

Budget Process and Timeline

The Constitution of Maine requires the Governor and the Legislature to submit, enact and approve a balanced budget that achieves each fiscal year a balance between resources and commitments. The State of Maine develops General Fund and Highway Fund revenue forecasts for the biennial budget within the context of a consensus revenue forecasting model. The Consensus Economic Forecasting Commission first meets to prepare a four year economic forecast for the State of Maine. The six-member Revenue Forecasting Committee uses the economic assumptions recommended by the Consensus Economic Forecasting Commission to prepare its four year revenue forecast for the General Fund and the Highway Fund. The committee's recommendations for revenues affecting the upcoming biennium are made in November, and are subsequently used by the Governor in developing the General Fund and Highway Fund budget recommendations for the upcoming biennium.

The State of Maine uses a biennial budget in which the budget is presented by the Governor and acted upon by the Legislature for two fiscal year periods beginning in even numbered years. Each fiscal year of the biennium encompasses the period July 1 through June 30. Appropriations and allocations are provided for each fiscal year of the biennium. The biennial budget for each ensuing biennium is presented and acted upon by the first regular session of the Legislature. During the first regular session, the Legislature may also make adjustments to the appropriations and allocations by program for the last fiscal year of the current biennium. The second regular session of the Legislature may make adjustments to both the first and second fiscal years of the current biennium.

Appropriations and allocations by program are further delineated by three line categories: Personal Services; All Other; and, Capital Expenditures. The Personal Services line category includes the salaries, wages and benefits for all positions authorized by the Legislature reduced by an attrition factor of 5%. The All Other line category includes the operational expenditures of a program such as vehicle operations, in state travel, supplies, etc. The Capital Expenditures line category includes funds for the purchase and replacement of equipment assets of \$5,000 or more with a useful life greater than one year, and for real property purchases and facility improvements and construction.

Each appropriation and allocation to a program also includes the number of positions authorized by the Legislature. Referred to as "headcount" these positions are further classified by the Legislature as "legislative count" or "full time equivalent". Legislative count represents positions authorized by the Legislature for 52 weeks in a fiscal year. These may include full-time and part-time positions. Full time equivalent represents positions authorized by the Legislature for less than 52 weeks in a fiscal year. These typically include seasonal and intermittent positions. Positions authorized by the Legislature may not vary from the position titles and detailed funding that support the positions without legislative approval unless permanent funding is identified and approved by the State Budget Officer.

The biennial budget is presented separately in the form of an operating budget and a capital budget. Capital facility repairs to maintain asset value are included in the operating budget.

Once the Legislature has enacted the biennial budget, and it has been signed into law, the departments and agencies receiving expenditure authorization are required to develop budgets by program for each fiscal year, requesting allotment by line category and quarter. Allotment is established in four quarters approved by the Governor. Fiscal year budgets may be adjusted, or funds transferred between line categories and programs within the same fund and department or agency, to meet changing conditions upon approval by the Governor. Limitations on the transferability of funds between line categories and programs in a fiscal year are guided in law.

Basis of Budgeting

Governmental Funds

Expenditures for Governmental Funds are budgeted on an encumbrance and cash basis. Tax revenues, including Sales and Use Tax, Service Provider Tax, Individual Income Tax, Corporate Income Tax, Cigarette and Tobacco Tax, Estate Tax, Real Estate Transfer Tax and Fuel Taxes, are budgeted on a modified accrual basis. These tax revenues are recognized as available for appropriation or allocation in the fiscal year earned, providing they are measurable and available to liquidate liabilities in the current fiscal year period. These tax revenues that are due in the current fiscal year, but which are payable by the taxpayer subsequent to the close of the fiscal year, are accrued as accounts receivable and, therefore, recognized as revenue in the fiscal year benefited. Other revenues are recognized on a cash basis or are accrued as accounts receivable depending upon the circumstance and historical practice.

