THE BUDGET SYSTEM AND CONCEPTS

25. THE BUDGET SYSTEM AND CONCEPTS

The budget system of the United States Government provides the means for the President and Congress to decide how much money to spend, what to spend it on, and how to raise the money they have decided to spend. Through the budget system, they determine the allocation of resources among the agencies of the Federal Government and between the Federal Government and the private sector. The budget system focuses primarily on dollars, but it also allocates other resources, such as Federal employment. The decisions made in the budget process affect the Nation as a whole, State and local governments, and individual Americans. Many budget decisions have worldwide significance. The Congress and the President enact budget decisions into law. The budget system ensures that these laws are carried out.

This chapter provides an overview of the budget system and explains some of the more important budget concepts. It includes summary dollar amounts to illustrate major concepts. Other chapters of the budget documents discuss these amounts and more detailed amounts in greater depth.

The following section discusses the budget process, covering formulation of the President's Budget, action by Congress, and execution of enacted budget laws. The next section provides information on budget coverage, including a discussion of on-budget and off-budget amounts, functional classification, presentation of budget data, types of funds, and full-cost budgeting. Subsequent sections discuss the concepts of receipts and collections, budget authority, and outlays. These sections are followed by discussions of Federal credit; surpluses, deficits, and means of financing; Federal employment; and the basis for the budget figures. A glossary of budget terms appears at the end of the chapter.

Various laws, enacted to carry out requirements of the Constitution, govern the budget system. The chapter refers to the principal ones by title throughout the text and gives complete citations in the section just preceding the glossary.

THE BUDGET PROCESS

The budget process has three main phases, each of which is related to the others:

(1) Formulation of the President's Budget;
(2) Action by Congress; and
(3) Execution of enacted budget laws.

Formulation of the President's Budget

The Budget of the United States Government consists of several volumes that set forth the President's fiscal policy goals and priorities for the allocation of resources by the Government. The primary focus of the Budget is on the budget year—the next fiscal year for which Congress needs to make appropriations, in this case 2010. (Fiscal year 2010 will begin on October 1, 2009, and end on September 30, 2010.) The Budget also covers the nine years following the budget year in order to reflect the effect of budget decisions over the longer term. It includes the funding levels provided for the current year, in this case 2009, so that the reader can compare the President's Budget proposals to the most recently enacted levels, and it includes data on the most recently completed fiscal year, in this case 2008, so that the reader can compare budget estimates to actual accounting data.

In a normal year, the President begins the process of formulating the budget by establishing general budget and fiscal policy guidelines, usually by the Spring of each year, at least nine months before the President transmits the budget to Congress and at least 18 months before the fiscal year begins. (See the "Budget Calendar" later in this chapter.) Based on these guidelines, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) works with the Federal agencies to establish specific policy directions and planning levels, both for the budget year and for at least the following four years, and in this case the following nine years, to guide the preparation of their budget requests.

During the formulation of the budget, the President, the Director of OMB, and other officials in the Executive Office of the President continually exchange information, proposals, and evaluations bearing on policy decisions with the Secretaries of the departments and the heads of the other Government agencies. Decisions reflected in previously enacted budgets, including the one for the fiscal year in progress, reactions to the last proposed budget (which Congress is considering at the same time the process of preparing the forthcoming budget begins), and evaluations of program performance all influence decisions concerning the forthcoming budget. So do projections of the economic outlook, prepared jointly by the Council of Economic Advisers, OMB, and the Treasury Department.

In early Fall, agencies submit their budget requests to OMB, where analysts review them and identify issues that OMB officials need to discuss with the agencies. OMB and the agencies resolve many issues themselves. Others require the involvement of the President and White House policy officials. This decision-making process is usually completed by late December. At that time, the final stage of developing detailed budget data and the preparation of the budget documents begins.

The decision-makers must consider the effects of economic and technical assumptions on the budget estimates. Interest rates, economic growth, the rate of inflation, the unemployment rate, and the number of people eligible for various benefit programs, among other factors, affect Government spending and receipts. Small changes in these assumptions can alter budget estimates by billions of dollars. (Chapter 12, "Economic Assumptions," provides more information on this subject.)

Thus, the budget formulation process involves the simultaneous consideration of the resource needs of individual programs, the allocation of resources among the agencies and functions of the Federal Government, and the total outlays and receipts that are appropriate in light of current and prospective economic conditions.

The law governing the President's budget requires its transmittal to Congress on or after the first Monday in January but not later than the first Monday in February of each year for the following fiscal year, which begins on October 1. The budget is routinely sent to Congress on the first Monday in February, giving Congress eight months to act on the budget before the fiscal year begins.

The outgoing President in not required to transmit a budget and it is impractical for an incoming President to complete a budget within a few days of taking office on January 20th. President George W. Bush submitted a report to Congress on February 28, 2001, describing his economic plan and containing summary budget information. President Barack Obama similarly submitted an initial document, *A New Era of Responsibility—Renewing America's Promise*, to Congress on February 26, 2009, and is submitting the *Budget of the United States for Fiscal Year 2010* in May 2009.

Budget Calendar

The following timetable highlights the scheduled dates for significant budget events during a normal budget year:

Between the 1st Monday in January and the 1st Monday in February	President transmits the budget
Six weeks later	Congressional committees report budget estimates to Budget Committees
April 15	Action to be completed on congressional budget resolution
May 15	House consideration of annual appropriations bills may begin even if the budget resolution has not been agreed to.
June 10	House Appropriations Committee to report the last of its annual appropriations bills.
June 15	Action to be completed on reconciliation
June 30	Action on appropriations to be completed by House
July 15	President transmits Mid-Session Review of the Budget
October 1	Fiscal year begins

Congressional Action[1]

Congress considers the President's budget proposals and approves, modifies, or disapproves them. It can change funding levels, eliminate programs, or add programs not requested by the President. It can add or eliminate taxes and other sources of receipts or make other changes that affect the amount of receipts collected.

Congress does not enact a budget as such. Through the process of adopting a planning document called a budget resolution (described below), Congress agrees on targets for total spending and receipts, the size of the deficit or surplus, and the debt limit. The budget resolution provides the framework within which individual congressional committees prepare appropriations bills and other spending and receipts legislation. Congress provides spending authority for specified purposes in appropriations acts each year. It also enacts changes each year in other laws that affect spending and receipts. Both appropriations acts and these other laws are discussed in the following paragraphs.

In making appropriations, Congress does not vote on the level of outlays (spending) directly, but rather on budget authority, which is the authority provided by law to incur financial obligations that will result in outlays. In a separate process, prior to making appropriations, Congress usually enacts legislation that authorizes an agency to carry out particular programs and, in some cases, limits the amount that can be appropriated for the programs. Some authorizing legislation expires after one

[1] For a fuller discussion of the congressional budget process, see Robert Keith, Introduction to the Federal Budget Process (Congressional Research Service Report 98–721 GOV), and Robert Keith and Allen Schick, Manual on the Federal Budget Process (Congressional Research Service Report 98–720 GOV, archived).

year, some expires after a specified number of years, and some are permanent. Congress may enact appropriations for a program even though there is no specific authorization for it or its authorization has expired

Congress begins its work on its budget resolution shortly after it receives the President's budget. Under the procedures established by the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, Congress decides on budget targets before completing action on individual appropriations. The Act requires each standing committee of the House and Senate to recommend budget levels and report legislative plans concerning matters within the committee's jurisdiction to the Budget Committee in each body. The House and Senate Budget Committees then each design and report, and each body then considers, a concurrent resolution on the budget—a congressional budget plan, or budget resolution. The budget resolution sets targets for total receipts and for budget authority and outlays, both in total and by functional category (see "Functional Classification" below). It also sets targets for the budget deficit or surplus and for Federal debt subject to statutory limit.

The congressional timetable calls for the House and Senate to resolve differences between their respective versions of the congressional budget resolution and adopt a single budget resolution by April 15 of each year.

In the report on the budget resolution, the Budget Committees allocate the total on-budget budget authority and outlays provided in the resolution to the Appropriations Committees and the other committees that have jurisdiction over spending. (See "Coverage of the Budget," later in this chapter, for more information on on-budget and off-budget amounts.) Once Congress resolves differences between the House and Senate and agrees to a budget resolution, the Appropriations Committees are required to divide their allocations of budget authority and outlays among their subcommittees. Congress is not allowed to consider appropriations bills (so-called "discretionary" spending) that would breach or further breach an Appropriations subcommittee's target. The other committees with jurisdiction over spending (so-called "mandatory" spending) may make allocations among their subcommittees but are not required to do so. Congress is not allowed to consider legislation that would cause the overall spending target for any such committee to be breached or further breached. The Budget Committees' reports may discuss assumptions about the level of funding for major programs. While these assumptions do not bind the other committees and subcommittees, they may influence their decisions. The budget resolution may also contain "reconciliation directives" (discussed below) to the committees responsible for tax laws and for mandatory spending—programs not controlled by annual appropriation acts—in order to conform the level of receipts and this type of spending to the targets in the budget resolution.

Since the concurrent resolution on the budget is not a law, it does not require the President's approval. However, Congress considers the President's views in preparing budget resolutions, because legislation developed to meet congressional budget allocations does require the President's approval. In some years, the President and the joint leadership of Congress have formally agreed on plans to reduce the deficit or balance the budget. These agreements were then reflected in the budget resolution and legislation passed for those years.

Once Congress approves the budget resolution, it turns its attention to enacting appropriations bills and authorizing legislation. Appropriations bills are initiated in the House. They provide the budgetary resources for the majority of Federal programs, but only a minority of Federal spending. The Appropriations Committee in each body has jurisdiction over annual appropriations. These committees are divided into subcommittees that hold hearings and review detailed budget justification materials prepared by the agencies within the subcommittee's jurisdiction. After a bill has been drafted by a subcommittee, the full committee and the whole House, in turn, must approve the bill, sometimes with amendments to the original version. The House then forwards the bill to the Senate, where a similar review follows. If the Senate disagrees with the House on particular matters in the bill, which is often the case, the two bodies form a conference committee (consisting of Members of both bodies) to resolve the differences. The conference committee revises the bill and returns it to both bodies for approval. When the revised bill is agreed to, first in the House and then in the Senate, Congress sends it to the President for approval or veto.

