

Understanding Election Budgets

What are election funds used for?

Each county board of elections is responsible for conducting elections - and this costs money! Funding allows board staff to register and update voter records, maintain voting equipment and election records, conduct mail voting, provide accessible voting locations, and run post-election audits. Proper funding ensures that all voters can cast a ballot, and that every ballot is counted as cast.

How are election budgets made?

Your county's annual budget will include funding for your county's board of elections. The election budget is prepared by your county director or county manager, approved by the county board of elections, and then is integrated (in whole or in part) into the county's budget. Each county must pass their annual budget no later than **July 1**.

What is the timeline for the election budget process?

1. **Election budget preparation:** your county board of elections director or county manager will prepare the budget. This process typically begins before **April 30**.
 - Public input: You can ask for a copy of the proposed budget from your county board of elections director. You can submit feedback to your county board of elections – either in writing or by signing up to speak at a board meeting.
2. **County budget preparation:** county budget officers will prepare the county budget (which will include the elections budget from step 1) to present to county commissioners.
 - Public input: The proposed county budget will be available to community members to view and offer input. A notice will be posted detailing when and where the public can offer comments on the proposed budget.
3. **Budget Adoption:** The budget will be adopted by a vote of the county commissioners. This typically happens at least 10 days after the draft budget is prepared, and no later than **July 1**.

What period of time is a budget for?

Funding in the budget will be for the next fiscal year. Fiscal years begin on July 1 and end on June 30 of the following year. For example, the upcoming budget will be for the period beginning on July 1, 2022 and ending on June 30, 2023. This budget will be called Fiscal Year 2022-2023 – often abbreviated to FY 2022-2023.

Next steps

- Contact your County Board of Elections to see where they are in the budgeting process
 - If there is a draft budget for the county board of elections, ask to see it.
- Contact the county manager's office for information about budget meetings with commissioners and opportunities for public comment.
- Compare your county board of election's budget to past election years.
 - For example, compare FY 2022-2023 to FY 2020-2021 and FY 2018-2019.
- If your county's election budget has significantly shrunk in size, ask the board why - and let us know.
- If your county commissioners reject your county board of elections funding proposal, ask them why - and let us know.
- If you think something should be included in your county board of elections budget, let your board know! Here are some examples of things your county may need:
 - Virtual meeting supplies
 - Updated website
 - Voter education campaigns
 - Full-time and part-time staff
 - Voting machines
 - More Early Voting sites
 - More weekend voting hours during Early Voting
 - Absentee ballots
 - Higher pay for poll workers & more poll workers
 - COVID-specific supplies
 - Ensuring all aspects of voting are ADA compliant

Questions? Contact elections@democracync.org.