



A PEOPLE'S BUDGET

A Research and Evaluation Report on
Participatory Budgeting in New York City

Cycle 4: Key Research Findings

By the Community Development Project at the Urban Justice Center
with the PBNYC Research Team

PB Cycle 4 (2014–15)

Key Findings

This cycle of Participatory Budgeting in New York City ushered in a significant expansion of the process from previous years, with 24 Council Members—nearly half the City Council—taking part. More than six thousand New Yorkers brainstormed ideas for projects to improve their community, and more than 50,000 turned out to vote all across the city, at high schools, senior centers, public housing developments, community centers, in parks and on street corners. Through the PB process, driven by and centered on community members, New Yorkers determined the allocation of more than \$30 million of City Council funds to bring to fruition capital projects in their Council districts. This year, for the first time, the process was supported by the City Council Speaker's office, with the dedication of resources and coordinating support, including: contracts issued to enlist community-based organizations in PB outreach;

assistance in translation, printing and counting of PB ballots; media outreach and PB promotion; and central coordination of trainings and meetings throughout the process.

Participatory budgeting (PB) allows community members—instead of elected officials alone—to determine how public funds should be spent, from start to finish. Four years ago, in 2011–12 a pilot process in four City Council districts brought this unique form of direct democracy to this city. Since then, the process has grown with each PB cycle, with this year's process seeing a six-fold increase in the number of participating Council districts and the amount of money allocated to the process, and more than eight times as many New Yorkers casting PB ballots.

Participating Council Districts in this fourth cycle of PB in New York City were:

Council Member Corey Johnson, District 3
Council Member Ben Kallos, District 5
Council Member Helen Rosenthal, District 6
Council Member Mark Levine, District 7
Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, District 8
Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, District 10
Council Member Andrew Cohen, District 11
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The Annual PB Cycle

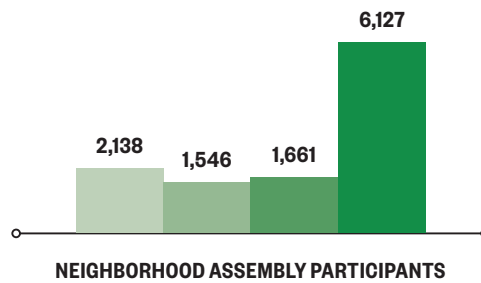
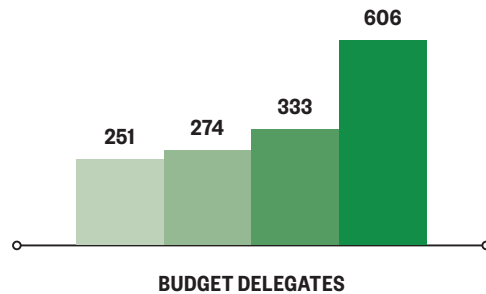
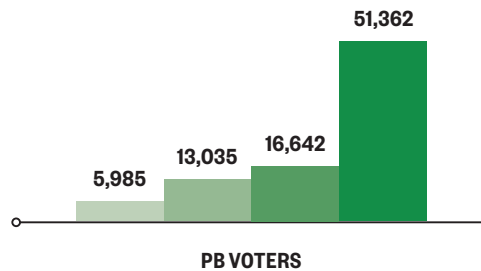
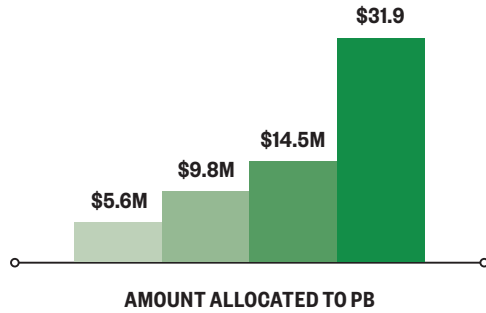
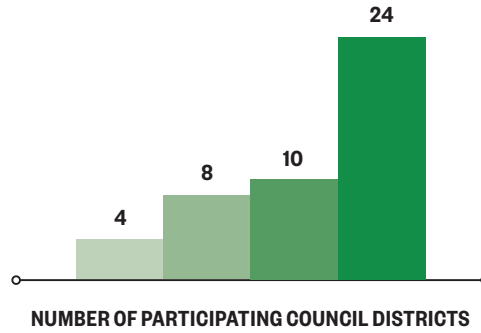
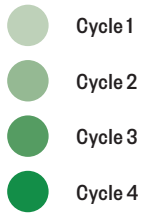
Total overall funds allocated to all winning projects: **\$31,894,025**

Number of winning projects: **114**

Average cost of a winning project: **\$279,772**



The Growth of PB



Research Methodology

Over 22,000 PB voter surveys were collected (paper surveys and digital surveys from those voting with pilot digital ballots).

