STRATEGIC AND FISCAL POLICIES

This Section includes **STRATEGIC POLICIES** and **FISCAL POLICIES**. Both are critical to the Government's operations to achieve efficient and effective service deliveries while maintaining a strong fiscal stewardship.

I. STRATEGIC POLICIES

THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT VISION AND STRATEGIC PLAN

The County Executive established a **vision** entitled *Path to Greatness*, which, together with a **mission** statement and a set of **principles** added in FY 2012, guides the County Government's services to its residents, businesses and visitors. To help achieve the vision, seven **priority areas** were identified with the top five cross-agency goals listed for each priority area. Each of these cross-agency goals are supported by multiple agencies as indicated in the **strategic linkage** section below.

Vision – Path to Greatness

Prince George's County is a nationally recognized jurisdiction that will be a leader in the Washington Metropolitan Region because of our thriving economy, great schools, safe neighborhoods and high quality healthcare. We will govern with policies and practices that are innovative, results oriented and sustainable. The residents and businesses of Prince George's County will know that this is one of the best places to live, invest, work and visit.

Mission

To transform the quality of life for our residents, visitors and businesses by providing excellent services that achieve high levels of customer satisfaction through integrity, accountability and convenience.

Principles

- Customer Service Excellence
- Ethics, Trust and Transparency
- Financial Responsibility
- Communication, Teamwork and Collaboration
- Accountability and Execution with Measurable Results
- Energizing and Visionary Leadership
- Technology-Driven and Innovative
- Efficient Use of Resources
- Can-Do Attitude
- Responsive and Disciplined
- Evidence-Based Decisions
- Sense of Urgency

Priorities

1-Thriving Economy
2- Excellent Education System
3- Safe Neighborhoods
4- Quality Healthcare
5- Effective Human Services
6- Clean and Sustainable Environment
7- High Performance Government Operations

Cross-Agency Organizational Goals and the Strategic Linkage

For each priority area, two to five cross-agency goals are identified as the government's strategic focuses. A matrix, connecting individual department/agency goals and the Government's key performance goals, is attached in the appendix of the book as "STRATEGIC LINKAGE MATRIX".

Agency Plans

Agency plans define: (1) how the agency aligns with, and will work on, accomplishing the countywide vision and (2) the agency's intended impact on customers. To accomplish this, each agency has included in its section of this book its mission, core services, goals, objectives, and strategy statements. The Strategic Focus was added in FY 2013 to indicate short-term priorities of each department based on the organization's overall strategic priorities.

Performance Measures

Performance measures are provided for each objective to illustrate a quantitative picture of the services delivered to customers. This information is important to evaluate the current status and possible improvements to carry out the countywide vision and agency plans. To accomplish this, performance measures indicate each objective's resources, tasks, services, production, efficiency, quality and impact. Five categories of performance measures provide this information: input (resources), output (workload, demand and production), efficiency (how well resources are utilized given the output), quality (accuracy, timeliness and customer service) and outcome (impact).

Performance Budgeting

The countywide strategic plan, agency plans and performance measures provide a clear strategic direction and a comprehensive quantitative picture of the services the County delivers to our customers. Performance-informed budgeting uses this information to justify and evaluate the allocation of resources, and seeks to better match funding with the strategic focus and maximize the utility of limited resources. As a result, the allocation of resources can better facilitate the agency's ability to meet its plan and the countywide vision and its ability to positively impact its customers.

ON-GOING IMPROVEMENT OF THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Performance Management is utilized as a tool to facilitate decision making and improve service delivery. The Performance Management System is a comprehensive integrated system, including development of the strategic plan, execution of the plan, constant monitoring and feedbacks, on-going training and constant improvement.

Major elements include:

- Development of organization vision, priorities and goals
- Development of agency mission, goals, priorities, strategies and performance measures
- Development of annual budget supporting agency strategic plan
- Development of centralized data warehouse for automatic data availability for all agency indicators
- Monthly reporting – tracking, analyzing, recommending and communicating
- CountyStat sessions focusing on priority objectives
- Management studies
- On-going training and constant improvement

In FY 2013, major achievements include:

- Organizational strategic planning / cultural change exercises led by the leadership (developing vision, priorities, goals; connecting agency goals and objectives with organizational goals)
- Implementation of CountyStat sessions
- Increased emphasis on strategic planning and performance budgeting in the annual budget development

In FY 2014, strategic focuses will include:

- Transforming Neighborhood Initiative
- Development of program inventories and mapping their connections with strategic priorities
- Continued implementation of CountyStat sessions
- Integrated centralized performance measures database
- Training and management studies

FUNDING BY PRIORITY AREA IN SUPPORT OF VISION AND GOALS

The County's budget is a plan to allocate and spend funds in support of achieving the Government's strategic priorities. Each major area of the countywide vision is listed below along with the aligned budget in FY 2014.

