COMMUNITY CHOICES FUND

2016/17 REPORT

Contents   **Page**

Introduction

Participatory budgeting (PB) is recognised internationally as a way for people to have a direct say in how local money is spent. Having its grassroots development in Brazil in the late 1980s, it has taken hold across the world. The Scottish Government supports PB as a tool for community engagement and as a resource to build on the wider development of participatory democracy in Scotland. PB can:

- support one of the principles of Public Service Reform, that people should have equal opportunity to participate and have their voice heard in decisions shaping their local community and society.

- complement aspirations for the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 which will help give communities more powers to take forward their own ambitions.

- help deliver the Public Sector Equality Duty by advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between different groups.

In Scotland, PB is better known as Community Choices because of the Scottish Government's Community Choices programme to support and promote PB nationally. This programme is delivered in partnership with local authorities, communities and third sector organisations, and is implemented across policy areas from policing to health and social care, transport, and education.

During 2015/16 the Scottish Government invested over £750,000 promoting and supporting PB nationally. This included £530,267 for 14 Local Authorities to help them build on and maintain their PB activity which enabled more than 50 PB events in 2016. £226,200 was invested in a national support programme which included producing learning resources, launching a PB website, funding consultancy support, digital tools, and an evaluation programme and also looking at ways to invest in a learning programme.

Background - Community Choices Fund 2016/17

In February 2016, due to the growing interest in PB and to enable more local people to make decisions on local spending priorities, then Minister for Local Government and Community Empowerment announced a £2 million Community Choices Fund to support PB in 2016/17. Targeted particularly at work in deprived areas, the fund's aim was to open up opportunities for public authorities (as well as Local Authorities), community organisations and community councils to engage with and deliver PB. The fund included: £300,000 for a national support programme, an impact accelerator of £200,000 for innovative PB ideas that needed help getting off the ground, and £1.5 million available for applications.

The £1.5 million community choices fund was split into two, with half of the money available to public authorities, and the other half open to community organisations and community councils. Applicants could apply for up to a maximum of £100,000. The funding was available to allocate to Projects plus Support Costs. For Public Authorities, the funding to allocate to projects was on a match funding basis.

From the £1.5 million fund, a total of 137 applications were received to the sum of £7,097,287; 23 from public authorities totalling £1,322,385, and 114 from community organisations totalling £5,774,902. Of these 137, 28 organisations were successful. In addition, 4 other applications that had not met the criteria for the main fund, but had

innovative proposals, were awarded funding from the Impact Accelerator. The remainder of the Impact Accelerator was awarded to the Church of Scotland to support some of the country's economically poorest communities to engage in and develop their skills in PB. The Church did not apply to the £1.5 million Community Choices fund. It had carried out an extensive community engagement exercise which asked almost 11,000 people to identify what key issues needed to be addressed in order to create a fairer, more equal and more just society. The Scottish Government felt that their work, to be delivered collaboratively with a range of wider faith and communities groups, resonated closely with the ambitions of PB. This report therefore represents the evaluations of all 33 funded organisations. For efficiency of reporting, the Church of Scotland is included among the community organisations.

Preface to this Report

The 33 recipients of community choices funding (14 public authorities, 18 community organisations, 1 Church of Scotland) were required to submit a self-evaluation report detailing how they organised and facilitated their PB events, including information about who took part, the format of events and voting, and any key insights gleaned from experience of engaging in a PB process.

