

Analysis of minutes from [Nov 10 Civic Tech Toronto Budget Workshop](#)

by Henrik Bechmann, November 2015

*Note: The analysis so far is based on notes, but requires revision based on input of workshop [sticky notes](#) exercise content*

## Problems

Transparency: Trust is required, but currently soft, and can be achieved through several dimensions:

- audits
- certifications of sources
- full transparency of process, including pre-consultative, and exogenous (province, feds)
- controls such as comparisons to actual, comparisons to quarterly revisions, performance reports

Accessibility: this is the source of most problems

- comprehension, such as clear language, clarity and consistency of meaning, avoidance of “insider” technical language, clear categorizations
- discovery, simple act of finding facts and related documentation
- (implied) lack of convenience, efficiency in researching issues and assembling arguments

Interpretation: requires better

- clarity of vision,
- clarity of motivation through clarity of voices being expressed

Participation: most decisions are made outside of public consultation

- parameters are set before consultation
- marginal issues are addressed (and are often given conflicted support, or ignored), but core issues are not

## Solutions

A. Budget information:

1. toolset to get credible facts from common source, including visualization tool
2. interactive budget classification (taxonomy)
3. provide timelines as well as current information

4. compare budgets, budget revisions (quarterly progress reports), and actuals for greater insight

B. Budget evaluation:

5. budget and councillor scorecards - results against commitments: compare major commitments, decisions, budget allocations, budget revisions
6. interactive visualization budgeting education tool, allows user modifications to show consequences

C. Process information:

7. toolset to get complete info about process, including, but not limited to, deputations
8. allow interactive engagement with budget details like reddit
9. tool to aggregate deputations along themes and facilitates collaboration, plus tools for collecting video and audio recordings
10. interactive revelatory tool on decision process
11. storytelling platform to reveal underlying budget process
12. storytelling platform to reveal how people use and influence the budget

D. System information:

13. move toward access to original data sources
14. provide access to information architecture of city budget system
15. provide organized access to what other cities have accomplished, and how
16. *(later, related to 15) provide access to comparisons to other cities data, eg police cost per person*