

FY 2014
Budget Survey

Multnomah County, Oregon



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Executive Summary	4
Methodology.....	4
Training and Preparation	5
Budget Office Efforts	7
Overall Budget Office Satisfaction Rating	9
Overall Satisfaction with Budget Process	10
Overall Satisfaction by Budget Role.....	11
Comparison with Last Year’s Budget Process	12
Appendix	13

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Introduction

Every year, the Budget Office surveys participants in the budget process to see how satisfied they were with the previous year and to elicit recommendations for how to improve the process. The FY 2014 budget was adopted on June 6, 2013. The annual budget survey was launched on September 19, 2013, slightly later than in past years. The data analysis and reporting was done by the Budget Office.

In 2012, we substantially shortened the Budget Survey for a variety of reasons, including decreased capacity within the Budget Office and a substantial State Rebalance process in the FY 2012 budget. This shorter survey focuses specifically on the Central Budget Office's products and performance. In order to provide three years of comparable data, and to ensure continuity as we prepare for the launch of a new countywide budget system, we reused this shorter survey in both 2013 and 2014.

Confusion over budget processes complicates our analysis of the Budget Survey results. The County's budget process is really made up of two overlapping processes. First, individual departments develop their requested budget, following their own internal timelines and procedures. Then the countywide budget process begins when departments submit their requested budgets to the Central Budget Office in mid-February. This countywide process is separate from individual department processes, and has its own timelines and procedures. We have found that there is confusion between the two levels, and that people equate their immediate department budget experience with the countywide budget process even if they only participate in internal departmental budgeting.

The Budget Survey is sent out to a broad group of people, including those who may only work on department budget processes. When we interpret the results of the survey, it is difficult to know which budget process is being evaluated. For example, this year we found that department Program Managers and line staff had a lower level of overall satisfaction with the FY 2014 Budget Process, compared to other employee groups. Because department Program Managers and line staff are more likely to be involved in departmental budgeting, we do not know if this lower level of satisfaction is related to the countywide budget process or to internal departmental processes.

We are working on a more detailed survey to evaluate the FY 2015 budget process that will allow us to better differentiate between the Countywide and internal departmental budget processes. This more nuanced understanding will help both departments and the Central Budget Office make targeted process improvements. We will also use the FY 2015 Budget Survey to evaluate the launch of the TeamBudget budget system.

Executive Summary

- There were 90 responses, representing a response rate of 38% for the 236 people surveyed. Last year's response rate was 47% (96 out of 202 people surveyed).
- Overall satisfaction with the budget process increased compared to last year (7.45 for FY 2014 compared to 7.16 for FY 2013, on a scale of 1 - 10).
- Almost all respondents felt that the 2014 budget milestone dates were clearly posted and the Budget Manual instructions were clear. However, 21% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with information on Internal Service Rates.
- All categories of Budget Office efforts were rated as "satisfactory" or "excellent" by over 90% of respondents. Quality of documents, level of cooperation, and level of professionalism had the highest satisfaction ratings. Budget Office efforts were rated higher in 2014 than the past two years in all but one category, completeness of documents, which was slightly higher in 2013.
- The overall customer service rating for the Budget Office has steadily increased since 2012.
- 71% of respondents found there to be no difference in the budgeting process as compared to last year. 14% found the process to be better and 2% found the process to be worse.

Methodology

The annual budget process survey was launched on September 19, 2013 and was open for two and a half weeks, closing on October 4th. There were 90 responses, representing a response rate of 38% for the 236 people surveyed. Last year's response rate was 47% (96 out of 202 people surveyed).

The survey was largely the same as last year. We removed one open-ended question on the technical and process challenges faced when preparing department budgets, which was asked in 2013 as a lead-up to designing and implementing the new TeamBudget system. We anticipate asking more questions about departmental budget processes on the FY 2015 budget survey, after the TeamBudget system has been fully implemented.