This evaluation is based on the collation of these reports and is an attempt to give a broad overview of the PB activity related to Community Choices in the 2016-2017 funding period, as well as providing some commentary on procedural issues identified in the reports. For ease and consistency of reporting, the evaluation reflects the structure of the reporting template that successful applicants to the fund were asked to follow.
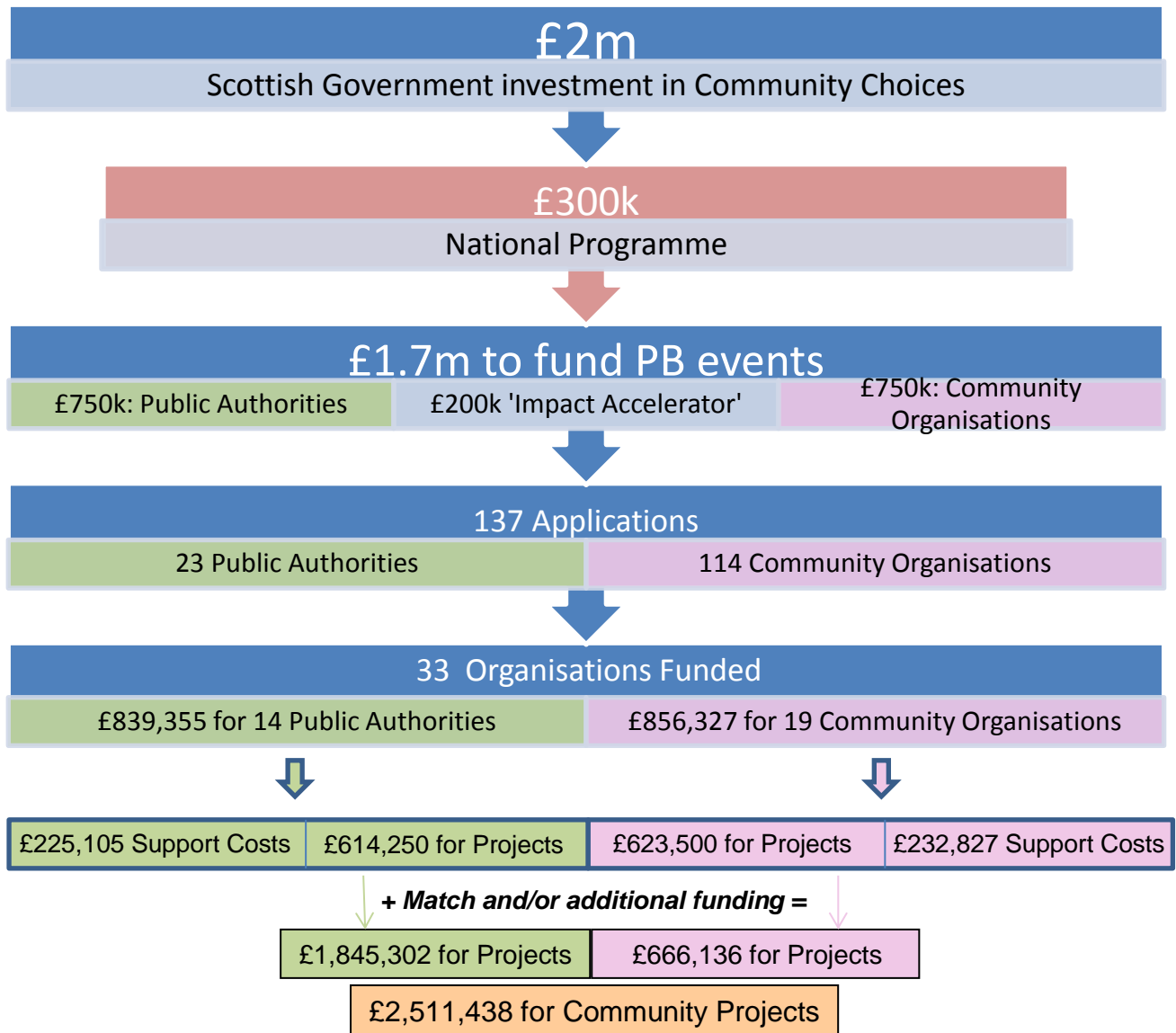
An important caveat to these findings is that the reports from recipients of community choices funding have, in the main, been completed by individuals heavily involved in implementing these PB processes; local government officials, community development officers etc. By no means does this mean there is a bias in the reporting, but it should be recognised that the reports represent a particular perspective and are not disinterested accounts. It is also worth noting that the reports differed in the amount of information provided; some reports ran to just a few pages while others went into lengthy detail and submitted several appendices. While some common overarching themes are identified herein, the differences between reports make it more difficult to assess the full extent of their prevalence.

Noting the caveat above and the evidence gaps identified through this evaluation – particularly evidence of barriers to participation for marginalised groups and people living in rural areas - will help inform approaches to capturing this evidence in any future Community Choices Fund reporting.

33 organisations secured £1.7 million and this report provides a collective summary of the evaluation data received from each.

