Florida Government Finance Officers Association

Government Resource Manual

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SECTION 1 – ACCOUNTING

Overview

A well-designed and properly maintained accounting system is necessary to be able to provide all data that is needed to allow for the timely preparation of financial statements in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). The official source of GAAP for local governments is the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB). The GASB is an independent, not-for-profit organization that establishes and improves standards of financial accounting for local governments.

In addition, Section 218.33, Florida Statutes, requires local governments to follow uniform accounting practices and procedures and a uniform chart of accounts as established by the Florida Department of Financial Services (DFS). To this end, DFS drafted the Uniform Accounting System Manual. These requirements are in place to help ensure proper accounting and fiscal management as well as to provide consistency in preparing local government annual financial reports.

In establishing accounting practices and procedures, local governments must comply with Section 218.33(3), Florida Statutes, which requires the establishment and maintenance of internal controls designed to:

- Prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse as defined in Section 11.45(1), Florida Statutes.
- Promote and encourage compliance with applicable laws, rules, contracts, grant agreements, and best practices.
- Support economical and efficient operations.
- Ensure reliability of financial records and reports.
- Safeguard assets.

References

- Section 218.33, Florida Statutes - Uniform fiscal years and accounting practices. Official link
- Florida Department of Financial Services - Local Government Financial Reporting and Uniform Accounting System Manual. Official link
- Governmental Accounting Standards Board - Pronouncements. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association - Accounting and Financial Reporting Best Practices. Official link

SECTION 2 – ANNUAL FINANCIAL AUDIT

Overview

Based upon a certain revenue or expenditure threshold, local governments (i.e., all counties, municipalities with revenues or expenditures and expenses greater than $250,000, and special districts with revenues or expenditures and expenses greater than $100,000) are required to undergo an independent audit of their financial statements in accordance with established generally accepted auditing standards. Properly performed audits play a vital role in protecting the integrity of public finance operations and sustaining citizens' trust in their elected officials.

Requirements

Section 218.39, Florida Statutes, mandates an annual financial audit for local governments, requiring an independent certified public accountant to perform the audit within nine months of the fiscal year's end, with specific reporting requirements and provisions for the auditor to report on deteriorating financial conditions. The audit report must include financial statements, internal control reports, and a management letter, and the audited entity must submit a written statement explaining any findings or corrective actions.

Current audit thresholds

Section 218.39(1), Florida Statutes, requires an annual audit for each county; for a municipality with revenues or total expenditures and expenses above $250,000; and for a special district above $100,000. Municipalities between $100,000 and $250,000 and special districts between $50,000 and $100,000 must be audited at least once every three fiscal years.

The annual financial audit report may also need to include a "single audit" in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance), or as required under Section 215.97, Florida Statutes, and Chapter 10.550, Rules of the Auditor General. Additionally, Section 163.387, Florida Statutes, mandates separate audits for each community redevelopment agency (CRA) with revenues, expenditures, or expenses exceeding $100,000 in a fiscal year. These audits must be conducted by an independent certified public accountant in accordance with Section 218.39, Florida Statutes, and Chapter 10.550, Rules of the Auditor General. After completion of the audit, the auditor must discuss all comments intended for inclusion in the audit report with management, each member of the governing body and any audit committee responsible for oversight. Additionally, the auditor is required to report any identified instances of non-compliance or deficiencies in internal controls.

Single-audit thresholds

Under 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 200.501, a federal single or program-specific audit is generally required when federal awards expended during the fiscal year equal or exceed $1,000,000. Under Section 215.97, Florida Statutes, a Florida state single or project-specific audit, is generally required when state financial assistance expended equals or exceeds $750,000. An award agreement may impose an audit requirement below these thresholds.

The local government's response to the audit findings, including corrective action to be taken, must be filed with the local government's governing body within thirty (30) days after delivery of the audit findings. In addition, the audit findings and responses must be incorporated in the audit report and submitted to the Auditor General within forty-five (45) days after the delivery of the audit report to the local government's governing body, but no later than nine (9) months after the end of the fiscal year.

Chapter 10.550, Rules of the Auditor General, requires the management letter to include, among other things, the following:

1) For counties as a whole, municipalities, and special districts:
    a) A statement describing the results of the auditor's determination as to whether or not the local governmental entity met one or more of the conditions described in Section 218.503(1), Florida Statutes, and identification of the specific condition(s) met.
    b) A statement that the auditor applied financial condition assessment procedures.
    c) If a deteriorating financial condition(s) is noted, a statement that the local governmental entity's financial condition is deteriorating and a description of conditions causing the auditor to make this conclusion. If the auditor reported that the local governmental entity met one or more of the conditions specified in Section 218.503(1), Florida Statutes, this statement shall indicate whether such condition(s) resulted from a deteriorating financial condition(s).
    d) If appropriate, a statement indicating the failure of a special district that is a component unit of a county, municipality, or special district to provide the financial information necessary to a proper reporting of the component unit within the audited financial statements of the county, municipality, or special district. (Section 218.39(3)(b), Florida Statutes)
2) For water management districts
    a) A statement describing the results of the auditor's determination as to whether or not the district provided monthly financial statements to its governing board and posted the monthly financial statements on its web site (See Sections 215.985(11) and 373.536(4)(e), Florida Statutes).
    b) A statement describing the results of the auditor's determination as to whether or not the district provided a link on its website to the DFS website to allow viewing of the district's annual financial report (See Section 218.32(1)(g), Florida Statutes).
    c) A statement describing the results of the auditor's determination as to whether or not the district posted its tentative and final budgets on its website (See Section 373.536(5)(d) and (6)(d), Florida Statutes).
3) For counties as a whole, municipalities, and dependent special districts:
    a) A statement as to whether or not a property assessed clean energy (PACE) program that finances qualifying improvements authorized pursuant to Sections 163.081 or 163.082, Florida Statutes, operated within the county, municipality, or dependent special district geographical boundaries during the fiscal year under audit, regardless of whether any new financing arrangements were initiated during the period under audit or whether only preexisting financing arrangements were administered.
    b) If a PACE program was operating within the geographical area of the county, municipality, or dependent special district during the period under audit, a list of all program administrators and third-party administrators that administered the program.
    c) The full legal names and contact information of each such program administrator and third-party administrator.
4) For special districts, data required pursuant to Sections 218.32(1)(e) and 218.39(3)(a), Florida Statutes (See Rule 10.554(1)(i)(6)-(8), Rules of the Auditor General).

Additionally, Chapter 10.550, Rules of the Auditor General, requires the scope of the financial audit to include an examination pursuant to the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) Professional Standards, AT-C Section 315, promulgated by the AICPA, to determine the following, as applicable:

- For all local governmental entities, a determination of the entity's compliance with the requirements of Section 218.415, Florida Statutes

- For counties that received E911 funds, a determination that all E911 fee revenues, interest, and E911 grant funding were used for payment of authorized expenditures, as specified in Section 365.172(10), Florida Statutes, and as specified in the E911 Board grant and special disbursement programs (See Section 365.173(2)(d), Florida Statutes)
- For Clerks of the Courts, a determination of the Clerk's compliance with the requirements of Sections 28.35 and 28.36, Florida Statutes
- For Clerks of the Courts, a determination of the Clerk's compliance with Section 61.181, Florida Statutes
- For local governmental entities that received or expended funds related to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, that are not Federal awards audited as major programs or State financial assistance audited as major projects: a determination of the entity's compliance with Federal and State laws, rules, regulations, contracts, or grant agreements related to the receipt and expenditure of the funds (See Section 288.8018(1), Florida Statutes).
- For CRAs, with revenues or a total of expenditures and expenses in excess of $100,000, a determination that the CRA complied with Sections 163.387(6) and (7), Florida Statutes

The scope of the financial audit shall also include a report that includes an opinion (or disclaimer of opinion) as to whether any supplementary information, including the schedule of receipts and expenditures related to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill funds, is presented fairly in all material respects in relation to the financial statements taken as a whole. The report shall be prepared in accordance with AICPA Professional Standards, AU-C Section 725, promulgated by the AICPA.

Audit Filing Requirements

The following audit report filing requirements apply:

- Department of Financial Services (DFS) filing requirements:
- Section 218.32(1)(c), Florida Statutes, requires each regional planning council created under Section 186.504, Florida Statutes, each local government finance commission, board, or council, and each municipal power corporation created as a separate legal or administrative entity by interlocal agreement under Section 163.01(7), Florida Statutes, to submit to DFS a copy of its audit report and an annual financial report for the previous fiscal year in a format prescribed by DFS.
- Section 163.387(8)(c), Florida Statutes, requires that audit reports for CRA conducted pursuant to that section be filed with DFS.
- Auditor General filing requirements:
    - Each county, municipality, and special district are required to obtain an audit pursuant to Section 218.39, Florida Statutes, is required to file its audit report with the Auditor General.
    - Any CRA required to obtain an audit pursuant to Section 163.387, Florida Statutes, is required to file its audit report with the Auditor General.
- The audit reports referenced above are required to be submitted within 45 days of delivery of the audit report to the entity's governing body or nine months after the end of the entity's fiscal year, whichever occurs first. It should also be noted that, although the Federal Office of Management and Budget, the Government Finance Officers Association, Inc. (GFOA), and other organizations may occasionally extend their filing deadlines, insofar as the State of Florida's audit deadlines are established by Florida Statutes, those filing extensions ***do not*** apply to filing deadlines contained in Florida Statutes.
- Pursuant to Section 163.371(2), Florida Statutes, a CRA is required to file an annual report with the county or municipality that created the agency. This annual report is due by March 31 of each year, and the required content is described in Sections 163.371(2)(a)-(c), Florida Statutes

- Further, it should be noted that other entities, such as grantors and creditors, may impose additional audit report filing requirements.

Auditor Selection Process

Section 218.391, Florida Statutes, requires specific procedures to be followed by local governments with respect to selecting an auditor to conduct the annual financial audit required by Section 218.39, Florida Statutes The local government must establish an auditor selection committee to assist in the selection process.

Auditor selection committee composition requirements

- For counties, the committee must, at a minimum, consist of each elected county officer, or their respective designees, and one member of the Board of County Commissioners.
- For municipalities and special districts, the committee must have at least three members, and at least one member must be a member of the governing body, who shall serve as committee chair.
- No employee, chief executive officer, or chief financial officer may serve as a committee voting member; however, they may serve in an advisory capacity.

In addition, the GFOA, in its best practices, has recommended the following for audit committees, which may also apply to auditor selection committees:

- All members should possess or obtain a basic understanding of governmental financial reporting and auditing.
- The committee should have access to the services of at least one financial expert, either a committee member or an outside party engaged by the committee for this purpose.

Recognizing that smaller local governments may face challenges in finding individuals with the required experience in governmental financial reporting and auditing, the Auditor Selection Guidelines, accessible on the Auditor General's website, include a small government consideration. This suggests that smaller governments may consult with nearby larger governments to identify employees or consultants who could assist their audit committee.

The auditor selection committee shall perform the following functions:

- Establish factors to be used in the evaluation of audit services.
- Publicly announce requests for proposals.
- Provide interested firms with requests for proposals.
- Evaluate proposals provided by qualified firms.
- Rank and recommend in order of preference to the local government's governing body no fewer than three (3) firms deemed to be the most highly qualified to perform the required services. If fewer than three firms respond to the request for proposal, the committee shall recommend such firms as it deems to be the most highly qualified.

If compensation is not considered by the audit committee in evaluating proposals, the governing body shall first negotiate a contract with the firm ranked first. If a satisfactory contract cannot be reached, negotiations with that firm shall be formally terminated, and discussions shall begin with the second-ranked firm. If negotiations with the second-ranked firm fail, they shall be terminated, and negotiations shall proceed with the third-ranked firm, continuing in the same manner with subsequent firms as necessary. If compensation is a factor in the evaluation, the governing body shall select the highest-ranked firm.

Section 218.391(9), Florida Statutes, states that "If a local government fails to select the auditor in accordance with the requirements of Sections 218.391(3)-(6), Florida Statutes, the local government

must again perform the auditor selection process in accordance with this section to select an auditor to conduct audits for subsequent fiscal years."

References

- Office of Management and Budget. Official Link
- Section 163.387, Florida Statutes - Redevelopment trust fund and CRA audit requirements. Official link
- Section 215.97, Florida Statutes - Florida Single Audit Act. Official link
- Section 218.32, Florida Statutes - Annual financial reports. Official link
- Section 218.39, Florida Statutes - Annual financial audit reports. Official link
- Section 218.391, Florida Statutes - Auditor selection procedures. Official link
- Section 218.503, Florida Statutes - Determination of financial emergency. Official link
- Florida Auditor General - Current Rules, including Chapter 10.550, Local Governmental Entity Audits. Official link
- 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart F - Federal audit requirements. Official link

SECTION 3 – ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORTING

Overview

Local governments are accountable for the manner in which they spend public funds. Annual financial reporting is one method of demonstrating accountability. Two types of local government annual financial reporting are the State Annual Financial Report (AFR) and the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR).

State Annual Financial Report

Section 218.32, Florida Statutes, requires each local government that is determined to be a reporting entity, as defined by generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP), to submit to the Department of Financial Services (DFS) an AFR in a format prescribed by DFS. The AFR and the local government's annual financial audit report must be sent to DFS within forty-five (45) days after the completion of the audit report, but no later than nine (9) months after the end of the fiscal year. If the local government is not required to have an annual audit in accordance with Section 218.39, Florida Statutes, the AFR must be submitted to DFS no later than nine (9) months after the end of the fiscal year. In addition, each local governmental entity's website must provide a link to the DFS website to view the entity's AFR. If the local governmental entity does not have an official website, the county government's web site must provide the required link for the local governmental entity.

In addition, Section 218.32(1)(c), Florida Statutes, requires each regional planning council created under Section 186.504, Florida Statutes, each local government finance commission, board, or council, and each municipal power corporation created as a separate legal or administrative entity by interlocal agreement under Section 163.01(7), Florida Statutes, to submit to DFS a copy of its audit report and an AFR for the previous fiscal year in a format prescribed by DFS.

For fiscal years ending on or after September 1, 2022, local governments are to report financial data required by Section 218.32, Florida Statutes, using XBRL (eXtensible Business Reporting Language). DFS's Division of Accounting & Auditing has partnered with the Office of Information Technology to build the new Florida Open Financial Statement System. Local governments have the option to provide their financial data in the same manner they currently utilize, where it will be tagged and converted into XBRL format for their validation and submission, or they may choose to submit an XBRL instance. Updates may be found on the Florida Department of Financial Services website (see LOGERx).

Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR)

Section 218.39, Florida Statutes, requires that local governments that meet specific criteria outlined in the section shall have an annual financial audit of their accounts and records completed within nine months after the end of their fiscal year. However, the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recommends issuing an ACFR as a best practice for financial reporting. The ACFR expands on the basic financial statements required by GAAP by including additional financial information organized into three sections: Introductory, Financial, and Statistical. The Introductory Section provides general information on the government's structure, services, and environment. The Financial Section includes the basic financial statements, notes, and Management's Discussion and Analysis, as well as additional information on all individual funds not reported in the basic financial statements. The Statistical Section provides trend data and non-financial information that assist in assessing the government's financial condition. ACFR requirements are codified in the GASB Codification as Section 2200. Governments that participate in the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting Program are asked to

submit their reports within six months of the end of the fiscal year. The GFOA's review process typically requires an additional four to six months.

The GFOA maintains a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting Program designed to encourage and assist local governments to go beyond the minimum requirements of GAAP to prepare annual comprehensive financial reports that evidence the spirit of transparency and full disclosure. Reports submitted to the GFOA for this certificate are reviewed by selected members of the GFOA professional staff and the GFOA Special Review Committee (SRC), which is comprised of individuals with expertise in public sector financial reporting. The certificate of achievement is generally regarded as the highest form of recognition in local government financial reporting is viewed positively by credit rating agencies and others interested in the professionalism of governmental finance.

Other Financial Reporting Requirements

Additional financial reporting requirements for Florida local government entities have been statutorily established and have been summarized by the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee (JLAC) in its Calendar of Financial Reporting Requirements.

Current GASB Reporting Standards

GASB Statement No. 103, Financial Reporting Model Improvements, is effective for fiscal years beginning after June 15, 2025. It revises requirements affecting management's discussion and analysis, unusual or infrequent items, proprietary fund presentation, major component units, and budgetary comparison information.

GASB Statement No. 104, Disclosure of Certain Capital Assets, is effective for fiscal years beginning after June 15, 2025, and requires separate disclosure of specified lease, subscription, right-to-use, and other intangible assets, as well as additional information for capital assets held for sale.

GASB Statement No. 105, Subsequent Events, is effective for fiscal years beginning after June 15, 2026, and clarifies the evaluation period, recognition, and disclosure of subsequent events.

Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR)

The GFOA established the PAFR Program in 1991 to encourage and assist state and local governments to extract information from their ACFR to produce high quality popular annual financial reports specifically designed to be readily accessible and easily understandable to the general public and other interested parties without a background in public finance and then to recognize individual governments that are successful in achieving that goal. Although the preparation of a PAFR is optional, those PAFRs submitted to the PAFR Program are reviewed by selected members of the GFOA professional staff and by outside reviewers with experience in governmental accounting and financial reporting and may be eligible for an award by the GFOA.

References

- Section 218.32, Florida Statutes - Annual financial reports. Official link
- Section 218.39, Florida Statutes - Annual financial audit reports. Official link
- Florida Department of Financial Services - Local Government Financial Reporting and LOGERx. Official link
- Joint Legislative Auditing Committee - Local Government Financial Reporting and current reporting calendar. Official link
- GASB Statement No. 103 - Financial Reporting Model Improvements. Official link
- GASB Statement No. 104 - Disclosure of Certain Capital Assets. Official link

- GASB Statement No. 105 - Subsequent Events. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association - Financial reporting resources. Official link

SECTION 4 – BUDGETING

Overview

Budgeting is one of the most important activities undertaken by governments. The budget is a plan of financial operation embodying an estimate of proposed expenditures for a given period and the proposed means of financing them. The budget serves as the primary tool in allocating financial resources to programs and services. This process should involve all stakeholders – elected officials, governmental administrators, employees, citizen groups, and business leaders, and reflect their overall needs and priorities. A budget process that is well integrated with the other activities of the government and involves those stakeholders will lead to a more efficient and accepted government. Specifically, the budget can serve as a policy making tool, a management tool, a financial tool, and a communication tool. The end result should be a balanced budget that has been well planned and communicated among all stakeholders.

- A brief description of the budget cycle is as follows
    - Input
        - Elected and appointed officials gather information from citizens, taxpayers, and other sources about financial and non-financial priorities.
        - Officials meet with staff and convey the goals, objectives, priorities, and concerns that will guide the development of the budget.
    - Preparation
        - Revenues estimates and forecasts are created to determine what financial resources will be available to fund operations.
        - Expenditure requests and forecasts are prepared by the departments.
        - The chief administrator submits a proposed budget that reflects the community needs and desires to the local government governing body for review.
    - Adoption
        - The governing body reviews the proposed budget.
        - Changes are made according to the governing body's recommendations and public comments.
        - The proposed budget is approved by the governing body.
        - The budget is adopted.
    - Implementation
        - Revenues are collected and expenditures are incurred in accordance with the budget.
        - The budget may be modified or amended by approval from the governing body in accordance with procedures established by state law.
    - Evaluation
        - Internal reports may be prepared as needed for financial data and performance measurement.
        - Other evaluations are done through internal audits, performance audits, and external audits.

Requirements

Section 166.241, Florida Statutes, (Municipalities) and Sections 129.03–129.06, Florida Statutes, (Counties) provide specific requirements for local governments to follow when adopting annual budgets. Some of those requirements are as follows:

- The local government's budget must be adopted by resolution or ordinance, unless otherwise specified in the local government's charter.
- The amount available from taxation and other sources, including balance brought forward from prior fiscal years, must equal the total appropriations for expenditures and reserves.
- At a minimum, the adopted budget must show for each fund, as required by law and sound financial practices, budgeted revenues and expenditures by organizational unit which are at least at the level of detail required for the annual financial report under Section 218.32(1), Florida Statutes
- The tentative budget must be posted to the local government's official website at least two days before the first budget hearing at which the tentative budget is approved. The final adopted budget must be posted to the local government's official website within 30 days after adoption. For municipalities, if the municipality does not operate an official website, the municipality must transmit the tentative and final budgets to the manager or administrator of the county or counties in which the municipality is located.
- If the tentative budget of a municipality contains a funding reduction to the operating budget of the municipal law enforcement agency of more than 5 percent compared to the current fiscal year's approved operating budget, the state attorney for the judicial circuit in which the municipality is located or a member of the governing body may file a petition with the Division of Administrative Hearings pursuant to Section 120.569, Florida Statutes, requesting a hearing to challenge the reduction in the municipal law enforcement agency's proposed operating budget.
- The adopted budget may be amended at any time during the fiscal year or within sixty (60) days following the end of the fiscal year. If the amendment increases the total amount of expenditures by fund or department, the budget amendment must be adopted in the same manner as the original budget, unless otherwise specified in the local government's charter. Counties are required to follow specific advertising requirements (Section 129.06, Florida Statutes) with respect to the adoption of budget amendments.

Section 189.016, Florida Statutes, provides specific requirements for special districts. Some of those requirements are as follows:

- The special district's budget must be adopted by resolution. This requirement does not apply to water management districts as defined in Section 373.019, Florida Statutes Water management districts must comply with the budget requirements in Section 373.536, Florida Statutes

The total amount available from taxation and other sources, including balances brought forward from prior fiscal years, must equal the total appropriations for expenditures and reserves. This requirement does not apply to water management districts as defined in Section 373.019, Florida Statutes Water management districts must comply with the budget requirements in Section 373.536, Florida Statutes

- At a minimum, the adopted budget must show for each fund, as required by law and sound financial practices, budgeted revenues and expenditures by organizational unit, which are at least at the level of detail required for the AFR under Section 218.32(1), Florida Statutes The adopted budget must regulate expenditures of the special district, and an officer of a special district may not expend or contract for expenditures in any fiscal year except pursuant to the adopted budget. This requirement does not apply to water management districts as defined in Section 373.019.
- The tentative budget must be posted on the special district's official website at least 2 days before the first budget hearing and must remain on the website for at least 45 days. The final adopted budget must be posted on the special district's official website within 30 days after adoption and must remain on the website for at least 2 years. All special districts are required to maintain an official website (See Section 189.069, Florida Statutes). This subsection does not apply to water management districts as defined in Section 373.019, Florida Statutes.

- The proposed budget for a dependent special district must be contained within the general budget of the local governing authority to which it is dependent and be clearly stated as the budget of the dependent district. However, with the concurrence of the local governing authority, a dependent district may be budgeted separately. The dependent district must provide any budget information requested by the local governing authority at the time and place designated by the local governing authority.
- The governing body of each special district at any time within a fiscal year or within 60 days following the end of the fiscal year may amend a budget for that year under certain circumstances. If the governing body of a special district amends the budget, the adopted amendment must be posted on the official web site of the special district within five days after adoption. If the special district does not operate an official web site, the special district must, within a reasonable period of time, transmit the adopted amendment to the manager or administrator of the local general-purpose government or governing authority, who shall post the adopted amendment on the web site of the local general-purpose government or governing authority. Chapter 200, Florida Statutes, and the Truth-in-Millage (TRIM) guidelines promulgated by the Florida Department of Revenue (DOR) outline specific requirements that local governments must follow with respect to adopting property tax rates and budgets. Some of the key requirements are as follows:
- Specific timetables with respect to the noticing of the local Property Appraiser's office for the adoption of the ad valorem millage rate and budget; the scheduling of the tentative and final millage rate/budget public hearings and the respective advertising of the public hearings.
- The preparation of specific forms, which must be sent to the local Property Appraiser's, Tax Collector's offices, and DOR.
- The placement of specific advertisements, which are uniform throughout the state based on the local government's situation.
- Section 17 of this document, Reporting Requirements provides further information regarding recurring local government reporting requirements and links to current state reporting calendars and resources.

2026 Legislative Update - Local Government Financial Transparency and Accountability Act

Chapter 2026-161, Laws of Florida, which takes effect January 1, 2027, revises county and municipal budget transparency requirements. Counties and municipalities should incorporate these requirements into the first applicable budget process and compliance calendar occurring on or after the effective date:

- Post tentative budgets and proposed budget amendments at least five days before the applicable hearing and retain final budgets and adopted amendments online for at least five years. Post tentative budgets at least five days before the applicable budget hearing. For budget amendments requiring governing-body action under Sections 129.06 or 166.241, Florida Statutes, post the proposed amendment at least five days before adoption; counties must also comply with applicable public-hearing notice requirements. Retain final budgets and adopted amendments online for at least five years.
- Provide tentative, adopted tentative, and final budgets in PDF or a similar downloadable format with the financial, staffing, debt, capital, reserve, fund balance, narrative, and graphical information required by the act.
- Publish an annual budget-development calendar by January 30 of each year and prepare and post quarterly employee-compensation summaries in the form required by the act.

- By October 15 each year, beginning in 2027, county and municipal budget officers must electronically submit the specified final-budget and economic-status information as prescribed format to the Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR).
- Conduct a public budget-reduction strategy workshop and post the required exercise at least 14 days before final budget adoption. The exercise must identify potential 10 percent reductions without compromising essential public services or legal obligations.
- These county and municipal requirements do not replace the separate requirements applicable to special districts under Section 189.016, Florida Statutes.

