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How Multnomah County Budgets

fy2012 adopted budget

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Reader's Guide

The budget document for Multnomah County consists of three separate volumes structured as summarized below.

Volume I – Policy Document and Legal Detail

- Mission, Vision, Values
- County Chair's Message – Budget message to citizens.
- Budget Director's Message – Introduction and general overview to the budget, explaining major issues affecting decisions.
- Meet Multnomah County - Social, economic and demographic overview of the County.
- How Multnomah County Budgets – Description of the budget process that is used to guide the County in making decisions.
- Financial Summaries – Summary of resources and requirements, property tax information and debt schedule.
- Budget by Fund/Legal Detail – Display of financial summaries, as well as detail by department by fund.
- Capital Budget – Summary of the County's plan to determine long term financing for fixed assets.
- Financial and Budget Policies – Summary of the Board approved policies that dictate how the County approaches financial decisions.
- Glossary of Terms and List of Acronyms

Volumes 2 and 3 – Program Information by Department

The budget is structured around the County's ten departments. Volumes 2 and 3 contain the program offers that were funded in each of the County's departments and Nondepartmental agencies. The departmental sections include a department introduction, budget trends, and division narratives followed by a list of the program offers funded in each department.

The department introduction contains three lists: (1) budget trends (2) budget by division and (3) a list of programs by department.

Programs identified as one-time-only have been designated to end by June 30, 2012 unless otherwise noted.

How We Budget

Multnomah County's Board of Commissioners adopts an annual budget to plan for the effective delivery of services to its citizens and to responsibly manage the public resources that support these services. Budgeting in Oregon is a collaboration between the citizens who receive the services and the elected or appointed officials who are responsible for the provision of those services. Citizen involvement in the budget process ensures that desired services are adequately funded, while County officials ensure that the budget balances competing needs, is fiscally sustainable, and meets legal requirements.

Local Budget Law

Multnomah County's budget is developed within constraints imposed by Oregon's Local Budget Law, Chapter 294 of the Oregon Revised Statutes. The law has four major objectives:

1. To provide standard procedures for preparing, presenting, and administering local budgets;
2. To ensure citizen involvement in the preparation of the budget;
3. To provide for a method of estimating revenues, expenditures, and proposed taxes; and
4. To offer a way of outlining the programs and services provided by local governments and the fiscal policy used to carry them out.

Local Budget Law requires that appropriations be established by department for each fund. Expenditures may not legally exceed appropriations at the fund level for each department. Local Budget Law also establishes the Tax Supervising and Conservation Commission (TSCC) to review the budgets of jurisdictions within Multnomah County (including the County) for compliance with the law.

Fund Structure and Basis of Budgeting and Accounting

Funds are legally established accounting entities with a self-balancing set of accounts that are established to track specific revenues or services. Multnomah County has 30 funds including the General Fund, Special Revenue Funds, Debt Service Funds, Capital Projects Funds, Internal Services Funds, and one Enterprise Fund:

Modified Accrual Basis of Budgeting

The budget is prepared on a modified accrual basis, the same accounting basis as that of the General Fund, Special Revenue Funds, and Debt Service and Capital Project Funds (the Internal Services and Enterprise Funds are accounted for using accrual accounting). The basis defines the timing of when revenues and expenditure transactions are recognized for recording purposes. The budget estimates revenues based on whether they are measurable and available within the current period and expenditures on when they will likely occur. This basis is different from private sector accounting, which measures the use of economic resources. Governmental accounting focuses on disclosing how public money is spent during a discrete period.

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One exception is the acknowledgement of revenues. Property Tax and Business Income Tax (BIT) revenues are acknowledged in the budget for 60 days after close of the fiscal year. All annual appropriations lapse at fiscal year end. Items not fully expended must be re-budgeted in the following fiscal year.

Accrual and Modified Accrual Basis of Accounting

Governmental accounting, governed by state statute and Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), differs substantially from private sector accounting. Private sector financial reports measure economic profits, whereas governmental accounting focuses on disclosing how public money is spent.

The government-wide financial statements are reported using the *economic resources measurement focus* and the *accrual basis of accounting*, as are the proprietary fund and fiduciary fund financial statements. Revenues are recorded when earned and expenses are recorded when a liability is incurred, regardless of the timing of related cash flows. Property taxes are recognized as revenues in the year for which they are levied. Grants and similar items are recognized as revenue as soon as all the provider requirements are met.

Governmental *fund* financial statements are reported using the *current financial resources measurement focus* and the *modified accrual basis of accounting*. Revenues are recognized as soon as they are both measurable and available. Revenues are considered to be *available* when they are collectible within the current period or soon enough thereafter to pay liabilities of the current period. The government considers revenues to be available if they are collected within 60 days of the end of the current fiscal period. Expenditures generally are recorded when a liability is incurred, as under accrual accounting. However, debt service expenditures, as well as expenditures related to compensated absences and claims and judgments, are recorded only when payment is due.

