



ISSUE PRIMER

A Guide to New Mexico's State Budget

Executive Summary



WHAT IS OUR STATE BUDGET?

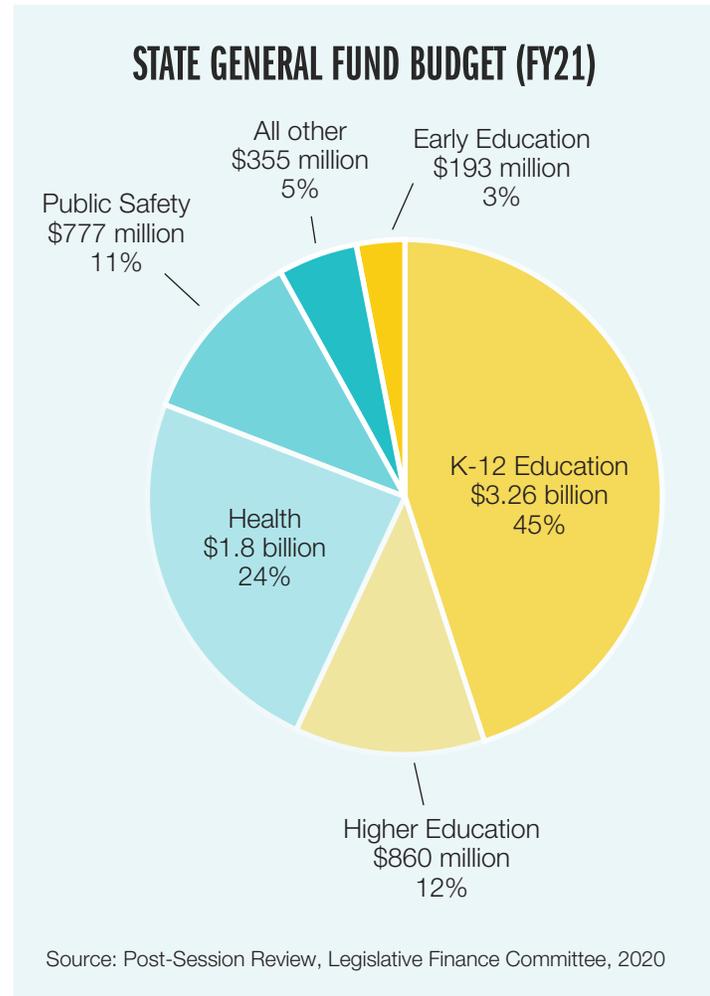
Our state budget is a reflection of what we value most and an illustration of the kind of communities we wish to create. How we spend and allocate funding – basically, how we make our values a reality – is decided by the lawmakers we elect to represent us in Santa Fe. They create the annual budget that the state uses to provide services that benefit us collectively, like education and health care.

Our budget is important because it determines whether all New Mexicans – no matter our zip code or the color of our skin – can access the same opportunities and quality of services throughout the state. While we may differ on what size we think the budget should be, we probably all agree that the budget should represent smart, targeted investments that best achieve our goals.

The annual spending for ongoing programs and services such as schools and colleges, public health and hospitals, our court system, and more, is called the state general fund operating budget, often referred to simply as the state budget. If we look at New Mexico's state budget as a pie, it is clear that we value education, health care, and public safety, as those are the three largest slices – or spending categories (see our full budget guide for more details on these spending categories).

The revenue for the state budget comes from the state's general fund, which is made up of the money we all pay in taxes, fees for things like drivers licenses and entrance to parks and museums, the money that's paid by the oil and natural gas producers for the minerals they extract from public lands, earnings and interest on state money that's been invested, and other sources, like casinos (see our tax guide for more on that).

The state budget is actually made up of many smaller operating budgets – one for each of the state's agencies. The agencies – for example, the departments of Public Education and Public Safety – determine how much money they will need in the coming year in order to pay for the services that are provided by employees like teachers and state police officers and to purchase the tools they need, like paper, computers, and squad cars. This process begins a full year in advance of the fiscal year for which the budget will be used (which begins on July 1). The state budget is then created, revised, and approved by the Legislature during their annual legislative session and signed by the governor following the end of the session.



