



PART 1: BASIC DATA

Title of the experience: Participatory budget of Ahuntsic-Cartierville, first edition		
Name of the city/region: Borough of Ahuntsic-Cartierville, City of Montreal		
Country: Canada		
Institution presenting the candidacy: Borough of Ahuntsic-Cartierville		
Start date of the experience: February 2019		
End date of the experience: January 2020		
Type of candidacy	New experience	X
Type of experience	Participatory budgeting	X
Objective of the experience	To achieve higher levels of equality in terms of participation and to incorporate diversity as a criterion for inclusion	X
	Community empowerment	X
	To empower non-organised citizens	X
Territorial area	District	X
Thematic area	All	X

PART 2: DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPERIENCE

Objectives

<p>Main objective of the innovative experience:</p> <p>At the heart of the project was the goal of "achieving higher levels of equality in participation and incorporating diversity as a criterion for inclusion". It was part of the principles of the Participatory Budget Charter: "Establish measures to promote the active participation of all social groups".</p>
<p>How have you achieved this objective?</p> <p>First, by taking Participatory Budgeting activities to where people are. A mobile team went to a park during a public event to discuss community needs. We met with seniors one afternoon at a seniors' club to discuss their projects. Several high schools hosted us during the vote to reach out to 12-19 year olds, an age group not often involved in municipal democratic processes.</p> <p>The borough also focused on producing accessible information tools. Summary of the process, ballots, project summary sheets, etc. were designed in a simple manner. It is important to note that the project sheets submitted to the vote were each accompanied by a playful illustration, produced by an artist, which made them easier to understand, among other things, for those who are less skilled in reading or in the French language.</p> <p>Finally, we joined forces with community groups that have a privileged contact with audiences that are more difficult to reach. Guided by their trustworthy resources, many people contributed to the process when they could not have done so otherwise.</p>


To what extent has this objective been achieved?

The results speak for themselves: 26% of those who took part in the vote were immigrants and 21% were young people aged 12 to 19. In addition, for many people (under 18 years of age and non-citizens), this was an introductory exercise to municipal democracy, as 23% of those who voted were not eligible to vote in municipal elections. The vote also reached a portion of the population that is not likely to participate in municipal elections, with 12% of voters indicating that they sometimes or never participate in municipal elections.

Although efforts still need to be made to reach non-traditional audiences, these results are motivating for a first edition of the participatory budget. They encourage the borough to continue its efforts to reach higher levels of equality in participation, whether for the next edition of the participatory budget or for the organization's participatory practices as a whole.

Dimensions of the experience

Which is the most innovative aspect of the experience?

The participatory budget approach is in itself an innovative element for the borough, since it implies a change of mentality on the part of the municipal administration in the way financial resources are allocated.

However, the most innovative element remains the variety of means used to broaden participation to as many and diverse populations as possible. We held workshops across the territory, at various times, in universally accessible locations, each time offering a drop-in centre. We reached out to the public rather than waiting for them to come to us by holding mobile voting sessions in seniors' residences, in schools and in sports centers frequented by a very diverse population. Voting stations were set up in community centers, libraries and borough offices, allowing those who wished to vote by paper to do so near their residence. Online voting was also available for those who could not or did not wish to travel.

Individually, these practices may seem trivial, but combined, they constitute the heart of the innovation of this process. They facilitated the participation of many and expanded the opportunities for participation, including to people who were not at all familiar with the process and who would not have participated if we had not come.

To what extent is the procedure transferable?

The participatory budget process is not new and is well established in many cities around the world. The steps to carry out such a process can remain more or less the same from one place to another (ideation, development of ideas towards concrete projects and voting to prioritize projects). There is no universal formula, but one of the key elements to replicate is paradoxically to adapt the methods and conditions of participation to each environment, taking into account good practices. To consult the documentation on the first edition of the Ahuntsic-Cartierville participatory budget, please visit <https://www.realisonsmtl.ca/budgetparticipatifac>

Why do you consider that the experience is feasible?

First of all, the political will to carry out a participatory budget exercise must be present and this was the case in the borough of Ahuntsic-Cartierville. The borough council was ready to make available a sum of money to be used for the realization of projects whose initiative and choice were up to the population. The administrative will was also there, since at several points, the borough teams contributed to the process by accompanying the participants in



the development of their projects and by analyzing their technical, legal and financial feasibility.

