

MULTNOMAH COUNTY

FY 2024 Budget Work Session Follow-Up

Department of County Assets

May 3, 2023



Question 1

Commissioner Meieran (District 1): Please provide the Board with the funding sources for the Arbor Lodge Capital Project.

Response

The Arbor Lodge Capital Project budget is \$9,400,000. The funding sources are:

- State funds from HB 5006 \$4,960,685
- State funds from HB 5202 \$4,379,315
- Brownsfield Redevelopment fund grant \$60,000

Question 2

Commissioner Meieran (District 1): [Program Offer 78302 IT Planning, Projects & Portfolio Management](#) looks like the budget is reduced from \$3.17 million in FY 2023 to \$2.55 million in FY 2024, can you explain this decrease in more detail?

Response

The budget decrease between FY 2023 and FY 2024 in IT Planning, Projects & Portfolio Management (78302) was due to a \$647,000 reduction in professional services. This was related to the completion of the post-go-live phase of the DART-Orion project. During this final phase of the multi-year system project, performance issues with the software were resolved and final functionality was delivered.

Question 3

Commissioner Meieran (District 1): Please provide an update on the transfer of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) from the City of Portland to the County. How much of the budget in Program Offer [78331 IT Portfolio Services: DCHS, DCJ, JOHS, LPSCC](#) supports the HMIS system?

Response

The transfer of the HMIS is pending the completion of a data sharing agreement with the City of Portland. The final drafts of the data sharing agreement are in review and will likely be signed by May 12, 2023. Further, we have an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with each of the two counties (Washington and Clackamas) circulating for signatures. Once all of the parties have signed the agreements, DCA will establish the official transition date and the project teams will begin the transition process. The transition process should take approximately four months to complete. DCA IT will manage the overall software, technology, and vendor relationship for the three counties and their respective Continuums of Care. The JOHS will administer and support the agencies they fund. As part of the IGA, there will be a new HMIS Leadership Council and a HMIS Change Control Board which will provide coordination and direction for the HMIS across the partners.

The total IT budget to support the HMIS is spread among two Program Offers: [IT Portfolio Services: DCHS, DCJ, JOHS, LPSCC \(78331\)](#) and [Regional Coordination - Homeless Management Information \(30006C\)](#). The budget to support the HMIS is approximately \$1.2M. DCA/IT program offer 78331 includes the costs associated with an HMIS Administrator (approximately \$225,000). JOHS program offer 30006C includes the cost of the software licenses, in addition to funding for an implementation Project Manager and a Reporting and Business Intelligence Sr. Developer (approximately \$942,000).

Question 4

Commissioner Rosenbaum (District 3): What is the impact of the Chair's budget not including the Hansen Project Feasibility Study (Program Offer 78240)? What will happen with this project in FY 2024 without this funding?

Response

As originally submitted, the program would have resulted in a comprehensive feasibility study to demolish the structures on the property and assess redevelopment options. Following the submission of the program offer, we revised the request and were able to propose using some unallocated operating funds to complete a more limited feasibility study and redevelopment assessment. This work will inform the future countywide capital planning.

Question 5

Commissioner Rosenbaum (District 3): What work happened in FY 2023 with program offer 78234 - New Animal Services Facility, and what is the timeline for the FAC-1 process in FY 2024 (noted in PO as "within first half of FY 2024" - can DCA be more specific about timeline goal)?

Response

Conceptual design and feasibility work has been in progress through much of FY 2023 to help the Department of Community Services (DCS) determine what the ideal program for Animal Services would be, how that program might be configured in a new facility, and a rough estimation of how much a new facility with the ideal program would cost. When the program offer was submitted, consideration was being given to going to the Board in the first half of FY 2024 to request approval to enter into formal design. Although that is still a possibility, it is now certain that more time and analysis will be needed before there will be a suggestion by DCS to move into formal design. Upcoming work includes continued feasibility and conceptual design work, as well as an assessment of the feasibility of renovating and expanding the current Animal Services facility. We will update program offer 78234 for the adopted budget to reflect the most recent planning.

Question 6

Commissioner Rosenbaum (District 3): What are the safety and security needs for the Multnomah Building Boardroom in program offer 78003, and how will this request address them? At the Juvenile Justice Center, how will window security film improve safety, and why is an assessment of lobby security needed?

