

# Selling your Public Works Budget to Your Board and the Public

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In difficult economic times, successfully selling your public works budget to local elected officials and the public is even more critical than good times.

## Develop a Concise Budget Summary:

A concise budget summary for informing the Board and involving the public is very valuable. There is no set format for this summary. It could include a transmittal letter, a budget message, an executive summary, and a budget-in-brief. However, a summary should do at least the following:

1. Summarize the major changes in priorities or service levels from the current year and the factors leading to those changes.
2. Articulate the priorities and key issues for the new budget period.
3. Identify and summarize major financial factors and trends affecting the budget, such as economic factors; long-range outlook; significant changes in revenue collections, tax rates, or other changes; current and future debt obligations; and significant use of or increase in fund balance or retained earnings.
4. Provide financial summary data on revenues, other resources, and expenditures for a least a three-year period, including prior year actual, current year budget and/or estimated current year actual and proposed budget.

## Tips for Presenting the Budget:

Ask first: "Have I fully involved my staff in developing the departmental budget?"

1. Tailor your presentation to the situation, and what you want the Board (and the public) to decide. Begin with an overview of the presentation.
2. Revenue section:
  - a. Explain key assumptions in developing revenue projections.
  - b. Show anticipated revenues by source.
3. Expenditure section:
  - a. Explain key assumptions: inflation rates, staff turnover, and anticipated increases.
  - b. Show expenditures by program.
  - c. Project changes in salaries and fringe benefits.
4. Program Section:
  - a. Briefly explain new requirements.
  - b. Give status reports on programs and success of new initiatives.
  - c. Explain proposed new program initiatives and justification: pay for itself, will improve efficiency; will improve performance/safety/liability. Stress benefits to be achieved.
5. Focus on what interests members of the audience (support existing programs, new programs, effect on property taxes, and staffing).
6. Discuss implications of the budget (facilities, taxes, debt), show benefits if passed, and explain the consequences if the budget is reduced.

*Reference: Reprinted from the CT LTAP Center Newsletter, Spring 2009, with permission on June 29, 2009.*

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**UNH T<sup>2</sup> Budgeting workshop: 9-2-09 in Lincoln:**  
[www.t2.unh.edu/training/budgeting.pdf](http://www.t2.unh.edu/training/budgeting.pdf)