democratic
society

scdc
scottish
community
development
centre

**Supporting
Community Access
to Digital PB Tools
in Scotland Report
2021**

demsoc.org

Supporting Community Access to Digital PB Tools in Scotland Report

—

June 2021

Table of Contents

democratic
society

Executive Summary

Democratic Society and Scottish Community Development Centre ran an exploratory and discovery research project to understand what community digital participatory budgeting could look like for communities in the future. We discovered a clear set of challenges that could be transferred into opportunities for communities to be enabled and supported to run effective digital participatory budgeting processes. This executive summary provides the key recommendations from community practitioner's needs outlined from the findings in this report.

We have found that community practitioners in Scotland have not been effectively involved in the digital development of the participatory budgeting pilot tool Consul, which is being rolled out across Scotland for local authorities. Communities often have time, capacity and funding restraints, working on their own or in small teams, sometimes voluntary and with very limited in-house technical expertise, IT support, or the funds to implement a digital tool and ensure it is an accessible, engaging process for those in their communities. For this to change for community PB practitioners and for PB to be ran effectively, below is a list of the main recommendations:

Tool specific

- **Bespoke digital PB tool for communities:** Develop a bespoke software tool to support PB in Scotland's communities. The software should be co-designed and co-produced by community PB practitioners with expertise such as coder/s and should start by building on community strengths and responding to the preferences of communities. Co-design of the system should include support to look at creative solutions (i.e gamification) which will produce a tool which is flexible, user-friendly, accessible, and engaging for long-term use. This tool could be hosted and supported by Scottish Government, with in-house coding expertise and flexible support available for communities.
- **Consul:** Community practitioners have not been involved in the development or use of Consul. There needs to be support for community PB practitioners to access, develop and use the software for localised community needs. Consul could be adapted to be fit for purpose for communities and become an option for communities. There needs to be a further review of what would make Consul useful for communities.
- **Provide access to training support and resources for PB practitioners:** Providing access to resources which support PB practitioners to learn about

different software options and materials to support the PB process. Access to resources should be supported by a team of knowledgeable experts that can develop bitesize, accessible materials. The bespoke support will work with PB practitioners and communities that want to do more with existing online software. Support should also include advice on how to address using digital tools in tandem with face-to-face events and **more training in security and GDPR (data protection)** which can be delivered by the support programme.

- **Accessibility:** Accessibility and inclusion should be fully considered when developing both support materials and any future digital software solution to overcome barriers to engagement. This can be done through co-design and co-working on solutions together.
- **Funding restrictions:** There needs to be long term financial investment in PB so that the process takes place on a regular basis within Scotland's communities. PB should be resourced and delivered as part of regular budgetary planning. This means communities can build upon their learning and improve their processes continually.

General

- **Bridging the digital divide:** There should be an increased access to IT devices, Wi-Fi, data bundles and PB software to overcome the digital divide. PB should link with the Scottish Government's 'Connecting Scotland' programme (https://connecting.scot/) and other initiatives to bridge the digital divide.
- **Create a digital network:** PB practitioners would like a space to share knowledge, ideas and experience and to support lone workers who may be tasked with leading their digital/face to face PB process. This will provide peer support and partnership opportunities for PB practitioners to share software tools and knowledge. The network should have a mechanism to share learning at a Government and national policy making level so that real change can come about through PB.
- **More marketing support for PB at a local and national level:** Stories of PB and change in Scotland are currently not utilised in mainstream media. This should be done for the public to understand what PB is and how we are using it to address inequalities in our society. This would help raise awareness and encourage people to participate.
- **PB Charter:** Should be used to support local partnership working between the statutory, private, and voluntary sector as they work together to deliver PB.

Overview

The initial brief

Democratic Society and Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) were funded by the Scottish Government to explore what digital participatory budgeting (PB) might look like for communities in the future. The research purpose was to highlight the needs, challenges and opportunities for running a digital PB process. The project ran from March-June 2021 and maps out a set of digital support resources tested with communities and a set of recommendations defined in this report. This work also involved establishing a Digital PB Learning Network which will further progress and develop the learning to ensure communities have the knowledge, skills and confidence to use digital tools to support PB going forward.

Aims and Objectives

Our goals for this work were to:

- Explore the challenges and opportunities for communities to access digital tools for PB.
- Establish a 'Digital PB Learning Network' for communities as part of **PB Scotland**.
- Create resources that support communities to use digital tools for PB and provide guidance on the latest developments and design, including a digital tools appraisal, guidelines and templates.
- Support and facilitate communities in making recommendations for long-term, continuous community access to digital tools, including opportunities and learning for **CONSUL**, Scotland's national pilot PB participation tool.
- Inform the development of a digital engagement infrastructure that takes into account communities needs and supports the Scottish Government's ambitions for participatory budgeting and community empowerment.

This report includes a summary of the findings from interviews, feedback and workshops we ran with community representatives and PB stakeholders across Scotland.

democratic society

Background to the project

What a discovery and exploration project is

The intention behind this work was to provide an overview of the digital PB picture for Scottish communities, aimed at identifying opportunities to improve real-world situations through the development or transformation of services in the future, perhaps where support could be offered by the Scottish Government or alternative services.

A discovery project is exploratory, practical and time limited. The essential idea of a discovery is not to produce an exhaustive answer to a "typical" research question (such as "what do the communities of Scotland want for a digital participatory budgeting tool"), but instead to develop a perspective at a level of detail that is sufficient to justify the next phase—a deeper-dive or new project into specific areas of opportunities and build a prototype to test an emerging hypothesis.

Deliverables

- **March-April 2021** - Stakeholder sessions, interviews and surveys to capture Scottish communities digital PB insights around the key lines of enquiry.
- **May 2021** - Two half-day peer learning sessions available to all communities.
- **May-June 2021** - Finalised community focused digital tools appraisal, adapted from the input and insight from community research.
- **May-June 2021** - Template technical induction plan, adapted from the input and insight from community research.
- **May-June 2021** - A set of templates in practical digital PB processes including but not limited to; moderation guidelines, a privacy notice, communications plan, facilitation plan for running a deliberative online PB event, adapted from input and insight from community research.
- **May-June 2021** - Written guidance on security, verification & GDPR specified to communities.
- **May-June 2021** - FAQ gathered from the community activities and responses generated.
- **June 2021** - A 'Digital Engagement Network' set up as part of PB Scotland populated with resources.
- **30 June 2021** - A final report capturing key learning, challenges, barriers and a set of recommendations informed by community organisations in Scotland for the future of communities and digital PB in Scotland

democratic
society

8

Who did we talk to

We spoke to a range of community PB practitioners, PB stakeholders and local authorities through either an in-depth interview, core community group workshops or wider PB network workshops to gather insights. In total, there were 7 representatives in our core community group and we interviewed 13 individuals. There were in total 73 people who attended the two wider PB workshops.

