Memo

Metro
600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232-2736

Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022
To: Nature in Neighborhoods Capital Grants Pilot Program Design and Review Committee
From: Nature in Neighborhoods Capital Grants Pilot Staff
Subject: Participatory Process Implementation Model

Introduction

How we came to this model

This model is Metro staff's interpretation of the stated goals and values of the Capital Grants Pilot Program Design and Review Committee (engagement and community ownership, equity, transparency) within a framework that adheres to legal and fiscal constraints, represents project development best practices, and respects the staff capacity and autonomy of local jurisdictions within the Metro region. This model is the result of numerous interviews with other jurisdictions with active participatory budgeting programs, consultation with Metro planning and development staff, and consideration by Metro leadership and community engagement specialists. We hope that it represents the best intentions of the Committee while respecting the unique challenges of participatory budgeting programs and Metro's relationship with other local jurisdictions and their communities.

Why it's constructed the way it is

Beginning with a recognition that all participatory budgeting programs are unique and adapt to the particular contours of their local administrative and political structures, this model follows the common participatory budgeting model of Idea Collection → Project Development → Community Vote. In interviews with other jurisdictional practitioners, one of the common challenges with this model is limited staff capacity and budget delegate volunteer attrition. To combat this, we've made two principal adaptations:

1) A Budget Delegate Summit will be a community event to both collect ideas in person and allow idea submitters and organizations to develop ideas to a schematic level (with a defined scope, budget, and plan) with the aid of Metro staff, subject area experts, and jurisdictional staff. This makes more efficient use of limited staff capacity as well as providing a forum for community members to submit, discuss, and develop their ideas with their neighbors.
2) A multi-vote process allows the community to weigh in early on their preferences, generate additional excitement for the program, and reduce the burden on jurisdictional staff and community members to develop projects unlikely to be funded by the Community Vote. The first vote would establish the community's preferred projects for further development, while the second would recommend final funding after further development.

The Committee's role

This model as presented here represents a starting point for your discussion, not a final decision. Once you have decided if this framework meets stated goals and values, Metro can secure funding for the project development process. Once a framework is approved, the Committee and Metro staff will work through the model, defining the character and priorities of each component of the process to best meet the needs of the community and the established criteria for engagement, equity, and climate resilience.

Reflective Questions, from Metro's Racial Equity Framework

As you, the Program Design and Review Committee, review the framework presented here, and particularly as we prepare to address the questions and considerations that will inform the final program design and implementation, we would like to present a few reflective questions to bear in mind and inform your decision-making process. These questions are derived from Metro's Racial Equity Framework, a tool designed to "help ensure that a racial equity analysis is applied when decisions about Metro's budget and public services are being made."[1] As this program has racial equity and inclusion as a core principle, we think these questions are a helpful and important prompt.

On Goals and Outcomes

- How does this decision advance racial equity?
- What are the racial equity outcomes that will be affected by this decision?
- Does this decision reflect our racial equity principles?

