



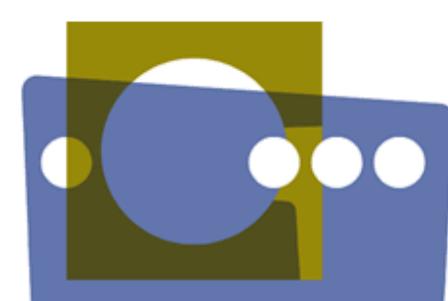
# Citizens' Assemblies and Participatory Budgeting - Tools to help Northern Ireland 'Build Back Better' post-COVID

Report of seminar  
20th November 2020

In partnership with .....



Community  
Places



involve

## Event information

This event was organised by the Community Foundation, in partnership with Involve, Community Places and NICVA.

It was a follow up event to the Roundtable Discussion on 23rd October: “Building Back Better – Involving the Public in Shaping Northern Ireland’s post-COVID Recovery” – the report of this event can be accessed [here](#)

A closed invitation was sent to elected representatives (MLAs and Councillors) as well as key departmental officials.

The event took place on Friday 20th November from 9.30am – 10.30am via Zoom. A video recording of the presentations can be accessed [here](#).

## Agenda

Welcome and background – Paul Braithwaite, Community Foundation NI.

### Guest Speakers:

Kaela Scott, Head of Democratic Innovation, Involve  
Citizens' Assemblies

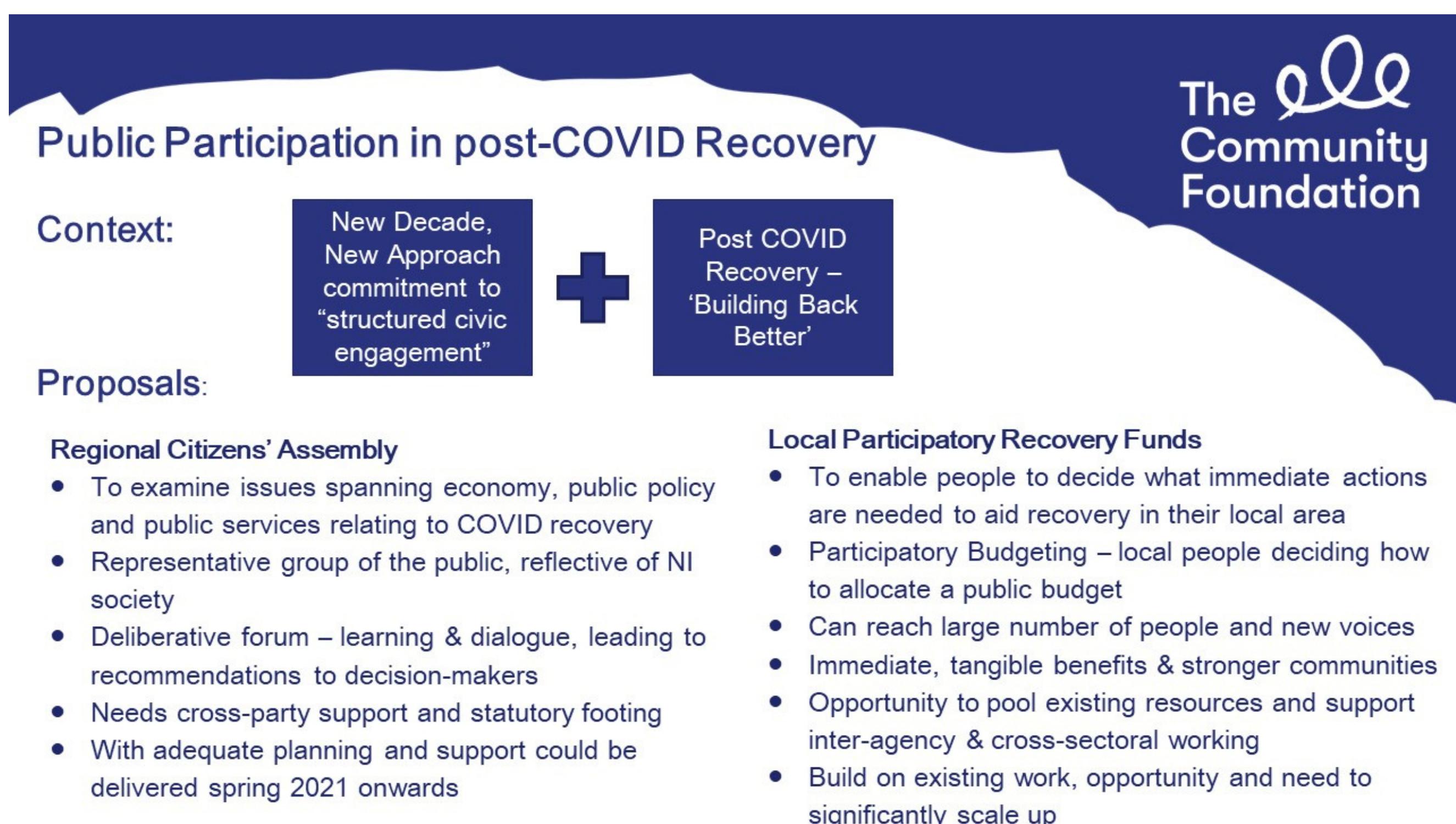
Jezz Hall, Director of Shared Future CIC  
Participatory Budgeting

