

CLATSOP COUNTY 2024-2025 BUDGET POLICIES

I. Clatsop County Budget Process:

The budget process and resulting budget document reflect the County's policy and budget priorities for the coming fiscal year as established by the Board of County Commissioners. The budget document, in its entirety, serves as a Policy Document, Operations Guide, Financial Plan, and Communication Device.

The County will adopt a balanced budget for all funds. A balanced budget is defined as a budget where planned expenditures do not exceed the amount of resources available in accordance with state law.

II. Budgets Supported by the General Fund:

- A. General Fund Underpinnings: The General Fund houses discretionary revenues and expenditures. The General Fund will be actively managed over a multi-year forecasting horizon according to Board policies and directives, and fund priority programs, services and service levels. The General Fund will be actively managed during the fiscal year, with adjustments made as necessary based on the best information available to meet year-end fund balance goals.
- B. Fiscal Planning: Financial forecasting will be grounded in best-available data/information and historical trends.
- C. General Guidance for FY 24-25
 - 1. Based on forecast modeling, the aggregated growth in General Fund expenditures is targeted for 5% - 6% for the FY 24/25 fiscal year.
 - i. FTE count is to remain at fiscal year 2023/24 levels (no new positions anticipated). The priority is to fund existing COLA, step adjustments and associated benefit costs for existing employees.
 - ii. Materials and supplies are to remain at fiscal year 2023/24 levels or below. Departments should scrutinize M&S line-items and prioritize expenses accordingly and reduce where appropriate.
 - iii. Strategic Plan and other Board directed priorities should be discussed with Finance Director and County Manager prior to including in requested budget.
- D. Base Budget Assumptions for FY 24-25: General Fund Departments will be provided a base budget amount. The base allocation is calculated using departments adopted 2023-24 budgets and includes any known adjustments, either increases or decreases, in expenses for the coming budget cycle.
 - 1. Base Budget Elements:
 - i. Staffing Levels: The base budget includes a "status quo" position type and FTE (Full-Time Equivalent) count.
 - ii. Materials & Services: The base budget does not include an increase for materials and supplies above the current 2023-24 budgeted levels. Departments should critically examine past spending patterns by line-item to see if increases or decreases are necessary.

- iii. Budget Requests Beyond Base: Personnel or program expenditure changes that departments cannot accommodate within their base budget allocation must be submitted to, and discussed with, the Finance Department and County Manager prior to budget submittal.
- E. Revenue Estimates: Departments should budget for revenues based on the best information available during the budget process. If additional information becomes available during the budget process, it should be provided to the Finance Director on a timely basis. Accuracy in revenue/expenditure estimates is critical. New revenues should be estimated based on available information the first year. Subsequent annual estimates should also take into consideration actual receipts from the previous year. One-time resources should only be used for one-time expenditures/uses, and recurring resources should be used for recurring expenditures/uses.
- F. Pursuit of New Departmental Revenues: Departments shall pursue revenue sources to the fullest extent possible for all services using activity-based costing to determine all cost drivers, both direct and indirect, for fee setting purposes. Any new revenue sources should be used to offset the cost of existing staff and programs, rather than funding new staff or programs. Fee schedules will be reviewed annually to ensure costs are recovered.
- G. Expenditure Reductions: In the event that reductions in revenues require expenditure reductions from the base budget level, recommendations will be guided by the Board's Resource Management Strategy.
- H. New Discretionary Programs: New discretionary programs should be discussed with the Finance Director and County Manager prior to inclusion in the department's budget submittal using the Personnel and Work Program Change form. The impact of new or expanded programs on overhead services (information system services, financial services, building/grounds maintenance, human resource services, budget services, etc.) shall be evaluated to determine if overhead services need to be increased due to the addition of new programs. The costs of increases in overhead services attributed to additional programs shall be included in the analysis of the total cost of new programs. Should outside funding for a program expire, the program may be adjusted or eliminated by the Board of Commissioners.
- I. Full Cost Recovery: County staff shall make every effort to assign costs in the department where they occur through the use of interdepartmental/interfund charges and indirect cost percentage assignments. The intent is to clearly define the actual cost of each direct service the County provides internally or externally. The first priority is the recovery of overhead costs from all funds and grant programs and from County Service Districts, through the use of the County's Indirect Cost Allocation Plan.
- J. Expected Expenditure Level(s): General Fund organization units are expected to spend under the appropriated spending level. Historically, the General Fund expends between 88% and 92% of the appropriated level. For sake of forecasting, an average expenditure rate based on the historical expenditure amounts is factored into the projected year-end spending and is a cornerstone to financial stability and viability.

