





# Biennial Budget Priorities

1

## Why This Matters Now

Fiscal Context; Where We Stand

2

## How Priorities Shape the Budget

From Policy Intent to Allocation + Funding Approvals

3

## The Goldilocks Zone

Building Actionable Priorities | Not Too Broad, Not Too Narrow

4

## Examples

Walk Through Sample Dos and Don'ts

5

## Your Turn

Draft and Submit Your Priority Ideas



# Fiscal Context | Why This Biennium Is Different

Council priorities will be set against constrained, uncertain fiscal backdrop

<b>Ongoing</b>	<b>Declining</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
<b>Structural Deficit</b> —	<b>Fund Balances</b> —	<b>S+P Outlook</b> —	<b>Debt Capacity</b> —
Revenue growth unable to keep pace with expense growth.	Many fund balances/ reserves trending down; limits ability to counter deficit.	Rating outlook signals continues fiscal stress.	Internal loan funding still below expanded internal funding cap.

*What this means for priorities: There is limited new capacity. Priorities that require new spending must displace existing spending or identify new revenue.*



# How Your Priorities Shape the Budget



## Council Passes Priorities

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*Provides policy direction  
to Administration.*



## Administration Translates to Budget

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*Proposed budget  
considers priorities.*



## Budget Negotiations

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*Tradeoff, analysis and  
reconciliation.*



## Adopted Biennial Budget

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*Pass 2-Year balanced  
budget reflecting  
community priorities.*

*Vague priorities encourage vague budget allocations that fail to reflect Council policy priorities.*



# Goldilocks Zone For Priorities

Provide Administration clear direction without writing the budget for them.



## Too Broad

Insufficient direction;  
Difficult to measure.

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“Improve city services.”

“Support public safety.”

“Be fiscally responsible.”



## Just Right

Identifies outcome,  
area (fund), & scope.

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Names specific fund/division.

Points toward measurable  
outcome.

Implies scale of change.



## Too Specific

Writes budget for  
Administration

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“Add 3 FTEs to Parks by Q1.”

Sets exact dollar values.

Specifies position/job title.

# Examples | Priorities in Practice



Topic Area	 Too Broad	 Just Right	 Too Specific
Public Safety	Increase PS services.	Maintain 911 response staffing levels through PSAP transition while managing ramp-up costs.	Hire 4 dispatchers in Q1 at \$X salary.
Infrastructure	Fix potholes quickly.	Prioritize arterial preservation in high-use corridors over expansion of new lane miles.	Resurface 12 miles of Monroe Street.
Fiscal Health	Cut the budget by 10%.	Limit general fund structural use of one-time revenues to no more than x% of budget.	Cut \$500k from department X.
Human Services	Help more vulnerable individuals.	Maintain current contracted service levels for mental health crisis response.	Fund organization Y at \$280k.



# What to Include in Each Priority

<b>1</b>	<b>What area, fund, or service?</b> Specify function, department, or population (e.g. Parks, Fire, Streets)	<i>"This priority is about Streets"</i>
<b>2</b>	<b>What outcome are you seeking?</b> Describe desired end-state, rather than input (e.g. maintain, expand, reduce)	<i>"I want to see increased bike lane development over 2 years."</i>
<b>3</b>	<b>What's the approximate scale?</b> Not a dollar amount, but a sense of magnitude. (e.g. significant investment, hold flat, modest reduction)	<i>"The scale I have in mind is a modest increase."</i>
<b>4</b>	<b>Any constraints or trade-offs considered?</b> Optional but helpful: Do you expect this to displace something or require new revenue stream?	<i>"I recognize this may require a delay in some street resurfacing until '27."</i>



# Useful Tools For Crafting Priorities

## Priorities Can...



- Direct Admin to invest in or protect a service area
- Signal if you want reallocation or revenue options explored
- Ask for spending trade-off analysis
- Set policy direction (equity lens, geographic focus)
- Identify problem you want solved

## Priorities Cannot...



- Circumvent Admin operational authority
- Guarantee specific program or position attracts specific funding
- Override labor contract obligations or law
- Create new revenue without Council vote
- Solve structural deficit with a few simple “tweaks”