Type of Fund	Type of Resources or Expenditures	Example	Basis of Budgeting	Basis of Accounting
General Fund	Discretionary	General Fund	Modified Accrual	Modified Accrual
Special Revenue Fund	Restricted to a specific purpose	Road Fund	Modified Accrual	Modified Accrual
Debt Service Fund	Pay debt service	General Obligation Bond Fund	Modified Accrual	Modified Accrual
Capital Projects Fund	Capital Improvements and Asset Preservation	Capital Improvement Fund	Modified Accrual	Modified Accrual
Internal Services Fund	Internal business functions	Fleet Services	Modified Accrual	Full Accrual
Enterprise Fund	External business functions	Behavioral Health Managed Care Fund	Modified Accrual	Full Accrual

Measuring Performance

Performance measurement is an integral part of the budgeting process in Multnomah County. Performance measurement is a management tool to improve operations and services and communicate program results to citizens. Performance measures are integrated into each program offer and the department narratives to ensure accountability and to establish a link between resources and results. A more detailed discussion of performance measurement can be found in the Introduction sections of Volumes 2 and 3.

Four Phases of the Budget Process

Multnomah County uses an incremental budgeting process in which departments are given expenditures targets that they cannot exceed. The budget process consists of four distinct phases:

Phase I - The departments submit their requested budgets

Phase II - The Chair develops the proposed budget

Phase III - The Board approves the proposed budget

Phase IV - The Board adopts the final budget

Phase I - Requested Budget

Phase I - Departments Submit their Requested Budgets

Multnomah County's budget process begins in September with the Budget Director and the Department Directors reviewing the prior fiscal year's budget process. Survey comments are also collected from department budget staff. This feedback is incorporated into the process where appropriate. The process kicks off in October when the Budget Office presents the General Fund Five-Year Forecast to the Board of Commissioners informing them of the fiscal health of the County for the foreseeable future. The forecast is updated in February when the budget process is further along.

In conjunction with the County Chair's Office, the Budget Office issues guidelines to set broad limits and direction for the County's budget cycle. Based on the General Fund forecast, departments are directed to constrain their operating costs by a targeted amount. From January through February, department heads, the Chair's Office, and the Budget Office meet to discuss proposed budget changes in order to provide policy direction to the departments prior to submitting their budget requests in March.

Phase II - Proposed Budget

Phase II - The Chair Prepares the Proposed Budget

Beginning in February and ending in March, meetings occur between the Chair, Chief Operating Officer, Budget Office staff, elected officials and department directors to review and discuss the department requests. The sessions are designed to provide two-way communication concerning budget needs and assessments, and also to provide information that would assist the Chair in developing a responsible and balanced budget. During this time, the Chair's Office focuses on short and long term goals and objectives to provide the basis of the budget plan for the fiscal year.

Phase III - Approved Budget



Phase IV - Adopted Budget

Phase III - The Board Approves the Budget and TSCC Reviews

The Chair's proposed budget is submitted to the Board of Commissioners for discussion. The proposed budget must be approved by the Board no later than May 15 and then submitted to the Tax Supervising and Conservation Commission (TSCC), a five-member citizen board appointed by the Governor that helps determine whether the County's budget complies with Local Budget Law. The TSCC holds a public hearing and then returns the budget to the County no later than June 28. Accompanying the budget is a letter of certification with instructions for corrections, recommendations, and objections. The Board is required to respond to these recommendations and objections. Approval and forwarding the budget meets the legal requirements of Oregon Budget Law and allows the Board to begin public deliberation of the budget.

After the budget has been submitted to the TSCC, no fund may be increased by more than 10% in total revenue, and no property tax greater than the amounts included in the proposed budget may be levied. Voting to forward the budget without extensive public review and comment might produce adverse comment if it were not clearly understood that the process meets a technical requirement of the law, or if the Board were not to hold extensive public review before adopting the budget.

Phase IV – The Board Adopts the Budget

The adoption process begins after the budget is approved. Five weeks of work sessions and public hearings are scheduled prior to adopting the budget in June. During the work sessions the Board may propose amendments to the approved budget. The amendments get voted on as part of the budget adoption.

An important part of this final phase is citizen input --the Citizen Involvement Committee (CIC), the departments' Citizen Budget Advisory Committees (CBAC's), and public hearings held during the evening all provide an opportunity for direct feedback from the community and facilitate a participatory budget process. In June, the Board adopts the budget, makes appropriations, and declares tax levies in a public meeting.

