


MEMORANDUM

TO: Government Operations & Fiscal Policy [GO] Committee

FROM: Carolyn Chen, Legislative Analyst 

SUBJECT: **FY24 Recommended Operating Budget Worksession:
Public Information [PIO]**

PURPOSE: Review and make recommendations for Council consideration – vote expected.

Expected Participants:

- Barry Hudson, Director, Office of Public Information (PIO)
- Alyce Leach, Program Manager, PIO
- Eva Acevedo, Fiscal & Policy Analyst, Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

SYNOPSIS: [FY24 Recommended Operating Budget: Public Information \[PIO\]](#)ⁱ

About PIO. The mission of the Office of Public Information (PIO) is to provide timely, accurate, and effective communication with the public. Programmatic areas in PIO include MC311, Public Relations and Web Content and Graphic Management. Established in 2010, approximately 75% of the PIO budget is comprised of the MC311 Call Center, the County’s single contact number and website for non-emergency requests for information and service requests for Montgomery County Government. PIO and MC311 served as the crisis communication hub during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

Summary analysis of FY24 changesⁱⁱ. The FY24 recommended PIO operating budget of \$7,158,807 represents 3% of the [General Government and Other Functions](#) departmental budget or 0.24% of County’s total operating budget (excluding MCPS). PIO’s FY24 recommended budget increase by 6.3% is primarily due to compensation shifts and adjustments in MC311.

- **Public Relations** → *Reduction* of a vacant position no longer needed of **(\$133,614)**.
- **Web Content and Graphic Management** → *Shift* of personnel costs from Cable Fund of \$26,254.

FY24 Fiscal Impact Considerations.

1. **Vacancy/Lapse and Succession Planningⁱⁱⁱ.** As of March 3, 2023, PIO had 5 vacancies representing \$584,189 in compensation and 37% of FTEs budgeted with a FY24 planned lapse of \$138,148. PIO includes three departmental staff eligible for retirement with a pension plan.

PIO Program / Years Vacant	# Vacancies	Workforce Compensation
PIO 23 Director's Office		
<1 year	1	\$ 118,723.55
PIO 23 Information		
<1 year	4	\$ 465,465.89
TOTAL	5	\$ 584,189.44

2. **Revenue Generating Arms.** PIO does not historically hold a revenue generating source in its department.
3. **Racial Equity and Social Justice Rating.** PIO received a rating of 0 → Department-level budget does not yet demonstrate a commitment to advancing racial equity and social justice in Montgomery County.
4. **Growth Areas.** In an effort to centralize and increase cost-efficiency of public information services, organizational and structural changes are anticipated over the next five years as a result of the County’s ongoing assessment of its vision for resident communication post-pandemic.

The Office of Legislative Oversight’s report on [How the County Communicates to Its Residents](#) provides a baseline inventory of communication channels by department^{iv} and highlighted that the County has 18 departments with dedicated communication staff representing 59 positions at a cost of \$8M.

Departments’ Communication Structure and Staff			
Type of Staff	High	Specialized	Limited
Contract & Other Duties		(1) AGR	
Dedicated	(5) ABS, CC, DHCA, MCFRS, PIO	(3) PRO, SAO, OHR	
Dedicated & Contract	(3) DEP, DOT, POL		
Dedicated, Contract, & Other Duties	(2) HHS, REC		
Dedicated & Other Duties	(5) BOE, Consumer Protection, CUPF, OCP (Main), Permitting		
Other Duties	(11) ANM, CEX, MCPL, OCP (Gilchrist), OCP (Volunteer), RS (BCC), RS (Eastern), RS (Mid-County), RS (SS), RS (Upcounty), SHF	(4) COR, FIN, Human Rights, OEHMS	(17) BOA, Circuit Court, CFW, DGS, EC, MCERP, MSPB, OCA, OGM, OIG, OIR, OLO, OLR, OMB, ORESI, OZAH, TEBS

Council staff recommends reviewing PIO vacancies and lapse calculations for possible reductions in the FY24 Recommended Budget in anticipation of future organizational restructuring of County-wide resident communications.

This packet contains:

© Page #

FY24 Recommended Operating Budget: Public Information	©1-6
Office of Legislative Oversight Report 2023-3: How the County Communicates to Its Residents	Online

ⁱ [FY23 Recommended Operating Budget: Public Information \[PIO\]](#)

ⁱⁱ **Summary analysis of FY23 changes.** The County Executive recommended investments in each program area in PIO: six contract MC311 positions termed at three years, two Public Information Officer positions in Public Relations and a position shift to web content and graphic management. The PIO budget also includes a dedicated Spanish language communications channel through County-based Radio America, the second oldest Hispanic radio signal in the Capital Region.

