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Participatory Budgeting in Local Governments: A Scoping Review of Models, Citizen Involvement, Accountability, and Development Outcomes

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Abstract: *Participatory budgeting (PB) has developed from an influential democratic innovation into a diverse family of local-government practices through which residents may identify priorities, develop proposals, deliberate, vote, monitor projects, or otherwise influence the allocation of public resources. Yet the mechanisms through which citizens participate, the extent of their decision authority, the accountability safeguards used, and the development outcomes achieved vary substantially across contexts. This scoping review mapped evidence on participatory-budgeting models in local governments, with attention to citizen involvement, accountability, documented development outcomes, and implementation challenges. Guided by the Arksey and O'Malley framework, its refinements, JBI guidance, and PRISMA-ScR, the review applied a Population-Concept-Context lens. The population included local governments, public officials, residents, community organizations, and other actors involved in local budget decisions; the concept included PB models, citizen participation, accountability, equity, public value, and development outcomes; and the context was local and municipal government. A targeted search of peer-reviewed studies, reviews, institutional reports, and practice guidance published from 2004 to 21 June 2026 was conducted. Twenty-nine substantive sources were charted. Five themes emerged: (1) PB has diversified from deliberative assemblies into project-voting, proximity, community-grant, multi-stakeholder, and digital-hybrid models; (2) meaningful participation depends on clear decision rights, accessible information, inclusion supports, and facilitated deliberation; (3) accountability is strengthened when the process links published rules, feasibility review, transparent allocation, and implementation monitoring; (4) documented outcomes include civic learning, more responsive or equitable allocations, improved transparency, and context-dependent fiscal, service, and well-being gains; and (5) limited budget discretion, unequal participation, political turnover, capacity constraints, digital exclusion, and weak follow-through can reduce PB to a symbolic exercise. An emergent framework is proposed to guide the design of accountable and development-oriented PB in local governments. The review concludes that PB should be treated not as a one-time vote but as a continuing public-financial-management cycle in which citizens can understand choices, influence real resource allocations, and track delivery.*

Keywords: *Participatory budgeting, Local government, Public financial management, Citizen participation, Accountability, Development outcomes, Scoping review*

1. INTRODUCTION

Public financial management is concerned not only with how public resources are raised, allocated, spent, and reported, but also with whether budget choices reflect public needs and can be explained to the people affected by them. At the local level, this concern is especially immediate because residents experience the consequences of budget decisions in roads, drainage, public spaces, health facilities, neighborhood services, climate adaptation, and other visible public goods. Participatory budgeting (PB) is one approach through which citizens can participate in the allocation of a defined share of public resources. Rather than treating participation as a single hearing or survey, PB can create an organized process for information sharing, priority setting, proposal development, deliberation, voting, allocation, and implementation monitoring (Ebdon & Franklin, 2006; Wampler, 2007).

PB is often associated with the experience of Porto Alegre, Brazil, where neighborhood assemblies, delegates, and structured priority-setting helped residents influence municipal investment decisions. However, the international expansion of PB has not produced one uniform institutional design. Programs have travelled across political, fiscal, and administrative contexts, and they now include deliberative assemblies, neighborhood or proximity processes, project-proposal and public-voting schemes, community grant mechanisms, multi-stakeholder arrangements, youth or sectoral PB, and online or hybrid processes. This diversity has made PB adaptable, but it has also created ambiguity about what should count as meaningful participation and how much authority citizens actually hold (Ganuza & Baiocchi, 2012; Krenjova & Raudla, 2013; Sintomer et al., 2008).

The variation in design has important implications for citizen involvement. A PB process may involve residents in defining priorities, preparing proposals, selecting projects, monitoring implementation, or all of these stages. Some arrangements give the public binding authority over a fixed budget envelope, while others are consultative and leave final discretion to public officials. The quality of involvement therefore cannot be judged by voter turnout alone. It depends on whether residents receive understandable

budget information, whether diverse groups can participate, whether dialogue is facilitated, whether reasons for feasibility decisions are disclosed, and whether public input can shape final allocations (OECD, 2022; Pereira & Figueira, 2022).

