

Empower Eau Claire



Community. Democracy. Equity.

Participatory Budgeting Rulebook



CITY OF
**EAU
CLAIRE**

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Approved by the Participatory Budgeting Steering Committee on September 2, 2021

Amended February 23 & April 6, 2022

What is Participatory Budgeting (PB)?

It is a democratic process that empowers community members with direct say in creating and funding projects that meet local needs.

Started in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 1989, there are now over 7,000 cities worldwide running PB programs. The New York Times calls PB “revolutionary civics in action”— it deepens democracy, builds stronger communities, and creates a more equitable distribution of public resources.

The Participatory Budgeting Steering Committee has created this rulebook to guide all participants in establishing clear expectations each step of the way. The Empower Eau Claire PB program and this rulebook will remain a civic work in progress as the community continues to develop and improve the process. The PB program follows an annual cycle that is integrated into the regular budgeting process. In the City of Eau Claire’s case, it utilizes Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) funds to implement physical projects. A typical year follows these steps.

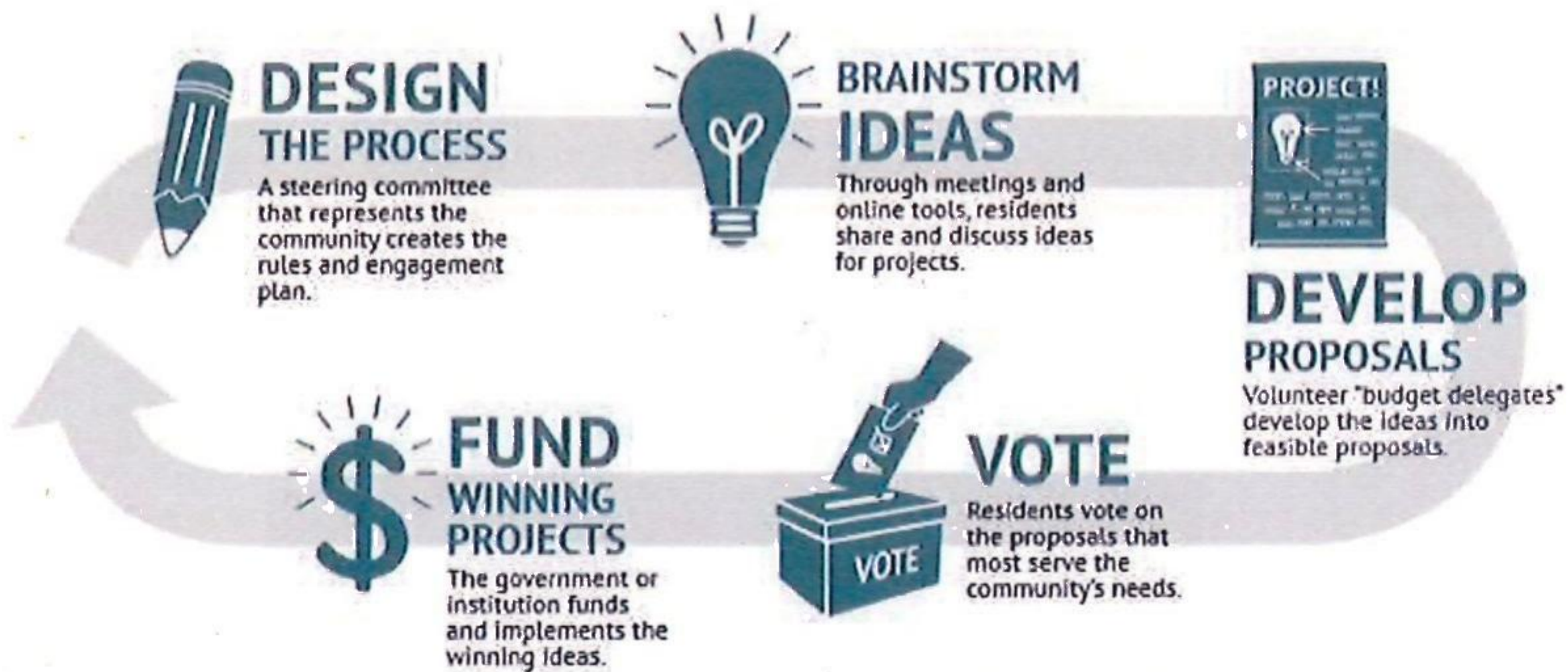


Image credit: PBP – Participatory Budgeting Project

Program Roots

In 2018, the City Council voted to fund a participatory budgeting program in Eau Claire. The first step was hiring a consultant to study what could work for the community. Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP) was contracted to advise council members and staff on what is involved in creating a successful program and how to tailor it to local circumstances. A report¹ was produced to provide an implementation roadmap with recommendations. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the City to delay the program until 2021.

Eau Claire has had a proud history of civic engagement in local democracy. One example that dates back to over a decade is called Clear Vision Eau Claire. In 2007, Clear Vision was founded on three basic principles: preserving the quality of life, transforming the local economy and empowering the individual. It was based on the belief that active and meaningful citizen involvement in planning the future of the community will result

in a commitment to make the desired, envisioned future a reality. In 2011, a Clear Vision Eau Claire Toolkit² was created to provide a collection of core concepts, core strategies, and core practices, anchored by a Public Work philosophy as advanced by Augsburg College's Center for Democracy and Citizenship. Success from Clear Vision's work includes the civic collaboration that led to the Pablo Center at the Confluence, the Sculpture Tour Eau Claire, a Safe Routes Bicycle Map of Eau Claire County, community gardens, and more.



