

Increased Civic Engagement Through Priority Based Budgeting

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During last week's ICMA Annual Conference in Seattle, I attended a session on Priority Based Budgeting (PBB) that was conducted by Jon Johnson and Chris Fabian with the Center for Priority Based Budgeting (CPBB) (www.pbbcenter.org). According to CPBB's website:

"Local governments continue to face previously unknown financial and political pressures as they struggle to develop meaningful and fiscally prudent budgets. *Fiscal Health and Wellness through Priority Based Budgeting* is a unique and innovative approach being used across the Country to:

- help organizations assess their "picture of fiscal health"
- objectively determine how to match available resources with community priorities
- provide elected officials with clearly presented information that leads to better informed decisions
- **meaningfully engage citizens in the budgeting process**
- escape the traditional routine of basing "new" budgets on revisions to the "old" budget

This holistic approach helps to provide elected officials and other decision-makers with a "new lens" through which to frame *better-informed financial and budgeting decisions* and helps ensure that a community is able to identify and preserve those programs and services that are most highly valued.

Conversely, communities that have successfully navigated the fiscal storm will also benefit from Fiscal Health and Wellness through Priority Based Budgeting. By continuing to match resources with community priorities, **engage citizens**, and develop budgets that focus scarce resources on the most highly valued programs and services, this unique and logical process created by CPBB, provides an ongoing platform for high-performing communities to continue to be successful."

Throughout Chris and Jon's presentation, I increasingly realized that this approach to budgeting can facilitate a high degree of civic engagement throughout a locality's budgeting process. As

opposed to traditional type budget development processes resulting in a thick budget document with endless pages of line items that elected officials and citizens rarely fully grasp or understand, PBB seeks to simplify the budgeting process by emphasizing and highlighting how community priorities are reflected in a locality's budget through specific programs and services. Approaching the budgeting process in this manner facilitates transparency, communication, and understanding between staff, elected officials, and citizens. In turn, this increased transparency, communication, and understanding should serve to bolster citizen engagement and will ensure the budget more accurately reflects the priorities of the community as a whole.

I will be looking more closely at PBB in the months ahead as I develop the proposed FY17 budget. I encourage you to do the same!