



Office of Community Involvement



Department of County Assets & Department of County Management CBAC

TO: Chair Jessica Vega Pederson and Board of County Commissioners (6) pages

FROM: Department of County Assets (DCA) and Department of County Management (DCM) Community Budget Advisory Committee

DATE: April 25, 2024

SUBJECT: Department of County Assets and Department of County Management Community Budget Advisory Committee Report & Recommendations

The Dept. of County Management/Dept. of County Assets Community Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC) members appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on the Fiscal Year 2025 budget priorities of these two departments. The perspectives we bring come from our lived experience, professions, education, and community work. This year's members' professional backgrounds include financial services, nonprofit work, retail, and customer service, and contracting. We share common desires to give back to our community and to ensure fiscally responsible use of our tax dollars.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - Our final report will focus on program offers that align best with our core values and guiding principles. The DCA/DCM CBAC believes each of the items below is important to strive for and a prerequisite for good budgetary oversight.

- Ensuring the County is using public money responsibly.
- Making sure government agencies are responsible for their actions.
- Viewing budgets as moral documents and commitments to the most vulnerable members of our community.
- Making sure everyone in the County workforce is treated fairly, and that their health and safety are prioritized.
- Promoting transparency so that the public can see what the government is doing.
- Recognizing that racism exists in our government systems.

Our recommendations cover a wide range of issues, which is reflective of the diverse needs that DCA and DCM serve within the County. These recommendations include increased strategic planning, organizational and operational efficiency, workplace security, and information technology improvements. Our members discussed the relative merits of each program offer

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and collectively decided which offers to highlight for the Board. We also noted the impact of a looming constraint year and the need to make responsible reductions in services. Our hope is that these programs help support the County's continued growth and service to the public.

PROCESS - Our group convened for virtual, hour-long meetings every other week for twenty weeks, where collaborative discussions were held with ten representatives from the County. Before each meeting, we identified the department and the individual(s) with whom we intended to engage. We used a shared file to brainstorm a range of questions, drawing from past years' meetings and focusing on current departmental issues. The guests were asked to provide answers to these questions and comment on how specific programs aligned with the county's mission and values.

We decided to meet first with DCM's and DCA's Equity Managers so they could share with us some tools and strategies for evaluating the budget and program offers with an equity lens. The rest of the guests answered questions about their respective departments or relevant program offers. Below is a complete list of our guest speakers.

- Estelle Norris, DCM Equity Manager
- Sophie Wilson, DCA Equity Manager
- Serena Cruz, Chief Operating Officer
- Jeff Renfro, County Economist, Budget Office
- Tracey Massey, DCA Director and Chief Information Officer
- Sim Ogle, Deputy Chief Information Officer
- Dan Zalkow, Director of Facilities and Property Management
- Travis Graves, Deputy Chief Operating Officer
- Travis Brown, Chief Human Resources Officer
- Dorothy Elmore, Director of Workplace Security

After wrapping up our meetings with county leaders, we delved into the budget, collectively analyzing program offers, with a focus on one-time-only out of target requests. Through individual readings of budget documents outside of our sessions and active engagement in group discussions, we compiled our findings and formulated recommendations for the Board of Commissioners to assist with their decision-making during this year's budget process.

EMERGING THEMES/TRENDS - Throughout the various interviews with DCA and DCM leadership, there were several themes that emerged, including a desire to focus on capacity building within the departments to create structures and supports for high-level, strategic focus on long-term planning for county health. This focus starts with developing new and better metrics for what constitutes a healthy and safe environment for both county staff and county assets. In discussions with leadership and review of the program offers for DCA and DCM, we

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can see the interest in long-term planning objectives, including prioritizing increased leadership capacity within what is expected to remain a constrained budget and streamlining IT and countywide systems to maximize efficiency and user satisfaction.

We heard from leadership the importance of promoting Multnomah County as a diverse, dynamic, and advanced workplace. This includes upgrading technology, analyzing recruiting practices, and growing security systems to align with the countywide mission, vision, and values. This group acknowledges the county's need to invest in technology to promote strategic leadership and comprehensive, long-term plans for growth in an ever-changing, highly competitive environment.

BUDGET/PROGRAM OFFERS FEEDBACK - Because DCM and DCA's budgets are subject to a 3% reduction this fiscal year, we were pleased to learn that they participated in exercises focused on incorporating equity into decisions to cut or fund certain activities. We learned that DCA did not experience any major reductions and did not eliminate any programs, all while maintaining current service levels. DCM piloted a new Budget Equity Process which guided their reductions and helped them meet the General Fund target allocation.

However, because DCM and DCA are not generally public-facing departments, it is difficult to assess the full impact of their decisions, which largely occur downstream in the form of reduced operational efficiency and services in *other* departments. We did not note any concerns in their targeted reductions, but our review was naturally constrained to the information they provided to us.

Overall, we appreciated DCM and DCA's prioritization of strategic planning, organizational restructuring, workplace security, and IT improvements in this year's budget. We would like to see the County continue to explore ways to use its assets to address urgent issues, such as homelessness and stray animal care. We would also like to convey our position that the best tools for recruitment, hiring, and retention are competitive salaries, comprehensive benefits, and workplace flexibility.