Building on that base, the City won the All-America City Award in 2014. The prestigious award recognizes communities that leverage civic engagement, collaboration, inclusiveness and innovation to successfully address local issues. The theme that year was healthy communities. The community won the award because it used the National Civic League's civic democracy training process, created a Health Chapter in the City's Comprehensive Plan, and showcased the redevelopment of the Phoenix Park area.



¹ Participatory Budgeting in Eau Claire. Report by the Participatory Budgeting Project, February 2020

² Clear Vision Eau Claire Toolkit at http://ec.clearvisioneauclaire.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Clear_Vision_Eau_Claire_Toolkit_9-6-2011.pdf

STEERING COMMITTEE

In June 2021, a Participatory Budgeting Steering Committee (SC) was formed by City staff who recruited interested community volunteers. The values of diversity, equity, and sustainability drove the recruiting process as recommended in the consultant report.

The committee includes a group of individuals representing the community and the unique perspectives of stakeholder voices that sometimes are not present at the public decision-making table. They have a diversity of racial and ethnic backgrounds and sexual orientations. Their professions include social work, city planning, criminal justice, and higher education (student and educators). Affiliations of SC members include but are not limited to: University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire Student Senate, Chippewa Valley Street Ministry, Eau Claire County Department of Human Services, Sierra Club - Chippewa Valley Chapter, Joining Our Neighbors Advancing Hope (JONAH) Affordable Housing Task Force, and Black and Brown Womyn Power Coalition, Inc.

The SC members have initially committed to serve a one-year term as the PB program undertakes its first year. As the cycle nears its end, members will have a chance to continue on with a more formalized commitment. This exact process is yet to be defined but will be added to this rulebook.

2021-2022 Steering Committee Members

Cheryl Contant (resigned)

Karen Petersin

Richard Spindler

Pakou Thao

Kenny Tubwell

Jacksen Wolff

Susan Wolfgram

Mai Xiong

GOALS & OUTCOMES

The Empower Eau Claire Participatory Budgeting program follows the City of Eau Claire’s vision, mission, and values as found in the adopted 2020 Strategic Plan³.

Vision

Eau Claire is a vibrant city with exceptional quality of life and services.

Mission

It is our mission to assure the common good through services essential for a safe, sustainable, engaged and healthy community.

Our Strategic Values

We believe in making Eau Claire a great city.

We believe that local government is a stewardship.

We believe in sustainability.

We believe in equity.

The PB program will foster a higher integration level of these ideals, providing for an engaged community that has a direct role in shaping the city’s quality of life and essential services that meet real needs. It will further ensure that public resources are more equitably and sustainably delivered to all, with special focus on meeting the needs of those who have been historically marginalized in the civic decision-making realm.

