2015-16 Budget Goals and Policies and Budget Balancing Strategies and Approaches

This section includes descriptions of the budget goals and policies that are used to guide the development of the County's budget and to manage the budget in current and future years. The Board of Supervisors reviews and adopts the budget goals and policies in the Fall of each year to guide staff in the preparation of the County's budget.

Overall, the goals of the County of San Luis Obispo, in the development and implementation of its annual budget are to:

- Establish a comprehensive financial plan which demonstrates, in measureable terms, that County government runs efficiently, provides high quality services, complies with all legal requirements and produces results that are responsive to community priorities and desires; and

- Further the County's mission to serve the community with pride while enhancing the economic, environmental and social qualities of life in San Luis Obispo County.

Also included in this section is an overview of the County's Budget Balancing Strategies and Approaches which outlines some of the budget planning processes that the County employs to maintain its fiscal health while continuing to provide programs and services to County residents.

Budget Development Policies

1. **Budget Process:** County departments shall participate and cooperate during the budget development process to facilitate the creation of a budget based upon a collaborative effort between the Board of Supervisors, the Administrative Office, Department Heads, staff, and the community.

   Each year, the Board of Supervisors shall set its priorities for the upcoming budget year. In most cases, this will be done in the Fall of each year in conjunction with the financial forecast provided by the County Administrative Office. The Board may at its discretion revisit its budget priorities and directives at any other point during the year.

   The Administrative Office shall utilize the Board's direction in order to create detailed instructions for use by departments in creating their respective budget submittals. Department submittals shall comply with the Board's directives and both reductions and additions will be prioritized. The intent is that the overall Proposed Budget created by the Administrative Office will comply with the Board's priorities and directives to the extent that available funding allows.

2. **Results Based Decision Making and Budgeting:** The County is committed to providing efficient, high quality services that produce clear results for the public we serve. Budget requests and recommendations must be linked to measurable results that are responsive to communitywide priorities.

3. **County's Vision Statement and Communitywide Results:** The Board adopted communitywide results shall be used by all departments to strategically guide the budget preparation process. Departments will link all goals and funding requests to communitywide results.

4. **Departmental Goals and Performance Measures:** Individual departments will establish goals that will facilitate achievement of the desired communitywide results. Departments will also develop meaningful performance measures that will be used to gauge the success of individual programs within a department. All requests to allocate additional resources to a new program or service must clearly demonstrate expected results in measurable terms. If additional funding is requested to augment an existing program or service, departments must identify actual results achieved to date in meaningful, measurable terms.

5. **Mission Statements:** County departments shall have a Department Mission Statement consistent with San Luis Obispo County's overall Mission Statement.

6. **Budget Hearings in June:** Conduct final budget hearings before the end of June; adopt budget by July 1, unless extenuating circumstances arise and the Board adopts a revised budget schedule for that particular year; adjust final numbers - no later than October 1st.

7. **Cost Allocation:** Allocate Countywide overhead costs to all County departments based on the cost allocation and implementation plan developed annually by the Auditor-Controller. Each department shall incorporate these allocations into their budget.

8. **General Fund Support:** General Fund Support is the amount of General Fund money allocated to a given budget after revenues and other funding sources are subtracted from expenditures. These net costs would be used in developing budget recommendations and when reviewing budgets during the quarterly reporting process. Significant departures from the General Fund Support amounts during the fiscal year may result in a recommendation to reduce expenditures to allow/ensure that the budgeted net cost would be achieved by the end of the fiscal year.

9. **Discretionary Programs:** Review all discretionary programs to determine if they are a high priority program with communitywide benefits and demonstrated results. Preferences for funding of new discretionary programs are for those which will facilitate the achievement of Board adopted communitywide results utilizing non-General Fund revenue first, offsetting fee revenue (if appropriate) second, and General Fund last. All requests for discretionary funding must be accompanied by a performance plan that clearly describes actual and/or expected results in measurable terms. Additionally, departments will prioritize their funding requests for new, discretionary programs by focusing on those programs that are most effective in terms of achieving departmental goals and desired results.

   Departments must also consider the potential effects of new programs and services on interrelated programs and desired communitywide results when developing requests.

Financial Planning Policies

10. **Balanced Budget:** The County Administrative Officer shall present a balanced budget for all County operating funds, on an annual basis, to the Board of Supervisors for scheduled public hearings in June of each year. In accordance with the State Budget Act, Government Code §29009, available funding sources shall be at least equal to recommended appropriations.

