

# FY24 BUDGET CYCLE ENGAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT



Education, Engagement, and Impact Unit  
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA BUDGET OFFICE



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## Introduction

The City's Budget Office aims to transform Philadelphia into a City where equal opportunities are open to all residents, race is not a determinant of success, and diversity is elevated as one of Philadelphia's greatest assets. In support of this vision, the Education, Engagement, and Impact (EEI) Unit within the Budget Office engages the community throughout the annual budget process. The EEI Unit engages directly with communities that have been marginalized, disengaged, and/or disinvested in, historically. The voices engaged through this work help to shape the annual budget that emerges at the end of the budget process.

This document outlines steps taken in support of the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) Budget cycle, which commenced in fall of calendar year 2022 and concluded in late spring of calendar year 2023. This critical work helped to shape the Adopted FY24 Budget, which went into effect on July 1, 2023.

Budget engagement efforts conducted as part of the FY24 cycle built upon prior-year engagement work. For FY24, the EEI Unit took steps to expand who is involved in the budget process, ensuring that residents' voices have a meaningful impact on the City's budget. In practice, this translates into investments in quality government services and infrastructure, maintaining the City's long-term fiscal health, reducing racial disparities, and advancing equitable outcomes for all Philadelphians. This work aligns with efforts across City government to take meaningful steps towards achieving racial equity and with other work in the Budget Office to [better embed racial equity in the City's budget processes](#). This is critical as the City continues to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and begins to address systemic racism that has existed for generations.

## FY24 Budget Cycle Engagement Process

### Goals of Engagement

For the FY24 cycle, the City's Budget engagement work aimed to provide a platform to enable residents, employees, and the local non-profit community to better understand the City's budget. These engagement efforts with community members also provided a mechanism through which the Budget Office could collect feedback from participants that, in turn, was used to help shape the FY24 Budget.

### Focus on Accessibility and on Compensating Participants

Budget engagement staff focused on defining accessibility (ensuring that opportunities to provide input and feedback on the budget cycle are available to all Philadelphians) and strategizing about ways to dismantle barriers to access, thus increasing engagement with and impact on the City's budget process. By providing essential accommodations, including language access through interpreters and translations of outreach materials, and gathering feedback on accommodations prior to engagement sessions, Budget engagement staff were able to gather input from a diverse array of individuals.



## Budget Office

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

For FY24, Budget engagement staff continued to prioritize accessibility, conduct community outreach, increase the number of sessions, and compensate participants for their time and inputs. Taken together, these steps towards increasing accessibility increased the number of opportunities for individuals to participate, from 96 during the preceding cycle (FY23) to 513 during this cycle (FY24), with more than four times the number of individuals participating in the process in this cycle than in the preceding cycle. By increasing accessibility, participant focus groups were more diverse than in previous years. Fifty-six percent of participants identified as non-white/Caucasian during this cycle (FY24), an increase of 11 percentage points during this cycle (FY24) over the preceding cycle. The EEI Unit also continued to grow its relationships and partnerships with community organizations and other City departments, including Mural Arts, which grew its People’s Budget Office as part of the FY24 cycle.

### In-person and Virtual Engagement

Utilizing lessons from prior budget cycles, as well as from peer cities’ community engagement processes, the FY24 Budget Cycle Community Engagement was presented in a hybrid model that took the form of in-person Budget Forums, “grasstop” gatherings, and City employee focus groups held in partnership with local non-profit and community groups that work directly with residents and online resident focus groups. The Budget Office “grasstop” gatherings are designed to engage leaders from the local non-profit community to hear how their organizational priorities align with the City’s Budget priorities. By working with community partners and City departments, the EEI unit created content-specific presentations catered specifically to each community’s specific needs and interests.