### Discussion

## Event notes

Welcome – Paul Braithwaite, Head of Innovation and Voice, Community Foundation

Paul Braithwaite, Head of Innovation and Voice at the Community Foundation began by introducing the contributors and providing some background to the event in terms of the Foundation's strategic work around Community Voice. A recap of the 23rd October seminar was provided by way of highlighting the proposals that have been put forward for consideration by the NI Executive, as summarised in the slide below:



Paul then explained that the purpose of this event was to provide attendees with further background on the specific methodologies of citizens' assemblies and participatory budgeting. Both these methodologies have been increasingly used in the UK and Ireland in recent years, including in NI, to involve the public in decision-making.

Paul then introduced the speakers who are experts on these respective approaches, Kaela Scott from Involve and Jezz Hall from Shared Future CIC.



## Kaela Scott, Head of Democratic Innovation, Involve

Kaela Scott is Head of Democratic Innovation at Involve, a role focused on developing the theory and practice of public engagement and new forms of democratic participation. With a background in local government, since joining Involve in 2015 she has led on a wide range of engagement and research projects, with a particular focus on how to involve the public in dialogue and deliberation around complex and technical issues.

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## Jezz Hall, Director Shared Future CIC



Jez Hall is Director of Shared Future CIC. For over 25 years Jez has worked in diverse communities, facilitating deliberative and participatory democracy processes and delivering research and policy work. He specialises in participatory budgeting, co-production and social enterprise.

## Citizens' Assemblies Kaela Scott

[Click here to watch a video of the presentation](#)



