What is Participatory Policy Making?

Participatory policy making (PPM, for short) focuses explicitly on ways the community can inform and decide on policy. More specifically, it refers to a policy-making process that invites community members to identify, develop, and decide directly on policy proposals.

Why Participatory Policy Making?

At worst, policy-making processes neglect to actively engage those most impacted by the issue they seek to address. At best, public servants and elected officials trying to engage their community during a policy process hit barriers to sharing their power, and community member experiences and solutions are met with closed-door meetings and half-hearted initiatives.

We're joining communities across the country in their demand for real community decision-making. Participatory policy making is a practical model that puts real decision-making power into community hands.

The Working Group

We convened a PPM Working Group every two weeks for three months. We shared learning about participatory practices, models, and tools. Building on that learning, we collaboratively brainstormed and discussed the kind of participatory policy making we'd like to see in the world.

Leveraging the experiences and expertise of working group members, we built a participatory policy-making model that combines the best parts of participatory budgeting (broad community engagement and decision-making opportunities) and policy juries (a core group of representative members of the community working together to address a specific problem).

The model is designed to:

- Work in a variety of policy-making contexts
- Give community members real decision-making power that is equitable, accessible, and significant

The Participatory Policy-Making Working Group was a DBE initiative that included participants from the following organizations:

PARTICIPATORY POLICY-MAKING MODEL

1. DESIGN THE PROCESS

Build internal support and convene a steering committee (including community members) to work together to make key decisions about the process, using the core criteria.

2. LAUNCH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Kick off community engagement plan to ensure multiple opportunities for the full community to participate in the process.

3. CONVENE COMMUNITY POLICY TEAM

Convene the Community Policy Team to explain the process, including compensation, roles, responsibilities, and timeline; collect relevant evaluation data.

8. ANALYZE DATA & SHARE RESULTS

Analyze and share relevant evaluation findings with participants and steering committee.

CORE CRITERIA

- Engages full community at each step of the process.
- Ensures real community decision-making with an implementation accountability plan.

7. HONOR THE VOTE & IMPLEMENT

Announce the winning policies; convene elected(s) and staff to create a policy implementation plan; share timeline and accountability and community follow up measures.

4. LEARN TOGETHER

Engage in deep learning about the policy issue to understand the problem, its impacts, and a variety of perspectives about possible solutions; collect relevant evaluation data.

6. VOTE

Hold a community vote. Convening body collects relevant evaluation data.

5. DEVELOP POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Community Policy Team, with support from the convening body, creates one or more policies informed by community input as well as their own learning and experiences.

Democracy Beyond Elections is a collaborative, national campaign dedicated to transformative democracy rooted in community-led decision making.