

Application Form

CATEGORIES IN WHICH YOU WANT TO APPLY THE EXPERIENCE

1: TYPE OF EXPERIENCE: *choose the most important element (choose only one element which you consider the most outstanding of your practice).*

A) Deliberation Citizen assembly / deliberation workshop / lottery / legislative theater / participatory planning	
B) Decision Participatory budget / referendum / consultation / participatory process with vote	X
C) Citizenship Citizenship / community action / permanent council / civic education / associationism / other initiatives to reinforce local democracy	

2: TYPE OF GOVERNMENT: *choose one only.*

A) Up to 50,000 inhabitants (towns, small cities, rural areas).	
B) Cities between 50,000 and 250,000 inhabitants.	
C) Cities between 250,000 and 1,000,000 inhabitants.	X
D) Large cities or urban areas of more than 1,500,000 inhabitants.	
E) Supralocal, regional, provincial governments	

Experience data: *complete the information below in a clear and concise manner.*

Title of the experience: Denver Participatory Budgeting Program: Cycle One
Name of the city or region: City and County of Denver, Colorado
Inhabitants of the city or territory: City and County of Denver residents
Country: United States of America

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Institution presenting the candidacy: (name of the municipality, department, government, institution leading the candidate experience) The agency of Community Planning and Development for the City and County of Denver		
Website of the experience or institution: www.denvergov.org/DenverPB		
Profiles in social networks of the experience or the institution: City and County of Denver Facebook , Instagram , and Twitter		
Start date of the experience: February 1, 2022		
End date of the experience: Cycle one ended February 1, 2023. Projects funded through cycle one are currently being constructed. Cycle two of the program will begin Fall 2023.		
Budget of the experience: (indicate the budget of the experience or the resources mobilized for its development and implementation). \$1,250,000.00 total operating budget. Of this \$1,000,000 was reserved for residents to budget, and the remaining \$250,000 was for city staff to operate the program (to compensate residents for their time, to pay for language translation and interpretation, to print materials, etc.)		
Type of candidacy <i>(mark with an X in the right column)</i>	New experience	X
	Innovation on an existing experience	
	Continuity of an experience	
Type of experience <i>(mark with an X in the right column, you may choose more than one)</i>	Participatory budgeting	X
	Participatory planning	
	Standing council	
	Workshop / meeting for diagnosis, monitoring, etc.	
	Public hearing / forum	
	Poll / referendum	
	Assemblies / Citizen juries / Deliberation spaces	

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	E-government / Open government / Digital platforms		
	Citizen initiative		
	Other (specify):		
Objective of the experience <i>(mark with an X in the right column, you may choose more than one)</i>	To achieve higher levels of equality in terms of participation		X
	Including diversity as a criterion for inclusion		X
	Community empowerment		X
	To empower non-organised citizens		X
	To increase citizen's rights in terms of political participation		X
	To connect different tools of participation within a participatory democracy "ecosystem"		
	To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the mechanisms of participatory democracy		
	To improve the quality of public decision-making through the mechanisms of participatory democracy		X
	To improve the evaluation and accountability of the mechanisms of participatory democracy		
To improve any public policy through the active participation of the public			
Territorial area <i>(mark with an X in the right column, you may choose more than one)</i>	All the territory	Local	X
		Regional	
	District		
	Neighbourhood		
	Governance		X

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<p>Thematic area (mark with an X in the right column, you may choose more than one)</p>	Education	
	Transport	
	Urban management	
	Health	
	Security	
	Environment / Climate change and/or urban agriculture	
	Civic associations, grassroots and new social movements	X
	Culture	
	Housing	
	Job creation	
	Decentralization	
	Local development	
	Training / learning	
	Economy and/or finances	X
	Legal regulations	
	Social inclusion	X
All		
Other (write the topic)		
<p>Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) associated</p>	SDG 1 - No poverty	
	SDG 2 - Zero hunger	

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<p>with the practice</p> <p><i>(mark with an X in the right column, more than one option can be chosen, you can also add the specific target)</i></p>	SDG 3 - Good health and well-being	
	SDG 4 - Quality education	
	SDG 5 - Gender equality	
	SDG 6 - Clean water and sanitation	
	SDG 7 - Affordable and clean energy	
	SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth	
	SDG 9 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure	X
	SDG 10 - Reduced inequality	X
	SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities	
	SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production	
	SDG 13 - Climate action	
	SDG 14 - Life below water	
	SDG 15 - Life on land	
	SDG 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions	X
SDG 17 - Partnership for the goals		

PART 2: DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPERIENCE

Fill in the following fields clearly and concisely. You can add links, images or graphics if you consider it appropriate.

Context:

In a **maximum of 300 words**, present the cultural, geographical, historical, institutional and socioeconomic context of the city, region or territory in which the experience takes place.

