

# Champaign County Financial Policies

## Introduction

Champaign County has several relevant financial policies in order to preserve and enhance its fiscal health, identify acceptable and unacceptable courses of action, and provide a standard to evaluate the government's fiscal performance. Besides the county's Financial Policies and Annual Budget Process Resolution, other policies that are central to a strategic, long-term approach to financial management are posted on the county website <http://www.co.champaign.il.us/HeaderMenu/generalinfo.php>.

- Purchasing Policy (including Capital Asset Management and Replacement)
- Grant Application/Approval Policy
- Personnel Policy (including Salary Administration Guidelines)
- Treasurer's Investment Policy  
<http://www.co.champaign.il.us/treasurer/PDFS/InvestmentPolicy.pdf>

## Budgeting Policies

1. The County's fiscal year is January 1 – December 31.
2. All County funds are appropriated in the "Official Budget," which is approved by the County Board. Appropriations are considered the maximum authorization to incur obligations and not a mandate to spend.
3. The County is committed to producing a balanced budget in a timely manner. The County will pay for current expenditures with current revenues, avoiding procedures that balance budgets by postponing needed expenditures, realizing future revenues early, or rolling over short-term debt. A budget is balanced when total appropriations do not exceed total revenues and appropriated fund balance within an individual fund.
4. The budgets for all governmental funds and proprietary funds are presented on a modified accrual basis.
5. The final Budget document must include:
  - a. A statement of financial information including prior year revenue and expenditure totals, and current and ensuing year revenue and expenditure projections; and
  - b. A statement of all moneys in the county treasury unexpended at the termination of the last fiscal year; and
  - c. A statement of all outstanding obligations or liabilities of the county incurred in any preceding fiscal year; and
  - d. Additional information required by state law.
6. The budget may be amended through a Budget Amendment or Budget Transfer which require a 2/3<sup>rd</sup> majority vote (15) of the County Board. Department heads may authorize transfers between non-personnel budget lines in their department budget as long as they do not exceed the total combined appropriation for non-personnel categories; and transfers between personnel lines as long as they do not exceed the total combined appropriation for personnel categories.
7. A General Corporate Fund contingency appropriation will be designated for emergency purchases during the fiscal year. The contingency appropriation goal is 1% of the total

anticipated expenditure for the General Corporate Fund. No more than 5% of the total General Corporate Fund Appropriation may be appropriated to contingencies. Money appropriated for contingencies may be used for contingent, incidental, miscellaneous, or general county purposes, but no part of the amounts so appropriated shall be used for purposes for which other appropriations are made in the budget unless a transfer of funds is authorized by a 2/3<sup>rd</sup> majority vote (15) of the County Board.

8. On an annual basis, the County will prepare a Financial Forecast to include expenditure projections for the current year and the next four (4) fiscal years.

## Revenue Policies

1. The County will strive to maintain diversified and stable revenue sources to shelter it from unforeseeable short-run fluctuations in any one revenue source.
2. The County will estimate its annual revenues by an objective, analytical process. On an annual basis, and in conjunction with expenditure projections, the County will prepare revenue projections for the current year and the next four (4) fiscal years. Each existing and potential revenue source will be re-examined annually.
3. The property tax rates for each levy shall be calculated in accordance with the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL).
4. The County charges user fees for items and services, which benefit a specific user more than the general public. State law or an indirect cost study determine the parameters for user fees. The County shall review all fees assessed in its annual budget preparation process to determine the appropriate level of fees for services and recommend any proposed changes to the fees collected to be implemented in the ensuing budget year.
5. To the extent feasible, one-time revenues will be applied toward one-time expenditures and will not be used to finance ongoing programs. Ongoing revenues should be equal to or exceed ongoing expenditures.
6. The Champaign County Board supports efforts to pursue grant revenues to provide or enhance County mandated and non-mandated services and capital needs. Activities which are, or will be, recurring shall be initiated with grant funds only if one of the following conditions are met:
  - a. The activity or service can be terminated in the event the grant revenues are discontinued; or
  - b. The activity should, or could, be assumed by the County's General and recurring operating fund or another identified fund. Departments are encouraged to seek additional sources of revenue to support the services prior to expiration of grant funding. Grant approval shall be subject to the terms and conditions of County Ordinance Number 635, and Ordinance amendments 903 and 920.

