

# **Financial Policy Guidelines**

*For:*

**Alamance County, North Carolina**

Revised May 3, 2021

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# **FINANCIAL POLICY GUIDELINES**

**Alamance County, North Carolina  
Adopted Financial Policy Guidelines**

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## **FINANCIAL POLICY GUIDELINES - OBJECTIVES**

This financial policy is a statement of the guidelines and goals that will influence and guide the financial management practice of Alamance County, North Carolina. A financial policy that is adopted, adhered to, and regularly reviewed is recognized as the cornerstone of sound financial management. Effective financial policy:

- Contributes significantly to the Alamance County's ability to insulate itself from fiscal crisis,
- Enhances short term and long term financial credit ability by helping to achieve the highest credit and bond ratings possible,
- Promotes long-term financial stability by establishing clear and consistent guidelines,
- Directs attention to the total financial picture of Alamance County rather than single issue areas,
- Promotes the view of linking long-run financial planning with day to day operations, and
- Provides the Staff, the Governing Body and citizens a framework for measuring the fiscal impact of government services against established fiscal parameters and guidelines.

To these ends, the following financial policy statements are presented.

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### **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT BUDGET POLICIES**

1. Alamance County will consider all capital improvements in accordance with an adopted capital improvement program and budget in accordance with a long term facility plan.
2. Alamance County will develop a five-year Capital Improvement Program and Budget and review and update the plan annually.
3. Alamance County will enact an annual capital budget based on the five-year capital improvement plan. Future capital expenditures necessitated by changes in population, changes in real estate development, or changes in economic base will be calculated and included in capital budget projections.
4. Alamance County will coordinate development of the capital improvement budget with development of the operating budget. Future operating costs associated with new capital improvements will be projected and included in operating budget forecasts.
5. Alamance County will use intergovernmental assistance to finance only those capital improvements that are consistent with the capital improvement plan and County priorities, and whose operating and maintenance costs have been included in operating budget forecasts.
6. The Capital Improvement Program will include the estimated costs for Alamance County to maintain all assets at a level adequate to protect Alamance County's capital investment and to minimize future maintenance and replacement costs.
7. The Capital Improvement Program will include a projection of Alamance County's equipment replacement and maintenance needs for the next several years and will update this projection each year. From this projection a maintenance and replacement schedule will be developed and followed.
8. Alamance County will identify the estimated costs and potential funding sources for each capital project proposal before it is submitted for approval.
9. Alamance County will attempt to determine the least costly, most appropriate and most flexible financing method for all new projects.
10. Alamance County will use non-recurring revenue sources for time-limited services, capital projects, equipment requirements, or services that can be

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terminated without significant disruption to the community or County organization.

### **DEBT POLICIES**

#### **General**

1. Alamance County will confine long-term borrowing to capital improvements or projects that cannot be financed from current revenues except where approved justification is provided.
2. Alamance County will take a balanced approach to capital funding utilizing debt financing, Capital Reserves and pay-as-you go funding.
3. When Alamance County finances capital improvements or other projects by issuing bonds or entering into capital leases, it will repay the debt within a period not to exceed the expected useful life of the project. Target debt ratios will be annually calculated and included in the review of financial trends.

#### **Tax Supported Debt**

4. Net debt as a percentage of assessed value of taxable property shall not exceed 3%. Net debt is defined as any and all debt that is based upon the taxing authority of the County Tax Supported Debt.
5. The ratio of tax-supported debt service expenditures as a percent of total governmental fund expenditures shall not exceed 15.0% with a minimum aggregate ten-year tax-supported principal payout ratio of 50%.
6. In the event that Alamance County anticipates exceeding the policy requirements stated in items 4 and 5 above, Staff may request an exception from the Governing Body setting forth the reason and need for the exception and length of time estimated to retire the debt.

