

Application Form

PART 1: BASIC DATA

Experience data (complete the information below in a clear and concise manner)

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Title of the experience: PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN NORTH LANARKSHIRE | | |
| Name of the city or region: North Lanarkshire | | |
| Inhabitants of the city or territory: 341,140 (females: 176,106 male: 165,034) | | |
| Country: Scotland | | |
| Institution presenting the candidacy (name of the municipality, department, government, institution leading the candidate experience): North Lanarkshire Council Community Partnership Team | | |
| Website of the experience or institution: Welcome to North Lanarkshire Council North Lanarkshire Council | | |
| Profiles in social networks of the experience or the institution: NorthLanCouncil (@nlcpeople) / Twitter | | |
| Start date of the experience: September 2019 | | |
| End date of the experience (if operational, indicate "ongoing"): Ongoing | | |
| Budget of the experience (indicate the budget of the experience or the resources mobilized for its development and implementation): £600,000 | | |
| Type of candidacy (Mark with an X in the right column) | New experience | x |
| | Innovation on an existing experience | |
| | Continuity of an experience | |
| Type of experience (Mark with an X in the right column) (you may choose more than one) | Participatory budgeting | x |
| | Participatory planning | |
| | Standing council | |
| | Workshop/meeting for diagnosis, monitoring, etc. | |

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| | Public Hearing/Forum | | |
| | Poll/referendum | | |
| | Assemblies / Citizen juries / Deliberation spaces | | |
| | E-government/Open government/Digital platforms | | |
| | Citizen initiative | | x |
| | Other (specify): | | |
| <p>Objective of the experience</p> <p>(Mark with an X in the right column) (you may choose more than one)</p> | To achieve higher levels of equality in terms of participation | | x |
| | Including diversity as a criterion for inclusion | | |
| | Community empowerment | | x |
| | To empower non-organised citizens | | x |
| | To increase citizen's rights in terms of political participation | | |
| | To connect different tools of participation within a participatory democracy "ecosystem" | | |
| | To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the mechanisms of participatory democracy | | x |
| | To improve the quality of public decision-making through the mechanisms of participatory democracy | | x |
| | To improve the evaluation and accountability of the mechanisms of participatory democracy | | |
| To improve any public policy through the active participation of the public | | x | |
| <p>Territorial area</p> <p>(Mark with an X in the right column)</p> | All the territory | Local | x |
| | | Regional | |

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| <i>(you may choose more than one)</i> | District | |
| | Neighbourhood | x |
| Thematic area (Mark with an X in the right column) <i>(you may choose more than one)</i> | Governance | |
| | Education | x |
| | Transport | |
| | Urban management | |
| | Health | x |
| | Security | |
| | Environment/Climate change and/or urban agriculture | |
| | Civic associations, grassroots and new social movements. | |
| | Culture | |
| | Housing | |
| | Job creation | |
| | Decentralization | |
| | Local development | x |
| | Training/learning | |
| | Economy and/or finances | x |
| | Legal regulations | |
| Social inclusion | x | |
| All | | |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Other (write the topic) | |
| <p>Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) associated with the practice Mark with an X in the right column (more than one option can be chosen) You can also add the specific target</p> | SDG 1 - No poverty | x |
| | SDG 2 - Zero hunger | |
| | SDG 3 - Good health and well- being | x |
| | SDG 4 - Quality education | |
| | SDG 5 - Gender equality | |
| | SDG 6 - Clean water and sanitation | |
| | SDG 7 - Affordable and clean energy | |
| | SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth | |
| | SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure | |
| | SDG 10 - Reduced inequality | x |
| | SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities | x |
| | SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production | |
| | SDG 13 - Climate action | |
| | SDG 14 - Life below water | |
| | SDG 15 - Life on land | |
| | SDG 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions | |
| | SDG 17 - Partnership for the goals | x |

PART 2: DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPERIENCE

Fill in the following fields clearly and concisely. You can add links if you consider it appropriate.

Context

In a **maximum of 300 words**, it presents the cultural, geographical, historical, institutional and socioeconomic context of the city, the territory in which the experience takes place.

North Lanarkshire Council is a local authority area in Scotland that consists of 9 Community Board areas:

Airdrie, Bellshill, Coatbridge, Cumbernauld, Kilsyth, Motherwell, Northern Corridor, Shotts and Wishaw.

North Lanarkshire is ideally situated in the heart of Scotland with first-rate connectivity to the rest of Scotland, the UK and the world. As the fourth largest council area of 32 in Scotland, North Lanarkshire is divided into 21 wards which are represented by 77 elected members.

