

## Budget Process

### Introduction

The budget is the master financial plan of the governmental entity, showing the proposed cost for each function of activity and the proposed means of financing them. The budget should not be thought of merely as a means of determining the amount to be raised by tax levy to supplement other revenues.

The budget should be **comprehensive**, covering all proposed expenditures and all anticipated receipts and revenues, regardless of source. Expenditure estimates should be in **sufficient detail** to show the need for the appropriations requested, and cover all items, whether for ordinary operation or capital outlay. Revenue estimates should be made with due consideration for possible failure to realize the full amount anticipated, and thereby avoid the possibility of revenue deficits during the fiscal year.

In addition to being required by statutes and the Department of Audit (W.S. 15-2-201 for towns with populations of 4,000 or less, W.S. 16-4-103 for towns with populations of over 4,000, first class cities and towns with the city manager form of government, and W.S. 16-4-125(c) for all other governmental entities), the necessity of preparation and use of a budget cannot be overemph

The annual budgetary process involves three phases: **preparation, adoption and execution**. The preparation phase of the budgetary process is the responsibility of the designated budget officer (usually the clerk or treasurer). It is accomplished by the correlation of financial data produced by the accounting system and the projected program requirements of the various functions and activities for which a particular governmental entity may have responsibility. The adoption phase involves the proposed budget being presented to the governing body for consideration, possible modification and final enactment. The budget execution phase is the phase of the budget cycle which encompasses all the actions required to effectively, efficiently, and economically accomplish the programs for which funds were request and approved.

### Budget Preparation

The appropriate budget officer (generally the clerk or treasurer) shall prepare a proposed budget for each fund and file the proposed budget with the governing body in a timely fashion allowing the governing body to meet the hearing date and notice requirements established by W.S. 16-4-109.

Incorporated towns not subject to the Uniform Municipal Fiscal Procedures Act (i.e., incorporated towns having 4,000 or less constituents) and special purpose districts having the authority under the general laws of Wyoming to levy taxes or impose assessments and public entities receiving funds from a municipality, as defined by W.S. 16-4-102(a)(xiv), shall prepare budgets in a format acceptable to the Director of the State Department of Audit [W.S. 16-4-125(c)]. In addition, special districts must report their budget to the Department of Audit and the Board of County Commissioners [W.S. 9-1-507(a)(viii)]. To enhance consistency, the Department of Audit has

created a budget form for which **only special districts are required** to use when preparing their budget. The budget form is available on the Department of Audit's website.

In addition, the format of the proposed budget for which a municipality, as defined by W.S. 16-4-102(a)(xiv), shall be prepared to best serve the municipality except the budget formats for community colleges shall be uniform and approved by the community college commission and the Director of the State Department of Audit [W.S. 16-4-104(b)]. However, municipalities, as defined by W.S. 16-4-102(a)(xiv), must follow the budget requirements as defined in W.S. 16-4-104.

Further, the degree of detail necessary to provide adequate control over expenditures will vary from entity to entity. However, at a minimum, each governmental entity shall specify functions when preparing the budget. The Department of Audit's Uniform Chart of Accounts provides flexibility for varying degrees of control.

Intra-governmental and enterprise fund budgets are required for adequate management control and for public information, including financial statements of condition, work programs and any other costs as the governing body may request. These fund accounts shall not be deemed to have spent amounts in excess of those budgeted when the funds available from all sources are sufficient to cover the additional operating expenditures that have been approved by the governing body [W.S. 16-4-103].

### **Department of Audit's Budget Format**

The budget format, as designed by the Department of Audit for required entities, shall have five basic sections [W.S. 16-4-104]:

- A. Budget Message
- B. Budget Summary
- C. Statements of Cash Available
- D. Revenue Forecasts
- E. Expenditure Plan

The Department of Audit's budget format is designed to manage the budgeting by individual fund. Below are the different types of funds in a governmental accounting system. For the related definitions, refer to the governmental accounting section in Section 1 of this manual.

1. Governmental Funds
  - a. General Fund
  - b. Special Revenue Fund
  - c. Debt Service Fund
  - d. Capital Projects Fund
  - e. Permanent Fund
2. Proprietary Funds
  - a. Enterprise Fund
  - b. Internal Service Fund
3. Fiduciary Funds
  - a. Agency Fund
  - b. Pension (and other employee benefit trust funds) Trust Fund

- c. Investment Trust Fund
- d. Private-Purpose Trust Fund

Budgets for all funds should contain essentially the same detail. Budgets for governmental entities are required by W.S. 16-4-104 to contain:

1. Actual revenues and expenditures for the last completed fiscal year.
2. Estimated total revenues and expenditures for the current fiscal year.
3. Estimated available revenues and expenditures for the ensuing fiscal year.

**The governing body may not make any appropriation in excess of the estimated expendable revenues in the fund for the budget year. It is a violation to budget to spend more than the resources available (negative spending) [W.S. 15-2-201 and W.S. 16-4-110].**

Further, each proposed and adopted budget shall be accompanied by a **budget message** in explanation of the budget. The budget message shall contain an outline of the proposed financial policies for the budget year and describe in connection therewith the important features of the budgetary plan. It shall also state the reasons for changes from the previous year in appropriation and revenue items and explain any major changes in financial policy [W.S. 16-4-104].

The **Statements of Cash Available, the Revenue Forecasts and Expenditure Plan** shall document past, present, and future financial information that supports the **Budget Summary**.