11. **Ongoing Budget Administration:** It shall be the responsibility of the County Administrative Officer to submit Quarterly Financial Status Reports to the Board of Supervisors. These reports shall provide a projection of expenditures and revenues, identifying projected variances. They may also include recommendations and proposed corrective actions which may include mid-year reductions.

12. **Long-Term Financial Planning:** The County Administrative Office will annually develop a financial forecast of General Fund revenues and expenditures for the coming fiscal year and will provide the Board with a longer-term fiscal outlook. The purpose of the financial plan shall be to: 1. Guide the Board in the development of its budget priorities, 2. Provide the Board with the information it needs to direct County departments in their creation of budget proposals, and 3. Assist the Board in the implementation of budget balancing plans and solutions.

13. **Use of "One-Time" Funds:** One-time revenues shall be dedicated for use for one-time expenditures. Annual budgets will not be increased to the point that ongoing operating costs become overly reliant upon cyclical or unreliable one-time revenues. In the face of economic downturns or significant State cuts in subventions for locally mandated services, the use of one-time funds may be permitted to ease the transition to downsized or reorganized operations.

14. **Funding of Reserves/Contingencies/Designations:** In times when the County has adequate discretionary funds to restore or enhance programs and services that have been scaled back in difficult budget years, there shall be a balance between the restoration of these programs and services and the funding of the County's reserves, contingencies and designations that have been used to balance the budget in prior years. Further, it should be recognized that the funding of reserves, contingencies and designations is essential to ensuring the long-term fiscal health of the County.

15. **Funding of Self Insurance Internal Service Fund Reserves:** Self-Insurance Internal Service fund reserves are to be maintained between the 70% (minimum) and 90% (conservative) confidence levels. This funding range is consistent with guidelines set by the County's excess insurance carrier and industry norms. The setting and maintaining of reserve levels is based upon annual actuarial studies and internal analysis. Annual charges to departments shall be set to generate the funding necessary to maintain reserves between the 70% and 90% confidence levels.

16. **Enhance Cost Efficiency:** County departments should review multi-departmental programs and services in order to enhance coordination and cost efficiency for streamlined achievement of communitywide objectives and results.

17. **Consolidation of Programs:** County departments should consolidate programs and organizations to reduce County costs while maintaining or increasing existing levels of service. Before service level reductions are proposed, i.e. if budget cuts are required, department heads will determine if consolidation of departmental or Countywide programs or services would be cost effective.

18. **Privatization of Services:** County departments are encouraged to identify and recommend opportunities for cost savings whenever possible, including the privatization of services that are beneficial to the County and legally possible. Analysis will include review of existing services, including the possibility of "contracting in" with existing personnel and the development of a transition process for those services approved for privatization. In implementing significant new services, a thorough cost and program analysis shall be conducted to ascertain if privatizing will result in reduced costs, increased services and accountability.

19. **Reductions:** Reductions shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, in a fashion consistent with Board approved budget policies, to reach the appropriations level required within the available means of financing. When budget reductions are necessary, departments will prioritize their service programs and propose reductions in areas that are least effective in terms of achieving departmental goals and desired results. Departments must also consider the potential effects on interrelated programs and desired communitywide results when developing budget reductions.

20. **Investing in Automation:** The Board recognizes that cost reduction, cost avoidance and process efficiency can be enhanced by utilizing automation. Proposals for investments in automation, particularly computer automation, must measurably demonstrate how cost savings will be achieved and/or how services will be improved. It will be important that countywide benefits, compatibility with existing systems, and potential liabilities are fully addressed. All proposals for major automation improvements will be reviewed and approved by the Information Technology Executive Steering Committee prior to formal Board approval.

Revenue Policies

21. **Cost Recovery Through Fees:** Utilize fees to recover costs where reasonable and after all cost saving options have been explored. Exceptions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. County departments will review fees annually to ensure that they meet statutory requirements, fall within the range of fees being charged by comparator counties and achieve cost recovery.

22. **Pursuit of New Revenues/Maximizing Use of Non-General Fund Revenues:** County departments are directed to pursue revenue sources, when reasonable, in support of the communitywide results sought by the County. Where not prohibited by law, departments will maximize use of non-General Fund revenues, existing designations and trust funds prior to using General Fund money to fund programs.