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### **RESERVE POLICIES**

1. Alamance County will maintain a minimum Unassigned Fund Balance, as defined by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board, at the close of each fiscal year equal to 20% of General Fund Expenditures.
2. In the event that funds are available over and beyond the policy amount, those funds may be transferred to capital reserve funds or capital projects funds at the Governing Body's discretion.
3. The Governing Body may, from time-to-time, utilize fund balances that will reduce Unassigned Fund Balance below the 20% minimum for the purposes of a declared fiscal emergency or other such purpose as to protect or enhance the long-term fiscal security of Alamance County. In such circumstances, the Governing Body will adopt a plan to restore the Unassigned Fund Balance to the target level within 36 months. If restoration cannot be accomplished within such time period without severe hardship to Alamance County, then the Governing Body will establish a different but appropriate time period.
4. In other enterprise operating funds, Alamance County shall strive to maintain positive retained earning positions to provide sufficient reserves for emergencies and revenue shortfalls.
5. Alamance County will strive to limit the designation of fund balance only for those purposes for which a legal requirement exists. Examples of such designations may include legally restricted funds, donations, and encumbered funds. In the event staff believes a designation of funds is necessary for the successful completion of a project or purchase, and no other legal basis exists for such designation, approval shall be requested from the Board of Commissioners prior to closing the accounting records for the fiscal year.

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### **BUDGET DEVELOPMENT POLICIES**

1. The Budget Process and Fiscal Procedures will be compliant with the North Carolina Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act.
2. One-time or other special revenues will not be used to finance continuing operations but instead will be used for funding special projects.
3. Alamance County will pursue an aggressive policy seeking the collection of current and delinquent property taxes, utility, license, permit and other fees due to Alamance County.
4. Budget amendments will be brought to the Governing Body for consideration as needed.
5. The Governing Body will receive a financial report at least quarterly showing year-to-date revenues and expenditures and comparing each amount to the budget as amended.
6. Alamance County will begin to develop a program to perform five-year operating budget projections that include projections of annual growth plus allowances for operating costs of new capital facilities.

### **CASH MANAGEMENT / INVESTMENT POLICIES**

1. It is the intent of Alamance County that public funds shall be invested to the extent possible to reduce the need for property tax revenues. Funds shall be invested with the emphasis on safety and liquidity. Yield shall be a secondary consideration. All deposits and investments of County funds shall be in accordance with Chapter 159.
2. The Finance Director will establish a Cash Management Program that maximizes the amount of cash available for investment. The Program shall address at a minimum; Accounts Receivable/Billings, Accounts Payable, Receipts, Disbursements, Deposits, Payroll and Debt Service Payments.

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### **CASH MANAGEMENT / INVESTMENT POLICIES**

3. Alamance County will use a Central Depository to maximize the availability and mobility of cash for all funds that can be legally and practically combined.
4. Cash Flows will be forecasted and investments will be made to mature when funds are projected to be needed to meet cash flow requirements.
5. Liquidity: No less than 20% of funds available for investment will be maintained in liquid investments at any point in time.
6. Maturity: All investments will mature in no more than thirty-six months (36) months from their purchase date. Exceptions to this guideline may be authorized by the Governing Body.
7. Custody: All investments will be purchased “payment-verses-delivery” and if certificated will be held by the Finance Officer in the name of Alamance County. All non-certificated investments will be held in book-entry form in the name of Alamance County with Alamance County’s third party Custodian (Safekeeping Agent).
8. Authorized Investments: Alamance County may deposit County Funds into: Any Governing Body approved Official Depository, if such funds are secured in accordance with Chapter 159 (31). Alamance County may invest County Funds in: the North Carolina Capital Management Trust, US Treasury Securities, US Agency Securities specifically authorized in Chapter 159 and rated no lower than “AAA”, and Commercial Paper meeting the requirements of Chapter 159 plus having a national bond rating.
9. Diversification: No more than \$20 million of Alamance County’s investment funds may be invested in a specific company’s commercial paper and no more than 50% of Alamance County’s investment funds may be invested in any particular investment vehicle with the exception of North Carolina Cash Management Trust. No more than 25% of Alamance County’s investments may be invested in any one US Agency’s Securities.
10. Allocation: Investment income will be allocated to each participating fund or account based on a fair and equitable formula determined by the Finance Director.



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## **CASH MANAGEMENT / INVESTMENT POLICIES**

11. Reporting: Not less than twice per year the Finance Director will provide an investment report to the Manager and Governing Body including the interest earned in the past six months and on the current investment portfolio including: type of investment, purchase date, price, par amount, maturity date, coupon rate, any special investment features and due diligence taken to assure investments meet guidelines.
12. Alamance County's annual financial report will be prepared according to the standards necessary to obtain the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the GFOA and submitted each year for that recognition.
13. Alamance County will develop a Fiscal Procedures Manual to serve as a central reference point and handbook for all spending and purchasing activities that have a fiscal impact within the County and will serve as the County's authoritative source for fiscal procedure.