

BUDGET FINANCIAL POLICIES & GUIDELINES

Guilford County's financial policies and guidelines ensure fiscal strength and accountability, as well as guide the County in managing resources used to carry out governmental functions for its citizens. The guidelines presented below are specifically related to the development, adoption, and management of the budget.

The County's budget is prepared in accordance with the North Carolina Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act (North Carolina General Statutes, Chapter 159). The Budget and Fiscal Control Act regulates North Carolina governmental units in financial matters.

Operating Budget and Fund Balance

1. The County will operate under an annual balanced budget ordinance whereby the sum of the net revenues and appropriated fund balances equals the expenditure appropriations as required by The Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act.
2. Guilford County's annual budget shall be adopted by July 1st of the new fiscal year, and shall begin on July 1 and end June 30.
3. The Board of Commissioners shall review and determine the property tax rate each fiscal year. The tax rate will be based on the county's cost of providing general government services.
4. Unreserved, undesignated fund balance of the General Fund at fiscal year end shall not fall below 8% of the subsequent year's adopted budget.
5. At June 30th, the minimum level of fund balance available for appropriation that should be on hand is 8% of the prior year's expenditures.
6. Revenues and expenses shall be budgeted at realistic levels that both avoid shortfalls and accurately reflect expenditure requirements.
7. The County shall avoid funding continuing expenses with one-time revenues.
8. The County will not assume funding responsibility for expired grant funded programs and positions without Board approval.
9. Amendments to the annual budget shall be made in accordance with Section VIII of the Budget Ordinance.
10. The County shall have its accounts independently audited at the close of each fiscal year by a certified public accountant.

Capital Projects

1. The County shall prepare and present to the Board of Commissioners an updated 10-year Capital Investment Plan (CIP) each year.
2. Capital projects included in the CIP should cost at least \$100,000, take more than one year to complete, and have a useful life of at least 10 years. Other items may be included if they represent a substantial investment of County funds.
3. Anticipated changes in operating expenses related to capital projects shall be identified in the CIP and included in the appropriate departments in the annual operating budget.
4. The County shall transfer from the General Fund to the County Building Construction Fund annually an amount equal to the scheduled contribution according to the Future Capital Needs Financing Schedule. (See page 227, "GF Transfer – Future Capital Needs.")
5. The Board of Commissioners will authorize individual capital projects by approving a balanced capital project ordinance in accordance with state statutes.

Debt

1. The approval, sale and repayment of debt for the County are determined by North Carolina statutes and regulations.
2. Per the state statutes, net debt shall not exceed 8% of the appraised value of property subject to taxation (NCGS 159-55).
3. Local policy places additional restrictions and guidance on the use of debt financing and debt structuring beyond the terms of the General Statutes:
 - a. Net general obligation debt per capita should not exceed \$3,000.
 - b. Net general obligation debt as a percentage of assessed valuation should not exceed 3.0%.
 - c. Net general obligation debt service as a percentage of the operating budget should not exceed 15.0%.
4. Debt affordability will be determined using an objective, analytical approach. This process involves the comparison of generally accepted standards and guidelines.
5. Selection of debt instruments is made with reference to risk, cost, and term.
6. The County will seek to maintain and improve its high ratings (currently AAA from Standard and Poor's Corporation, Aa1 from Moody's and AA+ from Fitch).
7. The County shall seek to increase the level of pay-as-you-go funding for major capital projects to reduce reliance on debt financing