# **TOOL** COLLABORATIVE BUDGET BUILDER

## OVERVIEW

Money can be one of the hardest things for partners to talk about, let alone an entire collaborative group. The Collaborative Budget Builder helps to collect input from each coalition member about their priorities. Then it averages these scores to provide a draft budget back to the group, which can be easily revised using consensus tools like a fist-to-five.

| Average Budget | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Budget Category | % Julie | % Carlye | % Antonio | Budget Amount | % | % |
| Communication | 10% | 20% | 40% | $11,666.67 | | 23.33% |
| Local Food Sources | 20% | 30% | 20% | $11,666.67 | | 23.33% |
| Cultural Access | 30% | 30% | 20% | $13,333.33 | | 26.67% |
| Access to Resources | 40% | 20% | 20% | $13,333.33 | | 26.67% |
| Total Budget | 100% | 100% | 100% | $50,000.00 | | 100.00% |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | Total Budget | $50,000.00 | | |

## WHEN TO USE

In some cases, a group has received money and is coming together to decide how to spend those dollars. In this case, this could be the start of a collaborative effort. In other cases, a coalition has been working together to define strategies and take action, but is now ready to apply for funding. This tool can be used in either case, but before you get started, you should have a clear set of strategies that can be used as possible priority areas in the budget.

## HOW TO USE

### *Identifying Budget Categories*

Before creating the budget template, consider your potential budget categories. One of the major pitfalls in collaboratives is starting these conversations by trying to figure out *who* gets what. Rather than focusing on how the dollars will be split between different organizations, begin by breaking your budget into the different strategy areas you're working on to get to the larger result you seek. This will shift your conversation away from competition between

individual entities to what's needed to create the impact you want to achieve together. If you already have a theory of change, strategic plan, action map, or work plan, start with these documents to identify your categories.

For example, below you would use the following action map to create budget categories for communication, local food sources, cultural access, and access to resources.

## Food Coalition Action Map

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Result** | **All people in our county have access to food, which includes nutritious and culturally relevant foods.** | | | |
| **Strategy** | **Communication** | **Local Food Sources** | **Cultural Access** | **Access to Resources** |
| **Tactic** | Create Facebook Page to share resources | Encourage gardeners to donate excess food to pantries | Procure Culturally Appropriate Foods and Distribute | Expand the senior food box program |
| | Provide training on how to use resources | Work with Farmer's Market to accept SNAP | Conduct an assessment to find out the food needs and barriers to food access | Add small community food fridges to local libraries |
| | Provide nutrition educational opportunities virtually | Advertise Community Supported Agriculture from local producers | Facilitate discussions on diversity, equity, and inclusion with local food banks | Work with local employers to add community gardens to employee housing |

In some cases, the type of funding you're applying for or have received may guide the types of programs that can be funded through that work. For example, many funding opportunities may ask for you to separate out what dollars will go towards operating expenses (often a backbone entity or fiscal sponsor for collaborative groups) and what can go toward program expenses. They may even outline the kinds of program expenses you can include, like policy work or direct service. While it's important to pay attention to these constraints, don't let them shift you away from the work you think is needed. If not everything you're working on falls within a single grant opportunity, seek additional funding to get to your desired impact.

THE CIVIC CANOPY

## OPIOID GOVERNANCE COUNCIL

When the San Luis Valley received dollars from settlements with pharmaceutical companies, they needed to decide how to distribute funds throughout the six counties. In this case, the state had already created categories they could assign dollars to:

- Prevention
- Criminal Justice
- Treatment and Recovery
- Harm Reduction
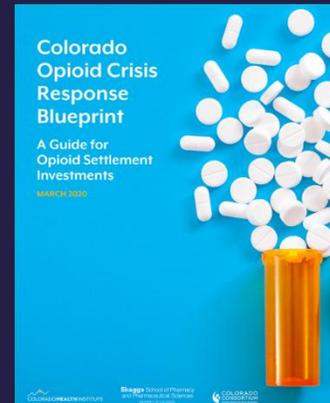
Before assigning any dollars, the council discussed the benefits and drawbacks of each category. Out of these conversations emerged three priorities: a prevention campaign, peer coaching network, and recovery housing (sober living units).