Account Groups

Expenditures for Internal Service Funds and Enterprise Funds are budgeted on an encumbrance and cash basis. All revenues are recognized on an accrual basis. All revenues are recognized as available for allocation in the fiscal year earned. All revenues due in the current fiscal year, but which are payable subsequent to the close of the fiscal year, are accrued as accounts receivable and, therefore, recognized as revenue in the fiscal year benefited.

Biennial Budget Time Line

Biennial budget policy is provided to departments and agencies in July of the last fiscal year of the current biennium. Policy guidance includes a description of the required documentation to support each budget request. Variance explanations for requests that are over or (under) the consumer price index guideline are required as part of a department or agency submission. Alternative funding scenarios from departments and agencies may also be requested to show the program impact if funds by program were limited to 95%, for example, of the base year appropriations or allocations. In addition, the guidelines and instructions may also request detailed technology and other budget information for each department and agency.

Biennial budget requests are due in the Bureau of the Budget by September 1 of each even numbered year. This due date is established in statute. The remainder of the time line that follows is based on

an election year when there is a Governor-elect. During the months of September and October, the budget analysts in the Bureau of the Budget prepare budget recommendations for the Governor-elect based on independent analysis and forecasts as well as one-on-one discussions with department and agency staff. Following the election, one-on-one budget meetings are held with key department and agency staff to discuss specific requests, departmental priorities, and impact of reductions from alternative budget scenarios. These meetings may include the Governor-elect, the Commissioner of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, the State Budget Officer, the Governor-elect's Chief of Staff and the Governor-elect's Senior Policy Advisors, depending upon the department or agency and the issue under consideration.

In late December, all budget decisions are finalized, including the development of the capital budget. The budget bills are transmitted to the Legislature in January or early February. Two budget bills are provided to the Legislature. One is a supplemental budget bill (also referred to as an emergency budget bill) that proposes adjustments to appropriations and allocations for the last fiscal year of the current biennium. The second is referred to as a unified budget bill in that it presents all appropriations and allocations for a program regardless of funding source. Part A of the bill presents the Governor's appropriation and allocation recommendations for the upcoming biennium. Part B of the bill presents adjustments associated with approved reclassifications and range changes. Other parts of the unified budget bill include proposed statutory and unallocated language required to give legal effect to the Governor's budget proposals.

The budget document must be submitted to the Legislature in early January according to statute, except when there is a Governor-elect. A Governor-elect has one additional month and must submit the budget in early February.

The content of the budget document is prescribed by statute. The budget document presents the budget, financial and operational plan of the Governor for the upcoming biennium. Details are provided in the budget document to show how those plans will be realized and the manner in which the budget has been balanced.

The Legislature conducts separate public hearings for each budget bill type before the Joint Standing Committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over appropriations and financial affairs. At each public hearing, department and agency heads present and defend each budget request by program for his or her department or agency. Testimony from the public, either for or against the request, is solicited by the committee during the public hearing. Members of the joint standing committee of the Legislature having policy jurisdiction over the department or agency also are included in the public hearing process.

Following each public hearing, the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over appropriations and financial affairs engages in work sessions for each budget bill type. The initial stage of the work session involves the receipt of recommendations from the legislative policy committees of jurisdiction. The committee next engages each department or agency head, and their staff, in one-on-one discussions in order to elicit additional program information pertinent to the budget decision making process. Such information may include staffing and organization, performance measures, caseload forecasts, etc. The committee takes public votes on each item in the Governor's budget, adjusting each budget bill to reflect the priorities of the Legislature. At the

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conclusion of the work session, the committee reports out each budget bill type for consideration by the full Legislature followed by referral to the Governor for his or her approval.

Budget bills are submitted as emergency bills that require a $2/3$ vote of the members of both legislative bodies in order to take effect when approved by the Governor. Non-emergency budget bills require a majority vote of those legislators present and voting in each legislative body. These budget bills take effect 90 days after the adjournment of the Legislature if signed into law by the Governor.