



COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

CITY COUNCIL of SALT LAKE CITY

Item Schedule:

Work Session: April 15, 2025
Follow-up WS: May 13, 2025
Unfinished Business: TBD

TO: City Council Members

FROM: Lehua Weaver and Kira Luke
(with help from former Executive Director, Cindy Gust-Jenson)

DATE: May 13, 2025

RE: Council Policy Manual – Communication Budgets

NEW INFORMATION

At the Council's April 15th Work Session discussion, staff was assigned to draft a new policy for the Council's review based on the current typical uses of the Communication Budget. Attached is a draft Policy section for the Council's review and a chart of potential uses for the Council to straw poll.

Staff is coordinating with the Attorney's Office to understand any legal limitations on the types of uses for the Communication Funds. Once we coordinate with the Attorney's Office on this question, we will share new information with the Council.

POLICY QUESTIONS

The Council could review the draft language and ensure it meets the needs of Council Members to communicate and connect with the residents in your Districts.

The Council could review the attached chart during the briefing and give direction on:

- a) What types of uses are approved for Council Member use? Are there any limitations for those uses (i.e. dollar amount)?
- b) What types of donations can outside organizations ask for? Are there any limitations for donations (i.e. dollar amount, use, frequency, etc.)?

If there is time, the Council may also wish to give direction on a few other components:

- a) Should funding be consolidated in the City for similar uses and requests that come from Recognized Community Organizations (RCOs)?
 - b) Should there be an overall limit for the amount of City funds an outside organization can apply for from the City?
 - c) Should more outreach be done to ensure that all RCOs are aware of the funding available?
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Information below was provided for the April 15th briefing.

ISSUE AT-A-GLANCE

Each Council Member has at their discretion a “Communication Budget” to use for mailings, events, and other community related activities. The funds are budgeted to allow Council Members to quickly and easily participate in and pay for eligible uses. Over the years, the Council has relied on the Communication Budget section of the Council Policy Manual to help guide use of the money. The current section of the Council Policy Manual (see Attachment 1, referred to herein as the “Policy”) outlines the main activities anticipated and eligible, including sharing information with constituents, supporting events within the district for all to enjoy, and other community building activities.

The Policy is outdated and does not recognize all current uses, the increased dollar amount that is available to each District, or the availability of a full-time Liaison to work with each Council Member. The additional staff and funding availability broadens Council Members’ opportunities to more fully deploy their communications budgets. However, the outdated Policy has caused confusion and frustration. Updates would give more clarity, improve equitable access, and ensure the effectiveness of these taxpayer dollars.

Given current practice and use of the Budgets, the Council may wish to review the Policy and give staff direction on updates.

Purpose of the briefing: Review the policy questions and potentially direct staff to update the communications budget policy and return with an updated Policy for review and Council consideration.

POLICY QUESTIONS & BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Currently, each Council district has a budget of \$16,200 to spend on these communication and community building activities as permitted under the Policy.

Since the budget amount was increased a few years ago, and Council staff communication and graphic designer resources have grown, the typical uses of the funds have changed. Additionally, recognized community groups have become familiar with the opportunity to request funds to support mailers, events, and supplies as well. As the uses have changed, the Policy is in need of updating.

Council staff has outlined various questions for the Council to consider on how the Policy should be updated. The questions and any preliminary options are only provided as a starting point for the discussion.

1. Current Policy components

- a. Current policy language of allowed & anticipated uses of Communication Budgets:
 - i. Communication efforts & mailings – newsletters, postcards, etc. to share information on city issues.
 - ii. District meetings –invitations, refreshments, copies, displays etc. for either small group meetings in the office or larger town hall district-wide meetings.
 - iii. Community building activities/events – either hosted & put together by Council staff or supporting another public/community group event; activities are free and open to the public; support for other community events is limited to \$500 (has not been updated).
- b. Process: Council Members are the main point of contact for directing use of the Communication budget – either by planning an event, coordinating with a Community Council Chair, or requesting pins, shirts, “swag,” etc.
- c. Budget amount: current allocations are \$16,200 per district.
- d. Title: Council District Communication Budget

