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The Executive Budget Process Timetable

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The executive budget process is a complex set of activities that includes formulation of the President's budget, interaction with Congress, and execution of the budget. While some of the activities are required by specific dates, many follow a more flexible schedule established by formal and informal rules and procedures. Table 1 provides a timetable of the major steps in the year and a half process. The initial development of the President's budget begins in the individual federal agencies approximately 10 months before the President submits it to Congress (17 or 18 months before the start of the fiscal year).

Table 1. The Executive Budget Process Timetable

Calendar Year Prior to the Year in Which Fiscal Year Begins	
Date	Activities
April-June	Agencies begin development of budget requests. The President, with the assistance of OMB, reviews and makes policy decisions for the budget beginning October 1 of the following year.
July-August	OMB issues policy directions to agencies, providing guidance for agencies' formal budget requests.
Early fall	Agencies submit initial budget requests to OMB.
November-December	OMB and the President review and make decisions on agencies' requests, referred to as OMB "passback." Agencies may appeal these decisions to the OMB director, and in some cases directly to the President.
Calendar Year in Which Fiscal Year Begins	
Date	Activities
By first Monday in February	President submits budget to Congress.
February-September	Congressional phase. Agencies interact with Congress, justifying and explaining President's budget.
By July 15	President submits mid-session review to Congress.
October 1	Fiscal year begins.
15 days after end of legislative session	Final sequestration report published by OMB. If required, sequestration order issued by President.
October-September (the fiscal year)	OMB apportions funds to agencies. Agencies incur obligations and make outlays.

The developmental phase of the executive budget process largely is coordinated through the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which assists the President in the preparation of the budget and its execution. OMB budget guidelines are communicated formally to federal agencies through circulars, bulletins, and other publications. At any given time, agencies could conceivably be simultaneously working on the budgets for three fiscal years. For example, in April 1999, agencies were implementing the FY1999 budget, seeking funds for the FY2000 budget, and developing the FY2001 budget.

Federal agencies submit initial budget requests to OMB for review in the early fall. During this review phase, OMB staff clarify policy and technical questions with the agencies in order to make recommendations to the OMB director. The budgetary decisions of the OMB director are passed back to the agencies, in what is known as an OMB passback. Federal agencies may appeal these decisions, but usually only have a limited time to do so. The appeals are made to the OMB director, and in some cases, to the President. Once final decisions are made, federal agencies revise their budget requests accordingly to be included in the President's comprehensive budget submission to Congress, which he is to submit by the first Monday in February for the fiscal year beginning October 1 (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)).

During the congressional phase of the federal budget process, executive branch activities concerning the budget year largely are driven by the congressional budget process. These activities typically involve negotiations with Congress about budgetary legislation. For more on the congressional budget process timetable, see CRS Report 98-472 GOV, *The Congressional Budget Process Timetable*.

The President is required to submit a mid-session review of the budget by July 15 (31 U.S.C. 1106). This budget update reflects changed economic conditions, any legislative actions taken by Congress, and other factors affecting the President's budget submission. In addition, the President may revise his budget submission any time during the legislative session.

Federal agencies may incur obligations and make outlays after the beginning of a new fiscal year on October 1 if Congress passes, and the President signs, the appropriations acts into law. In some years, however, all appropriations bills are not enacted by this time. Continuing resolutions typically are adopted until Congress and the President can agree on any appropriations bills still remaining.

The 1985 Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act (Title II of P.L. 99-177), as amended, requires the OMB director to issue a final sequestration report 15 days after the end of the legislative session, indicating whether a sequestration is necessary under the discretionary spending limits or the pay-as-you-go rules. If the OMB director determines that a sequestration is necessary, the President is required to issue a sequestration order at the same time. For more on the sequestration process, see CRS Report RS20007, *The Sequestration Process*.