

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/how-to-use-budget-advocacy-to-drive-justice-reform>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

Every new budget is an opportunity to rethink the public's spending priorities. And the \$350 billion in federal recovery funds provided through the 2021 American Rescue Plan provides a rare opportunity to rethink how we provide community safety. For too long, addressing our toughest problems—whether mental health crises, substance use, homelessness, or others—has centered around police and jails. Now is the time to stop trying to solve every problem with handcuffs and a jail cell.

In this primer, Vera offers practical strategies for analyzing budgets and advocating for reform-oriented spending priorities.

The annual budget process offers cities and counties, no matter how big or small, a unique opportunity to demand accountability for how public funds are spent and to move public dollars away from traditional criminal justice investments that have failed to deliver safety, especially in Black communities.

The executive budget is usually published as a book that is posted on the government's website. Analyzing the book is an important step toward using budget advocacy to drive justice reform.

The American Rescue Plan, which includes an injection by the federal government of more than \$350 billion into state and local governments across the country, makes the budget this year more important than ever.

Hearings on executive budget proposals are open to the public.

PUBLICATION

NEWS

WHAT JAILS COST LANDING

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