Annual Budget Document

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) established the Distinguished Budget Presentation Awards Program (Budget Awards Program) in 1984 to encourage and assist state and local governments to prepare budget documents of the very highest quality that reflect both the guidelines established by the National Advisory Council on State and Local Budgeting and the GFOA's best practices on budgeting and then to recognize individual governments that succeed in achieving that goal.

Documents submitted to the Budget Awards Program are reviewed by selected members of the GFOA professional staff and by outside reviewers with experience in public-sector budgeting.

References

- Sections 129.03 and 129.06, Florida Statutes – County budget preparation, adoption, execution, and amendment. Official link
- Section 166.241, Florida Statutes – Municipal fiscal years, budgets, and budget amendments. Official link
- Section 189.016, Florida Statutes – Special district reports, budgets, and audits. Official link
- Section 189.069, Florida Statutes – Special district official website requirements. Official link
- Chapter 200, Florida Statutes – Determination of millage and TRIM. Official link
- Section 218.32(1), Florida Statutes – Annual financial report requirements. Official link
- Chapter 373 Florida Statutes – Water Resources. Official link
- Chapter 200, Florida Statutes – Determination of millage and TRIM. Official Link
- Chapter 2026-161, Laws of Florida – Local Government Financial Transparency and Accountability Act. Official link
- Florida Department of Revenue – Truth in Millage resources. Official link
- Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research – Local government resources. Official link
- GFOA Budgeting Best Practices. Official link
- GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Awards Program. Official link

SECTION 5 – CAPITAL ASSETS

Overview

Capital assets typically represent one of the largest asset categories for local governments. They include tangible and intangible assets acquired for operational use that provide benefits beyond a single fiscal year. Common examples include land, land improvements, construction-in-progress, infrastructure, buildings, furniture, motor vehicles, audiovisual equipment, and software. Governments generally report capital assets they own or control in accordance with applicable accounting standards. Financed purchases and right-to-use arrangements should be evaluated under the applicable Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) standards rather than solely by legal title.

Statutory Requirements

Chapter 274, Florida Statutes, governs the administration of tangible personal property owned by certain local governments. Section 274.01, Florida Statutes, defines "governmental units" for purposes of the requirements as the governing board, commission or authority of a county or taxing district of the state or the sheriff of the county. Section 274.02, Florida Statutes, defines "property" as fixtures and other tangible personal property of a non-consumable nature and requires the State's Chief Financial Officer to establish, by rule, the requirements for the recording of property. Department of Financial Services (DFS) Rule 69I-73, Florida Administrative Code, prescribes requirements for recording and inventorying tangible personal property, marking of property items, and disposing of property items.

Capital Asset Valuation

Capital assets should be reported at historical cost, which may include: (1) costs necessary to place the asset in its intended location, such as freight; (2) costs necessary to prepare the asset for its intended use, such as installation or site preparation; and (3) subsequent additions or improvements that enhance the asset's functionality or extend its expected useful life. Routine repair and maintenance costs are typically excluded. If historical cost information is unavailable, estimated historical cost may be used. Donated capital assets should be reported at acquisition value as of the donation date.

Capital Asset Capitalization and Accountability

Any asset that benefits more than one fiscal year potentially could be classified as a capital asset. As a practical matter, not all items that meet the definition of a capital asset should be capitalized for reporting purposes. Local government officials should establish a dollar value or capitalization threshold that capital assets must exceed if they are to be capitalized. Other considerations, as recommended by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), include:

- Items capitalized should have an estimated useful life of at least two years from the date of acquisition.
- Capitalization thresholds are best applied to individual items rather than to groups of similar items unless the effect of doing so would be to eliminate a significant portion of total capital assets (e.g., books of a library district).
- GFOA recommends that capitalization thresholds generally not be set below $5,000 for an individual item. For federal award purposes, 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 200.1 defines equipment using the lesser of the recipient's capitalization level or $10,000. Florida's separate property-record threshold under Rule 69I-73.002, Florida Administrative Code, remains $5,000 for covered governmental units. Governments should separately document their

financial-reporting capitalization policy, Florida property-record requirements, and federal award property-management requirements.

When capital assets are not capitalized, governments should still ensure that adequate control and accountability is maintained, especially in certain circumstances, such as:

- For governmental units subject to Chapter 274, Florida Statutes, and Rule Chapter 69I-73, Florida Administrative Code, property with a value or cost of $5,000 or more and a projected useful life of one year or more must be recorded for inventory purposes.
- Items below $5,000 are not automatically required by Rule 69I-73.002 to be recorded solely because they are attractive. Governments should establish local policies for identifying and controlling sensitive or attractive items below the statutory property-record threshold.
- Sensitive or attractive items may require special attention because they:
    - Pose a risk to public safety and could be the source of potential liability.
    - Are assets that must be accounted for pursuant to a legal or contractual provision.
    - Are assets that are easily transportable and readily marketable or easily diverted to personal use.

Many governments use a perpetual inventory system that is updated for additions and deletions. Periodic physical verification remains necessary to confirm accountability and the accuracy of the inventory. GFOA recommends that governments inventory their tangible capital assets, at least on a test basis, no less often than every five years. Governmental units subject to Chapter 274, Florida Statutes, and Rule Chapter 69I-73, Florida Administrative Code, must conduct the inventories required by those provisions, including annual inventory and inventory when custody changes.

Capital Asset Maintenance and Replacement

Local governments should establish a system for assessing the condition of capital assets and develop a plan and budget for capital asset maintenance and replacement. Assessing the condition of capital assets can be done in conjunction with the inventory process. GFOA issued best practice recommendations for this process in its Capital Asset Assessment, Maintenance and Replacement Policy.

Depreciation

Depreciation is the systematic and rational allocation of the cost of a capital asset over its estimated useful life. Land and construction-in-progress are typically not depreciated. Local government officials need to establish a useful life and depreciation method for each class of capital asset. Straight-line depreciation is the most common method. The composite depreciation method is applied to a certain type of capital asset rather than to an individual capital asset.

Past experience should be used to determine the estimated useful life of an asset. When the government has no past experience to rely upon, the experiences of other governments can be useful. However, when depending on others' experiences, the government should take into consideration differences in quality of materials that comprise the asset, differences in the extent of use or the intended uses of the asset, and environmental differences between assets held by others and those acquired by the government. Once established, estimated useful lives should be periodically compared to actual experiences to make adjustments as necessary.

Capital Assets Reporting

GASB Statement No. 34

GASB Statement No. 34 requires capital assets to be reported on the government-wide Statement of Net Position and in the Notes to Financial Statements. Each local government must make four distinctions:

- Capital assets related to governmental activities that must be reported separately from those related to business-type activities.
- Different major classes of capital assets.
- Capital assets that are not being depreciated.
- Accumulated depreciation that must be reported separately for each major class of depreciable capital assets.

In addition, the following must also be reported

- The historical cost of capital assets (or their fair value at the time of donation).
- Accumulated depreciation.
- Additions during the period.
- Deletions during the period.

The format of the disclosure must demonstrate the change between the beginning and ending book values.

GASB Statement No. 104

For fiscal years beginning after June 15, 2025, GASB Statement No. 104 requires specified lease assets, subscription assets, right-to-use assets, and other intangible assets to be disclosed separately and establishes additional disclosure requirements for capital assets held for sale.

GASB Statement No. 87 and No. 96

Require governments to recognize right-to-use assets and related liabilities for leases and subscription-based IT arrangements (SBITAs) on the Statement of Net Position. Both standards apply to agreements longer than 12 months and require amortization of the asset over the lease or subscription term, with note disclosures summarizing key terms and future payment schedules. Short-term agreements are expensed as incurred.

References

- Chapter 274, Florida Statutes - Tangible personal property owned by local governments. Official link
- Rule Chapter 69I-73, Florida Administrative Code - Tangible personal property owned by local governments. Official link
- 2 CFR Section 200.1 - Federal definition of equipment and capitalization threshold. Official link
- GASB Statement No. 34 – Basic Financial Statements. Official link
- GASB Statement No. 87 – Leases. Official link
- GASB Statement No. 96 – SBITAs. Official link
- GASB Statement No. 104 - Disclosure of Certain Capital Assets. Official link
- Florida Department of Financial Services - Local Government Financial Reporting. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association – Capital Asset Management Resources. Official link

SECTION 6 – CAPITAL PLANNING

Capital Planning:

Capital planning is a disciplined, multi-year process that enables governments to anticipate infrastructure needs, preserve public assets, and align capital investments with community priorities and available financial resources. By evaluating asset conditions, service demands, life-cycle costs, operating impacts, funding capacity, and potential risks before assets reach critical failure, the process supports timely maintenance, rehabilitation, and replacement while reducing reliance on costly emergency responses. An effective capital planning cycle strengthens fiscal sustainability, promotes informed decision-making, supports service continuity and demonstrates responsible stewardship to residents, lenders, investors, and credit-rating agencies.

Capital Planning Process

Many local governments adopt a multi-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), often covering five years or more. The planning horizon, project threshold, and definition of a capital project should be established by local policy and aligned with the government's capitalization, budgeting, debt, and financial-planning policies. The CIP is typically updated annually as part of the budget process.

Major elements of the CIP process include: (1) conducting an inventory of present physical assets (often generated by the Finance Department, physically verified/confirmed by all departments); (2) the completion of an asset maintenance and replacement schedule submitted by each operating department requesting capital items to be included in the budget; and (3) a project timetable containing project requests for future needs.

The Finance Department or the Budget Department consolidate all requests filed by the departments and conduct a financial analysis of revenues and expenditures to evaluate all CIP proposals while correlating these proposals to pre-approved documents, such as resolutions and ordinances, comprehensive Plans or Master Plans.

Priority rankings for proposed CIP projects are developed through a structured evaluation process that considers factors including, but not limited to, legal mandates, funding availability, life-cycle costs, operating impacts, project readiness, health and safety considerations, asset condition, service needs, and departmental assessments. Projects are also evaluated for alignment with the City's Strategic Plan, applicable master plans, executive leadership recommendations, and the City Council's priorities.

In many jurisdictions, the Planning and Zoning Board plays an advisory role in developing the Capital Improvement Plan, as prescribed by the local charter, code, or adopted policies. The Board reviews proposed projects for consistency with the comprehensive plan, land-use policies, anticipated growth, and the community's long-term infrastructure needs and provides its recommendations. The recommended CIP is then submitted to the governing body for formal consideration and adoption, either as part of the annual budget or through a separate resolution or ordinance, as required by local policy.

Following adoption, the capital-planning process continues through project implementation, monitoring, reporting, amendment, and closeout. Completed projects should undergo a financial and administrative closeout, including reconciliation of funding sources, capitalization of eligible assets, release or reallocation of unused balances, and evaluation of project outcomes and fiscal impact in the operating budget. Unfunded capital needs and deferred maintenance should remain documented to support future funding decisions.

Common Projects Included in the CIP

The most common major capital project categories included in the CIP are:

- Transportation and Mobility – Roads, sidewalks, bridges, alleys, traffic-calming devices, transit, bicycle paths, and pedestrian improvements.
- Water and Sewer Infrastructure – Water treatment, distribution lines, sewer systems, lift stations, fire hydrants, and utility facilities.
- Stormwater and Flood Mitigation – Drainage systems, pump stations, canal improvements, swales, stormwater retrofits, and flood-control projects.
- Parks and Recreation – Parks, playgrounds, pools, athletic fields, community centers, trails, courts, and recreational facilities.
- Public Safety – Police facilities, emergency-management infrastructure, security systems, communications equipment, and related improvements.
- General Government Facilities – City Hall, administrative buildings, maintenance facilities, elevators, roofs, restrooms, and other municipal buildings.
- Technology and Communications – Enterprise systems, cybersecurity, network infrastructure, telecommunications, audiovisual systems, and digital-service improvements.
- Fleet and Major Equipment – Vehicles, heavy equipment, specialized machinery, and scheduled fleet replacements.
- Economic and Community Development – Commercial corridors, streetscape improvements, redevelopment projects, affordable housing, and neighborhood revitalization.
- Environmental Sustainability and Resilience – Energy efficiency, renewable energy, shoreline protection, tree canopy, environmental restoration, and climate-resilience projects.

Funding Capital Projects

Funding for capital projects could come from various sources, including the general fund or general revenue, enterprise funds, grants (possibly with matching requirements), debt proceeds (general obligation or revenue bonds), special taxes or assessments, or impact or user fees.

References

- GASB Statement No. 34 - Basic Financial Statements and Management's Discussion and Analysis. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association - Capital planning policies. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association - Capital project monitoring and reporting. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association – Capital Planning and Asset Management, Multi-Year Capital Planning. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association – Capital Planning. Best practices, resources, and case studies from GFOA on capital planning and infrastructure. Official link

SECTION 7 – CASH MANAGEMENT AND INVESTING

Overview

Pursuant to Section 280.03, Florida Statutes, all public deposits must be deposited in a qualified public depository (QPD). "Public deposits," as defined in Section 280.02(23), Florida Statutes, include time deposit accounts, demand deposit accounts, and nonnegotiable certificates of deposit, but exclude deposit notes and non-deposit accounts such as repurchase or reverse-repurchase agreements, securities, mutual funds, and similar investments. "Qualified public depository" is defined in Section 280.02(26), Florida Statutes. Governments should periodically confirm that all public deposits are held with a QPD.

For purposes of this section, "investments" include certain cash deposits and investments authorized under Section 218.415, Florida Statutes. Investing public funds is a core responsibility of many local government finance professionals and can be complex. Finance officers should understand the entity's investment policy, statutory authority, cash-flow needs, and principal risks and should obtain qualified assistance when necessary.

The main objectives of effective cash management and investing public funds are, in this specific order, to ensure the safety of principal, provide sufficient liquidity to pay obligations when due, and earn a reasonable rate of return on invested funds. Typically, the rate of return earned will be inversely related to the other two objectives; however, the first two objectives must remain primary to the third. An easy method to remember the objectives is by utilizing the acronym S.L.Y. (Safety, Liquidity, and Yield).

An appropriate balance among safety, liquidity, and yield can provide a reasonable return while protecting principal and maintaining adequate liquidity. For example, funds held in an FDIC-insured checking account are safe and liquid, but amounts exceeding operating liquidity needs may be eligible for investment in a higher-yielding authorized vehicle without compromising safety or required liquidity.

Investment Strategy

The main strategic decision that must be made is whether to invest "passively" or "actively". A passive investment strategy essentially means that securities are purchased for the yield earned and held until maturity, assuming that the securities are non-callable. Active investing is an investment strategy involving ongoing buying and selling actions by the investor. Active investors purchase investments and continuously monitor their activity to exploit profitable conditions. Studies have shown that the majority of active investment managers do not beat their established benchmarks in any given year, both with equity investments and fixed income investments. And it is even more difficult to consistently replicate above average returns from year to year. So, it is prudent to evaluate and compare both active and passive investment strategy results over 1, 3, 5, and 10 years before investing any funds.

The key determinants of whether to adopt a passive or an active investment strategy include:

- Time Available
- Risk Tolerance
- Expertise
- Need or Desire for Additional Income
- Political Environment

In general, the more time, risk tolerance, and expertise that is available, the more able a government is to adopt an active investment strategy; however, the political environment must be such that realized investment losses (if any) are understood and accepted.

Most small governments tend to adopt passive investment strategies to reduce the amount of effort spent in purchasing securities and to eliminate the risk associated with securities trading. Most passive investment strategies include the following practices:

- Securities are held to maturity, rather than traded for gains.
- Securities are purchased frequently throughout the year to achieve an average weighted yield, rather than purchased sporadically in order to time the market.
- Securities purchased are relatively low risk, which reduces the need to closely monitor changes in the issuer's financial strategy.

Florida Statutes

The following statutes are of primary interest in managing public funds:

- Section 215.855, Florida Statutes - Investment Manager External Communication.
- Chapter 218, Florida Statutes - Part IV – Investment of Local Government Surplus Funds.
- Section 218.415, Florida Statutes - Local Government Investment Policies.
- Chapter 219, Florida Statutes - County Public Money Handling by State and County.
- Chapter 280, Florida Statutes - Security for Public Deposits.

Major Guidelines and Requirements

Pursuant to Section 218.415(17), Florida Statutes, local governments without a written investment policy may invest in:

- The State of Florida Local Government Surplus Trust Fund or any intergovernmental investment pool authorized pursuant to the Florida Interlocal Cooperation Act
- SEC registered money market funds with the highest credit quality rating from a nationally recognized rating agency
- Interest-bearing time deposits or savings accounts in qualified public depositories as defined in Section 280.02, Florida Statutes
- Direct obligations of the U.S. Treasury

Pursuant to Section 218.415(16), Florida Statutes, local governments with a written investment policy may invest in the items listed in number one above, in addition to:

- Federal agencies and instrumentalities
- Securities of, or interest in, any open-end or closed-end investments
- Management-type investment as further described in Section 218.415, Florida Statutes
- Other investments authorized by law or ordinance
- For local governments that adopt an investment policy, the policy must comply with the requirements of Sections 218.415(1) through (15), Florida Statutes
- For governments operating under a written investment policy, Section 218.415(14), Florida Statutes, requires officials responsible for investment decisions or the chief financial officer to complete 8 hours of investment-related continuing education annually

Risk

There are different types of risks associated with cash management and investing that must be understood and managed to ensure the safety of principal.

- *Credit Risk* – The risk that an issuer or other counterparty to an investment will not fulfill its obligations. This risk can be managed by purchasing only highly rated securities and monitoring the credit worthiness of issuers.
- *Concentration of Credit Risk* – The risk of loss attributed to the extent of investments held from a single issuer. This risk can be managed by limiting the amount of investments held from any single issuer (diversification).
- *Custodial Credit Risk* – The risk that, in the event of the failure of a depository financial institution, a government will not be able to recover deposits or will not be able to recover collateral securities that are in the possession of an outside party.
- *Interest Rate Risk* – The risk that changes in interest rates will adversely affect the fair value of an investment. When rates rise, security values fall and vice versa. This risk can be managed by matching investment maturities with accepted disbursements, purchasing shorter-term securities, and staggering maturity dates throughout the year (laddering the portfolio).
- *Liquidity Risk* – The risk that securities must be sold before anticipated to provide liquidity, which may result in a loss of principal. See interest rate risk discussion above.

Quick Tips and Caveats

- Never invest in any security that is not fully understood, even if the security is an approved investment in an investment policy.
- Many governments adopt a “buy and hold” investment strategy to reduce administrative time required for investment related activities. This strategy typically employs a “laddered” portfolio, whereby securities are purchased on a regular recurring basis (weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc.), in relatively equal amounts, which provides for recurring liquidity and generates an average rate of return over an interest rate cycle.
- Avoid inordinately extending maturities in search of higher yields, because market values on long-term securities can decline rapidly in a rising interest rate market.
- Manage maturity exposure in accordance with the investment policy, forecasted cash-flow needs, and established interest-rate-risk limits.
- Use a documented maturity or duration strategy, such as laddering, rather than relying primarily on forecasts of future interest rates.
- Reconciliations of bank account and investment account balances to the accounting records should be performed on a timely, routine basis to provide reasonable assurance that cash and investments agree with recorded amounts, permit prompt detection and correction of unrecorded and improperly recorded cash transactions or bank errors and provide for the efficient and economic management of cash resources.
- When deciding whether to invest and when investing public funds, make decisions based solely on pecuniary factors as defined in Section 218.415(24)(a), Florida Statutes (added by Section 13 of Chapter 2023-28, Laws of Florida).

Investment Reports

Section 218.415(15), Florida Statutes, requires a written investment policy to provide for annual or more frequent reporting of investment activities. The officials responsible for investment decisions or the chief financial officer must prepare periodic reports for the legislative and governing body that include

securities in the portfolio by class or type, book value, income earned, and market value as of the report date; the reports must be available to the public. Many governments also provide monthly or quarterly internal reports. Typical items reported include:

- Types of investments held.
- Average rate of return for period reported and year to date.
- Average maturity of portfolio.
- Compliance with investment policy provisions.
- Changes in investment strategy.
- Comparison of portfolio return with benchmarks.
- Interest rate environment changes.

External Report Annual Public Depositor Report to be filed with the Florida Department of Financial Services by November 30, pursuant to Section 280.17(6), Florida Statutes.

Depository, Broker, and Dealer Relations

Depositories are usually retained through a competitive bid process conducted by the local government directly or by another government that allows other governments to "piggy-back" on an established contract. Relationships generally extend 5 years before rebidding, due to extensive switching costs. Typically, one depository is selected for all cash management and investing safekeeping services to achieve an economy of scale, which lowers the overall cost of services and reduces administrative time.

Brokers and dealers are usually selected by an informal selection process. Criteria used may include office proximity, services provided, references from other governments, and competitiveness of bids. If brokers or dealers become non-competitive, other providers can be substituted relatively easily. Retaining three to five broker/dealers is usually sufficient to ensure adequate competition, depending on the portfolio size, frequency of purchases, and services required.

Purchasing Investments

All securities should be purchased using the "delivery versus payment" (DVP) method through an independent third party. This method provides for delivery of securities in exchange for payment and helps protect the government's interest in the transaction.

The Florida Qualified Public Deposit System enhances the safety of principal if funds are invested with member banks. Investing with non-QPD institutions may result in higher yields, but at a greater risk.

Where possible, obtain more than one quote on securities purchased to ensure the highest rate of return has been obtained. Competition will usually enhance the rate of return achieved. Similar securities can be substituted if maturity dates and credit risk are comparable. For example, federal instrumentalities (Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae, etc.) are usually comparable in credit risk. Requesting quotations on specific security types and specific maturity dates (or narrow date ranges) is a common practice to facilitate comparison of competitive offers.

Social, Political or Ideological Activism Prohibited in Banking, Investment and Financing Decisions

In accordance with Chapter 2023-28, Laws of Florida, banking services, investments, investment managers, and other service providers are required to use "pecuniary factors" and to not sacrifice investment return or undertake additional investment risk to promote nonpecuniary factors such as the furtherance of social, political or ideological interests. Pecuniary factors are factors prudently expected to have a material effect on risk or returns of an investment based on appropriate investment horizons

consistent with applicable investment objectives and funding policy. In addition, there are Prohibitions against considering social, political or ideological interests in government contracting. For more information, see Sections 218.415, 287.05701, and 215.855, Florida Statutes.

References

- Section 218.415, Florida Statutes - Local government investment policies. Official link
- Chapter 280, Florida Statutes - Florida Security for Public Deposits Act. Official link
- Section 280.17, Florida Statutes - Public depositor duties and reporting. Official link
- Florida PRIME - State Board of Administration. Official link
- Florida Department of Financial Services - Treasury and qualified public depository resources. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association - Investment management best practices. Official link
- Florida Court Clerks & Comptrollers – Investment policy best practices. Official Link

SECTION 8 – CASH RECEIPTS/ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE

Overview

Most local governments collect revenue from the public through various channels such as in-person transactions, mailed payments, and electronic methods including cash, personal checks, credit and debit card transactions, or money orders. Additionally, many jurisdictions facilitate online payment options and direct debit arrangements for recurring payments such as monthly utility bill payments. Collections may occur at multiple locations throughout the government's operations including:

- Tax Payments
- Utility Payments
- Various Fees and Charges
- Court Collections
- Permits and Licenses
- Other Service Charges
- Intergovernmental Revenues

Each payment must be thoroughly documented, either by issuing prenumbered manual receipts or by using electronic devices, such as cash registers and/or computers, that generate receipts. For ongoing services, like utilities, governments need reliable accounting systems to track what is owed and what has been paid by users. Maintaining accounts receivable records, whether manually or electronically, is a key aspect of internal controls for payment processing. These records are also essential for preparing interim and annual financial statements and for evaluating the financial status of the local government.

A comprehensive system of internal controls is necessary to ensure that every amount due is properly collected, recorded, documented, and deposited into the government's accounts. Documentation should provide both detailed and summary information that is crucial for balancing, reconciliation, and auditing. End-of-day procedures should require reconciling all records with the total cash, checks, and other payments received, and recorded daily in the accounting system, either manually or electronic integration between the payment processor and the government's accounting system. Implementing such controls.

Small Government Considerations

Smaller governments often struggle with separation of duties due to having a limited number of employees. Effective and efficient oversight over receipts and receivables to detect and deter loss due to error and fraud is best established through strong management commitment to this objective, and the implementation of revenue control procedures and policies that are appropriate for the size and employee count of the government External auditors can provide useful guidance for evaluating internal control and fraud prevention. Such guidance may be in the form of checklists or programs utilized by the auditors to evaluate internal controls during the annual audit. Organizations representing or including government finance practitioners also offer publications and resources on the topics of internal controls and fraud awareness.

Small governments should carefully evaluate, choose and maintain a suitable computerized system and payment system based on budget and information technology capability. Local governments can turn to external service providers or financial institutions that can offer or run software applications remotely to lower the systems costs of maintenance, support, and disaster recovery or provide a platform of fraud prevention.