North Lanarkshire's economic history was dominated by the steel and coal industries as main employers, but with ongoing decline in recent years has had to adapt to be the place to Live, Learn, Work, Invest, and Visit. This is our vision, and our shared ambition with our communities. It means economic regeneration and growth that benefits everyone in North Lanarkshire by responding to major social, economic, and technological change.

We are improving the lives of our communities in both urban and rural areas by driving inclusive economic growth, increasing skills, and generating jobs and training opportunities. In doing this, we will reduce poverty and inequality.

We work in partnership with Community Planning partners including NHS Lanarkshire, Police Scotland and Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire to achieve this and we involve people in our communities in what we do. At the heart of our delivery is embedding Participatory Budgeting (PB) as a key community engagement tool to ensure we respond to their needs and desires.

Providing local people with the opportunity to make key decisions puts into practice legislative requirements at Scottish Government level via the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act and addresses priorities and outcomes identified locally as part of The Plan for North Lanarkshire.

Participatory Budgeting is at the heart of increasing our citizen participation activity and builds upon previous successful empowerment activities.

Precedents

Explain the precedents and origins of the experience: if it is the innovation of an existing experience, what are its origins, if it is a new experience, what are the antecedents in participation in your city/municipality/region. You can also indicate if you have been inspired by experiences in other cities/countries. (**maximum 300 words**)

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As mentioned, North Lanarkshire Council consists of 9 Community Board areas with local people supported by Council and other Community Planning partners to deliver actions highlighted within each Board's Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP). This new set-up emerged from previous Local Area Partnership structures and builds in support from partners, including NHS Lanarkshire, ensuring a more detailed and structured approach to supporting communities.

Participatory Budgeting is a key component of LOIP delivery, enabling local democratic activity to directly help reduce inequalities, promote improved health and well-being activities and ultimately ensures communities decide how budgets are spent within the areas they live.

Participatory Budgeting has been developing across Scotland for a number of years, inspired by positive experiences in Brazil, England and across Europe. Within Scotland, North Lanarkshire Council has led on developing the PB process based on our communities' ongoing needs – whether provision required is place-based or thematic delivery.

During the 5-years period 2014-2018, we carried out several PB place initiatives with communities across the local authority area. Each initiative generally consisted of relatively small budget amounts (up to £10,000) and helped better inform future events.

In 2019, knowledge gathered to date assisted us to organise and deliver a more ambitious place-based initiative in the Motherwell, Wishaw and Shotts areas – culminating in 10,500 people voting (online and offline) on how best to spend a £500,000 budget. Local people aged 8+ years of age participated and the positive impact and learning enabled us to develop additional thematic initiatives to complement place-based PB.

Subsequently, since 2020 we have worked with communities to carry out PB initiatives around health, carers and young people themes. PB has enabled young people to be empowered to vote for the first time and also benefitted isolated communities by helping them decide on proposals they considered most important.

Objectives of the experience

*What is the objective listed in Part 1 that you think is the most important, and indicate other outstanding objectives of the experience (**maximum 100 words**)*

Community empowerment is the most important objective listed in Part 1. Communities have come together from different ages ranges and backgrounds to decide how money should be spent. This has also increased confidence levels, leading to engagement in our Community Boards structure and an increase in volunteering opportunities.

In addition, local people have become involved in Health and Social Care Consortia that also decide how specific budgets are allocated, further emphasising the positive impact on additional objectives:

To achieve higher levels of equality in terms of participation

To improve the quality of public decision-making through the mechanisms of participatory democracy

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Methodology

Describe the methodology of the experience: phases of the process, participation channels
(maximum 300 words)

At the outset of each Participatory Budgeting initiative, we have established steering groups consisting of local people supported by Council staff. For example, groups in Motherwell, Wishaw and Shotts included young people, older people and councillors to help establish the PB process based on local need.

Steering groups have then assisted us to deliver information and voting sessions in local community centres and other local facilities. In addition several community groups organised Open Day events that incorporated PB voting sessions which helped maximise local participation.

We also attended all local primary and high schools to deliver information and voting sessions about PB to help give an understanding of what is involved. For most young people it was their first ever vote and led, in most cases, to new school projects about democracy, active citizenship and the right to vote.

Offline voting sessions utilised the same ballot boxes used for local and national elections and helped highlight the importance PB voting is for local people who had never previously taken part in a similar process. In addition we have also used various online voting methods, including Microsoft Teams forms, Survey Monkey and the Scottish Government CONSUL platform – thus reducing barriers to participating in a key voting process.

As previously mentioned, we have delivered both themed and place-based Participatory Budgeting initiatives. We have also targeted support at areas of greatest deprivation, including the Craigneuk area of Motherwell which has datazones in the top 5% categories of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation statistics (SIMD 2020). Targeting methodology has led to local groups and individuals coming together to further look at other key concerns within their communities, such as mental health, play facilities and environmental issues.

