



BUDGET FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

QUESTION: How does an office obtain budget authority?

ANSWER: Budget authority is obtained through the Legislative appropriations process whereby agencies request spending authority (a.k.a. budget authority) by submitting a Legislative Budget Request (LBR) in October of each fiscal year. (s. 216.023, F.S.).

QUESTION: Is there a difference between budget authority and cash?

ANSWER: Yes, cash is the monetary resource that is given to an entity via funding such as grants, contracts, private contributions, etc., and it is deposited into the state treasury. Budget authority is the Legislature's approval to spend that cash for state expenditures.

QUESTION: Once my office receives budget authority, can we request changes or adjustments if needed?

ANSWER: Yes, pursuant to ss. 216.181 and 216.292, F.S., adjustments or revisions to the original approved operating budget can be requested to the Governor's Office of Policy and Budget (OPB) via a budget amendment between categories or budget entities.

QUESTION: How can our office obtain additional budget authority to pay the 8% service charge to General Revenue?

ANSWER: This type of budget authority is known as "non-operating budget authority" and must initially be requested via the annual OPB exercise slated for that purpose in May of each fiscal year. This budget authority is given based on current year appropriations and may be adjusted for various situations in consultation with agencies. Once the non-operating budget is authorized by OPB and an entity determines that it is insufficient, that entity may request additional authority by submitting a budget amendment.

QUESTION: We've noticed several spelling, grammatical, and other minor errors and omissions in our Legislative Budget Request that was submitted in October, and it is now December. Is there anything that can be done to correct those errors before the document is acted upon by the Legislature during Session?

ANSWER: Yes, OPB provides an opportunity to make spelling, grammar, and a few other minor changes during their technical review period.* However, major corrections, deletions, and additions to the LBR can only be made during the "Amended" LBR processing period beginning in the month of February (for regular Session) and all during the Legislative Session. JAC's Budget Office will be notified as to the actual dates that these transactions can be placed into the Legislative Appropriations System/Policy & Budgeting Sub-system (LASPBS). Changes/corrections can only be made to existing issues that are already in the LBR and will be noted as "amended issue." These can also include dollar amount and FTE changes. Deletions of issues or the addition of new issues will be noted as such accordingly.

***Special Note:** Corrections made during OPB's technical review period will not change data that has already been posted to the Florida Fiscal Portal.



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QUESTION: My office has been asked to break out our current year budget down to the county level but the budget is only provided to us at the budget entity level. How can we get the budget at the county level?

ANSWER: The Legislature only appropriates at the budget entity and category level unless specifically noted in the General Appropriations Act. If your circuit or office tracks expenditures at the county level, you can take the prior fiscal year's actual expenditures by county and get the percentage to the total budget for that year and then apply that percentage to the current year's budget in order to get an estimate of the budget break down by county.

QUESTION: If my office receives cash from a contract or grant for which we did not request budget authority in the LBR, can we request the budget authority now or must we wait until the next LBR cycle?

ANSWER: Your office can request budget authority via the submission of a budget amendment, however a complete assessment or analysis of your current budget authority and obligations against that budget authority should be made to determine whether or not additional budget authority is truly needed. All budget amendments requesting additional budget authority must have a clear and concise justification and include any supportive and pertinent documentation.

QUESTION: Our office requested to move a certain amount of budget authority and release from appropriation category A to category B via a 5% or \$250k [whichever is greater] Budget Amendment. However when we received the approval back, the release amount was less than the amount requested? Why did that happen and what can we do about it?

ANSWER: Trust fund releases are given in the 1st Quarter of a fiscal year at 100%. General Revenue Releases are provided in 4 quarterly installments in accordance with the Governor's Approved Annual Release Plan. A new release amount must be calculated when the requested budget amendment amount exceeds the total amount that has already been released.

Example: If an office's request for a General Revenue budget amendment was made in late November to move \$80,000 from the OPS category to the Salaries & Benefits category; 50% of the budget in both of these categories would have already been released via the 1st and 2nd Quarter Releases and therefore, no more than \$40,000 (or 50%) can be released against the \$80,000 that is being requested via budget amendment. [$\$80,000 * 50\% = \$40,000$]. The remaining \$40,000 [$\$80,000 - 40,000 = \$40,000$] will be included as an adjustment to the unreleased balance in those categories and those funds will be released with the remaining quarterly releases, subject to any budget amendments that may occur in the interim.

Special Note: In any given quarter, once a GR release is made and it is determined that an additional release is necessary prior to the next quarter's release, an Early Release of funds may be requested via submission of a budget amendment.



