



NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
**SPEAKER**  
**COREY JOHNSON**  
**CYCLE 9**

# **RULEBOOK**

**REAL MONEY** ★ **REAL PROJECTS** ★ **REAL POWER**

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
**PARTICIPATORY**  
**BUDGETING**   





## ABOUT THIS RULEBOOK

This booklet was originally developed by the Citywide Committee for Participatory Budgeting\* in New York City (PBNYC) in July 2011 and is revised annually through input from stakeholders and staff at the New York City Council. While PBNYC is inspired by Participatory Budgeting experiences throughout North America and the world, the Citywide Committee drafted these guidelines to reflect the unique needs, issues, and interests of New York City's communities.

This rulebook remains a work in progress. Together with NYC's diverse communities, we will continue to develop and improve the process as it unfolds in future years.

## INTRODUCTION

As members of the New York City Council who represent diverse districts, we are pleased to embark on the ninth cycle of a new form of democracy: Participatory Budgeting in New York City. Through this exciting initiative, we are putting budget decisions directly in the hands of the people those decisions impact the most: the residents of our districts.

Over the past few cycles, PBNYC has expanded to all five boroughs, making the process more accessible and transparent while opening up local government to all communities.

In Cycle 8, over 118,000 people across 32 districts voted on how to spend close to \$40 million in public funds. The New York City Council partnered with Girls for Gender Equity, Coro New York Leadership Center, Department of Youth and Community Development, LinkNYC, and other community-based organizations to reach more New Yorkers.

We are proud to present this rulebook to you and are excited to launch Cycle 9.

**Let the participating begin!**



# WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING?

Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget. PB gives people real power to make real decisions over real money. The process was first developed in Brazil in 1989. There are now over 1,500 participatory budgeting processes around the world, most of them at the municipal level.

## PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN NEW YORK CITY

PBNYC enables New York City residents to propose and vote on projects in their City Council districts. Projects that receive the most votes will be funded through a Council Member's discretionary funds. Discretionary funds are allocated on an annual basis by Council Members based on their understanding of community needs.

Residents in each participating district will decide how to spend at least \$1 million dollars of Council Member capital discretionary funds. PB funds can be used for physical infrastructure\* projects that benefit the public, cost at least \$50,000 and have a lifespan of at least 5 years. Projects such as local improvements to schools, parks, libraries, housing and other public spaces can be funded.

Council Members then submit winning projects to be allocated in the City's upcoming fiscal year budget. The projects are then implemented by City agencies.

## OUR GOALS: WHY PB?

**We aim for PBNYC to have the following impact:**

### 1. Open up Government

Allow residents a greater role in local spending decisions and inspire increased transparency in New York City government.

### 2. Expand Civic Engagement

Engage more people in politics and in their communities, particularly marginalized groups, including, but not limited to: young people, people of color, immigrants, low-income people, the formerly incarcerated and others.

### 3. Develop New Community Leaders

Build the skills, knowledge and capacity of community members.

### 4. Build Community

Inspire people to more deeply engage in their communities and create new networks, organizations and community economic opportunity.

### 5. Make Public Spending More Equitable\*

Generate spending decisions that are fairer, so resources go where they are most needed.

# OUR PRINCIPLES: HOW WE WORK

We strive to implement PBNYC according to the following principles:

## 1. Empowerment\*

Enable local people to decide how PB works in their communities and across the city.

## 2. Transparency\*

Share information and make decisions as openly as possible.

## 3. Inclusion\*

Make special efforts to engage people who face obstacles to participating, are often excluded, or are disillusioned with government.

