

FROM THE ASHES OF BANKRUPTCY:
AN ASSESSMENT OF THE COLLABORATIVE NATURE OF
THE CITY OF VALLEJO'S PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROCESS

A Thesis

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by

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Abstract
of
FROM THE ASHES OF BANKRUPTCY:
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THE CITY OF VALLEJO'S PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROJECT

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On April 18, 2012, the City of Vallejo adopted a participatory budgeting process that enables the public to influence the allocation of approximately \$3 million of revenue from their recently passed sales tax measure, Measure B. Vallejo is the first city in the nation to adopt participatory budgeting 'city-wide' and for general funding. Other communities, such as the 49th ward in Chicago and a few City Council Districts in New York City, have experimented with participatory budgeting on a limited basis, but not on the citywide scale that Vallejo has pursued. The use of participatory budgeting has the potential to “open up” local government and create a stronger connection between government and its citizens, as well as, better educate and empower citizens on how their tax money is spent.

In this thesis, I explore whether this participatory budgeting process in Vallejo can actually attain the public collaboration that it wishes to achieve, based on the

properties intrinsic to collaborative governance. To assess Vallejo's participatory budgeting plan and process, I first analyze the city's adopted Rulebook for the process in relation to the Center for Collaborative Policy at California State University, Sacramento's "Collaborative Public Involvement Framework". Additionally, I draw from interviews I conducted with various organizers of the process, including answers to questions ranging from an assessment of respondents' opinions about the process used in Vallejo, to their own evaluation of the rationale used in determining its various guidelines and rules.

I find that the process adopted in Vallejo fits many of the criteria for a collaborative public decision-making process but with four main caveats. First, the City Council's ability to override any decision made by the public potentially casts doubt over the public's actual ability to influence the process. Second, the short period between the City Council's approval of the process and its beginning creates a situation in which citizens might feel rushed to become educated on the budget and become involved in the process. Third, the city's heavy reliance on the Participatory Budgeting Project potentially presents implementation issues if the city wished to continue the process into a second year. Last, the lack of concrete performance measures could potentially provide confusion around whether the process is an ultimate success.

With these caveats, the process that Vallejo has chosen to undertake presents a potentially positive development in the area of public participation in public budget

decision-making. Depending on the results of the process, participatory budgeting could potentially spread to other cities throughout the Bay Area and the country as a whole.

_____, Committee Chair
Edward L. Lascher, Jr., Ph.D.

Date

DEDICATION

To Henry Giron

3/16/1984 – 2/17/2012

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BABABOOEY!!!

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

When I started thinking about what topic to pursue for my master's thesis, I had only one criteria in mind. I wanted to find the *Moneyball* (Lewis, 2003) concept of local government, a potentially game-changing way of thinking that few knew about. Lucky for me, around this time I was told that the City of Vallejo had just chosen to implement the first city-wide process of participatory budgeting in the United States and were going to use it to determine how to spend approximately \$3 million of the cities' recently passed sales tax increase. I had found my subject.

Currently, all levels of government are having issues balancing their books, and in turn, gaining the public's trust. More and more cities and counties are declaring bankruptcy (Christie, 2012), local government officials are being charged with corruption (Palmeri, 2010), and gridlock in Sacramento only gets worse with each passing day (Goldmacher, 2010). With all this, it is hard to blame citizens for becoming cynical towards their government and its ability to spend their hard-earned tax dollars. A new relationship between the taxpayer and their government is needed.

The participatory budgeting process in Vallejo potentially brings that new relationship. Participatory budgeting attempts to give citizens the opportunity for more meaningful input into how they spend their local tax dollars. The process can also potentially restore that trust in their local officials' ability to understand the needs of their community. Local governments will be watching the process that unfolds in Vallejo and the ramifications it could have for their own local communities. Vallejo has also "stuck

its neck out” to try something new and the risk that comes with doing so is large, but the potential reward of bridging the gap between the government and its citizens is large as well.

This thesis will evaluate the collaborative nature of the City of Vallejo’s plan for their participatory budgeting process that will take place from July 2012 through May 2013, and possibly into the future. Will the process adopted by Vallejo actually empower its citizens in the budgeting process? Is there potential for the city and its staff to fully buy-into and embrace the process and its eventual outcome? What does this process mean for other cities and counties in California and throughout the country? I will attempt to answer these questions throughout this thesis. What follows in this chapter is an introduction to participatory budgeting and its origins, the City of Vallejo’s decision to adopt this process, and an overview of the remaining chapters of this thesis.

Participatory Budgeting

Participatory budgeting is a public process where citizens vote on how to allocate funding within their government’s budget. This process usually takes the form of initial neighborhood assemblies where priorities are established and representative delegates selected, delegate meetings where volunteers choose prospective projects, and then community-wide voting on the proposed projects by the public. Usually, the public selects winning projects until the cost of the projects reach the sum of allocated funding. The city then implements the projects, which presumably address the most pressing needs of the community (Participatory Budgeting Project, 2012). Up to this point, the role of the public official in this process varies. Some cities allow the citizens to have the final

say, while for others the vote is simply advisory. The hands-on nature of public officials in every step of the process also varies. No two versions of participatory budgeting are the same.

Experts generally agree that the process started in the City of Porto Alegre in Brazil in 1989. After years of political corruption and decaying infrastructure needs, the newly elected Workers Party instituted the process to gauge the exact needs of the community. The process has occurred annually ever since and has appeared to produce positive results. From 1989 to 1996, access to clean water improved from 80% to 98% while sewage service improved from 46% to 85%. The number of children in public schools has also doubled and roads significantly improved. Most importantly, revenue from taxes increased 50%, suggesting more motivation by citizens to pay into the system (Wagle, 2003). Ever since the inception of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, the process has spread to over 1,000 different governments throughout the world (Participatory Budgeting Project, 2012).

Despite the rapid expansion of participatory budgeting, it has not taken hold in North America outside of a few instances. The first example in North America began in Guelph, Canada, just outside Toronto. Beginning in 1999, the city established the Neighborhood Support Coalition that would distribute funding to various neighborhood projects. However, local organizations and sponsors have to secure the funding for the Coalition, not the local government. To determine projects, residents meet in local neighborhood groups and elect delegates to represent them at the Coalition's finance committee. This finance committee, with constant input from the neighborhood groups,

determines which projects to fund. Roughly 10,000 people participate in the neighborhood groups per year and the process saves the city an average of \$250,000 annually. While not pure participatory budgeting, city staff credit the coalition process for helping them to gain a better understanding of community needs (Pinnington, 2009). Since Guelph's implementation of participatory budgeting, the cities of Toronto and Vancouver have also adopted forms of the practice, both tied to community housing (Participatory Budgeting Project, 2012).

Chicago's 49th Ward

The first, and to date most successful, participatory budgeting process within the United States began in the City of Chicago's 49th Ward in 2009. The Ward's Alderman, Joe Moore, made the decision to turn over his discretionary budget (roughly \$1.3 million annually) to the citizens of his Ward to decide how to spend it. The 49th Ward's process consists of neighborhood meetings where the community establishes their priorities and selects delegates to represent them. These delegates then develop a "menu" of potential projects to present to the community. The Ward then attempts to educate the public by initiating an information campaign and allowing the various advocates of each project to make their case for their respective projects. Each voter then votes on a percentage of the budget that is to be dedicated to street resurfacing and then other projects for the remaining funding. One notable aspect of the 49th Ward's process is that it is open to all residents of the Ward who are over 16 years old, regardless of citizenship and voter registration (Lerner, 2012). The most recent participatory budgeting election in the Ward had 913 participants, approximately a 3% turnout. Funded projects ranged from

improvements to a busy intersection, additional bike lanes, and a new playground, among others (Moore, 2011).

The City of Vallejo

The City of Vallejo, located in Solano County and one of the largest cities in the Bay Area with a population over 115,000, became the first city in the United States to adopt a city-wide participatory budgeting process for a portion of the cities' recent sales tax increases on April 18, 2012 (York, 2012).

Up until recently, most people only knew Vallejo as the home of Marine World (now Discovery Kingdom) and where the search for the Zodiac Killer still takes place. This changed in 2008 when, on a 7-0 vote, Vallejo became the largest California city to declare bankruptcy. The city held that unfortunate title until the recent declaration of bankruptcy by the City of Stockton. While there are many factors that led to the bankruptcy, many have pointed to the large percentage of its budget going towards public safety worker pay and benefits, topping 80% of its general fund, as the main culprit. Since the infamous events in 2008, the city has become the prime example of poor budgetary planning and a culture of self-interest (Lewis, 2011). After taking various steps to address the problem, such as new mechanisms for raising revenue, negotiating new employee contracts, and increasing employee contributions to health and pension plans, Vallejo was released from bankruptcy in 2011 (Jones, 2011).

The bankruptcy adds an interesting context to the city's recent adoption of participatory budgeting. As part of its plan to increase revenues and balance its books, the city placed Measure B, a one-percent sales tax increase, on the November 2011 ballot.

The city's stated use for the sales tax revenue was to enhance 9-1-1 emergency response, public safety services, youth and senior programs, street repairs, economic development, along with other city services (City of Vallejo, 2012). The tax increase narrowly passed by 159 votes with the city expecting to raise \$9.8 million per year (Solano County Registrar of Voters, 2011).