ⁱⁱⁱ [OLO Memorandum Report 2021-6: Availability of County Government Vacancy and Lapse Data](#). April 6, 2021.

^{iv} On May 6, 2021, the [GO Committee reviewed CEC’s FY22 Recommended Operating Budget](#) that included strategic discussion topics for future fiscal years (see page 2 of May 6, 2021 memo.) On June 23, 2021, the [GO/HHS joint committees met on the coordination of call centers and governance](#). A resulting action from these sessions was to direct the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) to add Project #12: How the County Communicates to its Residents. OLO assigned the report in May 2022.



Public Information

RECOMMENDED FY24 BUDGET

\$7,158,807

FULL TIME EQUIVALENTS

60.11

BARRY HUDSON, DIRECTOR

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Office of Public Information (PIO) is to provide timely, accurate, and effective communication to the public. PIO works with the County Executive, departments and agencies, media, County employees, the County Council and other elected officials, businesses, civic groups, and every other segment of the Montgomery County community. PIO provides information through the mass media, social media, internet, presentations, publications and graphics, cable television programming, and telephone and electronic requests for information and assistance via the MC311 Customer Service Center.

BUDGET OVERVIEW

The total recommended FY24 Operating Budget for the Office of Public Information is \$7,158,807, an increase of \$423,108 or 6.28 percent from the FY23 Approved Budget of \$6,735,699. Personnel Costs comprise 96.48 percent of the budget for 75 full-time position(s) and one part-time position(s), and a total of 60.11 FTEs. Total FTEs may include seasonal or temporary positions and may also reflect workforce charged to or from other departments or funds. Operating Expenses account for the remaining 3.52 percent of the FY24 budget.

COUNTY PRIORITY OUTCOMES

While this program area supports all seven of the County Executive's Priority Outcomes, the following is emphasized:

Effective, Sustainable Government

INNOVATIONS AND PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENTS

- Collaborated with TEBS, the Office of Community Partnerships, Regional Service Offices, and OMB to expand non-English speaking hybrid budget forums to improve community engagement.
- Streamlined the process for requesting graphic and website support by introducing an online work request form.
- Implemented bi-weekly meetings for Executive Branch public information officers and outreach staff to update department communicators on communication trends as well as ensure consistent messaging.
- During the past year, MC311 reduced customer pain points by changing policies in partnership with the Departments of Environmental Protection, Finance, Health and Human Services, Housing and Community Affairs, and Permitting Services and the Office of Human Resources.

- ☀ Simplified and streamlined how MC311 staff answer questions on the phone and online, with the cooperation and support of many department operations, which reduced the time customers spent on the phone getting the information they requested.
- ☀ Eliminated or minimized the need to transfer MC311 callers to internal experts in property taxes, permitting services, and trash and recycling leading to more callers who received the information they needed in one call.
- ☀ Callers to MC311 wait an average of 26 seconds, down from 36 seconds in FY22, over 60 seconds in FY21, and over 4 minutes in FY20.
- ☀ Average handle time for callers to MC311 is just under 4 minutes, down from 4.5 minutes in FY22, and down from over 5 minutes during FY21 and FY20.
- ☀ Customer satisfaction for callers to MC311 continues to hover near 90% so far in FY23.

PROGRAM CONTACTS

Contact Barry Hudson of the Office of Public Information at 240.777.6507 or Eva Acevedo of the Office of Management and Budget at 240.777.2763 for more information regarding this department's operating budget.

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance measures for this department are included below (where applicable), with multi-program measures displayed at the front of this section and program-specific measures shown with the relevant program. The FY23 estimates reflect funding based on the FY23 Approved Budget. The FY24 and FY25 figures are performance targets based on the FY24 Recommended Budget and funding for comparable service levels in FY25.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

☀ MC311 Customer Service Center

MC311 is a key strategic, enterprise-wide initiative that provides the public with a single three-digit number (311) to call for County information and service from anywhere within Montgomery County. In addition, MC311 provides the County with a sophisticated ability to count, track, and respond to resident requests. MC311 is the County's main hub for customer service and provides the general public with a higher quality of service delivery and accountability while helping the government achieve operational efficiencies. MC311 actively partners with other County departments and offices to discover process improvement opportunities that will benefit the customers' experience while simultaneously increasing operational efficiencies within the County. The County's Siebel users receive their training through MC311, as the Siebel system tracks the status of service requests throughout the County.