- A random sample of 7,420 were analyzed. Note that all districts submitted voter surveys with the exception of Districts 32, 44, and 47.

264 PB implementation surveys were completed by Council district staff and delegate committee facilitators, and analyzed by researchers.

- 164 of 179 assemblies were reported on, and all participating districts reported to researchers information about at least some of their assemblies.
- 22 of 24 districts reported on their outreach and idea collection methods and on the delegate phase.
- In addition, 56 delegate committee facilitators in 15 districts reported to researchers about their committees and experience as facilitators.

13 in-depth interviews with community-based organizations that were contracted by the city to conduct PB outreach.

What does PB look like across the city?

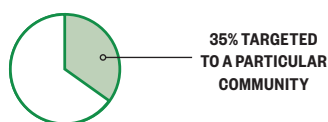
This cycle, PB researchers asked Council Member staff from the participating districts to report on various components of the process. This reporting was used to generate a picture of PB in the city, as well as to make recommendations for improvement

The Idea Collection Phase: Neighborhood Assemblies and PB Idea Collection

Participating districts held 179 neighborhood assemblies across the city.

- Of these, approximately one third (35%) targeted particular communities, such as youth, seniors and public housing residents.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSEMBLIES



- About a third (34%) of assemblies had language support (interpretation or translation) and nearly half (47%) provided food to participants. Fewer districts provided childcare (13%).
- Most districts (63%) partnered with at least one community-based organization when hosting an assembly; staff

report that a total of 63 community-based organizations around the city partnered with a Council office to host an assembly.

- The most common outreach methods for neighborhood assemblies and idea collection were online (social media and emailing) and flyering. The least common outreach method was door-knocking.
- Approximately 80% of reporting districts conducted outreach in a language other than English.
- Districts reported collecting approximately 5,084 project ideas.
 - In addition to neighborhood assemblies, the most common methods for collecting ideas were idea cards filled out during outreach (64% of reporting districts); online idea collection via OpenPlans (82% of reporting districts); and idea collection at non-assembly meetings (68% of reporting districts).

The Budget Delegate Phase

- Among reporting districts, less than half (44%) of those who signed up to be delegates at the beginning of the process ended up serving actively through the delegate phase (attended more than half of the delegate meetings).
- There were a total of 606 active budget delegates across the city.
- In addition to asking for budget delegate volunteers at neighborhood assembly meetings, districts relied on online methods to recruit budget delegates: the most common recruitment methods were email/e-blasts and social media.
- Most districts held one orientation meeting for budget delegates. Six districts held two orientations, and two districts reported holding three orientations.
- To boost inclusive participation, many districts provided food at delegate orientations. However, relatively few districts provided child care, metro cards, or language supports for non-English speakers at delegate orientations.
- Findings show that additional emphasis on budget delegate facilitator training and support would be beneficial, as more

than half of surveyed facilitators (54%) had not attended a facilitator training and 75% had not joined a facilitator-support conference call.

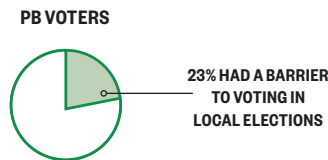
- Most surveyed delegate committees utilized tools to consider issues of community need during the project development phase: approximately half of reporting facilitators had used district needs maps and district profiles, two-thirds had used a project evaluation matrix, and 80% had made site visits or done field research.
- Reporting from both Council staff and delegate committee facilitators indicates relatively limited direct interaction between budget delegates and city agencies, outside of initial agency briefings for delegates: all reporting districts noted that Council district staff served as intermediaries between delegates and city agencies; 4 districts reported that delegates emailed with agencies, 2 districts reported that additional meetings were set up between delegates and agencies, 1 district reported phone calls between delegates and agency staff.

The PB vote

PB engaged diverse community members, many of whom have barriers to vote or are not otherwise active in their communities:

Of Cycle 4 PB voters:

- **The majority (57%) identified as people of color.** This compares to 47% of local election voters and 66% of the total population of the districts.
- **Nearly half (44%) earned under \$50,000 a year.** This is comparable with the overall population of the districts (45%).
- **More than a quarter (28%) were born outside the U.S.** This compares to 38% of the total population of the districts.
- **Approximately 1 in 5 cast a ballot in a language other than English.**
- **About half (51%) were not part of a community group or organization.**
- **Nearly a quarter (23%) had a barrier to voting in regular elections, including:**
 - 12% who reported they could not vote because they were under 18.
 - 10% who reported they could not vote because they were not a U.S. citizen.



Different outreach methods engaged different communities in the PB vote.

