Meeting summary

Meeting:	Nature in Neighborhoods Capital Grants Pilot Program Design and Review Committee Meeting #6
Date:	Tuesday, March 15, 2022
Time:	4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
Place:	Zoom
Purpose:	Guidebook development
Outcome(s):	Develop the program Guidebook: Proposal Development and Community Vote

Recording: https://vimeo.com/688611068/48d089e6a6

Links:
Mural Board Community Vote
Feedback Jamboard

Attendees

Committee Members
Kevin Hughes, he/him, City of Hillsboro Parks and Recreation Department
Alisa Chen, they/them, Grow Portland
Jairaj Singh, they/he, Unite Oregon
Blanca Gaytan Farfan, she/her, East County Rising Community Projects
Jeffrey Lee, he/him, (City of Portland, BES)
Theresa Huang, she/her, Urban Greenspaces Institute

Absent: *Anthony M. Bradley*

Staff
Amanda Hudson, Participatory Budgeting Oregon (PBO)
Humberto Marquez Mendes, Metro
Crista Gardner, Metro
Brandon Goldner, Metro
Gabrielle Brown, Metro (PSU Fellow)
Allison Brown, JLA Public Involvement

Welcome and Introductions

Allison Brown, JLA Public Involvement, opened the meeting and reviewed Zoom logistics. Crista Gardner, Metro, shared a land acknowledgement. She apologized for the meeting notes from the previous meeting being delayed, and told committee members to send her any additional edits they may have.

Meeting Follow-up and Discussion

Allison Brown facilitated a short discussion which followed up on questions from the previous meeting that the group needed to address.

- Committee members have indicated that memos have been long and challenging and they require too much time to read through and analyze before meetings.
- Renee will schedule 1:1 meetings with committee members and Crista if they need them for questions and clarification.
- Members have questions on the meeting process.

Members also had questions on the group JamBoard about:

- Development funding.
- What community engagement will look like, especially when idea solicitation begins.
- What decisions the Metro Council be making on Geography.

Crista reminded the group that many of the things they have been struggling with are also things that staff has been struggling with and that is why it is good to collaborate and discuss ways to work through these issues. She thanked them for their patience and participation.
- The project development piece is being worked through on the Metro side. They are secure in finding funding for the project development but need patience as they figure out internally what this may look like.
- Geography is beyond the control of the staff, and they are trying to navigate that decision making process. Once there is a decision, members will know. Staff is seeking any recommendations from the group for the Council.

Allison asked group members if there were any other questions that they wanted to ask:
- **Member:** I'm hearing that the committee doesn't know all the pieces related to project funding, and I understand. Happy to move forward and wait for more information.
  - o **Allison:** I just want to highlight that it is frustrating not having all the answers and I appreciate Kevin acknowledging that.

There would be space at the end of the meeting to continue this discussion and answer any questions.

Proposal Development/Matchmaking Case Studies

Gabrielle Brown, Metro, shared a presentation on case studies which highlighted different ways of tackling project development. The project is in the design processes phase and is working on developing a guidebook that will shape the way the program runs idea collections, proposal phases, and community votes.

Project development workflow:
- Project ideas: come in through idea collection phase.
- Project development: vetting; identifying partners; feasibility; cost analysis; process and procurement.
- Community Vote Ballot.

She wanted to address what happens during the complex project development phase. The purpose for this would be to:
- Establish a base of knowledge on the project development process.

- Show rather than tell how project development processes vary from place to place.
- Inspire members to formulate the key questions that will guide the project development process.

There overviewed six case studies from around the world and explained the how the flow charts would be ordered in the different processes. Each square next to the flow chart represented how the community volunteers, steering committee, city staff, and subject experts worked together throughout the process.

Case studies:

Reykjavik, Iceland
- Uses digital platform for open community collaboration.
- Development is completed by City staff and subject area experts, with some collaboration from those who submit ideas.
- When users submit ideas, they are considered the public property of Reykjavik residents to enable deliberation of amendments to the original proposal and grant the city of Reykjavik the right to use the ideas.

