Public Safety Budget and Funding Opportunity Analysis

Pueblo County and City of Pueblo

February 2024

PSC

PUBLIC SECTOR
CONSULTANTS

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Executive Summary

The Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition and the Latino Coalition for Community Leadership partnered with Public Sector Consultants (PSC) in 2023 to conduct a public safety budget analysis in partnership with community leaders in Pueblo County, Colorado. The project was intended to provide data about city and county budget processes, spending levels, and advocacy opportunities to inform local strategic planning and advocacy efforts.

Budget Processes

Both the county and city budget processes consist of financial reviews, internal working sessions, public comment periods, and adoption. These steps take place throughout the year, with the major opportunities for public engagement occurring in the last few months before the December budget adoption.

Budget Overview

In the last few years, significant federal and state investments have increased city and county budgets, but the largest share of revenue in both jurisdictions is still from various forms of taxes. At both the city and county levels, public safety is a major priority and receives a significant amount of funding through taxes, intergovernmental transfers, and other services. For example, public safety makes up 39 percent of total county expenditures. The core public safety agencies at the county level are the Pueblo County Sheriff's Office, the correctional services department, and the Office of the District Attorney. At the city level, public safety–related activities are centralized within the police department and the municipal court. In both jurisdictions, operations for the sheriff's office and police department comprise most of the budget. Pueblo County has also borrowed a significant amount of funding to support a new jail and related road construction projects.

Budget Targets

After reviewing dozens of potential targets and engaging with community action teams about their priorities, PSC ultimately analyzed eight targets.

To account for varying levels of publicly available information and opportunities to repurpose funds, PSC organized the eight targets using a three-tiered approach. The first tier is budget line items where community leaders have the information and opportunity to advocate for redirecting funds. The second tier is areas where community activism could lead to greater investment or divestment in public safety–related programs. The final tier is prospects that community leaders may want to consider for future engagement, but would likely need to gather additional information that PSC was not able to find in publicly available records.

Exhibit 1 includes a complete list of the reinvestment targets included in this analysis, organized by tier.

EXHIBIT 1. Reinvestment Targets

Tier/Target	County/City	Department	FY 2023 Adopted Budget
Reinvestment Opportunities (T1)			
Public safety sales tax	City	Police	$7,537,817
Opioid settlement funds	City/Region	Multiple	Multiple
School resource officers	City	Police	$750,791
Engagement Opportunities (T2)			
Intervention Community Corrections (ICCS) Pueblo	County	Correctional Services	$2,814,224
Sheriff's fees	County	Sheriff	$1,230,000
Prospects (T3)			
Law enforcement grants	County	Sheriff	$5,726,868
District attorney grants	County	District Attorney	$372,594
Vacancy savings	City	Police	$200,000

Sources: City of Pueblo 2023 budget 2023 and Pueblo County 2023 budget

Introduction

This report outlines the budget processes for Pueblo County and the City of Pueblo and analyzes the overall budget picture for both jurisdictions. It then reviews key public safety departmental budgets and highlights key revenue and expenditure trends. It concludes with a tiered set of budget line item targets community leaders can use to inform efforts related to increasing transparency, investment, and/or reinvestment in community-based alternatives.

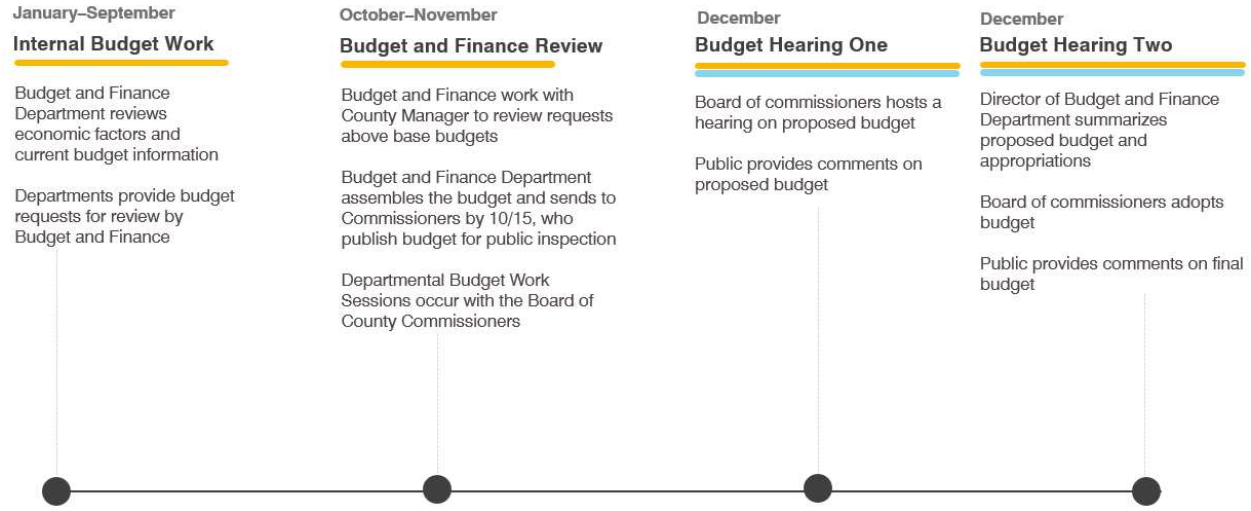
Budget Process

Annual budgets allow cities and counties to document revenue expectations and allocate funds for the upcoming fiscal year. These important documents are developed through a year-long process that includes financial reviews and allocations, departmental budget reviews and requests, and public hearings before final adoption. While there are many similarities between county and city budget processes, there are some important differences that are worth exploring.

Pueblo County

Pueblo County's budget process runs from January to December before the fiscal year. Exhibit 2 highlights the primary process components.

EXHIBIT 2. Pueblo County Budget Process



Sources: Pueblo County adopted budget 2023 and PSC analysis

Internal Budget Development and Review

The budget process for Pueblo County begins in January, when the Budget and Finance Department reviews current economic factors and budget information and establishes base budgets for each department that consider factors such as staffing, contracts, and debt obligations. Throughout the spring and summer, departments are in discussion with county leadership about potential budget shifts and

priorities. Throughout this more informal and internally focused part of the budget development process, departments must make difficult strategic decisions that account for revenue trends, community priorities and political concerns. Departmental budget analysts and leadership must weigh these factors, as well as many others, to determine their strategy for maintaining or expanding key programs and determining areas where they could accept and mitigate the impact of cuts if needed. In September, this period of internal departmental negotiation results in each agency submitting a formal budget request for Budget and Finance Department review. These requests include areas where the department is seeking additional funds that go beyond their base allocation.

Once departments have submitted their requests, the Budget and Finance Department works with the county manager to review all budget requests. Because departments typically ask for more funding than is available, the initial review is a critical moment when county leadership must consider a variety of factors and priorities to determine the best allocation of scarce resources. After the review, the Budget and Finance Department assembles an initial recommended budget, which it sends to county commissioners to be published for public comment in October. The release of the budget does not end departmental negotiation because between October and November, the Budget and Finance Department, county commissioners, and various departments work internally to prioritize and finalize departmental budgets before developing the final recommended budget (Pueblo County n.d.).

