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PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING
IN THE LOCAL SPHERE



Diputació
Barcelona

#DibaOberta

WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING?

At Barcelona Provincial Council we see participatory budgeting as an innovative methodology for the purpose of involving citizens in the decision-making process on how part of the public budget will be invested.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

Participatory budgeting consists of different stages. Barcelona Provincial Council presents you with a series of recommendations for each one of them.

STAGES OF PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING:

Fostering the process STAGE 01

Designing the process STAGE 02

Collecting proposals STAGE 03

Screening proposals STAGE 04

Prioritising proposals STAGE 05

Announcing results STAGE 06

Evaluating the project STAGE 07



Fostering the process

Fostering the process

STAGE 01

The first stage is to foster the participatory process; in other words, the point at which the process begins. At this stage it is important to take the following considerations into account:

- › **Fostering the process** must be managed, preferably, by the **mayor's office** or **the city council's public participation department**, with the initial or progressive involvement of other city council departments, especially **the financial department**.
- › It is necessary to anticipate the active involvement of the **opposition** throughout the whole process, whether in **ad hoc committees** (steering groups, monitoring commissions, one-off meetings, etc.) or in existing **fixed committees** (people's councils, territorial councils, plenary sessions, etc.).
- › The stage for **implementing** the proposals that emerge from participatory budgeting must be incorporated into the process **schedule**.
- › The process should ideally take place once **every two years** and should preferably begin during the **first year in office**.



Designing the process

Designing the process

STAGE 02

The second stage consists of designing the process. In this stage the following points must be considered:

- › **The amount** of funds that are to be allocated to participatory budgeting must be **substantial**; in other words, it must have the **capacity to influence** municipal policies.
- › **The expected impact** of the participatory process must be **sustainable** in terms of the municipal **resources** available and must have the capacity to **endure over time**.
- › The **rules of engagement**, which will define such participatory budgets, must be **established** at the **beginning** of the process in a **reciprocal** manner with **the city council's specialised team and political team** as well as **citizens**, whether through an **existing committee** (people's council, sectorial council, territorial council, etc.) or through the creation of an **ad hoc committee**. These rules of procedure must be **flexible and revisable** over time.



Collecting proposals

STAGE 03

The third stage involves the collection of proposals; during this period it is important to make sure that two factors have been determined:

- › The first concerns **who** may propose actions: either only **citizens in an individual capacity, who are registered as residents of the municipality and are over the age of 16 years old**; or it can be opened to other profiles, such as members of the **commercial and business sector** linked to the municipality (**Business Activities Tax**), **organisations registered in the municipal register or second-home owners**. Furthermore, undertaking specific measures to involve those **citizens who normally do not participate** (young people, women, the elderly, immigrants, etc.) should be explored.
- › The second point concerns the way in which **proposals** are collected. In this case, a combination of **online and offline methodologies** is recommended. For the purpose of facilitating understanding and future evaluation, it is recommended that proposals are articulated in a simple manner; a good way to do so being through a **form**.



Screening proposals

STAGE 04

The fourth stage involves the screening of proposals. During this stage two factors must be taken into account: the definition of criteria and the establishment of screening mechanisms.

It is recommended that criteria are elaborated in a joint manner, with the involvement of both the city council's specialised team and political team as well as citizens. These criteria must be public and must be determined before initiating the participatory budgeting process.

The proposed measures must be:

01 GENERAL CRITERIA

- › **Legally and technically viable**
- › **Within municipal competence**
- › **Of general interest**
- › **Inclusive and respectful of human rights**
- › **Unconnected to those who will implement them.**

02 FINANCIAL CRITERIA

- › **Financially viable**
- › **Financially limited**
- › **Different to those foreseen in ordinary expenses or in city council investment.**

03 TERRITORIAL CRITERIA

- › **Previously determined in terms of the total cost (budget) or the number of projects per territory (district/ neighbourhood) of the municipality, where required.**

CRITERIA



GENERAL CRITERIA

FINANCIAL CRITERIA

TERRITORIAL CRITERIA



Screening proposals

STAGE 04

MECHANISMS

The following four mechanisms shall be used for the purpose of screening proposals:

01 RECEPTION

Firstly, proposals must be **received in person** (with the support of specialised facilitators) **and online**, where applicable.