The first set of survey questions asked respondents to rate their level of agreement with three **Training and Preparation** issues. The level of agreement options ranged from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4). There was also an open-ended question where respondents could explain why they ranked any of the three Training and Preparation issues as "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

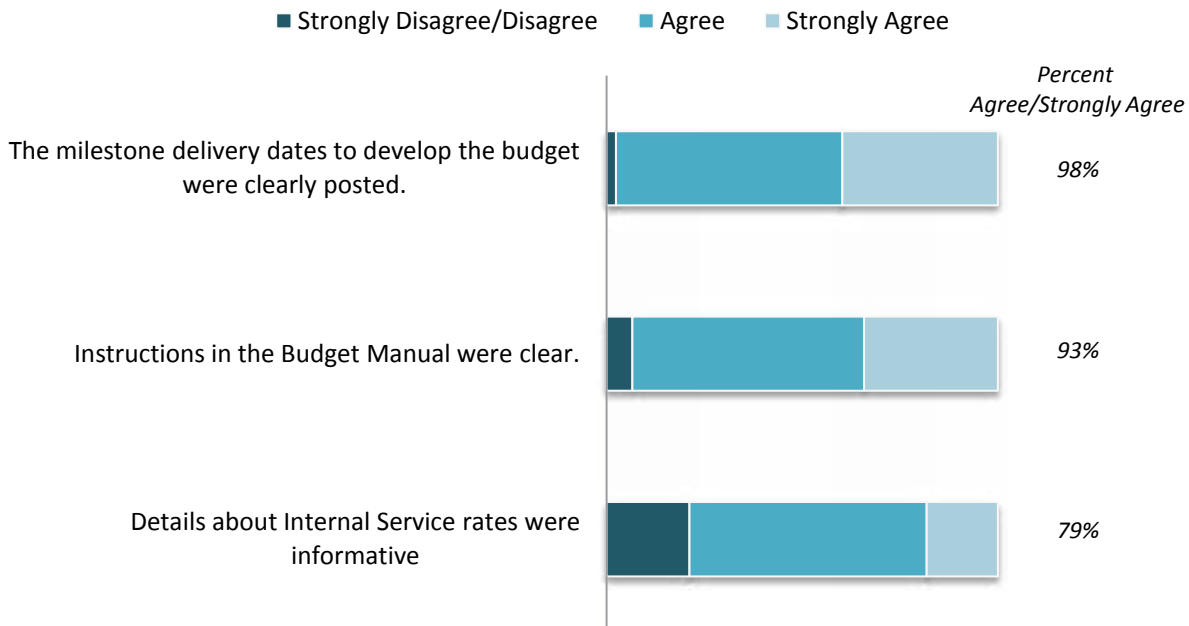
The second set of questions asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction on the amount of **Effort** received from the Central Budget Office in various areas, including cooperation, timeliness and communication. The satisfaction ratings were: Needs Improvement (1), Satisfactory (2), or Excellent (3).

Training and Preparation

The last set of questions asked respondents to rate their **Overall Satisfaction** with the budget process, to compare this year’s process with prior years, and to explain why this year’s process was better or worse. Respondents were also asked what functional area of government they represented (Health and Human Services, Public Safety, General Government or other) and what role they played in the process (for instance, Board Member or Finance Manager). This report analyzes the data from this survey. The **Appendix** lists the full text of questions along with the number of respondents, average response, and standard deviation, which measures how similar responses were to each other.

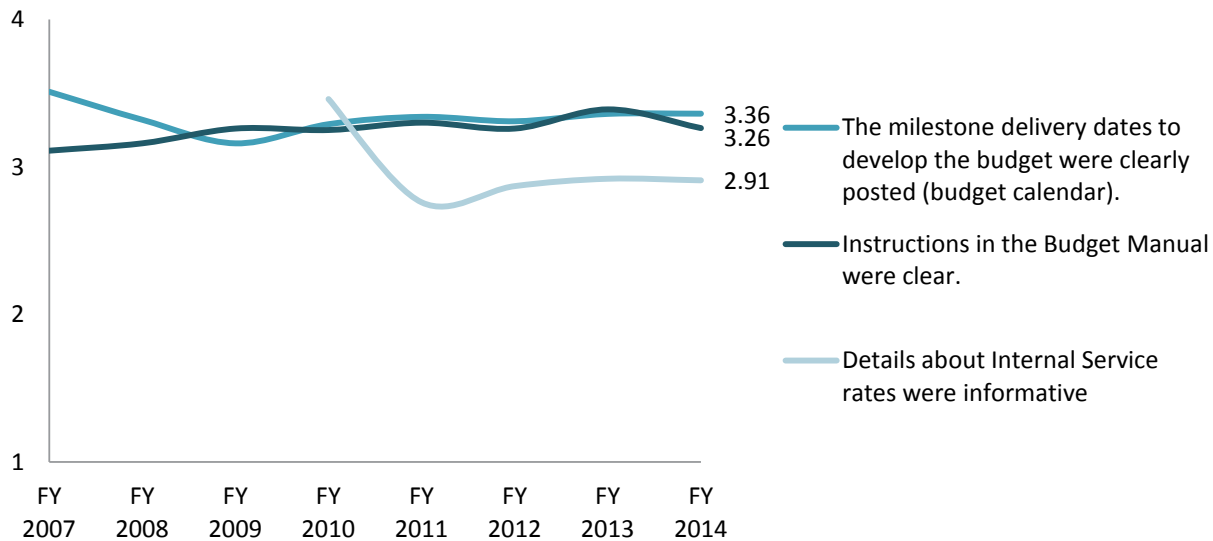
Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with three statements regarding training and preparation for the FY 2015 Budget Process. As shown in Figure 1, almost all respondents felt that the 2014 budget milestone delivery dates were clearly posted and the Budget Manual instructions were clear. However, 21% of respondents felt that that Internal Service Rate details were not informative.