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Denver is the largest city in the state of Colorado, with a population of over 730,000 within the county and nearly 3 million people in the surrounding metro area. The city's population grew 21.2 percent between 2010 and 2019. According to the 2019 census, 55 percent of the population identifies as white, 30 percent identifies as Hispanics, 10 percent identifies as Black or African American, and nearly 5 percent identify as Asian or American Indian. Denver is experiencing many trends, amplified by rapid population growth, that threaten the community's values of equity and inclusivity. In the past ten years, for the first time in decades, the city became less ethnically and racially diverse. There are growing disparities between neighborhoods, with communities of color often experiencing greater barriers to opportunity, and longtime residents and businesses who can no longer afford to stay in place. These challenges put Denver at risk of losing its rich diversity of people and cultures. Today many youth and adults do not have equitable access to the key amenities, services and opportunities that advance quality of life. Addressing these inequities and mitigating the negative impacts of gentrification—especially involuntary displacement—is essential to realizing our future vision. This includes helping our most vulnerable residents access tools to build their wealth, including quality education and attainable homeownership.

Precedents:

*Explain the precedents and origins of the experience: if it is the innovation of an existing experience, what are its origins; if it is a new experience, what are the antecedents in participation in your city, region or territory. You can also indicate if you have been inspired by experiences in other cities/countries. (In a **maximum of 300 words**).*

Denver piloted its first-ever participatory budgeting (PB) program in 2022. The idea for the PB program originated in 2018 after collaborations between key Denver City Council members, the city's Chief Financial Officer, and the Denver Mayor. After several years of negotiations among leadership, the City secured \$2 million to fund projects identified through the first cycle.

Objectives of the experience:

*What is the objective listed in Part 1 that you think is the most important, and indicate other outstanding objectives of the experience. (In a **maximum of 100 words**).*

A form of participatory democracy, Denver's PB program aimed to strengthen partnerships between residents and government. An equity-focused civic engagement process, the PB Program set the objectives to improve communication between municipal government and historically underserved residents, increase trust and transparency, and foster reciprocal learning between government and the community. The program hopes to increase equitable outcomes for under-resourced residents (especially for communities of color, immigrant and refugees, people with disabilities, and youth populations) through shifting decision-making power in city budgeting, promoting community-led ideas and plans, and instituting inclusive engagement strategies for participation in civic processes.

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Methodology:

*Describe the methodology of the experience: phases of the process, participation channels. (In a **maximum of 300 words**).*

Denver launched its first cycle of PB in 2022 empowering residents to budget \$2 million of capital funds for neighborhood projects. The PB process consisted of four community-led phases:

Phase 1: Program Design

- In the first phase, a group of residents called the Community Steering Committee worked with City staff to develop a guidebook, laying the foundation for the first cycle.

Phase 2: Idea Collection

- In the second phase, the Community Steering Community handed the process off to a new group of residents, called Community Connectors. Community Connectors were a small but mighty group of residents with strong relationships in their neighborhoods and into historically underserved populations. Denver dispersed \$30,000 in mini-grants to Community Connectors to help resource them as they led the idea collection phase. Through community outreach efforts, the city collected over 1,100 ideas, of which 97 percent of respondents identified as a person of color.

Phase 3: Proposal Development

- With these ideas in hand, Phase 3 engaged a new group of residents, called Budget Delegates, who scored and ranked ideas based on equity criteria and then worked side-by-side city staff to turn the top ideas into actual project proposals, complete with scopes and cost estimates. Budget Delegates narrowed the 1,100 ideas down to 23 specific proposals.

Phase 4: Community Voting

- Finally, the city re-engaged the Community Connectors to work alongside staff and encourage residents to vote for their favorite projects. Outreach in this phase focused on reaching people who cannot participate in traditional civic processes or who face the highest barriers to these processes, including children, undocumented residents, currently incarcerated residents, and people experiencing homelessness. Over 3,100 people voted and chose to spend the \$2 million on nine infrastructure projects, which Denver is constructing in 2024.

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Innovation:

*Explain what you consider as the most innovative aspect(s) in the practice. (In a **maximum of 150 words**).*

The PB program recognized that not all residents are welcome in traditional government and traditional civic processes. This program was not only open to such residents, it developed the entire outreach and engagement strategy around these communities. To create an inclusive process and shift decision-making to historically underserved communities, the Program could not simply invite residents to the process. Rather, the city committed to taking on the burden of accessibility and bring the process directly into corners of the community that were most often excluded. Deliberation meetings, outreach, and voting events were held in untraditional locations, including homeless shelters, the Denver county jail, in public housing, at food banks, in schools and after school programs, and more. The program hosted discussions with residents to hear their needs and ideas for budgeting the \$2 million. This approach built long-term relationships within communities that, rightfully so, were mistrusting of government.

