

# Overview of State Budgeting Language

## Part 1

House Appropriations Committee  
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# How to Speak Like an Appropriator

Part 1: State Finance terms can feel like another language



# How to Speak Budget

- There are lots of terms that are tossed around by the experts who work on state finances that do not have obvious definitions
- Financial terms, like many technical terms, have very specific definitions and using incorrect language and terms can result in unanticipated consequences



# Terms that Relate to Appropriations



# Key Terms Related to Appropriations

- Spending Authority
- Appropriation
  - Appropriation vs Obligation vs Expense/Expenditure
- Carryforward
- Reversion



# Spending Authority and Appropriation

## Spending Authority

- General Assembly's authorization to an entity of government to spend a specific amount of money from a specific fund on a specific thing
- Spending authority is granted to all three branches of government

## Appropriation

- Formal term for the establishment of spending authority



# Spending Authority and Appropriation; An Example

- I give Chris \$5 to buy me a cup of Coffee
- I have given him the authority to spend a certain amount of funds for a specific purpose



# Appropriated vs Obligated

- The appropriations process establishes **spending authority** it does not commit funds to specific expenses, grants, or contracts
  - The testimony provided to the Appropriations Committees is an entities best approximation of how they plan to execute their budget, or their spending plan for the next fiscal year
  - Significant deviations from the plan are presented in the Budget Adjustment to realign the plan with authorized **spending authority**
- When the entities move to the execution phase of the budget, they begin to **obligate** the appropriation to specific expenses, grants, contracts
  - Contracts and Grants are executed
  - Payrolls are run every two weeks
  - Supplies are purchased
  - Etc.





# Obligated vs Expense/Expenditure

- Through the **appropriation** and **obligation** stages of budget execution, no actual money changes hands
- An **expense** occurs once a payment is made by the entity
  - Payroll runs
  - An invoice is paid for work done by a contractor or a subrecipient of a grant
- **Obligations** and **Expenditures** reduce the **spending authority** available to a department throughout the fiscal year

YOUR LOGO NO. 000001

## INVOICE

Date: 02 June, 2030

**Billed to:**  
Studio Shodwe  
123 Anywhere St., Any City  
hello@reallygreatsite.com

**From:**  
Olivia Wilson  
123 Anywhere St., Any City  
hello@reallygreatsite.com

Item	Quantity	Price	Amount
Logo	1	\$500	\$500
Banner (2x6m)	2	\$45	\$90
Poster (1x2m)	3	\$55	\$165
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$755</b>

**Payment method:** Cash

**Note:** Thank you for choosing us!



# Obligated vs Expense/Expenditure; An Example



- I give Chris \$5 to buy me a cup of coffee
- When Chris fills the mug he is **obligated** to pay for the coffee
- An **expense** occurs when Chris pays the cashier



# Carryforward

- Often, an entity does not **obligate** or **expend** exactly what has been appropriated
  - Remember the budget is a plan built on a set of assumptions
- When this happens, an entity will find itself with some spending authority that hasn't been **obligated** at the end of the Fiscal Year
- What happens with the **spending authority** depends on the Fund from where the **appropriation** originates...



# Spending Authority that Expires at the End of the Fiscal Year

- If the **spending authority** is from Special Funds, Federal Funds, Interdepartmental Transfers, or Internal Service Funds, is unutilized, the **spending authority** expires at the end of the fiscal year.
  - Unless there is explicit language that rolls the spending authority to the next fiscal year
- **Spending authority** from these funds is either:
  - Reestablished in the Appropriations Process in the next fiscal year
  - Reestablished in law
  - Reestablished through the Excess Receipts process
    - We will talk about Excess Receipts another day



# Spending Authority that can Carryforward

- If the **spending authority** is from the General Fund, Transportation Fund, TIB Fund, Education Fund, Technology Modernization Special Fund, or the Clean Water Fund, historically the General Assembly has allowed the **spending authority to carryforward** at the end of the fiscal year subject to the approval of the Secretary of Administration
- Proposed BAA language:
  - *Notwithstanding any other provisions of law and subject to the approval of the Secretary of Administration, General, Transportation, Transportation Infrastructure Bond, Education Fund, Technology Modernization Special Fund (21951), Clean Water Fund (21932), and Agricultural Water Quality Fund (21933) appropriations remaining unexpended on June 30, 2025 in the Executive Branch shall be carried forward and shall be designated for expenditure.*



# Carryforward continued

- If an entity has unobligated or unexpended spending authority at the end of a fiscal year, it can be brought forward into the next fiscal year.
  - Often there are timing issues with anticipated budgetary needs that don't necessarily align cleanly with the timing of the fiscal year
  - Entities will receive authorization to **carryforward** funds to meet anticipated needs
    - Pay Act Obligations
    - Project needs that didn't align with the timing of the fiscal year



# Carryforward; an Example



- I give Chris \$5 to buy me a cup of coffee
- The cafeteria coffee costs \$1.59
- I tell Chris to keep the change and buy me a cup of coffee tomorrow
  - The funds haven't been obligated
  - Chris is carrying the funds forward for a specific purpose and a known future expense (e.g., buying me a cup of coffee tomorrow)



# Reversions

- If a department has funds that are not **obligated** or **expended** and it is determined that the spending authority is not needed by a department, then the spending authority is reverted to the General Fund in the Big Bill or the Budget Adjustment
- Through the reversion process, the money that backed the original appropriation is now available to be appropriated again





# Reversion; an Example



- I give Chris \$5 to buy me a cup of coffee
- The cafeteria coffee costs \$1.59
- I tell Chris I want my change back
- I now have \$3.41 back in my possession and I can give it someone else to buy me coffee tomorrow or to spend on something else entirely

