



Analysis: 2011 Multnomah County Budget Forum Survey

Submissions between March 23—May 13, 2011

Background: This year's Multnomah County Budget Forum held on March 3, 2011, focused on providing information about the relationships between state and county budget funding, and obtaining input from attendees about how county programs and services should be prioritized for funding given looming reductions. Following the budget forum, the Citizen Involvement Committee (CIC) believed it was critical to continue offering county residents the chance to understand and provide input into the 2011-12 budget-making process. This is particularly true this year given the region's considerable economic downturn and the likelihood of significant reductions in state funding. As a result, the CIC developed a survey with two questions similar to those answered by attendees at the March 3rd forum. By using similar questions and posting a brief video online from the forum which included presentations made by Chair Jeff Cogen, Chief Operating Officer Joanne Fuller, and District Attorney Michael Shrunk, survey respondents were also encouraged to consider how state and county funding are interrelated and how state reductions could affect county programs.

Survey Design and Response: As previously noted, the online survey consists of two questions similar to those asked at the budget forum. The first question asks respondents to rank the county programs and services that are the most important to them. Out of a total of 18 county service categories (see descriptions on pages 7-8), respondents are asked to rank, in order, their top six service categories. Scores are assigned based on the ranking order. The scores have been totaled and are shown on a survey ranking sheet. The scores are also presented visually on a bar chart. The second question is qualitative as it asks respondents to describe what features of the services and programs that they selected are most important to them. By asking the question in this way, respondents are encouraged to describe what elements of the selected services and programs are important to them beyond simply naming them. The features that respondents listed have been analyzed and categorized based on similarity. This question is very useful to gain insight into the qualities that Multnomah County residents feel are among the most important with regard to county services and programs.

The survey was posted online and paper copies were also made available beginning in late March. The survey has been well-publicized, ranging from postings on the homepages of both Multnomah County and the Office of Citizen Involvement to an announcement that appeared in the Oregonian. Between March 23rd and May 13th, 220 surveys were submitted by the public.

Question 1 Results and Summary: The results are fairly easy to discern from the survey ranking sheet on page 2 and the bar chart on page 3. The service categories receiving the highest amount of support were, in order: Mental Health Services, Community Health Services, Aging and Senior Services, SUN Schools and Early Childhood Services, Health Clinics, Homeless Services, and Libraries. Another interesting element to consider is where supporters of a particular service category ranked it within their top six. For example, supporters of Aging and Senior Services, SUN Schools and Early Childhood Services, and County Jails appeared adamant in their support given that they consistently assigned them their highest score.