Goals

The steering committee has selected these important goals. Goals are the “what” and “why” of a successful PB program in Eau Claire. They can be measured by specific outcomes.

Civic Empowerment

To increase community members’ participation, confidence, and cooperation with their local government by directly deciding on community projects.

³ <https://www.eauclairewi.gov/our-city/vision-mission-values>

Transparency

To provide integrity, accountability, open access, communication, monitoring and evaluation throughout.

Equity

To more fairly distribute public resources to the community and underserved populations that are in greater need.

Inclusion

To intentionally include specific underrepresented and marginalized populations so that their needs and perspectives are heard, valued, and acted upon.

Diversity

To make certain the process represents as many community members as possible.

Sustainability

To meet the environmental, fiscal, social, and well-being needs of the present without compromising the same needs of future generations who live in the community.

Outcomes

Outcomes are “How” the goals will be successfully realized, whether quantitatively or qualitatively. The steering committee wants to see that as many as possible outcomes are met within both the PB process and project proposals. It is understood that not all will be accomplished within an actual project or a particular process activity.

Civic Empowerment

- Encourage civic and community engagement in process and projects.
- Develop communications, trainings, events, and evaluation strategies to boost participation, knowledge, and support for the PB program.
- Create voting processes that encourage participation and that are voter-friendly.
- Increase the number of volunteers engaged in and skilled in the program.

Transparency

- Provide clear and understandable information to diverse populations in a variety of ways and languages.
- The Steering Committee, City staff, and volunteers will manage and represent the program ethically and based on the goals described.

- Local elected officials will remain a neutral party in the process.
- Make accessible program funding levels and status of project implementation.

Equity

- Prioritize projects to serve underrepresented and/or marginalized populations.
- Serve areas of the city that have experienced disinvestment or overlooked projects.
- Include direct outreach to diverse populations for ideas on projects and process.
- Consider using firms and vendors on contracted projects that meet similar goals.

Diversity

- Establish and maintain a diverse steering committee to represent different viewpoints.
- Seek feedback from different community populations on ways to engage their members and on how to best involve them in the process.
- Seek representatives of diverse groups to be integrated in the process and serve in volunteer roles.

Inclusion

- Use direct and intentional targeted outreach and engagement approaches to different groups and cultures.
- Provide language translation at events and on materials.
- Use non-technological means to communicate to various abilities and backgrounds.
- Hold events at locations that are very accessible.
- Aid the community in drafting proposals with use of budget delegate volunteers.
- Prioritize projects that include more than one user group.
- Seek partnerships to enhance the project proposal.
- Reduce voting barriers as much as possible.

Sustainability

- Seek projects that improve cultural, health and well-being, economic, and environmental benefits.
- Encourage proposals to consider using the Eco-municipality four systems conditions for a sustainable community⁴ and/or the Sustainable Development Goals.⁵
- Seek projects that eliminate or minimize ongoing operating or maintenance costs to the public.
- Integrate the PB program and cycle into the City's structural policies and processes.
- Incorporate sustainability goals or elements in project contracts.

⁴ Eco-municipality description at <https://www.eauclairewi.gov/government/our-divisions/sustainability> and City resolution at <https://www.eauclairewi.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/550/635285726974170000>

