



Making Civic Trust Less Abstract

A FRAMEWORK FOR MEASURING TRUST WITHIN CITIES

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Measuring trust in cities has often been challenging due to its inherently abstract nature. Below, we propose an actionable framework that focuses on identifying and prioritizing metrics that can be used toward:

- ▶ Assessing the tangible manifestations of trust; and
- ▶ Mapping the factors driving them, rather than attempting to quantify trust as an abstract concept.

Introduction

Trust is essential to a well-functioning society. It is what gives institutions and officials the license to operate. It is key to facilitating social and economic relationships. It is what allows people to interact with their friends, their neighbors, and community.

Yet, trust, as a concept, is very abstract, and little understood. Decades of interdisciplinary research have yielded little consensus on how to measure trust.¹ While there is no shortage of public surveys that track popular support for different institutions, to date, there is no widely known, actionable framework for city officials to use when they want to determine the state of civic trust, and identify ways to improve it.

The New York City Civic Engagement Commission, formed in 2018, was created in part to bolster civic trust within the context of New York City government (more information on this can be found in Appendix II). In 2024, the Civic Engagement Commission contacted The Governance Lab to explore ways for measuring civic trust in New York City. We responded to this request with [a study of the existing literature](#), a workshop with civic engagement experts, and [regular conversations](#) with officials in the Civic Engagement Commission.

This report represents the culmination of that work. Of note, we provide a case study describing a hypothetical implementation of this framework in the parks department. An appendix provides a “cheat sheet” that city agencies can use to kickstart their effort to measure trust. A third appendix provides further context on the Civic Engagement Commission and its goals. A final case study describes a real-world case study from the Civic Engagement Commission in which it sought to apply the lessons learned on “The People’s Money” initiative.

Both NYC CEC and The Governance Lab hope these resources can be of use to city officials seeking to enhance their operations in ways that foster trust.

¹ PytlikZillig, Lisa M., and Christopher D. Kimbrough. 2016. “Consensus on Conceptualizations and Definitions of Trust: Are We There Yet?” In *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Trust: Towards Theoretical and Methodological Integration*, edited by Ellie Shockley, Tess M.S. Neal, Lisa M. PytlikZillig, and Brian H. Bornstein, 17–47. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-22261-5_2.

Analytical Framework

Civic trust is not a quality that can be understood in the abstract. It manifests itself in a set of emotions and behaviors. It is a result of interventions by and experiences with public sector institutions—such as, for instance, elected offices, law enforcement and corrections, transit agencies, schools, and public housing authorities.

To understand trust, we encourage organizations to think about two kinds of metrics, those organized around **observable manifestation**—existing and desired behavior and emotions—and **drivers (or origins)**—the kinds of experiences or interventions that enable those behaviors and emotions.



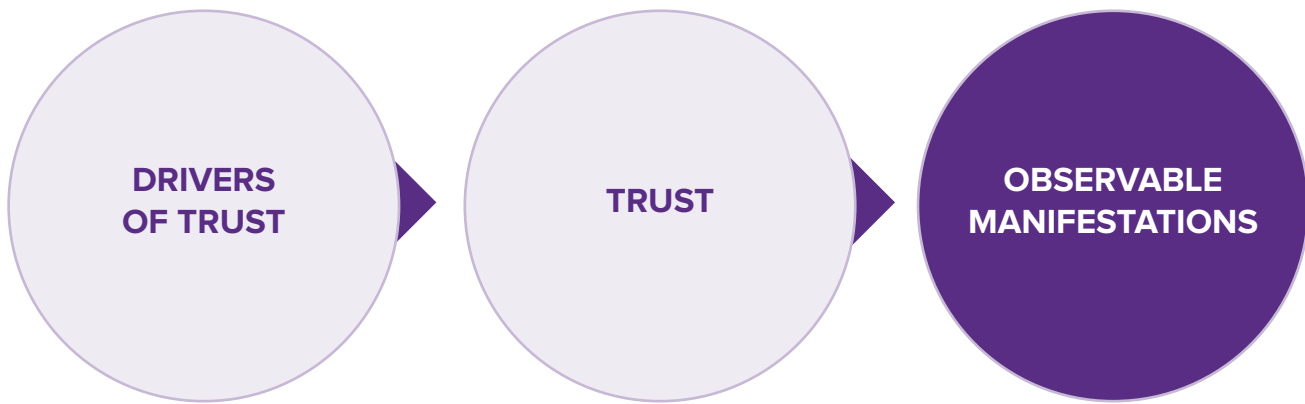
Figure 1: A model of the relationship between drivers, trust, and observable manifestations



In simple terms, the drivers of trust refer to those things that cause a person to trust or distrust a specific government agency. These can refer to a good or bad experience that they've had—such as feeling that agency staff treated them fairly—and any specific actions that the government has taken to mitigate or reinforce those experiences—such as providing additional cultural competency training.

