

February 28, 2024

**Commission Members**

John Burke, Chair  
Frank Jazzo, Vice Chair  
Jonathan Adelstein  
Jacqueline Snelling  
Andrea Wingo  
Gary Thayer  
Michael Cornfield  
Laura Gross  
Miranda Willis  
Prescott Burden  
Jim Smith  
Biran Zhang

Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 300  
Arlington, VA 22201

Libby Garvey,  
Chair  
Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Boulevard  
Suite 300  
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Chairwoman Garvey,

On behalf of the Information Technology Advisory (Tech) Commission, I am writing to you to express our priorities and recommendations for the FY 25 budget.

Budget Priorities in Order

1. **Secure the County's networks, systems, and data.** Ensuring the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of the County's networks, systems and data is mission critical and we recommend the Board accept little or no risk in this area.
2. **Execute the cloud transition funded in the CIP.** Adoption of cloud technologies will reduce costs and improve performance over time. Short term budget constraints should not delay or defer the execution of CIP Information Technology Enterprise IT Program Item 2 Cloud Migration or Item 5 Data Center Consolidation and Refreshment.
3. **Continue the digital transformation of County enterprise-wide operations and services.** Digital transformation generally should be supported at the enterprise level as it creates efficiencies that can be redeployed to higher priorities.
4. **Create a government-wide privacy program.** We reiterate our previous advice to create a government-wide privacy program and recommend that an initial investment is made in the FY 24 budget with a view to enhancing the program in future budgets.
5. **Support for Customer Experience activities.** The number of citizens utilizing online services is growing, making it critical to understand shifting customer behaviors. Developing an understanding of key drivers and patterns in their behaviors will enable the County to meet and exceed their technological needs.
6. **Support for County Website.** The county website is a core communications tool and repository of information for the public. Continued investment to ensure every department has the skills and resources to maintain high quality, timely, and accurate content as well as historical records is critical to the County's open government efforts.
7. **Arlington Independent Media (AIM).** A vibrant local independent media organization serving Arlington's diverse community is a valuable asset worthy of support and cultivation by the County. However, given that the County Board has already invested substantial resources, further support must be contingent on AIM raising independent philanthropic support that approaches self-sustaining viability in the foreseeable future. Reporting transparency, and results-oriented accountability will build public confidence in AIM's ability to execute the transition to a modern media organization.

Recommendations for Navigating Budget Constraints

1. **Create a strategic plan for Information Technology.** The commission has previously advised the Board that a Comprehensive Plan element or other Board enacted set of principles, goals, objectives, and policies would benefit the County Manager and staff in multiple ways. Informing the difficult trade-offs the Board and Manager have to make during the budget process is one of the most critical functions such a plan would have. This is especially important for Arlington given that the majority of information technology services and spending is outside of the Department of Technology Services.
2. **Defer or cancel projects that do not further strategic priorities.** Our primary recommendation for addressing the projected budget shortfall is to defer or cancel projects that do not further the County's strategic priorities. Not only will this eliminate direct expenditures, but it will free existing staff to focus on strategic priorities and fill the gap of unfilled vacancies and deferred hiring.
3. **Improve the transparency of Information Technology Spending.** While the Department of Technology Services represents only 4.2% of the County's budget<sup>1</sup>, the government's total spending on information technology is much higher and distributed throughout other departments. With better visibility, we would be able to identify where economies could be achieved.
4. **Expand engagement with the private sector including non-profits on an innovation agenda to reduce operating costs and increase revenue.** Difficult budget decisions can be alleviated by continuous attention to innovation. The County should not only look to staff to drive digital transformation, but should partner with other non-governmental organizations to achieve our economic and social policy goals and objectives consistent with our community's values and principles.
5. **Continue to maximize Federal and Commonwealth funding sources.** A substantial amount of Federal and Commonwealth funding is available through multiple grant programs for many purposes including information technology. The County should seek to maximize its share of these funding sources.

Respectfully,



John Burke,

Chair  
Information Technology Advisory Commission  
Arlington, VA 22201

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<sup>1</sup>[Arlington Wallet FY 23 Actual Expenditures](#)