Since 1977, when the start of the fiscal year was established as October 1, there have been only three fiscal years (1989, 1995, and 1997) for which Congress agreed to every appropriations bill by that date. When one or more appropriations bill has not been agreed to by this date, Congress usually enacts a joint resolution called a "continuing resolution," (CR) which is an interim or stopgap appropriations bill that provides authority for the affected agencies to continue operations at some specified level up to a specific date or until the regular appropriations are enacted. In some years, a CR has funded a portion or all of the Government for the entire year.

Most CRs instruct the Administration to take the most limited funding action permitted by the CR, so as not to impinge on the final funding prerogatives of the Congress. Congress must present these resolutions to the President for approval or veto. In some cases, Presidents have rejected CRs because they contained unacceptable provisions. Left without funds, Government agencies were required by law to shut down operations—with exceptions for some activities—until Congress passed a CR the President would approve. Shutdowns have lasted for periods of a day to several weeks.

Congress also provides budget authority in laws other than appropriations acts. In fact, while annual appropriations acts fund the majority of Federal programs, they account for only about 38 percent of the total spending in a typical year. Authorizing legislation controls the rest of the spending, which is commonly called "mandatory spending." A distinctive feature of these authorizing laws is that they provide agencies with the authority or requirement to spend money without first requiring the

Appropriations Committees to enact funding. This category of spending includes interest the Government pays on the public debt and the spending of several major programs, such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, unemployment insurance, and Federal employee retirement. This chapter discusses the control of budget authority and outlays in greater detail under "Budget Authority and Other Budgetary Resources, Obligations, and Outlays."

Almost all taxes and most other receipts also result from authorizing laws. Article I, Section 7, of the Constitution provides that all bills for raising revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives. In the House, the Ways and Means Committee initiates tax bills; in the Senate, the Finance Committee has jurisdiction over tax laws.

The budget resolution often includes reconciliation directives, which require authorizing committees to change laws that affect receipts and mandatory spending. The budget resolution directs each designated committee to report amendments to the laws under the committee's jurisdiction that would achieve changes in the levels of receipts and reductions in mandatory spending controlled by those laws. The directives specify the dollar amount of changes that each designated committee is expected to achieve, but do not specify which laws are to be changed or the changes to be made. However, the Budget Committees' reports on the budget resolution frequently discuss assumptions about how the laws would be changed. Like other assumptions in the report, they do not bind the committees of jurisdiction but may influence their decisions. A reconciliation instruction may also specify the total amount by which the statutory limit on the public debt is to be changed.

The committees subject to reconciliation directives draft the implementing legislation. Such legislation may, for example, change the tax code, revise benefit formulas or eligibility requirements for benefit programs, or authorize Government agencies to charge fees to cover some of their costs. Reconciliation bills are typically omnibus legislation, combining the legislation submitted by each reconciled committee in a single act.

Such a large and complicated bill would be difficult to enact under normal legislative procedures because it usually involves changes to tax rates or to popular social programs in order to achieve budgetary savings. The Senate considers such omnibus reconciliation acts under expedited procedures that limit total debate on the bill. To offset the procedural advantage gained by expedited procedures, the Senate places significant restrictions on the substantive content of the reconciliation measure itself, as well as on amendments to the measure. Any material in the bill or amendment to the bill that is not germane, that is extraneous, or that contains changes to the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and the Federal Disability Insurance programs is not in order under the Senate's expedited reconciliation procedures. In addition, the reconciliation bill as a whole is not permitted to increase projected deficits or reduce projected surpluses.

Reconciliation acts, together with appropriations acts for the year, are usually used to implement broad agreements between the President and the Congress on those occasions where the two branches have negotiated a comprehensive budget plan. Reconciliation acts have sometimes included other matters, such as laws providing the means for enforcing these agreements, as described under "Budget Enforcement."

Budget Enforcement

The Budget Enforcement Act (BEA), first enacted in 1990 and extended in 1993 and 1997, was an example of a law designed to enforce an overall budget agreement negotiated between the President and Congress; the purpose of the law was to reassure both the President and Congress that neither would work to unravel the budget agreement they had reached. Most aspects of the BEA expired in 2002, and its principal enforcement provisions were ignored by the President and Congress in its last few years. However, one of those provisions—a pay-as-you-go rule for tax and mandatory spending legislation—is part of House and Senate rules in a modified form and continues to govern congressional consideration of such legislation. In addition, the possibility of reinstating caps on discretionary spending and a statutory pay-as-you-go rule continues to prompt much discussion and so these provisions are discussed in this section.

The BEA divided spending into two types—***discretionary spending*** and ***direct*** or ***mandatory spending***. As noted above, discretionary spending is controlled through annual appropriations acts and mandatory spending is controlled by authorizing laws.

The BEA defined categories of discretionary spending (such as "defense" and "non-defense" spending) and set forth dollar limits known as ***caps*** on the amount of spending in each category. If the amount of budget authority provided in appropriations acts for a given year exceeded the budget authority cap for that category, or if the estimated outlays exceeded the outlay cap for that category, the BEA triggered an automatic procedure, called ***sequestration***, for reducing the spending in the category down to the level of the cap.

The BEA did not cap mandatory spending, in large part because much mandatory spending, such as unemployment compensation, is supposed to fluctuate automatically with economic conditions. Instead, it required that all proposed legislation that affected mandatory spending or receipts be enacted on a ***pay-as-you-go*** (PAYGO) basis. If such a law increased the projected deficit or reduced a projected surplus in the budget year or any of the four following years, another law had to be enacted with an offsetting reduction in mandatory spending or increase in receipts for each such year. In short, the PAYGO rule prohibited the enactment of new legislation that, on net, would cost money in any of the years covered by a budget agreement between the President and Congress. (In 1990, 1993, and 1997, the agreements each covered five years.) If the net of all tax and mandatory spending legislation enacted since the start of the most recent five-year agreement was a cost for the budget year, a sequestration would be triggered to offset that net cost.

Chapter 24, "Budget System and Concepts and Glossary," pages 460-461 in the *Analytical Perspectives* volume of the 2004 Budget, discusses the Budget Enforcement Act in more detail.

The Administration proposes to extend the BEA's pay-as-you-go mechanisms, with some modifications. This proposal is discussed in more detail in Chapter 15 of this volume, "Budget Reform Proposals."

Budget Execution

Government agencies may not spend or obligate more than Congress has appropriated, and they may use funds only for purposes specified in law. The Antideficiency Act prohibits them from spending or obligating the Government to spend in advance of an appropriation, unless specific authority to do so has been provided in law. Additionally, the Act requires the President to apportion the budgetary resources available for most executive branch agencies. The President has delegated this authority to OMB. Some apportionments are by time periods (usually by quarter of the fiscal year), some are by projects or activities, and others are by a combination of both. Agencies may request OMB to reapportion funds during the year to accommodate changing circumstances. This system helps to ensure that funds are available to cover operations for the entire year.

During the budget execution phase, the Government sometimes finds that it needs more funding than Congress has appropriated for the fiscal year because of unanticipated circumstances. For example, more might be needed to respond to a severe natural disaster. Under such circumstances, Congress may enact a supplemental appropriation.

On the other hand, the President may propose to reduce a previously enacted appropriation. The President may propose to either "cancel" or "rescind" the amount. If the President initiates the withholding of funds while Congress considers his request, the amounts are apportioned as "deferred" or "withheld pending rescission" on the OMB approved apportionment form. Agencies are instructed not to withhold funds without the prior approval of OMB. When OMB approves a withholding, the Impoundment Control Act requires that the President transmit a "special message" to the Congress. The historical reason for the special message is to inform Congress that the President has unilaterally withheld funds that were enacted in regular appropriations acts. The notification allows the Congress to consider the proposed rescission in a timely way. The last time the President initiated the withholding of funds was in fiscal year 2000.

COVERAGE OF THE BUDGET

Federal Government and Budget Totals

The budget documents provide information on all Federal agencies and programs. However, because the laws governing Social Security (the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and the Federal Disability Insurance trust funds) and the Postal Service Fund require that the receipts and outlays for those activities be excluded from the budget totals and from the calculation of the deficit or surplus, the budget presents on-budget and off-budget totals. The off-budget totals include the Federal transactions excluded by law from the budget totals. The on-budget and off-budget amounts are added together to derive the totals for the Federal Government. These are sometimes referred to as the unified or consolidated budget totals.

Table 25–1 TOTALS FOR THE BUDGET AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
(In billions of dollars)

	2008 Actual	Estimate	
		2009	2010
Budget authority:			
Unified	3,327	4,346	3,425
On-budget	2,842	3,820	2,873
Off-budget	485	527	551
Receipts:			
Unified	2,524	2,157	2,333
On-budget	1,866	1,502	1,649
Off-budget	658	655	683
Outlays:			
Unified	2,983	3,998	3,591
On-budget	2,508	3,480	3,042
Off-budget	475	518	549
Surplus:			
Unified	–459	–1,841	–1,258
On-budget	–642	–1,978	–1,393
Off-budget	183	137	134

It is not always obvious whether a transaction or activity should be included in the budget; the dividing line between the Government and the private sector is sometimes murky. Where there is a question, OMB normally follows the recommendation of the 1967 President's Commission on Budget Concepts to be comprehensive of the full range of Federal agencies, programs, and activities. In recent years, for example, the budget has included the transactions of the Universal Service Fund, the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board, Guaranty Agencies Reserves, the National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust, the United Mine Workers Combined Benefits Fund, the Telecommunications Development Fund, the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council, and the transactions of Electric Reliability Organizations (EROs) established pursuant to the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

The budget also classifies as governmental the collections and spending by the Affordable Housing Program (AHP) funds created by the Financial Institutions Reform, Recovery, and Enforcement Act of 1989 (FIRREA) and includes them in the budget totals. FIRREA requires each of the 12 Federal Home Loan Banks (FHLBs) to contribute at least 10 percent of its previous year's net earnings to an AHP fund to be used to subsidize owner-occupied and rental housing for low-income families and individuals and to provide assistance to certain first-time homebuyers. Since 1990, the FHLBs have contributed $3.3 billion to the AHP funds, of which $2.4 billion has been spent. The unspent funds represent 2008 contributions that will be committed in 2009 and the undisbursed portion of funds already committed to specific projects. Although the funds remain in the possession of the FHLBs, the deposit of specific amounts into the AHP funds is compulsory, and the expenditures are to meet specific governmental purposes.