## 4. Equity\*

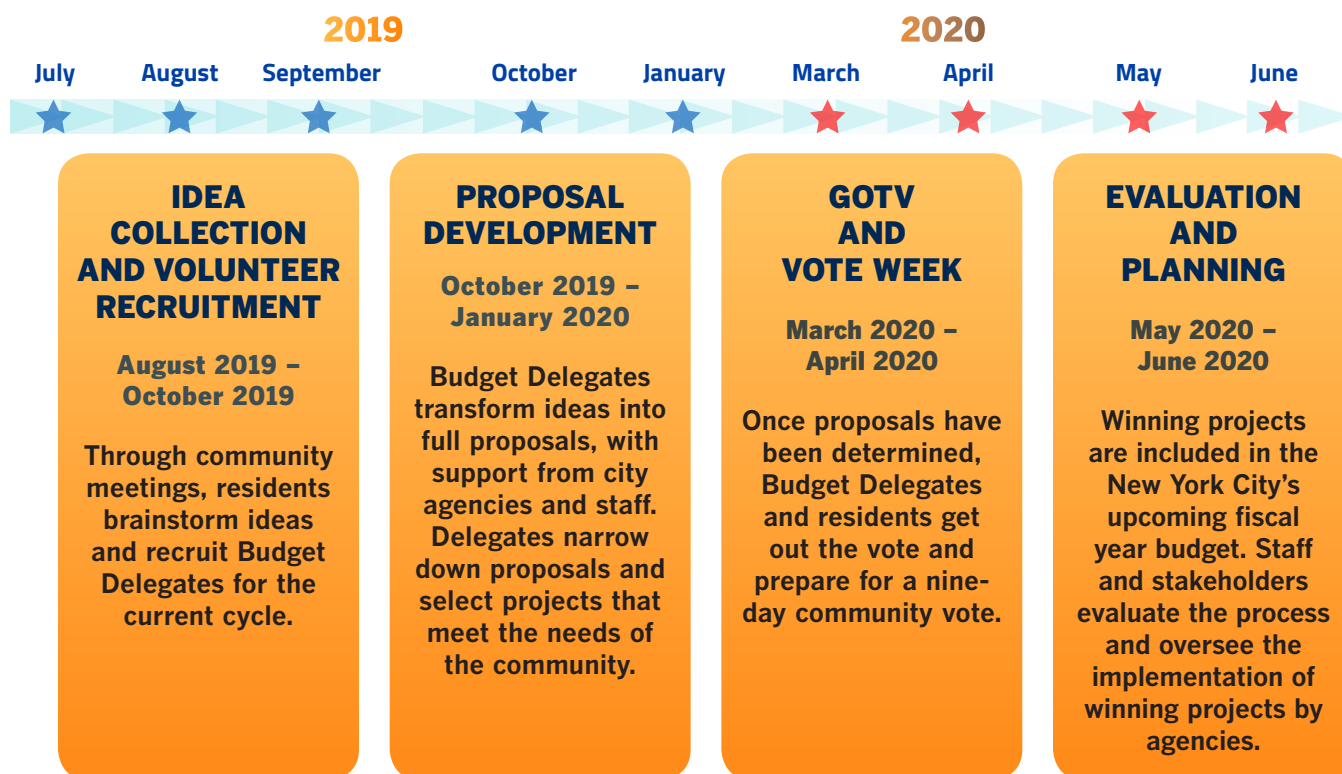
Ensure that the decision-making process for the allocation of public dollars is accessible to every person — including, but not limited to, those who have been historically underrepresented based on race, ethnicity, age, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, and religion — and that spending decisions most benefit high-needs communities.

## 5. Community\*

Bring people together across traditional lines of division to work together for the good of the whole community.

## TIMELINE: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN?

The PBNYC process involves a series of meetings that feed into the City's annual budget cycle. The 2019-2020 cycle has four main phases, beginning in August 2019 and continuing into 2020.