PB also has an accountability dimension. When communities can see a real budget envelope, compare proposals, understand technical and legal constraints, observe the results of selection, and monitor delivery, local governments can make the link between public preferences and public spending more visible. Such processes may strengthen transparency and responsiveness, but accountability is not created automatically by inviting citizens to vote. It requires clear rules, disclosed criteria, records of proposals and decisions, project-tracking information, administrative responsibility, and accessible routes for feedback or correction (Gilman, 2016; Transparency International, 2022).

The evidence on outcomes is promising but uneven. Studies from Brazil have associated PB with shifts toward sanitation and health spending and lower infant mortality, while research from South Korea has linked PB adoption with gains in fiscal sustainability and administrative efficiency. Other work has documented equity-oriented allocation when inclusive institutional designs are used, and evidence from New York City indicates that service-performance effects may be positive in the aggregate yet not uniform across specific categories of complaints. These findings suggest that PB can generate public value, but its effects are shaped by institutional context, available resources, political commitment, and the quality of implementation rather than by the PB label itself (Gonçalves, 2014; Jung, 2022; No & Hsueh, 2022; Sihotang, 2024).

The topic is therefore relevant to public administration and local governance because PB lies at the intersection of budget transparency, democratic participation, social accountability, and development planning. Recent scholarship continues to document an expanding and multidisciplinary literature, including questions about institutionalization, digitalization, equity, trust, and sustainability (Bartocci et al., 2023; Milosavljević et al., 2023; Schugurensky & Mook, 2024). At the same time, local governments need a consolidated map of the models they can use, the conditions that make participation meaningful, the accountability mechanisms that protect public value, and the risks that weaken implementation.

A scoping review is appropriate because evidence on PB is distributed across public budgeting, public administration, political science, local development, urban studies, and digital-government research. The review does not attempt to estimate one pooled effect of PB. Instead, it maps the forms that PB takes in local governments, synthesizes recurring implementation mechanisms, identifies documented outcome patterns, and draws attention to gaps. Specifically, this review asks: What participatory-budgeting models have been used by local governments, and what outcomes and challenges are documented?

2. METHODS

2.1 Design and Review Process

This study used a scoping review design. The review was conceptually anchored in the framework of Arksey and O'Malley (2005), refined by Levac et al. (2010), and aligned with the JBI guidance for scoping reviews and the PRISMA extension for scoping reviews (Peters et al., 2020; Tricco et al., 2018). A scoping review was selected because participatory budgeting is a broad and heterogeneous practice. It is used in different local-government systems, operates through different participation mechanisms, and is associated with outcomes that range from civic learning and transparency to allocation, service delivery, well-being, and fiscal performance. The purpose was to map the evidence landscape and clarify recurring models and conditions, not to produce a pooled effectiveness estimate.

The review used a Population-Concept-Context (PCC) approach. The population included local governments, municipal officials, residents, neighborhood groups, civil society organizations, community representatives, and other actors engaged in local budget decisions. The concept included participatory budgeting, citizen participation in budgeting, budget transparency, accountability, co-decision, deliberation, project voting, inclusion, equity, public value, service outcomes, and development outcomes. The context included city, municipal, district, neighborhood, community, and other subnational government settings where citizens could influence at least part of a public budget.

A targeted search was conducted on 21 June 2026 using web-accessible scholarly and institutional sources. Search locations included Google Scholar; publisher, university repository, and open-access journal pages; the OECD; the World Bank; intergovernmental and practitioner resources; and related public-financial-management and citizen-participation portals. Search strings were combined in different ways, including “participatory budgeting” AND local government, “participatory budgeting” AND municipality, “participatory budget” AND accountability, “participatory budgeting” AND citizen involvement, “participatory budgeting” AND development outcomes, “participatory budgeting” AND public service performance, “participatory budgeting” AND equity, and “digital participatory budgeting” AND local government. Backward citation checking was used selectively to identify foundational model and accountability sources.

