

FY 2027

Multnomah County Program Offer Writer's Guide

November 21, 2025
Version 1.0

Budget Office Contacts

Each County department has a Central Budget Office analyst who is responsible for helping departmental staff prepare department budgets and analyzing those budgets for the Chair and Commissioners. Central Budget Analysts can assist with questions about the budget process or Questica. The Central Budget Office is available to all employees involved in creating the budget. To find the Central Budget Analyst responsible for your department, please go to the [Budget Office Contact Information](#) site.

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Introduction: Program Offer 101

The budget is one of the most important policy documents that the County produces. The budget helps the Chair, the Board of County Commissioners, and our community understand the factors that affect the programs and services provided to the community. All County functions – from operating programs to the General Fund contingency account – request funding through a **program offer**.

Program offers include brief program descriptions, equity statements, budget summaries, and performance data for a given set of services. The Chair and the Board use this information to build the County's budget. Program offers help to break down department activities into more manageable, nuanced packages that allow the Board to make decisions about keeping, adding, or cutting specific services. The community, including departmental and central Community Budget Advisory Committees, community partners, and clients, use this information to understand what services we provide, who we serve, and how much we did. Thus, it is critical that program offers are written in a way that the program's activities are easily understood by all readers.

This guide focuses on writing strong program offer descriptions and equity statements. Additional information on filling out the other pieces of the program offer request form can be found in the FY 2027 Budgeting for Results Guide (performance measures) and the comprehensive FY 2027 Budget Manual, both of which can be found on the [FY 2027 Budget Manual, Forms, Calendars, and Other Resources website](#).

The Central Budget Office is here to help! If you have a question or need training or support, please don't hesitate to call or email.

What's New in FY 2027?

We have made significant changes to the program offer report for the FY 2027 budget process in order to make the size of the budget more manageable. These changes are being made in response to feedback from the Budget Survey and Elected Officials.

- **Program offers are streamlined and designed to fit on one page.**
- As a result, the **program description section is half its previous length**. This means departments will need to focus on explaining clearly and briefly (1) what the program will do, and (2) who the program will serve.
- There is also a **new, short Equity Statement** section, to highlight key information that the Board and community want to know.

- The **Performance Measures** section has been reduced to allow for two required output measures.¹
- The **Legal Obligation, Explanation of Revenues, and Significant Program Changes** sections are **no longer included in the printed report**, although the information will still be collected in Questica (our budgeting software system).
- The **Financial Summary** section, which shows revenues and expenditures, has been **restructured** to provide additional information about revenues.

DCS Program #90019 - Example Program Offer Really Really Long Name for Report Testing			FY 2026 Adopted	
Division: Transportation				
Program Characteristics:				
Program Description				
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
Equity Statement				
1				
2				
3				
4				
Revenue/Expense Detail				
	2025 General Fund	2025 Other Funds	2026 General Fund	2026 Other Funds
Personnel	\$0	\$1,142,628	\$0	\$1,216,903
Contractual Services	\$0	\$44,492,016	\$0	\$25,976,942
Materials & Supplies	\$0	\$34,673	\$0	\$12,123
Internal Services	\$0	\$5,600,081	\$0	\$5,619,048
Capital Outlay	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$200,000
Total GF/non-GF	\$0	\$51,269,398	\$0	\$33,025,016
Total Expenses:	\$51,269,398		\$33,025,016	
Program FTE	0.00	5.30	0.00	4.95
Program Revenues				
Fees, Permits & Charges	\$0	\$7,753,722	\$0	\$0
Intergovernmental	\$0	\$22,500,000	\$0	\$0
Financing Sources	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$20,100,542
Interest	\$0	\$500,000	\$0	\$350,000
Beginning Working Capital	\$0	\$20,515,676	\$0	\$12,574,474
Total Revenue	\$0	\$51,269,398	\$0	\$33,025,016
Performance Measures				
Performance Measure	FY24 Actual	FY25 Estimate	FY26 Target	
1	2,325	30%	2,550	
2				
1	116	N/A	115	
2				

¹ Program offers in departments that don't have divisions (i.e. Nondepartmental) or countywide program offers will continue to use both outcome and output measures. For more information on writing performance measures, please see the FY 2027 Budgeting for Results guide on the [FY 2027 Budget Manual, Forms, Calendars, and Other Resources website](#).

What Makes a Good Program Description?

Multnomah County staff work hard every day to better the lives of everyone in the community. That's a story worth telling. One way to tell that story is through the "program description" in Questica. This description should:

- Identify the issue the program is addressing,
- Briefly describe what the program does and who it serves, and
- Be easy to understand for someone unfamiliar with the program.