### *Setting Up Your Budget*

Once you've identified your budget categories and engaged your collaborators in discussions about the pros and cons of focusing dollars in each area, you're ready to begin working with numbers.

1. Save a copy of the Collaborative Budget Builder template.
    a. To save in Google Drive, go to File > Make a Copy.
    b. To save in Excel, go to File > Download > Microsoft Excel (.xlsx)
        i. Note: Unless you share SharePoint permissions, all your collaborators will not be able to work on the document together.
2. Begin by setting up your Collaborative Budget Builder in the Setup tab. This template allows you to create up to 10 budget categories and have up to 10 people vote on how to prioritize different budget items. You will:
    a. Enter your total budget.
    b. Add your budget categories.
    c. Change the name of each of the Person tabs to the names of your voters.
    d. Delete extra categories and people.

## Engaging Your Collaborative

Before jumping straight into the numbers, you should deliberate on the different ways you could prioritize your resources as a group first. If you had previously worked on a strategic plan or action map, you may have just been through this discussion as you worked through what you should focus your work on. If you haven't, dedicate a meeting or two to talking through the different budget categories.

Dedicate an equal amount of discussion time to every budget category. This will help your group by trying to compete or compare different priorities before you're ready. For each, generate the potential benefits of dedicating resources to this area and the potential drawbacks of focusing too many resources on this area. Capture these and create a summary of the discussion to provide back to the group.

Now you're ready to talk numbers. Provide the shared link to your Collaborative Budget Builder, ensuring you have editing permissions turned on. Customize the following directions for your group:

> Budget Voting Directions
> To help us decide on how to divvy up our budget into our different focus areas, we'll use a Collaborative Budget Builder [insert link].
>
> 1. When you open the link, find the tab that has your name on it. ONLY edit your own tab.
> 2. For each budget category, put the percentage you think should be dedicated to that category in the Green Box (Column C).
> 3. When you enter a percentage, you'll see what that equates to in total dollars next to it, in Column B. Don't like the number? Keep changing your percentage till you find the right fit.
> 4. You're finished when you reach 100% in the Total Budget line.

## Arriving at Consensus

After everyone has filled out the Collaborative Budget Builder, you're ready to review your results. Come together in a meeting and view the Average Budget tab together. There you'll see the average votes of all participants in the far-right columns.

Begin with a temperature check fist-to-five vote. You can ask:

- "If this were our final budget, indicate your support on a fist-to-five scale."

Provide opportunities for both people with concerns and appreciations to speak.

- "For those of you who put a three or below, what are your concerns with the average budget?"
- "For those of you who were above a three, what did you appreciate about the average budget?"
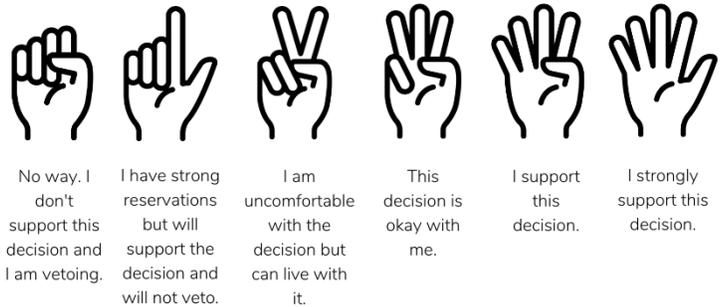
Then, ask people to recommend revisions that would make them more likely to accept this as a final budget.

- "What changes would you make that would increase your support?"
  - "How do others feel about that change?"

Keep going through this process and making revisions until you feel close enough to a budget that will get votes from everyone at 3 or above to reach consensus.

## The Fist to Five Voting Method

On the count of 1-2-3, everyone simultaneously raises a fist with 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 fingers extended to express how you feel about the decision.

No way. I don't support this decision and I am vetoing.

I have strong reservations but will support the decision and will not veto.

I am uncomfortable with the decision but can live with it.

This decision is okay with me.

I support this decision.

I strongly support this decision.

## COMMUNITY LEARNING MODEL

### Act

Make sure the planning leads to action, both within planning processes and at each stage of implementation.

Collaborative Budget Builder is a tool for the Act phase of the Community Learning Model. To learn more about tools for dialogue and the other areas of the Community Learning Model, visit civiccanopy.org/clm.