



Office of Community Involvement



Non-Department CBAC

TO: Chair Jessica Vega Pederson and Board of County Commissioners 9 pages

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

DATE: March 6, 2026

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dear Non-D Directors, Board of County Commissioners and Chair Jessica Vega Pederson,

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve on the Non-Departmental (Non-D) CBAC for this budget season, and we thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts. We are proud to be a part of Multnomah County, and appreciate a government that participates in collaborative cross-departmental and cross-jurisdictional programming, projects, and progress.

We are a diverse group of individuals who are proud to be a part of a diverse community, with a government that values that diversity and seeks to make county governance and programs accessible to and equitable for all Multnomah County residents.

Process and Key Program Areas Prioritized

Our committee met monthly from November 2025 to March 2026 and heard from representatives of seven non-departmental (non-D) offices. These offices were:

- Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC)
- Government Relations
- Office on Community Involvement (OCI)
- Office of Sustainability
- Auditors Office
- Communications Office
- Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE)

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Our committee learned that non-D offices were not required to make budget cuts this fiscal year, so our recommendations focus on supporting programs we learned about that we consider important priorities for current and future budgeting.

Our group's shared values guided our decision-making and priorities throughout this process.

Core Values Guiding Our Recommendations

The values below emerged from our group during discussions about potential recommendations. We consider these to be aligned with Multnomah County's stated mission, vision, and values.

- **Equity:** All programs are accessible and responsive to vulnerable communities, addressing systemic imbalances to ensure fairness for marginalized groups.
- **Accountability:** Commitments are met, and results are accounted for, building trust and strengthening relationships. "Accountability without equity can reinforce inequitable systems, and equity without a strong focus on accountability can lead to empty promises." (-Auditor McGurick)
- **Accessibility:** Environments, products, and services are usable by everyone and enable equal, independent interaction.
- **Transparency:** The open, honest, and accessible sharing of information regarding actions, decisions, and processes is crucial for building trust.
- **Interdependence and Collaboration:** Shared goals, mutual reliance, and combined expertise yield better results than individual effort.
- **Sustainability:** Long-term planning is prioritized, particularly for environmental and climate resilience programs.
- **Communication and Community Engagement:** Community voices are central to effective decision-making, and coordinated communication across the county is critical to effectively engage community members.
- **Prevention and Public Safety:** Proactively plan to reduce risks, prevent emergencies, and protect communities through education, law enforcement, collaboration, and emergency management planning.

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HIGHLIGHTS ON PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Cross-Departmental Collaboration

We want to highlight this committee's support for collaboration across departments and jurisdictions. This is a pinnacle of efficient and effective governance. We would like to highlight the interdepartmental and cross-jurisdictional work on the CEI Hub and climate resilience in particular, as a shining example of the type of projects that rely on collaboration.

Sustaining Positive Programs

Our recommendations highlight our desire that funding for important programs be supported by long-term sources, so that progress and developments made can be sustained through budget cycles and years. We believe building grant-writing and grant-seeking capacity and revenue streams, and weaving together different funding sources, is essential to the ongoing availability and success of programs that have positive community impacts and outcomes.

Promoting a Diversity of Voices in Governance

Our recommendations and comments highlight the work that has been done and the work we need to continue prioritizing to promote equity, especially in access to information about and participation in County governance. We call out the importance of accessibility and inclusion for our disabled community, as people with various disabilities make up a significant intersection of our population and are historically and currently marginalized in numerous ways. We also highlight the importance of and our suggestions to promote inclusion of a diversity of voices in the governance process. An important way to achieve this is to remove barriers. Providing stipends for participation is critical, so folks who lack extra time and resources can still participate in governance.

DEPARTMENT BUDGET/PROGRAM OFFER RECOMMENDATIONS

Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC)

Recommendation: Prioritize funding for a grants coordinator/writer to secure grant money for LPSCC to ensure its participation in critical programs such as: the youth workforce development program, justice fellowship, Reimagine Justice, victim/survivor advocacy, pretrial reforms, and other vital programs and initiatives centering on harm prevention, crime reduction, and rehabilitation rather than reactionary and punitive punishments. A creative solution we suggest is to leverage Justice Fellows as grant writers, to promote year-over-year funding for these important programs.

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Rationale: Public safety, crime prevention, and support for at-risk youth are critical to a well-functioning community. The Justice Fellowship program is a vital equity initiative that pays community members with lived experience in the criminal legal system to engage in policy and program decision-making. Leading with race and centering these voices is required to acknowledge and repair historical harms caused by the criminal justice system.

