



Office of Community Involvement



Non - Departmental CBAC

TO: Chair Jessica Vega Pederson and Board of County Commissioners 8 pages

FROM: Non - Departmental Community Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC)

DATE: March 14, 2025

SUBJECT: Non - Departmental Community Budget Advisory Committee Report & Recommendations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Non-Departmental Community Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC)** focused on critical areas where budget cuts and resource allocations directly impact the effectiveness of County services and the community's well-being. Our committee's recommendations aim to prioritize programs that foster long-term sustainability, equity, and community engagement, while acknowledging the constraints posed by the County's budget deficit. In light of the 8-12% cuts across various departments, we approached our recommendations with an understanding of the complex political landscape at both the state and national levels, which could further affect County funding and services and highlights the important role of the County as a safety net for our community.

Key Program Areas Prioritized:

- **Office of Sustainability:** We support maintaining funding for programs like the Enterprise Plan, Utility Policy, and Climate Justice by Design, while recommending a shift in resources for the Climate Resilience Coordinator role.
- **Office of Government Relations:** We support cutting 1 FTE in the grant-writing position but recommend distributing grant-writing responsibilities across departments to maintain funding streams.
- **Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE):** We emphasize ODE's critical role in supporting equity and recommend preserving its resources for continued guidance, especially as other departments face increased reliance on equity expertise.
- **Auditor's Office:** We advocate for maintaining community engagement in audits and protecting staff expertise to ensure transparency and accountability.
- **Office of Community Involvement (OCI):** We recommend transitioning a temporary position to an FTE and securing resources for internships to support OCI's community engagement efforts.

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Core Values Guiding Our Recommendations: We consider the below values in alignment with Multnomah County's stated mission, vision, and values.

- **Equity:** Ensuring all programs are accessible and responsive to vulnerable communities.
- **Sustainability:** Emphasizing long-term planning, particularly in environmental and climate resilience programs.
- **Community Engagement:** Ensuring community voices are central to decision-making.
- **Efficiency:** Advocating for strategic budget reductions that preserve essential services.

PROCESS

We met with representatives from five County departments to review their budgets and discuss essential services. Our discussions were guided by values of equity, community engagement, and climate resilience. Departments were transparent in presenting their budget cuts, but concerns arose about the loss of key staff and the impact on service quality.

EMERGING THEMES/TRENDS

- **Securing Functionality:** Protecting core functions and staff expertise is critical, especially given potential state and federal cuts.
- **Maintaining Institutional Knowledge and Expertise:** Reductions primarily affect staff positions, risking the loss of institutional knowledge and expertise.
- **Commitment to Equity:** Across departments, we emphasized the need to prioritize equity-driven programs, especially those supporting marginalized communities.
- **Climate Resilience:** Cuts to climate-related roles, like the Climate Resilience Coordinator, could undermine long-term sustainability goals.
- **Community Engagement:** Engaging community members and residents, particularly marginalized groups, in decision-making remains a top priority.

BUDGET/PROGRAM OFFERS FEEDBACK AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our committee considered all of the departments we met with as essential to the business of the County and to the continued thriving of our community, and the following recommendations are listed in no specific order

The Auditor's Office Recommendations

We understand the need for budget cuts but recognize the Auditor's Office as crucial to the County and its communities. We urge the Chair and Board to consider supporting the Auditor's staff despite cuts to cost-of-living increases, as their experience is vital to the County. We also recommend collaborating with the Auditor's Office to find ways to maintain resources for

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community engagement, such as sharing resources with other departments already engaged in similar work. Community and lived perspectives are invaluable to the Auditor's work and the effectiveness of County programs. Additionally, we support transitioning to online training to reduce costs and suggest exploring low-cost training options, such as Union Plus.

1. Program Recommendations to Maintain Funding:

- **Support for Auditor's Staff:** We recommend that the Chair and the Board of Commissioners consider how to support and maintain the Auditor's staff in light of budget cuts, particularly in the face of cuts to cost-of-living increases. The staff's experience and expertise are critical to the success of audits and the integrity of County programs.
- **Community Engagement Resources for Audits:** We ask the Chair and the Board to work with the Auditor's Office to ensure resources for community engagement, which is key to informing audits. This could include exploring ways to combine resources with other offices that are already positioned to conduct similar community engagement work.

2. Rationale:

- **Experience and Expertise of Auditor's Staff:** The loss of staff expertise due to budget cuts and the lack of cost-of-living increases would significantly impact the quality and thoroughness of audits. Maintaining experienced staff in the Auditor's Office ensures that the County can continue to have effective oversight and transparency.
- **Informed Audits Through Community Engagement:** Community engagement is essential for understanding how programs affect the people they serve. Incorporating lived experiences into the audit process is crucial to ensure the effectiveness of County programs and to address the needs of residents more comprehensively.