### WHAT IS A CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY?

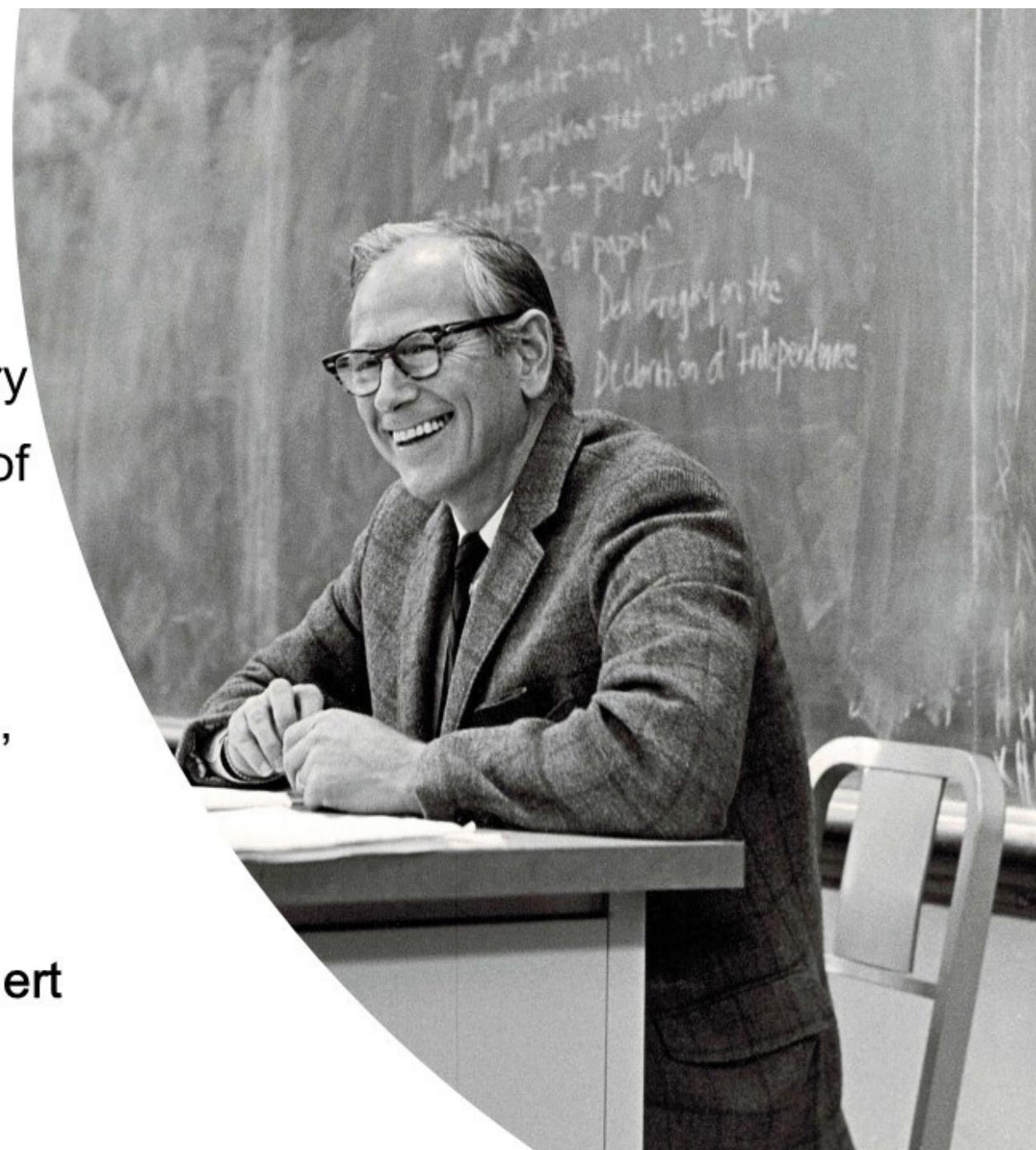


- Randomly selected members of the public are brought together to consider an issue;
- They learn in depth about the issue, hearing from witnesses;
- They discuss the issue with people from all walks of life;
- Together, they reach a collective decision.

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“Suppose an advanced democratic country were to create a ‘minipopulus’ consisting of perhaps a thousand citizens randomly selected out of the entire demos. Its task would be to deliberate, for a year perhaps, on an issue and then to announce its choices... one minipopulus could exist for each major issue on the agenda...” – Robert Dahl, 1989



# ALL DIFFERENT...



But some common features...

- Random selection
  - Demographic representation
  - Expert evidence
  - Facilitated dialogue
  - Collective decisions





ALL DIFFERENT, but....



**Not all assemblies of citizens  
are citizens' assemblies**

**– and neither do they need  
to be.**

- While it's important that rules/ definitions do not curb innovation, it's critical that methods are not watered down beyond recognition.
- Involve have been leading a process among practitioners and commissioners in the UK to developed some draft standards for citizens' assemblies

<https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/knowledge-base/how-do-i-setup-citizens-assembly/standards-citizens-assemblies>

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## WHAT IS NEEDED TO MAKE A CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY MOST EFFECTIVE...



### FEATURES IN SET UP...

- Clear remit
- Institutional ownership
  - The assembly is commissioned by an authority with responsibility for the issue in question
- Independent oversight
  - Impartial facilitation and independent advisory group scrutinizing the planning
- Random selection and demographic representation
  - 50 – 150 people (although can be bigger)

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## WHAT IS NEEDED TO MAKE A CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY MOST EFFECTIVE...



### FEATURES IN DELIVERY...

- Balanced information
- Expert witnesses
  - Members determine their own questions for witnesses and time to question them
- Inclusive
- Sufficient time
  - At least equiv. 4 days, but often significantly longer
- Collective decision-making

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## WHAT IS NEEDED TO MAKE A CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY MOST EFFECTIVE...