1-Thriving Economy

The success of our *Path to Greatness* will be measured by our ability to grow our economy. In 2012, we launched the Economic Development Incentive (EDI) fund with an investment of $50 million in grants and loans to attract and retain businesses. As of February 2013, the County awarded $2.4 million in EDI funding for six projects. This investment is estimated to retain and create nearly 900 County jobs. EDI funds leveraged $26 million in private investments and $700,000 in State economic development funds. The County budgeted $11 million in FY 2013 and FY 2014 from the fund to continue investing in our economy.

We will grow our residential, commercial and industrial construction economy by creating efficiencies in the permitting and inspections processes. In FY 2014, we will create a state-of-the-art, one-stop Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement.

This new agency consolidates under one roof functions previously performed by multiple County agencies. This will save the construction and development communities time and money and provide an unprecedented level of customer service.

The approved budget also supports the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Redevelopment Authority's efforts to focus on expanding access to a broad range of quality housing, promoting and increasing the supply of affordable housing, and enabling families to become self-sufficient. The FY 2014 approved budget includes $4 million from the Maryland Attorney General's National Mortgage Settlement fund to provide financial literacy and housing counseling services to County residents, acquire and rehabilitate foreclosed homes, and provide down payment and closing cost assistance to homebuyers. The County has been awarded $10 million over a three-year period to assist distressed homeowners and reduce the number of foreclosed properties in targeted communities. An additional $1.3 million will be transferred to the Redevelopment Authority's capital budget to support community revitalization efforts in Suitland and the Gateways Arts district.

2- Excellent Education System

The FY 2014 approved budget continues to support our goal of a first class school system to educate our children. The approved budget includes $1.69 billion in funding for the Board of Education, an increase of $23.4 million over the FY 2013 budget. Funding for the Board constitutes 62.4% of all General Fund spending in the FY 2014 budget. The County's contribution meets the Maintenance of Effort requirement. Additionally, the Board allocates nearly $7.7 million of funding to address K-12 and after school needs in TNI communities.

The County will also make significant investments in a number of school construction projects in FY 2014, including $80.3 million of County capital funds to support such projects as continued construction of the new Oxon Hill High School replacement, Fairmont Heights High School replacement and Eugene Burroughs Middle School renovations.

In addition, the FY 2014 approved operating budget includes $106.0 million for the Community College, a 3.4% increase over FY 2013. The CIP budget includes funding for renovations at the Facilities Management Building and to begin construction for the Upgrade Campus Fire Alarm System, and various infrastructure improvement projects.

The approved operating budget for the Memorial Library System is $27.1 million. This funding maintains current operating hours at most branches and restores Sunday hours of operation at selected branches. The FY 2014 CIP funds will support the construction of the new Laurel Library, the planning and design for the Hyattsville Branch Library replacement, the Bladensburg Library Replacement, the Langley Park Branch library replacement and the New Carrollton Branch Library renovations and various improvement projects.

3- Safe Neighborhoods

Despite an overall decrease in County-source revenues in FY 2014, the County manages to increase its funding for the public safety, criminal justice and court sectors by $10.2 million. Funding supports two new recruit classes for the Police Department which will add 80 new officers and will meet the staffing needs for the new District 7 station. The State's Attorney's Office receives two new investigator positions along with $400,000 in Asset Forfeiture Funds to support the Drug/Gun Prosecution Unit and non-violent drug offender program.

The Office of the Sheriff will phase-in the hiring of 16 vacant deputy sheriff positions to maintain adequate court security and continued focus on serving warrants in a safe, timely and efficient manner. The Office will also receive new x-ray machines and wands to enhance security in the court rooms. The Fire/EMS Department will receive two new classes of recruits (totaling 65), and a class of 20 recruits will be added to the Department of Corrections (DOC). The Office of Homeland Security receives funding for a full staffing complement.