Tallinn, Finland
- No Steering Committee, no Budget Delegates.
- Program design, vetting, development, and referendum preparation is entirely completed by City staff and subject area experts.
- Not as collaborative; community submits ideas and votes.
- Community Vote is an official referendum; the vote is binding. It is only open to residents aged 14 and older.

Agueda, Portugal
- Community meetings connected City staff and subject area experts with community members at tables
  - There are public deliberations of community needs and desires.
  - Ideas are co-developed to a schematic level.
  - After vetting, there is an initial vote to identify priority areas for further development.
- Multiple votes
  - First at community meetings, then after development to decide funding.
- Staff and subject area experts develop proposals between votes.

Victoria, B.C. – relevant to this project.
- There are multiple pots of money.
  - Different pots for small vs. large projects to keep things balanced.
- Vetting and development are done by Steering Committee and City staff, in collaboration with those who submit ideas.
- The burden is on the submitter to provide a detailed proposal prior to vetting and development.
- Pre-application meetings and information sessions between submitters and staff are available and act similar to charettes to discuss scope, budget, feasibility, etc.
- Submissions are required to be partnered with a community nonprofit.

Greensboro, N.C. – relevant to this project

- Project development by Budget Delegates (Project Advocates) working with City staff and contractors.
  - All volunteers.
  - Labor intensive; expected to engage 5+ hours a week.
- Similar to NYC project.
- Minimal vetting prior to project development.
- Early rounds organized Budget Delegates by subject area; later switched to Geography.

Kenya
- Cascade model: highly iterative.
  - Ideas are collected, vetted, and voted up through larger and larger geographic scales.
- Highly deliberative.
  - All decisions are made in-person at community meetings or delegations assembled from smaller geographic divisions.
- Consensus decision making at smallest scale gives way to democratic models as scale increases and delegates know each other less.
- Vetting is done by Participatory Budget Council (Eq. of steering committee) and development is done by Development Committee (subject area experts) with community members.
- Community members are very involved in the process.

Key Takeaways

Gabrielle asked the group to notice how the responsibility is passed from the community to jurisdictions, and back to the community. Collaboration works differently throughout this process.
- Places with higher institutional trust rely more on experts working independently between idea collection and voting. Lower trust areas are more iterative and need additional rounds of community input.
  - Less trust needs more transparency, collaboration, and deliberation.
- Every project development process is highly tailored to the specific legal and institutional structures of the place.
- Many processes rely less on specific project ideas from the community and more on surveys/discussions about community problems and needs. Implementers identify projects from these engagement efforts to fit those needs and desires.

Process Design Roles for Project Development
Metro

- Outline an implementation process that aligns with our unique Bond obligations, and legal and fiscal restrictions.
Participatory Budgeting Oregon
- Guide Program Design and Review Committee in applying participatory budgeting values to project development process.
Program Design and Review Committee
- Define values and guidelines for project vetting and development.
- Before finding the right answers, formulate the right questions.
  - How are the values integrated within the process every step of the way?

The committee role in project development is to foster partnerships between government agencies and community organizations, which may in turn support the PN Bond's goals in a meaningful and equitable way. Gabrielle recommended that members look through other examples of participatory budgeting to get ideas and learn from.