With the sales tax measure having passed, Councilmember Marti Brown presented a motion before the city council to use a participatory budgeting process to determine how to spend a portion of these funds. Specifically, the city would use the process to allocate 30% of this new revenue, roughly \$3 million. The motion also set aside \$200,000 to hire consultants for the process, eventually hiring the Participatory Budgeting Project to oversee the process (York, 2012). The motion passed just as narrowly as Measure B, by a vote of 4 to 3.

Opposition to the process centered on a few points and included criticism from Vallejo's Mayor, Osby Davis. Davis noted a concern that the public could potentially be upset if the participatory budgeting process selected projects that were not in line with the stated goals of Measure B (the uses of the tax were not formalized in order to qualify as a general tax, thus only requiring a majority vote). Other concerns included whether the same people that are already involved in city issues would be the only ones participating in this new participatory budgeting process. Additionally, any projects that the community selects through the participatory budgeting process are still up for City Council approval. This potentially creates a wedge between the Council and the participants if the Council does not agree with the outcome (York, 2012).

Despite these reservations, the city has moved forward, and nears the end of the process. The Participatory Budgeting Project currently oversees the process, which has also assisted Chicago's participatory budgeting program, as well as, other processes in New York City and Toronto.

Currently, Vallejo's process has proceeded in two phases and will end in May 2013 with an Election Week. The first phase consisted of planning for the process where a steering committee, representing the various interests in the city, developed a "Rulebook" outlining the steps the city will take, along with ground rules governing the process. The City Council later adopted this Rulebook, with amendments (discussed later). The second phase entailed neighborhood assemblies where the community was educated on the city's budget, recommended projects, and selected delegates to represent their interests, which occurred during the winter of 2012. Throughout the early months of 2013, the delegates met to vet and ultimately select the projects the community will vote on. Throughout April, the community was educated on the respective projects, culminating in a project expo occurring at the end of the month. Lastly, the community will vote on their top projects, subject to City Council approval, in May. Project implementation and evaluation will occur throughout much of the second half of 2013 (City of Vallejo Rulebook, 2012).

Purpose

This thesis will assess the City of Vallejo's plan for participatory budgeting through a collaborative public participation context. I performed this assessment by evaluating Vallejo's plan against the Center for Collaborative Policy at Sacramento

State's "Collaborative Public Involvement Framework", as well as other public participation frameworks outlined in the literature review. Evaluating Vallejo's participatory budgeting plan will help to serve as a guide for other cities who wish to pursue participatory budgeting practices in the future.

I structure the rest of my thesis as follows. First, I will review the current literature on public participation and participatory budgeting in order to set the context for evaluating Vallejo's participatory budgeting process. Next, I will outline the methodology that I will use to assess Vallejo's process. In Chapter 4, I will outline my findings and lay out my overall assessment. Lastly, I will summarize my findings and explore the implications that Vallejo's participatory budgeting process has not only for other cities throughout the Bay Area, but the rest of the country as well.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Participatory budgeting as a means of public engagement and participation is a new concept in North America and it shows in the relatively little research available on the practice in a North American context. Most of the current literature on the subject is constrained to the highly publicized participatory budgeting programs in South America, particularly in Porto Alegre, Brazil where the practice started. In order to set the context for my own case study, I attempted to keep all non-North American literature within the context of its implications for Vallejo's effort.

This review of the literature will help to lay out the foundational knowledge on collaborative dialogue, public participation, and participatory budgeting. My intent is that the background provided from this review will help to inform my evaluation of Vallejo's plan in future chapters. I divide this review into three parts. First, I will explore the themes and theory surrounding collaborative dialogue in general, along with public participation in governmental decision-making. Then I will review the theoretical literature on participatory budgeting. Lastly, I will set-up the groundwork for my evaluation of Vallejo's participatory budgeting plan by reviewing past attempts at participation in the budgeting process in North America.

Collaborative Dialogue

Many experts consider participatory budgeting to be a practice of collaborative dialogue. While some might believe it to be easy, establishing and sustaining a collaborative dialogue between two parties, let alone the government and its citizens,

takes a lot of time and effort. In one of the authoritative texts on the subject, Straus (2002) outlines five basic principles for establishing dialogue through collaborative problem solving. Budgeting is one of the most complex policy decisions made by local governments, so following these principles is invaluable for a successful process, especially when involving the public.

The first principle is to involve all of the relevant stakeholders. It is often the case during policy negotiations that one or more stakeholders will be left out of the process, or at least feel that way. This is avoidable if those undergoing the collaborative dialogue perform a stakeholder analysis to analyze who should be party to the negotiations and what purpose they ultimately serve in the discussions. Performing this analysis ahead of time reduces the potential for having to get left-out stakeholders up to date on the negotiations. The practice also reduces the potential for left-out stakeholders to attempt to stall your negotiations. Careful planning can avoid most negative outcomes.

Second, participants in a collaborative process need to build consensus among the group “phase-by-phase”. Organizers often overlook this step as policy-makers attempt to solve the problem expediently. Collaborative decision-making often takes multiple steps of gathering information, debating the problem, and then reaching consensus while coming to a solution. This usually takes a large amount of time, and without that commitment, is prone to failure.

Third, facilitators should clearly explain the process that will be used and establish a “process map” that will help guide the collaboration. Ensuring that everyone understands what happens at each step in the process is key to gain trust and ensure that

facilitators do not need to restart negotiations at any point in the process. Almost all progress could potentially be lost if the group hits a roadblock and does not know how to proceed.

Additionally, having an effective facilitator, who is non-biased but able to move the discussion along, is a key piece to successfully getting a group to move forward. Facilitators help to guide the discussion along while also establishing a figure in charge that is not associated with either side of the negotiation.

The final point is to establish group memory to discourage getting stuck or “wheel-spinning”. This includes making sure someone is always taking notes of the conversation and that these notes are reviewed prior to each new meeting. This can go a long way to making sure everyone is on the same page as the group proceeds forward.

In addition to Straus’ principles, the Center for Collaborative Policy at Sacramento State outlines eleven different conditions that must be present if an actual collaborative process is to take place. These include:

1. Ensuring there is a clear role and purpose for every stakeholder taking part in the process;
2. Decisions are always made with the highest degree of transparency;
3. Every stakeholder is committed to interest-based decision-making (focusing on what their goals are) rather than position-based (a tactic to help reach those goals);
4. Ensuring that all possible actions are taken to reach every stakeholder;
5. Stakeholders are accountable to their respective constituencies;

6. All interests are laid out and on the table. No stakeholder withholds information;
7. Joint fact-finding is utilized and all stakeholders have the same recognition of the problem;
8. There is available policy and technical expertise for the group;
9. All stakeholders are respectful of the group and the process;
10. The outcome and the policy-problem coincide; and lastly
11. The group has enough resources to perform its mission (Center for Collaborative Policy, 2012).

Both of these approaches present similarities. Properly informing stakeholders and including them in the process is the most crucial to the success of any collaborative effort. With participatory budgeting, this would primarily mean the public at-large. However, including the public and ensuring their meaningful participation is often much harder than it seems.

Any local official will tell you that engaging the community in government functions is difficult. It is not only necessary to balance the differing political philosophies in the room, but the different psychological differences as well. For example, Mutz (2006) examines the difference between participatory democracy (what most governments employ where activists and partisans attempt to influence the outcome) with deliberative democracy (where diverse opinions are valued and examined to come to a mutual decision). To Mutz, these are not compatible even though they are considered the same style. After a thorough analysis of people's reaction to opposite

political perspectives, she finds that exposure to differing opinions increases political knowledge but that the actual discussion of policy is often with those who share the same ideology, often through a conscious choice to avoid conflict. Mutz makes the case that any deliberative/collaborative process must create a culture of political inclusion in order to include those who would avoid such conflict, which is often inherent in government meetings (e.g. public comment periods).

Public Participation Theory

The Center for Collaborative Policy describes collaborative public involvement as that which, “goes beyond the basic requirements of public participation by creating opportunities for the public and agency staff to exchange information and influence one another’s thinking,” (2012). The Center also describes the underlying goals of this participation to be decisions that:

1. Achieve the agency’s goals;
2. Satisfy the needs of diverse community members;
3. Incorporate the information and expertise of both the [city] and community;
4. Reflect collaborative development of plans and alternatives; and,
5. Sustain effective communication and dialogue throughout all phases of planning, implementing, and evaluating public policy.

The Center stresses that there are five keys steps to make public participation truly collaborative: assessment, organizing, information sharing, effective dialogue, and follow-up. The assessment can either be a full-scale evaluation, or a quick “lay of the

land”, that analyzes whether the conditions necessary for collaborative public dialogue either exist or can exist. Organizing covers creating or ensuring that these conditions are present. Information sharing entails the agency undergoing a full-scale effort to inform the public on the issue at hand, as well as, how the agency will use their input to make a decision. Effective dialogue is the act of actually consulting with the public and facilitating ideas. Lastly, follow-up ensures that the input provided by both sides was useful, both sides have assessed the impacts of the decision, and the public involvement achieved the insight that it intended to gather (Center for Collaborative Policy, 2012). I will further explore this framework in Chapter 3, as it will be the main basis for evaluating Vallejo’s participatory budgeting plan.

The value and magnitude of public participation in the policymaking process can occasionally become a hot topic, especially at the local level. For example in California, the state’s Brown Act requires public participation that often only entails the minimum requirements of setting aside a public comment period in the agenda (Innes and Booher, 2004). Civic leaders also often ignore any input provided through during these periods while also, unintentionally or not, using it as a form of “token” input.