Moreover, as a result of the political and administrative will, such an approach requires the allocation of the necessary resources for its realization. First, the budget, \$250,000 in our case, must be sufficient to carry out projects that have an impact on the community. Then, the human resources. The coordination of the process, the realization of communication tools, the mobilization of local actors, the analysis of projects, etc., requires a substantial investment of time. It should be noted that in the borough of Ahuntsic-Cartierville, a resource entirely dedicated to citizen participation was in charge of coordinating the process.

How has the experience been coordinated with other actors and processes?

The collaboration of the community in the participatory budget process proved to be a strong asset in involving the population in the development of collective projects during the initial stages of the participatory budget. While carrying out their regular activities, these grassroots actors were able to mobilize their public, popularize the participatory budget and get people involved through their own activities. For example, during the voting period, the organization Concertation Femmes held 10 days of talks on the participatory budget and the projects submitted for voting. At the end of the discussion period, the women voted for their favorite projects. With a better understanding of the process, they were also able to discuss it with their families at home, thus becoming mobilizers of the process themselves.

What has been the level of co-responsibility?

In order to ensure that the process was in step with the community, the borough set up a steering committee made up of elected officials, local community organizations, two neighbourhood tables and borough staff. The committee formulated the principles that guided the entire process (transparency, accessibility and inclusion, community development and collective capacities, participatory democracy and power to act, and sustainable development) as well as the rules for the exercise (the participatory budget charter). It played an important role in encouraging the borough to adopt innovative practices in carrying out the process.

As this was a cross-cutting project, all borough departments were also called upon to collaborate. The involvement of staff in the mobilization, in guiding the participants during the activities and in analyzing the proposed projects was a key element in the success of the participatory budget.

Finally, the participatory budget involves the active participation of the population in a municipal decision-making process, which is an innovation in itself; not only did the participants put forward ideas and develop projects, but they were the ones who decided which projects to implement.

Which evaluation and accountability mechanisms were used?

The Ahuntsic-Cartierville participatory budget was designed and carried out with a view to experimentation and learning. This is why, throughout the process, different ways of evaluating the approach were put in place: evaluation meetings with the steering committee and with the borough's internal teams, evaluation questionnaires during the activities of the approach and open commentary in plenary sessions and opportunities for the participants. A [report](#) on the process was produced and made public. It describes the participation in each of the activities and stages of the process, the resources invested, the socio-demographic statistics of the participants, as well as the detailed results.



Finally, the organization that accompanied the borough for the realization of the participatory budget, the [Montreal Urban Ecology Centre](#), with its expertise in the realization of similar processes in several municipalities in Quebec, produced a summary report that contains judicious advice on the good results and the improvements to be made. All of this data is now being used to improve the process for the next edition and, more generally, our participatory practices in the borough.

Summary of the experience

In 2019, **the borough of Ahuntsic-Cartierville in Montreal** launched its very **first participatory budget**. The goal of this process was to go beyond traditional consultations and allow residents to imagine, develop and choose for themselves the projects they considered most important to improve their living environment.

Residents were able to decide on the allocation of a portion of the borough's budget, namely \$250,000. This amount came from the operating budget surplus, giving participants a great deal of latitude in the type of project that could be proposed (not limited strictly to development projects, unlike a participatory budget using money from the capital budget). In order to offer a process adapted to the reality of the borough, a steering committee composed of elected officials, local organizations, the two neighbourhood tables and borough staff was set up to formulate the principles that guided the entire process (transparency, accessibility and inclusion, development of the community and collective capacities, participatory democracy and power to act, and sustainable development), as well as the rules governing the exercise (the participatory budget charter).

The population was first invited to propose ideas for projects aimed at improving their living environment, during ideation workshops and at a large outdoor public event, in the form of a participatory kiosk. Then, with the support of borough staff, the participants discussed and prioritized the project ideas during a large forum. Just over 250 people contributed to these first stages of the participatory budget.

After a feasibility study (technical, financial and legal) carried out by the borough's services, the projects were submitted to a vote open to all residents of the borough aged 12 and over. In one month, more than 1,000 people took part in the vote online (on the [RealisonsMtl](#) platform) or in person (in the borough's libraries or community centres, at borough offices, or during mobile voting sessions in schools, sports centres or seniors' residences). Three projects were selected by the population. They are currently being carried out, are in progress or will be shortly:

- [a winter outdoor initiation project](#);
- [a glass recycling project](#);
- a small electric pleasure boat project on the Rivière des Prairies.

This project was the first in a recurring cycle of participatory budgets. Based on the lessons learned from this first edition, the borough of Ahuntsic-Cartierville is now implementing a second edition.