

Participatory Budgeting (PB) FAQ



What is PB?

Participatory Budgeting is a type of participatory democracy, in which ordinary people decide how to allocate part of a municipal or public budget. Developed in the 1980s in Porto Alegre, Brazil, PB is a process of democratic deliberation and decision-making. As the people from Porto Alegre say **“If it feels like WE have decided, its PB. If it feels like someone else has decided, it isn’t”**.

PB is very flexible as it can be used in relation to a:

- **Place (community, district, city and regional – space based)**
- **Planning Theme (health, transport, housing, education, economic, policing)**
- **People (specific social groups – youth, women, elderly, LGBTQ, ethnic groups etc)**

PB is designed to empower communities and help them to work with local agencies to develop solutions to problems that are affecting their lives. PB should always be considered as part of a community engagement process.

What is the main advantage of planning and delivering a PB event?

To a degree, the PB pot is a catalyst to help build networks and something called [social capital](#)*. Throughout the process you will become aware of activities, projects and services that you may not previously have been aware of. The networking and awareness opportunities are the most important aspect of PB. The PB itself will generate new ideas, relationships and initiatives locally and this is the social capital required to transform communities.

**Social capital relates to Trust, Norms and Networks.*

How Much Should Be Made Available?

We have supported PB events that range from over £1,000,000 to a few thousand. We would recommend a minimum of £15,000 be set aside as there is quite a bit of work required to deliver an effective PB event. Any amount less than that and you may wish to consider using a normal grant funding process where officers of the awarding organisation decide who will be awarded funds. We are always happy to discuss your requirements.

How long does the PB process take?

The PB process consists of one day of training followed by 4 x 2hr supported delivery sessions. This is where the key decisions are made and the logistics are planned. We attend the final decision day to help ensure that the presentation and voting process run smoothly. This process can be delivered in 12 weeks, but we recommend taking a little longer to allow for unforeseen circumstances.

Who plans and delivers the PB process?

We train a group of people from partner organisations and the community in the PB process. This is an important part of the programme as we focus on:

- **The philosophy of PB**
- **The principles and standards**
- **Key planning requirements**
- **Crucial decisions that will shape your PB process**

PB is a democratic and transparent process, so we ensure that correct procedures are followed at all times and support you at all stages of the process.

How Does PB Work?

There are a number of types of PB, but Small Grant PB is the most common in the UK. Here, a pot of money from a public budget is made available to the community and they are given the opportunity to bid for a portion of the money. The final decision as to who is awarded money is made by the community at the decision-making event.

We work with a community led planning group who make all of the 11 key decisions. These include decisions such as the maximum amount that can be applied for, whether multiple applications are acceptable etc. Partner organisations provide support at this point of the process. The wider community are then given the opportunity to apply for funding that matches the theme of the event and the criteria agreed by the community planning group.

After a paper sift process to check applications, the bidders are invited to the decision making event where they are given the opportunity to share their idea with the community. The community are then given an opportunity to vote for those projects that they think will provide the most benefit.

What happens on the decision making day?

Once the room is set up and the PA system tested, each applicant or group is invited to the stage to give a short presentation (usually 3 minutes). The community are then invited to vote for every group on a scale of 1 - 5. The votes cast are counted once all of the presentations are concluded. Those gaining the most votes are awarded the funding they applied for until all of the money available is used up.

What about governance?

This is agreed as part of the training programme, but it can range from an inspection process required by the commissioning organisation to the community planning group carrying out checks over an agreed period. We will support you all of the way.

You can find out more about PB and view films of some of our events by visiting our website www.mutualgain.org

Or you can contact us via info@mutualgain.org or **020 3887 2859**.