Innovation

Explain what you consider most innovative in the practice. (In a maximum of 150 words)

Participatory Budgeting delivery has enabled us to be innovative in 3 specific areas providing optimum benefit to our communities.

Through contracted works, we receive both financial and non-financial Community Benefits from service providers. As a result, we have established a Community Benefits Wishlist in each Community Board area and we use PB so local people decide how benefits are allocated. For example, we developed a PB process in 4 primary schools to decide how financial benefits would be spent, further embedding PB as a key engagement tool.

In addition, we have used PB budgets to attract additional £150,000 grant funding to enhance successful projects and practice to date has informed our 1% annual budget commitment to mainstream PB as part of an agreement between Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). This will further improve local democracy by increasing communities' influence on decision-making over a longer-term period.

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Inclusion

*Point out the importance of including as many groups and diverse populations as possible and how you have achieved it. (In a **maximum of 150 words**)*

During our 2019 PB initiative, steering groups with people from different age ranges and groups represented our urban and rural communities (Motherwell, Wishaw and Shotts localities). As previously indicated, young people 8+ years of age participated in a voting process for the first time. Since then feedback from colleagues has been positive, with additional projects subsequently delivered within school settings.

In addition, we ensured involvement from 'seldom heard voices' such as carers, the deaf community, people with other disabilities and older people. We did this by conducting information sessions with several community organisations including Lanarkshire Deaf Club, North Lanarkshire Disability Forum and McCormack Gardens sheltered housing complex. The organisations also hosted ballot boxes on site to maximise voting opportunities for community voices often omitted from decision making processes.

Key learning has informed subsequent thematic and place-based PB projects during the past 2 years and has improved our longer-term mainstreaming planning.

Communication

*What has been the strategy and communication channels of the experience so that the population knows about it and gets involved. (In a **maximum of 150 words**)*

We have adopted online and offline communication methods to ensure wider community involvement in Participatory Budgeting initiatives – from initial planning until completion.

Our Council website includes animations to demonstrate what PB is and how communities can become involved. Also, we highlighted specific events on our Twitter and Facebook platforms, including our 9 My Town Facebook sites, and we promptly respond to queries through our Community Matters mailbox address.

In addition, councillors have provided PB information at regular surgeries and we have linked with local press to promote events in specific areas. Our own We Aspire bulletin ensures we regularly feature PB events to raise awareness with Council colleagues, providing greater understanding as we implement our 1% mainstream budget commitments.

Voluntary sector organisations have helped us publicise PB with a range of community organisations and our Community Planning Partners, North Lanarkshire Partnership, have circulated information to maximise community involvement.

Articulation with other actors

*It explains how the experience was articulated with different actors and simultaneous or pre-existing processes. What roles did these participants assume? Explain the degree of success of this joint. (In a **maximum of 150 words**)*

As our work develops, partners are recognising the benefits of involvement in regular Participatory Budgeting activity. Our main partner, and the key to successful delivery in North Lanarkshire, has been our local communities. They have fully engaged in PB and

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have recognised that local people have become increasingly empowered by voting on how specific budgets are spent.

PB as a positive community engagement tool builds upon our previous engagement and consultation activities. However, PB's increased levels of interaction, involvement and influence upon decision making has demonstrated progress towards greater impact on seeking direct community solutions.

Throughout our journey, partners have become involved in PB initiatives as they better understand how such democratic processes increase active citizenship opportunities for local people. For example, initiatives with schools enabled young people to decide on proposals and activities with carers organisations has raised awareness of carers' rights and the need for improved carers' support.

Evaluation:

*What evaluation mechanisms have been implemented? Develop whether citizenship has participated in the evaluation of the practice (In a **maximum of 300 words**)*

As referred to earlier, PB steering groups were established in local areas. The groups met on a regular basis, initially to establish baseline information, then considered how best to take forward each initiative.

Thereafter, steering groups met at regular intervals, supported by North Lanarkshire Council staff, to clarify how planning of activities was progressing then adapting proposed delivery based on communities' needs. Finally, a post-project meeting determined ways to build on successes and how best to implement learning gathered for future PB initiatives.

With regard to PB work with young people, we arranged information sessions within school settings to help explain what PB is, how it can help engage all groups within a community and the importance of participatory democracy. Young people were keen to decide on budgets that had a direct impact upon them, for example, by creating a shortlist of proposals for the consideration around development of new outdoor learning and play areas.

To ensure PB progressed, we also carried out online information and feedback sessions with young people in schools when Covid-19 restrictions were in place. This enabled feedback to be gathered with regard to future planning and continued the momentum with young people in relation to active citizenship issues.