Manifestations, by contrast, are how people act and feel based on those experiences. It can be positive or negative (e.g. feelings of anger or pride, complying with rules or protesting against them) and is a reflection of their overall trust in the specific institution.





Observable Manifestations of Trust

	EMOTIONAL INDICATORS This category captures the emotional responses that experiences with civic bodies spur in individuals. Key emotions can include:
Belonging	The sense of being accepted, valued, and connected within a community.
Satisfaction	Satisfaction that arises when government services meet expectations and deliver on promised outcomes.
Confidence	Confidence in whether government services can deliver.
Pride	A sense of contentment that arises when an individual sees an agency make a significant achievement.
Stability	An overall feeling of physical safety and personal, emotional, or financial security.
Validation	The feeling that one's perspective is respected and heard by others.

**BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS**

This category captures how people behave in response to their interactions with civic bodies. Key behaviors can include:

Voluntary Compliance

The willingness (or unwillingness) of individuals to voluntarily adhere to rules, regulations, and societal norms.

Participation in Public Consultations

The extent to which individuals are willing to express their opinions to public officials, such as by attending public meetings or engaging in community decision-making processes.

Usage of Government Services

The willingness of individuals to seek out and rely on services provided by public agencies to improve their well-being.

Community Engagement

The extent to which individuals participate in community activities, including celebrations, gatherings, and volunteer work.

Disclosure

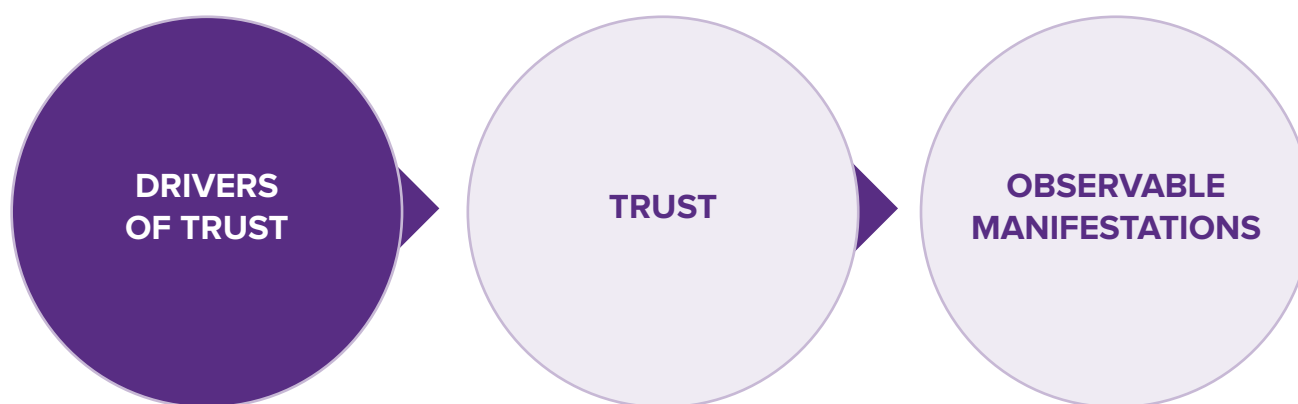
Willingness to take part in surveys and other information gathering activities.

Proactively reporting of issues

The actions individuals take to advocate for change or address perceived injustices within their communities; proactively reporting issues to complaints line or engaging with neighbors to enact change.

Political Activism

Individuals organizing their communities to advocate for policy and programs, or running for office.



Drivers of Trust

DIRECT EXPERIENCES

It encompasses citizens'² past experiences that influence whether they trust the organization or service:

Service Quality and Speed	The degree to which services fulfill or exceed citizens' expectations and the speed at which it can be delivered.
Openness	The transparency in decision making processes and availability of relevant information to the public.
Fairness of Treatment and Resource Allocation	The extent to which resources are allocated fairly and agencies treat individuals and communities impartially and without discrimination.
Information and Service Availability	The ease with which information and services can be accessed when and where needed.
Responsiveness to Feedback	The degree to which agencies and their representatives respond to feedback and are considered accountable.

² This document uses "citizens" in a general sense to refer to any resident of a city. It does not seek to make any distinction according to legal citizenship.



INSTITUTIONAL INTERVENTIONS

This category reflects how agencies respond to the public's emotions and behavior and try to foster trust.

