

2009 Non-Mandated Expenditures Department Response

DEPARTMENT: Non-Departmentals/Website
OCA TITLE: Central IT/Website

Hamilton County departments and agencies have the opportunity to respond and provide insight to the Office of Budget and Strategic Initiatives (BSI) initial assessment as to non-mandated services. This response form should be used for each specific BSI assessment; not a general response for entire department. Take as much space as necessary for each question.

1. Are there elements of the BSI non-mandated services that you believe are mandated? If so, provide the specific Ohio Revised Code (ORC) citation, Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) and/or relevant case law information. Please be especially diligent if there is a specific service or staffing level prescribed by law.

The ORC does not mandate a county website.

2. Who are the recipients of the service or activity for the non-mandated service? How many recipients? Please note any internal customers, other county departments, jurisdictions, businesses, etc. If the service is geographic specific (i.e., a satellite probation office), please identify the neighborhood, township or municipality.

The county website provides useful information about county services to all citizens through the internet, and to county staff through the intranet. The average monthly visits to the county web is approximately 250,000 with some coming from internal employees, committee members such as the Criminal Justice Commission, job applicants, politicians, and the citizens and consumers of the county. The website also provides access for many people who would otherwise find it difficult to obtain this information. People who have limited mobility, people with hearing or vision loss, and people who have speech disorders all use the website to obtain information. Without the website, those individuals would need to call or come to the county offices in order to receive information or obtain help in getting services. Those individuals, as well as the general population, would then need to rely on customer service or receptionists to be directed to the right departments.

3. Are there county revenues associated with the non-mandated services? If so, please provide the methodology for any lost revenues. Please consider state or federal reimbursements, grants, fees, etc. Please note if the service or activity is included in the county's indirect cost plan.

No. Not at this time but there is potential to receive payments for specific items via the website, as the court system website does.

4. If the county did not provide the non-mandated service, is there the potential for increased expenditures in another jurisdiction within Hamilton County? If so, please list the specific municipality and/or township.

No.

5. Does the non-mandated service include Board of County Commissioner policy via resolution or motion?

To the extent that budget goals and commissioner programs like the GASP initiative encourage government transparency, performance reporting, and improved customer service, the county website is a key vehicle for implementation of these efforts.

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6. Are there contracts or agreements that preclude the elimination of a non-mandated service? If so, please provide the specific language as to termination and/or amendment terms.
No.
7. What are the equipment/non-personnel expenditure considerations with discontinuing a non-mandated service? (i.e., surplus equipment).
Website servers and equipment would not be recommended as surplus in the short term, assuming that at some point the website would be restored.
8. Do any of the non-mandated services include employees represented by a bargaining unit? If so, please note the union and provide information as to reduction-in-force and job abolishment considerations.
No.
9. For positions within non-mandated services, are there special circumstances that preclude a traditional job abolishment process? Separation costs will be addressed centrally including leave balance payouts, unemployment compensation and severance (based on current Commission policy).
Central website maintenance is a portion of the responsibilities of employees of the Regional Planning Commission. Should the website be eliminated, reassignment of duties is at the discretion of the commission director. While these are not general fund employees, the commission is funded substantially through a general fund subsidy, and it does not have adequate fund balance to absorb separation costs.
10. In addition to positions associated with non-mandated services, the Budget Office included a review of management layers, support staff, and currently vacant positions. Please comment on the impact of eliminating these positions.
Not applicable.
11. What is the performance impact of not providing the non-mandated service? For example, wait times, waiting lists, case loads, operating hours and other consequences of not providing the service.
Elimination of the website removes a key vehicle for communicating information both internally and externally. Approximately 20 to 25 departments including the Board of Elections will be affected by the elimination of the web presence. The accessibility of the county services would be reduced by removing the website. There are county departments that have built their daily mandated operations around the web. Examples of such operations are the courts (Jury Commission and Court of Appeals) and the Board of Elections. Customer satisfaction could very well be drastically reduced if citizens do not have access to county information when they need it. With the website, citizens can access information 24 hours a day.
12. Are there any alternatives that result in savings to the general fund?
No. Regional Planning has already pursued all alternatives for reducing the cost of website maintenance.

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13. Are there more efficient ways to deliver a mandated service that may allow for the savings to offset the cost of a non-mandated service?

Not applicable.

14. Is there an opportunity to transfer any non-mandated expenditures to another funding source (i.e., restricted fund or grant)?

No. Employee time is already absorbed by Regional Planning.

15. Does your department have any fees that could be raised to offset the cost of a mandated service?

No.

Other Considerations and Comments:

The county, through the Regional Planning Commission, employs the only county web services staff: a web developer who is responsible for coding, maintaining, updating, backing up, etc. for the entire county web site and a systems administrator who is responsible for the web hardware (servers, etc.) In the absence of these two positions, the Hamilton County web would not exist. Additionally, the web developer maintains and manages the content and coding for 20 departments, some by contractual arrangement. Therefore, elimination of the county web services would greatly affect the other departments and reduce income. This elimination would conflict with budget policy No. 29 regarding improving customer service.