

Colorado Revised Statutes
Budget Law

29-1-101. Short title

This part 1 shall be known and may be cited as the "Local Government Budget Law of Colorado".

29-1-102. Definitions

As used in this part 1, unless the context otherwise requires:

- (1) "Appropriation" means the authorization by ordinance or resolution of a spending limit for expenditures and obligations for specific purposes.
- (2) "Basis of budgetary accounting" means any one of the following methods of measurement of timing when revenue and other financing sources and expenditures and other financing uses are recognized for budget purposes:
 - (a) Cash basis (when cash is received and disbursed);
 - (b) Modified accrual basis (when revenue and other financing sources are due and available and when obligations or liabilities are incurred for expenditures and other financing uses, except for certain stated items such as, but not limited to, prepaids, inventories of consumable goods, and interest payable in a future fiscal year); or
 - (c) Encumbrance basis (the modified accrual basis, but including the recognition of encumbrances).
- (3) "Budget" means the complete estimated financial plan of the local government.
- (4) "Budget year" means the ensuing fiscal year.
- (5) "Certified" means a written statement by a member of the governing body or a person appointed by the governing body that the document being filed is a true and accurate copy of the action taken by the governing body.
- (6) "Division" means the division of local government in the department of local affairs.
- (7) "Encumbrance" means a commitment related to unperformed contracts for goods or services.
- (8) (a) "Expenditure" means any use of financial resources of the local government consistent with its basis of accounting for budget purposes for the provision or acquisition of goods and services for operations, debt service, capital outlay, transfers, or other financial uses.
 - (b) "Expenditure" shall not include the payment or transfer of moneys by the office

of the public trustee created in [section 38-37-101, C.R.S.](#), that are received from and required to be paid to another person or entity pursuant to the requirements of article 37, 38, or 39 of title 38, C.R.S., including, but not limited to, recording fees and publication costs pursuant to [sections 38-38-101 and 38-39-102, C.R.S.](#), and transfers of excess funds to the county treasurer made pursuant to [section 38-37-104 \(3\), C.R.S.](#)

(9) "Fiscal year" means the period commencing January 1 and ending December 31; except that "fiscal year" may mean the federal fiscal year for water conservancy districts which have contracts with the federal government.

(10) "Fund" means a fiscal and accounting entity with a self-balancing set of accounts in which cash and other financial resources, all related liabilities and residual equities or balances, and changes therein are recorded and segregated to carry on specific activities or to attain certain objectives in accordance with special regulations, restrictions, or limitations.

(11) "Fund balance" means the balance of total resources available for subsequent years' budgets consistent with the basis of accounting elected for budget purposes.

(12) "Governing body" means a board, council, or other elected or appointed body in which the legislative powers of the local government are vested.

(13) "Local government" means any authority, county, municipality, city and county, district, or other political subdivision of the state of Colorado; any institution, department, agency, or authority of any of the foregoing; and any other entity, organization, or corporation formed by intergovernmental agreement or other contract between or among any of the foregoing. The office of the county public trustee shall be deemed an agency of the county for the purposes of this part 1. "Local government" does not include the Colorado educational and cultural facilities authority, the university of Colorado hospital authority, collegeinvest, the Colorado health facilities authority, the Colorado housing and finance authority, the Colorado agricultural development authority, the Colorado sheep and wool authority, the Colorado beef council authority, the Colorado horse development authority, the fire and police pension association, any public entity insurance or investment pool formed pursuant to state law, any county or municipal housing authority, any association of political subdivisions formed pursuant to [section 29-1-401](#), or any home rule city or town, home rule city and county, cities and towns operating under a territorial charter, school district, or junior college district.

(14) "Object of expenditure" means the classification of fund data by character of expenditure. "Object of expenditure" includes, but is not limited to, personal services, purchased services, debt service, supplies, capital outlay, grants, and transfers.

(15) "Objection" means a written or oral protest filed by an elector of the local government.

(16) "Revenue" means all resources available to finance expenditures.

(17) "Spending agency", as designated by the local government, means any office, unit, department, board, commission, or institution which is responsible for any particular expenditures or revenues.