### Language and Digital

The EEI Unit increased language and digital access in the engagement process. Specific focus was directed at Spanish-speaking, Chinese, immigrant, LGBTQIA+, and youth involvement to provide platforms for communities who had not been engaged previously in the City’s budget process. The EEI Unit continued providing translations in outreach materials in the following languages: Spanish, French and Simplified Chinese, which are three of the most frequently spoken languages based on recommendations from the Office of Immigrant Affairs. The Budget Office will continue to develop meaningful, representative engagement opportunities to expand the number of participants for future budget cycles.

### FY24 Budget Cycle Engagement Partnerships

During this cycle, the EEI Unit expanded its capacity, experience, and methods of equitable community engagement by partnering with various City agencies, including Mural Arts, the Service Design Studio (SDS) within the Chief Administrative Office, and the Office of Civic Engagement and Volunteer Service (OCEVS).

### Mural Arts: The People’s Budget Office

For the FY24 Budget Cycle engagement period, the Budget Office partnered with the Mural Arts Program and their “People’s Budget Office,” which was a fixed site located at LOVE Park from April 7 to June 1, 2023. The EEI Unit provided informational support, facilitated community engagement sessions, and worked with Mural Arts’ Lead Artist, Phoebe Bachman, to gather feedback and share resources.

Over the course of two months, the People’s Budget Office interacted with over 400 city residents across different age ranges, neighborhoods, and racial backgrounds. Much of the input from the community came from people who dropped by the “office hours” sessions at LOVE Park and shared their ideas on post-its, postcards, and in conversations. Additionally, throughout the project, the People’s Budget Office connected with grassroots groups across the city to amplify their funding priorities. The EEI Unit held three in-person sessions at the People’s Budget Office collected feedback from hundreds of visitors who participated in the installations activities as outlined below in the Feedback Section. To learn more about the People’s Budget Office, please follow the [link](#).



The People’s Budget Office at LOVE Park



Members of the public participating in the closing Ceremony on June 1

### Equitable Engagement Toolkit Pilot

The EEI Unit partnered with the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer’s [Service Design Studio](#) (SDS) and the [Office of Civic Engagement and Volunteer Service](#) (OCEVS) to plan outreach strategies and obtain resource support as part of the [Equitable Community Engagement Toolkit](#) pilot. SDS supports service improvement efforts across City government and OCEVS supports and amplifies civic engagement opportunities for residents. The Equitable Engagement Toolkit aims to serve as a compass for equitable community engagement within City government. The Toolkit provides guidance, stories, tools, and training on how to center equity in engagement. The EEI Unit participated in the initial pilot as part of this engagement cycle, testing and providing feedback on the usability of the Toolkit and its guides.

## FY24 Budget Cycle Engagement Findings and Priorities

### What we heard in the fall to create the FY24 Proposed Budget

The Fall Engagement cycle began in fall 2022:

- 26 Sessions
- 445 participants engaged
- Details outlined in the Fall Community Engagement Recap

### What we heard in the spring on the FY24 Proposed Budget

The Spring Engagement began in spring 2023:

- 5 sessions
- 68 participants engaged

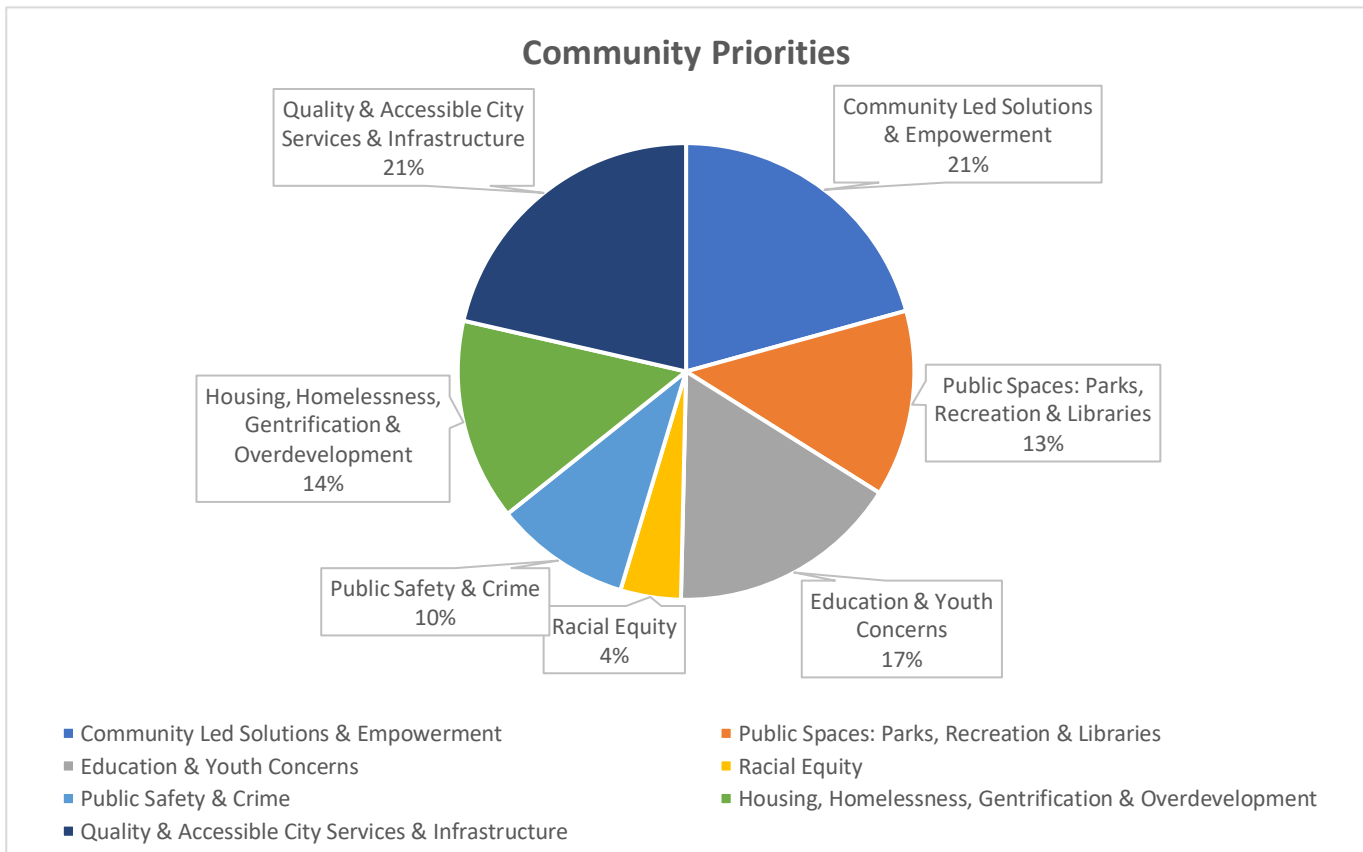
Community members, employees, and grasstop leaders identified seven priority areas during the FY24 cycle:

Figure One



Figure Two highlights the percentage breakdown of respondents across the seven community priorities.

Figure Two





## Philadelphia Voices Survey

The EEI Unit also participated in the City's spring 2023 Philadelphia Voices resident survey, a survey open to all Philadelphia residents to gauge their satisfaction and alignment with the City's operations and priorities. The following questions were posed:

- Participants were asked to identify whether the following is accurate: *I feel the City's budget is aligned with my community's needs.*
  - Of 800 respondents,
    - 328 (41%) felt that the City's budget did not align with their needs
    - 184 (23%) felt that the City's budget somewhat did not align with their needs
    - 136 (17%) felt that the City's budget somewhat aligned with their needs
    - 48 (6%) felt that the City's budget aligned with their needs
    - 104 (13%) were unsure
- Participants were asked how they would like to submit feedback on the City's budget.
  - Of 800 respondents,
    - 400(50%) preferred surveys
    - 224 (28%) preferred engaging in an in person setting (via in-person focus group in their respective communities, in person at a central location, or via in-person interview)
    - 128 (16%) prefer engaging virtually or over the phone
    - 48 (6%) were unsure

## Where Community Voice Aligns with the Adopted FY24 Budget

As previously noted, the goal of this year's budget engagement was to provide a mechanism through which the Budget Office could collect feedback from participants that, in turn, could be used to help shape the FY24 Budget. The investments listed below are examples of items in the budget that reflect community feedback.