DEPARTMENT BUDGET/PROGRAM OFFER RECOMMENDATIONS - Due to the nature of the essential and supportive services DCM and DCA provide, it is difficult to recommend any one program offer over another; therefore, they are listed **in no particular order of priority** below. Furthermore, the CBAC does not consider program offers not listed below to provide no potential value to the County; rather, the below programs are being highlighted as offering essential or exceptional value.

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Department of County Assets

1. 78233B - Justice Center Electrical System Upgrade - Bus Duct Replacement \$6,500,000

This program offer is for the continuation of construction work to replace the electrical Bus Duct System at the Justice Center, which the County has described as its greatest operational risk. The CBAC sees this project as an essential upgrade to a vulnerable county asset which has already seen millions of dollars in investments. Leaving this project unfinished would not constitute a good use of public funds, nor would it further the County’s goal of providing County staff and the public with a safe and functional space.

2. 78240 Hansen Complex Deconstruction Project (Enterprise): \$750,000

The Hansen Complex Deconstruction Project aligns with the core values of the County by creating a safer environment and less of an eyesore in the community. Moreover, County leaders presented a possible use for the site as a shelter for people experiencing homelessness, which the CBAC would consider a very worthwhile investment. The need for more shelter space is increasing each year as extreme weather events force more and more people to seek refuge indoors, and the CBAC encourages creative, responsible repurposing of the County’s surplus property.

3. 78332B Website and Digital Services Transformation \$1,500,000

A government website is not just a tool for communicating with the public, it is also a gateway for people to access essential services. For many individuals, it is also the only way in which they interact with the County; therefore, clarity, accessibility, and navigability should be of paramount importance. Given that equitable access is a core value of both the CBAC and the County, we highly recommend adoption of this program offer.

4. 78337 Network Access Control \$310,000

Although the CBAC members lack some technical expertise, we do recognize the importance of investing in cybersecurity generally as a means of protecting County assets and safeguarding sensitive public data. The County must continue to make investments like this to stay ahead of emerging threats and prevent unauthorized access to restricted systems. A potential ransomware attack or data breach could be extremely costly and jeopardize the privacy of thousands of people.

5. 78340 Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Historical Data Retention \$1,000,000

This program will help the County maintain legal compliance with Executive Rule 301 (Retention of Public Records) and support the ongoing availability of data required for historical pay equity management, both of which are laudable goals; however, the CBAC would like to note some concerns about the estimated total cost of the two year project, which is \$1.5 million, and the

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yearly maintenance cost estimate of \$150,000. Both of these figures seem high, and some questions remained regarding the details of the software solution being sought.

Department of County Management

6. 72000B & 72000C - COO Organizational Redesign SPARK Unit and COO Organizational Redesign Assistant Chief Operating Officers \$2,224,644

The CBAC supports the County's efforts to invest in long-term strategic planning by restructuring the office of the COO. This restructuring will allow the COO to focus more on urgent issues and improving operations, which is well-timed with the rollout of Mission, Vision, Values. A nimbler, more adaptable government has many downstream benefits that are in line with our commitment to using taxpayer dollars responsibly.

7. 72033B & 72034B DART Reappraisal Program \$755,000

This is projected to add \$1.8 million in annual revenue, which more than offsets the cost of the program. Additionally, this program promotes financial sustainability and the ability of the county to invest more in better services. This can provide a pathway to meeting the County's changing needs.

8. 72064 Countywide Strategic Planning \$250,000

We recognize the importance of continuing to invest in this process, which should result in a countywide roadmap for setting goals, priorities, and outcome metrics for years into the future. This program helps leaders make sure that the services provided are effective and that they focus on community needs.

9. 72065 Multnomah County Managers Conference \$250,000

This offer promotes the rollout of the County's Mission, Vision, and Values to a large number of staff in a collaborative environment. We recognize the impact that the pandemic had on the organizational community and feel the manager's conference is a vital opportunity for employees to reconnect. If this offer is adopted, we hope there are measurable outcomes that can be used to advocate for similar program offers in future budget periods.

10. 72056C Workplace Security - Security Operations Center Dispatch Expansion \$400,000

The County has stated these proposed enhancements are in response to increasingly frequent security-related incidents, and the CBAC recognizes the right of every County employee to enjoy a safe working environment; however, we are tempering this recommendation with a firm insistence that any contracted security personnel be held to the highest possible standard then dealing with the public, especially when engaging with the unhoused community. We also urge the County to be consistent and transparent in communicating their policies around "addressing"

campsites on County property—a goal which we acknowledge can be challenging given the changing legal landscape.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS – The Committee would like to give special thanks to Lisa Whedon, Deb Anderson, and more for their support, coordination, facilitation, responsiveness and enthusiasm. They were essential to the organization and scheduling of our discussions and provided excellent perspective on all of the budget requests discussed. We would also like to acknowledge and extend our gratitude to Kerensa Mauck and Allison Don for filling in for Lisa and Deb during their respective absences. Finally, we would like to thank all of our guests/presenters for their time, informative presentations, and responsiveness to our questions.