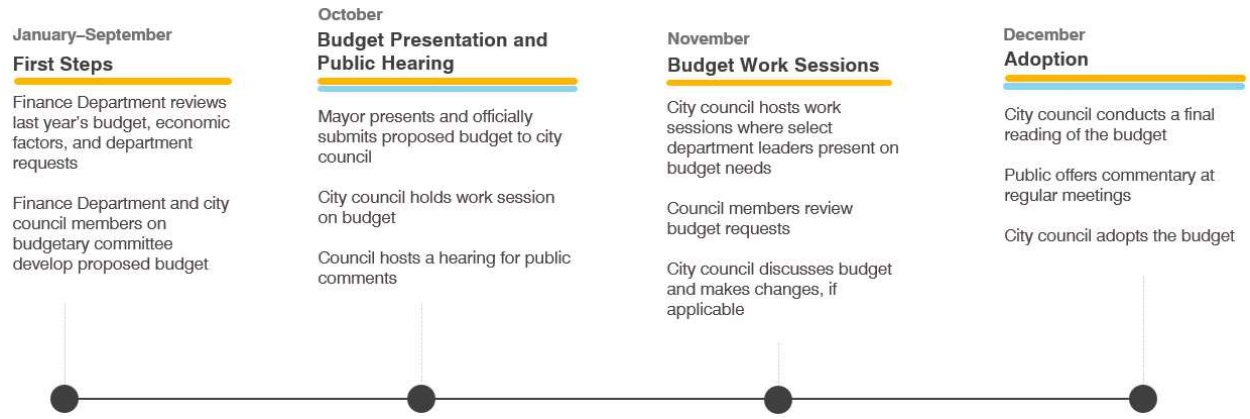
Budget Hearings and Approval

In December, the board of commissioners conduct two public hearings on the proposed budget. The first hearing allows public comments on the proposed budget. At the second hearing, the Director of Budget and Finance provides a summary of the proposed budget and appropriations, the board of commissioners adopts the budget, and the public can provide comments on the final budget (Pueblo County n.d.).

City of Pueblo

The City of Pueblo's budget process is conducted from January to December before the fiscal year, concluding with the budget adoption in December. Exhibit 3 highlights the primary process components.

EXHIBIT 3. City of Pueblo Budget Process



Sources: City of Pueblo adopted budget 2023 and PSC analysis

Financial Review and Budget Development

As with the Pueblo County budget process, the city's finance department conducts a financial review comprising the previous year's budget, economic factors, and departmental budget requests. This analysis is critical for determining spending levels and ensuring that revenues will cover all anticipated expenditures. Following the conclusion of these initial negotiations and analyses, the finance department and the city council's budget committee develop a proposed budget.

Budget Presentation and Public Hearing

Once the proposed budget has been developed, by October, the mayor of Pueblo presents and submits the proposed budget to the entire city council. The council holds a work session on the budget, which is followed by a hearing for public comment.

Budget Work Sessions

In November, department leaders work with the city council to present, review, and finalize any department budget requests. Based on the outcomes of these working sessions, the proposed budget is amended as needed.

Adoption

The budget process concludes in late November or December, when the city council conducts a final reading of the budget, public comment is offered during a regularly scheduled council meeting, and the budget is adopted.

Key Takeaways

- Both the county and city budget processes consist of departmental budget deliberations and negotiations, financial reviews by a budget-focused agency, board and council working sessions, public comment periods, and votes for formal adoption of the budget.
- Pueblo County offers two opportunities for public comment, both at the end of the budget process in December.
- The City of Pueblo also provides two opportunities for public comment, though one earlier in the budgetary process and prior to departmental working sessions (October) and one in December during the adoption.

Budget Analysis

City and county budgets publicly document how these jurisdictions intend to accrue and allocate revenue. While city and county budgets both focus on key areas of public interest (e.g., public safety, recreation, transportation, etc.) they do so at different levels and in different ways. This section of the report analyzes general revenue and expenditure levels and trends before more closely examining spending in public safety–related departments. To avoid introducing additional complexity in the analysis, budget figures are not adjusted for inflation, which should be considered when examining the historical budget trends highlighted throughout the report.

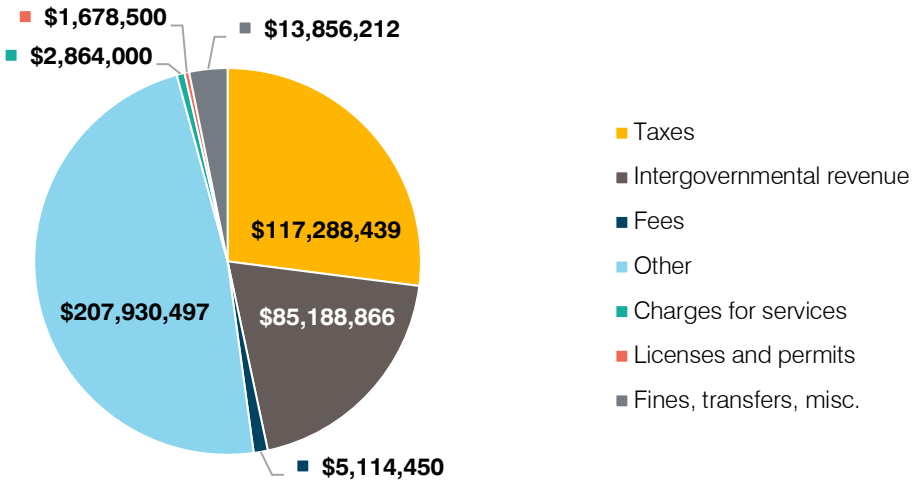
Pueblo County

Countywide Budget Overview

While there are many different government funds, the budget is split into two major categories: operating and capital. The former refers to spending that is used during the upcoming year to staff and operate government agencies and services (e.g., salaries, benefits, etc.), while the latter refers to larger and/or longer-term projects to maintain or enhance public assets (e.g., infrastructure, construction projects, etc.).

In 2023, the county's total budget was $433.9 million, with almost half (48 percent) of the county's total revenue came from "other" financing sources, including debt proceeds and proceeds held for future years, and use of unrestricted reserves (Exhibit 4). Analysis of the budget indicates that these "other" funds are closely tied to recent borrowing for large capital projects, including a new jail complex and related road construction project. The other largest sources of revenue for the operating budget are taxes and intergovernmental transfers, which refers to state and federal government transfers.

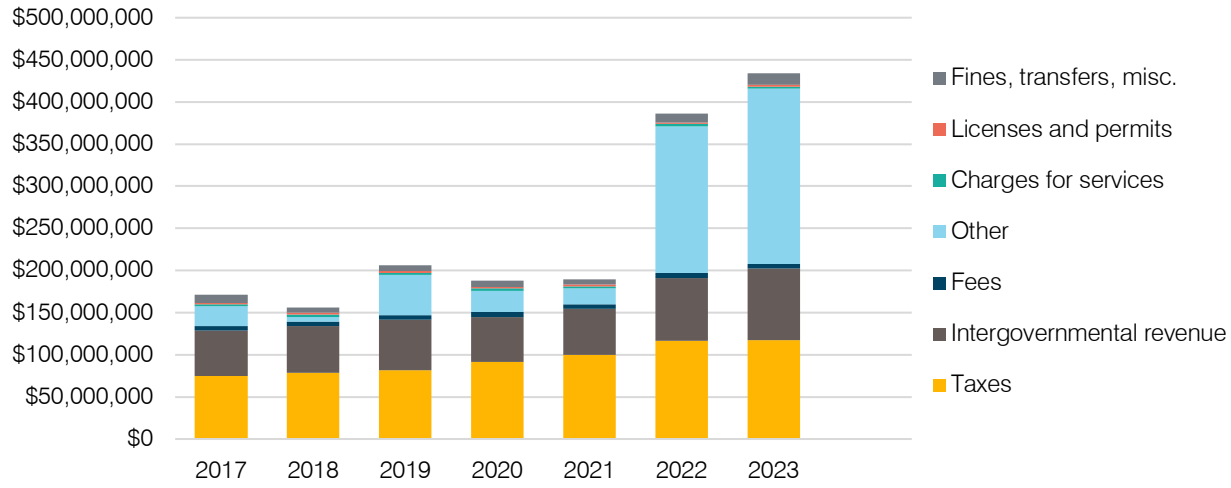
EXHIBIT 4. Pueblo County Budgeted Revenue Sources (2023)



Source: Pueblo County 2023 adopted budget

Since 2017, overall revenue has increased steadily. Revenue sources such as taxes, intergovernmental revenue, fees, charges for services, licenses and permits, and fines, transfers, and other miscellaneous sources have grown at rates from 3 to 57 percent increases over the last six years (Exhibit 5).