'AT A GLANCE'

Community Choices Fund 2016/17

£2m
Scottish Government investment in Community Choices

£300k
National Programme

£1.7m to fund PB events

| £750k: Public Authorities | £200k 'Impact Accelerator' | £750k: Community Organisations |

137 Applications

| 23 Public Authorities | 114 Community Organisations |

33 Organisations Funded

| £839,355 for 14 Public Authorities | £856,327 for 19 Community Organisations |

| £225,105 Support Costs | £614,250 for Projects | £623,500 for Projects | £232,827 Support Costs |

+ Match and/or additional funding =

| £1,845,302 for Projects | £666,136 for Projects |

£2,511,438 for Community Projects

Detailed project data available at appendix i

An Indicative Community Choices Process

No two PB processes were identical in their planning, although most utilised Community Choices to facilitate grant-making, generally following the steps advised in the small grants 10 step PB Guide produced to support the community choices process.

1
- **Form planning/steering group made up of community representatives**
- Determines crieteria for applications and formats of events.

2
- **Name The PB process to reflect aims of community choices**
- E.g. 'U Decide', 'Your Money, You Decide', 'Community Matters'

3
- **Agree Priorities**
- Many processes decided priorities based on previous community planning, however opportunities for community consultation may be taken.

4
- **Tell People about it**
- Inform and advise potential applicants and publicise event to the community

5
- **Recieve applications**
- Steering group vet applications against agreed criteria

6
- **Hold 'decision' event**
- Eligible applications voted on by the community; the event should be widely publicised.

7
- **Announce results**
- Ideally, support offered to both successful and unsucessful applicants in either realising their project aims, or signposting other funding opportunities.

8
- **Follow Up**
- Decide on measures to evaluate progress and outcomes of successful projects

9
- **Spread the word**
- Share details of the event; who 'won'? What kinds of things are being funded?

10
- **Next Steps**
- Consider and plan how to develop PB and build on community engagement

Section 1: Project Information

1.1 Projects Overview

Reporters were asked to provide a brief summary of their PB process and to include details of any partnership working and other stakeholder involvement.

Beneficiaries of Community Choices funding, in most cases, allocated budgets to specific geographical communities *and* in relation to particular themes. In many instances, community action plans or locality plans determined the thematic criteria for funding in a particular area. In a few cases, criteria were established through a deliberative stage of the PB process itself, in consultation with members of participating communities; notably, a number of other reports indicate, with hindsight, a preference for this kind of 'priority-setting' phase as part of the overall PB process.

Occasionally, funding was given geographically but criteria for applications was deliberately 'open' (i.e. not linked to specific themes) in order to encourage wide-ranging participation. In a minority of processes, it was not clear from the reporting how a particular theme had been decided on.

Only a very few public authorities hosted processes that were city, or area-wide in terms of activities funded, with money being most often disbursed to community organisations operating at local levels.

1.1.1   Themes Supported by Community Choices Funding

Several processes invited project submissions in relation to specified **themes** identified as community priorities. In these cases, money was awarded to projects addressing the following issues (the larger the text, the more frequently a particular theme is specified throughout the reports):

1.1.2 Collaboration

Recipients of community choices funding engaged a number of partner organisations in delivering PB events; this was often reflected in the constituency of community-based steering groups who planned local processes. Commonly, partners included:

- Local Health and Social Care partnerships
- Community Councils
- Tenants' Associations
- Local Voluntary Organisations
- Police Scotland
- NHS
- Local 3rd Sector Interfaces

 Full list included as appendix ii

1.2 Participation

Reporters were asked to summarise the level of community 'buy-in' and were invited to comment on the diversity among applicants and participants, and steps taken to facilitate participation.

- The vast majority of processes held public voting events; even where online voting was used, this was usually alongside, rather than in place of, 'in-person' events.
- 12 (8 public authorities, 4 community organisations) record the usage of some kind of online voting procedure.
- 15 of the reports show that young people (under 16) were eligible to vote, with children as young as 8 participating in some areas.
- 16 events were reported as offering childcare provision or included child/family friendly activities at voting days.
- 13 of the reports indicate that free transport was provided to and from events.
- 16 report that venues used had disability access, although this may be higher; several reports simply do not say.
- 13 of the reports say that support was offered to groups submitting applications. There were fewer reported instances of help being offered to unsuccessful groups (i.e. identifying alternative funding streams).
- 541 staff and 371 volunteers were involved in facilitating community choices events.

