for to fund seven projects.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- It is imperative for budget delegates to have the support from staff to understand the feasibility of the projects at hand and help choose the most impactful projects.
- Young people are the leaders of today, not just tomorrow, and by engaging in a Youth Participatory Budgeting project the City is giving youth the opportunity to step up, participate, and become lifelong leaders in civic engagement.

PB BENEFITS



1. BROADER PARTICIPATION

Numerous PB processes have shown that the people who participate in PB are not the usual suspects. This also includes more of the population than traditional voting allows because most PB processes design their rules to engage all residents (not just citizens), youth, people without documentation, and those who aren't registered to vote.

2. FAIRER SPENDING

Good PB practice targets communities who have traditionally been left out of decisions about where to allocate resources. Thus, the projects that are implemented represent investments in areas that have long been neglected by the traditional budgeting process.

3. MORE ENGAGEMENT

When institutionalized, PB has the opportunity to “create a sustainable structure for robust, transparent citizen engagement between elections” (Gilman, 2016, p. 3). In places where there has been multi-year PB processes have increased their number of neighborhood associations and civic groups have reported that their populations are easier to mobilize (Baicocchi & Lerner, 2007). PB has been a remarkably effective tool for redistributing decision-making to the neighborhood level. (Cabannes & Lipietz, 2017).

4. EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Participants of PB are often drawn to the process because of the opportunity for transparency in a typically opaque government process. Participants often report increased trust due to meeting and becoming familiar with elected officials, bureaucracy, and budgetary protocol. In fact, the very act of a government engaging in PB sends a positive signal that extends to their broader constituency (Gilman, 2016).

SPEAKER SNAPSHOT: AMY NGUYEN



Amy Nguyen spoke from the implementers perspective, and shared how Seattle's process has evolved to "Your Voice, Your Choice: Parks & Streets", a \$3 million initiative that allows people to propose and design small-scale park and street improvements.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Pay steering committee members for their expertise--\$50/hr!
- Leading the process with equity, specifically with racial equity.
- Emphasize participation for all, but centering communities of color.
- PB has to be fun!
- As you're doing your program design, put your barriers up front. Have realistic expectations. Draw a smaller box, and do it well. Then use that data as a case to expand, but don't shoot for the moon right off that bat.