The six-year CIP budget includes funding for: the completion of the District 7 police station, the construction of three new police stations and implementation of a records management system to support all public safety data. The six-year CIP also includes construction of a new kitchen facility at DOC, renovations of the building to house the Work Release facility, and renovations on the original 14 housing units that opened in 1987. Construction will begin on the new Brandywine Fire/EMS station and the construction of the Shady Glen Fire/EMS station will be completed.

4- Quality Healthcare & 5- Effective Human Services

The FY 2014 approved budget continues to include $15 million for the Dimensions Health System. Joint efforts on behalf of the State and the County will ensure financial stability of the system, and plan for the new Regional Medical Center. The six-year CIP includes $208 million for this new state-of-the-art facility, constructed as a part of a strategy to transform the County's healthcare system into an efficient, effective and financially viable healthcare delivery system. This will improve the health of residents of Prince George's County and the Southern Maryland region.

Despite overall decreases in County-source funding in these areas, our health and human service agencies are restructuring their service delivery and administrative structures through correctly aligning staff with functions and utilizing grant funding. These efforts have ensured that there will be no diminution of social services, particularly to our most vulnerable and at-risk populations.

Funding continues to support the Family Crisis Center and additional funding is added to the Health Department for nurses in TNI areas. Through agency appropriations and the discretionary grant program, services for the elderly, at-risk youth, those with no or substandard health insurance and many others continue to be supported.

6- Clean and Sustainable Environment

Improving the quality of life in our communities and providing a clean environment continues to be a priority in FY 2014. The approved budget includes $4.5 million for a blight eradication program in the six TNI areas. This new program will allocate $750,000 to each TNI community for acquiring and demolishing approximately 150 blighted properties.

In FY 2014, the Department of Environmental Resources and the Department of Public Works and Transportation will begin funding programs in support of the State mandates for the Watershed Implementation Plan for better water quality. The Watershed Protection and Restoration Enterprise Fund is established to ensure proper use of funding for this mandate.

7- High Performance Government Operations

Due to funding constraints, general government agencies as a group experience a 3.4% reduction in funding, one year after the sector was reduced 6%. The decrease is greater when adjusted for the positions transferred in from other agencies to operate the 3-1-1 center. Despite continued reductions, the approved budget supports the following initiatives:

- Expansion of the scope of calls administered by the 3-1-1 Call Center
- A fully staffed Office of Ethics and Accountability
- Continued implementation of CountyStat sessions to enhance data-informed, evidence-based decision making
- IT network and infrastructure refreshment
- Implementation of a new Enterprise Resource Planning project to enhance government efficiency across functional areas

FISCAL AND FINANCIAL POLICIES

The financial integrity of the County government is of utmost importance. The financial policies are a key element to maintaining this integrity. These financial management policies are designed to ensure the fiscal stability, provide long-term sustainability, and guide the development and administration of the annual operating and capital budgets, as well as the debt program.

The objectives of these fiscal policies are:

1. Fund stable and sustainable public services to citizens and ensure the County's fiscal integrity is maintained.

2. Enhance the policy-making ability of the County Executive and County Council by providing accurate, reliable and timely information about County operations in order to guide important decisions which have significant fiscal impact.

3. Set forth operational principles that achieve a structurally balanced budget and maintain the County's AAA bond rating, while minimizing the cost of funding core government services and financial risks.

4. Ensure the appropriate use of all County funds through a sound financial system and strong internal controls.

5. Employ revenue policies that diversify revenue sources, and expenditure policies that distribute the cost of government services fairly, provide adequate funds to operate desired programs and services, and make effective use of all applicable and appropriate sources of funding.

In order to meet these objectives, the County's policies are divided into seven general categories. These categories include: 1) Financial Planning Policies, 2) Revenue Policies, 3) Budget Management Policies, 4) Fund Balance Policies, 5) Debt Management Policies, 6) Cash Management/Investment Policies and 7) Financial Reporting Policies.

1. FINANCIAL PLANNING POLICIES

KEEP THE COUNTY IN A STRONG FINANCIAL CONDITION

The County will continue to maintain sound cash and financial management. Several approaches and models are employed to guide the County in this process. These models assist in revealing possible structural imbalances and provide an opportunity to take corrective actions. As a result, the County can further ensure the efficient use of public funds over the long term.

One approach to accomplish this is achieving and maintaining a balanced budget for all funds. A balanced budget means the total money the government receives in one year, including other financing sources such as transfers in and use of fund balances, is equal to the amount it spends on goods, services and debt payment that year. In addition, the County follows a variety of policies to maintain a healthy balance sheet and to maximize cash management strategies. In balancing the budget, the County considers the nature of the revenues (sustainable, one-time, program specific, etc.) and the anticipated spending needs of the particular program or activity in the out-years.