3. Concerns and Supports:

- **Concern:** Reductions in the Auditor's Office staff compensation and resources could compromise the quality and depth of audits, as well as reduce the ability to gather meaningful input from community members. It's essential that resources for community engagement are preserved or found through collaborative partnerships with other departments.
- **Support:** The recommendation to transition to online training and seek out low-cost training opportunities is a practical step that can reduce costs while maintaining staff skill development. We also support efforts to integrate

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community engagement into audits to improve the relevance and impact of County programs.

4. Suggested Follow-Up Actions:

- **Support for Auditor's Staff Retention:** We recommend that the Chair and Board prioritize maintaining the Auditor's staff by considering strategies to support staff through retention incentives other than cost-of-living adjustments included in proposed cuts, as their expertise is invaluable for the County.
- **Collaboration on Community Engagement:** We suggest further discussions between the Auditor's Office and other departments to explore opportunities for pooling resources for community engagement, ensuring that audits remain well-informed by community perspectives and lived experiences.
- **Staff Training:** We support the transition to online training opportunities to cut costs, and recommend looking for additional low-cost training opportunities such as Union Plus (a reduced cost training program for union members).

The Office of Community Involvement (OCI) Recommendations

We support the OCI budget request to transition funding from a temporary position to a Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) role, ensuring that the office can rely on a consistent and experienced professional to further develop its program offers. We also strongly support OCI securing the resources needed to hire or host an intern, which would not only support the office's workload but also provide a valuable training opportunity for a community member.

1. Program Recommendations to Maintain Funding:

- **Transition to FTE:** We recommend transitioning funding for the LDA position to an FTE, allowing OCI to build and sustain long-term, effective community engagement efforts across the County.
- **Internship Opportunity:** We encourage the allocation of resources to hire or host an intern for OCI, providing both valuable assistance to the office and a hands-on learning experience for a community member.

2. Rationale:

- **Stability and Consistency:** By transitioning the temporary position to an FTE, OCI will have the stability and consistency needed to develop and implement effective community engagement strategies across various County departments.
- **Training Opportunities:** Providing internships creates an opportunity for community members to gain skills and experience, while simultaneously supporting OCI's critical work in engaging the public in County decisions.

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- **Essential Role of OCI:** The work of OCI is vital to the County’s overall function, as it supports all departments in their community outreach efforts and provides a vital link between the County and residents. OCI is uniquely positioned to support advisory groups as well as County staff, and foster meaningful participation in decision-making processes that impact our community.
3. **Concerns and Supports:**
- **Concern:** While OCI plays a crucial role in community engagement, we recognize that this is a budget-constrained year. However, we believe that continued investment in OCI will have long-term benefits for the County and the community it serves.
 - **Support:** We strongly support the long-term sustainability of OCI’s work. Investing in the office's capacity to consistently engage with community advisory groups and department staff is essential to ensure that County programs are responsive to the needs and perspectives of residents.
4. **Suggested Follow-Up Actions:**
- **FTE Transition and Staffing:** We recommend that the Board consider prioritizing the transition of the temporary position to an FTE to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of OCI's community engagement efforts.
 - **Internship Program:** Work with the OCI team to identify potential funding sources and partnerships to create an internship program that serves both the office and the local community, enhancing capacity and providing valuable learning opportunities.

The Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE) Recommendations

We support ODE’s budget requests and acknowledge that, with the deep budget cuts, ODE will become an even more crucial resource for other departments. The ODE’s role in supporting equity across all County departments should be prioritized, as it provides essential guidance and expertise in fostering diversity, inclusion, and equitable practices in both internal and external operations.

1. **Program Recommendations to Maintain Funding:**
- **Continued Support for ODE:** We recommend that funding for the Office of Diversity and Equity be preserved, as its work is vital for promoting equity within County programs and services, especially during a time of significant cuts.
 - **Collaboration with Other Departments:** ODE should continue to be a resource for other departments, ensuring that their programs are inclusive and equitable, even with reduced resources across the County.

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2. Rationale:

- **Increased Demand for Equity Guidance:** As the County faces budget cuts, the demand for ODE's expertise will only grow. The ODE is integral to ensuring that all County programs are responsive to the needs of diverse communities, and its work must continue without interruption.
- **Support for Organizational Culture:** The ODE plays a crucial role in shaping an inclusive organizational culture, promoting diversity, and ensuring that the County's policies and services are equitable and accessible to all community members.