Community Engagement Sessions

Efforts by the government to regularly seek out the perspective of community members.

Clear Communication Channels

Efforts by the government to provide clear and direct lines (e.g. hotlines, contact forms) through which community members can be heard.

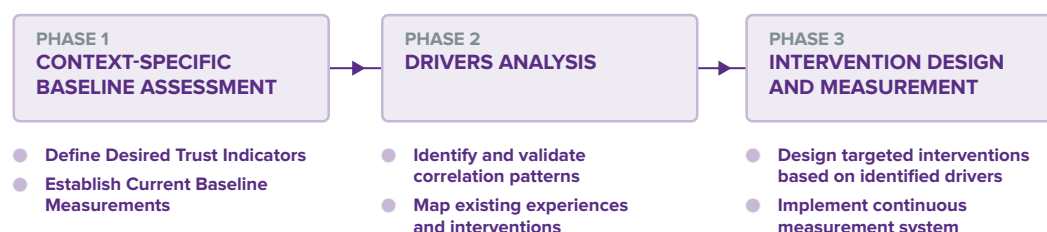
Participatory Processes

Participatory methods, such as participatory budgeting, that allows community members to identify, discuss, and prioritize public spending.

Cultural Competency Training

Training that allows government staff to better respond to the specific needs of a community in a respectful, appropriate and empathetic manner.

Implementation Framework



The framework above can be used to make trust less abstract and more tangible. It seeks to inform specific interventions by government officials to mitigate certain behaviors or reinforce certain emotions among their communities.

This work of understanding the factors driving or resulting from (dis)trust, developing targeted interventions, and assessing the effectiveness of those interventions can be done through three phases, outlined below.

PHASE 1 CONTEXT-SPECIFIC BASELINE ASSESSMENT

The first step in developing an intervention to address trust toward a government agency is to assess the current state of trust toward that agency. This can be done by identifying observable manifestations of trust and drivers of trust for a given government agency.

Define Desired Trust Indicators: Government agencies must first define trust indicators specific to their context. These should include both emotional and behavioral indicators to be comprehensive. Simply put, what kinds of behaviors and emotions do law enforcement, park officials, or regulators hope to see if people trust them? What is the desired end state of the civic trust effort?

EXAMPLE

A housing authority might focus on:

- ▶ **Emotional indicators:** resident satisfaction, feeling of security
- ▶ **Behavioral indicators:** maintenance request reporting, participation in tenant meetings



Establish Current Baseline Measurements: Government agencies can subsequently seek to either re-use or gather data to define the baseline of “trust” along the metrics prioritized above. An inventory of existing datasets (and data collection methods) may be useful in identifying what is available and what can provide insight into the identified indicators. Ideally, the dataset selected should be something that is regularly available and runs “parallel” or is otherwise complementary to existing operations, as something that runs counter to usual processes may cause organizations to lose interest later. Once a dataset is identified, the agency should identify what the status quo is (e.g. the number of park visitors for an agency concerned about service usage) and what they hope to achieve (e.g. what would a reasonable increase of park visitors be).

EXAMPLE

A housing authority might look at:

- ▶ Survey data on emotional indicators (e.g. How do people feel after engaging with housing authority staff?)
- ▶ Behavioral data from service usage statistics (e.g. Are there any kinds of people who need services from the housing authority that avoid it? Why?)
- ▶ Complaint records and feedback patterns (e.g. What are common criticisms of current services?)



PHASE 2

DRIVERS ANALYSIS

After establishing the baseline for their priority metrics, government agencies should take efforts to identify the drivers that may explain the numbers. How do citizens' experiences (e.g. lack of service availability) feed certain emotions (e.g. anger, anxiety)? How do emotions (like anger or anxiety) impact public behavior (e.g. reduced civic engagement, protests)? These linkages can be understood through efforts to:

Identify and validate correlation patterns: Government agencies can attempt to connect specific kinds of experiences and interventions with the documented emotions, and behavior. This work can begin with a simple brainstorming exercise. Staff can ask themselves what kinds of experiences and interventions are likely to drive the observed manifestations of (dis)trust given the identified manifestations (e.g. belonging, community engagement)? What do staff who work with the public commonly cite as major concerns? Have prior public consultations surfaced common complaints and, if so, what is at the root of them?

These hypotheses need to subsequently be validated through additional research.

EXAMPLE

A housing authority that is concerned about low rates of service usage might:

- ▶ Test whether specific experiences lead to specific emotional responses (e.g. Does a lack of responsiveness undermine citizens' sense of stability?)
- ▶ Connect interventions to behavioral changes (e.g. Has a program to improve safety resulted in all in increases in service use?)
- ▶ Track temporal relationships between changes in drivers and indicators (e.g. How long after the intervention began, was a change measured?)

