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GAO

Report to the Chairman, Committee on
Budget, U. S. Senate and the Chairman,
Committee on Budget, House of
Representatives

October 1989

BUDGET ISSUES

The President's Budget Submission





United States
General Accounting Office
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Comptroller General
of the United States

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October 27, 1989

The Honorable Jim Sasser
Chairman, Committee on Budget
United States Senate

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Chairman, Committee on Budget
House of Representatives

This report responds to your October 4, 1989, joint letter asking us to analyze the budget information provided by the President. You expressed concern that the President's transition budget submission for fiscal year 1990 did not contain the detailed information necessary for the Congress' use. You felt that last year's transition experience may become the norm for regular budget submissions.

As you requested, our report identifies (1) the budget documents and related materials customarily submitted by a President, the level of budget detail usually available to the Congress, and the historical pattern followed for providing various budget documents, (2) the budget information that a President is required to submit under existing law, and (3) the budget material and level of detail that, in our opinion, are needed by the Congress and GAO to perform their duties.

A key point made in our report is that the Congress needs at least account level detail to carry out its budgeting duties. Furthermore, because budgeting is a shared responsibility between the legislative and executive branches, the structure, concepts, and detail of the budget should be based upon full consultation between legislative and executive branch users of the budget. A cooperative approach aimed at ensuring good budget information is an essential starting point for reaching badly needed consensus on a deficit reduction plan.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

In developing the answers to your questions, we conducted a literature search to identify the budget documents normally submitted by Presidents from fiscal year 1969 to the present, and a legal search of the statutory requirements pertaining to the President's annual budget submission. Our listing of the budget documents does not include any special presidential budget documents such as the revised transition budgets submitted by incoming Presidents. In addition, we contacted officials at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to identify the

backup materials did not contain the usual comparable account level detail.

Budget Information Submitted to the Congress

Since the federal government adopted the unified budget approach for fiscal year 1969, Presidents have routinely submitted four basic documents in their annual budget submission to the Congress. They are discussed below.

- Budget of the United States Government: Frequently termed “the budget,” this comprehensive volume contains the President’s budget message and presents an overview of the administration’s budget proposals. The document includes summary information on the budget, including economic assumptions, receipts, budget authority, outlays, off-setting collections, and debt. The proposals also are reflected in numerous discussions and listings of programs by governmentwide budget functions (defense, transportation, etc.) and subfunctions and in a listing of programs by agency and account. There are numerous other tables on miscellaneous items. The document’s tables include data not only for future fiscal years (up to 5 years), but also for the current year and several past years.
- Appendix: This volume contains narrative and additional detail on each of the government’s hundreds of budget accounts. For each appropriation account, it includes the proposed appropriation language, which often includes language to control subaccount activities or projects. The accompanying narrative explains the activities of the account and major changes that are being proposed. A budget schedule or schedules are provided with account and subaccount data on spending levels, financing, objects of expenditure, assets and liabilities (for business-type enterprises), and other matters. Most of the data are presented for 3 fiscal years: the past year, current year, and coming year. The document also provides information on proposed supplementals and rescissions and government-sponsored enterprises.
- Special Analyses: This document provides supplemental data and analyses on a wide range of topics and governmentwide categories. It compares by budget function and program the President’s proposals with current services levels, provides Gramm-Rudman-Hollings budget baselines, and provides actual (past year) and estimated (current and coming year) data for the national income accounts, borrowing and debt, funds in the budget (trust, enterprise, etc.), investment outlays, credit programs, grants to state and local entities, tax expenditures, federal research and development programs, and civilian employment in the executive branch.

such as GAO, printouts on obligations by object class (travel, supplies, etc.) and on unobligated balances.

Statutes Requiring Presidential Budget Information

There are numerous statutory provisions requiring the President to include certain information in each budget submission to the Congress. In all, we identified 53 such provisions. (See appendix II.) Thirty-three of the provisions require that information be submitted on a governmentwide basis or for each agency (such as estimated expenditures and receipts and appropriations and proposed appropriations, of the government for the current fiscal year). The other 20 statutory provisions contain requirements which are specific to individual programs and agencies (such as the requirement to report on the appropriations requested for the National Drug Control Policy). Ten of the 53 statutory provisions give the President discretionary authority on deciding whether to include certain information (such as recommendations, to the extent practicable, of specific policies to reduce the rate of inflation). Of the 10 statutory provisions with discretionary authority, 2 pertain to governmentwide/agency information and 8 relate to program-specific information.