Eligible sources included peer-reviewed empirical studies, systematic and bibliometric reviews, conceptual or comparative studies with direct public-administration implications, official guidelines, and implementation-oriented institutional documents. Sources were

prioritized when they described a local-government PB process, identified the role of residents or community organizations, specified the budget or decision mechanism, examined accountability or implementation conditions, or reported outcomes. Sources were excluded when they addressed only internal employee participation in organizational budgeting, ordinary public consultation without a budget-allocation dimension, purely national-budget processes without local-government relevance, purely computational allocation models without an actual local PB setting, and articles lacking sufficient information on the process or context. English-language sources published from 2004 to 21 June 2026 were prioritized, while selected earlier and foundational sources were included when conceptually necessary.

After relevance screening, twenty-nine substantive sources were charted, excluding the methodological sources used to guide the review. Data extraction focused on author and year, country or local-government setting, PB model, participation stage, decision authority, inclusion features, accountability mechanisms, reported outcomes, and implementation challenges. The charted evidence was analyzed through an inductive-deductive thematic synthesis. Initial codes captured terms such as assemblies, proposal development, public voting, fiscal envelope, eligibility criteria, feasibility review, transparency, monitoring, equity, capacity, digital access, implementation delay, and political support. The codes were then organized into broader themes that explain how PB functions as a local public-financial-management and governance practice.

No formal methodological quality appraisal was undertaken because the objective was to map the breadth and characteristics of evidence rather than establish a hierarchy of intervention effectiveness. The findings should therefore be read as an evidence-informed synthesis of models, mechanisms, outcomes, and risks rather than as a definitive causal ranking of PB approaches.

2.2 PCC Framework and Eligibility Criteria

Table 1. Population-Concept-Context Framework and Eligibility Criteria

Element	Description
Population	Local governments, municipal officials, residents, neighborhood groups, civil society organizations, community representatives, and other actors participating in local budget decisions.
Concept	Participatory budgeting; citizen participation; deliberation; project proposal and voting; accountability; transparency; monitoring; inclusion; equity; public value; service and development outcomes.
Context	Municipal, city, district, neighborhood, community, and other local or subnational government settings where the public can influence at least part of a public budget.
Included sources	Peer-reviewed empirical studies, systematic or bibliometric reviews, conceptual or comparative studies with direct public-administration implications, official guidance, and practice-oriented institutional documents.
Excluded sources	Employee-only participative budgeting; ordinary consultation with no budget-allocation role; national-only processes lacking local relevance; pure computational models without local PB implementation; and sources with insufficient process detail.
Time coverage	2004 to 21 June 2026, with earlier foundational sources included where conceptually necessary.
Language	English.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The synthesis indicates that participatory budgeting is best understood as a family of local public-financial-management arrangements rather than a fixed program. Across the charted literature, the most important variation concerns what residents are invited to do, what part of the budget is genuinely open to influence, how technical and legal constraints are handled, and whether citizen input is connected to delivery and monitoring. The evidence also shows that inclusive and accountable PB is not created by the final vote alone. It is produced by the entire cycle of information, outreach, proposal development, feasibility review, deliberation, allocation, implementation, and feedback.

