

Overview and Timeline of the DC Budget Process

DC's Budget Process

The DC Fiscal year runs from October through September. The budget process for a given fiscal year starts about a year beforehand. Using the FY 2016 fiscal year as an example, the budget process proceeds as follows:

Budget Instructions Issued to Agencies	Fall 2014
Current Services Funding Level Released	Fall 2014
Office of Budget and Planning Finalizes Agencies Budgets	Winter 2015
Revenue Forecast Released	February 2015
Performance and Oversight Hearings	February 9 - March 13, 2015
Mayor's Budget Proposal Released	April 2, 2015
Council Hearing on Overall Budget	April 13, 2015
Council Hearings on Proposed Agency Budgets	April 15 - May 7, 2015
Council Budget Mark-up Hearings	May 12 - May 15, 2015
Main Budget Vote	May 27, 2015
Revenue Forecast Released	May or June 2015
Second Vote on Budget Support Act	June 16, 2015

These are described in more detail below.

Budget Instructions Issued to Agencies

Fall 2014

The Office of Budget and Planning (OBP) in the Chief Financial Officer's office issues instructions to each agency that set the terms for the agency's budget request. The agency requests are submitted back to OBP in the fall using the format set out in the instructions.

Much of the instructions are intended to determine current services funding needs – the amount needed to maintain existing services and meet legal obligations. The current services budget reflects changes in salary expenses, utilities, and other fixed costs.

Release of the FY 2016 Current Services Budget

December 2014 (<http://cfo.dc.gov/node/963402>)

The CFO completes work on the FY 2016 current services budget. Ideally, this is an estimate of the costs of maintaining current services, by factoring changes in costs for salaries, rent, supplies and other expenses but will not include any funding that was designated "one-time" in the previous year. The current services budget can be compared to the Mayor's proposed budget to look for changes to an agency's budget. An advocate could take the Mayor's proposed budget and compare it to the current services budget to see what, if any, funding reductions or additions were proposed over what the agency is currently doing.

Office of Budget and Planning (OBP) “Scrubs” Agencies Budgets, Mayor’s Budget Team Begins Assembling FY 2016 Budget Winter 2015

OBP reviews and “scrubs” each agency’s request. Has all one-time funding from the prior-year been eliminated? Did the agency accurately reflect costs associated with expected staffing levels? Did the agency include something in the baseline that should be considered an enhancement?

OBP passes back a modified request to the agency and allows the agency to appeal. This back-and-forth relates mostly to the current services budget. OBP generally does not comment on enhancement requests, since decisions over new initiatives or enhanced funding for existing services are political and made by the Mayor. The CFO’s office is independent and avoids policy recommendations. Enhancement requests are passed on directly to the mayor’s office.

At the same time the Mayor’s budget review team is working on assembling the final budget and making policy decisions about cuts and revenue increases.

****POINT OF ADVOCACY**** At this time you can contact the Mayor’s office to make a request for additional funding (or to maintain funding) for a program or services you care about. Most often, this is easiest to do by finding out who is responsible in the City Administrator’s office or in the Mayor’s Office of Budget and Finance for the issue area you are concerned about and meeting with them or sending them a letter or email.

Release of the FY 2016 Revenue Forecast February 2015

In late February, the CFO issues a revenue forecast that includes projected revenues for FY 2016. The budget submitted in March must live within the revenues identified in this forecast. The most recent revenue forecast can be found here: <http://cfo.dc.gov/node/305482>

Council Performance and Oversight Hearings February 9 – March 13, 2015

The Council holds hearings on the FY 2014 performance and the implementation of the FY 2015 budget for every agency. These are free-form hearings that are open to comment on virtually any aspect of the agency. The DC Council Budget Office’s website (<http://www.dccouncil.us/officeofthebudgetdirector>) posts questions that are submitted by committees to the agencies for the hearing, as well as the agencies’ responses. A list of the hearing schedules can be found here: [http://dccouncil.us/files/user_uploads/event_testimony/\(3-4-15\)%20FY2014-2015%20Performance%20Oversight%20Hearing%20Notice.pdf](http://dccouncil.us/files/user_uploads/event_testimony/(3-4-15)%20FY2014-2015%20Performance%20Oversight%20Hearing%20Notice.pdf)

****POINT OF ADVOCACY**** This is a good time to testify on programs and services that you think are working well and help make the case they should be continued or expanded in the upcoming fiscal year. It is also a good time to discuss any changes or improvements you think could be made to the programs and services you care about.