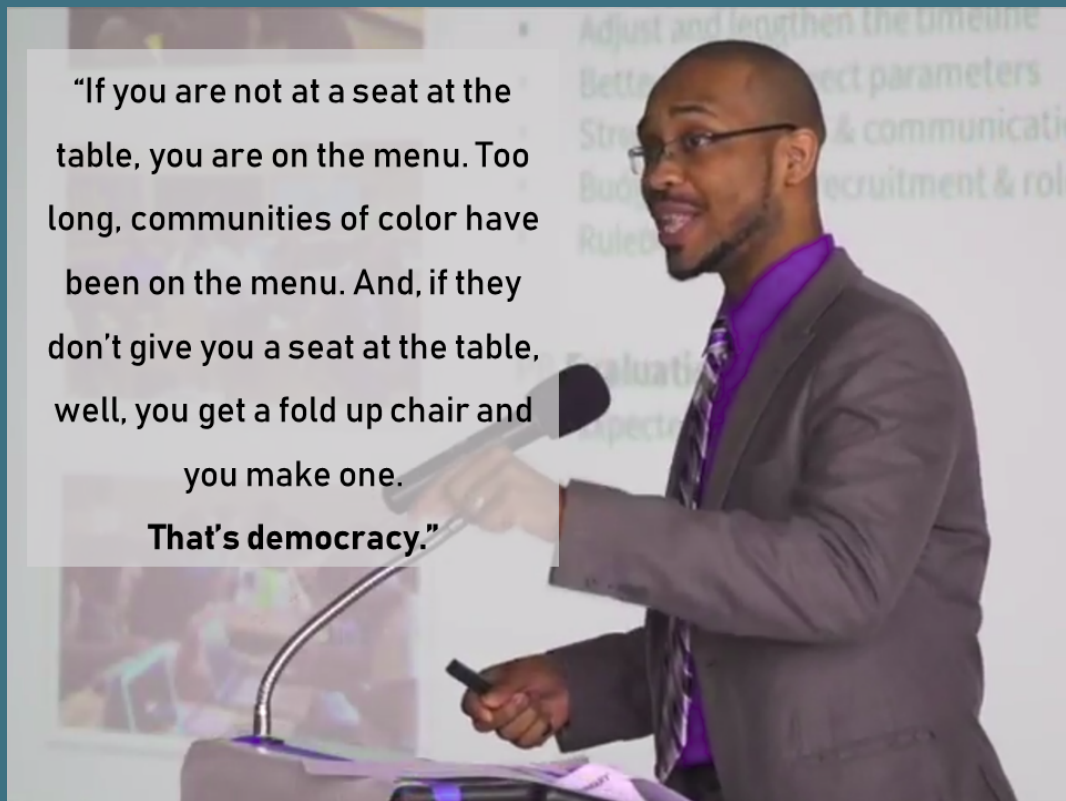
STARTING PB

PB projects have been funded at a variety of scales—district, school district, city-wide, and even some attempts at statewide processes. Many local politicians have used it as a progressive platform to advocate for increased transparency and government accountability (Wampler, 2018). Other times it is started by local residents. This can be either PB advocates who want to see PB in their community, or grassroots community groups who discover PB and decide to use it as a tool to support their ongoing work (Participatory Budgeting Project, 2017).

When PB is initiated, a steering committee's job is to design the rulebooks, establish partnerships with government agencies and city officials, and identify local revenue sources. An effective steering committee will be representative of the community and will center their process on the needs of the various stakeholders, particular those of vulnerable populations who have not traditionally participated in government processes. In addition to researching local revenue sources, steering committee members begin broad-based community outreach to identify and engage stakeholders. Best practice is to target outreach to vulnerable communities who have not traditionally participated in civic decision-making.

SPEAKER SNAPSHOT: JAMAL FOX

Jamal Fox shared his experience as an elected official who used PB as a way to get communities of color and those who were not traditionally involved in the decision making process. After campaigning on a PB platform, he was integral in designing and implementing Greensboro PB's process.



"If you are not at a seat at the table, you are on the menu. Too long, communities of color have been on the menu. And, if they don't give you a seat at the table, well, you get a fold up chair and you make one.

That's democracy."

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- One of the hardest things for elected officials is to give up power. They had to ask themselves, did they really want people to get involved in our public process?
- They were able to develop new leaders--people who previously felt that government didn't care about them.
- They were able to hire two new staff from the community to run the PB process.
- PB had higher voter turnout than local elections
- "PB allowed a different person and equal opportunity to participate for a change" (85% were new to the process)
- It was important to create a simulator tool to educate people about how the city budget worked

WHY DO WE NEED PB IN THE PORTLAND-METRO REGION?

Since the 1970s, the Portland-Metro region has been nationally and internationally recognized for its tradition of strong community involvement (Leistner, 2013). The City of Portland still ranks among the top US cities for civic health, with 94.2% of residents reporting that they frequently talk with neighbors, 42.7% of residents participate in groups and/or organizations, and 71.8% of residents engaging in some type of "informal volunteering" (for example, doing favors for neighbors). Additionally, a 2016 study of 50 cities ranked Portland number one for voter turnout in local elections with 60% voter turnout, compared to the national average of 15%!

So, why in a city that is nationally recognized for its community involvement and planning processes would we suggest the adoption of a new, time-intensive participatory process?

Despite the region's reputation for civic engagement, many of its communities--particularly communities of color, low income communities, and those outside of the central business district--have not had a say in how the region has grown. Areas such as East Portland, particularly have a history of lacking a political voice, despite being where 25% of the City's population resides (The Oregonian, 2014). While long being described as the whitest places in the US, the region's demographics are changing, and will continue to as the Multnomah county population alone is projected to add over 30,000 new residents by the year 2020 (Population Research Center, 2016). It is particularly the region's youth where these changes are most apparent with Portland Public Schools and North Clackamas School Districts having nearly 50% of students of color; and in David Douglas School District it is 60.3%.

Concerns about gentrification, housing unaffordability, and uneven development have proven intractable, and disproportionately affect these vulnerable communities. With the growth and inevitable change, it is imperative that we adopt methods that fairly allocate resources to all of the Portland region, particularly to neglected communities and their neighborhoods. We feel that PB is a tool that can help give power back to those affected communities resulting in higher levels of social capital and a more inclusive form of democracy.