Frequent Challenges

Frequent challenges often encountered by local governments in establishing appropriate controls over collections including the following:

- Failure of management to establish internal controls, evaluate the continued effectiveness of the controls established, or document the monitoring of adherence to established procedures.
- Lack of adequate separation of duties related to physical access to the payments and the recording of the payments. For example, placement of responsibilities for receipt of money, issuance of receipts, recording of collections in the accounting records, preparation of bank deposits, and reconciliation of collections to amounts deposited with one individual increases the possibility that errors or fraud would not be detected.
- Lack of documentation at the initial point of collections for payments received through the mail, or the handling of payments by multiple employees who perform different duties in the receipt and processing of payments prior to deposit. The custody of payments should be documented from the point of receipt to the point of deposit.
- More than one person operating out of a single cash register or drawer. This can preclude identification of the individual responsible for any shortages.
- Failure to utilize pre-numbered forms or computer-generated receipting alternatives to document payments. This documentation is necessary to establish that all receipts have been deposited and recorded in the accounting records.
- Failure to utilize programs offered by financial institutions for fraud prevention
- Failure to deposit receipts timely and/or properly secure collections prior to deposit.
- Failure to report missing collections to the proper authorities.
- Failure to record receipts and receivables in accordance with GAAP. To help ensure the proper recording of receipts and receivables, local governments should consult the Uniform Accounting System Manual promulgated by DFS.
- Lack of reconciliation of daily collections (cash, check, and credit card payments) with the records used to document the receipt of payments by someone not involved in the actual collection process. Such supervisory review is particularly essential for small governments with limited ability to separate the duties related to collections.
- Lack of adequate procedures for the follow-up of unpaid fees, including failure to assess late charges or other penalties, or to discontinue service, in accordance with Florida law or local ordinances. Policies and procedures should be established to ensure that non-payment of fees is promptly detected and addressed in accordance with the Florida law and the local government's ordinances and policies regarding delinquent accounts.
- Lack of cash collection policies for employees accepting payments defining the actions taken by management for cash short/over occurrences which provide a schedule of verbal or written reprimands, including conditions of termination for larger dollar amounts or greater occurrences when daily cash reconciliations do not balance. No force balancing should be permitted.

Governments should work with their external auditors to resolve any concerns related to the implementation of effective controls over cash receipts and accounts receivable, including the identification of compensating controls when the local government does not have sufficient staff to properly separate duties.

References

- Section 219.07, Florida Statutes - Deposit of public money. Official link
- Chapter 280, Florida Statutes - Florida Security for Public Deposits Act. Official link
- Florida Department of Financial Services - Local Government Financial Reporting. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association - Revenue collection and internal control resources. Official link

SECTION 9 – INTERNAL CONTROLS AND FRAUD PREVENTION

Overview

Internal control is a process carried out by the governing body, management, and employees to provide reasonable assurance that the government will achieve its objectives related to operations, reporting, and compliance. Internal controls are part of day-to-day operations and are not solely the responsibility of the Finance Department. Department managers and employees are responsible for the controls within the activities they supervise or perform, while finance personnel often play a central role in establishing, coordinating, and monitoring financial controls.

An effective system of internal control reduces the risk of error, fraud, waste, abuse, noncompliance, and loss of public assets. No system can eliminate all risk because controls may be affected by judgment, human error, collusion, management override, technology changes, or other changing conditions. Controls should therefore be designed in proportion to the government's size, complexity, staffing, systems, and risk profile and should be reviewed periodically to ensure they remain effective.

Statutory Requirements

Section 218.33(3), Florida Statutes, requires each local governmental entity to establish and maintain internal controls designed to:

- Prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse as defined in Section 11.45(1), Florida Statutes.
- Promote and encourage compliance with applicable laws, rules, contracts, grant agreements, and best practices.
- Support economical and efficient operations.
- Ensure reliability of financial records and reports.
- Safeguard assets.

These requirements apply across the organization. Financial controls should be integrated with operational, information technology, procurement, human resources, grant, and program controls rather than treated as a separate year-end or audit function.

Internal Control Framework

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recommends that state and local governments use the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO) Internal Control—Integrated Framework as the conceptual basis for designing, implementing, operating, and evaluating internal control. The framework consists of five interrelated components:

- Control Environment – Establishes the organizational foundation for internal control through integrity, ethical values, oversight, organizational structure, assignment of authority and responsibility, competence, and accountability.
- Risk Assessment – Identifies and analyzes risks that could prevent the government from achieving its objectives, including risks arising from fraud, changes in operations, technology, laws, staffing, vendors, or programs.
- Control Activities – Includes policies and procedures that reduce identified risks, such as approvals, authorizations, reconciliations, access controls, verifications, reviews, and segregation of duties.
- Information and Communication – Ensures that relevant, reliable information is identified, documented, communicated, and available to employees and decision makers who need it to perform control responsibilities.

- Monitoring – Uses ongoing supervision, periodic evaluations, audits, exception reporting, and corrective-action follow-up to determine whether controls are present and functioning effectively.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office's 2025 Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government, commonly known as the Green Book, provides a complementary public-sector framework and may also be used by state and local governments. Governments administering federal awards should also comply with applicable internal-control requirements under 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 200.303 and the terms of each award. See Section 24 – Grants for additional grant-related requirements.

Control Environment and Accountability

A strong control environment begins with the governing body and senior management. Policies and actions should demonstrate that integrity, ethical conduct, compliance, and accountability are expected throughout the organization. Key practices include:

- Establishing clear organizational structures, lines of authority, approval levels, and responsibility for key financial and operational processes
- Maintaining written policies and procedures that are current, accessible, and consistent with applicable laws, contracts, grant requirements, and adopted policies
- Providing employees with appropriate training and ensuring that employees assigned financial responsibilities possess the knowledge and competence needed to perform them
- Holding managers and employees accountable for complying with established controls and for correcting identified deficiencies
- Requiring disclosure and appropriate management of conflicts of interest and other ethical concerns

Risk Assessment and Fraud Risk

Governments should periodically assess financial and operational risks and update the assessment when significant changes occur. Changes in personnel, systems, banking arrangements, payment methods, vendors, organizational structure, laws, grant requirements, or service delivery can create new risks or make existing controls ineffective.

Fraud risk should be considered as part of the assessment. Areas that commonly warrant attention include:

- Cash receipts, deposits, refunds, adjustments, and accounts receivable
- Vendor creation and changes to vendor payment or banking information
- Accounts payable, purchasing cards, electronic payments, ACH and wire transfers
- Payroll changes, time reporting, overtime, benefits, and terminated or inactive employees
- Procurement, contract administration, conflicts of interest, bid manipulation, and split purchases
- Manual journal entries, accounting estimates, reconciliations, and management override of established processes
- Inventory, equipment, capital assets, and other property susceptible to theft or misuse
- Grant expenditures, eligibility, matching requirements, subrecipient activity, and restricted funding
- Information system access, social engineering, payment-redirection fraud, cybersecurity events, and unauthorized changes to financial data

The results of significant risk assessments should be documented, together with the controls or other responses selected to address identified risks and the individuals responsible for implementing or monitoring those responses.

Segregation of Duties and Compensating Controls

Segregation of duties is a fundamental internal-control principle. To the extent practical, responsibility for the following functions should be assigned to different individuals:

- Authorization or approval of a transaction
- Custody of cash, checks, inventory, purchasing cards, electronic-payment credentials, or other assets
- Recording or posting transactions in the accounting or subsidiary system
- Reconciliation, verification, or independent review of the transaction and related records

Smaller governments may not have enough staff to fully separate all incompatible duties. In those situations, management should identify the resulting risk and establish documented compensating controls. Examples include independent supervisory review of bank statements and reconciliations, dual approval of electronic payments, secondary verification of vendor banking changes, review of exception or audit-log reports, governing-body review of selected transactions, periodic rotation of duties, or independent review by qualified personnel who are not responsible for the underlying transaction.

Key Financial Control Activities

The specific controls needed will depend on each government's operations and systems. Common financial control activities include:

- Cash and receivables – Document collections at the point of receipt, reconcile collections to deposits and accounting records, restrict access to cash, and provide independent review of adjustments, refunds, and write-offs. See Section 8 – Cash Receipts/Accounts Receivable.
- Disbursements and vendor management – Require appropriate authorization and supporting documentation, independently verify significant vendor-master or banking changes, restrict access to payment files and credentials, and use layered controls for ACH, wire, check, and other disbursements.
- Payroll – Require authorized personnel actions, control changes to pay rates and deductions, reconcile payroll and related liabilities, review exception reports, and provide final review or approval independent of payroll preparation. See Section 14 – Payroll.
- Purchasing and purchasing cards – Enforce procurement thresholds and approval requirements, prohibit split purchases, establish card limits and allowable uses, require timely supporting documentation, and provide supervisory review. See Section 16 – Purchasing.
- Journal entries and financial reporting – Restrict the ability to create and post manual entries, require adequate support and independent approval for significant or unusual entries, reconcile subsidiary records to the general ledger, and review financial reports for unexpected variances or unusual activity.
- System access – Use unique user accounts, role-based access and least privilege; appropriately restrict privileged access; promptly revise or deactivate access when responsibilities change or employment ends; and periodically review user access. See Section 23 – Information Technology.
- Capital assets and inventory – Maintain complete property records, restrict custody where practical, document additions and disposals, and perform required physical inventories and reconciliations. See Section 5 – Capital Assets.

- Grants – Establish award-specific project codes, review allowability and eligibility, reconcile expenditures and drawdowns, monitor subrecipients when applicable, and maintain complete supporting documentation. See Section 24 – Grants.

Fraud Reporting and Response

GFOA recommends that governments establish policies and procedures that encourage and facilitate the reporting of suspected fraud, waste, abuse, and questionable accounting or auditing practices. Reporting mechanisms should be appropriate for the size and structure of the organization and may include confidential or anonymous reporting options.

Policies should identify how concerns are reported, who receives and evaluates reports, how potential conflicts are avoided, and how matters are documented and resolved. The individual or unit responsible for investigating a concern should be sufficiently independent of the activity or person involved. Appropriate steps may include preserving records and electronic evidence, consulting legal counsel or human resources, notifying an inspector general or law-enforcement agency when appropriate, and documenting the disposition of the matter. Governments should also ensure that employees are informed of applicable protections under the Florida Whistle-blower's Act and other laws or policies prohibiting retaliation.

Monitoring, Deficiencies, and Corrective Action

Internal controls should be monitored throughout the year rather than evaluated only during the annual audit. Supervisory reviews, reconciliations, exception reports, access reviews, inventory counts, management reports, internal audits, and other periodic evaluations can provide evidence that controls are functioning as intended.

When a control deficiency, audit finding, error pattern, suspected fraud, or other weakness is identified, management should evaluate the cause and potential impact, determine whether the issue is isolated or systemic, assign responsibility for corrective action, establish a reasonable completion date, and verify that the corrective action is implemented and effective. Significant or recurring deficiencies should be communicated to appropriate executive management and the governing body or audit committee.

GFOA recommends that every government consider the feasibility of establishing a formal internal audit function. Where a separate function is not practical, periodic internal-control reviews may be assigned to qualified personnel independent of the activity being reviewed or obtained from an outside provider, subject to applicable independence and procurement considerations.

Periodic Review

At least periodically, and whenever significant organizational or system changes occur, management should review whether internal controls remain appropriate. The review should consider staffing and segregation of duties, user access, bank and payment controls, vendor-management procedures, changes in laws and grant requirements, new or modified systems, unresolved audit findings, known fraud or error trends, and emerging technology or cybersecurity risks. Policies, procedures, training, and control assignments should be updated when needed.

References

- Section 218.33, Florida Statutes - Local governmental entities; uniform fiscal years, accounting practices, and internal controls. Official link
- Section 11.45, Florida Statutes - Definitions of fraud, waste, and abuse and Auditor General authority. Official link

- Sections 112.3187-112.31895, Florida Statutes - Florida Whistle-blower's Act. Official link
- 2 CFR § 200.303 - Internal controls for federal awards. Official link
- Florida Auditor General - Rules of the Auditor General, including Chapter 10.550. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association - Internal Control Framework. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association - Internal Control Environment. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association - Whistleblowing. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association - Internal Audit Function. Official link
- Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission - Internal Control—Integrated Framework. Official link
- U.S. Government Accountability Office - Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government (2025 Green Book). Official link

SECTION 10 – DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY

Overview

From capital projects to short-term financing needs, financial intermediaries and traditional lenders offer tax exempt and taxable debt financing alternatives.

Florida Statutory Citations

The Internal Revenue Code, Florida Statutes, local charter and/or ordinances outline legal borrowing authority, restrictions, and compliance requirements while the Florida Constitution and Statutes authorize the issuance of bonds by counties, municipalities, and certain special districts.

- Section 125.013, Florida Statutes, General Obligation; Revenue Bonds
- Chapters 130 and 132, Florida Statutes, County Bonds & General Refunding Law
- Section 154.219, Florida Statutes, Revenue Bonds
- Chapter 159, Florida Statutes, Bond Financing
- Section 163.01(7), Florida Statutes, Florida Interlocal Cooperation Act of 1969
- Chapter 166, Part II, Florida Statutes, Municipal Borrowing
- Section 189.051, Florida Statutes, Bond Issuance (Special Districts)
- Section 215.43, Florida Statutes, Public Bonds, Notes, and Other Securities
- Section 215.431, Florida Statutes, Issuance of Bond Anticipation Notes
- Section 215.681, Florida Statutes, ESG Bonds and Prohibitions
- Section 215.84, Florida Statutes, Government Bonds and Maximum Rate of Interest
- Section 215.845, Florida Statutes, Certain Special Laws Establishing Interest Rates on Bonds Prohibited
- Chapter 218, Part III, Florida Statutes, Local Financial Management & Reporting

Policy Statements and Objectives

Many governmental units adopt additional financial parameters over and above those required by law. Such policy guidelines often reflect overall constituent and management philosophy regarding public finance. Debt policies often include: (1) committing to complete and full public disclosure of all financing transactions, (2) mandating specific required uses to borrow funds, (3) restricting overall debt service as a percentage of available resources to annual debt requirements, (4) requiring interest rate analysis to be conducted for each issuance as well as at regular intervals, (5) issuing debt for periods not to exceed the useful life or average useful lives of the project or projects to be financed with debt proceeds, and (6) setting benchmarks for savings on proposed refinancings.

These are just examples of policy statements reflecting prudent borrowing practices and sound financial management.

Comprehensive Strategic Financial Plan

To determine if debt financing can benefit a governmental unit, a debt management policy, as part of a comprehensive strategic financial plan, should be in place. The financial plan should contain guidance on strategies, objectives, and requirements of debt issuance, in an effort to support the best allocation of the local government's financial resources. The debt management policy should provide local governments with a procedural framework to assess the costs and benefits of overall debt financing or potential findings, considering existing capital planning, budgetary, investment, and reporting policies.

Types of Debt

A wide range of financing vehicles, with a variety of terms can meet most municipal needs, including:

- "Bond anticipation notes" are notes issued by a governmental unit in anticipation of the issuance of general obligation or revenue bonds.
- "Commercial paper" is short-term debt (from one to 270 days) to finance capital projects. Commercial paper provides an alternative to the traditional fixed-rate debt for both short-term (interim) financing needs and possibly for diversification of the long-term debt portfolio.
- "General obligation bonds" are obligations secured by the full faith and credit of a governmental unit payable from the proceeds of ad valorem taxes.
- "Limited general obligation bonds" are obligations secured by the full faith and credit of a governmental unit payable from the proceeds of ad valorem taxes, subject to a maximum millage rate.
- "Limited revenue bonds" are obligations issued by a governmental unit to pay the cost of improvements of a project or combination of projects, payable from funds of a governmental unit, exclusive of ad valorem taxes, special assessments, or earnings from such projects.
- "Revenue bonds" are obligations of a governmental unit issued to pay the cost of improvements of a self-liquidating project, or combination of projects payable from the earnings of such project(s) and any other special funds authorized to be pledged as additional security.
- "Special assessment bonds" are bonds that provide for capital improvements paid in whole or in part by levying and collecting special assessments on the abutting, adjoining, contiguous, or other specially benefited property.

Bond Pools

A bond pool offers governmental units an opportunity to joint venture with other entities to borrow funds for capital improvements, renovations, fixed asset additions, or refinancing existing debt. Advantages of bond pools may include improved marketability and reduction in issuance costs through economies of scale. Bond pools may provide either long-term fixed-rate or variable rate debt products.

Bank Borrowings

Financial institutions offer short-term financing needs for governmental units to alleviate temporary cash flow timing differences (e.g., bond, revenue, or tax anticipation notes). In addition, banks can provide longer-term financing solutions for capital projects. Traditional revolving credit facilities and other financing vehicles, such as leasing arrangements, can also provide local governmental units an additional source of funds, typically with reduced costs of issuance.

Refunding

Capital projects can be funded with bond proceeds with extended repayment terms. A governmental unit's debt management policy should address significant changes in the interest rate environment in order to consider potential savings of refinancing higher interest rate debt with proposed lower interest rate obligations. For such refunding to be considered, many governmental units establish a threshold percentage to compare the existing obligation's costs with the costs of the proposed debt refinancing in terms of the net present value of interest cost savings (expressed as a percentage savings of the refunded bonds) and that the amortization period not be extended.

Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board—Electronic Municipal Market Access (EMMA)

The Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board's Electronic Municipal Market Access system (EMMA) is the official public source for municipal securities data and disclosure documents. EMMA provides free access to official statements, continuing disclosures, trade data, and other municipal-market information. Governments that issue debt should establish responsibility for timely continuing-disclosure filings and periodically review their issuer information and outstanding securities on EMMA.

Selection of Bond Professionals

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) best practices recommend that issuers select financial advisors, underwriters, and bond counsel using a request for proposal (RFP) or request for qualification (RFQ) competitive process. Using a competitive process allows the issuer to compare the qualifications of proposers and to select the most qualified firm based on the scope of services and evaluation criteria outlined in the RFP or RFQ. A competitive process also provides objective assurance that the best services and interest rates are obtained at the lowest possible cost and demonstrates that marketing and procurement decisions are free of self-interest, personal, or political influences. Furthermore, a competitive process reduces the opportunity for fraud, waste, and abuse and is fair to competing finance professionals.

- Independent Municipal Advisor – In many cases, debt financing involves complex transactions requiring specific expertise not always available in local governments. The financial advisor may be chosen through a competitive RFP or RFQ process for a negotiated sale or may be chosen based upon a public bid process through a competitive sale process. Depending on the funding purpose and level of debt required, it is recommended that an independent financial advisor be engaged to represent the governmental unit during the debt issuance process. This individual or firm would be responsible to the appropriate governmental decision makers and recommend the best method of sale and structure for the debt issue. Assistance with the selection of other financial professionals, for bond preparation, disclosure, and compliance documentation necessary to consummate a transaction, could also be assembled by this individual or firm. In most cases, the financial advisor is paid from debt proceeds.
- Underwriter – The underwriter purchases the bonds of the local government and markets, usually as a fee based on a percentage of the issue, the bonds to the ultimate bond purchasers. The underwriter may be chosen through a competitive RFP or RFQ process for a negotiated sale or may be chosen based upon a public bid process through a competitive sale process. The underwriter is also compensated from the proceeds of the bond sale. Due to the inherent conflict of interest, GFOA recommends that issuers not use a broker/dealer or potential underwriter to assist in the method of sale selection unless that firm has agreed not to underwrite that transaction.
- Bond Counsel – The bond counsel works on behalf of the bondholders (but is hired by the local government) to ensure compliance with federal laws and regulations related to the issuance of tax-exempt debt. The bond counsel prepares the legal documents related to the financing and oversees the closing process for the bonds. Additionally, the bond counsel may be chosen through a competitive RFP or RFQ process and, in most cases, is paid from the proceeds of the debt issuance.
- Disclosure Counsel – The disclosure counsel works on behalf of the bondholders (but is hired by the local government) to ensure compliance with federal laws and regulations related to disclosures required for the issuance of tax-exempt/taxable debt. The disclosure counsel prepares the form of disclosures related to the financing. Additionally, the disclosure counsel may be chosen through a competitive RFP or RFQ process and, in most cases, is paid from the proceeds of the debt issuance.

Credit Rating and Credit Enhancements

Various independent bond rating agencies assess the credit quality of the borrowing entity and debt offerings. Superior ratings by these organizations command favorable borrowing rates, resulting in lower overall cost of

funds. Many governmental units strive to maintain or improve their bond rating in order to maintain easy access to credit markets.

These and other variables affect the overall rate of interest paid by the governmental unit. The use of credit enhancements can also reduce overall borrowing costs and improve the quality of the debt issuance. Surety bonds or insurance (guaranteeing the repayment of the obligation) enhance the offering to potential investors by providing additional strength to the issue. The current availability of bond insurance is very limited, and the future of such instruments is uncertain.

Conclusion

The issuance of debt instruments by a governmental unit can provide significant benefits to the governmental unit, residents, and local businesses alike. To adequately assess, manage, and maintain such obligations, a debt management policy, as a component of a comprehensive strategic financial plan, must be in place. Such a policy provides guidelines and procedures to determine whether debt financing would be a beneficial funding option. The ability to incur debt by a governmental entity provides added flexibility and responsiveness that is important in today's ever-changing financial landscape. Sound financial management practices, including continued review and monitoring of existing obligations, enable local governments to enhance the quality of life for its residents and local businesses.

Reporting Requirement

Section 218.38, Florida Statutes, requires local governments to furnish the Florida State Board of Administration's Division of Bond Finance a complete description of new general obligation and revenue bonds, including advance notice of the impending sale of any new issues, and a copy of the final official statement, within 120 days of delivery of the bonds.

References

- Chapter 159, Florida Statutes - Bond financing. Official link
- Chapter 215, Florida Statutes - Financial matters and public debt. Official link
- Section 218.38, Florida Statutes - Bond issue reporting. Official link
- Section 218.385, Florida Statutes - Truth in Bonding Statement and disclosure requirements. Official link
- Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board - EMMA. Official link
- Florida Division of Bond Finance - Debt overview and affordability reports. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association - Debt management best practices. Official link

SECTION 11 – EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Overview

Emergency management is a coordinated governmental function designed to reduce the loss of life and property, protect public health and safety, maintain continuity of government, and support recovery from natural, technological, and manmade emergencies and disasters. Events may include hurricanes, flooding, tornadoes, wildfires, severe weather, hazardous material incidents, cyber or infrastructure disruptions, and other incidents that significantly affect a community.

Under Chapter 252, Florida Statutes, each county must establish and maintain an emergency management agency unless it participates in an approved interjurisdictional emergency management arrangement. County emergency management plans and programs must be coordinated and consistent with the State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. Legally constituted municipalities are authorized and encouraged to establish municipal emergency management programs; municipalities without such programs are served by their respective county agencies. A municipal program must coordinate with the county, and its emergency management plan must be consistent with and subject to the applicable county plan.

Emergency management programs commonly develop, maintain, or coordinate plans that include:

- Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP)
- Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)
- Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS)
- Floodplain management and related hazard mitigation plans

Municipalities must coordinate requests for state or federal emergency response assistance with their county. This coordination requirement does not apply to requests for reimbursement under federal public disaster assistance programs.

Community Support and Finance Role

Emergency management coordinates the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) with local, state, federal, nonprofit, and private-sector partners. The EOC serves as a central location for information sharing, resource coordination, and direction and control during an activation. Finance representation in the EOC can be especially valuable because financial decisions made during an emergency can directly affect cash flow, procurement, payroll, grant eligibility, documentation, auditability, and reimbursement.

Finance should be integrated into preparedness activities before an event and should understand the jurisdiction's emergency purchasing authority, payroll and labor policies, equipment-rate methodology, financial system capabilities, insurance coverage, grant requirements, and documentation procedures. Finance should also identify primary and alternate personnel who can support EOC operations and disaster-recovery grant administration.

Emergency Financial Planning and Preparedness

Section 252.391, Florida Statutes, encourages counties, municipalities, and district school boards to develop an emergency financial plan for major natural disasters that may affect the jurisdiction. The plan should estimate potential disaster costs, identify available financial resources, and identify strategies to address any gap between anticipated costs and financial capacity. Strategies may include use of reserves, reprioritization of the annual budget, borrowing, or other legally available financing. The statute encourages annual review of the plan to address changing conditions.

Preparedness activities should be completed and reviewed periodically, and at least annually where appropriate. Finance-related activities should include:

- **Emergency Operations Center (EOC) staffing.** Identify finance, procurement, payroll, risk management, and grant personnel who may be assigned to the EOC or recovery team and include them in exercises and training.
- **Cash flow.** Estimate short-term liquidity needs and plan for the timing difference between disaster expenditures and federal or state reimbursement. Determine whether governing-board authorization may be needed for reserves, budget amendments, interfund loans, lines of credit, or other financing.
- **Emergency procurement.** Review emergency purchasing policies, procurement thresholds, pre-event contracts, mutual-aid agreements, and procurement procedures for compliance with applicable federal award requirements. Competition, cost or price analysis, contract provisions, and documentation should be addressed before an event whenever practical.
- **Labor and payroll.** Confirm policies for overtime, compensatory time, temporary assignments, emergency pay, standby time, and timekeeping. Employees should know how to document disaster-related work by date, location, activity, project, and funding category.
- **Equipment and materials.** Maintain inventories and a method for documenting force account equipment and materials. Review local equipment rates and compare them with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Schedule of Equipment Rates. FEMA generally funds equipment usage based on the applicable rate under current policy; higher local rates may require supporting documentation and FEMA approval.
- **Continuity of operations plan (COOP).** Update the COOP and procedures for maintaining financial operations when facilities, systems, internet access, banking services, or normal approval workflows are unavailable.
- **Forms and records.** Maintain electronic and, when appropriate, paper copies of forms that may be needed during a system outage, including time records, equipment logs, materials logs, purchasing documentation, travel records, and vendor payment forms.
- **Training.** Ensure employees with emergency response, EOC, procurement, finance, grant administration, cost documentation, or other assigned incident responsibilities complete applicable FEMA, Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM), National Incident Management System (NIMS), and award-specific training.
- **Policy review.** Review current FEMA and FDEM policy guidance before hurricane season and after significant policy or regulatory changes.

