



STATE OF VERMONT
JOINT FISCAL OFFICE

MEMORANDUM

TO: Sarah Clark, Secretary of Administration
Agency and Department Heads

FROM: Senator Andrew Perchlik, Chair, Senate Appropriations
Representative Robin Scheu, Chair, House Appropriations

DATE: January 30, 2025

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Testimony Before House and Senate Committees on Appropriations

This memorandum contains guidance to agency and department heads detailing the General Assembly's expectations for budget presentations to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations.

The budget process is both highly complex and time-sensitive. This process is particularly challenging at the start of a new biennium when the Committees on Appropriations have experienced a high amount of turnover. The below offers guidance on the types of documentation our Committees hope to receive. It is essential to the work of our Committees and the Joint Fiscal Office that agencies and departments submit as much comprehensive information in as timely and clearly a manner as possible. The documentation you provide to us is the most valuable tool we have for completing our work.

We expect our conversation with you to begin with a brief description of your mission and who you serve. We want to focus first on your priority programs and issues and save the "ups and downs" for the end of our discussion. What are the activities and programs we are funding? How did they work and what was the impact? Are there programs that should be dropped or modified?

The Committees on Appropriations, in conjunction with the policy committees, would like to understand the challenges and opportunities that have been identified in your budget. Please include discussion and responses to the following:

- Are there changes that can be made regarding the delivery of services, use of space, technology, or approaches to efficiently using State resources to ensure that Vermonters are being served effectively?

- What new initiatives are you proposing in your budget?
- What programs currently pose the most significant challenges? What work has been done to address them?
- For any program with significant financial changes, please discuss the underlying reasons for these changes in written and verbal testimony.
- Please provide information on the source of federal funding, programs that are supported by federal funding, any relevant information about the status of the funds, and the impacts if the funding is reduced or eliminated.
- For all programs, where possible, please include applicable internal performance goals, the trend direction and scale of change, and any external benchmark or points of comparison you use to contextualize your performance in this program area.

As was the case last session, both committees expect to have documents presented electronically, preferably in PDF format. **If you are proposing new language be added to the budget, please include a Word document of the drafted language.** Depending on the format of materials being provided, there may be a need for paper copies.

It should be noted that the Joint Fiscal Office website is a useful resource for departments and agencies looking to track budgetary changes made by the General Assembly. Documents relating to these changes, including House, Senate, and Committee of Conference versions of the bill and web reports that show and explain changes made in each of those versions, can be found on the [Appropriations and Budget](#) page of the website.

Thank you in advance for your attention to these matters. Please email the staff at the Joint Fiscal Office with any questions related to this guidance.



Senator Andrew Perchlik
Chair, Senate Appropriations



Representative Robin Scheu
Chair, House Appropriations

APPENDIX – DOCUMENTATION FOR BUDGET TESTIMONY

Evidence-Based Performance Accountability – The House and Senate Committees on Appropriations and the policy committees remain focused on evidence-based performance accountability. We hope that you share our belief that this approach will support sound policy making and resource allocation for the State, as well as help to demystify the budget process for the public. The goal is for State leaders, managers, staff, and the public to understand both how public funds are spent in the budget and whether these expenditures are leading to the intended results.

The Committees on Appropriations intend to continue the level of focus on programs and performance accountability. In addition, policy committees will be requesting this evidence-based information to evaluate program and policy effectiveness. For each program, please include a sheet with your budget documentation that responds to the following three questions – the same that were asked last year.

1. How much did we do? And the primary measure(s) you use to assess performance.
2. How well did we do it? And the primary measure(s) you use to assess performance.
3. Is anyone better off? And the primary measure(s) you use to assess performance.

If you use a different evidence-based system than that described above, please include documentation of each program's intended outcomes and the performance measures you use to evaluate them.

Point Person – The Committees on Appropriations both delegate responsibilities for specific areas of the budget to individual committee members, or subcommittees, to obtain detailed information that they use when making recommendations to the committee as a whole during the mark-up process. Department heads will be asked to meet, or correspond by email or telephone, with the appropriate committee member to answer specific questions. Additional follow-up information requests made by a committee member should be provided within one week, whenever possible. Please submit a copy of any follow-up documents to both the point person and the relevant staff person in a timely manner so they are added to the Committee's permanent budget file.