## Fund Policies

1. The County's financial structure begins with funds. A fund is a self-balancing accounting entity with revenues and expenditures which are segregated for the purpose of carrying out specific programs in accordance with County policies and certain applicable State and Federal laws. Each fund has at least one Department Budget, which is a group of expenditures that provide for the accomplishment of a specific program or purpose.

2. A major fund is a budgeted fund where revenues or expenditures represent more than 10% of the total appropriated revenues or expenditures.
3. All county funds are included in the Annual Budget Document except the fiduciary funds described below.
  - a. Private Purpose Trust Funds in which the County Engineer acts in a trustee capacity on behalf of townships to use state funding to maintain township roads and township bridges, which resources are not available to support the County's own programs.
  - b. Agency Funds held in a custodial capacity for external individuals, organizations and governments for the purpose of reporting resources, such as property taxes and circuit court fees and fines.
4. Governmental funds account for traditional governmental operations that are financed through taxes and other fixed or restricted revenue sources.
  - a. The General Corporate Fund is available for any authorized purpose, and is used to account for all financial resources except those required to be accounted for in another fund. A summary is prepared which lists the amount of General Corporate Fund appropriation for all affected departments. The General Corporate Fund is a Major Fund.
  - b. Special Revenue Funds are used to account for the proceeds of specific sources that are legally restricted to expenditures for a specific purpose.
    - i. Included in the Special Revenue Funds are Debt Service Funds utilized to account for the payment of interest, principal and related costs on the County's general long-term debt. (In addition to Debt Service Funds, the County also has debt service budgets included in other funds as appropriation based on the purpose of the fund.)
    - ii. Also included in Special Revenue Funds are Capital Project Funds used to account for all expenditures and revenues associated with the acquisition, construction or maintenance of major facilities that are not financed through proprietary funds or funds being held for other governments.
  - c. Proprietary Funds account for certain "business-type" activities of governments that are operated so that costs incurred can be recovered by charging fees to the specific users of these services.
    - i. An enterprise fund is used to account for operations that are financed primarily by User charges. The Nursing Home Fund is the county's only enterprise fund.
    - ii. An Internal Service Fund is established to account for the financing of goods and services provided to the County and other agencies on a cost reimbursement basis. The activities of the Self-Funded Insurance Fund and Employee Health Insurance Fund are budgeted and appropriated through the use of Internal Service Funds.
5. A Fund Statement is presented for each fund, which summarizes past and projected financial activity for the fund as follows:
  - a. Revenues presented in line item detail within revenue categories; and

- b. Expenditures presented in line item detail within major categories – e.g., personnel, commodities, services; and
- c. Fund Balance including the actual or estimated funds remaining at the end of the fiscal year.

## Financial Reserves and Surplus

1. The fund balance for each fund shall be reviewed annually, and recommendations for financial reserves and a plan for the use of surplus funds shall be documented.
2. For cash flow purposes due to the timing of property tax revenues and fluctuations in the receipt of state shared revenues, and in order to allow flexibility to respond to unexpected circumstances, the minimum fund balance requirement for the General Corporate Fund is 45-days or 12.5% of operating expenditures. A plan will be developed to increase the fund balance in instances where an ending audited fund balance is below the 45-day minimum requirement. The fund balance target for the General Corporate Fund is two months or 16.7% of operating expenditures.
3. It is the intent of the County to use all surpluses generated to accomplish three goals: meet reserve policies, avoid future debt and reduce outstanding debt.