⁵ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

TIMELINE

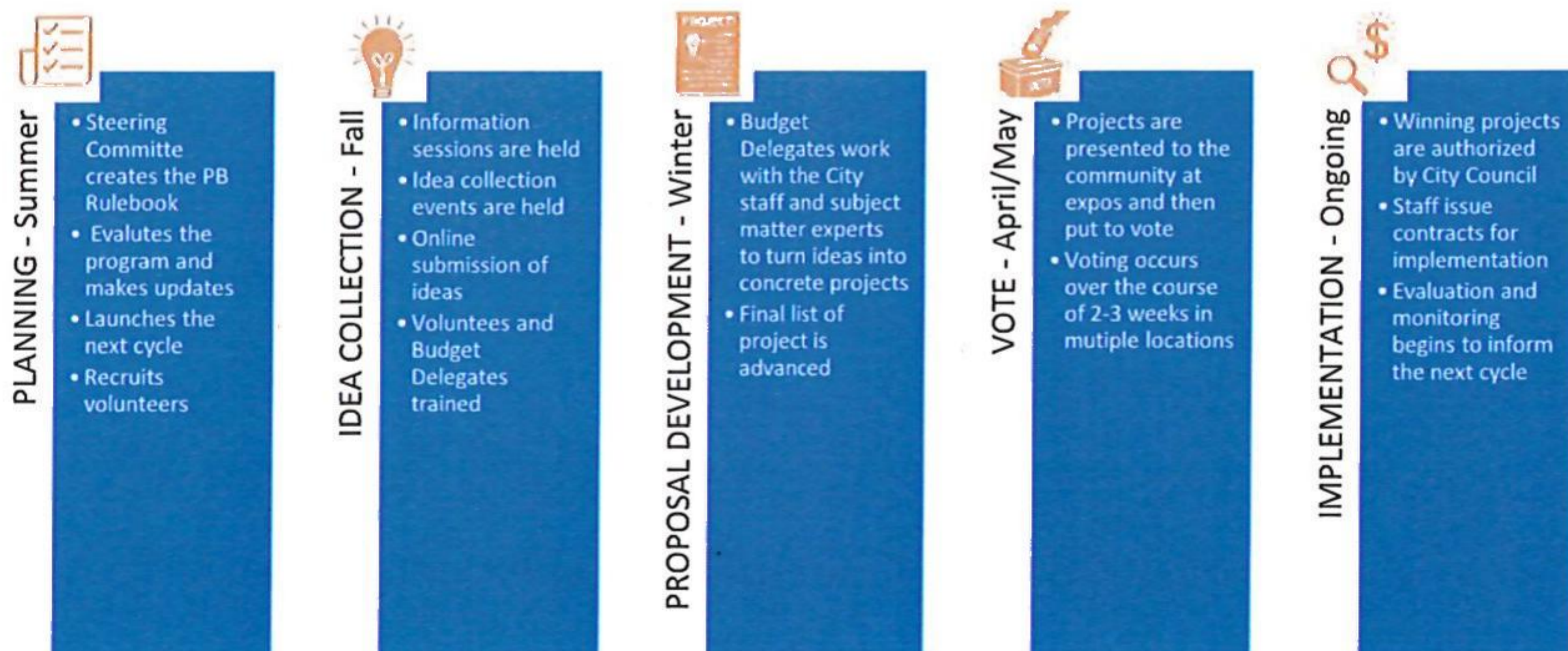
The Participatory Budgeting (PB) timeline typically follows an annual cycle as indicated in the graphics below. As this is the first year of the Empower Eau Claire PB program, considerable time was spent with the PB steering committee to design the initial process and this rulebook is the product of that effort. Accordingly, the public launch begins in September with collecting ideas from the community until the end of the year. Project ideas are then refined over a few months well into the new year so that final ballot proposals can be reviewed and voted on in April or May. After the winning projects are determined by the public, City Council approves the list for funding and then contracts are let to begin implementation. Before the next cycle begins, the steering committee will consider program and process improvements based on evaluation of participation, goals, outcomes, and other factors.

General timeline



Image credit: PBP – Participatory Budgeting Project

What happens when?



How Does PB Work in Eau Claire?

- The City Council authorizes the funding and staffing of the program.
- Volunteers are selected by City staff to form a Steering Committee that designs and oversees the process.
- Volunteers are trained to serve as Budget Delegates, facilitators, and poll-workers.
- Residents come together in person and/or online to brainstorm and submit project ideas.
- Anyone who lives in the city can submit a project idea. Special interest groups like neighborhood associations, non-profits, etc. cannot submit projects.
- City Staff and Budget Delegates assist to develop submitted project ideas into full proposals.
- The Steering Committee makes the final determination on the proposals that advance to voting.
- Residents vote on proposals and the winning projects are submitted to the City Council for final authorization.
- Projects are implemented via contracts.
- The Steering Committee works with City Staff and a third-party evaluator to monitor project implementation and improve the process for the next cycle.