III. **Non-General Fund Budgets:**

- A. **General Fund Contributions:** For activities or programs funded primarily from non-General Fund sources, Departments are to prepare budgets holding any General Fund contribution to no more than the amount provided in the current (2023-24) fiscal year, subject to the availability of funds. Whenever possible, reductions in General Fund contributions should be identified.
- B. **Revenue Reductions:** Non-General Fund departments experiencing reductions in State-shared or federal revenues or other earned revenues should not include a General Fund contribution offsetting the reduction.
- C. **Revenue Estimates:** Departments should budget for revenues based on the best information available during the budget process. If additional information becomes available during the budget process, it should be provided to the Finance Manager on a timely basis. Accuracy in revenue/expenditure estimates is critical. New revenues should be estimated based on available information the first year. Subsequent annual estimates should also take into consideration actual receipts from the previous year. One-time resources should only be used for one-time expenditures/uses, and recurring resources should be used for recurring expenditures/uses.
- D. **Overhead Cost Allocation Charges:** All non-General Fund departments should budget the amount allocated to that department in the County's Indirect Cost Allocation Plan.
- E. **Cost Efficiency:** As with the General Fund, staff responsible for non-General Fund budgets will prepare fiscally conservative budgets and will seek savings wherever a balance between cost efficiency and the quality of public service can be achieved.
- F. **General Fund Transfer Savings:** Budget and Finance will monitor and work with departments on the necessity of making all or some of the budgeted General Fund transfers to non-General Fund departments.

IV. **General Fund Reserve Goals:**

- A. Managing the General Fund Reserve is a core strategy to maintain financial stability, ensure essential services are funded and the long-term financial health of the General Fund is maintained. The General Fund Reserve strategy is informed by the following goals:
 - a. Maintain a financial position that provides the time necessary to manage/respond to year-to-year fluctuations in revenues and/or expenses. The reserves provide critical time to analyze, strategize and implement strategies to balance revenues and expenditures without negatively impacting priority services and service levels.
 - b. Maintain a favorable Bond Rating
 - c. Compliance with financial best practices, per Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA)
 - d. Plan for unforeseen events (recession, natural disaster, other emergency or unanticipated event) within limits of discretionary revenues.

- e. Maintain positive cash position from beginning of fiscal year to tax collection in November.
- B. General Fund Reserve Goal: The County will manage the General Fund with the goal of maintaining the Reserve within a range of 20% to 30% of budgeted expenditures, excluding Contingency and the transfer amount to the Revenue Stabilization Fund. This equates to 2.5 to 3.5 months of expenses. The minimum reserve level is established at 20%.
 - a. The Reserve amount is derived by three elements:
 - i. Contingency (the General Fund has single contingency – Org Unit 9900)
 - ii. General Fund Stabilization (Special Fund – Org. Unit 1200)
 - iii. Unappropriated Ending Fund Balance
- C. Use of Contingency: In all funds, no expenditure can be made using budgeted contingency prior to approval from the Board of County Commissioners. With the approval, the expenditure authority budgeted as contingency will be reduced and the appropriate expense account(s) will be increased by the same amount. Prior to requesting Board approval any request made by a department for use of contingency must first be approved by the County Manager or designee, and must address the following considerations:
 - 1. Need: reason the expenditure is necessary in the current fiscal year.
 - 2. Planning: reason this expenditure could not have been anticipated during the budget process.
 - 3. Alternatives: besides contingency, how can the organization realistically fund this request and what are the impacts.
- D. General Fund Resource Stabilization Account: Maintain a Fund to set aside discretionary resources, to meet General Fund reserve goals detailed in sections IV(B) of this policy.

V. Matching Funds:

- A. County Share: If State funding is reduced, there should be no increased County share for programs funded primarily from non-General Fund sources, unless otherwise approved by the Board of Commissioners. The exceptions would be for high priority programs identified in the Resource Management Strategy or any mandated increases in the County share. Staff shall consider the effect of reducing the existing General Fund match to the lowest allowed by State/Federal mandates.
- B. In-kind Contribution: In-kind resources already allocated by the county will be used first as matching funds for grant purposes. Hard dollar match resources will be used last.

VI. Lobbying and Grant Applications:

- A. Approval to Pursue: County Manager's Office approval is necessary before appointed County representatives and employees may pursue, in accordance with the County Legislative Guide, lobbying efforts on matters having budget implications, and before grant applications are submitted to the granting agency.

Elected department heads should advise the Manager's Office before official positions are taken on matters that might have budget implications.

- B. General Fund Matching Funds: General Fund match or share of the cost of a grant project may not be included in grant applications without the prior review and approval of the County Manager or designee.