Mayor's Budget Submission

April 2, 2015

The Mayor will submit a proposed **Budget and Financial Plan**, which includes proposed funding to cover the operating costs of running agencies in mid-March. The Mayor also will submit a proposed **capital budget**, which is a six-year plan for building and rehabbing government facilities and infrastructure.

The budget legislation that reflects proposed funding levels is called the **Budget Request Act**. The Mayor also submits a **Budget Support Act**, which includes legislation for any budget proposal that requires a statutory change.

The proposed FY 2016 budget and related documents will be posted on the Chief Financial Officer's website: <http://cfo.dc.gov/cfo/site/default.asp>.

Council Overview Hearing on the Budget

April 13, 2015

Each year, the full DC Council holds a hearing on the Mayor's budget proposal shortly after it is released. Video archives of this hearing, along with other hearings, can be found from the Council's web site, www.dccouncil.us.

Council Budget Hearings, by Agency

April 15 - May 7, 2015

Shortly after the budget is submitted, each committee holds a hearing on the proposed budgets for the agencies the committee oversees. There are both public witnesses and executive branch witnesses. The DC Council Budget Office's website posts questions regarding the proposed budget that are submitted by committees to the agencies. The budget office also posts the agencies' responses. You can view the schedule here: <http://dccouncil.us/news/entry/performance-oversight-and-budget-hearing-schedules-slightly-updated>

****POINT OF ADVOCACY**** This is a good time to testify on elements of the mayor's budget that you like and elements that you do not like, especially if things are not included at all.

Final Revenue Forecast

May or June 2015

The CFO releases a new revenue forecast in the spring, though the specific timing changes from year to year. If the forecast is released before the Council's main budget vote on May 27, the final budget adopted by the Council must fit within this revenue forecast. If the new revenue forecast is lower than the February forecast, the Mayor and Council must work to find additional budget savings. If the revenue forecast is higher than the February forecast, the Council can support some additional funding proposals.

In recent years, the spring revenue forecast has been released after the final budget vote. When that occurs, how to respond to any change in projected revenues must occur outside the standard budget process.

Council Committee Budget Mark-ups

May 12 - 15, 2015

Each Council committee meets to mark-up the budgets for the agencies they oversee. The committees cannot appropriate more in total for their agencies than the amount in the Mayor's proposed budget, but they can shift funds within and between their agencies. The committees can make recommendations for things they were not able to fund but that they hope the full Council will find a way to fund. The Committees also adopt recommendations on the Budget Support Act provisions that relate to the Committee.

After each committee has completed mark-up, there is a 1-2 week period during which the Council members work to merge the committee actions into a comprehensive budget. This work happens behind the scenes. There is no mark-up on the Council's comprehensive budget.

Main Budget Vote

May 27, 2015

The full Council (Committee of the Whole) votes on the **Budget Request Act**, which sets the appropriations level for each agency. There is only one vote on the BRA. Also in May, the Council will hold its first reading of the **Budget Support Act**. There is a second reading on the BSA.

Final Vote on the Budget Support Act

June 16, 2015

The Council holds the second reading of the Budget Support Act. The budget is then submitted to the U.S. Congress for approval.

Resources

Approved FY 2014 and prior year budgets: <http://cfo.dc.gov/node/289642>

DCFPI Budget Toolkit: <http://www.dcfpi.org/> contains details of:

- Budget by Issue Areas (e.g. child care, education, health):
- Overall Summary of DC Budget
- Budget Process and Timeline
- Budget Testimony from DCFPI staff
- Advocacy Resources
- And much more!

Agency Performance Plans: <http://oca.dc.gov/page/oca-performance-management>