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QUESTION: Our office wants to move budget authority between the General Revenue Fund and a trust fund. How can we accomplish this?

ANSWER: *The movement of budget authority between funds is achieved via an expenditure journal transfer (JT) whereby expenditures are paid from one fund and later transferred to another fund such that the original fund where the disbursement was made is reimbursed and the other fund is charged. This transaction in effect restores the budget authority to the original fund and utilizes budget authority in the other fund. This must be done through the JAC Accounting Office. However, the movement of budget authority between categories or budget entities within the same fund, can be achieved via a 5% or \$250,000 [whichever is greater] budget amendment which is processed through the JAC Budget Office. There is a distinct difference between a budget amendment and an expenditure journal transfer.*

Examples: Scenario #1 – *An invoice of \$100 is paid from GR but it is later determined that the budget authority is actually in the Grants & Donations Trust Fund (GDTF) and it should have been paid from that fund source. In order to reverse the GR transaction, a transfer of expenditures must be requested through the Accounting Office who will process a journal transfer (JT) in FLAIR.*

Scenario #2 – *An office was appropriated \$200 in the Other Personal Services (OPS) category within the GDTF, but has determined that their GDTF-OPS obligations have changed and they now need \$300 to meet anticipated obligations. They have projected a surplus in the Salaries and Benefits category whereby they wish to transfer \$100 budget authority to OPS. This action must be requested through the JAC Budget Office who will process a 5% or \$250k [whichever is greater] budget amendment to OPB for approval. The requesting office must have sufficient unexpended release balance and must not have exhausted the budget transfer authority into or out of the specified categories. Approval of this type generally takes 3 days.*

QUESTION: We received a copy of our office's Appropriation Ledger and noticed that there is an amount posted as a reduction (or increase) in the Salaries & Benefits categories but we have not submitted any budget amendments in that category. What is this amount for and by what authority is it there?

ANSWER: Adjustments to the salaries categories that are not posted as the result of an approved budget amendment are usually tied to specific Proviso by the Legislature and the authority can be found in Sections 6 or 8 of the General Appropriations Act. These sections spell out items and initiatives that the Legislature has acted upon that are termed "Administered Funds Adjustments" (e.g., state health insurance, life insurance, retirement) and/or other specific appropriation adjustments, such as bonuses, pay increases, bar dues, etc.



BUDGET FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

QUESTION: Our office has had a multi-year grant to participate in a particular statewide program. We've had 2 grant funded positions and \$500,000 in our base budget for the past three years. We were recently informed that we will no longer receive funding for this program. Who should I notify and what is the fiscal impact on my budget of not having this program funded?

ANSWER: As soon as you are notified that the grant is ending or expiring, you should contact JAC's Budget Office and consider submitting a LBR issue to decrease the associated budget authority. The fiscal impact will be that your office will no longer be receiving revenue from that grant source to support the budget authority; and your Trust Funds Available Report (LBR Trust Fund Schedule 1 Report) should show a reduction in the estimated revenues and expenditures for the year in which the grant funds (cash) will not be available. This in effect will also reduce the amount of unreserved fund balance that is shown on the Schedule 1 thereby not overestimating the available funds at the end of a given fiscal year.

QUESTION: Are the State Attorneys Revenue Trust Fund and Public Defenders Revenue Trust Fund exempt from the 8% Service Charge to General Revenue (SCGR)?

ANSWER: No, per House and Senate, when these trust funds were established in FY 2008-2009, it was not their intent for them to be exempted from the 8% SCGR. Therefore, **all receipts** into these trust funds will be assessed accordingly by the Department of Financial Services (DFS).

QUESTION: What authority does DFS have to assess a SCGR on any trust fund?

ANSWER: Section 215.20, F.S., requires certain income and trust funds to contribute to the General Revenue Fund.

QUESTION: Our office has a vehicle that was recently involved in a crash and we have been told by the repair shop that it is beyond repair. We have opted to replace it. How can we go about doing this in the most expeditious manner?

ANSWER: Vehicle replacements must be addressed in the LBR; however, this obviously appears to be an unforeseen situation. Accordingly, your office can submit a budget amendment requesting to replace it. [Please review s. 287.14, F.S.] A copy of the accident report, repair estimate, and pictures of the wrecked vehicle (if asked for) must be included, as well as information you have from the Department of Management Services.

QUESTION: We have some very hard and smart working employees who we want to give pay increases to but don't have sufficient salary rate. How can we get more rate?

ANSWER: Requests for increases above your currently authorized rate must be addressed in the LBR. If your office needs additional rate in the current fiscal year, you may consider polling your counterpart offices for a loan and upon agreement, submit a budget amendment with substantial justification.