Table 2. Recurring Participatory-Budgeting Model Clusters in Local Governments

Model cluster	Typical citizen role and decision mechanism	Potential strengths	Common limitations or conditions
Deliberative or Porto Alegre-inspired PB	Residents join territorial or thematic assemblies, identify needs, elect or nominate delegates, discuss priorities, and influence investment choices through structured criteria and negotiation.	Builds civic learning, deliberation, ongoing representation, and stronger links between neighborhood needs and investment priorities.	Requires sustained facilitation, a meaningful fiscal envelope, administrative responsiveness, and time for repeated meetings; can be difficult where civil society is weak or fiscal discretion is limited.
Project proposal-and-vote PB	Residents submit ideas; staff screen proposals for eligibility, cost, legality, and feasibility; the public votes on a defined set of projects.	Highly visible and easier to communicate; can engage large numbers through simple project choice; suits discretionary capital or neighborhood funds.	May narrow participation to a one-time vote; feasibility screening can appear opaque; popular projects may not reflect need or equity without clear criteria and outreach.
Proximity or neighborhood PB	Residents shape small-area priorities and local grants, often through meetings, neighborhood committees, or local outreach.	Brings decisions close to lived experience and may identify small but important service gaps.	Can fragment resources, favor organized neighborhoods, or duplicate existing planning processes unless allocation rules and coordination are clear.
Community grant or participatory fund model	Community groups, associations, or residents help allocate smaller public grants, often for social, cultural, youth, or community-development initiatives.	Can support local innovation, co-production, and community capacity, especially when entry requirements are accessible.	May privilege organizations with proposal-writing capacity; needs conflict-of-interest rules, reporting support, and safeguards against elite capture.
Multi-stakeholder or partnership PB	Residents, civil society, public officials, and sometimes business or sectoral actors deliberate on priorities, projects, or budget segments.	Can integrate technical knowledge, community expertise, and cross-sector collaboration for complex local issues.	Representation can become selective; power imbalances and unclear roles may weaken the authority of ordinary residents.
Digital or hybrid PB	Online platforms support idea generation, proposal discussion, information access, and voting, often combined with in-person meetings and assisted access.	Can reduce time and travel barriers, extend outreach, improve records, and make project information easier to publish and track.	Digital access, platform literacy, cybersecurity, and reduced deliberation are persistent concerns; hybrid design is needed to avoid exclusion.
Sectoral, youth, green, or inclusion-targeted PB	PB is directed to a specific population or policy area, such as youth, schools, climate adaptation, housing, disability inclusion, or marginalized neighborhoods.	Can make participation more accessible for underrepresented groups and align budget decisions with policy priorities.	May create parallel processes or a token fund unless linked to mainstream budgeting, technical support, and wider accountability mechanisms.

[a] *Note. Model clusters are synthesized from Ebdon and Franklin (2006), Sintomer et al. (2008), Krenjova and Raudla (2013), Cabannes and Lipietz (2018), Bartocci et al. (2023), OECD (2023), and Davies et al. (2022). Models can overlap within the same local-government program.*

Theme 1: Participatory budgeting has diversified from one democratic innovation into several local-government models with different degrees of citizen authority.

The reviewed literature consistently shows that PB does not have one universal design. Its historical association with Porto Alegre has often encouraged a view of PB as a deliberative assembly process in which residents diagnose neighborhood needs, elect representatives, and negotiate priority investments. This model remains important because it illustrates a robust form of ongoing participation connected to actual spending choices. Yet, as PB travelled across countries, it was adapted to local political systems, fiscal rules, administrative capacities, and civic cultures. Ganuza and Baiocchi (2012) describe this travel as a process of translation, while Cabannes and Lipietz (2018) show how PB can be shaped by political-democratic, good-governance, or technocratic logics.

European and North American cases often use more bounded project-proposal and voting formats, frequently allocating a discrete amount for capital improvements, neighborhood services, or community projects. These programs can make PB highly visible and accessible: residents submit ideas, local technical staff review feasibility, and eligible residents vote on a shortlist. Krenjova and

Raudla (2013) distinguish several European models, including Porto Alegre adaptations, proximity participation, consultation on public finance, multi-stakeholder participation, and community PB. The key implication is that local governments should choose a design based on the decision problem they want to address rather than import a label without clarifying who decides, over what budget, and at which stage.