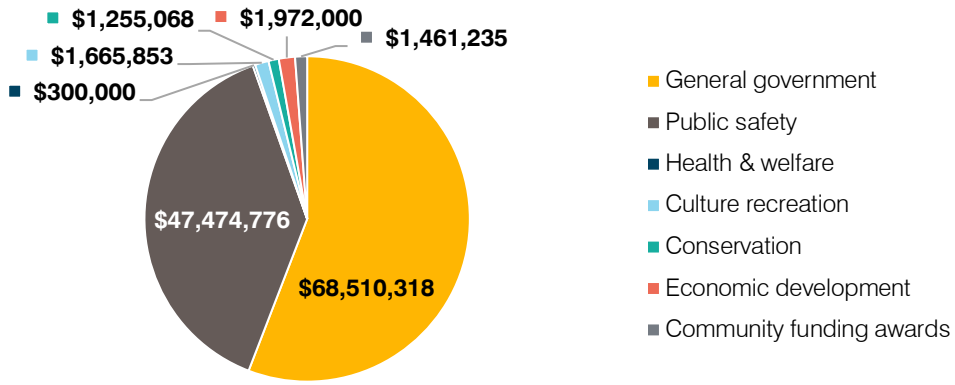
EXHIBIT 5. Pueblo County Budgeted Revenue Sources (2017–2023)



Sources: Pueblo County adopted budgets, 2017–2023

While more than half of general fund expenditures fall under the general government category, the second largest portion of spending (39 percent) is allocated to public safety. The remaining 5 percent of spending goes to health and welfare, culture recreation, conservation, economic development, and community funding awards (Exhibit 6). Historically, this funding distribution has been relatively consistent.

EXHIBIT 6. Pueblo County Budgeted General Fund Expenditures (2023)



Source: Pueblo County 2023 adopted budget

Pueblo County has several capital projects, which include two majority public safety–related capital projects: the new county jail complex and the Medal of Honor Boulevard expansion. These projects are funded through certificates of participation (COPs) issued in 2022, which is a financing method in the form of a lease-purchase agreement. This type of financing method allows the state flexibility to build capital assets when the funds are not available to pay for the project upfront (Donaldson 2018).

The county jail complex is expected to be completed in fall 2025 and has cost $146 million as of May 2023 (Winfrey May 2023). Payments on the COPs began in January 2023 and are made using revenue from the approved marijuana sales tax increase from 2019, along with hazardous waste impact funds, some urban renewal area funding, and federal COVID-19 grants. In addition, the City of Pueblo used $2 million in federal grants to expand sewer infrastructure to accommodate growth and the complex (Hilal 2021).

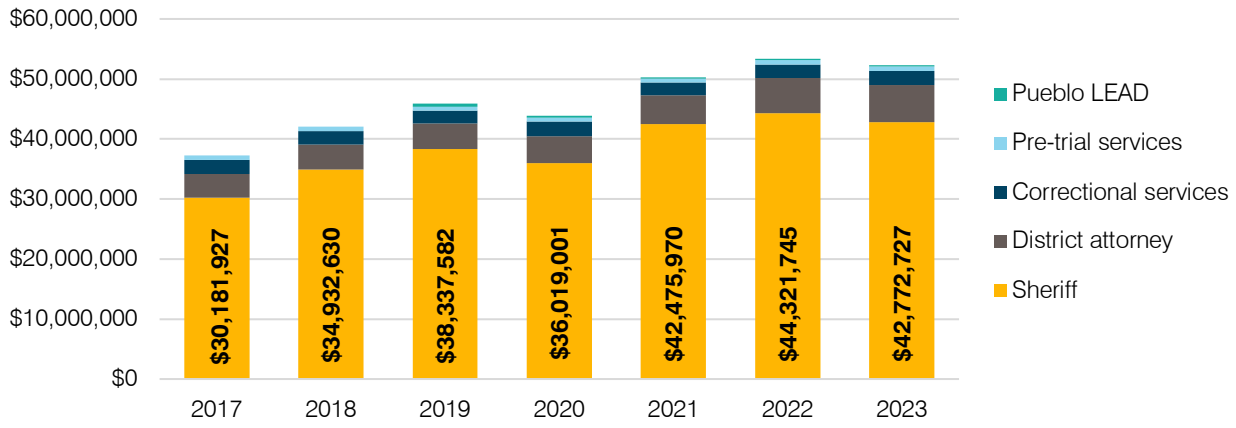
The Medal of Honor Boulevard extension project has several purposes, including to support the jail complex construction, improve traffic flow, and increase economic development in the area. While construction plans are currently being finalized, the estimated project cost is $40 million dollars and will be funded primarily by COPs and a small appropriation from the federal government (Winfrey August 2023).

Public Safety Departmental Budgets

The sheriff's office, the district attorney's office, and correctional services department represent the core agencies responsible for providing public safety and law enforcement services in Pueblo County. The Pueblo Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion program and pretrial services are also connected to this work but represent a relatively small portion of the budget and are managed by one of the three leading public safety agencies. For this report, fire departments are not included in the report's analysis of public safety agencies, despite being often referred to as such in budget documents.

Across these agencies and programs, Pueblo County expenditures were over $52.3 million in 2023 (Exhibit 7). While the other departments receive significant resources, the sheriff's office accounts for the overwhelming majority of the total expenditures. In 2023, the sheriff's office made up 82 percent of the total public safety expenditures and spent about $42.8 million.

EXHIBIT 7. Pueblo County Budgeted Expenditures for Major Public Safety Departments (2017–2023)



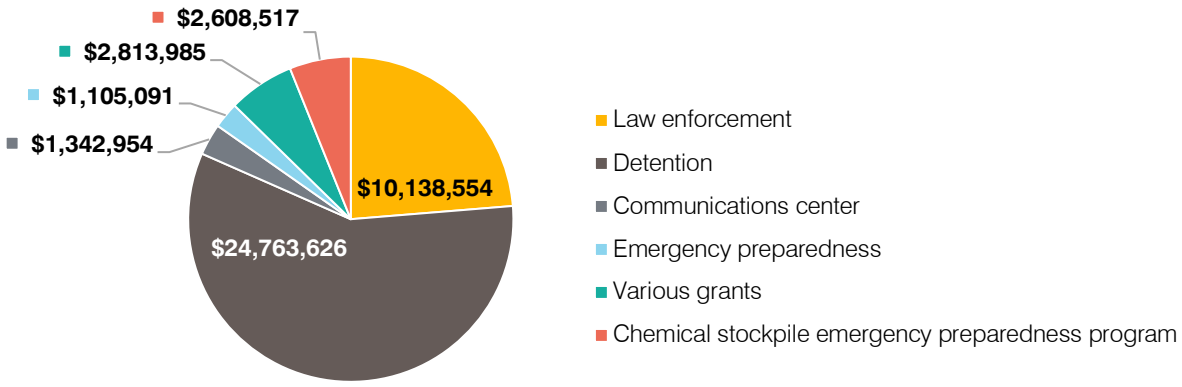
Source: Pueblo County adopted budgets, 2017–2023

Sheriff's Office Overview

According to the Pueblo County Sheriff's Office, it has made a commitment to "control crime, problem solve, reduce the perception of fear and ultimately improve the quality of life by working in a partnership with our citizens" (Pueblo County Sheriff's Office). Across all bureaus, the sheriff's office employs almost 400 full-time employees, 20 part-time resource pool members and over 130 volunteers.

