

REIMAGINING SAFETY & SECURITY:

BUDGET TOOLKIT & RESOURCE GUIDE



LAW FOR
**BLACK
LIVES**

THE
CENTER
FOR **POPULAR
DEMOCRACY**

WHAT IS INVEST/DIVEST?



We must divest from police and prisons.

Invest in infrastructure and services that support, strengthen and keep our communities safe.



For decades elected officials have stripped funds...

from mental health services, housing subsidies, youth programs, and food benefit programs, while pouring money into police forces, military grade weapons, high-tech surveillance, jails and prisons. These investment choices have not made us safer and have devastated Black and brown low-income communities.

Invest/Divest demands a reallocation of funds from punitive systems to supportive ones.

Many communities have identified housing, employment, health services, treatment and transportation as key investments.

WHY INVEST/DIVEST?

Mass criminalization and aggressive policing harm and destabilize communities and have not been shown to reduce crime.

Study after study shows that a living wage, access to health services and treatment, educational opportunity and stable housing are more effective than police or jails.

The vast majority of municipalities spend huge portions of their budgets on policing, while comparatively little goes to services, resources and infrastructures needed to keep communities safe.

Community members and organizers across the country are fighting for investments in critical resources such as: healthcare, educational opportunities, affordable housing, transit access, and investments in youth.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

**ORGANIZE! ORGANIZE!
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YOU CAN ORGANIZE AT THE CITY OR COUNTY LEVEL TO FIGHT FOR A BUDGET THAT REFLECTS THE DIGNITY AND NEEDS OF YOUR COMMUNITY AND ENDS THE CAGING OF OUR PEOPLE.



What is a city or county budget?

City and county budgets determine how cities and counties spend money. They are passed every year or every other year. They are controlled by city and county administrators and generally passed through the city council (at the city level) or the board of supervisors or county commission (at the county level). They include input from mayors and county executives and municipal departments (such as departments of sanitation, education, health, corrections, etc.).

What parts of the city or county budget can organizers impact?

A portion of city and county budgets are completely determined by the local elected officials through a mostly public process. This part of the budget is called the "general fund." Community members can change how money in the general fund is used by building power and pressuring city councils and county commissions to change local budgets.

The rest of city and county budgets are made up of "restricted funds" or "individual funds." Although, it is more difficult to change how this money is allocated, because it is determined by state or federal law or state or federal grant requirements, organizers can impact these funds through legislative and/or administrative advocacy.

The amount of the budget that is general funds varies from city to city. For instance in Atlanta the general fund is 30% of the budget. However, in Baltimore the general fund is 68% of the total budget. The percentage of your budget that is "general funds" can be found in the budget.



WHAT KINDS OF THINGS DO CITY BUDGETS INCLUDE?

City and county budgets cover the costs of running cities. This includes:



WHAT KINDS OF THINGS ARE NOT PAID FOR BY CITIES?

City and county budgets normally do not cover:



While many city budgets do not fund public education, there are some exceptions, such as NYC. Other cities (for example, Baltimore), make contributions to the public school system through the city budget.

HOW DOES THE BUDGET CYCLE WORK?

The budget process varies from city to city and county to county but generally the process includes:



The budget process normally happens every year. However, some cities and counties pass budgets every other year.

The budget process normally is aligned with the fiscal year of the city, which is not always the same as the calendar year.

WHO ARE THE TARGETS?

Targets may vary based on the city or county. However, the following are common targets for changing the local budget.

CITY COUNCILS/ COUNTY COMMISSIONS

City councils and county commissions often have to approve the final budget. They also are often required by law to hold public budget hearings.

MAYOR OR COUNTY EXECUTIVE

The mayor or county executive proposes a budget that is then negotiated with city council. In some places the mayor or county executive has a lot of power over the budget.

DEPARTMENT DIRECTORS

Department directors submit their proposed budget before the budget is drafted. Department requests have an influence on the Mayor or County Executive's proposed budget and the City Council or County Commission's final budget.



What are opportunities to intervene in the budget process?

There are a number of opportunities to intervene and influence the budget process. Whether you organize direct actions, engage in advocacy or use other methods here are some key intervention points:

PUBLIC HEARINGS

City councils or county commissions are often required by law to hold public hearings where community members can provide input on the city budget proposal.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Normally cities and counties allow an opportunity for the public to ask questions about the budget and provide written and oral comments.

PRESSURE DEPARTMENT DIRECTORS

You can pressure department directors to submit budget proposals that include asks for additional (or decreased) funding that reflects your priorities.

PRESSURE INDIVIDUAL COUNCIL MEMBERS OR COUNTY COMMISSION MEMBERS

You can pressure individual council members to advocate for a budget that reflects your priorities. Additionally, in some cities council members have a small pot of their own funds, called discretionary funds, which they get to decide how to use. In these cities you can pressure individual council members to invest in initiatives or programs you want to pilot or expand.

