

Budget Cycle

Annual budget preparation is delegated by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to the Sedgwick County Manager. The County Budget Office, which is a part of the Division of Finance, works closely with the Manager in preparing a budget according to the following timetable:

Budget Calendar											
	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Financial Forecast Development Budget staff compared historical revenues with projections. Financial forecast revised based on 2024 actual data.											
Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Committee The CIP committee reviewed all of the requests for projects with significant multi-year benefits (such as buildings and roads), and ranked projects in order of importance in two categories: facilities/drainage and roads/intersections/bridges.											
Business Needs Assessments Departments submitted a list of factors external to the department that could impact the funding they need to provide current levels of service throughout 2024 and 2025, such as growth in service volume or contractual changes.											
Budget Workshop The BOCC, the County Manager, Division Directors, and other staff met in mid-February to outline the Commissioners' financial and policy goals for the organization.											
Base Budget Development for Tax and Non-Tax Supported Funds Departments received and developed budget requests to meet budget targets in property-tax-supported funds and developed balanced budgets for non-property-tax-supported funds. They also submitted requests for additional funding, decision packages, as well as opportunities to increase revenues or reduce costs.											
Budget Division Review Budget staff reviewed departmental submissions and prepared materials for budget hearings.											
Manager's Recommended Budget The County Manager used the information gathered in budget hearings to make recommendations for the budget.											
Public Hearing and Budget Adoption Members of the public are invited to comment on the budget at special meetings of the BOCC. Legal notice of the last public hearing is published at least ten days prior to the hearing, stating the maximum budgeted expenditure and property tax levy.											
Adopted Budget Preparation Information in the adopted budget document is updated.											

2026 Annual Operating Budget Development Calendar

2025Action

February 21

County Commission Budget Workshop

March 17

Operational Budget Request, Decision Packages, Alternative Reduction Proposals, and Revenue Packages Due to Budget Office

March 31

Departmental narratives due to Budget Office

May 5 – May 30

Budget Simulator

May 7 - May 15

County Commission Budget Hearings

May 14

Solid Waste Fee Adopted

July 9

Recommended Budget Presented to County Commissioners

July 9

Last “Up” Day to set maximum Budget and maximum Property Tax Levy

July 30

First Public Hearing

August 20

Second Public Budget Hearing/Public Hearing Revenue Neutral Rate (RNR)

August 20

Budget Adoption

October 1

Budgets Certified to County Clerk

Financial Requirements Policies and Goals

Sedgwick County recognizes the foundation for strong fiscal management rests in the adherence to sound financial policies and goals. Comprehensive financial policies and goals are essential tools used to publicly disclose current and future financial management plans and broad-based policy initiatives, in addition to ensuring fiscal accountability. The following policies, goals, and guidelines on how to finance essential community services laid the foundation for the development of the 2026 budget.

In accordance with State of Kansas law, the County submits the annual budget to the State for certification of all operating funds. If increased expenditure authority is needed for any fund subject to the State Budget Law, the BOCC must formally approve a revised budget and re-certify those funds to the State, following the re-certification process prescribed in State law.

Statutes of the State of Kansas govern the operating budget process. Budget law states counties must:

- prepare an annual budget;
- account for prior, current, and ensuing years;
- maintain a fund balance within prescribed limits;
- hold formal hearings with appropriate publication and notice;
- complete the budget process and submit the adopted budget to the County Clerk by October 1; and
- not exceed adopted expenditure authority without approval from the BOCC through a formal amendment process.

Senate Bill 13 and House Bill 2104, passed in 2021, eliminated the property tax lid that was imposed in 2017 and established requirements for notice and public hearing if counties intend to exceed the revenue neutral rate. If counties intend to exceed the revenue neutral rate, public notice must be published at least ten days in advance of the hearing on the governing body's website and in a weekly or daily newspaper. Beginning in 2022, Clerks are required to mail notification in a consolidated mailer at least ten days in advance of the public hearing. Clerks must also be notified by July 20 of the intent to exceed the revenue neutral rate.

To amend the adopted budget, the County must publish notice of the updated maximum property tax levy, allow for public hearings, and then readopt the budget. This

only applies to property-tax-supported funds though as grant funds and other funds can be adjusted by the BOCC through a less formal process.