Arnstein (1969), in one of the most cited articles in the field, tackles the issue of public participation and the fine line between when actual participation occurs or is a form of tokenism. She highlights the concept that citizen participation is “citizen power” but distinguishes between its efficacy and level of involvement, described by her as the “ladder of citizen participation” (see Appendix A). At the bottom of the ladder are “manipulation” and “therapy” which she describes as non-participation and where those

in power often try to educate the public of how things really are. The middle of the ladder constitutes “informing” (explaining the decision rather than educating), “consultation”, and “placation”. Arnstein describes these three rungs as public participation “tokenism” where it appears that participation is taking place but the communicative action is usually only one-way. The last three rungs of the ladder are where true citizen power and participation take place – “partnership”, “delegated power”, and “citizen control”. These three rungs represent a stage where citizens have an actual impact on the decisions that most affect them and can ensure outcomes that are in their best interests.

Fung (2006) critiques Arnstein’s model as too skewed towards full citizen control when there are numerous examples when consultation, rather than direct decision-making, are better suited. In contrast, Fung presents his own model, described as the “democracy cube” made up of three dimensions: participant selection, communicative mode, and the extent of influence (see Appendix B). Using sliding scales in a model much like a linear plane; Fung compares the three dimensions against the participation’s legitimacy, justice and effectiveness. Through this method, he creates a visual representation of the participation that serves as a visual model showing the extent of which a decision can best meet the interests of the citizens, while also reaching the desired quality of policy outcomes.

Performing a review of the literature and presenting their own model of public participation, Innes and Booher (2004) argue that the current and prevalent form of public participation is broken, often leading to counter-productive arguments that the public’s views is uninformed. They argue that common practices in public participation, such as

open meeting laws and Robert's Rules of Order, often achieve the opposite of the intended result and dissuade participation. They also point to a lack of resources, information, and the occasional hubris of elected officials as other factors creating a negative environment. In contrast, Innes and Booher (2004) present a model of collaborative participation where networking helps to focus community outcomes and encourages the sharing of ideas. However, they do stress that not all circumstances warrant a collaborative approach, as often times highly political or impactful decisions are near impossible to achieve collaborative consensus. Budgeting could potentially fall into this category.

Participatory Budgeting

Participatory budgeting takes one of the most central, complex, and important aspects of governance (how to allocate resources) and pushes it to the top of Arnstein's ladder or the center of Fong's democracy cube. With the success of Porto Alegre, participatory budgeting has spread throughout the world, with hundreds of cities attempting the process (Lerner 2011; Baiocchi, 2007).

Participatory budgeting usually follows a set format. First, the government holds public forums throughout various parts of the community in order to gather ideas for projects that the community would like to fund. Citizens also can volunteer to serve as a representative of the neighborhood to a larger body that will vet and determine which projects the public will ultimately vote on. After the delegates determine the projects that will go to the public, an information campaign leads up to the citizens voting on the projects they wish to fund. Lastly, depending on the communities' governance, the city

council decides whether to approve the community's decisions. Participatory budgeting proponents often consider implementation as a part of the process as well (Pinnington et al., 2009).

Participatory budgeting advocates claim it provides quite a few advantages to local communities. One of the most cited advantages includes a sense of ownership that the process provides to the community while also lending legitimacy to governmental actions (Bernier, 2001; Lerner 2011). Involving the public presents a great opportunity to educate the public on how their tax money is spent and how their government actually works. It also can potentially encourage collaboration and compromise through greater transparency and an actual mechanism of co-dependence (Baiocchi, 2001; Lerner, 2011). Additionally, advocates point to a social justice aspect with participatory budgeting as every citizen potentially gets an equal say in how to spend their tax money. This is a result of special interests presumably having a tougher time involving themselves in the process. Lerner (2011) even points out that under-represented groups often participate more in participatory budgeting than other forms of political involvement. Lastly, participatory budgeting may create a sense of community as participants get to know the needs of other parts of their community while also meeting new people in the process.

Would it work in the United States?

Participatory budgeting does have its detractors. Despite this popularity, participatory budgeting has not gained much traction within the United States, up until recently.

The research on the experience in Porto Alegre points to issues that would not necessarily be relevant to local communities within the United States. For example, there is a large focus on infrastructure, along with other needs intrinsic of developing democracies, which is not a high priority in United States. The literature also brings up other issues that may be prevalent in communities throughout the United States as well. One example is that there is a high-rate of communities and citizens who stop participating once their needs or “pet projects” have been met (Souza, 2001). Due to this, participatory budgeting potentially only presents a temporary reprieve from civic disengagement once the city addresses what ails it.

Souza (2001), performing a review of the literature on Porto Alegre, also presents some other common criticisms. Broad participation among various stakeholder groups is seldom, often under-representing the very poor, young and middle classes. Additionally, with so much enthusiasm put into projects by citizens, often times they can become just as unenthusiastic about government as before if their projects move slower than anticipated. Just as the declining participation argument, this has the potential to be widespread in United States cases as well. Lastly, Souza (2001) also points to the often fragmented and short-term decisions made in participatory budgeting having the potential to lead to unintended budget shortfalls and consequences. That criticism may potentially ring too true for the residents in Vallejo and California. However, with these criticisms in mind, there is hope in the research for the process to take hold in the United States.

Baiocchi and Lerner (2007) see potential opportunity for local communities within the United States, although there are some hurdles. Local and State governments

in the United States are often heavily reliant on grants and other forms of funding that are earmarked and whose purposes are not easily altered by local officials, let alone citizens. The complexity and overlap of cities and counties, along with the geographic distance between some communities, can also cause difficulty. However, these issues pale in comparison to the largest hurdle, the hyper-politicized nature of taxes and spending in the United States. In order to address these issues, Baiocchi and Lerner (2007) see promise in already formed public coalitions such as Bus-Rider Unions, participatory grant making, or community land trusts can help foster participation. Case studies in other North American governments can provide examples for the United States as well.

The Canadian Case: Possible Similarities?

Some of the most successful participatory budgeting practices are in Canada, such as those Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and Guelph, Ontario. These prove useful for comparison to the United States due to their various similarities in culture, local governance and values. Baiocchi and Lerner (2007) point to four similar participation barriers that exist in both Canada and the United States. They argue that looking to Canada can make a potential participatory budgeting translation to the United States possible.

The first similarity they point to is the budgetary necessities of local citizens, such as recreation and safety needs. In contrast, the participatory budgeting processes employed around other parts of the world are in less developed areas where budgetary priorities are for roads and sewage. The second similarity is the need to overcome the barrier of already established methods of public participation, such as the Brown Act or

Bagley-Keene Act in California. Baiocchi and Lerner (2007), along with Booher and Innes (2004), point to these methods as counter-productive as they deter participation and establish a participation ceiling rather than a floor. The third similarity between the Canadian examples is the diversity of cultures and languages, as well as, the similarity of having a slow-moving local government that rarely make radical changes.

There are ways to overcome these obstacles. Canadian participatory budgeting efforts mainly focused on funding for community and social service needs while also focusing on outreach to marginalized communities, some going as far as to exclude certain parts of the population (higher-income, non-public housing). This ends up providing those marginalized group a larger voice (Baiocchi and Lerner, 2007). The programs also used visual communication in order to help citizens better understand budgeting and used other funding sources rather than the general fund in order to avoid political or legal constraints.

Pinnington et al. (2009) evaluated the Guelph experience and found that there were numerous factors fueling a successful process, along with some challenges. First, support from government officials, as well as the city council, was one of the biggest indicators of success. Guelph also has a form of political autonomy, much like cities in the United States. Additionally, they found that there was a widespread commitment from the community to overcome any challenges they faced.

The process did not come without its own set of challenges. Pinnington (2005) found that city staff was often indifferent to the process due to abrupt introduction of a completely new way of business. Additionally, the annual funding that was available was

not necessarily congruent to the amount of participation the city was asking for. Lastly, there were instances where citizens often found it difficult to escape the usual hierarchy of decision-making in government, often asking staff and the city council for direction during the process.

Los Angeles Case Study

While not the complete empowerment model that Arnstein (1969) and other proponents envision, the City of Los Angeles put in place a system of budgetary neighborhood councils into the city's charter in 1999. The various communities organized these councils with funding from the city. Each fall the councils receive budget information, along with invited to community meetings. The community groups then each send one representative to meet with the mayor and advocate for budget allocations. However, ultimate authority still rests with the mayor whom does not need to take the suggestions of these councils (Amsler, 2010).

Masso et al. (2007) evaluated the city's neighborhood council budget by studying the process for two of its main goals: involving a representative sample in the process and providing a forum for informed deliberation. They conclude that the process implemented in Los Angeles was essentially "tokenistic" and hampered by confusing goals among stakeholders, a fiscal environment not conducive to the process, and an organizational culture (most notably the mayor's office) that did not value the participation. While Los Angeles made the move towards a more inclusive approach, other examples of public participation in budgeting would prove more useful.

Chicago Case Study

The process implemented in Chicago's 49th Ward presents the most relatable civic conditions to Vallejo. Started in 2009, Alderman Joe Moore decided to use participatory budgeting as a means of finding ways to expend his \$1.3 million discretionary fund for his Ward. Using neighborhood assemblies and other ways for public outreach, the Ward came up with a list of thirty-six proposals that residents would vote on. Voting was open to Ward residents over the age of 16, regardless of voter registration or citizenship status. The result was a turnout of over 1,600 people who voted to fund 16 projects. Due to the successful nature of the initial run of participatory budgeting, the Alderman has used the system ever since with more Wards in Chicago taking up the practice as a result.