LONG-RANGE FINANCIAL PLANNING

The County implements its long-range financial planning policies using two methods – (1) the legislative approval of its six-year capital improvement program (CIP) budget and (2) internal financial forecasting and modeling. These practices are essential in order to plan for potential liabilities early and allocate resources accordingly. This ensures that County policies and/or decisions do not lead to unexpected financial burdens and measures the fiscal impact of present day decisions on long-term outcomes.

1. Capital Improvement Program

The County develops and adopts a six-year CIP each year. This plan is approved by the County Council through the annual budget adoption process.

2. Internal Financial Forecasting and Modeling

Various forecasting and debt models are used during the County's planning process. These models include six-year revenue, expenditure, and fund balance projections, and debt affordability models. These models are typically updated twice a year and as needed. They take into consideration several critical factors, including national and local economic outlook data, anticipated changes in federal, State and local laws and policies, and long-term governmental obligations. Assumptions include anticipated cost of living and merit increases for employees, maintaining adequate staffing levels across the government, rising health care expenses for active and retired employees, capital spending, risk management, pension and other long-term debt obligations.

INTERNAL SERVICE AND ENTERPRISE FUNDS

The goal for internal service and enterprise funds is to provide certain services at rates that ensure self-sufficiency. An annual review of all programs that operate on an internal and enterprise fund basis is prepared to ensure charges are not burdensome to the public or users and revenues continue in a self-supporting nature.

2. REVENUE POLICIES

DIVERSIFY REVENUES

The County strives to broaden revenue bases and seek alternative revenues to fund programs and services. This mitigates our vulnerability to reductions in program and services due to economic downturns and decreases our dependence on general taxes for government operations. This policy has become more important in recent years as the State continues to shift costs to local governments.

It is important to note that the County's ability to raise taxes is limited by a 1978 amendment to Section 817, Article VIII of the Prince George's County Charter. The amendment referred to as Tax Reform Initiative by Marylanders (TRIM) limits the County's ability to raise the property tax rate. Due to this restriction, it is essential for the County to seek other revenue sources and maintain an adequate level of fund balance to guard against financial uncertainties and risks.

USE CONSERVATIVE ASSUMPTIONS IN FORECASTING REVENUE GROWTH

The fiscal integrity of a government is heavily dependent on the extent to which actual revenues meet or exceed expenditures. It is, therefore, essential that conservative assumptions be used in forecasting revenues. During economic downturns, conservative revenue forecasts are particularly important because the slowdown in one sector of the economy can extend to other sectors, and in those circumstances, the County could experience a broader decline in revenues.

RELY ON CONTINUING REVENUE SOURCES

Over the long-term, a local government's fiscal health is greatly dependent on its ability to pay for current expenses with current revenues. Recurring expenditures should be funded from a stable stream of income, such as taxes, service charges and intergovernmental revenues, with little or no reliance on one-time sources. Non-recurring monies should be allocated primarily to non-recurring expenditure items.

REVIEW USER FEES AND GRANT FUNDS

The County completes an annual review of all user fees and charges to determine the extent to which the full cost of services are being recovered. The approval of changes to existing fees and new fees are approved as part of the annual budget process.

Grant funds are utilized to leverage County funds in order to supplement current programs and services. Inconsistent and/or fluctuating grants are not to be used to fund ongoing programs. Programs financed with grant funds are primarily budgeted in Special Revenue funds. Programs are adjusted to reflect the level of funding available.

ASSESS THE APPROPRIATENESS OF GRANT-FUNDED PROGRAMS

Grant programs are often seen as ways to implement programs that are fully or mostly paid by other entities, usually the State or Federal governments. However, some grant programs have limited life spans that require the County to pay for the full cost in subsequent years. The County will continue to implement only those grant-supported programs that balance important public services without unnecessary or unsustainable commitments of County funds in future years.

3. BUDGET MANAGEMENT POLICIES

MAINTAIN PERIODIC FINANCIAL REPORTING AND MONITORING

Financial reports in different formats are generated and systematically reviewed each month. Revenue collections and agency spending are monitored and projections are updated on a regular basis. The County also closely monitors and analyzes changes in the national and local economies and in Federal, State and local laws in order to take preventative measures in a timely manner against negative impacts. Projections and analytical reports are prepared periodically to facilitate management decisions. Particularly during challenging economic conditions and amid fiscal constraints, such periodic reporting and monitoring mechanisms are extremely important for maintaining the fiscal health of the County, and allows the government to take needed fiscal actions in a timely manner.