In 2023, the sheriff's office's budget was $42,772,727, with the detention services receiving over $24 million (58 percent), and the law enforcement bureau receiving another 24 percent (Exhibit 8). The detention bureau is primarily focused on managing and operating the county jail, while the law enforcement bureau conducts investigations and manages patrol officers. The remaining 18 percent of the budget is divided between the communications center, emergency preparedness, various grants, and the chemical stockpile emergency preparedness program.

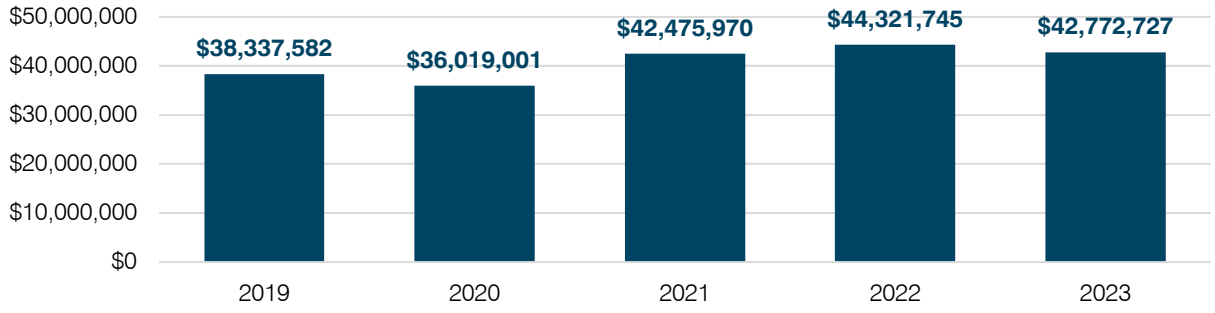
EXHIBIT 8. Pueblo County Sheriff's Office Budget Expenditures by Category (2023)



Source: Pueblo County 2023 adopted budget

Since 2019, the sheriff's office budget has increased by 12 percent, which represents a relatively small increase when considering the increases in overall inflation during that period (Exhibit 9).

EXHIBIT 9. Pueblo County Sheriff's Office Budget (2019–2023)



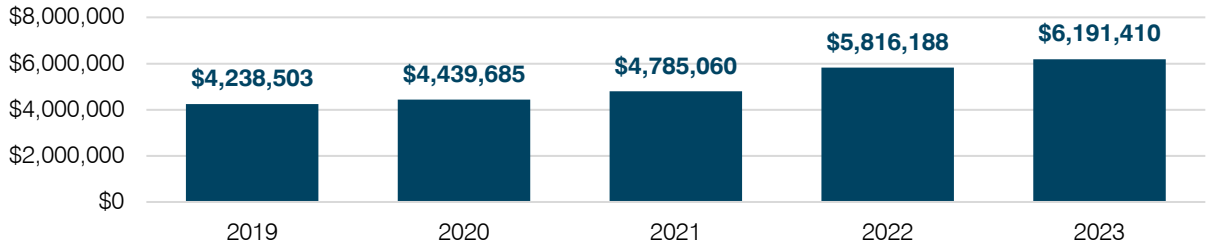
Source: Pueblo County adopted budgets, 2019–2023

District Attorney's Office Overview

According to Pueblo County's 2023 adopted budget, the Pueblo County District Attorney's Office (the Tenth Judicial District Attorney's Office) is responsible for "prosecuting criminal cases, seeking justice for victims, and advocating measures to reduce criminal behavior." Deputy district attorneys are assigned different types of cases, including district court felonies, county court misdemeanors, petty offenses, traffic offenses, and district court juvenile cases. In 2023, the district attorney's office employed 70 individuals and prosecuted over 10,000 cases (2023 Pueblo County Adopted Budget).

In 2023, the district attorney's office's budget was $6,191,410, a 46 percent increase since 2019 (Exhibit 10). The office is primarily funded through the general fund with some small amounts of revenue from state reimbursements/grants (e.g., juvenile diversion) and fees. The office's expenses are almost entirely salary and other personnel costs.

EXHIBIT 10. Pueblo County District Attorney's Office Expenditures (2019—2023)



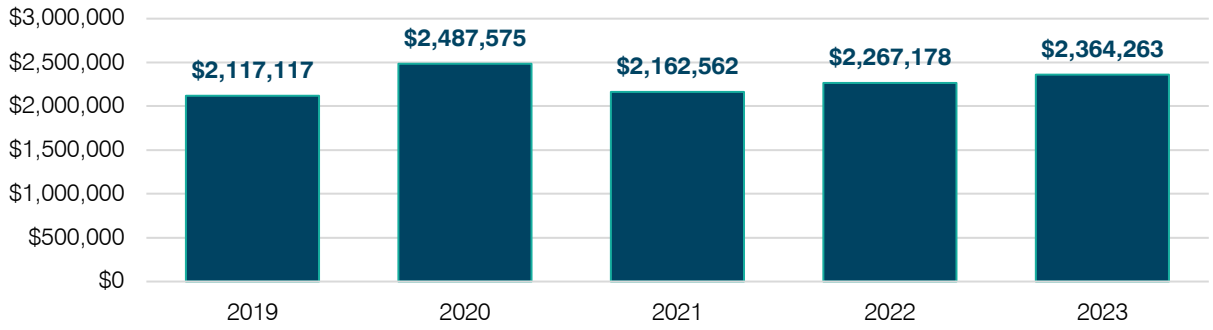
Source: Pueblo County adopted budgets, 2019–2023

Correctional Services Overview

The correctional services department offers "high-level planning and administrative services in the areas of community corrections, Alternatives to Incarceration, and jail overcrowding relief in order to ensure the safety of the citizens of Pueblo County and to ensure that tax dollars are wisely spent in these areas" (Pueblo County Correctional Services). The department provides staffing to the Community Corrections Screening and Advisory committees and the juvenile review board and currently contracts with two private community corrections programs and five private vendors who provide Alternatives to Incarceration services. Finally, the department conducts research and coordination of criminal justice planning activities.

While the department is primarily funded with general fund dollars, those resources entered the fund through state transfers. Expenditures support salaries and other personnel costs, as well as a range of programming, including residential dual diagnosis treatment, residential programs, treatment support, and nonresidential diversion programs. While the department's budget has essentially been flat for the last six years and is highly connected to changes in state community corrections spending, the department budget increased slightly over the past three years to $2.4 million in 2023 (Exhibit 11).

EXHIBIT 11. Pueblo County Correctional Services Expenditures (2019–2023)



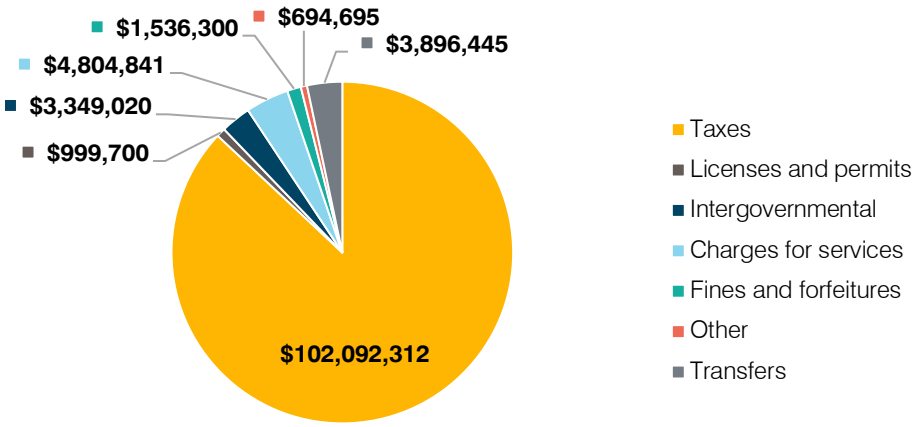
Source: Pueblo County adopted budgets, 2019–2023

City of Pueblo

Overview

Similar to the county, the city also generates and allocates funds across a wide range of funds split into capital and operating categories. The largest portion of the city's revenue comes from taxes, which makes up 87 percent of total revenue (Exhibit 12). Of that, more than $70 million is from sales tax. The remaining 13 percent of revenue comes from licenses and permits, charges for services, fines and forfeitures, intergovernmental transfers, and other sources.