Funding Level

There is \$100,000 annually allocated for PB for about \$1.45 worth of funding per the City's 69,000 residents. For PB cycle one in 2021-2022 there is \$300,000 or about \$4.35 for each resident. This includes a \$100,000 carryover from 2020 due to COVID-19 delaying the program. PB funding comes from the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Once allocated for a given year there are three years to expend the amount. The CIP is a 5-year plan that outlays City funding for many physical improvements.

Funding Eligibility

The CIP has specific funding purposes that generally deal with physical assets of the City. These include infrastructure, roads, buildings, land, parks, equipment, and vehicles. Before PB projects are put before a public vote, they must be reviewed by City staff to ensure they meet all legal requirements and fiscal concerns. Implications for ongoing costs need to be evaluated during the proposal development round. The following explains what is eligible but the list is not exhaustive. The steering committee did not want to stifle creativity and innovation so there may be examples when a physical project can effectively provide a small service improvement.

- No programs or services (minor improvements may be allowed but depends on proposal development process and cost factors).
- Funding must be used inside city limits and applies city-wide not per a given ward or aldermanic district.
- Must be used for a public benefit and be accessible to the public.

- Projects should be installed on public property but certain cases may allow projects on private property.
- Funding can go towards improving existing situations or new projects.
- Projects should be for tangible assets like equipment, vehicles, buildings, land improvements, and infrastructure.
- The useful life of the asset must be at least one-year or more.
- Asset ownership can be transferred to another public, non-profit, or private owner if there is clear public benefit and community accessibility.
- Requests must be at or above a \$5,000 minimum.
- In year-one, multiple projects should be funded.
- The allocated budget will fund the top numerically ranked projects until it does not.
 - Any remaining funds will:
 - 1st decision point - Go to the next project in order if partial funding can cover the project
 - 2nd decision point - If not, go to the next project in order until the budget is exhausted
 - 3rd decision point: any fund balance returns to next cycle.⁶
- First year maintenance costs may be included in the initial purchase price but depends on type of project and ongoing impacts.
- Project eligibility may include public-private partnerships that may form from an initial resident idea. Organizations cannot submit their own projects.
- Proposals can include matching funds but this is not a prerequisite.
- Contracts for winning projects may contain any legal, liability or other stipulation the City may need to retain.

⁶ Amended April 6, 2022

Voters must be permanent or temporary residents of the City of Eau Claire and be at least in 6th grade (approximately ages 11-12). To facilitate a strong voter turnout there will be a number of methods, sites and times to collect votes. Each voter can only vote once using a ballot. Votes will be tabulated with the highest project receiving votes earning funding first. Funding is then allocated to the next highest and so on until the full budget has been exhausted. If the remaining budget for the last project is not adequate, the funding shall follow the decision steps listed on page 11.⁷

In order to seek wide participation, an “on your honor” system was chosen by the steering committee. Voters are therefore not required to present a form of identification but will be asked if they meet the above requirements.⁸ If voters would like to present a form of identification they may from the example list below, thereby establishing their residency and age:

- A document with name and current address from a local, state, or U.S. government agency such as a state driver’s license or non--driver ID, consular ID, passport, EBT card, military ID card
- Student or School ID
- School records (or naming the parents of children attending school and the parents’ address)
- Voter registration card
- Utility, medical, credit card bill with name and current address
- Current lease
- Residency Letter or Identification issued by a homeless shelter, halfway house, agency, etc.
- Employee ID
- Paycheck or paycheck stub from an employer or a W-2 statement
- Employment Authorization Document
- Bank statement or bank-issued credit card statement
- Permanent Resident Card (Green Card) or other Immigration Documentation
- Passport or other ID issued by a foreign government
- Social Security benefit statements or check
- Medicare or other insurance document with address
- Tax forms
- Title to any property (automobiles, house, etc.) with address
- Birth or marriage certificate
- Union Membership Card

⁷ Amended April 6, 2022

⁸ Amended February 23, 2022

Community Members

Residents of the community can attend events, identify local problems and needs, propose and submit project ideas, and vote on projects. They can serve as volunteers on the steering committee, as facilitators, as budget delegates or poll workers. They can encourage friends and neighbors to participate in the process.