Discussion and Q & A

- **Member:** I'm wondering if it's more important to have the steps of the engagement process or more interaction between the community volunteers, steering committee, city staff, and subject experts. Is it more important that they interact more for trust building, or is more community engagement more important? People's capacity may be an issue.
  - **Gabrielle:** People's capacity is a common issue in some places more than others. What's more important is if the process is aligned with the goals of the community. That structure is going to vary from place to place. Trust can factor greatly into how the process works, and there are trust deficits in many places. That is why we are asking you what the right balance is for the Metro region. This is within the group's power, and I hope you share your impressions.
- **Member:** I'm trying to figure out what we're trying to do here, which should be serving marginalized communities. That might not align with the capacity that Metro has, but we're going to have to plug into the community volunteers, steering committee, city staff, and subject experts as much as possible. That is the honest thing to do if we want the project to be as in depth as we want it to be.
  - **Gabrielle:** The implementers are going to be the local jurisdictions, so when we ask about the geography of this project, there is a paradox in that the places with the highest need don't always have the capacity to do this work. It's a big issue and there are many intersecting issues.
  - **Crista:** It's not just the capacity of Metro staff, it's the capacity of Parks staff or special districts that serve parks. Those might not always have staffing capacity to do good community engagement.
  - **Member:** We should understand which jurisdictions we engage with who don't have a great track record, such as Hillsboro. We need to consider how communities have changed, and how cities aren't able to keep up with how that change can impact involvement.
  - **Gabrielle:** There was a question about whether this would be a grants program or a mandate, and the jurisdictions stated that they would prefer a grant program. This allows us to offer them money if they have the capacity to do certain things, which makes it contingent on how much work they are willing and able to do with the community organizations.
- **Member:** I'm curious if there are more examples of U.S. systems that we can learn from or find best practices and recent experiences. It would be helpful to see how they have engaged the community and worked within underfunded areas. This may be applicable to some of the areas in the Metro region.
  - **Crista:** We have had conversations on national case studies of participatory budgeting, and we've talked to PB organizations in Seattle and New York. Staff capacity seems to be what is most difficult. What is often presented is an optimistic view of capacity, and then when having informational interviews, most of those staff members are stressed.
  - **Amanda Hudson, Participatory Budgeting Oregon (PBO)**: There are generally two ways this is done in the U.S. PB will start in the community through an elected or community leader who will campaign on it, or like in in the NY example, nonprofits worked with immigrant refugees and then started grassroots campaigns to put pressure on elected

officials. Elected officials tend to have their own budgets which can get moved around to include PB, and nonprofits will fundraise, with foundations funding the first few years. Capacity always comes up as discussions are made about contracting staff or building within the organization. Most of the processes in the U.S. are about reform, so the whole point is pushing back on something. It takes a lot of time, involvement, and investment.

Allison stated that Gabrielle had raised some questions after the presentation and asked if there was anything she wanted members to continue to think about or have responses for.
- All the questions came from the memos, which may be difficult to get through, but can be used as reference.
- Think about partnerships and helping to define goals for what the relationships between community members, organizations, and jurisdictions look like so we can have a collaborate and transparent partnership.
- What are some best practices for these partnerships, as members have experience in different aspects of this. What has felt good and right when members have done this work before? What has not felt right?

The group took a 7-minute break.

Review and Refine Community Vote and Project Selection Goals and Values

Gabrielle reviewed the community vote process and what the committee would make decisions on, as well as balancing in-person and online voting. She shared an example of the process from Greensboro, N.C. The first rounds of voting were in person and representative of the local population, but when voting moved online, it increased more among white populations vs. BIPOC populations. This raised access questions and she asked members to consider this as they make decisions.

Amanda shared a Mural about the voting process. The link can be found HERE.

A member asked what age the group had settled on and was reminded that it was age 6 and above.
- Amanda stated that idea collection could be a different age from voting if the group felt they were different levels of responsibility.
- Gabrielle pointed out that there was no decision on the age, but the group had discussed it at the last meeting.
- **Member:** (In reference to a question on the Mural) Is it number of events for one vote, or for the number of votes in the process?
  - o **Amanda:** Voting is done over a period of time. There would be online submissions that can happen and then community events. The idea is can it be one big event or multiple events to reach certain populations.

Amanda asked the group how they were feeling about Mural questions:
- **Member:** This has been really helpful. Activities like this help me through the process.
- **Member:** I agree, it's helpful to have tangible things in front of us so there are mile markers, but it's also opening questions for me:
  - o How can we balance online vs. in-person events and what are the pros and cons of Geography vs. community based? How do we determine how many events will occur?
- **Member:** I would like some clarification on single funding.