Each Committee on Appropriations point person will also be working with the other committees in their respective chamber regarding assigned appropriations/budget areas. The point person will track budget issues arising from standing committee deliberations.

Budget Testimony – The commissioner or director of each department should present budget testimony that is brief, concise, and leaves sufficient time for questions and discussion. Budget testimony and supporting materials should relate to the Governor's recommended budget.

Both Committees on Appropriations have been assigned iPads and most members will access budget documents electronically. To facilitate committee members' use of iPads, please submit all budget materials electronically at least five days prior to your scheduled testimony. Please submit your documents as PDF attachments in an email.

Vantage Budget System Reports – Please combine each budget component from the Vantage System as one attachment, i.e., all budget details, all budget rollups, narrative, etc., and ensure that the orientation of all pages is the same. You may need to attach several documents to one email or send multiple emails. If you send more than one attachment or email, please make sure that you label the attachments to indicate how many there are, e.g., “1 of 2”, in the subject line. Please be sure to include page numbers on your documents.

Budget documents will be posted on the Joint Fiscal Office website and the respective committee’s webpage. While testifying before the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, budget documents may be presented on Zoom for virtual attendees to see.

Crosswalk Spreadsheet; “Ups and Downs”– Please provide a brief update on significant changes or initiatives between the fiscal year 2024 and fiscal year 2025 appropriation requests.

Section numbers corresponding with the budget should be included on the far left of each crosswalk. This will help members quickly and accurately identify what section of the budget the numbers relate to.

Please be prepared to provide a written annotation of your budget crosswalk at the Committees’ request.

Federal Funding – Please identify federal funding sources that are or are likely to be reduced or eliminated in fiscal year 2025 based upon the information that you have at this point in the process. Additionally, please include detail on any significant change in federal funding, including information about the size and duration of federal grants that are included in the budget. If there is a major initiative funded with federal funds, the Committees on Appropriations would like to know the funding plan for the initiative once federal funds are no longer available.

If the budget proposal includes funds from recent federal bills such as the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA), and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), please highlight in your budget presentation.

Federal State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SFR) – Agencies and departments are carrying out programs funded with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) SFR and Capital Project funds. Be prepared to provide an update on the status of ARPA-funded programs.

Impact on Vermonters – Policy Impact Assessment – The Committees on Appropriations request that any policy impact assessments provided to the Department of Finance and Management per the Commissioner’s budget instructions dated August 31, 2023, be provided to the committee. If there are proposals for new initiatives or changes (additions or reductions) included in the budget request that do not have a completed policy impact assessment, please complete one and provide it to the Committees on Appropriations.

Position Changes and Vacancy Savings – The Committees on Appropriations would like to understand how services provided by each department might be impacted by any budgeted vacancy savings target and be informed of any position reductions or increases included in the proposed budget.

Grants – The Committees on Appropriations would like a summary of the grants that are distributed from each appropriation as well as information on any changes in these grant amounts from fiscal year 2024 to fiscal year 2025. This document may be omitted if enough detail on these grants is included in the Vantage System reports.

Carryforward Funds – For each appropriation, please provide a summary of the amount of carryforward funds that were available at the end of fiscal year 2024 and the anticipated amount of carryforward funds available at the end of fiscal year 2025. Please be prepared to discuss what you are planning to use your carryforward funds for.

Single Audit Findings – It is important to ensure that the State complies with federal requirements specific to federally funded programs. The Office of the Vermont State Auditor annually audits selected State entities and develops Single Audit recommendations. To avoid repeat findings, we request that departments that have undergone Single Audits list any findings and indicate what actions they are taking to address them.

Human Services – Specific Request – The Committees on Appropriations would like more longitudinal data about the populations enrolled in and services provided by the programs that we fund. This includes recent caseload trends, characteristics (such as age, income, and employment), acuity of need, types of services provided (such as case management), type of workforce participation, and other relevant data for factors that relate to program costs and outcomes.

QUESTIONS?

Please email the staff at the Joint Fiscal Office with any questions. The staff assignments and email addresses are included below for electronic submission of information. In addition to staff specifically assigned to the Committees on Appropriations, the Chief and Deputy Fiscal Officers will be working with the Committees on Appropriations as needed over the course of the session.

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