Figure 1: FY 2014 Training and Preparation Ratings



When averaged, overall satisfaction with the posting of milestone delivery dates remained at 3.36, the same as 2013. Satisfaction with the Budget Manual decreased slightly (see Figure 2). Similar to previous years, respondents were less satisfied with Internal Service Rate details. The overall satisfaction rating for Internal Service Rates remained steady at 2.9.

Figure 2: Average Training and Preparation Scores over Time



Rating scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree

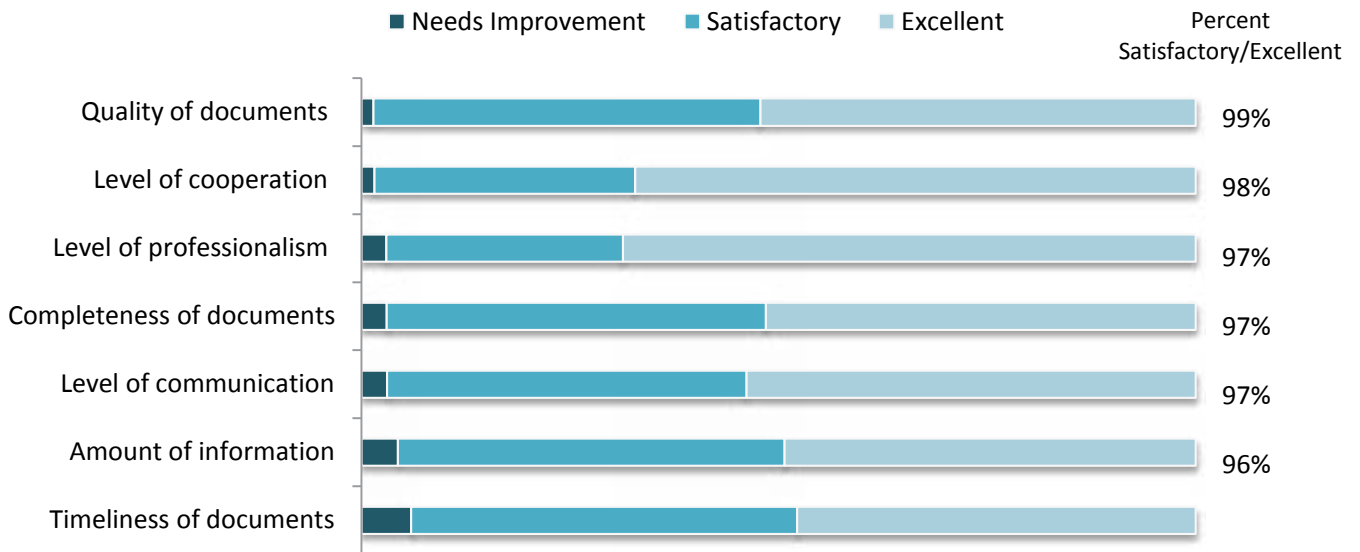
Almost all of the comments regarding dissatisfaction with training and preparation mentioned problems with Internal Service Rates, specifically telecom and communications. One comment noted that “Internal Service Rates seem the most non-transparent and complicated to actually budget for.” Other comments mentioned incomplete rates, confusion regarding changes in rates, and the need for more detailed information about internal service rates.