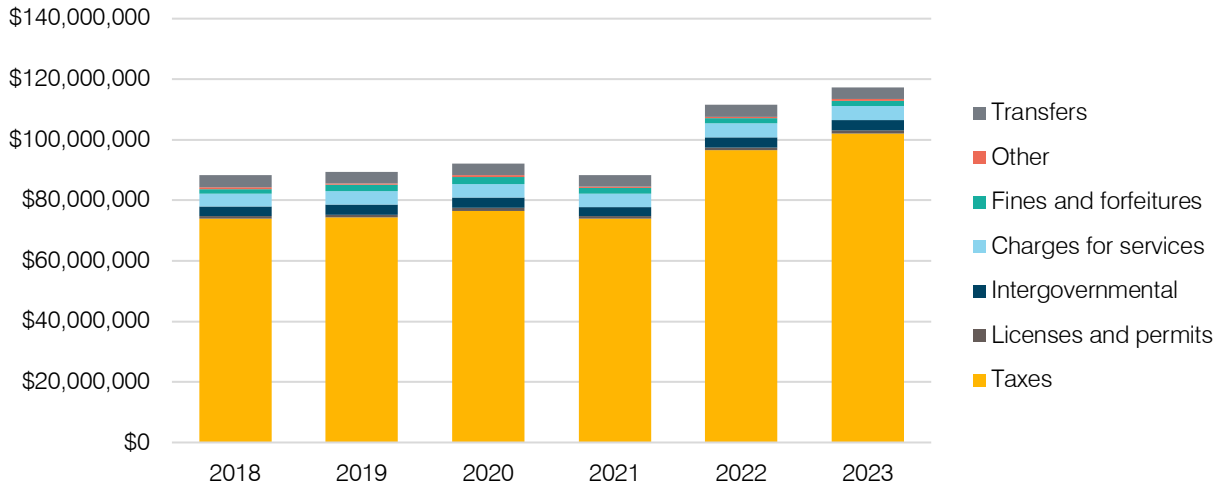
EXHIBIT 12. City of Pueblo General Fund Revenue (2023)



Source: City of Pueblo 2023 Annual Budget

Since 2018, most revenue sources have increased, such as intergovernmental sources (77 percent), licenses and permits (72 percent), taxes (48 percent), other sources (35 percent), and charges for services (22 percent) (Exhibit 13). Transfers have decreased over the last five years by 9 percent and fines and forfeitures have decreased by 8 percent.

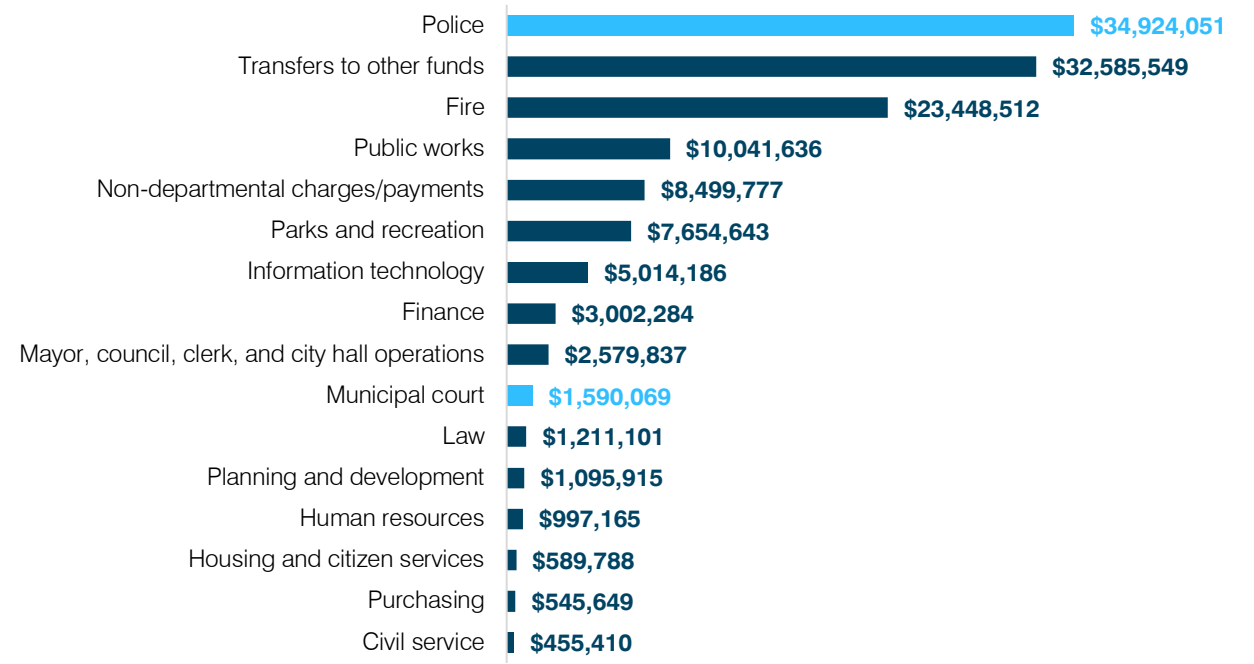
EXHIBIT 13. City of Pueblo General Fund Revenue (2018–2023)



Source: City of Pueblo annual budgets, 2018–2023

The largest single expenditure category was the city police department, totaling almost $35 million, or 25 percent of all expenditures, in 2023 (Exhibit 14). Approximately 31 percent of expenditures, or $41 million, were transfers to other funds and nondepartmental charges and payments.

EXHIBIT 14. City of Pueblo General Fund Expenditures by Category (2023)

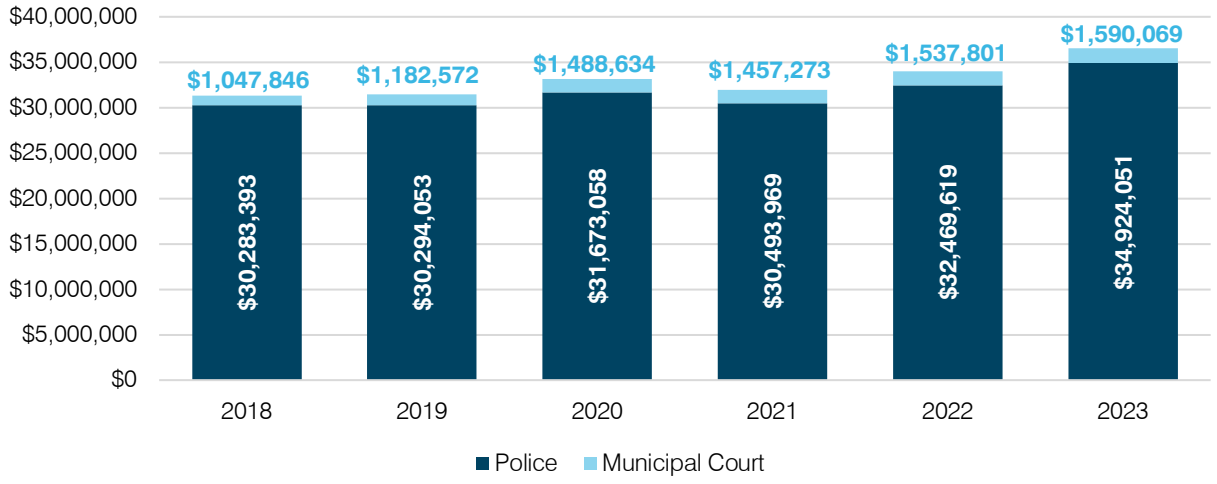


Source: City of Pueblo 2023 Annual Budget

Public Safety Departmental Budgets

The City of Pueblo provides public safety funding to two core agencies, the police department and the municipal court. For this report, fire departments are not included in the report's analysis of public safety agencies, despite being often referred to as such in budget documents. Combined, the police and municipal court budgets in 2023 reached $36,514,120, a 17 percent increase since 2018 (Exhibit 15).