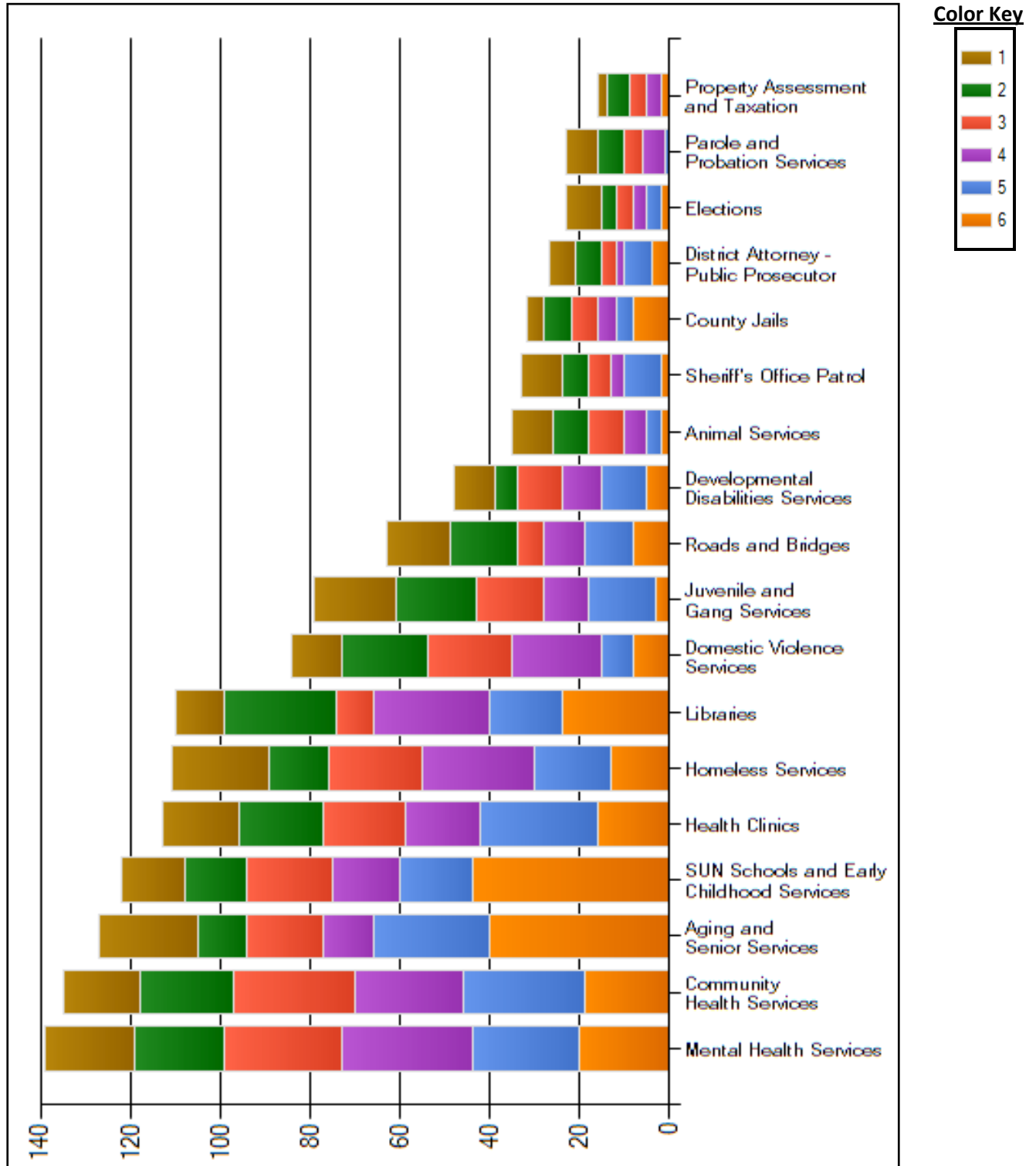
Survey Ranking Sheet

Respondents ranked the top six county service categories that were most important to them, in order from 6 to 1. A higher number means higher value was placed on that service category.

	6	5	4	3	2	1	Response Count
Aging and Senior Services	31.5% (40)	20.5% (26)	8.7% (11)	13.4% (17)	8.7% (11)	17.3% (22)	127
Animal Services	5.7% (2)	8.6% (3)	14.3% (5)	22.9% (8)	22.9% (8)	25.7% (9)	35
Community Health Services	14.1% (19)	20.0% (27)	17.8% (24)	20.0% (27)	15.6% (21)	12.6% (17)	135
County Jails	25.0% (8)	12.5% (4)	12.5% (4)	18.8% (6)	18.8% (6)	12.5% (4)	32
Developmental Disabilities Services	10.4% (5)	20.8% (10)	18.8% (9)	20.8% (10)	10.4% (5)	18.8% (9)	48
District Attorney - Public Prosecutor	14.8% (4)	22.2% (6)	7.4% (2)	11.1% (3)	22.2% (6)	22.2% (6)	27
Domestic Violence Services	9.5% (8)	8.3% (7)	23.8% (20)	22.6% (19)	22.6% (19)	13.1% (11)	84
Elections	8.7% (2)	13.0% (3)	13.0% (3)	17.4% (4)	13.0% (3)	34.8% (8)	23
Health Clinics	14.2% (16)	23.0% (26)	15.0% (17)	15.9% (18)	16.8% (19)	15.0% (17)	113
Homeless Services	11.7% (13)	15.3% (17)	22.5% (25)	18.9% (21)	11.7% (13)	19.8% (22)	111
Juvenile and Gang Services	3.8% (3)	19.0% (15)	12.7% (10)	19.0% (15)	22.8% (18)	22.8% (18)	79
Mental Health Services	14.4% (20)	17.3% (24)	20.9% (29)	18.7% (26)	14.4% (20)	14.4% (20)	139
Libraries	21.8% (24)	14.5% (16)	23.6% (26)	7.3% (8)	22.7% (25)	10.0% (11)	110
Parole and Probation Services	0.0% (0)	4.3% (1)	21.7% (5)	17.4% (4)	26.1% (6)	30.4% (7)	23
Property Assessment and Taxation	12.5% (2)	0.0% (0)	18.8% (3)	25.0% (4)	31.3% (5)	12.5% (2)	16
Roads and Bridges	12.7% (8)	17.5% (11)	14.3% (9)	9.5% (6)	23.8% (15)	22.2% (14)	63
Sheriff's Office Patrol	6.1% (2)	24.2% (8)	9.1% (3)	15.2% (5)	18.2% (6)	27.3% (9)	33
SUN Schools and Early Childhood Services	36.1% (44)	13.1% (16)	12.3% (15)	15.6% (19)	11.5% (14)	11.5% (14)	122
answered question							220