Discussion

The option to vote online appears to significantly increase voter participation; in some instances, over 75% of the total votes were cast online. There is also some evidence to suggest that online voting encourages the participation of some marginalised groups, including those with mental health conditions, physical disabilities and inhabitants of rural areas. To note, it should be kept in mind that this evidence is in the context of the self-evaluation reports received and cannot be generalised to include all marginalised groups and across a range of rural settings. On the former, for example reporters did not provide evidence of barriers to people with sensory impairments.

There is, however, a concern that digital methods of voting discriminate against the over 65s who are less likely to be 'tech-savvy' than younger voters[1]. There are also some reservations concerning the ability of larger, established groups to mobilise online support through existing networks to an extent that smaller groups cannot compete with. Moreover, some reports suggested that online participation is a more passive means of engagement which does not encourage dialogue or interpersonal connections.

'Family-Friendly' activities generally improved attendance at voting events. Some events 'tied-in' with other established community occasions and were similarly well-attended. Up-take of transport to events was variable and appeared to have less overall impact on event attendance but was valued where used.

A few PB processes included efforts to specifically involve marginal social groups including; using 3rd sector agencies to promote the process among less engaged groups, 'drop-ins' at schools to encourage youth participation, targeted recruitment of steering group members to reflect community diversity.

Overall, the reports include very little demographic information regarding participation levels, though some note low levels of participation from BME (black and minority ethnic) individuals and a couple of events report that applications associated with BME groups were ultimately unsuccessful, but did not explain why.

A common observation throughout all of the reports is that general levels of engagement with PB processes could have been better facilitated by having *more time*. Some note that short time-scales benefit larger groups who monitor funding opportunities and are equipped to submit applications quickly. Reports claim that more time could be used to thoroughly publicise events, engage hard to reach communities (in both making applications and attending events) and plan events to maximize community participation (i.e. by selecting the most suitable time and location).

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[1] **http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/09/7673/9**

1.3 Use of supporting agencies - PB Partners, Democratic Society (Demsoc), Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC).

Reporters were asked to indicate if they had received support from the 3 principal agencies made available through the national programme.

Key: ● Public Authority   Community Organisation
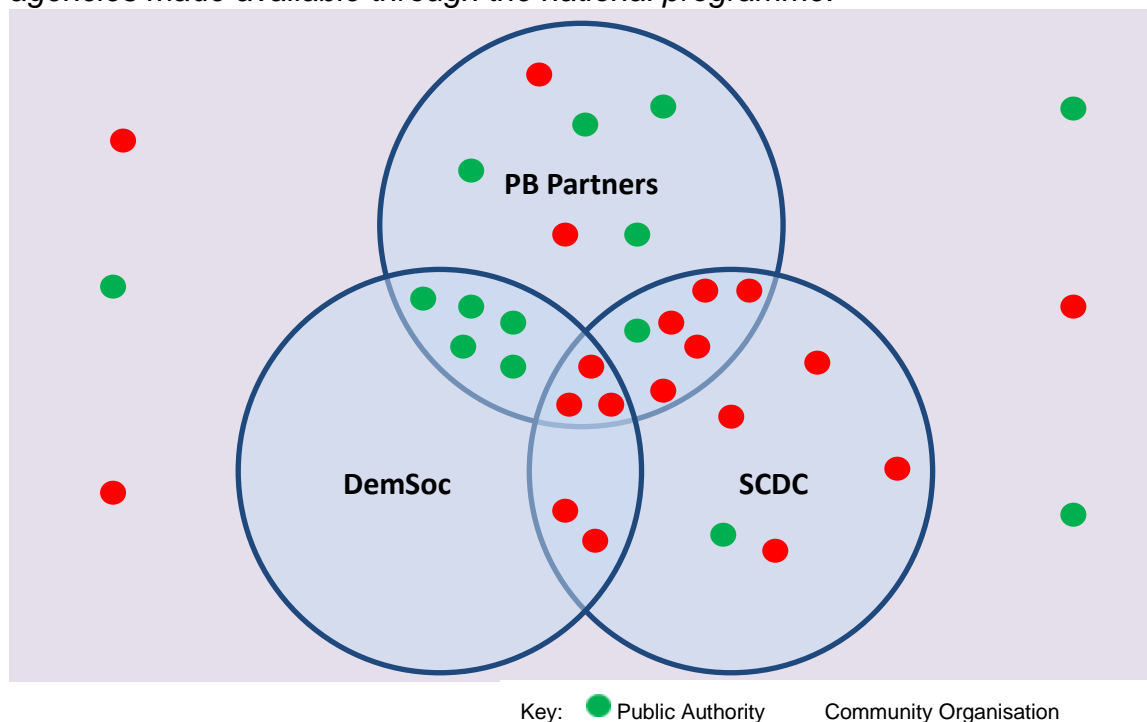
- The majority (20) of processes made use of support from PB Partners , through attending presentational events and continued ad-hoc guidance.
- 10 engaged with the Democratic Society to explore the use of digital tools (although 2 processes ultimately did not make use of these).
- Practical Support from the Scottish Community Development Centre, including help with publicising events, was accepted by the majority (14) of community organisations though very few public authorities used this resource.
- Overall, 6 reports indicated no take-up of support.
- 3 processes accessed support from all three agencies, all of which were community organisations.