In contrast, the budget excludes tribal trust funds that are owned by Indian tribes and held and managed by the Government in a fiduciary capacity on the tribes' behalf. These funds are not owned by the Government, the Government is not the source of their capital, and the Government's control is limited to the exercise of fiduciary duties. Similarly, the transactions of Government-sponsored enterprises, such as the FHLBs, are not included in the on-budget or off-budget totals. Federal laws established these enterprises for public policy purposes, but they are privately owned and operated corporations. Nevertheless, because of their public charters, the budget discusses them and reports summary financial data in the budget Appendix and in some detailed tables.

The Appendix includes a presentation for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for information only. The amounts are not included in either the on-budget or off-budget totals because of the independent status of the System within the Government. However, the Federal Reserve System transfers its net earnings to the Treasury, and the budget records them as receipts.

Chapter 22 of this volume, "Off-Budget Federal Entities and Non-Budgetary Activities," provides more information on this subject.

Functional Classification

The functional classification arrays budget authority, outlays, and other budget data according to the major purpose served—such as agriculture, transportation, income security, and national defense. There are 19 major functions, most of which are divided into subfunctions. For example, the Agriculture function comprises the subfunctions Farm Income Stabilization and Agricultural Research and Services. The functional array meets the Congressional Budget Act requirement for a presentation in the budget by national needs and agency missions and programs.

The following criteria are used in establishing functional categories and assigning activities to them:

- A function encompasses activities with similar purposes, emphasizing what the Federal Government seeks to accomplish rather than the means of accomplishment, the objects purchased, the clientele or geographic area served (except in the cases of functions 570 for Medicare, 650 for Social Security, and 700 for Veterans Benefits and Services), or the Federal agency conducting the activity (except in the case of subfunction 051 in the National Defense function, which is used only for defense activities under the Department of Defense—Military).

- A function must be of continuing national importance, and the amounts attributable to it must be significant.

- Each basic unit being classified (generally the appropriation or fund account) usually is classified according to its primary purpose and assigned to only one subfunction. However, some large accounts that serve more than one major purpose are subdivided into two or more functions or subfunctions.

Detailed functional tables, which provide information on Government activities by function and subfunction, are available on the Internet and as a CD-ROM in the printed document (Tables 26–1 and 26–2).

Agencies, Accounts, Programs, Projects, and Activities

Various summary tables in the *Analytical Perspectives* volume of the Budget provide information on budget authority, outlays, and offsetting collections and receipts arrayed by Federal agency. A table that lists budget authority and outlays by budget account within each agency and the totals for each agency of budget authority, outlays, and receipts that offset the agency spending totals are available on the Internet and as a CD-ROM in the printed document (Table 27–1). The *Appendix* provides budgetary, financial, and descriptive information about programs, projects, and activities by account within each agency.

Types of Funds

Agency activities are financed through Federal funds and trust funds.

Federal funds comprise several types of funds. Receipt accounts of the ***general fund***, which is the greater part of the budget, record receipts not earmarked by law for a specific purpose, such as income tax receipts. The general fund also includes the proceeds of general borrowing. General fund appropriation accounts record general fund expenditures. General fund appropriations draw from general fund receipts and borrowing collectively and, therefore, are not specifically linked to receipt accounts. ***Special funds*** consist of receipt accounts for Federal fund receipts that laws have earmarked for specific purposes and the associated appropriation accounts for the expenditure of those receipts. ***Public enterprise funds***

are revolving funds used for programs authorized by law to conduct a cycle of business-type operations, primarily with the public, in which outlays generate collections.

Intragovernmental funds are revolving funds that conduct business-type operations primarily within and between Government agencies. The collections and the outlays of revolving funds are recorded in the same budget account.

Trust funds account for the receipt and expenditure of monies by the Government for carrying out specific purposes and programs in accordance with the terms of a statute that designates the fund as a trust fund (such as the Highway Trust Fund) or for carrying out the stipulations of a trust where the Government itself is the beneficiary (such as any of several trust funds for gifts and donations for specific purposes). ***Trust revolving funds*** are trust funds credited with collections earmarked by law to carry out a cycle of business-type operations.

The Federal budget meaning of the term "trust," as applied to trust fund accounts, differs significantly from its private-sector usage. In the private sector, the beneficiary of a trust usually owns the trust's assets, which are managed by a trustee who must follow the stipulations of the trust. In contrast, the Federal Government owns the assets of most Federal trust funds, and it can raise or lower future trust fund collections and payments, or change the purposes for which the collections are used, by changing existing laws. There is no substantive difference between a trust fund and a special fund or between a trust revolving fund and a public enterprise revolving fund.

However, in some instances, the Government does act as a true trustee of assets that are owned or held for the benefit of others. For example, it maintains accounts on behalf of individual Federal employees in the Thrift Savings Fund, investing them as directed by the individual employee. The Government accounts for such funds in ***deposit funds***, which are not included in the budget. (Chapter 21 of this volume, "Trust Funds and Federal Funds," provides more information on this subject.)

Budgeting for Full Costs

A budget is a financial plan for allocating resources—deciding how much the Federal Government should spend in total, program by program, and for the parts of each program and deciding how to finance the spending. The budgetary system provides a process for proposing policies, making decisions, implementing them, and reporting the results. The budget needs to measure costs accurately so that decision makers can compare the cost of a program with its benefit, the cost of one program with another, and the cost of one method of reaching a specified goal with another. These costs need to be fully included in the budget up front, when the spending decision is made, so that executive and congressional decision makers have the information and the incentive to take the total costs into account when setting priorities.

The budget includes all types of spending, including both current operating expenditures and capital investment, and to the extent possible, both are measured on the basis of full cost. Questions are often raised about the measure of capital investment. The present budget provides policymakers the necessary information regarding investment spending. It records investment on a cash basis, and it requires Congress to provide budget authority before an agency can obligate the Government to make a cash outlay. By these means, it causes the total cost of capital investment to be compared up front in a rough and ready way with the total expected future net benefits. Since the budget measures only cost, the benefits with which these costs are compared, based on policy makers' judgment, must be presented in supplementary materials. Such a comparison of total costs with benefits is consistent with the formal method of cost-benefit analysis of capital projects in government, in which the full cost of a capital asset as the cash is paid out is compared with the full stream of future benefits (all in terms of present values). (Chapter 6 of this volume, "Federal Investment," provides more information on capital investment.)

RECEIPTS, OFFSETTING COLLECTIONS, AND OFFSETTING RECEIPTS

In General

The budget records money collected by Government agencies two different ways. Depending on the nature of the activity generating the collection and the law that established the collection, they are recorded as either:

- ***Governmental receipts***, which are compared in total to outlays (net of offsetting collections and offsetting receipts) in calculating the surplus or deficit; or
- ***Offsetting collections*** or ***offsetting receipts***, which are deducted from gross outlays to calculate net outlay figures.

Governmental Receipts

Governmental receipts are collections that result from the Government's exercise of its sovereign power to tax or otherwise compel payment and from gifts of money to the Government. Sometimes they are called receipts, Federal receipts, or Federal revenues. They consist mostly of individual and corporation income taxes and social insurance taxes, but also include excise taxes, compulsory user charges, regulatory fees, customs duties, court fines, certain license fees, and deposits of earnings by the Federal Reserve System. Total receipts for the Federal Government include both on-budget and off-budget receipts (see Table 25–1, "Totals for the Budget and the Federal Government," which appears earlier in this chapter.) Chapter 17 of this volume, "Federal Receipts," provides more information on receipts.

Offsetting Collections and Offsetting Receipts

Offsetting collections and offsetting receipts are recorded as offsets to (deductions from) spending, not as additions on the receipt side of the budget. As explained below, they are recorded as offsets to outlays so that the budget totals represent governmental rather than market activity and reflect the Government's net transactions with the public. They are recorded in one of two ways, based on interpretation of laws and longstanding budget concepts and practice. They are offsetting collections when the collections are authorized by law to be credited to expenditure accounts and are generally available for expenditure without further legislation. Otherwise, they are deposited in receipt accounts and called offsetting receipts.

Offsetting collections and offsetting receipts result from one of the following types of transactions:

- ***Business-like transactions or market-oriented activities with the public***—collections from the public in exchange for goods or services, such as the proceeds from the sale of postage stamps, the fees charged for admittance to recreation areas, and the proceeds from the sale of Government-owned land. The budget records these amounts as *offsetting collections from non-Federal sources* (for offsetting collections) or as *proprietary receipts* (for offsetting receipts). The amounts are deducted from gross budget authority and outlays, rather than added to governmental receipts. This treatment produces budget totals for governmental receipts, budget authority, and outlays that represent governmental rather than market activity.

- ***Intragovernmental transactions***—collections from other Federal Government accounts. The budget records collections by one Government account from another as *offsetting collections from Federal sources* (for offsetting collections) or as *intragovernmental receipts* (for offsetting receipts). For example, the General Services Administration rents office space to other Government agencies and records their rental payments as offsetting collections from Federal sources in the Federal Buildings Fund. These transactions are exactly offsetting and do not affect the surplus or deficit. However, they are an important accounting mechanism for allocating costs to the programs and activities that cause the Government to incur the costs. Intragovernmental offsetting collections and receipts are deducted from gross budget authority and outlays so that the budget totals measure the transactions of the Government with the public.

- ***Voluntary gifts and donations***—Newly authorized gifts and donations are treated as offsets to budget authority and outlays. Existing gifts and donations are reported as Governmental receipts, but are expected to be reclassified for the 2011 Budget.

- ***Offsetting governmental transactions***—collections from the public that are governmental in nature (e.g., tax receipts, regulatory fees, compulsory user charges, custom duties, license fees) but required by law to be misclassified as offsetting. The budget records amounts from non-Federal sources that are governmental in nature as *offsetting governmental collections* (for offsetting collections) or as *offsetting governmental receipts* (for offsetting receipts).