### FEATURES IN FOLLOW UP...

- Public report to decision-makers
- Consideration in a suitable forum
- Formal response to recommendations

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## WHEN HAVE A CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY?



- Tackling complex issues
- Breaking deadlock
- Multiple possible answers
- Potentially conflicting beliefs/values
- Trade-offs are required
- Rebuilding trust
- When there is genuine commitment to listen and respond

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# Participatory Budgeting

## Jez Hall, Director, Share Future CIC

[Click here to watch a video of the presentation](#)

### Citizens' Assemblies and Participatory Budgeting Tools to help Northern Ireland 'Build Back Better' post-COVID



### Participatory Budgets for Structured Civic Engagement

Jez Hall: Shared Future CIC



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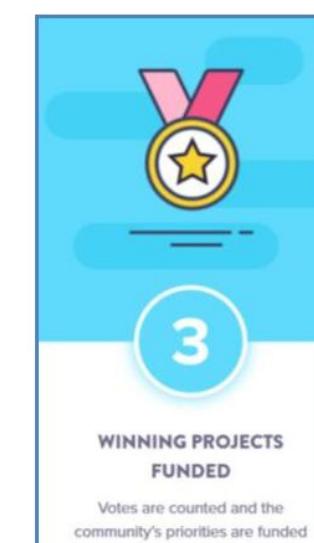
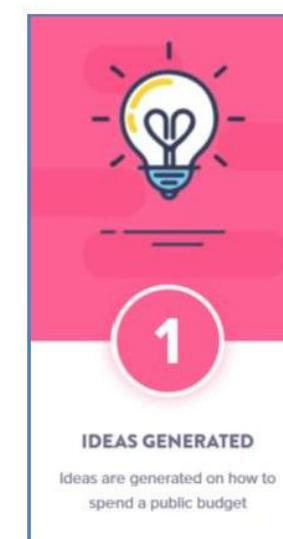
## PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING?



Participatory budgeting (PB) is a **process** through which **citizens** participate directly in **budget** formulation, decision-making and monitoring of the budget execution. A channel for citizens to give voice to their budget **priorities**.  
*(World Bank)*

**"Local People deciding how to allocate part of a public budget."**

A way for citizens to have a direct say in how public funds are used to address local needs.  
*(NI PB Works website)*



**'If it feels like we have decided, it's PB.  
If it feels like someone else has decided, it isn't.'**  
*(Resident involved in PB)*

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## 7 defining characteristics of PB



- 1) Public budgets are the object of the process...** *(its about real money)*
- 2) Participation has a direct impact on the budget...** *(it is not a consultation)*
- 3) The process has a deliberative element...** *(more than just voting)*
- 4) Citizens influence rules governing the process...** *(its co-designed)*
- 5) Redistribution is embedded in the process...** *(it promotes equity)*
- 6) Designed so that citizens can monitor spending...** *(fosters Open Govt)*
- 7) The process is repeated (e.g. on a yearly basis)...** *(PB grows and learns)*

*(Credit: Tiago Peixoto, Senior Public Sector Specialist at the World Bank)*

*"The truth about our aspirations isn't found in our vision, its found in our budget."*

*(Credit: Brett Toderian, City Planner, Canada)*



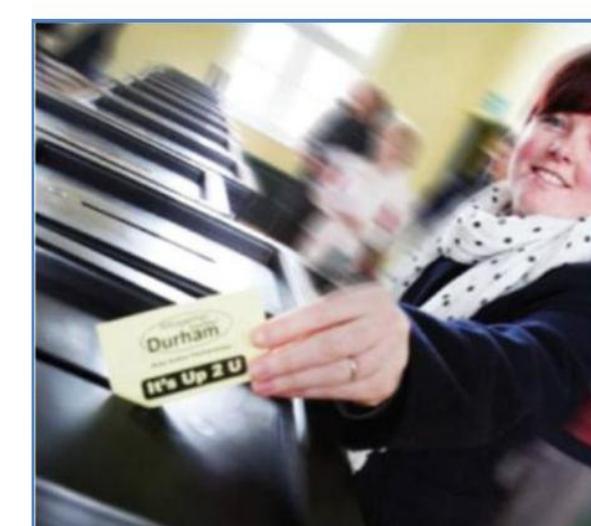
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## NOT ALL OF THE BUDGET!!