FEMA Public Assistance

Following a qualifying presidential declaration, FEMA's Public Assistance (PA) Program may provide supplemental funding to eligible state, local, tribal, and territorial governments and certain private nonprofit organizations for eligible emergency work and the repair or restoration of eligible facilities. The FEMA Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide (PAPPG) is the primary consolidated policy resource for the Public Assistantance (PA) Program. The version applicable to the declaration date should always be used. Version 5.0 Amended applies to incidents declared on or after January 6, 2025.

Request for Public Assistance and Project Development

A local government seeking PA funding must submit a Request for Public Assistance (RPA) through FEMA's Grants Portal within the applicable deadline. Under the current PAPPG, the RPA is generally due within 30 days after the area is designated for PA, unless FEMA extends the deadline. Once the RPA is approved and the entity is determined eligible, FEMA assigns program delivery support, and the applicant begins project development.

The project-development process generally includes an exploratory call or initial coordination, a Recovery Scoping Meeting, development of the Damage Inventory, site inspections as applicable, development of scopes and costs, submission of supporting documentation, and FEMA eligibility review. FEMA may issue Requests for Information (RFIs) when additional documentation is needed. A local government should designate a primary contact and alternate and maintain a centralized file of correspondence and submissions so that the project record remains complete if assigned personnel change.

When an entity applies for PA funding, FEMA refers to it as an applicant. Once an applicant receives a federal award through the recipient, it becomes a subrecipient. In Florida, FDEM serves as the recipient for PA awards to local governments and administers the state-side reimbursement and grant-management process.

Public Assistance Eligibility

FEMA evaluates four basic components of PA eligibility, often described as the eligibility pyramid:

- **Applicant.** The entity requesting assistance must be an eligible applicant.
- **Facility.** For work involving a facility, the facility generally must meet FEMA eligibility requirements, and the applicant must have legal responsibility for the facility.
- **Work.** The work must be required as a result of the declared incident, generally be located within the designated area, and be the legal responsibility of an eligible applicant.
- **Cost.** Costs must be associated with eligible work and must be reasonable, necessary, properly documented, and compliant with applicable federal requirements.

PA is a cost-share program. The federal share is generally not less than 75 percent of eligible costs. The declaration or subsequent federal action may authorize a higher federal cost share for certain work or periods. Finance staff should verify the cost share applicable to each declaration and project rather than rely on historical reimbursement percentages.

Categories of Work

FEMA groups eligible work into categories to support project development and reimbursement:

- **Category A – Debris Removal.** Eligible activities may include removal, reduction, disposal, and related work necessary to eliminate immediate threats or support community recovery, subject to FEMA eligibility requirements.
- **Category B – Emergency Protective Measures.** Eligible emergency measures may include activities undertaken to save lives, protect public health and safety, and protect improved property.
- **Category C – Roads and Bridges.** Permanent work involving eligible roads, bridges, and associated components.
- **Category D – Water Control Facilities.** Permanent work involving eligible drainage, irrigation, flood-control, and similar facilities.
- **Category E – Buildings and Equipment.** Permanent work involving eligible buildings, contents, equipment, and vehicles.
- **Category F – Utilities.** Permanent work involving eligible public utility systems.
- **Category G – Parks, Recreational, and Other Facilities.** Permanent work involving eligible parks, recreation facilities, and other facilities that do not fall within Categories C through F.
- **Category I – Building Code and Floodplain Management Administration and Enforcement.** Eligible post-disaster building-code and floodplain-management administration and enforcement activities are addressed separately under current FEMA policy.

Facilities or work that fall under the specific authority of another federal agency may be ineligible for FEMA PA or may require coordination with that agency. Before incurring significant repair costs, local governments should confirm legal responsibility, facility eligibility, and whether another federal funding authority applies.

Documentation and Reimbursement

Disaster reimbursement is documentation driven. The jurisdiction should establish project codes or other accounting identifiers as early as practical and capture costs contemporaneously. Documentation should demonstrate who performed the work, what was done, why the work was required by the declared incident, where and when it occurred, how the cost was calculated, and how the expenditure was procured and paid.

Typical documentation may include:

- Damage Inventory records, site information, photographs, maps, global positioning system (GPS) coordinates, inspection reports, scopes of work, and cost estimates.
- Force Account Labor (FAL), including employee, date, hours, pay rate, activity, work location, and applicable payroll support.
- Force Account Equipment (FAE), including operator, equipment identification, dates and hours used, work performed, and applicable rate.
- Force Account Materials (FAM), including quantities used, inventory records, purchase records, and the project or activity supported.
- Procurement files, solicitations, bids or proposals, evaluations, contracts, change orders, invoices, proof of payment, and required federal contract provisions.
- Insurance policies, claims, settlement information, and other documentation needed to address duplication-of-benefits and insurance requirements.
- Mutual-aid agreements and documentation of assistance provided or received.
- Correspondence with FEMA and FDEM, meeting notes, RFIs and responses, project worksheets, determinations, appeals, and closeout documentation.

Finance should reconcile FEMA Grants Portal project numbers, FDEM project or payment identifiers, the general ledger, and cash receipts so that reimbursement can be traced from the federal project through the state payment to the local accounting records. Reconciliations should also identify local and state cost-share obligations and any ineligible or unsupported costs.

Records Retention

Disaster-related records must comply with applicable Florida public-records and records-retention requirements as well as federal award requirements. Under 2 CFR § 200.334, federal award records are generally retained for three years from the date of submission of the final financial report, subject to exceptions that may extend the retention period, including litigation, claims, audits, other award terms, or written notice. Because FEMA projects may remain open for several years, records should not be destroyed solely because the jurisdiction's routine operational retention period has expired. Coordinate retention and disposition decisions with records management, legal counsel, grant management, and the applicable state and federal requirements.

Florida Recovery Obligation Calculation (F-ROC)

The F-ROC program, sponsored by FDEM, promotes a proactive and standardized approach to disaster recovery and Public Assistance documentation. The program is intended to improve readiness, reduce administrative risk, and support more efficient project development and reimbursement. F-ROC currently covers Category A (Debris

Removal) and Category B (Emergency Protective Measures); FDEM should be consulted for the current program scope.

The F-ROC program is organized around four key pillars:

- **Standardization –** Standardizes and simplifies forms and documentation practices to improve consistency and timely submission.
- **Procurement –** Helps participating entities evaluate procurement readiness and whether contracts and procurement procedures are positioned to meet federal requirements.
- **Procedures –** Supports review of policies and procedures so that disaster-related financial and operational practices are current and aligned with FEMA requirements.
- **Assessment –** Uses the Disaster Readiness Assessment (DRA) to evaluate preparedness and identify opportunities for improvement.

Participation in F-ROC is optional. Participating local governments must complete program requirements, including the DRA, to remain in the program. Participation or a favorable readiness assessment may improve preparedness and documentation, but FEMA and FDEM retain responsibility for eligibility, obligation, and reimbursement determinations.

Finance Best Practices

- **Assign responsibility before the event.** Identify the finance lead, primary PA contact, alternate contact, procurement lead, payroll lead, risk/insurance contact, and records custodian.
- **Create disaster accounting codes immediately.** Use consistent project, activity, department, and funding identifiers so labor, equipment, materials, contracts, and revenues can be reconciled.
- **Document daily.** Require supervisors and departments to submit complete labor, equipment, material, and activity documentation while facts are current.
- **Centralize records.** Maintain a controlled electronic repository for each project with standardized file naming and version control, with contingency procedures for system outages.
- **Preserve procurement documentation.** Maintain the complete procurement history, not only the final contract and invoice.
- **Track insurance and other funding.** Coordinate insurance proceeds, state assistance, donated resources, and other funding sources to avoid duplication of benefits and to support accurate project accounting.
- **Reconcile throughout recovery.** Regularly reconcile Grants Portal, FDEM records, project files, the general ledger, accounts receivable, and cash receipts rather than waiting until closeout.
- **Use current guidance.** FEMA policy and federal grant requirements change. Confirm the PAPPG, regulations, cost-share provisions, deadlines, thresholds, and FDEM requirements applicable to the specific declaration.

References

- Chapter 252, Florida Statutes - Emergency management. Official link
- Section 252.38, Florida Statutes - Emergency management powers of political subdivisions. Official link
- Section 252.391, Florida Statutes - Emergency financial plans. Official link
- Florida Division of Emergency Management. Official link
- Florida Recovery Obligation Calculation (F-ROC). Official link
- FEMA Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide, Version 5.0 Amended. Official link
- FEMA Public Assistance resources. Official link
- 2 CFR § 200.334 - Retention requirements for records. Official link

SECTION 12 – HUMAN RESOURCES

Overview

The Human Resources function often includes a variety of activities, such as recruitment and training of employees, maintaining current job descriptions on all positions, pay and compensation, maintaining employee manuals, maintaining employee personnel files, and ensuring compliance with established policies and procedures as well as federal and state regulations. Each of these activities is discussed below.

Recruitment and Training of Employees

This includes advertising open positions, reviewing applications to assess whether candidates meet the minimum qualifications, verifying applicants' education, experience, and certifications, and training new employees on the organization's policies and procedures. Other responsibilities assigned to Human Resources may include routine training of employees and maintaining records for continuing education for employees with professional certifications.

Background Screening

When a position or program is mandated by law to undergo screening under Chapter 435, Florida Statutes, the employer must adhere to the relevant screening, disqualification, confidentiality, and recordkeeping requirements outlined in the law. Additionally, government entities may establish lawful screening protocols for other positions based on job responsibilities, associated risks, and applicable collective bargaining agreements or personnel policies.

Compensation

Compensation practices must comply with applicable state and federal regulations, including Section 448.110, Florida Statutes, which pertains to the state minimum wage, annual wage adjustments, and enforcement. Governments should regularly verify the current wage rates to ensure ongoing compliance with the prevailing laws and regulations.

Job Descriptions

To ensure that qualified employees are hired and that employees understand the responsibilities of their positions, job descriptions should be established for each position in the entity. Job descriptions should describe the responsibilities assigned to the position as well as the minimum qualifications, such as education, experience, or certification requirements. To assist with compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, job descriptions should also include information on the working conditions of the position (environmental and physical demands) such as physical and dexterity requirements, environmental hazards, and sensory requirements. Human Resources is also responsible for regularly reviewing pay and benefits to ensure that compensation remains aligned with the job responsibilities and current local market conditions.

Employee Manual

It is vital that the governing body establishes personnel policies and procedures. Such policies and procedures should be codified into an employee manual and describe the entity's policies regarding hours of work, leaves of absence, performance evaluations, promotion procedures, classification and pay schedules, discipline and discharge procedures, and a description of the employee complaint process. Each employee must be provided

with a copy, or access to a copy, of the entity's employee manual. The entity should maintain documentation showing that its policies were communicated to employees.

The manual should also reflect compliance with

- The Florida Whistle-blower's Act (Sections 112.3187–112.31895, Florida Statutes), protecting employees who disclose violations of law.
- The Florida Domestic Violence Leave Act (Section 741.313, Florida Statutes), which entitles employees to take leave for issues arising from domestic violence.

Personnel Files

Personnel files should document all activities related to employees, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Employee application
- Documentation of verification of education, experience, licenses, and certifications
- Results of any background checks
- Date of hire, including classification and starting pay
- Direct deposit authorization, if applicable
- Documentation of policy acknowledgement
- Property checklist (listing of assigned municipality assets)
- Optional benefits authorized by the employee
- Performance evaluations
- Salary changes, promotions, demotions, commendations, and reprimands, if any
- Training completed with associated licenses and certifications as applicable
- Medical and health-related employment records required by position or law (e.g., Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), workers' compensation, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), or accommodation documentation) should be maintained separately from general personnel files and protected under applicable federal and Florida confidentiality and public-record requirements. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) generally does not govern an employer's employment records, even when they contain health information, unless the entity is acting in a separate capacity as a covered entity or business associate.
- Separation documentation including resignation letters and exit interview records

Note: Social Security numbers, medical information, and certain employee addresses are confidential or exempt under Florida law and must be protected accordingly.

Entity Policies and Procedures

Human Resources should ensure that established policies and procedures are followed for certain personnel actions, such as verification of qualifications of new hires and employees recommended for promotion or termination, frequency of performance evaluations, training, and exit interviews.

Policies must also ensure compliance with the Florida Civil Rights Act (Section 760.10, Florida Statutes) prohibiting employment discrimination, including protections against pregnancy discrimination, as well as state and federal requirements such as OSHA workplace safety rules and federal lactation accommodation requirements, Providing Urgent Maternal Protections for Nursing Mothers Act (PUMP Act).

Federal and State Regulations

There are many federal and state regulations that apply to employees, including minimum wage requirements, overtime issues, anti-discrimination laws, workplace safety, family and medical leave, and accommodations for persons with disabilities. It is advisable to consult with the entity's legal counsel to ensure compliance with applicable regulations.

Florida law requires

- Verification of employment eligibility through the federal E-Verify system for all public employers, contractors, and subcontractors (Section 448.095, Florida Statutes).
- Compliance with the Florida Minimum Wage Act (Section 448.110, Florida Statutes).
- Adherence to conflict-of-interest provisions under Section 112.313, Florida Statutes, ensuring ethical conduct for public officers and employees.
- Application of federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) standards for eligible employees.

References

- Chapter 112, Florida Statutes - Public officers and employees. Official link
- Chapter 435, Florida Statutes - Employment screening. Official link
- Section 448.095, Florida Statutes - Employment eligibility verification. Official link
- Section 448.110, Florida Statutes - Florida Minimum Wage Act. Official link
- Section 741.313, Florida Statutes - Domestic violence leave. Official link
- Chapter 760, Florida Statutes - Florida Civil Rights Act. Official link
- Internal Revenue Service - Publication 15, Employer's Tax Guide. Official link
- U.S. Department of Labor - Compliance resources. Official link
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Official link
- Florida Commission on Human Relations. Official link

SECTION 13 – INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

Overview

Effective intergovernmental relationships support efficient service delivery, sound financial management, regulatory compliance, and public accountability. Florida local governments operate within overlapping service areas, funding systems, statutory requirements, and regulatory frameworks. Counties, municipalities, special districts, school districts, state agencies, federal agencies, and other public entities may share responsibility for infrastructure, programs, public safety, economic development, grants, and community services.

For finance officers, intergovernmental coordination extends beyond communication. It includes evaluating the financial and operational terms of shared-service and interlocal arrangements; identifying and administering funding opportunities; monitoring statutory, regulatory, and grant requirements; maintaining reliable financial and performance reporting; and ensuring that intergovernmental revenues, expenditures, cost-sharing arrangements, and other commitments are appropriately reflected in budgets, forecasts, capital plans, and long-term financial plans. Particular consideration should be given to the sustainability of recurring commitments, allocation of costs and financial risk, service-level expectations, and the fiscal implications of entering, modifying, or terminating significant intergovernmental arrangements.

Where governmental jurisdictions or service responsibilities overlap, effective coordination can reduce duplication, improve service delivery, provide access to specialized resources, and promote the efficient use of public funds. Governments should clearly understand their respective responsibilities and consider the financial, operational, and community impacts of alternative service-delivery arrangements. Public and stakeholder input should be incorporated when appropriate to the nature and significance of the decision.

Local governments should also maintain effective lines of communication with state and federal agencies and monitor legislative, regulatory, funding, and administrative developments that may affect their operations or financial condition. Communication with legislators, agency personnel, other governmental entities, and professional associations can assist local governments in understanding emerging requirements, communicating the fiscal and operational effects of proposed changes, and identifying opportunities for intergovernmental coordination or financial assistance.

Collaboration with other governments and professional organizations can also provide an effective means of addressing common financial, operational, and regulatory issues. Florida's governmental and professional associations provide forums for information sharing, technical assistance, education, legislative and regulatory monitoring, and collaboration among entities facing similar requirements and challenges. A listing of selected organizations and resources is included in the reference section of this chapter.

Relationships with Other Local Governments

The responsibility for providing government services to citizens in any given geographical area is shared locally by counties, cities, and special districts. Local governments are empowered to impose taxes and fees on the public to provide funding for those services. Citizens subject to governance by local governments with overlapping jurisdictions are best served when those local governments work effectively together to provide needed services in an economical manner.

The Florida Interlocal Cooperation Act of 1969 (Section 163.01, Florida Statutes) allows public agencies to cooperate with one another and jointly exercise powers they share in common in order to make more efficient use of governmental resources. Interlocal agreements may be used to coordinate or jointly provide services, share facilities or systems, allocate costs and revenues, administer joint programs, or establish a separate legal or administrative entity. Such agreements should clearly identify the purpose and scope of the arrangement, the responsibilities of each participating entity, the method of financing and cost allocation, ownership or use of

assets, reporting and accountability requirements, and provisions governing amendment, withdrawal, or termination. Material financial commitments resulting from interlocal agreements should be appropriately incorporated into the participating government's budget, financial reporting, and long-term financial planning. It also provides broad authority for public agencies to exercise powers jointly through interlocal agreements. The statute defines public agencies broadly and permits qualifying agencies to cooperate for mutual advantage and more efficient use of governmental powers and resources.

Counties, municipalities, special districts, school districts, and other public entities frequently serve the same residents or geographic areas. Cooperation can reduce duplication, improve service quality, expand access to specialized expertise, and provide economies of scale. Common arrangements include shared facilities or systems, joint procurement, mutual aid, shared technology, consolidated service delivery, regional planning, and joint grant initiatives.

Section 163.31777, Florida Statutes, establishes additional interlocal requirements related to coordination between district school boards and applicable counties and municipalities. The statute requires the parties to coordinate their planning processes through an interlocal agreement addressing specified school-facility and planning matters. Effective with the 2026 statutory amendment, such agreements must also address reasonable access, where available, to public easements and public rights-of-way that may be necessary for the siting, construction, expansion, or improvement of public school facilities, including charter schools, consistent with adopted level-of-service standards, school concurrency requirements, and applicable public-facilities planning requirements. Governments subject to these requirements should review affected interlocal agreements when they are created, amended, or otherwise updated.

Relationships with State Government

There are several state agencies that interact with local governments in a meaningful way through rulemaking, financial reporting and oversight requirements, administration and distribution of revenues, grant programs, and technical assistance. State funding of local government operations is generally provided through various revenue-sharing programs, grants, and other financial assistance; however, such funding is authorized by state law and may be subject to statutory or administrative requirements governing its use. Certain state agencies also maintain financial, demographic, and operational information useful to the financial management of local governments. While it is not feasible to describe all such interactions in this publication, it is useful to identify several agencies that have significant roles in local government financial operations.

Department of Revenue (DOR)

Responsible for the administration and distribution of various taxes and fees affecting local governments and for general supervision of Florida's property tax system through its Property Tax Oversight program. Of particular importance to local government finance officers, DOR provides guidance and oversight relating to ad valorem taxation, Truth in Millage (TRIM) requirements, millage adoption, required notices and budget hearings, and other property tax administration requirements. Finance officers responsible for ad valorem budgeting should consult Chapter 200, Florida Statutes, applicable administrative rules, and current DOR guidance when developing and adopting millage rates.

Department of Financial Services (DFS)

Responsible for providing a variety of financial services for the State of Florida and its citizens. Of particular importance to local governments is DFS's Division of Accounting and Auditing. Section 218.33, Florida Statutes, requires local governmental entities to follow uniform accounting practices and procedures prescribed by DFS. The Division maintains the Uniform Accounting System (UAS) Manual and uniform chart of accounts used for recording and reporting local government financial information to the State.

Section 218.32, Florida Statutes, requires applicable local governmental entities to submit annual financial information to DFS. Annual Financial Reports (AFRs) are submitted electronically through the Local Government

Electronic Reporting in XBRL (LOGERx) system. DFS also maintains local government financial information derived from AFR filings and provides related reporting resources and technical guidance.

Department of Commerce (FloridaCommerce)

Responsible for working with local governments on community planning and other state programs, including responsibilities relating to local comprehensive planning.

FloridaCommerce also administers the Special District Accountability Program, a centralized source of information concerning Florida special districts and the requirements of Chapter 189, Florida Statutes, the Uniform Special District Accountability Act. The Program maintains the Official List of Special Districts, which provides standardized information concerning each district, including its independent or dependent status, special purpose, geographic jurisdiction, registered agent, and official website.

FloridaCommerce also publishes the Florida Special District Handbook, which provides guidance concerning special district organization, operating procedures, reporting requirements, accountability, and other requirements under Chapter 189, Florida Statutes.

Auditor General

Responsible for conducting audits of state and certain local governmental entities as authorized by law and for adopting rules governing financial audits performed by independent certified public accountants. Chapter 10.550, Rules of the Auditor General, establishes requirements applicable to audits of local governmental entities and includes applicable Florida Single Audit Act requirements.

The Auditor General reviews local government audit reports submitted pursuant to Florida law and provides technical guidance concerning local governmental financial reporting, auditing, accounting systems, procedures, internal controls, and related compliance matters. The Auditor General also provides financial condition assessment information and procedures to assist local governments and their auditors in identifying deteriorating financial conditions that could contribute to a financial emergency.

Relationships with the Federal Government

The federal government affects local governments through legislation, regulations, grants, cooperative agreements, disaster assistance, infrastructure programs, and other funding. Federal awards often require local matching funds, specific procurement and internal-control practices, financial and performance reporting, records retention, and audit compliance. Finance officers should evaluate both the funding opportunity and the full lifecycle cost and compliance requirements before accepting an award.

Grants.gov (www.grants.gov) is the primary federal portal for identifying many competitive funding opportunities. For federal award administration, finance officers should also consult 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 200 and Section 24 – Grants of this manual.

References

- FloridaCommerce - Special District Accountability Program. Official link
- Florida Department of Financial Services. Official link
- Florida Department of Revenue. Official link
- Florida Auditor General - Local government guidance. Official link
- Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research - Local government resources. Official link
- Florida Government Finance Officers Association. Official link
- Florida League of Cities. Official link
- Florida Association of Counties. Official link
- Florida Association of Special Districts. Official link
- 2 CFR Part 200

SECTION 14 – PAYROLL

Overview

Processing payroll is an important function in any governmental organization. Payroll processing consists of: (1) calculating the earnings of employees and the related withholding for taxes and other deductions; (2) calculating employer contributions for taxes, pensions and other benefits; (3) recording the results of payroll activities; and (4) preparing required tax returns and other forms.

The payroll department should review contracts and other agreements, together with current IRS worker-classification guidance, to determine whether a worker is properly classified as an employee or an independent contractor. Employment taxes generally apply to employee wages, while payments to properly classified independent contractors are not subject to employment-tax withholding by the payer.

The Internal Revenue Service publishes Publication 15, Employer's Tax Guide, which explains federal employment taxes, filing and deposit requirements, and the tax treatment of many fringe benefits. Governments should consult the current publication and related IRS instructions each year.

Payroll Process

In general, the payroll process is as follows:

- Payrolls are typically processed on a weekly, bi-weekly, semi-monthly, or monthly basis.
- Each pay period, the payroll department determines the hours worked by employees, including any changes to payroll, such as deductions, pay increases, new hires, and terminations.
- A calculation of gross wages or salaries, federal and state taxes, and pension contributions, as well as other types of deductions (e.g., insurance premiums, garnishments, union dues, 457(b) contributions, etc.), is then performed.
- Following verification, auditing, and payroll posting to each departmental cost center, checks are issued and/or direct deposits are transmitted to authorized financial institutions. For direct deposits, net pay is deposited directly into employees' bank accounts or loaded onto pay cards. Employees receive a pay voucher detailing their gross earnings, withholdings, and net pay.

Payroll journal entries detail the check number issued and the employee's wages, taxes, deductions, and net pay. The payroll journal also provides totals of wages, taxes, deductions, and net pay, as well as the employer's liabilities, such as FICA (i.e., Social Security and Medicare), applicable state re-employment tax liabilities or reimbursement obligations, and other employer payroll obligations.

Reporting and depositing payroll taxes to the appropriate agency in an accurate and timely manner is important as late or inaccurate deposits may result in penalties and interest charges. Additionally, timely remittance of amounts to providers of benefits such as retirement contributions and health insurance is important to ensure compliance and continued coverage. One report that can provide assistance in the timely remittance of payroll taxes with the appropriate agencies is a Payroll Tax Summary that details by pay period, all wages, employee taxes, employer liabilities, and deposits. The Payroll Tax Summary is a cumulative report providing quarter-to-date and year-to-date balances and should be generated each time a payroll is processed.