We also ensured our PB provision reflected the needs of local people, we established a North Lanarkshire Council Task and Finish Group that measured progress of our ongoing delivery. This has enabled us to improve governance of PB delivery by updating relevant documentation including pro-forma proposal forms, guidelines and eligibility criteria.

We now have a structured mechanism in place to share knowledge and experience gained to date with Council and Community Planning Partners as we develop our 1% mainstream commitments.

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Impacts and results

*Describe the impacts and results of the process. How many people have participated, and which are their profiles. What have been the impacts on public policies, on the functioning of the administration and on citizens. (In a **maximum of 300 words**)*

As indicated earlier with regard to our main PB project in 2019, 10,500 people voted within 3 of our main towns – with roughly half the voters being young people voting for the first time.

Feedback from participants was positive, highlighted in the following quotes:

“My views were listened to – we had suggested a new play area locally and our project made the shortlist. Even better that it was one of the successful projects voted for!”

“ I was involved with the steering group in Motherwell – it made a difference being in at the start of something through to the implementation of winning projects!”

“It was a good feeling deciding how money could be spent in my community – lots of my neighbours also took part.”

“Helping with the information sessions really boosted my confidence – and I got to meet lots of new people!”

Similar comments have been emphasised in other PB projects where votes cast totalled 3000+. For example, carers have since become involved in local (Council) and national (Scottish Government) consultation exercises after initial PB projects engagement, with young people also telling us they want to know other ways they can decide what happens in their school and wider community.

Schools colleagues also stated they built on PB activity to discuss key issues with young people, including climate change and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) agreement.

In addition, we were able to use the financial impact of PB initiatives to access other funding, including external grants from organisations such as the National Lottery Community Fund and internal Council grants. We have also provided match funding through financial community benefits gained from contractors to further enhance our PB delivery.

Furthermore, members of PB steering groups have now joined local Community Boards.

PART 3: EXPERIENCE SUMMARY

A summary of the experience: origin, objectives, operation, results, monitoring and evaluation (Do not hesitate to repeat aspects that have already been written before, this summary is the

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one that will be shared on the digital platform for open evaluation and in the publication of the award). (In a **maximum of 500 words**)

North Lanarkshire Council has a first-rate record of increasing citizen participation levels. Participatory Budgeting initiatives with our communities has been crucial in achieving this.

From 2014-2018 we carried out several initiatives. Each consisted of small budgets (up to £10,000) and helped inform future events. In 2019, we delivered an ambitious initiative in Motherwell, Wishaw and Shotts areas – culminating in 10,500 people voting (online and offline) on how to spend £500,000. Local people aged 8+ participated and the positive impact enabled future delivery of thematic initiatives to complement place-based PB.

Since 2020 we have engaged communities to deliver PB on health, carers and young people themes. PB has empowered young people to vote for the first time and has enabled isolated individuals to be effectively supported when deciding on proposals they considered most important.

PB ensured that:

Community empowerment is our most important objective when delivering PB, enabling us to help communities:

To achieve higher levels of equality in terms of participation and,

To improve the quality of public decision-making through the mechanisms of participatory democracy

At the outset of each initiative, we established steering groups consisting of local people supported by Council staff. Groups included young people, older people, carers and councillors who decided specific PB activity based on local need. As delivery has progressed, we have adapted offline and online communication methods to ensure greater community involvement – from initial planning until completion stages.

Offline voting utilised local/national election ballot boxes, highlighting the importance we placed on PB voting. We used various online voting methods, including Microsoft Teams Forms, Survey Monkey and Scottish Government's CONSUL platform – further reducing barriers to participation.

Through contracted works, we received both financial and non-financial Community Benefits, with PB processes adopted so local people best decided how benefits were allocated. We ensured involvement from 'seldom heard voices' such as carers, the deaf community and older people in our PB delivery. We did this by organising information sessions with community organisations who then hosted ballot boxes to maximise voting opportunities for people usually unable to influence decision making processes.

Our PB evaluation and monitoring activity was established from the outset. Steering groups met to establish baseline information, then considered how best to take forward each initiative. Thereafter groups met to clarify how delivery was progressing, adapting provision based on communities' needs. Finally a post-project meeting determined ways to build on successes and how to implement learning gathered for future initiatives.

To ensure progress with young people, we carried out online feedback sessions in schools when Covid-19 restrictions were in place. This enabled information gathered to influence future PB planning, whilst considering other active citizenship and democracy issues.

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Seldom heard voices, such as carers, have since become involved in local and national consultation exercises after initial PB involvement, and young people want to decide what happens in their school and wider community.

Finally, we now have improved PB governance in place with updated proposal forms, guidelines and criteria documentation ensuring a positive experience for North Lanarkshire communities.