Public Testimony and Hearings

In preparing the budget, input was sought from the community and stakeholders. On March 3rd a community forum was held with county leaders, members and leaders of the business community, stakeholders, clients, and citizens to receive input on possible budget reductions. The Chair listened to comments and suggestions for consideration in the FY 2012 budget. In addition, an online [survey](#) was created, giving citizens a chance to tell leaders what's best for Multnomah County's budget.

An important part of the adoption process is citizen input --the Citizen Involvement Committee, the departments' Citizen Budget Advisory Committees, and public hearings held during the evening provide an opportunity for direct feedback from the community and facilitate a participatory budget process.

Public Testimony and Public Hearings

In addition to participating in the budget advisory committees and other forums, citizens have several opportunities to testify on the budget. Written material can be hand delivered, mailed, faxed or submitted via email.

Citizens testified at:

Annual Budget Hearings— the Board, sitting as the Budget Committee, held several public hearings after the approval of the Chair's budget but before the final adoption of the budget. Hearings were held from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at the following dates and locations:

- May 18, 2011 Public Budget Hearing – Multnomah Building, Commissioners Boardroom, 501 SE Hawthorne Boulevard, Portland
- May 25, 2011 Public Budget Hearing – Multnomah County East Building, Sharron Kelley Conference Rooms A & B, 600 NE 8th Street, Gresham
- May 31, 2011 Hosted by the Communities of Color at the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) Gymnasium, 10301 NE Glisan, Portland

More information can be found at <http://web.multco.us/board/budget-hearings>.

The Tax Supervising and Conservation Commission Hearing – On June 8, 2011 TSCC held a public hearing on the budget .

The Budget Hearing—testimony was taken at the Board session for final adoption of the budget on June 9, 2011.

Citizens also contacted the Chair or Commissioner's offices directly and provided input for the budget worksessions.

Budget Calendar

The FY 2012 budget calendar can be found on the County's website at: <http://web.multco.us/budget/budget-information-fy-2012>.

Major budget milestone dates for FY 2012 were:

- Nov. -Feb. 2011 Chair's Office meets with departments to provide strategic direction
- Dec. 17, 2010 Constraint targets released
- Feb. 18, 2011 Department requested budget submissions due
- May 5, 2011 Chair proposes the Executive Budget
- May-June 2011 Budget work sessions and hearings
- June 8, 2011 TSCC public hearing
- June 9, 2011 Board adopts the budget

Modifying the Budget and Supplemental Budgets

The adopted budget is the County's financial and operational plan for the fiscal year. However, during the year, events occur which require the plan to be modified. State law gives the Board of County Commissioners wide latitude to change the budget during the year. County departments request changes, and then the Board must review them before passing any resolution to approve them. The appropriation of new, unanticipated revenue requires that the Board adopt a supplemental budget through a resolution.

During the year, the Board has the authority to:

- alter appropriations to reflect changed priorities during the year;
- incorporate new grant revenue into the expenditure plan;
- change approved staffing levels; and
- transfer appropriations from contingency accounts.

Where to Find Other Information

Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) – this reports actual revenues and expenditures for the last completed fiscal year, discusses financial policies, and provides demographic and economic information about the region. The CAFR, required by state statute, is prepared in accordance with GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles). It reconciles differences between the budgetary basis – as presented in the annual Adopted Budget – and the modified accrual method used for the CAFR.

Tax Supervising and Conservation Commission Annual Report – this discusses the property tax system and taxing levels for all governments in Multnomah County and summarizes budgeted and actual revenues and expenditures for all governments in Multnomah County.

County Auditor's Financial Condition Report – this discusses the performance of the County and the region according to guidelines recommended by the International City Managers' Association.

The Progress Board Benchmarks – www.portlandonline.com/auditor/ this site contains data and graphic information about benchmarks obtained through surveys and other analysis.

Citizen Involvement Process – Citizen Budget Advisory Committees (CBAC's) -are made up of citizens appointed by the Citizen Involvement Committee. The committees monitor department budgets and operations and identify issues for the Commissioners' consideration. All County departments have a CBAC. Each committee is provided with time during the Budget worksessions to present its reports. The CBACs are partners with the Commissioners, departments, and the public during the budget cycle.

During the budget development process, citizens and employees are encouraged to submit their questions, thoughts, or suggestions about the budget. This input is compiled and communicated to the elected officials.

Budget Website - Citizens and employees have the opportunity to participate in the budget process through the County's web site. From the County's home page, www.multco.us/budget, citizens and employees may access the site that contains the FY 2012 budget, links to frequently asked questions; the calendar; live and other information, input opportunities and employee resources.