

EXPLANATION OF OVERVIEW OF BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Budgeting, at best, is an inexact science. It can be both precise and unyielding as numbers tend to be, or as flexible as priority changes dictate. In the end, the goal of Weld County's budgeting process is to produce a "user friendly" document, designed to enhance policy makers', managers', and citizens' understanding of major issues, resource choices, and impact of the total budget. The budget is not only a financial plan, but a policy document, operational guide, and communication device.

As a financial plan, Weld County's budget includes all funds, presents a summary of historical and projected revenues and expenditures, describes major revenue sources, underlying assumptions and trends, and includes projected changes to fund balances.

As a policy document, the budget includes a budget message articulating strategic priorities, describes budget and financial policies, and addresses long-term concerns and issues.

As an operations guide, the document includes an organizational chart(s), provides authorized personnel schedules, describes departmental services or functions, and includes goals and objectives.

As a communications device, the budget includes a summary of budgetary issues, trends, and resource choices, explains the impact of other plans or planning processes, describes the preparation, review, and adoption process, includes a demographics or community profile section, and contains a table of contents and glossary of terms.

The budget and management system begins with community assessments that take the form of formal assessments, such as those done by the Health Department and Social Services, surveys, town meetings, citizen input, and various forms of input from citizen advisory boards. Based upon the community assessments, policy formulation is done by analyzing community needs, developing county-wide goals, assessing prior year program performance, reviewing policy alternatives, establishing priorities, and fiscal policy. A spin off of the policy formulation is the creation of a capital improvements plan and long-range plan.

Program planning at the department level follows policy formulation. All departments assess their programs, explore alternatives, design and define existing and new programs, develop program objectives, and relate present operations to the programs planned. The budget is then based upon the program, performance, and periodic program review. This process allows for the allocation of resources by program area and multi-year projections. The programs are then evaluated on an on-going basis through program analysis, review of performance, and an examination and evaluation of alternatives. This input then cycles into the policy formation process for a new budget cycle.

The budget and management system is supported by the Banner Accounting System, fiscal control and cost accounting by program, and workload and performance management systems and reports.

In summary, Weld County's budget process is virtually a year-around process, combining months of planning, analysis, program and policy review, and constant monitoring. The adopted budget asserts Weld County's commitment to meet or exceed the community's highest priority expectations at the lowest possible cost to citizens. In the end, the budget represents a balance between the political process represented by citizen input, policymakers, county departments and offices, and teamwork.

The following two pages show the process graphically.