

Distinguished Budget Presentation Awards Program Government Finance Officers Association

Awards Criteria (and explanations of the Criteria)

The Budget as a Policy Document

Policy Document criterion # 1. *Mandatory*: The document should include a coherent statement of entity-wide long-term financial policies.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Is there a summary of financial policies and goals?
2. Do the financial policies include the entity's definition of a balanced budget?
3. Are all financial policies presented in one place?

Explanation

This criterion requires a discussion of the long-term financial policies used during the budget process. The entity should indicate whether the budget presented is balanced. Refer to GFOA's recommended practice [Adoption of Financial Policies at GFOA's website www.gfoa.org](http://www.gfoa.org) for information on the specific types of financial policies that should be included as part of this discussion.

Policy Document criterion # 2: The document should include a coherent statement of entity-wide, non-financial goals and objectives that address long-term concerns and issues.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Are non-financial policies/goals included?
2. Are these policies/goals included together in the Budget Message or in another section that is separate from the departmental sections?

Explanation

This criterion relates to the long-term, entity-wide, non-financial policies that provide the context for decisions within the annual budget. Long-term policies may include mission statements and strategic goals and objectives.

Policy Document Criterion # 3: The document should describe the entity's short-term initiatives that guide the development of the budget for the upcoming year.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Are short-term initiatives included?
2. Does the document discuss how the short-term initiatives guided the development of the annual budget?
3. Are changes in staffing levels for the budget year explained?
4. If there are no changes in staffing levels, is that item noted?

Explanation

This criterion requires discussion of the entity's response to the changes in the environment in which it operates and of the key initiatives that guided the development of the upcoming year's budget. These initiatives reflect the choices for the fiscal year and should be consistent with the entity's long-term policies. Staffing level changes must be explained. If there are no staffing level changes, then that fact must be noted. Initiatives that might be included are: salary and benefit costs, fee changes, capital improvements, program enhancements or reductions, tax levels, use of reserves, service level assumptions, unfunded mandates, economic development strategies, inflation assumptions, and demographic assumptions.

Policy Document Criterion #4. *Mandatory*: The document shall include a budget message that articulates priorities and issues for the budget for the new 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*).

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Does the message highlight the principal issues facing the governing body in developing the budget (*e.g., policy issues, economic factors, regulatory, and legislative challenges*)?
2. Does the message describe the action to be taken to address these issues?
3. Does the message explain how the priorities for the budget year differ from the priorities of the current year?
4. Is the message comprehensive enough to address the entire entity?

Explanation

This criterion requires a summary explanation of key choices and decisions made during the budget process. The budget message also should address the ramifications of these choices and decisions. It is recommended that the total amount of the budget be included in the budget message.

Policy Document Criterion # 5: The document should include clearly stated goals and objectives of organizational units (*e.g., departments, divisions, offices or programs*).

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Are unit goals and objectives identified?
2. Are unit goals clearly linked to the overall goals of the entity?
3. Are short-term objectives quantifiable?

Explanation

This criterion requires that unit goals and objectives be clearly identified. The relationship of unit goals to the overall goals of the entity should be apparent. For purposes of this criterion, goals are long-term and general in nature, while objectives are more short-term oriented and specific.

The Budget as a Financial Plan

Financial Plan Criterion # 1: The document should include and describe all funds that are subject to appropriation.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Is a narrative or graphic overview of the entity's budgetary fund structure included in the document?
2. Does the document indicate which funds are appropriated? (Other funds for which financial plans are prepared also may be included in the document.)
3. Does the document include a description of each individual major fund included within the document?
4. If additional or fewer funds are included in the audited financial statements, does the document indicate this fact?

Explanation

Showing an entity's budgetary fund structure is essential for understanding its financial configuration. An overview of the budgeted funds should be included in the document. This overview should include each major fund's name and either (1) an indication of whether the fund is a governmental, proprietary, or fiduciary fund OR (2) an indication of the fund type of each fund (*e.g., general, special revenue, enterprise fund*). Any fund whose revenues or expenditures, excluding other financing sources and uses, constitute more than 10% of the revenues or expenditures of the appropriated budget should be considered a major fund for this purpose.

The document should indicate which funds are appropriated. If all of the funds are appropriated, this fact should be stated in the document. If none of the funds are appropriated, this fact should be stated in the document.