Examples of Payroll Reports

PAYROLL REPORTS	
Each Payroll	**Each Quarter**
• Employee Earnings Statements • Departmental Cost Summary • Payroll Checks • Payroll Journal • Payroll Tax Summary	• 941 Federal Tax Return • State Re-employment Tax Return
Each Month	**Each Year**
• Month-End Departmental Summary • Payroll Tax Summary	• W-2s for all Employees • ACA Reporting (1095s), if applicable

The payroll department should ensure that vacation, sick, compensatory, and other leave balances are properly recorded and reconciled on a periodic basis. Leave balance reports can also be used to calculate amounts due to employees for accumulated leave upon termination and to calculate compensated absences balances reported on the local government's annual financial statements.

GASB Statement No. 101 - Compensated Absences

GASB 101 statement, which is effective for fiscal years beginning after December 15, 2023, and all reporting periods thereafter, changes the way governments will recognize and measure liabilities for leave time earned by employees, including recognition of liabilities for leave that is expected to be paid as salaries for periods during which employees use leave, as well as for leave that will be paid in cash or settled in some other manner during or at the end of an employee's active service, for reporting on an economic resources measurement focus.

Helpful Hints

- There should be a clear separation of duties between: (a) persons involved in preparing payrolls; (b) timekeepers; and (c) persons distributing pay to employees
- Action should not be performed for the following without written approval from the appropriate authority
- Adding or deleting employees from the payroll
- Changes to the rate of pay
- Changes to payroll deductions
- Direct deposits for salaries should only be made pursuant to written authorizations from the employee and depository.
- Changes to direct deposit instructions should be verified with the requesting employee by telephone or in person.
- Payrolls should be rechecked as part of routine payroll preparation.
- Payrolls should be subject to final approval by responsible person(s) outside the payroll department.
- Duties of payroll employees should be periodically rotated, and payroll employees should be required to take leave.
- Custody of unclaimed payroll checks should be vested in someone other than person(s) who prepares payrolls or distributes payroll checks.
- Sufficient control should be maintained over blank payroll checks.

- Payroll revolving funds should be reconciled by someone other than the person(s) who prepares payrolls or distributes payroll checks. Additionally, reconciliation procedures should include verifying names on payroll checks to payroll records and examining some of the endorsements on payroll checks.
- Procedures should be in place to ensure compliance with:
- Union agreements regarding wage rates, vacation pay, and similar items
- Federal and state regulations regarding wage and employment taxes (e.g., Social Security, Medicare, unemployment taxes, withholding taxes)
- State regulations regarding bargaining workforce (e.g. eligibility of union dues to be collected as a payroll deduction)
- Governing body policies on pay (classification and pay plan), leave, and benefits

References

- Internal Revenue Service - General information for federal state and local government. Official link
- Internal Revenue Service - Publication 15, Employer's Tax Guide. Official link
- Florida Department of Revenue - Reemployment tax. Official link
- U.S. Department of Labor – Wages and the Fair Labor Standards Act. Official link
- Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) Statement No. 101 – Compensated Absences. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) "GASB 101. Literally." Official Link
- Florida Retirement System - Employer resources. Official link

SECTION 15 – PUBLIC RECORDS/SUNSHINE LAW/ETHICS/ORDINANCES

Public Records/Sunshine Laws

The State of Florida has established some of the most comprehensive open government laws in the country, laws that can impact virtually every aspect of local government operations. The open government laws include the Public Records Law (Chapter 119, Florida Statutes) and the "Sunshine Law" (See Section 286.011, Florida Statutes).

The Public Records Law provides that:

- All state, county, and municipal records are open for personal inspection and copying by any person, unless specifically exempt.
- Public records are defined to include all materials made or received in connection with official business, regardless of form (e.g. paper, email, text, data systems, photographs, recordings).
- The Division of Library and Information Services within the Florida Department of State adopts retention schedules and disposal processes for records (Section 257.36, Florida Statutes).
- Agencies must ensure that contractors handling public records comply with Section 119.0701, Florida Statutes
- Exemptions are updated annually by the Legislature. Agencies must review and apply current exemptions (see the Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual, Attorney General's Office).

Responding to Public Records Requests:

Public records requests must be acknowledged promptly and handled in good faith. Agencies should make reasonable efforts to identify and locate responsive records. When only part of the record is exempt or confidential, the exempt information should be redacted and the remainer produced. If an exemption is asserted, the agency must identify the statutory basis for the exemption and, if requested, state in writing, with particularity, the reasons for the conclusion that the record is exempt or confidential (Section 119.07, Florida Statute).

The Sunshine Law requires that:

- Meetings of public boards or commissions must be open to the public.
- Reasonable notice of such meetings must be provided to the public.
- Minutes of the meeting must be taken.
- The law applies to in-person, electronic, and written communication between board members when discussing public business.
- The public has the right to be heard on propositions before a board or commission (Section 286.0114, Florida Statutes).
- Closed sessions are permitted only in narrow circumstances (e.g., litigation strategy, security matters) under Section 286.0113, Florida Statutes
- Violations may result in civil or criminal penalties.

Attorney General Resources

The Florida Department of Legal Affairs, headed by the Attorney General (AG), is responsible for administering Florida's open government laws. The Attorney General publishes the Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual, which provides detailed guidance on the Public Records Law and Sunshine Law, including exemptions, redactions, fees, meeting requirements, and case law summaries.

The manual is updated annually and is available electronically. The AG's Office also provides:

- Training resources and FAQs to help local governments and agencies address records and meeting requirements.
- A searchable database of AG Opinions on open government issues.

Issue Resolution

When public records or Sunshine Law issues arise, officials should:

- Review the statutory provisions.
- Consult any applicable local ordinances or policies.
- Refer to the AG's Sunshine Manual.
- Seek legal counsel.
- Request an AG opinion if unresolved.

Ethics Law

The Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees (Chapter 112, Part III, Florida Statutes), establishes standards of conduct for public officers, employees, candidates, lobbyists, and others in State and local government.

Key provisions include

- Conflicts of interest, prohibited transactions, and misuse of position (Section 112.313, Florida Statutes).
- Disclosure requirements for financial interests (Section 112.3145, Florida Statutes).
- Mandatory ethics training (Section 112.3142, Florida Statutes): constitutional officers, elected municipal officers, commissioners of community redevelopment agencies, and elected officers of independent special districts must complete four hours of training annually covering the Constitution, the Code of Ethics, public records, and public meetings.

The Florida Commission on Ethics administers these requirements and enforces violations. The State of Florida publishes this Code of Ethics at: https://ethics.state.fl.us/ Ordinance Laws Counties (Section 125.66, Florida Statutes) and municipalities (Section 166.041, Florida Statutes) must follow uniform procedures when adopting ordinances and resolutions. These statutes establish minimum notice requirements that cannot be waived. [AGO Informal Opinion, 7/15/97]

Financial Disclosures

Officials and employees subject to financial disclosure requirements should determine whether they are required to file Form 1 or Form 6 and comply with the applicable filing requirements. Financial disclosures administered by the Florida Commission on Ethics are filed electronically through the Electronic Financial Disclosure Management System (EFDMS). See Sections 112.3144, 112.31446, and 112.3145, Florida Statutes.

Ordinance Laws

Counties (Section 125.66, Florida Statutes) and municipalities (Section 166.041, Florida Statutes) must follow statutory procedures when adopting ordinance. These procedures include notice and hearing requirements, with additional requirements for emergency ordinances and certain zoning or land-use ordinances. Local requirements should also be reviewed for any additional procedures consistent with general law.

Key requirements

- Certain ordinances require preparation of a Business Impact Estimate (BIE) before adoption.
- Counties and municipalities must suspend enforcement of certain recently enacted ordinances when all conditions in Sections 125.675 or 166.0411, Florida Statutes, are met. These provisions apply to specified challenges alleging express preemption or that an ordinance is arbitrary or unreasonable, when the action is filed within 90 days after adoption, suspension is requested in the initial complaint or petition, and the local government has been served.
- Section 57.112, Florida Statutes, addresses attorney fees, costs, and damages in specified challenges to local ordinances. For express-preemption challenges, the court must award reasonable attorney fees and costs and damages to the prevailing party. For challenges alleging that an ordinance is arbitrary or unreasonable, the court may award a prevailing plaintiff reasonable attorney fees and costs and damages, subject to the statutory $50,000 cap.
- Failure to comply with notice requirements may render an ordinance void.

References

- Chapter 119, Florida Statutes – Public records. Official link
- Section 119.07 Florida Statutes – Inspection and copying of records; photographing public records; fees; exemptions. Official link
- Section 257.36, Florida Statutes – Records management and retention. Official link
- Sections 286.011, 286.0113, 286.0114, and 286.012, Florida Statutes – Public meetings, exemptions, public participation, and voting. Official link
- Chapter 112, Part III, Florida Statutes – Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees. Official link
- Section 125.66, Florida Statutes – County and municipal ordinance procedures. Official link
- Section 166.041, Florida Statutes – Legal challenges to certain recently enacted ordinances. Official Link
- Florida Attorney General – Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual and open government resources. Official link
- Section 57.112, Florida Statutes – Attorney fees, costs, and damages in certain local government ordinance challenges. Official link
- Section 125.675, Florida Statutes – Legal challenges to certain county ordinances. Official link
- Section 166.0411, Florida Statutes – Legal challenges to certain municipal ordinances. Official link
- Florida Commission on Ethics. Official link
- Section 112.3144, Florida Statutes – Full and public disclosure of financial interests. Official link
- Section 112.31446, Florida Statutes – Electronic Filing of financial disclosure forms. Official link
- Section 112.3145, Florida Statutes – Disclosure of financial interests and clients represented before agencies. Official link

SECTION 16 – PURCHASING

Overview

The purchasing function may be centralized or distributed among operating departments. Regardless of structure, local governments should maintain written policies and procedures that establish purchasing authority, promote competition, support compliance, and provide accountability throughout the procurement and contract lifecycle.

Policy

Florida law may require justification and annual reporting when a local government uses its own staff to perform certain construction or electrical projects instead of competitively selecting a contractor. Local policies should identify when these requirements apply and assign responsibility for the required documentation and reporting.

A government should have a policy regarding purchasing that

- Assigns authority and establishes procurement thresholds and methods.
- Addresses procurement requirements and procedures for noncompetitive, emergency, cooperative, and grant-funded procurements, when applicable.
- Promotes full and open competition, reducing the appearance and opportunity for favoritism.
- Inspires public confidence that contracts are awarded in an impartial and accountable manner.
- Prohibits dividing purchases to circumvent competition or approval requirements.

Such a policy should describe the duties and authority of the governing body, purchasing agent, legal counsel, finance staff, user departments, and any other agency-specific staff involved in procurement and contract administration, together with the procedures for carrying out those responsibilities. Budget approval should not be treated as procurement or contract authorization unless the local government's framework expressly provides otherwise.

Full and open competition is important to help obtain the best value for the taxpayer and prevent corruption. Competitive procurement should clearly define evaluation criteria; however, this does not always mean the lowest bidder will be chosen.

Governments utilizing cooperative purchasing programs should verify that the originating procurement was conducted through a competitive process and that use of the resulting contract is permitted by applicable law, policy, and funding requirements.

Governance Framework and Policy Alignment

When procuring goods or services and establishing or periodically updating procurement policies and procedures, governments should identify which state laws expressly apply to the entity and the particular procurement. Some provisions of Chapter 287 primarily govern state agencies, while others—such as Section 287.055, Florida Statutes—expressly apply to municipalities and political subdivisions. Local ordinances, grant requirements, and adopted policies may impose additional or more restrictive requirements. Potentially applicable provisions include:

- Section 218.391, Florida Statutes, Auditor Selection Procedures
- Section 255.0525, Florida Statutes, Advertising for Competitive Bids or Proposals
- Section 255.20, Florida Statutes regarding use of local government staff
- Section 255.0991, Florida Statutes regarding restrictions on local preferences in construction services
- Section 287.055, Florida Statutes regarding procurement of professional services (CCNA)

- Section 287.057, Florida Statutes, Procurement of Commodities or Contractual Services
- Section 287.05701, Florida Statutes regarding viewpoint neutrality in contracting
- Section 287.058, Florida Statutes regarding contract requirements including audit
- Section 287.135, Florida Statutes, regarding contracting restrictions applicable to certain scrutinized companies and other entities
- Section 287.139, Florida Statutes - Certification requirements applicable to certain county and municipal contracts and grants

Governments should also adopt and implement the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing's (NIGP) Values and Guiding Principles of Public Procurement, which emphasizes accountability, ethics, impartiality, professionalism, service, and transparency.

Grant and Federal Award Procurements

Procurement requirements associated with grants and federal awards may differ from locally adopted procurement thresholds and procedures. Governments should consider these requirements when establishing and periodically reevaluating procurement policies, thresholds, and procedures. Governments should also identify the funding source before initiating a procurement to ensure applicable procurement requirements are followed. Local governments conducting procurements under federal awards or subawards must comply with 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Sections 200.318 through 200.327, applicable federal agency regulations, award terms, and program-specific requirements, and should verify current thresholds and award-specific requirements before each procurement.

Contractual Services

Governments are responsible for ensuring effective and efficient procurement of contractual services in compliance with applicable federal and state laws, local ordinances and resolutions, contracts, grant agreements, and policies. Governments should periodically review standard contract forms and solicitation documents to ensure required statutory provisions and certifications are incorporated.

- Procurements should be supported by written contracts that clearly define services, responsibilities, and payment terms.
- Contracts should include sufficient detail to support administration, payment, monitoring, and audit. When Section 287.058, Florida Statutes, applies, the contract must include the provisions required by that section.
- Monitoring procedures should ensure that services are delivered as agreed, with compliance documented before payments are made.
- Purchasing staff, together with user departments, should conduct monitoring throughout the contract lifecycle, including contract performance, contract modifications, and compliance with contractual requirements.

Purchasing Cards

Many governments implement a purchasing card program as an efficient, cost-effective method for making and paying for small dollar or high-volume purchases. A well-controlled program can reduce the number of purchase orders and invoices processed by the finance department.

Advantages include:

- Simplified purchasing and payments
- Lower overall transaction costs
- Reduced paperwork

- Better management information on purchasing histories
- Control of dollar limits and categories of purchases
- Rebates or incentives from banks
- Faster payments to small businesses
- Alternative to petty cash
- Support for emergency preparation
- Expediting payment of travel expenses

Risks include duplicate payments, fraud, waste, abuse or public perception issues.

Recommended Controls:

- Competitive selection of a card provider
- Automated approval and reconciliation software
- Written agreements with banks
- Clear policies and procedures
- Staff training with a written manual and acknowledgement form
- Compliance with IRS 1099 reporting
- Regular monitoring and audits of card use

Prompt Payment

The Local Government Prompt Payment Act (Part VII, Ch. 218, Florida Statutes) requires timely payments to vendors:

- Non-construction services: undisputed invoices must be paid within 45 days of receipt.
- Construction services: payment is generally due within 25 business days when an agent must approve the request before submission to the local governmental entity, and within 20 business days when agent approval is not required before submission, as provided in Section 218.735, Florida Statutes.
- Interest accrues on late payments.

Agencies should establish procedures for the timely review, approval, and payment of invoices to ensure compliance, avoid penalties, and maintain good vendor relationships.

Internal Controls

Internal controls over purchases should ensure compliance with competitive purchasing requirements, purchase order approvals, and proper documentation. Controls should also ensure:

- Timely elimination of encumbrances.
- Proper recording of expenditures in the correct period.
- Documentation of grant expenditures to meet federal/state audit standards.
- Appropriate segregation of duties or compensating review procedures when segregation is not feasible.

Governments should periodically evaluate internal controls against published guidance such as the GFOA's Evaluating Internal Controls: A Local Government Manager's Guide.

References

- Part VII of Chapter 218, Florida Statutes – Local Government Prompt Payment Act. Official link
- Section 218.391, Florida Statutes – Auditor selection procedures. Official link
- Section 255.20, Florida Statutes – Local bids and contracts for public construction works. Official link
- Section 287.055, Florida Statutes – Consultants' Competitive Negotiation Act. Official link
- Sections 287.057, 287.05701, 287.058, 287.135, and 287.139 Florida Statutes – Procurement and contractual services requirements. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association – Procurement and purchasing card best practices. Official link
- NIGP – Public procurement principles and practices. Official link
- Uniform Guidance (2 CFR Sections 200.318-200.327) – Federal procurement requirements. Official link

SECTION 17 – REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Overview

Florida local governments are subject to recurring financial, budgetary, audit, pension, transparency, and other reporting requirements established by Florida law. Requirements vary by entity type and activity. Government finance officers should identify the requirements applicable to their entity and verify current deadlines, forms, thresholds, and submission procedures with the responsible state agency.

Key Statewide Reporting Requirements

Florida local governments are subject to recurring financial, budgetary, audit, pension, transparency, and other reporting requirements established by Florida law. Requirements vary by entity type and activity. Government finance officers should identify the requirements applicable to their entity and verify current deadlines, forms, thresholds, and submission procedures with the responsible state agency.

Annual Financial Report (AFR)

Section 218.32, Florida Statutes, requires applicable local governmental entities to submit an annual financial report to the Florida Department of Financial Services (DFS). Counties, municipalities, and independent special districts submit the AFR through the Local Government Electronic Reporting in XBRL (LOGERx) system. Filing requirements for dependent special districts may vary based on their reporting relationship with another local governmental entity.

Annual Financial Audit

Section 218.39, Florida Statutes, establishes annual financial audit requirements for counties, municipalities, special districts, and other specified entities. Whether an audit is required depends on the type of entity and applicable statutory financial thresholds. Required audits generally must be completed within nine months after the end of the fiscal year and must comply with applicable Rules of the Auditor General, including Chapter 10.550 for local governmental entity audits.

County and Municipal Financial Reporting to Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR)

Sections 129.03 and 166.241, Florida Statutes, require county and municipal budget officers to submit specified final budget and economic information annually to EDR by October 15 each year. The revised requirements enacted in Chapter 2026-161, Laws of Florda, take effect January 1, 2027. EDR publishes the current reporting forms, instructions, and supplemental information. School districts and independent special districts are not subject to this reporting requirement.

Truth in Millage and Retirement Plan Reporting

EDR maintains links to local government Truth in Millage (TRIM) compliance requirements and retirement plan reporting requirements. Because these requirements may vary by entity and plan, finance officers should consult current EDR resources and the applicable statutory and administrative requirements.

Special District Reporting

Special districts are subject to additional accountability and reporting requirements under Chapter 189, Florida Statutes, and other applicable laws. Department of Commerce's (FloridaCommerce) Special District Accountability Program publishes the Florida Special District Handbook, which summarizes reporting requirements and organizes them by due date and responsible agency.

Joint Legislative Auditing Committee (JLAC) Reporting Calendar

JLAC publishes a Calendar of Local Government Reporting Requirements as a resource for counties, municipalities, special districts, school districts, and other local governmental entities. The calendar compiles statutorily mandated reporting requirements and generally identifies:

- Due date (if specified)
- Title of the required report
- Statutory or Administrative Rule authority
- Current contact person in state government to whom the report is submitted

JLAC's calendar is a useful reference but should not be treated as a substitute for reviewing current statutes, rules, and agency instructions. Reporting requirements and submission procedures may change, and not every requirement applies to every local governmental entity.

Failure to timely submit certain required financial reports may result in statutory noncompliance procedures (See Section 11.40(2), Florida Statutes). Finance officers should monitor applicable filing requirements and consult the responsible state agency or JLAC when questions arise.

References

- Section 218.32, Florida Statutes – Annual financial reports; local governmental entities. Official link
- Florida Department of Financial Services – Local Government Annual Financial Reports and Local Government Electronic Reporting in XBRL (LOGERx). Official link
- Section 218.39, Florida Statutes – Annual financial audit reports. Official link
- Florida Auditor General – Chapter 10.550, Rules of the Auditor General, Local Governmental Entity Audits. Official link
- Section 129.03, Florida Statutes – Preparation and adoption of county budget. Official link
- Section 166.241, Florida Statutes – Municipal fiscal years, budgets, and budget amendments. Official link
- Florida Legislature, Office of Economic and Demographic Research – Local Government Financial Reporting. Official link
- Florida Department of Revenue – Truth in Millage (TRIM). Official link
- Chapter 200, Florida Statutes – Determination of Millage. Official link
- Florida Department of Management Services, Division of Retirement – Local Retirement Plans. Official link
- Chapter 189, Florida Statutes – Uniform Special District Accountability Act. Official link
- FloridaCommerce – Special District Accountability Program. Official link
- FloridaCommerce – Florida Special District Handbook. Official link
- Section 11.40, Florida Statutes – Legislative Auditing Committee. Official link
- Joint Legislative Auditing Committee – Local Government Financial Reporting. Official link
- Joint Legislative Auditing Committee – Calendar of Local Government Reporting Requirements. Official link

SECTION 18 – RETIREMENT PLANS

Overview

Retirement plan benefits are deferred compensation for services and form an important component of recruiting and retention within a compensation and benefits policy. Furthermore, they are significant financial commitments requiring the serious attention of government employers' financial staff.

Types of Plans

Public sector employers offer several retirement options for their employees. Retirement plans fall into three general categories: (1) defined benefit plans; (2) defined contribution plans; and (3) hybrid plans. The defined benefit plan retirement option historically has been the primary retirement plan offered to employees. In an effort to control costs, some government agencies are now offering a defined contribution plan as an alternative to the defined benefit plan. Other governmental entities have adopted a hybrid plan which combines the features from a defined benefit plan with a defined contribution.

Many public sector employers have implemented deferred retirement option plans as a feature in their defined benefit plans to achieve a variety of financial and human resource management objectives.

Defined Benefit Plan

A defined benefit (DB) plan provides employees with a predictable retirement benefit for life. DB plans are based upon an established formula and defined by a legal plan document. DB plans promise a monthly pension for life (with survivorship options).

The amount of the monthly pension is determined by a formula, usually multiplying a benefit accrual rate (as a percentage) times a final average monthly pay times years of service with the government. Some plans may include a Cost-of-Living-Adjustment (COLA) which increases the pension benefit over time to account for inflation. The monthly benefit to the employee is reasonably predictable, based on the formula. The monthly pension usually begins after leaving employment and upon satisfying certain age and service eligibility conditions. DB pensions usually provide disability pensions and death benefits to surviving beneficiaries as well.

A DB pension fund is professionally managed and builds up over time to systematically and actuarially finance the benefits promised. A reasonable goal is to work toward maintaining a 100% funded status; that is, a pension fund with assets equal to the liability attributed to past years of service. Typically, employees in a DB plan pay a fixed rate of payroll contributions into the pension fund to help finance their future monthly pension benefits. However, the employer is responsible for contributing the balance of what is actuarially required each year based on the actuarial valuation prepared by the plan's actuary.

Under conventional DB plans, the employer bears all the risks of a given plan, including investment and longevity risks. Since the employer pays the balance of the actuarially determined contributions, any shortfalls in investments and any other adverse actuarial experience must be made up by the employer over time. Conversely, if the plan's actuarial experience is better than expected, the employer reaps the reward of lower contribution requirements. The employer's contribution rates will fluctuate based upon the actuarial experience of the plan and if there are changes to the benefits offered under the plan.

Defined Contribution Plan

Defined contribution (DC) plans are the opposite of defined benefits plans in several ways. Contributions to DC plans may be made by the employee and/or the employer. The employer contributions are fixed and defined by the contribution formula, while the employee/retiree bears all the investment risks. Account balances are

maintained in the name of each employee, with the ultimate benefit being unpredictable because it depends on the performance of the account's investment. DC plans provide funds for retirement based solely on the contributions made to the plan and the gains and losses on the assets available in an employee's individual account. Typically, the employee decides what investments are appropriate from a predetermined list, and all investment-related risk is borne by the employee.

The account balance is paid out to the employee according to the options outlined in the plan documents. This may include a lump sum payment upon termination or retirement, which would allow for the purchase of an annuity, or withdrawals may be made over the lifetime of the employee that are in compliance with required minimum distribution rules promulgated by the Internal Revenue Service. DC plans can be offered as the primary retirement plan or as a supplemental retirement plan to a DB plan, or they can be part of a Combination DB-DC pension plan.

Hybrid Plans

Other plan designs incorporate features of both DB and DC plans into a single plan. Hybrid plans can be offered as a primary, optional, or supplemental plan. There are a growing number of hybrid plans that express future retirement benefits as account balances. The key difference between DC plans and hybrid plans is that DC plans establish an actual funded account for each participant, which contains employer and employee contributions and investment gains and losses, while hybrid plans establish "accounting" or notational accounts for each participant. The participant's balance in a hybrid plan continues to grow throughout employment, and the benefit is defined by the current value of the account.

- DB Plans with DC Features – Public sector plans have options under Section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) to add a DC feature to a DB plan. There are several variations of DB plans with DC features. These include floor offset plans and pension equity plans. Another common approach is to simply offer a DB plan and a separate voluntary DC plan such as a 457(b), 403(b) or 401(k) plan.
- DC Plan with DB Features – DC plans may seek ways to allow members to manage the risk of outliving their money. This could include the purchase of an annuity contract or allowing a transfer out of the DC plan into an appropriate DB plan where the employee can annuitize this transferring DC balance.

Cash Balance Plans

Cash balance plans maintain notional account balances in the name of each employee, crediting their accounts with pay credits and interest credits, and pay lump sums upon termination or retirement like DC plans. However, the interest credits come from a professionally managed pooled fund. The ultimate benefit to the employee may or may not be predictable depending on the interest crediting method; and the employer contributions are not predictable either. The employer bears much or all the investment risk and reward.

