

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is the Operating Budget?

- A. The Operating Budget in Transparency Florida provides a snapshot of the most current authorized budget and where we are in spending that budget. The Operating Budget starts with the General Appropriations Act (GAA) and any other legislation containing appropriations. It is considered the original approved operating budget for operational and fixed capital expenditures. In addition, the Operating Budget includes budget amendments approved after the passage of the GAA for operational and fixed capital outlay expenditures pursuant to Chapter 216, Florida Statutes.

Q. Why is the Operating Budget different than the original General Appropriations Act (GAA)?

- A. Each fiscal year, the Operating Budget begins with the total line item appropriations in the General Appropriations Act (GAA). Additional appropriations are made in sections in back of the GAA and in other substantive bills. Also some appropriations may be vetoed by the Governor and therefore reduce the Operating Budget. Additionally, Chapter 216 of the Florida Statutes authorizes the use of budget amendments to change, increase or decrease appropriations. Once these budget amendments have been approved they become part of the operating budget. In summary the operating budget incorporates the following:
- General Appropriations Act
 - Supplemental Appropriations (made in bills other than the GAA)
 - Vetoes
 - Deducts for certain contingent appropriations, which may be included in the operating budget only if some contingency is met , but which did not meet the required contingency
 - Budget Amendments

Q. What is a Budget Amendment?

- A. A **“budget amendment”** is requested by an agency to adjust its approved budget in accordance with changed circumstances and only to the extent allowed by Florida law. State expenditures cannot be made without prior approval. Additionally, agencies are prohibited from spending in excess of their approved budgets. They are also required to develop internal management procedures and budgets necessary to ensure compliance with their approved budget. If the needs of an agency cannot be met within the current statutory flexibility granted to agencies, then an amendment to the original approved budget may be requested. The budget amendment process requires agency consultation with the Office of Policy and Budget (OPB), approval by OPB, consultation with the legislative appropriations committees, and may require approval by the Legislative Budget Commission.

Q. Why does the budget get adjusted in the interim?

- A. There is a budget amendment process pursuant to Chapter 216 which provides for the approval of additional appropriations/budget during the year after the GAA. This process allows for budget adjustments that may be necessary due to unforeseen circumstances and changes in the financial climate.

Transparency Florida Glossary

Q. How does the Budget Process work in Florida?

- A. Florida's budget process is governed by the laws and Constitution of the state. The process involves citizen input, state agencies, the Governor, and the Legislature. The development of the state budget begins more than a year before its effective date, and the budget is not final until adopted by the Legislature and signed by the Governor. The Legislature will convene in its regular session beginning in March. The budget passed by the Legislature is valid for one year, beginning each July 1, and ending on June 30.

The budget development process has three major phases: agency requests, Governor's recommendations and legislative adoption. Following instructions issued jointly by the Governor's Office and the Legislature in July, state agencies begin developing long-range program plans and budget requests which lay out the programs and funding needs of each agency for the next fiscal year. By mid-October, these requests are submitted to the Governor for consideration in the recommended budget.

The Governor's Office analyzes the agency requests and works to develop the Governor's budget recommendations. The Governor's recommendations are based on state priorities and economic forecasts and reflect a balance between the Governor's policies and available revenues. The Governor's budget recommendations are typically submitted to the Legislature thirty days before the start of the legislative session each year.

Following presentation of the Governor's recommended budget, the Legislature begins its review during committee meetings prior to the start of the legislative session. While considering the proposed budget, legislative committees hold public meetings with agency leaders and interested citizens.

On opening day of the regular legislative session, the Governor delivers an annual "State of the State" address. At this time, the Governor outlines economic trends and conditions facing the state, the needs created by these conditions, and the programs being advanced to address these needs.

During the legislative session, the Florida House and Senate each pass a budget reflecting the priorities of its members. These budgets are referred to as general appropriations bills. Differences between the Senate and House budgets are resolved in a joint conference committee.

The report of this conference committee becomes the General Appropriations Act and is signed by the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate and is presented to the Governor. The Governor has line item veto authority which may be used to delete any specific budget item within the appropriations act. Once the Governor has completed his line item vetoes, he signs the General Appropriations Act into law, establishing the statewide budget for the next fiscal year. A two-thirds majority vote of both the Senate and House is required to overturn any of the Governor's line item vetoes.

