





April 8, 2024

MEMORANDUM

TO: Ingrid S. Watson, Chair
Government, Operations, & Fiscal Policy Committee (GOFP)

THRU: Joseph R. Hamlin 
Director of Budget and Policy Analysis

FROM: Alex Hirtle 
Legislative Budget & Policy Analyst

RE: Office of Ethics and Accountability
Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Review

Budget Overview

The FY 2025 Proposed Budget for the Office of Ethics and Accountability is \$1,144,200. This is a decrease of \$5,400, or 0.5%, below the FY 2024 Approved Budget. The decrease is due to lower operating costs from the removal of funding for the mandated quality review contract, as well as software costs.

Budget Comparison - General Fund

Approved Fiscal Year 2024 to Proposed Fiscal Year 2025

Category	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Budget Approved	FY 2024 Estimated	% Change - Est vs App	FY 2025 Proposed	\$ Change	% Change
Compensation	\$ 615,276	\$ 740,400	\$ 703,000	-5.1%	\$ 747,800	\$ 7,400	1.0%
Fringe Benefits	190,646	248,000	246,500	-0.6%	270,000	22,000	8.9%
Operating Expenses	202,152	161,200	149,400	-7.3%	126,400	(34,800)	-21.6%
Total	\$ 1,008,074	\$ 1,149,600	\$ 1,098,900	-4.4%	\$ 1,144,200	\$ (5,400)	-0.5%

Authorized Staffing Count - General Fund

	FY 2024 Approved	FY 2025 Proposed	Change Amount	Percentage Change
Full-Time	6	6	0	0.0%
Total	6	6	0	0.0%

Staffing Changes and Compensation

- General Funds are provided for six (6) full-time positions – an Executive Director, Attorney, Investigator, Administrative Aide, Administrative Specialist, and a Compliance Specialist. FY 2025 proposed staffing remains unchanged compared to FY 2024.
- The Office reported a full complement of staff. There has been an attrition rate (to date) for FY 2024 of 0%.
- FY 2025 Compensation expenditures are proposed to increase by \$7,400, or 1% due to the annualization of FY 2024 salary adjustments.

Fringe Benefits

- FY 2025 fringe benefit expenditures are proposed to increase by \$22,000, or 8.9%, as a result of alignment with the projected increased compensation costs.
- A five-year trend analysis of fringe benefit expenditures is included below.

	FY 2021 Actual	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Estimated	FY 2025 Proposed
Fringe Benefit Expenditures	\$ 198,284	\$ 195,165	\$ 190,646	\$ 246,500	\$ 270,000
As a % of Compensation	30.7%	29.4%	32.9%	35.1%	36.2%

Operating Expenses

- FY 2025 operating expenses are proposed at \$126,400 and are comprised of the following major items:
 - Office Automation \$69,200
 - Operating Contracts 34,900
 - General Office Supplies 8,000
 - Telephone 7,500
- Overall, operating expenses will decrease \$34,800 from the approved FY 2024 level. The accompanying table compares the FY 2025 Proposed Budget operating expenditures with the FY 2024 Approved Budget operating expenditures. In four (4) categories, the FY 2025

Proposed Budget increases planned spending over the FY 2024 level. In three (3) of the categories, the FY 2025 Proposed Budget reduces planned spending from the FY 2024 budget. In four (4) of the categories, the FY 2025 Proposed Budget level remains unchanged compared to the FY 2024 approved level.

Operating Objects	FY 2024 Budget	FY 2025 Proposed	FY 2024 - FY 2025	
			\$ Change	% Change
Office Automation	\$ 65,700	\$ 69,200	\$ 3,500	5.0%
Postage	100	0	(100)	-100.0%
Advertising	100	0	(100)	-100.0%
Printing	300	300	-	0.0%
Telephone	7,500	7,500	-	0.0%
Operating Contracts	74,900	34,900	(40,000)	-53.0%
General Office Supplies	8,000	8,000	-	0.0%
Membership Fees	500	500	-	0.0%
Training	3,900	5,000	1,100	28.0%
Mileage Reimbursement	200	500	300	150.0%
TOTAL	\$ 161,200	\$ 126,400	\$(34,800)	-21.6%

- Increases between the FY 2025 Proposed Budget and the FY 2024 Approved Budget include Mileage Reimbursement and Training, mainly for newly hired personnel receiving required trainings and with that, travel expenses.
- The notable decrease for FY 2025 from FY 2024 is Operating Contracts, due to removal of quality review contract and duplicate case management software contract- this is a proposed \$40,000 decrease.

Highlights

- The Office of Ethics and Accountability provides enforcement of the Prince George's County Code of Ethics, to ensure the ethical conduct of individuals who serve in County Government.
- Core services of the Office include administering public ethics laws, providing ethics training and advice to County employees, reviewing financial disclosure and lobbying records, investigating alleged ethical violations, providing administrative support to the County's Board of Ethics, and providing analysis and recommendations to the Executive and Legislative Branches.

- The Office has fully updated the Salesforce portal to mirror the language/instructional changes based on the State Ethics Law changes in FY 2022.
- The Board of Ethics is a five-member board established to administer the County's Code of Ethics. Members of the Board are appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the Council. The current Board members are as follows:
 - Cassandra Burckhalter, Chair 2nd Term (Holdover)
 - Charlene Gallion, Member 1st Term Expires 12/1/2024
 - Melanie Barr-Brooks, Esq., Member 1st Term Expired 12/23/2023
 - Mickei M. Milton, Member 1st Term Expires 12/1/2024
 - Sharon Theodore-Lewis, Esq., Member 2nd Term (Holdover)
- The Office reported the following key accomplishments for FY 2024:
 - Processed approximately 1,200 Financial Disclosure Statements filed for the 2024 fiscal year.
 - Processed almost 500 requests for all OEA case types, including investigations, legal reviews, advisory opinions, ethics advice, information provision and waiver/exemptions. The Office has seen more than a 500% increase in cases since its establishment in 2014.
 - Completed the required County Code OEA five-year quality assurance review.
 - Expanded its outreach functions by working with the Office of Community Relations (OCR) with their 100 Events of Summer, conducted a mailing of introductory letters to County civic associations and attended community association meetings, and is currently working with the Office of Human Rights to translate into Spanish its brochure, and compliance with the Language Access Program.
- The Office reports its top priorities for FY 2025 are to continue to maintain the County's electronic filing/case management system that allows County residents, County government employees, and elected/appointed officials 24/7/365 access to online filing of complaints and required financial disclosure statements, and lobbyist registrations and annual reports. Additionally, to efficiently investigate all complaints in accordance with applicable laws to ensure timely responses, analysis, reporting and recommendations to management, initiate operation reviews to improve day to day efficiencies of governmental operations, and provide appropriate stakeholder and community communications and outreach to understand the mission and function of OEA and Board of Ethics.