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Understanding Program Offers

This volume contains the program offers submitted by departments and funded in the budget. Each section is separated by department/division and contains the following items, in order:

- An introduction to the department along with budget trends and a division summary,
- Division narrative including significant changes by division,
- A list of all of the program offers in the department, and
- The department's program offers.

Program offers form the basis for County's budget process. They constitute a department's budget request and narrative budget, and provide the information that the Board of County Commissioners uses to select programs that will best serve the community.

"Nothing astonishes people so much as common sense and plain dealing."
~Ralph Waldo Emerson

What Makes a Good Program Offer

A good program offer explicitly shows the relationship between the program and the desired results for services. Program offers should:

- Describe how they will make a significant contribution to the services indicated.
- Show why the County's spending on this program is effective – the "bang for the buck."
- Show evidence the program can deliver and measure its results.
- Give performance measures that accurately track the program's contributions.
- Link the offer to the policy direction/frameworks.
- Describe program activities in layperson's terms.

Program offers are not about funding programs because these programs exist – they are about outcomes. They emphasize meeting the County's goals, not preserving the government status quo. The following paragraphs describe the configuration of each program offer and the major types of information each should contain.

Program Offer Description

Program Offer Justification

Performance Measures

In Multnomah County's budget, a "program" is an organizational unit that provides services to the public or to other County departments or divisions. Its description should briefly and clearly explain the activities encompassed in the program offer. If the offer represents a change in current practice (a reorganization or change in staffing levels, service hours, etc.), it should briefly describe the nature of that change.

The justification should describe how the program will support the strategies outlined for the department or in known County policy frameworks. It should cite research, experience, or logic to convincingly make the case. If it is a new program, it should note how the department created its cost estimates.

"I have no data yet. It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories instead of theories to suit facts."

~Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes

Every program offer includes two to four performance measures that indicate the level of service that the County can expect to receive if this program is selected. Two types of measures are required: the output, which represents the volume of work, and the outcome, which represents the measurable results of that work. For example, a hypothetical addictions treatment program for abused teenage girls might report the number of teenage girls who entered and received treatment (output), and the percentage of teenage girls who were clean and sober and completed their treatment plan upon exit (outcome).

Departments also have the option of including additional types of measures to better illustrate a program's performance. These can include resources other than staffing or finances (inputs), measures of the quality of service that's delivered, and measures of service efficiency in terms of cost or time. Using the addictions treatment example above, inputs might be reported as the number of treatment beds available to serve abused teenage girls. Quality could be reported as the percent of teenage girls that rated counseling staff as engaging and supportive, and efficiency might be reported as the cost to the County for each successful treatment completion.

The performance measures are organized in a uniform table in each program offer. The table identifies the type of measure, the measure's definition, and several cells to report the results. The cells present program history where available, annualized estimates of the current service level (what's being delivered at the time of printing, where available), and the anticipated target service level for the upcoming year if the program is selected. Additional supporting information, such as explanations as to notable changes in a program's performance, are located in the narrative section below the table.

Legal and Contractual Mandates

Many program offers will be constrained by legal or contractual mandates. If a program offer is affected by a mandate, the mandate and its authorizing document (a statute, contract, etc.) should be noted.

Program Costs (Revenue/Expense Detail)

This area should show the cost to the County of providing the program, as well as the revenues generated by the program for its support. These costs include personnel, contracted services, materials and supplies, and internal services.

Explanation of Revenues

This section explains how non-General Fund revenues or General Fund fee revenues were estimated. Revenue estimates should clearly demonstrate the reasonableness of the estimate.

Significant Program Changes

This section details significant programmatic changes that affect the program—not financial changes up or down. Such changes might include the following information:

- Increases or decreases in the scope or level of services,
- Increases or decreases in net personnel resources (FTE's),
- Revenue increases or decreases, or
- How this change affects other departments and/or service delivery programs.

In this section you will find a link from this year's program offer to its predecessor, if applicable. Note that program offer numbering can change between fiscal years.

Types of Programs

Program offers are categorized based on the “type” of services they deliver. Program offers fall into one of the following groups:

- Administration
- Support
- Operating Program
- New/Innovative Program
- Program Alternative/Reconstruction
- Internal Service
- Revenue

Administration

Department- or division-level management and related expenses (i.e. office space, supplies, telephones, etc.). Direct program supervision is considered to be a part of the operating program (NOT administration), and could be included in the operating program’s offer.

Support

An activity in a department that provides services directly to some or all operating programs within a department. Examples include the Health Department’s pharmacy, which supports the various health clinics; the Library’s Technical Services, which maintains the Library’s materials and catalog systemwide; or the District Attorney’s Human Resources unit.

Operating Program

An “on the ground” activity of the County. Includes front-line supervisors/ program managers with specific responsibilities for particular operating programs. An example would be the Health Department’s Primary Care Clinics.

New/Innovative

“On the ground” or support activity the County currently does not perform.

Program Alternative or Reconstruction

A program that has been or is currently operated by one or more County departments that is proposed to be operated in a different way, by different providers, or with different business models.

Internal Service

Programs that support Countywide operations. Examples of these types of programs would be Fleet or Information Technology services.

Revenues

These programs are used to budget discretionary (primarily General Fund) revenues at the fund level. Program revenues are budgeted within the applicable program offer.

Other Important Notes

Characteristics of Program Offers

Reading through the program offers, one should keep in mind:

- Program Offer characteristics (e.g. backfill and offers requesting one-time-only resources), and
- The way in which program offers are scaled.

Backfill - Backfill is defined as discretionary dollars (General Fund) applied to a program that formerly was funded by a grant, state, or other dedicated funding source. Explicitly identifying backfill allows the Chair and the Board to decide to partially or fully backfill expiring grants, state or federal funds with General Fund dollars.

One-Time-Only Resources - In most budget years, the County has a varying amount of one-time-only funds. These funds will not be available in the following years and thus should be spent on projects that do not have or have minimal ongoing expenses.

Measure 5 Education Offers - Multnomah County has General Fund revenues that are not derived from real property taxes. These revenues can be expended on educational services without violating the Constitutional limitation on spending real property tax for educational services. In order for the County to easily demonstrate that it has complied with the Constitutional limitation on spending for "educational services," departments can designate such programs so that they may be funded by non real property tax revenues.

Scaled Program Offers

Program offers represent discrete increments of service and many County programs can deliver services at varying levels. For example, an Alcohol and Drug Treatment Program may be able to offer 100, 150 or 200 beds. Departments were asked, when appropriate, to provide decision-makers with the option to choose from those service levels. Looking at scaled program offers, one should consider:

- The Base Level of Service - Program "A" is the base level of service that can be provided while still delivering the expected results. In the example above, the base level of service would be 100 beds.
- Increments of Service - Program "B and beyond" represent incremental levels of service that buy additional outcomes. In the A&D treatment example, one increment could be 50 additional beds, and another, separate increment could be 100 additional beds.