Presidential and OMB Budget Data Needed by the Congress and GAO

The question of what budgetary information the Congress and GAO need from the President and OMB is a complex one given the large number of budget users in the legislative branch and their evolving information needs. Therefore, at this time we can only offer some general guidelines on the subject.

First, the budget submission should report presidential proposals and related information at least down to the budget account level. The Congress controls the use of Treasury funds essentially through the appropriations and other controls it applies to hundreds of budget accounts. This often includes statutory controls over subaccount budgetary resources as well. These accounts and subaccounts may be thought of as the “building blocks” of the budget. As long as the Congress chooses to set controls at these levels, executive branch budget materials should normally provide information at these levels of detail, including information on past transactions and results, current activities, and estimates of future transactions and results. This permits the Congress to assess executive branch performance.

We recognize, however, that there are times when it may not be feasible to reflect in the budget submission itself all of the subaccount detail seen

Fourth, the budget information provided by OMB to the Congress and others should not be restricted to that which is reported in the President's formal budget submission. The President's budget submission is comprised of public documents intended for the use of many kinds of users—congressional committees, agency officials, private researchers, journalists, and others. Its hardcopy format is suitable for many such users. At the same time though, legislative branch users, such as the budget-related committees, CBO, and GAO, need the capability to conduct special analyses of the budget's data. These entities in particular also need detailed data not customarily reported in the budget. Customarily, OMB has responded to their needs by providing budget tapes, disks, and specialized printouts. Without such interbranch cooperation, it would be very difficult for legislative branch entities to carry out their responsibilities.

Fifth, the budget should accurately and fully disclose past, present, and future costs. In several studies and statements,¹ we have pointed out how budget reporting overstates some costs (direct loan costs, capital investment costs), understates many other costs (loan guarantee and pension liabilities), and ignores some costs (the use of assets in lieu of cash). Also, its structure permits billions of dollars in trust surpluses, especially the growing Social Security surpluses, to mask the fact that the underlying deficit problem is actually getting worse, not better. If the trust surpluses are excluded from the deficit calculation, it is seen that the nontrust deficit, which stood at \$266 billion in fiscal year 1985, rose to about \$283 billion in fiscal year 1989 and is projected by CBO to rise under current law to about \$303 billion by fiscal year 1994.

We believe that actions to correct these and similar reporting problems would greatly enhance the usefulness of the budget's information. We have just issued a report which summarizes these kinds of problems and proposes solutions to them.²

Sixth, major changes in the structure, concepts, and detail of the budget should be undertaken in a consultative manner. While the budget is the

¹The Budget Treatment of Trust Funds (GAO/T-AFMD-90-1, Oct. 12, 1989) and The Budget Treatment of Trust Funds (GAO/T-AFMD-90-3, Oct. 18, 1989); Budget Issues: Restructuring the Federal Budget—The Capital Component (GAO/AFMD-89-52, Aug. 24, 1989); Budget Issues: Budgetary Treatment of Federal Credit Programs (GAO/AFMD-89-42, Apr. 10, 1989); and Budget Issues: USDA's Commodity Certificates Should Be Recognized in Budget Totals (GAO/AFMD-88-27, Aug. 16, 1988).

²Managing the Cost of Government: Proposals for Reforming Federal Budgeting Practices (GAO/AFMD-90-1, Oct. 1989).

Budget Information Required by Statute

The law requires the President to include the following information in his annual budget submission to the Congress. Some of the requirements are general in nature; that is, the required information is submitted on a governmentwide basis, or is submitted for each agency. Other requirements are specific to individual programs or agencies. The underscoring notes instances where the President has some discretion in the type of information to submit, or the presentation of the information.