This diversity also means that not all programs have equal democratic depth. A process that only gathers preferences after officials have already defined the project menu is different from one that allows residents to set agendas, deliberate over trade-offs, and monitor delivery. Project voting can be a legitimate model when it concerns a real, defined funding envelope and transparent feasibility rules. However, it should not be presented as equivalent to co-governance when resident influence is limited to selecting among pre-screened options. The model must therefore be described honestly in public communication, including the scope of citizen authority and the decisions that remain with elected officials or administrators.

Theme 2: Meaningful citizen involvement requires more than turnout; it depends on accessible information, inclusion, facilitation, and the capacity to deliberate over real fiscal choices.

The second pattern concerns the quality of participation. Residents cannot participate meaningfully in budget choices if the size of the available budget, the legal limits on spending, project costs, timelines, and trade-offs are not understandable. Ebdon and Franklin (2006) emphasized that citizen participation in budgeting must be analyzed in relation to information, process design, and public influence rather than merely the presence of a consultation activity. The OECD (2022) similarly stresses that citizen participation should begin only where there is a genuine problem to solve and clear expected results for how public input will influence the decision.

Inclusion is particularly important because PB can reproduce existing inequalities when participation relies on self-selection, digital access, meeting time, prior knowledge, language proficiency, or organizational networks. The strongest accounts of equity do not assume that open access alone produces representative participation. They use targeted outreach, accessible venues, simplified materials, translation, childcare or transport support where feasible, youth and community partnerships, assisted digital access, and allocation criteria that recognize historically underserved areas. No and Hsueh (2022) provide evidence from Seoul that inclusive structural design can direct resources toward poorer neighborhoods, illustrating that equity is shaped by institutional rules as well as by individual participation.

Digital and hybrid models can extend engagement but should be treated as participation infrastructure rather than a complete replacement for deliberation. Online proposal systems and voting can make it easier for people to participate across distance and time constraints, while digital records can improve transparency. However, Davies et al. (2022) show that local-government officers must be trained and resourced to embed digital PB, and they must mediate the institutional tensions that arise when innovative processes meet established representative structures. Hybrid PB, combining online access with in-person meetings and assisted participation, is therefore more defensible where connectivity, accessibility, and trust are uneven.

Theme 3: Accountability is strongest when participatory budgeting operates as a transparent cycle from budget information to implementation monitoring.

The evidence portrays accountability as a process, not an aspiration. A credible PB program identifies a real budget envelope; publishes the rules for participation and proposal eligibility; explains the technical, legal, and financial criteria used in feasibility review; records the results of deliberation or voting; formally incorporates winning decisions into the local budget; and publishes implementation status. These steps reduce the distance between public participation and public expenditure. They also make it easier for residents to see whether a project was rejected because it was unlawful, unaffordable, duplicative, unsafe, or outside the available mandate, rather than because officials simply disregarded the idea.

Public monitoring is a crucial but sometimes overlooked stage. In a strong model, citizens can track procurement, construction, delivery, changes in cost or scope, and reasons for delay. This does not mean that residents replace technical staff, auditors, or elected bodies. It means that the local government maintains a public feedback loop so that decisions remain explainable after the vote. Transparency International (2022) and Gilman (2016) both emphasize the value of transparent procedures and follow-up in preventing PB from becoming a symbolic or disconnected engagement exercise.

Accountability also requires clarity about the role of representative institutions. PB should complement, not obscure, the legal responsibilities of local councils, mayors, finance officers, planners, and auditors. The literature warns that broad participatory claims can be misleading when the available budget is very small, when officials may override outcomes without explanation, or when selected projects are not carried through. OECD (2023) notes that PB has primarily operated at local level and often on small-scale capital funds. The practical lesson is not that small funds are unimportant; rather, local governments should state their scale honestly and connect PB choices to the regular budget cycle and public reporting system.