EXHIBIT 15. City of Pueblo Public Safety Departments Budgeted Expenditures (2018–2023)

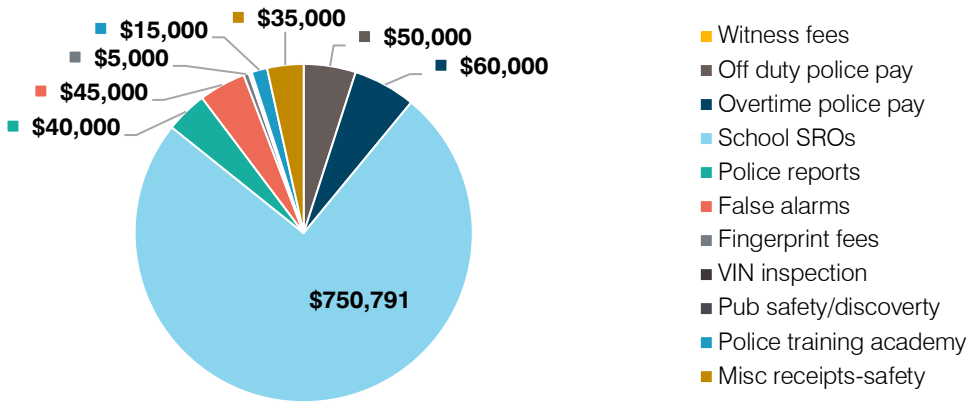


Source: City of Pueblo annual budgets, 2018–2023

The Pueblo Police Department is responsible for "the preservation of public peace, prevention of crime, apprehension of criminals, protection of the rights of persons and property, and the enforcement of the laws of the state and the ordinances of the City of Pueblo" (City of Pueblo, Colorado n.d.a). The department is organized into two major bureaus: the Operations Bureau, which consists of the patrol division, the traffic section, and the volunteers of the Chaplains Corps, and the Services Bureau, which consists of the Criminal Investigation, Special Investigation, Special Services, Support Services, and Community Services divisions. At full capacity, the department employs 308 individuals, though 284 were employed in 2023 (2023 Budget Book).

The department does not generate much revenue each year, $1,003,791 in 2023, but 75 percent is from contracts with school resource officers (SROs) (Exhibit 16). The remaining 25 percent of revenue comes from charges or fines paid by agencies or individuals for overtime police pay, off-duty police pay, police reports, false alarms, and others.

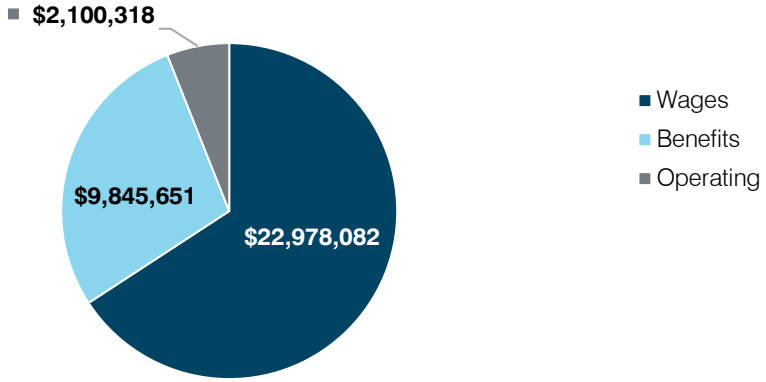
EXHIBIT 16. City of Pueblo Police Department Revenue by Type (2023)



Source: City of Pueblo 2023 Annual Budget

Of the department's total expenditures ($34,924,051), most of that goes toward wages and benefits (94 percent), while the remaining 6 percent goes toward operating costs (Exhibit 17).

EXHIBIT 17. City of Pueblo Police Department Expenditures (2023)



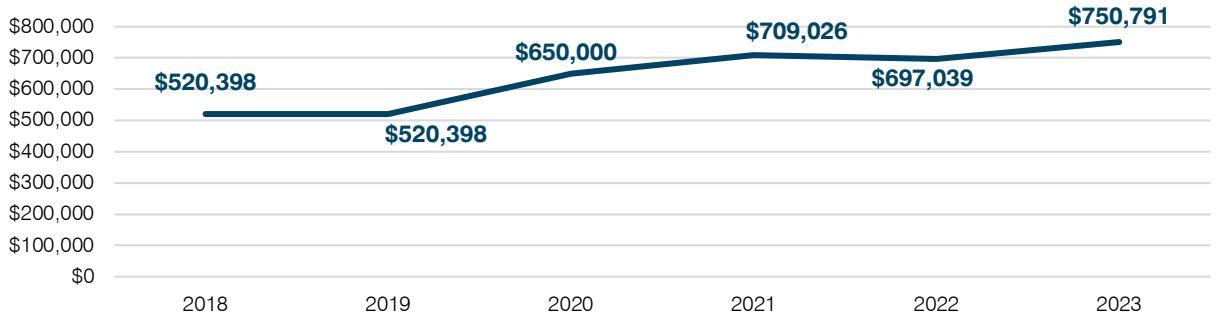
Source: City of Pueblo 2023 Annual Budget

The Pueblo Police Department also assigns one SRO to each of the four high schools and six middle schools in District 60. The SROs are responsible for:

- Conflict resolution with students
- Handling all the school's law enforcement needs
- Implementing safety crisis plans and conducting lockdown drills
- Investigating cases
- Conducting weekly check-ins with surrounding elementary schools (City of Pueblo, Colorado n.d.b)

Over the last several years, the overall budget for SROs has increased to $750,791 in 2023 (Exhibit 18).

EXHIBIT 18. City of Pueblo School Resource Officer Budgeted Expenditures (2018–2023)



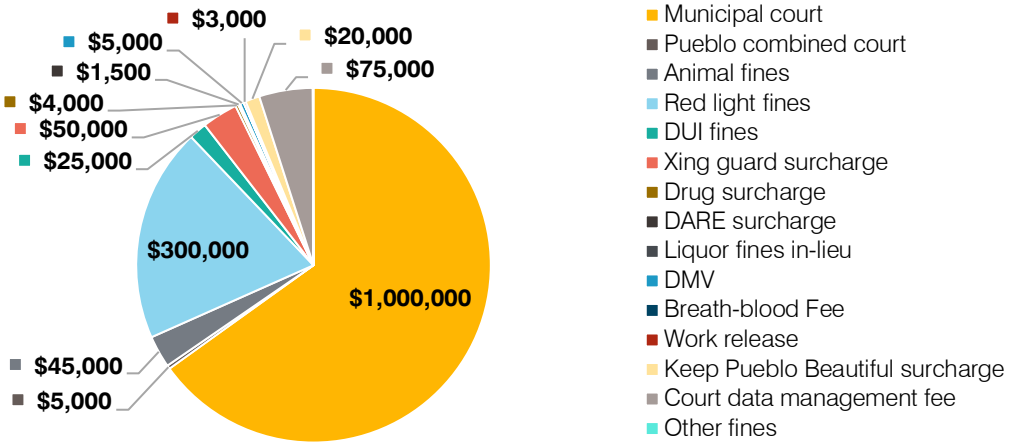
Source: City of Pueblo annual budgets, 2018–2023

Municipal Court

The mission of the City of Pueblo Municipal Court is to "provide an efficient, equitable, and impartial forum to hear and resolve alleged violations of the City of Pueblo Municipal Code, to impose appropriate consequences, and to effectively and efficiently collect fines, costs, and penalties due to the City of Pueblo" (2018 Annual Report). As part of its charge, the court provides alternative sentencing options and programs for adults and juveniles, including community service, payment plans, deferred sentencing and other diversion programming. Sentencing alternatives also include substance use counseling, mental health and anger management, Restorative Justice programming, GED programming and others (2018 Annual Report).