Budget Office Efforts

As shown in Figure 3, all categories of Budget Office efforts were rated as “satisfactory” or “excellent” by over 90% of respondents. The service with the highest percentage of “Excellent” ratings (69%) was the level of professionalism received from the Budget Office. This was followed closely by the level of cooperation received from the Budget Office, which 67% of people rated as excellent. Budget Office documentation had both the highest and lowest levels of satisfaction. Ninety-nine percent of respondents found the quality of documents received from the Budget Office to be either satisfactory or excellent. However, timeliness of documents received from the Budget Office had the lowest level of satisfaction, with 6% of respondents finding that timeliness needed improvement.

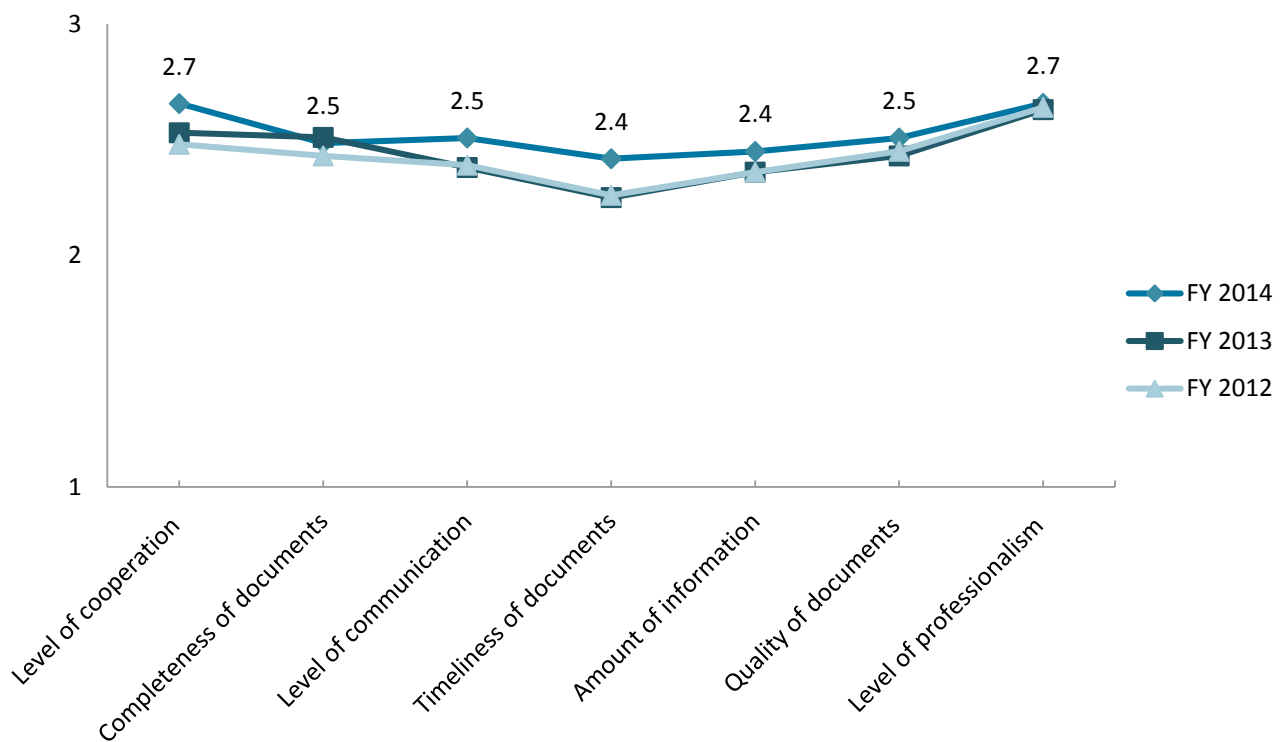
Figure 3: FY 2014 Budget Office Effort Ratings

(see Appendix for full text of each question)



Compared with 2013 and 2012, Budget Office efforts scored higher in all categories except for the completeness of documents received from the Budget Office, which had a slightly higher rating in 2013 (see Figure 4). The level of professionalism received from the Budget Office was slightly higher in 2014 than in 2012 and 2013.