The document should include a description of each major fund, including the general fund. The description can be part of the overview of the fund structure or can be presented in individual sections.

If the fund structure in the audited financial statements is different from the budgetary fund structure, the differences should be described. For example, some of the funds reported in the audited financial statements may not be included in the budget document.

Financial Plan Criterion # 2. *Mandatory*: 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.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Does the document include an overview of revenues and other financing sources and expenditures and other financing uses of all appropriated funds?
2. Are revenues and other financing sources and expenditures and other financing uses presented either (1) together in a single schedule OR (2) in separate but adjacent/sequential schedules OR (3) in a matrix?

3. Are revenues presented by major type in this schedule (*e.g., property taxes, intergovernmental, sales taxes, fees and charges*)?
4. Are expenditures presented by function, organizational unit, or object in this schedule? (For funds other than the main operating fund of the entity, a presentation by fund normally would satisfy this requirement.)

Explanation

This criterion requires a **summary** of the revenues and other financing sources and expenditures and other financing uses of all appropriated funds in one place in the budget document. Other funds *may* be included in this schedule, but appropriated funds *must* be included. Both revenues and other financing sources and expenditures and other financing uses must be presented either (1) together in a single schedule OR (2) in separate but adjacent/sequential schedules OR (3) in a matrix.

Revenues should be presented by type (*e.g., property tax, sales tax, fees and charges, intergovernmental*) for all appropriated funds in total. A more detailed presentation that also shows revenues by major fund is encouraged, but not required. Expenditures should be presented either by function, organizational unit or object. Often funds other than the general fund encompass only a single function. For such funds, reporting expenditures in total by fund would be acceptable because the presentation would be tantamount to reporting expenditures by function.

If no appropriated funds are included in the document, the summary should present revenues, other financing sources, expenditures and other financing uses for the entity as a whole. Pension systems may present this information in the same format as presented in the audited financial statements (*i.e., additions and deduction*). Graphs (pie graphs are helpful) may supplement this schedule, but not substitute for it. The document may include a schedule or matrix describing transfers, but this is not required.

Financial Plan Criterion # 3. *Mandatory:* The document must include summaries of revenues and other financing sources, and of expenditures and other financing uses for the prior year actual, the current year budget and/or estimated current year actual, and the proposed budget year.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. For annual budgets, are revenues and other financing sources and expenditures and other financing uses for the prior year, the current year, and the budget year presented together on the same schedule(s) or on schedules presented on adjacent/sequential pages?
2. Is this information presented for the appropriated funds in total (or for the entity as a whole if no appropriated funds are included)?
3. Is this information also presented at a minimum for each major fund and for other (*i.e. nonmajor*) funds in the aggregate (or for each significant fund and other funds in the aggregate if no appropriated funds are included)?
4. For biennial budgets, are revenues and other financing sources and expenditures and other financing uses for the prior year, the current year, and both budget years presented together on the same schedule(s) or on separate schedules presented on adjacent/sequential pages?

Explanation

This criterion requires a schedule(s) that includes both revenues and other financing sources and expenditures and other financing uses for at least three budget periods (prior year actual, current year, and budget year). The data for the prior year should be the actual revenues and expenditures. However, the entity may choose whether to use current year budget and/or estimated figures. Alternately, the document may include both the current year budget and the current year estimated amounts. Also, the document may include a discussion of any changes to the budget for the current year. However, such a discussion is not required. Any fund whose revenues or expenditures, excluding other financing sources and uses, constitute more than 10% of the revenues or expenditures of the appropriated budget should be considered a major fund. Of course, information for other funds also may be presented. Information for individual major funds, nonmajor funds in the aggregate, and the entity as a whole may be presented on a single schedule OR on separate schedules. Regardless of the format selected, the information for both revenues and expenditures must be included (1) on the same schedule(s) OR (2) on schedule(s) presented on adjacent/ sequential pages.

If the entity does not include any appropriated funds, then data for three years should be presented for the entity as a whole, each significant fund, and other funds in the aggregate. Any fund whose revenues or expenditures constitute 10% or more of the total budget should be considered a significant fund for this purpose. Entities with biennial budgets should present data for four years - one prior year actual, current year budget and/or estimated amount, and budget for both years of the biennium.