Table 3. Documented Outcome Patterns and Key Conditions in Participatory Budgeting

Evidence cluster	Documented or reported outcomes	Key conditions and qualifications
Civic and democratic outcomes	Greater budget awareness, civic learning, perceived voice, community connection, and potential gains in trust or legitimacy.	Outcomes are more plausible when citizens see a visible link between participation and a real decision, receive feedback on proposals, and can observe delivery; turnout alone is not enough.
Transparency and accountability	More public information on budget choices, clearer project criteria, increased scrutiny, and stronger demand for follow-through.	Requires published rules, accessible budget data, feasibility explanations, results disclosure, and implementation dashboards or comparable monitoring mechanisms.
Equity and allocative responsiveness	Investments may better reflect local needs; some designs have directed resources toward poorer or underserved neighborhoods.	Equity must be designed through outreach, access supports, allocation criteria, and representation safeguards; open voting may otherwise favor better organized communities.
Fiscal and administrative outcomes	Reported improvements in fiscal sustainability, administrative efficiency, budget discipline, and information flow in some settings.	Effects are context dependent and may depend on leadership, legal mandate, institutional capacity, and the size of the discretionary budget.
Development and service outcomes	Evidence includes shifts toward sanitation and health investment, improved well-being indicators, and possible aggregate service-performance improvements.	Causal evidence remains uneven across countries and service areas; local outcomes should be measured rather than assumed from the adoption of PB.
Digital and organizational outcomes	Broader outreach, easier access to project information, better records, and potentially higher convenience for participants.	Digital platforms can reduce deliberation, create access gaps, and add staff, procurement, privacy, and cybersecurity requirements; hybrid models remain important.

Note. Outcome patterns are synthesized from Gonçalves (2014), Touchton and Wampler (2014), No and Hsueh (2022), Jung (2022), Sihotang (2024), Touchton et al. (2024), OECD (2022, 2023, 2026), and related reviews. The table reports recurring patterns, not guaranteed effects.

Theme 4: Development outcomes are documented across civic, allocative, fiscal, and service domains, but they are contingent rather than automatic.

The literature identifies several potential outcome domains. At the civic level, PB can increase residents' understanding of public finance, create opportunities for public reason-giving, and make local decision-making more visible. At the allocative level, PB can surface needs that routine administrative processes overlook, especially when local governments deliberately reach residents of underserved areas. At the accountability level, a transparent and monitored process can strengthen the public's ability to scrutinize both priorities and implementation. These outcomes are central to the public-value rationale for PB because they concern not only what money buys but also how public choices are made and justified.

Some studies also identify tangible development and performance outcomes. Gonçalves (2014) found that Brazilian municipalities with PB increased the share of spending on sanitation and health and associated PB with lower infant mortality. Touchton and Wampler (2014) similarly examined the relationship between PB and social well-being in Brazilian cities. In South Korea, Jung (2022) reported that PB adoption was followed by improvements in fiscal sustainability and administrative efficiency. The evidence from Seoul adds an equity dimension by showing how inclusive structural design can direct resources toward poor neighborhoods (No & Hsueh, 2022).

These findings should be interpreted carefully. Local governments do not adopt PB randomly, and PB frequently appears together with broader reforms, political coalitions, administrative changes, or civil-society mobilization. Therefore, an association between PB and an outcome cannot automatically be interpreted as a universal causal effect. Sihotang (2024), for example, found an association between PB adoption in New York City and lower total 311 complaint rates but no evidence of effects in several specific complaint categories. The most defensible conclusion is that PB may support better outcomes when it is embedded in a responsive local system, but local governments should monitor their own results rather than assume success from the existence of a PB process.

Theme 5: The recurring challenges are limited budget discretion, unequal participation, administrative capacity, political instability, digital exclusion, and weak follow-through.

A central challenge is the amount of budget genuinely open to participation. Many PB programs are limited to small discretionary capital or community funds. Such limits may be practical and legally necessary, but they can reduce public confidence when residents expect influence over wider service or recurrent spending. Krenjova and Raudla (2013) note that fiscal autonomy, political culture, civil-society strength, and the characteristics of local government shape the feasibility of different PB models. Local governments

should therefore match the model to the fiscal space available and avoid presenting a narrow pilot as comprehensive budget co-decision.