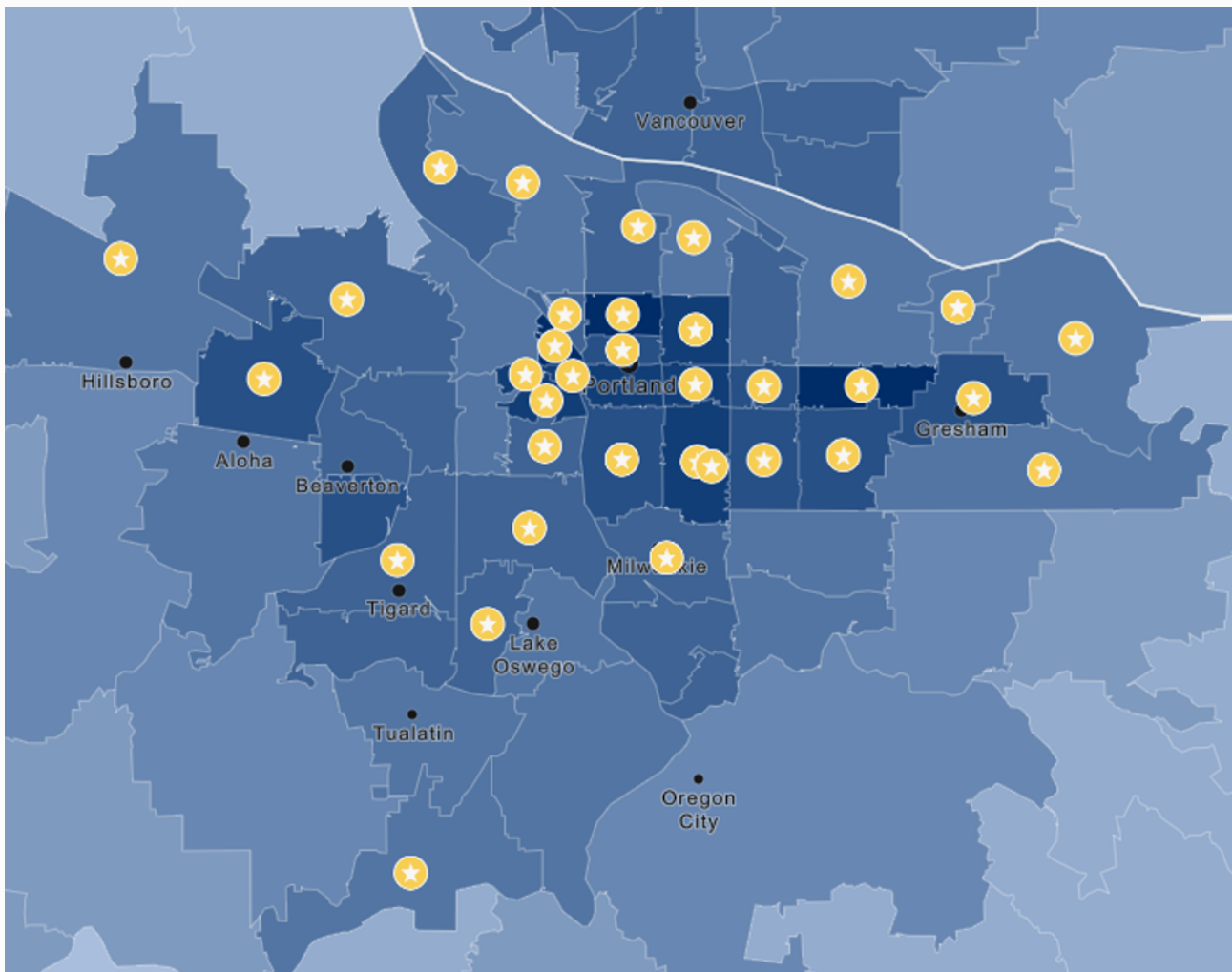
FORUM PARTICIPANTS



WHO ATTENDED?