MONITOR FRINGE BENEFIT COSTS

County fringe benefit costs have been increasing, especially in the categories of retirement, pension and health insurance. As part of the effort to curtail health insurance costs, starting from calendar year 2008, the County implemented mandatory prescription drug mail order and adjusted employee co-payments for generic prescription drugs. Prudent fiscal management requires awareness of the forces effecting changes in the pension funds so that current and future liabilities can be met. The County strives to maintain a balance between providing quality healthcare benefits while also considering measures to control costs and limit future cost escalation.

CONTINUE RISK MANAGEMENT FUNDING

Risk management costs have been increasing in recent years. The County's risk management strategy includes maintaining funding at levels that will provide adequate coverage in the risk management fund. In FY 2014, the County continues its commitment to reduce the risk management fund deficit by allocating $2 million on top of the PAYGO amount.

BUDGET FOR LONG-TERM LIABILITIES

The County continues to contribute to retiree benefits in order to meet the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) requirement of funding Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) liabilities.

4. FUND BALANCE POLICIES

MAINTAIN A GENERAL FUND CONTINGENCY RESERVE (COMMITTED RESERVE)

A Charter amendment adopted by the voters in November 2002 requires that the County maintain a contingency reserve for the general fund. These funds are to be used as a possible source of funding in the event the County Council enacts emergency appropriations in response to unforeseen events. The reserve requirement is 5% of the general fund budget. The County expects to maintain the required balance in the contingency reserve of $133.9 million in FY 2012, and $133.9 million in FY 2013 and $135.3 million in FY 2014.

MAINTAIN A GENERAL FUND OPERATING RESERVE

To ensure a reasonable degree of stability in its programs over the long-term, the County must have the budgetary flexibility to deal with events that can create instability such as emergency situations, severe economic fluctuations, or State and federal policy changes. The County policy is to retain an operating reserve equal to at least 2% of the general fund budget in addition to the contingency reserve. This reserve is a continuing and non-lapsing source of un-appropriated funds that can be used to offset the impact of one-time budget emergencies as long as a plan exists to replenish the reserves.

The operating reserve was $53.6 million at the end of FY 2012, and is projected to be $53.5 million in FY 2013 and $54.1 million in FY 2014.

UNASSIGNED FUND BALANCE

The County has an unassigned fund balance created by a combination of effective expenditure controls and higher-than-expected revenues during periods of strong economic growth from last decade. This amount was $76.7 million at the end of FY 2012. It is expected to reach $47.2 million FY 2013 and then decrease to $39.6 million in FY 2014. The reason for the decline is in recent years, the County mitigated the combined impact of slower than normal growth of revenues due to the economic downturn and ongoing, non-discretionary expenditure needs by prudently using some undesignated fund balance both to provide one-time PAYGO funding for capital projects and to address fiscal challenges.

MAINTAIN FUND BALANCE RESERVES IN OTHER FUNDS

A number of important government functions are financed through funds other than the County's general fund, most notably the County's enterprise funds, internal service

funds and special revenue funds (these fund types are described more fully in the Budget Guide section of this document). Although these funds are designed to be self-sustaining, they must contend with certain special factors that threaten their financial stability: they are much smaller than the general fund; they support specific, limited services; and they tend to rely on a narrower and less diverse set of revenue sources.
For example, the Stormwater Management Enterprise Fund receives the bulk of its monies from an ad valorem property tax, making this fund vulnerable to potential fluctuations in that single revenue source. To minimize fiscal volatility in these funds, the County policy calls for maintaining adequate reserve levels in each fund group, as well as making needed expenditure reductions to restore a structural balance. The County also strives to maintain a positive fund balance in all special revenue funds.

5. DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICIES

MAINTAIN SOUND DEBT MANAGEMENT

The County is committed to keeping its debt level low despite rising needs for capital projects. Prince George's County debt level remains well below its self-imposed and statutory limits. Article 25A of the Annotated Code of Maryland states that the aggregate amount of indebtedness outstanding at the time of issuance shall not exceed 6% of the County's assessable base of real property plus 15% of the County's assessable base of personal property. In recent years, the County has successfully kept its net direct debt to assessable value ratio well below 2%. It was 0.8% in FY 2012 based on full market value. Based on the State law, the County's debt limit at the end of FY 2012 was $5.4 billion. Comparatively, the County's outstanding debt was $713.2 million, leaving a debt margin of $4.7 billion.

