

## **Appendix D: The Basis of Virginia's Budget**

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Virginia's budget operates within a legal framework including the Constitution of Virginia, the Code of Virginia, and the Appropriation Act. It is proposed by the Governor in the form of the budget bill, is amended and approved by the General Assembly, and covers a two-year period (a biennium). Everything in the State budget stems from this review and approval process by the State's elected officials. The JLARC report Interim Report: Review of State Spending (House Document 30 (2002)) described Virginia's budget process, including discussions of the program budget structure, revenue forecasting process, and performance measures. Additional discussion of Virginia's budget processes may be found in the 2008 JLARC report, The Potential for Improving Budget Review in Virginia.

Data used in assessing Virginia budget growth come from several sources and are available at several levels of detail. Financial data are available in the form of appropriations and expenditures, at the function, program, and agency levels of detail. The time periods vary for which various levels of data are available and are noted, where relevant, throughout this report.

### **Budget cycle**

Virginia's budget operates on a two-year cycle known as a biennium. Each biennial budget is passed and amended by the General Assembly three times. The General Assembly approves the initial budget act for the upcoming biennium in even numbered years along with amendments and adjustments to the prior biennial budget (known as the caboose bill). During odd-numbered years, the General Assembly approves amendments for the first and second fiscal years of the biennium. This report covers the last five biennial budgets, with each budget cycle spanning three General Assembly sessions (Table D-1).

### **Budget terminology**

There are several specialized terms used in the Virginia budget process. This section explains them and how they are used.

#### **Appropriations**

An appropriation can be considered a limit on spending, or a spending ceiling, that is authorized by the General Assembly and approved by the Governor. Expenditures may be made only if the agency or program has an appropriation (legal authority) to do so. Appropriations are maximum limits that expenditures cannot exceed. In addition, appropriations are payable in full only if sufficient revenues are available to pay all appropriations in full. A non-general funded program or agency must have both an appropriation and sufficient cash within the state treasurer in order to expend the funds.

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**TABLE D-1**  
**Virginia's biennial budget cycle over the last five biennia**

Fiscal years covered by budget	General Assembly Session	Budget Bill
<b>2012-2014 Biennium Budget</b>		
	2014	Final Caboose Bill Amendments to FY 2014
FY 2013 - FY 2014	2013	Mid-Cycle Biennial Budget Amendments to FY 2013 and FY 2014
	2012	Initial Biennial Budget
<b>2010-2012 Biennium Budget</b>		
	2012	Final Caboose Bill Amendments to FY 2012
FY 2011 - FY 2012	2011	Mid-Cycle Biennial Budget Amendments to FY 2011 and FY 2012
	2010	Initial Biennial Budget
<b>2008-2010 Biennium Budget</b>		
	2010	Final Caboose Bill Amendments to FY 2010
FY 2009 - FY 2010	2009	Mid-Cycle Biennial Budget Amendments to FY 2009 and FY 2010
	2008	Initial Biennial Budget
<b>2006-2008 Biennium Budget</b>		
	2008	Final Caboose Bill Amendments to FY 2008
FY 2007 - FY 2008	2007	Mid-Cycle Biennial Budget Amendments to FY 2007 and FY 2008
	2006	Initial Biennial Budget
<b>2004-2006 Biennium Budget</b>		
	2006	Final Caboose Bill Amendments to FY 2006
FY 2005 - FY 2006	2005	Mid-Cycle Biennial Budget Amendments to FY 2005 and FY 2006
	2004	Initial Biennial Budget

This report primarily focuses on appropriations. Unless otherwise noted, appropriations used in this report are the final appropriations approved (voted on and adopted) by the General Assembly and approved by the Governor. This includes all legislative changes made to appropriations during a biennium, such as second year changes to first year amounts and the caboose bill. Administrative adjustments made to appropriations subsequent to the adoption of the Appropriations Act are not included. The Appropriations Act authorizes the Governor, under certain conditions, to make limited adjustments to appropriations.

## **Expenditures**

Expenditures are actual amounts spent or transferred by State agencies and certified by the Department of Accounts. In addition to spending by agencies, expenditures include financial assistance to localities for personal property tax relief and deposits made to the revenue stabilization fund. Expenditures also include payments made on capital projects in a given year, regardless of when appropriations were made to the projects. Expenditures may vary from appropriations because of administrative adjustments to the legislative appropriation amount, as authorized in the Appropriation

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Act and changes in the amount of revenue collected from what was assumed in the Appropriation Act.

## Functions and programs

Virginia's budget is based on a program structure, a mechanism intended to conveniently and uniformly identify and organize the State's activities and services. Under this structure, services that the State provides are classified into three levels of detail: functions, programs, and agencies.

Functions represent the broadest categories of State government activities. Virginia government is grouped into the following seven broad operating functions:

- education,
- administration of justice,
- individual and family services,
- resource and economic development,
- transportation,
- general government, and
- enterprises.

Budget programs include funding directed toward specific objectives such as developing or preserving a public resource, preventing or eliminating a public problem, or improving or maintaining a service or condition affecting the public. Programs are grouped by function, and may appear in several agencies. First adopted by Virginia in the mid-1970s, program budgeting is an attempt to avoid the excessive detail of line-item budgets by combining logical groupings of governmental activities into broader "programs."