The total amount of revenue generated by the municipal court in 2023 was $1,536,300. Of that, 65 percent came from general municipal court fees and fines, which research indicates includes mandatory county penalties. Another 20 percent came from red light fines, and 5 percent came from the court data management fee (Exhibit 19). The remaining 10 percent came from animal fines, crossing guard surcharges, DUI fines, the Keep Pueblo Beautiful surcharge, and others.

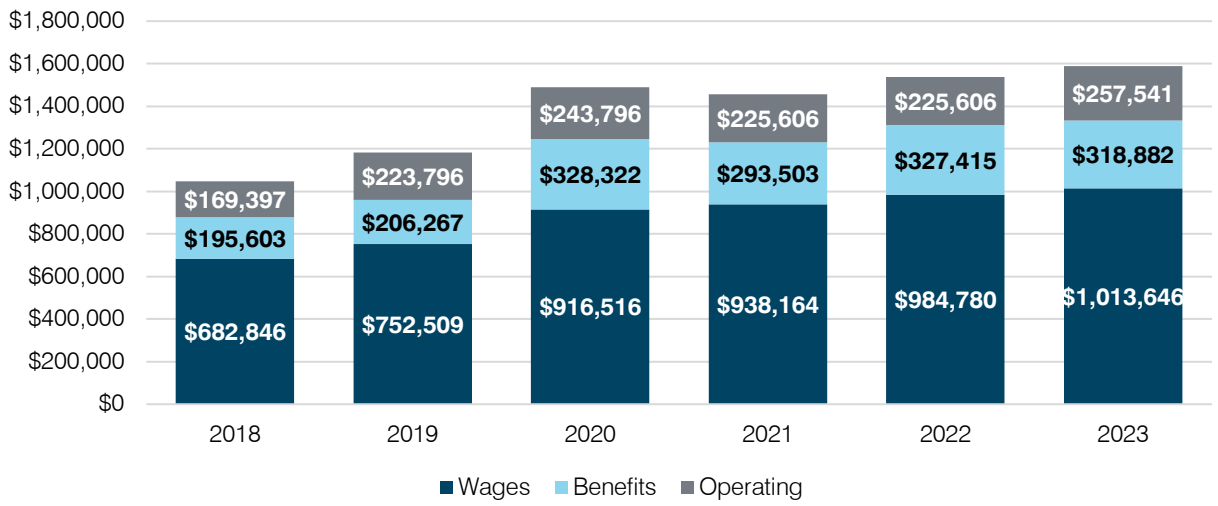
EXHIBIT 19. City of Pueblo Municipal Court Revenues by Type (2023)



Source: City of Pueblo 2023 Annual Budget

In 2023, the total court expenditures were $1,590,069, a 52 percent increase from 2018 (Exhibit 20). In 2023, wages and benefits made up 84 percent of total expenses. While this is a significant rate of increase, the overall budget is very small, so even small changes in personnel costs can generate a large rate of budget growth.

EXHIBIT 20. City of Pueblo Municipal Court Budgeted Expenditures (2018–2023)



Source: City of Pueblo annual budgets, 2018–2023

Key Takeaways

- Pueblo County and the City of Pueblo share similar revenue sources and expenditure categories, though county revenue has increased at a much higher rate compared to the city. A major reason for this discrepancy is the funding borrowed to support capital projects, including the new jail project.
- Public safety makes up 39 percent of county expenditures and 27 percent of city expenditures. In both jurisdictions, the sheriff's office and police department make up most of both budgets.
- For county and city public safety departments (excepting fire departments), expenditures far exceed the revenue brought in by the departments, which means departments rely on a significant amount of general fund resources.

Target Overview

The final step in PSC's analysis was targeted research on individual items within public safety budgets that might represent an opportunity for community engagement and advocacy. This could include spending or revenue line items that support evidence-based programming in a community setting or provided by community-based organizations. PSC assessed each line item using the criteria in Exhibit 21.

EXHIBIT 21. Target Profile Characteristics

Characteristic	Key Question(s) Answered	Options or Rating Criteria
Funding	• How much funding did this line item receive in the most recent budget? • How have funding levels changed? • What is the source of funds?	General fund, restricted funds, or federal funds
Description	• How can this funding be used?[1]	N/A
Impact[2]	• What is the impact and/or performance of this line item for its stated purpose?	**Positive:**[3] Positive impacts for people through program evaluation, performance metric reporting, or commitment to specific evidence-based program(s) with research demonstrating their success **Mixed:** Programming has mixed or limited impact or the positive program impacts are countered by the negative ones **Unclear:** No detailed reports, program evaluations, performance reporting, or references to evidence-based programming **Negative:** Documented negative impacts on key outcomes or failure to meet performance targets
Action Step	• Which policy levers can be used to make this change?	Ordinance, budget, ballot initiative, etc.
Feasibility	• When compared to other targets and an assessment of multiple factors (e.g., funding history, political climate, program popularity and performance, etc.)? • What are the chances that an advocacy strategy could impact this line item?	**High:** There is reason to be believe this target represents a strong opportunity to influence how resources from this line item are spent **Medium:** While this target is not the most relatively promising option, there is reason to believe a targeted and effective strategy could influence how resources from this line item are spent **Low:** When compared to others on this list and given the difficulty of existing barriers, it is relatively unlikely that advocacy can achieve the desired impact on this line item, particularly in the short term

[1] Based on assessment of the most recently available public budget and other documentation.

[2] While the primary scope of work for this project does not include a detailed impact analysis of individual programs, this characteristic is important for evaluating the potential gains for the redirection of program funding. PSC conducted a high-level review of program performance information, but these ratings should not be considered comprehensive.

[3] Without a rigorous program evaluation, it is impossible to truly describe the extent of the causal impact of the program delivery in Pueblo County and City, but a commitment to using funds for a specific evidence-based program is the next best proxy for suggesting the program is likely to have a positive impact on its intended outcomes.

While PSC was able to analyze a variety of public information about the county and city budgets, there are still large gaps in many cases where public information requests or interviews are needed to better understand funding, revenue, and/or use of fund details. Given these challenges, some targets have more detail than others. PSC categorized each into a tiered system to inform community budget advocacy strategy (Exhibit 22).

EXHIBIT 22. Target Tiers

Tier	Description
One: Reinvestment opportunities	These are line items where enough information is available to complete the full target criteria information and where the feasibility of repurposing funding is rated as at least medium. Simply put, community leaders have both information and opportunity to successfully advocate for the redirection of some or all the funds in the line item.
Two: Engagement opportunities	These are line items where the community is unlikely to secure resources for reinvestment, but there might be an opportunity to drive greater investment or divestment. Investment opportunities could include promising or evidence-based programs where research suggests that they can make a positive investment or there is already some level of community engagement. Divestment strategies may focus on eliminating or reducing the funding available for programs with a demonstrated negative impact or fines, fees, or charges that the community feels are inappropriate, inequitable, or excessively punitive.
Three: Prospects	These are line items where the amount of information is insufficient to support the development of a robust advocacy strategy. Community leaders are encouraged to view these as better medium- or long-term prospects where more information should be gathered through public hearing questions, public information requests, and/or interviews with county or city officials.