Map existing experiences and interventions: Government agencies can identify what they and other agencies are currently doing that could explain the baseline.

EXAMPLE

A housing authority trying to understand tenants' sense of insecurity may:

- ▶ Document current service delivery methods (e.g. How does the housing authority try to make citizens feel safe and secure?)
- ▶ Review existing engagement practices (e.g. How are citizens' attitudes towards those efforts tracked and assessed?)
- ▶ Analyze feedback mechanisms (e.g. How can the housing authority interpret the information received from the public?)

PHASE 3

INTERVENTION DESIGN AND MEASUREMENT

Together with the public (through public consultations, co-designing workshops, or other engagement methods), the government agency can then identify specific ways to change the baseline.

Design targeted interventions based on identified drivers: For each identified area of focus, government agencies can then ideate and design interventions specifically targeting it. If there is a lack of belonging, city agencies might talk with the public about how they can better host community-building events, public forums, or localized engagement initiatives. They may also work internally with civic engagement staff, asking them about what resources, training, or time they need to better conduct their work.

Whichever approach is adopted, it is essential that the public and the staff implementing it understand what is being undertaken and feel some sense of ownership over it. This will ensure that any intervention survives beyond its initial development and can be integrated into existing patterns of behavior.

EXAMPLE

If data shows low participation due to a perceived lack of openness and timing conflicts:

- ▶ **Intervention:** Flexible scheduling for community meetings
- ▶ **Measurement:** Track changes in attendance patterns



Implement continuous measurement system: To ensure that interventions are actually targeted and implemented well, it is critical to monitor their results and make adjustments based on ongoing feedback. Staff can conduct their own internal assessments of this work (e.g. assessing whether there have been any noticeable changes after identifying their goal and baseline). They might also consider engaging citizens through workshops, citizen assemblies, and surveys to determine if the intervention needs further refining or tailoring and if there are consequences that might not be well-captured by the dataset selected.

The level of frequency of evaluation and revision should be determined at the start of the effort and will vary based on context and agency. A regulatory agency testing a fraught and complicated intervention may wish to check in on its work more frequently than a parks department hoping to see higher facility usage after an advertising campaign. Reviews can be quarterly, annually, or take place as part of pre-existing performance evaluations or efforts to collect stakeholder feedback.

EXAMPLE

To ensure they have timely and reliable data on which to derive insights, officials can:

- ▶ Conduct regular data collection on selected indicators
- ▶ Seek periodic assessment of intervention effectiveness
- ▶ Adjustment of interventions based on results





HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE

Municipal Parks Department

CONTEXT

In many cities around the world, the parks department is responsible for providing and maintaining recreational and athletic facilities. In the below we provide an example on how the above trust framework can be applied as to ensure people use their facilities and feel a sense of “ownership” over them.

PHASE 1

BASELINE INDICATORS SELECTED

To improve trust, the department looks at the specific emotions and behaviors it views as visible manifestations of trust towards the parks department. In this instance, it identifies:

EMOTIONAL INDICATORS

- ▶ *Feeling of safety in parks:* Park staff want visitors to feel no risks to their personal security when they visit the park.
- ▶ *Satisfaction with maintenance:* Park staff want visitors to the park to feel like the grounds of their parks are clean and able to be used for public recreation.
- ▶ *Pride in local parks:* Park staff want visitors to identify the parks as a major draw for their neighborhoods and something to praise or celebrate.

BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

- ▶ *Park usage rates:* Park staff want regular and diverse visitors to their parks.
- ▶ *Volunteer participation:* Park staff want locals from nearby neighborhoods to participate in garbage clean-up and other activities that help maintain the grounds.
- ▶ *Reporting of maintenance issues:* Park staff want visitors to keep them informed if something in the park is broken or out of order.



PHASE 2

DRIVER ANALYSIS RESULTS

Having identified the specific indicators it hopes to encourage or reinforce, the parks department asks itself what specific experiences within the parks people should have. They also ask themselves what is being done already to try and guarantee these experiences occur.

DIRECT EXPERIENCES:

- ▶ **Cleanliness:** People feel satisfied with the parks if the grounds are cleared of garbage and other waste and trash bins are not overflowing.
- ▶ **Staff presence:** People feel a greater sense of safety when they know where to go for help and can clearly see staff walking the grounds.
- ▶ **Response time to reports:** People are more likely to report maintenance issues if existing maintenance problems are responded to in a timely manner.

SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTIONS:

- ▶ **Community garden programs:** Gardening and other beautification programs can make the parks seem cleaner, more attractive, and inspire a sense of community pride.
- ▶ **Regular maintenance schedules:** Staff having a set routine where they walk the grounds and look for maintenance problems can allow them to more proactively identify and resolve problems.
- ▶ **Mobile reporting app:** Deployment of a mobile application can increase communication with park visitors, allowing them to identify issues they want fixed and “closing the loop” when those issues are resolved.



PHASE 3

INTERVENTION DESIGN AND MEASUREMENT

Having identified select indicators that they want to encourage, the parks department can then look at what datasets are available that they can use to track the desired emotional and behavioral indicators. These might be existing datasets that can be reused, data held by partners, or new data that needs to be collected but, ideally, should be readily and continually accessible to allow for continuous measurement.

TARGETED INTERVENTION:

- ▶ The parks staff will launch a mobile app that allows park visitors to flag maintenance issues and get informed when they are resolved.

MEASUREMENT SYSTEM:

- ▶ Staff can track downloads and use of the app to understand adoption and internally track whether the app improves the speed at which repairs are made. They may also use existing engagement methods to conduct a survey to understand whether the app deployment has had any meaningful impact on the general public's satisfaction with maintenance services.





Conclusion

Measuring trust effectively requires shifting focus from abstract concepts to observable indicators and their drivers. This framework provides a practical approach for city government agencies to:

1. IDENTIFY RELEVANT TRUST INDICATORS IN THEIR CONTEXT

What kinds of indicators make sense for different government agencies?

2. PRIORITIZE AND MEASURE CURRENT MANIFESTATIONS OF TRUST THROUGH EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL METRICS

How might the absence or presence of these emotions and behavior be observed and recorded?

3. UNDERSTAND THE DRIVERS AND INFLUENCE THE LEVEL OF TRUST THROUGH TARGETED INTERVENTIONS

What drives trust and what actions might be taken by a government institution to change people's emotions and behavior?

4. TRACK PROGRESS THROUGH CONTINUOUS MEASUREMENT

What constitutes success and how does an institution know when it has been achieved?

Success in improving trust across a city lies in maintaining this systematic approach while remaining adaptable to local contexts and changing needs. Specific, tangible interventions, not abstract concepts, are what improve people's lived realities.



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A Framework for Measuring Trust Within Cities

CHECKLIST



Trust Measurement Reference Guide

In this report, we highlighted several observable manifestations of trust along with possible drivers that can help identify interventions. Below, we provide a longer, yet still non-exhaustive, listing of these categories in a checklist format. Several of these come from social science literature while others came from conversations with city officials or our own structured brainstorming.

Government agencies can use this list to kickstart an identification and prioritization of the trust metrics they are most interested in. At the end of this checklist is a list of additional context-specific considerations that may affect one's work.

IMPLEMENTATION NOTES

SELECT RELEVANT INDICATORS BASED ON:

- ▶ Agency mission
- ▶ Community needs
- ▶ Available resources
- ▶ Measurement capacity
- ▶ Current challenges

PRIORITIZE MEASUREMENTS THAT:

- ▶ Are readily observable
- ▶ Can be consistently tracked
- ▶ Relate to outcomes
- ▶ Support decision-making
- ▶ Enable comparison over time

REGULAR REVIEW AND ADJUSTMENT:

- ▶ Quarterly assessment
- ▶ Annual planning
- ▶ Stakeholder feedback
- ▶ Performance evaluation
- ▶ Strategic alignment



OBSERVABLE MANIFESTATIONS OF TRUST

1. Emotional Indicators	
Sense of belonging in community	Feeling of fair treatment
Feeling of being respected by authorities	Confidence in crisis response
Confidence in service quality	Emotional connection to community
Sense of personal safety	Sense of representation in governance
Emotional security about future access to services	Feeling of cultural respect
Pride in local institutions	Optimism about community future
Feeling of being heard/listened to	Sense of personal dignity in interactions
Sense of agency in decision-making	

BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

Participation Behaviors
Attendance at community meetings
Voting in local elections
Volunteering for community initiatives
Participation in public consultations
Engagement in civic programs
Contributing to community discussions
Joining advisory boards
Attending cultural events

Service Utilization
Use of public facilities
Enrollment in government programs
Library card registration
Public transportation usage
Recreation program participation
Online service adoption
Usage of government portals

Compliance Behaviors
Timely tax payments
Following regulations without enforcement
Proper waste disposal
Traffic rule adherence
License/permit renewal
Building code compliance
Health regulation adherence

Communication Behaviors
Reporting issues to authorities
Providing feedback on services
Sharing positive experiences
Recommending services to others
Following official communications
Engaging with digital platforms
Participating in surveys



