

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING CHARTER

SUPPORTING QUALITY PB



What is Participatory Budgeting (PB)?

PB is a democratic process that directly involves people in making decisions on the spending and priorities of a defined public budget.

From its development in Porto Alegre, Brazil in the late 1980s Participatory Budgeting is now practised around the world and is recognised as an innovative engagement, resource allocation and decision-making process. It goes beyond informing or consulting with communities. Instead, it empowers communities through direct decision-making on public spending decisions.

PB is perhaps best summed up by one of the first PB participants who said:

"If it feels like we have decided, it's PB. If it feels like someone else has decided, it isn't"

*PB Participant
from Porto Alegre*

What is the purpose of the PB Charter?

As each PB process is unique, the purpose of the Charter is to offer guiding points to support you to plot and navigate your own PB course.

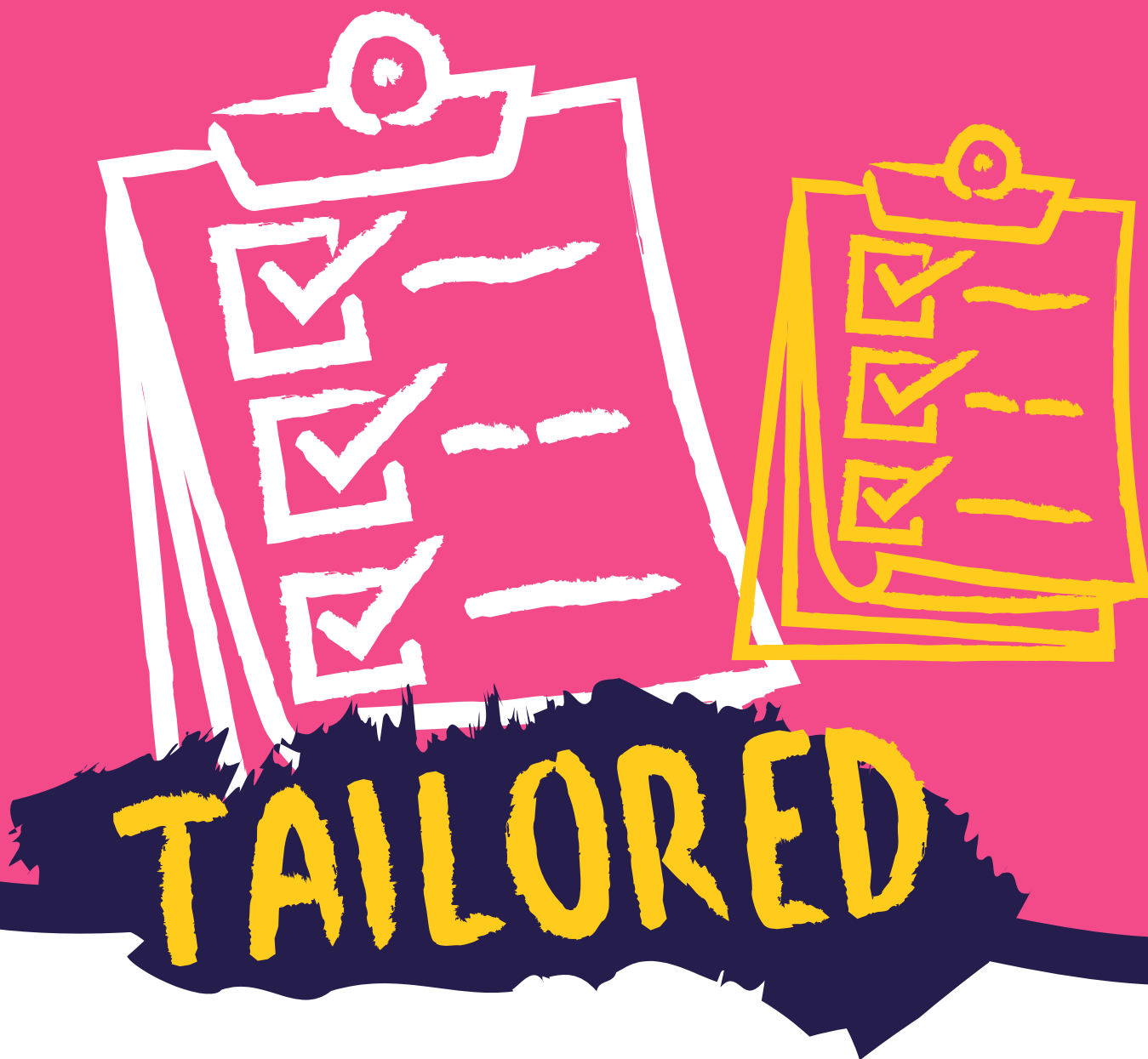
The Charter has been developed to:

- Ensure local communities are at the heart of every PB process
- Provide clarity on what to expect of a PB process
- Support the reflection on and improvement of PB practice
- Highlight the features of what 'good' PB looks like
- Support the planning and design of quality PB processes

Who is the Charter for?