General Information

- Information on personnel and other objects of expenditure in the way that information was included in the budget for fiscal year 1950. (31 U.S.C. 1104(b).)
- Information on activities and functions of the government. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(1).)
- When practicable, information on costs and achievements of government programs. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(2).)
- Other desirable classifications of information. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(3).)
- A reconciliation of the summary information on expenditures with proposed appropriations. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(4).)
- Estimated expenditures and proposed appropriations which the President decides are necessary to support the government in the fiscal year for which the budget is submitted and the 4 fiscal years after that year. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(5).)
- Estimated receipts of the government in the fiscal year for which the budget is submitted and 4 fiscal years after that year. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(6).)
- Appropriations, expenditures, and receipts of the government in the prior fiscal year. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(7).)
- Estimated expenditures and receipts, and appropriations and proposed appropriations, of the government for the current fiscal year. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(8).)
- Balanced statements of the condition of the Treasury at the end of the prior fiscal year, estimated condition of the Treasury at the end of the current fiscal year, and estimated condition of the Treasury at the end of the fiscal year for which the budget is submitted if financial proposals in the budget are adopted. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(9).)
- Essential information about the debt of the government. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(10).)
- Other financial information the President decides is desirable to explain in practicable detail the financial condition of the government. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(11).)
- For each proposal in the budget for legislation that would establish or expand a government activity or function, a table (1) showing the

- An analysis and explanation of the differences between each amount compared under clauses (18) and (19) of 31 U.S.C. 1105(a). (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(20).)
- A statement of budget authority, proposed budget authority, budget outlays, and proposed budget outlays, and descriptive information in terms of (1) a detailed structure of national needs that refers to the missions and programs of agencies and (2) the missions and basic programs. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(22).)
- A horizontal budget showing specific aspects of the program of, and appropriations for, each agency and estimated goals and financial requirements. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(21).)
- A separate appropriation account for appropriations for each Office of Inspector General of an establishment defined under section 11 (2) of the Inspector General Act of 1978. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(25).)
- An analysis, prepared by the Office of Management and Budget, after consultation with the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, of the budget's impact on the international competitiveness of U.S. business and the U.S. balance of payments position. The analysis shall include the following projections: (1) the amount of borrowing by the government in private credit markets, (2) net domestic savings, (3) net private domestic investment, (4) the merchandise trade and current accounts, (5) the net increase or decrease in foreign indebtedness, and (6) the estimated direction and extent of the influence of the government's borrowing in private credit markets on U.S. dollar interest rates and on the real effective exchange rate of the U.S. dollar. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(26).)
- Recommendations (1) to meet any estimated deficiency (that is, when the estimated receipts for the fiscal year for which the budget is submitted and the estimated amounts in the Treasury at the end of the current fiscal year available for expenditure in the fiscal year for which the budget is submitted are less than the estimated expenditures for that year) and (2) required by the public interest when the estimated receipts and estimated amounts in the Treasury are more than the estimated expenditures. (31 U.S.C. 1105(c).)
- A statement on all changes about the current fiscal year that were made before the budget or information was submitted. (31 U.S.C. 1105(d).)
- An analysis for the ensuing fiscal year that shall (1) identify requested appropriations or new obligational authority and outlays for each major program that may be classified as a public civilian or military capital investment program, (2) contain summaries of the total amount of such appropriations or new obligational authority and outlays for such programs, and (3) contain detailed estimates and assessments of the current

- A separate statement of the amount of appropriations requested for the Office of National Drug Control Policy and each program of the National Drug Control Program. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(26).)
- Without change, estimated expenditures and proposed appropriations for the legislative and judicial branches. (31 U.S.C. 1105(b).)
- Beginning in fiscal year 1990 and every year thereafter, a budget request for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for the immediate fiscal year and the following fiscal year, and budget estimates for the third fiscal year. (31 U.S.C. 1105 note (Public Law 100-685, sec. 104).)
- A proposed 2-year budget for the Coast Guard every other year, beginning with fiscal year 1990. (31 U.S.C. 1105 note (Public Law 100-448, sec. 24).)
- The values estimated by the Mayor of the District of Columbia for water and water services and sanitary sewer services furnished to facilities of the U.S. government. (31 U.S.C. 1105 note (Public Law 100-202, sec. 101(c).)
- Beginning with fiscal year 1988, a proposed 2-year budget for the Department of Defense and related agencies every other year. (31 U.S.C. 1105 note (Public Law 99-145, sec. 1405).)
- In the budget next submitted to him after the date of a report and recommendations from the Commission on Executive, Legislative and Judicial Salaries, recommendations with respect to the exact rates of pay which the President deems advisable. (2 U.S.C. 358.)
- Recommendations for changes in law as are required to meet the long-term goals established in the Long-Term Agricultural Trade Strategy Report, required by 7 U.S.C. 5211(a). (7 U.S.C. 5211(d).)
- Data projecting the effect of the Department of Defense appropriations requested for material readiness requirements. (10 U.S.C. 2203.)
- Policies and programs which will contribute to the achievement of the goals of the Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act of 1978. (15 U.S.C. 1022c.)
- Recommendations on levels of outlays and receipts consistent with the short-term economic goals of the Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act of 1978. (15 U.S.C. 1022d(a).)
- Five-year projections of outlays and receipts consistent with the medium-term goals of the Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act of 1978. (15 U.S.C. 1022d(b).)
- The estimate by the Secretary of Agriculture of sums necessary for accomplishment of reforestation and other treatment of National Forest System lands. (16 U.S.C. 1601(d).)