TRUST DRIVERS

Service Quality
Response time
Problem resolution rate
Service accuracy
Staff competence
Process efficiency
Service accessibility
Language accessibility
Digital service reliability
Physical facility conditions

Process Characteristics
Transparency of procedures
Fairness in decision-making
Consistency in application
Clear expectations
Reasonable timelines
Appeal mechanisms
Error correction processes
Documentation clarity

Interaction Quality
Staff courtesy
Cultural sensitivity
Clear communication
Consistent information
Fair treatment
Personal attention
Professional conduct
Empathetic response
Respectful dialogue

INSTITUTIONAL INTERVENTIONS

Communication Initiatives
Regular updates
Multi-language communications
Clear service standards
Transparent decision explanations
Crisis communication protocols
Performance reporting
Budget transparency
Policy explanations
Service change notifications

Engagement Programs
Community forums
Participatory budgeting
Advisory committees
Focus groups
Youth engagement programs
Senior outreach
Cultural celebration events
Neighborhood meetings
Online engagement platforms



Service Improvements
Extended service hours
Mobile services
One-stop service centers
Digital transformation
Simplified procedures
Reduced wait times
Improved facilities
Additional service locations
Accessible design features

Staff Development
Cultural competency training
Customer service training
Language skills development
Diversity and inclusion programs
Community relations training
Crisis response preparation
Professional development
Leadership development
Community engagement skills

Accountability Measures
Performance metrics
Public reporting
Feedback mechanisms
Independent audits
Oversight committees
Complaint resolution
Service guarantees
Ethics policies
Transparency initiatives

CONTEXT-SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

Sector-Specific Adjustments
Healthcare trust indicators
Education system metrics
Law enforcement measures
Social services assessment
Environmental protection
Transportation services
Housing administration
Economic development
Emergency services

Community-Specific Factors
Cultural considerations
Historical context
Demographic makeup
Geographic challenges
Economic conditions
Language diversity
Digital accessibility
Social dynamics
Local priorities



About the NYC Civic Engagement Commission

In November 2018, New York City voters approved three ballot initiatives proposed by the 2018 Charter Revision Commission. This established the NYC Civic Engagement Commission (NYC CEC), which can be found in Chapter 76 of the NYC Charter.³ The NYC Civic Engagement Commission formed with a focus on four areas:

- ▶ Run a citywide participatory budgeting program with guidance from a participatory budgeting advisory committee;
- ▶ Partner with community-based organizations and civic leaders, increase awareness of City services, and assist New York City agencies in developing civic engagement initiatives;
- ▶ Develop a plan to consider the language access needs of limited English proficient New Yorkers with regards to the Commission's programs and services and provide language interpreters at poll sites by the 2020 general election, with advice from a language assistance advisory committee; and
- ▶ Provide assistance to community boards.

This work has led NYC CEC to pursue a variety of programs. From the Voter Language Assistance Program to its TIRE Neighborhood Initiative, NYC CEC has been active in its efforts to help city residents and strengthen New York's social fabric (see Table 1).

³ You can see the creation of the commission in Chapter 76 of the NYC Charter: https://www.nyc.gov/assets/civicengagement/downloads/pdf/charter_chapter_76_cec.pdf



THE VOTER LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE (VLA) PROGRAM:

VLA improves the civic and electoral participation of Limited English Proficient (LEP) New Yorkers by providing access to interpretation services at select poll sites city-wide based on a publicly vetted methodology.⁴

COMMUNITY BOARDS PROGRAM:

The CEC works with all 59 Boards across the city to provide assistance and training to community board members, such as workshops on uniform meeting procedures, the city budget, and community outreach.

THE PEOPLE'S MONEY:

The People's Money is New York City's annual citywide Participatory Budgeting (PB) program where community members decide how to spend part of the city's budget. This democratic process is open to all New Yorkers, ages 11 and up, regardless of immigration status.

TRIE NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE:

In partnership with the Taskforce for Racial Inclusion and Equity (TRIE) and the Young Men Initiative, the CEC created and managed 33 neighborhood coalitions to strengthen local civic infrastructure in the 33 neighborhoods hardest hit by Covid-19.

