

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Season Overview: Here's What You Need to Know

By DCFPI Staff

The DC budget—our community's decisions about how to spend our resources—is the central tool for addressing challenges like widening racial inequities in access to affordable housing, quality health care, and educational opportunities. By crafting a budget that strengthens our community, we can ensure that all DC residents have the resources they need to thrive. There are a number of opportunities throughout budget season to voice our values and shape the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 DC budget. You can—and should—have a say in where our community invests our resources.

The process of planning the District's FY 2022 budget has already begun, and there are opportunities right now for residents to shape the budget for next year. The District's fiscal year runs from October through September, and the budget process for a given fiscal year starts about a year beforehand. This blog post explains the timeline for the FY 2022 budget process.

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Timeline

Budget Instructions Issued to Agencies	Fall 2020
Current Services Funding Level Released	December 2020
Revenue Forecast Released	End of February 2021
Performance and Oversight Hearings	February 8–March 19, 2021
Mayor's Budget Proposal Released	April 22, 2021
Mayor Briefing to Council on Overall Budget	April 23, 2021
Committee of the Whole Public Briefing on the "Proposed Spending of Federal Stimulus Funds"	May 10, 2021
Council Hearings on Proposed Agency Budgets	April 26–May 20, 2021
Final Hearing on Overall Budget	May 21, 2021
Council Budget Mark-up Hearings	May 25-27, 2021
First Vote on Local Budget Act & Budget Support Act	June 15, 2021
Second Vote on Local Budget Act	June 29, 2021
Second Vote on Budget Support Act	July 13, 2021
Revenue Forecast Released	End of June 2021

Mayor's Budget Team Works to Assemble Budget Proposal: [Winter 2020-21](#)

The Mayor's budget review team works to assemble the budget proposal and policy decisions about program cuts or increases, and revenue increases.

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.

You can also attend one of the Mayor's Budget Engagement Forums. This is an opportunity to gather with other DC residents and share your priorities with the Mayor before the proposed budget is finalized.

FY 2020 Audit Announcement: [Beginning of February 2021](#)

The annual audit of the District's finances—the [Comprehensive Annual Financial Report \(CAFR\)](#)—shows what the fund balance of the city was at the close of 2020. The balance represents DC's accumulated monetary assets, including various reserve funds—a mix of federally-required and locally-controlled rainy-day funds to help DC manage its bills. The city's fund balance has grown substantially in recent years.

Revenue Forecast Released: [Late February 2021](#)

In late February, the CFO issues a revenue forecast that includes projected revenues for FY 2022. The budget submitted in March must be balanced. This means that total spending cannot exceed the total revenues from the February forecast, unless the budget also includes provisions to increase revenue. In recent history, forecast revenue has tended to grow from year to year, due to increases in population and economic activity but the pandemic has led to reduced revenues. If there are no increases to taxes or fees, or major cuts to existing programs, there will likely be no funding available for program enhancements or new programs in FY 2022.

Agency Performance Oversight Hearings: [February 8–March 19, 2021](#)

The Council holds hearings on the FY 2021 performance and spending of every agency. These are free-form open hearings where any member of the public can comment on practically any aspect of the agency, and where agency heads are questioned by committee chairs and other Councilmembers. The written questions submitted by committees to the agencies in advance of the hearing, as well as the agencies' responses, can be found on the Council website. The schedule of performance oversight hearings can be found [here](#).

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 Proposal Released: [April 22, 2021](#)

The Mayor submits a proposed Budget and Financial Plan, which describes proposed operating funding for all DC government agencies and services, in late March. The Mayor will also submit a proposed capital budget, which is a six-year plan for building and improving government facilities and infrastructure.

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

The proposed FY 2022 budget and related documents will be posted [here](#) on the Chief Financial Officer's website.

Agency Budget Oversight Hearings: April 26–May 20, 2021

Shortly after the budget is submitted, each Council Committee holds hearings on the budgets of the agencies the committee oversees. There are both public witnesses and executive branch witnesses. Here is the [schedule](#) for budget oversight hearings. Questions regarding agency budgets that are submitted by committees to the agencies, and the agencies' responses will be posted on the DC Council website.

Final Council Hearing on Overall Proposed Budget: May 21, 2021

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

Council Committee Markups and Work Session: May 25-27, 2021

Each Council committee meets to markup 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. Committees can also transfer funds to agencies in other committees, or request and accept the transfer of funds from other committees' agencies to theirs. 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.

The Council holds a Work Session that is closed to the public but is livestreamed where they discuss the recommendations of each committee and other budget issues.

After the committees have completed markup, there is a short period during which the Councilmembers work to merge the committee actions into a comprehensive budget. This work happens behind the scenes. There is no markup on the Council's comprehensive budget.

First Budget Vote: June 15, 2021

The full Council (Committee of the Whole) votes on the Local Budget Act (LBA), which sets the appropriations level for each agency, and on the Budget Support Act (BSA), which reflects legislative changes in the new budget.

Second Budget Vote: June 29, 2021

The Council holds the second vote on the Local Budget Act. The federal portion of the budget is then submitted to the U.S. Congress for approval.

Second Budget Vote on Budget Support Act: July 13, 2021

The Council holds the second vote on the Budget Support Act which includes legislation for any budget proposal that requires a statutory change.

RESOURCES

- [Budget & Financial Plans](#) for FY 2021 and prior years, via the Office of the Chief Financial Officer. The Mayor's proposed FY 2022 budget will appear here on March 31.
- **Resident's Guide to the DC Budget** is a deep dive into the DC Budget, including what the budget funds, how it is put together, and information on how to get involved in shaping the budget.
- **DCFPI Budget Toolkit**, which includes budget by issue areas (e.g. child care, education, health), and other helpful resources. The FY 2022 budget toolkit will be available in early April 2020.