Interviews

To get some initial insights we interviewed a mix of community practitioners and PB stakeholders as an individual or part of a small group of up to three people:

- Glasgow Disability Alliance (small group)
- SCVO (small group)
- Improvement service (small group)
- Open Government
- YoungScot
- TSI Moray
- Musselburgh Area Partnership
- Letham4all

Core community group workshops

We then explored these themes further in our core community group workshops comprised of a mix of community practitioners that had developed digital PB processes, used Consul, or never done digital PB but had ran PB events before (See appendix 4 for a breakdown of the workshops and tasks):

- TSI Moray
- Gorbals
- Leith Chooses
- Church of Scotland/Dundee
- Musselburgh Area Partnership
- Letham4All
- Leith Area Partnership

Wider PB workshops

We involved the wider PB Scotland Network to comment on our initial research findings over two zoom workshops on 24 & 25 May. Participants included representatives from 31 community and voluntary sector orgs, 29 Statutory sector workers that support community PB, 9 Housing associations and 4 funders. (See appendix 1 for a summary of the discussion)

Resources developed

As outcomes and deliverables of this project we have developed a series of resources to support communities in doing digital participatory budgeting. They are as follows:

A digital PB resource guide for practitioners which includes:
- A template privacy statement (this is what you could include on your digital platform or website, includes information about GDPR)
- A template communications plan (to help you plan out your marketing and communications for your PB or civic engagement activities)
- Facilitation & online moderation guidelines
- Collaboration tools for supporting your communications and sharing with other partners or people in your community. (*please note these are not participatory budgeting tools- more in the digital tools appraisal)
- A template technical induction plan (to help you support your citizens or people to get involved in an online process)
- A template digital tools guide for participants (an example of what you could share with citizens)
- A template online security & updates guidance for participants (an example of what you could share with citizens)
- A template using tools on different devices guidance for participants (an example of what you could share with citizens)
- Some guidance around security, verification & GDPR

'Ongoing' Digital tools appraisal on Airtable ([what is airtable](#)) which includes:
- 'Ongoing' means it is an online, publicly accessible resource that can be continually developed and contributed to, this is to ensure it can be maintained and kept up to date with digital tool developments
- Ideation tools & insights
- 'All in one' tools & insights
- Voting tools & insights

Further digital tools guidance
- Digital tools developer **workshop recording** [available here](#)
- **FAQ** digital PB tools from developers [available here](#)
- Resource covering some of the digital tools feedback and an example facilitation plan with how you could use free or cheaper tools to do PB from the user-journey & testing workshop.

democratic
society

Context of Scotland PB

PB is a way of making sure that everyone who is affected by a decision on how money is spent has an opportunity to share their views and listen to others. It provides a space (online and/or face to face events) for sharing information and for everyone involved to develop their knowledge about how public finances work. PB is a way for people who live and work in communities to work together to make sure that public money is used to achieve the best possible results.

Done well, PB helps to:

- build strong relationships between people, communities and public organisations.
- Build trust between people and make joint action possible.
- Encourage democratic participation by reducing barriers to involvement and making sure that everyone who wants to take part can do so.
- Target resources to where they are most needed.
- Make sure that everyone who is affected can see how decisions about budgets are taken, how money is spent, and what happens as a result.

PB is about shifting the balance of power towards communities, helping to create a Scotland that is fairer and more prosperous. The current pandemic has put a lot of things on hold, but we now need to consider how we can involve our communities in the discussions about 'Building Back Better'. We will get back to face to face events but for now we will have to continue to consider digital approaches to engage our communities.

Over the last 4 years The Scottish Government has committed £7m (investment and support) to participatory budgeting and enabled over 122,000 voters to have a direct say in the dispersal of £6.6m at local events from the Borders to Orkney and funding local priorities from reducing the cost of a school day, funding the local U14 football team, upgrading the changing facilities at the local rugby club so that girls and young women can join in, buying a boiler for the community centre, supporting the development of grassroots mental health services to funding initiatives to improve the lives of homeless people.

Other funders of PB in Scotland include health and social care, wind farms and charitable trusts. While the impact of PB has been largely positive there is always more work to be done to increase the engagement of communities.

Participatory Budgeting in Scotland also involves **Mainstream PB** which requires communities participating in decisions about the allocation of local resources and budgets. In Scotland, local authorities have committed to allocating at least 1% of their

democratic
society

budgets through participatory budgeting, this is known as Mainstream PB. Mainstream PB differs from small grants PB which typically involves a 'pot' of money awarded on a project basis, instead Mainstream PB seeks to ensure all departments and services across a council engage local people in how resources and funding are used on an annual basis. An example of Mainstream PB is a council working with the local community to invest resources (e.g. staff time or budgets to improve roads, parks or green spaces) into areas which are jointly identified by the community as being a priority. Through Mainstream PB the local community participates in defining priorities, strategic decision making and planning.

The importance and breadth of PB is demonstrated by Open Government which states that PB, like other methods of participatory decision making, must also have an ethical lens *"PB has to be a meaningful amount of money and not hidebound by such restrictions that it's meaningless. It needs to be properly deliberative and include an assessment of the impact that will be made." -Open Government*

We explored

As a team with existing experience working with communities in Scotland on digital PB, we ran a team workshop to explore what our current understanding of the community context is. This meant:

- Defining our understanding of the issues
- Defining our assumptions of what community needs are
- Exploring if we could reverse the issue and solve the challenges (what would an ideal situation look like?)

This then helped us to define the key lines of enquiry and what questions we might ask to get results. (see Appendix 2 – Key Lines of enquiry Graphic)

We identified 5 key themes with a range of questions (see Appendix 3 for full range of questions) to help develop the discussions further, these were:

Theme 1:	What are the issues and challenges for PB practitioners in the community/voluntary sector?
Theme 2:	What are the experience and support needs around digital PB?
Theme 3:	How is Consul working for communities?

Theme 4	What are communities & PB stakeholders partnership experiences?
Theme 5:	How can we ensure digital democracy & accessibility?

We discovered: key findings that inform the set of recommendations

We discovered a set of insights that inform the recommendations outlined above through running a combination of interviews and workshops with community PB practitioners (third sector organisations, neighbourhood councils, local area partnerships, housing associations) and PB stakeholders across Scotland. This section explores the key needs and opportunities highlighted from the workshops and interviews.

Why might communities do digital PB?

There are lots of reasons to why digital can improve participation and throughout the pandemic has shown that there has been a built familiarity with using digital tools meaning there is a bigger potential for digital PB right now. Digital can make it easier to take part for many and expands reach, saves time and money, and opens up new ways of taking part like just using the chat on a zoom call. Money saved can be invested in reaching other groups.

Digital was highlighted as a means to enable different paths for participation and engagement with people. Before the pandemic, there were huge levels of digital exclusion and getting people involved in participatory budgeting was notably challenging and exclusionary to some. With the world being pushed to online working and communication, there has been a drive to keep people engaged and minimise social isolation; Glasgow Disability Alliance (GDA) as an example have been running a huge training and support programme for their members to ensure there are options and opportunities to get online. This has transformed many people's lives in being able to communicate with friends and family and interact and engage with decision-making processes during the crisis. Using Zoom to host conversations in breakout rooms, participants noted that because they are forced to interact with different people, *"people from totally different walks of life who probably wouldn't flock to the same table in real life have become close friends because of Zoom"-GDA,* therefore building new relationships.

Although there has previously been this underlying tension between using an online platform or online method versus in-person processes, allowing both options can enable more people to participate in different ways and the way that suits them the most; *"tension between using an online platform versus in-person processes, trying to respect the decisions participants make. But switching to digital enabled more people to participate in different ways" -TSI Moray.* Having parallel pathways and different creative ways of communicating can support in tackling inequalities and widen access. For example, GDA raised that *"physical or mental health conditions previously barred many people from participating, but now many are connecting and thriving"-GDA.* With thanks

to digital support programmes, online confidence has grown. Digital inequalities, illiteracy and other barriers are still there and important to consider helping people take advantage of digital opportunities, however, digital can bring new methods and useful resources to participation, e.g. using emojis, written, verbal.

Digital can expand reach because it can remove the need for having a set time and physical place - you can keep an online process going for a longer period of time, for example if you have an idea generation platform or voting platform. For instance, young people may not be able to get the time away from school, studying or seeing their friends (their priorities), however they may have the time and willingness to participate and provide their views in the same process through an online platform that isn't restrictive to a time or physical place. Digital can enable more people to take part, including those unable to take part in person due to access, confidence issues, work and other commitments.