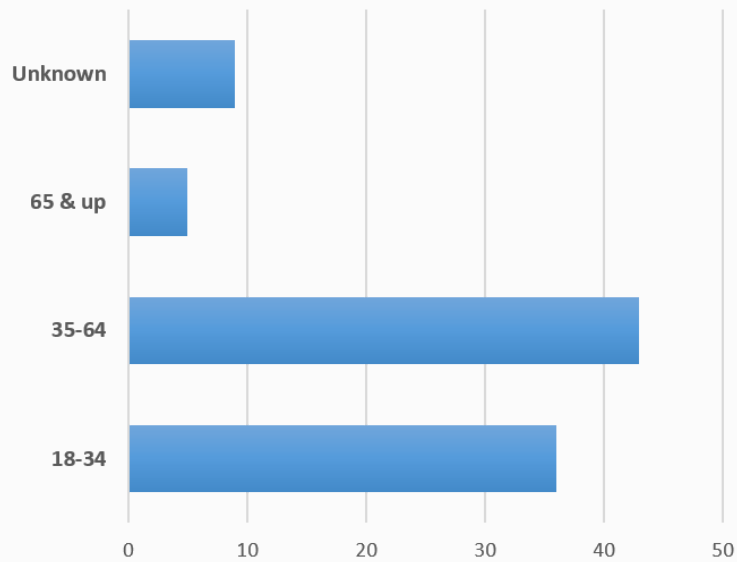
Close to 100 people were present and engaged at the community forum. Our participants were a mix of community leaders, organizational leaders, government, and elected official representatives. Per our equitable outreach strategies, we used targeted recruitment to include underrepresented community members with robust networks of affiliations.

Our intention for targeted recruitment was to allow us to host a wide range of perspectives and experiences to formulate solutions that are tailored to better serve historically underrepresented communities and low socioeconomic populations.