The Charter is for anyone who is planning, designing, supporting or taking part in a PB process.





Each PB process should be unique, planned and designed to reflect the local context and to respond to the needs of the community.

For example:

- time and resources are invested in building relationships with the local community to build ownership of the process
- communities are supported to be actively involved in designing the process from the start
- communities help shape and agree a shared purpose
- communities define the priority issues or themes of the PB process
- the process is branded in a way that means something to the community
- the process is flexible and responds to the needs of the community



People are supported to get and stay involved in the PB process.

For example:

- time and resources are invested in the community to secure their participation and enable them to lead and build interest in the process
- barriers to involvement are identified and people supported to participate
- trusted networks are used to reach those who may face barriers to getting involved
- a variety of opportunities for people to participate is provided
- those who are unsuccessful are signposted to other forms of support



All voices have the opportunity to have their say and be heard on how public resources are spent.

For example:

- access needs are fully considered and addressed
- minority or marginalised groups are identified and actively supported to participate
- care should be taken to ensure that no-one dominates the process
- the process attracts people who don't normally get involved
- different techniques such as community conversations, market stalls, pitches, videos or posters are used to reach a wide range of people
- new voices are heard

An illustration on a pink background shows a hand with yellow outlines holding a magnifying glass with a white frame. The magnifying glass is focused on the word 'TRANSPARENT', which is written in a bold, blue, hand-painted font. The word is set against a dark, textured, brush-stroke-like background.

TRANSPARENT

Information and processes are clear and open helping to build trust in the process.

For example:

- information about the process is made available to everyone from the start
- information is available in different formats and is jargon free
- the 'rules' guiding the process are available to all
- it is clear from the outset that not every idea will be successful, but that support will be in place for all participants