Lerner (2011), who as Executive Director of the Participatory Budgeting Project helped to facilitate the process, reflected on Chicago's experience and found that the process had its fair share of challenges. First, he noted that the diversity of voters was not as desired, trending towards older, white homeowners. He also noted that the Latino vote was relatively low, possibly due to concerns over citizenships status. Lerner suggests if there were no budgetary constraints, that more experienced facilitators be used. In addition, he suggests providing childcare and food during the proceedings. Funding for social programs might also have induced more participation, since infrastructure is not a topic that spurs a large amount of interest.

Lerner also noted that there is a necessity for a large amount of buy-in from city staff. He notes that it can often be hard for staff and politicians to allow the public process to take place, especially if they feel the public is going in the "wrong" direction.

Taking ownership of the process and devoting resources was also key and, at times a hindrance (Lerner, 2011).

Areas for Further Research

The first apparent constraint of this review is the lack of research on participatory budgeting processes in North America while also being currently confined to a few authors, particularly Josh Lerner who has been involved in many of these processes. This is likely the result of each of the presented processes being less than 10 years old, making it hard to quantify results or assess trends. Research on the effect of these new ways of involving the public in the budgeting process, along with ways to improve on these systems, will prove highly useful to local governments in the future.

With the City of Vallejo being the first local government in the United States to take up participatory budgeting on a citywide level, there is a large amount of potential research on this new process. What works for Vallejo, may serve as a good model indicating the potential for participatory budgeting in the United States.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will discuss the methodology that I used to assess the collaborative nature of the City of Vallejo's participatory budgeting process. Much of my analysis used the Center for Collaborative Policy's "Collaborative Public Involvement Framework" as the cornerstone, followed by the inclusion of field observations and interview responses to inform my analysis. What follows is an explanation of how I came to the interview questions and what I looked for in the fieldwork, as well as, what the Center's framework entails and how it guided my analysis.

To assess Vallejo's participatory budgeting plan and process, I first analyzed the city's adopted Rulebook against the framework. This helped to lay the stage early for where there are potential areas of praise and concern to investigate in the future. After the initial rulebook analysis took place, I performed fieldwork in Vallejo by attending a few working groups of the Steering Committee. I incorporated the notes from this fieldwork into the initial findings.

Lastly, in order to assess the underlying thought-process for the creation of the plan, I conducted interviews with various organizers and stakeholders of the process. Questions ranged from those asking the interviewees of their opinions of Vallejo's adopted process, to questions about the thought-process used to determine the actions that were taken. The responses to these interview questions informed the analysis and provided the full picture for the potential success of Vallejo's project.

Development of Interview Questions

Among the most important aspects of my analysis were the actual answers by stakeholders to the various questions asked. With these questions, I hoped to understand the city's motivation to undergo this extensive public participation process, as well as what reservations (if any) they may have and what the public's buy-in into the process may be. Many of the questions I asked related to the Center for Collaborative Policy's "Collaborative Public Involvement Framework", which I outline later. I designed each of the questions to garner appropriate reflective feedback on the process rather than a typical "yes" or "no" response.

I designed the first set of questions to gather respondent's opinions on why Vallejo has undergone this process of participatory budgeting and what each interviewee hopes to have come out of the process. Specifically, the following questions were in this category:

- Why do you think the City of Vallejo has chosen to undergo the process of participatory budgeting?
- What would you like to see come out of the process?
- What do you see as the goals of the process?
- Do you think that this process could potentially ease any trust or communication issues between the City of Vallejo and its citizens? What about the City Council specifically? What about city staff specifically?
- What is your hope for what happens after the process is complete in May?

The second set of questions addressed the potential issues that may arise, or have arisen, during the process and whether the respondent feels any potential these issues exist, have the potential to exist, or were remedied:

- What issues have you seen with the process as it has played out to this point?
- What conflicts have you seen with the process so far? Have they been remedied?
Can they be remedied?
- Do you feel there is the potential for citizens to avoid participatory budgeting because of an aversion to conflict? In what ways has the city attempted to remedy that?
- Are you aware of any stakeholders or citizen groups that have been unhappy with the process?
- The City Council approved the Rulebook but made some changes (raised the voting age, etc.). What do you see as the impact of those changes?
- What has surprised you the most with the process so far?
- What has disappointed you the most with the process so far?

The last set of questions concerned the future for the process. Specifically, the questions focused on whether the process will, and even should, continue after the trial period.

- Would you like this to be an ongoing process for Vallejo year-to-year?
- Do you think what Vallejo is doing is translatable to other communities in the Bay Area? California? United States?
- What other thoughts do you have about the process?

Response Analysis

I asked each of these sets of questions to identify the amount of buy-in from both city staff and the public. The answers given were essential to understanding if the process can be successful and translatable to other communities.

For example, in the first set of questions examining the hopes of staff and participants, I expected a wide-ranging set of responses depending on individual circumstances. Potential red flags would have been presented if hopes were either too grandiose (expecting an unprecedented sea change in public participation in the city) or too scaled-back (not expecting much at all). Each of these answers provided a sense of the level of over-eagerness or cautiousness that could prove damaging to the project's potential success.

The second set of questions, centering on issues, was the real meat of the interviews. Here I looked for conflicts or issues that are insurmountable for the process to be even a mild success. Of particular interest were the questions addressing any trust issues and the potential for potential voters to avoid the process due to conflict. If either of these issues arose in the answers provided, the process could potentially have difficulty garnering meaningful public involvement and input.

Lastly, the third set of questions helped to gauge the buy-in from the public and the potential for a long-term commitment on behalf of the city. If it became apparent that there is no such commitment, the public will notice, and success for the process is unlikely. These questions also helped to cover any potential subjects or issues that I may have missed beforehand.

Interviews

For my respondents I selected some of the main decision-makers for the process. I performed these interviews through email between March and April 2013, or in person on March 15, 2013. I assured each of the interviewee's response confidentiality through the non-use of names and by blending responses into broad assertions covering many respondents' answers. However, if interviewees made statements publically outside of the interviews, such as in a newspaper or city council meeting, I could not assure such confidentiality. Specifically I interviewed:

- The City Manager of Vallejo Daniel Keen,
- Councilmember Marti Brown (introduced the PB resolution),
- PB Vallejo Community Engagement Coordinator Ginny Browne,
- PB Steering Committee Chair Joey Lake,

Once interviews were completed, I used the answers to analyze the potential success for the process, in conjunction with publically available information and the Center for Collaborative Policy's "Collaborative Public Involvement Framework".

Collaborative Public Involvement Framework

The Center for Collaborative Policy at Sacramento State has produced a "Collaborative Public Involvement Framework" that outlines the values and needs for a truly collaborative public involvement process. The Center divides the framework (Appendix A) into five sections, each detailing the needed qualities of the certain step: Assessment, Organizing, Information Sharing, Effective Dialogue, and Follow-up.

The assessment of public involvement involves an initial identification of whether a truly collaborative process can take place and how facilitators might be able to address the various perspectives of potential participants. This includes broadly identifying why the public entity wants public involvement, along with what outcomes the entity desires. The assessment also lays out what the role of the public is, how much influence the public would actually have, and a "process-map" for each step along the way. Lastly, the assessment also identifies any conflicts that may arise between the public and the public entity or other various constituencies.

The organizing segment addresses the ways an agency fosters public involvement and begins to stir public interest in getting involved. This includes a thorough analysis of the relationship between stakeholders and the organization, as well as any historical issues that could potentially arise. It also focuses on building trust in order to resolve or overcome prior issues. Training staff to be sensitive to these issues, along with how to create dialogue, is important. Facilitators also identify barriers to dialogue within, and outside, the agency. Lastly, facilitators explore ways to address transportation, language, and timing issues.

The information sharing stage is where the whole scene is set for collaborative public involvement. The focus is on the sharing of information both ways, from agency to community and vice versa. Plain English skills, especially with decisions regarding bureaucratic heavy topics, are necessary. Additionally, agencies can foster trust by providing quick and easy to understand information as the city receives or produces it. The agency must also attempt to use all different methods of distributing information

(newsletters, canvassing, online, mail, etc.). It is also important for an agency to respond to critiques of the information sharing and address accordingly.

Effective dialogue is much like the information-sharing section but applies to the actual public involvement as it occurs. Government agencies will want to ensure that there is a “quality of learning” between the government and its citizens. Additionally, the agency should disburse this information in a format that engages the public, while not boring them. This also includes trusted facilitation by trained staff in order to move the discussion along and ensure input from all stakeholders.

Lastly, follow-up entails the agency executing the actual decision appropriately, and as agreed upon during the public process. This includes a mechanism to monitor the impacts of the decision as well as provide a venue for input on the process. Creating a repetitive meeting to assess the impact is also a good move.

Limitations

There are some limitations to my study. First, I was not able to interview budget delegates due to time constraints. My analysis of the findings in this thesis will seek to reflect this limitation and qualify any findings as such.