29-1-103. Budgets required

(1) Each local government shall adopt an annual budget. To the extent that the financial activities of any local government are fully reported in the budget or budgets of a parent local government or governments, a separate budget is not required. Such budget shall present a complete financial plan by fund and by spending agency within each fund for the budget year and shall set forth the following:

(a) All proposed expenditures for administration, operations, maintenance, debt service, and capital projects to be undertaken or executed by any spending agency during the budget year;

(b) Anticipated revenues for the budget year;

(c) Estimated beginning and ending fund balances;

(d) The corresponding actual figures for the prior fiscal year and estimated figures projected through the end of the current fiscal year, including disclosure of all beginning and ending fund balances, consistent with the basis of accounting used to prepare the budget;

(e) A written budget message describing the important features of the proposed budget, including a statement of the budgetary basis of accounting used and a description of the services to be delivered during the budget year; and

(f) Explanatory schedules or statements classifying the expenditures by object and the revenues by source.

(2) No budget adopted pursuant to this section shall provide for expenditures in excess of available revenues and beginning fund balances.

(3) (a) The general assembly finds and declares that the use of lease-purchase agreements by local governments creates financial obligations of those governments and that the disclosure of such obligations is in the public interest and is a matter of statewide concern.

(b) In addition to the governmental entities included in the definition of "local government" in [section 29-1-102](#), the provisions of this subsection (3) shall apply to every home rule city, home rule city and county, school district, and junior college district.

(c) As used in this subsection (3), "lease-purchase agreement" means a capital lease as defined in the generally accepted accounting principles issued by the

governmental accounting standards board that the controller prescribes for the state as specified in [section 24-30-202 \(12\)](#), C.R.S.

(d) (I) The budget adopted by every local government shall separately set forth each of the following:

(A) The total amount to be expended during the ensuing fiscal year for payment obligations under all lease-purchase agreements involving real property;

(B) The total maximum payment liability of the local government under all lease-purchase agreements involving real property over the entire terms of such agreements, including all optional renewal terms;

(C) The total amount to be expended during the ensuing fiscal year for payment obligations under all lease-purchase agreements other than those involving real property;

(D) The total maximum payment liability of the local government under all lease-purchase agreements other than those involving real property over the entire terms of such agreements, including all optional renewal terms.

(II) Each budget required to be filed pursuant to [section 29-1-113](#) shall include a supplemental schedule that contains the information described in this paragraph (d).

(e) (I) No local government shall enter into any lease-purchase agreement whose duration, including all optional renewal terms, exceeds the weighted average useful life of the assets being financed. In the case of a lease-purchase agreement involving both real property and other property, the lease-purchase agreement shall provide that the real property involved shall be amortized over a period not to exceed its weighted average useful life and the other property shall be separately amortized over a period not to exceed its weighted average useful life. This provision shall not prevent a local government from releasing property from a lease-purchase agreement pursuant to an amortization schedule reflecting the times when individual pieces of property have been amortized.

(II) Nothing contained in this paragraph (e) shall be construed to apply to any lease-purchase agreement entered into prior to April 9, 1990.

29-1-106. Notice of budget

(1) Upon receipt of the proposed budget, the governing body shall cause to be published a notice containing the following information:

(a) The date and time of the hearing at which the adoption of the proposed budget will be considered;

(b) A statement that the proposed budget is available for inspection by the public at a designated public office located within the boundaries of the local government, or,

if no public office is located within such boundaries, the nearest public office where the budget is available; and

(c) A statement that any interested elector of the local government may file any objections to the proposed budget at any time prior to the final adoption of the budget by the governing body.

(2) If the governing body has submitted or intends to submit a request for increased property tax revenues to the division pursuant to [section 29-1-302 \(1\)](#), the amount of the increased property tax revenues resulting from such request shall be stated in such notice or in a subsequent notice in the manner provided in subsection (3) of this section.

(3) (a) For any local government whose proposed budget is more than fifty thousand dollars, the notice required by subsection (1) of this section shall be published one time in a newspaper having general circulation in the local government.

(b) Any local government whose proposed budget is fifty thousand dollars or less shall cause copies of the notice required by subsection (1) of this section to be posted in three public places within the jurisdiction of such local government in lieu of such publication.

29-1-108. Adoption of budget - appropriations - failure to adopt

(1) The governing body of the local government shall hold a hearing to consider the adoption of the proposed budget, at which time objections of the electors of the local government shall be considered. The governing body shall revise, alter, increase, or decrease the items as it deems necessary in view of the needs of the various spending agencies and the anticipated revenue of the local government. Adoption of the proposed budget shall be effective only upon an affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the governing body.