Examples of investments include:

- Education and Youth Concerns
  - Added 950 seats and additional supports for [PHLpreK](#)
- Public Safety & Crime
  - An additional \$1 million to support public safety cameras
- Racial Equity
  - \$51 million contribution to the Community College of Philadelphia, including added investments to the Catto Scholarship
  - Investments in Anti-Violence programs
- Housing, Homelessness, Gentrification & Overdevelopment
  - 100+ additional Supportive Housing Units
- Quality & Accessible City Services & Infrastructure
  - \$60 million to support new paving and ADA ramps
- Community Led Solutions & Empowerment
  - \$5 million to support the Clearing Criminal Justice Debt fund
- Public Spaces
  - Additional \$15 million to Parks and Recreation to support programming and \$57.4 million to support capital projects.



## Lessons Learned

The Budget Office is committed to continuing to build upon prior years' efforts to embed principles and practices of equity into the budget process moving forward. Community engagement efforts are a key pillar of that work. Based on feedback received from residents, employees, community leaders, and grasstop members (shown in Appendix A), as well as learnings from this cycle, there are two main process-related takeaways for future cycles.

### Increase Transparency

Philadelphians who work for the City, community members, and grasstop participants asked for more transparency on how the City budget operates and affects their lives, as well as how they can best impact the budget and budget process. The EEI unit will continue to make outreach and education materials available to the public in various languages as well as working with community partners to ensure residents understand how they can best impact the budget and budget process.

### Increase Accessibility

While improvements to accessibility were made during this year's engagement cycle, there were still many left out of these conversations, such as individuals who speak other languages, are members of disabled communities, and/or are experiencing poverty, homelessness, and high crime rates. The EEI unit will prioritize partnerships with stakeholders and organizations that work with various marginalized populations to ensure feedback and input is received from diverse populations.

## Steps Ahead

For the upcoming FY25 Budget Cycle engagement strategy, the EEI Unit aims to deepen its relationships with City departments and community partners, expanding engagements to reach more residents whose voices have been unheard, historically. The EEI Unit will use the following strategies to achieve this goal:

- Continue to expand and strengthen partnerships with City agencies and Community Based Organizations to advance digital, language, and disability access and ensure a more equitable budget feedback process.
- Communicate community priorities to City departments as departments compile their Proposed FY25 Budgets and asks for new funding (November 2023-February 2024).
- Continue to work with City employees to continue Budget's Budgeting for Racial Equity work by educating City employees regarding the budget cycle and providing opportunities for feedback.



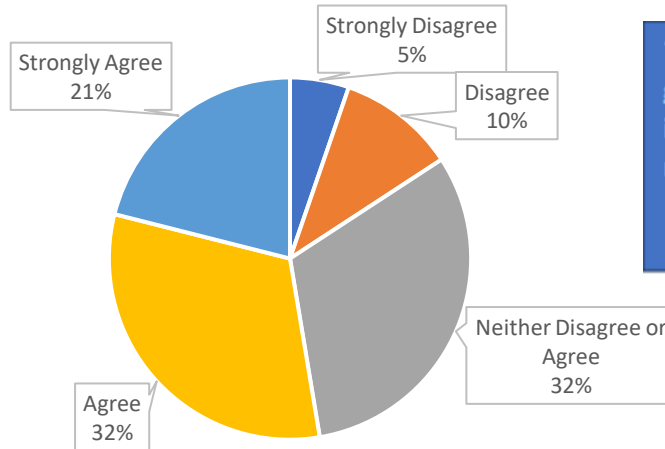


## Appendix A

### FY24 Budget Process & Engagement Feedback

To continue to become stronger at meeting community members where they are with effective and equitable engagement, The EEI Unit collected feedback from participants during the Spring engagement period. Feedback was collected from 20 respondents and made available in Spanish and Mandarin, as well as printed for members who did not have online access.