In summary:

- The Legislature authorizes the budget
- The Governor implements the budget
- The Chief Financial Officer oversees the expenditures of the budget

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What are disbursements?

A. Disbursements are payments of expenditures.

- Operational disbursements are defined as payments made to the operational appropriation categories and can be made for fifteen months.
- Fixed Capital Outlay disbursements are defined as payments made to the Fixed Capital Outlay appropriation Categories. These disbursements are treated differently in law and may be made for many years.

Q. What are the sources of the data and how often is it updated?

A. The Transparency Florida data is provided from the following sources:

- **Legislative Appropriations System/Planning and Budgeting System (LAS/PBS): (Updated Nightly)**
 - Operating Budget Data - Appropriations, Unbudgeted Reserves, Approved Budget, Releases, Unexpended Releases, and Budget Amendments
 - Operating Budget in Bill Format Data– Line Items, Appropriations, FTE, and Salary Rate, and Text
 - Position and Salary Rate Data – Fixed, Excess, Total, Reserve, Authorized, Filled, and Vacant
- **Budget Amendment Processing System (BAPS): (Real Time)**
 - Budget Amendment documents that contain the backup information for all approved budget amendments
- **Florida Accounting Information Resource SubSystem (FLAIR): (Updated Nightly)**
 - Expenditure Data: Disbursements, Objects, Vendors, Payments (Statewide Document Numbers), Organizational Allotment Balances, Expenditures, and Encumbrances
- **People First: (Updated Weekly – Fridays)**
 - Personnel Data for all Agencies except the Legislative Branch – Position Titles, Number of Positions Established, Filled, Vacant, FLAIR Organization, Pay Plan, Salary Range, Benefits Range, and Total Salaries and Benefits
- **Office of Legislative Services: (Updated Monthly)**
 - Personnel Data for the Legislative Branch - Position Titles, Number of Positions Established, Filled, Vacant, FLAIR Organization, Pay Plan, Salary Range, Benefits Range, and Total Salaries and Benefits

Q. How do I get additional information for a particular Payment?

A. For more information for the particular payment, go to the [Agency Contact List](#) on the ‘Site Information’ tab and provide the Statewide Document Number, Amount, and Date of the specific payment to the Agency contact.

The screenshot shows the Transparency Florida website interface. At the top, it says 'TRANSPARENCY FLORIDA' with a sun icon and the tagline 'Shining the Light on Florida's Budget'. Below this, there are navigation links for 'Payments by Vendor - Operational' and 'Payments by Vendor'. A search filter is set to 'Month: Year to Date' and 'Fiscal Year: 2009-10'. The main content area displays a table for 'COMMUNICATION & FREIGHT' with the following data:

Date	Statewide Document Number	Amount
7/15/09	D0000011951	46.59
8/14/09	D0000077640	50.86
9/16/09	D0000143894	44.80
10/14/09	D0000204646	50.64
11/16/09	D0000270486	29.55
12/10/09	D0000318800	43.01
Total		265.45

Transparency Florida Glossary

Q. What is the difference between Fixed, Excess or Authorized Positions?

A. The following terms regarding position data can be found in the [Glossary](#) on the 'Site Information' tab:

- **Fixed:** The total number of positions appropriated by the Legislature.
- **Excess:** Additional positions that an agency has obtained approval, after a public committee hearing, to exceed the number of positions fixed by the legislature. These positions are in excess of the number fixed or authorized by the legislature (in the GAA or supplemental appropriations).
- **Total:** The total number of Fixed and Excess Positions.
- **Reserve:** Positions not authorized for use by the agency. These positions are being held in reserve until such time they are released to the agency for their use.
- **Authorized:** Positions included in an approved budget.
- **Established:** Authorized positions which have been classified in the state personnel systems (Peoples First or the State Board of Education). This is a function of the agency.
- **Filled:** Positions which are currently occupied.
- **Vacant:** Positions which are unoccupied or vacant.