On Benefits and Burdens

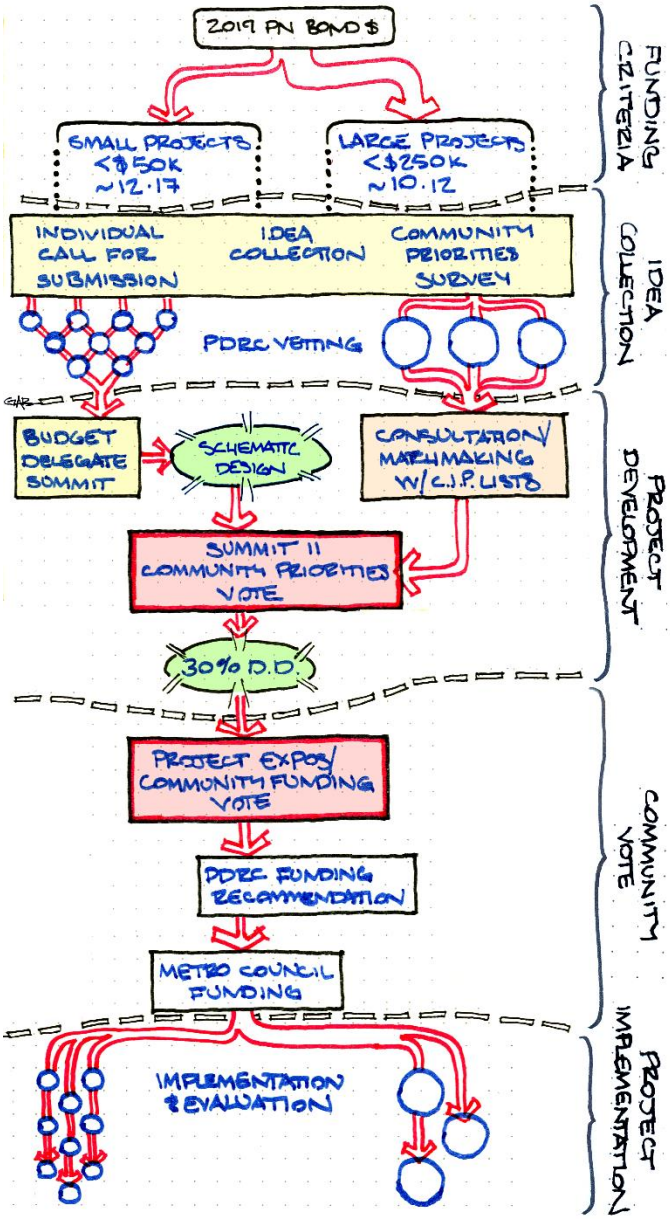
- Who will benefit from this decision?
- Who will be burdened by this decision?
- What racial inequities are being produced or perpetuated by this decision?

On Resources and Partners

- What resources are needed for this decision to be successful?
- What other decisions, practices, or processes are necessary to ensure success?
- What partnerships are needed to ensure success?

[1] Metro Racial Equity Framework, 2021, p. 1.

Model summary



Multiple Funding Streams

Multiple funding pots, likely divided between small and large projects

Idea Collection

a) **Small projects** concepts/ideas are submitted by community members and community-based org's
b) Community priorities survey identifies community needs and desires for **large projects** in their neighborhoods

Project Development

Small Projects

1) Program Design and Review Committee vets submitted ideas for potential feasibility (Is it legal? Is it feasible? Is it fair and in keeping w/ Bond and program criteria?)
2) Budget Delegate Summits held in program areas connect idea submitters to implementer or planning staff to build back-of-the-envelope project concepts w/ scope & budget outlines
   - Multiple or large community design charette (e.g. subject area like nature play area or pollinator habitat like bee apiary; or all together; or by geography like five Councilor Districts with same five designers with designated project types like pollinator habitat or nature play area)
3) Summit-developed concepts are then shaped by implementer and Metro staff to a Schematic Design (scope, budget, location, design).
4) Community Priorities Vote held to identify pool of potential projects to be further developed
5) Implementer staff develop projects ideas to ~80% Design Development for final community vote (grant applications). (This could be a second design charrette.)