The largest limitation in my view is that Vallejo’s participatory budgeting process is finished by the time this thesis is completed. While I geared this thesis towards an assessment of the process, and not the outcome, there are still limitations in foreseeing issues that may arise on the day of voting, and afterwards with project implementation. The success of Vallejo’s process is largely contingent on the work performed after the voting has taken place, both with the City Council’s vote of approval and the

implementation of projects. However, this concern is unavoidable as well due to time constraints.

Conclusion

To assess the collaborative nature of Vallejo's participatory budgeting process, I used a three-step approach. First, I assessed Vallejo's participatory budgeting rulebook using the Center for Collaborative Studies "Framework for Collaborative Public Involvement". Then I used the notes from my observations of Vallejo's working group meetings to add further context for how the process works. Lastly, I used responses to interview questions to assess the "buy-in" for the entire process. With this three-pronged approach to the analysis, I was able to identify the collaborative strengths and weaknesses of the process.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

I divided this chapter into five sections, each corresponding with the area of the Public Involvement Framework described in the methodology chapter. Staff reports, documents, and public comments made available publically by the city, as well as, interview responses from city officials and others involved in the process are the basis for these findings. The first section addresses the findings of Vallejo's initial assessment for public involvement. The second section analyzes the city's organizing efforts. Following that is an analysis of the information sharing capacity and willingness shown by the city. The fourth section analyzes the potential for effective dialogue between the city and the community. The last section analyzes the city's follow-up procedures.

Initial Assessment of Public Involvement

Reasons for Involvement and Specific Outcomes

The original resolution authored by Councilmember Marti Brown lays out the reasoning for the public involvement fairly well. The resolution stated that "by re-engaging citizens in the democratic process and giving them real power to make decisions about how to spend their tax payer dollars, Participatory Budgeting is one antidote to the public's lack of trust in government and feelings that their opinions and concerns about the operations and administration of their city go unheard and do not matter," (City of Vallejo, 2012). The entirety of the resolution also centers on the perception of distrust between the Vallejo civic government and its citizens.

Specific Outcomes

The Vallejo Rulebook adopted by the City Council defines three main goals: (1) Improve the City, (2) Engage our Community, and (3) Transform our Democracy. While these phrases are broad and quick talking points, the rulebook goes on to define what the successful accomplishment of these goals would look like:

Improving our City – “We aim to enhance quality of life in Vallejo by developing projects that solve real problems and create strong and healthy communities. We hope that this process will build a new spirit of civic pride and raise the profile of Vallejo on the regional, state, and national levels.”

Engage our Community – “We aim to ensure that all members of our community have a voice. We will make every effort to engage those who are traditionally underrepresented in politics, who face obstacles to participating, or who feel disillusioned with the political process. Through widespread and meaningful community engagement, we hope to increase public involvement in civic life in Vallejo. To the extent applicable, public meetings will comply with the open meeting requirements of the Ralph M. Brown Act.”

Transform our Democracy – “We aim to empower Vallejo residents and stakeholders with the skills and knowledge they need to shape our city’s future. By enabling people to make real decisions, we will build new leadership from the bottom up and forge deeper ties between residents, neighborhoods, and communities.”

The city explains each of these goals well but lacks any type of measurement to ensure success. While it would be tough to attach metrics to goals regarding participation

and leadership, having the goal of a specific number of participants or voters, or a survey result of how satisfied participants were with the process, would be helpful for participants to understand what success would look like.

Decision Elements and Role for Public Defined

Due to the nature of participatory budgeting, the decision element that is up for public participation is inherently defined. Vallejo goes to great depths to explain what portion of the Measure B sales tax is up for participatory budgeting (30 percent or approximately \$3 million).

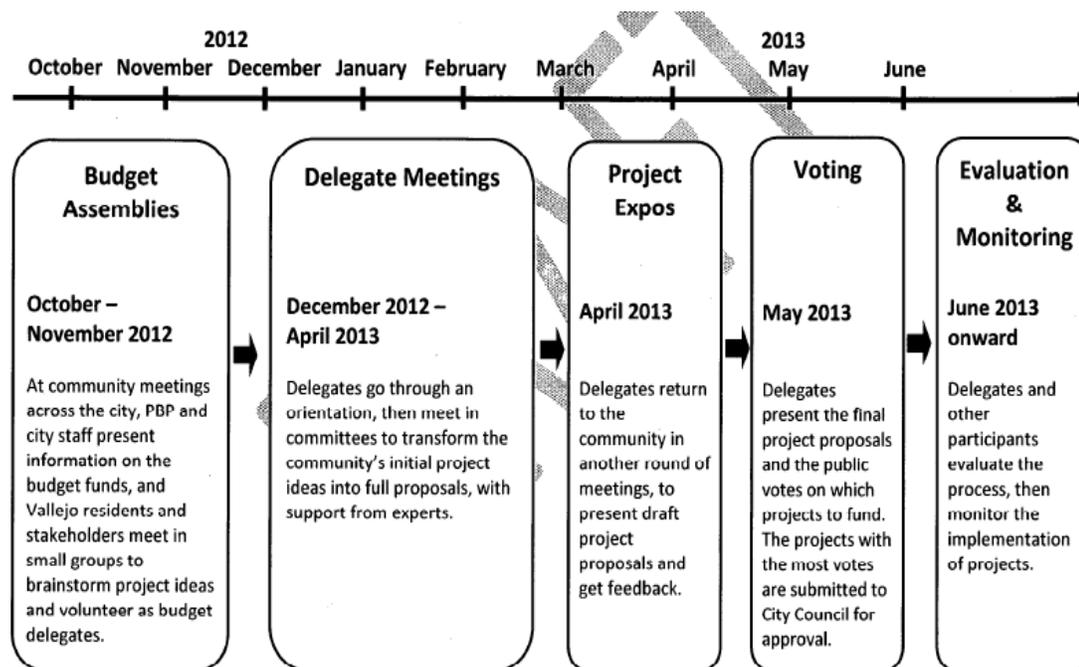
The city lays out the role of the public well and covers each degree of potential participation by the citizens. There are roles for the public to become facilitators, assembly participants, budget delegates, and actual voters. Participants have the discretion over whether they want to participate in all or just one of the duties, should they choose to do so and become more involved.

One of the largest issues is the City Council's ultimate authority in approving the budgetary decisions made by the public. Looking at all of the documents presented to the public that overview the process, the city makes the distinction but could better define it. Rather than saying "submitted to the City Council for approval", it could be made more clear to read, "all funding decisions are ultimately made by the City Council," This language makes it clear that the Council has the ability to change or deny any projects approved by the voters.

Process Map

The steps for the participatory budgeting process are laid out although the timeline is compressed, which could potentially hamper quality decision-making. The process map defined by the Rulebook is below:

Figure 4.1 City of Vallejo Participatory Budgeting Timeline (City of Vallejo Rulebook, 2012)



The process map used by Vallejo is very similar to those used in Chicago and New York, cities that also used the consultation of the Participatory Budgeting Project. The city garnered initial interest through a series of budget assemblies that took place in October and November 2012. During these assemblies, community members could volunteer to be a budget delegate who, collectively, would make decisions on what projects to propose to the voters. These delegates met from December 2012 to April 2013. Currently, Vallejo is introducing the projects through a series of project expos,

while also welcoming feedback. Finally, the community votes on the presented projects, up to the \$3 million total, in May 2013. Staff will then present these projects to the City Council for their approved or amendments. Lastly, the city will implement these approved projects with oversight from the budget delegates and the steering committee.

One portion of the map that is not included but described in the Rulebook is the ability for the public to submit ideas and proposals throughout the entire process, up to voting in May 2013. An issue that arises with this specific process map is the timing. In a city such as Chicago or New York, where participatory budgeting has become the norm, this short of a timeline is doable. However, Vallejo is new to this type of process and more time might be beneficial for the community to grasp the process and implications.

Another large issue is the City Council's ability to change the process at any point, without warning. This puts a level of uncertainty over the whole process and can potentially indicate that the city council is hesitant of the process. This could potentially dissuade the community from getting involved in a situation they may see as ultimately fruitless, especially if trust issues are deeper than anticipated.

Identify Full Range of Communities Affected

While it is unclear if the city did an in-depth analysis of those communities affected by Participatory Budgeting, the make-up of the Steering Committee makes for a good starting point. The City Council appointed the following Vallejo community groups to the Steering Committee:

- Better Vallejo

- Vallejo Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- Greater Vallejo Recreation District
- Solano Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Vallejo Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Solano County Black Chamber of Commerce
- Belvedere Homeowners Association
- Vallejo Chamber of Commerce
- Heritage District Neighborhood Watch
- Solano Community College District
- Hillcrest Park Homeowners Association
- Filipino-American Retired US Armed Forces Association
- Parkview Terrace Neighborhood Association
- Vallejo Heights Neighborhood Association
- Hiddenbrooke Property Owners Association
- Vallejo Sister City Association
- Filipino Community of Solano County
- Filipino-American Chamber of Commerce
- Solano Association of Realtors
- Florence Douglas Senior Center
- Councilmembers Stephanie Gomes and Marti Brown

At first glance, there are some substantial omissions such as the Vallejo Unified School District. However, while the district was not involved in the initial process, the District has become a partner. However, I would note that excluding the school district initially is understandable due to the separate nature of city and school funding. Another omission is the California Maritime Academy, a large part of the local economy. It is unclear how involved the Maritime Academy has been involved in the process.

