

PART I

An Ohio Budget Primer

Part I of *Follow the Money* details the legal and political complexities of Ohio's biennial budget process. We analyze each step in the state budget process, from initial development to ultimate enactment and execution. While some budgetary principles and mechanisms may seem a bit arcane to the casual reader, a fundamental understanding of these concepts is essential for effective participation in the process, whether as a policymaker, an advocate, or simply as an informed citizen.

Chapter 1 describes the legal framework of state budgeting as applied in Ohio. It provides an understanding of the precepts and different types of budgeting, and how they evolved.

The state's tax structure changes each biennium, affecting the yield of revenues available to the executive and legislature for budgetary purposes. Chapter 2 lists the major sources of both state and local government revenues. It also outlines the principles of a sound tax structure and how Ohio measures up.

Chapters 3 and 4 describe the preparation of the Executive Budget Request and the subsequent detailed analysis of the document that legislators and legislative staff undertake following its unveiling.

Chapter 5 outlines the fundamental principles and mechanisms of the legislative appropriations process.

Chapter 6 describes how budget outcomes can be effectively influenced, for at its heart, the budget process is political as well as financial and programmatic.

After the budget is enacted, many steps are taken to implement it. Chapter 7 details these steps and how checks and balances work to oversee budget implementation.

Finally, Chapter 8 introduces some ideas for reforming the budget process to provide for greater transparency.