**Only a percentage of any public budget will be allocated using PB**

The PB process is always formally mandated and 'signed off' by the relevant elected legislature



- 1. Supporting Representative Democracy**
- 2. Improving and reforming how public money is spent**
- 3. Building Stronger Communities**

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## Growth Of Participatory Budgeting



History going back 30 years

Spreading across  
the globe

Over 11,000  
DIFFERENT  
experiences



Americas, Europe, Asia, Australasia, Africa

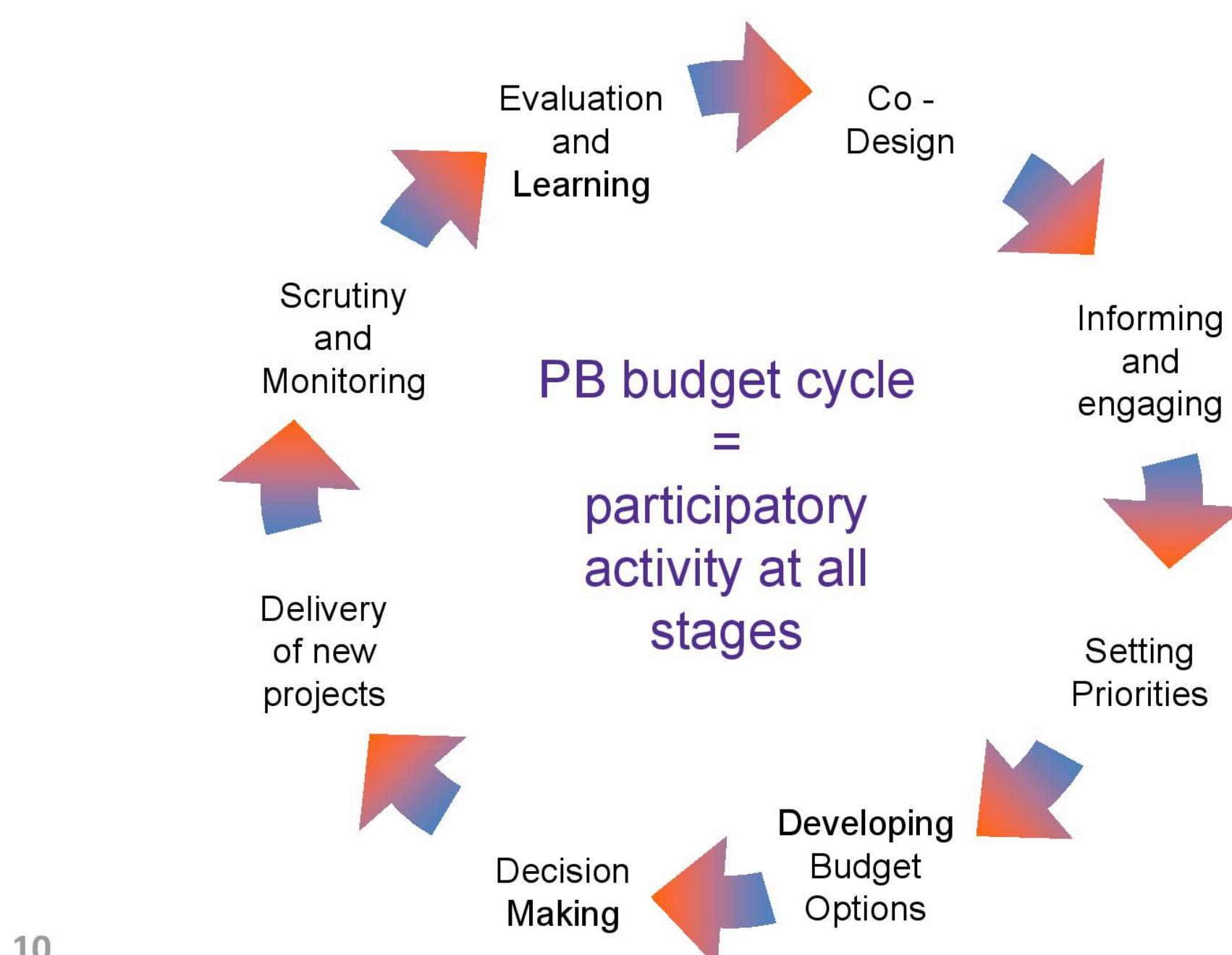
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## Growth Of Participatory Budgeting



