



BUDGET PROCESS

Budget As Operating Plan

The budget for the City is an Annual Operating Plan serving as the guidebook for the fiscal year. It sets policy, identifies new initiatives and allocates the resources necessary to maintain City services and meet the objectives of the fiscal year. The fiscal year for the City of St. Louis runs from July 1 to June 30. In accordance with state law, the budget must be balanced when adopted.

Budget Basis

The General Fund and most special fund budgets are formulated on a modified accrual basis. Encumbrances, including outstanding purchase orders, are budgeted as expenses but revenues are recognized only when they are actually received. Enterprise fund appropriations including the Airport and Water Divisions are budgeted on a cash basis. Both expenditures and revenues are recognized when actually paid or received. The City's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) accounts for the City's finances according to generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). This method differs from the budget basis primarily in that revenues are recognized when they are measurable and available as opposed to actually received and expenditures are recognized when the obligation is incurred rather than paid or encumbered. For this reason, the CAFR also contains financial statements expressed on a "budget" basis so that end-of-year results can be compared with the budget.

The Budget Process

- The budget process begins in the Fall when the Budget Division issues a request for departmental revenue estimates. The information submitted by the departments will be incorporated into the Budget Division's initial revenue estimate for the coming fiscal year.
- At the same time the department heads are asked to identify any new initiatives or programs so that they may be included in the budget planning process.



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- In January, having arrived at a preliminary revenue estimate for the coming fiscal year and incorporating any new initiatives or areas that will experience an increase in costs, the Budget Division issues budget allocations to departments.
 - Departments respond by submitting their budget requests and service level information to the Budget Division.
 - In February, the Budget Division holds budget meetings with the departments and the administration to discuss budget requests and, where necessary, reconcile discrepancies between allocations and requests.
 - Revenue estimates are continually updated throughout this period. In March, departmental budget proposals are adjusted to reflect the latest revenue projections.
 - In April, the Budget Division prepares the budget document and submits its proposed budget to the Board of Estimate and Apportionment, (E&A), comprised of the Mayor, the Comptroller and the President of the Board of Aldermen. The Board of E&A reviews the proposed budget, holds hearings with departments and conducts a public hearing at which citizens may voice their concerns. Following the hearings, the Board of E&A may recommend changes to the proposed budget.

Next Steps - Charter Requirements

- The Board of E&A must submit its proposed budget to the Board of Aldermen not less than 60 days prior to the beginning of the fiscal year, or May 1.
- During May and June, the Ways and Means Committee of the Board of Aldermen conducts public hearings on each segment of the proposed budget prior to taking any action. The proposed budget is reviewed and then considered by the Board of Aldermen.



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- The Board of Aldermen may reduce the amount of any item in a budget bill, except amounts fixed by statute or ordinance obligations. The Board of Aldermen may not increase any appropriation amount nor insert new items unless specifically approved by the Board of E&A. (As a general rule, should increases for particular items be desired, the Ways and Means committee will submit a list of items for the Board of E&A to consider, with which it may or may not agree.)
 - If the Board of E&A does not submit its proposed budget to the Board of Aldermen by May 1, the Budget Director would be required to submit a budget directly to the Board of Aldermen.
 - If the Board of Aldermen does not approve a budget by the beginning of the fiscal year, the proposed budget by the Board of E&A or, in its absence, the submission by the Budget Director, shall be deemed to have been approved by the Board of Aldermen.

Budget / Operating Plan Administration

- As needs arise during the fiscal year, limited transfers within or among departments or funds may occur with approval of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment. Any accruing or unappropriated City revenue may be appropriated by ordinance recommended by the Board of E&A and passed by the Board of Aldermen.