Offsetting Collections

Some laws authorize agencies to credit collections directly to the account from which they will be spent and, usually, to spend the collections for the purpose of the account without further action by Congress. Most revolving funds operate with such authority. For example, a permanent law authorizes the Postal Service to use collections from the sale of stamps to finance its operations without a requirement for annual appropriations. The budget records these collections in the Postal Service Fund (a revolving fund) and records budget authority in an amount equal to the collections. In addition to revolving funds, some agencies are authorized to charge fees to defray a portion of costs for a program that are otherwise financed by appropriations from the general fund and usually to spend the collections without further action by Congress. In such cases, the budget records the offsetting collections and resulting budget authority in the program's general fund expenditure account. Similarly, intragovernmental collections authorized by some laws may be recorded as offsetting collections and budget authority in revolving funds or in general fund expenditure accounts.

Sometimes appropriations acts or provisions in other laws limit the obligations that can be financed by offsetting collections. In those cases, the budget records budget authority in the amount available to incur obligations, not in the amount of the collections.

Offsetting collections credited to expenditure accounts automatically offset the outlays at the expenditure account level. Where accounts have offsetting collections, the budget shows the budget authority and outlays of the account both gross (before deducting offsetting collections) and net (after deducting offsetting collections). Totals for the agency, subfunction, and budget are net of offsetting collections.

Offsetting Receipts

Collections that are offset against gross outlays but are not authorized to be credited to expenditure accounts are credited to receipt accounts and are called offsetting receipts. Offsetting receipts are deducted from budget authority and outlays in arriving at total budget authority and outlays. However, unlike offsetting collections credited to expenditure accounts, offsetting receipts do not offset budget authority and outlays at the account level. In most cases, they offset budget authority and outlays at the agency and subfunction levels.

Proprietary receipts from a few sources, however, are not offset against any specific agency or function and are classified as undistributed offsetting receipts. They are deducted from the Government-wide totals for budget authority and outlays. For example, the collections of rents and royalties from outer continental shelf lands are undistributed because the amounts are large and for the most part are not related to the spending of the agency that administers the transactions and the subfunction that records the administrative expenses.

Similarly, two kinds of intragovernmental transactions—agencies' payments as employers into Federal employee retirement trust funds and interest received by trust funds—are classified as undistributed offsetting receipts. They appear instead as special deductions in computing total budget authority and outlays for the Government rather than as offsets at the agency level. This special treatment is necessary because the amounts are so large they would distort measures of the agency's activities if they were attributed to the agency.

User Charges

User charges are fees assessed on individuals or organizations for the provision of Government services and for the sale or use of Government goods or resources. The payers of the user charge must be limited in the authorizing legislation to those receiving special benefits from, or subject to regulation by, the program or activity beyond the benefits received by the general public or broad segments of the public (such as those who pay income taxes or customs duties). Policy regarding user charges is established in OMB Circular A–25, "User Charges" (July 8, 1993). The term encompasses proceeds from the sale or use of Government goods and services, including the sale of natural resources (such as timber, oil, and minerals) and proceeds from asset sales (such as property, plant, and equipment). User charges are not necessarily earmarked for the activity they finance and may be credited to the general fund of the Treasury.

The term "user charge" does not refer to a separate budget category for collections. User charges are classified in the budget as receipts, offsetting receipts, or offsetting collections according to the principles explained previously.

See Chapter 18, "User Charges and Other Collections," for more information on the classification of user charges.

BUDGET AUTHORITY AND OTHER BUDGETARY RESOURCES, OBLIGATIONS, AND OUTLAYS

Budget authority, obligations, and outlays are the primary benchmarks and measures of the budget control system. Congress enacts laws that provide agencies with spending authority in the form of budget authority. Before agencies can use the resources, OMB must approve their spending plans. After the plans are approved, agencies can enter into binding agreements to purchase items or services or to make grants or other payments. These agreements are recorded as obligations of the United States and deducted from the amount of budgetary resources available to the agency. When payments are made, the obligations are liquidated and outlays recorded. These concepts are discussed more fully below.

Budget Authority and Other Budgetary Resources

Budget authority is the authority provided in law to enter into legal obligations that will result in immediate or future outlays of the Government. In other words, it is the amount of money that agencies are allowed to commit to be spent in current or future years. Government officials may obligate the Government to make outlays only to the extent they have been granted budget authority.

The budget records new budget authority as a dollar amount in the year when it first becomes available for obligation. When permitted by law, unobligated balances of budget authority may be carried over and used in the next year. The budget does not record these balances as budget authority again. They do, however, constitute a budgetary resource that is available for obligation. In some cases, a provision of law (such as a limitation on obligations or a benefit formula) precludes the obligation of funds that would otherwise be available for obligation. In such cases, the budget records budget authority equal to the amount of obligations that can be incurred. A major exception to this rule has been for the highway and mass transit programs financed by the Highway Trust Fund, where budget authority has been measured as the amount of contract authority (described later in this chapter) provided in authorizing statutes, even though the obligation limitations enacted in annual appropriations acts restrict the amount of contract authority that can be obligated.

In deciding the amount of budget authority to request for a program, project, or activity, agency officials estimate the total amount of obligations they will need to incur to achieve desired goals and subtract the unobligated balances available for these purposes. The amount of budget authority requested is influenced by the nature of the programs, projects, or activities being financed. For current operating expenditures, the amount requested usually covers the needs for the year. For major procurement programs and construction projects, agencies generally must request sufficient budget authority in the first year to fully fund an economically useful segment of a procurement or project, even though it may be obligated over several years. This full funding policy is intended to ensure that the decision-makers take into account all costs and benefits fully at the time decisions are made to provide resources. It also avoids sinking money into a procurement or project without being certain if or when future funding will be available to complete the procurement or project.

Budget authority takes several forms:

- ***Appropriations***, provided in annual appropriations acts or authorizing laws, permit agencies to incur obligations and make payment;

- ***Borrowing authority***, usually provided in permanent laws, permits agencies to incur obligations but requires them to borrow funds, usually from the general fund of the Treasury, to make payment;

- ***Contract authority***, usually provided in permanent law, permits agencies to incur obligations in advance of a separate appropriation of the cash for payment or in anticipation of the collection of receipts that can be used for payment; and

- ***Spending authority from offsetting collections***, usually provided in permanent law, permits agencies to credit offsetting collections to an expenditure account, incur obligations, and make payment using the offsetting collections.

Because offsetting collections and receipts are deducted from gross budget authority, they are referred to as negative budget authority for some purposes, such as Congressional Budget Act provisions that pertain to budget authority.

Authorizing statutes usually determine the form of budget authority for a program. The authorizing statute may authorize a particular type of budget authority to be provided in annual appropriations acts, or it may provide one of the forms of budget authority directly, without the need for further appropriations.

An appropriation may make funds available from the general fund, special funds, or trust funds, or authorize the spending of offsetting collections credited to expenditure accounts, including revolving funds. Borrowing authority is usually authorized for business-like activities where the activity being financed is expected to produce income over time with which to repay the borrowing with interest. The use of contract authority is traditionally limited to transportation programs.

New budget authority for most Federal programs is normally provided in annually enacted appropriations acts. However, new budget authority for more than half of all outlays is made available through permanent appropriations under existing laws and does not require current action by Congress. Much of the permanent budget authority is for trust funds, interest on the public debt, and the authority to spend offsetting collections credited to appropriation or fund accounts. For most trust funds, the budget authority is appropriated automatically under existing law from the available balance of their receipts and equals the estimated annual obligations of the funds. For interest on the public debt, budget authority is provided automatically under a permanent appropriation enacted in 1847 and equals interest outlays.

Annual appropriations acts generally make budget authority available for obligation only during the fiscal year to which the act applies. However, they frequently allow budget authority for a particular purpose to remain available for obligation for a longer period or indefinitely (that is, until expended or until the program objectives have been attained). Typically, budget authority for current operations is made available for only one year, and budget authority for construction and some research projects is available for a specified number of years or indefinitely. Most budget authority provided in authorizing statutes, such as for most trust funds, is available indefinitely. Only another law can extend a limited period of availability (see "Reappropriation" later in this chapter).

Budget authority that is available for more than one year and not obligated in the year it becomes available is carried forward for obligation in a following year. In some cases, an account may carry forward unobligated budget authority from more than one year. The sum of such amounts constitutes the account's ***unobligated balance***. Most of this budget authority is earmarked for specific uses and is not available for new programs. A small part may never be obligated or spent, primarily amounts provided for contingencies that do not occur or reserves that never have to be used.

Amounts of budget authority that have been obligated but not yet paid constitute the account's ***unpaid obligations***. For example, in the case of salaries and wages, one to three weeks elapse between the time of obligation and the time of payment. In the case of major procurement and construction, payments may occur over a period of several years after the obligation is made. Unpaid obligations net of the accounts receivable and unfilled customers' orders are defined by law as the ***obligated balances***. Obligated balances of budget authority at the end of the year are carried forward until the obligations are paid or the balances are canceled. (A general law cancels the obligated balances of budget authority that was made available for a definite period five years after the end of the period.) Due to such flows, a change in the amount of budget authority available in any one year may change the level of obligations and outlays for several years to come. Conversely, a change in the amount of obligations incurred from one year to the next does not necessarily result from an equal change in the amount of budget authority available for that year and will not necessarily result in an equal change in the level of outlays in that year.[2]

Congress usually makes budget authority available on the first day of the fiscal year for which the appropriations act is passed. Occasionally, the appropriations language specifies a different timing. The language may provide an ***advance appropriation***—budget authority that does not become available until one year or more beyond the fiscal year for which the appropriations act is passed. ***Forward funding*** is budget authority that is made available for obligation beginning in the last quarter of the fiscal year (beginning on July 1) for the financing of ongoing grant programs during the next fiscal year. This kind of funding is used mostly for education programs, so that obligations for education grants can be made prior to the beginning of the next school year. For certain benefit programs funded by annual appropriations, the appropriation provides for ***advance funding*** —budget authority that is to be charged to the appropriation in the succeeding year, but which authorizes obligations to be incurred in the last quarter of the current fiscal year if necessary to meet benefit payments in excess of the specific amount appropriated for the year. When such authority is used, an adjustment is made to increase the budget authority for the fiscal year in which it is used and to reduce the budget authority of the succeeding fiscal year.