Major Contributors to This Report

Accounting and
Financial Management
Division, Washington,
D.C.

Charles W. Culkin, Jr., Senior Assistant Director, (202) 275-1981
Phillis L. Riley, Evaluator-in-Charge
Nell E. George, Evaluator

Office of the General
Counsel

Thomas H. Armstrong, Attorney

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Appendix II
Budget Information Required by Statute

- A separate request for construction of school facilities by the Director, Office of Dependents' Education, Department of Defense. (20 U.S.C. 925.)
- A funding request, by the Environmental Protection Agency, for the Great Lakes National Program Office as a separate line item. (33 U.S.C. 1268(c)(5).)
- In the budget next transmitted after the submission of each report of the Department of Veterans Affairs, recommendations with respect to the exact rates of special pay for VA physicians and dentists. (38 U.S.C. 4118(g)(3).)
- The budget of the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation as modified, amended, or revised by the President. (42 U.S.C. 8107(d).)

service levels of public civilian and military capital investment, investment needs, factors that affect investment needs, and estimates of demand for public services. (The law requires that the President submit this analysis with materials related to each budget transmitted.)

(31 U.S.C. 1105(e).)

- A budget baseline estimate, made in accordance with section 251(a)(6) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, using economic and technical assumptions consistent with the current services budget submitted under section 1109 of title 31 for the fiscal year. If such a budget baseline estimate differs from the estimate in the current services budget, the President shall explain the difference. Also, the information required by section 251(a)(2) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985. (31 U.S.C. 1105(f)(3).)
- The budget programs submitted to the President by wholly owned government corporations. (31 U.S.C. 9103(c).)
- Recommendations, to the extent practicable, of specific policies to reduce the rate of inflation. (15 U.S.C. 1022e(c).)
- New programs or modifications to improve existing programs concerned with private capital formation, as appropriate. (15 U.S.C. 3117(b).)
- A summary and analysis of the statements most recently submitted by the heads of executive agencies with respect to motor vehicle use. Each summary and analysis shall include a review, for the fiscal year preceding the fiscal year in which the budget is submitted, the current fiscal year, and the fiscal year for which the budget is submitted, of the cost savings that have been achieved, that are estimated will be achieved, and that could be achieved, in the acquisition, maintenance, leasing, operation, and disposal of motor vehicles by executive agencies through use of a qualified private fleet management firm, increased reliance on the Interagency Fleet Management System, or other existing motor vehicle management systems. (Under the law, the President may submit this information in the budget or in a separate written report to the Congress.) (40 U.S.C. 904.)

Program-Specific Information

- A horizontal budget showing the programs for meteorology and of the National Climate Program established under section 5 of the National Climate Program Act. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(21).)
- Separate appropriation accounts for appropriations under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 and the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(23).)
- Recommendations on the return of government capital to the Treasury by a mixed-ownership corporation that the President decides are desirable. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(24).)

amount proposed in the budget for appropriation and for expenditure in the fiscal year for which the budget is submitted and (2) the estimated appropriation required for each of the 4 fiscal years after the year that the proposal will be in effect. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(12).)