Digital can also save money depending on the design of the process, because you may not need to pay for a physical venue and event costs, and tasks such as counting up votes can become automated. However, using digital is not free and can come with other associated costs such as the tool itself if it is not free, training the practitioners and providing digital support to the community in using the tool. *"The money saved (from using a digital PB process) should be used to target disengaged groups"- community practitioner*

Notably those communities who have initially used in-person processes and then added a digital element have increased participation and the amount of people voting on projects; *"when we moved online we had more votes than we ever had" -Gorbals* and having a blended model- with online and in-person was a good approach for the future, for example, not just online or just in-person.

What it's like for community practitioners delivering PB currently

Practitioners face the challenges of funding, capacity and time constraints when it comes to delivering a meaningful process with people as well as challenges around setting up and using a digital tool to enhance their PB processes.

Lone working, funding & capacity

Community PB practitioners often work alone or in small teams which means that they do not always have the digital skills to develop existing tools and ensure that it is well marketed, understood by the community and moderated well. They don't have the funding or knowledge to buy the right PB platform. When community PB practitioners run PB they often put in long hours online and offline/in person to ensure that the

process runs without a hitch and people are supported to discuss and vote on their priorities.

The barriers, highlighted by practitioners, to running effective PB processes are infrequent funding which means they don't always have the support in place to run inclusive and engaging processes or support the development of skills for staff and volunteers. This can be frustrating when they have a good understanding of what they need and how they could facilitate a good process for their communities.

LONE WORKER

PB Practitioners often work alone or in very small teams which can create a lot of pressure to develop and use digital tools effectively. Developing digital skills, accessing funding and evaluating competing digital platforms can be overwhelming.

"I think that ongoing there needs to be resources in terms of support for PB - but to do PB it needs sustained funding. In our area there is none and so nothing happens unless we can apply for external funding or if one of the big funders make PB part of their process for making decisions about their funding pots."- community practitioner

"[We] need funding to pay for hosting or someone with great technical and coding expertise to build the platform from the Open Source data" -Gorbals

The costs and associated training in using a digital tool are notably one of the other big challenges. Small PB processes do not require complicated digital tools because there are multiple free resources available which can be used in tandem to support PB. Larger online PB systems are valuable for bigger processes e.g. at a local authority level or multiple communities where there are larger numbers of people to reach and a budget, staff and expertise to support the process.

Community practitioners have highlighted the need for consistent year on year funding - this will support communities to plan and design their PB processes with more confidence and creativity as PB rolls on a regular basis within their community. Ongoing funding will support PB practitioners to design and implement PB at a local level.

CONTINUOUS FUNDING

Need for ongoing funding. Infrequent funding reduces the capacity for PB practitioners to run inclusive and engaging processes and impacts on the knowledge and PB skills development of staff and volunteers.

"Access of tools is hard- don't always have the budget to buy a fancy tool. Budget is usually where there's a desire for doing PB and doing decisions in a different way." -TSI Moray.
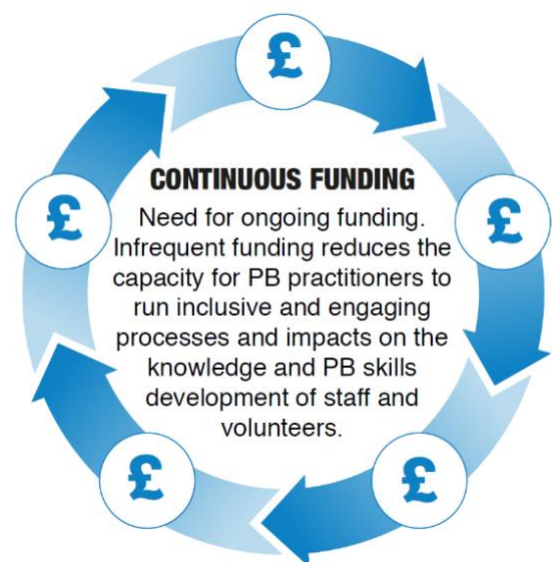
Community practitioners have highlighted the need for continuous funding and long-term financial investment, with increased access to devices, wi-fi, data bundles and software for PB and having support such as *"a skilled Digital Officer shared across several small charities to build capacity would be helpful to develop digital presence in communities. A funding package from a funder is needed here."- Letham.* This means planning and design could be done more cleverly in preparation of each PB phase. There is also a need for a support group around them; this point relates to partnership and collaboration explored later in the report, however local partners (volunteers, local authority and other community organisations) are key in terms of getting the local community on board and will help support the design and direction of the process.

Communities, volunteers and paid staff need to know that PB is not just a 'one off' exercise. For this to change there is a further opportunity for the *"Scottish Government to support a platform that a community organisation (not excluding but including TSIs) could use or offer to groups to use to run PB processes, so that the community and third sector are not charged huge amounts for a robust secure platform, nor tied to Consul, so that we have some choice and can experience/offer greater opportunities for community empowerment in relation to communities of identity and place (that power and resources don't run always top down through LAs first, that TSIs really can play a key role, and for power to be dispersed a bit more widely to help community and third sector work in partnership with one another and LA's or other statutory bodies through healthier power dynamics)."- TSI Moray*

Skills & support

Currently there is a skills gap around digital accessibility and more in-depth digital literacy including being able to set up and adapt a digital tool. This goes even further with the lack of coding or IT experience across the nation. Most communities do not have access to people with IT expertise who can support these processes. Community practitioners often work alone which means they learn by doing but this can be a stressful experience where things go wrong and there is no one to fall back on or support.

Community practitioners highlighted the following as being useful:

- *"We really need more support at community level to explore digital PB, a resource outlining each tool would be great but I think it would come in to its own with practical examples. Would it be possible to do this from a website? Showing digital tools, digitally to give people the opportunity to test and try them. By which I mean, something we've developed rather than the standard demos which aren't always particularly useful. Would we be able to negotiate with developers in some way, e.g. if we include their tool and someone picks it up as a result they get some sort of discount...maybe wishful thinking but in my experience these things are rarely free." - Community practitioners*

- *"Best Practice guides are helpful and also perhaps methods or tools for breaking the PB process down for those who haven't heard of it or engaged in it before across the community." - Community practitioners*

There is a need for a support group. This ties into the Digital Learning Network and how it can be most useful to community practitioners on the ground doing the work; *"active facilitation is key, whether it be subject matter expertise or expertise for getting the most out of the platform you're using. The danger with PB is that every process is set up from scratch. You need connectors and central resources, so that the focus isn't the tool but the topic you're supposed to be discussing." -Improvement Service.*

PB SUPPORT

There is a need for support to help PB practitioners to design, steer and coordinate the digital PB process with the wider involvement of the community.

Community practitioners have highlighted access to free technical support, more training on security, GDPR and different software options, practice and resources to support the process. Access to resources should be supported by a team of knowledgeable experts that can develop bitesize, accessible materials. The support can advise PB practitioners and communities that want to do more with new software. There is also an opportunity here for an IT/digital working group in Scotland where there can be a network or place for communities to draw on digital IT support when they need it. Support and training for PB could allow people to explore different options, and involve communities in the design process.

Participation barriers

Participation barriers to online PB were highlighted in interviews and by the core group. Having access to Wi-Fi and broadband, printing, iPad or tablets for members of the community and addressing digital literacy and digital poverty is a requirement before you can digitally engage people. We need to meet people where they are at and provide support and tools. This means that organisations need to communicate that people can still participate using their phones to call in responses where there is no internet connection and having alternative options-

ADDRESSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Addressing the digital divide is a priority for most communities. Having access to WIFI, broadband, printing, ipads is a way to address digital literacy and is a necessary step before you can fully engage the community in digital PB.

allowing options like this can support in building community participation and confidence for next time.

Being online can be overwhelming if you are not a digital native and starting with phone coaching has been an effective method for GDA. The *"biggest thing is raising confidence - reassuring people that they're not too old, disabled too stupid to learn - lots of internalised issues. Being very patient and supporting, taking people at their level and not assuming anything. Discover many people who have a literacy or visual impairment challenge that hasn't been disclosed before."- GDA.* GDA's suggested investing in brands that offer accessibility e.g voiceover, and also having a digital chat channel where they can throw in problems if they get stuck and get advice from colleagues has been helpful so between them they can usually find a solution.