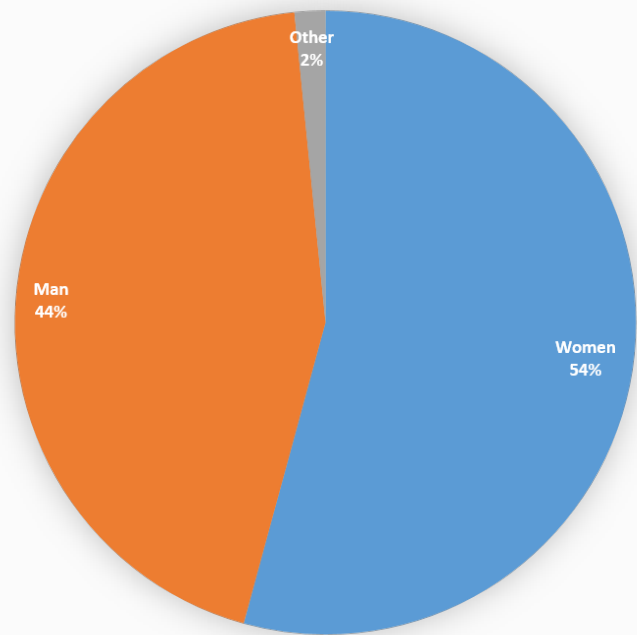


DEMOGRAPHICS

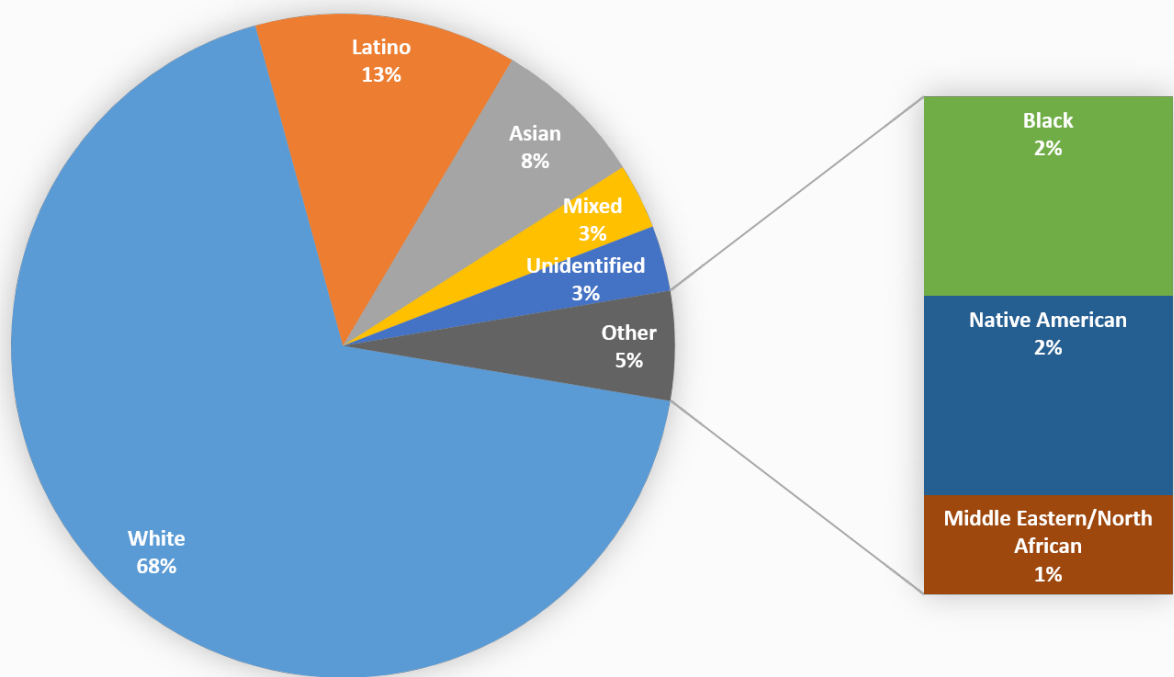
Age of Forum Participants



Gender of Forum Participants



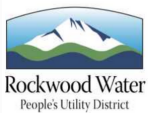
Race/Ethnicity of Forum Participants (n=95)



ORGANIZATIONS



When registering, participants were asked to include any organizational affiliations. The following are all of the organizations that were represented.



O. Hm.



PROSPER
PORTLAND
Building an Equitable Economy



Oregon
Humanities



Portland State
UNIVERSITY



OPAL
ORGANIZING PEOPLE / ACTIVATING LEADERS



CAFE CONVERSATIONS



After lunch, forum participants engaged in small group conversations exploring the applications of PB. Here is what we learned:

- **Curiosity.** People showed genuine interest in the PB process and how it may fit within their own personal scope. They asked fundamental questions, like how to develop PB practices that don't perpetuate previous exclusive structures; best methods of making sure the right people get to the table; and how to best build trust in Hispanic and Latino communities through PB.
- **Resonance.** Participants noted deep appreciation for the depth of the speaker's message. They also demonstrated harnessing ideas of how to implement new ideas learned from the speakers.
- **Excitement.** Participants showed a sense of wonder as they learned about PB. There was a substantial number of individuals who showed interest in learning more post event. 102 to be exact.
- **Local scale.** Participants showed interest in carrying out PB through local small-scale avenues. They wanted future implementation of PB to be informed by the successful experiences and practices in other communities.
- **Equity.** Equity was a centerpiece for many conversations that took place at the event. People were enthusiastic about the potential of using PB as a tool to redistribute power to underrepresented communities.

EMERGING THEMES FROM CAFE CONVERSATIONS



"Different type of leadership from the bottom up"

"It just makes sense!"

"Identifying the barriers to participation"

"Tapping into community partners"

"Meeting people where they're at"

"Can you graft this process to existing plans?"

"Who initiates it? Elected officials?"

"How to get them involved through community organizing where trust has been built"

"Rebalance power scales"

"PB is an opportunity to receive feedback"

"Very exciting to see this at a local level"

"Holds political representatives accountable"

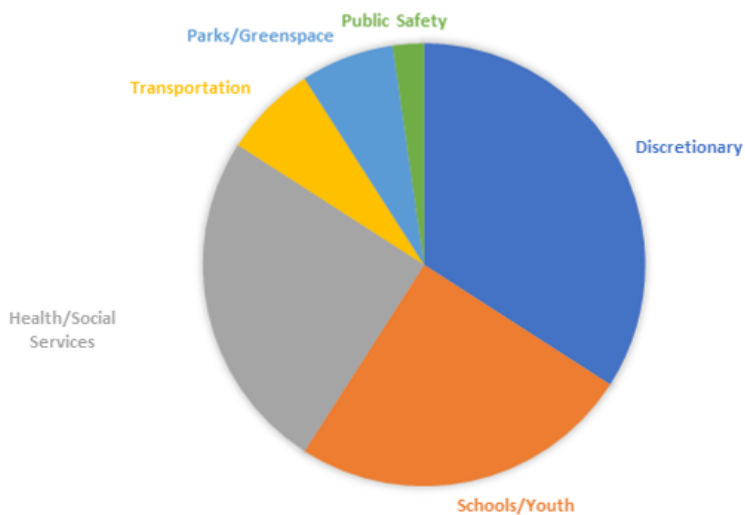
"Providing people the tools to break down budgeting language"