Of note is that these omissions, and many others, are the result of a low response rate for the initial call for Steering Committee members. While there were 20 spots on the committee, only 20 stakeholders applied. As a result, the City Council approved all of the applicants. This is more than likely the result of the new nature of participatory budgeting, as well as the short timeline. Another speculative reason could be that stakeholders did not want to be on the steering committee when they would rather work to push projects from outside the process.

Identify Interests and Incentives

Vallejo seems to have considered this. There was an expressed concern by those in public comments that outside or “special” interests could influence the outcome of the vote. However, this does not seem to have been the case. Through interviews with those involved, many interests have taken the opportunity to introduce projects that may benefit them, but not all of these projects made it past the initial discussion or the budget delegates. In fact, interviewees alluded that some interests were uncomfortable or unfamiliar with lobbying through the new process and attempted to push their projects

thorough the normal process of trying to influence the city council. This proved to be unsuccessful.

Effective Consultation and Realization of Interests and Cross-Cultural/Historical Issues

Consulting with the stakeholders early and often is a crucial part of an effective public participation plan and it appears that Vallejo has done so quite well. Since the enactment of the participatory budgeting process by the city in April, the Steering Committee has met numerous times as a general group along with various working groups of the Steering Committee meeting as needed. There does not seem to be an analysis of cross-cultural and historical issues, but this may be the result of a lack of funding.

Agency-Community Interactions

There does not seem to be an analysis of the agency-community issues that surround the city; however, the resolution that the city passed when adopting participatory budgeting alludes to some of those issues. Specifically, "...after more than four years of severe cuts to city services and programs while in bankruptcy, there is evidence that Vallejo citizens feel disenfranchised from the political process and are disillusioned by its lack of performance and inability to improve their quality of life." However, there is no evidence provided except for the interactions the City Council has had with community members presenting during the public comment period or with the local newspaper.

Goals set for improvement

While there are no qualitative indicators for what a successful process will look like, the Steering Committee, and the City Council added provisions to the Rulebook allowing changes at any time to address the need for improvement during the process. Indications from interviewees is that the city will likely make changes to the process if a second round of participatory budgeting is undertaken.

Involvement Process

The process outlined by the Rulebook involves the public in various aspects of the participatory budgeting process. The most basic involvement is the act of voting on the budget projects in May 2013. Participants can be, and have been, also involved in the process through the normal avenues of public comment before the City Council and the Steering Committee. Full involvement comes in the budget assemblies. Here citizens can discuss ideas to bring forward for voting and set community priorities. Citizens can also become budget delegates who deliberate on what projects are presented to the voters. As discussed earlier, there is a level of involvement for all types of citizens. Additionally, the city has openly asked for volunteers from the community and surrounding areas to be part of the process during the selection process, the project expos, and the actual week of voting. The city has particularly targeted local schools and universities for volunteers as well.

Organization

Dialogue on History and Build Trust through Resolution of Specific Problems

While it is not specifically called-out, each of the budget assemblies included an introduction to the city budget and participatory budgeting. If agency-community history was an underlying issue at any of the assemblies, the city presumably addressed it in these assemblies. From all indications, that discussion was welcome in order to further the dialogue and address any issues that could potentially threaten the process or trust.

Building trust is also one of the major goals outlined by the Steering Committee for participatory budgeting. If the process goes as expected, the citizens of Vallejo will address specific issues within the community through direct action. Ostensibly, this will build trust between the citizens and the local government if successful. However, the final vote by the City Council overshadows the process with the possibility of changes at the end of the process. If the City Council was to change the allocations approved by the voters, trust in the local government could reach a low.

Community Guidance in defining selection process for advisory or group

As described earlier, the City Council determined the selection of the advisory committee. The Council solicited input on the selection of members in accordance with normal procedures at Council meetings. However, after the selection of the advisory committee, the city used community guidance to solicit budget delegates and other volunteers.

Honor community culture, language and customs

In order to address the various language needs of the city, the city established Spanish interpretation at two of the Community Assemblies and set aside one of the nine assemblies for Spanish only. Initially, the Steering Committee also wanted to establish language assistance for Tagalog but was discouraged from doing so by Filipino community leaders, showing a deference to cultural wishes.

Create dialogue, not persuade

The agenda for the assemblies was set up in a way that dialogue was encouraged. After the initial welcome and introduction to the budget, the assemblies were broken up into breakout groups to discuss potential local projects that could use funding. The discussion never entailed the assembly as a whole, which negates the tendency for a few individuals to take over and debate. Staff also made sure to clarify that any ideas offered at the end of each assembly were not the end- result but part of a continuing dialogue throughout all nine assemblies and into the future.

Identify barriers to incorporating public input

The city addressed a few barriers, the first being timing of the assemblies. The times of the assemblies varied with half occurring in the early afternoon (1-4 PM) while the other occurring in the evening (6-8 PM). Additionally, staff aimed a few of the assemblies towards specific constituencies with one primarily for Spanish speaking audiences and another for youth involvement. The city also provided Spanish translation at two other Assemblies. Vallejo also provided childcare in order to encourage parent

participation. Lastly, the city also established an online presence to accommodate any citizens not able to make any of the Assemblies.

Aim for alliance based on shared interests of agency and community

Alliances are what any public participation effort seeks, and Vallejo is no exception. While it is not the first goal, Vallejo's second goal is to "Engage our Community" which includes, "...increase[ing] public involvement in the civic life of Vallejo". One can interpret this to mean that the city wants to forge this civic-public alliance for the long term. The theme resonating throughout discussions with those involved in the process was to create an atmosphere where both sides, community and government, could forge a relationship to address the budgetary issues of Vallejo and any other future issues that arise.

Define how public will know they have made a difference

The level of difference making depends on the level of involvement from the citizens. The passive citizen may have attended a budget assembly and voted in the final election. This type of involvement could produce "second-hand" feelings of having "made a difference" as the citizen was able to make the ultimate decision in bringing a project to completion, and may enjoy its benefits. However, such a citizen would not have direct involvement in bringing the idea to fruition. The fully engaged citizen will have produced an idea and advocated for it throughout the budget assemblies, delegate meetings, and directly to voters. This amount of involvement would potentially cause the citizen to feel that he or she "really made a difference" in their community because of

being directly involved. While the level of involvement is drastically different, the feeling that the individual made a difference could be the same.

However, there is the potential for citizen disengagement, particularly from those who advocate for a project that does not make it through the entirety of the process. Such citizens could feel disenfranchised and ultimately not become involved again in the future. Another potential aspect is the influence of “special interest” groups to mobilize their own constituencies to fund projects. If this occurs, citizens could feel that the process is “more of the same” and become disinterested. However, interviewees did not feel this last example occurred during the early stages of the process.

Work through local communication networks

Vallejo established relationships with the various local groups to reach the citizenry, such as schools, senior centers, and churches. Members of the Steering Committee also committed to using their own connections to get the word out.

Vallejo has also established an online presence. First, the city’s official website (<http://www.ci.vallejo.ca.us>) has a link to the processes official website (www.pbvallejo.org), although the link does not stand out and is part of the ordinary front-page links. The front page of Vallejo’s main participatory budgeting site lays out necessary information quickly, outlining upcoming important dates, pictures from the process, and documents for review by budget delegates and the public. The process also has a Twitter and Facebook presence. At the time of this writing the Facebook page had over 450 “likes” while the Twitter handle had over 100 “followers”.

The main website is broken up into five main sections: About, Participate, Blog, Resources, and Contact. “About” lays out the timeline until April’s election, the members of the Steering Committee, Local News Coverage, and sections detailing Vallejo and participatory budgeting. “Participate!” has resources on how to attend the assemblies, submit proposals online, become a budget delegate, volunteer, and vote when the time comes. The “Blog” provides details and stories from the assemblies, budget delegate meetings, and the project expos. “Resources” contains the entire adopted rulebook and links to the Participatory Budgeting Project and the processes in Chicago and New York, along with other information for budget delegates. Lastly, there is a “Contact” section for citizens to ask any additional questions. The website also contains a section that translates the page into Spanish, in conjunction with its other language efforts at the assemblies.

Venues, Timing, and Transportation

The city spread the locations of the assemblies throughout Vallejo and ensured all were at locally recognized locations. These included a local adult school, senior center, community center, the local boys and girls club, two local churches, two local elementary schools, and a high school. The Steering Committee has also expressed that it will ensure that the location of the project expos and voting places will also be at similar locations throughout the city. There has been no transportation assistance provided.

As explained earlier, the times for the assemblies and project expos have ranged in order to target specific groups for each assembly. Most of the assemblies were in the evening. However, four of the assemblies were in the early afternoon in order to accommodate seniors and high school students.

Information Sharing

Agency Needs and Dialogue

The basic decision presented to the citizens is how to spend approximately \$3 million in sales tax funds. However, the city also wants to learn why citizens are currently disengaged from the process and what they view the future of Vallejo to be. The city views participatory budgeting as a way to create this dialogue with the community on its various needs and wants.

Public distrust of agency

Due to the recent bankruptcy by the city, participatory budgeting in Vallejo has an added obstacle. Interviewees acknowledged that the public still holds underlying trust issues of public officials due to the bankruptcy (some of whom still hold office). City officials note that, through the process so far, that the public has been more receptive and that there seems to be acknowledgement from the community that this is a step in the right direction.

