

SECTION 80—DEVELOPMENT OF BASELINE ESTIMATES

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80.1 What are the basic requirements?

OMB baseline estimates follow the rules in section 257 of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act (BBEDCA) of 1985, as amended. The baseline rules were recently reinstated through amendments to BBEDCA enacted in the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA).

Each agency, including the legislative and judicial branches, must submit estimates of budgetary resources, outlays, and receipts that project the CY levels into BY through BY+9, except:

- For credit financing accounts, baseline data is required only for net financing disbursements; and
- Government-sponsored enterprises do not have to submit baseline estimates.

Section [82](#) provides detailed information on entering baseline data into MAX.

The BBEDCA provides explicit instructions on how to develop the baseline estimates. Some apply to all baseline estimates. However, most rules are specific to two categories of collections and spending:

- Those that are controlled through annual appropriations acts (discretionary spending); and
- Those that are controlled through authorizing legislation (mandatory spending and receipts).

The classification of collections and spending as discretionary or mandatory spending generally follows the criteria specified in the BBEDCA. Consult your OMB representative if you have questions concerning the classification.

OMB may work with affected agencies to make adjustments to the estimates to produce an adjusted baseline to be used in the budget documents.

80.2 What general rules do I need to know?

The baseline is a projection of the budgetary resources, outlays, and receipts for mandatory programs and governmental receipts based generally on current law, and a projection of the current year (CY) levels of budgetary resources, outlays, and receipts into the outyears for discretionary programs. Below are rules that apply to all baseline estimates:

- *Legislative proposals.* Legislative proposals are considered to be changes from the baseline projection. Do not reflect their budgetary effects in the baseline estimates.

- *Supplementals.* Include only supplementals associated with mandatory programs that would finance obligations required by current law in the baseline.
- *Regulations, management initiatives, and administrative actions.* Include the effects of these, including planned regulations that are not final, in the baseline estimates, as long as they can be implemented without further legislation.
- *Credit programs.* Base the estimates for credit programs on enacted appropriations of subsidy budget authority for direct loans and guaranteed loan commitments. In addition, see section [185.11\(d\)](#) for baseline requirements for net financing disbursements in liquidating and financing accounts (Schedule Y).

80.3 What rules apply to discretionary spending and collections?

Follow the BBEDCA guidelines and base the baseline estimates for discretionary spending and collections on the levels provided in the most recent appropriations act or full-year continuing resolution (CR). If a part-year CR is in effect, base the estimates on the annualized level of the CR. Except for advance appropriations, the most recent appropriations act or full-year CR is normally for the current year.

(a) *Current year base*

Estimates will equal the enacted current year amounts reported in MAX under transmittal code 0. You must separate discretionary budgetary resources, except those related to spending authority from offsetting collections, into portions related to civilian pay and benefits, military pay and benefits, or not related to pay and benefits. See section [81.2](#) for pay and non-pay definitions.

(b) *BY through BY+9 baseline estimates*

In most cases, baseline estimates of budgetary resources are calculated by MAX to be equal to the most recent full year appropriation (generally the CY level) adjusted for anticipated pay and non-pay inflation using factors supplied by OMB.

For the four BBEDCA-specified accounts with social insurance administrative expenses (the Federal hospital insurance trust fund, the supplementary medical insurance trust fund, the unemployment trust fund, and the rail industry pension fund), you must report estimates of the beneficiary population (see explanation of line 5150-00 in section [82.9](#)).

For programs financed by the Highway and Mass Transit trust fund and controlled by annual obligation limitations, projections of discretionary outlays are derived from a projection with inflation of the CY level of the obligation limitation.

Outlays from budgetary resources provided prior to the budget year should be the same in the baseline and in the Presidential policy estimates. New budgetary resources generally should outlay at a rate that is consistent with Presidential policy spendout rates. Section [82.6](#) describes outlays more fully.

(c) *Advance appropriations*

If an account is completely funded through advance appropriations, the last year of the enacted advance appropriation is the base for calculating the baseline estimate for the remaining years. However, if Congress discontinues an advance appropriation and provides the funding for that advance in the current appropriations instead, the last year of the advance appropriation should be assumed to be zero, and the regular appropriation should be inflated accordingly.

If an account is funded with both current and advance appropriations, inflate the current appropriation as described in (b) above; for the advance appropriation, follow the guidance in the paragraph above.

(d) *Discretionary credit accounts*

MAX inflates CY subsidy budget authority using the annual adjustment factor for non-pay costs from the economic assumptions for the budget. The estimated policy subsidy rate for the BY should be a separate and distinct calculation from that done for the CY. The OMB subsidy model computes the subsidy rate using the economic assumptions for the budget. (See section [185.5](#) for instructions on calculating baseline subsidy estimates, including programs with negative subsidies.) OMB does not collect baseline information on direct loan obligations and guarantee commitments.