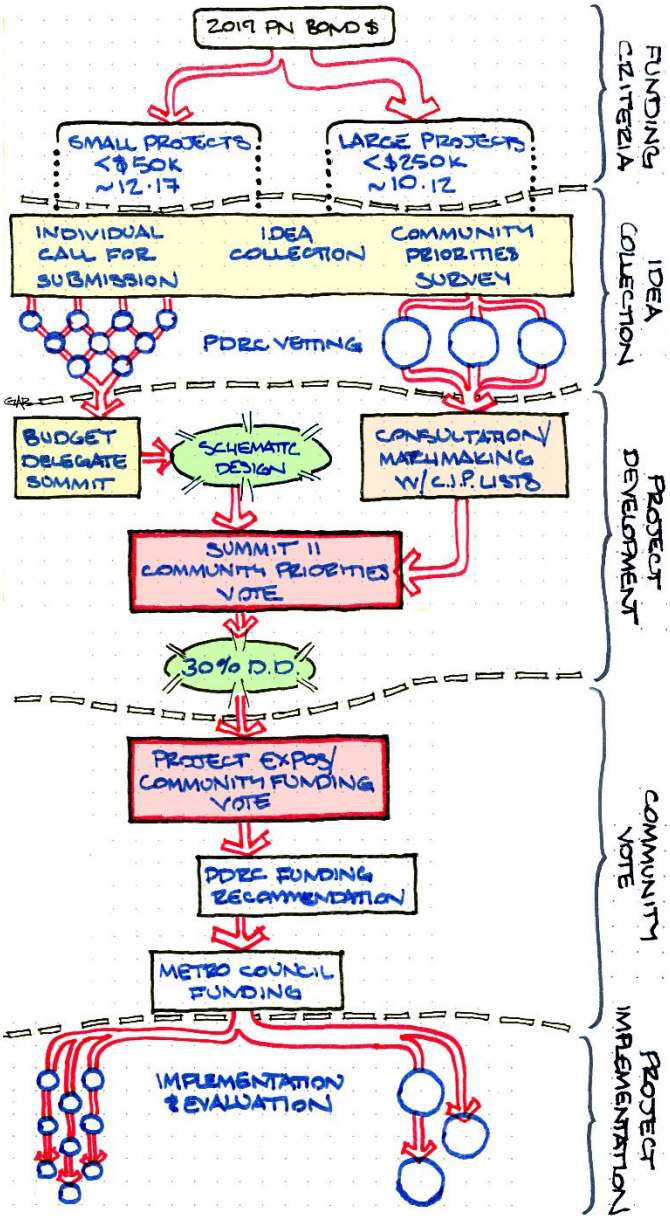
Large Projects

1) Program Design and Review Committee takes summary of community priorities surveys to potential project implementers (matchmaking)
2) Potential project implementers identify projects that align with stated community needs and desires
3) Community vote held to identify pool of potential projects to be further developed
4) Implementer staff develop projects ideas to ~30% Design Development for final community vote (grant applications). (This could be a second design charrette.)

Community Vote

1) Project expos present pool of potential projects for funding
2) Community votes on two slates of projects: large and small
3) Community vote results are forwarded to Program Design and Review Committee for funding recommendation
4) Program Design and Review Committee recommends funding to Metro Council

Acorns-to-Oaks[2], or A multi-vote divided stream participatory process for the Capital Grants Pilot



Multiple Funding Streams

Description: multiple funding pots, likely divided between small and large projects

Potential Benefits

- Less competition between small and large projects for limited fund dollars (small projects don't get squeezed out)
- Summit work can focus on small projects, allowing them to be developed further, while large projects can rely on previous development and community engagement
- A distributed mix of small and large projects allows implementation to be staged to maximum effect, i.e., while large projects go through longer approval and construction processes, small projects can be sequenced more quickly, resulting in lots of smaller winning investments punctuated by larger investment achievements

Potential Risks

- Duplication of efforts
- Staff time investment for two development processes

Important Considerations

- How can it be ensured that both streams adhere to both Bond and program criteria? Ensured that C.I.P.-sourced projects also meet engagement, equity, and climate goals?
- How does dividing the funding affect project development processes and interactions/collaboration between community members and staff/subject area experts?

Questions for the Committee

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach?
- Does it/could it align with stated Goals and Values?
- What is an appropriate balance between the different streams?
- How are projects divided/classified? Where are the thresholds?

[2] Name is informal; for humor use only. See also: Samaras-to-Maples, Cones-to-Conifers.