23. **Appropriations from Unanticipated Revenues:** Appropriations from departmental unanticipated revenues will not be recommended unless the department is either reaching or exceeding its total departmental revenue estimates on a monthly or quarterly basis, or its revenues are in line with historical revenue trends for that department. Grant program revenues and appropriations will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

24. **Maintain or Enhance Revenue Generating Ability:** Appropriate sufficient funds to maintain the capabilities of budgets that generate revenues in excess of their costs. Enhancements to such budgets will be dependent upon resulting revenues being in excess of the associated costs.

Expenditure Policies

25. **Debt Management:** The Board of Supervisors established a Debt Advisory Committee (DAC) in 1992 to serve as a centralized debt review mechanism. The Board has also adopted an Infrastructure Planning and Financing Policy, and a Local Goals and Policies document for Community Facilities Districts (Mello Roos CFDs). The DAC has adopted various operating guidelines such as a process for internally financing cash purchases rather than leasing capital equipment. The DAC has also reviewed each debt proposal from County departments or special districts and provided recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. A comprehensive Debt Management Policy was developed by the DAC and was adopted by the Board on December 14, 2010.

In practice, the County of San Luis Obispo uses debt financing to fund capital infrastructure necessary for provision of services for County residents. Debt financing provides a mechanism to spread the cost of such infrastructure to current and future years in which the improvements will be utilized. However, care is taken to not unduly burden future budgets with debt service costs. Long term debt may also be utilized where savings can be realized from refunding existing obligations for pensions or other benefits, or previously issued capital construction debt. The County may also employ short term financing to meet cash flow requirements.

San Luis Obispo County will not exceed its legal maximum debt limit as established by State Law. This amount is calculated annually based on 1.25% of the County's total assessed valuation. The County also calculates certain ratios to compare the level of bonded debt outstanding to personal income and on a per capita basis. A chart making such comparisons is published annually in the County's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).

26. **Funding of Contingencies and Reserves:** For the General Fund place a minimum of 5% of available funds into contingencies. Additionally, place up to 15% of available funds into contingencies or reserves and any additional unrestricted funds into reserves, after departments' operational needs are funded.

27. **Matching Funds - County Share:** No increased County share for budgets funded primarily from non-general fund sources if state funding is reduced, unless increased County share is mandated. The Board of Supervisors, at its discretion, may provide County "overmatches" to under-funded programs to ensure or enhance specified levels of service. Proposed "overmatches" shall include the specific, measurable, goals and results expected to be attained at both the "required" and the "overmatched" funding levels.

28. **"In-Kind" Contribution:** Where matching funds are required for grant purposes, provide as much "in-kind" contribution (resources already allocated by the County that will be expended in any case) as allowed, instead of hard dollar matches.

29. **Carry forward of Expenditures:** Expenditures carried forward from one year to the next (e.g. encumbrances) shall only be spent on the intended expenditure. If the actual expenditure is less than the amount carried forward, the remaining funds shall not be spent on something else without prior approval of the Administrative Office.

30. **Savings from Vacant Positions:** Salary and benefit savings resulting from vacant positions shall first be used to offset salary increases before requesting re-allocation of the savings to other expenditures that achieve communitywide objectives and results.

31. **Non-Emergency Mid-Year Requests:** Mid-year budget (including staff requests) or capital project requests of a non-immediate nature requiring a transfer from contingencies are recommended to be referred to the next year's budget deliberations. Mid-year requests with other funding sources or which can be absorbed within a department's budget are considered as needed.

Capital Project Policies

Review and evaluate projects based upon their cost, scope, countywide significance, correlation to facility master plans, and relation to communitywide objectives and results.

The following criteria shall be used in evaluating projects:

1. Ability to address a critical need or threats to health and safety
2. Connection to mandates or legal requirements
3. Existence of non-General Fund funding source(s)
4. Impact on General Fund or other budgetary impacts to existing services due to costs for staffing, operations and maintenance
5. Ability to address essential maintenance or repair needs to existing assets
6. Impact to service levels
7. Potential to save water/energy
8. Level of consistency with County plans, goals and priorities

Proposed projects shall include the project's anticipated impact on current and future operating costs. Projects will be recommended for approval that are 100% revenue offset or have their own funding source (such as golf courses and Lake Lopez), which meet one or more of the above criteria and would be reasonable in terms of scope or cost.

Projects should utilize energy and resource efficiencies such as "green building" (LEED) and Low Impact Development (LID) techniques and strategies to reduce ongoing utility and maintenance costs.

Library Projects: Consider funding new library buildings or major improvements to existing libraries only if at least 50% of the cost of the project is provided by the community in which the facility is located. The funding required from the community may be comprised from a variety of sources, including grants, school districts, special districts, cities, community group funding, private donations, or fees generated for specific use in libraries. The County's portion of this funding formula will be financed from the Library budget (Fund 1205000000), grants, gifts, the General Fund or fee revenues generated for specific use in libraries.