"Great tool within the work of decolonization, giving power to community of color and representing those who are not seen or heard"

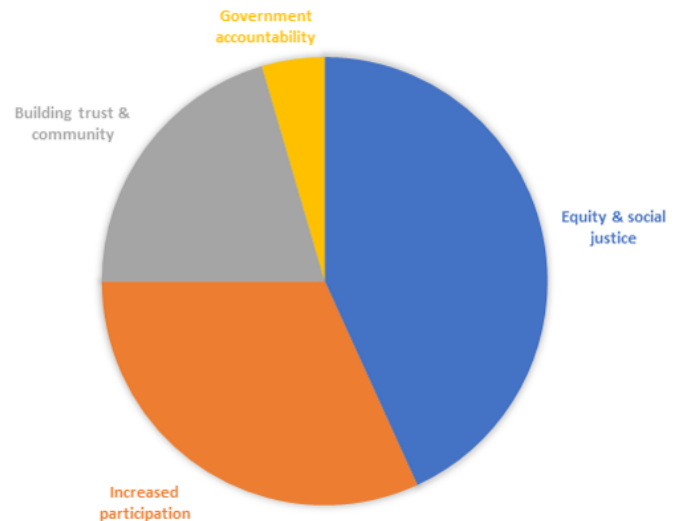
REAL TIME VOTING

In order to understand attendees priorities, we conducted a real-time voting activity and asked people to rank various options. The following are what attendees ranked as their first priority in implementing PB.

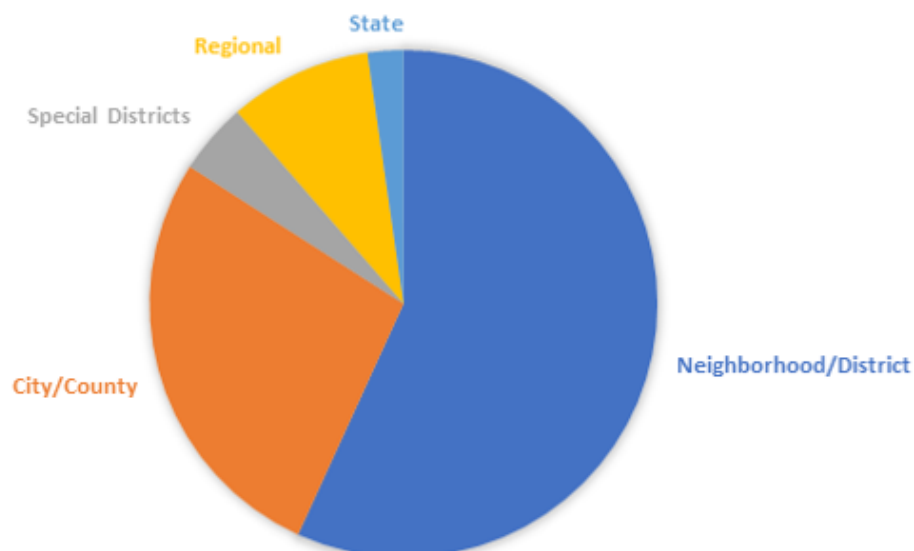
WHAT AREA SHOULD WE FOCUS ON WITH PB?



WHAT SHOULD BE THE MAIN GOAL OF A PB PROCESS?