If you only had a few minutes to explain your program to someone, what would you say?

The prompts below each heading are designed to help you put together a description; however, departments will need to tailor their description to reflect their unique operations and approaches.

Identify the Issue

In one or two sentences, summarize the issue the program is attempting to address. What is the problem you're trying to solve? In order to show the value of your program, you need to briefly identify the need or problem in the community that the program is responding to. This will help the Board and community understand why they should be interested in funding this program.

Keep in mind that every program offer is required to connect to at least one division outcome statement.² Even if you are not the person in your department who identifies the division outcome statement, you should know which division outcome statement(s) your program offer contributes to. You are not required to identify that outcome statement in the program offer, but knowing what it is may help you develop your description.

² A division outcome statement describes what the community will experience, receive, or understand as a result of the division's activities, services, or processes. For more information on division outcome statements and their relationship to program offers, please see the FY 2027 Budgeting for Results guide and FY 2027 Division Narrative template, both of which can be found on the [FY 2027 Budget Manual, Forms, Calendars, and Other Resources website](#).

Explain What the Program Does & Who It Serves

Briefly explain what service or product your program provides. What are the specific actions you are taking to solve the problem your program addresses?

You also want to identify who the program serves. If this problem affects a particular population, describe that group of people. Include data when it's useful and available. It's possible you'll address some or all of the demographic information in the Equity Statement section; just make sure that, between the Program Description and Equity Statement, you have clearly identified who the program impacts.

For a clear and concise way to describe your activities, you may want to consider the structure outlined in the table below.

Activity/Action	What? The Product or Service	For/to whom?
Processes	pet licenses	for new pet owners
Hosts	summer reading program	for children and teens
Provides	peer delivered behavioral health services	for BHRC clients
Provides	emergency shelter facilities during severe winter weather	to houseless county residents

If you have the space for it, you could show this information in a bulleted list to make the activities stand out and be easier to read. In narrative form, it might look like this:

"This program offer:

- Provides immunizations to all animals under our care,
- Provides microchipping services for cats and dogs,
- Performs emergency medical procedures to animals in crisis, and
- Provides low-cost spay/neuter procedures for the public."

Easy to Understand

Use plain language - that is, clear, concise, well organized language that readers can understand the first time they read it. Will a non-expert reader understand what the program does, who it serves, and why it's important? A few quick writing tips:

- Keep sentences as clear, simple, and short as possible.
- Make your points as directly as possible. Avoid jargon or excessively technical language. Remember that many readers will not be experts in your field.

- Write in the active voice: “This program funds X and Y services.” Active voice clarifies who will take which actions. Avoid using the passive voice: “The services funded by this program are X and Y.”
- Spell out all acronyms on first reference.

What Should be in the Equity Statement?

Each program offer now has a separate, short section to address equity, which was previously incorporated into the program description itself. The Equity Statement ensures County resources are allocated to actively address systemic disparities and promote fair access to services, especially for populations historically underserved or marginalized. It must be a concise, direct summary of your program's intentional contribution to advancing equity. An equitable program requires an intentional approach. This statement can also summarize how your program dismantles systemic inequities and how you have designed resources to achieve a measurable improvement in equitable results for your target population.

For programs with an overarching equity focus, the Program Description may contain robust details, with the Equity Statement serving as a summary. For programs with a more general population focus, or those supporting internal staff, use this section to discuss your approach to equity, including connection to the [Workforce Equity Strategic Plan](#) (WESP).

The Office of Diversity and Equity has put together a Budget Equity Tool and accompanying Worksheet to provide guidance to departments on the application of equity concepts to budgeting. Those materials should be used to help craft your program's Equity Statement and can be found on the [FY 2027 Budget Manual, Forms, Calendars, and Other Resources website](#). Your department equity managers and the Office of Diversity and Equity are also great resources to help you write the statement.

Additional Considerations and Resources

All of the following resources can be found on the [FY 2027 Budget Manual, Forms, Calendars, and Other Resources website](#).

Policy Direction from the Chair

The Chair's budget guidance provides important information about how to approach budgetary decisions and may be a helpful resource in determining what to write about or emphasize in the program description.

Equity in Budgeting

The Office of Diversity and Equity has put together a Budget Equity Tool and accompanying Worksheet to provide guidance to departments on the application of equity concepts to budgeting. Please use those resources while preparing program descriptions and equity statements. They can be found on the [FY 2027 Budget Manual, Forms, Calendars, and Other Resources website](#).