Bar Chart

Respondents ranked the top six county service categories that were most important to them, in order from 6 to 1. A higher number means higher value was placed on that service category. Within each bar, the colors represent the amount of value that was accorded by respondents ranking the service category among their top six (orange reflects the amount of respondents who ranked the service category as their top one, and so on).



Question 2 Results and Summary: Over 560 comments were submitted by survey takers about the features they valued most about the county programs and services that they selected. The comments were reviewed and similar ones were categorized accordingly. While the features described in the comments frequently overlap making them difficult to categorize, some common qualities about the features of valued programs and services emerged. The comments ranged broadly—falling into more than 50 different categories. Nearly 70% of the comments fell into 11 categories however.

The following four features related to county programs and services were valued the most (listed in order) as they constituted over 36% of total comments:

1. **All citizens need health care since healthy citizens lead to healthy communities.** Justifications included: lays the foundation for people to succeed and avoid other perils like homelessness and unemployment, reduces long-term health care costs, it's a human right reflecting a compassionate and sensitive society.
2. **Aging populations must be supported.** Justifications included: rapidly growing segment of the population, vulnerable and high needs population, valuable asset for transfer of knowledge and experience, certain services permit seniors to stay in their homes and remain independent which is cheaper, large contingent of community's volunteers come from this population.
3. **Youth need to receive early education, social service assistance, and afterschool activities.** Justifications included: encourages youth to be successful and not go down the wrong path, promotes productive citizens and a safe and civil society, high return investment by reducing expensive public health and criminal costs over the long-term, creates critical channels to address crises as they arise.
4. **People with mental health problems need psychiatric care and attention.** Justifications included: rapidly growing segment of the population, vulnerable and high needs population that tends to be lower income, may be confronting multiple crises and family breakdowns, reduces drain on other county services, critical for preventing crime and other social problems.

The next two features related to county programs and services were also highly valued as they constituted over 12% of total comments:

5. **Advance literacy, and access to media and information for all citizens.** Justifications included: supports an informed and knowledgeable public which promotes democracy and prosperity; strengthens community; related programs effectively become community centers; makes huge difference in people's lives, particularly those who do not have resources and are seeking work during economic downturns.
6. **Generally support our community's most vulnerable and at-risk populations.** Justifications included: rapidly growing segment of the population, high needs population, circumstances

leading to vulnerable condition are frequently not people's fault, community is likely to be less safe and functional if don't address, difficult economic times hit these groups hardest.

The next five features related to county programs and services were also valued (listed in order) as they constituted over 21% of total comments:

7. **Address homelessness and ensure everyone in the community has housing.** Justifications included: amount of people who are homeless is growing, current economy has been a significant factor in people becoming homeless, makes community more stable and increases stability for vulnerable populations, increases success of other social programs like addiction treatment, reduces panhandling and criminal activity, youth who are homeless are much less likely to succeed in future, reflects sensitive society.
8. **Maintain and upgrade county infrastructure.** Justifications included: significant amount of current infrastructure is past its prime, infrastructure is bedrock of functioning society and promotes economy and jobs, allows people to travel easily and safely, more expensive to fix the longer community waits to do it, the big earthquake will come eventually.
9. **Provide access to family services like early education, housing, affordable child care, foster care support, and community centers.** Justifications included: leads to much greater chance of success for many families, reduces likelihood of child abuse, creates investment that's likely to pay off with future high returns (i.e., preventing crime), prevention-type services are a more efficient delivery approach than later intervention services.
10. **Protect law-abiding citizens by enforcing crime and supporting public safety.** Justifications included: promotes lawful society and discourages inappropriate behavior, safety is vital to the well-being of all citizens.
11. **Support efforts to address domestic violence.** Justifications included: creates double return for both victims and their children, lends moral support to victims who are faced with decisions about how to handle their situations, those affected may not have other places to go to escape abusers, likely to reduce other impacts on victims' lives (i.e., loss of housing), reflects sensitive society.

