

Kittitas County

205 West 5th
Ellensburg, WA 98926
509-962-7557



Elected Officials & Department Heads,

May 16th, 2024

Pursuant to RCW 36.40.010, this memorandum, jointly issued by the Auditor's Office and the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), initiates the 2026 budget process. It reflects our shared commitment to collaborative problem-solving and governance, fostering a partnership across the development, adoption, implementation, and reconciliation of the county's budget.

This year, we face significant financial challenges that require collective action. To address this, the BOCC proposes the following shared priorities for the 2026 budget:

- **Strategic Space Utilization:** Conduct a countywide analysis to optimize space, support consolidation, divest aging assets, and plan investments for a sustainable long-term physical footprint.
- **Balanced Budget Simulation:** Collaborate with departments to model a net-zero budget, eliminating structural deficits while preserving essential services.
- **Sustainable Personnel Cost Management:** Explore options to slow the growth of personnel costs, such as a targeted or countywide vacancy freeze, to maintain fiscal stability.
- **Maximize Revenue and Reserves:** Shift expenses to restricted funds where feasible and explore revenue-enhancing measures, such as redirecting some or all earned interest to the General Fund.

We acknowledge the potential impacts on your departments and offices. Our goal is to leverage existing fund balance reserves and implement proactive measures to avoid more severe actions in the future, such as layoffs or furloughs, while maintaining service excellence.

The process will formally begin on June 10th with the annual budget retreat. Following the budget retreat, our budget development and adoption process will follow the schedule below:

Date	Audience	Event
June 10 th	Budget Retreat	All Departments/Offices
June 20 th	Budget Workbooks Available	All Departments/Offices
August 15 th	Budget Workbooks Due	All Departments/Offices
September 2 nd	Preliminary Budget Deadline	BOCC/Auditor
September 18 th	Preliminary Budget Review	BOCC/Auditor
October 6 th	Budget Meeting #1	Central
October 9 th	Budget Meeting #2	Public
October 13 th	Budget Meeting #3	Sheriff
October 15 th	Budget Meeting #4	CJPS
October 20 th	Budget Meeting #5	Public Health
October 23 rd	Budget Meeting #6	Public Works
October 28 th	Draft Budget Review	BOCC/Auditor
December 1 st	Budget Adoption	BOCC/Auditor

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Kittitas County stands at a pivotal moment. By working together to align expenses with available resources, we can sustain an excellent level of service for the community. Inaction risks severe financial constraints that could harm our employees and the public. We invite leadership across the county to join us in shaping solutions. Please reach out with any questions or ideas.

Laura Osiadacz, Chairman

Bryan Elliott, Auditor

Cory Wright, Vice-Chairman

Brett Wachsmith, Commissioner