Ensure Plain English Skills and Involve Community for its Knowledge

During the planning phase of the process, staff indicated that getting the public to understand the process was paramount to its success. Staff noted at the beginning that all documents should be readable in easy-to-understand language. For example, officials wanted to avoid wordy and “dense” budget documents, such as a widely used budgetary PowerPoint presented in the working group meetings. Through discussions with stakeholders, the information was condensed and simplified so that all stakeholders and

the public could understand the ramifications of any budgetary decisions made and how the budget was ultimately constructed.

In order to address many of these issues, the Steering Committee divided into working groups to address each facet of the process, including the development of all materials involved. Working groups were established to address outreach, facilitation, and event planning. All working groups were open to the public to attend and provide input as well.

Use accessible technologies

As described earlier, the process made heavy use of an online presence. The online presence also included a mechanism for submitting ideas to the budget delegates for consideration. For example, ideas.pbvallejo.org was set up for citizens to submit their own ideas and to also look at and vote on other ideas worthy of consideration. The website reports that citizens submitted over 600 ideas online.

Respond to public critique

Through discussions with interviewees, it does not appear there has been much public critique of the process outside of those expressed by community members during the public comment period at city council meetings. These critiques range from the cost of the process, to distrust of how the process will unfold. Criticism has also come from councilmembers who felt that the city would not be able engage citizens in a budget process effectively in such a short timeframe, as well as, the need to hire additional employees. One of the biggest concerns expressed was the use of the funding for different purposes than what was proposed to voters when they voted for Measure B.

Interviewees did point out that some who have critiqued the process in the past have changed their mind as they have experienced the process unfold.

Effective Dialogue

Ensure quality of public experience, learning, and dialogue

While this is hard to measure, interviewees have expressed their amazement at how quickly many of the budget delegates have grasped the budgetary concepts put before them, as well as their role in the process. Additionally, interviewees has also expressed that other members of the community have engaged at a high level as well. City staff has made every effort to keep all documents, as well as the website, as “user-friendly” as possible to help ensure the quality and timeliness of information.

Build an evaluation of process

The city has established a Research Board that will evaluate the process and make recommendations on how to improve the process based on its findings. The city emphasizes that the Research Board is a collaborative effort and membership ranges from the Executive Director of the Participatory Budgeting Project to researchers at the University of California, Berkeley. The website lists the Research Board’s goals as:

1. To support project coordinators in their efforts to attract broad and meaningful participation, by tracking who is participating, how they are participating, and why;
2. To improve the PB process by evaluating how it worked and helping staff and participants identify improvements for the future;

3. To support advocates for democratic budgeting by documenting the strengths and weakness of the PB process and providing support data for organizations and officials seeking to democratize budgeting and government.

Provide for trusted facilitation of process by trained staff

The Participatory Budgeting Project has provided staff members trained in facilitation. The organization has also trained members of the community to be effective facilitators, providing guides to volunteers on how to oversee discussion and guide it to meaningful input. Leaving facilitation to volunteers is always risky but no issues are apparent to this point. Encouraging participation from the community could also prove to be a plus in improving trust and overall buy-in.

Ensure public that all types of information and experiences listened to

No matter what efforts the city makes to address this issue of meaningful information sharing, there is no guarantee that the City Council will take up the recommendations of the community. This discourages those who may feel that the city will not hear their opinion. However, up to this point it appears that staff has attempted to ensure that all ideas, within the PB process, are heard and presented accordingly.

Provide means to capture unrelated items and refer to other forum

One important action by the city was placing City Council liaisons on the Steering Committee. Doing this ensures that any unrelated items that arise in the participatory budgeting process are heard and directed to the appropriate place with the city.

Follow-Up

Analysis of public input

City staff has indicated that after the process of participatory budgeting is complete, the process will begin to determine whether the city should replicate participatory budgeting in the future. In interviews with those involved, it did not seem that there was a concrete goal for public participation or indicators of what they would consider a “success”. In each interviewee’s case, the definition of success ranged from “deeper trust between the city and the public” to “active participation from the community”. While these are certainly desired goals, they are not concrete or measurable. However, the workings of the Research Board could potentially address this issue, although after the process has taken place.

Document and explain how input was used

This will be almost automatic due to the nature of voting and the process. The city will need to make readily apparent, and disseminate to the public appropriately, any decision made by the City Council that ultimately changes what was voted on by the community. While such a decision could potentially negate any progress in trust, as noted by various interviewees, if the process is transparent and the city made the decision readily available and understandable, the process could be successful.

Ongoing community role

Whether participatory budgeting continues as an annual process or not, many of those interviewed expressed the hope that the process will encourage the citizens of Vallejo to continue their involvement in the budget, and other matters, into the future.

The process has the potential to get those not normally involved, particularly students, more involved in local government as well.

Opportunities for dialogue for disputing resolution

This also depends on how the City Council decides to act, as there does not seem to be a plan for when or if this happens. If the Council decides to change any decisions made by the public, disputes will almost inevitably arise by those who are affected. The city needs a contingency plan for such an occurrence, whether through an information campaign or some other way to negate the impact.

Ongoing Process

While the city builds or takes action on the selected projects, the budget delegates will continue to meet and oversee implementation of the projects. The Steering Committee will also continue to meet throughout the implementation process.

One concern expressed during the interview process was the potential for constraints to impede a project after approval, due to the lack of vigorous vetting of projects. If this issue arises, the Steering Committee will have to set-up a protocol to address such issues.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The City of Vallejo's venture into participatory budgeting represents an interesting crossroad for local government budgeting and public involvement. What comes of the process could lead to a boom of public participation in budgeting throughout the country. Alternatively, one might be able to use Vallejo as a "post-mortem" on the process and exemplify how it cannot work in the United States' unique form of local governance.

Throughout this thesis, I have explored which road participatory budgeting could ultimately take based on its implementation in Vallejo. How collaborative is the process? Will it actually be successful in what it achieves? Can it overcome some of the many barriers that it faces?

To achieve these ends, I first introduced the process of participatory budgeting, the unique situation of Vallejo, and the process the city has outlined. Then I explored the current literature on the process and its potential success in the United States (key observation: it depends). I then outlined how I set out to determine the collaborative nature of Vallejo's process by using both a collaborative public participation framework and information gathered from interviews with decision makers in the process. Lastly, in Chapter 4 I presented my findings.

Key Findings

The first thing that jumps out from my findings is the uncertainty that surrounds the process due to the City Council's ultimate decision on whether to accept the projects

as voted on by the public. Final passage of the communities' funding decision is not assured, partly due to the slim vote to approve participatory budgeting in the first place, as well as some members, including the Mayor's, unreceptive nature throughout the process. As some interviewees noted, it will be tough for a councilmember to vote against the proposals due to the political implications of such a vote. Nevertheless, the uncertainty exists.

Another finding is the seemingly rushed timeline from approval of the process to the final vote. However, participation levels have surpassed expectations, potentially making this point moot. One does have to wonder if there was more time to plan and educate the public on the process, if a better turnout or more legitimate process could result.

The hiring of the Participatory Budgeting Project to facilitate the process could present issues if the process continues into the future. The Participatory Budgeting Project has a dearth of knowledge on the subject, which the city certainly needs for such a new concept. However, having the PB Project facilitate the whole process takes away from the potential for staff to learn and undertake the process on their own. This potential "brain drain" if the Participatory Budgeting Project moves on, could prove troublesome for future years.

Finally, the lack of concrete performance measures is potentially troublesome. As noted in earlier chapters, interviewee's definition of what success looks like varied and are not entirely measurable. It may very well be that the process is a success, but there will be no way to measure whether that is the case. The research and evaluation

performed by the Research Board, as well as group from the University of California, Berkeley, could prove to provide those measures or assessment, but it is unclear.

Outside of these few critiques, there are many positives surrounding the process Vallejo has undertaken. All accounts of the process signal that the members of the public involved in the process have been happy and engaged. There also does not seem to be an aversion by citizens to become involved, outside of time constraints. If the turnout and enthusiasm continues from the assemblies and delegate meetings to Election Day, the process would be successful in that regard.

Additionally the process to this point has been transparent and readily available online, while numerous news articles on the process have raised awareness. The Steering Committee has also been engaged with the process and, from early accounts, more groups are excited to join the committee for a second year if the City Council chooses to take that route.

Constraints

Given these findings, there are a few constraints with my analysis and findings. First, due to time and location constraints, I did not have the ability to interview any members of the public or budget delegates. All information on how the public has responded to the process has been second-hand and may not be fully accurate in their perceptions of participant experiences. Any future analysis of the process will need to have this first-hand account of the public's opinion and experiences with the process.

Additionally, the timing of this thesis and the process in Vallejo prevents me from assessing the final results. If I had the ability to do so, this thesis would have evaluated

the outcome of the vote and the proceeding evaluation process, producing a richer product.

Implications

It is not a surprise to anyone that if Vallejo is successful other cities within the Bay Area and potentially the rest of the country could attempt to experiment with Participatory Budgeting.

It is notable that since the implementation of participatory budgeting in Vallejo, San Francisco Supervisor Councilmember David Chiu has allocated \$100,000 of his discretionary budget to a participatory budgeting process. Additionally there have been indications that other Bay Area cities have already contacted the city for information on their process.

This process also has implications for public participation in budgeting in general. Even though the policy committee has slowly begun to view “ballot-box budgeting” in a negative light, public participation in local budgeting could potentially rise, if not through participatory budgeting then through other means.

