

BUDGET GUIDE

BUNCOMBE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
A CITIZENS GUIDE TO THE COUNTY BUDGET

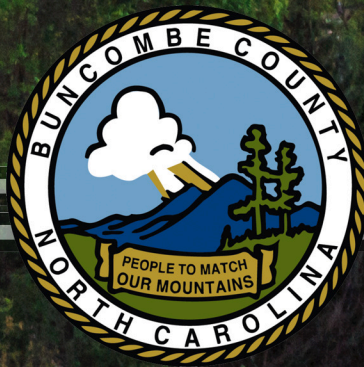
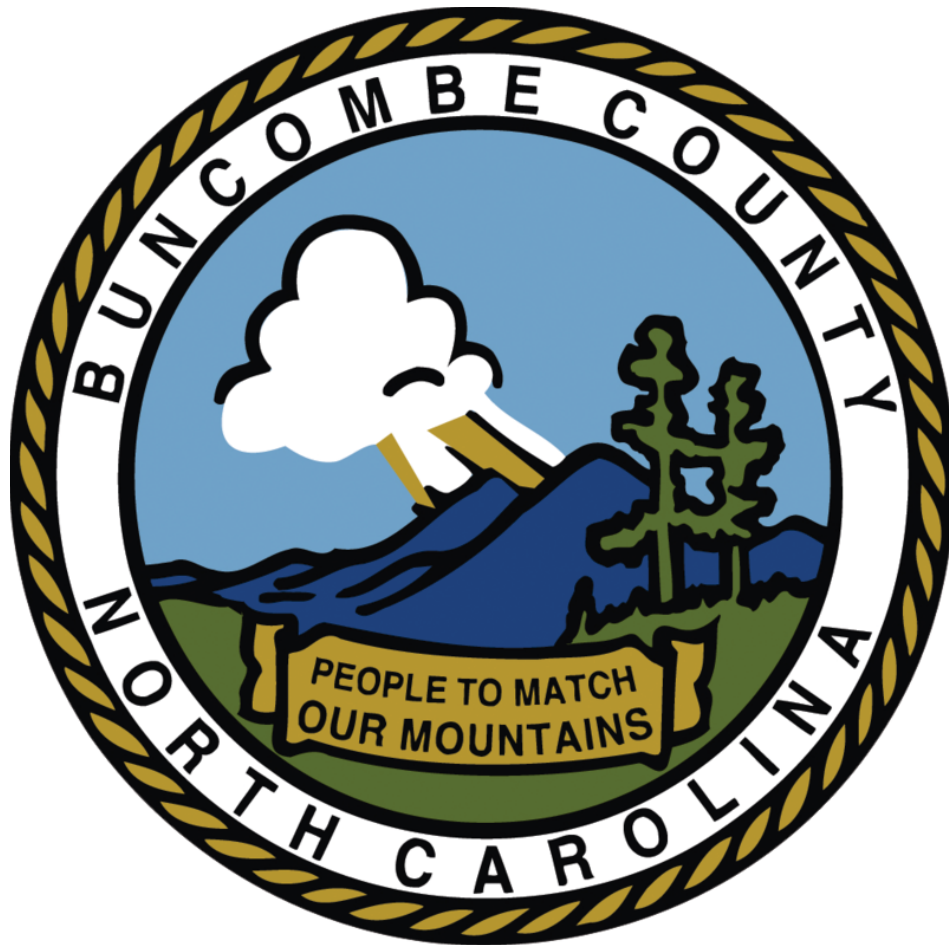


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BASIS OF BUDGETING

Budgets are adopted as required by State Statute. An annual budget ordinance is adopted for the General, Special Revenue, Internal Service Fund, and Enterprise Funds. The General Fund is where all the transactions of the County that are not required to be accounted for elsewhere are recorded. The Special Revenue Funds account for revenues that must be spent for a specific purpose. All annual appropriations lapse at fiscal year end.

Project ordinances spanning more than one year are adopted for the Grant Project Fund, Debt Service Fund and Capital Project Funds; where expenditures for multi-year grants/projects and infrastructure and facilities are accounted for.

