

Summary of Sticky Notes collected during the Toronto Budget Workshop

November 10, 2015

1. Problem Definition Exercise

Theme	Sticky Notes
Participation	"Timeline does not allow for participation throughout budget process"
	"How can I act on the info I see re: the budget?"
	"Political stakeholders"
	"Improvement needed on participatory budgeting"
	"Not sure @ which point of the process public can engage w/ budget"
	"What is the goal of the budget consultation process?"
	"Budget deputations are difficult to attend"
	"Not sure how it's relevant to my life"
	"How to better blend in-person consultation with digital tools?"
	"How to involve some of the less civically engaged communities in the city?"
	"What are my opportunities to participate?"
Technical Language	"Language (jargon) difficulties with explaining to communities"
	"Budget language is too technical"
	"#s not presented in a way that's easily/quickly understandable to the lay person"
	"Capital Budget vs Operating (what is on which)"
Governance	"Not really related to budget per se, but the proposed subway operating earlier on Sundays; cost will once again be downloaded to rider :-\"
	"Fear of taxation"
	"Big strategies (parks, poverty) are approved by Council by never funded"
	"Budget narrative - negative?"
	"Staff/Council not really listening during deputations"

	"Quality of budget info needs improvement. Garbage-in-garbage-out"
	"Commitment to anti-poverty strategy in principle alone and not on funding"
	"Broken budget process"
	"Lack of vision"
	"How do I know I can trust the numbers? I can point to 2-3 different numbers on the same thing"
	"Value for money"
	"Unused revenue tools"
Access / Transparency	"I want to better understand the budget as a whole"
	"I have no idea what is going on w/ budget decisions - it's not like I don't care, it's just not easily accessible"
	"Make information accessible (UX)"
	"Transparency around planning & decision-making/prioritization process"
	"How budgets change year-to-year"
	"Budget process (esp. operating) feels 'point-in-time' - hard to figure out trends over the years/decades"
	"Bailouts disguised as city loans"
	"Unclear timeline"
	"Geographic distribution - downtown vs. suburbs"
	"Municipality-to-municipality fees comparison by income"
	"What reserve funds are available to plug budget holes?"
	"I can't connect the #s in the budget with the city I see in front of me"

2. Ideation Exercise

Theme	Sticky Notes
Decoding the budget	"Typology entry point / classification for data"
	"Long term context of \$\$"
	"Who/which city does present decoded data well?"
	"Are there cities that release budget data?"
	"What improvements are needed to present data?"
	"Clarifying flow & sources of \$\$"
	"Understanding resource allocation"
	"Advocating city to release info"
	"What is the granularity of data?"
	"In what form is data available?"
	"What do we mean by data"
Improving access to budget info	"Online community message board/forum/wiki"
	"Create working groups by key topics"
	"Question board - answer these with highest upvotes, NLP, or rank"
	"Structure for an upvoting system that doesn't end in tears"
	"Q&A discovery process" - Info hierarchy - Get right questions to right experts & right answers to the interested partners"
	"Overview of the budgetary process" - timeline - areas - key people"
	"Knowing who to talk to"
	"Limiting total access. Information/access overload"
	"Tool to allow individual to tweak budget on their own" - upvoting tools exist, but fewer deal with allocation of limited

	resources - only allow *decreasing* budgets, not increasing”
	“Tool to show community budget consensus (compared to actual)”
	“Break out #s by major department with background detail on what that department delivers”
	“Ward level breakdown of services. How to discuss by need vs. % allocation”
Influencing budget decisions	“Quick referendum (independent polling)”
	“Create regional (poll/community per ward) consultation system (or voting) that is simple”
	“Tech: use better time/issue management for deputation process <code> + allow people to connect by theme - digital and in person deputations”
	“‘Citizen’s referendum’ app to better signal public opinion (3rd party group creates app that allows for snap notes on big budget-y issues, e.g. what to do with Gardiner Expressway? -tear down -leave up)”
	“Make your budget. Game/tool that people can use to allocate T.O. budget (e.g. Aussie Stats - who run’s this town?)”
	“Capturing and adding up deputation by theme and over time - show trends & relationship between deputations and budget decisions”
	“‘Mayor’s consult’ about setting budget priorities (to frame staff’s initial work on the 98%)”
	“ - Mayor’s consult - about setting budget priorities (to frame initial staff work) - Summary of key themes from consultations/deputations (can scrape the data off website) - Online portal - e-petitions - Budget simulations - “Mock referendum” digital tool ”
Empowering citizens to participate/take action	“Tool that related council priorities to budget allocation”
	“Council budget scorecards”

	“City ‘parliamentary’ budget officer that compares Council priorities to budget allocation”
	“Third-party ‘competence assessment’ tool”
	“A pre-election (before budget ... survey on citizens’ priorities)”
	“Pretty budget infographic that documents budget process”
	“A better, accessible story of the budget process Like TAL(?): Giant pool of money”
	“Civics in high school ‘learn about the budget’ ”
	“David Simon mini-series on the budget ‘show me a budget here’”
	“Civic education on the real INFORMAL process of the budget”
	“Analogies to understand the budget”