Basis of Accounting

When households pay their monthly bills, they are faced with a timing problem; specifically, when to consider the money for the bills spent, when the checks are written, when the bill payments are mailed, when the companies can be expected to actually *receive* the checks, or when the bank statement arrives at the end of the month showing the checks have actually been cashed. Obviously, the earlier monies are considered spent, the less likelihood there is to overspend the balance in the account. Similarly, it is important for governments to spend only the money they have on hand. For governments, then, the answer to this timing question for earnings (revenues) as well as expenditures is provided by the "basis of accounting."

Kansas legally requires a modified accrual basis of accounting in which revenues are not recognized until received. Encumbrances (purchase orders, contracts, and other commitments of funds) are reported as a charge to the current budget. At the end of the fiscal year, December 31, unencumbered appropriations (monies budgeted but not yet committed to be spent) lapse except for capital project funds and some grant funds. Capital project funds are carried forward until the project has reached completion. Due to the modified accrual basis of accounting, the actual data presented in the budget document differs from Sedgwick County's annual financial statements, which are prepared according to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

Budgetary Controls

In a household, a budget is a plan that can be easily modified. If one member of the household gets a bonus, for example, the family can spend more money than it had originally budgeted. Business budgeting operates in much the same way: if sales are up, the business can spend more than budgeted to buy new inventory. This is one of the major ways in which governmental budgeting differs from other budgets. Budgets for local governments are a plan for spending, but they also have the force of law. In Sedgwick County, no department can spend more than is budgeted for the department. If more is needed, a budget adjustment or amendment must be approved.

Kansas Statutes require annual budgets to be legally adopted for all fund types unless exempted by a specific

statute. Financial commitments cannot exceed the total amount of the adopted budget. Sedgwick County policy further restricts budgetary spending by requiring the breakdown of individual departments and funds into specific expenditure categories such as personnel and contractual services. Allocations for funds and departments cannot exceed the approved and budgeted amount in any of the expenditure categories. The only method to increase funding after the budget is approved is through a transfer from one category or program to another.

K.S.A. 79-2929(a) permits adopted budgets to be increased for previously unbudgeted increases through revenue other than ad valorem taxes. To amend a budget by increasing the expenditure authority of a specific fund, the County must publish a Notice of Hearing to allow members of the public to provide comments, followed by a ten-day waiting period. After the public hearing, the County may formally amend the budget. If the amendment is approved, copies of the adjusted budget are filed with the County Clerk, who in turn files copies with the State of Kansas.

Balanced Budget

State law requires all local governments to operate with a balanced budget for funds that levy a tax. A balanced budget is defined as a budget in which projected revenues and available unencumbered cash are equal to expenditures. Sedgwick County's 2026 budget is a balanced budget for all County funds, including those that do not levy a tax.

Long Range Financial Forecasting

Annually, the County develops a long-range financial forecast for a period of five years that is updated throughout the year. The financial forecast assists in evaluating current and future fiscal conditions to guide current and future policy and programmatic decisions.

Fund Balance

Fund balance is the amount of unencumbered cash that ensures services could be provided for a short time even if commitments exceeded revenues. The minimum fund balance requirement is equal to 20.0 percent of the budgeted expenditures in the General Fund.

Cash Management

Effective cash management is recognized as essential to good fiscal management. The County pursues an aggressive cash management and investment policy to enhance investment interest as a viable and material revenue source for all operating and capital funds. The County's portfolio is designed and managed in a manner responsive to the public trust and consistent with State and local law. Investments are made with the primary objectives of:

- Security of County funds and investments;
- Preservation of capital and protection of principle;
- Maintenance of sufficient liquidity to meet operating needs;
- Diversification of investments to avoid unreasonable or avoidable risks; and
- Maximization of return on the portfolio.

Eligible investments include obligations of the United States Government, repurchase agreements between the County and commercial banks, interest-bearing time deposit instruments, temporary or no-fund warrants, and the Kansas Municipal Investment Pool.

Capital Planning

In 1999, the CIP process was refined to ensure realistic project planning. Consistent with prior years, the CIP is reviewed as planning before the previous cycle ends. Facility Project Services assists departments in developing new or updating current projects, obtaining accurate estimates, determining potential impact on the operating budget, and submitting project requests for the next five years. These requests are forwarded to their respective department directors to prioritize. Those prioritized requests are then forwarded to the CIP Committee. The Committee prioritizes the recommendations based on the most important needs of the County and presents its recommendations to the BOCC.