Provisions of law that extend into a new fiscal year the availability of unobligated amounts that have expired or would otherwise expire are called reappropriations. Reappropriations of expired balances that are newly available for obligation in the current or budget year count as new budget authority in the fiscal year in which the balances become newly available. For example, if a 2008 appropriations act extends the availability of unobligated budget authority that expired at the end of 2007, new budget authority would be recorded for 2008. This scorekeeping is used because a reappropriation has exactly the same effect as allowing the earlier appropriation to expire at the end of 2007 and enacting a new appropriation for 2008.

For purposes of the Congressional Budget Act (discussed earlier under "Budget Enforcement"), the budget classifies budget authority as ***discretionary*** or ***mandatory***. This classification indicates whether an appropriations act or authorizing legislation controls the amount of budget authority that is available. Generally, budget authority is discretionary if provided in an annual appropriations act and mandatory if provided in authorizing legislation. However, the budget authority provided in annual appropriations acts for certain specifically identified programs is also classified as mandatory. This is because the authorizing legislation for these programs entitles beneficiaries—persons, households, or other levels of government—to receive payment, or otherwise legally obligates the Government to make payment and effectively determines the amount of budget authority required, even though the payments are funded by a subsequent appropriation.

Sometimes, budget authority is characterized as current or permanent. Current authority requires Congress to act on the request for new budget authority for the year involved. Permanent authority becomes available pursuant to standing provisions of law without appropriations action by Congress for the year involved. Generally, budget authority is current if an annual appropriations act provides it and permanent if authorizing legislation provides it. By and large, the current/permanent distinction has been replaced by the discretionary/mandatory distinction, which is similar but not identical. Outlays are also classified as discretionary or mandatory according to the classification of the budget authority from which they flow (see "Outlays," later in this chapter).

The amount of budget authority recorded in the budget depends on whether the law provides a specific amount or employs a variable factor that determines the amount. It is considered ***definite*** if the law specifies a dollar amount (which may be an amount not to be exceeded). It is considered ***indefinite*** if, instead of specifying an amount, the law permits the amount to be determined by subsequent circumstances. For example, indefinite budget authority is provided for interest on the public debt, payment of claims and judgments awarded by the courts against the United States, and many entitlement programs. Many of the laws that authorize collections to be credited to revolving, special, and trust funds make all of the collections available for expenditure for the authorized purposes of the fund, and such authority is considered to be indefinite budget authority because the amount of collections is not known in advance of their collection.

Obligations

Following the enactment of budget authority and the completion of required apportionment action, Government agencies incur obligations to make payments (see earlier discussion under "Budget Execution"). Agencies must record obligations when they enter into binding agreements that will result in immediate or future outlays. Such obligations include the current liabilities for salaries, wages, and interest; and contracts for the purchase of supplies and equipment, construction, and the acquisition of office space, buildings, and land. For Federal credit programs, obligations are recorded in an amount equal to the estimated subsidy cost of direct loans and loan guarantees (see "Federal Credit" later in this chapter).

Outlays

Outlays are the measure of Government spending. They are payments that liquidate obligations (other than certain exchanges of financial instruments, of which the repayment of debt is the prime example). The budget records outlays when obligations are paid, in the amount that is paid.

Agency, function and subfunction, and Government-wide outlay totals are stated net of offsetting collections

[2] A separate report, "Balances of Budget Authority," provides additional information on balances. The National Technical Information Service, Department of Commerce, makes the report available shortly after the budget is transmitted.

and offsetting receipts for most budget presentations. (Offsetting receipts from a few sources do not offset any specific function, subfunction, or agency, as explained previously, but only offset Government-wide totals.) Outlay totals for accounts with offsetting collections are stated both gross and net of the offsetting collections credited to the account. However, the outlay totals for special and trust funds with offsetting receipts are not stated net of the offsetting receipts; like other offsetting receipts, these offset the agency, function, and subfunction totals but do not offset account-level outlays.

The Government usually makes outlays in the form of cash (currency, checks, or electronic fund transfers). However, in some cases agencies pay obligations without disbursing cash, and the budget nevertheless records outlays for the equivalent method. For example, the budget records outlays for the full amount of Federal employees' salaries, even though the cash disbursed to employees is net of Federal and State income taxes withheld, retirement contributions, life and health insurance premiums, and other deductions. (The budget also records receipts for the amounts withheld from Federal employee paychecks for Federal income taxes and other payments to the Government.) When debt instruments (bonds, debentures, notes, or monetary credits) are used in place of cash to pay obligations, the budget records outlays financed by an increase in agency debt. For example, the budget records the acquisition of physical assets through certain types of lease-purchase arrangements as though a cash disbursement were made for an outright purchase. The transaction creates a Government debt, and the cash lease payments are treated as repayments of principal and interest.

The measurement of interest varies. The budget records outlays for the interest on the public issues of Treasury debt securities as the interest accrues, not when the cash is paid. A small portion of Treasury debt consists of inflation-indexed securities, which feature monthly adjustments to principal for inflation and semiannual payments of interest on the inflation-adjusted principal. As with fixed-rate securities, the budget records interest outlays as the interest accrues. The monthly adjustment to principal is recorded, simultaneously, as an increase in debt outstanding and an outlay of interest.

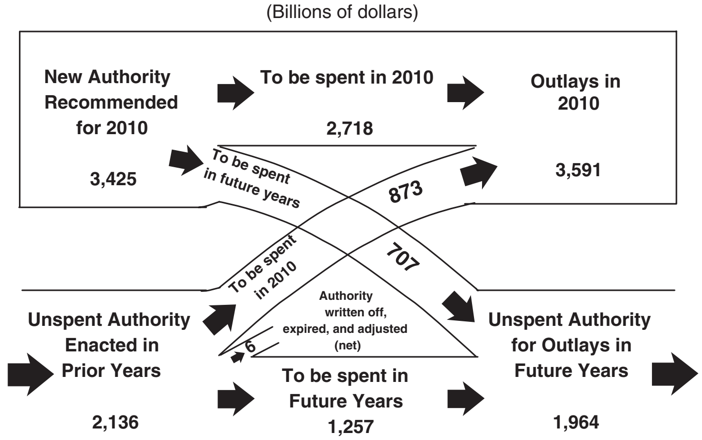
Most Treasury debt securities held by trust funds and other Government accounts are in the Government account series (special issues). The budget normally states the interest on these securities on a cash basis. When a Government account is invested in Federal debt securities, the purchase price is usually close or identical to the par (face) value of the security. The budget records the investment at par value and adjusts the interest paid by Treasury and collected by the account by the difference between purchase price and par, if any. However, two trust funds in the Department of Defense, the Military Retirement Trust Fund and the Education Benefits Trust Fund, routinely have relatively large differences between purchase price and par. For these funds, the budget records the holdings of debt at par but records the differences between purchase price and par as adjustments to the assets of the funds that are amortized over the life of the security. The budget records interest as the amortization occurs.

For Federal credit programs, outlays are equal to the subsidy cost of direct loans and loan guarantees and are recorded as the underlying loans are disbursed (see "Federal Credit" later in this chapter).

The budget records refunds of receipts that result from overpayments by the public (such as income taxes withheld in excess of tax liabilities) as reductions of receipts, rather than as outlays. However, the budget records payments to taxpayers for refundable tax credits (such as earned income tax credits) that exceed the taxpayer's tax liability as outlays. Similarly, when the Government makes overpayments that are later returned to the Government, those refunds to the Government are recorded as offsetting collections or offsetting receipts.

Chart 25-1. Relationship of Budget Authority to Outlays for 2010

(Billions of dollars)



Not all of the new budget authority for 2010 will be obligated or spent in 2010. Outlays during a fiscal year may liquidate obligations incurred in the same year or in prior years. Obligations, in turn, may be incurred against budget authority provided in the same year or against unobligated balances of budget authority provided in prior years. Outlays, therefore, flow in part from budget authority provided for the year in which the money is spent and in part from budget authority provided in prior years. The ratio of a given year's outlays resulting from budget authority enacted in that or a prior year to the original amount of that budget authority is referred to as the spendout rate for that year.

As shown in the accompanying chart, $2,718 billion of outlays in 2010 (76 percent of the outlay total) will be made from that year's $3,425 billion total of proposed new budget authority (a first-year spendout rate of 79 percent). Thus, the remaining $873 billion of outlays in 2010 (24 percent of the outlay total) will be made from budget authority enacted in previous years. At the same time, $707 billion of the new budget authority proposed for 2010 (21 percent of the total amount proposed) will not lead to outlays until future years. In general, the total budget authority for a particular year is not directly indicative of that year's outlays since it combines budget authority having different short-term and long-term implications for budget obligations and outlays.

As described earlier, the budget classifies budget authority and outlays as discretionary or mandatory for the purposes of the Congressional Budget Act. This classification of outlays measures the extent to which actual spending is controlled through the annual appropriations process. Almost 40 percent of total outlays in 2008 ($1,135 billion) are discretionary and the remaining 60 percent ($1,848 billion in 2008) are mandatory spending and net interest. Such a large portion of total spending is mandatory because authorizing rather than appropriations legislation determines net interest ($253 billion in 2008) and the spending for a few programs with large amounts of spending each year, such as Social Security ($612 billion in 2008) and Medicare ($386 billion in 2008).

The bulk of mandatory outlays flow from budget authority recorded in the same fiscal year. This is not the case for discretionary budget authority and outlays. For most major construction and procurement projects and long-term contracts, for example, the budget authority covers the entire cost estimated when the projects are initiated even though the work will take place and outlays will be made over a period extending beyond the year for which the budget authority is enacted. Similarly, discretionary budget authority for most education and job training activities is appropriated for school or program years that begin in the fourth quarter of the fiscal year. Most of these funds result in outlays in the year after the appropriation.

FEDERAL CREDIT

Some Government programs make direct loans or loan guarantees. A ***direct loan*** is a disbursement of funds by the Government to a non-Federal borrower under a contract that requires repayment of such funds with or without interest. The term includes equivalent transactions such as selling a property on credit terms in lieu of receiving cash up front. A ***loan guarantee*** is any guarantee, insurance, or other pledge with respect to the payment of all or a part of the principal or interest on any debt obligation of a non-Federal borrower to a non-Federal lender. The Federal Credit Reform Act (FCRA) prescribes the budget treatment for Federal credit programs. Under this treatment, the budget records the net cost to the Government (subsidy cost) when the loans are disbursed, rather than the cash flows year by year over the term of the loan, so direct loans and loan guarantees can be compared to each other and to other methods of delivering benefits, such as grants, on an equivalent basis.