Support: Continue to allocate budget and staff to learning from other jurisdictions' best practices on how to prevent recidivism and the school-to-prison pipeline, and lean on grant-writing capacity to create continued budget streams.

Support: We support leaning on grant writers across other County departments and utilizing the success stories of Justice Fellowship graduates to bolster the narrative needed to secure further grant funding. LPSCC has a proven track record of successful collaboration and national leadership, as demonstrated by its ongoing management of the \$2 million federal grant for the community-led "Reimagining Justice in Cully" project and its ongoing monitoring of the justice system through central data analysis.

Concerns: LPSCC relies heavily on external and state funding that is currently shrinking, including SB 1145 state corrections formulas and Justice Reinvestment grants. Most notably, the MacArthur Foundation Safety and Justice Challenge grant, which currently funds the Justice Fellowship stipends and a coordinator position, will end in June 2027. Without immediate support for additional grant writing, programs that provide vital civic engagement opportunities for marginalized residents may be discontinued, directly conflicting with the County's equity values.

Government Relations

Recommendation: Maintain and strengthen funding for coalitions and regional partnership investments. We recommend continued investment in coalition building and regional collaboration to strengthen the County's influence and improve shared policy and budget outcomes.

Rationale: Government Relations amplifies local voices at tribal, state, and federal levels, so community impacts can be felt beyond County boundaries. Transparent communication and coalition building ensure that community priorities are reflected in broader policy decisions. Proactive coalition building reduces duplication of effort, strengthens shared regional strategies, and improves the likelihood of successful legislative outcomes. This is essential for protecting core safety-net services during periods of economic uncertainty.

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Support: The office has demonstrated strong collaboration with the new City of Portland government and has successfully launched a regional federal coalition, which will help the County leverage relationships and maximize available funding.

Concerns: The office lost a Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) position focused on grants and federal advocacy during the last budget cycle. Operating with reduced staff while preparing for the 2027 long legislative session and managing heightened stakeholder expectations may strain the office's capacity.

Office on Community Involvement (OCI)

The work of the Office on Community Involvement is important and should be prioritized, as it directly aligns with many of the county's and our core values. Our recommendations center on promoting equitable access to civic engagement and engaging a diversity of voices in the governance process.

Recommendation: Continue to fully fund the CBAC Improvement Plan to provide ongoing stipends for all CBAC members at \$35 per meeting. Support departments and the library allocate money in their own budgets to provide stipends for their CBAC members. Additionally, approve the temporary budget requests for the Charter Review process, which includes 1 FTE Limited Duration Appointment (LDA) Project Manager, committee stipends for participants, and programming materials.

Rationale: Some advisory committee volunteers currently receive stipends for participation. Set a consistent stipend amount and policy for all advisory committee volunteers that acknowledges and honors their time and participation in County governance. Providing stipends reduces financial barriers to civic participation for marginalized populations and ensures that decision-making reflects diverse lived experiences.

Concerns: Without adequate funding for stipends and structured outreach, participation may be limited to individuals with existing financial stability and flexible schedules. This limitation would undermine the County's commitment to equitable and inclusive community representation.

Support: The office's established educational programs and its existing Volunteer Connect infrastructure provide a strong foundation for successfully recruiting, training, and supporting

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community members serving as public officials. This programming provides structured outreach and engagement, including meeting facilitation and materials development to ensure inclusive, transparent, and accessible engagement throughout the Carter Review and CBAC improvement process.

Recommendation: Support for a budget allocation to hire a project manager for the upcoming charter review process who is qualified and committed to high-quality engagement, process design, and deliverables.

Rationale: The charter review committee and process will need strong, capable leadership to ensure sufficient coordination and community outreach for durable outcomes. The Charter Review process presents an opportunity to strengthen trust between the County and residents. Investing in clear outreach and facilitation promotes meaningful participation rather than symbolic engagement. As the County faces fiscal constraints, transparent and inclusive budget and governance processes become even more important. OCI plays a foundational role in supporting departments and advisory groups, ensuring community voices are integrated into major policy and budget decisions.

Office of Sustainability

Recommendation: Continue to support funding for community-driven climate justice initiatives, specifically the wood-burning exchange program, targeted heat pump installations, and utility discounts.

Rationale: Fighting energy poverty and advancing energy justice directly improves the health, safety, and resilience of frontline communities facing extreme weather events.

Support: The office successfully advocates for utility discounts and less punitive disconnection practices at the state level. We support this work and continued investment in energy justice.