Inclusion:

*Point out the importance of including as many groups and diverse populations as possible, and how you have achieved it. (In a **maximum of 150 words**).*

The PB Program set a specific intention to remove barriers to participation, especially for communities of color, immigrant and refugees, people with disabilities, and youth populations. To achieve such inclusion, it was necessary to ensure diversity among our various resident leadership committees. Across the program, there were three resident leadership groups (the Community Steering Committee, Community Connector Mini-Grant Recipients, and Budget Delegates) and the Program took great care to ensure these bodies were representative if not over-representative of Denver's diverse populations. More than 80% of the resident leadership groups were people of color, and the program ensured that crucial lived experience was represented as well. Resident leaders included undocumented residents, youth, people experiencing homelessness, and low wage earners and members of public housing. Having such diversity in these leadership roles kept the Program focused inclusivity as we carried out the phases of the program.

Communication:

*What has been the strategy and communication channels of the experience for engaging the population. (In a **maximum of 150 words**)*

While the program utilized a variety of mass communication channels like social media, newsletter, e-mail blasts, the press releases, the Program focused on reaching specific communities that were often not tied into the City's existing communication channels. The program collaborated with Community Connectors to create fact sheets, idea submission cards, fliers, etc. and resourced these residents so they could do direct, in-person outreach. During the voting phase, the Program utilized a digital ballot tool for a dynamic and modern experience that would be simple and engaging for those who may not have voted before. The Program promoted the digital ballots through standard communication channels, but was also adaptable for in-person engagements. Using tablets and smartphones, the digital

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engagement tool allowed people to vote in neighborhoods or at specific locations like food banks, homeless shelters, youth centers, public housing, schools, jails, etc. All communication was translated in eight languages.

Articulation with other actors:

*Explain how the experience was articulated with different actors and simultaneous or pre-existing processes. What roles did these participants assume? Explain the degree of success of this articulation. (In a **maximum of 150 words**)*

The Program was led through the Department of Finance but worked closely with internal and external partners. Internally, the Program was in close coordination with several other city government agencies, including the Department of Transportation & Infrastructure, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Department of Housing Stability, the Office of Social Equity and Innovation, and others. Additionally, the program worked in partnership with city leadership like the Mayor and the Denver City Council and provided regular, publicly televised updates on the process. Externally, the Program contracted with local partners and organizers to support public outreach, meeting facilitation, and general project management. During the program, several other community groups and organizations became heavily involved in outreach and in the project development, including the city's public housing provider and non-profits leading efforts to support people experiencing homelessness.

Evaluation:

*What evaluation mechanisms have been implemented? Develop whether the citizenry has participated in the evaluation of the practice. (In a **maximum of 300 words**).*

The program contracted for an independent, third-party evaluation of the first cycle of the program. The Evaluation team, led by Educe Consulting, collected data from over 1,500 residents using surveys, interviews, and observations of meetings and events. Data was collected for ongoing process evaluation and to examine participation at key points in the PB process. The Evaluation Team built a local participant research team to build capacity within Denver to evaluate future cycles of PB. Participant researchers were trained to collect and compile survey data, attend events to collect observational data, and to compose personal narratives of those events. The rationale for using participatory action research was that it aligned well to the principles central to participatory budgeting such as grassroots community engagement, capacity-building, and community voice. All demographic data from the program was communicate through a public facing dashboard posted to the Program website. Similarly, all ideas submit as part of the process were aggregated and posted to the idea collection dashboard as well. The Evaluation Team submit a formal report to the city highlighting lessons learned and reflections from the first cycle to help inform future cycles. Finally, the program also stood up regular monitoring committee meetings with all resident leaders. The monitoring committee meets quarterly to provide updates on the design and construction process for the nine projects that won and received funding in cycle one. At these meeting, residents have the opportunity to meet with and ask questions to the agencies constructing the projects.

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Impacts and results

*Describe the impacts and results of the process. How many people have participated, and what are their profiles? What have been the impacts on public policies, the functioning of the administration, and the citizenry? (In a **maximum of 300 words**).*

In cycle on of Denver's PB program, over 4,200 residents (predominately from Denver's historically underserved communities) successfully budgeted \$2 million of capital funds, investing into nine community-developed infrastructure projects:

1. \$400,000: Accessible sidewalks in Ruby Hill
2. \$362,500: New lights along Parks/Trails
3. \$300,000: New Freedom Park Improvements
4. \$225,000: Shower trailers for unhoused residents
5. \$200,000: Tiny homes for unhoused residents
6. \$187,500: Safer intersections in Capitol Hill
7. \$175,000: Community Gardens at subsidized housing
8. \$112,500: Accessible transit in City Park
9. \$37,500: New trashcans in Parks/Trails

Denver saw success in engaging residents who face the greatest barriers to civic participation. During the idea collection phase, 97 percent of respondents identified as a person of color, over half of respondents reported earning less than \$25K annually, and over half of respondents reported earning only a GED or had not earned a high school diploma. During the voting phase, people who cannot or may not participate in traditional civic processes had the opportunity to vote, including children, undocumented residents, currently incarcerated residents, and people experiencing homelessness.

