

# How to Engage Disabled People in Participatory Budgeting



Global Hub for  
Participatory  
Democracy

## Why It Matters

At its best, **participatory budgeting (PB)** is a **transformative way to more equally distribute power and resources**. PB enables community members to decide how to allocate public funds, and to ensure that funds go where they are needed most.

But PB **without inclusion can exacerbate inequalities**. Without inclusion, community members who are isolated, marginalized, or excluded are less likely to participate and funds are less likely to address their needs.

*It's obvious when disabled people's voices aren't being heard because needs are not met.*

### Disabled People<sup>1</sup>:

People with physical or mental impairments that substantially limit their activities. This includes people with diverse impairments and conditions: physical, sensory, autism, learning difficulty, mental health, neurological conditions, etc.

<sup>1</sup>Or people with disabilities

When disabled people participate actively, PB is more likely to **reduce inequalities** and **increase social inclusion**. By engaging disabled people, PB can:

**Develop capacities**  
of disabled people



**Create a sense of belonging**



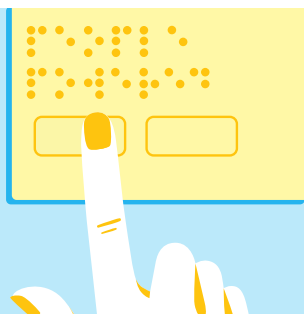
**Raise awareness**  
**about the needs**  
of disabled people



Creating inclusive presentations

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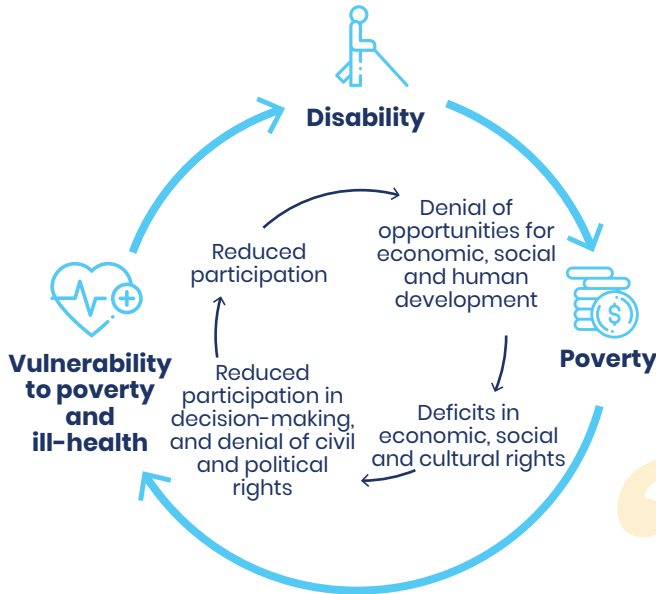
**Address problems and barriers**  
disabled people face