⁴ The CEC provides services in the following languages: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin), French, Haitian Creole, Italian, Korean, Polish, Russian, Urdu, and Yiddish



Chapter 76 Charter Mandated Goals

ENHANCE CIVIC PARTICIPATION & BUILD PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS TO			
ENHANCE CIVIC TRUST	STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY	SUPPORT CIVIC SERVICE	INCREASE VOLUNTEERISM
INCREASE STEWARDSHIP OF PUBLIC SPACES	INCREASE CIVIC EDUCATION	IMPLEMENT PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING	INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY BOARDS
ENGAGE WITH CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS		ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS	

An ingredient behind all these programs is *trust*, a vital concept that is only mentioned once in the NYC Charter—which calls the NYC CEC to “enhance civic trust and strengthen democracy in New York city”.While the term is not defined, it is implicit in all of NYC CEC’s work that trust is essential to a well-functioning society. It is what gives institutions and officials the license to operate. It is the key to facilitating social and economic relationships.

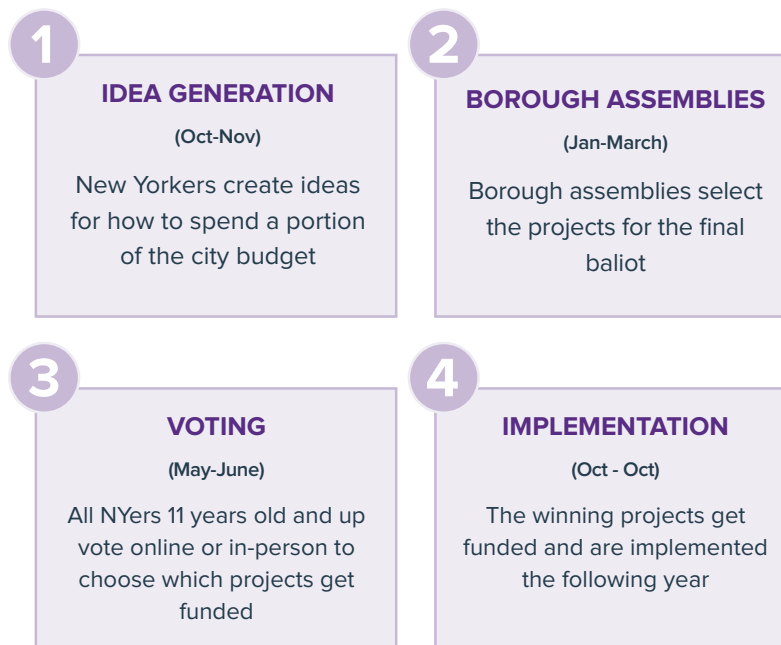
NYC CEC Application of the Framework for the People's Money

Background

Inaugurated on September 14th, 2024,⁵ The People's Money is New York City's annual citywide Participatory Budgeting (PB) program where community members decide how to spend part of the city's budget. This democratic process is open to all New Yorkers, ages 11 and up, regardless of immigration status.

The People's Money is divided into four phases: **Idea Generation**, **Borough Assemblies**, **Voting**, and **Implementation**.

The People's Money Phases



Idea Generation invites residents to participate in community workshops where they can learn about the city budget, identify community needs, and brainstorm ideas to improve their communities through interactive activities and discussions.

⁵ The first citywide participatory budgeting process was set to be launched in early 2020, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic delayed its launch



The Borough Assemblies The CEC convened five⁶ Borough Assembly Committees made up of residents who applied online or in idea generation sessions to represent their borough. Each borough's committee was made up of residents, 107 in total across the five boroughs, that were selected through a sortition process based on four demographic categories, age, gender, race and level of education.

The assembly committees are 6 meetings held between January and February where members get together to discuss the borough projects. The committees evaluate projects submitted through the idea generation sessions using criteria to ensure equity, need, and feasibility. The projects selected are then placed on the corresponding borough ballot. Borough assembly members deliberate for a total of 16 hours.

Citywide Voting is open to residents aged 11 and older, regardless of immigration status, to vote on the projects they believe should be funded in the borough ballots where they either live, work or study. The projects with the most votes are then moved forward to the implementation phase.

Project implementation begins with identifying organizations to implement projects through an application process, and working with organizations to develop project plans, implement their projects. The whole process combines elements of participatory and deliberative democracy.

PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

It is a process that enables community members to make decisions with the government entities that impact their communities and their lives.

DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

Is a process in which communities discuss, find common grounds, build consensus, and collectively make decisions to impact their communities.

⁶ There are five assemblies representing each borough in NYC: Manhattan, Brooklyn, The Bronx, Staten Island and Queens.



Application

For the Idea Generation phase of the People's Money, the commission partners with about 115 organizations, hosts about 490 workshops, engaging an average of 10,381 people that submit an average of 3,241 ideas. New Yorkers can also submit ideas online through the participate.nyc.gov site.