Financial Plan Criterion # 4. *Mandatory:* The document shall describe major revenue sources, explain the underlying assumptions for the revenue estimates, and discuss significant revenue trends.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Are individual revenue sources described?
2. Do the revenue sources that are described represent at least 75 percent of the total revenues of all appropriated funds?
3. Are the methods used to estimate revenues for the budget year described (*e.g., trend analysis, estimates from another government or consulting firm*)?
4. If revenues are projected based on trend information, are both those trends and the underlying assumptions adequately described?

Explanation

This criterion requires that the major revenues of the appropriated funds in the aggregate be identified and described. If an outside source (*e.g., another government or consulting firm*) provides an estimate of the revenue for the budget year, that fact must be clearly stated. If the entity uses trend analysis to project a particular revenue, a discussion of the revenue trend is required in addition to any schedules or graphs depicting the revenue trend. If the projections are based on trend analysis, the discussion must identify factors that affect the trend, such as changes in the local economy, a new housing development, or fee increases. If no appropriated funds are included in the document, this criterion

requires that the major revenues of the entity as a whole be identified and described, and that revenue projections be discussed.

Financial Plan Criterion # 5. *Mandatory:* 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).

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Does the document include the entity's definition of "fund balance" (or of "fund equity" if no governmental funds are included in the entity - frequently the noncapital portion of net assets)?
2. Is the fund balance (equity) information presented for the budget year?
3. Is there a schedule showing (1) beginning fund balances, (2) increases and decreases in total fund balances (reported separately), and (3) ending fund balances for appropriated governmental funds?
4. Is this information presented at a minimum for each major fund and for nonmajor governmental funds in the aggregate?
5. If fund balances of any major fund or the nonmajor funds in the aggregate are anticipated to increase or decline by more than 10%, does the document include a discussion of the causes and/or consequences of these changes in fund balance?
6. If an entity has no governmental funds, is the change in fund equity presented for (1) the entity as a whole, (2) each significant fund, and (3) other funds in the aggregate?
7. If an entity has no governmental funds and the fund equity of any significant fund or other funds in the aggregate is anticipated to change by more than 10%, does the document include a discussion of the causes and/or consequences of any change in fund equity that is greater than 10% in either a significant fund or other funds in the aggregate?
8. For biennial budgets is the change in fund equity presented separately for both years of the biennium?

Explanation

This criterion requires that beginning and ending fund balances, as defined by the entity in the budget document, be shown for the budget year, as well as revenues, expenditures, and other financing sources/uses. This information must be provided for each major fund and for the nonmajor governmental funds in the aggregate. The information may be included on the schedule(s) with the three-year data or may be presented on a separate schedule(s). Both the beginning and ending fund balances must be clearly labeled. If the entity budgets on a cash basis, the schedule may show beginning and ending cash rather than fund balance. If the fund balances of any major fund or the nonmajor funds in the aggregate are expected to change by more than 10%, the changes should be discussed in the budget message/transmittal letter or at the bottom of the schedules identifying the change. If the ending fund balances are greater than the amount or percentage that the financial policies require to be set aside, the entity is encouraged to state that fact. Changes in fund equities for entities with no governmental funds should be reported.

Financial Plan Criterion # 6. *Mandatory*: The document should include budgeted capital expenditures, whether authorized in the operating budget or in a separate capital budget.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Does the document define “capital expenditures”?
2. Does the document indicate the total dollar amount of capital expenditures for the budget year (both budget years for biennial budgets)?
3. Are significant nonroutine capital expenditures described along with dollar amounts? (Information in a separate CIP document does not satisfy this criterion.)
4. If the entity has no significant nonroutine capital expenditures, is that fact clearly stated in the document?

Explanation

This criterion does not mandate any particular definition of “capital expenditures,” only that whatever definition is being used by the entity be disclosed.

After defining *capital expenditures*, the entity should indicate the total dollar amount of such expenditures for the budget year. The entity is encouraged, but not required, to provide a summary of capital expenditures by major project, type, fund, or user.

Routine capital expenditures are those that 1) are included in almost every budget and 2) will have no significant impact on the operating budget. For example, the construction of a new school building, because of its significant impact, would almost always be considered nonroutine, even if such construction is a frequent occurrence. If the entity has only insignificant routine capital expenditures, the document should clearly state that fact.