Unequal participation is another persistent concern. Programs may attract already organized, educated, digitally connected, or politically active groups while people with the greatest service needs face the highest barriers to joining. Self-selection, fatigue, complex procedures, and distrust can reduce the representativeness of the process. Pereira and Figueira (2022) argue that effective participation requires attention both to citizens' capacity to understand budgeting and to the state's capacity to communicate in an accessible way and respond to public voice. Inclusive outreach and support must therefore be built into the core budget process rather than added as an afterthought.

Administrative capacity and political sustainability also matter. PB requires staff who can facilitate meetings, translate budget rules, cost proposals, conduct feasibility review, manage a transparent vote, coordinate procurement and implementation, update public information, and respond to complaints. Political turnover or changes in leadership can interrupt the process, particularly when PB relies on individual champions rather than formal rules and budget-calendar integration. Recent work on institutionalization continues to show that formal adoption alone does not secure practice; local governments need operational ownership, trained personnel, reliable resources, and routines for learning across cycles (Bartocci et al., 2023; Davies et al., 2022).

Finally, digitalization creates both opportunity and risk. Digital platforms can widen outreach and improve records, but they can also constrain deliberation, privilege residents with reliable connectivity, and create new demands for accessibility, data protection, and platform governance. A hybrid approach remains a prudent design principle: digital tools should extend, not replace, face-to-face and assisted routes to participation. This is particularly important where local governments aim to include low-income, rural, older, disabled, linguistically diverse, or otherwise underserved residents.

Emergent Framework

The synthesis suggests that development-oriented participatory budgeting can be understood as a linked local public-financial-management cycle. The first element is the local problem and fiscal context: communities experience service gaps, unequal access, neighborhood priorities, and pressure on limited budgets. These needs create a legitimate reason for participation, but a PB process requires an explicit and usable financial envelope. A process cannot be meaningful if residents are invited to deliberate without knowing what resources are available or what legal and technical constraints apply.

The second element is PB design. Local governments must decide which model fits the problem, who can participate, how proposals will be developed, whether deliberation or voting will occur, and whether citizen decisions are binding, advisory, or a hybrid of both. The design should be supported by readiness conditions such as political commitment, fiscal autonomy, a clear mandate, staff capacity, accessible information, and hybrid participation routes. These factors do not guarantee success, but their absence creates a high risk of tokenism, exclusion, or unimplemented choices.

The third element concerns core change mechanisms: voice, civic learning, deliberation, co-production, scrutiny, and shared priority-setting. These mechanisms can generate public value when they are connected to accountability safeguards. The safeguards include published criteria, open budget information, documented feasibility review, transparent selection, formal adoption, project tracking, citizen monitoring, audit, and feedback. Accountability is therefore not a final audit alone; it is the visible continuity between a community proposal and the way the resulting public money is used.

The expected outcomes include more responsive allocations, greater inclusion, equity-oriented investments, transparency, trust, civic capacity, and, under favorable conditions, fiscal, service, or well-being improvements. Continuous learning surrounds the framework. Local governments should track not only winning projects but also who participated, who did not participate, which proposals were rejected and why, whether selected projects were delivered, and whether benefits reached intended communities. This feedback allows the next PB cycle to revise outreach, rules, project support, and implementation arrangements.

Figure 1. *Emergent Framework for Accountable and Development-Oriented Participatory Budgeting in Local Governments*

This review has several limitations. First, it used a targeted search of web-accessible scholarly and institutional sources rather than a full database export with duplicate management. Second, English-language sources were prioritized, which may have excluded relevant evidence from local-government contexts where PB scholarship is published in other languages. Third, PB is highly context dependent, and the reviewed evidence includes different models, budget scales, outcome measures, and institutional environments. Fourth, no formal quality appraisal was performed because the aim was mapping and conceptual clarification. Accordingly, the synthesis should be interpreted as an evidence-informed map of practice rather than a definitive statement that one model will produce the same results in all local governments.

