

**Location:** City of Los Angeles

**Issue:** Los Angeles - Community Participation in Budget Process

**Methodology:** Mixture of online surveys and facilitated discussion.

**Link to more:**

[http://www.lacity.org/mayor/budget/comm\\_participation.htm](http://www.lacity.org/mayor/budget/comm_participation.htm)

Unique among most California cities, Los Angeles has a vibrant and empowered Neighborhood Council system – it is part of the City Charter. Through these nearly 90 Councils, Angelenos are given opportunities to participate in their self-governance at the most local levels – neighborhood by neighborhood.

There are many ways these neighborhood councils participate in actual policy-making in the city, but one of the most interesting and encompassing is the annual budget process. This ten-month campaign begins with a “Community Budget Day” in October where Angelenos are invited to participate in a series discussions, meant both to inform and solicit feedback on the budget priorities for the following fiscal year. Shortly after this gathering, residents offer their opinions on budget options through an online survey. In 2008, over 4,900 questionnaires were filled out and submitted.

When this period concludes in January and the results are gathered, residents meet at local Neighborhood Council Roundtables to review the survey outcomes and provide their feedback again. Council leaders then meet with the Mayor in February to talk about the conclusions from the Roundtables. Following on this consultation, the Mayor makes his final budget decisions in March and April, submitting his proposed budget in April.

City Council Budget Hearings follow in May, offering yet another opportunity for public participation, and the final Budget is adopted in June. At each stage in the process, Angelenos are involved either individually through surveys and the “Budget Day” or through their Neighborhood Council, and the city website provides updated results on surveys, and event calendars, and budget decisions.