Providing support and making people aware of what support is out there from others is part of digital empowerment, but crucially it was also highlighted that there's a lack of willingness from partners to acknowledge just how much support people actually need to take part in an online or PB process; *"talking to people about what they need is important. It's funding dependent too - to be able to offer coaching in languages other than English to reach people who're already isolated is important. Supporting asylum seekers in French, Kurdish and Urdu has been amazing…" -GDA.* There is room for further exploration around setting up a dedicated service for an online platform that can be kept running. There is potential for funding to put in place skills training and preventing online participation barriers, (wi-fi, coaching, data bundles, devices, support) viewing these things as fundamental and upskilling local communities through their digital processes by running things like *"design Panel(s) - listened to peoples' priorities and how they wanted to design the process and find out about barriers."- GDA* This could develop into best practice in preventing participation barriers whilst also making it a meaningful, accessible process for people.

Digital tools overview

Communities have highlighted a desire for their own digital platform that is not going to limit them and where they can be part of the development or design to ensure it is accessible and flexible and easy to use to suit their community needs; *"we're keen for a tool / platform where we feel valued and supported to take part in the development of the platform. I'm not going to push for us to take part if we don't have support, and risk making the process stressful or unhelpful for people" -TSI Moray.*

There is also a collective understanding around tools from community practitioners that *"there isn't one (digital) tool that suits everything- smaller or simpler tools suit smaller processes and larger more sophisticated tools suit larger processes"- community practitioner.*

Communities also highlighted design in digital PB as playing a part in existing exclusions, for example by having lower security requirements such as not having to fill in lots of personal information, this could improve accessibility for people to get involved and participate. There is therefore the challenge of balance in getting it right with a digital

tool; they typically can't meet every need unless at a high cost e.g *"cheap vs broad [flexible] vs strong [security] - you can pick any two, unless you invest a ton of money and try to make a tool that can does it all, which is what Consul's trying to do. Perhaps we should be comfortable with flaws from the start and mitigate these rather than trying to make the perfect platform"- YoungScot.* In essence, good participatory budgeting tools need to facilitate positive civic spaces because *"once an online space gets a vibe, e.g. tumbleweed or pitchforks at dawn, it can be a fixed vibe for a long time" -SCVO,* however the perfect tool currently does not exist and it is ultimately down to the design of the process, budget to implement a tool, communication and distribution, support in place, moderation and functionality of the tool chosen.

Note: Appendix 1 has details of the key feature of a PB tool described by the wider group of PB practitioners drawn from the PB Network.

Consul

As part of this work we explored with communities and PB stakeholders what they know about Consul and if it is working for them in the current environment. Consul is the national pilot open-sourced tool being used across local authorities in Scotland but when we asked community groups, they either hadn't heard of it or were wanting to be part of the Consul journey to learn more. There was one community organisation with an understanding and access to Consul that said they *"didn't use Consul in the end, [we] used Zoom instead".* The PB stakeholder partners we spoke to who are more likely to be familiar with the platform also found that Consul hasn't delivered in terms of accessibility and security as of yet and has some more work ahead of it.

Community practitioners and PB stakeholders highlighted the following on Consul:

- *"Pre-pandemic, huge level of digital exclusion on PB. Accessing PB was very challenging and exclusionary for our members. Consul was the platform, and really difficult and inaccessible to use. Some members were unable to vote and had to get us, or friends and family members to help them. Others, their postcode wasn't recognised so they weren't allowed to vote. Lots of accessibility challenges."*

- *"Still feels enthusiastic about Consul but it hasn't delivered particularly for young people and the security elements around Consul aren't clear. It's good that it's Open Source."*

- *"Consul has dialogue potential but it's not fit for purpose currently as heavy moderation is key, needs a lot of online moderation because look at Facebook community groups as an example- lots of hate."*

- *"Consul didn't work with Hotmail email addresses, barred lots of people and made them feel frustrated and stupid. Undermines the work you do to build peoples' confidence and enable them to work independently."*

- *"Hoped to use Consul but wasn't ready- GDPR issues. Left with no voting or consultation hub. Advantage consultation hub is already being used so people familiar with it."*

Relating back to the point about building community support, there is also a need for local digital support for communities; *"I feel afraid to use Consul without Demsoc or PB Scotland or a trusted partner saying it's useful for doing democracy with local communities. I've damaged servers and broken things in the past because of the power it takes. If something fails, in a process with 2,000 people, I need someone to turn to." - TSI Moray.* Specifically for Consul there also needs to be more development on the platform including security and GDPR, geo-location voting in order to localise votes in specific areas and training in how to set up and use the platform.

Fit for purpose & adaptability

The general consensus is that communities require adaptability within a digital tool; whether that tool is a centralised, shared tool across Scotland or a one-off tool/s- the tool needs to fit the needs of communities to be enabled to run a process that suits the PB process design within the local context and scale, for instance the budget of the PB has an impact on what budget there is for support and digital tool costs they have. There is also a desire for communities to

MULTIPLE TOOLS

There isn't one tool that suits all situations. Smaller or simpler tools suit smaller processes and larger more sophisticated tools suit larger processes. There is a challenge in getting the balance right with a digital tool: they typically can't meet every need unless at high development costs.

have their own digital PB platform to ensure agency and freedom for community empowerment to do PB. It was highlighted that tools developers can have their own agenda and design when providing a tool and support (which doesn't always suit the Scottish or localised context) and there can also be possible restrictions and risk of working with local authorities; this is because different local authorities work in different ways depending on the local context and a one size fit all approach doesn't always work even within one particular local authority area. *"Across six different areas who share the same overall aim, there will be great differences due to demographics and local needs. There needs to be agency in design- city/rural there is a difference. Different local authorities work in different ways. So unless the Council is funding it itself, one-size fits all devolved funding approach which dictates what people will be deciding to fund wouldn't be welcome. What's important is giving the community the chance to decide what will be funded."- Musselburgh Area Partnership*

What came up a lot was not using over-designed tools and aiming to keep it a simple, meaningful process with people is a challenge- there needs to be confidence building with people and conversations to open up dialogue about what you're trying to do with them. Having flexibility and creativity in how you deliver things online is essential, and the best ways of working are when the sessions are centred around the people involved and what works best for them to participate and then working out access and providing materials in advance.

Using multiple or low cost tools and building familiarity with people can also be a useful way to build online confidence throughout the community *"lots of platforms; Surveymonkey, Surveygizmo etc. We need a preferred set of tools so users get familiar with using them...it doesn't need re-inventing...Sticking with tools is important for people who're upskilling themselves, so they don't get left behind."* -YoungScot

Accessibility, simplicity, fun & inviting

Whatever the digital tools used, the process needs to support people to feel valued, safe and be accessible for participants. Similar to offline in person community spaces, the tools need to be inviting. The tools being developed should include elements of what we love; fun and games to encourage participation and engagement. There is a need to support people to participate - practitioners won't risk making the process stressful or unhelpful for people. *"Online spaces for dialogue- allow people to play with the tools. We can develop the tools around stuff we love i.e making it fun and engaging. People need trained in Consul & tools - playing with it making it into a game."*- YoungScot

There is a need to test and co-design digital spaces with people, taking them on a journey from A-B, including what you're trying to do but how they can benefit from the space and how they can shape the space to be meaningful for them. *"Whatever platform is used, it's only as good as the networks, funding, training and people in them"*- Improvement Service.

This goes back to the idea of priority setting within a community and adapting your process or design to the needs of the people that are in it.