The cost of direct loans and loan guarantees, sometimes called the "subsidy cost," is estimated as the present value of expected disbursements over the term of the loan less the present value of expected collections, using appropriate Treasury interest rates to discount the cash flows.[3] As for most other kinds of programs, agencies can make loans or guarantee loans only if Congress has appropriated funds sufficient to cover the subsidy costs or provided a limitation on the amount of direct loans or loan guarantees that can be made in annual appropriations acts.

The budget records the estimated long-term cost to the Government arising from direct loans and loan guarantees—the budget authority and outlays—in ***credit program accounts***. When a Federal agency disburses a direct loan or when a non-Federal lender disburses a loan guaranteed by a Federal agency, the program account disburses or outlays an amount equal to the estimated cost or subsidy to a non-budgetary credit ***financing account***. The financing accounts record the actual transactions with the public. For a few programs, the estimated cost is negative, because the present value of expected collections exceeds the present value of expected payments from the Government over the term of the loan. In such cases, the financing account makes a payment to the program's negative subsidy receipt account, where it is recorded as an offsetting receipt. In a few cases, the offsetting receipts of credit accounts are earmarked in a special fund established for the program and are available for appropriation for the program.

The agencies responsible for credit programs must reestimate the cost of the outstanding portfolio of direct loans and loan guarantees each year. If the estimated cost increases, the program account makes an additional

[3] Present value is a standard financial concept that allows for the time value of money. That is, it accounts for the fact that a given sum of money is worth more in the present than the same sum would be worth in the future because interest can be earned on money held in the present. That is why future sums are discounted.

payment to the financing account. If the estimated cost decreases, the financing account makes a payment to the program's downward reestimate receipt account, where it is recorded as an offsetting receipt. The FCRA provides permanent indefinite appropriations to pay for upward reestimates.

If the Government modifies the terms of an outstanding direct loan or loan guarantee in a way that increases the cost, as the result of a law or the exercise of administrative discretion under existing law, the program account records obligations for an additional amount equal to the increased cost and outlays the amount to the financing account. As with the original cost, agencies may incur modification costs only if Congress has appropriated funds to cover them. A modification may also reduce costs, in which case the financing account makes a payment to the program's receipt account.

Credit financing accounts record all cash flows to and from the Government arising from direct loan obligations and loan guarantee commitments. These cash flows consist mainly of direct loan disbursements and repayments, loan guarantee default payments, fees and interest from the public, the receipt of subsidy cost payments from program accounts, and interest paid to or received from the Treasury. Separate financing accounts record the cash flows of direct loans and of loan guarantees for programs that provide both types of credit. The budget totals exclude the transactions of the financing accounts because they are not a cost to the Government. However, since financing accounts record cash flows to and from the Government, they affect the means of financing a budget surplus or deficit (see "Credit Financing Accounts" in the next section). The budget documents display the transactions of the financing accounts, together with the related program accounts, for information and analytical purposes.

The FCRA, which was enacted in 1990, grandfathered direct loan obligations and loan guarantee commitments made prior to 1992. The budget records these on a cash basis in ***credit liquidating accounts***, the same as they were recorded before FCRA was enacted. However, this exception ceases to apply if the direct loans or loan guarantees are modified as described above. In that case, the budget records the subsidy cost or savings of the modification, as appropriate, and begins to account for the associated transactions as the FCRA prescribes for direct loan obligations and loan guarantee commitments made in 1992 or later.

The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 (EESA) created the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) under the Department of the Treasury, and authorized Treasury to purchase or guarantee troubled assets until December 31, 2009, unless extended upon a written certification by the Secretary of the Treasury. Under the TARP, Treasury has purchased preferred stock (equity interests) in financial institutions. Section 123 of the EESA provides the Administration the authority to treat these equity investments pursuant to the FCRA, recording outlays on a subsidy cost basis as is done for direct loans and loan guarantees. The budget reflects the cost to the Government of TARP direct loans, loan guarantees, and equity investments consistent with the FCRA and Section 123 of EESA, which also requires adjustments to the discount rate otherwise prescribed by FCRA to account for market risk.

BUDGET DEFICIT OR SURPLUS AND MEANS OF FINANCING

When outlays exceed receipts, the difference is a deficit, which the Government finances primarily by borrowing. When receipts exceed outlays, the difference is a surplus, and the Government automatically uses the surplus primarily to reduce debt. The Government's debt (debt held by the public) is approximately the cumulative amount of borrowing to finance deficits, less repayments from surpluses, over the Nation's history.

Borrowing is not exactly equal to the deficit, and debt repayment is not exactly equal to the surplus, because of the other means of financing such as those discussed under this heading. The factors included in the other means of financing can either increase or decrease the Government's borrowing needs (or decrease or increase its ability to repay debt). For example, the change in the Treasury operating cash balance is a factor included in other means of financing. Holding receipts and outlays constant, increases in the cash balance increase the Government's need to borrow or reduce the Government's ability to repay debt, and decreases in the cash balance decrease the need to borrow or increase the ability to repay debt. In some years, the net effect of the other means of financing is minor relative to the borrowing or debt repayment; in other years, such as 2008, the net effect may be significant, as explained later in this chapter.

Borrowing and Debt Repayment

The budget treats borrowing and debt repayment as a means of financing, not as receipts and outlays. If borrowing were defined as receipts and debt repayment as outlays, the budget would always be virtually balanced by definition. This rule applies both to borrowing in the form of Treasury securities and to specialized borrowing in the form of agency securities. The rule reflects the commonsense understanding that lending or borrowing is just an exchange of financial assets of equal value—cash for Treasury securities—and so is fundamentally different from, say, paying taxes.

In 2008, the Government borrowed $768 billion from the public, bringing debt held by the public to $5,803 billion. This borrowing financed the $459 billion deficit in that year as well as the net effect of the other means of financing, such as changes in cash balances and other accounts discussed below. The main reason that borrowing from the public was so much larger than the deficit in 2008 was that Treasury borrowed from the public to accumulate $299 billion in cash balances under the new Supplementary Financing Program, through which Treasury holds cash balances with the Federal Reserve to provide liquidity for the Federal Reserve to conduct efforts to stabilize the financial markets.

In addition to selling debt to the public, the Treasury Department issues debt to Government accounts, primarily trust funds that are required by law to invest in Treasury securities. Issuing and redeeming this debt does not affect the means of financing, because these transactions occur between one Government account and another and thus do not raise or use any cash for the Government as a whole.

(See Chapter 16 of this volume, "Federal Borrowing and Debt," for a fuller discussion of this topic.)

Exercise of Monetary Power

Seigniorage is the profit from coining money. It is the difference between the value of coins as money and their cost of production. Seigniorage adds to the Government's cash balance, but, unlike the payment of taxes or other receipts, it does not involve a transfer of financial assets from the public. Instead, it arises from the exercise of the Government's power to create money and the public's desire to hold financial assets in the form of coins. Therefore, the budget excludes seigniorage from receipts and treats it as a means of financing other than borrowing from the public. The budget also treats profits resulting from the sale of gold as a means of financing, since the value of gold is determined by its value as a monetary asset rather than as a commodity.

Credit Financing Accounts

The budget records the net cash flows of credit programs in credit financing accounts. These accounts include the transactions for direct loan and loan guarantee programs, as well as the new equity purchase programs under TARP that are recorded on a credit basis, consistent with Section 123 of EESA, as explained above. These accounts are excluded from the budget because they are not allocations of resources by the Government (see "Federal Credit" above). However, even though they do not affect the surplus or deficit, they can either increase or decrease the Government's need to borrow. Therefore, they are recorded as a means of financing.

Financing account disbursements to the public increase the requirement for Treasury borrowing in the same way as an increase in budget outlays. Financing account receipts from the public can be used to finance the payment of the Government's obligations and therefore reduce the requirement for Treasury borrowing from the public in the same way as an increase in budget receipts.

Deposit Fund Account Balances

The Treasury uses non-budgetary accounts, called deposit funds, to record cash held temporarily until ownership is determined (for example, earnest money paid by bidders for mineral leases) or cash held by the Government as agent for others (for example, State and local income taxes withheld from Federal employees' salaries and not yet paid to the State or local government or the Thrift Savings Fund, a defined contribution pension fund held and managed in a fiduciary capacity by the Government). Deposit fund balances may be held in the form of either invested or uninvested balances. To the extent that they are not invested, changes in the balances are available to finance expenditures and are recorded as a means of financing other than borrowing from the public. To the extent that they are invested in Federal debt, changes in the balances are reflected as borrowing from the public (in lieu of borrowing from other parts of the public) and are not reflected as a separate means of financing.

Exchanges with the International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Under the terms of its participation in the IMF, the United States transfers dollars to the IMF and receives Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) in return. The SDRs are interest-bearing monetary assets and may be exchanged for foreign currency at any time. These transfers are like bank deposits and withdrawals, where the government exchanges one type of financial asset (cash) for another (bank deposit), with no change in total financial assets. Consistent with the budgetary treatment recommended by the President's Commission on Budget Concepts in 1967, the U.S. transactions with the IMF under the quota subscriptions are exchanges of financial assets that would not increase the deficit in any year, and the budget excludes these transfers from budget outlays and receipts. Beginning this year, the budget also excludes increases in the government's quota subscription to the IMF from budget authority totals. In contrast, the budget records interest paid by the IMF on U.S. deposits as an offsetting receipt in the general fund of the Treasury. It also records outlays for foreign currency exchanges to the extent there is a realized loss in dollars terms and offsetting receipts to the extent there is a realized gain in dollar terms.

Investments of the National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust

Under longstanding rules, the budget has generally treated investments in non-Federal securities as a purchase of an asset, recording an obligation and an outlay in an amount equal to the purchase price in the year of the purchase. Since investments in non-Federal securities consume cash, fund balances (of funds available for obligation) are normally reduced by the value of these purchases. As previously noted, the purchase of equity securities through TARP is recorded on a credit basis, with an outlay recorded in the amount of the estimated subsidy cost. In addition, the Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Improvement Act of 2001 (Public Law 107–90) requires purchases or sales of non-Federal assets by the National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust to be treated as a means of financing in the budget, rather than as an outlay.