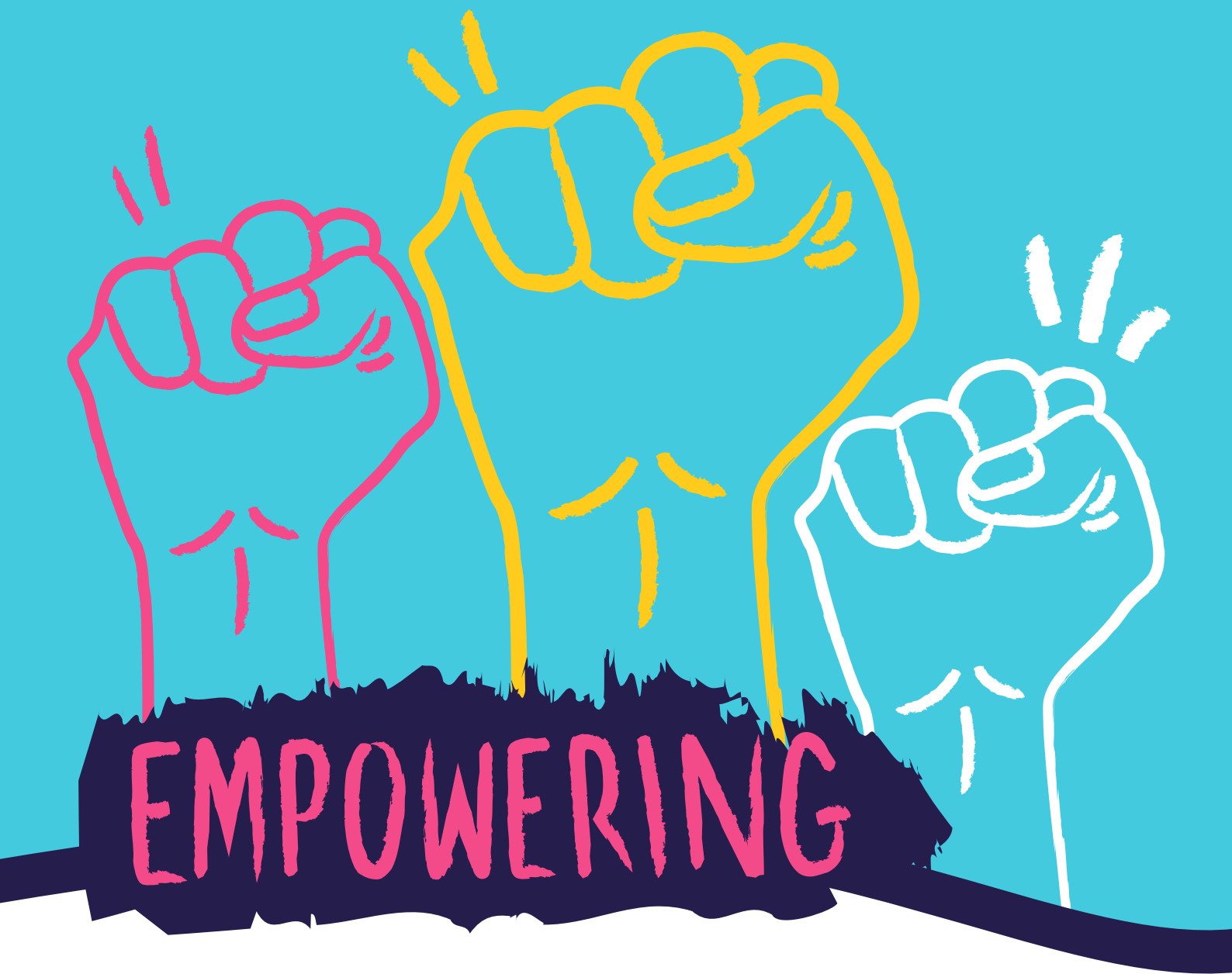


BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Spaces are created to bring people together to share ideas, to discuss what is important to their community and to decide together how best to spend resources.

For example:

- informal spaces and creative approaches are used to facilitate informed discussion and reflection
- time and resources are invested in supporting people to create connections with others and build stronger relationships
- trust and relationships between people, service providers and local and regional government grows
- by participating people have fun, build confidence, and develop new skills



People in the community make key decisions about the process. The final decision on how the resource is allocated is always made by people in the community.

For example:

- people are involved in shaping the rules which guide the process
- people direct priorities
- those who may face barriers to inclusion are identified and supported to take decisions
- power is shifted with communities making the final decision about how resources are allocated
- care is taken to anticipate challenge or conflict and support is given to overcome it



CELEBRATION OF SHARED ACTION

Through shared experience and community action something real is produced which responds to local needs and invigorates a sense of connection. You can see, sense, or touch it.

For example:

- people are encouraged to be imaginative, have fun and not be afraid to fail
- people have space to be inspired by what they are seeing and hearing
- people feel greater ownership of the ideas of others in the community
- participation in the process is acknowledged and celebrated
- people and groups who are unsuccessful still feel included in the process
- community connections and relationships are strengthened



People learn from and reflect throughout the process, sharing with others to refine PB practice.

For example:

- time and resources are invested in reflecting and measuring impact
- people are supported to network and share their PB stories, experiences and learning and consider how processes could be improved
- unexpected outcomes are noted and shared
- learning informs repeat processes



Leadership and commitment from local and central government embeds PB as part of investing in a healthy participative democracy.

For example:

- people are trusted and can routinely make spending decisions about the things that matter to them
- people are encouraged and supported to participate in PB at local and regional levels
- a percentage of public funds is allocated via PB
- PB is aligned with policy and strategy development and addresses inequality
- communities are stronger, more resilient, and politically engaged
- PB becomes a measure of a healthy participative democracy



Community

- This can include communities of interest; place or geography, including online; action; and practice.

Healthy participative democracy

- Where people have the opportunity to take decisions about issues that affect and matter to them.

Minority groups

- Groups of individuals in society that are different from the rest because of their race, practices, religion, ethnicity, political beliefs, or other characteristics.

Marginalised groups

- Groups of individuals that experience inequality or barriers to accessing rights, opportunities, protection, and services fundamental to participation in social, economic, and political life on an equal level with other members of society (UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency).

Find Out More

To find out more about the Charter, including two support resources to help you apply and reflect on the Charter visit www.communityplaces.info/services/participatory-budgeting/

Thank You

We would like to thank everyone who attended our workshops and helped shape the content of the Charter.

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