

2011 Multnomah County Budget Forum

Topic: Relationships between State & County Budget Funding
Thursday, March 3, 2011, 6-8:15pm, Multnomah Building Boardroom

Attendees: Over 60 community members; County Chair Jeff Cogen, Commissioner Deborah Kafoury, Commissioner Loretta Smith, Commissioner Judy Shiprack; Chief Operating Officer (interim) Joanne Fuller; Budget Director Karyn Kieta; Budget Economist Mike Jaspin; District Attorney Michael Shrunk; Sheriff Dan Staton; Community Justice Director Scott Taylor; Citizen Involvement Committee (CIC) members—Brad McLean, Chair; BJ Finleybranch, Vice-Chair; Amy Anderson, Treasurer; Steven Joiner, Shalonda Menefee, Sue O'Halloran, Steve Schmunk; County staff and Office of Citizen Involvement staff.

Forum Structure: Significant public attention is currently being paid to how state funding reductions would affect Multnomah County programs and services. As a result, the forum was structured to provide information about relationships between state and county budget funding and then allow attendees to give input to county officials about which services should be prioritized for funding in the event that deeper state budget reductions do occur.

The event kicked off with introductions by CIC Chair Brad McLean and County Chair Jeff Cogen. Economist Mike Jaspin from the County Budget Office then provided an overview of how state funding reductions would affect the county and its budget decisions. County Chief Operating Officer Joanne Fuller, District Attorney Michael Shrunk, Sheriff Dan Staton, and Community Justice Director Scott Taylor subsequently discussed how particular state reductions could affect specific county programs and services. From there forum attendees broke into seven small groups where facilitators led them in discussions about which county services were the most important to them and the features that they valued the most. Each discussion group then reported out to the larger group about which services and features were the most important to them. County officials also responded to questions and comments raised by the discussion groups.

Classification of Public Comments: Comments from over 50 of the attendees were received. The comments have been classified and the results are presented in two ways. The first one lists the three most valued services of each of the seven discussion groups which were presented to the larger group as well as the features most important to them. The CIC feels these comments are particularly significant and useful because they were developed as participants discussed their individual opinions on funding priorities with each other in order to come up with larger conclusions.

The second approach includes a table showing the scores for various county programs and services based on participants' ranking sheets. Scores were assigned by individual participants according to how they prioritized county programs and services for funding prior to consensus building within the group. The score sheets have been totaled and are broken down by the overall totals as well as the specific discussion groups.

County Services Most Valued by Discussion Groups along with their Important Features			
Green group—Top 3 most valued services			
1) Health Clinics			
2) Community Health Services			
3) SUN Schools			
Most important features of valued services: Emphasize prevention, provide a high return from investment, keep kids in school, reduce child abuse, reduce poverty, reduce crime, control communicable diseases, provide quality education for children and families, promote mentor relationships			
Blue group—Top 3 most valued services			
1) SUN Schools			
2) Community Health Services			
3) Homeless Services			
Most important features of valued services: Emphasize prevention and education, make financial sense as they have a multiplier effect which trickles down, personalize help and provide it at a grassroots level, offer multiple services, provide lifesaving care when no other resources exist			
Other comments: could Community Health Services be combined with other health services to eliminate duplicative administrative services?			
Pink group—Top 3 most valued services			
1) SUN Schools			
2) Aging and Senior Services			
3) Health Clinics			
Most important features of valued services: Emphasize prevention, directly provide poverty support and other community services to people who need them the most, provide family and community engagement			
Other comments: budget situation equates to “Sophie’s Choice”, promote more intergovernmental partnerships to get more bang for the buck, raise revenues by selling Wapato to ICE, consider consolidating budgets for services that are interrelated and systemic (i.e., under “Public Safety” locate county jails, domestic violence services, parole & probation, Sheriff’s Office, District Attorney)			
Violet group—Top 3 most valued services			
1) Mental Health Services			
2) SUN Schools and Early Childhood Services			
3) tie between Health Clinics and Aging and Senior Services			

Most important features of valued services: Alleviate situations where county employees have to provide services for which they're not trained (ie, Sheriff's officers being forced to act as mental health counselors), affect entire community, build community, avoid needless tragedies, prevention and early treatment programs are more cost-effective in the long-run, offer much needed parent education, offer non-threatening access to services, create positive youth development, encompass all health needs including dental, target the most vulnerable populations

Other comments: Recognition that this is a very difficult process with hard choices, Mental Health Services are not sufficiently supported as is, Mental Health Services need to increase their accessibility to all (ie, offer more language interpretation)

Tan group—Top 3 most valued services

1) Health Clinics

2) SUN Schools

3) Aging and Senior Services

Most important features of valued services: Cost-effective, cheaper to provide health services early-on than emergency services, health services are a government responsibility and providing them at school is invaluable, coordinate various services for people with less resources, create a safe and enriching environment, reduce crime, narrow gap of lost school services, keep seniors at home rather than institutions, increase productive contributions to society by promoting senior health

