

IDEAS *in* ACTION

External Oversight Board Meeting

April 17, 2025



Office of
Participatory
Budgeting

CITY of BOSTON

AGENDA

- 6:00 pm: **Meeting Overview**
 - *Motion to adopt meeting minutes*
 - *Board Meetings Schedule*
- 6:10 pm: **Response to Public Comments + Rulebook Comments**
- 6:30 pm: **Overview of Rulebook Updates & Adoption by the Board**
- 6:50 pm: **Project Implementation Updates**
- 6:55 pm: **Cycle 2 Updates**
- 7:15 pm: **Public Comment**
- 7:30 pm: **Closing**

BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

Date	Board Meeting Topic
May 15, 2025 (Thursday, Virtual)	<i>Ideas in Action Cycle Two Updates</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Timeline</i>• <i>Communications</i>• <i>Evaluation</i>

MEETING MINUTES

- Sent to External Oversight Board members to review in advance of this meeting

Note: Minutes are posted in OPB's website, www.boston.gov/participatory-budgeting

RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS



Response to Public Comment from March 20, 2025

Visibility and Accessibility of Post-Voting Evaluation Survey

- Participants were invited to complete an optional evaluation survey after voting on proposals. The link to the survey appeared on a webpage after voting, along with an option to subscribe to the Ideas in Action newsletter.
- Anecdotal feedback showed that the survey link was easy to miss, especially for anyone reading quickly or exiting out immediately after voting. For the next cycle, OPB will incorporate some of the survey questions into the voting process itself, and strive to make the link to the optional survey more visible.

Retaining Zip Code Field in Idea Collection Survey

- We agree that zip code provides useful information for in-depth census analyses. These analyses are beyond the scope of the contracted evaluation; however, collecting such information could be useful future analysis.
- OPB proposes including Zip Code as an optional field in the idea submission forms (online + paper), similar to our pilot cycle. This will provide additional data about those submitting ideas and voting, but would not restrict participation in case people don't know their Zip Code. Neighborhood will remain a required field.

Response to Public Comment from March 20, 2025

Contracted Community Partners reported how many people attended each of their workshops. Those estimates summed to ~560 people. (Some partners included ranges like “25-30 folks,” in which case we used the higher number). ***As such, we know that 560 is on the higher range of workshop attendees.***

Estimates of participation for Idea Collection Workshops

- **OPB** estimated that 200 individuals submitted ideas through PB workshops. This number (200) is lower than 560 because: A) Not all workshop participants submitted ideas; B) Participates at some workshops filled the paper idea submission form, and hosts submitted those ideas online on behalf; and C) Some workshop participants may have not select “City Sponsored Event” when entering their ideas online.

Estimates of participation for the Online Portal (not through workshops)

- OPB estimated that 789 individuals submitted ideas through the online portal in total. Of these, 200 selected “City Sponsored Event.”
- An estimate of 589 individuals submitted ideas online - not through workshops. ***However, it is likely that this number (589) is an overestimate, because we believe that some workshop participants did not select “City Sponsored Event” when entering their ideas online.***

RESPONSE TO PUBLIC FEEDBACK: RULEBOOK



Response to Rulebook Feedback

Community Partnerships

Partner more in depth with community organizations in all stages of the process, especially during voting to meet people where they are at in person.

- Based on feedback from community partners and the evaluation process, the Office plans to expand the Community Partnership model both in terms of number participating organizations and the scope of services, including collaboration during the Proposal Development and PB Voting phase.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS FOR RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

APPLICATION INFORMATION

The Office of Participatory Budgeting seeks to contract with Boston-based nonprofit organizations to facilitate outreach, public education, and resident engagement during **Cycle Two of Ideas in Action**, expected to launch in July of 2025.
Deadline to apply is April 30th!

JOIN THE INFO SESSION: Wednesday, April 23, 2025 at 12 PM.

→ To register for the info session, or for more information, visit [Boston.gov/Participate](https://boston.gov/Participate)



SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION HERE!