#### I feel that the City Budget and process is transparent for communities to review and participate in.



"This is a start but only that. I hope to see more in the future."

- Resident

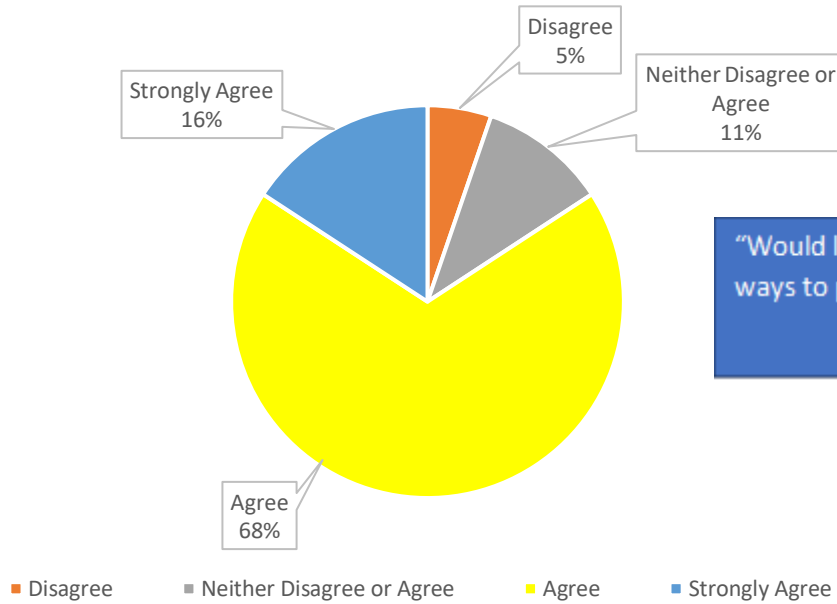
"Making the budget public is good but access to that information is limited by many."

- Resident

■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither Disagree or Agree ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

