



Office of Community Involvement



To: Multnomah County Chair, Jessica Vega Pederson and Board of County Commissioners

From: The Office of Community Involvement

Date: September 19, 2024

Subject: Community Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC) and Central Community Budget Advisory Committee (CCBAC)

Objective: To provide the Board of County Commissioners information about existing Multnomah County Community Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC) efforts and address the Office of Community Involvement 2024-25 Budget Note by Commissioner Beason. The budget note requested a calendar for the 2025-26 fiscal year and a work plan for implementation of that calendar. The commissioner also requested information on the Conflict of Interest process for community members who volunteer for the CBAC.

As outlined in the Work Plan some Code changes and program updates will take place in the current year as they pertain to short-term process improvements for the FY2025 budget cycle and some will occur next year, to provide greater clarity and alignment for the FY2026 budgeting process.

Background: CBACs are groups of community members who review and make recommendations on county departmental budgets. CBACs are one of the key ways the county receives community input on its budget priorities. CBAC volunteers hear directly from department directors and other staff about the county's programs and services in a process that is outlined in county Code, directed by department and is aligned with the overall County budget timeline. Together, they make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners about how Multnomah County can best use its resources to serve the community.

There are ten CBACs, one for each Multnomah County department. The Central Community Budget Advisory Committee (CCBAC) is made up of one member from each CBAC, and is charged with making county-wide recommendations to the Chair, the Board and the public that may cross departmental lines and affect one or more departments.

Over the last several years, the management of the CBAC program has been challenging. Because of this, the Chair had directed OCI to prioritize the development and implementation of a county-wide CBAC improvement process.

In 2023 work began to address community concerns and in July of 2024, OCI began implementing a community engagement plan. This included: convening and facilitating three community listening sessions with current and past CBAC members, and conducting individual interviews to better understand and validate concerns. OCI also convened a listening session with CBAC coordinators and conducted one on one meetings as well. Additional outreach included meeting with a variety of County staff, presenting to Multnomah County's Executive Council, and scheduled/requested briefings with each member of the Board of County Commissioners. Those efforts culminated in an updated analysis of clear and specific challenges. Challenges identified included: compressed budget timelines, recruitment concerns, and CBACs out of compliance due to low numbers.

As part of this community engagement plan, OCI then convened a work group representative of the key stakeholders in the CBAC programs. The group included 10 key stakeholders to the CBAC program, representing the diverse perspectives and experiences from the community and across the County. CBAC members, CBAC coordinators, the budget office, district offices, and Chair's office all actively participated.

This workgroup was primarily convened to help address the most immediate challenges, brainstorm solutions, and operationalize a plan to improve the impact and efficacy of county-wide CBACs. They would provide guidance, feedback, and recommendations to improve CBACs; and identify strategic engagement opportunities to maximize the function & deepen the impact of county-wide CBACs.

The three *[virtual]* meetings of this workgroup provided strategic guidance and feedback related to the development and implementation of the CBAC Improvement Plan specifically addressing Commissioner Beason's [budget note](#).

Background documents and findings for Central Community Advisory Committee (CCBAC) are not included in this round of proposed code changes, (as addressed later in this memo) to focus on compliance and capacity needs of the departmental CBACs.

Background Attachments:

- [Multnomah County District 2 Commissioner Jesse Beason's Office of Community Engagement Budget Note](#)
- [Existing Multnomah County Code for Budget Advisory Committees § 3.300 - § 3.306](#)
- [Budget Audit - CBAC Findings](#)
- [Community Involvement Committee Findings](#)
- [CBAC Coordinators - Needs + Concerns](#)

Findings: Research conducted by the Office of Community Involvement Staff included three community listening sessions, one-on-one interviews and meetings with CBAC coordinators as well as a review of past practice. A work group, composed of department leaders, CBAC Coordinators, and CBAC (Community) Members, has been convened three times to address listening session findings and begin work on CBAC program and code changes. The group has committed to meeting for a limited time to support the work in the work plan. Regular meetings of CBAC coordinators and staff will also continue, facilitated by OCI through the coming year. Materials reviewed by the groups included: the results of the listening sessions, the one-on-one meetings, the Multnomah County audit findings and the 2024 Community Involvement Committee recommendations,(included as attachments listed above).

Key themes:

- **What is the purpose of CBAC and the scope of work?** Updates to Multnomah County Code to address CBAC community member roles, responsibilities and final products. Need for clarity and consistency in best practices for engagement and communications to staff and community.
- **How can the CBAC structures and processes be more effective?:** The alignment of the annual budget and CBAC meeting calendar with economist presentation, departmental budget processes and general onboarding. Recruitment, interview, placement and recognition of CBAC community members. Appropriate staffing, facilitation and guidance of the CBAC program.

- **What are the onboarding and training needs of community volunteers?** Increasing understanding of the community members role and responsibilities. Topics include knowledge of county budget structure and practices, general Multnomah County information, equity practices, use of bylaws and group norms as well as public records and open meetings laws.
- **What is the impact of this work?** Engage with Commissioners through Town Halls and meetings with CBAC groups. Provide more public information and outreach through the budget season, for appointments and general meetings. Reporting process and outcomes, with a feedback loop from the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to CBAC groups.

Both community volunteers and department staff have expressed a strong commitment to addressing challenges and supporting a future of robust and inclusive budget engagement. As few official CBAC and CCBAC Policies and Procedures exist outside of what is written in the Multnomah County Code, department staff have developed an unofficial set of practices for the CBAC and CCBAC program. These unofficial practices need to be aligned with updated OCI processes and coordinated across departments. This will support CBACs more effectively in their work on behalf of departments and the BOCC.

Recommendations: The CBAC Improvement Workgroup and OCI recommends:

- 1) **Fall 2024:** The Board reviews and provides feedback to the 2024-25-26 CBAC Calendar and work plan.
- 2) **Fall 2024:** The Board reviews the proposed (future) Code changes that include addressing Conflict of Interest, to be brought to the board for adoption.
- 3) **Winter to Spring 2025:** The Central CBAC operates during the 2024 - 25 budget cycle, but does not produce a report. This allows for adequate time and capacity to: gain compliance, provide appropriate training and implement a more cohesive structure and functionality for the Central CBAC. One example is that currently the Central CBAC does not have guidelines about tenure for members or a selection process. During this budget cycle, departmental CBACs' compliance and quality should be prioritized as the Central CBAC is dependent upon quality departmental CBAC processes.
- 4) **Fall 2024-25-26** The Office of Community Involvement will partner with the central budget office and departments to engage community budget advisory committees earlier in the budget process and provide them with information sooner, so their comments have more time to be addressed with the release of the Chair's proposed budget.
- 5) **Fall 2024-25-26** The Office of Community Involvement will partner with Auditor, the Central Budget Office, and the Office of Diversity and Equity to develop, coordinate, and present a training calendar for CBAC members

Materials for Review:

- 1) [Proposed 24-25-26 CBAC Improvement Work Plan / Timeline](#)
- 2) [Proposed Revisions to Multnomah County Code](#)