IDEA COLLECTION

Description

a) **Small projects** concepts/ideas are submitted by community members and community-based org's
b) Community priorities survey identifies community needs and desires for **large projects** in their neighborhoods

Potential Benefits

- Small projects tend to be more fully conceptualized in potential submitters' minds; large projects are harder to articulate succinctly
- Provides a pathway for community-driven projects already on implementer C.I.P. lists to funding

Potential Risks

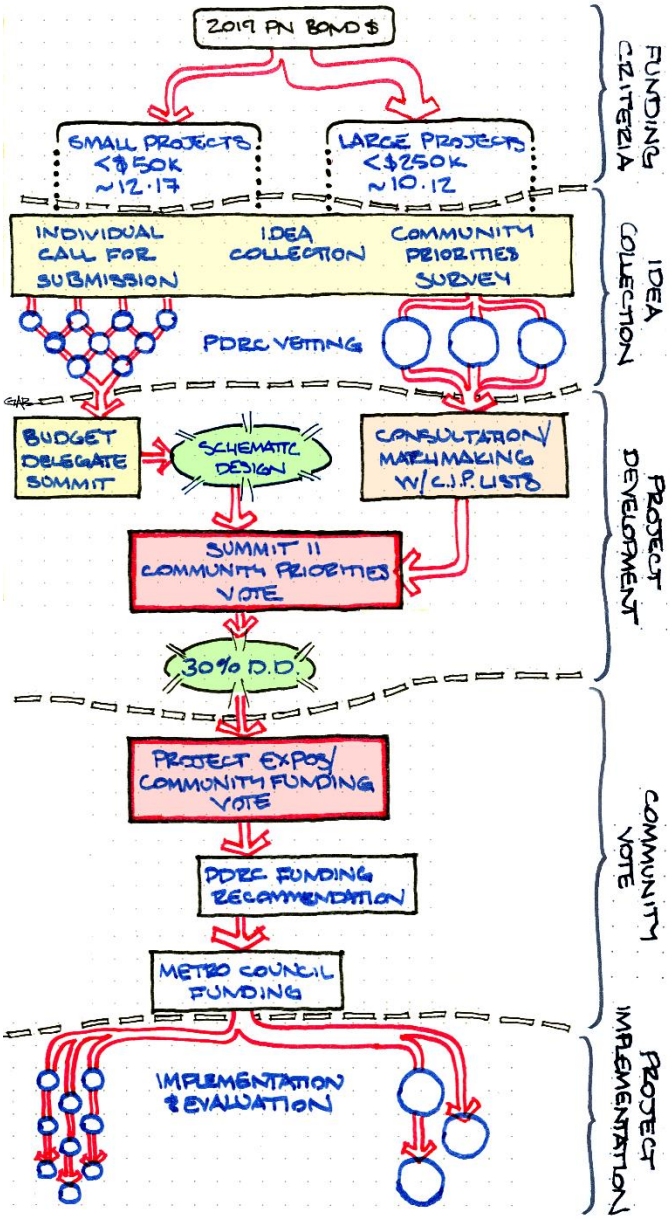
- Differential (real or perceived) levels of community-generation of ideas between large and small
- Survey results may not well align with existing project plans
- Survey results or submitted ideas may not accurately reflect broad community interests
- Better-resourced individuals, organizations, or jurisdictions may have advantage in presenting project ideas