(2) Before the mill levy is certified pursuant to [section 39-1-111](#) or [39-5-128, C.R.S.](#), the governing body shall enact an ordinance or resolution adopting the budget and making appropriations for the budget year. The amounts appropriated shall not exceed the expenditures specified in the budget. Appropriations shall be made by fund or by spending agencies within a fund, as determined by the governing body. Changes to the adopted budget or appropriation shall be made in accordance with the provisions of [section 29-1-109](#).

(3) If the governing body fails to adopt a budget before certification of the mill levy as provided for in subsection (2) of this section, then ninety percent of the amounts appropriated in the current fiscal year for operation and maintenance expenses shall be deemed reappropriated for the purposes specified in such last appropriation ordinance or resolution.

(4) If the appropriations for the budget year have not been made by December 31 of the current fiscal year, then ninety percent of the amount appropriated in the

current fiscal year for operation and maintenance expenses shall be deemed reappropriated for the budget year.

(5) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the adoption of the budget, the appropriation of funds, and the certification of the mill levy shall be effective upon adoption.

(6) All unexpended appropriations, or unencumbered appropriations if the encumbrance basis of budgetary accounting is adopted, expire at the end of the fiscal year.

29-1-109. Changes to budget - transfers - supplemental appropriations

(1) (a) If, after adopting the budget and making appropriations, the governing body of a local government deems it necessary, it may transfer appropriated moneys between funds or between spending agencies within a fund, as determined by the original appropriation level, in accordance with the procedures established in subsection (2) of this section.

(b) If, after adoption of the budget, the local government receives unanticipated revenues or revenues not assured at the time of the adoption of the budget from any source other than the local government's property tax mill levy, the governing body may authorize the expenditure of such funds by enacting a supplemental budget and appropriation.

(c) In the event that revenues are lower than anticipated in the adopted budget, the governing body may adopt a revised appropriation ordinance or resolution as provided in [section 29-1-108](#).

(2) (a) Any transfer, supplemental appropriation, or revised appropriation made pursuant to this section shall be made only by ordinance or resolution which complies with the notice provisions of [section 29-1-106](#).

(b) For transfers, such ordinance or resolution shall set forth in full the amounts to be transferred and shall be documented in detail in the minutes of the meeting of the governing body. A certified copy of such ordinance or resolution shall be transmitted immediately to the affected spending agencies and the officer or employee of the local government whose duty it is to draw warrants or orders for the payment of money and to keep the record of expenditures as required by [section 29-1-114](#). A certified copy of such ordinance or resolution shall be filed with the division.

(c) For supplemental budgets and appropriations, such ordinance or resolution shall set forth in full the source and amount of such revenue, the purpose for which such revenues are being budgeted and appropriated, and the fund or spending agency which shall make such supplemental expenditure. A certified copy of such ordinance or resolution shall be filed with the division.

29-1-110. Expenditures not to exceed appropriation

(1) During the fiscal year, no officer, employee, or other spending agency shall expend or contract to expend any money, or incur any liability, or enter into any contract which, by its terms, involves the expenditures of money in excess of the amounts appropriated. Any contract, verbal or written, made in violation of this section shall be void, and no moneys belonging to a local government shall be paid on such contract.

(2) Multiple-year contracts may be entered into where allowed by law or if subject to annual appropriation.

29-1-111. Contingencies

In cases of emergency which could not have been reasonably foreseen at the time of adoption of the budget, the governing body may authorize the expenditure of funds in excess of the appropriation by ordinance or resolution duly adopted by a majority vote of such governing body at a public meeting. Such ordinance or resolution shall set forth the facts concerning such emergency and shall be documented in detail in the minutes of the meeting of such governing body at which such ordinance or resolution was adopted. A certified copy of such ordinance or resolution shall be filed with the division.

29-1-113. Filing of budget

(1) No later than thirty days following the beginning of the fiscal year of the budget adopted pursuant to [section 29-1-108](#), the governing body shall cause a certified copy of such budget, including the budget message, to be filed in the office of the division. Copies of such budget and of ordinances or resolutions authorizing expenditures or the transfer of funds shall be filed with the officer or employee of the local government whose duty it is to disburse moneys or issue orders for the payment of money.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of [section 29-1-102 \(13\)](#), budgets shall be filed with the division by home rule cities, cities and counties, and towns and cities operating under a territorial charter for the purpose of information and research.

(3) If the governing body of a local government fails to file a certified copy of the budget with the division as required by this section, the division, after notice to the affected local government, may notify any county treasurer holding moneys of the local government generated pursuant to the taxing authority of such local government and authorize the county treasurer to prohibit release of any such moneys until the local government complies with the provisions of this section.