Program Performance Measures	Actual FY21	Actual FY22	Estimated FY23	Target FY24	Target FY25
Total number of General Information Service Requests created ¹	338,329	328,869	330,000	332,000	334,000
Total number of Fulfillment Service Requests created ²	272,507	270,751	220,000	220,000	220,000
Percent of calls classified as General Information	70.41%	68.38%	60.00%	60.00%	60.00%
Average rate of Fulfillment Service Requests created on the MC311 website and the mobile enabled portal	41.61%	39.44%	40.00%	40.00%	40.00%
Average percent of callers requesting to speak Spanish	8.38%	6.15%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%

Program Performance Measures	Actual FY21	Actual FY22	Estimated FY23	Target FY24	Target FY25
Average amount of time it takes to reach an MC311 Customer Service Representative after welcome announcement (in seconds)	241	37	30	28	26
Average rate of calls that come into 311 but are not answered by a Customer Service Representative (CSR) ³	15.05%	4.15%	3.50%	3.20%	3.00%
Cost per customer contact (in dollars) (salary expenditures divided by the total number of customer contacts by phone, web portal, mobile-enabled portal, Twitter)	\$5.00	\$5.31	\$5.25	\$5.25	\$5.25
Percent of MC311 survey respondents reporting satisfaction	86%	88%	88%	88%	88%

¹ General Information Service Requests are those created, handled and closed within the MC311 Customer Service Center on behalf of other County departments.

² Fulfillment Service Requests are those that are forwarded to departments for handling and completion. The numbers and types of service requests are driven by many factors including seasonal events such as tax notices, mass mailings, weather events, and global pandemics.

³ The industry standard target is 5%.

FY24 Recommended Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY23 Approved	4,546,738	46.70
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	393,173	0.00
FY24 Recommended	4,939,911	46.70

Public Relations

Under this program, the Public Information Office:

- Educates and informs residents about County issues, programs, and services through press releases, media advisories, news, public events, the County website, online newsletters, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and podcasts.
- Works directly with media organizations to ensure that reporters and editors have accurate and timely information about County issues, programs, and services.
- Develops promotional campaigns to increase awareness of critical issues such as public health and emergency preparedness.
- Develops culturally competent outreach (radio programming) to inform and engage the County's Spanish speaking constituency.
- Provides television and video direction/production services at no cost to the County Executive's Office, and any additional County department requesting assistance.

Program Performance Measures	Actual FY21	Actual FY22	Estimated FY23	Target FY24	Target FY25
Number of press events	90	110	100	75	75
Internal County staff satisfaction with PIO services (scale of 1-4)	3.27	3.13	3.15	3.15	3.15
Total attendance at press conferences and press events ¹	3,150	3,338	3,338	3,200	3,200
Total utilization of direct resident communication systems - web, YouTube, video, podcasts, Facebook, Twitter (in millions) ²	155.2	93.9	100.0	100.0	100.0

¹ Virtual attendance is tallied from logged-in accounts, so this total is much lower than actual participants and views.

² COVID-19 pandemic level communications were continued into FY22.

FY24 Recommended Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
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FY24 Recommended Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY23 Approved	1,909,097	12.20
Eliminate: Reduction of a Vacant Position No Longer Needed	(133,614)	(1.00)
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	111,196	0.00
FY24 Recommended	1,886,679	11.20

☀ Web Content and Graphic Management

The Web Content and Graphic Development Program has four major functions:

- Providing creative and technical support to Public Relations, Cable Programming, MC311, and County departments.
- Developing and overseeing the County's graphic identity program to ensure consistency in the County's printed communication for the public. The program develops printing guidelines for departments in accordance with Administrative Procedure 1-7, Use of the Montgomery County Coat of Arms, Logotype and Emblem, and Public Communication Guide.
- Managing the growth and activity on the County's website and the MC311 web portal, which involves the development of policies and procedures for adding information to the website, as well as providing a leadership role in internet management.
- Producing artwork and design services for publications, fliers, decals, exhibits, charts, maps, and other promotional and educational products. Graphic artists provide advice to departments in cost-effective and attractive ways to meet project requirements and objectives.