Response

The Workplace Security (WS) team evaluated both the Boardroom's and Juvenile Justice Center's (JJC) entry points and identified valuable security improvements at both locations. The Boardroom was last upgraded in 2001 and the WS team determined that there were not sufficient cameras and card readers to adequately view all areas of the room and lock the room down if needed. Additionally, protective film on the room's entry doors will better protect the room from a forced entry and from projectiles coming into the room. Similarly, the protective film at the JJC at the entry and in the lobby area will better protect that facility from forced entry and from projectiles coming into the building. The assessment at the JJC will determine if there are more secure ways to screen how staff, visitors, and clients enter the facility to limit the opportunities for potential acts of violence during high profile court hearings.

Question 7

Commissioner Rosenbaum (District 3): Will any of the work performed in the Digital Access Program be carried out by other County departments as outlined in the roadmap's recommendations if it goes unfunded (program offer 78902)? What happens to the partnerships with the City of Portland, State of Oregon, and other public, private, and nonprofit groups countywide? Will the technical assistance on broadband and digital inclusion or the pursuance of grant opportunities be picked up elsewhere in the County?

Response

The full roadmap outlined three goals with 16 specific strategies designed to achieve those goals. Some of the ongoing work outlined in the roadmap will be carried out by partners or within departments across the County. We expect the following seven strategies to continue in FY 2024.

Goal 1: Universally Available, Affordable Broadband: *Ensure the availability of fast, reliable, affordable home internet and free public internet.*

- **Provide gigabit speed internet at Multnomah County buildings** - DCA's Information Technology division is working with the City of Portland and Astound Broadband to migrate the County to a new fiber network. The project will be completed in late 2023. This benefits our free public wifi users.
- **Lend hotspots and computers** - Multnomah County Library (MCL) has helped meet this need through a Tech Lending program, offering free short-term loans of a personal laptop and hotspot with the flexibility to connect anywhere and anytime. MCL could seek Digital Equity Act grant funding for this service in late 2024 to early 2025.
- **Ensure internet is available in unincorporated areas** - Relative to urban areas, the cost to deploy rural broadband is expensive. This has resulted in about 1,000 households without high-speed broadband internet in our unincorporated areas. DCA is supporting state legislation to address this with new federal funding. DCA has encouraged private providers to pursue this funding to build services for these residents.

Goal 2: Digital Navigation: *Help the community to access and use the internet.*

- **Deliver tech help and computer access at libraries** - Multnomah County Library provides technology help, computer and internet access in the community through its digital equity and adult learning programs. The Library's expansion through the work of the Library Capital Bond Program will improve access to these services.
- **Provide refurbished computers to residents** - Multnomah County has activated its sustainability and digital equity goals through an IT asset disposition partnership with Free Geek since 2015. This DCA program donates an average of 1,775 devices to Free Geek annually. Through this program, free computers are made available to the community.
- **Support enrollment in internet subsidy programs** - The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) is a federal subsidy available to cover \$30/mo of eligible households' internet service. Households at or below 200% of federal poverty guidelines or enrolled in a wide range of programs such as SNAP and WIC are eligible for this program. Supporting subscriptions increases internet connectivity rates in Multnomah County. County departments continue to integrate ACP outreach and enrollment into the

existing ecosystem of programs which provide consumers assistance with navigating federal benefits.

- **Tailor services to meet community-specific digital needs** - With the end of the public health emergency, many in-person services have resumed. Multnomah County is committed to helping people navigate public systems, regardless of their ability to get online. Where a lack of digital skills presents a barrier, decentralized and ad-hoc digital skills training that began with the Covid-19 pandemic will continue where departments have capacity. Some ARPA-funded programs will end. DCA's digital service transformation strategy will further address this need by improving the usability of Multnomah County digital services.

With direction from County leadership, additional strategies could be pursued without countywide coordination. Technical Assistance (Goal 3) is not anticipated to move forward. DCA will partner with County leadership to determine how to best support and participate in local and statewide partnerships. DCA will partner with Government Relations to track grant opportunities and develop the best course of action when an opportunity arises.

Question 8

Commissioner Rosenbaum (District 3): What was the total cost of website development associated with the 2014 launch of the revamped multco.us website and MultCo Commons? With a request to begin a new website transformation strategy ([program offer 78332](#)) less than 10 years after that last launch, what are the greatest needs? Can you provide detail on:

- why the technology is aging?
- the security risks?
- Why do the current websites lack service orientation where audiences of all abilities can quickly access digital services, conduct business and easily find information? Was this not part of the last project scope?

Response

The last significant upgrade to the underlying platform (Drupal) for multco.us was completed in 2014. Commons was not part of this upgrade effort. The project team was comprised of internal staff and the goals were:

- Create a visual hierarchy to determine most/least importance
- Improve site navigation for services
- Improve search features
- Give the web builders components and tools that improve the end user experience
- Improve the editor experience
- Create a responsive theme to improve site navigation on mobile devices

These goals were successfully completed. The final cost was \$343,801.