2. Approved uses

- a. Would Council Members like to maintain the current list of allowable uses of the Communication Budgets?
- b. Are there other uses for the Communication Budget that Council Members would like to consider adding to the list of approved uses in the Policy?
 - i. For example, some of the following uses have evolved over time:
 - 1. Stuff We All Get (SWAG) – design and ordering large quantities of gear to be distributed to the community (t-shirts, reusable bags)
 - 2. Sponsorships of or donations to organizations or for multiple/ongoing community activities (sports, outside publications, advertising space, festivals, etc.)
 - 3. Support for a community service project – this could fit within the existing policy, but could also be specifically identified since it may require unique supplies or support.
 - ii. Other items that have not been paid for, but the question has come up periodically:
 - 1. Purchase of tickets to fundraising events
 - 2. Partnership with a school to promote an educational topic related to City services, i.e. water conservation or recycling
 - 3. Training or conference attendance for non-city staff
 - 4. Donation to local non-profit efforts (food bank or clothing drives)
 - 5. Recognition event of local community members who have contributed to the District.
 - 6. Funding for an art project or community identifiers/markers

- c. Would Council Members like to establish a maximum amount that can be contributed to outside community organizations?
 - i. This could be tied to types of use or over a period of time, i.e. \$x amount per calendar year or \$x amount per event.
- 3. **Other City funding sources** - There are a few other ways that Community groups can access City sponsorship funds for their events. For example, special events can apply for the City's ACE Funding. Community Councils can also apply for and receive funds from the Mayor's Office to help with mailing costs and online meeting licenses.
 - a. Does the Council want to assess the total amount of funding available to Community groups and streamline the process so that all Community groups have timely and equal access to funds and the application process is consistent across the City?
 - b. If the Council is interested in reviewing the other sources of funding and evaluating opportunities for coordination, you could direct staff to review and propose changes.
- 4. **Annual budget amount:**
 - a. Does the Council feel as though the current budget per district is still appropriate/adequate?
 - b. Would the Council like to consider changing the amount of funding appropriated for the communications budget?
 - c. The current policy outlines the process for "carryover funds" in order to sync up the fiscal year (July – June) with the Council terms (calendar year). Does the carryover practice work for Council Members or are there any changes to consider?
- 5. **Fiscal procedures and budget transparency** - Currently, this budget allocation meets the fiscal procedures requirements, because it is part of the Council Office budget adopted as part of the annual budget.
 - a. As some unique uses and requests have come up, should additional steps be required to ensure transparency for the use of communication funds consistent with fiscal procedures guidelines?
 - b. Would the Council like to consider updating the Policy to reflect that unique requests (based on activity or amount, or otherwise outside of those uses explicitly stated in the Policy) would be subject to inclusion in a budget amendment to ensure fiscal transparency?
 - c. Would the Council like staff to create a yearly report summarizing how each district uses the communication budget to promote transparency?
- 6. **Special projects/interests**
 - a. Depending on the Council's direction on the previous items, there may be some potential uses that are not eligible under the policy. A sample of this over the years could be: contributing to the cost of programs with partner organizations (i.e. free fare months with UTA), encouraging new art projects in the districts, support for new infrastructure projects (i.e. futsal courts at the Mead Ave underpass), etc. These have been handled through the Communication Budgets

and other times through a budget amendment with general fund or office budgets.

- i. Does the Council have direction on whether these should be allowed uses for the Communication funds or through another city program?

7. **Project Timelines** – This section of the Policy Manual does not address the balance of requests on staff in terms of workload balancing, prioritization, and turn around.

- a. Staff resources have been increased over the years to accommodate more requests for graphic design, coordination with community members, etc. However, the amount of funds available in each district has created an increased workload for staff. Would the Council be open to adding information about staff turnaround and estimated timeframes so that it is part of the consideration for requests?
- b. Would the Council be interested in establishing a priority-setting process to guide staff resources during busy periods or at the end of the fiscal year (if the rollover process continues), to manage workload and expectations more effectively?

8. **Misc.**

- a. Title: Would the Council consider updating the title to more accurately reflect current practice? Option: Council District Budget for Communication, Outreach, and Community Building
- b. Coordination: would the Council like the policy to outline a mechanism for staff to coordinate with the Administration to avoid redundancy and provide consistency in how funding to outside organizations or special projects is allocated?