Digital tool dedicated to communities

Communities have highlighted that they *"would like their own digital PB platform...to ensure agency and freedom for community empowerment to do PB"- TSI Moray.* There is a need for a dedicated service to run or support an online platform for communities. This is because developers and/or local authorities might have

their own process/design in mind; *"developers have their own opinion of how digital PB processes should be but they come at it from a city-wide EU perspective when in Moray having 5 people come to a small neighbourhood event is great- completely different ball games." -TSI Moray.* Barriers to digital could also be further reduced by co-producing a community PB software or platform that is flexible and meets specific needs with communities. This tool should start by building on community strengths and responding to the preferences of communities rather than service providers.

"A platform that is free, that is flexible and can be amended easily for hosting PB processes in Scotland and viewing others that are taking place would be helpful." - community practitioner

DIGITAL PLATFORM
Community PB practitioners said that they wanted their own digital PB platform to ensure that they have the freedom to do PB in an effective way.

Partnership working & collaboration

The importance of partnerships and collaboration was highlighted not only for delivery but for learning and supporting each other through sometimes challenging processes. There's a need for local support; where people in the community can be supported in coordinating the project and getting the community on board but also a need for support in local design, steer and delivery choices. This relates back to the point that community PB practitioners often work alone or in small teams, therefore creating the foundations and space to have honest, open conversations with different partners can help add value to see things from different perspectives and provide the building blocks for strong working relationships and support. This could be done through advancing the principles set out in the PB Charter which encourages partnerships to do participatory budgeting together. It was highlighted that collaboration and pursuing a shared agenda based on the 'PB Charter' is where partnerships work really well and a desire for local authorities to connect and share better with trusted partners; i.e community practitioners or organisations doing PB work.

With PB, the objective is to connect people together, therefore local authorities who share better and include community organisations or practitioners as trusted partners means working together through using digital tools and getting security cleared to work in their online systems could make partnership working easier. *"We're left to get on with*

it. We have the council's trust...which works well" -Musselburgh Area Partnership.
Having a standard proforma for every council after a PB process is run could be a good
method for helping to learn what is and what isn't working around PB to create a
smoother, streamlined process for other community organisations and local authorities
for the next time. This would be useful because *"people want to be shown it could be
done"* however having that ability to *"see things from two or more perspectives...if you
can create good conditions...has lots of added value"*- TSI Moray.

*"Partnerships need forming, storming, norming, performing - it's a process and dynamic.
It's important to remind people at the beginning that it's a process, particularly when it's
online and digital, and building the confidence that we'll get there together in the end."* -
SCVO

There is the aspiration to share knowledge and stories more cleverly through linking up
and regularly updating learning and materials. This also connects to communities having
the space to work together, playing and failing with digital tools, practically testing out
methods and storytelling, however there needs to be investment in place for this to
become reality.

There is also a key point that there is not enough joined-up-working; although there are
lots of projects, learning and activities happening around training, digital, PB and
community empowerment, there are still silos and a lack of collaboration with this
knowledge and experience. For example, there are existing digital support programmes
such as from SCVO and the Digital Office for Digital Training for Citizens as options to
tap into for digital support needs.

A good example of community collaborative working under resource constraints is
Letham4All, who put out an online recruitment request and got 130 volunteers in return
to help tackle food poverty. They had a core distribution point and neighbourhood
coordinators (local people) who could coordinate where they live. Letham also used
SurveyMonkey but offered this tool and license out to other community groups making it
a municipal resource.

Communications

Related to good partnerships and collaboration is communications; a lack of joined up
working approach means that there is lots of knowledge but a lack of a *"knowledge
ecology"-Improvement Service* which means not starting from scratch but sharing the
learning and linking people to evidence so they are informed. There is a challenge
around finding a suitable platform or tool for everyone in the PB network as similarly like
a PB platform, the perfect communication/sharing knowledge platform currently does
not exist *"most community councils prefer not to use Teams. This is a challenge for a
knowledge ecology because it balkanizes knowledge if people are stuck in different
platforms"- Improvement Service.* However, connecting people could also be done

through sharing stories and human challenges through mainstream media and existing organisations. Mainstream media in Scotland has arguably not been used enough to communicate what PB is and PB stories; this could support on a wider public scale in making it real for people; *"Using the existing infrastructure to get the word out makes comms much easier too"- Improvement Service.*

"With 1% of Scottish government budget at stake, it's important to get it right and tell the story so that others can pick it up and get involved in PB. We're not currently seeing the flow of information we'd expect or like to. KnowledgeHub isn't doing the job of bringing people together by itself." -Improvement Service

There is also the point about communicating with people about the process, design and purpose of the PB itself, this could include making sure people know the security behind it, for example, *"yes it may be hack-proof but that's ok because you want to ensure a certain demographic of people definitely vote, whether they are voting twice is ok"-YoungScot*

On a really practical level relating to accessibility and participation, explaining and communicating clearly that you can offer access, language and digital support options to participate or people won't participate based on a historic understanding that it isn't available. Having multiple options for people to get in touch can help as well and ensure inequalities aren't worsened i.e through phone, whatsapp, facebook and getting in touch multiple times through digital and post methods. Importantly, by spreading this through the community through word of mouth means the trust will grow more than if PB practitioners do the outreach themselves.

Joining-the-democratic-dots

Looking at some of these themes that have come out there are some overarching points about joining-the-democratic-dots and feeding into wider change, decision making and recommendations back into the parliamentary cycle and regularly reporting across the political cycle *"e.g. across 5 mini publics across Scotland we discovered… Cumulatively this information could influence change. It would need a central mechanism. It ought to join up with the Local Governance Review"* -Open Government

Essentially, there are a lot of silos across different sectors in policy and there is a risk here that communities may run some meaningful deliberative activities and conversations, but they are actually not meaningful because it is not being fed into the wider learning, decision making and future cycles. *"PB is a route to institutionalising that participation, but it's currently not there, either because of the tech or the culture in how it's used."* Open Government

This returns to the idea of collaboration, communication and partnership, connecting into other engagement and citizen participation strategies and creating a culture of

participatory decision making by sharing and embedding the ideas beyond local authorities and communities and into schools, third sector organisations and health boards etc, perhaps by developing the way partnerships work, creating a shared agenda approach to reach a shared goal.

Appendices

Appendix1

Wider workshops with communities through the PB Scotland network

Digital PB wider workshops 24th & 25th May, 2021

Purpose:

As part of a feedback loop/process, we fed back what we heard to the wider Scottish Participatory Budgeting network over the course of two Zoom workshops on **24 & 25 May**. Following a presentation of the research we asked the 75 participants to respond to 3 questions using Sildo (online survey software) and had a wider discussion around the topics highlighted in the findings.

Key insights:

1. **How can we overcome the barriers for communities to participate in digital PB?**

Participants said that there is a need for training support and resources. This includes access to resources which support PB practitioners to learn about different software options and resources to support the process. Access to resources should be supported by a team of knowledgeable experts that can develop bitesize, accessible materials and support newcomers to digital tools and advise communities which want to do more with new software. Participants at the workshops suggested the development of a knowledge network of IT/PB practitioners would be useful to share learning and practice as Scotland starts to blend face to face PB events/meetings with online options. There is also a need for long term financial investment and increasing access to devices, Wi-Fi, data bundles and software for PB.

Participants felt that the barriers to digital PB can be addressed by co-producing community PB software that meets their specific needs - this should start by building on community strengths and responding to the preferences of communities rather than service providers.

There are significant accessibility issues which create barriers to involvement in PB, the group suggested providing funding to pay for;

- interpreters to support people who don't have English as their first language,
- to produce accessible materials for those with literacy issues,

democratic
society

- to support people to use new technology,
- To provide additional pieces of equipment that can support access, e.g. external keyboards, bluetooth speakers, stylus, wheelchair clamps etc

2. What support do those planning a PB process with digital components need?

There is a need for comprehensive resources and access to digital experts who can support community PB practitioners to the right hardware/software and advice to meet their needs. Participants suggested that there should be a mechanism to gather learning and support peer to peer learning by developing and supporting a digital PB network.