Important Considerations

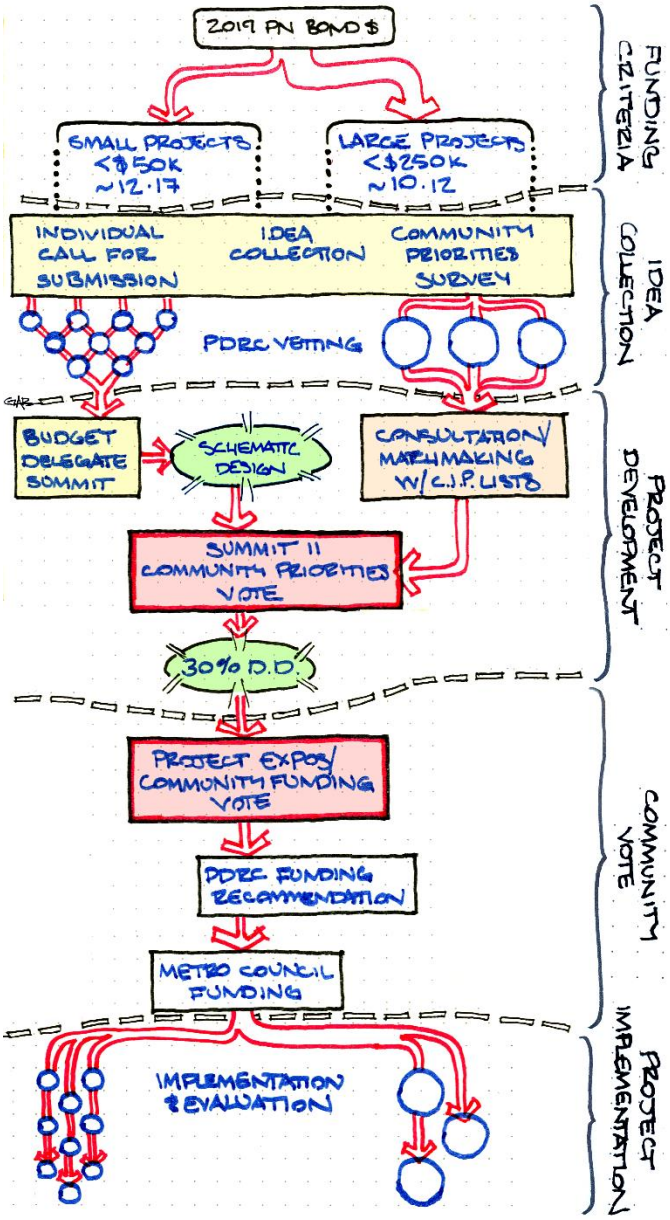
- Need to craft surveys to accurately capture community needs and desires

Questions for the Committee

- What strengths and weaknesses do you foresee with this approach? How could it be improved?
- How can we ensure that surveys are accessible and written to best capture community needs and desires?
- How can we target outreach for idea submission in alignment with program Goals and Values?
- *More questions on idea collection are included in the memo and materials previously presented.*



Project Development



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Potential Benefits

- More community input and excitement
    - Community building
    - Buzz – cool projects – excitement like Nature in Neighborhoods integrating habitats design competitions
    - Information sharing across neighborhoods
    - Opportunity for community members to see what goes into project development in your own project – and others
    - Non-idea-submitters can also see how projects are developed
    - Opportunity for cross-cultural and cross-project collaboration
    - Opportunity to combine small project ideas into larger projects (a single park bench → park bench program throughout a community)
- Themes or values of the communities by committee – like environmental justice – make it visceral to see it come together in one room

- More transparent/public development process
- Reduces number of unfeasible projects submitted by 'pre-vetting' ideas publically w/ staff
- More predictable project development costs
- Less burden on staff capacity
- Reduces project development costs for large projects by relying on previous work and C.I.P. lists

Potential Risks

- Differential staff capacity among implementers could result in varying quality/completeness/cost of project proposals and project development
- Implementer staff may choose to focus efforts on C.I.P. projects to the neglect of community-submitted projects ideas

Important Considerations

- Who can submit ideas/participate in the Summit?
- Where are the Summits held? How many? How are they organized?

Questions for the Committee

- What strengths and weaknesses do you foresee with this approach? How could it be improved?
- What challenges could we expect? What are the risks of project development this way (e.g. feasibility, engineers review, land use permit)?
- Project management details and logistics: What would be needed for this summit (e.g. Staff, materials, internet, whiteboards, printers)? Who produces what? Who is accountable/responsible for production?
- How could the Capital Grants Pilot or community identify agencies and/or organizations for project implementers?
    - How does the Capital Grants Pilot foster partnerships between government agencies and community organizations?
    - Could community based organizations help support the PN Bond meaningful community engagement and racial equity goals?
    - When should the Capital Grants Pilot engage project implementers in the process?
- How should project implementers request funding for the Capital Grants Pilot project development costs?
- How do we ensure projects are developed in alignment with original idea intent while allowing for necessary modification by staff and subject area experts?
- How are projects vetted? By what criteria?