PRESSURE THE MAYOR OR COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Mayors and County Executives propose budgets and negotiate with county and city bodies to finalize the budget. You can pressure the Mayor or County Executive to propose a budget that reflects your priorities.

HOW TO DECIDE WHAT SHOULD BE FUNDED?

Across the country people are building power, formulating demands and pressuring local officials to change what is in their local budget and even how it is created.

Below are some examples and resources about different communities waging invest/divest fights.

SETTING PRIORITIES:

Different communities determine what budget priorities are important to them in different ways.

TOWN HALLS

In St. Louis County, Missouri a coalition of organizations hosted a series of townhalls over a six month period under the banner Redesigning Public Safety. At the town halls community members strategized about what types of investments, programs, and services would make them feel safe. At each meeting organizers presented an analysis of the city budget, breaking down how much was spent on policing, courts, and jails. Community members overwhelmingly called for investments in community centers, mental health supports, and afterschool programs. The Pine Lawn Coalition, one of the coalition partners, used the findings to create a legislative platform and successfully ran on the platform in Pine Lawn pushing for divestment from police and incarceration and investment in communities. Since taking office they dissolved the Pine Lawn police force and are actively pushing for increased community investments.

INVEST/DIVEST COALITIONS

In a number of places a number of organizations have come together to organize around divestment from policing and jails and investment in services and programs that better benefit their community. Each organization brings a set of priorities to the coalition that collectively become the invest/divest demands.

Services Not Cells is a campaign run by ACCE-Contra Costa, alongside several other community organizations including religious groups and formerly incarcerated residents. The campaign calls for the county to reject the Contra Costa County Sheriff's proposal to spend \$95 million in taxpayer money expanding and building new jail facilities. Services Not Cells calls on the county to divert investment from jails into mental health services outside of the jail system, where it has been proven that preventive treatment can help community members avoid incarceration, live healthier lives and flourish in their communities.

CHANGING HOW BUDGETS ARE MADE: PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

What is it?

Participatory budgeting is a democratic process in which community members decide how to spend a portion of a public budget. It gives community members decision-making power over government funds.



1. Residents brainstorm for improvement.



2. Ideas are turned into proposals by budget delegates.



3. Residents vote for their favorite projects in their district.



4. Projects with the most votes get funded.

What you need to know and where you can find it?

Current Budget

You can normally find city or county budgets on the city or county executive website under the "Annual Budget" and/or "Operating Plan" tab, which is often under the finance department's tab. You can also google the budget by searching for the fiscal year and the name of your city or county.

Budget Process

You can find out more about the process and timing of how your local budget is passed on the city council or county commission website.

Public Hearings/ Public Comment periods

You can find out when public hearings and comment periods are on the city council or county commission website.

Your Priorities

In order to successfully change county or city budgets you need to articulate what you are advocating for and why it is important.

Where has it happened?

EXAMPLES INCLUDE GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA AND FAR ROCKAWAY IN NEW YORK CITY.

HOW CAN YOU DO IT (CHECKLIST)?

- Construct a research team to collect data about your local budget
- Map out decision making points in the budget process as well as decision makers and pots of money to target
- Base build on the ground to organize community members to advocate for participatory budgeting and then to vote on priorities that you propose
- Get in touch with organizations like the Participatory Budgeting Project who can help you develop and host trainings
- Construct an oversight and accountability team that can assess and evaluate the process and ensure that it reflects your values and priorities
- Advocate with local elected officials identified in the power mapping to get them to enact Participatory Budgeting

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL BUDGET

FREEDOM TO THRIVE:

REIMAGINING SAFETY

& SECURITY IN OUR COMMUNITIES : SUMMARY

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROJECT

- The National Advisory Council on State and Local Budgeting provides a framework for improved state and local government budgeting.

<http://www.gfoa.org/sites/default/files/RecommendedBudgetPractices.pdf>

- Governing the states and localities provides best practices in local government budgeting.

<http://www.governing.com/papers/Best-Practices-in-Local-Government-Budgeting-1432.html>

- With the resources in this guide, interested citizens should be able to understand what is contained in their local government's budget.

<https://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/pubs/releases/LocalBudgetGuide2010.pdf>

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT MAKES US SAFE:

- "Blueprint for Shared Safety" promotes smart justice strategies that increase safety and reduce costs by investing in prevention, education, and health.

<http://sharedsafety.us/>

- The Agenda to Build Black Futures is a set of economic goals and structural changes that could improve the lives of Black people living in America.

<http://agendatobuildblackfutures.org/>

- Vision for Black Lives

<https://policy.m4bl.org/>

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT STATE BUDGETS:

- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities applies their deep expertise in budget and tax issues and in programs and policies that help low-income people, in order to help inform debates and achieve better policy outcomes.

<https://www.cbpp.org/>

- Participatory budgeting (PB) is a different way to manage public money, and to engage people in government. It is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget.

