

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Budget Engagement & Advisory Best Practices

*Prepared by Chevon Kothari, Deputy County Executive  
for the Health & Human Services Coordinating Council's Boards and Commissions*

### Q1. What role do Boards/Commissions play in shaping policy?

**Answer: Boards and Commissions serve as community-informed advisors, subject matter resource partners, early warning systems for emerging needs, and bridges between residents and County leadership.**

### Q2. What opportunities exist to provide input during the budget process?

**Answer: Boards/Commissions can engage at several points.**

- **Departmental Leadership:** Most advisory boards have County or Departmental leadership that attend either regularly or intermittently. We encourage you to give your feedback about needs and gaps to your staff liaisons as they arise throughout the year.
- **Budget Workshops:** In December or January each year, the Board of Supervisors typically holds a workshop outlining the fiscal outlook and high-level priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. These sessions offer valuable context for advisory bodies.
- **Department Presentations & Updates:** In the months leading up to budget hearings, which occur typically the first week or two in June, departments may present updates regarding programs, fiscal pressures, and budget development progress. Stay informed by checking Board meeting agendas, posted on the Board of Supervisors meeting website the Friday before each meeting: <https://agendanet.saccounty.gov/BoardOfSupervisors>
- **Public Comment:** Members of the public (including Board Members/Commissioners) may provide comment in person at Board meetings, by email to [BoardClerk@saccounty.gov](mailto:BoardClerk@saccounty.gov), or by mail to 700 H Street, Suite 2450, Sacramento, CA 95814
- **Board Appointees:** Most advisory board members are appointed by a County Supervisor. We encourage you to maintain contact with the member that appointed you, giving them your insights and feedback.

### Q3. What makes a budget recommendation most effective?

**Answer: Concise, well-supported recommendations tend to have the greatest impact.**

Strong recommendations typically:

- Are aligned with Board-stated priorities
- Reference existing fiscal realities
- Include supporting data
- Offer feasible implementation strategies
- Are shared early enough to influence budget development

#### Q4. How can we align our recommendations with the County's budget development schedule?

**Answer: Understand the timeline and submit data-supported recommendations early in the process to increase the likelihood that your priorities are reflected in departmental proposals before they reach the Board.**

- County departments begin building their proposed budgets each January. Recommendations provided before or early in this period are more likely to be considered.
- The Recommended Budget Hearing is held in early June; the Revised Recommended Budget Hearing is held in early September. The Recommended Budget is usually posted two weeks prior on the Office of Budget and Debt Management's website:  
<https://bdm.saccounty.gov/#gsc.tab=0>
- Many Boards/Commissions choose to submit letters after reviewing the Recommended Budget. Submitting letters sooner gives the Board more time to consider your feedback.
- Maintain regular communication with department directors throughout the year—not just during budget season. Keeping them informed of your work, priorities, and community findings builds alignment and trust. Share:
  - Data (qualitative and quantitative)
  - Emerging trends
  - Actionable recommendations

#### Q5. When should our Board/Commission submit written budget recommendations or letters to the Board of Supervisors?

**Answer: The earlier, the better.**

- Share your upcoming workplan, priorities, and supporting data as early as possible with the County Supervisor(s) who appointed you — ideally well before formal budget hearings.
- It is also helpful to include relevant department directors and the Deputy County Executive supporting your policy area in these communications.

#### Q6. How can our advisory role be most effective within capacity constraints?

**Answer: Many Boards/Commissions operate with limited time and resources. Impact does not require extensive staffing — it requires clarity and strategy. Position your Board/Commission as a trusted, credible source of timely information.**

- **Focus on What Matters Most:** Identify and prioritize 2–3 key issues. Align your annual workplan with those priorities. Ensure recommendations are realistic and actionable.
- **Lead with Data and Lived Experience:** Combine quantitative data with community stories. Provide clear, concise summaries that decision-makers can easily reference.
- **Build Relationships and Use Strategic Engagement:** Establish regular communication with appointing County Supervisors and relevant department directors. Public presentations can be impactful, but they are not required. Scheduling targeted meetings to share findings and concrete strategies can be just as effective.