Programs are more specific than the broad governmental functions and may appear in several agencies. For example,

The budget program "State health services" within the broad individual and family services function includes the provision of direct health care services to individuals and families through State-operated facilities, including services relating to child development, drug and alcohol abuse, geriatric care, inpatient medical, maternal and child health, mental health, intellectual disabilities, outpatient medical, technical support and administration, and other services. This program is included in several agencies, including the University of Virginia Medical Center, Virginia Commonwealth University, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, and the Department of Veterans Services.

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The budget program "administrative and support services" combines a wide variety of discrete services, including architectural and engineering services, food and dietary services, physical plant services, human re-sources, information technology services,

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and others. Administrative and support services can be found across many different agencies. As of 2014, Virginia had over 200 budget programs.

## **State “agency” defined**

An agency represents the major unit of operational and budgetary control and administration of State services. Agencies are generally thought of as including a set of programs under the purview of an agency head who is typically appointed by the Governor, along with a staff who implement the agency’s programs.

There are, however, differing notions about what constitutes a State agency and how many there are in Virginia. The 2014 Appropriation Act (Chapter 1) provided funding to entities identified by 189 unique agency codes. In 2005, over 140 State agencies were identified in the JLARC report, *Review of State Spending: December 2005 Update* (House Document 35). In 2014, JLARC staff identified 155 agencies.

The State accounting and budgeting system essentially regards anything assigned an agency code to be equivalent to a State agency, although such codes are often merely a matter of administrative convenience. For instance, appropriations for agency codes 720 (central office), 790 (grants to localities), 792 (mental health treatment centers), 793 (intellectual disability training centers), and 794 (Virginia Center for Behavioral Rehabilitation) must be combined to arrive at a budget total for the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (formerly the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services).

Agency codes are sometimes used as a way of entering a new program or activity into the State financial system and ensuring budget control. For example, “central appropriations” is assigned an agency code of 995 even though it is not an actual agency.

This report uses the Appropriation Act as a basis for identifying State agencies. The 189 unique agency budget codes are then adjusted for situations where multiple codes are assigned to a single agency, and to exclude various financial accounts (Table D-2).

This process identified 155 State agencies, which is the number used throughout this report. While this approach consolidates DBHDS programs and facilities into a single agency, it counts each of the courts—Circuit Courts, the various types of district courts, and the Magistrate System—as separate agencies, as does the Appropriation Act.

This report, however, does not treat the personal property tax relief program as a separate agency. In FY 2014, this program received an appropriation of \$950 million and was larger than all but 10 State agencies. However, it was not included as an agency in the analysis of growth in appropriations over the last ten years among agencies. Instead, it was discussed separately on page 20 of the report, along with the revenue stabilization fund and debt service, which is funded through the Treasury Board.

**TABLE D-2**  
**Counting State Agencies, FY 2014**

Unique agency codes in 2014 Appropriation Act	189
Codes assigned to DBHDS Facilities & Programs	5
Codes assigned to UVA Academic Division (207) & Medical Center (209)	2
Codes assigned to William & Mary (204) and VIMS (268)	2
Codes assigned to DARS (262), Woodrow Wilson Rehab Center (203), and Department for the Aging (163)	3
Codes assigned to Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (702) and Rehab Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (263)	2
Codes assigned to Councils, Commissions and Boards under the Division of Legislative Services <sup>a</sup>	23
Codes assigned to various financial activities <sup>b</sup> :	4
DOA transfer payments (162) <sup>c</sup>	
Central appropriations (995)	
Towing and Recovery operations (507)	
Interstate Organization Contributions (921)	
<b>Total Number of State Agencies</b>	<b>155</b>

Source: 2014 Appropriation Act (Chapter 1); Department of Planning and Budget.

Note: Total number of State agencies is calculated by subtracting the number of codes assigned from the number of unique agency codes, ensuring that the principal agency is correctly counted—e.g. from 189, subtract 5 for DBHDS facilities and programs and add back 1 for the overall agency.

<sup>a</sup> There were 23 agency codes in FY 2014 under the Division of Legislative Services. <sup>b</sup> The four agency codes assigned to various financial activities were not included in the total number of State agencies for FY 2014. <sup>c</sup> The Department of Accounts has a separate line item for transfer payments, such as the Revenue Stabilization Fund (program 735).

## General and non-general funds

State revenues and appropriations are grouped into two categories, depending on their origin: general and non-general funds. The State’s general fund consists primarily of revenue from income and sales taxes that are not restricted in any way, and are used for the widely varied purposes of government. Non-general funds, as noted earlier, derive from many diverse sources and are restricted to certain specified uses.

General and non-general funds comprised 41 and 59 percent, respectively, of the FY 2014 Virginia budget. This is important because the expenditure of non-general funds is controlled by their authorizing statute—thus, more than half the State budget is determined by statute more than by the appropriation process. This ensures that child support payments, for example, are spent for child support and not some other purpose. It also means that growth in more than half the budget is determined by factors other than the annual budget decision-making process.