1.4 Evaluation

Reporters were asked about any means of evaluation of events and/or collection of feedback from participants.

- The vast majority (31) of events provided, or were in the process of providing, participants with the means to feedback on their experience of local PB and many reports include summaries of this feedback in report appendices.
- 4 community councils completed self-evaluations, rating themselves on the overall conduct of the process and tended to give positive evaluations.
- 7 of the reports specifically describe the mechanisms to be used to track the progress of successful projects though in most cases, it is perhaps too early to evaluate impact.
- A very small minority (2) attempted PB collect equalities monitoring data and participant response rate in relation to this was low.

1.5 Participant Feedback

Participants fed-back on various elements of PB events, from voting systems used, to the quality of the catering provided. Below is presented a **representative selection of participant feedback …**

"I did not know all of this was happening in our area." (South Ayrshire respondent)
Participants consistently reported learning a lot about community activity at public voting events, which were often the only occasions at which applicants interacted with one another and with the wider voting community. This engagement has the potential to foster partnerships and collaboration between community members and organisations. Indeed, instances of on-the-day offers of support are documented in some of the reports. Greater community deliberation prior to the 'main event' may present more opportunities to capitalise on this type of engagement.

"I prefer going 'round stands. It's much better than listening to individual talks or having to read forms." (Moray respondent)
The 'market-stall' format proved popular on the whole, cited as fostering greater levels of engagement with projects and enabling socialising. By contrast, the use of formal presentations was criticised for not allowing enough time for applicants to adequately convey information and for potentially favouring more experienced organisations who may have made similar presentations elsewhere.

"Obviously people's voting will be strongly influenced by localities which have little to do with the projects themselves." (Perth & Kinross respondent)
At some events, voting systems were designed to overcome geographical biases within voting populations. This brings into question whether the projects being voted on reflected the interests of the electorate in processes where different localities are brought together to vote. Understandably, people may not be inclined to vote for projects that only affect a neighbouring community.

"Multiple votes meant people were taking time to look at each project; not just if it was their pal's." (Possilpark respondent)
Having a handful of votes to spread around meant people were more inclined to find out about the projects being exhibited and this strategy is intended to overcome advantages that may be wielded by larger, well-supported groups. On the other hand, there is evidence that too much choice causes people to make some less considered choices; one report of an event where participants had 10 votes to allocate claimed that people were randomising choices after they had exhausted their first preferences.