- o **Amanda:** There is a typo; it's multiple categories. Some processes will subdivide the pot of money, so you can have multiple focuses (like the Victoria, B.C. example).
  - o **Gabrielle**: Money can be earmarked for projects based on size, so you don't have to choose one project over another.
  - o **Amanda**: One of the choices for a project Blanca and us are working on is to give small nonprofits or those who may not have their 501(c)(3) yet a small percentage of funds, almost like a small grant. This depends on what values you set.
- **Member:** Is the project development process different between small and large projects?
  - o **Gabrielle:** We are exploring what the implications may be if you decide to split between small and large projects. We hope to have a framework to present to you very soon. We are trying to figure out how to manage the process and can address that question.

Guidebook Preview

Gabrielle shared a draft of the guidebook and stated that it will include all of the guidelines prescribed to the project, including fiscal and legal frameworks that Metro has, and grant application details. It will be comprehensive when it is done.

Everything in the document is copied from memos, frameworks, policy documents, summaries, and screenshots. Metro is compiling the committee's input and decisions, and when a topic is revisited or refined, it is also refined in the guidebook. Metro will continue to show the committee the guidebook as it is continuously being updated. Gabrielle noted that there are differentials between the sections completed by Metro and sections reflective of the committee's work, but that will change as the group continues their work.

Next Steps and Closing

Allison closed the meeting with the following items:
- Committee members are invited to share their thoughts on meeting process improvements and topics they'd like to discuss using a Google Jamboard. This will be open for committee members to fill out until the next meeting.
- The committee should think about what is unfinished and needs to be addressed.
- The next meeting will be Tuesday, March 29.
- The group will receive information about scheduling 1:1 meetings with Crista.

Allison thanked everyone for their time and the meeting ended.

Appendix A: Zoom Meeting Chat

Crista Gardner (she/her): Thank you, Alisa!
Crista Gardner (she/her): Check out the guidebook for next meeting. Thanks!
Alisa Chen: Bye everyone! And will do
Humberto: Sorry the call dropped but I'm back!
Allison (she/her), facilitator: As we wrap, here's the Jamboard link (still the same one!), now with a new opening slide:
https://jamboard.google.com/d/1KhtwJkV6Gih0gJNoFg3bfmEnYdJ9Izv7P50LDfbM-
OQ/edit?usp=sharing
Jeffrey Lee (he/him): Thanks Allison! Could we maybe add a slide for sharing resources/references we'd likek to share!
Allison (she/her): Yes 100%
Jeffrey Lee (he/him): looks great, Gabrielle! =)
Humberto: Thanks y'all!
Amanda Hudson (she/her) | Participatory Budgeting Oregon: Thanks :)
Crista Gardner (she/her): Thank you! Have a wonderful night!

Appendix B: Land acknowledgement – Oversight Committee

The greater Portland area is built upon the ancestral homelands, villages and traditional use areas of multiple Indigenous tribes and bands who have stewarded these lands we cherish since time immemorial.

The lands at the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia rivers have long served as a major crossroads for the economic, social and political interactions of tribal nations for thousands of years and a place of significance in the homelands and traditional territories of many tribal nations.

We owe a special acknowledgement to the many tribes and bands and their descendants who ceded these lands in treaties with the United States.

We recognize the strong and diverse tribal nations and Native communities in our region today and offer respect and gratitude for their stewardship of these lands past, present and future.
Metro seeks to establish meaningful relationships and explore opportunities to collaborate and consider tribal priorities and interests in our work, including our parks and nature bond work.
We are building our understanding of tribal interests in the greater Portland area as we implement our parks and nature work.

As we learn more, we hope to refine Metro's approach to land acknowledgements in the future;
We recognize land acknowledgements are important and can be sensitive. We are hoping to learn more to integrate this into our work appropriately and in a good way honoring tribal interests going forward.