VII. New Positions and Programs:

- A. Considerations of New Positions and Programs: Consider new positions and programs only if the cost of the position or program is offset by non-General Fund sources legally tied to the new position, or if the cost of the position is offset by new external revenues, and the position is required to generate those revenues, or is pursuant to item II.H., above. Cost estimates for new positions will include office facility space, equipment, rent, utilities, supplies, related increases in overhead services (as identified in II.I. above), etc.

VIII. Mid-Year Budget Reductions:

- A. Revised Revenue or Expense Estimates: If additional information concerning revenue reductions or significant expense increases becomes available after the start of the 2024-25 fiscal year, it may be necessary to make budget adjustments. These adjustments will be made in accordance with the Board's adopted Resource Management Strategy.

IX. Mid-Year Requests, General Fund Contingency:

- A. Non-Emergency Requests: In those cases where a department is required to absorb an unanticipated cost beyond its control of a non-emergency nature, departmental resources must first be exhausted prior to a transfer from General Fund contingencies. Upon conducting a final financial review of departmental budgets towards the end of the year, a transfer from contingency may be made to cover unanticipated costs that could not be absorbed through the year.
- B. Emergency Requests: Emergency requests during the fiscal year will be submitted to the Budget and Finance Department for recommendation and forwarded to the County Manager and Board of Commissioners for consideration.

X. Employee Salary Adjustments:

- A. Cost of Living Adjustment: Budgeted personnel services expenditures will include an amount to account for a cost of living adjustment for all employees. The amount budgeted for this purpose will consider the most recent consumer price index information available at the time the budget is prepared, existing collective bargaining agreements, and other relevant information.
- B. Step Adjustments: Budgeted personnel services expenditures will include an amount to account for annual step adjustments for all employees who are not currently at the top of their range. Annual employee adjustments will be in accordance with union contracts as well as applicable salary schedules.

XI. Budget Controls:

- A. Legal Compliance: The County Budget Officer or designee will continue to review and control departmental budgets to ensure legal compliance with all applicable rules and regulations.

XII. Contribution(s) to Outside Agencies:

- A. The Board, to the extent resources are available, may allocate up to \$30,000 in General Fund resources for contributions to outside agencies or organizations to be applied for through a grant application process.

XIII. Discretionary Resources:

- A. Maximize Board's Discretion: Wherever legally possible, revenues are to be treated as discretionary resources, rather than as dedicated to a particular program or service. The goal is to give the Board as much flexibility as possible in allocating resources to priority services and service levels.

XIV. Dedicated Resources:

- A. Room Tax Revenues: 7% of the 9.5% room tax monies are not legally dedicated to fund particular programs or services and would fall under discretionary resources. The additional 2.5% is to be distributed as directed by ORS 320.350 which allows 70% of the new revenue to be used to fund tourism promotion or tourism-related facilities. The remaining 30% of the increase can be used in a discretionary manner and under the Board's direction is intended to be used to fund storm water drainage and improvements to public roads primarily in Arch Cape, or any legal costs associated with legal action taken by citizens of unincorporated Clatsop County against the county on land use issues.

Per Ordinance No. 2018-07 a county-wide tax of one percent is being imposed on transient lodging (room tax). Of this one percent tax increase, a portion of the 70% is to be used to fund tourism promotion or tourism-related facilities and shall be distributed to the Cities within which the tax was collected from. The remaining 30% collected for General Fund purposes shall be used for jail operational costs.

- B. Video Lottery Revenues: Video Lottery monies must be used to further economic development, as defined by the Board. The Board recognizes that a wide variety of County programs and services further economic development, by helping to create climate that makes economic development possible. The first priority for use of video lottery monies will be those existing or new County programs, services, or projects that the Board finds are supporting economic development in the County.
- C. Parks Land and Acquisition Maintenance Fund: Spending priorities for the Parks Land and Acquisition Maintenance Fund are as follows:
 1. Matching funds for grants for new or existing Parks facilities that generate revenue;
 2. Urgently needed maintenance of existing parks facilities; and
 3. Recognition that a portion of the fund be used to support parks operating expenses.

When the Parks operation begins to generate revenue beyond the amount needed to cover actual operational costs without General Fund support, the excess amount will be returned to the Parks Land and Acquisition Fund to support parks acquisition and/or major improvements.

- D. Industrial Revolving Fund: These monies are to be spent pursuant to ORS 275.318(3) which includes:
1. Engineering, improvement, rehabilitation, construction, operation or maintenance,
 2. including pre-project planning costs, of any Industrial Facility as defined in ORS 271.510 and specifically including off-site transportation or utility infrastructure that is necessary or appropriate to serve a development project.
- E. Use of Dedicated Funding Sources: Whenever legally possible, the funding responsibility for dedicated programs or activities to appropriate dedicated funding sources should be used. Thus, freeing up scarce discretionary resources to fund Board priorities.