Earnings on investments by the National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust in private assets pose special challenges for budget projections. Over long periods, equities and private bonds are expected to earn a higher return on average than the Treasury rate, but that return is subject to greater uncertainty. Sound budgeting principles require that estimates of future trust fund balances reflect both the average return and the cost of risk associated with the uncertainty of that return. (The latter is particularly true in cases where individual beneficiaries have not made a voluntary choice to assume additional risk.) Estimating both of these separately is quite difficult. While the additional returns that these assets have received in the past are known, it is quite possible that these premiums will differ in the future. Furthermore, there is no existing procedure for the budget to record separately the cost of risk from such an investment, even if it could be estimated accurately. Economic theory suggests, however, that the difference between the expected return of a risky liquid asset and the Treasury rate is equal to the cost of the asset's additional risk as priced by the market. Following through on this insight, the best way to project the rate of return on the Fund's balances is to use a Treasury rate. As a result, the Budget treats equivalently, assets with equal economic value as measured by market prices, avoiding the appearance that the budget would be expected to benefit if the Government bought private sector assets.

The actual and estimated returns to private securities are recorded in subfunction 909, other investment income. The actual-year returns include interest, dividends, and capital gains and losses on private equities and other securities. The Fund's portfolio of these assets is revalued at market prices at the end of each month to determine capital gains or losses. As a result, the Fund's balance at any given point reflects the current market value of resources available to the Government to finance benefits. Earnings for the remainder of the current year and for future years are estimated using the 10-year Treasury rate and the value of the Fund's portfolio at the end of the actual year. No estimates are made of gains and losses for the remainder of the current year or for subsequent years.

FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT

The budget includes information on civilian and military employment. It also includes information on related personnel compensation and benefits and on staffing requirements at overseas missions. Chapter 23 of this volume, "Federal Employment and Compensation," provides employment levels measured in full-time equivalents (FTE). Agency FTEs are the measure of total hours worked by an agency's Federal employees divided by the total number of compensable work hours in a fiscal year.

BASIS FOR BUDGET FIGURES

Data for the Past Year

The past year column (2008) generally presents the actual transactions and balances as recorded in agency accounts and as summarized in the central financial reports prepared by the Treasury Department for the most recently completed fiscal year. Occasionally, the budget reports corrections to data reported erroneously to Treasury but not discovered in time to be reflected in Treasury's published data. In addition, in certain cases the Budget has a broader scope and includes financial transactions that are not reported to Treasury (see Chapter 20 of this volume, "Comparison of Actual to Estimated Totals," for a summary of these differences).

Data for the Current Year

The current year column (2009) includes estimates of transactions and balances based on the amounts of budgetary resources that were available when the budget was transmitted, including amounts appropriated for the year.

Data for the Budget Year

The budget year column (2010) includes estimates of transactions and balances based on the amounts of budgetary resources that are estimated to be available, including new budget authority requested under current authorizing legislation, and amounts estimated to result from changes in authorizing legislation and tax laws.

The budget *Appendix* generally includes the appropriations language for the amounts proposed to be appropriated under current authorizing legislation. In a few cases, this language is transmitted later because the exact requirements are unknown when the budget is transmitted. The *Appendix* generally does not include appropriations language for the amounts that will be requested under proposed legislation; that language is usually transmitted later, after the legislation is enacted. Some tables in the budget identify the items for later transmittal and the related outlays separately.

Estimates of the total requirements for the budget year include both the amounts requested with the transmittal of the budget and the amounts planned for later transmittal.

Data for the Outyears

The budget presents estimates for each of the nine years beyond the budget year (2011 through 2019) in order to reflect the effect of budget decisions on objectives and plans over a longer period.

Allowances

The budget may include lump-sum allowances to cover certain transactions that are expected to increase or decrease budget authority, outlays, or receipts but are not, for various reasons, reflected in the program details. For example, the budget might include an allowance to show the effect on the budget totals of a proposal that would actually affect many accounts by relatively small amounts, in order to avoid unnecessary detail in the presentations for the individual accounts.

This year's Budget reflects the statistical probability that disasters will occur in the future that necessitate federal assistance.

Baseline

The budget baseline is an estimate of the receipts, outlays, and deficits or surpluses that would occur if no changes were made to current laws and policies during the period covered by the budget. The baseline assumes that receipts and mandatory spending, which generally are authorized on a permanent basis, will continue in the future as required by current law and policy. The baseline assumes that the future funding for most discretionary programs, which generally are funded annually, will equal the most recently enacted appropriation, adjusted for inflation.

The baseline represents the amount of resources, in real terms, that would be used by the Government over the period covered by the budget on the basis of laws currently enacted.

The baseline serves several useful purposes:

- It may warn of future problems, either for Government fiscal policy as a whole or for individual tax and spending programs.
- It may provide a starting point for formulating the President's Budget.
- It may provide a "policy-neutral" benchmark against which the President's Budget and alternative proposals can be compared to assess the magnitude of proposed changes.

As it happens, a number of significant changes in policies are embedded in current law. For example, the tax cuts enacted in 2001 and 2003 are scheduled to expire at the end of 2010; relief from the Alternative Minimum Tax enacted on a one-year basis in virtually every year of the last decade is scheduled to expire at the end of 2009; and relief from very deep cuts to Medicare physician reimbursement rates is scheduled to expire at the end of 2009. Because the expiration of these laws would create significant differences between the baseline as specified in the Budget Enforcement Act (BEA) of 1990 and policies in effect this year or last, the Administration also issues a baseline projection of current policy that, unlike the BEA baseline, assumes such scheduled changes in current law will not occur. (Chapter 24 of this volume, "Current Services Estimates," provides more information on the baseline, including the differences between the baseline as calculated under the rules of the BEA and the baseline projection of current policy used in this Budget.)

PRINCIPAL BUDGET LAWS

The following basic laws govern the Federal budget process:

Article 1, section 8, clause 1 of the Constitution, which empowers the Congress to collect taxes.

Article 1, section 9, clause 7 of the Constitution, which requires appropriations in law before money may be spent from the Treasury and the publication of a regular statement of the receipts and expenditures of all public money.

Antideficiency Act (codified in Chapters 13 and 15 of Title 31, United States Code), which prescribes rules and procedures for budget execution.

Chapter 11 of Title 31, United States Code, which prescribes procedures for submission of the President's budget and information to be contained in it.

Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974 (Public Law 93–344), as amended. This Act comprises the:

Congressional Budget Act of 1974, as amended, which prescribes the congressional budget process; and

Impoundment Control Act of 1974, which controls certain aspects of budget execution.

Federal Credit Reform Act of 1990, as amended (2 USC 661–661f), which the Budget Enforcement Act of 1990 included as an amendment to the Congressional Budget Act to prescribe the budget treatment for Federal credit programs.

Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (Public Law 103–62, as amended) which emphasizes managing for results. It requires agencies to prepare strategic plans, annual performance plans, and annual performance reports.

GLOSSARY OF BUDGET TERMS

Accrual method of measuring cost means an accounting method that records cost when the liability is incurred. As applied to Federal employee retirement benefits, accrual costs are recorded when the benefits are earned rather than when they are paid at some time in the future. The accrual method is used in part to provide data that assists in agency policymaking, but not used in presenting the overall budget of the United States Government.

Advance appropriation means appropriations of new budget authority that become available one or more fiscal years beyond the fiscal year for which the appropriation act was passed.

Advance funding means appropriations of budget authority provided in an appropriations act to be used, if necessary, to cover obligations incurred late in the fiscal year for benefit payments in excess of the amount specifically appropriated in the act for that year, where the budget authority is charged to the appropriation for the program for the fiscal year following the fiscal year for which the appropriations act is passed.

Agency means a department or other establishment of the Government.

Allowance means a lump-sum included in the budget to represent certain transactions that are expected to increase or decrease budget authority, outlays, or receipts but that are not, for various reasons, reflected in the program details.

Balances of budget authority means the amounts of budget authority provided in previous years that have not been outlayed.

Baseline means a projection of the estimated receipts, outlays, and deficit or surplus that would result from continuing current law or current policies through the period covered by the budget.

Budget means the Budget of the United States Government, which sets forth the President's comprehensive financial plan for allocating resources and indicates the President's priorities for the Federal Government.

Budget authority (BA) means the authority provided by law to incur financial obligations that will result in outlays. (For a description of the several forms of budget authority, see "Budget Authority and Other Budgetary Resources" earlier in this chapter.)

Budget resolution—see concurrent resolution on the budget.

Budget totals mean the totals included in the budget for budget authority, outlays, receipts, and the surplus or deficit. Some presentations in the budget distinguish on-budget totals from off-budget totals. On-budget totals reflect the transactions of all Federal Government entities except those excluded from the budget totals by law. The off-budget totals reflect the transactions of Government entities that are excluded from the on-budget totals by law. Under current law, the off-budget totals include the Social Security trust funds (Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and Federal Disability Insurance Trust Funds) and the Postal Service Fund. The budget combines the on- and off-budget totals to derive unified or consolidated totals for Federal activity.

Budgetary resources mean amounts available to incur obligations in a given year. The term comprises new budget authority and unobligated balances of budget authority provided in previous years.

Cap means the legal limits for each fiscal year under the Budget Enforcement Act on the budget authority and outlays provided by discretionary appropriations.

Cash equivalent transaction means a transaction in which the Government makes outlays or receives collections in a form other than cash or the cash does not accurately measure the cost of the transaction. (For examples, see the section on "Outlays" earlier in this chapter.)

Collections mean money collected by the Government that the budget records as a governmental receipt, an offsetting collection, or an offsetting receipt.

Concurrent resolution on the budget refers to the concurrent resolution adopted by Congress to set budgetary targets for appropriations, mandatory spending legislation, and tax legislation. These concurrent resolutions are required by the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, and are generally adopted annually.

Continuing resolution means an appropriations act that provides for the ongoing operation of the Government in the absence of enacted appropriations.

Cost refers to legislation or administrative actions that increase outlays or decrease receipts. (Cf savings.)