As part of this process, the CEC provides community partners with a curriculum, as well as assets (presentations, palm cards, idea worksheets, interactive games, among other materials) that can be used to facilitate the interactive workshop. Over the last three years the materials have changed based on the feedback the CEC has received from participants. The commission uses a combination of exit surveys, interviews, and data analysis to determine strategies to measure how successful the sessions are and to identify opportunities to improve.⁷ Although the CEC uses three data collection tools to assess the impact of the idea generation sessions (Participant Exit Survey, CBO Partner Reflection, Facilitator in depth Interview), currently only one question in the participant exit survey provides a proxy for trust. CEC examined ways it could modify its approach in line with the research conducted by The GovLab.

⁷ See the data collection tools in the appendix.



Civic Trust in NYC Participatory Budgeting Program: The People's Money

CONTEXT

The NYC Civic Engagement Commission is committed to make NYC Government policies and programs more representative of the needs of New Yorkers, by creating avenues for participatory democracy.

The People's Money Idea Generation Sessions offer an opportunity for New Yorkers to not only set priorities for the city to focus on, but also to define how the city should address such priorities.

However, participants have expressed discernment, disillusion, and distrust in the NYC Government ability to take their input and make it count. In order to improve trust, the CEC has decided to develop strategies to measure it.

PHASE 1

BASELINE INDICATORS SELECTED

To improve trust, the Civic Engagement Commission looked at the specific emotions and behaviors it views as visible manifestations of trust towards The People's Money. In this instance, it identified:

EMOTIONAL INDICATORS

- ▶ *Feeling heard:* Participants of Idea Generation sessions feel that their voice was heard by the NYC government.
- ▶ *Exercising Agency:* Participants of Idea Generation sessions were to discuss local community challenges, and propose ideas on how the city should address them.
- ▶ *Sense of community:* Participants are able to find common ground with other participants and to advocate for ideas together.
- ▶ *Pride in the ideas submitted:* Participants feel represented in the ideas that they have developed and shared.

BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

- ▶ *Participants share the ideas:* Participants share the ideas that they submitted to The



People's Money, both online and offline.

- ▶ *Participants encourage other people to submit ideas:* Participants invite other people to engage and submit their ideas online or at other workshops.
- ▶ *Participants seek other avenues to influence government:* Participants look for opportunities to engage with their elected officials and other NYC agencies.
- ▶ *Participants apply to the Borough Assembly Committees:* Participants want to continue to engage with The People's Money.

PHASE 2

DRIVER ANALYSIS RESULTS

Having identified the specific indicators it hopes to encourage or reinforce, the CEC asked itself what specific experiences people should have in the Idea Generation Sessions. They also asked themselves what is being done already to try and guarantee these experiences occur.

DIRECT EXPERIENCES:

- ▶ *Informed:* Participants know what happened with their ideas after they submitted them.
- ▶ *Satisfied with the process:* Participants feel satisfied with how their ideas went through the borough assembly, voting, and implementation process.
- ▶ *Represented:* Participants see the projects implemented and feel pride to be part of The People's Money.

SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTIONS:

- ▶ **Develop population specific sessions:** The CEC developed a facilitation guide and a program designed specifically for college youth (18–24) to increase youth engagement and make the curriculum more relevant.
- ▶ **Develop topic specific sessions:** The CEC will work with other government agencies to develop topic-specific idea generation sessions to be able to produce ideas that go deeper into an Impact area (Environment, housing, transportation, safety, etc.)
- ▶ **Improve communications:** Develop better user systems for people to be able to track online what has happened with the ideas that they have submitted.
- ▶ **Diversify communication channels:** Develop opt-in systems for people to register their phone number and emails to receive text messages, and newsletters with key updates, and calls to action to continue to support the People's Money.



PHASE 3

INTERVENTION DESIGN AND MEASUREMENT

Having identified select indicators that they want to encourage, the CEC can then look at what datasets are available that they can use to track the desired emotional and behavioral indicators. These might be existing datasets that can be reused, data held by partners, or new data that needs to be collected but, ideally, should be readily and continually accessible to allow for continuous measurement.

TARGETED INTERVENTION:

- ▶ The Civic Engagement Commission will improve its communication strategies that allow Idea Generation participants to receive updates and relevant information to see the outcomes of their ideas.
- ▶ The Civic Engagement Commission will continue to develop population and topic specific curriculum for the Idea Generation Sessions.

MEASUREMENT SYSTEM:

- ▶ CEC Staff can review the engagement of residents with the online profile, the sms messages, and the newsletter to determine what messages resonate better.
- ▶ CEC Staff can carry out A/B testing during idea generation sessions. Continue to do Exit Interviews of both participants, and partners as well as in-depth interviews to assess whether the and improvement on the trust indicator above has happened.



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