Both the annual and project budgets are prepared using the modified accrual basis of accounting, which is consistent with the accounting system used to record transactions. Under this method, revenues are recognized when they become both “measurable” and “available” to finance expenditures of the current period. Expenditures are recognized when the liability is incurred in most cases.

Expenditures are accounted for at three levels. The functional level represents a group of departments with the same or similar purpose, i.e. public safety. The departmental level represents the budget for each department as a stand alone entity. The object level is each line item within the department’s budget. Expenditures may not legally exceed appropriations at the functional level for the General Fund, at the department level for the Special Revenue and Enterprise Funds, and at the object level for the Capital Projects Funds.

The County utilizes the encumbrance method of accounting, as required by State Statute. An encumbrance is an amount of money committed and set aside, but not yet expended, for the purchase of a specific good or service. Encumbrances outstanding at year-end represent the estimated amounts of the expenditures ultimately to result if unperformed purchase orders and other contracts in process at year-end are completed. All unexpected annual budget appropriations lapse at year-end. Encumbrances outstanding at year-end are reported as part of fund balances since they do not constitute expenditures or liabilities. The subsequent year’s appropriations provide authority to complete these transactions. Encumbrances at year-end in funds that are budgeted on a multi-year project basis automatically carry forward to the next fiscal year along with their related appropriations and are not subject to annual cancellation and reappropriation.

OPERATING FUNDS

GENERAL FUND

The General Fund is the main operating fund of the County. It is used to account for all financial resources except those required to be accounted for in another fund. This fund receives the major portion of ad valorem tax revenues, local option sales tax, federal and state shared revenues, licenses, permits and fees. The major operating activities include: public safety, economic and physical development, human services, education, debt services, and general government service functions. The Commissioners annually adopt appropriations for this fund.

SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS

Special Revenue Funds are used to account for the proceeds of specific revenue sources (other than special assessments, expendable trusts, or major capital projects) that are legally restricted to expenditures for specified purposes. The Commissioners annually adopt appropriations for these funds. Buncombe County maintains ten Special Revenue Funds:

Register of Deeds Automation
Occupancy Tax
911
Fire Service Districts
Transportation
Forfeiture Funds
PDF Woodfin Downtown Fund

INTERNAL SERVICE FUND

Internal Service Funds are used to account for the financing of goods by one department or agency to other departments or agencies of the County on a cost reimbursement basis. The Health, Employment, Property & Casualty Insurance Fund is used to account for the activities of the County's health and dental insurance plans for County employees. Also included in the Health, Employment, Property & Casualty Insurance Fund is all activity for worker's compensation, property, professional liability, and general liability premiums and claims. The Commissioners annually adopt appropriations for this fund.

ENTERPRISE FUNDS

The Enterprise Funds are used to account for operations that are financed and operated in a manner similar to private business enterprises – where the intent of the governing body is that costs of providing services to the general public be recovered primarily through user charges. The Commissioners annually adopt appropriations for these funds. Buncombe County has two Enterprise Funds:

Solid Waste
Inmate Commissary & Welfare

GENERAL FUND

The **General Fund** is the County's main operating fund and accounts for resources traditionally associated with government that are not required legally or by sound financial management to be accounted for in other funds.

The major operating activities include:

- General Government
- Public Safety
- Human Services
- Economic & Physical Development
- Culture & Recreation
- Education

SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS

Special Revenue Funds are used to account for specific revenues that are legally restricted to expenditures for particular purposes.

Fire Service Districts Fund

The County's Board of Commissioners serves as the tax levying body for twenty special fire protection districts. Taxes levied and collected on behalf of these districts are distributed under contract to volunteer fire departments serving the respective districts.

Transportation Fund

This fund was established to account for intergovernmental revenues received to operate Mountain Mobility van service which provides transportation to the senior citizens, persons with disabilities, children and the general public of Buncombe County.