County policy also requires that the ratio of debt service to County source revenues not exceed 8%. It was 5.6% in FY 2012. The anticipated bond sales in FY 2014 will be conducted in accordance with the County's debt policies. The County also follows a strategy of retiring debt rapidly.

In addition, the County has been utilizing alternative resources other than general obligation bond revenue to fund capital projects. It plans to continue to include school surcharge, telecommunication tax and PAYGO capital revenues in its future CIP programs. During FY 2009 through FY 2012, the County used approximately $24 million of PAYGO to fund capital projects; this includes $16.7 million in FY 2009, $2.8 million in FY 2010, and $1.4 million in FY 2011 and $3.8 million in FY 2012. Budgeting PAYGO funds annually helps lower long-term debt burdens and allows the County to follow best practices recommended by bond rating agencies. FY 2013 budget includes $3 million of PAYGO funds and FY 2014 budget includes $5.8 million in PAYGO funds.

6. CASH MANAGEMENT/INVESTMENT POLICIES

MAINTAIN SOUND INVESTMENT MANGEMENT POLICY

The County Council adopted its investment policy in September 1995 (CR-52-1995). The local policy was subsequently amended in September 1998 and February 2006 due to changes in the Maryland State law.

The policy applies to the investment of all unexpended or surplus funds of the County. These funds are accounted for in the County's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and include the General Fund, special revenue funds, capital project funds, enterprise funds, debt service funds, internal service funds, trust and agency funds. The policy does not cover the investment activities of pension funds. The funds are administered by separate trustees.

The primary objectives for the management of County funds are to (a) protect investment principal in the overall portfolio, (b) ensure sufficient liquidity to meet all cash flow requirements which might be reasonably anticipated, and (c) maximize investment return consistent with risk limitations and prudent investment policies.

These objectives are met by implementing the following policies:

1. The County's investment officials shall use the "prudent person" standard in the context of managing an overall portfolio, considering the probable safety of their capital as well as the probable income to be derived.

2. The investment officials involved in the investment process will refrain from personal business activity that could conflict with the proper execution of the investment program or which could impair their ability to make impartial investment decisions.
3. The County will diversify its investments by security type and institution. With the exception of U.S. Treasury securities, authorized pools and money market funds, no more than 50% of the County's total investment portfolio will be invested in a single security type or with a single financial institution.

4. To the extent possible, the County will attempt to match investments with anticipated cash flow requirements. The County will not directly invest in securities maturing more than one year from the date of purchase, except for the investment of bond proceeds which may be invested up to three years.

5. Regarding suitable investments, the County's investments will conform without exception to Article 95, Section 22 and Section 6-222 of the State Finance and Procurement Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

6. The County will maintain a system of adequate internal controls to be compliant with the investment program policy and procedures.

7. The County will hold periodic investment strategy meetings with officials and document the resulting investment strategy approved to meet the policy.

7. FINANCIAL REPORTING POLICIES

The County's accounting and financial reporting systems will be maintained in conformance with all State and federal laws, generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and standards of the GASB and the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). Each year, an independent accounting firm performs an annual audit and issues an audit opinion that is included in the County's published Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). The County aims to achieve an unqualified audit opinion, meaning that the financial records and statement are fairly and appropriately presented. The County Government's FY 2012 CAFR received an unqualified audit opinion.

The County's CAFR is submitted to the GFOA Certification of Achievement in Excellence in Financial Reporting Program annually. The financial report should be in conformity with finance related legal and contractual provisions, disclose thoroughness and detail sufficiency, and minimize ambiguities and potentials for misleading inferences. It is important to note that the County has been participating in GFOA's Certification of Achievement in Excellence in Financial Reporting Program and Distinguished Budget Presentation programs for over 20 years.

The County's budget is submitted to GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Program annually. The budget should satisfy criteria as a financial and programming policy document, as a comprehensive financial plan, as an operation's guide for all organizational units, and as a communication device for all significant budgetary issues, trends and resource choices. The County's budget has received a GFOA's Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the past several years.

Financial systems will maintain internal controls to monitor revenues, expenditures and program performance on an ongoing basis.