

# Politics of Participatory Budgeting

# What is Politics?

Personal, interpersonal, contextual or organizational factors, including policies and practices, that either restrict or open discussion and the range of acceptable proposals.

In this framework, the point of participatory budgeting is to encourage democratic habits, or a culture of democracy, and expand discussion and choices.

# Personal Reflection

- What does inclusion mean to you?
- What are some barriers to inclusion?

# Politics of Talking

- Who gets to speak?
  - What language is recognized?
  - What opinions or insights are accepted?
  - Who can present ideas?
- ❖ The point is to avoid anyone having a monopoly on ideas or speech

# Politics of Meetings

- Who sets the agenda?
  - Are discussions controlled?
  - Are meetings accessible to everyone?
  - Is an environment of participation established?
- ❖ Do meetings support inclusion?

# Politics of Project Selection

- Do all ideas get a fair hearing?
  - Is there too much emphasis on being pragmatic?
  - Are desires properly understood?
  - What is the best combination of funded projects?
- ❖ Project selection should be as expansive as possible.

# Personal Reflection

- How can persons begin to care for others?
- What would a fair selection process look like?
- Is establishing a budget a struggle for fairness?

# Politics of Empowerment

- How can cooptation be avoided?
  - Is pushback encouraged?
  - How can an assertive posture be maintained?
  - Is cooperation possible through recognition and reconciliation?
- ❖ Briefly, think of empowerment as the ability to make decisions and solve problems, along with the ability to implement these activities.

# Community Empowerment

- Changing the locus of action.
  - Dissemination of information and action.
  - Reflection on and disengagement from former centers of action.
  - Foster different centers of action
- ❖ Goal: multiple, coordinated centers of action in a community

# Politics of Social Justice

- Has inclusion been achieved?
  - Is equity a dominant theme?
  - Has everyone been treated with dignity?
  - Is solidarity/support a guiding principle?
  - Is anyone left behind?
- ❖ The aim is to establish what some writers call a “moral economy.”  
Have institutional barriers been addressed that stifle the vision of such an economy?

# Politics of Solidarity

- Has community well-being been treated as important?
- Has the spirit of collaboration been fostered?
- Has interpersonal trust been emphasized?
- Have encompassing outcomes been encouraged?

# Personal Reflection

- Is community solidarity possible?
- Or is solidarity simply a dream?