In particular:

- **People who heard about PB online/ via social media or from a Council member tended to be white, higher income, U.S.-born, and English speaking.**

Of those who heard about PB online/ via social media

- 72% were white, compared to 43% of white PB voters overall.
- 89% did not have a barrier to voting in regular elections, compared to 77% of PB voters overall.
- 92% were primary English speakers, compared to 81% of PB voters overall.
- 84% were born in the U.S. compared to 72% of PB voters overall.
- 78% earned \$50,000 or above, compared to 56% of PB voters overall.

Of those who heard about PB through a Council member:

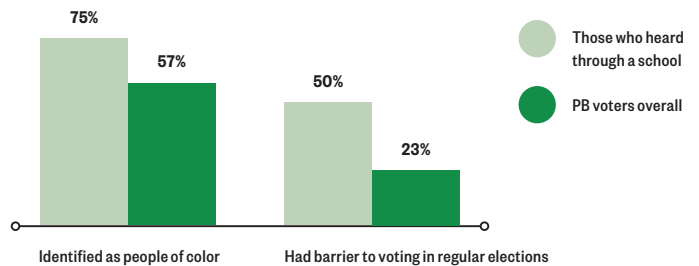
- 57% were white, compared to 43% of PB voters overall.
- 91% did not have a barrier to voting in regular elections, compared to 77% of PB voters.
- 80% were born in the U.S. compared to 72% of PB voters overall.
- 68% earned \$50,000 or above, compared to 56% of PB voters overall.

People who heard about PB from a community group, via door knocking, or from a school tended to be people of color, lower income, more likely foreign-born and non-English speaking.

Of those who heard about PB through a school:

- 75% were people of color, compared to 57% of PB voters overall.
- 50% had a barrier to voting in regular elections, compared to 23% of PB voters overall.

DIFFERENT OUTREACH METHODS REACH DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES



- 30% were non-English speaking, compared to 19% of PB voters overall.
- 40% were born outside the U.S., compared to 28% of PB voters overall.

Of those who heard about PB from a community group:

- 67% were people of color compared to 57% of PB voters overall.
- 56% earned under \$50,000, compared to 44% of PB voters overall.

Of those who heard about PB because someone came to their door:

- 71% were people of color, compared to 57% of PB voters overall.
- 32% were born outside the US, compared to 28% of PB voters overall.
- 57% earned under \$50,000 compared to 44% of PB voters overall.

Recommendations

This cycle was a pivotal step in the growth of PB in New York City, with a dramatic expansion of the process and new coordinating support and resources dedicated by the City Council Speaker's office. As PB continues to grow and solidify its place as a vibrant and unique civic engagement process in the city, steps should be taken to ensure it remains a sufficiently resourced process centered on the engagement of a diverse cross-section of New Yorkers. Key recommendations for the upcoming cycle are:

Expand and sustain central resources for the PB process as it continues to grow.

- Dedicate additional resources to PB project funding to allow for larger, more substantive projects.
- Advocate for new pots of money for PB, including non-capital discretionary funding.

Maintain a focus on the participation of traditionally disenfranchised New Yorkers, whose involvement is a priority of PB, and ensure the PB process is accessible.

- Encourage districts to provide supports (in the form of interpretation and translation, food at meetings, childcare and metro cards) at all stages of the PB process. Ensure that social media and online outreach and communication strategies are supplemented by in-person, face-to-face strategies which research demonstrates reach more traditionally marginalized communities.
- Ensure that digital vote sites are supplemented by paper ballots, and are accessible to non-English speaking PB voters.

Promote opportunities for PB participants to learn new skills and build relationships with those in government.

- Expand training opportunities for PB participants, particularly budget delegates, delegate committee facilitators, and district committee members.
- Promote additional interaction between PB participants and those in government, such as Council district staff and city agency staff.

Ensure that PB remains community driven and considers issues of equity and need.

- Ensure that community members and community-based organizations are involved in the governance and evaluation of PB. Maintain a focus on equity and need at all phases of PB.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2014-2015

City Council Members

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Council Member Ben Kallos, District 5
Council Member Helen Rosenthal, District 6
Council Member Mark Levine, District 7
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Council Member Jumaane Williams, District 45
Council Member Mark Treyger, District 47

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Arts & Democracy Project
Brooklyn College
Center for Urban Pedagogy
Citizen's Committee for NYC
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Community Development Project at the Urban Justice Center
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Desis Rising Up and Moving
El Puente
FIERCE
Getting Out & Staying Out
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New Yorkers for Parks
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Red Hook Initiative
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WeAct
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About the Authors

The Community Development Project (CDP) at the Urban Justice Center strengthens the impact of grassroots organizations in New York City's low-income and other excluded communities. We partner with community organizations to win legal cases, publish community-driven reports, assist with the formation of new organizations and cooperatives, and provide technical and transactional assistance.

For more information about CDP please visit:
cdp.urbanjustice.org
www.researchfororganizing.org