(e) *Discretionary offsetting collections and receipts*

The baseline estimates should be consistent with the levels of budgetary resources assumed for the account conducting the activity that generates the collections. When the level of collections is independent of the appropriated level, reflect collections consistent with the level of activity anticipated under current law.

(f) *Multi-account appropriations*

If an appropriation covers more than one account and does not specify the amount provided for each account, such as the limitation on administrative expenses under the Social Security Act, the distribution of the budget authority by account in the CY is the base for subsequent years. Inflate the CY amount by account to derive the budget authority for BY through BY+9.

(g) *Accounts with negative budget authority in the CY*

- If the account has net negative budget authority as a result of a rescission, reduction, or transfer of balances, estimate the budget authority for BY through BY+9 as zero.
- If the account has negative budget authority because the offsetting collections credited to the account exceed the spending authority from those offsetting collections (e.g., as a result of limitations on administrative expenses or repayments of debt), provide your best estimate of the *offsetting collections* under current law, and
 - ▶ If the *spending authority is controlled by appropriations*, project the authority using the guidance in section [80.3\(b\)](#).
 - ▶ If the *spending authority from offsetting collections is indefinite*, reflect the level of activity anticipated under current law.

80.4 What rules apply to mandatory spending and collections?

Section 257 of the BBEDCA requires the estimates for budgetary resources provided in authorizing law and for appropriated entitlements to reflect the level of activity anticipated under current law, using the Budget's economic and technical assumptions. Include the effect of changes to programs and activities directed by previously enacted legislation (such as a change in a benefit formula that becomes effective in BY+2) in the year that the changes become effective. The following special rules apply:

- *Expiring authorizations.* Assume that a program explicitly designated as temporary will expire in the baseline, if the program was enacted after the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. Assume that programs scheduled to expire under current law (even if not explicitly designated as temporary) will expire in the baseline if current year outlays for the program are \$50 million or less. Assume

that expiring programs will continue in the baseline if current year outlays exceed \$50 million. For programs with definite BA, extend the BA at the same level provided in the last full year, and for programs with indefinite BA, project future BA and outlays based on the program's eligibility criteria, benefit formulas, and other provisions in effect at the point of expiration. Assume an expiring *provision* of law (in contrast to an expiring *program*) will expire if that assumption does not have the effect of terminating the basic program.

- *Veterans' compensation cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA)*. Assume enactment of a COLA for veterans' compensation that is equal to the COLA required by law for veterans' pensions.

Affected agencies should contact their OMB representative for guidance.

You should base collections affected by Federal pay rates on rates used for Presidential policy, not on the levels of compensation assumed in the baseline for the pay portion of discretionary accounts.

Certain substantive changes to or restrictions on entitlement law or other mandatory spending law contained in appropriations laws (including changes in offsetting receipts or collections) shall be treated as changes in discretionary spending for the purposes of scoring those appropriations laws (see Appendix [A](#)). However, in the subsequent budget, OMB can decide to reclassify such changes, especially in accounts that are generally mandatory. If advised by OMB to reclassify the change, the mandatory spending entries for the account should reflect the change made in appropriations law.

80.5 What rules apply to mandatory supplemental requests?

Baseline estimates for mandatory supplemental requests will reflect *current year* baseline estimates of budget authority and the related outlays insofar as that budget authority will finance obligations that exist under current law. Budget authority estimates for BY through BY+9 will be zero. However, you should reflect the spendout of current year budget authority, as appropriate, over the period BY through BY+9.

80.6 What rules apply to governmental receipts?

Governmental receipts should be projected based on provisions of the tax code under current law, except that excise taxes dedicated to trust funds are assumed to continue after their scheduled expirations. (These receipts will not necessarily be carried over in policy if the trust fund spending is assumed to expire.) Thus, estimates should include the effect of changes to governmental receipts directed by previously enacted legislation (such as a change in a tax rate, deduction, or credit that becomes effective in BY+2) in the year that the changes become effective.

80.7 What materials must I provide in support of baseline estimates?

After final budget decisions, you must submit a table showing the impact on the baseline of estimates of:

- Major regulations;
- Expiring provisions of law assumed to be extended in the baseline;
- Caseloads for major mandatory programs;
- Management initiatives;
- Administrative actions; and
- Other major program assumptions included in the baseline.

Show the budgetary impact of each major assumption separately. For example, a change in outlays due to a regulatory change should be shown separately from a change due to the expiration of a provision of law. Consult with your OMB representative on the format and content of this table.