Program Performance Measures	Actual FY21	Actual FY22	Estimated FY23	Target FY24	Target FY25
Number of press releases and media advisories posted on website	1,114	1,154	1,185	1,215	1,245
Number of subscribers to county communications ¹	1,187,120	1,672,510	1,750,000	1,850,000	1,950,000
Average open rate for email communications sent via the Office of Public Information	66%	32%	30%	32%	34%

¹ This number reflects the total number of subscribers to the County email distribution system.

FY24 Recommended Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY23 Approved	279,864	2.00
Shift: Personnel Costs from Cable Fund to General Fund	26,254	0.21
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	26,099	0.00
FY24 Recommended	332,217	2.21

BUDGET SUMMARY

	Actual FY22	Budget FY23	Estimate FY23	Recommended FY24	%Chg Bud/Rec
COUNTY GENERAL FUND					
EXPENDITURES					
Salaries and Wages	4,320,706	4,982,220	4,692,032	5,284,519	6.1 %

BUDGET SUMMARY

	Actual FY22	Budget FY23	Estimate FY23	Recommended FY24	%Chg Bud/Rec
Employee Benefits	1,344,012	1,507,958	1,449,611	1,622,282	7.6 %
County General Fund Personnel Costs	5,664,718	6,490,178	6,141,643	6,906,801	6.4 %
Operating Expenses	499,740	245,521	245,134	252,006	2.6 %
County General Fund Expenditures	6,164,458	6,735,699	6,386,777	7,158,807	6.3 %
PERSONNEL					
Full-Time	71	76	76	75	-1.3 %
Part-Time	1	1	1	1	—
FTEs	53.70	60.90	60.90	60.11	-1.3 %
County General Fund Revenues	0	0	0	0	—

FY24 RECOMMENDED CHANGES

	Expenditures	FTEs
COUNTY GENERAL FUND		
FY23 ORIGINAL APPROPRIATION	6,735,699	60.90
<u>Changes (with service impacts)</u>		
Eliminate: Reduction of a Vacant Position No Longer Needed [Public Relations]	(133,614)	(1.00)
<u>Other Adjustments (with no service impacts)</u>		
Increase Cost: Annualization of FY23 Compensation Increases	311,940	0.00
Increase Cost: FY24 Compensation Adjustment	232,493	0.00
Shift: Personnel Costs from Cable Fund to General Fund [Web Content and Graphic Management]	26,254	0.21
Increase Cost: Annualization of FY23 Lapsed Positions	24,475	0.00
Increase Cost: Printing and Mail	4,750	0.00
Increase Cost: Motor Pool Adjustment	1,735	0.00
Decrease Cost: Retirement Adjustment	(7,876)	0.00
Decrease Cost: Annualization of FY23 Personnel Costs	(37,049)	0.00
FY24 RECOMMENDED	7,158,807	60.11

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Program Name	FY23 APPR Expenditures	FY23 APPR FTEs	FY24 REC Expenditures	FY24 REC FTEs
MC311 Customer Service Center	4,546,738	46.70	4,939,911	46.70
Public Relations	1,909,097	12.20	1,886,679	11.20
Web Content and Graphic Management	279,864	2.00	332,217	2.21
Total	6,735,699	60.90	7,158,807	60.11

CHARGES TO OTHER DEPARTMENTS

Charged Department	Charged Fund	FY23 Total\$	FY23 FTEs	FY24 Total\$	FY24 FTEs
COUNTY GENERAL FUND					
Human Resources	Employee Health Self Insurance	0	0.00	0	0.00
Health and Human Services	General Fund	153,719	1.50	165,325	1.50
Permitting Services	Permitting Services	305,352	2.90	322,686	2.90
Housing and Community Affairs	Montgomery Housing Initiative	75,942	0.90	84,688	0.90
Recycling and Resource Management	Solid Waste Disposal	445,804	4.75	468,907	4.75
Recycling and Resource Management	Solid Waste Collection	115,708	1.25	121,137	1.25
Cable Television Communications Plan	Cable TV	554,040	4.30	546,809	4.09
Total		1,650,565	15.60	1,709,552	15.39

FUNDING PARAMETER ITEMS

CE RECOMMENDED (\$000S)

Title	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29
COUNTY GENERAL FUND						
EXPENDITURES						
FY24 Recommended	7,159	7,159	7,159	7,159	7,159	7,159
No inflation or compensation change is included in outyear projections.						
Labor Contracts	0	214	214	214	214	214
These figures represent the estimated annualized cost of general wage adjustments, service increments, and other negotiated items.						
Subtotal Expenditures	7,159	7,373	7,373	7,373	7,373	7,373