"It was obvious that bigger organisations; schools, police and established charities could and will always outvote smaller grassroots organisations." (Leith Links Respondent)
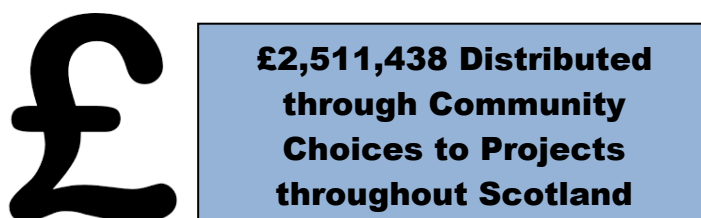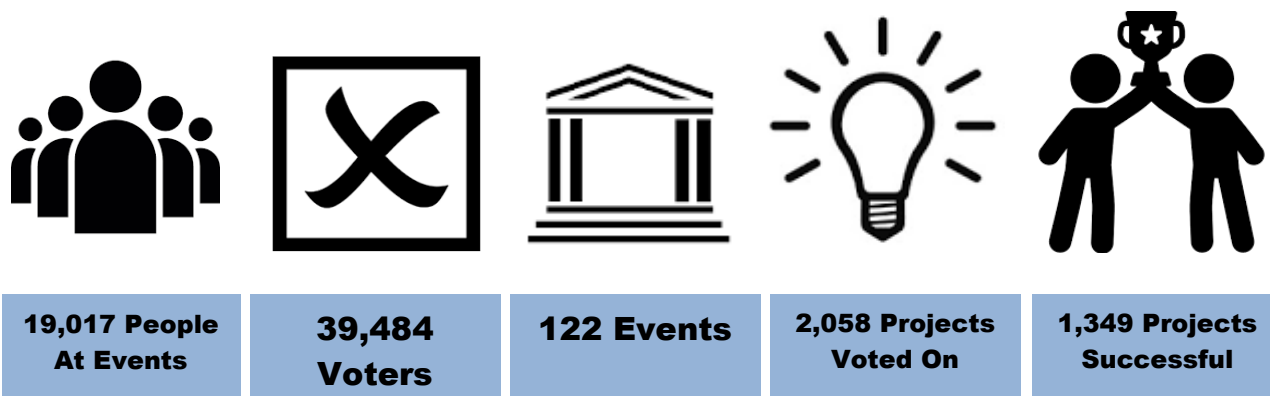Although in many cases, voters were encouraged or required to spread their votes, many participants at events still voiced concern that the ready support-base of certain organisations (such as schools) meant that smaller projects struggled to compete.

"Great cup of Tea!" (Moray respondent)
Lots of participants seemed to appreciate the catering that was offered at several events, which helped to create a welcoming and friendly social atmosphere and could be one factor in encouraging future participation.

Section 2: Project Data

*Reporters were asked to complete a table detailing quantifiable aspects of their projects; the following combines the figures from **all** reports:*

19,017 People At Events	39,484 Voters	122 Events	2,058 Projects Voted On	1,349 Projects Successful

£2,511,438 Distributed through Community Choices to Projects throughout Scotland

Discussion-*Disentangling number at events and number of voters*

The disparity between the number of people at events and the number of voters can largely be explained by the use of online voting which, where employed, accounted for many more votes than were made in person at events.

A potential complication with participation figures is that the number of voters who were also involved in submitting applications cannot be readily discerned. While certainly not a major factor in every instance, a significant minority of reports, at the least, imply that many of the electorate were associated with a bidding Organisation and, in one notable case, it is indeed apparent that the composition of voters and applicant groups was identical.

One self-evaluation reported that "it would have been good to see more people attending the event that were not part of the community groups looking for funding", while participant evaluation from a separate event included suggestions to limit the number of "voters per project" which strongly suggests that voters were attached to certain bids. Similarly, a further report claimed to limit "voting capacity to those attendees who represented an applicant group to one vote per Organisation" which, again, implies that a significant proportion of the voting populace were also involved in applications.

Section 3: Sustainability

3.1 Engagement with PB Scotland Website

Reports, photographs and videos of PB events are available on the PB Scotland web pages, Reporters were asked to indicate if, and what, they had contributed to the site.

Of Public Authorities;
-6 uploaded event materials (4 more have not yet but plan to)
-8 populated the PB map with their events
-6 have joined the PB network (either as organisations or individuals)

Of Community Organisations;
-15 have uploaded event materials
-6 have populated the PB map (3 more plan to)
-8 have joined the PB network (organisations or individuals (1 more plans to))

Links to materials: appendix iii

3.2 Knowledge Sharing

The majority of public authorities and community organisations indicated a willingness to share their learning and experience gained through engagement in PB processes. Experience of delivering PB events has already been shared with a range of interested parties. Most prominent among these are:

- Third Sector Organisations
- Community Councils
- Community Planning Partnerships
- Local Authorities

Notably, the reports show that opportunities for sharing *between different council areas* are being developed, with a planned 'North Scotland' PB conference to encompass Highland, Moray and Aberdeenshire, and also discussion of PB processes scheduled at a 'pan-Ayrshire' learning event.

