

Tips for Council Budgeting

- ✓ Set up your budget on a fraternal year, rather than annual year basis. This will allow you to align it with officer terms and with completing the *Semiannual Council Audit Report (#1295)*.
- ✓ Use two columns – one for budgeted and one for actual year-to-date spending – to allow you to track how well you’re adhering to your goals. As you spend and receive money throughout the year, log each transaction in a spreadsheet (see the *Transactions* tab for a sample) with its assigned category so that you can quickly calculate year-to-date figures.
- ✓ Try to keep the categories on your budget at a high level. If your council holds fish frys in both Advent and Lent, you probably just need one category for “Fish Frys” – there’s no need to have one category for each season, let alone one for each individual event. Use a “Miscellaneous” category to capture any small or one-off events.
- ✓ If your Financial Secretary uses *Member Billing*, work with him to align the categories used in your budget with those used in *Member Billing*. This will ensure you both record transactions consistently, and help with completing the *Semiannual Council Audit Report (#1295)*.
- ✓ Strive for a balanced budget. Remember, your council exists to serve your community and your members. If you’re running a surplus, think of ways you could use those excess funds to better meet your council’s goals, rather than simply building up a bigger bank account balance.
- ✓ In addition to creating a budget, consider using a Statement of Cash Flows to track your monthly income and spending and see how your council’s bank account balance changes over time. If you know about large future expenses (per capita, a major donation, etc.) you can even complete this in advance to forecast if you’ll have enough funds or if you need to think of a new fundraiser.
- ✓ Get into a regular rhythm with your budget. Your council officers should meet in the spring (March/April) to think about your goals for the year and draft a budget and then share it with the council for their approval in May. Throughout the year, have your Treasurer share the budget (with year-to-date figures) with the council at monthly meetings so everyone is aware of how the council is doing financially.