If the entity has any significant, nonroutine capital expenditures, the document should describe these items (i.e. indicate the project’s purpose and funding sources) and indicate the amount appropriated for the project during the budget year(s). Also, the document should include the amount appropriated for significant, nonroutine capital expenditures in the budget year.

Financial Plan Criterion # 7: The document should describe if and to what extent significant nonroutine capital expenditures will affect the entity’s current and future operating budget and the services that the entity provides.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Are anticipated operating costs associated with significant nonroutine capital expenditures described and quantified (*e.g., additional personnel costs, additional maintenance costs, or additional utility costs*)? (Information in a separate CIP document does not satisfy this criterion.)
2. Are anticipated savings or revenues expected to result from significant nonroutine capital expenditures described and quantified (*e.g., reduced utility costs, lower maintenance costs*)?

Explanation

This criterion asks for the identification of specific significant financial impacts upon current and future years that are likely to result from significant nonroutine capital expenditures (other than the cost of the improvements themselves). The entity may make its own determination of what is “significant.” However, some examples of significant costs are those that (1) would require an increase in the tax rate OR (2) would result in a reduction in spending elsewhere in the budget OR (3) would require additional staff. Additional anticipated revenues and expenditure reductions also should be briefly described and quantified. Concepts like net present value, return on investment, or payback period may be used.

Identification of the anticipated non-financial impact of significant nonroutine capital expenditures on services is encouraged. Examples include a cleaner environment, improved response time by public safety employees, smaller class sizes in schools, and access to public buildings and public transportation by all citizens.

Financial Plan Criterion # 8. *Mandatory:* 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.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Is the entity’s debt policy described?
2. If the entity has legal debt limits:
 - Are debt limits described?
 - Are the amounts of debt limits expressed in terms of total dollars, millage rates or percentages of assessed value?
 - Are the amounts of debt subject to debt limits identified in the same terms used to describe the debt limits themselves?
3. If the entity has no legal debt limits, is that fact clearly stated within the budget document?
4. If the entity does not have and does not intend to issue debt, is that fact clearly stated?
5. Is the amount of principal and interest payments for the budget year (two years for biennial budgets) shown for each major fund (for appropriated funds), for each significant unappropriated fund and for other funds in the aggregate?

Explanation

If an entity uses debt, the budget document must either describe its debt policy or indicate that it has no debt policy. Refer to GFOA’s recommended practice [Debt Management Policy at GFOA’s website www.gfoa.org](http://www.gfoa.org), for the types of matters that a debt policy might address. Entities should describe their legal debt limits. The legal debt limits may be expressed in terms of total dollars, millage rates, or percentages of assessed value. A graph may supplement the calculation, but may not be a substitute for the calculation. If an entity has no legal debt limits, that fact should be clearly stated within the budget document. The budget document may omit the debt policy and the debt limits requirements only if the entity (1) has no debt, (2) has no intention of issuing debt, and (3) states this fact in the budget document.

The document should indicate the impact of debt on the current budget by indicating the total amount of principal and interest payments to be paid during the year for each major appropriated fund and for each significant unappropriated and for other funds in the aggregate (two years for biennial budgets). If the entity has variable rate debt or a balloon payment that could significantly alter debt levels in the future, the entity is encouraged to disclose that fact. A repayment schedule may be presented, but is not required. Although this criterion does not require that principal and interest payments for tax-supported debt be presented separately from other debt, this information could be useful to citizens. The entity is encouraged to discuss coverage requirements and actual coverage for revenue backed debt. An entity may wish to discuss debt that it anticipates issuing separately from its discussion of outstanding debt.

Financial Plan Criterion # 9. The document shall explain the basis of budgeting for all funds, whether cash, modified accrual, or some other statutory basis.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Is the basis of budgeting defined (*eg., modified accrual, cash, or accrual*) for all funds included in the document?
2. If the basis of budgeting is the same as the basis of accounting used in the entity's audited financial statements, is that fact clearly stated?
3. If the basis of budgeting is not the same as the basis of accounting used in the entity's audited financial statements, are the differences described?