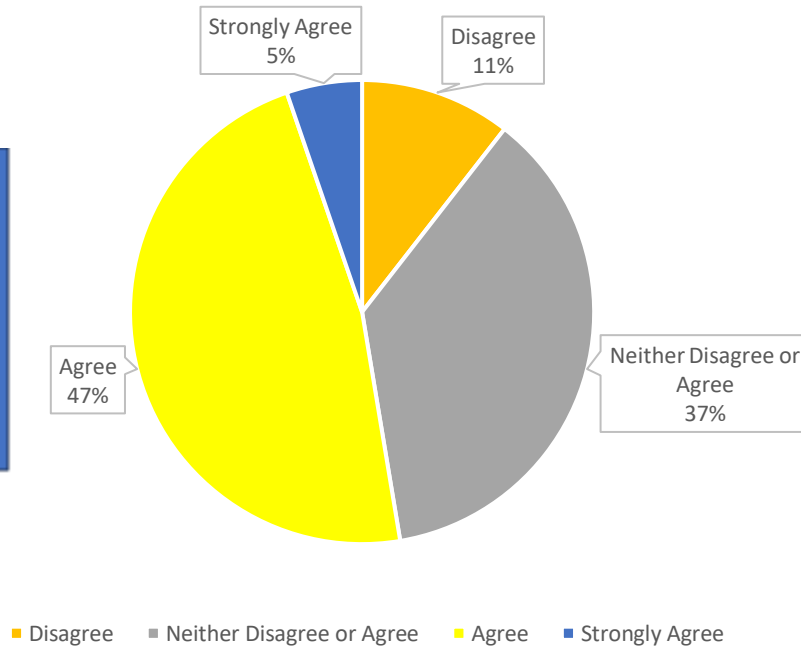


## I am more aware of ways to participate in the City Budget process.



**"Would love to know more ways to participate!"**  
- Resident

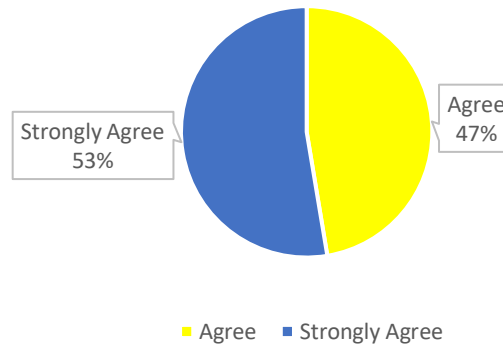
## I feel like my voice can affect how the City creates the Budget.



**"Public opinion only matters when city council and mayoral administrations truly listen to, have genuine regard for and utilize public input in their decision making..."**  
- Resident



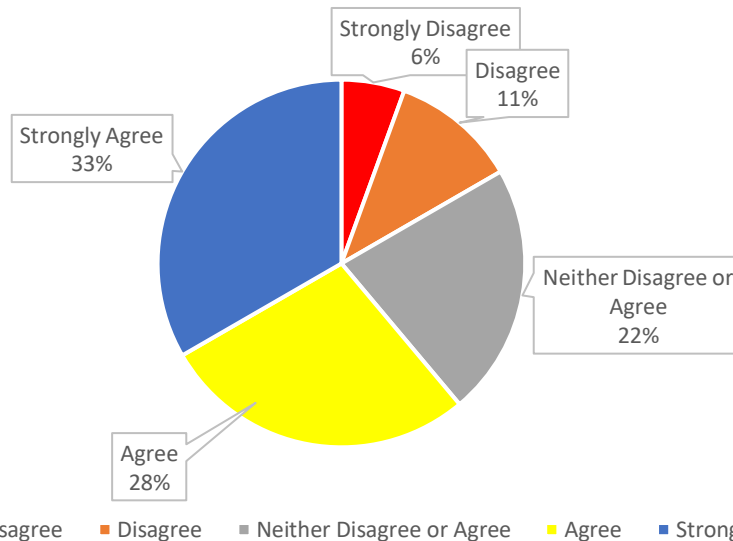
## I have a better understanding of the City Budget and spending process.



"We often hear about the budget amount; it was most enlightening to "learn about the City Budget process beyond spending demands."

- Resident

## I feel my community can accessibly participate in the City Budget process.



"It needs to be communicated more widely so people are informed about how to participate."

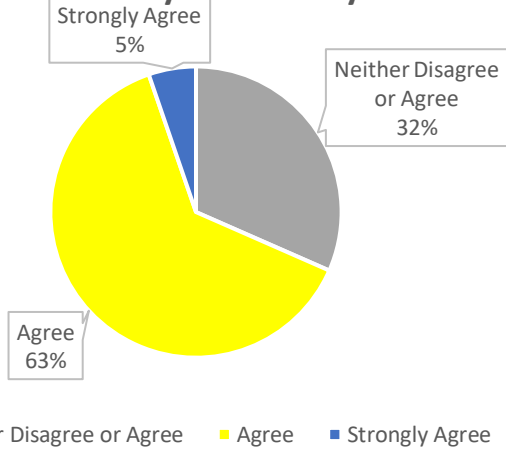
- Resident



## The City Budget reflects the needs of members within my community.

"It's hard to say if the budget reflects the needs of my community unless outcomes of spending are shared also because this adds justification for continued, increased, or decreased allocations. This can provide reasoning for taxpayers to consider while viewing the budget numbers, if presented in a plain talk manner."

- Resident



## The City Budget reflects the needs of all residents across the City.

"Some areas of the city are sub-standard for money that is in the budget for the City of Philadelphia. Many people and areas of the city are treated as if they are invisible."

- Resident

