

### OVERVIEW

Participatory budgeting is a process by which citizens decide on how to spend a portion of a public budget. It has been adopted in more than 40 local jurisdictions in the United States. Only one jurisdiction in the South — Greensboro, NC — has adopted a participatory budgeting process.

Among the findings from the research on these processes is that participatory budgeting increases public understanding of the budget process, raises engagement levels among residents in the policymaking process, and increases connections to community. Additional research on the specific efforts underway in the U.S. and Canada found that the average amount allocated to participatory budgeting was \$1 million and that the primary purposes or project ideas were around parks and recreation, schools, and, to a lesser degree, public safety.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.publicagenda.org/files/PublicSpendingByThePeople\\_PublicAgenda\\_2016.pdf](https://www.publicagenda.org/files/PublicSpendingByThePeople_PublicAgenda_2016.pdf)

### HOW IT WORKS

There are several phases to the participatory budgeting process.

1. Idea collection phase invites residents to submit ideas through on-line or in-person formats.
2. Volunteers serving as budget delegates then work to turn the ideas into project proposals.
3. Fully developed project ideas are put on ballots for residents, including youth and noncitizens, to vote on.
4. Projects that get the most votes and fit within the funding guidelines win and are funded.

Many participatory budgeting processes have implemented monitoring and evaluation phases as well.

### IMPACTS IN N.C. TO DATE

[Greensboro](#) is the only North Carolina community where a participatory budget process has been adopted. Participatory budgeting was established in 2015. Each year, city staff, with support from a Steering Committee, guides the process for citizens to engage in the development of project ideas and decision-making for where to invest \$500,000 of the City's money. Now in its second year, the participatory budget process has invested in several important capital improvements to neighborhoods, including laundry services for the homeless and park improvements.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Host a workshop on your local budget to identify where investments are currently being made and opportunities that may exist.**
- **Engage your City Council or County Commissioners to explore a resolution to establish a participatory budget process.**
- **Build awareness of the budget process and opportunities to engage.**

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Participatory Budget Project, <https://www.participatorybudgeting.org/>**
- **HUD Exchange, Participatory Budgeting Resources, <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/participatory-budgeting/>**