# RULES: HOW DOES IT WORK?

## Collect Ideas & Recruit Budget Delegates: Neighborhood Assemblies\*, Informal Idea Collection and Online Idea Map

- Each district will collect project ideas and recruit Budget Delegates through all of the following methods:
- At least four special meetings for underrepresented community members (e.g. youth, non-English speakers, seniors, public housing residents, etc.).
- Informal idea collection at public events and spaces where there is a high concentration of underrepresented community members. At these events, volunteers and District Staff should explain the PB process to attendees, collect ideas, and recruit delegates.
- Anyone is welcome to propose project ideas.
- People can volunteer to serve as Budget Delegates if they:
  - Have a meaningful connection to the district, i.e., live in the district, work in the district, own a business in the district, attend school in the district, or are parents of children who attend school in the district, etc.
- Districts should recruit delegates and facilitators who represent the district's demographics and geography.
- District Offices must provide the following information neighborhood assemblies:
  1. Process overview, including project eligibility
  2. Previously funded projects (if applicable)
  3. Status of previously funded projects (if applicable)
  4. Importance of equity throughout the process
- When planning neighborhood assemblies, District Offices may consider providing food, child-care, travel support (MetroCards) and interpretation services when possible to best support the participation of underrepresented community members, but only do so after consulting the Office of the General Counsel first.

## Develop Proposals: Budget Delegate Meetings

- All delegates must attend an orientation session and sign a delegate agreement.
- Each delegate committee should have one or two trained facilitators.
- At the delegate orientation, each Budget Delegate will join a committee to discuss and develop project proposals for a certain issue area or demographic group.
- Potential issue committees may include but are not limited to:
  1. Transportation

2. Public Safety
  3. Education
  4. Parks, Recreation & Environment
  5. Libraries
  6. Housing
- Delegates may also discuss with Council Member's staff whether to form a demographic committee. Demographic committees are meant to ensure maximum participation from people who might not otherwise participate, not to divide or separate sectors of the community. These committees will develop projects that specifically address the needs of their demographic group. Potential demographic committees may include but are not limited to:
    - Youth
    - Seniors
    - Non-English speaking communities in the district
    - In cases where there is a significant geographic divide in the district (such as a body of water), delegates may choose to form geography-based committees.
    - City Council staff may establish a limit for how many project proposals each committee will submit for the public vote.
    - When prioritizing projects, delegates will consider criteria that include need, impact and feasibility in reference with the Idea Ranking Tool.
    - Delegates from each committee will send final project proposals to District Staff by January 12, 2020.
    - Agencies will provide feedback through a form procedure coordinated by City Council Central Staff.

### **Project Expos (Optional)**

- At the Project Expos, Budget Delegates will present their project proposals to the community through a science fair format.
- Each district will hold at least one Project Expo and post project proposals online.
- Project Expos may be combined with the launch of the voting period.

### **Voting for Projects**

- People can vote for projects if they live in the district and are at least 11 years old or in 6th Grade\*.
- Anyone who serves as a Budget Delegate will be eligible to vote in his or her district and in the

district for which they serve as Budget Delegate.

- At the time of voting, all voters must satisfy the eligibility requirements by completing an affirmation.
- Each voter may select up to five projects and can only vote once per project.
- Voting Locations:
  - Each district will have at least six advertised voting locations, including:
    - Two or more large voting events;
    - At least four mobile voting events in places with a high concentration of underrepresented community members, (e.g. at senior centers, during lunch at schools in the district, etc.).
  - “Pop-Up” voting at subway stations and in high traffic areas to target hard to reach populations.
  - Each district will also offer weekday voting in the Council Member’s District Office.
  - Each district will offer absentee ballots to individuals with disabilities, limited mobility, out of town residents and active service members. Ballots can be mailed to district residents who request an absentee ballot. These ballots must be numbered and voter information must be tracked by the Council office to avoid duplicate voting. Ballots can be returned to the District Office in person or by mail and must be received by the end of vote week.
  - All voting events must be fully ADA compliant and accessible.
- Our goal is to provide full translation of ballots and surveys in the four languages most represented in the District as identified by District Staff.