- An allowance for additional estimated expenditures and proposed appropriations for the fiscal year for which the budget is submitted. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(13).)
- An allowance for unanticipated uncontrollable expenditures for that year. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(14).)
- A separate statement on each of the following items: (1) totals of new budget authority, budget outlays, direct loan obligations, and primary loan guarantee commitments, (2) total federal revenues and the amount, if any, by which the aggregate level of federal revenues should be increased or decreased by bills and resolutions to be reported by the appropriation committees, (3) the surplus or deficit in the budget, (4) new budget authority, budget outlays, direct loan obligations, and primary loan guarantee commitments for each major functional category, and (5) the public debt. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(15).)
- The level of tax expenditures under existing law in the tax expenditures budget for the fiscal year for which the budget is submitted, considering projected economic factors and changes in the existing levels based on proposals in the budget. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(16).)
- Information on estimates of appropriations for grants, contracts, and other payments
 - for the fiscal year following the fiscal year for which the budget is submitted;
 - for each program for which there is an authorization of appropriations for that following fiscal year; and
 - when the appropriations are authorized to be included in an appropriation law for the fiscal year before the fiscal year in which the appropriation is to be available for obligation. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(17).)
- A comparison of the total amount of budget outlays for the prior fiscal year, as estimated in the budget submitted for that year, for each major program having relatively uncontrollable outlays, with the total amount of outlays for that program in that year. Also, a comparison of the total amount of receipts for the prior fiscal year, as estimated in the budget submitted for that year, with receipts received in that year. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(19).)
- A comparison, for each major source of receipts, of receipts estimated in the budget submitted for the prior fiscal year, with the amount of receipts from that source in that year. (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)(19).)

The Documents in the President's Budget Submission

The budget documents and the fiscal years for which the President has submitted them are shown in table I.1. The table does not include revised transition budgets submitted by newly-elected Presidents, nor does it include the budgets for the District of Columbia government, which were submitted for fiscal years 1969 through 1973, prior to the District obtaining home rule.

Table I.1: Budget Documents

Fiscal Year	Budget	Appendix	Special Analyses	Budget in Brief	Major Policy Initiatives ^a	Historical Tables	Management of the U.S. Government
1990	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1989	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1988	X	X	X	X		X	X
1987	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1986	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1985	X	X	X	X	X		
1984	X	X	X	X	X		
1983	X	X	X	X	X		
1982	X	X	X	X			
1981	X	X	X	X			
1980	X	X	X	X			
1979	X	X	X	X			
1978	X	X	X	X	X		
1977	X	X	X	X	X		
1976	X	X	X	X			
1975	X	X	X	X			
1974	X	X	X	X			
1973	X	X	X	X			
1972	X	X	X	X			
1971	X	X	X	X			
1970	X	X	X	X			
1969	X	X	X	X			

^aThe volumes for fiscal years 1977 and 1978 were entitled *Seventy Issues* and *Issues '78*, respectively. Source: *Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Years 1969 - 1990*.

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Abbreviations

CBO	Congressional Budget Office
OMB	Office of Management and Budget

vehicle the President uses for communicating the administration's proposed budget priorities and levels to the Congress, it should be viewed as more than simply a presidential document. Indeed, its content is governed to a large extent by statutory reporting requirements, reflecting that several entities outside of the executive branch have constitutional or statutory roles in the budget process. These include the Congress and its committees, CBO, and GAO.

Also, beyond reflecting the statutory reporting requirements, the budget reports other information, such as object classifications, which is useful to legislative branch users. Over the years, these users have expressed information needs that are being accommodated in current budget reporting, and their studies would be hampered by any major curtailment of that information.

In this context, it is important that when implementing major changes in the budget's information, including changes in the presentation of information not required by statute, OMB do so in consultation with legislative branch users. Budgeting is, in the final analysis, a shared responsibility. If it is to be effectively carried out under our system of government, the information needs of all parties should be considered and acted upon in the spirit of cooperation.

As agreed with your offices, unless you publicly announce the contents of this report earlier, we will not distribute it until 30 days from the date of this report. At that time, we will send copies to the Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations; the Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations; the Director, Congressional Budget Office; the Director, Office of Management and Budget; and other interested parties.

This report was prepared under the direction of James L. Kirkman, Director, Budget Issues, who may be reached on 275-9573 if you or your staff have any questions. The major contributors to this report are identified in appendix III.



Charles A. Bowsher
Comptroller General
of the United States

in appropriations and other statutory controls. For example, the appropriation bill may earmark funding for specific projects, such as defense weapons systems, and in such cases it may be appropriate to report the detailed information in agency budget justifications or other agency budget documents rather than in the budget submission.

Second, the budget submission should report information on major activities, programs, accounts, and sometimes subaccounts organized according to cross-cutting categories. One of the most significant developments in budgeting over the last 4 decades has been the inclusion in the budget of various listings and special analyses that array budget information according to governmentwide categories. Besides the categories included in the Special Analyses already mentioned, they include but are not restricted to:

- budget functions (national defense, energy, transportation, etc.) and subfunctions;
- discretionary and mandatory spending programs;
- receipts by source;
- offsetting receipts by type; and
- controllability of outlays.