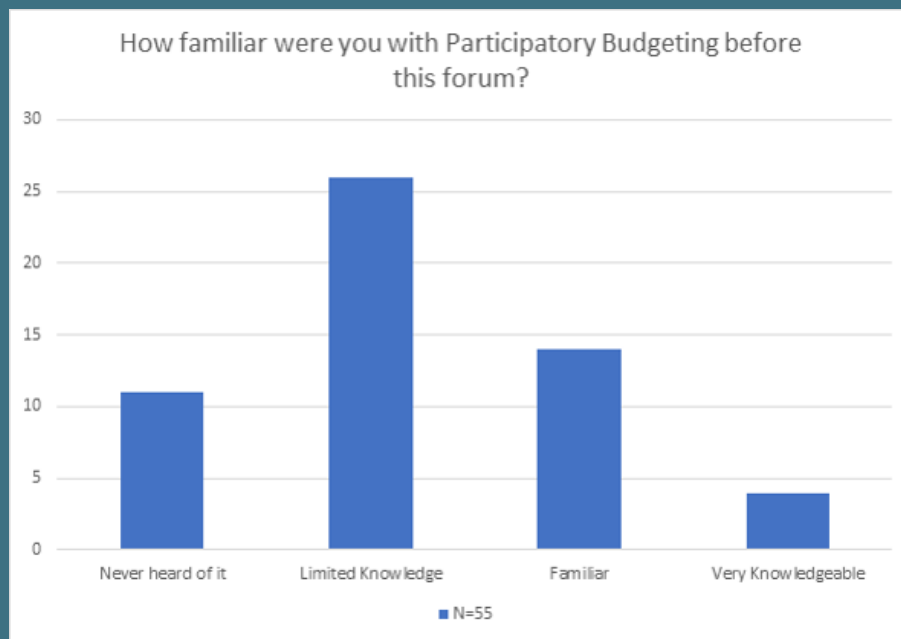


AT WHAT SCALE SHOULD PB START?



EVALUATIONS

Participants were invited to complete an optional event evaluation in order for us to assess the quality of the event, and to plan for our next steps. All attendees who completed evaluations stated that they were “satisfied” to “very satisfied” with the forum, and 94% were “interested” or “very interested” in bringing PB to the Portland region. Prior to attending the forum, the majority of attendees stated that they had “limited knowledge” of PB prior to coming to the forum (average=2.2).



Despite starting with limited exposure to PB, after attending the forum, 85% of attendees believed that PB would support their work.

Additionally feedback focused on which agencies participants believed should implement PB, what issues PB should focus on, or which groups it should target. Suggested agencies were Multnomah County, Trimet, Parks and Recreation, the Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC), the Portland Neighborhood Associations, Metro and Prosper Portland. Respondents also suggest two issues that PB should address: transportation and homelessness/housing.

Lastly, many attendees saw the value in PB as a way to serve specific marginalized and vulnerable groups. They shared that they would like to see a PB process that focuses on East Portland, youth, low income populations, immigrants, and communities of color.

FORUM VIDEOS

Speaker Presentations

Brian Wampler



Amy Nguyen



Becky Scurlock &
Jess Jaunich



Jamal Fox



Panel Discussions

Morning



Afternoon



Visit PB Oregon's YouTube channel for a full list of videos



RECOMMENDATIONS



1. PROCESS DESIGN

- a. Clearly define the primary goals and objectives for a PB processes. Possible goals might include:
 - Social inclusion and social justice
 - Transparency and accountability
 - Civic education and leadership development
 - Fostering community, trust, and democratic deliberation
- b. Provide adequate funding for:
 - Staff time for outreach and engagement.
 - Implementation and administration.
 - Translation, interpretation, transportation, or other needs to reduce or eliminate barriers to participation by the least served and least represented communities.
 - Capacity building in underserved and underrepresented communities and organizations that can help make PB a success long-term.
- c. Make participatory budgeting fun. Incorporate game design into PB design to make participation more fun, engaging, inclusive, fair and transparent.

2. IMPLEMENTATION

- Start small and build on success through an effective pilot PB process.
- Follow Greensboro's example, by enlisting private foundations to help fund initial "start-up" implementation costs.
- Don't do a one-off process. Commit to at least 3 cycles to allow for learning by both the community members and local government staff.
- Fully evaluate PB processes to learn and improve over time.

RECOMMENDATIONS



3. SUPPORT & TRAINING

- Follow Seattle's lead in establishing a paid steering committee that resources the time and expertise of individuals, especially those from underserved and underrepresented communities.
- Provide PB training for elected officials, local government staff, steering committee members, and representative community leaders.
- Explore the use and development of “budget stimulator”, as in Greensboro, North Carolina, to link PB to the larger municipal budgeting process.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Enlist the full diversity of the community in designing a pilot PB process that prioritizes equity and inclusion.
- Sustainably fund and center PB processes on vulnerable, underserved or underrepresented communities.
- Create a PB process that is open and welcoming to community members (e.g. students, non-citizens, and others) who are currently ineligible to vote in elections.

5. POSSIBLE FOCUSES

- Consider models in Seattle, Boston, and Phoenix that that started PB with youth or students.
- Focus it on a specific high need district or a particular sub-populations.
- Use the pilot PB process to allocate discretionary funds with fewer policy or legal constraints on potential outcomes.
- Use PB to build skills and knowledge in vulnerable, underserved or underrepresented communities before scaling PB processes up to the entire population.