<http://www.nasbo.org/about/about-nasbo>

- NASBO advances state budget practices through research, policy analysis, education, and knowledge sharing among its members.

<http://www.nasbo.org/about/about-nasbo>

- The National Conference of State Legislatures provides an overview of state budget requirements and procedures.

<http://www.ncsl.org/research/fiscal-policy/state-budget-procedures.aspx>

- The National Black Caucus of State Legislatures is an organization that assists policymakers collect and share the nation's best public policy practices with their members.

<http://www.nbcsl.org/index.php/public-policy>

- Racial Justice Action Center, and others, successfully advocated for the development and implementation of a pre-arrest diversion program that diverts people from the criminal legal system into community based services and supports.

<http://www.rjactioncenter.org/>

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ONGOING INVEST/DIVEST CAMPAIGNS



- Stop Urban Shield is a broad coalition of grassroots community and social justice organizations that have united against Urban Shield, a SWAT team training and weapons expo that brings together local, regional, and international police-military units – including those from the Apartheid State of Israel – to collaborate on new forms of surveillance, state repression, and state violence.

<http://stopurbanshield.org/>

Ongoing Invest/Divest Campaigns

A coalition of organizations in Atlanta have been engaged in a long-term multi pronged strategy to render the jail obsolete and to build community support and infrastructure that will better protect and serve all communities.

<http://snap4freedom.org/>

Maryland Communities United has been fighting for increased funding for community schools as an investment in real public safety.

<http://www.communitiesunite.org/about>

CASA is holding the city of Baltimore accountable in the city's efforts to raise \$1.2 million to pay an independent monitor to satisfy the city's current consent decree with the DOJ.

<http://wearecasa.org/who-we-are/>

Services not Cells is a campaign that calls on the county to divert investment from jails into mental health services outside of the jail system, where it has been proven that preventive treatment can help community members avoid incarceration, live healthier lives and flourish in their communities.

<https://www.facebook.com/ServicesNotCellsinCoCo/>

Youth Justice Coalition launched the Transportation is an Educational Right campaign to advocate for a free metro pass for LA County students and the end to youth stop and frisk, fare evasion ticketing and arrests on public transportation.

<http://www.youth4justice.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/8thFreeMetroPassCampaignReport.pdf>

NOC, Black Lives Matter Minneapolis, and other organizations created the Black Legislative Agenda and successfully advocated for \$35 million in equity funding to support job training and development programs, incubation for Black businesses, and increased funding for community schools.

<http://www.mnno.org/ubla>

In April 2017, two organizations, Urban Youth Collaborative and the Center for Popular Democracy published a report calling for the divestment of police and punitive punishment in schools and the reinvestment of these funds in youth services.

<https://populardemocracy.org/news/publications/746-million-year-school-prison-pipeline>

In California, advocates successfully pushed to ensure that the state savings from reducing prison populations as a result of Proposition 47 be used to create a special fund called the Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Fund (SNSF).

https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920160S8527

Californians for Safety & Justice, a statewide advocacy group, developed a "Blueprint for Shared Safety" in order to promote smart justice strategies that increase safety and reduce costs by investing in prevention, education, and health.

<http://sharedsafety.us>

Rooted in the D is a campaign that aims to divest from punitive housing foreclosure and other displacement measures, and invest in keeping people in their homes and allowing those who have been displaced to return to the city.

<http://byp100.org/>

In May Texas Organizing Project joined groups in 15 other cities to bail out mothers and caregivers for Mother's Day, and highlight the inhumane impact of discriminatory policing and the money bail system.

<http://organizetexas.org/>

Dignity and Power Now is in the midst of an ongoing fight against a recent jail expansion proposal in LA County and is demanding that the \$3.4 billion dollars that is being sought for jail expansion be spent instead on jail diversion, mental health crisis centers, and permanent supportive housing.

<http://dignityandpowernow.org/>

The Ella Baker Center, working alongside other members of the Justice Reinvestment Coalition of Alameda County, created the Jobs Not Jails campaign and has won a permanent directive to set aside half of the county's public safety realignment budget for community-based reentry programs that help people rebuild their lives after leaving jail.

<http://ellabakercenter.org/jobs-not-jails-for-alameda-county-0>

Last year, activists in Orlando engaged in a campaign to de-prioritize marijuana related arrests that could save over \$2 million in reinvestment funds to be used for critical resources, programs, and institutions that make the communities safer and stronger.

http://www.orgfl.org/our_campaigns

A coalition of organizations in St. Louis county, including MORE, OBS, the Coalition Against Police Crimes and Repression (CAPCR), ArchCity Defenders, Decarcerate St. Louis (a campaign of MORE), and the Ferguson Collaborative, hosted a series of town halls under the banner Redesigning Public Safety and from that developed a local legislative agenda.

<http://www.organizemo.org/> <http://www.obs-stl.org/> <http://capcr-stl.org/>

<http://www.archcitydefenders.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Ferguson-Collaborative-1657420974541402/>



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