3. Concerns and Supports:

- **Concern:** While the ODE is critical, there is concern that the office may face challenges in maintaining its current level of support for other departments with reduced resources. It's important to ensure that the office remains adequately staffed to fulfill its expanded role during this period of deep cuts.
- **Support:** We strongly support the continued funding and growth of ODE's role in supporting equity and diversity initiatives across all County departments, particularly in times of financial constraint.

4. Suggested Follow-Up Actions:

- **Ensure Adequate Resourcing:** We recommend that the County evaluate the resources available to ODE to ensure that it can continue to effectively serve as a resource for other departments, especially as those departments face cuts and greater reliance on equity expertise.
- **Cross-Departmental Collaboration:** Continue to foster strong collaboration between ODE and other County departments to help integrate equity considerations into their budget and program decisions, ensuring that equity remains central to the County's response to budget cuts.

The Office of Sustainability Recommendations

We support the Office of Sustainability's proposal to reduce the Climate Resilience Coordinator position to half-time. However, we recommend that the City of Portland and State of Oregon be engaged to help cover the environmental resilience work currently managed by this position, specifically the work related to the "CEI Hub." This transition could help ensure the continuity of critical programs without compromising the overall impact of climate resilience efforts.

1. Program Recommendations to Maintain Funding:

- **Enterprise Plan:** Essential for ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience of the County's operations.

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- **Utility Policy:** Critical for managing energy and water use, which impacts both environmental and community health outcomes.
 - **Environmental Health Protection Programs:** Vital for safeguarding the health of community members, especially in underserved areas.
 - **Climate Justice by Design:** A crucial program that addresses climate equity and works to ensure that vulnerable communities are protected from environmental threats.
- 2. Rationale:**
- These programs collectively have a significant impact on improving the quality of life, enhancing public health, and addressing long-term environmental threats that could disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. We believe these programs are essential and must be fully funded to ensure the County’s ongoing commitment to sustainability and equity.
- 3. Concerns and Supports:**
- **Concern:** Reducing the Climate Resilience Coordinator to part-time may compromise the County’s ability to fully implement its climate resilience goals. We encourage finding ways to ensure this work continues at full capacity through partnerships or external funding.
 - **Support:** The recommendation to maintain funding for the core sustainability and climate justice programs is supported, as these areas are critical to long-term health, equity, and resilience for all community members.
- 4. Suggested Follow-Up Actions:**
- **Explore DEQ Funding:** We recommend further discussions with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to identify potential funding opportunities that could support the work of the Climate Resilience Coordinator and other climate-related efforts.
 - **Engage State and City Partners:** Collaborate with the City of Portland and State of Oregon to ensure that environmental resilience work can continue to be supported across jurisdictions, particularly in the “CEI Hub.”

The Office of Government Relations Recommendations

We align with the Office of Government Relations’ recommendation to cut 1 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) position for the current grant writing role. However, we propose that specific offices and staff members be designated to take on the responsibility of writing both large and small grants, such as those critical to our community programs (e.g., LIPSC). This strategy would help maintain the essential funding streams for our community programs without losing the expertise needed for successful grant writing.

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1. Program Recommendations to Maintain Funding:

- **Grant Writing for Community Programs:** We recommend identifying specific staff persons across departments who will take on grant writing responsibilities. These staff members should focus on securing both large and small grants that support critical community programs.

2. Rationale:

- **Preserving Grant Funding:** Grant writing is essential to securing external funding for critical programs. By assigning responsibility for grants across departments, we can continue to access these funds without the need for a dedicated full-time grant writer position.
- **Sustainability of Community Programs:** LIPSC and other similar grants are vital for the continuation of community-focused programs. It is important that resources be allocated to ensure that these grants remain a reliable funding source.

3. Concerns and Supports:

- **Concern:** The reduction of a dedicated grant writing position could impact the overall efficiency and quality of grant applications. Without a specialized FTE, there is a risk that grant writing may be deprioritized or that existing staff may struggle to balance these duties alongside their regular responsibilities.
- **Support:** The proposal to identify key staff across departments to take on grant writing responsibilities, provided they are given the necessary support and training, would help ensure that the County continues to secure critical funding without the burden of a full-time, dedicated position.

4. Suggested Follow-Up Actions:

- **Staff Designation and Support:** We recommend that the Office of Government Relations work with department heads to identify specific staff persons who are well-equipped to take on grant writing duties and provide them with adequate training and resources to succeed.
- **Monitor Impact:** Track the effectiveness of this approach in maintaining the County's grant funding, and assess whether additional resources or support are needed to ensure the continued success of grant applications.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Committee would like to give special thanks to the department leads for their time and thoughtful presentations, and the OCI staff who supported our process.

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