Emergency Telephone System (911) Fund

This fund was established in accordance with North Carolina law to account for the accumulation of telephone surcharges to be used for emergency telephone systems.

Occupancy Tax Fund

This fund was established to account for the revenues from the room occupancy tax to fund the development and implementation of strategies designed to promote tourism in Buncombe County. Occupancy taxes net of a collection fee are transferred to the component unit, Tourism Development Authority, to achieve this purpose.

Register of Deeds Automation Fund

The Automation Fund receives most of its revenue from permits and fees and appropriated fund balance. This fund is used to budget for capital expenditures that help to automate all documents that the Register of Deeds keeps records of so that the citizens will have easier access to these forms and records.

Sheriff Federal Forfeiture Fund & BCAT Federal Forfeiture Fund

The Sheriff Federal Forfeiture Fund and Buncombe County Anti-Crime Task Force (BCAT) Federal Forfeiture Fund account for monies received from the federal government's asset forfeiture program. Federal law authorizes the Attorney General to share federally forfeited property with participating state and local law enforcement agencies. Any state or local law enforcement agency that directly participates in an investigation or prosecution that results in a federal forfeiture may request an equitable share of the net proceeds of the forfeiture. These proceeds must be used for law enforcement purposes.

Sheriff State Forfeiture Fund & BCAT State Forfeiture Fund

The Sheriff State Forfeiture Fund and Buncombe County Anti-Crime Task Force (BCAT) State Forfeiture Fund account for the unauthorized substances tax received from state and for proceeds from State Judicial Forfeitures. The unauthorized substances tax is an excise tax on controlled substances. Seventy-five percent of the tax collected is returned to the law enforcement agency whose investigation led to the assessment.

PDF Woodfin Downtown Fund

This fund accounts for a portion of County and Town of Woodfin ad valorem tax revenues pledged to meet the debt service requirements related to the Woodfin Downtown Project.

ENTERPRISE FUNDS

Enterprise Funds are used to account for operations that are financed and operated in a manner similar to private business enterprises – where the intent of the governing board is that the costs (expenses, including depreciation) for providing services to the general public be recovered primarily through user charges; where the governing body has decided that the periodic determination of net income is appropriate for accountability purposes.

Solid Waste Disposal Fund

This fund is used to account for the landfill and transfer station activities.

Inmate Commissary/Welfare Fund

This fund is used to account for Commissary revenues and expenditures at the County Detention Center.

INTERNAL SERVICE FUND

Internal Service Funds are used to account for the financing of goods and services by one department or agency to other departments or agencies of the County on a cost reimbursement basis. The County maintains the Health, Employment, Property & Casualty Insurance Internal Service Fund to account for the financing of its commercial liability programs and the operations of its self-insurance, group health, dental and workers' compensation, unemployment, and general liability programs.

The Internal Service Fund's major revenue source is derived from departmental charges, retiree payments, employee payments and insurance settlements.

With mandated changes related to the Affordable Care Act impacting health insurance costs, the County continues to look for ways to manage expenses while continuing to offer employees valuable health and wellness programs and services.

DEFINITIONS

ACCOUNTABILITY

The state of being obliged to explain one's actions, to justify what one does.

Accountability requires governments to answer to the citizenry; to justify the raising of public resources and the purposes for which they are used.

ACCRUAL

An expense that is recorded at the time it occurs or revenue recorded when earned.

ACCRUAL BASIS OF ACCOUNTING

A method of accounting that recognizes the financial effect of transactions, events, and interfund activities when they occur, regardless of the timing of related cash flows.

ADOPTED BUDGET

The budget approved by the County Commissioners and enacted via a budget appropriation ordinance, on or before June 30 of each year.

AD VALOREM TAXES

Commonly referred to as property taxes, ad valorem taxes are levied on the value of real, certain personal, and public utility property according to the property's valuation and tax rate.

AGENCY FUNDS

One type of fiduciary (trustee) fund. Agency funds are used to report resources held by the reporting government in a purely custodial capacity. Agency funds typically involve only receipt, temporary investment, and remittance of financial resources to individuals, private organizations or other governments.

