



Engaging Residents in the Budget Process

City of Milwaukee

Update on Public Engagement in Budgeting Program

June 10, 2020

Directive and Timeline

- Adopted in January 2020, Resolution #191462 directs the Administration Director to develop and present a plan to the Common Council for a City budget public education and participation initiative
- Mid-March 2020: Project team consisting of City staff and community members was brought together and was set to begin, until COVID-19 put temporary pause on the initiative
- The kickoff meeting was held Monday June 8th
- The Work Group is tasked with presenting:
 - A report of recommendations for educating and engaging the public in the budget process
 - A plan for implementing those recommendations for the 2021 Budget
- Very short timeframe- Mayor's Public Budget Hearing is typically mid-August

Purpose of Public Engagement in Budgeting

According to the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA):

“Good public participation practices can help governments be more **accountable** and **responsive** to their communities, and can also improve the public’s perception of governmental performance and the value the public receives from their government.

Transparency is a core value of governmental budgeting.

Developing a transparent budget process will improve the government’s **credibility** and **trust** within the community.”

Methodology

- Review best practices, examples from other cities
- Solicit input from elected officials, community stakeholders
- Identify types of engagement activities and educational opportunities
- Evaluate each activity and informational opportunity for feasibility in City of Milwaukee
 - Logistical, technical, financial feasibility
 - Community preferences
 - Inclusion
- Use results of evaluation to develop list of recommended practices
- Identify resource and logistical requirements to implement recommended practices

Impact of COVID-19 on Public Outreach for 2021 Budget

- COVID-19 has added further complications to an already challenging 2021 Budget
- Very short timeframe for developing and implementing public engagement strategies for the 2021 Budget Process
 - The Mayor's Proposed 2021 Budget is published in mid-September
 - Three months to develop and implement a public engagement strategy for the 2021 Budget
- Large, in-person meetings present potential public health issues
 - Greater focus on remote or online engagement

Current City Practices in Engaging the Public in the Budget Process

- Mayor's Public Budget Hearing
- Joint Public Budget Hearing
- Aldermanic Town Hall events
- Issue-specific Town Hall events (i.e. public safety)

Types of Engagement & Educational Opportunities

- Surveys- informal or statistically valid
- Issue-based Budget Advisory Committees
- Budget Workshops
- Town Hall events and/or small group discussions
- Budgeting Software- allows residents to build their own City budget
- Informational materials- prepare materials geared towards various levels of understanding of City budget
- Participatory Budgeting
- Social Media

Feedback & Recommendations from Council

- Partner with:
 - CDBG community organizing groups, other community-based organizations
 - Foundations who can encourage the non-profits they fund to provide info to the people they serve
 - Equal Rights Commission
- Connect with MPS to reach out to parents of school-aged kids
- Tap into barbershops and salons to reach out to residents

Work Group Kickoff Meeting- Initial Discussions and Next Steps

- Outreach Strategy
 - Inclusion must be an essential component of the City's outreach strategy
 - Work through community groups- CDBG, others
- 2021 Budget Engagement Strategy
 - Start small- Do a few things well, don't try to do everything at once
 - Large, in-person meetings may not be considered safe from a public health perspective
 - Online and other forms of remote engagement will be important to any 2021 Budget engagement strategy
 - With increased focus from residents on public safety and public health, consider holding single-issue meetings or discussions

Work Group Kickoff Meeting- Initial Discussions and Next Steps cont'd

- Educate **AND** Engage- Two-Pronged Approach
 - Inform residents about budget process and budget parameters
 - Obtain feedback on residents' budget priorities
- Next Steps
 - Continue soliciting feedback from stakeholders
 - Evaluate engagement activities, focus on the most promising
 - Establish connection between resident feedback and the budget process