Credit program account means a budget account that receives and obligates appropriations to cover the subsidy cost of a direct loan or loan guarantee and disburses the subsidy cost to a financing account.

Current services estimate—see baseline.

Debt held by the public means the cumulative amount of money the Federal Government has borrowed from the public and not repaid.

Debt held by the public net of financial assets means the cumulative amount of money the Federal Government has borrowed from the public and not repaid, minus the current value of financial assets such as loan assets, bank deposits, or private-sector securities or equities held by the Government and plus the current value of financial liabilities other than debt.

Debt held by Government accounts means the debt the Treasury Department owes to accounts within the Federal Government. Most of it results from the surpluses of the Social Security and other trust funds, which are required by law to be invested in Federal securities.

Debt limit means the maximum amount of Federal debt that may legally be outstanding at any time. It includes both the debt held by the public and the debt held by Government accounts, but without accounting for offsetting financial assets. When the debt limit is reached, the Government cannot borrow more money until the Congress has enacted a law to increase the limit.

Deficit means the amount by which outlays exceed receipts in a fiscal year. It may refer to the on-budget, off-budget, or unified budget deficit.

Direct loan means a disbursement of funds by the Government to a non-Federal borrower under a contract that requires the repayment of such funds with or without interest. The term includes the purchase of, or participation in, a loan made by another lender. The term also includes the sale of a Government asset on credit terms of more than 90 days duration as well as financing arrangements for other transactions that defer payment for more than 90 days. It also includes loans financed by the Federal Financing Bank (FFB) pursuant to agency loan guarantee authority. The term does not include the acquisition of a federally guaranteed loan in satisfaction of default or other guarantee claims or the price support "loans" of the Commodity Credit Corporation. (Cf. loan guarantee.)

Direct spending—see mandatory spending.

Discretionary spending means budgetary resources (except those provided to fund mandatory spending programs) provided in appropriations acts. (Cf. mandatory spending.)

Entitlement refers to a program in which the Federal Government is legally obligated to make payments or provide aid to any person who or State or local government that meets the legal criteria for eligibility. Examples include Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and Food Stamps.

Emergency appropriation means an appropriation that the Congress has designated as an emergency requirement. Under terms of most recent budget resolutions, such spending is not subject to the limits on discretionary spending, if it is discretionary spending, or the pay-as-you-go rules, if it is mandatory.

Federal funds group refers to the moneys collected and spent by the Government through accounts other than those designated as trust funds. Federal funds include general, special, public enterprise, and intragovernmental funds. (Cf. trust funds group.)

Financing account means a non-budgetary account (an account whose transactions are excluded from the budget totals) that records all of the cash flows resulting from post-1991 direct loan obligations or loan guarantee commitments. At least one financing account is associated with each credit program account. For programs that make both direct loans and loan guarantees, there are separate financing accounts for the direct loans and the loan guarantees. (Cf. liquidating account.)

Fiscal year means the Government's accounting period. It begins on October 1st and ends on September 30th, and is designated by the calendar year in which it ends.

Forward funding means appropriations of budget authority that are made for obligation starting in the last quarter of the fiscal year for the financing of ongoing grant programs during the next fiscal year.

General fund means the accounts in which are recorded governmental receipts not earmarked by law for a specific purpose, the proceeds of general borrowing, and the expenditure of these moneys.

Government sponsored enterprises mean private enterprises that were established and sponsored by the Federal Government for public policy purposes. They are not included in the budget totals because they are private companies, and their securities are not backed by the full faith and credit of the Federal Government. However, the budget presents statements of financial condition for certain Government sponsored enterprises such as the Federal National Mortgage Association. (Cf. off-budget.)

Intragovernmental fund —see revolving fund.

Liquidating account means a budget account that records all cash flows to and from the Government resulting from pre-1992 direct loan obligations or loan guarantee commitments. (Cf. financing account.)

Loan guarantee means any guarantee, insurance, or other pledge with respect to the payment of all or a part of the principal or interest on any debt obligation of a non-Federal borrower to a non-Federal lender. The term does not include the insurance of deposits, shares, or other withdrawable accounts in financial institutions. (Cf. direct loan.)

Mandatory spending means spending controlled by laws other than appropriations acts (including spending for entitlement programs) and spending for the food stamp program. Although the Budget Enforcement Act used the term direct spending to mean this, mandatory spending is commonly used instead. (Cf. discretionary spending.)

Means of financing refers to borrowing, the change in cash balances, and certain other transactions involved in financing a deficit. The term is also used to refer to the debt repayment, the change in cash balances, and certain other transactions involved in using a surplus. By definition, the means of financing are not treated as receipts or outlays and so are non-budgetary.

Obligated balance means the cumulative amount of budget authority that has been obligated but not yet outlayed. (Cf. unobligated balance.)

Obligation means a binding agreement that will result in outlays, immediately or in the future. Budgetary resources must be available before obligations can be incurred legally.

Off-budget refers to transactions of the Federal Government that would be treated as budgetary had Congress not designated them by statute as “off-budget.” Currently, transactions of the Social Security trust fund and the Postal Service fund are the only sets of transactions that are so designated. The term is sometimes used more broadly to refer to the transactions of private enterprises that were established and sponsored by the Government, most especially “Government sponsored enterprises” such as the Federal Home Loan Banks. (Cf. budget totals.)

Offsetting collections mean collections that, by law, are credited directly to expenditure accounts and deducted from gross budget authority and outlays of the expenditure account, rather than added to receipts. Usually, they are authorized to be spent for the purposes of the account without further action by Congress. They result from business-like transactions or market-oriented activities with the public and other Government accounts. The authority to spend offsetting collections is a form of budget authority. (Cf. receipts and offsetting receipts.)

Offsetting receipts mean collections that are credited to offsetting receipt accounts and deducted from gross budget authority and outlays, rather than added to receipts. They are not authorized to be credited to expenditure accounts. The legislation that authorizes the offsetting receipts may earmark them for a specific purpose and either appropriate them for expenditure for that purpose or require them to be appropriated in annual appropriation acts before they can be spent. Like offsetting collections, they result from business-like transactions or market-oriented activities with the public and other Government accounts. (Cf. receipts, undistributed offsetting receipts, and offsetting collections.)

On-budget refers to all budgetary transactions other than those designated by statute as off-budget (Cf. budget totals.)

Outlay means a payment to liquidate an obligation (other than the repayment of debt principal or other disbursements that are “means of financing” transactions). Outlays generally are equal to cash disbursements, but also are recorded for cash-equivalent transactions, such as the issuance of debentures to pay insurance claims, and in a few cases are recorded on an accrual basis such as interest on public issues of the public debt. Outlays are the measure of Government spending.

Outyear estimates mean estimates presented in the budget for the years beyond the budget year of budget authority, outlays, receipts, and other items (such as debt).

Pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) refers to requirements of the Budget Enforcement Act that would have resulted in a sequestration if the estimated combined result of legislation affecting mandatory spending or receipts is a net cost for a fiscal year. Similarly, it refers to current House and Senate rules requiring that legislation affecting mandatory spending or receipts not have net costs over either a 6-year or an 11-year period starting with the current fiscal year.

Public enterprise fund —see revolving fund.

Reappropriation means a provision of law that extends into a new fiscal year the availability of unobligated amounts that have expired or would otherwise expire.

Receipts mean collections that result from the Government’s exercise of its sovereign power to tax or otherwise compel payment and gifts of money to the Government. They are compared to outlays in calculating a surplus or deficit. (Cf. offsetting collections and offsetting receipts.)

Revolving fund means a fund that conducts continuing cycles of business-like activity, in which the fund charges for the sale of products or services and uses the proceeds to finance its spending, usually without requirement for annual appropriations. There are two types of revolving funds: Public enterprise funds, which conduct business-like operations mainly with the public, and intragovernmental revolving funds, which conduct business-like operations mainly within and between Government agencies. (Cf special fund and revolving fund.)

Savings refers to legislation or administrative actions that decrease outlays or increase receipts. (Cf. cost.)

Scorekeeping means measuring the budget effects of legislation, generally in terms of budget authority, receipts, and outlays for purposes of measuring adherence to the Budget or to budget targets established by Congress, as through agreement to a Budget Resolution.

Sequestration means the cancellation of budgetary resources provided by discretionary appropriations or mandatory spending legislation, following various procedures prescribed by the Budget Enforcement Act. Under that Act, a sequestration could have occurred in response to a discretionary appropriation that causes discretionary spending to exceed the discretionary spending caps set by the Act or in response to net costs resulting from the combined result of legislation affecting mandatory spending or receipts (referred to as a "pay-as-you-go" sequestration).

Special fund means a Federal fund account for receipts or offsetting receipts earmarked for specific purposes and the expenditure of these receipts. (Cf. revolving fund and trust fund.)

Subsidy means the estimated long-term cost to the Government of a direct loan or loan guarantee, calculated on a net present value basis, excluding administrative costs and any incidental effects on governmental receipts or outlays.

Surplus means the amount by which receipts exceed outlays in a fiscal year. It may refer to the on-budget, off-budget, or unified budget surplus.

Supplemental appropriation means an appropriation enacted subsequent to a regular annual appropriations act, when the need for additional funds is too urgent to be postponed until the next regular annual appropriations act.

Trust fund refers to a type of account, designated by law as a trust fund, for receipts or offsetting receipts earmarked for specific purposes and the expenditure of these receipts. Some revolving funds are designated as trust funds, and these are called trust revolving funds. (Cf. special fund and revolving fund.)

Trust funds group refers to the moneys collected and spent by the Government through trust fund accounts. (Cf. Federal funds group.)

Undistributed offsetting receipts mean offsetting receipts that are deducted from the Government-wide totals for budget authority and outlays instead of being offset against a specific agency and function. (Cf. offsetting receipts.)

Unified budget includes receipts from all sources and outlays for all programs of the Federal Government, including both on- and off-budget programs. It is the most comprehensive measure of the Government's annual finances.

Unobligated balance means the cumulative amount of budget authority that is not obligated and that remains available for obligation under law.

User charges are charges assessed for the provision of Government services and for the sale or use of Government goods or resources. The payers of the user charge must be limited in the authorizing legislation to those receiving special benefits from, or subject to regulation by, the program or activity beyond the benefits received by the general public or broad segments of the public (such as those who pay income taxes or custom duties).