There should be specific guidance on equalities to ensure that the whole community is involved in PB and clear guidance on how to integrate in-person events and digital tools.

Communities, volunteers and paid staff need to know that PB is not just a 'one off' exercise.

A better understanding of promoting and marketing techniques (online and offline) would be useful to ensure everybody in the community understands PB and how they can get involved.

3. What are the 3 key features of an online PB tool?

Participants said that the key features of an online PB tool should be that it is:

- Accessible to children and family friendly, including disabled people friendly.
- Clear co-design accessible and inclusive tool. YouTube film clips with tips, advice, information, guidance – inclusive
- Be accessible for the 1.3 million people in Scotland with sensory loss. Should work on all devices and platforms - Apple, PC, laptop, Android.
- Be able to integrate the software with systems communities actually use.
- Useful functionality to compliment PB and different processes:
- Easy to use and understand and doesn't need a lot of administration
- Quick Polls/Voting options
- Open space for deliberation
- Will work across all platforms - phone, tablet, laptop etc
- A fun and engaging user interface which is simple and easy to understand
- Able to customise/brand it for the organisation
- Simple for all demographics of people to use, easy to set up
- Not complicated to use e.g. needing to have an email address
- Works on different platforms – smartphone/laptops etc
- Secure, supports transparency and is cost effective

Appendix 2

Areas of exploration
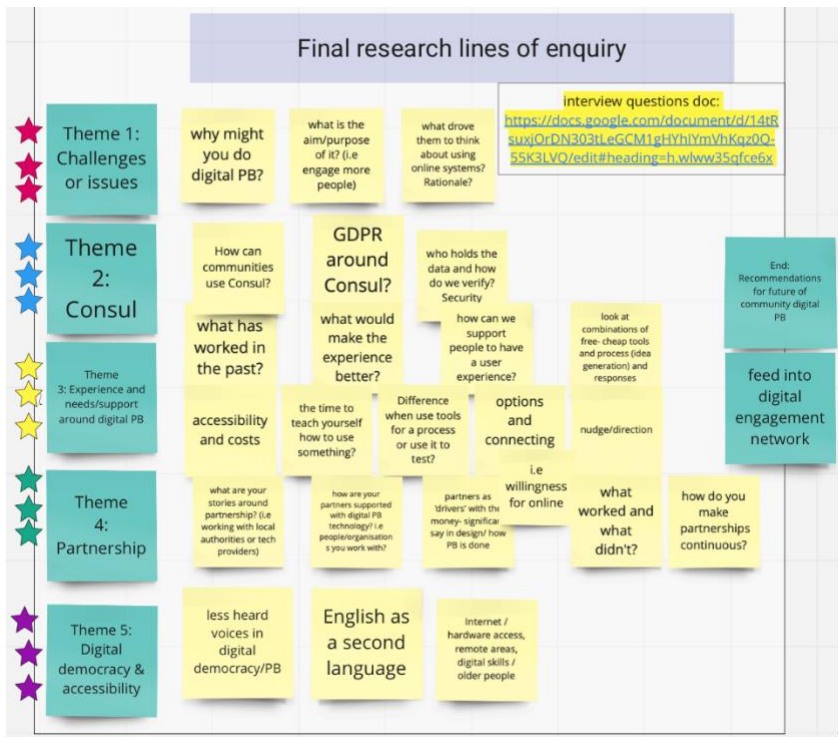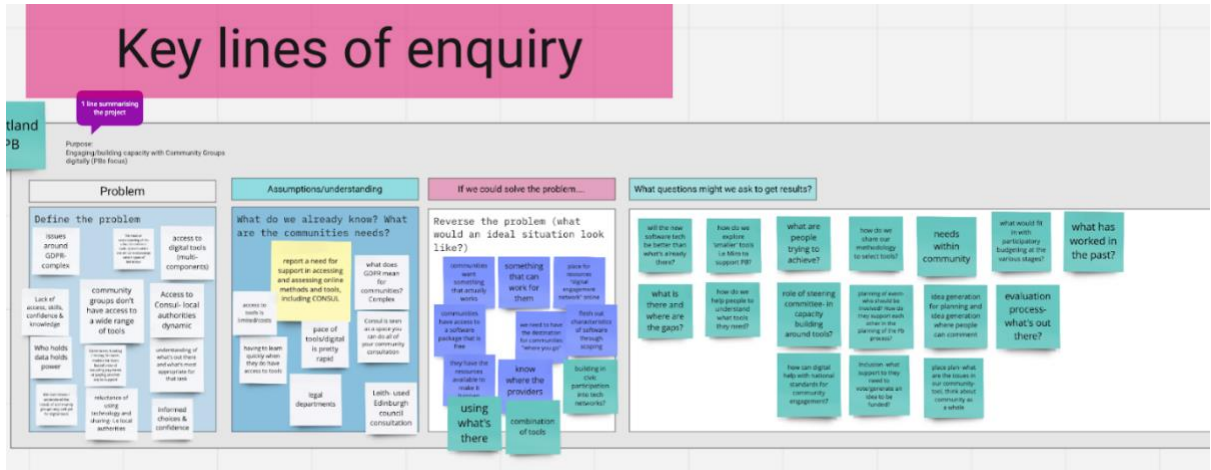
Appendix 3

Topic Guide for Interviews and Core Group discussions

Theme 1: What are the issues and challenges for PB practitioners in the community/voluntary sector?

1.   Why might you do digital PB?
2.   What is the aim/purpose of it? (i.e. engage more people or increase democratic participation)
3.   Have you used digital tools for PB or community engagement before? What drove you to think about using online/digital tools to do PB? What was the rationale? (or why not if your community has not used digital before?)

Theme 2: What are the experience and support needs around digital PB?

1.   What digital tools methods have worked well in the past?
2.   Where do you currently go for PB or digital PB support? What are your digital PB support needs?
3.   What would make the experience better?
4.   How can we support people to have a positive user experience? (testing using digital tools)
5.   What was the time it took to teach yourself how to use a digital tool/method?
6.   Was there any difference when testing the tools and actually using them in a PB process?
7.   What are your community constraints when it comes to accessing, buying and/or using a digital tool?
8.   Have you come across accessible, low cost tools? Have you ever combined multiple digital tools for your process? (i.e for doing different things; idea generation and responses options)

Theme 3: How is Consul Software working for communities?

1.   Do you know how communities can use Consul?
2.   What is your experience of using Consul?
3.   What worked and what didn't? Why?

Theme 4: How do communities work with partnerships?

1.   What are your stories around partnership? (i.e working with local authorities or tech providers)
2.   How are your partners supported with digital PB technology? i.e people/organisations you work with?
3.   How do communities work with councils in Scotland? i.e with the role of Consul as national PB tool? How can this work tie together instead of two

democratic
society

separate entities/processes? How can we build better relationships between local authorities/communities to work with digital tools for PB/democratic processes?

4. What is your experience with partners as 'drivers' in how PB is done? (for instance willingness to use online methods?)
5. What worked and what didn't?
6. How do you make partnerships work better or become continuous?
7. What would you like to see in a Digital Engagement Network specific for communities? How would you like to access and share community learning?

Theme 5: How can we ensure digital democracy & accessibility?

1. How can we make digital tools and democracy accessible/free/easy for communities? What are the qualities of digital that 'empower'?
2. Does digital increase access for everyone to democracy? What are the digital-specific inequalities?
3. How could we make sure digital works for everyone in the community?
4. How might we build in civic participation into tech networks?
5. How can we avoid (digital) participation fatigue?
6. How is Digital changing power dynamics? How can we ensure that democratic process confer real power to citizens? How are people's agency amplified?