ALLOCATE

Set apart portions of budgeted expenditures that are specifically designated to organizations for special activities or purposes.

AMORTIZATION SCHEDULE

A schedule of debt-service payments separating the portions of payments attributable to principal and interest.

ANNUAL BUDGET

A budget covering a single fiscal year.

APPROPRIATED FUND BALANCE

The unspent amount (fund balance) appropriated as a revenue for a given fiscal year to offset operating expenses that exceed current revenue.

APPROPRIATION

An authorization granted by the Board of Commissioners to make budgeted expenditures and to incur obligations for purposes specified in the budget.

ASSETS

Property owned by the County that has monetary value.

ASSESSED VALUE

The value of real estate or personal property as determined by tax assessors and used as a basis for levying taxes.

ASSESSMENT

The process for determining values of real estate and personal property for taxation purposes.

BALANCED BUDGET

A budget in which the sum of estimated net revenues and appropriated fund balance is equal to appropriations.

BASIS OF ACCOUNTING

A term used referring to when revenues, expenditures, expenses, transfers, and the related assets and liabilities are recognized in the accounts and reported in the financial statements. Specifically, it relates to the *timing* of the measurement, on either the cash or the accrual method.

BENCHMARKING

The process of measuring an organization's performance and processes against the best-in-class private and public organizations.

BIENNIAL BUDGET

A budget applicable to a two-year budget.

BOND

A written promise to pay a specified sum of money (principal or face value) at a specified future date (the maturity date) along with periodic interest paid at a specified percentage of the principal (interest rate).

BONDED DEBT

The portion of indebtedness represented by outstanding bonds.

BUDGET

An annual financial plan that identifies revenues, specifies the type and level of services to be provided and establishes the amount of money which may be spent within a certain time period.

BUDGET DOCUMENT

A formal document presented to the Board of Commissioners containing the county's financial plan for a fiscal year.

BUDGET MESSAGE

A written overview of the proposed budget from the county manager to the Board of Commissioners which discusses the major budget items and the county's present and future financial condition.

BUDGET ORDINANCE

The ordinance that levies taxes and appropriates revenues for specified purposes, functions, activities, or objectives during a fiscal year.

BUDGET YEAR

The fiscal year for which a budget is proposed or a budget ordinance is adopted.

BUDGETARY CONTROL

The control or management of a government or enterprise in accordance with an approved budget to keep expenditures within the limitations of available appropriations and available revenues.

BUNCOMBE COUNTY ANTI-CRIME TASK FORCE (BCAT)

A drug suppression and investigative unit.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

A plan for capital expenditures to be incurred each year over a fixed period of years to meet capital needs arising from a long-term work program. It sets forth each project and specifies the resources needed to finance the projected expenditures.

CAPITAL PROJECT

A capital project is defined as construction, renovation or demolition project, or acquisition of land or other assets, valued in excess of \$25,000, and with a useful life of at least five years. This includes significant capital maintenance projects and information technology projects. Improvements to or expansions of existing assets must increase appraised value or add to life expectancy to qualify as a capital project.

CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND

A fund type used to account for financial resources to be used for the acquisition or construction of major capital facilities.

CAPITAL RESERVE FUND

A fund used to segregate a portion of the government's resources to be used for future capital program expenditures.

CCBI

City-County Bureau of Identification. This department maintains criminal and other identity records for local law enforcement agencies.

CDE

Central Data Entry. This division maintains a centralized database of criminal history information on all persons arrested or cited in the County.

CERTIFICATES OF PARTICIPATION (COPs)

A financing mechanism in which certificates, or securities, are sold to investors who underwrite a project. The issuance of COPs is secured by lease-purchase agreements to which the County is a party.

CJIS

Criminal Justice Information System. This division maintains an information system of criminal data from the state, counties and cities of North Carolina for public safety agencies and the citizens of Buncombe County.

CONTINGENCY ACCOUNT

An appropriation of funds to cover unanticipated events that may occur during the fiscal year. Transfers from this account must be approved by the Board of Commissioners.