Budgeting for Results

The Budget Office has updated its Budgeting for Results guide to outcome-based budgeting, which includes recommendations for developing division-level key performance indicators (KPIs) and program offer output measures. It also describes a three-step approach that is relevant to the development of program offers: (1) establish division outcome statements (so we understand *why* we do what we do), (2) align program offers (so we understand how we are going to achieve the desired results), and (3) analyze performance (so we understand the progress we are making toward our desired results).

Style Guide

Appendix B of the FY 2027 Budget Manual is a Style Guide designed to help us be consistent in how we present information in the budget document. The guide begins with County-specific guidelines that address capitalization, number formatting, and word choices. The guide also provides information and resources on the use of plain language - that is, clear, concise, well organized language that readers can understand the first time they read it.

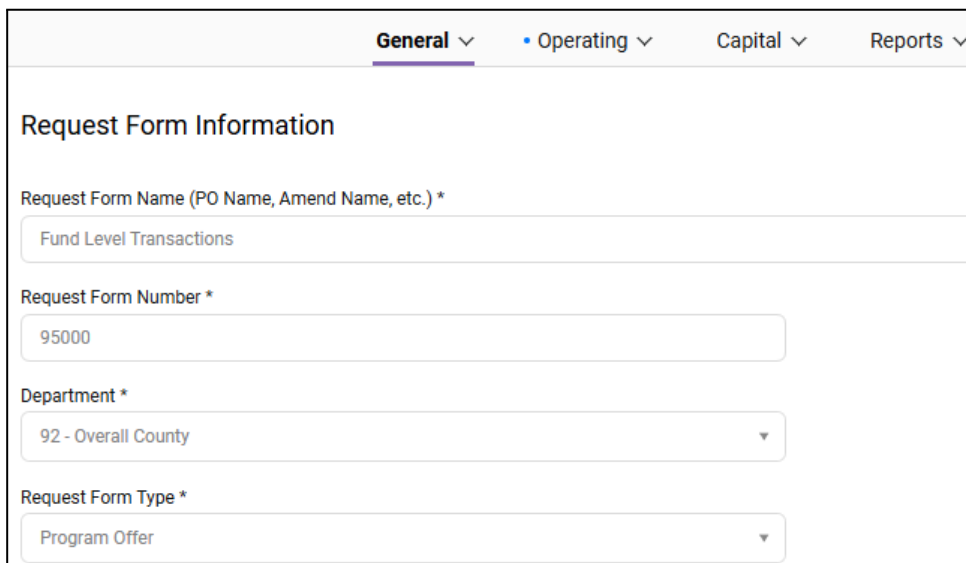
Entering Data in Questica

Program offers can be found in the Request Form section of [Questica](#). The Request Forms captures critical data that will be shown in the printed program offer, including the program description, equity statement, performance measures, and revenue/expense detail, as well as information that will be retained in the system but not printed out, i.e. legal/contractual obligations, explanation of revenues, and significant program changes.

1. Finding a Program Offer Request Form

To get started, see the “Find a Program Offer or Other Request Form” Quick Reference Guide (QRG) or training video on the [Commons Questica Learning Resources page](#).

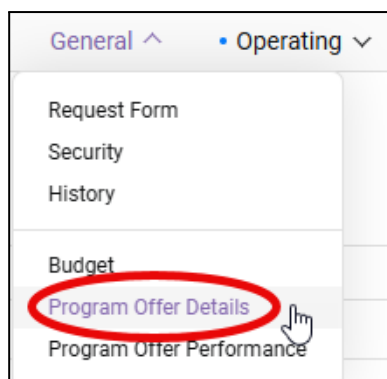
Once you have a program offer open, from the “General” dropdown menu, select “Request Form.” You will see the following screen:

The screenshot shows the 'Request Form Information' screen in Questica. At the top, there are four tabs: 'General' (selected), 'Operating', 'Capital', and 'Reports'. Below the tabs, the title 'Request Form Information' is displayed. The form contains four fields: 'Request Form Name (PO Name, Amend Name, etc.) *' with the value 'Fund Level Transactions'; 'Request Form Number *' with the value '95000'; 'Department *' with a dropdown menu showing '92 - Overall County'; and 'Request Form Type *' with a dropdown menu showing 'Program Offer'.

- **Request Form Name** – This is where you can enter or edit the program offer name.
- **Request Form Number** – Informational only. Program numbers start with the department’s two digit number (e.g. 72 = Department of County Management), followed by three digits to identify the offers. To update this number, contact your business manager, who will work with the Central Budget Office to make necessary changes.
- **Department** – Informational only. This identifies your department number and name.
- **Request Form Type** – Informational only. Request form types include: program offer, budget adjustment, amendment, or budget modification.

For more information, view the training videos in the Narrative Preparers section of the [Commons Questica Learning Resources page](#).