IDEAS
in **ACTION**



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Response to Rulebook Feedback

Outreach & Education

- *Start outreach and education for PB by May by highlighting the winning projects from pilot cycle and implementation progress.*
 - *Announce & table for PB at summer community events , festival, concerts, parades, etc.*
 - *Create partnerships with community orgs earlier in the process and share content with them that they can integrate into their community meetings and outreach.*
 - *Engage all the City of Boston Youth Employment sites in submitting ideas during the summer.*
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- ➔ *OPB will partner with City Departments and Contract Organizations starting in May to coordinate PB outreach and education online and at various community events in neighborhoods across the city. This is in addition to our communications and marketing campaign through the City's social media platforms, as well as paid and earned media for hard to reach populations starting in June.*
 - ◆ *OPB is updating materials that can be distributed to residents by community partners*
 - ➔ *OPB started the recruitment process for Community Partners this month, anticipating adequate time needed for onboarding and facilitating training for Idea Collection in July 2025.*
 - ➔ *OPB will continue to work with City Hall and BPL for in-person Idea Collection. The Office will explore additional outreach opportunities considering internal and external resources.*

Response to Rulebook Feedback

Idea Collection Phase

- *Add more discussion time into the idea workshops.*
 - *Add more framing questions to the idea submission page to allow for more detailed responses.*
 - *Provide the option of templates for outreach materials for community partners that can be adapted with their branding.*
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- ➔ *OPB is revising the Idea Collection Workshop Toolkit to simplify it, and will incorporate guidance and flexibility to support community organizations that choose to host PB workshops.*
 - ➔ *The PB portal for Idea Collection is currently being updated in ways to encourage more detailed ideas from residents. OPB is cognizant that additional prompts or questions may discourage residents from submitting their ideas.*
 - ➔ *In the last cycle, OPB provided several templates for outreach materials in multiple languages, and will continue to provide these resources. Community Partners can adapt materials as needed.*

Response to Rulebook Feedback

Advancing Equity through Addressing Disparities

Hold more in-depth learning and planning on ways to achieve equity.

- ◆ *Assessment of neighborhoods impacted by disparities and disinvestment and needs assessment of issues impacting those neighborhoods.*
 - ◆ *The process can include priority issues to address in ways that include people of all races.*
 - ◆ *Look at how different cities are reaching goals around equity and researching various frameworks for achieving equity (for example, targeted universalism)*
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- *In developing Boston's PB equity framework, the Office researched and communicated with other cities to learn about their efforts. From the municipalities that prioritize equity in their processes, everyone approaches and implements equity in PB differently. Our Equity Framework was developed and adapted for Boston's city-wide approach.*
 - *OPB will continue to explore opportunities to better engage with residents during Idea Collection, Proposal Development, and Voting - including partnering with community organizations, to ensure equity practices are embedded into the PB process.*
 - ◆ *Using maps and data during visioning forums to help inform proposals*

Response to Rulebook Feedback

Voting Phase

Partner with community partners for outreach. Have a printed ballot option, send out flyers, printed proposal summary and other reachout material ahead of time, to make voting accessible on the website and in person.

- Based on feedback from Contract Partners and the evaluation process, OPB will expand the scope of services of community partners to include recruitment for Proposal Development (Visioning Forums) and PB outreach/education during the Voting phase.
- OPB will explore collaboration options with community organizations interested in supporting outreach and education during the Voting phase. Community groups can support residents to cast their votes online via phones, tablets, or computers.
- In-person voting will continue to be available at City Hall, and OPB will explore in-person voting opportunities with other City Departments that work/serve residents directly.

Response to Rulebook Feedback

Switching Online Platform to Decidim

Increase transparency, efficiency, and engagement via a platform such as Decidim, where people can see all the information in one place from start to finish of the PB process.

- *Tracking where ideas were submitted (online or in person events), how those proposals changed over time with budget delegates/city staff input.*
 - *Engagement workshops, in person events, Oversight Board meetings and other meetings can all be visible in one place, unlike now they are split between Ideas in Action and the city of Boston website.*
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- ➔ *Based on platform research, the Office decided not to use Decidim due to constraints related to user interface experience, timeline, budget.*
 - ➔ *OPB recognizes the importance of improving information sharing throughout the PB process for residents. To enhance access to resources, OPB is working with the City's Department of Information and Technology to explore ways to make it easier for residents to access resources seamlessly across platforms.*

Response to Rulebook Feedback

Neighborhood Focus

In order to ensure a focus on equity, set aside part of the PB pot for neighborhoods with a history of disinvestment and continued disparities. This includes Mattapan, Roxbury, East Boston, and Chinatown where community organizations could also support with outreach. The rest of the money would go towards citywide ideas.

- Ideas in Action is a citywide process that is inclusive of all Boston neighborhoods. The Office of Participatory Budgeting, in its efforts to reduce barriers to participation, uses multiple approaches to ensure that historically underserved populations learn about PB and can easily participate.
- The PB process will maintain its citywide scope and continue to embed equity throughout all its phases to ensure that PB dollars are used to advance social and racial equity, as outlined by the PB Ordinance.
- In addition to Equity Guidelines and the Equity Framework developed during Ideas in Action Cycle One, an equity lens will be used during the Project Implementation Phase so that funding is directed to communities that need it most across the City.