An ideal method of preparing a budget with this information is to have four columns labeled **Actual Prior Year, Actual Current Year, Tentative Budget, and Approved Budget** for the revenue and expenditure schedules.

The **Actual Prior Year** column should contain the financial information for the last complete fiscal year.

The **Actual Current Year** column should contain year-to-date data through the month preceding the month in which the budget is prepared, plus estimated information for the remainder of the current fiscal year.

The **Tentative Budget** is the unapproved budget, while the **Approved Budget** is the final approved budget for the next fiscal year.

Once the detailed revenue and expenditure budget schedules are created, the aggregate totals of these budgets should be used to populate the Budget Summary.

For instance, if a budget is being prepared for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014, the **Actual Prior Year** would be June 30, 2012. The **Actual Current Year** (i.e., the year in which the budget is being prepared) would be the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013. Since the budget should be prepared during the last quarter of the current fiscal year (usually beginning in April), the actual figures for April, May and June would be estimated for the **Actual Current Year** column. The **Tentative Budget** would be the estimated revenues and expenditures for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014 and the **Approved Budget** would be the budget after the budget hearing and the approval.

In addition, to improve management control of the budget, anticipated revenue and expenditures should be shown for all appropriate accounts presented in the Chart of Accounts. However, the governing body may deem it unnecessary to determine budgeting by object code.

In preparing the annual budget a governmental entity may accumulate net position in any enterprise or intra-governmental service fund or accumulate a fund surplus in any other fund. However, the surplus in the general fund may only be used for a few specific purposes [W.S. 16-4-105].

### **Special District's Budget Form**

As mentioned above, the Department of Audit has created a budget form for which **only** special districts **are required** to follow. The budget form and instructions should be studied carefully to make sure the special district's budget is prepared and adopted in conformity with all provisions.

To enhance consistency between all special district budgets, the form calls for the presentation of certain information that is required of those entities subject to the Uniform Municipal Fiscal Procedures Act. The three items specifically required by the Act are the budget message, budgets for the enterprise funds, and the two years of historical financial information for all budgets.

To properly control and administer a budget, the same revenue and expenditure categories must be used for both the budget and the actual reporting process. As such, the Department of Audit's Budget Form and Uniform Chart of Accounts align. This conformity enhances consistency and provides for meaningful budget to actual comparisons. Further, the Uniform Chart of Accounts for special districts, and therefore the Budget Form was created to fit as precisely as possible into the required census reporting forms.

Further, all applicable forms should be completed and if additional schedules or exhibits are needed for additional funds and/or departments, they should be prepared and inserted where necessary.

Finally, the special district budget form must be submitted to the Department of Audit and the Board of County Commissioners electronically, as hardcopies will not be accepted.

### **Budget Adoption**

The proposed budget shall be reviewed and considered by the governing body in a regular or special meeting called for this purpose. Following a public hearing as provided in W.S. 16-4-109, the governing body shall adopt a budget [W.S. 16-4-104 (e)].

The budget shall be passed by ordinance, other than special district, which shall be approved and passed by minutes.

### **Budget Execution**

The budget execution phase is the phase of the budget cycle which encompasses all the actions required to effectively, efficiently, and economically accomplish the programs for which funds were

requested and approved. During this phase, it is important to align the budget classifications with the chart of accounts in order to facilitate the meaningful comparison of actual against budgeted revenues and expenditures. Performing this comparison will help to ensure spending is within approved budget limits. It is important to remain within budget, since it is against state statute and therefore illegal to 'go over' budget [W.S. 16-4-108(a)].

In order to prevent unauthorized and illegal spending, if an unforeseen increase in revenues or expenditures occurs, it may be necessary to **amend** the budget. The budget must be amended if the entity intends to spend more than the total amount of expenditures approved within the budget [W.S. 16-4-108(a)]. Amending the budget must be approved **prior to** exceeding the budget. It is unnecessary to amend the budget if budgeted funds are moved around, but remain under the total approved expenditure. In the latter situation, although it is unnecessary to amend the budget, the movement must be approved in a board meeting and documented in the meeting minutes [W.S. 16-4-112].

For instance, if an entity only budgeted for a police department to spend \$5,000 on uniforms and \$15,000 on a vehicle, their budgeted "bottom line" expenditures would total \$20,000 ( $\$15,000 + \$5,000$ ). If the actual vehicle cost \$11,000, the police department would be able to move the \$4,000 ( $\$15,000 - \$11,000$ ) to the uniforms, as long as the board approved the movement and it was documented in the meeting minutes. However, if the actual vehicle cost \$25,000 and the department purchased the vehicle, then they would have gone over budget by \$10,000, since the "bottom line" expenditure would have totaled \$30,000 ( $\$25,000 + \$5,000$ ), which is illegal. Therefore, **prior to purchase**, the department would have to amend the budget. If the budget is amended and the estimated expendable revenues remain greater than expenditures, as required by state statutes [W.S. 15-2-201 and W.S. 16-4-110], then the department could purchase the vehicle legally.

If it is necessary to amend a budget, perform the following items:

1. Publish a hearing notice to include a summary of the tentative amended budget.
2. Send a copy of the hearing notice to the Department of Audit.
3. Hold a hearing to adopt the amended budget.
4. Then, send a copy of the certified amended budget to the county commissioners (at the discretion of the commissioners).