Figure 4: Budget Office Efforts (Average Rating)

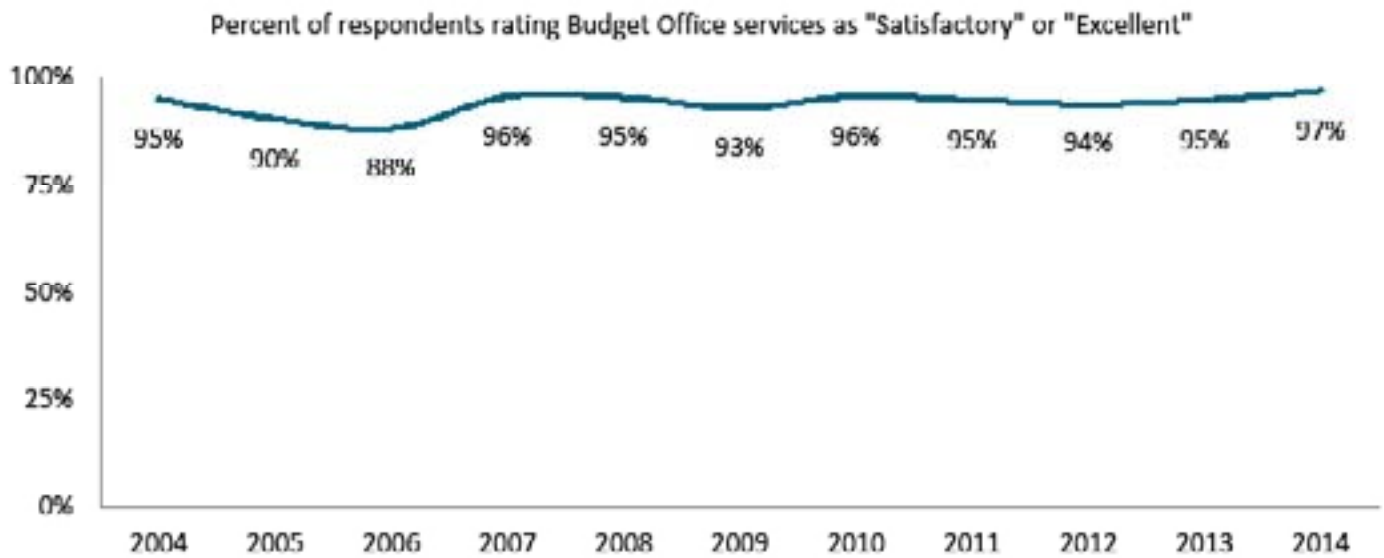


Rating scale: 1 = Needs Improvement, 2 = Satisfactory, 3 = Excellent

Overall Budget Office Satisfaction Rating

The overall Budget Office Customer Service rating is calculated as the percentage of respondents who rated Budget Office efforts as either satisfactory or excellent. Any "N/A" responses are not included in this calculation. In FY 2014, this customer service rating jumped two percentage points to 97% (see Figure 5). This is the highest customer service rating since 2004, and represents a steady increase in the Budget Office's customer service rating since 2012.

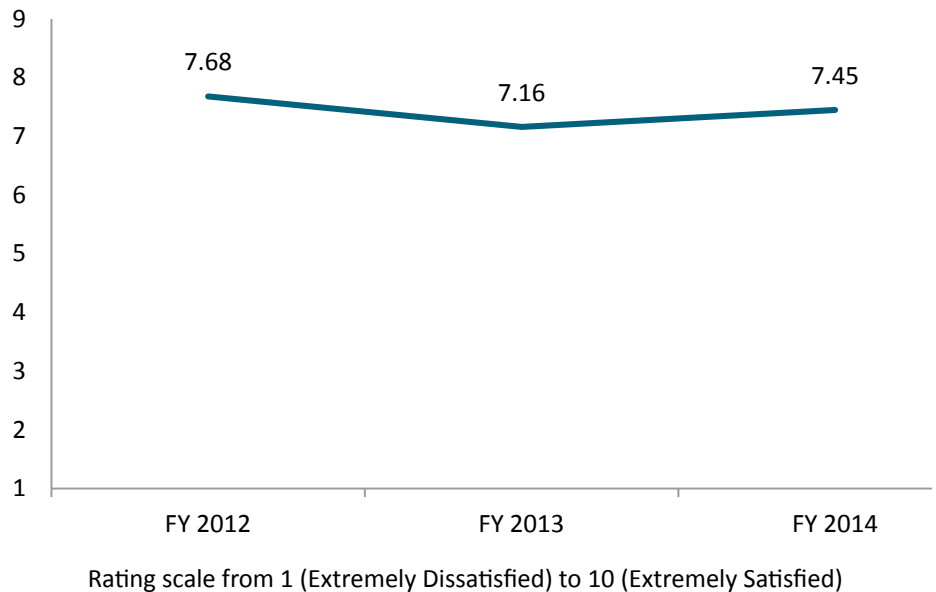
Figure 5: Budget Office Customer Service Rating



Overall Satisfaction with Budget Process

Respondents were also asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the budget process from beginning to end. Respondents were asked to select their satisfaction on a 10-point scale from 1 (Extremely Dissatisfied) to 10 (Extremely Satisfied). As shown below, overall satisfaction with the budget process was higher for 2014 than for the 2013 budget process, but lower than satisfaction for 2012.