**\*Unless a different age is indicated by the local Council Member.**

- Unless serving as a Budget Delegate, each voter may only cast one ballot each cycle.
- To ensure the integrity of the vote, all voting sites will be administered by staff or volunteers who have completed a poll worker training. All Council Member offices will use a standardized system of voter and ballot tracking.
- Budget Delegates can manage vote sites; however, they must be trained on campaigning guidelines. A copy of the campaigning guidelines must also be available at each of the poll sites.
- If there is a tie for the last bit of funding, the Council Member will resolve the tie. Options may include attempting to draw on additional funds to implement both proposals or funding the project that costs the least.
- In addition to their initial \$1 million allocation, Council Members receiving additional funds from the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President must use the entire allocation.



## Outreach & Engagement

- Outreach plans should be developed for Neighborhood Assemblies, Project Expo(s), GOTV and Vote Week phases. They should include both broad-based outreach to reach all parts of the district and targeted outreach to ensure engagement with under representative and disenfranchised communities.
- Materials provided by Central Staff will be translated into languages identified by District Office staff.
- Leading up to the Assemblies and Vote Week, districts should host at least three group outreach days (canvassing/subway) and at least two group phone banks.
- All public events should be publicized at least two weeks in advance, either online or through publicly displayed posters and fliers in the district.
- District Offices will recruit community-based organizations and coordinate with them for outreach for events.
- Outreach should include social media and traditional press, including local ethnic media outlets.
- District Offices are encouraged to utilize their e-newsletter list and/or send a mailer to constituents.
- Data (contact information) should be tracked and managed for general updates and announcements.

## Evaluation, Implementation & Monitoring

- After Vote Week, each district will hold at least one evaluation meeting.
- In each district, the District Committee will monitor the implementation of projects and address any problems that may arise with their local Council Member's Office.
- The City Council will monitor progress and implementation of winning projects.

## ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES:

There is a role for everyone in Participatory Budgeting, but different people have different responsibilities, based on their stake in the community. We encourage all community members to take part in the process.

### COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Anyone can participate, even if participation is limited to attending a single meeting or simply voting. For example,

- Identify local issues and needs
- Propose project ideas
- Provide input and feedback on project proposals
- Monitor and provide input on the implementation of projects
- Provide feedback on the PB process



- Volunteer to be Budget Delegates, if they are at least 11 years old and have a meaningful connection to the district, including live in the district, work in the district, own a business in the district, attend school in the district, are parents of children who attend school in the district, etc.
- Vote on project proposals, if they are at least 11 years old or at least in 6th Grade and live in the district.

## BUDGET DELEGATES\*

Budget Delegates do the critical work necessary to turn ideas into real projects.

- Research local issues
- Agree to put the needs of the community above their personal interests
- Learn about the budget process
- Discuss and prioritize project ideas based on the criteria of need, impact and feasibility
- Develop full project proposals and posters for expos, with assistance from experts.
- Update residents on project proposals and solicit feedback
- Serve as spokespeople for citywide and local media, when called upon
- Monitor and provide input on the implementation of projects
- Evaluate and provide feedback on the PB process
- Communicate delegate concerns and ideas to the District Committee and Citywide Committee

## FACILITATORS\*

Facilitators help residents participate effectively in neighborhood assemblies and Budget Delegate meetings. They are neutral parties that do not advocate for particular projects.

- Attend at least one facilitator training
- Facilitate group meetings and ensure that all participants are able to contribute
- Serve as the main point of contact between Council Member staff and Budget Delegates, help coordinate communication and resolve conflicts
- Remain neutral throughout the process, but work to ensure equity and that PBNYC principles are adhered to
- Connect delegates with information and resources
- Strive to keep delegates engaged throughout the entire process
- Ensure that notes are taken at meetings and distributed afterward
- Support delegates with the tools they need to research, assess and develop proposals, based on criteria that include feasibility, need and impact

## DISTRICT COMMITTEES

Each participating Council Member should convene a District Committee that meets regularly to provide oversight and assist with planning throughout the cycle. District committees are composed of community-based organizations, institutions, community leaders, and former Budget Delegates to manage PB locally. The make-up of the District Committee should be representative of the entire district, both geographically and demographically.