The employer sets aside a percentage of an employee's salary each period, and the balance set aside earns interest at a set rate. In other words, the employer promises to make a contribution to an account, usually with a specified percentage of pay (also referred to as a credit to the employee's account), and to credit the account with interest, usually a specified rate of return or a rate based on the yield of a particular benchmark. The employer invests the funds, retaining all investment income and bearing all the risks. The plans generally provide participants with the option of receiving their vested account balances as an annuity or as a lump sum.

Cash balance plans have become common in the private sector and have seen some growth in the public sector.

Variable Benefit Plans

The benefit factors and formulas in traditional DB plans are usually fixed and change up or down only through amendment by the governing body. However, a variable benefit plan is a DB plan with a multiplier or other factor

that automatically varies up or down depending on the investment performance of the fund or on the contribution budget, to share the risk between the employer and the member. While these are rare in the public sector, they have a long history (although in the minority) in the private sector.

Deferred Retirement Option Plans (DROP)

Although DROP plan features can vary significantly, the plans usually result in a lump sum payout that supplements an employee's pension. DROP plans allow employees who would otherwise retire in a DB plan to continue working. However, rather than continuing to accrue credit for service and compensation, the monthly pension payment is credited to a separate account under the government's retirement plan. The account increases in value from the monthly payments which may include an agreed-upon interest amount or may increase or decrease in accordance with the investment return of the account, until the end of the DROP period.

A significant concern about the use of DROP plans is that costs have been substantially higher than anticipated in some jurisdictions. In these cases, unexpected cost increases have been attributed to factors such as unfavorable plan design and guaranteeing an interest rate that equals or exceeds an overly optimistic return assumption.

Essential Elements of a Retirement Plan

- Defines employee groups that are eligible to participate in the retirement plan
- Indicates vesting requirements for members of the plan
- Defines the benefits provided by the plan, including the components of the formula to determine those benefits (e.g., benefit accrual rate in percentage, years of service, and final average compensation)
- Defines other benefit options, such as early and disability retirement, joint and survivor options, and lump sum withdrawals
- Defines eligible service, including an employee's ability to purchase past service, such as prior military or other government service

Essential Elements of a Plan Design

- Determine the adequacy of the retirement plan in meeting the needs of employees
- Conduct a full actuarial analysis based on workforce demographics and the desired level of replacement income to determine the related cost of providing the benefit
- Provide a tax deferral to the employee through the use of mandatory employee contributions (employer pick-ups)
- Design a plan that is financially sustainable for the employer

Financial Statement Accounting and Footnotes

The Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) issued Statement No. 67, Financial Reporting for Pension Plans—an amendment of GASB Statement No. 25 and Statement No. 68, Accounting and Financial Reporting for Pensions—an amendment of GASB Statement No. 27, which now comprise the primary accounting standards for reporting pension information in governmental financial reports. Other subsequent standards supplement these.

There are many different rules governing pension reporting and disclosure for accounting purposes, depending on the type of plan and the governmental entity's makeup. Pension plans can be classified in several different ways such as a single-employer DB plan, agent multiple-employer DB plan, cost-sharing multiple-employer DB plan, DC plan, or insured DB plan.

A pension plan and trust sometimes issues its own separate financial statement in compliance with GASB Statement No. 67, but if such a separate financial statement is not issued, then the financial reporting entity is

required to provide all disclosures ordinarily required by GASB Statement No. 67 of stand-alone pension plan reports in addition to the accounting and financial reporting requirements of GASB Statement No. 68. On DB plans, these disclosures include significant information typically contained in actuarial valuations. The GASB Statement also requires historical 10-year data to be reported as Required Supplementary Information.

For those local governments that participate in the Florida Retirement System (FRS), the FRS provides the pro rata data required for accounting and financial reporting.

Benefits Policy Considerations

The level of retirement benefits provided by governments must balance two core aims: provide adequate and competitive income for employees and ensure the plan supports workforce attraction and retention. Determining what is "adequate" or "competitive" requires assessing workforce needs, community expectations, and long-term organization goals.

These considerations should be weighed against affordability and long-term sustainability. Adequacy and competitiveness sometimes are competing objectives to affordability and sustainability. Affordability is an assessment of whether the employer can afford the cost of the retirement benefit for a given year, while sustainability is an assessment of the affordability over a long period of time through changing economic and demographic conditions. Striking this balance prevents overly modest benefits that weaken service quality and overly generous benefits that strain budgets, increase taxes, or crowd out essential programs.

Defined Benefit Plan Management

Pension Board

Typically, a pension board is created and comprised of appointed and elected trustees. The board and its trustees have fiduciary responsibilities to operate the plan prudently, as adopted by the elected officials, and not to act in their own self-interests or in other interests that are not aligned with the current pension interests of plan members. A pension board will need to engage the services of independent professionals to advise them, including an attorney, an actuary, and an investment consultant.

Funding Policy

A written funding policy sets forth the principles to determine when and how much the employer is to contribute to the pension fund in order to ensure the plan is well-funded, giving the employees and retirees a high level of benefit security. A funding policy strikes a balance among several policy objectives:

- A pension fund with actuarially sufficient assets to pay benefits when due
- A reasonable annual matching of the cost to the employer and the service rendered by members earning benefits (in other words, inter-generational equity or not kicking the can down the road)
- Manage contribution volatility (not contribution affordability)
- Transparency and accountability
- Governance integrity (avoiding agency risk and the employer's commitment to fund the program)

A good resource for establishing a funding policy is found in Actuarial Funding Policies and Practices for Public Pension Plans.

Investment Policy and Risk/Reward

The pension board is typically given the responsibility to invest the pension fund. The board should adopt an investment policy to guide its investment duties.

The most important aspect of setting an investment policy is the decision about the risk profile of the fund. That decision should be made in cooperation with the employer's assessment of its own risk appetite and its natural desire for lower contributions which competes with actuarial benefit security.

A pension fund portfolio with a higher risk profile will usually result in volatile levels of investment returns and, thus, volatile employer contribution requirements. But a higher risk profile usually carries with it higher "expected" returns which lowers the contribution requirements. Conversely, a pension fund portfolio with a lower risk profile will usually result in more stable levels of investment returns and, thus, more stable employer contribution requirements. But a lower risk profile usually carries with it lower "expected" returns which raises the contribution requirements.

Since the employer is bearing all the investment risk in conventional DB plans, the employer should have significant input to the pension board on the risk profile of the pension fund and the resultant level of employer contributions required. The pension board should not set the risk profile of the fund in a vacuum.

The board's actuary and investment consultant should jointly advise the parties concerning the risk/volatility levels of different asset allocation policies. Section 112.662, Florida Statutes, requires that investment decisions be based solely on pecuniary factors as defined in Section 112.662(1), Florida Statutes, and requires periodic filing of a comprehensive report detailing and reviewing governance policies concerning investment decisions regarding retirement systems or plans (see Section 5 of Chapter 2023-28, Laws of Florida). Additionally, Section 215.4755, Florida Statutes, provides certification and disclosure requirements by investment advisors and managers (see Section 10 of Chapter 2023-28, Laws of Florida).

Actuarial Assumptions

DB plans make promises to public employees that can easily stretch over a period of several decades. Demographic actuarial models of the projected workforce and retired population are employed to estimate the number and timing of disabilities, terminations, retirements, and deaths among covered plan members and their beneficiaries. Economic actuarial models are integrated with the demographic models to estimate future salary increases, inflation, and investment performance. The combined models help the actuary to determine the future cash flow expectations, present values, annual contribution requirements, funded status, and pension liability and risk assessments.

These models require selection and adoption of assumptions about the future. These are called actuarial assumptions. The assumptions must be reasonable and constitute an honest, best estimate of future events, without influence or bias in favor of any parties' self-interests or any other interests that are not aligned with the current pension interests of plan members. Two of the more significant actuarial assumptions are the mortality tables that estimate future longevity and the investment return assumption that estimate how much the pension fund will earn over time.

The investment return assumption should be developed through a robust process of estimating the future returns of the fund's own portfolio, taking into account: (a) the forward-looking capital market assumptions of multiple professional experts in the fields of forecasting inflation and investment returns, (b) the fund's own asset allocation, and (c) the plan's expected cash flow.

Sections 112.63 and 112.664, Florida Statutes, require local government pension plans to use the mortality tables used in either of the two most recently published actuarial valuation reports of the FRS, including the projection scale for mortality improvement, and appropriate risk and collar adjustments based on plan demographics. These tables are to be used in preparing the local plans' actuarial valuations and actuarial disclosures. Copies of recent FRS actuarial valuations may be found on the FRS website on the Publications. The mortality methodology is described in Appendix A of the valuation.

The Bureau of Local Retirement Systems in the Department of Management Services' Division of Retirement is responsible for monitoring Florida's local government DB pension plans for compliance with Florida law and

Florida Administrative Code provisions. These responsibilities are divided between the Local Retirement Section and the Municipal Police Officers and Firefighters' Retirement Trust Funds Section.

The Local Retirement Section pages provide information regarding the local government pension plans for compliance with Part VII of Chapter 112, Florida Statutes

The Municipal Police and Fire Plans pages provide information regarding the local government pension plans established under the provisions of Chapters 175 and 185, Florida Statutes

Defined Contribution Plan Management

Fiduciary Responsibility

DC plans have fiduciaries to select vendors and to monitor the investment performance of the pre-determined list of investments offered. These fiduciaries are often the employer's own finance department or other committee or can be a board of trustees.

Comprehensive vs. Specialized Provider Arrangements

DC plans require outside vendors to provide various services. These services can be arranged as follows:

- Recordkeeping – prepare quarterly statements and IRS forms, distribute funds as required, develop and maintain a website, maintain a platform for access to investment funds, and execute investment trades.
- Education – assist plan members to make informed decisions concerning which investment funds they should select from the pre-determined list for their own account.
- Investment Management – manage the investment funds made available to plan members (usually mutual funds).
- Investment Consulting – assemble the list of funds or investment managers, monitor the performance of the funds and recommend fund replacements within the list or the entire list when advisable.

Under a *specialized provider arrangement*, these services are contracted separately, usually with one vendor handing education and consulting. This structure can improve investment flexibility but may be difficult for smaller employers to access due to limited market options.

A *comprehensive provider arrangement* places most or all services under a single vendor. While this reduces administrative responsibilities, it may limit flexibility in the investment line up and create challenges if the employer seeks changes. Consequently, this opens the possibility for conflicts of interest and makes it harder to seek alternate options later because the plan is locked in with all the services.

Small employers can consider a *comprehensive provider arrangement* with a wide range of investment funds while still allowing employer input on fund selection and changes, retaining flexibility in replacing funds as needed. Under this model, an independent investment consultant can assist the employer or board in the discharge of the fiduciary duties it has in the selection, monitoring and replacement of investment options made available to plan members.

References

- Chapter 112, Part VII, Florida Statutes – Actuarial soundness of local government retirement systems. Official link
- Chapter 121, Florida Statutes – Florida Retirement System. Official link
- Chapters 175 and 185, Florida Statutes – Firefighter and municipal police pension trust funds. Official link
- Rule Chapter 60T-1, Florida Administrative Code – Local retirement systems. Official link
- Florida Department of Management Services – Local retirement plans. Official link
- Governmental Accounting Standards Board – Pension and OPEB pronouncements. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association – Retirement and benefits best practices. Official link

SECTION 19 – REVENUES

Overview

Local governments generate revenues from a wide range of sources. The authority for generating revenues is derived from the State Constitution, home rule authority, or Florida law. The Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR) annually publishes a Local Government Financial Information Handbook (which references most of the revenue sources available to local governments). Some of the major revenue types for local governments in Florida are discussed below.

Revenues Authorized by the State Constitution and State Law

Ad Valorem Taxes

Ad valorem taxes on property are assessed as of January 1 each year and are first billed (levied) and due the following November 1. Under Florida law, the assessment of non-exempt properties and the collection of county, municipal, school board, and special district property taxes are consolidated in the offices of the County Property Appraiser and County Tax Collector. State laws regulating tax assessments are also designed to assure a consistent property valuation method statewide.

Except for voted levies, Section 9(b), Art. VII, of the State Constitution permits counties and municipalities to levy property taxes at a rate of up to 10 mills ($10 per $1,000 of assessed taxable valuation). Additional taxes may be levied by counties providing municipal services. Only certain special districts are authorized to levy taxes. The tax levies are established prior to October 1st of each year, and the County Property Appraiser incorporates the millage into the local tax roll. All property is reassessed according to its fair market value as of January 1st of each year. Each assessment roll is submitted to the Department of Revenue's (DOR) Executive Director for review to determine if the rolls meet all of the appropriate requirements of state statutes.

All unpaid taxes on real and tangible personal property become delinquent and liens are attached on April 1st of the year following the year in which taxes were assessed. Procedures for the collection of delinquent taxes are provided in state law.

State Shared Revenues

The Florida Legislature has passed several laws providing for the sharing of fees and taxes assessed by the state with counties and municipalities, including sales and use taxes, fuel taxes, alcoholic beverage license taxes, cigarette taxes, and alternative fuel user decal fees. For many of these shared revenues, the authorized use is at the local government's discretion. However, some shared revenues, such as fuel taxes, are authorized for specific purposes.

The category of state-shared revenues includes the following sources, which are discussed in greater detail in the Local Government Financial Information Handbook:

- Alcoholic Beverage License Tax
- Cardroom Revenues
- Constitutional Fuel Tax
- County Fuel Tax
- County Revenue Sharing Program (Derives Funding from Transfers of 2.9 Percent of Net Cigarette Tax Collections and 2.0810 Percent of Sales and Use Tax Collections)
- Distribution of Sales and Use Taxes to Counties
- Emergency Management Assistance
- Fuel Tax Refunds and Credits

- Indian Gaming Revenues
- Insurance License Tax
- Intergovernmental Radio Communication Program
- Local Government Half-Cent Sales Tax Program (Derives Funding from Separate Transfers of Net Sales Tax Proceeds)
- Miami-Dade County Lake Belt Mitigation Fee
- Mobile Home License Tax
- Municipal Revenue Sharing Program (Derives Funding from Transfers of 1.3653 Percent of Sales and Use Tax Collections and Net Collections from the Municipal Fuel Tax)
- Oil, Gas, and Sulfur Production Tax
- Payments from State Forest Timber Sales to Eligible Fiscally Constrained County Governments
- Phosphate Rock Severance Tax
- Public Safety Emergency Communications Systems Fee
- State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program
- Support for School Capital Outlay Purposes
- Vessel Registration Fee

Home Rule Authority Revenues

Under Florida's Constitution, local governments possess expansive home rule powers. Given these powers, local governments may impose proprietary fees, regulatory fees, and special assessments to pay the cost of providing a facility or service or regulating an activity.

Proprietary Fees

Proprietary fees are home rule revenue sources, which are based on the assertion that local governments have the exclusive legal right to impose such fees. Examples of proprietary fees include admissions fees, franchise fees, user fees, and utility fees. The guiding legal principle is that the imposed fee is reasonable in relation to the government-provided privilege or service or that the fee payer receives a special benefit. Local governments may impose a franchise fee upon a utility for the grant of a franchise and the privilege of using local government's rights-of-way to conduct the utility business. The imposition of the fee requires the adoption of a franchise agreement, which grants a special privilege that is not available to the general public. The fee is considered fair rent for the use of such rights-of-way and consideration for the local government's agreement not to provide competing utility services during the term of the franchise agreement. Typically, the franchise fee is calculated as a percentage of the utility's gross revenues within a defined geographic area. User fees are imposed to recoup the costs of providing a service or a facility to the public. Local governments cannot impose a user fee higher than the cost. Local governments charge customers fees for the utility services provided. Utility fees may include a reasonable profit that can be used for purposes other than providing utility services.

Regulatory Fees

Regulatory fees are imposed pursuant to a local government's police powers in the exercise of a sovereign function. Examples of such regulatory fees include building permit fees, impact fees, inspection fees, and stormwater fees. Two principles guide the use and application of such fees: (1) the imposed fee cannot exceed the cost of the regulatory activity; and (2) the fee is generally required to be applied solely to pay the cost of the regulatory activity for which it is imposed. In terms of fiscal impact to local governments and school districts, impact fees are the most significant.

Special Assessments

Special assessments are often used to fund major capital facility projects, such as utility infrastructure and expansion as well as general operations. As established by Florida case law, two requirements exist for the imposition of a valid special assessment: (1) the property assessed must derive a special benefit from the improvement or service provided; and (2) the assessment must be fairly and reasonably apportioned among the properties that receive the special benefit. If a local government's special assessment ordinance withstands these two legal requirements, the assessment is not considered a tax, which is levied for the general benefit of residents and property rather than for a specific benefit to property.

Revenues Authorized by the Legislature

The legislature has authorized certain revenue sources for local governments through legislation providing authority for local governments to assess a tax or fee:

- Communication Services Tax
- Convention Development Taxes
- Discretionary Surtax on Documents
- Green Utility Fee
- Gross Receipts Tax on Commercial Hazardous Waste Facilities
- Insurance Premium Tax
- Local Business Tax (Including the Panama City and Panama City Beach Merchant License Tax)
- Local Discretionary Sales Surtaxes
- Local Option Food and Beverage Taxes
- Motor Fuel and Diesel Fuel Taxes (Ninth-Cent, 1-6 Cents, and 1-5 Cents Local Option Fuel Taxes)
- Municipal Pari-Mutuel Tax
- Municipal Parking Facility Space Surcharges
- Municipal Resort Tax
- Public Service Tax
- Tourist Development Taxes
- Tourist Impact Tax
- Traffic Citations Resulting from Use of Traffic Infraction Devices

A few selected revenue sources are discussed below.

Impact Fees

Chapter 2026-161, Laws of Florida, effective January 1, 2027, revises Section 163.31801, Florida Statutes, primarily with respect to impact-fee increases based on extraordinary circumstances, cumulative rate-increase limitations, payor refund requests, and certain interlocal agreements. Local governments, school districts, and special districts should review the revised statute before adopting or increasing an impact fee.

- For an extraordinary-circumstances increase, ensure that the demonstrated-need study identifies the standards supporting the existence of extraordinary circumstances and includes the required declaration of the method and timeframe by which the increase will add capacity.
- Apply the existing phase-in and public-workshop requirements as applicable, and do not use the extraordinary-circumstances provisions to increase an impact-fee rate by more than 100 percent cumulatively within a four-year period.
- Maintain written procedures for credits and impact-fee payor refund requests, and review interlocal agreements that may be affected by the statutory expiration provisions.

Discretionary Sales Surtax

The discretionary sales surtax (DSS) may be adopted by Florida counties and applies to most transactions subject to sales tax, specifically on the first $5,000 on any one item of tangible personal property. Other transactions subject to DSS are not capped. The selling dealer must collect the surtax in addition to Florida's general sales tax of 6%. The discretionary sales surtax is based on the rate in the county where taxable goods or services are delivered and ranges from a combined surtax of 0.5% to a 2.5% maximum. A few counties do not impose the surtax. DOR distributes the discretionary sales surtax collected back to the counties that levy the surtax. Counties use these funds to help pay for local authorized projects or distribute these funds and a portion of general sales taxes among the local municipalities in revenue sharing arrangements. DSS categories include: (1) Charter County and Regional Transportation System Surtax; (2) Local Government Infrastructure Surtax; (3) County Public Hospital Surtax;. (4) Voter-Approved Indigent Care Surtax; (5) Small County Surtax; (6) Indigent Care and Trauma Center Surtax; (7) School Capital Outlay Surtax; (8) Emergency Fire Rescue Services and Facilities Surtax; and (9) and Pension Liability Surtax. In accordance with Section 212.055(2), Florida Statutes, municipalities need to review interlocal agreements with counties in local jurisdictions as to any restrictions governing category of expenditures authorized to be incurred for payment with the DSS proceeds (i.e., infrastructure expenditures only). DSS rates are published by the DOR on Form DR-15DSS. Currently, DSS rates may be implemented or changed effective January 1 of each year and must terminate only on December 31 of a given year (with rare exceptions). DSS is only authorized by enactment or amendment by voter referendum during a general election. At least 180 days before a referendum is held, a performance audit of the program associated with the proposed surtax must be performed in accordance with Section 212.055(11), Florida Statutes

Local Option Fuel Taxes

Levied on each gallon of fuel sold within a county's boundaries, the tax is collected by the state and remitted back to the originating county. Counties are required to share some of these proceeds with municipalities residing in the county.

Local Business Taxes

Historically known as occupational license fees, but recently classified as business taxes, these taxes grant the privilege of engaging in a business or profession within the local government's boundaries. This tax is billed annually and remitted to the local government directly.

Fines and Forfeitures

Local governments are authorized to issue fines for violations of local laws, such as overdue parking or for unsafe structures, and may acquire property as a result of such actions.

Federal and State Grants

Federal and state assistance programs are available to local governments for many purposes, including housing, urban development, and community development, and are identified through the federal Assistance Listings and the Florida Catalog of State Financial Assistance (CSFA). Current federal opportunities and registration information are available through Grants.gov and SAM.gov. The Florida CSFA is available through the Florida Department of Financial Services.

Financial Reporting Issues

For many entities, property taxes have traditionally been the largest general revenue source. Revenues from charges for services, grants, and contributions may be reported as program revenues. For government-wide reporting, revenues and expenses are associated with governmental activities or business-type activities. Governmental activities generally include services financed primarily through taxes and intergovernmental

revenues, while business-type activities generally include operations intended to recover all or most of their costs through user fees and charges.

Revenues generated by fees and charges for typical governmental services, such as public safety, transportation, parks and recreation, and economic development, are classified as governmental activities. Some local governments also provide essential services to their residents that are classified as business type activities, such as electric or water delivery, and sewer and sanitation services, or operate a civic or sports facility.

References

- Chapters 125 and 166, Florida Statutes – County and municipal home rule authority. Official link
- Chapter 200, Florida Statutes – Ad valorem taxation and TRIM. Official link
- Chapter 212, Florida Statutes – Sales, use, and discretionary surtaxes. Official link
- Section 163.31801, Florida Statutes – Impact fees. Official link
- Section 215.97, Florida Statutes – Florida Single Audit Act. Official link
- Chapter 2026-161, Laws of Florida – Local Government Financial Transparency and Accountability Act. Official link
- Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research – Local Government Financial Information Handbook. Official link
- Florida Department of Revenue – Local tax resources. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association – Revenue control and forecasting best practices. Official link

SECTION 20 – RISK MANAGEMENT

Overview

All organizations are subject to liability and claims from a variety of risks arising from torts, property damage, errors and omissions, injury to employees arising from unsafe conditions or hazards in the workplace, and natural disasters. Risk management encompasses identifying risks, evaluating potential losses, and ultimately planning and developing a risk management program to mitigate these risks to an acceptable level. The importance of risk management has grown steadily in recent years for various reasons, including increased use of technology and higher litigation costs.

Local governments face unique risk challenges. Unlike many business organizations, local governments provide facilities and services for all residents of a given area. Additionally, the nature of some of the services provided, such as public safety, can be considered high-risk areas, which could make obtaining adequate insurance coverage difficult or cost-prohibitive. Additionally, each community has unique risk attributes that might not be a risk area for other communities. For example, two seaside communities might exhibit similar risk profiles, except one operates a seaport facility with petroleum storage. Given the heightened awareness of terrorism on domestic soil, the seaport community would possess a very different risk profile. Consequently, a comprehensive risk management program is a vital component of a local government's administration. For some local governments, this responsibility and other insurance-related matters often fall to the finance department.

To implement a risk management program, the local government must establish written risk management policies and procedures that identify the local government's goals and individuals responsible for carrying out risk-related functions and contain guidelines for making decisions about fundamental activities. Reviewing and updating a local government's overall risk assessment and insurance coverage can help ensure that the entity maintains the best mix of risk mitigation for the lowest possible cost to taxpayers.

Identifying Risks

The first step in creating an organization-wide risk management program starts with a comprehensive risk assessment, including identifying risks to understand the sources, types, and likelihood of risk. At a minimum, exposure to risks should be identified in the following areas:

- Economic environment (market trends)
- Internal environment (attitude of individuals towards risk)
- Legal environment (laws and legal procedures)
- Operational environment (day-to-day activities)
- Physical environment (e.g., natural disasters)
- Political environment (legislative activity, elections)
- Social environment (socio-economic composition of the community)
- Accurate insurance valuations on government owned properties via formal property appraisals (at least every 5 years) with annual increases for buildings and contents
- Cyber Liability risk analysis
- Employee Safety – review of Job Hazard Analysis' plus PPE (personal protective equipment) assessments

In most cases, such an assessment already exists; however, periodic re-assessment will provide a more current and accurate risk profile, reflecting the ever-changing risk environment. The purpose of this process is to ensure that all areas of significant risk have been identified and addressed, and that insurance coverage is adequate to meet potential claims.

Evaluating Potential Losses

To determine the level of coverage necessary for a given area, it is helpful to understand how the entity values particular assets. For instance, it would not make sense to insure a new civic center against hurricane damage for significantly more than its replacement cost. The entity's liability profile and recent claims experience also provide guidance on appropriate coverage. Relevant information includes the frequency and severity of claims, the number of open claims, amounts paid, and amounts reserved.