## Capital Asset Management and Replacement

1. The Capital Asset Replacement Plan includes a multi-year plan for vehicles, computers, technology, furnishings and office equipment. It will be updated for the General Corporate Fund departments during the annual budget process. Expenditures will be appropriately amortized and reserves for replacement will be estimated. If the county is unable to appropriate full funding for future reserves, this will be documented in Capital Asset Replacement budget. A five-year forecast for capital asset management and replacement will be developed and updated annually.
2. The Capital Asset Replacement Plan also includes a multi-year plan for the facilities owned and maintained by the County. The County will strive to maintain all assets at a level adequate to protect the County's capital interest and to minimize future maintenance and replacement costs.
3. The County will identify the estimated costs and potential funding sources for each capital project proposal before it is submitted and included in the Capital Asset Replacement Fund plan.
4. The Deputy County Administrator of Finance will review all expenditures from the Capital Asset Replacement Fund and the County Administrator is authorized to approve all expenditures from the Capital Asset Replacement Fund in compliance with the multi-year plan and policies established by the County Board. No more than 3% of the equalized assessed value of property subject to taxation by the county may be accumulated in a separate fund for the purpose of making specified capital improvements.
5. The Auditor maintains a fixed asset inventory of furniture, equipment, buildings, and improvements with a value of greater than \$5,000 and a useful life of one year or more.

## Debt Management

1. When applicable, the County shall review its outstanding debt for the purpose of determining if the financial marketplace will afford the County the opportunity to refund an issue and lessen its debt service costs. In order to consider the possible refunding of an issue a Present Value savings of three percent over the life of the respective issue, at a minimum, must be attainable.
2. The County will confine long-term borrowing to capital improvements or projects that cannot be financed from current revenues.
3. When the county finances capital projects by issuing bonds, it will pay back the bonds within a period not to exceed the estimated useful life of the project.
4. The County will strive to have the final maturity of general obligation bonds at, or below, thirty years.
5. Whenever possible, the County will use special assessment, revenue, or other self-supporting bonds instead of general obligation bonds, so those benefiting from the improvements will bear all or part of the cost of the project financed.
6. The County will not use long-term debt for current operations.
7. The County will maintain good communications with bond rating agencies regarding its financial condition. The County will follow a policy of full disclosure on every financial report and borrowing prospectus.

## Accounting, Auditing and Investment

1. The County follows Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).
2. State statutes require an annual audit by independent certified public accountants. A comprehensive annual financial report shall be prepared to the standards set by the government finance Officers Association (GFOA).
3. The County uses an accounts receivable system to accrue revenues when they are available and measurable for governmental fund types. Departments should bill appropriate parties for amounts owed to Champaign County, review aging reports, complete follow-up information about the account, and monitor all accounts receivables.
4. The County Treasurer is responsible for investment of all Champaign County funds. With County Board approval, the Treasurer may make a short term loan of idle monies from one fund to another, subject to the following criteria:
  - a. Such loan does not conflict with any restrictions on use of the source fund; and
  - b. Such loan is to be repaid to the source fund within the current fiscal year.

## Purchasing and Encumbrances

1. An encumbrance system is maintained to account for commitments resulting from purchase orders and contracts. Every effort will be made to ensure that these commitments will not extend from one fiscal year to the next. Any emergency encumbrances, which do extend into the next fiscal year, shall be subject to appropriation in the next year's budget. Encumbrances at year - end do not constitute expenditures or liabilities in the financial statements for budgeting purposes.

2. All items with an expected value of \$30,000 or more must be competitively bid with exceptions for professional services (other than engineering, architectural or land surveying services). Additional competitive bid requirements may apply by statute or as a condition of using funds from an outside source.
3. All purchases over the respective limit of \$30,000, which require the use of either formal bids or requests for proposals, must be approved by the full Champaign County Board.
4. The Champaign County Purchasing Policy Ordinances Number 897 and 902, establish the procedures to be followed in all purchasing activities.

## Risk Management

1. In order to forecast expenditures for its self-funded insurance program for workers compensation and liability, the county hires an actuarial consulting firm to review loss history and recommend funding taking into consideration claims, fixed costs, fund reserves, and national trends.
2. The County strives to maintain the actuary recommended fund balance.

## Salary Administration

1. The County Personnel Policy, adopted by Ordinance Number 960, includes Salary Administration Guidelines.
2. The County Administrator is responsible for computing salaries and fringe benefits costs for all departments.
3. Increases for non-bargaining employees will be established by the Finance Committee at the beginning of the budget cycle and forwarded to the County Board for inclusion in the annual budget.