Appendix 4

We tested: digital tools and a test digital PB process with communities
After the initial interviews we then ran a core community group workshop. We then gathered this information to develop digital homework tasks and a user-journey digital PB workshop for our core community group. The purpose is to test some of these tools with the group, provide some options and learning and gather their feedback on what the best practices and methods for communities are.

a) Digital PB initial core group community workshop

Purpose:

To bring a small core community group together (a mix of community practitioners with digital-to-no digital experience) to discuss and explore some of the challenges and opportunities for community digital PB.

Aims:

- Start a small core community group that will work together to test some digital tools and methods out together
- Provide a space fo communities to share their experiences and learning together
- Gather communities insights on their challenges and opportunities around digital PB

Learning outcomes:

- Hopes of PB building back after the pandemic
- Aspirations of communities for digital & PB
- Appetite of PB in local areas
- Key characteristics of digital tools that would support PB

Outputs:

- Feedback/insights for this report and wider network workshops

Participants:

8 participants from different communities: Gorbals, Musselburgh, Leith Chooses, Leith city partnership (different team), Letham, Moray, Church of Scotland, Annexe community

Key insights:

- Highlighted in this report

b) Digital homework tasks for core community group

Purpose:

We created a live google document with a list of 43 digital tools with as many demo's as we could include that could be used to test how communities might implement a digital PB process. This list included ideation tools, 'all in one' PB platforms, tools with event focus, voting tools and other tools that didn't fit these categories. The aim was to both provide some options and opportunity for communities to test these tools in their own time but also to collate their feedback and experiences on using the tool- whether they had already used it or they were testing the demo for the first time.

Learning outcomes:

Through participating in this homework task, participants will learn how to:

- Reflect and be able to self-evaluate the benefits and challenges of various online tools for PB, community engagement and decision making
- Use different and combination of online tools and techniques to support their PB processes
- Think about design choices they might make when running a process with online components and learn from other participants feedback

Outputs:
- Feedback on digital tools and real-world experiences from task
- A live document that can be adapted into a digital tools appraisal

Participants:

8 participants from different communities: Gorbals, Musselburgh, Leith Chooses, Leith city partnership (different team), Letham, Moray, Church of Scotland, Annexe community

Key insights:
- Highlighted in digital tools appraisal

democratic society

Contents

Figure – Democratic Society, 'Testing tools' community task:

c) Testing digital tools & user-journey workshop 22nd April 2021

Purpose:

In this workshop, participants will build on workshop 1 through a practical exploration of some digital tools that could be used at different stages of a PB process. They will go through a user journey and will have space to consider their community users perspective. This is an opportunity for deeper exploration of the needs, benefits and barriers to using different digital tools for PB.

The outputs from this workshop will feed this into phase 2 development of resources for communities, and into the draft final report and recommendations.

Aims:
- To build focus group relationships and get them working together to generate peer feedback and solutions, learning from the process together

democratic society

- To better understand the user journey and experience of different digital tools that could be used for community-led PB processes in Scotland, getting to grips with the needs, benefits and barriers to their use
- To use outputs to shape the next phase of resource development, including digital tools appraisal and example workshop plans for communities, and the draft final report and recommendations for further testing with communities.

Learning outcomes:

In this workshop, participants will learn how to:

- Reflect and be able to self-evaluate the benefits and challenges of various online tools for PB, community engagement and decision making
- Use different and combination of online tools and techniques to support their PB processes
- Think about design choices they might make when running a process with online components

Outputs:
- Feedback on digital tools and experience from pre-workshop task
- Feedback on user journey experience for each tool tested in the workshop
- Feedback on how different tools could be used in participants communities
- Feedback on needs, barriers and suggested improvements to tools and process.

Participants:

8 participants from different communities: Gorbals, Musselburgh, Leith Chooses, Leith city partnership (different team), Letham, Moray, Church of Scotland, Annexe community

Key insights:
- Highlighted in digital tools appraisal

Figure – Democratic Society, testing digital tools & user journey 'Who's Whoville' task Jamboard:

d) Digital tools developer workshop with Q&A 8th June, 2021

Purpose:

The workshop will be hosted on Zoom and offer a space for 5 digital tool developers to present their digital tools and ways in which they could be used for participatory budgeting at a community level (community PB in this sense is often implemented on a much smaller scale than at a local authority or regional level). Each developer will have 10-15 minutes to present their tool and some ideas on how it has been used, followed by a broader Q&A discussion with Scottish community PB practitioners. The developers that presented were from Consul, CitizenLab, Decidim, Social Pinpoint and Your Priorities and they were selected based on the diversity of being open sourced vs cost and that they were all in the 'all in one'

36

category type of tool for PB (which means that the tools could be used for multiple purposes i.e both voting and idea generation).

Aims:

- To provide Scottish community PB practitioners with more knowledge and understanding about the different options of tools that they could use to do citizen engagement and participation for PB in their communities and how they can access and use them.
- To host a space for Q&A and discussion with tools developers on some of the challenges and opportunities for communities in using digital tools to do PB (for instance, potential for co-design, shared learning or sharing a tool across communities & concerns around security, GDPR & costs to procure a tool).

Outputs:

- Presentations on some of the 'all in one' digital tools for PB and expertise and experience from the developers
- Q&A that informs a live FAQ for communities/PB Scotland network available here
- Recording of workshop that can be shared wider available here

Participants:

15-16 participants from different communities: Gorbals, Musselburgh, Leith Chooses, Leith city partnership (different team), Letham, Moray, Church of Scotland, Annexe community and more

Key insights:

- Common questions that get asked often that came up were around security and voting security, costs of a digital platform and feasibility of using the platform for example if working without IT support or a team. You can review the full list of questions and answers here.

Appendix 5

Feedback from surveys

a) Post digital tools testing and user-journey workshop:

1. What did you learn from the workshops and homework tasks? What was most useful?

What did you learn from the workshops and homework tasks? What was most useful?

7 responses

More about tools I knew, and more about tools I didn't! Chance to hear other people's experiences from a range of processes but within smaller group discussions and in main group, again in itself not too large. Large events can be great, but the group sizes for these workshops were really appropriate and worked well. Thank you.

Learning about the tools was hugely helpful, as I hadn't come across most of them before, and those that I had heard of, I had little experience of using so it was insightful to learn how they work and how others who have used them, have found them. For me, the knowledge around the tools has been the most beneficial thing, as well as the run through of a pretend PB process to show how these tools can complement the process.

The availability of the different platforms available and their different uses for both PB and the different stages of process from scoping, generating ideas and voting . It was also very helpful to take part in the various breakout discussions and activities so we could listen to all the different views, opinions and experiences. The homework helped provide a sense of the different levels of skill levels required along with potential viability and level of user friendliness. It also promoted my thinking on designing future processes.

Far more tools that I could have ever discovered myself!

I learned about tools I had not come across before - Padlet, Slido, Jamboard -and interesting to think about using different tools for different stages of the process.

The amount of tools out there ! This has been really helpful for me and I enjoyed getting the chance to play with them and undertake some of the tasks

The vast variety of platforms where pb can be used. It was most helpful to have practical use of these with tasks to figure out.

2. Would you take any of the tools/methods forward?

democratic
society

Would you take any of the tools/methods forward?

7 responses

Yes, I would select according to PB aims/process (or part of process) and good therefor to have choice

Yes, I plan to use several of the tools going forward, including Jamboard, Slido, Menti and SurveyMonkey

Yes There are a number of tools I would look at taking forward to assist both the planning process and PB. However I would have to give more thought in terms of cost v budget. Would definitely use some of the open source tools for planning. These include: Mentimeter, padlet,

Yes. I'm going to explore All Our Ideas and Social Pin Point.

Definitely. Probably Jamboard and Padlet first.