XV. Unappropriated Ending Fund Balances:

- A. Limit Unappropriated Ending Fund Balances: To provide the most budget flexibility during the year, limit the use of unappropriated ending fund balances to circumstances where they are required by law. Rather than use unappropriated fund balances, the goal should be to place any monies not needed for current expenditures in the relevant funds' operating contingencies.

CLATSOP COUNTY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Guiding Policies & Principles

1. Recognizing its financial limits, the County will make a distinction between two different types of services: those that are funded primarily from County discretionary resources; and those that are funded primarily from dedicated resources:
 - * County discretionary resources fund traditional county services that have historically been funded by discretionary resources, and are not services that generate significant revenues from fees or other sources. The County will fund these programs primarily from discretionary resources.
 - * Dedicated resources (e.g., fees, grants, state-shared revenues) are traditional county services that have historically been funded primarily with dedicated resources, or if they are traditional county services and may generate significant revenues from fees or other sources. Frequently, these services will be state or federal programs that the County administers locally, such as Parole & Probation. The County will fund these programs primarily from dedicated resources. Exceptions may be made, on a case-by-case basis, only by the Board of County Commissioners. One criterion will be whether the County would incur more significant discretionary costs in another part of the system by failure to provide discretionary support to a county-wide service funded by dedicated resources.

2. The County services funded by discretionary resources are listed below:

Functional Area

Public Safety and Justice

Public Health

General Government Direct Services

Community Development, Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Economic Development, and Capital

Culture and Recreation

As additional discretionary resources become available, the Board of Commissioners will consider the priority of functional areas as part of the decision-making process in determining which programs will receive additional and/or new funding.

The County's overhead programs will not be prioritized, but will be sized to the need and size of the overall organization.

3. Generally, wherever possible, the County's goal is to make fee-supported programs self-sufficient. This includes recovering those programs' appropriate share of the County's overhead costs.
4. Where legally possible, the County will consider using dedicated resources to fund high priority programs related to the purpose for which the dedicated funds are received.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

General Policies and Principles

1. When faced with a potential reduction in resources, the County's goal is to continue to provide high priority services in a professional, effective and efficient manner. Consequently, to the extent possible, across-the-board reductions in expenditures will be avoided. Reductions will be made on a case-by-case basis, focusing on each individual program or service.
2. Expenditure reductions will attempt to preserve the higher priority functional areas as much as possible; however, all functional areas may have to share in the overall need for reductions. Wherever possible, it will also be the County's goal to reduce the quantity of a service being provided, rather than the quality of service (e.g., limit the number of recipients of a service, rather than the quality of service provided to the remaining recipients).
3. For purposes of the 2024-25 fiscal year budget, the County will not consider seeking voter approval for a new or increased broad-based discretionary revenue source (such as a new property tax base, sales tax or real estate tax) to offset any reduction in revenues.
4. Recognizing that it is not prudent to fund current operations at the expense of long-term capital or planning programs, every effort will be made to continue capital and planning programs geared to the County's long-term needs.

Resource Management Priorities

If, as a result of loss of a significant amount of discretionary resources, expenditure reductions become necessary, those reductions will be made roughly in the following order:

1. First, County contributions to outside organizations will be reduced or eliminated. If this proves insufficient, then
2. Moderate reductions in discretionary support will be made on a case-by-case basis. These reductions will focus first on programs funded by dedicated resources and then low priority services funded by discretionary resources. Reductions made at this point will generally not have a significant impact on service levels. If this proves insufficient, then
3. Any discretionary funding for County-wide services that are funded by dedicated resources will be reduced or eliminated. This may apply to programs or activities expanded or started with discretionary resources within the last few years. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis, by the Board of County Commissioners. One criterion will be whether the County would incur more significant costs in another part of the system by failure to provide discretionary support to a County-wide service funded by dedicated resources. If necessary, where legally possible the County will consider turning these programs over to the state. If this proves insufficient, then
4. Discretionary funding for programs funded by discretionary resources will be reduced or eliminated. To the extent possible, funding reductions will attempt to preserve the higher priority functional areas as much as possible; however, all functional areas may have to share in the overall need for reductions. If necessary, the County will consider turning programs over to the state where legally possible. County mandated services funded by discretionary revenues are listed below:

Functional Area

Public Safety and Justice

Public Health

General Government Direct Services

Community Development, Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Economic Development, and Capital

Culture and Recreation

General Government overhead will be sized to the needs and size of the rest of the organization. If this proves insufficient, then

5. A reduced County workweek will be proposed to achieve salary savings.

If, due to a loss of state-shared revenue, significant expenditure reductions become necessary in programs that are primarily the state's responsibility, then the County will consider returning responsibility to the state for operating those programs.