Explanation

The document should clearly identify the basis of budgeting (*e.g., modified accrual, cash, accrual*) employed by the entity for each category of funds represented (governmental, proprietary, and fiduciary). If the basis of budgeting is identical to the basis of accounting used in the audited fund financial statements in the basic financial statements for some or all categories of funds, that fact should be clearly stated. Differences between the basis of budgeting and the basis of accounting should be identified. For examples of differences between the basis of budgeting and the basis of accounting, refer to GFOA's recommended practice, [Relationship Between Budgetary and Financial Statement Information at GFOA's website www.gfoa.org](http://www.gfoa.org).

The Budget as an Operations Guide

Operation Guide Criterion # 1 (Mandatory): The document shall describe activities, services or functions carried out by organizational units.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Does the document clearly present the organizational units (*e.g., divisions, departments, offices, agencies, or programs*)?
2. Does the document provide descriptions of each organizational unit?

Explanation

This criterion requires a clear presentation of the organizational units within the budget document. A narrative description of the assigned services, functions, and activities of organizational units should be included. The presentation of relevant additional information is encouraged (*e.g., shift in emphasis or responsibilities*).

Operation Guide Criterion #2: 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.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Are performance data for individual departments included in the document?
2. Are performance data directly related to the stated goals and objectives of the unit?
3. Do performance measures focus on results and accomplishments (*e.g., output measures, efficiency and effectiveness measures*) rather than inputs (*e.g., dollars spent*)?

Explanation

Performance measures should include the outputs of individual units and provide a meaningful way to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of those units. The measures should be related to the mission, goals, and objectives of each unit. As the entity implements performance measures, it should work toward including information for at least three years (the prior year actual, current year estimate or budget, and budget year). Refer to GFOA’s recommended practice [Performance Management: Using Performance Measurement for Decision Making - Updated Performance Measures at GFOA’s website www.gfoa.org](http://www.gfoa.org) for more information on performance measures.

Operations Guide Criterion # 3. Mandatory: The document shall include an organization chart(s) for the entire entity.

Criteria Location Guide Question

1. Is an organization chart provided which shows the entire entity?

Explanation

This criterion requires that an organizational chart be presented only for the overall entity. Organizational charts for individual units are not required. When organizational charts are provided for individual units within the entity, those charts should be presented in such a way as to underscore the link between the individual unit and the overall entity.

Operations Guide Criterion # 4. Mandatory: A schedule or summary table of personnel or position counts for prior, current and budgeted years shall be provided.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Is a summary table of position counts provided for the entire entity?
2. Does the table include the prior year, the current year, and budget year position counts?

Explanation

This criterion requires a presentation of position counts or full time equivalents (FTEs) within the entity. Presentation may be by position and/or by summaries of positions. Position summaries within individual departments may supplement, but not be a substitute for, the position counts on the consolidated schedule. If presented, position counts on the departmental summaries should tie to the consolidated position count schedule for the entity as a whole.

The Budget as a Communications Device

Communication Device criterion #1: The document should provide summary information, including an overview of significant budgetary issues, trends, and resource choices. Summary information should be presented within the budget document either in a separate section (e.g., *executive summary*) or integrated within the transmittal letter or other overview sections, or as a separate budget-in-brief document.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Is summary information contained in the budget message/transmittal letter, overview section, or in a separate budget-in-brief document?
2. Is summary information on significant budgetary issues conveyed in an easy to read format?
3. Is summary information on budgetary trends provided?

Explanation

The intent of this criterion is to help readers quickly understand major budgetary issues, trends, and resource choices. Highlighting, indentation, bullet points, outlines, pictures, tables, or graphs may help in communicating this information. If a budget-in-brief is published as a separate document, inclusion of easy to read summary financial information in the main budget document is encouraged.

Communication Device criterion #2: The document should explain the effect, if any, of other planning processes (e.g., *strategic plans, long-range financial plans, and capital improvement plans*) upon the budget and the budget process.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Are other planning processes (e.g., *strategic plans, long-range financial plans, and capital improvement plans*) identified?
2. Are the effects of other planning processes on the current budget explained?
3. Are the long-term implications of other planning processes discussed?

Explanation

This criterion requires the identification and discussion of other planning processes that affect the budget and the long-term implications of these other planning processes. These processes can have significant impacts upon the current budget and future years.