Different Scales, Different Contexts, Different Challenges

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## Scotland's PB Journey

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>2015</b><br><b>Community Empowerment Act (Scotland)</b>   |  |
| <b>2016</b><br><b>Community Choices Funding</b><br>Embedded the Test & Learn Culture   |  |
| <b>2017</b><br><b>Agreement between Scot' Gov' and COSLA</b><br>That at least 1% of budgets will be subject to PB by 2022<br>All Scotland's 32 Local Authorities committed |  |
| <b>2018</b><br><b>Developing the PB Equalities Framework</b><br>Enable Deliberation and Reduce Inequality  |  |
| <b>2019</b><br><b>Development of a PB Charter for Scotland (2019)</b><br>Co-produced within the PB Scotland Network  |  |
| <b>It takes time to embed PB Values and Principles</b>   |  |



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## Sustaining PB requires your ‘Buy-In’



**The importance of authentic and sustained ‘buy-in’ from politicians**

Balanced by public sector and civil society ‘buy-in’

**PB has to flourish for long enough for positive impacts to show**

PB is always prone to being overcome by ‘events’

**Citizens lose trust if a process stops and starts**

Measurable results take time

**Hence a need to embed a culture of participation?**

=

**“Structured Civic Engagement”**



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## Benefits of Participatory Budgeting



- Better alignment between needs of citizens and public investment
- Reduction in inequality (through pro-poor expenditure)
- Improvements in public health and well-being
- Increased tax revenues
- Improved democratic culture (turnout and trust)
- Trust building (reduced social conflict)



***It is worth noting that this process is both a political and a technical process***

***and a balance needs to be struck between the two***

*Senior Elected Politician at an international PB conference in 2015*



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## What might Government do?



### What?

Promote innovation	(Technical support + resources)
Enable localities to try PB	(Remove regulatory burdens)
Act quickly	(Create momentum)
Connect PB to social justice	(Evaluate outcomes that matter)
Educate through 'doing democracy'	(Lead through example)

### How?

- Connect Deliberative and Participatory Democracy (Structured)
- Do PB Grant-Making plus PB 'Mainstreaming' (Blended)
- Identify and support PB Champions (Active)
- Challenge everyone to do better (Ambitious)

**Attendees:**

**Organisers and speakers:**

Paul Braithwaite, Head of Innovation and Voice, Community Foundation NI

Kaela Scott, Head of Democratic Innovation, Involve

Jezz Hall, Shared Future CIC.

Gemma McCaughley, Community Foundation NI

Rebekah McCabe, Involve

Geoff Nutall, NICVA

Dearbhla Sloan, NICVA

Louise O’Kane, Community Places

**Other attendees:**

Elected representatives and staff of the following political parties were in attendance:

Alliance Party

Green Party

Sinn Fein

Social Democratic and Labour Party

Ulster Unionist Party

Representatives of the following government departments were in attendance:

Department for Communities

Department of Finance

'Building Back Better'- Involving the Public in Shaping Northern Ireland's post-COVID Recovery' & 'Citizens' Assemblies and Participatory Budgeting – Tools to help Northern Ireland Build Back Better post-COVID' are part of the Community Foundation's advocacy campaign aligned to our Strategic Priority, Community Voice



Everyone has the right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and shape the society they live in. Public trust in government and politics is extremely low and there are few opportunities for people to influence the decisions that affect their lives – with the right support civil society and government can work together to change this by reinvigorating civic participation and deepening democracy.

For further information or to discuss contact Paul Braithwaite, Head of Innovation and Voice, at [pbraithwaite@communityfoundationni.org](mailto:pbraithwaite@communityfoundationni.org)

The Community Foundation,  
Community House,  
6A Albert Street,  
Belfast, BT12 4HQ

T: 028 9024 5927

[info@communityfoundationni.org](mailto:info@communityfoundationni.org)  
[www.communityfoundationni.org](http://www.communityfoundationni.org)