Maintenance Costs: Consider cost of ongoing maintenance before recommending capital projects, acquisition of additional parklands or beach access way projects.

Master Plans: Consider approving projects included in master plans if they have their own funding sources or if they are requested from other sources which identify an operational need for the facility.

Grant Funded Capital Projects: For grant funded projects, when a County match is required, budget only the County share if receipt of grant money is not expected in the budget year. If there is a reasonable expectation that the grant revenue can be received during the budget year, budget the entire project amount including revenues.

Encumbrances: The Auditor-Controller is authorized to encumber capital project money appropriated for a specific capital project at the end of each fiscal year, if work has been undertaken on that project during the fiscal year. Evidence that work has been undertaken would be in the form of an awarded contract or other item upon which the Board of Supervisors has taken formal action.

Phasing of Large Projects: For capital projects which will be undertaken over several fiscal years, develop full project scope and costs in the initial year.

Budget Balancing Strategies and Approaches

In early 2007, the County's recent fiscal challenges were first identified. At that time, the budget was balanced and economic conditions were generally good; however, the great recession loomed on the horizon. In order to proactively deal with the difficulties that laid ahead, a seven year "pain management plan" was crafted and utilized to guide the Board and staff in addressing significant budget gaps. FY 2008-09 was the first year of the plan, and FY 2014-15 represented the final year.

Moving into FY 2015-16, the County is in a strong financial position as a result of its adherence to the plan to close the structural budget gap. Despite the fact that the plan is no longer being actively utilized, the underlying budget balancing strategies and approaches are still relevant and represent the Board's preferences for achieving a balanced budget. In the event of a future economic downturn, it is likely that these same strategies and approaches would be utilized to close any future budget gaps.

The Last Seven Years: A Look Back

The foundations of the seven year plan were the County's adopted Budget Goals and Policies, Board priorities and direction, and the detailed budget instructions. The Goals and Policies were reviewed annually by the Board and will continue to be subject to annual review and approval.

The approach was for the Board to provide its priorities and other direction to staff early in the annual budget process. County departments utilized this direction in crafting each of their individual budget proposals and the County Administrative Office utilized these priorities and directions when crafting an overall Proposed Budget. This approach will continue, and in accordance with the State Budget Act (Government Code 29000-29144), the Board will continue to review and set the budget for the fiscal year during budget hearings in June of each year. Along the way, the Board has been, and will continue to be provided regular updates regarding the status of the budget.

One of the overarching objectives of the budget strategies has been to strike a balance between maintaining fiscal health and continuing to provide programs and services to the County's many and varied customers. The recent fiscal challenges have made striking this balance more difficult than ever. In order to maintain the County's fiscal health, this balance will continue to be important, even in an improving economy. Over the years, the County has been prescient in creating and maintaining adequate reserves in order to help address a potential fiscal downturn. The approach has been to utilize some of these reserves and other short-term budget balancing solutions in order to soften the impact of reductions to programs and services. However, it is imperative that these short term solutions be used judiciously in order to maintain the County's fiscal health. Should short-term solutions be over-utilized, the magnitude of reductions required later would be amplified.

With respect to the use of short-term budgeting solutions, the intent was to pare down the amount used as the County worked its way through the seven year pain management plan. To illustrate, during the creation of the pain management plan, the planned use of short-term solutions was as follows:

- 2008-09 50% of gap closed with short-term options
- 2009-10 30% of gap closed with short-term options
- 2010-11 25% of gap closed with short-term options
- 2011-12 20% of gap closed with short-term options
- 2012-13 15% of gap closed with short-term options
- 2013-14 10% of gap closed with short-term options
- 2014-15 Structural gap closed- no use of short-term options

The plan served the County well and the underlying strategies and approaches should continue to do so into the future. While the County's recent fiscal challenges were unprecedented in recent times, they paled in comparison to that of many local governments around the state and the country. The County's fiscal position is enviable to many and is primarily attributable to fairly stable property tax revenues (as compared to other areas) and to sound fiscal management.

