

Criteria and Standards for Distinguished Budget Presentation Award - Government Finance Officers Association (further explanation detailing expectations is available)

### **Introduction and Overview**

1. **Table of Contents:** The document shall include a **table of contents** that makes it easier to locate information in the document.
2. **Strategic Goals and Strategies:** The document should include a **coherent statement of organization-wide, strategic goals and strategies** that address long-term concerns and issues.
3. **Short-term Organizational Factors:** The document should describe the entity's short-term factors that influence the decisions made in the development of the budget for the upcoming year.
4. **Priorities and Issues:** The document shall include a **budget message that articulates priorities and issues for the upcoming year.** The message should describe significant changes in priorities from the current year and explain the factors that led to those changes. The message may take one of several forms (e.g., *transmittal letter, budget summary section*).
5. **Budget Overview:** The document should provide an overview of significant budgetary items and trends. An overview should be presented within the budget document either in a separate section (e.g., *executive summary*) or integrated within the transmittal letter or as a separate budget-in-brief document.

### **Financial Structure, Policy, and Process**

6. **Organizational Chart:** The document shall include an **organization chart(s)** for the entire entity.
7. **Fund Descriptions and Fund Structures:** The document should include and describe all funds that are subject to appropriation.
8. **Department/Fund Relationship:** The document should provide narrative, tables, schedules, or matrices to show the relationship between functional units, major funds, and nonmajor funds in the aggregate.
9. **Basis of Budgeting:** The document shall explain the basis of budgeting for all funds, whether cash, modified accrual, or some other statutory basis.
10. **Financial Policies:** The document should include a coherent statement of entity-wide long-term financial policies.
11. **Budget Process:** The document shall **describe the process for preparing, reviewing, and adopting the budget for the coming fiscal year.** It also should describe the procedures for amending the budget after adoption.

## Financial Summaries

12. **Consolidated Financial Schedule:** The document shall present a summary of major revenues and expenditures, as well as other financing sources and uses, to provide an overview of the total resources budgeted by the organization.
13. **3-4 Year Consolidated Financial Schedule:** The document must include summaries of revenues and other financing sources, and of expenditures and other financing uses for the prior year. Break out revenues by type and expenditures by function, organizational unit, or object. Include the public in your budget process. Consolidated Financial Schedule 6 actual, the current year budget and/or estimated current year actual, and the proposed budget year.
14. **Fund Balance:** The document shall include projected changes in fund balances, as defined by the entity in the document, for appropriated governmental funds included in the budget presentation (*fund equity if no governmental funds are included in the document*).
15. **Revenues:** The document shall describe major revenue sources, explain the underlying assumptions for the revenue estimates, and discuss significant revenue trends.
16. **Long-range Financial Plans:** The document should explain long-range financial plans and its effect upon the budget and the budget process.

## Capital and Debt

17. **Capital Expenditures:** The document should include budgeted capital expenditures, whether authorized in the operating budget or in a separate capital budget.
18. **Impact of Capital Investments on operating Budget:** The document should describe if and to what extent significant nonrecurring capital expenditures will affect the entity's current and future operating budget and the services that the entity provides.
19. **Debt:** The document shall include financial data on current debt obligations, describe the relationship between current debt levels and legal debt limits, and explain the effects of existing debt levels on current operations. Quantify and discuss operating impacts.  
Impact of Capital Improvements on Operating Budget 10

## Departmental Information

20. **Position Summary Schedule:** A schedule or summary table of personnel or position counts for prior, current and budgeted years shall be provided.
21. **Department Descriptions:** The document shall describe activities, services or functions carried out by organizational units.
22. **Unit Goals and Objectives:** The document should include clearly stated goals and objectives of organizational units (e.g., departments, divisions, offices or programs).

23. **Performance Measures:** The document should provide objective measures of progress toward accomplishing the government's mission as well as goals and objectives for specific units and programs.

**Document-wide Criteria**

24. **Statistical/Supplemental Section:** The document should include statistical and supplemental data that describe the organization, its community, and population. It should also furnish other pertinent background information related to the services provided.
25. **Glossary:** A glossary should be included for any terminology (including abbreviations and acronyms) that is not readily understandable to a reasonably informed lay reader.
26. **Charts and Graphs:** Charts and graphs should be used, where appropriate, to highlight financial and statistical information. Narrative interpretation should be provided when the messages conveyed by the graphs are not self-evident.
27. **Understandability and Usability:** The document should be produced and formatted in such a way as to enhance its understanding by the average reader. It should be attractive, consistent, and oriented to the reader's needs.

\*Highlights denote associated tools and deliverables to be presented with budget