IT is currently working on a Drupal upgrade for Multco.us that started in 2021. The project team is comprised of internal staff and the goals are:

- Update the website platform to an up-to-date version of Drupal
- Complete training for all content coordinators
- Migrate all relevant content
- Archive of all relevant content
- Migrate existing users

The baseline cost of this work is estimated to be \$868,160 and is scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2023. This upgrade is necessary in preparation for a transformative upgrade of the user interface envisioned following the completion of the work in the FY 2024 program offer.

The last significant upgrade of Commons was completed in 2018. The project team was comprised of internal staff and the goals were:

- Upgrade to a supported and mobile responsive platform
- Remove outdated, trivial or duplicative content to improve overall quality of content
- Reduce support needs by leveraging common features and modules used across the external and internal websites.
- Improve search results and efficiency of finding information
- Improve global site navigation
- Implement a governance model

These goals were successfully completed. The final cost was \$458,380.

The 2014 and 2023 Multco.us, and the 2018 Commons upgrades were funded with existing IT staff. Project-specific funding was not dedicated for these projects. The projects were completed over multiple years. The staff balanced existing support work, customer requests, and the upgrades. The scope of the three projects are significantly smaller in every respect than the proposed Website Transformation Strategy program offer and the expected program offer in FY 2025.

The current website and intranet are unable to meet the needs and expectations of employees or the people who want services from the County. In the 10 years since the upgrade, we have experienced an incredible growth in the use of mobile devices. They are now the primary tool used to access web-based services by the Community. During the same timeframe we have also seen a 274% increase in individuals accessing our public website Multco.us. It is difficult to identify the “greatest needs” as there are many. From an analytics perspective we know what the primary services are that people search for, we also know that these same services can be confusing and difficult to find on the current website. One example is information about 211.

In addition to the technical challenges, we lack a centralized governance structure to ensure our website meets Federal, State and County website standards. We currently have more than 5,701 published pages, 38,021 items of content, as well as 64,438 documents that do not meet accessibility standards. These documents are typically written at a grade 14 (College sophomore) level. Website standards require us to publish content at a grade 6-8 level or lower. Additionally 41% of the published pages have not been updated in over a year. Almost 20% have not been updated since 2017. All of this needs to be cleaned and improved for the community. This will require dedicated investments of staff time from County departments to be successful.

Technology ages rapidly just like any device or piece of hardware. For example, to continue receiving security updates, patches and new features for your Android or iPhone you have to; a). Use the most current version of the software, and; b). The device itself needs to be current. If you don't do this, your phone becomes a security risk. That's the same for any IT system, in this case the County external and internal websites, where we need to upgrade the underlying Drupal website technology being used. This upgrade will move us onto a more secure platform that allows for easier future upgrades from the manufacturer, and also improves the functionality we can provide to our Community and staff. Because of the size and complexity of our websites, as well as the major technology changes Drupal has undergone over the last ten years, this is a significant effort.

Why do the current websites lack service orientation where audiences of all abilities can quickly access digital services, conduct business and easily find information? Was this not part of the last project scope?

Since 2014, in addition to technology evolving and changing, there have been recent Acts and Executive Orders from the US Federal government that are having a major impact on the government website and digital services space, including:

- The 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act (IDEA), passed 2018 - This includes a focus on Website Modernization. In it, improving customer interactions with government websites and digital services is a high priority. It outlines how a customer's digital experience is impacted by

usability, mobile functionality including page load speeds, search, the way the content is presented both in the written word and visually, the way content is organized, and a person's ability to complete their tasks.

- Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government, 2021 and Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, 2021 - these are Executive Orders that provide additional guidance on Website Modernization.
- The Clear and Concise Content Act of 2022 - builds on the Plain Writing Act of 2010, and specifies that the government's intended audience includes those who "may be disabled, may not be proficient in English or may otherwise be disadvantaged or traditionally underserved." The proposed legislation creates a framework to prioritize customer needs when planning, creating, and delivering effective customer content.

These federal laws have already started to influence policies, best practices, and the work at state and local-level government organizations. At the same time the public is now more technologically literate. They expect a secure mobile experience when they interact with the services we provide.

Our current Multco.us was designed to provide static publications and as a source for news. The concept of being a primary way for residents to get services was not as clear as it is 10 years later. Based on our data, we know that services are the main reason residents come to our website. And we know that when government websites help residents self-serve, it frees up staff time for folks who really need help.