02 APPLICATION OF CRITERIA (I)

Once proposals have been received by the city council, **the specialised participation team** (with the implication of other **departments** if necessary) must apply the previously approved **criteria** and **evaluate** the proposals **from a financial perspective**. Afterwards, **citizens must be contacted** (explaining why it was rejected, that it will be merged with other projects or confirming progress to the next stage, etc.).

03 DELIBERATION

The **deliberation** process begins alongside **citizens** with the aim of **gathering, exploring, defining and selecting** the proposals. This measure can be undertaken, for example, **through a participatory committee, participatory workshops** or through other measures open to citizens.

04 APPLICATION OF CRITERIA (II)

The city council's **citizen participation team** (with the implication of other **departments**, if necessary) will then **reassess** the approved proposals **from a technical and financial perspective** by drafting a **report** for each proposal.

RECEPTION

APPLICATION OF CRITERIA (I)

DELIBERATION

APPLICATION OF CRITERIA (II)



Prioritising proposals

STAGE 05

The proposals, having been assessed technically and financially, move on to the **prioritisation stage**, the fifth phase of the process.

The prioritisation of proposals may be conducted **in person** (through specialised facilitators, a consultancy firm, etc.) or **online** (with specific software), wherever necessary. **Specific measures for citizens** who normally **experience difficulties in participating** (young people, women, the elderly, immigrants, etc.) must be explored at all times.

Be that as it may, **the prioritisation criteria** must be clear:

- › What will be the maximum and minimum number of proposals that may be voted on?
- › What will be the maximum amount per person that votes?
- › Will any type of territorial distribution be taken into account?
- › Who may vote? (in this case, it is recommended that voters are **over the age of 16** and are registered as residents in the municipality)



Announcing results

STAGE 06

The sixth stage concerns the results of the process. Here, two factors must be taken into account: how the results will be announced and the way in which monitoring is designed.

ANNOUNCING RESULTS

Results may be announced in person (community groups, committees, city boards, audiences, etc.) or online (websites, social media, etc.). This should also be combined with regular **media channels** (radio, television, municipal magazines and bulletin, door drops, information boards, etc.).

It is recommended that successful proposals contain as much **information** as possible:

- › **Name and brief explanation**
- › **Number of votes** obtained
- › **Technical and financial** evaluation
- › Approximate implementation **schedule**
- › Territorial **location**
- › Specific **development details**
- › **Traceability**

MONITORING THE PROJECT

The implementation of proposals must be **monitored** in a **participatory** manner internally (through the city council's **specialised team and political team**) and externally (through the city council's **specialised team, political representatives and citizens** who have presented proposals or participated in the evaluation stage).

Monitoring must be formalised through an **ad hoc** participatory **committee**, an existing participatory **committee** or through one-off **meetings and assemblies**.



Evaluating the project

STAGE 07

Finally, the participatory process reaches the evaluation stage.

- › All participatory budgeting processes must **evaluate** the project in a **participatory manner** with the city council's **specialised team**, along with the involvement of the **political team and citizens**.
- › This **participatory evaluation** must be conducted through an existing **monitoring committee** (people's council, monitoring commission), through online **questionnaires** or through **working sessions** or one-off **workshops**.

Communication

Finally, a good communication strategy is essential throughout the whole process.

Different communication channels must be combined during the different stages of the process:

- › Traditional media (radio, television, municipal bulletin or magazine)
- › Internet (website, social media, email, applications, mass emailing, etc.)
- › Face-to-face events (meetings, street information points, stands at fairs, etc.)
- › Other means (brochures, leaflets, posters, billboards or through door drops).