Future of the Survey: The survey remains posted online and surveys are continuing to be submitted. The CIC is planning to continue posting the survey and publicizing its availability through the time that the County's FY 2011-12 budget may have to be rebalanced. This will continue to provide an avenue for citizens to participate in the budget process as well as provide input for the Board of County Commissioners to factor into their future decision-making. Additionally, the CIC will soon be posting online the survey in Spanish in order to broaden the population of Multnomah County residents who can participate in the process.

Additional Opportunities for Citizens to Provide Input into Budget Decision-making: Citizens may want to consider participating at one of the three public budget hearings that are being held in May. At the hearings which are spread throughout the County, the County Commissioners will take public comments and testimony concerning the County's proposed budget prior to the adoption of the final

budget on June 9th. Additionally, citizens or community groups may want to consider scheduling a meeting with a County Commissioner to express their opinions.

The CIC is also currently encouraging the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners to strongly consider co-sponsoring at least one budget forum later this year if the FY 2011-12 budget has to be rebalanced due to state funding reductions.

Please feel free to contact the Office of Citizen Involvement to get more information about the opportunities listed above or any questions you have about this report. We can be reached at 503-988-3450 or citizen.involvement@multco.us.

Your County, Your Services



Service Descriptions

Aging and Senior Services

Aging provides serves over 200,000 seniors and disabled people in Multnomah County. Services include case management, in-home care, senior housing assistance, protection from elder abuse, and assistance accessing public benefits.

Animal Services

Animal Services licenses pets, operates an animal shelter, responds to animal emergencies, and rescues injured, sick and abused animals. Animal Services received over 8,000 animals in its shelter in 2009.

Community Health Services

Community Health Services monitors and treats communicable diseases. Community Health also addresses chronic diseases and environmental health conditions in the community. Community Health provides services to over 90,000 individuals.

County Jails

The County Jails screens arrestees, houses inmates before trial, and has custody of inmates after sentencing to jail. The jails provide medical and mental health services to inmates. The jails booked over 37,000 arrestees in 2009.

Developmental Disability Services

Developmental Disabilities serves over 4,200 residents with intellectual and physical disabilities, providing family support and help finding programming, housing and employment for clients.

District Attorney - Public Prosecutor

The District Attorney prosecutes misdemeanor and felony offenders for the County. The District Attorney's Office issued 4,200 felony cases in 2009.

Domestic Violence Services

Domestic violence services include victim protection and assistance, legal advocacy, emergency shelter, and prosecution of offenders. Domestic violence assisted over 5,000 victims in 2009.

Elections

Elections conducts all local, city, county, state and federal elections for all political districts within Multnomah County. In 2009 Elections counted 430,288 ballots.

Health Clinics

Health clinics provide access to primary health care for low-income and uninsured residents. County health clinics are located in the community and in schools and served over 60,000 people in 2009.

Service Descriptions, Continued

Homeless Services

Services to the homeless and those at risk of losing their housing. Rent assistance, emergency shelter, temporary housing, and assistance accessing public benefits. Over 80% of the formerly homeless retain housing 12 months after exiting the program.

Juvenile and Gang Services

Parole and probation services for juveniles, as well as gang prevention and outreach to at-risk youth by community-based providers. Juvenile probation services monitored 500 youth in 2009.

Libraries

Libraries provide books, media, and cultural and educational programs to the community. Multnomah County's libraries have the highest circulation per person in the country.

Mental Health Services

Mental Health Services serves residents with mental illnesses and addictions. Services include counseling, school- and community-based services, medication, and residential treatment. Mental Health provided mental health insurance to over 74,000 county residents in 2009 through Verity/OHP.

Parole and Probation Services

Parole and Probation services supervises adult offenders after sentencing to probation or release from jail on parole. Parole and Probation supervised approximately 8,600 probationers and post-prison offenders in 2009.

Property Assessment and Taxation

Property Assessment and Taxation assesses and collects property taxes for local governments within Multnomah County. In 2009 the Tax Collector collected and distributed \$1.2 billion in property taxes for Multnomah County and other local governments.

Roads and Bridges

Roads and Bridges is responsible for building and maintaining 6 major Willamette River bridges as well as 580 miles of roads that are located primarily in unincorporated Multnomah County.

Sheriff's Office Patrol

Multnomah County sheriffs patrol unincorporated areas of Multnomah County, some East County cities, and the Willamette and Columbia rivers. Patrol deputies made approximately 3,000 arrests in 2009.

SUN Schools and Early Childhood Services

SUN Schools provides extra-curricular and enrichment activities at 58 local elementary, middle and high schools. Early childhood provides health, nutrition services and parent education in homes and schools.