

TIPS FOR REVIEWING A STATE BUDGET

Deciphering a state budget can feel overwhelming — it's absolutely a skill that comes with practice. While every state budget has its own state-specific quirks, some general tips and tricks can help guide your review of your state budget.

1. Before diving into the appropriations cycle, review the current fiscal year's budget.
 - The Urban Institute's [State Fiscal Briefs](#) resource provides links to every state's current budget.
2. Each state has its own way of organizing its budget, so you'll need to do some sleuthing to find the appropriations for the programs and services relevant to your issue. Some tips include:
 - Look for the federal programs and funds that all 50 states administer in the prenatal-three area, including SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children), and CCDFBG (Child Care Development Fund Block Grant).
 - Funds are organized by department so you'll want to focus on the departments running programs you work on. While different states have different names for these departments and different state agencies oversee different programs, there are common themes. Below are some examples of where relevant funding is located in state budgets.
 - ▶ **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES:** maternal and child health, prenatal health, sometimes SNAP and WIC, sometimes child care.
 - ▶ **EDUCATION:** early childhood education, sometimes child care.
 - ▶ **CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES:** sometimes SNAP and WIC, sometimes child care.
 - ▶ **AGRICULTURE:** sometimes SNAP and WIC.
 - ▶ **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:** sometimes child care.
 - Keep an eye out for non-budget language, which can sometimes be included in appropriations bills, such as: States vary in terms of when and how often per year they release budget forecasts.
 - ▶ **RIDERS:** Non-germane policy language in an appropriations bill that changes permanent law governing the program funded by the bill.
 - ▶ **PREEMPTION LANGUAGE:** Language in a state bill to limit or eliminate local authority from taking action on an issue. For more information, see this [Preemption Toolkit](#)
3. Budgets are complex documents, so it's always good to confirm your analysis with trusted expert partners in your state coalition.
 - Many states have [in-state groups that are official partners](#) of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a nonpartisan research and policy institute focused on federal and state budgets and policies.