

FY 2008 Priority Budgeting

About Ranking

What is ranking?

Ranking is a tool the County uses as part of its Budget Priority Setting Process to determine how to spend our limited funds. In separate ranking exercises, Outcome Teams (comprised of County employees) and the Board of County Commissioners rank program offers submitted by each department.

Ranking provides guidance and valuable information for making policy decisions. It is not the final action or decision. Final decisions will be made by the Board before adopting the Budget. The Chair's Executive Budget will be released on April 19th, followed by public hearings and the amendments process. The final Budget will be adopted on June 7th.

What is the criteria for ranking programs?

Programs are ranked based on their contribution to Priority Areas that have been identified for the County by groups of citizens and employees. The Priority Areas include Accountability, Education, Safety, Basic Needs, Thriving Economy and Vibrant Communities.

Why did some important programs rank lower than others?

The rankings are a "forced choice exercise," meaning that 1/3 rd of all 400+ county programs are ranked as High, 1/3 rd as Medium and 1/3 rd as Low. Forced choice exercises are sometimes necessary in situations where priorities must be established because resources are insufficient.

In some cases, programs were ranked lower because more information was needed. In other instances, lower rankings may indicate that though the program is important, it isn't as effective as other programs at the level that it is being provided.

Rankings do not indicate the inherent value of a program offer. Each of the program offers represents important and valuable work.

What do the colors mean?*

- **Yellow:** significant difference between Board members' ranking within their group
- **Purple:** Team members disagreed with each other within their groups and Board members disagreed with each other within their group.
- **Blue:** there were differences between the Teams' total ranking and Board's total ranking score

* If printing in black and white, please see the letter symbols are in the far left column.



Who did the ranking?

Outcome Teams comprised of cross-functional county staff produced one score; the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) participate in two rounds of ranking. In Round One, the BCC ranks without seeing the Outcome Teams' rankings. The BCC, Outcome Teams and department directors then discuss the rankings for understanding and clarity during budget Work Sessions. During the last week of March, the BCC ranks again, factoring new information gleaned from the Work Sessions.

What does Ranking accomplish?

Ranking gives the Board, department staff and others an opportunity to talk about budgeting and programs in a different way, framing the conversation from the perspective of "What's the most effective way to spend our limited resources?" versus "Where do we cut?"

Ranking exercises also provide opportunities for the Board, Team members and department directors to discuss and share information about their programs. This open dialogue creates a more transparent policy-making process; at the same time, it increases knowledge and understanding of County programs.