Reporters were asked to indicate their willingness to share their experiences with others either nationally, regionally or locally and over 50 put their names forward.

3.3 Future Plans for Community Involvement in Decision-Making

Reporters were asked about their Organisation's plans to continue PB and/or other forms of community engagement.

Of Public Authorities;
-8 have made plans for the continued use of PB in the future outwith 'Community Choices'. 2 have budgets already agreed for this.
-6 are considering options to engage communities in budgetary decision making in the future.
-2 are considering strategies to meet the target for at least 1% of council budgets to be allocated through community choices.

Of Community Organisations;
-5 have indicated plans to host PB events in the future outwith 'Community Choices'.
-9 more are considering/open to future use of PB.
-5 did not directly indicate future plans to involve communities in budgeting processes.

Discussion

Several reports noted other forms of community engagement as a direct result of PB events, namely steering group members and participants becoming involved in other community groups and/or joining community councils and development trusts. Two community organisations indicated plans to establish new local resources (a 'youth bank' and a 'local coordination point') following on from engagement with PB.

While numerous reports asserted that short timescales were a barrier to implementation, a number have noted that repeating the process and building up a PB cycle will make administration easier as the practice becomes embedded. It was mentioned that the tools and capacity built up in this first round of PB, alongside learning from any methodological shortcomings, would make future processes easier.

Section 4: Conclusion

The majority of reports generally express enthusiasm for participatory budgeting and indicate a willingness to engage in future process, with 8 public authorities, and 5 community organisations having concrete plans to hold further PB events. This is encouraging in consideration of the fact that PB is a decidedly novel initiative for most of the participating agencies and has required the investment of considerable time, resources and effort from those tasked with delivering processes. Furthermore, developments such as the planned PB conference for the North of Scotland highlight the potential for further discussion and partnership working at regional level. At more localised levels, there is evidence that holding PB events enhances opportunities to strengthen community capacity as people discover a range and variety of organisations and related community activity in their areas, of which they were previously unaware.

However, the reports, taken as a whole, identify certain factors that arguably impede the realisation of community empowerment aims. There is some suggestion that general participation often failed to reflect a wide cross-section of communities with concerns raised in relation to the participation of BME people and organisations, as well as the observation that public involvement sometimes seemed to be significantly determined by affiliation to applicant groups.

Another commonly identified theme was that, at present, approaches to PB tend to favour larger, more established groups in that they have the resources to respond to calls for applications swiftly and efficiently, and they can draw upon existing support networks to ensure a sizeable share of the public vote.

Finally, some processes highlighted an uneasy relationship between the scale of projects and the constituency of the public(s) voting for them, with some highly localized projects being pitched to a much wider geographic electorate.

PB in Scotland is still at an early stage and there is considerable scope for procedures to be modified and improved; these reports suggest that public engagement in PB could be both deeper and broader, and that investment in time could be central to achieving this. The target for local authorities to allocate at least 1% of their budgets through Community Choices will potentially expand the national conversation around PB, and community empowerment more generally.

