

BUDGET AND FINANCE POLICY SUMMARY

The Board of Education adopted the District's Budget and Finance Policy in June 2004. The Policy is intended to assist the Board of Education in making sound policy, guide the development of the District's budget, enhance the management of the District's finances, minimize the risk that the District's financial condition will create a need for Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) action, and reduce potential audit concerns. The Board and Superintendent set priorities and allocate resources through the budget.

The Budget and Finance Policy was developed based on standards from the Government Finance Officers Association's (GFOA) "Recommended Budget Practices" document. The Policy is also consistent with the State Board of Education (Education Code Sections 33127, 33128), and current Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) rules and standards. In any areas that LAUSD's budgeting and accounting practices were not in compliance with this policy at the time of its adoption, implementation was phased in.

In February 2009, effective for the 2010-11 financial statements, GASB issued Statement No. 54 Fund Balance Reporting and Governmental Fund Type Definitions. This new standard has left the total fund balance amount unchanged, but has changed the categories, the terminology, and how the components of the fund balance are presented and established. The fund balance policy is intended to provide guidelines and to establish procedure for reporting fund balance.

In November 2013, the District adopted an updated Budget and Finance Policy that establishes a formula that calculates annual contributions to an Other-Post-Employment Benefit (OPEB) trust when the balances in the general fund exceed the 5% minimum reserve threshold.

Contrary to the policy of contributing to the OPEB trust when the balances in the general fund exceed the 5% minimum reserve threshold, no contributions were reflected in 2018-19 and 2019-20. The planned annual contributions for these fiscal years were used to address the deficits in the out years as part of the 2017-18 fiscal stabilization plan.

The Finance and Budget Policy is a "living document," which the District expects will evolve over time to best connect District policy, budgeting, and financing principles. The Budget and Finance Policy enumerates various broad principles for budgeting and financial operations, as follows:

Principle One: The budget should be based on the goals of the Board and Superintendent.

The Board and Superintendent have the primary responsibility for developing and articulating the District's goals. As the budget is developed and presented, these goals should be considered.

Principle Two: The budget should be based on sound financial principles.

LAUSD's budget should keep the District financially viable and able to sustain its key programs over time.

The following specific financial principles are explained in detail in the full Budget and Finance Policy document:

- Balanced Operating Budget
- Alignment of Budget with Expected Expenditures

- Adequate Reserves
- Revenue Maximization
- Revenue Estimation
- Cost Recovery Through Fees and Charges
- Multi-Year Capital Plan and Budget
- Asset Management
- Equipment Replacement
- Prudent Debt Management
- Program Sustainability
- GASB Compliance

Principle Three: The budget should be clear and easy to understand.

The budget should be organized and presented in such a way that readers can understand:

- What the District intends to do and how it intends to do it
- The District's overall financial condition
- The historical context for LAUSD programs

Consistent with the GFOA standards, LAUSD has identified guidelines for the presentation of budgets. These standards provided guidance for development of LAUSD's budgets from four perspectives, as a:

- Policy Document
- Financial Plan
- Operations Guide
- Communications Device

Principle Four: The budget should be timely and easy to manage at the school level.

The process of managing the budget is easier for schools and offices if they have access to systems and training. The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for defining the parameters under which schools and offices may manage their budgets, as set forth by the Board of Education.

Principle Five: The budget process should inform stakeholders.

Prior to the adoption of the final budget, District staff should present the budget to stakeholders. The Board should also conduct a formal public review of the budget, prior to its adoption. The District's Budget and Finance Policy can be found in its entirety as an Appendix to the Superintendent's 2015-16 Final Budget document.