

City of Texarkana, Texas General Fund Balance Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a key element of the financial stability of the City by setting guidelines and parameters for fund balance. Unassigned fund balance is an important measure of economic stability. It is essential that the City maintain adequate levels of unassigned fund balance to mitigate financial risk that can occur from unforeseen revenue fluctuations, unanticipated expenditures, and other similar circumstances. This policy will ensure that the City maintains an adequate fund balance in the City's general fund for the purposes of:

- Providing sufficient cash flow for daily operations
- Securing and maintaining a higher investment grade bond rating
- Offsetting significant economic declines or revenue shortfalls
- Providing funds to meet unforeseen emergency expenditures
- Demonstrating a commitment to long-term financial planning objectives

Definitions

Fund Equity – A fund's equity is generally the difference between its assets and its liabilities.

Fund Balance – The fund equity of a governmental fund is required to be split into the following categories for reporting purposes:

1. **Non-Spendable Fund Balance** – includes amounts that are not in spendable form or are legally or contractually required to be maintained intact.
2. **Restricted Fund Balance** – includes amounts that can be spent only for the specific purposes stipulated by external resource providers either constitutionally or through enabling legislation.
3. **Committed fund balance** – includes amounts that can be used only for the specific purposes determined by a formal action of the government's highest level of decision-making authority. Commitments may be changed or lifted only by the government taking the same formal action that imposed the constraint originally.
4. **Assigned fund balance** – comprises amounts intended to be used by the government for specific purposes. Intent can be expressed by the governing body or by an official or body to which the governing body delegates the authority. In governmental funds other than the general fund, assigned fund balance represents the amount that is not restricted or committed. This indicates that resources in other governmental funds are, at a minimum, intended to be used for the purpose of that fund.
5. **Unassigned fund balance** – is the residual classification of the general fund and includes all amounts not contained in other classifications. Unassigned amounts are technically available for any purpose.

Policy

Committed Fund Balance

- The City Council is the City's highest level of decision-making authority and the formal action that is required to be taken to establish, modify, or rescind a fund balance commitment is a resolution approved by the Council at the City's Council meeting. The resolution must either be approved or rescinded, as applicable, prior to the last day of the fiscal year for which the commitment is made. The amount subject to the constraint may be determined in the subsequent period.

Assigned Fund Balance

- The City Council has authorized the City Manager as the official authorized to assign fund balance to a specific purpose as approved by this fund balance policy.

Unassigned Fund Balance

It is the goal of the City to achieve and maintain an unassigned fund balance in the general fund of sixty (60) days of general fund operating expenditures, exclusive of capital outlay and debt services expenditures. The City considers a balance of less than sixty (60) days to be cause for concern, barring unusual or deliberate circumstances.

The computation of the required fund balance will occur once a year, as follows:

- The computation will occur after the audit is presented to City Council. The fund balance as of September 30 of the audit year will be compared to the budgeted operating general fund expenditures for the fiscal year following the audit.

The Council may appropriate unassigned fund balances for emergency purposes, as deemed necessary, even if such use decreases the fund balance below the established minimum.

If unassigned fund balance falls below the goal or has a deficiency, the City will implement a plan to replenish the fund within one year or as soon as economic and budgetary conditions allow. The following budget strategies may be considered for implementation until fund balance has been replenished to an acceptable level:

- Reduction of expenditures to minimum levels, including, but not limited to:
 - Reduction in discretionary spending such as travel and training
 - Implementation of a hiring freeze for non-essential positions
- Increase revenues or pursue other funding sources
- Use operating surpluses available in other funds
- Designate a fixed amount or a percent of operating expenditures in the next budget
- Any combination of the above strategies or others presented for consideration by staff or City Council

Should unassigned fund balance of the general fund exceed the sixty (60) day level, the City will consider using such fund balance surpluses for one-time expenditures that are nonrecurring in nature and which will not require additional future expense outlays for maintenance, additional staffing or other recurring expenditures.

Order of Expenditure of Funds

When multiple categories of fund balance are available for expenditure, the City will start with the most restricted category and spend those funds first before moving down to the next category with available funds.

Monitoring and Reporting

The Chief Financial Officer will be responsible for monitoring and reporting on the City's general fund balance. The City Manager is directed to make recommendations to the Council on the use of general fund balance surpluses both as an element of the annual operating budget submission process and in the annual audit and financial statement preparation process.