Such categories of information provide a very useful overview in several areas. The Congress' own budget resolutions are organized according to budget functions, and the two recent bipartisan budget summit agreements between the administration and the Congress (November 1987 and April 1989) explicitly referred to levels of discretionary and mandatory spending. Also, information on each of these areas is frequently used in congressional debates as well as GAO and CBO studies.

Third, the submission should contain multiyear budget information which extends into the past and the future. Another significant budgeting development in recent years has been extending the time horizon of budgeting by including historical tables and outyear budget projections. Analyses of historical data can increase the understanding of current budget issues, and the outyear projections of up to 5 years have made budget users more aware of the future consequences of current decisions. Unfortunately, one result of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings legislation has been to reverse the previous trend toward more concern for outyear results. The focus now is almost exclusively on next year's budget numbers—a range of view that encourages budget gimmicks.

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- Budget in Brief: This short volume is designed for the news media and general public. It provides a concise, less technical overview of the budget. Normally, it contains information that is printed elsewhere in the budget submission.

From time to time, Presidents have submitted additional documents highlighting their policy initiatives and priorities. Since fiscal year 1983, this policy document has been entitled Major Policy Initiatives. This was followed for fiscal year 1986 and subsequent years by the Historical Tables providing data on receipts, outlays, surpluses or deficits, federal debt, and other matters covering extended time periods—in many cases from fiscal years 1940 to 1994. At the same time, the President began submitting a document entitled Management of the United States Government, which provides a discussion of accomplishments and proposals for improving the management of governmental activities.

For fiscal years 1969 through 1973, the President submitted a separate budget document for the District of Columbia government. The District's budget is now included as part of the overall budget submission.

Appendix I to this report provides a chronological overview of the various documents included in presidential budget submissions for fiscal years 1969 through 1990.

Supporting Materials Provided by OMB

In addition to the above documents in the President's formal budget submission, OMB annually provides CBO with a copy of the computer tape containing the detailed budget data base used in preparing the President's budget documents. CBO in turn provides a copy to GAO and other offices. The budget tape contains detailed data, including presidential estimates for the coming fiscal year or years, on the accounts and sub-accounts in the federal budget. The amounts are coded to permit aggregations according to agency and governmentwide categories. Using the tape and its codes, users can develop listings of credit programs, investment outlays, outlays to state and local governments, and other transactions. CBO uses the tape to restructure budget data and develop special purpose printouts for various congressional users, mainly the House and Senate Budget and Appropriations Committees.

OMB also customarily provides to CBO some canned computer programs for developing special listings. For example, the programs permit the development of information, by account, on supplemental proposals and 5-year projections. Also, OMB annually provides CBO and other offices,

kinds of budget information they provide to the Congress beyond that which is contained in the President's formal budget documents. Also, we contacted staff of the Senate and House Appropriations and Budget Committees, the House Ways and Means Committee, the Senate Finance Committee, and the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to obtain an overview of the budget information that OMB provides to them.

Given the time constraints of the request, we could not perform a systematic and in-depth assessment of the Congress' budget information needs. The Congress is a large and diverse entity with many kinds of changing information requirements, and a thorough analysis of those requirements would have taken many months. Therefore, in this report, we set forth general guidelines, based upon our prior work, on the kinds of budget information that we believe should be provided by the President. Our work did not include a review of the budget-related materials provided to the Congress by various federal agencies other than OMB.

As used in this report, the expression "budget submission" refers to all of the public documents that the President usually submits to the Congress each year to accompany his budget message. This includes, but is not restricted to, the document often referred to as "the budget" containing the President's budget message.

Background

The Budget and Accounting Act of 1921 established the executive budget process that has been in operation for almost 70 years. The act, as amended, provides for the presidential submission of a budget to the Congress each year on or before the first Monday after January 3. Also, the act bars federal agencies from submitting budget estimates or appropriation requests directly to the Congress, unless requested by the House or Senate. Over the years, Presidents have met this requirement by annually providing one or more budget documents that include detailed information on the government's hundreds of budget accounts and summary information on various budget matters.

When a newly-elected President takes office (late January), his predecessor will have already made a budget submission to the Congress for the coming fiscal year. The new President, therefore, customarily submits a revised budget within a month or two. The transition budget normally includes comparable (to previous budgets) account level information either in the revised budget documents or available computer printouts. This practice changed when President Bush submitted his revised budget in February 1989. This budget and accompanying