Gold group—Top 3 most valued services

1) Animal Services

2) Health Clinics

3) Aging & Senior Services

Yellow group—Top 3 most valued services

1) Homeless Services

2) SUN Schools and Early Childhood Services

3) Health Clinics

Summary of County Services Most Valued by Discussion Groups: The county services viewed as the most valuable by the discussion groups were all health and community-related. Specifically, SUN and Early Childhood Services, Health Clinics, Aging and Senior Services, Community Health Services, and Homeless Services were the most-valued county services. Both SUN and Early Childhood Services and Health Clinics were prioritized by six of the seven discussion groups as the most critical services that the county provides. SUN and Early Childhood Services also received the highest overall ranking from the discussion groups followed closely by Health Clinics. Toward the lower end of the scale, Community Health

Services and Homeless Services were the next most highly ranked. However, Aging & Senior Services was actually mentioned more times (by four groups) as a valued service. Mental Health Services and Animal Services were also mentioned as valued services.

One of the most interesting and insightful outcomes from the discussion group exercise was participants describing the features that they cared about the most with regard to valued county services. We encourage you to review these features (listed above) as they provide some insight into qualities that the public may feel are among the most important with regard to county services and programs. Of course, these features frequently interrelate which makes them difficult to classify. Still, some common qualities appear to emerge. First, every group that chose to list features emphasized prevention and early treatment programs as being both cost-effective and producing the best results. Relatedly, some groups emphasized support of programs that produce high financial returns on the county's investment. Second, the discussion groups also appeared to highly value programs that address problems at the grassroots level, including life-saving and poverty services offered directly to people. Third, programs that can provide multiple services to people (both health and otherwise) appear to be highly valued. Fourth, the groups appreciated programs that educate and develop youth, parents, and families. Similarly, programs that seek to build and promote communities were also popular. Additionally, more than one group favored programs that have the effect of reducing crime. Finally, one overall sense that seemed to emerge from participants in the discussion groups and the forum in general was a realization of how difficult the budget process and the choices confronting county officials is.

Summary of Participant Ranking Sheets: Totaling the scores on the individual ranking sheets of forum participants shows a similar distribution in the prioritization of county services (see graph on following page). In order, the following services were prioritized as the top 5: 1) SUN Schools & Early Childhood Services, 2) Health Clinics, 3) Aging & Senior Services, 4) Homeless Services, and 5) Community Health Services.

TABLE: SCORES FOR SERVICE TYPES BASED ON TOTALING PARTICIPANT RANKING SHEETS

		Discussion Groups							Discussion Group Totals	Written Comments Totals	Overall Totals
		Green	Pink	Blue	Tan	Gold	Purple	Yellow			
Service Types	Aging & Senior	19	5	12	17	25	9	11	98	10	108
	Animal	3	0	0	0	32	2	5	42	21	63
	Community Health	22	11	12	7	14	3	18	87	5	92
	County Jails	6	6	0	11	6	0	0	29	1	30
	Dev. Disability	8	0	11	0	10	3	1	33	6	39
	DA	5	2	0	9	4	0	0	20	7	27
	Domestic Violence	12	0	4	1	12	3	0	32	4	36
	Elections	0	0	0	0	6	0	1	7	1	8
	Health Clinics	26	5	13	18	30	9	33	134	7	141
	Homeless	17	1	13	21	10	8	21	91	14	105
	Juvenile & Gang	10	0	0	16	20	1	2	49	1	50
	Libraries	12	0	10	2	11	0	20	55	6	61
	Mental Health	14	0	3	14	16	20	5	72	0	72
	Parole/Probation	3	3	1	11	0	3	0	21	1	22
	Property Assessment & Taxation	6	0	3	0	1	0	0	10	1	11
	Roads & Bridges	0	0	5	1	7	1	0	14	1	15
	Sheriff's Office Patrol	8	5	0	10	4	4	2	33	1	34
	SUN Schools & Early Childhood	21	6	18	27	23	18	28	141	1	142
	Total Scores for Discussion Groups	192	44	105	165	231	84	147	970	88	1056
	# of Ranking Sheets	9	3	5	8	11	5	7	48	4	52

Additional Opportunities for Citizens to Provide Input into Budget Decision-making:

Unfortunately, inclement weather led to the cancellation of a second budget forum. However, the public can provide budget input using a number of other mechanisms.

If you were unable to attend the budget forum or want to give additional feedback, the CIC will be posting an online survey during the week of March 21, 2011, at www.citizenweb.org. The survey will include a brief video from the first forum and asks similar questions. Paper survey forms will also be available. Your input will be analyzed and submitted to county officials like it is here.

You may also consider participating at one of the public budget hearings that will be held in May and June. At the hearings which are spread throughout the County, the County Commissioners will take your public comments and testimony concerning Chair Cogen's Executive Budget prior to the adoption of the County Budget for the next fiscal year on June 9. Additionally, you or any community groups you may be affiliated with may want to schedule a meeting with a county commissioner to express your opinions.

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

Please feel free to contact the Office of Citizen Involvement if you would like more information about the opportunities listed above or any questions you have about this report. You can reach us at 503-988-3450 or citizen.involvement@multco.us.