I think I would look at some of the tools for idea generation and also have a more serious look at Consul

I'll be diving further into CMNTY, Loomio and all the event focussed tools

3. We will have one more workshop in May where you will have the opportunity to discuss digital tools with developers and ask them questions. We can help you prepare questions in advance. What else would you find helpful to cover in that workshop?

We will have one more workshop in May where you will have the opportunity to discuss digital tools with developers and ask them questions. We can help you prepare questions in advance. What else would you find helpful to cover in that workshop?

7 responses

I guess these are just some thoughts on what matters: security, value of design, ease of use (without need for code to be able to set up a process as a community organiser), a platform that can easily embed into a website, a platform that can support a PB process in part or whole but that does not dictate the process, simple to use for voter and organiser. A bit about how to work with community organisers as developers and explore a bit the extent that they understand the PB process and some of the bits I value most (e.g. proposal development, deliberation and the connections people make through PB), again so as a developer they are not replacing the human beings who support these aspects but helps to make those aspects work really, really well. Paul mentioned gathering data to measure impact, that could be good to explore with developers too.

Any updates from folks who may have used the tools in the interim, although perhaps there won't be enough time for them to have trialled them by then. Also, hearing people's thoughts on what they might be using in their next process.

I would welcome this workshop (end of May if possible as busy work period first two week in may so ok daytime availability)and would like to consider the potential future costs and support/training that developers would invisage.

Live demonstrations of some of the platforms would be very useful. It was difficult to get a real sense of some of them from the demos.

I'd like a clear and authoritative explanation of what we can and can't do , as community groups, as regards GDPR regs on holding people;s personal info. (eg. when they register to vote and give their postcode and email address)

I would like to know how the developers propose to train/support people to use them.

Once we have the tools it would be could to think about the best ways to advertise a PB

4. What resources and/or support would be useful from Demsoc & SCDC going forward? (until end of June 2021)

What resources and/or support would be useful from Demsoc & SCDC going forward? (until end of June 2021)

7 responses

I would like to communicate with You Choose 4 projects about taking part in this project, and potentially identify some folk who are enthused about learning more or trying out digital tools, maybe you could support me with how to pick out an even smaller selection of the free tools to offer a mini local workshop with these project groups and/or others.

I contacted SCDC primarily to find out what tools are available online and also what others had been using, so for me those boxes have been ticked. I think knowing the current thinking around best practice is helpful.

A tool library which simply list the platform/software, the current costs, available support/training and its main use. A redacted version of the Google doc which is is a simple grid of these tools. Any knowledge/reports of pending/known improvement or upgrades for various platforms/software

Nothing I can think of.

Possibility of tutorial videos and 'templates' to help groups set up an engagement process easily.

I have really enjoyed hearing what the others in the workshop have done. Hearing their PB experiences was very interesting. I am very interested in hearing more , or an adiotnal session in using the tools.

Possible funding opportunities for the digital side of PB.

5. What resources and/or support would be helpful in the long term? (i.e beyond this project, from Scottish Government or decision makers). This will inform recommendations for our final report.

democratic
society

What resources and/or support would be helpful in the long term? (i.e beyond this project, from Scottish Government or decision makers). This will inform recommendations for our final report.

7 responses

Scottish Government to support a platform that a community organisation (not excluding but including TSIs) could use or offer to groups to use to run PB processes, so that the community and third sector are not charged huge amounts for a robust secure platform, nor tied to Consul, so that we have some choice and can experience/offer greater opportunities for community empowerment in relation to communities of identity and place (that power and resources don't run always top down through LAs first, that TSIs really can play a key role, and for power to be dispersed a bit more widely to help community and third sector work in partnership with one another and LA's or other statutory bodies through healthier power dynamics).

A platform that is free, that is flexible and can be amended easily for hosting PB processes in Scotland and viewing others that are taking place would be helpful. Best Practice guides are helpful and also perhaps methods or tools for breaking the PB process down for those who haven't heard of it or engaged in it before across the community.

The procurement of a suite of resources which will enable communities to engage more fully with PB either in partnership with Local Authorities or in isolation in a way that does not diminish the available funding for projects which can sometimes be self generated.

We really need more support at community level to explore digital PB, a resource outlining each tool would be great but I think it would come in to its own with practical examples. Would it be possible to do this from a website? Showing digital tools, digitally to give people the opportunity to test and try them. By which I mean, something we've developed rather than the standard demos which aren't always particularly useful. Would we be able to negotiate with developers in some way, e.g. if we include their tool and someone picks it up as a result they get some sort of discount...maybe wishful thinking but in my experience these things are rarely free.

I think we also need to find someone who has practical technical experience of things like SSL Certs and Cloud Servers to give advice and assistance to groups who want to use these tools but need support to build the foundation of the platform.

Free access to tutorial resources (via SCDC website?) and free technical support (from DemSoc?)
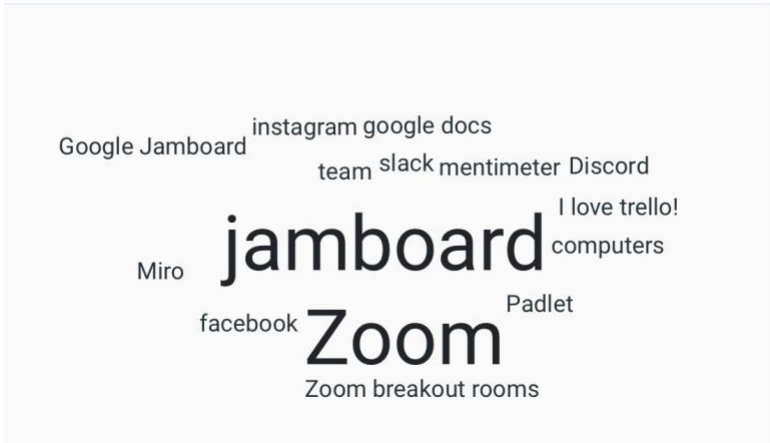
I think that on going there needs to be resources in terms of support for PB - but to do PB it needs sustained funding. In our area there is none and so nothing happens unless we can apply for external or if one of the big funders make PB part of their process for making decisions about their funding pots.

I think a decent blueprint or timeline for running PB with various external support contacts and examples.

b) Digital PB initial core group workshop sli-do:

What are your favourite digital tool/s for working with & for engaging people?

`0` `0` `5`

instagram google docs

Google Jamboard

team slack mentimeter Discord

I love trello!

Miro jamboard computers

facebook Zoom Padlet

Zoom breakout rooms

What are the 3 key features of an online PB tool? `0` `1` `4`

- Use plain English.
- Meets GDPR rules
- Agree security is paramount whilst transparent
- No complicated barriers to use, e.g. needing to have an email address, etc.
- doesn't need a lot of administration
- Can be used across a range of tools
- easy to monitor - multiple votes?
- Able to customise/brand it for the organisation
- Parameters to mitigate corruption
- Be able to respond to individuals where English is not first language
- Has the ability to allow debate

What are the 3 key features of an online PB tool? `0` `1` `4`

- A tool that has a survey, a discussion space, a voting element all in one
- accessible to all, fun and engaging, simple and easy
- simple, engaging and flexible
- 1. Survey (like a survey monkey) tool 2. A discussion tool 3. A voting tool
- transparent
- Easy to navigate and fun
- Easy to use
- Looks engaging, easy to use
- Accessible
- Accessible

What are the 3 key features of an online PB tool? `0` `1` `4`

- Simple!
- Secure
- Can be used with different platforms, models, devices.
- Assume no knowledge by person using it, therefore has to inform as well as engage
- transparent
- Free, easy to use and reliable
- not too time consuming to set up and use....
- Free, easy to use and reliable
- Flexible back end - able to change it to our needs
- Good on a variety of devices and browsers
- Making it look nice and very user friendly

For more information or insights on this project please contact Annie Cook annie@demsoc.eu and/or Paul Nelis paul.nelis@scdc.org.uk