COMMUNITY VOTE

Description

1) Project expos present pool of potential projects for funding
2) Community votes on two slates of projects: large and small
3) Community vote results are forwarded to Program Design and Review Committee for funding recommendation
4) Program Design and Review Committee recommends funding to Metro Council

Potential Benefits

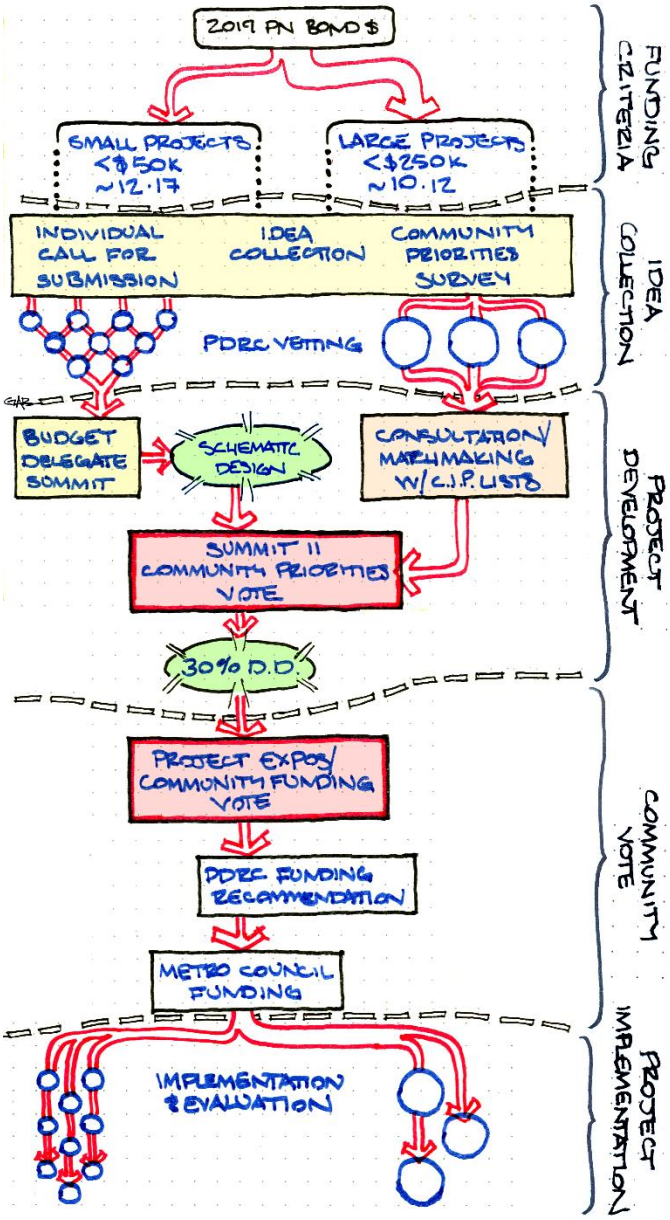
- No competition between small and large projects for limited fund dollars (small projects don't get squeezed out)

Potential Risks

- Online voting presents equity challenges that favor those with more digital access & sophistication
- Tension between making voting as accessible as possible while also ensuring the integrity of vote results

Important Considerations

- Who votes, and how, during first voting round v. final? Is it different? Is one more targeted than the other? E.g., first round of voting is more limited and more closely engaged with underserved/targeted communities, while final vote is Metrowide/geography-wide.

Questions for the Committee

- What strengths and weaknesses do you foresee with this approach? How could it be improved?
- *More questions community voting are included in the memo and materials previously presented.*