Communication Device criterion #3. *Mandatory:* 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.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Is a description of the process used to develop, review, and adopt the budget included in the document?
2. Is a budget calendar provided to supplement (not replace) the narrative information on the budget process?
3. Is a discussion of how the budget is amended provided in the budget document available to the public (including the budgetary level of control)?

Explanation

This criterion requires a concise narrative description of the budget process, including an explanation of relevant legal or policy requirements. This description should include the internal process to prepare the budget, the opportunities for public input, and the actual adoption of the budget. A budget calendar should be included, although its format may vary. Inclusion of dates in the narrative description of the budget process will not satisfy this criterion. The process for amending the budget after adoption should be covered. The description of the amendment process should identify the level at which the governing body must approve changes.

Communication Device criterion #4. *Mandatory:* 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.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Are charts and graphs used in the document to convey essential information (*e.g., key policies, trends, choices and impacts*)?
2. Do the graphics supplement the information contained in the narratives?

Explanation

This criterion requires that graphics be used to communicate key information in the budget document. Graphics should enhance the budget presentation, and clarify significant information. The entity determines the most effective format to present graphic information. Graphics may be consolidated or included throughout the document. Normally, narratives should accompany the graphs. Graphs can be used for such topics as revenues, expenditures, fund balances, staffing, economic trends, capital expenditures, service levels, performance measures, or general statistical information. Originality is encouraged, but not at the expense of clarity and consistency.

Communication Device criterion #5: The document should provide narrative, tables, schedules, or matrices to show the relationship between functional units, major funds, and nonmajor funds in the aggregate.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Is the relationship between the entity's functional units, major funds, and nonmajor funds in the aggregate explained or illustrated?

Explanation

Since most entities use more than one way of classifying financial and operational information, this criterion requires an explanation or illustration of the relationship between functional units, major funds, and nonmajor funds in the aggregate.

Communication Device criterion #6. *Mandatory:* The document shall include a table of contents to make it easy to locate information in the document.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Is a comprehensive table of contents provided to help the reader locate information in the document?
2. Are all pages in the document numbered or otherwise identified?
3. Do the page number references in the budget or electronic table of contents agree with the related page numbers in the budget or electronic submission?

Explanation

Detailed indices preceding individual sections can be helpful, but they are not a substitute for a single comprehensive table of contents. Care should be taken in developing budget or electronic page number references in the table of contents, so they agree with the related page numbers in the budget document or electronic submission.

Communication Device criterion #7: A glossary should be included for any terminology (including abbreviations and acronyms) that is not readily understandable to a reasonably informed lay reader.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Is a glossary that defines technical terms related to finance and accounting, as well as non-financial terms related to the entity, included in the document?
2. Are acronyms or abbreviations used in the document defined in the glossary?
3. Is the glossary written in non-technical language?

Explanation

The use of technical terms and acronyms ought to be kept to a minimum, to enhance the value of the document to the majority of stakeholders. When technical terms and acronyms are used, they should be clearly and concisely described in the glossary.

Communication Device criterion #8: 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.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Is statistical information that defines the community included in the document (*e.g., population, composition of population, land area, and average household income*)?
2. Is supplemental information on the local economy included in the document (*e.g., major industries, top taxpayers, employment levels, and comparisons to other local communities*)?
3. Is other pertinent information on the community (*e.g., local history, location, public safety, education, culture, recreation, transportation, healthcare, utilities, and governmental structure*) included in the document?

Explanation

Background information should be included in the budget in the form of statistical and supplementary data, either in a separate section or throughout the document. The goal is to provide a context for understanding the decisions incorporated into the budget document. The presentation should include factors that will affect current or future levels of service (*e.g., population growth, economic strength in the region, or a change in the size of the school age population*).

Communication Device criterion #9: 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.

Criteria Location Guide Questions

1. Is page formatting consistent?
2. Are the main sections of the document easily identifiable?
3. Is the level of detail appropriate?
4. Are text, tables, and graphs legible?
5. Are budget numbers in the document accurate and consistent throughout the document?

Explanation

The goal of this criterion is to make sure that the document itself contributes to the effectiveness of the communication to readers. Sequential page numbering throughout the document is encouraged. Bookmarks and hyperlinks are encouraged in electronic submissions to facilitate the navigation through the document. Budget numbers (both financial and operational) should be accurate and consistent throughout the document.