

AC Decision Support Framework

What is the Decision Support Framework?

A structured guide to deepen understanding, broaden perspectives, and foster strategic alignment in decision-making. This framework is meant to strengthen culture and decision-making capacity, not create more paperwork.

Use it to guide what matters—and make your thinking transparent. It supports the county in the development of a thinking discipline to guide and shape comprehensive discussions when decisions are needed. This is a lens, not a scorecard.

Purpose

This framework helps Arapahoe County institutionalize values-based, transparent decision-making. It is intended to assess strategies, initiatives, or decisions based on the County's Mission, Vision, and six strategic lenses (Sustainability, Data Informed, Community Engagement, Collaboration, Financial Implications, and Equity). In particular it intends to:

- Strengthen County operations and decision-making alignment with County strategic plan.
- Foster thoughtful discussion.
- Improve consistency and clarity in board-facing proposals.
- Serve as a thinking tool, not a mandatory pass/fail checklist.
- Cultivate analysis habits, not be a burdensome exercise.

When to Use the Framework

This tool is not required for every operational decision. It will be used:

- When preparing Board Summary Reports.
- Not for drop-ins or third party presentations.
- When presenting initiatives, policy shifts, capital investments, or new programs for BOCC consideration.
- As a training tool for strategic thinking across leadership.

How to Use the Framework

Review the statements in each section (6 strategic lenses + mission/vision). Hover over links for additional guidance and/or definitions.

Mark alignment*:

High – Strong alignment with criteria

Medium – Moderate alignment

Low – Weak alignment

No – Misaligned

N/A – Not applicable-provide justification in notes

Use the Notes section for short explanations (2-3 sentences maximum), if necessary. (Examples: "One-time cost from ARPA," "Limited engagement due to timeline.") Notes should be used to explain how or why it aligns, or doesn't align.

**Do not overthink alignment. Honest responses (including "low" or "no") are valuable to the discussion. Tradeoffs and imperfection are part of the process. The Notes are where the insight lives.*

Name and Title

Jessica Savko, Budget Manager

Department, Office, and/or Division

Finance

Issue/Initiative for Discussion

Submission of the 2026 Budget

Short Description of Issue/Initiative

These 2026 Budgets include the recommendations of the Executive Budget Committee for the full BOCC's consideration for 2026 County operations.

Tips:

Hover your mouse over the links for more information.

Use the Notes field to describe the “why”—even if it seems obvious.

There are 6 categories, each with multiple questions.

Note there is a "Save and Continue Later" option at the bottom right of each page.

Mission & Vision Alignment

Vision: [Initiative](#) enhances quality of life through exceptional, responsible public service.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

These proposed budgets include recommendations that align with the strategic goals of the County and address essential services to aid our community with investment emphasis in infrastructure and road maintenance, public safety, and housing and protective services. These proposed budgets would allow departments and offices throughout the County to carry out programs and services that enhance quality of life.

Mission: Initiative contributes to a diverse and vibrant county where everyone can thrive.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

The budget recommendations include investing the additional property tax revenue from measure 1A and include essential services and programs that help our residents thrive.

Sustainability

We analyze county activities through the lens of human, environmental, social, and economic sustainability, so our decisions lead the county toward meeting the needs of today while empowering current and future generations to thrive.

Hollistic. Initiative promotes long-term financial (including one-time and ongoing cost considerations), human, environmental, and social sustainability.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

The proposed 2026 budgets include significant investments in programs and services that involve both one-time and ongoing expenditures. The investment of additional revenue was intended to be a multi-year approach and as such the Executive Budget Committee set aside funds for investment in future years to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the County.

Enduring. The initiative builds lasting, resilient [systems](#) rather than offering temporary fixes.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

The budget process considers the current and projected future conditions of the County. The Executive Budget Committee was very cognizant of the forecast for future years and planned the investment of funds accordingly to ensure the additional 1A funds are long-lasting.

Established. The systems and infrastructure are in place to support sustainability [over time](#).

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

The Executive Budget Committee is aware that the current funding will not solve all of the needs throughout the County. Budget decisions were made to allow for future investments and ensure there is responsible spending of taxpayer dollars.

Established. The people and culture are in place to support sustainability over time.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

As budget decisions were made, increased personnel were recommended where necessary to support the programs and services being added or enhanced.

[Data Informed](#)

We use varied data informed and [evidence-based best and promising practice](#) tools to inform how best to utilize resources to address challenges.

Quality. Initiative is supported by accurate, relevant, and timely [data](#).

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

Many of the Departments and Offices provided trend and other relevant data in their budget package requests to aid the EBC in making informed decisions. The Budget Division provided current projections for the EBC to understand how their recommendations would impact the County into the future.

Accuracy. Data is [interpreted and validated](#) by appropriately [qualified professionals](#).

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

The EBC met with each Department and Office and asked questions about budget package submissions as well as what the impacts would be if EBC recommendations deviated from the original budget package requests.