Key questions

Before embarking on a participatory budgeting process in your municipality, it is important that you dedicate time to reflecting on several aspects, such as the following:

FOSTERING THE PROJECT

- › Who has the initiative to foster participatory budgeting? The specialised team? The government team? Is it at the request of the opposition or citizens?
- › Which of the city council's departments will foster the process? Will the city council's different departments collaborate from the beginning of the process? Which departments will that include?
- › What role do you think the opposition must play during the participatory process? In which stages should it intervene?
- › Will the process be conducted by the city council's specialised team or an external consultancy firm? Will the consultancy firm intervene throughout the entire process or just in some of the stages?
- › How long do you anticipate the whole participatory process to last? Do you deem that the implementation of voting results is part of the participatory budgeting process? How long do you expect it to last?

DESIGNING THE PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROCESS

- › How much of the municipal budget will be at the disposal of citizens? What percentage of the total budget does it represent?
- › What budget item does it concern (investment, excess, current expenditure, etc.)?
- › How often has the budget been presented? Annually? Biannually?
- › How will the rules of engagement of the participatory budget be defined? Will any existing participatory committees intervene? The people's council? A sectorial or territorial council? Will a specific committee be created? How will it operate? What will it do?
- › Who will participate in drafting the rules of engagement of the participatory budget? Just the government team? Or only the specialised team? Will citizens participate?

COLLECTING THE PROPOSALS MADE BY CITIZENS

- › How will the proposals be collected? What methodology will be used? Will a specific participatory committee act as an intermediary? Will it be done online?
- › Who will be able to present their proposals? Just organisations? Citizens in an individual capacity? Will proposals need to come from a certain number of citizens, even if they are not part of an organisation? Will it only be possible to present a proposal if you are registered as a resident of the municipality? Will there be limits?
- › Have any measures been put forward for the most vulnerable groups or those that are rarely represented (the elderly, women, immigrants, young people, etc.)?

SCREENING PROPOSALS

- › How will proposals be screened? Will a specific participatory committee act as an intermediary? Have any rules of procedure been created?
- › What course will the projects follow once they have been received by the specialised department that promoted participatory budgeting?
- › What criteria will be established? Technical? Political? Financial?
- › Who will draw up these criteria? The specialised team? The government team? The committees? Or a mixed participation council?

SELECTING PROPOSALS

- › How will votes be cast? In person? Only online? Or will both methodologies be implemented?
- › Will there be any constraints when voting on proposals? Will you only be able to vote on a certain number of them? Must they be prioritised? Will there be a financial limit? A territorial limit? Or limits according to the field?
- › Who will be able to vote? Only organisations? People registered as residents of the municipality? Business owners and citizens with a second residence in the municipality? Or everyone with no restrictions? Have any specific measures been put forward for the most vulnerable groups or those that are rarely represented (the elderly, women, immigrants, young people, etc.)?

RESULTS OF PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

- › How will voting results be announced? What media or channels will be used? Will it be conducted through the people's council or another council?
- › What type of information will be gathered? The budget? The measures? The implementation schedule?
- › Are there any plans for a committee to monitor the selected proposals? How will it operate? Will it be carried out through the people's council or another council?
- › Who will be a part of the monitoring committee? Just the specialised team? Only the government team? Just citizens? Or a mixed council?

EVALUATING THE PROCESS

- › Are there any plans to conduct an evaluation of the process or of any of its stages? Are there any plans to create an evaluating committee? How will it operate?
- › Who will participate in the evaluation? Just the specialised team? Only the government team? Just citizens? A mixed council? Or does it depend on the stage?



Diputació | Àrea d'Atenció
Barcelona | a les Persones

Department of Equality and Citizen Services
Coexistence, Diversity and Citizen Participation Service
Recinte Mundet. Edifici Migjorn, 3a
Passeig de la Vall d'Hebron, 171
Telephone 934 049 220
s.conviven.participa@diba.cat