4. CONCLUSION

This scoping review shows that participatory budgeting in local governments is not a single intervention. It is a set of institutional designs through which citizens can have different levels of influence over public spending. The reviewed models range from deliberative and delegate-based processes to project proposal-and-vote schemes, neighborhood PB, community grant funds, multi-stakeholder arrangements, sectoral or inclusion-focused PB, and digital-hybrid formats. The central design question is not simply whether residents are invited to participate. It is whether they have meaningful influence over a real budget, whether they can understand the available choices and trade-offs, and whether they can see how their decisions are implemented.

The evidence supports a cautious but constructive view of PB. When it is designed with clear rules, accessible information, deliberate inclusion, transparent feasibility review, public allocation decisions, and implementation monitoring, PB can strengthen civic learning, accountability, allocative responsiveness, and trust. Studies also document context-dependent associations with equity-oriented investment, fiscal and administrative efficiency, service performance, and well-being. However, these outcomes are not automatic. Small or symbolic budget envelopes, elite capture, unequal access, technical opacity, political turnover, administrative weakness, digital exclusion, and implementation delay can weaken the process and undermine legitimacy.

PB is therefore best treated as a continuing public-financial-management cycle rather than a one-time public vote. Its democratic and developmental value depends on the integrity of the entire cycle: a real fiscal envelope, inclusive outreach, supported participation, understandable budget information, transparent decisions, formal incorporation into the local budget, delivery of selected projects, and public feedback. Local governments that build these elements into regular planning, budgeting, reporting, and evaluation are better positioned to transform PB from an engagement event into an accountable mechanism for local development.

5. RECOMMENDATION

Local governments may begin participatory budgeting with a clearly defined and legally usable budget envelope, but they should state the scope of citizen authority honestly. A pilot can focus on neighborhood infrastructure, community projects, youth initiatives, climate adaptation, or other discretionary funds, provided that the process explains what is and is not open to decision. Before launch, local governments should prepare plain-language budget information, participation rules, eligibility and feasibility criteria, a project calendar, data-protection and accessibility procedures for digital tools, and a public mechanism for explaining rejected proposals.

Participation design should be inclusive by default. Local governments may combine outreach through barangays or neighborhood units, schools, community organizations, local media, social-service points, and online channels; offer in-person and digital participation routes; provide simple proposal support; and collect disaggregated participation data to identify who is being left out. Where equity is a stated goal, allocation and project-selection criteria should explicitly recognize underserved areas and groups rather

than rely only on open turnout or popularity. Facilitators and technical staff should be trained to translate financial, legal, and engineering constraints into information residents can use.

Accountability should continue after the selection stage. Local governments may publish the available budget, all eligible proposals, feasibility decisions and reasons, voting or deliberation results, the formal budget allocation, procurement and implementation status, changes in cost or scope, and completion reports. A public dashboard, citizen monitoring committee, or periodic community update can help maintain continuity between decisions and delivery. Results should be evaluated using both process indicators, such as participation diversity and proposal feedback, and outcome indicators, such as project completion, geographic distribution, service use, resident satisfaction, and fiscal or performance effects where measurable.

Future research may compare the effects of deliberative, voting-based, community-grant, and hybrid models across different local-government capacities and fiscal conditions. There is also a need for more evidence from low- and middle-income settings, rural and small municipalities, and local-government systems in Southeast Asia, including the Philippines. Research should pay greater attention to recurrent expenditure, climate and social equity, digital inclusion, implementation quality, political sustainability, and the long-term effects of PB on trust, service delivery, and local development. Mixed-method studies that combine administrative data with the experiences of residents, frontline staff, officials, and excluded groups would be especially valuable.

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