**Develop partnerships**  
**between local authorities and organizations**  
working with disabled people



# Cycle of Exclusion

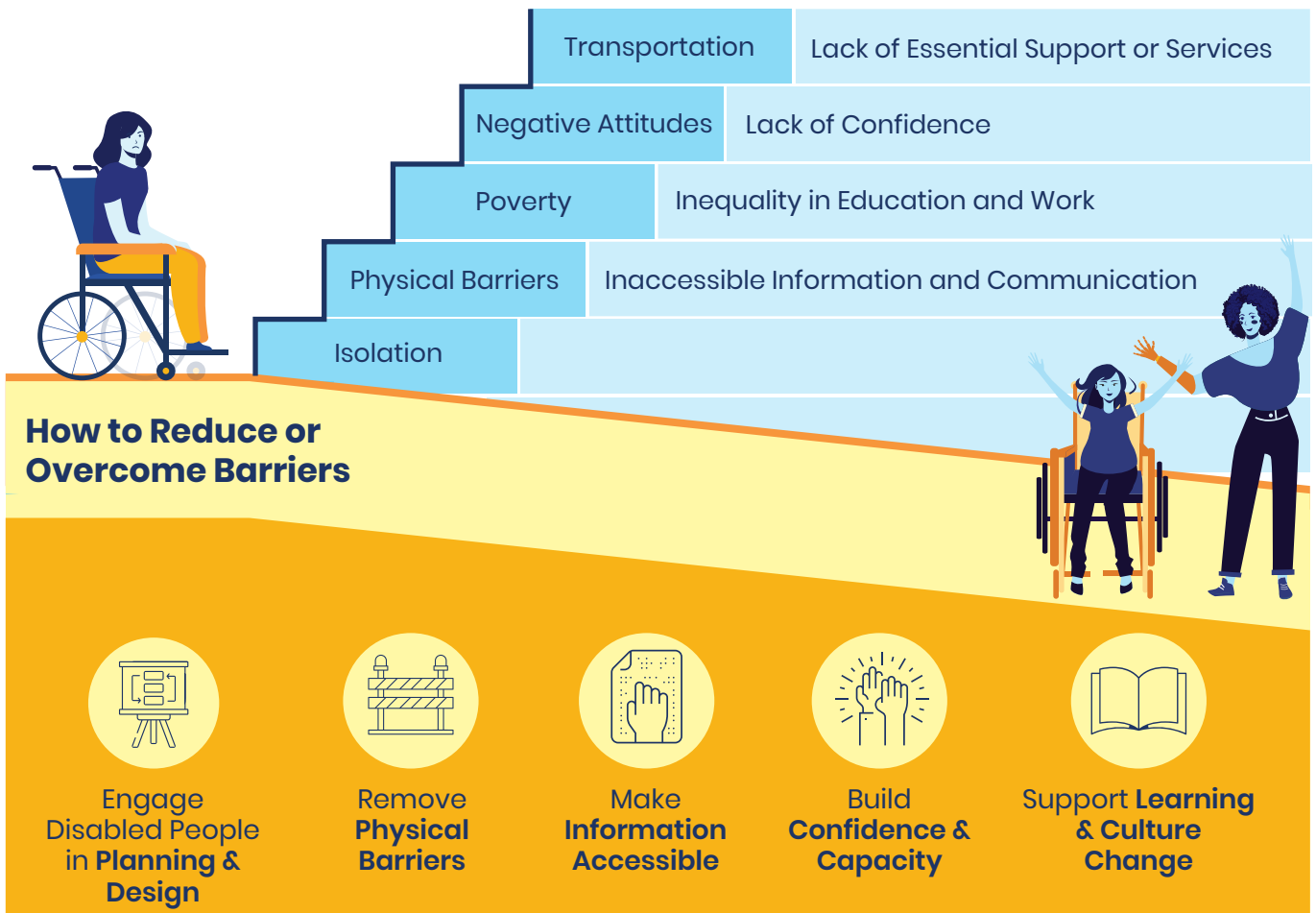


People with disabilities are often trapped in a cycle of exclusion. Barriers that exclude them also prevent them from taking part in decisions that could remove those barriers. This cycle makes it even harder to overcome the barriers.

**Major societal and cultural change is essential for disabled people to participate fully** – without realigning resources and being willing to do things differently, barriers persist and outcomes remain the same – or get worse.

*“Worrying about how I will be treated stops me taking part. In the past I’ve been made a fool of for not getting stuff right.”*

## Barriers to Inclusion



*“When you’ve never had choices your whole life, you need a lot more support to say what you think.”*

## Engage Disabled People in **Planning & Design**



- ☐ Include disability rights organizations in the PB **steering committee or planning group**.
- ☐ State in program **documents and rules** that engagement of disabled people is a priority.
- ☐ Include disabled people as **budget delegates or project champions**.
- ☐ Assist disabled people and advocacy organizations in **proposing projects**.
- ☐ Involve disabled people in information and **communication strategy**, developing materials, and planning trainings.
- ☐ Involve disabled people with relevant experience in **technical analysis**, finalization, and monitoring of projects.
- ☐ If projects are prioritized or selected using **evaluation criteria**, include criteria on whether disabled people are involved in or benefit from the project.
- ☐ On **registration and evaluation forms**, ask if people are disabled and what support needs they have, to track participation and concerns.

## Remove **Physical Barriers**



- ☐ Provide **transportation or resources to cover transportation costs** to events.
- ☐ Ensure **accessibility of venues**: level entrance, ramps, wide doorways, spacious elevators, and accessible toilets.
- ☐ Provide **support** for getting in and out of transport, directions in and around the venue, finding a suitable seat or place, and taking part in activities.

## Build **Confidence & Capacity**



- ☐ Provide resources for organizations to **provide direct support** for disabled people's participation.
- ☐ Convene **safe spaces and discussions** for disabled people to meet and contribute their experience.
- ☐ **Speak directly to disabled people**, position yourself at eye level, give them time to speak without interrupting, and ask questions if you do not understand.
- ☐ **Ask disabled people if they need help**, before helping. If necessary, ask what to do, then act.

# What to Do



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## Make Information Accessible



- ☐ **Share information** through disabled people and organizations that support them.
- ☐ **For materials**, use size 14 sans serif font, plain language, bullet points, horizontal text left-aligned, plain backgrounds, supporting images, captions, and positive images of disabled people.
- ☐ **For online content**, use easily scalable text and drawings, contrasting and bright colors, and easily distinguishable details.
- ☐ **For online meetings**, use captions, chat, and accompanying materials to make discussions more accessible. Speak clearly, use microphone headsets, and put non-speakers on mute.
- ☐ Provide **internet access and technology** for all people to participate online or via phone.
- ☐ Provide **sign language interpretation** if you expect people with hearing problems.

## Support Learning & Culture Change



- ☐ Assign a **person to be responsible for engagement of disabled people**, to build accountability.
- ☐ Provide **disability equality training for staff and volunteers**, to raise awareness and build skills.
- ☐ Use a **“test and learn” approach**, to try out new approaches and learn from them.

*When you have other disabled people supporting you, who understand and get it – you realise you’re a human being and you deserve better.*

## Next Steps

- ☐ Schedule a meeting with an organization that works with disabled people. **Decide with them how they can contribute to and benefit from PB.**
- ☐ Schedule a meeting with your colleagues to **decide how to apply the recommendations above.**
- ☐ **Identify a recommendation above that you can implement directly**, and make this change.

Content and quotes in this sheet are drawn from the Glasgow Disabilities Alliance and the World Bank Russia. **Access their reports and more resources at**

[peoplepoweredhub.org/pb-inclusion](https://peoplepoweredhub.org/pb-inclusion)