Figure 6: Overall Satisfaction with the Budget Process (Average Rating)

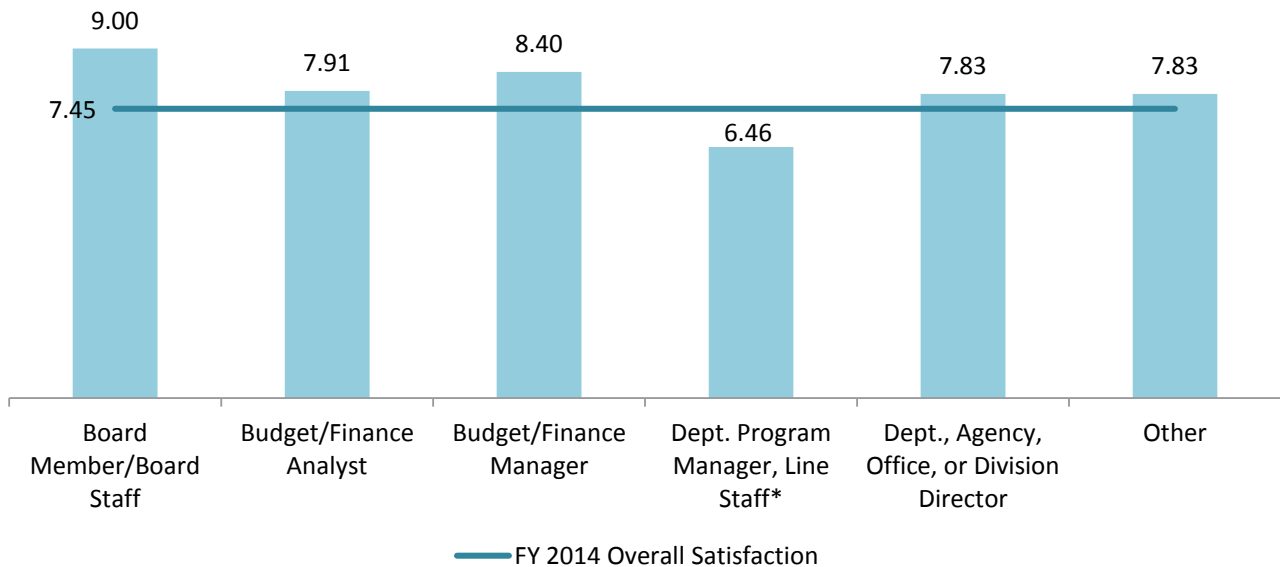


Although the average satisfaction level was 7.45, over a quarter of respondents had a satisfaction rating of either 9 or 10. 9 was the most frequently selected satisfaction level (or “mode”), making up 22% of all responses. Fifty percent of respondents noted satisfaction levels between 6 and 9. See Appendix 2.

Overall Satisfaction by Budget Role

Satisfaction with the overall budget process varied by both role in the budget process and functional area within the county. As seen in Figure 7, Department Program Managers or Line Staff had the lowest satisfaction rating at 6.46, the only rating lower than the overall satisfaction average of 7.45. Figure 8 shows that the overall satisfaction rating for respondents from General Government was significantly higher than the overall satisfaction rating, but Public Safety and Health and Human Services had lower satisfaction than the overall rate.

