

Location: City of Walnut Creek
Issue: Public Budgeting Prioritization
Methodology: Facilitated Meetings
Davenport Institute: 2009 Public Engagement Grant Recipient

Like most cities in California, the City of Walnut Creek was hard hit by the recession and state budget crisis. Faced with tough decisions about the city's financial future, the City looked sought to bring residents into the conversation, to discover what the community valued as it made difficult decisions about types and levels of service that the City could provide.

To this end, the City embarked on a two-step Community Conversation "Balancing for the Future." The City first sought to present the public with big picture goals and receive feedback from the community about what achieving these goals might look like. The second step was to ask the community to prioritize these goals. The city planned to use this prioritization to allocate budget funds.

The City of Walnut Creek sought to go beyond providing community members with alternatives. Recognizing that they did not have all the answers, the city sought to share both power and responsibility in choosing and providing services.

The City implemented the [Priority Based Budgeting](#) (PBB) process, which includes both internal (inside City Hall) and external engagement in order to present residents with program-based budget goals. The process gives residents a virtual \$500, and asks them to prioritize valued city services against available funds.

Several PBB workshops were held around the city at various times to encourage turnout, and several hundred residents participated. The final report was presented to Council. Since that first implementation, the City has continued to use PBB as part of its Budget process.