2. Navigating to the Program Offer Details Section



Departments enter program offer narrative information in the “Program Offer Details” section of Questica, which is found under the “General” dropdown menu. The published budget book will include this narrative information.

For more information, view the training videos in the Narrative Preparers section of the [Commons Questica Learning Resources page](#), as well as the FY 2027 Budget Manual, which can be found on the [FY 2027 Budget Manual, Forms, Calendars, and Other Resources website](#).

3. Entering Text in the Program Description and Equity Statement Fields

Once you’ve navigated to the “Program Offer Details” screen, scroll down to the “Program Details” section to find the Program Description and Equity Statement data fields. Add your text to these fields. We recommend that you click the Save button on a regular basis to ensure you don’t lose progress.

A screenshot of the 'Program Details' section in Questica. The section is titled 'Program Details' and contains two text input fields. The first field is labeled 'Program Description' and the second field is labeled 'Equity Statement'. Both fields are empty and have a small icon in the bottom right corner, likely for saving or editing.

Multiple editors

Only one person can edit a Questica request form screen at one time. If two or more people are editing screen at the same time (e.g. Request Form, Program Offer Details, Program Offer Performance Measures), Questica will only keep the edits of the last person to save. **You may wish to write your narratives in Word or Google Docs before copy/pasting into Questica to reduce the chance of lost information.**

Google Doc Program Offer Template

If you want to refine your narrative outside of Questica, a [Google Doc Program Offer Template](#) is available for you to copy on the [FY 2027 Budget Manual, Forms, Calendars, and Other Resources website](#). Please remember to enter all program offer information into Questica prior to submission.

Adding bullets

The easiest way to add a bullet into a text field in Questica is to copy and paste it from another document. Here is one: •.

Training videos

Training videos are available in the Narrative Preparers section of the [Commons Questica Learning Resources page](#).

Technical note

Because of the change to the program description spacing and the new equity statement section, your program narratives have not been automatically copied over from the FY 2026 Adopted budget into the FY 2027 program offer request forms in Questica. If you choose to start with FY 2026 language, please pay close attention to updating it to reflect the activities that will occur and people who will be served in FY 2027.

4. Ensuring Text is Not Cut Off in the Program Offer Report

It is very important to check that your text fits in the allotted space in the printed program offer, and that none of your text is cut off. Questica will allow you to enter unlimited text, despite making only a limited amount of text visible in the printed program offer. To make sure your text is not cut off in the printed program offer, you **must** view the PDF version of the program offer. To review a program offer, see the QRG titled “Run a Program Offer Report” or watch the training video “Run a Program Offer Report,” both located on the [Commons Questica Learning Resources page](#).

Artificial Intelligence and the Budget Process

NEW! The following information was provided by the County's Deputy Chief Information Officer.

Creative Writing Tools

The County has a number of tools to help craft budget narratives and program offer measures. These include Gemini, Google's Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) embedded into the Workspace suite of tools, and Writer, also a generative AI tool. To access these tools submit a software request through the [IT Service Portal's Software Catalogue](#). Enter "[Gemini](#)" or "[Writer](#)" as the Software Name and press the "Search" button. Select "Learn more and request now" to order the tool after approving the cost with the relevant manager.

County Policy Perspective

The use of Gemini or Writer for improving written content is allowable in County [Administrative Policy IT-4](#) and is specifically covered in (B) (1), *uses that do not require approval*. Use of these tools as part of program offer budget narratives is similar to how we use Gemini to help write letters in Google Docs. The key to this use is that a human should always be responsible for the final content that's published. Note that the County does not support the use of AI when making decisions, conclusions, and recommendations that impact staff and the community.

Suggested Prompts for Gemini

- Copy and paste a block of text into [Gemini](#) or click the "Help me write" button in Google Docs. Try these prompts:
 - "Improve this content"
 - "Simplify this content"
 - "Make this text more positive in tone"
 - "Make this statement more applicable to the community"
- Remember that Generative AI tools like Gemini and Writer remember context. Each new prompt can build upon the last prompt. This means you can keep adding information and asking questions, refining the prompts, as you go.
- If you like the suggestions, accept them, and use the text in your document. Be sure to make any final edits to the text before it's published in Questica to keep the human in the loop.

- In these examples, Gemini is not making any decisions, conclusions, or recommendations, but it is helping improve the language we as humans have written. We remain in control of the final text submitted as part of the departments' requested budget.
- How you phrase the question, or in this case "prompt", can make a big difference in the quality of the results. Our [Gemini Support site](#) has some good guidance on how to write advanced prompts. Also, don't be afraid to try a couple of different prompts to see what you like best. Iteration is key to getting the most out of generative AI tools.