How to Read the Budget

Volume 1 contains information on General Fund agencies. An agency accounts for a specific set of activities that a government performs. For example, the Police Department, a General Fund agency, performs public safety functions for Fairfax County residents. Each County agency is represented with its own narrative that contains program and budgetary information. Budgetary information is presented by functional area; therefore most agencies will include budget data at the "cost center" level. A cost center is a group of individual line items or expenditure categories within a functional program unit developed to meet specific goals and objectives.

Program Area Summaries

In addition to the individual agency narratives, summaries by program area (such as Public Safety, Health and Welfare, Judicial Administration, etc.) have been included in the budget to provide a broader perspective of the strategic direction of several related agencies and how they are supporting the County vision elements. This helps to identify common goals and programs that may cross over agencies. In each of the summaries by program area, benchmarking information is included on services to demonstrate how the County performs in relation to other comparable jurisdictions. Fairfax County is one of over 150 cities and counties that participate in the International City/County Management Association's (ICMA) benchmarking effort in the following service areas: Police, Fire/EMS, Library, Parks and Recreation, Youth Services, Code Enforcement, Refuse Collection/Recycling, Housing, Fleet Management, Facilities, Information Technology, Human Resources, Risk Management and Purchasing. ICMA performs extensive data cleaning to ensure the greatest possible accuracy and comparability of data. In service areas that are not covered by ICMA's effort, agencies rely on various sources of comparative data prepared by the state, professional associations and/or nonprofit/research organizations. In addition, a section is included in the program area summaries focusing on federal/state mandates. The County has undertaken a substantial effort to quantify the cost of federal/state mandates over the past few years, highlighting the fact that there has not been nearly enough revenue provided to cover the expenditure requirements necessary to meet the mandates. This section is not meant to be all inclusive, but is designed to mention some of the larger types of mandates the agencies in a particular program area must meet.

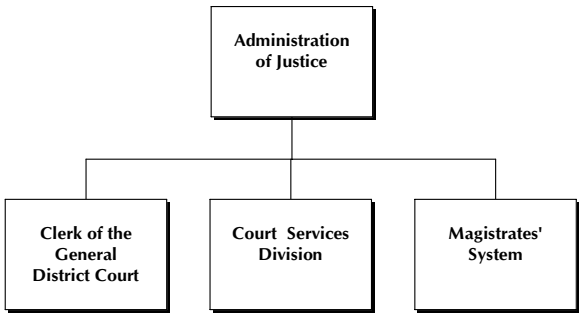
Most agency narratives include:

- Organization Chart
- Agency Mission and Focus
- New Initiatives and Recent Accomplishments in Support of the County Vision
- Budget and Staff Resources
- Funding Adjustments
- Cost Centers (funding and position detail)
- Cost Center Specific Goals, Objectives and Key Performance Measures
- Performance Measurement Results

Not all narratives will contain each of these components, but rather only those that are applicable.

Organization Chart

The organization chart displays the organizational structure of each agency. An example depicting the organizational structure of the General District Court is shown below.



How to Read the Budget

Agency Mission and Focus

The agency mission is a broad statement reflecting intended accomplishments for achievement of the agency's public purpose. It describes the unique contribution of the organization to the County government and residents receiving services and provides a framework within which an agency operates. The agency focus section includes a description of the agency's programs and services. The agency's relationship with County boards, authorities or commissions may be discussed here, as well as key drivers or trends that may be influencing how the agency is conducting business. The focus section is also designed to inform the reader about the strategic direction of the agency and the challenges that it is currently facing. Highlights of these challenges can be found in the "Thinking Strategically" box in the focus section.

New Initiatives and Recent Accomplishments in Support of the County Vision

To further strengthen the link between the budget and the strategic direction of both the County and each agency, each agency's new initiatives and recent accomplishments are presented by County vision element. There are seven County vision elements which are depicted by small icons. The vision elements include:

Maintaining Safe and Caring Communities

Building Livable Spaces

Connecting People and Places

Maintaining Healthy Economies

Practicing Environmental Stewardship

Creating a Culture of Engagement

Exercising Corporate Stewardship

Individual agency narratives identify strategic issues, which were developed during the agency strategic planning efforts, link new initiatives and recent accomplishments, as well as core services to the vision elements, and expand the use of performance measures to clearly define how well the agency is delivering a specific service.

Budget and Staff Resources

It is important to note that expenditures are summarized in three categories. *Personnel Services* consist of expenditure categories including regular pay, shift differential, limited and part-time salaries, and overtime pay. *Operating Expenses* are the day-to-day expenses involved in the administration of the agency, such as office supplies, printing costs, repair and maintenance for equipment, and utilities. *Capital Equipment* includes items that have a value that exceeds $5,000 and an expected life of more than one year, such as an automobile or other heavy equipment. In addition, some agencies will also have a fourth expenditure category entitled *Recovered Costs*. Recovered Costs are reimbursements from other County agencies for specific services or work performed or reimbursements of work associated with capital construction projects. These reimbursements are reflected as a negative figure in the agency's budget, thus offsetting expenditures.

A Summary Table is provided including the agency's positions, expenditures less recovered costs, and income/revenue (if applicable).

Funding Adjustments

This section summarizes changes to the budget. The first section includes adjustments from the *FY 2007 Revised Budget Plan* necessary to support the FY 2008 program. The second section includes revisions to the current year budget that have been made since its adoption. All adjustments as a result of the *FY 2006 Carryover Review* and any other changes through December 31, 2006 are reflected here. Funding adjustments are presented programmatically. For example, the entire cost to open a new facility is presented in one place and includes Personnel Services, Operating Expenses and other costs.

Cost Centers

As an introduction to the more detailed information included for each functional area or cost center, a list of the cost centers is included with a graphic representation of the FY 2008 budget by cost center. In addition, each cost center is highlighted by several icons which indicate the various vision elements that are supported by the programs and services within the cost center. A listing of the staff resources for each cost center is also included.

Key Performance Measures

Most cost centers include goals, objectives and performance indicators. Goals are broad statements of purpose, generally indicating what service or product is provided, for whom, and why. Objectives are outcome-based statements of specifically what will be accomplished during the budget year. Ideally, these objectives should support the goal statement, reflect the planned benefit(s) to customers, be written to allow measurement of progress and describe a quantifiable target. Indicators are the first-level data for reporting performance on those objectives.

A Family of Measures is provided to present an overall view of a program so that factors such as cost can be balanced with customer satisfaction and the outcome ultimately achieved. The concept of a Family of Measures encompasses the following types of indicators and serves as the structure for a performance measurement model that presents a comprehensive picture of program performance as opposed to a single-focus orientation.

- Input: Value of resources used to produce an output.
- Output: Quantity or number of units produced.
- Efficiency: Inputs used per unit of output.
- Service Quality: Degree to which customers are satisfied with a program, or the accuracy or timeliness with which the product/service is provided.
- Outcome: Qualitative consequences associated with a program.

Performance Measurement Results

This section includes a discussion and analysis of how the agency's performance measures relate to the provision of activities, programs, and services stated in the agency mission. The results of current performance measures are discussed, as well as conditions that contributed to the level of performance achieved and action plans for future-year improvement of performance targets.