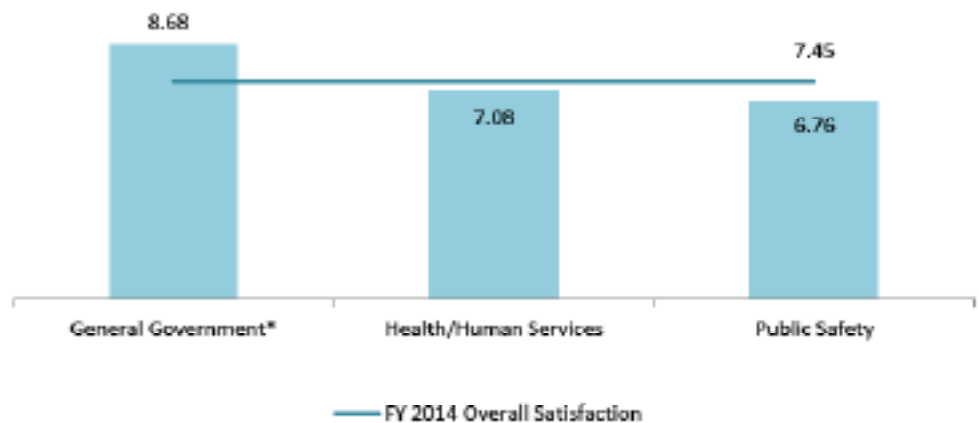
Figure 7: Overall Satisfaction by Budget Role



Rating scale from 1 (Extremely Dissatisfied) to 10 (Extremely Satisfied)

*Difference is significant at the 95% level, (P>.05)

Figure 8: Overall Satisfaction by Functional Area



Rating scale from 1 (Extremely Dissatisfied) to 10 (Extremely Satisfied)

*Difference is significant at the 95% level, (P>.05)

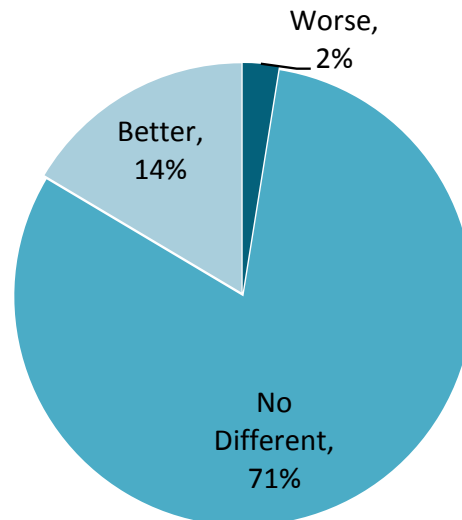
Comparison with Last Year's Budget Process

Respondents were asked to compare this year's budget process with last year's process, rating it as either better, worse, or no different. Only 2% of respondents said that the budget process was worse than the previous year.

Respondents were asked to explain why they rated the process as better or worse. The primary theme that emerged was communication. Interestingly, some respondents noted that communication from the Budget Office had improved from the previous year, while other responses listed communication with the Budget Office as a challenge.

Other respondents mentioned that adjusting to new budget office staff was a challenge, and one person said that the process felt rushed.

Figure 9: Comparison with Last Year's Budget Process



Appendix

Appendix 1: Budget Office Satisfaction Ratings

Training and Preparation Rating			
1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4= Strongly Agree	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
The milestones and delivery dates to develop the budget were clearly posted (budget calendar)	83	3.36	0.575
The instructions in the Budget Manual were clear	76	3.26	0.619
Details about Internal Service Rates were informative	66	2.91	0.759
Customer Service Rating			
Scale: 1 = Needs Improvement, 2 = Satisfactory, 3 = Excellent			
The level of cooperation you received from the Budget Office	64	2.66	0.511
The completeness of the documents you received from the Budget Office	66	2.48	0.561
The level of communication you received from the Budget Office	65	2.51	0.562
The timeliness of the documents you received from the Budget Office	67	2.42	0.607
The amount of information you received from the Budget Office	69	2.45	0.582
The quality of the documents you received from the Budget Office	69	2.51	0.532
The level of professionalism you received from the Budget Office	67	2.66	0.538

Appendix 2: Overall Satisfaction with Budget Process

Overall from beginning to end, please rate how satisfied you are with the FY 2014 budgeting process, where 1 = Extremely Dissatisfied and 10 = Extremely Satisfied			
Score	Frequency	Percent **	Cumulative Percent
2	1	1.3	1.3
3	2	2.5	3.8
4	2	2.5	6.3
5	8	10.0	16.3
6	8	10.0	26.3
7	16	20.0	46.3
8	16	20.0	66.3
9	18	22.5	88.8
10	9	11.3	100.0
Total	80	100.0	

Mean*		7.45
Mode		9.00
Percentiles	25	6.00
	50	8.00
	75	9.00

* Standard Deviation: 1.84

**Excludes non-response (N= 10)