Response to Rulebook Feedback

Add a Needs Assessment Component before Idea Collection

Start the process with a needs assessment in May/June so that idea proposals are responding to an idea prioritization, including having clear guidelines to honor the details of residents' ideas.

- *Include a needs assessment or problem framing step that is done with community partners . This should include asking residents what problems or challenges they are currently facing to identify themes for each PB cycle to solicit solutions.*
- ➔ *As a citywide process, Ideas in Action needs to be inclusive for everyone to participate. Potentially limiting the types of ideas that residents can submit based on pre-selected topics identified early on, may discourage participation. Our objective is for residents to share as many ideas as possible on any and all issues that matter to them.*
- ➔ *OPB created equity guidelines that residents must use to narrow down priorities for populations that experience disadvantages, and will further improve this step by adopting the recommendation of incorporating maps and data to frame Proposal Development conversations.*
- ➔ *Additionally, OPB is revising the campaign's messaging for Cycle Two to encourage residents to propose more specific project ideas.*

Response to Rulebook Feedback

Budget Delegates

Create a budget delegate structure where people receive gift cards or stipends (if not through city than through community partners) to come to a series of meetings to narrow down and develop proposals.

- *Incorporate relevant maps and data into the process of ranking projects around equity and impact and train the residents who are developing ideas.*
 - *Engage relevant community orgs in proposal development.*
- OPB's Proposal Development model offers the opportunity to any Boston resident to engage in the PB process through multiple forums in their neighborhoods, where they can review ideas and develop proposals based on feasibility and equity discussions with their neighbours and City staff.
- ◆ During Cycle One of Ideas in Action, in close collaboration with community organizations, over 100 residents in East Boston, Roxbury, and Dorchester participated in directly shaping the ideas that appeared on the PB Ballot.
 - ◆ This approach maximizes participation and ensures a diverse range of voices are included. Each forum allows 35-40 residents to contribute, broadening access to the process and fostering more inclusive community input.
 - ◆ OPB will work with City Departments to explore opportunities to incorporate data driven metrics during Visioning Forums to help inform proposal development with residents.

Response to Rulebook Feedback

Funding for PB Projects

Dedicate more funding to the PB projects pot, including using the full remainder of the special PB funds for Year 2 and having a formal recommendation from the oversight board on a funding amount.

- *OPB's proposed FY26 budget request met the guidelines provided by the Office of Budget Management to City Departments: "Departmental annual operating budget submissions should reflect a level funding amount, with allowances for budget increases only for approved and required contractual increases."*
- *Based on OPB's projected budget allocation for Fiscal Year 2026, the Office will sustain its of \$2 million fund for PB projects in Cycle Two, using our reserves responsibly to ensure the sustainability of Ideas in Action over time.*
- *The role of the External Oversight Board is to guide and oversee the Participatory Budgeting process, as stated in the PB Ordinance.*

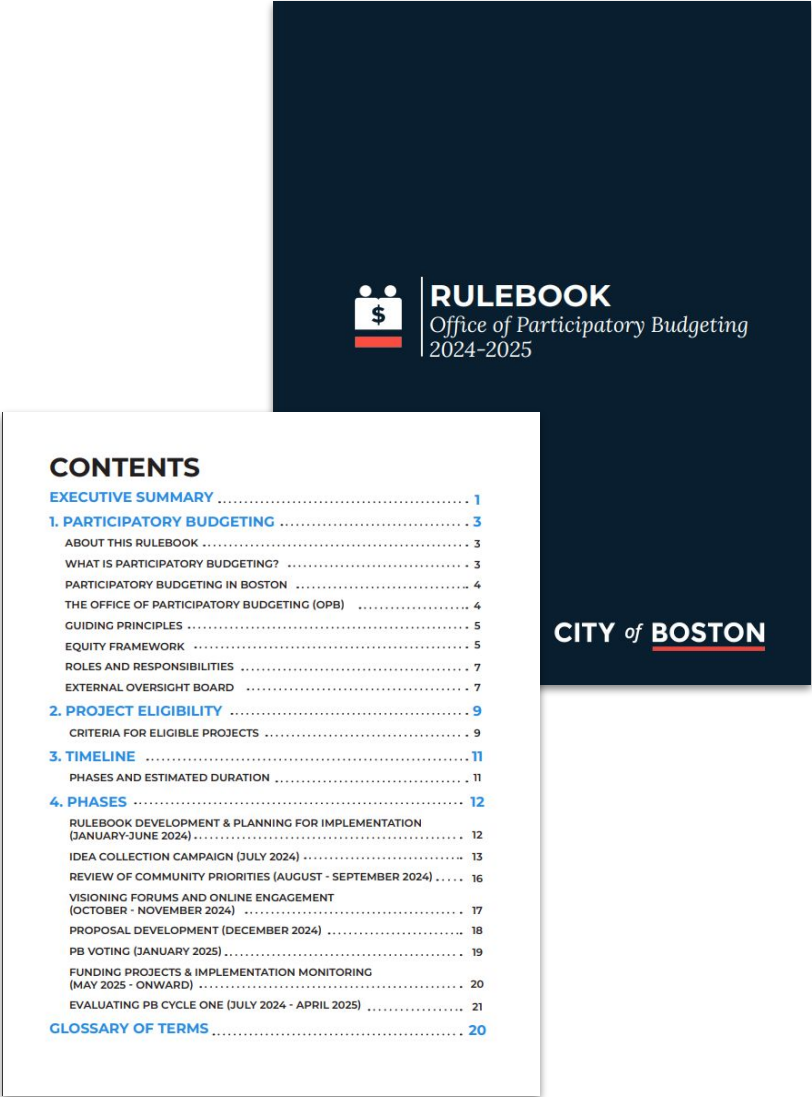
OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED RULEBOOK CHANGES