CURRENT PERIOD

Defines the near-term time frame, month or year, in which expenditures are made and revenue received.

DEBT SERVICE

Payment of interest and principal on an obligation resulting from the issuance of bonds.

DEBT SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

The amount of money required to pay interest on outstanding debt and required contributions to accumulate monies for future retirement of term bonds.

DEFICIT

Expenditures exceed revenues.

DEPRECIATION

An accounting charge associated with expiration in the service life of fixed assets. Depreciation is not recorded as an expense for budget purposes.

DESIGNATED FUND BALANCE

The amount of fund balance that is unavailable for future appropriations.

DISCRETIONARY EXPENDITURES

These are expenditures that the County can use or regulated by it's own discretion or judgment.

EMS

Emergency Medical Services.

ENCUMBRANCE

Commitments of appropriated funds related to unperformed contracts for goods or services.

ENTERPRISE FUND

Account for operations that are financed and operated in a manner similar to private business enterprises - where the intent of the governing body is that the costs of providing goods or services to the general public on a continuing basis be financed or recovered primarily through user charges.

EXPENDITURES

The measurement focus of governmental fund accounting. Financial resources expended during a period for operations, capital outlay, and long-term principal retirement and interest on debt. Expenditures reflect the cost incurred to acquire goods or services.

FISCAL YEAR (FY)

The annual period for the compilation of fiscal operations. The time period beginning July 1 of a calendar year and ending on June 30 of the following calendar year.

FUNCTIONAL LEVEL

The level where a group of related activities aimed at accomplishing a major service or regulatory program for which the government is responsible are reported together (e.g. *public safety*).

FUND

An independent fiscal and accounting entity with a self-balancing set of accounts recording cash and/or other resources together with all related liabilities, obligations, reserves and equities which are segregated for the purpose of carrying on specific activities or attaining certain objectives.

FUND BALANCE

Amounts which remain unspent after all budgeted expenditures have been made.

GASB

Governmental Accounting Standards Board

GASB STATEMENT 54

This GASB Statement (Fund Balance Reporting and Governmental Fund Type Definitions) redefines fund balance classifications and clarifies government fund type definitions.

GENERAL FUND

The general operating fund of the county used to account for all financial resources

except those required to be accounted for in another fund.

GENERAL OBLIGATION (GO) BONDS

A bond backed by the strongest form of security that a county can pledge for debt, its full faith and credit. A full faith and credit pledge is a promise to levy whatever amount of property tax is necessary to repay the debt.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM (GIS)

A computer-based technology that captures, stores, analyzes and displays information about places on the earth's surface: what's on it; what's under it; what the land is worth; where the natural resources, people and utilities are located.

GOALS

Realistic expression of specific things to achieve that relate directly to the mission; clear, measurable, attainable and in most cases, exceedable. They outline specific steps taken to accomplish the mission.

GOVERNMENTAL FUNDS

Funds generally used to account for tax-supported activities.

GROSS DEBT

Total debt plus authorized but not issued bonds plus installment purchase agreements.

HHW

Household Hazardous Waste

INFRASTRUCTURE

Facilities on which the continuance and growth of a community depend, such as roads, waterlines, etc.

INSTALLMENT FINANCING

A loan transaction in which a local government borrows money to finance or refinance the purchase of a capital asset or the construction or repair of fixtures or improvements on real property. Instead of taxing power (GO Bonds), the unit grants a security interest in the asset to the lender.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVENUES

Revenues (grants, shared revenues, etc.) received from another government (state, local, federal) for a specified purpose.

INTERNAL SERVICE FUND

A fund used to account for the financing of services provided by one department to other departments on a cost-reimbursement basis.

LINE ITEM

The detailed categories of expenditures for goods and services that the County purchases throughout the year.

LIMITED OBLIGATION BONDS (LOBS)

A type of installment financing similar to Certificates of Participation (COPS). Certificates, or securities, are sold to individual investors.

LONG TERM DEBT

Debt with a maturity of more than one year after the date of issuance.