Steering Committee

The steering committee's (SC) role is to represent the community and City of Eau Claire in terms of the PB program design and its successful implementation. The committee is selected by City staff and the SC approves the rulebook. They work with staff to essentially oversee the process and meetings making sure there is transparency and integrity related back to the participation and project outcomes outlined in the rulebook. They make decisions by consensus and have co-chairs that run meetings who work with staff to set agendas. They evaluate project ideas and determine the final ballot for public voting. They monitor and evaluate the ongoing process for possible improvements and can amend the rulebook if needed. Members are important communication liaisons between the public and specific groups they have connections with. They may also serve as volunteers in other roles for media outreach, event planning, facilitation, poll-workers, etc.

City Council

The Eau Claire City Council members have authorized the PB program by setting forth public policy, staffing, funding levels, and the strategic values. They do not approve of the steering committee's composition or the rulebook. They can attend events, help champion civic democracy, and remain neutral in the process. This is a very critical aspect as PB is not an elected-driven process- it is for the people and their projects. They do however confirm the final winners that were voter-approved and issue any contracts that may be needed during implementation.

City Staff

Staff have the most commitment level as they work with all parties involved to ensure the process goes smoothly and is successful. The City's Planning Division provides the program management and consults with other key departments like Administration and Finance on funding, policy, and communication efforts. Many other City staff members from relevant departments or divisions assist on the proposal development process and serve to implement winning projects via contracts and/or work orders.

Facilitators

Volunteers who help provide facilitation at idea collections, project refinement assembly meetings, and at project expo events. They are neutral parties working with the public, City staff, and the program steering committee to help the project development process run smoothly.

Budget Delegates

Volunteers who help the public and strengthen project ideas that they submit. They provide a level of expertise to residents on their proposals to help refine projects to meet program goals and outcomes, along with budget considerations that include implementation and possible maintenance costs. They are advocates on the behalf of the project so that the original idea can become a strong proposal to be voted on. They work with City staff as well during the process.

Poll Workers

Volunteers who help to manage the voter collection process, events, and count. They work with City staff helping to maintain the integrity of the voting process.

GLOSSARY

Included below are some common terms and definitions that are used during the participatory budgeting process.

Budget Delegate. A volunteer who serves to help participants develop their ideas into concrete proposals to be voted on.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). A plan that outlays funding for the City which covers physical needs that serve the public. It typically uses bonding or fees to fund parks, infrastructure like roads or water supply, buildings like a library or fire station, and equipment like vehicles or specialized tools.