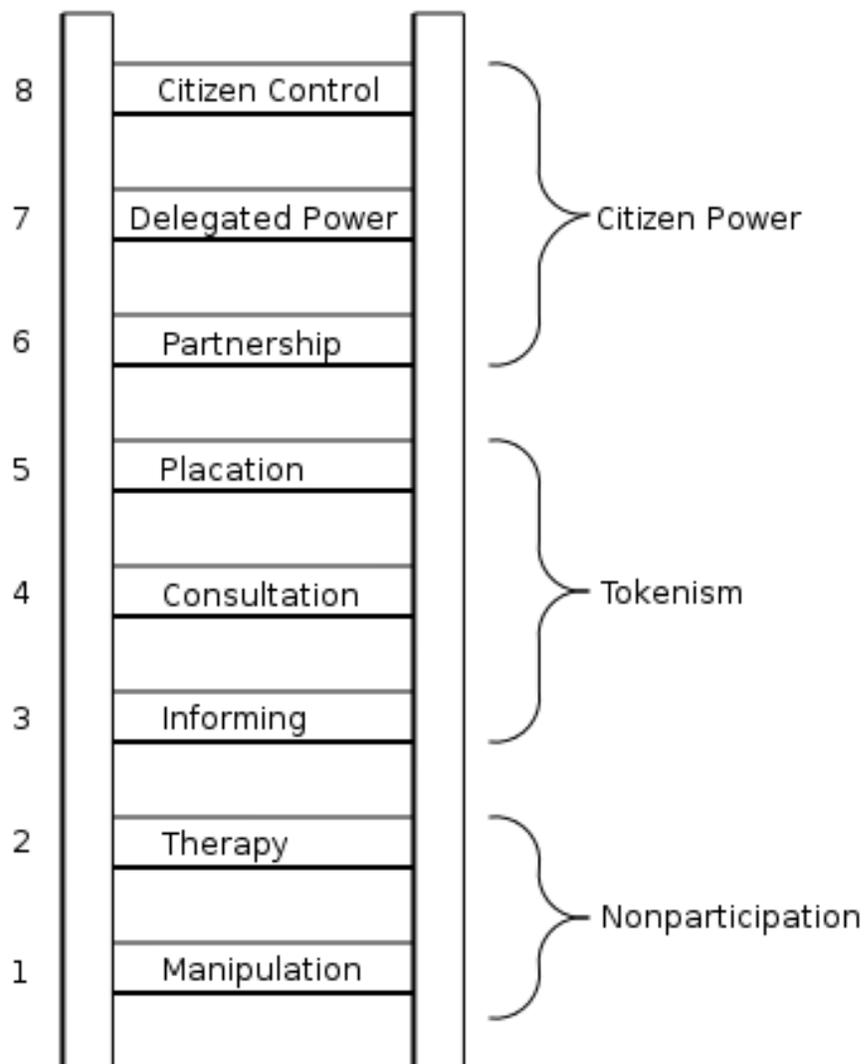
Conclusion

Vallejo has been a poster-child for municipal bankruptcy but is moving away from the identification through participatory budgeting. There is a lot in the future that will affect whether the process is a success and many of these factors lie with the City Council. However, it appears the process has been a success and follows many of the characteristics intrinsic to authentic public participation. The city has made a good-faith effort to include the public throughout the entire process and to correct any issues that

arose during the process. There have been, and will continue to be, speed bumps during the process; that is to be expected. Nevertheless, if Vallejo is successful and passes this legacy on to other local governments within the Bay Area and the country as a whole, it will have risen from the ashes of bankruptcy.

APPENDIX A

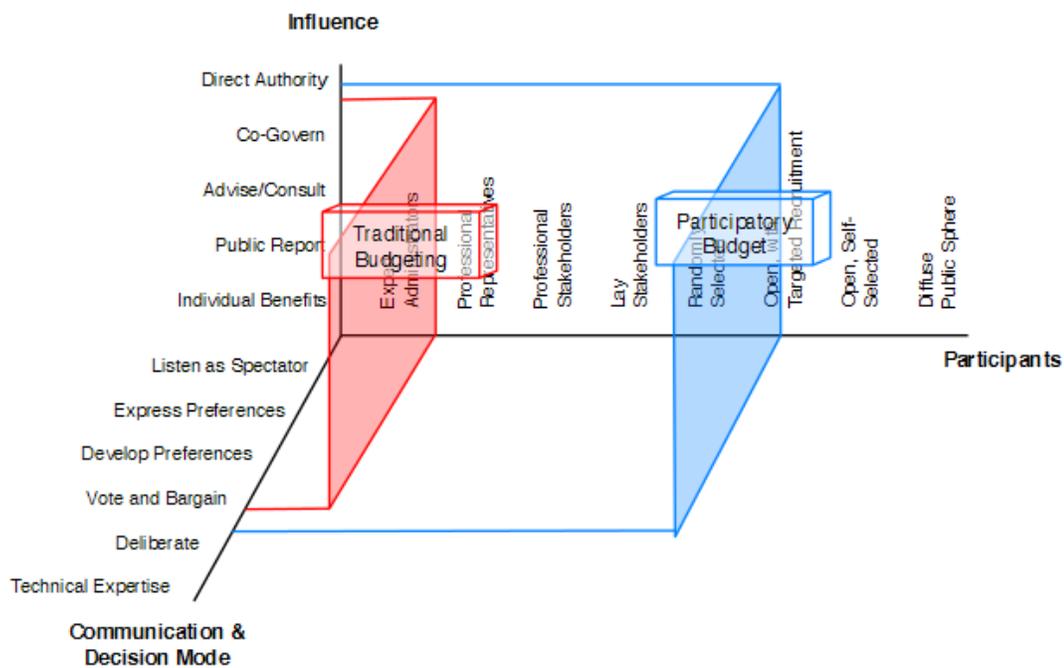
Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation



(Arnstein, 1969)

APPENDIX B

Fung's Democracy Cube



(Fung, 2006)

APPENDIX C

Collaborative Public Involvement Framework

Assessment	Organizing	Information Sharing	Effective Dialogue	Follow-up
<p>Review why the agency wants or needs public involvement</p> <p>Identify specific outcomes desired by agency for the public involvement process</p> <p>Define decision elements open to public influence</p> <p>Define clear role for public in decision-making and planning</p> <p>Map the flow of decision-making and ensure sufficient time provided for consideration of public input prior to agency decision</p> <p>Identify full range of communities affected by the agency action or decision</p> <p>Identify interests/incentives of each constituency</p> <p>Consult early with community leaders about issues &</p>	<p>Dialogue on agency-community history, expectations, mindsets</p> <p>Build trust through resolution of specific problems in relationship</p> <p>Community guidance in defining selection process for any advisory or representative group</p> <p>Honor community culture, language & customs in all interactions</p> <p>Train agency staff to create dialogue not to persuade</p> <p>Identify agency barriers/incentives to incorporating public input in plans/decisions</p> <p>Aim for alliance based on shared interests of agency & community in dealing with key issues</p>	<p>What does agency need to learn from public before preparing information?</p> <p>Dialogue with community/public on information needs</p> <p>Challenge: Public distrust of agency may overwhelm value of information</p> <p>Ensure staff have skills in plain English & graphic techniques of communication</p> <p>Involve community in designing appropriate materials & methods of distribution</p> <p>Honor/use community knowledge/experience</p> <p>Use accessible technologies for distributing info to the public:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community meetings • Local newsletters • Websites/ email • Canvassing • Kiosks • Telephone • Mail • Storefront or library 	<p>Ensure quality of public experience in process</p> <p>Quality of learning and experience</p> <p>Dialogue on values and goals</p> <p>User-friendly presentation of information</p> <p>Engaging formats for participation</p> <p>Ensure access to process through multiple venues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Public meetings at community locations • Websites accessible from public locations • Remote telephone • Simultaneous interpretation • Input accepted by all methods • Advisory committees • Focus groups • Formal public 	<p>Analysis of public input</p> <p>Document decision results for public review</p> <p>Explain how public input used in decision process</p> <p>Monitor & document actual impacts of decision</p> <p>Opportunities for dialogue & dispute resolution during implementation phase</p> <p>Ongoing information dissemination</p> <p>Ongoing use of community information networks</p> <p>Ongoing agency</p>

<p>effective methods of communication</p> <p>Identify cross-cultural interactions; analyze positive and negative aspects</p> <p>Work with agency to set goals for improvement and indicators to measure change</p> <p>Design involvement process to meet these goals and establish effective two-way communication</p>	<p>Define how public will know they've made a difference</p> <p>Work through local communication networks</p> <p>Cross-cultural & language interpretation needs</p> <p>Identify venues both convenient and familiar</p> <p>Transportation issues</p> <p>Convenient times of day/week</p>	<p>locations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all materials well indexed, easily searchable, available free or for cost of reproduction <p>Ensure timely updating and continuous availability of information for public review</p> <p>Respond to public critiques or comments about form and accessibility as well as content of information</p>	<p>hearings</p> <p>Build in public evaluation of process & content</p> <p>Provide for trusted facilitation of process by trained staff or independent providers</p> <p>Ensure all points of view are recorded and respected</p> <p>Ensure public that all types of relevant information and experiences will be listened to</p> <p>Provide means to capture unrelated items and refer to other forums</p>	<p>evaluation & revision of process</p> <p>Periodic repetition of public input process on long-term impacts of decision</p>
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(Center for Collaborative Policy, n.d.)

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