

# Participatory Budgeting Charter for Scotland

## Making good PB happen

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**Participatory budgeting** (PB) is a democratic way for people to have a direct say on how public money is spent.

A PB process gives people the opportunity to identify and discuss what matters to them in their communities and to vote on their priorities.

PB is used across the world and is now part of our democracy in Scotland.

### About the charter

The PB Charter sets out seven key features of what a fair and high-quality PB process should be, accompanied by guiding statements which describe what those features should look like in practice.

The charter is designed to make sure that every PB process involves good-quality democratic participation, resulting in positive outcomes for everyone involved.

### Who is the charter for?

The charter is for everyone involved in a PB process, including:

- people setting up a PB process to help them plan it properly; and
- people taking part in a PB process to help them know what they should expect.

The charter has been developed with people who have had experience of PB processes in Scotland, including those from equality groups, community organisations and public organisations.

## The following terms are used throughout the charter.

- **Community**

A group of people united by at least one common characteristic, including geography, identity or shared interests.

- **Deliberative**

A formal discussion, where an issue is considered carefully.

- **Participatory**

That anyone can take part or become involved.

- **Accessibility**

Taking action to remove the barriers that prevent people from being heard and enjoying equal access to community life.

## Benefits of PB

PB is a way of making sure that everyone who is affected by a decision on how money is spent has an opportunity to share their views and listen to others.

It provides a space for sharing information and for everyone involved to develop their knowledge about how public finances work.

PB is a way for people who live and work in communities to work together to make sure that public money is used to achieve the best possible results.

### Done well, PB helps to:

- build strong relationships between people, communities and public organisations;
- build trust between people and make joint action possible;
- encourage democratic participation by reducing barriers to involvement and making sure that everyone who wants to take part can do so;

- target resources to where they are most needed;
- encourage the testing of new ideas to help transform communities in a positive way; and
- make sure that everyone who is affected can see how decisions about budgets are taken, how money is spent, and what happens as a result.

**The seven key features of the PB Charter for Scotland are:**

- **Fair and inclusive**
- **Participatory**
- **Deliberative**
- **Empowering**
- **Creative and flexible**
- **Transparent**
- **Part of our democracy**

## Fair and inclusive

PB creates new opportunities for people to become involved in ways that bring new and different voices to discussions about how public money is spent.

Working together in this way encourages stronger relationships in and between different communities.

Everyone should be able to participate in community life but sometimes there are obstacles to getting involved.

PB can remove those barriers if it is carefully planned, properly resourced and support is available for those who need it.

### We will know that PB is 'fair and inclusive' when:

- the PB process meets all requirements in terms of accessibility;
- within a PB process everyone has a vote;
- people who have experienced inequality are involved in designing PB processes; and
- the outcomes of a PB process help to reduce inequalities.

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## Participatory

Anyone from the communities affected by decisions on how money is spent should have opportunities to be involved at every stage of the PB process. This includes identifying what budgets are being allocated, how the PB process is planned, how it works in practice and how it is evaluated.

### We will know that PB is 'participatory' when:

- communities have an opportunity to help shape the PB process from the start;
- priorities for the PB process are decided by communities;

- different and diverse communities discuss the issues and vote on priorities;
- a range of PB methods and events are used to make sure that different groups in the community can get involved;
- people from the communities involved say they are satisfied with the process and the outcomes;
- training and support is available to help people be involved in planning and delivering the PB process; and
- the PB process is promoted widely and in a variety of ways to encourage people to take part.

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## Deliberative

PB supports communities to access information, share ideas, listen to each other and consider different views.

Sharing ideas and views helps people to learn more about different issues and leads to informed decisions that are best for the whole community.

### We will know that the PB process is 'deliberative' when:

- the information people need to make informed choices is available and accessible at all points in the PB process;
  - people involved report increased knowledge about the issues affecting groups and individuals in their own communities and other communities;
  - methods are used which allow people to express their views and which encourage discussion; and
  - ideas, priorities and the choices made about how money is spent are reached through public discussions and informed by wide-ranging views.
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## Empowering

Decisions about how public money is spent are usually made by politicians and their officers. PB gives people and communities the power to decide what matters most to them and how public money should be used best.

The PB process encourages more people to become involved in their community and to work together to make change happen.

### We will know that PB is 'empowering' when:

- communities decide how money is spent;
- people feel they have more control over the issues that affect them;
- decisions taken through a PB process lead to improved outcomes and services;
- more people are involved in wider democratic processes; and
- more people become involved in community organisations and activities.

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## Creative and flexible

PB processes should be designed in a way that makes it easy and attractive for people to get involved. A creative mix of face-to-face approaches and online tools should be used to distribute information, encourage participation and get the best results.

PB in Scotland is a developing process which requires the confidence to take risks – to be flexible, to listen, to do things differently, try new things and to learn from mistakes as well as successes. This will help to make sure that PB in Scotland can really create positive change.

## **We will know PB is ‘creative and flexible’ when:**

- a range of methods has been considered and used as part of the PB process;
- support is in place for people who plan and deliver the PB process so they can ‘take risks’;
- PB processes are continuously evaluated and improved as a result; and
- PB in Scotland learns from and keeps pace with developing practice across the world.

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## **Transparent**

Everyone involved in a PB process should be able to see why and how decisions are taken, and what effect those decisions have.

## **We will know that PB is ‘transparent’ when:**

- information on the process and how people can get involved is clear and accessible;
- information on budgets is publicly accessible and understandable;
- it is clear who is accountable for the PB process;
- voting rules are clear and well understood; and
- people know the result of the process and what difference their involvement has made.

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## **Part of our democracy**

PB is a central part of our democracy in Scotland and should be standard practice for how budget decisions which affect communities are made.

PB should be resourced and delivered as part of regular budget planning.

## We will know that PB is 'part of our democracy' when:

- people expect to have a direct say in each budget cycle;
- public agencies have staff and systems in place to support good-quality PB processes;
- communities and community organisations have the skills and knowledge, as well as time and funding, to get involved and support the PB process;
- the PB process continues uninterrupted from one budget round to the next; and
- over time, PB is shown to improve outcomes, reduce inequalities and encourage people to be more involved in democratic processes.

For more information about the charter, as well as how it was developed visit

[www.pbscotland.scot/charter](http://www.pbscotland.scot/charter)