Following is an outline of the County's preferred budget balancing strategies and approaches:

Approaches that address the long-term budget gap:

1. Priority Driven- One of the starting points of the budget process is to identify Board priorities so staff can craft budget proposals that align with these priorities. Currently, the Board's priorities are as follows (in order):
    a. Meet legal mandates
    b. Meet debt service requirements
    c. Public Safety- defined as:
        i. Sheriff-Coroner (fund center 136)
        ii. District Attorney (fund center 13201)
        iii. Probation (fund center 139)
        iv. County Fire (fund center 140)

2. All Departments Participate- While departments will receive different levels of funding due to priorities, departmental revenue sources, and program designs (amongst many other variables); all departments will participate in the closing of the budget gap. More specifically, no department is exempt from budget reductions.

3. Proportional Reductions- Instead of cutting all operations by the same amount across the board, proportional growth and reductions will be taken into consideration. More specifically, staff could pursue reductions by department in relation to the amount of growth during the "good times". The rationale is that when times are good, some departments experience significant growth in expenditures and staffing due to increases in demand and revenues. In times when demand and corresponding revenues have slowed, expenditures should be scaled back

accordingly. Conversely, some departments grow very little over time, and as a result they may not be scaled back to the same extent as other departments.

4. Detailed Budget Reduction Lists (i.e. cut lists)- All departments are to incorporate a prioritized list of resource/expenditure reductions into their annual budget submittals. Reductions with the least impact upon programs and services should be the first in line for reduction per Board approved Budget Policy #19. The concept is that departments are the experts in their respective fields and are in the best position to recommend budget reductions in line with the Budget Goals and Policies, Board priorities and direction, and detailed budget instructions. The targets for the amount of reductions to include in the budget submittals are provided as part of the detailed budget instructions (usually early December).

5. Mid-Year Budget Reductions- Mid-year reductions may be necessary in any given fiscal year depending upon the fiscal climate or action at other levels of government at any particular point in time. The intent of the mid-year reductions is to help keep the current year budget in balance and to create additional Fund Balance Available (FBA) at year-end for use as a funding source in the subsequent budget year.

6. Reduce "Over Match"- Many County administered programs are mandated by the State. Funding provided by the State for these types of programs typically has not kept pace with the corresponding expenditures. During the "good years," the County may utilize some of its local, discretionary revenue to help offset the difference in order to keep many of these important programs intact. However, the County's ability to continue to provide this "over match" is limited during times of economic difficulty, and is scaled back. Some examples of "over match" include the Roads Pavement Management program, Health Agency programs, and Victim Witness services.

7. Engage Employees and Employee Associations- Approximately 45% of the total County budget (and almost 60% of the General Fund budget) are labor costs and not surprisingly, salary and benefit costs have the most significant influence upon expenditures. County staff and negotiators continue to work with employees and employee associations in order to create opportunities to curtail labor costs. Specifically, the goal is to negotiate labor agreements that are consistent with the Board's direction that:

   1. The cost of pension rate increases be shared 50/50 by the County and employees.

   2. A tiered pension plan be implemented for all new hires.

   3. Prevailing wage adjustments should be negotiated, consistent with the County's Prevailing Wage Ordinance.

Short-term solutions that do NOT address the long term structural budget gap:

1. Hiring "Chill"- The purpose of a hiring "chill" is two-fold: to save money in the current year so that additional FBA would be available for the subsequent budget year and to allow for attrition with respect to the reduction of positions (i.e. reduce

layoffs). It is important to emphasize that reductions should be based upon priorities, not vacant positions. Attrition is a helpful tactic but should not be the driving strategy in reducing costs. In October 2007, the County instituted a hiring "chill." All requested exceptions to the "chill" were to be approved by the County Administrative Officer. Early in FY 2013-14, the hiring "chill" was lifted to reflect improving budget conditions.

2. Reduce General Fund Contingency- Budget Policy #26 states that a minimum of 5% of available funds will be placed into contingencies. This policy was adhered to for many years, but as a part of the FY 2009-10 budget balancing strategies, the contingency was reduced to 4%. In FY 2014-15, the contingency was partially restored, to 4.5%. It is recommended that the contingency not be reduced below 3% in any given year as this would impair the County's ability to deal with unplanned issues and costs that occur mid-year. Additionally, it is important to note that reducing the contingency reduces the amount of FBA by an equal amount for fiscal year-end (unspent contingency is the largest component of FBA), hence deferring a portion of the budget gap to the subsequent year.

3. Defer capital improvement and automation projects that require General Fund support- This option saves money in the near-term but if these types of projects are continuously deferred, County facilities and systems would deteriorate and the cost of repairs would increase over time.