Debt Financing

The debt financing policy sets forth comprehensive guidelines for the financing of capital expenditures. The County will use debt financing only for one-time capital improvement projects and unusual equipment purchases. It is the objective of the policy to:

- Obtain financing only when necessary;

- Identify the timing and amount of debt or other financing as efficiently as possible;
- Obtain the most favorable interest rate and other related costs; and
- Maintain future financial flexibility when appropriate.

The Debt Management Committee is responsible for formulating all debt financing recommendations, and ensuring compliance with debt policy. The County will not engage in debt financing if the proposed obligation, when combined with all existing debts, will result in annual debt service obligations exceeding 10.0 percent of budgeted expenditures. Consideration of new debt issuance shall take into account the preservation of the County's applicable credit rating and the resulting access to favorable borrowing rates as well as the tax burden placed on citizens and businesses within the County. The County will not engage in debt financing unless the proposed obligation, when combined with all existing debts, will satisfy the following benchmarks:

- Budgetary flexibility is achieved by maintaining available unrestricted fund balance as a percentage of budgeted General Fund expenditures of at least 20.0 percent, with a target of 30.0 percent.
- Liquidity is maintained with total government available cash of at least 120.0 percent of total governmental funds debt service and at least 20.0 percent of total governmental fund expenditures.
- Debt levels are controlled by maintaining net direct debt at less than 60.0 percent of total governmental funds revenue and total governmental funds debt service at less than 8.0 percent of total governmental funds expenditures.

Capital Assets

The financial records of the County accurately reflect the ownership of capitalized capital assets in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles as adopted by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB). Capital assets to be capitalized in the financial records of the County include buildings, improvements, land, roads and bridges, sidewalks, sanitary sewer lines, storm drainage, traffic control systems, and other infrastructure with an original cost greater than \$50,000. In addition,

machinery and other capital assets not specifically listed with an original cost greater than \$10,000 will also be capitalized.

Purchasing

On January 18, 2017, Sedgwick County Charter Resolution 68 was adopted and took effect April 10, 2017, to ensure purchases are conducted in a manner that provides efficiency, equality, fairness, and accountability. Purchases in an amount exceeding \$25,000 are offered to responsible vendors by competitive sealed bid and will be approved by the County Manager. The Board of Bids and Contracts is responsible for recommending the purchase of goods and services to the BOCC which approves bids in excess of \$50,000. The Board is composed of five diversified members within the County. Purchases less than \$25,000 are offered to responsible vendors by informal bid and can be approved by the Director of Purchasing. Competitive bids for the procurement of contracts for professional services are unnecessary. In addition, requirements that bids be offered to multiple vendors may be waived if there is an emergency, public exigency, the good or service is from a sole source vendor, is a joint government purchase, is for undercover vehicles for the Sheriff's Office, is for major equipment repair, annual hardware and software maintenance and support agreements, insurance, professional services or are for legal professional services.

The revised policy now includes a provision to provide for disciplinary action if the policy terms are violated by an employee.

Purchasing Cards

The purchasing card is a means to expedite the purchase for eligible goods and services that cost less than \$10,000, but is only to be used for non-recurring purchases that are not covered by an existing County contract. The Director of Accounting is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the program. In addition, the purchasing card holder's Direct Supervisor is designated to review and approve cardholder documentation and reconciliation.

Property Tax

What is a "mill levy?"

A mill is \$1 of tax for every \$1,000 of assessed value on real and personal property. The mill levy is recalculated every year and is based on the amount of property tax dollars needed to finance the County budget.

After the budget is adopted, the County is required by the State to file the proper budget forms with the County Clerk. These forms demonstrate compliance with budget development and tax limitation legislation. Summaries of budgeted expenditures are also submitted to the Clerk.

The County Clerk calculates the annual mill levy rate by dividing the total revenue to be obtained from ad valorem taxes for each fund by the total assessed value (see next section for explanation) located in a specific jurisdiction. The result is then multiplied by one-thousand to convert the rate to mills. These individual fund levies are then added to determine the total mill levy rate for a jurisdiction.

The County Treasurer mails tax statements to property owners. One-half of the total tax bills are due in December and the balance is due in May of the next year.

The table below outlines the amount of taxes levied, the estimated assessed valuation, and the estimated mill levy included within the 2026 Recommended Budget.