RULEBOOK UPDATE

Details of the Update:

- The Rulebook should act as a reference guide for implementation
 - Language offers general guidance for each phase and the general PB process
- Flexibility for implementation
 - Provides OPB/ EOB the opportunity to refine details, as needed.



RULEBOOK CONTENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SECTION 1. PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

ABOUT THIS RULEBOOK

WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING?

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN BOSTON

THE OFFICE OF PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING (OPB)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

EQUITY GUIDELINES

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

EXTERNAL OVERSIGHT BOARD

SECTION 2. PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

CRITERIA FOR ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

SECTION 3. TIMELINE

PHASES AND ESTIMATED DURATION

SECTION 4. PHASES

RULEBOOK DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING FOR
IMPLEMENTATION

IDEA COLLECTION CAMPAIGN

REVIEW OF COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

VISIONING FORUMS AND ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

PB VOTING

FUNDING PROJECTS & IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING

EVALUATING PB CYCLE ONE

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Yellow Highlight– Indicates updates proposed

RULEBOOK CONTENT- SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Update brief Executive Summary based on changes proposed

SECTION 3. TIMELINE

PHASES AND ESTIMATED DURATION

- Combine Visioning Forums + Proposal Development into one phase
“Proposal Development”

SECTION 4. PHASES

IDEA COLLECTION CAMPAIGN

- Expand the number of community organizations participating in “Contract Partnerships” during the PB process
- Slight revisions to “Guidelines for Idea Collection”
 - Neighborhood will be required
 - Zip Code will be optional
 - Incorporate demographic information in Idea Submission form

REVIEW OF COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

- Replace Community Priorities with the original (9) categories selected by residents during Idea Submission
- Revision in methodology to review ideas

PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

- Combined “Visioning Forums” + “Proposal Dev.” phases into one phase
- Contractor to help promote, organize, facilitate event logistics
- OPB to restructure Visioning Forums format into a series of workshops

VOTING

- Up to 15 proposals will be developed and finalized for Voting
- Incorporate demographic information in Voting ballot

**EXECUTIVE OVERSIGHT
BOARD:
RULEBOOK ADOPTION**



PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION UPDATES



UPDATES

- **Project Tracker**
 - Meeting with City Departments to discuss internal and external project tracking
- **Coordination with Departments**
 - City Department Implemented Projects
 - Grants Administered by Departments

CYCLE TWO UPDATES



CYCLE TWO PREP

- **EOB Reports**

- Review and incorporate Data + Soul evaluation findings (*April 2025*)
- Incorporate PB Evaluation report + work with EOB to finalize (*June 2025*)

- **Branding and Communications**

- Engaging with ASG on revising brand messaging and outreach strategy for Cycle Two
- City Departments support for:
 - PB informational video
 - Cycle Two website updates
 - Coordination with the launch of Cycle Two Idea Collection Campaign (Digital media, City press, etc.)

Idea Collection Phase

- **City Dept Partnerships**

- BPL, BPS, ONS, etc, for cycle two outreach/ launch

- **Community Partnerships**

- Released application for community partners

- **Idea Collection Workshops**

- Revising and updating workshop toolkit materials

- **PB Portal, PB Phone Line, PB Corners**

- Engaging with Poe Public on revisions to the PB Portal
- Engaging with DoIT for phone line operations
- Engaging with BPL for PB Corners at Library Branches

- **Community Priorities**

- Working with Data Analytics on methodology

PUBLIC COMMENT

15 minutes, 3 minutes per person