The state budget helps drive our economy because the money flows right into our communities.

The state budget helps our economy by:



paying wages and salaries for teachers, first responders, judges, and others



purchasing goods like computers, office supplies, squad cars, building materials, and more



purchasing services like IT, health care, upkeep of state buildings, and more

THE BUDGET: FROM START TO FINISH

1 

It starts with state agencies:

In June, the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) issues budget request instructions to state agencies for the next fiscal year.

2 

Each agency requests money for the services they provide:

By September, agencies submit their budget requests to the governor (via DFA) and the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC).

3 

Those many small budgets become two versions of one big budget:

The governor and DFA develop the executive budget, while the LFC holds budget hearings & formulates their own, independent budget.

6 

The two budgets become one bill:

The initial budget must be introduced as a bill before the Legislature can officially consider the proposals. That bill – the General Appropriation Act – is referred to as House Bill (HB) 2.

5 

Differences are noted in the two budgets:

At the start of the legislative session, the DFA & LFC prepare “difference sheets” which are presented at a public hearing to the appropriations committees in the House and Senate.

4 

The two versions are made public:

In early January, the executive budget recommendations are submitted to the Legislature and made public, as are the LFC budget recommendations.

7 

Two groups of lawmakers meet and discuss the budget:

There are two committees that hold hearings on the budget proposals – the House Appropriations & Finance Committee (HAFC) and Senate Finance Committee (SFC).

8 

The first group makes changes and votes on the revised bill:

HAFC holds hearings on every agency budget, votes on any modifications, and finalizes its recommendations. The full House votes on the revised HB 2 and it is sent to the Senate.

9 

The second group also makes changes and votes on the revised bill:

The SFC holds hearing for only major agencies. It considers proposed amendments, finalizes its budget decisions, and passes its amended version of HB 2 to the Senate floor for a vote.

12 

The Governor signs – or vetos – the final budget:

Once approved, HB 2 is sent to the governor to sign. The governor has either three days or 20 days after the session to act, depending on when the bill was passed. The governor also has line-item veto power.

11 

A vote is held on the compromise budget:

The conference committee version of HB 2 goes to the House and Senate floors for approval by majority vote. Amendments are prohibited at this point.

10 

Both groups work out a compromise:

If the House does not accept the Senate amendments, a conference committee is appointed where members from both chambers develop a compromise bill, which is released as a new version of HB 2.

BUDGETS PAST AND FUTURE

While the state budget is created every year, many of the services and programs it pays for will benefit New Mexicans for years to come – much in the same way that we still benefit today from money the state spent decades ago.

We still benefit from money spent years ago on:

- school and university buildings – and the education we received in them that allows us to do our jobs,
- court buildings – and the justice that was administered within them,
- programs that helped us finish school, stay out of trouble, and see a doctor – all of which helped us become contributing members of our communities, and
- state parks and museums.

We will continue to benefit from money being spent now on:

- educating today's children – who are tomorrow's workforce,
- helping those children to grow up strong and healthy by ensuring they have enough food, can see a doctor, and have safe and nurturing child care, and
- keeping our state parks healthy and sustainable.

Our state budget is an opportunity to build a more equitable and prosperous society now and for future generations. While our spending decisions are important, so too are our decisions on how we raise revenue to support the programs and services that benefit us collectively. For more information on how the state raises revenue for the state budget, see *A Guide to New Mexico's Tax System*.



OUR BUDGET AT WORK

22,400 teachers in nearly **1,000** public schools educate more than **335,000** students.



More than **20,000** children receive child care assistance so their parents can work.



More than **200,000** of New Mexico's hard-working families get **\$80 million** back from the state thanks to the Working Families Tax Credit.



Each year, **5 million** visitors enjoy **34** state parks – **191,600** – acres of land and water, which are managed by the state.



8 museums and **7** historic sites – all overseen by the state – welcome **855,000** visitors a year.



NEW MEXICO
VOICES
FOR CHILDREN

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