

# Public Input and the FY10-14 Budget Process

## Budget Process with Public Engagement



Mayor Nutter at Dr. Doreen Loury's Kitchen

In order to close the \$1.04 billion projected deficit for FY10-14, the Nutter Administration launched Philadelphia's most public and transparent budget process to date. There were several components to the public outreach. Beginning in late January, 2009, there were five PhillyStat-style sessions on the budget. The first two "BudgetStat" sessions concentrated on a general overview of Philadelphia's demographics, economic situation, and financial structure. The following three sessions then concentrated on a specific area and its related challenges: Public Safety, Economic Development, and Health and Opportunity. Concurrently, each department submitted scenarios illustrating 10%, 20%, and 30% cuts, and their related

impacts. These scenarios were posted on [phila.gov](http://phila.gov) for public consumption.

Using these same scenarios, the Penn Project for Civic Engagement and WHYY created a worksheet of options that were representative of the choices that the Administration faced when addressing the deficit. These worksheets were used in four workshops held throughout the city. During the workshops, the citizens in attendance broke out into small groups, where they discussed and deliberated on the choices. Each option was assigned a point value reflective of its actual monetary value, using a scale of one point being equivalent to \$2 million. The object for each group was to reach 100 points, or \$200 million – the average annualized value of the five-year deficit.

In each of the groups, there was also a member of the Administration present who was able to clarify explanations, answer questions, and listen to the priorities and concerns of the citizens. Additionally, citizens were given the option to voice their opinions through video testimonials and the "Wailing Wall," where thoughts could be posted anonymously in the form of post-it notes. All of this information and data was captured and analyzed,



A group debates the pros and cons of departmental cuts and revenue enhancements at the Community Budget Workshops (Photograph courtesy of Patrick Cobbs)

and presented in a comprehensive report to the Mayor.

Additionally, the Administration sought input from three other sources – individual members of the public, the workforce and key stakeholders. Mayor Nutter embarked on a personal tour of the city, visiting diners, kitchen tables, barbershops and family basements to talk one-on-one about what the crisis means to Philadelphians and the city. The Managing Director's Office distributed a survey to the City workforce asking for recommendations on cost savings, efficiencies, and duplication of services. The survey yielded over 900 responses. Meanwhile, the relevant Deputy Mayors and Mayor's Office staff met in small groups with key stakeholders to give them the opportunity to voice concerns and contribute suggestions for handling the financial crisis.

All of these forms of input culminated in a final "BudgetStat" session in early March, where information from every aspect of the public engagement strategy was presented by the Mayor to the public and City Council. Using this input, the Mayor was then able to make the decisions that are reflected in this Plan.



The crowd gathered at the second Community Budget Workshop at Mastery Charter School (Germantown) organized by the Penn Project for Civic Engagement (Photograph courtesy of WHYY)