Florida law provides most Florida local governments with some relief from liability claims. Section 768.28, Florida Statutes, limits tort recovery to $200,000 per person and $300,000 for claims arising from the same incident or occurrence, unless a further act of the Legislature authorizes payment of an excess amount. However, a government may agree, within the limits of available insurance coverage, to settle a claim or judgment without further legislative action. Obtaining insurance coverage does not increase the statutory waiver of sovereign immunity.

Developing a Risk Management Plan

Based upon a completed assessment and a thorough understanding of the local government's risk profile, a risk management plan should be developed. A wide range of solutions are available to communities to combat each community's risk exposures. These include:

- Loss Prevention and Control: This involves education and training to employees to raise awareness of safety issues and other workplace hazards that can result in loss. It also involves instituting routine inspection programs that detect, deter, or prevent unsafe conditions or practices that can result in accidents, theft, property damage, or other losses.
- Risk Transfer: This involves acquisition of insurance, either directly by the local government or requiring others to do so contractually (e.g., construction contractor). Insurance can be obtained directly by local governments through:
- Traditional Insurance Coverage: Many insurance carriers provide property damage and liability coverage policies for local governments. Chances are an all encompassing policy can be formulated for your entity. To reduce insurance company credit risks, it is advisable to deal with established A. M. Best Company rated "A" insurance companies.
- Public Entity Risk Pools: Government associations may offer members participation in a variety of risk pools, which provide the opportunity to participate with other local governments and diversify self-insurance coverage geographically.
- Self-Insurance: This involves the local government assuming financial responsibility for all or a portion of specified losses. Depending on the government's size and risk exposure, self-insurance can be a cost-effective method of managing workers' compensation, property, liability, and other risks. Claims experience, premiums, reserve requirements, and coverage needs should be evaluated to determine whether self-insurance is appropriate. Self-insurance may be combined with excess or catastrophic coverage for claims above an established retention.
- Risk Avoidance: This involves a local government avoiding the provision of specific services if the risk management costs are excessive. For example, a local government may decline adding a swimming pool in a recreational area.

Funding Policy Considerations for Risk Management

As part of its risk-management policies and procedures, a local government may adopt a written funding policy describing how risk-related costs—such as premiums, deductibles, reserves, and mitigation expenses—will be

evaluated and funded over time. Clear funding principles can help ensure that the government is financially prepared to meet obligations when risks materialize and can support long-term resilience.

A risk management funding policy may balance several key objectives:

- Ensuring actuarially sufficient reserves are available to cover expected claims and liabilities.
- Managing funding volatility, especially in years with large claims or premium increases.
- Supporting transparency and accountability in how risk costs are allocated and tracked.

Local governments that self-insure or participate in pooled risk programs should fund their insurance reserves based on actuarial analysis, which may include confidence levels (for example, funding at an 80% confidence level suggests that funding will be sufficient in 8 out of 10 years). Confidence levels are developed by actuaries to reflect the probability that reserves will be adequate to meet future claims. Governments may choose a confidence level that aligns with their risk tolerance, financial capacity, and policy objectives. Funding to the actuarial central estimate may be appropriate for some, while others may prefer higher confidence levels to reduce the likelihood of underfunding.

Funding mechanisms such as internal service funds may be used to centralize and allocate risk-related costs across departments. These structures can improve cost tracking and support reserve planning.

References

- Section 768.28, Florida Statutes – Waiver of sovereign immunity and recovery limits. Official link
- Chapter 440, Florida Statutes – Workers' compensation. Official link
- Florida Department of Financial Services – Division of Risk Management. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association – Risk assessment and internal service best practices. Official link
- AM Best – Insurance company ratings and information. Official link

SECTION 21 – STRATEGIC PLANNING

Overview

Strategic planning is a governance and performance framework that enables governments to set priorities, focus resources, and strengthen operations. It ensures that staff, elected officials, and stakeholders are working toward common goals, establishes agreement on desired outcomes, and provides a mechanism for adjusting direction in response to changing conditions.

A strategic plan should function as a living management framework—providing a long-term vision while guiding near-term decision-making, resource allocation, and accountability. It should be periodically reassessed as conditions change and should provide clarity for internal staff and transparency for the public.

Benefits of Strategic Planning

Strategic planning helps

- Clarify direction by defining vision, mission, values, and goals
- Strengthen decision-making by aligning resources with organizational priorities
- Support performance-based budgeting and measurable outcomes
- Improve accountability through performance tracking and reporting
- Promote transparency by engaging residents and stakeholders in setting priorities
- Enhance long-term financial sustainability by linking planning to operating and capital budgets, long-term financial forecasts, and financial policies.
- Build organizational resilience by incorporating economic, legislative, operational, technology, emergency-preparedness, and other material risks into planning and resource decisions.

Why Strategic Planning Matters for Finance Officers

Finance officers are central to the success of strategic planning because they provide the fiscal framework that supports policy decisions. Strategic planning:

- Improves alignment between resources and priorities, ensuring the budget is a tool to achieve strategic objectives.
- Strengthens long-term financial forecasting and scenario analysis.
- Enhances accountability through clear goals and measurable performance indicators.
- Supports credibility with rating agencies, investors, and other external stakeholders by demonstrating alignment of debt, capital investments, and long-term financial capacity with strategic priorities.
- Positions finance officers as proactive partners in shaping policy rather than reactive budget managers.

Florida Statutory Considerations

Strategic planning is generally a management and governance best practice; however, Florida law establishes planning, performance, and budget requirements for certain governmental entities that should be integrated into strategic management and reporting processes.

Section 189.0694, Florida Statutes, requires each special district, beginning October 1, 2024, or by the end of the first full fiscal year after creation, whichever is later, to establish goals and objectives for each program and activity and performance measures and standards to determine achievement. By December 1 of each year thereafter, the

district must publish on its website an annual report describing goals and objectives achieved, the performance measures and standards used, and any goals or objectives not achieved.

Independent special districts subject to performance review requirements under Section 189.0695, Florida Statutes, should ensure that strategic plans and performance systems can demonstrate the relationship among statutory purpose, programs, revenues and costs, goals and objectives, performance measures, results, and corrective actions.

Effective January 1, 2027, Chapter 2026-161, Laws of Florida, adds budget-planning and transparency requirements for counties and municipalities, including publication of a budget-development calendar and a budget workshop at which the governing body identifies strategies to potentially reduce the ensuing fiscal year budget by 10 percent without compromising essential public services or legal obligations. These requirements reinforce the value of scenario planning, documented tradeoffs, and clear alignment between strategic priorities and budget choices.

Best Practices and Tools

Successful strategic planning involves

- Engagement: Involving policymakers, executive leadership, employees, residents, partners, and other stakeholders appropriate to the government's mission and decisions.
- Integration: Connecting strategic priorities to operating budgets, capital improvement programs, long-term financial forecasts, grants, financial policies, workforce plans, technology, and risk management.
- Measurement: Using performance measures, dashboards, scorecards, and other reporting tools to track and communicate progress. Measures should be useful, relevant, reliable, clearly defined, and supported by appropriate data ownership and context.
- Review: Using annual monitoring, periodic interim reviews, and a rolling planning process to adapt strategies and tactics as conditions change.
- Analysis Tools: Applying methods such as SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental), and scenario planning to evaluate options.

GFOA's Financial Foundations for Thriving Communities framework provides an additional resource for connecting strategic planning with sound financial management practices.

Steps to Establishing a Strategic Plan

1) Initiate the Strategic Planning Process
    a) The process should be authorized and supported by the organization's chief executive, whether appointed or elected. Inclusion of other stakeholders is critical, but a plan without executive support has little chance of influencing the organization's future.
2) Prepare a Mission Statement
    a) The mission statement should be a broad but clear statement of organizational purpose. It guides decisions about what the organization should and should not do, and all goals, strategies, programs, and activities should logically flow from it.
3) Assess Environmental Factors
    a) Conduct a thorough analysis of the government's internal and external environment, including relevant local, regional, state, national, and global conditions. A common tool is a SWOT analysis: strengths and weaknesses are internal, while opportunities and threats are external.

i) Factors to consider include: (a) economic and financial factors, (b) demographic trends, (c) legal or regulatory issues, (d) social and cultural trends, (e) physical environment (e.g., community development), (f) intergovernmental issues, and (g) technological change.

ii) Stakeholder input should also be gathered through public hearings, surveys, meetings with community leaders and citizens' interest groups, meetings with government employees, and workshops for administrative staff and the legislative body.

4) Identify Critical Issues

a) Use environmental analysis to identify the most critical issues facing the community. Issues should reflect both stakeholder concerns and environmental factors.

5) Develop Strategies and Goals

a) Create strategies and goals to advance strategic priorities. A single goal may support multiple priorities. Strategy maps or flowcharts can illustrate linkages. Input should be gathered from those affected to maximize buy-in.

6) Create an Action Plan

a) Action plans should be developed with input from employees closest to the work and should specify activities, responsible owners, operating and capital costs, funding sources, timelines, priorities, and key dependencies. Implementation should also identify whether resources are recurring or one-time and coordinate cross-departmental responsibilities where execution is shared.

7) Develop Measurable Objectives

a) Define specific, measurable objectives that express expected results in quantitative or otherwise verifiable terms. Objectives should identify responsible owners, targets, timelines, data sources, and reporting frequency as appropriate and should guide implementation and evaluation.

8) Incorporate Performance Measures

a) Select performance measures that link goals, strategies, actions, and objectives to funded programs and decisions. Measures should assess financial condition, service delivery, outputs, outcomes, efficiency, or community conditions as appropriate and should include clear definitions, targets, data sources, and reporting frequency.

9) Obtain Approval of the Plan

a) Present the strategic plan to the governing body for adoption. Formal approval supports alignment with budget and policy decisions.

10) Implement the Plan

a) Organizational stakeholders must work together to implement the plan. Cross-departmental teams organized around each strategic priority can foster collaboration. The plan should directly inform the operating budget, capital plan, long-term financial plan, grant strategy, and other resource-allocation decisions.

11) Monitor Progress

a) Establish a systematic review process to monitor financial and performance results. Regular progress reports should compare targets with actual results, explain material variances, and identify corrective actions or changes in strategy when needed.

12) Reassess the Strategic Plan

a) Use a rolling planning process to evaluate and reassess the plan as conditions change. GFOA's current Strategic Planning Best Practice contemplates interim reviews every one to three years and more comprehensive strategic planning processes every five to ten years, depending on how quickly conditions

change. Annual budget and performance reviews should still assess whether underlying assumptions, strategies, tactics, and measures remain valid.

References

- Government Finance Officers Association – Strategic Planning (Best Practice, approved March 3, 2023). Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association – Performance Measures (Best Practice). Official link
- National Advisory Council on State and Local Budgeting – Recommended Budget Practices. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association - Financial Foundations Framework. Official link
- Section 189.0694, Florida Statutes – Special districts; performance measures and standards. Official link
- Section 189.0695, Florida Statutes – Independent special districts; performance reviews. Official link
- Chapter 2026-161, Laws of Florida – Local Government Financial Transparency and Accountability Act. Official link

SECTION 22 – UNCLAIMED PROPERTY

Overview

Local governments are required to comply with the unclaimed-property provisions of Chapter 717, Florida Statutes, the Florida Disposition of Abandoned Personal Property Act. Governments should identify the requirements applicable to them because penalties may be imposed for noncompliance.

Requirements

Section 717.113, Florida Statutes, provides that intangible property held for the apparent owner by a court, government or governmental subdivision or agency, public corporation, or public authority that has not been claimed for more than one year after becoming payable or distributable is presumed abandoned, subject to the exceptions in the statute. Section 717.101, Florida Statutes, provides definitions used throughout Chapter 717.

Sections 717.117 and 717.119, Florida Statutes, govern holder due diligence, reporting, and delivery of abandoned property to the Florida Department of Financial Services (DFS). Property that has reached the applicable dormancy period is not deemed abandoned for reporting or remittance until the holder completes the due diligence required by Section 717.117 and receives no indication of interest from the apparent owner or authorized representative. Reports are generally due before May 1 for the preceding calendar year.

For property valued at $50 or more, Section 717.117(2), Florida Statutes, requires the holder to use due diligence to locate and notify the apparent owner. The required first notice generally must be sent at least 90 days, but not more than 180 days, before the report is filed, using the notice method permitted by the statute and current DFS instructions.

If the value of the property is greater than $1,000, Section 717.117(3), Florida Statutes, requires a second written notice by certified United States mail, return receipt requested, at least 60 days before filing the report, when the holder has a mailing address that is not known to be inaccurate. Required notices must contain the information prescribed by Section 717.117 and current DFS guidance.

Recordkeeping

- Governments should maintain records for each unclaimed-property type sufficient to identify amounts, owners, last known addresses, identifying information, due-diligence activity, reporting, and remittance. Records should be retained for the period required by Section 717.1311, Florida Statutes, and the applicable records-retention schedule.
- Governments should review outstanding checks and other potentially abandoned property before the applicable dormancy period expires, document owner-contact and reissuance activity, and follow current Chapter 717 and DFS requirements when determining whether property must be reported and remitted

Bureau of Unclaimed Property

The Division of Unclaimed Property within DFS administers Chapter 717, Florida Statutes. Its website provides reporting instructions, forms, contact information, and other guidance. Governments should use the current DFS Unclaimed Property Reporting Instructions when preparing reports and remittances.

Abandoned or Lost Tangible Personal Property

Section 705.103, Florida Statutes, prescribes the procedures required for abandoned or lost tangible personal property present on public property, such as impounded or abandoned vehicles. After performing a series of required procedures, the state or local government can retain the property, trade it to another state or local government, donate it to a charitable organization, sell it, or notify the appropriate refuse removal service.

Helpful Suggestion

It is also prudent practice for governments to periodically check the Bureau of Unclaimed Property's website for unclaimed property that the State may be holding for the local government itself to claim.

References

- Section 705.103, Florida Statutes – Procedure for abandoned or lost tangible property. Official link
- Sections 717.101, 717.113, 717.115, 717.117, and 717.119, Florida Statutes – Definitions, public-agency property, wages, reporting, and remittance. Official link
- Florida Department of Financial Services – Division of Unclaimed Property. Official link

SECTION 23 – INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Overview

Information Technology (IT) involves the use of computer systems, hardware, software, and networks to create, store, secure, process, and exchange data and information. IT is prevalent in local government operations of all sizes. Many government employees spend the vast majority of their workday on their computers. There are specialized software programs for just about any governmental activity or task, and large enterprise resource planning systems (ERP) that can coordinate all a government's data management needs. Employees draft correspondence on word processing software, do calculations and track management information on spreadsheets, and report to governing bodies with presentation software.

Employees use email, telephones, mobile devices, communication platforms (e.g., Zoom, Teams), and the internet for communications. They interface with the public through the local government's website, with other departments through fiber optic networks, and use internal and third-party secured portals for transferring money and other information.

Often these computer-assisted activities appear seamless to the users, but the computer hardware, software, networks, and processes must be installed correctly and managed properly to minimize disruptions and data loss, and to protect against unauthorized intrusion, data modification, and any other cybersecurity threats. Managing and maintaining the local government's information infrastructure is usually the responsibility of the organization's IT Department, but in small governments with no such department, it is often the responsibility of Finance.

The IT activities need support from the highest levels of the organization. Without proper funding for the maintenance of hardware, software, and the computer network, the organization risks: (1) becoming outdated; (2) data loss due to hardware failure; and (3) suffering from lack of interoperability between departments and other agencies.

Local Government Cybersecurity Requirements

Section 282.3185, Florida Statutes, applies to counties and municipalities and requires cybersecurity standards consistent with generally accepted best practices, including the National Institute of Standards and Technology Cybersecurity Framework.

Employees with network access must complete basic cybersecurity training within 30 days after commencing employment and annually thereafter. Technology professionals and employees with access to highly sensitive information must complete advanced training on the same schedule.

Counties and municipalities must maintain written procedures for cybersecurity and ransomware incident notification. Severity level 3, 4, or 5 cybersecurity incidents must be reported to the Cybersecurity Operations Center, the Cybercrime Office of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, and the sheriff having jurisdiction as soon as possible but no later than 48 hours after discovery; ransomware incidents must be reported no later than 12 hours after discovery. A local government must submit an after-action report to the Florida Digital Service within one week after remediation. Coordinate any applicable breach notice under Section 501.171, Florida Statutes. Cybersecurity records and meetings may be protected as provided in Section 119.0725, Florida Statutes.

Under Section 282.3186, Florida Statutes, a county or municipality experiencing a ransomware incident may not pay or otherwise comply with a ransom demand.

Responsibilities of the Department

IT should provide a collaborative relationship with all departments by facilitating the identification of appropriate technology and assisting in the training and implementation of that technology. Written policies and procedures should be developed in all key IT areas. Goals and responsibilities of employees who oversee IT activities in the organization may relate to the following areas:

- IT Management
- IT Hardware and Software Procurement
- Network Administration
- Application Installation/Development, Support, and Change Management
- Business Development
- Security

Following is a description of the duties with best practices in each of these areas.

1) **IT Management –** The IT Director or Manager leads the organization's technology program, including infrastructure, applications, cybersecurity, data, personnel, vendors, budgets, and major projects. The IT leader aligns technology priorities with organizational goals, establishes policies and performance expectations, manages risk, and recommends investments that improve service delivery, security, resilience, and efficiency. They also keep executive leadership informed of significant needs, costs, risks, and decisions, supporting the mission and responsible use of public funds.

    a) Best Practices

        i) Maintain a strong working relationship with the chief executive and leadership team. Provide concise, regular updates on service performance, projects, cybersecurity risks, spending, staffing needs, and decisions requiring executive support.

        ii) Stay current through professional associations, government technology groups, conferences, training, official security advisories, and reputable publications. Evaluate new technologies based on business value, maturity, security, supportability, and total lifecycle cost.

        iii) Learn from other public agencies and established industry frameworks. Reuse proven standards, contracts, templates, and lessons learned when practical, while adapting them to local legal, operational, security, and budget requirements.

        iv) Establish a cross-departmental technology steering group to gather feedback, review initiatives, prioritize competing requests, and communicate major changes. Consult legal counsel to determine whether the group is subject to Florida's Government-in-the-Sunshine Law.

        v) Work with departments to identify critical business processes, dependencies, and acceptable downtime. Prioritize projects and investments based on public impact, legal deadlines, financial exposure, data sensitivity, operational risk, and available resources.

2) **IT Hardware and Software Procurement –** IT staff manage the lifecycle of hardware, software, cloud services, subscriptions, and professional services, from requirements and acquisition through support, replacement, and secure disposal. They coordinate with departments, Procurement, Finance, Legal, and Security to evaluate compatibility, accessibility, licensing, support, privacy, cybersecurity, and total lifecycle cost, not just purchase price.

    a) Best Practices

        i) Acquire technology only for a documented business or operational need. Before selection, define expected outcomes, responsible owner, dependencies, security, privacy, accessibility, data ownership and return, retention, support, exit needs, and total lifecycle cost.

ii) Standardize approved hardware, software, configurations, upgrades, and support options when practical. Standardization improves compatibility, security, patching, training, support, reuse, and purchasing leverage. Document and approve legitimate exceptions.

iii) Coordinate technology purchasing through IT and Procurement, including cloud services and department-funded solutions. Departments define business needs, IT validates technical and security requirements, and Procurement ensures compliance with purchasing and competitive selection rules.

iv) Maintain current inventories for hardware, software, subscriptions, and licenses. Track asset and serial numbers, ownership, assignment, location, configuration, purchase and lifecycle dates, warranty or support status, renewal dates, costs, license entitlements, and final disposition. Reconcile records periodically.

v) Before equipment is reused, transferred, surplused, or disposed of, confirm that required records have been retained, transferred, or authorized for disposition. Sanitize or destroy storage media using an approved, documented method appropriate to the media and data sensitivity. Retain required chain-of-custody and disposition records, and apply FBI CJIS Security Policy requirements to media containing criminal justice information (CJI).

3) **IT Infrastructure and Network Operations –** ITD staff oversee the core technology systems and connectivity that keep the organization operating, including servers, storage, cloud services, networks, firewalls, remote access, and connections between facilities. They design, secure, monitor, maintain, and upgrade the environment; manage capacity, availability, configurations, incidents, and vendor support; and minimize service disruptions. They also coordinate backup and recovery, support disaster recovery, and business continuity planning with business owners, Security, Emergency Management, and leadership.

a) Best Practices

i) Maintain current diagrams, inventories, configurations, IP ranges, circuits, dependencies, support contacts, and recovery procedures. Use formal change controls that include risk review, approval, testing, communication, rollback planning, and post-change validation.

ii) Assign unique accounts or identifiers to users, administrators, service accounts, and system processes. Use separate standard and privileged administrator accounts, avoid shared accounts, require multifactor authentication for privileged and remote user access, enforce least privilege, disable inactive accounts, and retain traceable logs.

iii) Provide redundancy based on each service's criticality and outage impact. Reduce single points of failure across equipment, power, network paths, internet connections, storage, and facilities, and regularly test failover. Backups do not replace operational redundancy.

iv) Working with data owners, records management, and security, maintain an information asset inventory showing ownership, sensitivity, location, data flows, authorized users, third-party access, retention requirements, and safeguards. Update it when systems, vendors, integrations, or processes change.

v) Identify legal, regulatory, contractual, and policy requirements for systems and data, including privacy, breach notification, public records, retention, and the FBI Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Security Policy when systems store, process, or transmit criminal justice information (CJI). Coordinate controls with Legal, Security, Privacy, Records Management, and affected departments.

vi) Encrypt inter-facility communications that cross public, shared, or untrusted networks using a properly configured site-to-site VPN or equivalent. Apply strong authentication, secure protocols, key management, monitoring, segmentation, and firewall controls based on risk.

vii) Build public-records, legal-hold, and retention requirements into technology systems. Preserve records subject to an audit, litigation, or pending public-records request, and document authorized disposition under applicable state schedules. Do not rely on operational backups as the official records repository.

b) Network Access

i) Work with departments to establish new user access profiles commensurate with job responsibilities.

ii) Limit access to dangerous or inappropriate websites.

iii) Monitor your systems (establish baselines, watch trends, intrusion detection systems, security incident logs, etc.).

c) Backups and Contingency Plans

i) Backup regularly and test restores. Store backup media off-site (or the cloud).

ii) Develop a disaster recovery plan and perform training runs.

iii) Develop a security incident response plan

4) **Application Installation/Development, Support, and Change Management –** These IT employees work with end users and customers to develop system needs and specifications. They research, develop/acquire, and install new software for end users. They coordinate software training and support, troubleshoot technical issues, and fine tune applications for users. They implement software updates including bug fixes, patches, enhancements and customized options.

a) Best Practices
i) Prohibit user software installations (installations done by IT).
ii) Establish and maintain a relationship with vendor support departments.
iii) Design Go-Live plans for major software installations.
iv) Coordinate adequate training on new software.
v) Use an automated deployment system and log the timely installation of all software updates, patches, changes, etc.
vi) Use audit trails to detect unapproved changes.
vii) Implement change management processes that require authorization and testing.

5) **Business Development –** These ITD employees develop databases and applications that pool, extract, and analyze data for management insight and use. They use tools like SQL databases to manage the organization's data and produce reports.

a) Best Practices
i) Understand user needs and data characteristics.
ii) Based on user needs, maximize efficiency through re-use of applicable and supported systems.

6) **Security –** These ITD employees design, communicate, and enforce policies and procedures to mitigate risk from internal and external data breaches and cyberattacks. They remain abreast of changes in rules and regulations pertaining to cybersecurity. They develop and implement security incident management plans. They ensure protection of private data (e.g., bank account information, social security numbers) when it resides in the organization's systems. Securing data means securing the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of the data. There is a happy medium between security and convenience.

a) Best Practices
i) Physical Controls
(1) Establish physical controls (guards, gates, cameras, and/or locks, etc.,) in buildings and server rooms.
(2) Make sure server areas have appropriate environmental protection such as smoke detectors, fire alarms and extinguishers, temperature control, and uninterrupted power supplies.

ii) Network Security
   (1) Add a firewall between the internet and the network and ensure it is monitored and updated. Ensure that access to the firewall or router is password protected.
   (2) Employ website filters and scans.
   (3) Utilize a centrally-managed anti-virus system with regular automatic updates.
   (4) Deploy appropriately managed intrusion-detection or prevention, endpoint-protection, anti-malware, and ransomware controls. Require multifactor authentication for privileged, remote, and other high-risk access.
   (5) Develop, maintain, and test incident-response and continuity procedures so that security events are identified, contained, communicated, recovered from, and documented.
   (6) Conduct vulnerability scanning, penetration testing, or independent security assessments based on risk. Encrypt confidential and sensitive information in transit and at rest when appropriate.

iii) Banking and Customer Interfaces
   (1) Transmit confidential or sensitive data only through managed, encrypted connections, such as appropriately configured VPNs or secure web services.
   (2) Use trusted, managed devices and networks for banking and other sensitive transactions and avoid public or unsecured wireless networks.
   (3) Use payee positive pay, dual authorization, and out-of-band verification or other layered controls for online banking and payment transactions.
   (4) Monitor bank activity daily.
   (5) Carefully check ACH/direct deposit authorization forms and change requests and verify them with authorized vendor representatives by telephone to minimize fraud risk.
   (6) Ensure systems are in compliance with banking institution's compliance requirements, including PCI compliance for merchant services.

iv) End Users
   (1) Provide user security education and awareness training regularly.
   (2) Remove/change default passwords.
   (3) Require long passwords or passphrases, screen new passwords against lists of common or compromised values, and use multifactor authentication for high-risk access. Do not require routine password changes unless there is evidence of compromise. (See NIST SP 800-63B, Section 3.1.1.2.)
   (4) Remove access credentials at an employee's termination or transfer.
   (5) Configure risk-based session time-outs and reauthentication requirements, particularly for privileged or sensitive systems.
   (6) Limit/control super user and system administrator privileges, and the use of shared accounts.
   (7) Follow the principle of least privilege where a user's access should be limited to the specific data, resources and applications needed to complete their work.
   (8) Perform periodic reviews of user access for segregation of duties conflicts and to ensure user access follows the principle of least privilege.