Rationale: Previous funding cuts have negatively impacted essential climate resilience initiatives, such as the tree planting programs in Gresham. Without sustained investment, the County risks losing progress on its goals to protect vulnerable communities from environmental threats.

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Recommendation: We support the allocation of resources towards the Advisory Committee on Sustainability and Innovation (ACSI) in taking an official oversight role in finalizing the Climate Justice Plan.

Rationale: Granting ACSI an oversight role ensures that the final Climate Justice Plan remains grounded in community expertise and long-term accountability.

Recommendation: We recommend funding for a future FTE focused solely on climate justice and resilience related to the Critical Energy Infrastructure (CEI) Hub.

Rationale: We see this role as critical to continue collaborative work with other jurisdictions on the CEI Hub and climate resilience. The office has a proven track record of leveraging relationships with local community groups to deliver benefits directly to environmental justice communities.

Auditor's Office

Recommendation: Ensure independence of the Auditor's office by tying their budget to the overall County budget, rather than leaving it subject to Chair approval, as this creates a conflict of interest. Implement a standardized, annual percentage of the County's general fund expenditure budget of approximately .75% (in line with national standards) to fund the Office of the Auditor annually.

Rationale: Ensure the Auditor's Office can maintain independence from the Chair. Ensure funding practices for our Auditor's office avoid conflicts of interest and are in-line with national standards

Recommendation: Consider funding a part-time position for communication and community outreach.

Rationale: The Auditor's Office needs to maintain independence from other County operations and therefore cannot rely solely on other County resources for communications and community outreach. These are critical tools for the Auditor's Office to perform audits optimally.

Communications Office

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Recommendation: Ensure clear alignment of communications across County departments and offices. Allocate staff and budget to ongoing centralized communications across the County, critical for emergency preparedness and other issues that require community involvement. Establish a centralized, consistent communication infrastructure for important episodes and ongoing issues that require community involvement, including charter review, public safety, budget allocations, etc.

Recommendation: Ensure County website updates are accessible, offer translation, and include education on what services the County offers, who to contact with questions and concerns, and how to get involved.

Rationale: Communications across the County are disparate, with each department or office managing its own communication and outreach. This creates siloed knowledge and an inconsistent distribution of information within the county and to the public. All can benefit from more centralized communications focused on community outreach and education by a staff with experience in emergency communications strategies and processes.

Office of Diversity and Equity

Recommendation: Prioritize accessibility in accordance with federal law and out of respect for all County residents. Meet the needs of the blind/low-vision, deaf/Deaf/hard-of-hearing, and alternately disabled members of our community by allocating staff and resources to ensure accessibility. Ensure all offices and departments provide PDFs and materials accessible to all members of our community on updated Multnomah County websites. This includes multiple languages and mechanisms to make materials legible to people in variously disabled communities.

Recommendation: Continue administrative assistance beyond limited duration to ensure that the Equity Strategic Plan is brought to fruition and actualized. The new director requires as much administrative assistance as possible to both ensure a smooth transition between directors and carry on the necessary work of data analysis using last year's Auditor's report.

Rationale: Accessibility has become increasingly lumped together with equity, diversity, and inclusion (IDEA). Given the county's history of both marginalization of disabled communities and leading the way in restorative Justice through challenging ableism, it is logical to continue on that trajectory. Nearly a quarter of the county's population is disabled, so intentional and direct

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inclusion of this significant and often marginalized population in county governance is critical to the mission, and not trivial.¹

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank OCI for their continued efforts to provide opportunities for civic engagement, such as this one, and OCI staff for their thoughtful and dedicated work engaging us in the budget process.

The Committee would like to give special thanks to Gabriela Trinidad from the CBAC Non-D Policy and Resource Coordinator; Jennifer McGurik from the Auditor's Office; Denis Theriault from the Communications Office; Amara Perez from the Office of Community Involvement; Trisa Kelly from the Office of Diversity and Equity; John Wasitynski from the Office of Sustainability; Stacy Cowen from the Office of Government Relations; and Sarah Mullen from LPSCC. Your time, transparency, and thoughtful responses to our questions helped us better understand each office's work and the broader fiscal landscape. We deeply appreciate your professionalism, openness, and commitment to ensuring this process was collaborative, informative, and grounded in shared public service.

¹ See Oregon Office on Disability and Health, Oregon Health Data Statistics, <https://www.ohsu.edu/oregon-office-on-disability-and-health/oregon-disability-health-data-and-statistics>, reporting 23.5% of Multnomah County residents are disabled.

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