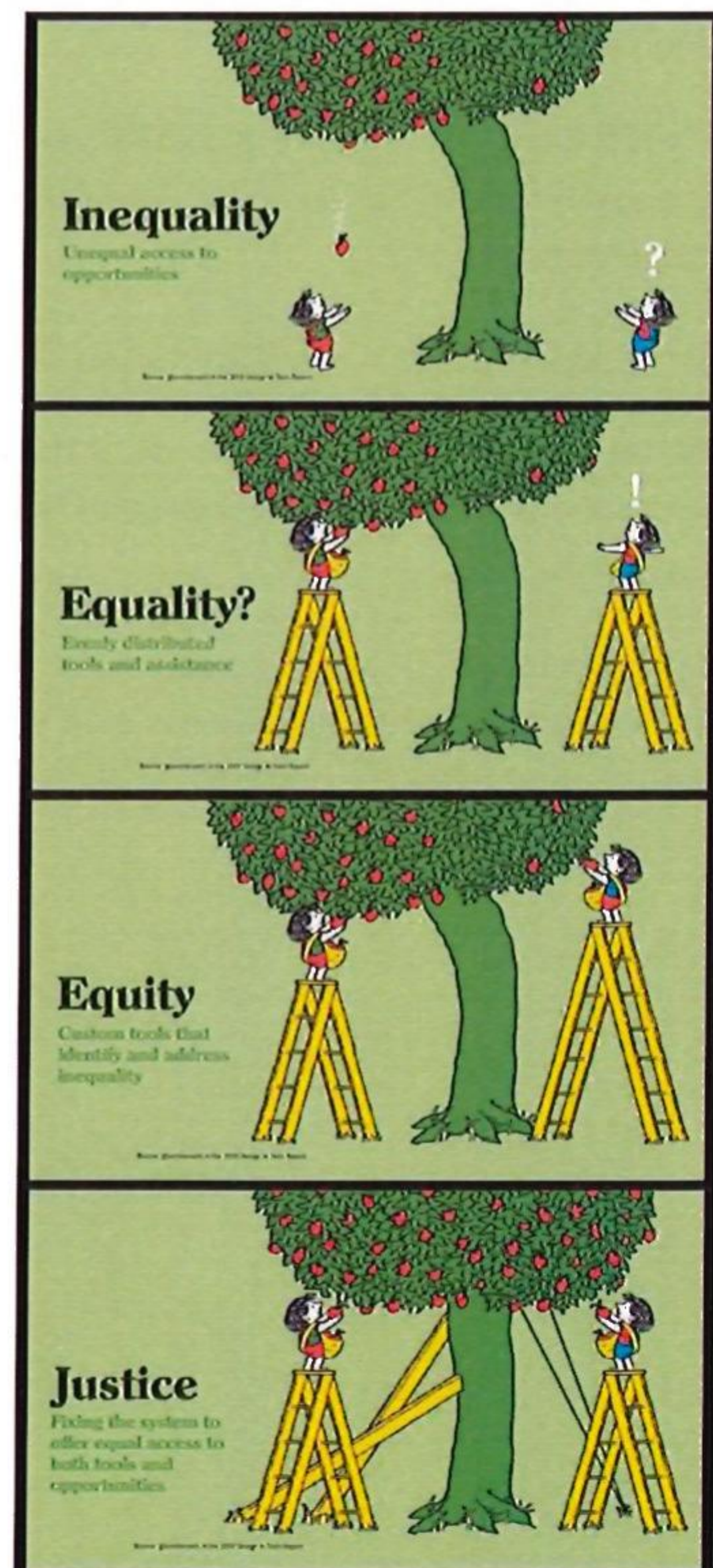
Capital Improvement Project. Is funded by the CIP and has a greater value of \$5,000 and a useful life of more than 1 year. With PB, there is an overall funding budget segregated for the winning projects.

Civic Engagement. A voluntary decision to be involved in public decision-making; whether by participation, co-creation, testimony, activism, voting, or serving on a project, committee or elected board.

Diversity. All the differences (both observable and non-observable) between us based on which we experience advantages or encounter barriers to opportunities.

Equality. Equality means treating all people the same. Equal treatment of all constituents has been a long-standing aspiration of local governments. The emphasis on equal treatment arose from a desire to combat the corruption and favoritism that was prevalent in local government in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Equity. Involves distributing resources based on the needs of the recipients. Equity means people could be treated differently in the interest of giving all people access to health, safety, and welfare (the fundamental purposes of local government). Just as the principle of equality gained currency in public management in the early 1900s in response to conditions of the time (pervasive corruption), the principle of equity is coming to the forefront today because of pervasive and material differences in wealth, safety, and health, particularly along racial lines.



Inclusion. Fostering a sense of belonging by centering, valuing, and amplifying the voices, perspectives, and styles of those who experience more barriers based on their identities.

Ineligible Projects. Projects that are outside of the city limits. Projects that would cause the City to hire additional staff or make a significant change in the protocol of City staff. Projects that take the form of a grant to a non-profit.

Justice. Dismantling barriers to resources and opportunities so that all people in the community can live a full and dignified life.

Neighborhood Assemblies. Town hall style meetings that involve presentations and small group brainstorming and take place in various locations throughout the community.

Ongoing Maintenance and Support Costs. These are costs of maintaining infrastructure to ensure compliance with relevant safety, access, and usage regulations and to keep the structure in operable use and working conditions.

Project Expo. Community gathering where submitters or budget delegates showcase their project proposals for their community. Often resemble science fair type events with volunteer-made visual presentations.

Steering Committee. Selected by City Staff to coordinate the PB process across the city.

Sustainability. Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations. This definition includes a framework of meeting environmental, social, well-being, and economic needs.

Transparency. The public knows about the process, information, and decisions made that the governance or administration has control over. That officials openly act with the public's knowledge of the decisions they are making.