4. Minimize building maintenance expenditures- Similar to item number three above, this option saves money in the near-term but over time if maintenance is deferred, county facilities will deteriorate. Historically, $1.5 million to $2 million of General Fund has been allocated annually to specific projects related to the maintenance of County facilities.

5. Reduce or eliminate the General Fund contribution to the Organizational Development program- The General Fund typically contributes $450,000 to the Organizational Development fund center annually. This funding has been used to pay for the Learning and Development Center (formerly the Employee University), Citizen's Opinion Surveys, Employee Opinion Surveys, and departmental organizational assessments and training. In difficult budget years, reserves and designations could be used to fund these operations; however, in the longer term, some or all of these programs would have to be reduced or eliminated if the General Fund contribution were reduced or discontinued.

6. Reduce or eliminate the amount of depreciation set aside for Countywide Automation projects- As part of the Countywide Cost Plan, the Auditor-Controller's Office calculates the amount of depreciation associated with automation equipment. The standard practice has been to allocate this money to the Countywide Automation fund center in order to help pay for replacement automation projects. Some or all of this money could be redirected to the General Fund. The impact is that over time, the County would not have sufficient funds to replace outdated or obsolete equipment and systems.

7. Reduce or eliminate the amount of depreciation set aside for Building Replacement- Similar to what was noted above, as part of the Countywide Cost Plan, the Auditor-Controller's Office calculates the amount of depreciation associated with County owned buildings. The standard practice has been to allocate this money to the Building Replacement fund center in order to help pay for the repair and replacement of County facilities. Some or all of this money could be redirected to the General Fund. The impact is that over time, there would not be sufficient funds to repair or replace County owned facilities.

8. Voluntary Time Off (VTO), otherwise known as voluntary furloughs- Currently, County employees may take up to 160 hours of VTO in any given year. Individuals that do so do not receive a salary but continue to receive benefits and time and service credits. As a result, VTO helps to defray salary and benefit costs. This option is short-term in nature, given that employees cannot be required to participate in this program (hence the name Voluntary Time Off) and it is not reasonable to expect employees to utilize VTO perpetually.

9. Use of Federal Stimulus Funding- The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 was authorized by the Federal government at the beginning of 2009. The intent of the program was to help stabilize the economy by providing up to $780 billion to various programs and organizations in order to mitigate future job loss and to potentially increase the number of jobs. The County actively pursued ARRA funds as a means to help shore up our budget and fiscal challenges. A committee comprised of 15 departments met on a regular basis in order to identify funding opportunities and to coordinate grant applications and program designs. In total, the County applied for $102.4 million in ARRA funding and received a total of $99.7 million. New funding is no longer available.

10. Early Retirement- Early retirement programs may be offered on a case-by-case basis. The intent is to reduce the number of layoffs by enticing individuals who are considering retirement to retire sooner rather than later in order to create attrition opportunities. Depending upon the specifics, an early retirement program may or may not provide cost savings. In instances where the program does not provide a cost savings (or is cost neutral), the sole benefit would be to reduce layoffs.

11. Use of one-time reserves- The County has set aside money in reserves, which is not designated for a specific purpose. This money has been accumulated over a number of years and has historically been used to help pay for unexpected costs or to help fund new projects or programs.

    Some of these reserves could be used to help address the budget gap. However, since this is one-time money that would be used to help fund ongoing operational expenditures, it is recommended that the amount used in any given year be limited to no more than $1 million to $2 million during the seven year "pain management plan." This approach allowed for reserves to remain in place for the latter years of the "pain management plan" and to help mitigate unforeseen future fiscal challenges.

Options not included in the budget balancing strategies and approaches:

1. Mandatory Time Off (mandatory furloughs)- This approach has not been included in the budget balancing strategies because it is challenging to implement, does not save much more money than the Voluntary furlough program (VTO), and is short-term in nature. Further, feedback from department heads was overwhelmingly against the use of mandatory furloughs. If economic conditions were to worsen in future years, the use of mandatory furloughs may be revisited.

2. Eliminate training- Maintaining a skilled workforce is important for every organization, especially one as labor intensive as the County. This approach was not included in the budget balancing strategies because in times of budget reductions, additional demands are placed upon remaining employees and it is more important than ever to maintain and enhance the performance of the workforce in order to successfully manage an increased workload. While training plans and expenditures were cut back considerably as part of the budget balancing process, they were not eliminated.

3. Revenue (tax) increases- In the past, tax increases such as sales taxes, transient occupancy taxes, business license taxes, and utility users taxes have been discussed. However, it was decided not to pursue these options given recent economic conditions and voter sentiment.