MEASUREMENT FOCUS

The accounting convention which determines (1) which assets and which liabilities are included on an entity's balance sheet and (2) whether its operating statement presents "financial flow" information (revenues and expenditures) or "capital maintenance" information (revenues and expenses).

MISSION STATEMENT

Fundamental purpose; a statement of what a department really wants to accomplish. The statement should refer to the impact on the County and its people.

MODIFIED ACCRUAL BASIS OF ACCOUNTING

A method for recording receipts and expenditures in which expenditures are recognized when the goods or services are received, and the revenues are recognized when measurable and available to pay expenditures in the accounting period.

NET DEBT

The difference between total gross debt less authorized but not issued bonds. It is the amount of debt that is applicable to the calculation of the County's debt limit.

OBJECT LEVEL

An expenditure classification, referring to the lowest and most detailed level of classification, such as utilities, office supplies, or contracted services.

OPERATING BUDGET

The County's financial plan which outlines proposed expenditures for the fiscal year and estimates the revenues which will be used to finance them.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES

The cost for personnel, materials and equipment required for a department to function.

OPERATING FUND

This is a fund that is adopted for the current fiscal year only.

OPERATING TRANSFERS

Legally authorized transfers from a fund receiving revenue to the fund through which the resources are to be expended.

OUTCOME

The results specified in organizational goals or the positive effects or results an organization has on the community it serves.

OUTPUT

What an organization produces as it attempts to provide public services. (Ex: The number of patrol cars a police department purchases.)

PAY-AS-YOU-GO

The practice of financing expenditures with funds that are currently available rather than borrowed.

PROPOSED BUDGET

The budget presented to the County Commissioners by the County Manager.

PROJECT FUND

This is a fund that includes on-going revenues and expenditures that “roll” from one year to the next. These funds do not require annual adoption by the Commissioners.

PROPRIETARY FUND

A type of fund that accounts for governmental operations that are financed and operated in a manner similar to a private business enterprise. It is financed primarily from charges to users for services provided. There are two types of proprietary funds: enterprise funds and internal service funds.

PRIOR PERIOD ADJUSTMENT

Prior period adjustments are the net effect of changes resulting from the correction of an error in the previous fiscal year.

REQUIRED EXPENDITURES

These are expenditures that the County must spend according to a law or ruling from a State or Federal agencies. These include Medicaid expenditures and School Capital and Operating funds.

RESERVED FUND BALANCE

The portion of a governmental fund’s net assets that is not available to budget to spend.

REVENUE

Income (excluding transfers and proceeds from the sale of bonds or notes) for the fiscal year. The major categories of revenue include local taxes, state shared revenues, fees and charges, interest on investments, federal revenue sharing, and fines and forfeitures.

SERVICE DISTRICTS

A unit of local government that is created for the operation of a particular public service enterprise. These include fire and rescue.

SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS

A compulsory levy made against certain properties to defray all or part of the cost of a specific capital improvement or service deemed to benefit primarily those properties.

SPECIAL OBLIGATION BONDS

A type of borrowing secured by a pledge of any revenue source or asset available to the borrowing government, except for the unit's taxing power.

SPECIAL REVENUE FUND

A governmental accounting fund used to account for the proceeds of specific revenue sources that are legally restricted to expenditures for specified purposes.

STRATEGIC PLAN

This is a long-range plan that guides the direction of the County departments in how to conduct day-to-day business in order to reach longer term goals.

SURPLUS

Revenues exceeded expenditures.

TAX LEVY

The total amount to be raised by general property taxes for purposes specified in the Budget Ordinance.

TAX RATE

The amount of tax levied for each \$100 of assessed valuations.

TRANSFERS (IN/OUT)

Amounts transferred from one fund to another to assist in financing the services for the recipient fund.

UNDESIGNATED FUND BALANCE

The amount of fund balance that is available for future appropriations.

UNRESTRICTED FUND BALANCE

The sum of committed, assigned, and unassigned fund balance as defined in GASB Statement 54.