# Submitting Your Priorities

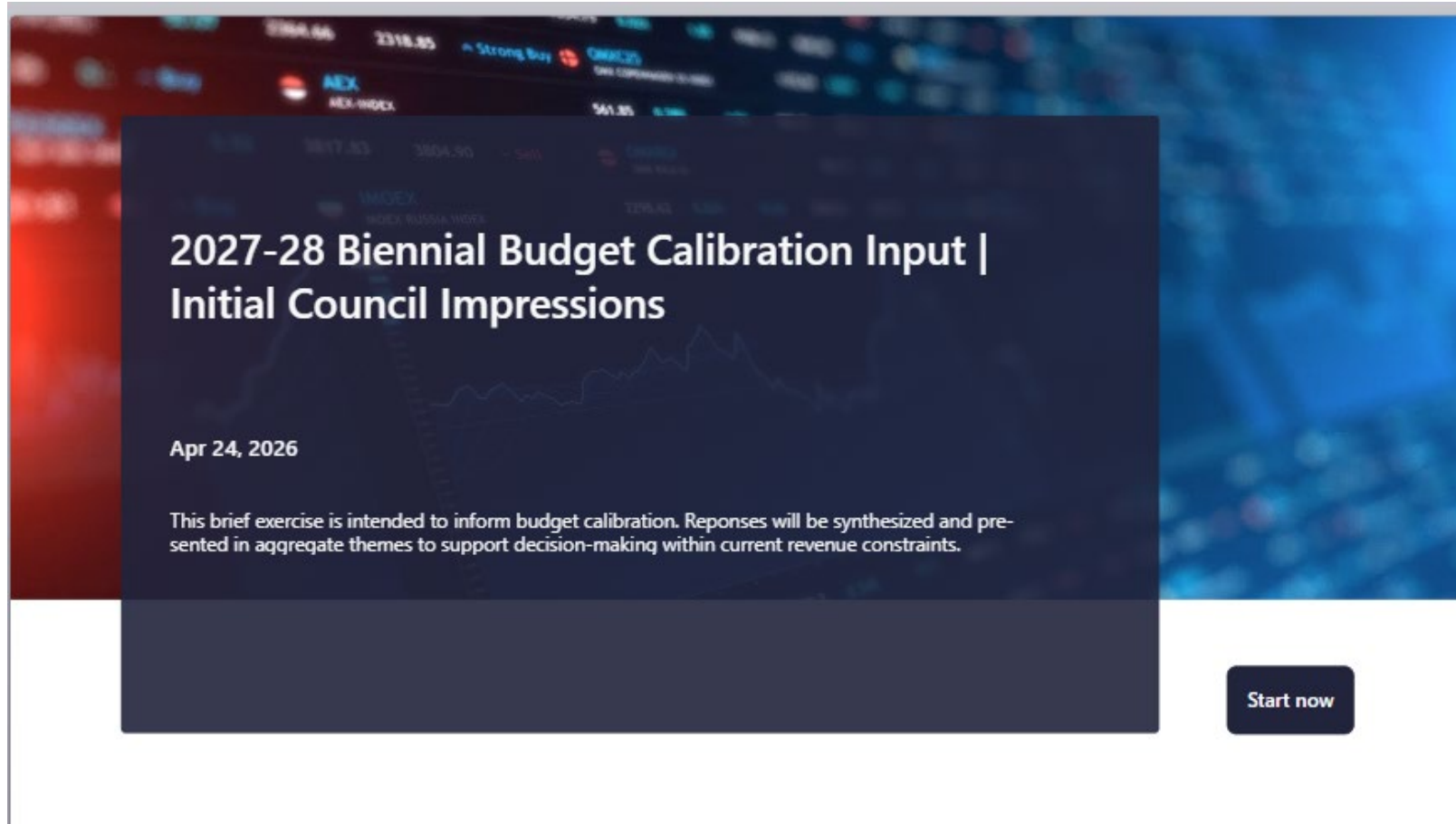
## How to Submit

1. Fill out short survey
2. Aim for 3-5 per member
3. Submit to CBD by May 8<sup>th</sup>
4. CBD will compile and circulate ahead of workgroup
5. Workgroup will align

## Next Steps

-  CBD synthesizes all Member priorities into summary view
-  Workgroup reviews for alignment
-  Workgroup agrees on language for Budget Priorities Ordinance
-  Discussions with Admin
-  Ordinance adopted on or before first meeting in July

# Survey to Follow...



**2027-28 Biennial Budget Calibration Input |  
Initial Council Impressions**

Apr 24, 2026

This brief exercise is intended to inform budget calibration. Responses will be synthesized and presented in aggregate themes to support decision-making within current revenue constraints.

[Start now](#)