7) **Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technology –** IT, Finance, Legal, Security, Records Management, and business owners should establish governance for artificial intelligence (AI), including generative AI and AI features embedded in enterprise software. Governance should address approved uses, data handling, vendor risk, human oversight, records retention, security, and accountability.

   a) Best Practices

      i) Maintain an inventory of approved AI tools and AI-enabled systems and establish a review process for new uses. Address unauthorized or "shadow AI" through policy, training, technical controls, and procurement oversight.

ii) Classify AI use cases based on data sensitivity, degree of automation, potential financial or legal impact, and consequences to individuals. Require increased Security, Legal, Privacy, Records Management, or executive review as risk increases.

iii) Do not enter confidential, exempt, sensitive, protected, or otherwise restricted government information into public or external AI services unless the use has been specifically authorized and appropriate contractual, privacy, security, and records controls are in place. Apply Chapter 119, Florida Statutes, and applicable retention requirements to AI inputs and outputs as appropriate.

iv) Require meaningful human review for AI-assisted outputs that could materially affect financial decisions, eligibility, personnel actions, enforcement, legal rights, public communications, or other high-impact governmental decisions.

v) For third-party AI products, address data ownership, model training, retention and deletion, security, auditability, subprocessors, intellectual-property rights, public-records obligations, and the return or destruction of government data at termination.

vi) Use established risk-management resources, such as the NIST Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework (AI RMF) and the NIST Generative Artificial Intelligence Profile, when developing AI governance and controls.

Ensure that the organization's policies and procedures comply with applicable federal, state, and local cybersecurity requirements, including Section 112.22, Florida Statutes, which requires governmental entities to block prohibited applications on government-issued devices and networks as specified by law.

Section 282.318, Florida Statutes, governs state-agency cybersecurity. Counties and municipalities are governed by the Local Government Cybersecurity Act, Section 282.3185, Florida Statutes, including its cybersecurity-training and incident-reporting requirements. Covered employees must complete the applicable training within 30 days after commencing employment and annually thereafter.

Security – Defense in Depth

Defense-in-depth refers to the implementation of multiple layers of security to protect data, networks, and systems. Building successive layers of defense mechanisms can reduce the risk of a successful attack by someone with malicious intent. There is no single control that can be used to adequately protect against sophisticated threats. A combination of controls is needed.

Financial Systems Access Controls and Segregation of Duties

Automated financial systems require access controls that protect system integrity and support sound internal control. Finance and IT or the applicable system administrator should coordinate user provisioning, role design, privileged access, segregation of duties, and periodic review.

- Grant access based on documented job responsibilities, role-based access, and least privilege. Approval authority should be assigned by an appropriate department official or system owner.
- Separate transaction initiation from approval when practicable. When staffing or system limitations prevent full segregation, document and monitor compensating controls.
- Promptly deactivate access when an employee terminates; remove prior-department approval authority when an employee transfers; and revise security and workflow roles when duties change. Local procedures should define responsibility and notification methods for these changes.
- Perform documented periodic reviews of financial-system access, segregation-of-duties conflicts, privileged or super-user access, and workflow authority. Finance, IT/system administrators, and business owners should resolve inappropriate or obsolete access and retain evidence of the review.

Payment Security (PCI DSS)

Governments that accept payment cards should maintain controls consistent with the current Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) and the requirements of their acquiring bank, payment brands, and service providers.

- Minimize the storage and handling of cardholder data. Mask primary account numbers (PAN) when displayed unless a legitimate business need requires additional digits, and do not store sensitive authentication data such as card verification codes or PIN/PIN blocks after authorization.
- Maintain an inventory of payment channels, point-of-sale devices, gateways, integrations, and third-party service providers that can affect payment security or PCI scope.
- Obtain and review current PCI DSS validation evidence appropriate to third-party payment providers, such as an Attestation of Compliance when applicable, at least annually and when significant changes occur. Do not treat vendor outsourcing as eliminating the government's responsibility to understand shared controls.
- Define payment-security responsibilities in contracts and service agreements, including incident notification, data retention and deletion, integration security, service availability, and responsibility for maintaining applicable PCI DSS compliance.

Cloud and Third-Party Vendor Risk Management

Cloud and third-party services can create operational, financial, cybersecurity, records-management, and data continuity risks. Critical vendors should be evaluated throughout the contract lifecycle, not only at purchase.

- Before acquisition, assess vendor security, privacy, financial viability, service availability, data location and handling, subcontractors, business continuity, incident response, and ability to meet legal and records requirements.
- Use contracts and service-level agreements to define data ownership, access, export format, return or deletion at termination, retention, recovery objectives, uptime and support expectations, breach and incident notification, audit rights, and transition assistance.
- For critical hosted systems, periodically review relevant security and compliance reports, service performance, incidents, vulnerabilities, insurance or risk-transfer requirements, and significant changes in the vendor's environment.
- Use a documented offboarding process that addresses data export, records retention, user and administrator accounts, keys and tokens, interfaces, payment credentials, licenses and renewals, equipment return, and confirmation of secure data deletion or media sanitization.

Size of the Department

The size of an ITD should be proportional to the size of the organization. The more users and data on the information infrastructure, the more individuals are needed to manage those users and data. In a small organization, one qualified individual may be able to handle all the above responsibilities. Lacking a qualified individual, the organization can retain an outside consultant or utilize managed services but should do so under a carefully written contract. A benefit of using an outside consulting firm may be access to individuals with varied experiences in the above areas.

Finance Involvement

The organization's finance team should understand key IT operations and controls, whether technology functions are performed internally or by service providers. Finance personnel should ask informed questions, review supporting documentation and reports, and work with IT to develop and test financial reports and interfaces. IT

risks and controls should be considered in the organization's risk assessment and in internal and external audit planning, as applicable. Finance should also participate, as appropriate, in financial-system access reviews, payment-security oversight, third-party technology risk assessment, cyber-incident fiscal impact analysis, and governance of AI used in financial or administrative processes.

Federal and State Resources for Information Technology

Florida Digital Service. The Florida Digital Service was established to improve state technology services and cybersecurity. It provides standards, guidance, training, incident-reporting information, and resources that may assist state and local governments.

The Florida Digital Service is the lead state entity for specified cybersecurity responsibilities. Its website includes local-government cybersecurity resources, training information, grant information when available, and incident-response guidance.

Section 282.31855, Florida Statutes, creates the Local Government Cybersecurity Protection Program within the Florida Digital Service. The program provides eligible local governments with cybersecurity commodities and services to develop and enhance cybersecurity risk-management programs and defend against threats, including ransomware. Statutory awards are made by December 1 of each year under the program criteria, with preference given to fiscally constrained counties.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) is a U.S. Department of Homeland Security agency responsible for reducing cyber and physical risk to critical infrastructure. CISA works with public- and private-sector partners to identify and manage risk and to strengthen resilience.

CISA offers free cybersecurity services, assessments, alerts, and tools to public-sector organizations. Federal and state grant opportunities may also be available periodically; governments should verify current eligibility, application periods, and award requirements through official sources.

References

- Section 112.22, Florida Statutes - Use of prohibited applications on government-issued devices. Official link
- Section 119.0725, Florida Statutes - Cybersecurity public records and public meetings exemptions. Official link
- Section 282.3185, Florida Statutes - Local Government Cybersecurity Act. Official link
- Section 282.31855, Florida Statutes - Local Government Cybersecurity Protection Program. Official link
- Section 282.3186, Florida Statutes - Ransomware incident compliance. Official link
- Section 501.171, Florida Statutes - Security of confidential personal information and breach notification. Official link
- Florida Digital Service - Cybersecurity resources. Official link
- National Institute of Standards and Technology - Cybersecurity Framework. Official link
- National Institute of Standards and Technology - Special Publication 800-63B, Digital Identity Guidelines: Authentication and Lifecycle Management, Section 3.1.1.2, Password Verifiers. Official link
- Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency - Cybersecurity resources for government. Official link
- Internal Revenue Service - Publication 1075, Tax Information Security Guidelines. Official link
- Florida Local Government Information Systems Association. Official link
- Section 119.071, Florida Statutes - General exemptions from inspection or copying of public records. Official link
- National Institute of Standards and Technology - Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework (AI RMF 1.0). Official link
- National Institute of Standards and Technology - Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework: Generative Artificial Intelligence Profile (NIST AI 600-1). Official link
- National Institute of Standards and Technology - Special Publication 800-88 Rev. 2, Guidelines for Media Sanitization. Official link
- PCI Security Standards Council - Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) v4.0.1. Official link

SECTION 24 – GRANTS

Overview

Grants can provide important funding for local government programs, services, and capital projects, but they often include detailed eligibility, procurement, matching, reporting, audit, and closeout requirements. Program staff, grants personnel, and finance staff should coordinate throughout the grant lifecycle. Governments should establish a grants policy, written administrative procedures, appropriate internal controls, and a defined oversight structure proportionate to the size and complexity of the grant portfolio.

Grants Policy

Because grants may commit a government to maintain a program or asset after the grant period, a grants policy should be adopted and implemented before applications are submitted. GFOA's best practice, "Establishing an Effective Grants Policy," identifies components such as grant identification and application, strategic alignment, funding analysis, evaluation before renewal or continuation, and administrative and operational support.

Grant Lifecycle and Compliance

- Pre-award review: confirm eligibility, strategic alignment, matching requirements, indirect cost treatment, procurement obligations, and the long-term operating impact before application.
- Award setup: obtain required approval, establish separate project or fund codes, identify responsible program and finance staff, and document the grant budget and reporting calendar.
- Administration: reconcile expenditures and drawdowns, test allowability and eligibility, maintain property records, and monitor subrecipients in accordance with 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 200.332.
- Reporting and closeout: submit required financial and performance reports, complete final reconciliation and property disposition, and document corrective actions.
- Record retention: follow 2 CFR Section 200.334 and the longest applicable federal, state, award-specific, property, litigation, audit, or records-retention requirement.

Post Grant Award

According to the GFOA's best practice on Grants Administration, local governments should develop processes that establish awareness that grants come with specific and significant requirements and that this awareness should be maintained throughout the life of the grant. On many occasions both the Grant Manager and Finance Manager work together to ensure the efficiency of grant administration. In smaller governments, these are often combined.

Many procedures of grant management and finance management overlap, such as developing procedures for cash management, record keeping, audit requirements, reporting requirements, and communication with grantor agency and in-house personnel.

An important aspect of grant administration is the development of effective internal controls. GFOA guidance emphasizes controls that support efficient use of grant resources, safeguard grant-funded assets, and promote compliance with laws, regulations, and award terms. The Committee of Sponsoring Organizations' (COSO) Internal Control—Integrated Framework can assist governments in organizing controls around the control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, and monitoring.

To aid in complying with all the complex requirements some grant programs set forth, the GFOA has recommended the establishment of a Grants Administration Oversight Committee. The issued best practice

outlines who should be a member of the committee and its duties. This recommendation is made so that a local government does not experience the negative consequences of not complying with all of the conditions and requirements of a grant from acceptance to expiration.

Audit Compliance

OMB's Guidance for Federal Financial Assistance includes the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards in 2 CFR Part 200. OMB substantially revised this guidance effective October 1, 2024. Federal agencies implement the guidance for their federal awards and may elect to apply the revised guidance to awards issued before October 1, 2024. Recipients should confirm the version of 2 CFR Part 200 and any agency-specific requirements applicable to each award. For single-audit compliance, use the current OMB Compliance Supplement applicable to the audit period.

The Yellow Book is another source of auditing standards published by the U.S. Government Accountability Office. Under 2 CFR Section 200.501, a federal single or program-specific audit is generally required when federal awards expended during the fiscal year equal or exceed $1,000,000. An award may require an audit below that threshold.

Florida Single Audit Act

Section 215.97, Florida Statutes, establishes state audit and accountability requirements for state financial assistance provided to nonstate entities. The act is intended, to the extent practicable, to parallel federal single-audit requirements. The state audit threshold is currently $750,000; governments should verify the current threshold, the State Projects Compliance Supplement, and any award-specific requirements each year.

References

- 2 CFR Part 200 - Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. Official link
- 2 CFR Sections 200.332, 200.334, and 200.501 - Subrecipient monitoring, record retention, and audit requirements. Official link
- Section 215.97, Florida Statutes - Florida Single Audit Act. Official link
- Florida Auditor General - Chapter 10.550 and Florida Single Audit Act guidance. Official link
- Florida Department of Financial Services - Florida Single Audit Act and State Projects Compliance Supplement. Official link
- U.S. Government Accountability Office - Government Auditing Standards (Yellow Book). Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association - Grants administration best practices. Official link
- Committee of Sponsoring Organizations - Internal Control Framework. Official link

APPENDIX A – FINANCE OFFICER COMPLIANCE CALENDAR AND CHECKLIST

Overview

This appendix provides a practical reference for recurring finance-office reporting and compliance activities. It is not an exhaustive list and is not a substitute for current statutes, administrative rules, grant or plan requirements, agency instructions, or local policies. Applicability varies by entity type and activity, and all dates and thresholds should be verified annually.

Mandatory external requirements and recommended internal procedures are shown separately so that users can distinguish legal or program obligations from good financial-management practices. See Section 17 – Reporting Requirements for additional discussion of major statewide reporting requirements.

Recurring Statutory and External Reporting Requirements

Timing	Requirement	Primary Authority / Source	Notes
Each payroll / applicable deposit schedule	Federal withholding, Social Security, and Medicare deposits	IRS Publication 15; EFTPS	Deposit frequency is based on the employer's applicable federal deposit schedule. Verify current-year requirements.
Monthly, if applicable	Florida Retirement System employer reporting and contributions	Florida Department of Management Services – Division of Retirement	Applies to participating FRS employers. Follow current employer reporting and contribution instructions.
Quarterly	Form 941, Employer's Quarterly Federal Tax Return	Internal Revenue Service	Generally due by the last day of the month following the end of the quarter. Verify current instructions and Schedule B requirements.
Quarterly	Florida reemployment tax reporting (RT-6 or applicable governmental-employer reporting)	Florida Department of Revenue	Governmental employers should follow the reporting and payment method applicable to their account and reimbursement status.
Plan schedule	Local pension contributions, reconciliations, and required reports	Chapters 175 and 185, Florida Statutes; DMS; plan documents	Requirements vary by plan. Verify contribution, actuarial, annual-report, and member-statement requirements with the plan administrator and DMS.

Timing	Requirement	Primary Authority / Source	Notes
January 31, generally	W-2 and W-3 filing	Social Security Administration; Internal Revenue Service	Furnish W-2s to employees and file required wage reports by the current federal deadline. Electronic filing requirements should be verified annually.
Form-specific annual deadlines	Applicable Form 1099 information returns	Internal Revenue Service	Furnishing and filing deadlines vary by form. Verify current-year instructions.
Upon hire	Form I-9 and E-Verify	USCIS; Section 448.095, Florida Statutes	Employee completes Form I-9 Section 1 no later than the first day of employment; employer completes Section 2 within three business days. Florida public employers must use E-Verify as required by state law.
July 1, generally	Statement of Financial Interests (Form 1), if applicable	Sections 112.3145 and 112.31446, Florida Statutes; Florida Commission on Ethics	Covered filers submit electronically through the state financial-disclosure system. Verify filing status and current instructions annually.
Before May 1	Annual abandoned/unclaimed property report, if applicable	Sections 717.113, 717.117, and 717.119, Florida Statutes.	Public-agency intangible property is generally presumed abandoned after more than one year after becoming payable or distributable, subject to statutory exceptions. Complete required due diligence before reporting. The annual holder report is due before May 1 for the preceding calendar year.

Timing	Requirement	Primary Authority / Source	Notes
November 30	Public Depositor Annual Report	Section 280.17, Florida Statutes; Florida Department of Financial Services	Florida public depositors must file the annual report with the Chief Financial Officer. Public Deposit Identification and Acknowledgment Forms are retained by the depositor and are not filed annually with DFS.
Annual	Investment continuing education, if a written investment policy is used	Section 218.415(14), Florida Statutes	Officials responsible for investment decisions or the chief financial officer must complete 8 hours of investment-related continuing education annually.
Within statutory deadline	Annual Financial Report (AFR)	Section 218.32, Florida Statutes; DFS LOGERx	See Section 17. The AFR is generally due no later than nine months after fiscal year-end, subject to the audit-related filing provisions of Section 218.32.
Within statutory deadline	Annual financial audit, when required	Section 218.39, Florida Statutes; Chapter 10.550, Rules of the Auditor General	Applicability depends on entity type and statutory thresholds. Required audits generally must be completed within nine months after fiscal year-end.
Annual, if threshold met	Federal Single Audit / program-specific audit	2 CFR Part 200, Subpart F	Generally applies when federal awards expended during the fiscal year equal or exceed $1,000,000. Verify award-specific requirements.
Annual, if threshold met	Florida Single Audit / project-specific audit	Section 215.97, Florida Statutes	Generally applies when state financial assistance expended during the fiscal year equals or exceeds $750,000. Verify the current threshold and State Projects Compliance Supplement.

Timing	Requirement	Primary Authority / Source	Notes
At least 120 days before levy change	Municipal Public Service Tax Database update, when applicable	Florida Department of Revenue	Municipalities and charter counties should use the current DOR form and instructions when a public service tax levy change is planned.

Budget and TRIM Compliance Calendar

The following items summarize common county and municipal budget and Truth in Millage (TRIM) milestones. Special districts and school districts are subject to separate requirements. Dates should be calculated from the applicable statutory event rather than assumed to occur in a particular month.

Timing	Requirement	Primary Authority / Source	Notes
January 30, beginning in 2027	Publish annual budget-development calendar	Sections 129.03 and 166.241, Florida Statutes; Chapter 2026-161, Laws of Florida	Applies to counties and municipalities beginning January 1, 2027.
Quarterly, beginning in 2027	Prepare and post required employee-compensation summary	Sections 129.03 and 166.241, Florida Statutes; Chapter 2026-161, Laws of Florida	Use the form and content required by current law.
By July 1, generally	Property Appraiser certifies taxable value (DR-420)	Chapter 200, Florida Statutes; Florida DOR TRIM guidance	The statutory TRIM cycle is driven by certification of taxable value.
Within 35 days after certification	Return proposed millage rate and first-hearing information to Property Appraiser	Section 200.065, Florida Statutes	Use the applicable DR-420 forms and current DOR instructions.
65–80 days after certification	Hold first public hearing on tentative budget and proposed millage	Section 200.065, Florida Statutes	The hearing may not be held earlier than 65 days or later than 80 days after certification of value.
Within 15 days after tentative adoption	Advertise intent to adopt final budget and millage and schedule final hearing	Section 200.065, Florida Statutes	Follow current statutory advertisement format and timing requirements.
2–5 days after advertisement	Hold final public hearing and adopt final millage and budget	Section 200.065, Florida Statutes	Verify hearing sequencing and notice requirements with current DOR TRIM guidance.

Timing	Requirement	Primary Authority / Source	Notes
Within 3 days after final hearing	Forward final millage resolution/ordinance as required	Section 200.065, Florida Statutes	Provide required documents to the Property Appraiser, Tax Collector, and Department of Revenue.
Within 30 days after final hearing	Submit TRIM compliance package	Florida Department of Revenue – Property Tax Oversight	Follow current DOR submission instructions.
At least 5 days before budget hearing, beginning in 2027	Post tentative budget	Sections 129.03 and 166.241, Florida Statutes; Chapter 2026-161	Applies to counties and municipalities beginning January 1, 2027. The tentative budget must be posted at least five days before the hearing at which the budget will be considered.
At least 14 days before final budget adoption, beginning in 2027	Conduct and post required budget-reduction exercise	Sections 129.03 and 166.241, Florida Statutes; Chapter 2026-161	The exercise must address potential 10 percent reductions without compromising essential public services or legal obligations.
After adoption, beginning in 2027	Retain final budgets and adopted amendments online for at least five years	Sections 129.03, 129.06, and 166.241, Florida Statutes; Chapter 2026-161	Applies to counties and municipalities.
During fiscal year and limited post-year period	Budget amendments	Sections 129.06, 166.241, and 189.016, Florida Statutes, as applicable	Authority and procedures vary by entity. Counties, municipalities, and special districts should verify the applicable post-year amendment period and adoption requirements.

Recommended Internal Finance Procedures

The following items are general financial-management practices and are not statutory requirements unless incorporated into applicable law, grant terms, contracts, local ordinances, policies, or procedures.

Frequency / Timing	Recommended Procedure	Notes
Each payroll	Reconcile payroll registers, earnings, taxes, deductions, direct deposits, and employer liabilities; maintain approval and change documentation.	Coordinate payroll records with Forms 941, W-2/W-3, pension reporting, and the general ledger.

Frequency / Timing	Recommended Procedure	Notes
Monthly	Reconcile bank, payroll, investment, and other material cash accounts to the general ledger.	Ensure reconciliations are prepared and reviewed by personnel with appropriate segregation of duties.
Monthly	Prepare management financial reports and review budget-to-actual results.	Investigate significant variances and record recurring or correcting journal entries as needed.
Monthly / quarterly	Reconcile pension and deferred-compensation statements and contributions.	Confirm employee and employer contributions agree with payroll and plan records.
Quarterly	Reconcile federal and state payroll reports to payroll-system and general-ledger totals.	Resolve discrepancies before year-end reporting.
Annually – calendar year-end	Close payroll records and reconcile annual wage and tax totals.	Confirm W-2/W-3 and information-return reporting totals before filing.
Annually	Review tax tables, payroll forms, benefit rates, contribution rates, and recurring payroll deductions.	Use current IRS, DOR, DMS, plan-provider, and benefit-provider guidance.
Annually	Review capital-asset inventory and departmental custody records.	Follow Chapter 274 and Rule Chapter 69I-73 where applicable, along with local capitalization and asset-control policies.
Budget development cycle	Update revenue forecasts, expenditure trends, staffing assumptions, capital needs, reserves, debt, and long-term financial projections.	Coordinate with operating departments and governing-body priorities.
Fiscal year-end	Complete year-end closing entries and reconciliations.	Common items include accounts payable, accounts receivable, accrued payroll, encumbrances, debt, capital assets, prepaid items, and other accruals or adjustments.
Fiscal year-end / audit preparation	Prepare audit schedules and supporting documentation.	Reconcile schedules to the final general ledger and maintain a centralized audit request list.
Beginning of new fiscal year	Load or activate the adopted budget and establish new-year accounting controls.	Confirm fund, department, project, grant, and capital coding is current.

Frequency / Timing	Recommended Procedure	Notes
After election or change in officials	Update authorized signers, bank signature cards, purchasing or credit-card access, system permissions, and benefit records as applicable.	Coordinate promptly with HR, IT, banking, purchasing, and records-management staff.
Annually	Review finance forms, desk procedures, policies, emergency contacts, and reporting calendars.	Replace obsolete forms and update hyperlinks, agency instructions, and contact information.
Ongoing	Maintain compliance calendar and evidence of timely filing.	Assign an owner and backup for each required report; retain confirmation of submission and supporting records.

Optional Professional Award Deadlines

Program	Timing	Notes
GFOA Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting	Submit the ACFR within six months after fiscal year-end when seeking the award.	Optional program. Verify current program rules, application procedures, and any available extensions.
GFOA Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting	Submit the PAFR within six months after fiscal year-end when seeking the award.	Optional program. Verify current program criteria.
GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award	Submit within 90 days of the legally approved final operating budget or submission of the proposed operating budget to the governing body, as applicable under current GFOA rules.	Optional program. GFOA budget award criteria are changing beginning in 2027; verify the criteria applicable to the submission year.

References

- Joint Legislative Auditing Committee – Local Government Financial Reporting and Calendar of Local Government Reporting Requirements. Official link
- Internal Revenue Service – Federal, State and Local Governments. Official link
- Internal Revenue Service – Publication 15, Employer's Tax Guide. Official link
- Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFTPS). Official link
- Social Security Administration – Employer W-2 Filing Instructions and Information. Official link
- Florida Department of Revenue – Reemployment Tax. Official link
- Section 409.2576, Florida Statutes - State Directory of New Hires reporting requirements. Official Link
- E-Verify – Employer Resources. Official link
- Florida Department of Management Services – Division of Retirement, Employer Resources. Official link
- Florida Commission on Ethics – Electronic Financial Disclosure Management System. Official link

- Florida Department of Revenue – Truth in Millage (TRIM). Official link
- Florida Department of Financial Services – Collateral Management / Public Depositors. Official link
- Florida Department of Financial Services – Unclaimed Property. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association – Financial Reporting Awards. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association – Popular Annual Financial Reporting Award. Official link
- Government Finance Officers Association – Distinguished Budget Presentation Award. Official link