Useful Links

PB Scotland Website

PB Network: Mainstreaming PB

Guide to Evaluating PB

Community Choices Information on Scottish Government website

'What Works' Scotland: PB Evaluation Toolkit

'What Works' Scotland: Review of 1st Generation PB

Appendix i - COMMUNITY CHOICES 2016/17

18 COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS & CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Organisation	Project Title	Number at Events	Number of Voters	Number of Successful applicants	Total for Projects (£)
Ardenglen Housing Association Social Committee, Castlemilk	Cost of School Day - reducing the impact of family poverty	156	134	10	£20,000
Burnfoot Community Futures, Hawick	Burnfoot Bids Together	400	308	13	£30,000
Cambuslang Community Council, South Lanarkshire	Greening Cambuslang: changing neighbourhoods for the better	0	3133	24	£38,701
East Ayrshire Tenants & Residents Federation, Kilmarnock	Community Decides	309	165	74	£80,000
Girvan Youth Trust, South Ayrshire	2Kare for South Carrick Award Scheme	220	210	14	£20,00
Kirkconnel and Kelloholm Development Trust, Dumfries and Galloway	KKDT Community Choices PB Fund	80	65	10	£20,000
Leith Links Community Council, Edinburgh	Community Links Brightening local lives	235	920	15	£16,462
Maryhill Housing Association, Glasgow	Vocalise to Localise	400	230	10	£40,000
Melness and Tongue Community Development Trust, Highlands	Up North! Community Chest	120	107	19	£20,000
North Glasgow Housing Association Ltd	Young Voice of North Glasgow	124	124	11	£57,942
North Carrick Community Benefit Company, South Ayrshire	Participate, Activate, Regenerate (PAR)	147	147	5	£80,000
The Joint Community Councils of Moray	Moray Chooses	150	105	14	£46,000
tsiMORAY	#YouChoose	475	480	22	£39,975
Voluntary Action Orkney	Your Island Your Choice	381	463	36	£36,000
West of Scotland Regional Equality Council, Glasgow	Over to you - B Empowered	593	537	53	£40,000
Young Peoples Futures (YPF), Glasgow	Spirit of Ruchill/Possilpark	388	1141	20	£17,056
Cornerstone House Centre Ltd (IA)	We Decide: Families overcoming inequality	117	72	21	£24,000
Enable Glasgow: Fortune Works (IA)	Vote for (a) fortune	250	200	1	£20,000
Church of Scotland	PB Project	348	329	28	£20,000
	TOTAL:	**4,893**	**8,870**	**400**	**£666,136**

14 PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

Organisation	Project Title	Number at Events	Number of Voters	Number of Successful applicants	Total for Projects (£)
Aberdeen City Council & Community Planning Aberdeen	U Decide	980	5200	52	£272,500
Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership	Aberdeenshire PB Programme	1097	3485	81	£326,000
Clackmannanshire Council	Community Matters	1398	970	28	£76,667
East Ayrshire Council	You Decide	1982	1875	143	£119,991
Edinburgh City Council	City of Edinburgh PB Programme	1,403	2977	48	£119,971
Falkirk CPP	Community Changes	700	1003	30	£78,000
Fife Council	Forward West Fife	57	57	11	£75,581
Highland Council	Highland Decides	488	2496	108	£155,200
North Ayrshire CPP	Your Money You Decide	564	5621	145	£136,834
Perth & Kinross Council	Local CPPs	1943	3328	92	£103,481
Shetland Islands Council	Shetland Community Choices	1654	1546	16	£112,000
South Ayrshire Council	South Ayrshire Decides - Phase 2	1539	924	155	£179,745
Argyll & Bute Council (IA)	Let's Decide	0	889	5	£14,332
Glasgow City Council (on behalf of the Poverty Leadership Panel) (IA)	Parkhead Decides Priesthill Decides Govan Decides	319	243	35	£75,000
	TOTAL:	**14,124**	**30,614**	**949**	**£1,845,302**

TOTAL (All 33):	Number at Events	Number of Voters	Number of Successful applicants	Total for Projects (£)
	19,017	**39,484**	**1,349**	**£2,511,438**

IA = Impact Accelerator
In several processes the number of voters was higher than the number of those attending events due to the use of online voting.

Appendix ii - List of partner groups and organisations:

Big Lottery

'Bord na Ghaidhlig'

'Building Healthy Communities'

Child Poverty Action Group

Churches

Civic Forums

Coalfields Regeneration Trust

Community Benefit Societies

Community Councils

Community Forums

Community Learning and Development

Community Planning Partnerships

Department for Work and Pensions

Faith organisations

Fire Service

Glasgow Centre for Population Health

Health and Social Care partnerships

'Healthy and Happy' CDT

Local Authorities

Locality Managers

Local NHS trusts

Local Third Sector Interfaces

Moray Federation of Village Halls and Associations

NHS Public Health

Old People's Groups

One parent Families Scotland

Police

Rural Area Partnerships

Schools

Social Landlords

Tenants and resident associations

Voluntary Action organisations

YoungScot

Youth Scotland

Appendix iii: Links to uploads on PB Scotland website