- Determine the number of neighborhood assemblies, and help plan and carry out said assemblies
- Arrange food, childcare, and interpretation for assemblies and meetings
- Recruit volunteers for outreach, assemblies, and Vote Week
- Distribute educational and materials about the PB process
- Develop and execute outreach plans to mobilize broad, inclusive and proportional community participation
- Facilitate neighborhood assemblies and budget delegate meetings
- Provide guidance and background information to budget delegates
- Serve as spokespeople for citywide and local media, when called upon
- Coordinate vote sites with District Staff
- Monitor project implementation
- Oversee any necessary changes to vetted projects, with Council Member offices, before the projects are submitted for the final ballot.
- Communicate with delegates and residents about progress on projects
- Provide orientation to new District Committee members
- Provide the following information at neighborhood assemblies and relevant events:
  1. PBNYC process including project eligibility
  2. Previously funded projects (if applicable)
  3. Status of previously funded projects (if applicable)
  4. The importance of equity

## COUNCIL MEMBER OFFICES

- Allow residents of each district to decide how to spend at least \$1 million of FY2021 capital discretionary funds
- Designate a staff person who commits to attending meetings convened by Central Staff and to coordinate PBNYC in the district, in collaboration with the District Committee
- Work with Central Staff and District Committee to recruit and train volunteers and interns
- Work with District Committee to coordinate and facilitate outreach to organizations, individuals,

and underrepresented communities

- Provide information on the budget funds and funded PB projects
- Secure spaces – in collaboration with the District Committee and Facilitators - for neighborhood assemblies, meetings and voting events, in accessible and ADA-compliant locations whenever possible
- Serve as a liaison between budget delegates, Central Staff and City Agencies
- Coordinate between Budget Delegates, Central Staff, and City Agencies to provide information on costs and feasibility
- Offer feedback and technical assistance on project proposals, presentations, and ballot text
- Determine eligibility of projects in collaboration with the city agencies and Central Staff
- Create a plan to increase voter participation online
- Coordinate outreach and serve as spokespeople to ethnic and local media
- Coordinate and oversee Vote Week in collaboration with the District Committee
- Oversee any changes to vetted projects with the District Committee
- Provide updates to Budget Delegates and the public during all stages of the PB process
- Work with Central Staff to ensure that funded projects are included in the City's budget and provide regular updates to district residents

## NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL CENTRAL STAFF

- Facilitate the PBNYC process and support District Staff
- Manage relationships with District Staff, City agencies and external partners
- Track participating district's progress
- Coordinate meetings for District Staff
- Work with City agencies to plan and hold presentations for budget delegates
- Provide participating districts with an online idea mapping tool and digital voting platform
- Design, edit, translate, layout and print materials
- Develop and conduct trainings and presentations on PBNYC
- Create guides and facilitator and budget delegate resources for District Offices
- Liaise with City agencies and collect agency feedback and updates
- Facilitate the Citywide Committee
- Oversee PB Fellows program



- Create & implement strategic press plan with citywide and ethnic media
- Create and maintain PBNYC page on official Council website
- Identify, recruit and deploy volunteers citywide for Vote Week
- Organize all PBNYC citywide and borough-wide events
- Provide tech devices for Vote Week
- Coordinate and manage ballot counting for all participating districts
- Provide status updates of previously funded projects on the Open Data Portal

## CITY AGENCIES\*

- Attend agency information sessions to provide Budget Delegates with feedback on proposed projects
- Provide Budget Delegates with relevant background information about their agency and about eligible projects
- Assess feasibility of all project proposals
- Provide cost estimates for all project proposals
- Offer feedback on all project proposals
- Work with Budget Delegates to make desired projects feasible within City guidelines
- Implement winning projects
- Provide updates on project implementation status

## COMMUNITY-BASED OUTREACH PROVIDERS

- Conduct outreach with the aim of collecting ideas and increasing voter participation in under-represented communities, as coordinated by Central Staff, in consultation with District Staff.