Application. Data is used to guide decisions rather than simply [justify them](#).

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

Current year projections and future year forecasts were provided for the five major operating funds to help guide the Executive Budget Committee in knowing the fiscal impacts of their recommended budget packages. This aided the EBC in determining funding to set-aside for future years.

Community Engagement

We want to understand and respond to [community values](#) in decision-making, meeting people where they are.

Inclusive. Specific communities affected by the initiative have been engaged, as appropriate, and in accessible ways.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria					X

Notes

The EBC was very aware of the ballot language when considering what budget packages to recommend knowing those were important items to the community based on the overwhelming support for the measure. With this being the recommended budget, the community was not involved in this portion of the budget process.

Open. We are transparent in sharing what we're doing and why, in a meaningful way.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

The Investing in Arapahoe webpage was established on the County's website dedicated to communicate to the community how the County is investing the 1A funds. The recommended budget is available on the County's website.

Responsive. Community input and feedback has been considered and reflected, where appropriate, based on genuine understanding.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

The County held community meetings that went into the 1A process and that information was reflected in the ballot question. That input is reflected in the EBC's recommendations that were included in the budget. The Resident Advisory Committee has been established to oversee the investment process and ensure alignment with the community expectations. There will be two study session followed by two public hearing in October and December where the public will have the opportunity to comment on the budget.

Collaboration

We work within and across the county to implement outcomes, engaging key [internal and external partners](#) to maximize benefits and increase efficiency.

Strategic. Key partners have been identified and intentionally engaged in a timely manner to maximize benefit and increase efficiency.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

The BOCC started the year with a leadership workshop asking departments and offices to identify the landscape of needs in the County. Departments and offices each provided a presentation at a study session to the BOCC to explain their needs and attach fiscal impacts to them. This work carried forward into the budget process where the EBC met with departments and offices to review the details of their request and follow-up in cases where additional questions arose or additional information was needed.

Participatory. Collaboration is transparent, inclusive, and responsive to both internal and external stakeholders.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria		X			

Notes

All departments and offices participated in the budget process and brought forward any budget package requests and met with the EBC to explain them and their prioritization. The departments and offices were individually notified of the EBC recommendations and were provided the opportunity to appeal or further discuss the recommendations with the EBC. The presentation of the recommended budget will be the point that the budget is handed over to the full BOCC and also available to the public for inspection or questions.

Defined. County's role is clearly defined as lead, support, or defer.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

It is the role of the Board of County Commissioners to adopt an annual budget. The Executive Budget Committee has been given the role by the BOCC to work with the Budget Division of the Finance Department to lead the effort in determining a recommended budget for the BOCC to consider.

Financial Implications

We consider long-term and holistic financial implications in decision-making, prioritizing best overall value, responsible use of public funds, and sustainable financial health.

Prudent. Short- and long-term costs are understood, affordable, and balanced with current available resources (including non-monetary assets like equipment or facilities.)

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

One-time and ongoing costs are identified in each budget package. There were instances where the EBC recommended items that were requested as ongoing to be one-time to either pilot the initiatives or gather some information on their impacts prior to making a long-term commitment. The EBC considered the long-term fiscal health of the County in making their recommendations and intentionally set-aside funding for future years and in particular 2027 which will be the year property taxes are collected from an intervening property tax year and an increase in revenue is not currently anticipated.

Efficient. The initiative includes cost-saving measures, external funding, or partnerships where appropriate, and prioritizes best overall value.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

A portion of the 2026 recommended budget includes grant funding and various partnerships where applicable and appropriate.

Accountable. Public funds are used responsibly, with trade-offs and [non-monetary impacts](#) clearly considered.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

The EBC gave a great deal of consideration to the 1A ballot language and the essential services identified in that language was a focus on their recommendations to ensure the additional property tax revenue is being invested as the voters intended.

Disciplined. One-time and ongoing financial commitments are identified, justified, and planned for in alignment with long-term fiscal health.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

The EBC was very cautious in their recommendations and their one-time or ongoing impacts. It was a priority that funding be set-aside for 2027 and future years when they were structurally balancing the recommended budget to ensure long-term fiscal health.

Equity

We work with communities impacted by county policies, behaviors, beliefs, practices, and decisions. We seek their voice, consider historical context, and understand intersectional impacts. We anticipate potential obstacles, consider unintended consequences, and work to remove barriers for the betterment of all.

Precautionary. Benefits, challenges, and impacts are understood and addressed, with care taken to avoid unintended harm.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria	X				

Notes

The EBC considered the residents that would be impacted by various budget packages being considered and weighed those impacts when making their recommendations.

Equitable. The initiative acknowledges and addresses both historical and current [inequities](#).

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria					X

Notes

Adaptive. The approach is [flexible](#) and inclusive, removing barriers and meeting diverse needs.

	High	Med	Low	No	N/A
Criteria					X

Notes