Beyond the turnout numbers and demographic results, a true success of the program was its ability to build long-term, meaningful relationships with residents and spur their continued involvement and enthusiasm for civic. One resident has since joined the Mayor's Commission on Mobility while a youth resident from the program began volunteering for a candidate in a local city council race. Another resident decided to go back to school and study public administration while one individual, an unhoused resident staying at one of the city's homeless shelters, said she voted in the formal Mayoral election for the first time the spring after being involved in the program. While harder to quantify, these stories show the true impact of the PB program.

PART 3: EXPERIENCE SUMMARY

*A summary of the experience: origins, objectives, operation, results, monitoring, and evaluation. (Do not hesitate to repeat aspects that have already been written before. This summary will be shared on the digital platform for open evaluation and in the publication of the award). (In a **maximum of 500 words**).*

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Denver launched its first cycle of Participatory Budgeting (PB) in 2022, empowering residents to budget \$2 million of capital funds for neighborhood projects. In the pilot cycle, over 4,200 residents, predominately from Denver's historically underserved communities, successfully designed the program guidelines, brainstormed project ideas, developed ideas into proposals, and voted for their top projects. Through rank choice ballots, residents chose to invest into nine community-developed infrastructure projects:

1. \$400,000: Accessible sidewalks in Ruby Hill
2. \$362,500: New lights in FNE Parks/Trails
3. \$300,000: New Freedom Park Improvements
4. \$225,000: Shower trailers for unhoused residents
5. \$200,000: Tiny homes for unhoused residents
6. \$187,500: Safer intersections in Capitol Hill
7. \$175,000: Community Gardens at subsidized housing
8. \$112,500: Accessible transit in City Park
9. \$37,500: New trashcans in FNE Parks/Trails

Throughout the first year, Denver saw success in engaging residents who face the greatest barriers to civic participation. During the idea collection phase, 97 percent of respondents identified as a person of color, over half of respondents reported earning less than \$25K annually, and over half of respondents reported earning only a GED or had not earned a high school diploma. During the voting phase, people who cannot or may not participate in traditional civic processes had the opportunity to vote, including children, undocumented residents, currently incarcerated residents, and people experiencing homelessness.

Beyond the turnout numbers and demographic results, a true success of the program was its ability to build long-term, meaningful relationships with residents and spur their continued involvement and enthusiasm for civics. While these achievements are harder to quantify, the impacts can be felt through stories and experiences with residents who participated with the program. One resident went on to join the Mayor's Commission on Mobility while a youth resident began volunteering for a candidate in a local city council race. Another resident decided to go back to school and study public administration while another individual, an unhoused resident staying at one of the city's homeless shelters, said she voted for the first time ever in the municipal mayoral election the spring after the first cycle.

Of course, it would be impossible to say participatory budgeting is causing these outcomes, but there are correlations that would suggest PB is benefiting larger efforts to increase participatory democracy in Denver. In cycle one, the program not only demonstrated the potential to allocate funds through a community-led approach, but also built a stronger sense of trust and collaboration between the government and the public and developed a more robust, diverse, and representative network of residents eager to be involved in civic processes.

While leveraging these successes, and building off lessons learned in cycle one and shared through the third-party evaluation, Denver is preparing for the second cycle of participatory budgeting, which is set to begin in Fall 2023.

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We invite you to share annexes that allow you to better illustrate your experience: videos, photographs, documents... These can be sent through a file transfer service, such as WeTransfer, Dropbox or Google Drive.

- I attached a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the first cycle. Here is a link to that document in Google Drive:
 - o
- I attached a Google Drive folder with photographs and videos from the first cycle. Here is a link to that folder:
 - o https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1I3yO6Tz2ahkQVDFI_mxhrFSvRxkb6RV2?usp=drive_link
- Finally, I attached a case study that was done on the first cycle of the program. Here is a link to that case study:
 - o https://engagedpublic-my.sharepoint.com/personal/kate_abalancingact_com/_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fkate%5Fabalancingact%5Fcom%2FDocuments%2FAttachments%2FDenver%5FFinal%20Draft%2Epdf&parent=%2Fpersonal%2Fkate%5Fabalancingact%5Fcom%2FDocuments%2FAttachments&ga=1

Thank you for participating!