## PBNYC CITYWIDE COMMITTEE

The Citywide Committee guides and supports the PBNYC process across the participating districts.

- Advise Council in a manner that upholds the core values and principles of PBNYC.
- Provides support and advice towards overall PB process
- Advise in key challenges, opportunities and questions that emerge during the implementation of the process.
- Harness energy and the expertise of key partners
- Explore expansion opportunities for PBNYC
- Evaluate the process

- Discuss policies affecting the implementation and expansion of PBNYC
- Attend PB events and meetings in participating districts during each stage of PB
- Provide specialized support for the PB process, such as research, organizing, media, online engagement, social media, policy & budgeting, data visualization, and design
- Promote the PB process through the press, social media, and other networks
- Create and distribute educational materials about PB
- Mobilize broad, inclusive, and proportional community participation
- Provide assistance at neighborhood assemblies, delegate meetings, and/or budget delegate orientations
- Give feedback on PB rulebook
- Identify and recruit groups to support PB at the City & district level
- Ensure that the district-level PB processes are inclusive and consistent with the core goals of PBNYC
- District Committee representatives on the Citywide Committee will also serve as the voice of the local processes

## CITYWIDE COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE

- Whenever possible, decisions are made by consensus at meetings.
- Each member organization, district committee member, budget delegate, facilitator, and Council Member office has one vote.
- Working-groups are formed at various times throughout the process to ensure that certain critical aspects of PBNYC are carried out efficiently and effectively.

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

## **Allocate**

To distribute funds for a specific reason.

## **Budget Delegates**

Volunteers who turn ideas into project proposals for the vote.

## **Capital Budget**

Funds used in the City of New York to build or improve physical spaces like schools, streets, parks, libraries, community centers and other public spaces. Capital funds can only be used for physical infrastructure projects that will last at least five years, cost at least \$50,000 and benefit the public. For example, repairing a basketball court in a public park would be a capital project. However, repairing a basketball court in your backyard would not be a capital project because it would not benefit the public. Similarly, paying for staff and referees to run a basketball league would not be a capital project because it would not be an improvement to physical infrastructure.

## **City Agencies**

Government entities that implement city projects and upholds the standards and ordinances of their respective fields.

## **Community**

Residents of New York City, including those living in nonparticipating districts.

## **Empowerment**

Giving power or authority to a person or group.

## **Equality**

Being equal in rights, status, and opportunity.

## **Equity**

Equity is a broader concept than equality. It is not just about equal numbers, but is concerned more with fairness, justice, inclusion, and recognition of systemic oppression. A history of unequal investment has led to a city with an unequal distribution of resources. Equity is the proactive response to this opportunity gap, to ensure all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.

## **Expense Budget**

Pays for the day-to-day operating costs of the City, such as the salaries of teachers and police officers, supplies, contracted services with non-profits and debt service. This is like a household's annual budget that includes food, clothing, and childcare.

## **Facilitator**

Someone who helps a group of people understand their common objectives and achieve them, without taking a particular position in the discussion.

**Grassroots Democracy**

Political processes where as much decision-making authority as practical is shifted to the organization's lowest geographic level of organization.

**Implementation**

The process of putting a decision or plan into effect.

**Inclusion**

The act of including something, someone, or a group of people; making sure that everyone's voice is heard.

**Infrastructure**

The basic equipment and structures (such as roads, school buildings, parks) that are needed for a city to function.

**Marginalized Groups**

A group that is treated as insignificant or peripheral.

**Neighborhood Assemblies**

Informational sessions where community members brainstorm ideas to improve the district. These ideas then get passed along to budget delegates, who develop concrete proposals for the PB vote.

**Participatory Budgeting (PB)**

A democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget.

**Transparency**

Openness and honesty about the way decisions are made.







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