2026 Recommended Budget Property Taxes				
		Taxes	Est.	Est.
Fund	Description	Levied	Assed. Value	Mill Levy
110	General Fund	177,723,697	7,550,821,976	23.537
201	WSU	11,326,233	7,550,821,976	1.500
205	Aging	2,491,771	7,550,821,976	0.330
206	Highways	6,501,258	7,550,821,976	0.861
301	Bond and Interest	12,481,509	7,550,821,976	1.653
Total County Wide Levy		210,524,468		27.881
240	Fire District 1	23,650,889	1,411,993,346	16.750

Taxes are levied in the previous year to finance the current budgets. For example, 2025 taxes are used to finance the 2026 budget. The following chart illustrates mill levy rates for Sedgwick County and Sedgwick County Fire District 1 for budget years 2014-2026.

2014 – 2026 Mill Levies
Sedgwick County and Fire District

Budget Year	County	Fire District
2014	29.377	18.348
2015	29.478	18.367
2016	29.383	18.371
2017	29.393	18.414
2018	29.393	18.392
2019	29.383	18.163
2020	29.384	17.896
2021	29.376	17.891
2022	29.370	17.817
2023	29.368	17.912
2024	28.988	17.883
2025	28.701	17.000
2026 est.	27.881	16.750

Kansas County Mill Levy Rankings

Sedgwick County levied less than 103 of the 105 Kansas counties for the 2025 budget year. Selected comparisons for the 2025 tax year are shown in the following table.

2024 Tax Rates (2025 Budget Year) expressed in Mills for Selected Kansas Counties
(County seats in parentheses)

Metropolitan Counties	
Shawnee (Topeka)	46.651
Douglas (Lawrence)	41.215
Sedgwick (Wichita)	27.881
Johnson (Olathe)	17.259
Neighboring Counties	
Sedgwick (Wichita)	27.881
Harvey (Newton)	43.622
Butler (El Dorado)	29.900
Reno (Hutchinson)	35.504
Sumner (Wellington)	52.090
Kingman (Kingman)	65.478
Highest and Lowest County Tax Rates	
Comanche (Coldwater City)	142.398
Johnson (Olathe)	17.259
<i>Sources: Kansas Department of Administration</i>	

What is an assessed value?

The assessed (or “taxable”) value of property is a percentage of the property’s appraised fair market value. The County Appraiser’s Office determines the fair market value of property and sets the appraised value. The appraised value is then multiplied by an assessment rate that is based on the function of the property. The following calculation is used to establish the assessed value:

Real Estate:

Residential:	Multi-family, urban, or rural	11.5%
Agricultural:	Valued based on use or production	30.0%
Vacant lots:		12.0%
Commercial:	For industrial purposes, and buildings and improvements to agricultural land	25.0%
Commercial:	Public utility real property, except railroad	33.0%

Personal Property:

Residential:	Mobile Homes	11.5%
Mineral leases:	Oil production over 5 barrels/day and natural gas production under 100 mcf/day	25.0%
Public Utility:	Inventory, except railroad	33.0%
Commercial and Industrial machinery, less depreciation		25.0%
Farm machinery, merchant/manufacturer inventories, livestock		Exempt

What is a “fund”?

A fund is an independent fiscal and accounting entity with a self-balancing set of accounts. The Sedgwick County budget uses funds to account for expenditures and revenues. Funds are comparable to individual bank accounts. The following fund types are used in the 2026 budget:

Governmental Funds - Account for revenue and expenditures relating to normal governmental activities, which are not accounted for in other funds.

- General Fund - Accounts for all financial resources of the general government, except those required to be accounted for in another fund. This is the County’s primary operating fund. Forty-seven

departments are listed in the budget, including judicial and law enforcement functions.

- Special Revenue Funds - Accounts for revenue sources that are legally restricted to expenditure for a specific purpose or required by state law to be a separate fund. Examples include WSU Program Development, and Federal/State Assistance Funds.
- Debt Service Fund - Accounts for the payment of interest and principal on long-term debt.

Proprietary Funds - Self-supporting accounts where Sedgwick County operates like a business.

- Enterprise Fund - Accounts for external operations that provide services to the community-at-large, such as the INTRUST Bank Arena Fund.
- Internal Service Fund - Accounts for internal governmental operations that provide services to other departments, such as Fleet Management.

Special District Funds - The BOCC is the governing body for one special taxing district, Sedgwick County Fire District 1. Tax levies needed in this district are approved in the annual budget and apply only to a specifically defined service area.

Other Funds - Other County funds exist but are not subject to Kansas budget laws, such as reserve funds for equipment replacement and capital improvements.

The fund structure can be found on the following page.