Targets

Exhibit 23 provides a high-level overview of the targets, as well as PSC's assessment of their impacts, the policy lever for redirection, and the political feasibility of successfully advocating for a change in the use of these funds. These targets are organized by tier and department.

EXHIBIT 23. Top Reinvestment Targets

Tier/Target	County/City	Department	FY 2023 Adopted Budget
Reinvestment Opportunities (T1)			
Public safety sales tax	City	Police	$7,537,817
Opioid settlement funds	City/Region	Multiple	Multiple
School resource officers	City	Police	$750,791
Engagement Opportunities (T2)			
Intervention Community Corrections (ICCS) Pueblo	County	Correctional Services	$2,814,224
Sheriff's fees	County	Sheriff	$1,230,000

Prospects (T3)			
Law enforcement grants	County	Sheriff	$5,726,868
District attorney grants	County	District Attorney	$372,594
Vacancy savings	City	Police	$200,000

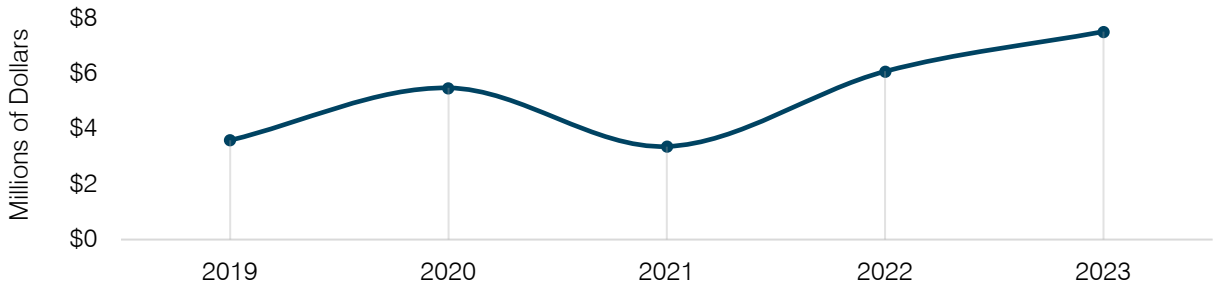
Sources: City of Pueblo Annual Budget 2023; Pueblo County n.d.

Tier One: Reinvestment Opportunities

Public Safety Sales Tax

EXHIBIT 24. Funding Details

FY 2023 Funding	$7,537,817
Trend	Increasing
Type	Restricted by ballot
Description	The total sales and use tax rate within the City of Pueblo is 3.7 percent, which consists of 3.0 percent general tax,.5 percent tax specifically for use in economic development and this.2 percent tax specifically for police personnel and operating needs. Currently, these funds are being used primarily for police wages and operations. The adopted 2023 budget provided resources to cover the wages for 20 patrol officers and four police sergeants.



Sources: City of Pueblo annual budgets, 2019–2023

Impact: *Mixed.* These resources are not currently used to impact specific public safety outside of crime reduction. Most of these resources are supporting police salaries; the evidence that crime is reduced by adding more police officers is mixed (Rouse 1985). For example, one study found that adding officers reduced homicides but also increased the number of people being arrested for lower level (e.g., disorderly conduct, drug possession, loitering) crimes and that the impacts of these arrests, and corresponding fees and fines, were disproportionally felt by Black people (Chalfin et al. 2022).

While these taxpayer resources primarily support salaries and operating costs, they also support capital projects (Exhibit 25).

EXHIBIT 25. Capital Projects Funded by the Police Safety Tax

Description	2023 Adopted Budget Amount
Drone–police	$35,000
Laptop Replacement–police vehicles	$850,000
Vehicle video system replacements	$550,000
Vehicle purchases–police	$1,315,500
BlackBerry licensing	$39,000
Total Public Safety Tax Projects	**$2,789,500**

Source: City of Pueblo Annual Budget 2023

Action Step: *Ballot*. These funds are restricted by the 2019 voter-approved ordinance that was reapproved in the 2022 election (Ordinance 10261). This tax is set to expire again in 2027, so the city council will likely be asked to vote to add it to the ballot again in 2025 or 2026. To change the fund distribution schedule, either the restriction language or the interpretation of the current language would need to change.

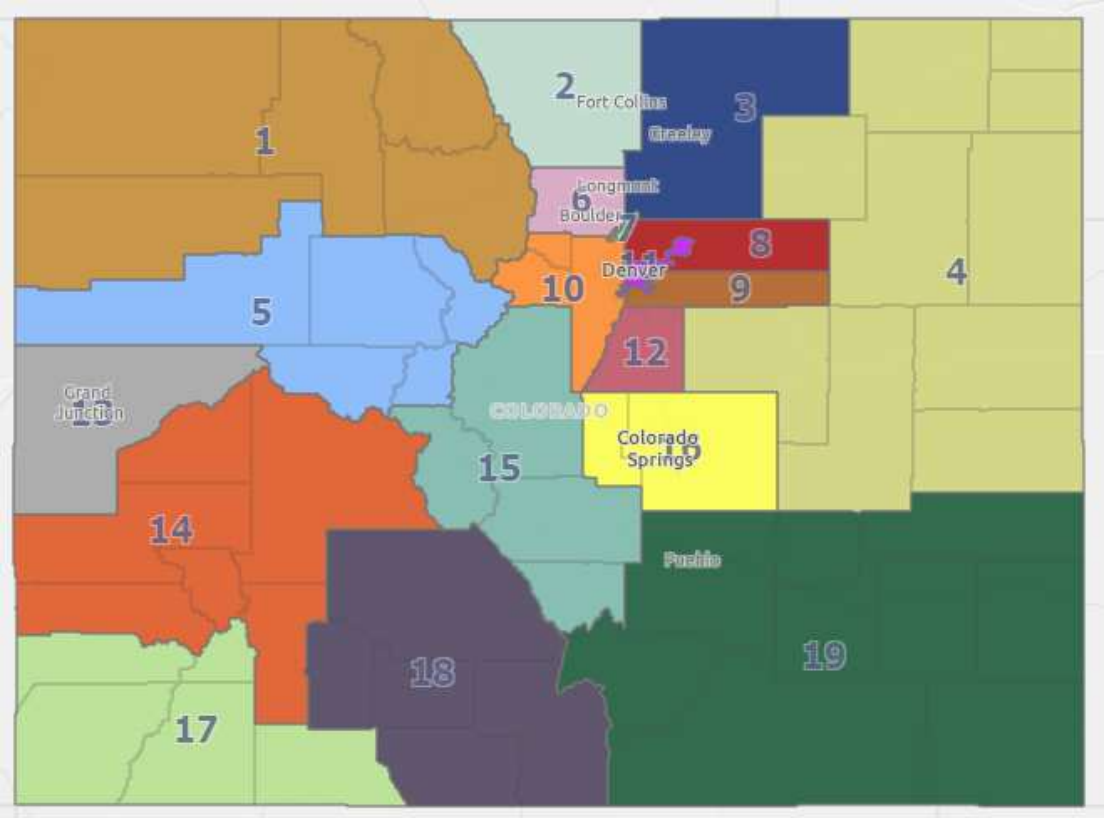
Feasibility: *Medium.* This sales tax is intended to improve public safety, which provides a direct opportunity for engagement on other potential uses of these funds that would produce better crime, recidivism, and other outcomes of interest. The ballot language for this tax is very specific and notes that these tax dollars must be deposited into the Police Sales and Use Tax Fund and be spent "solely for police personnel and operating needs" (Ordinance 10261). While this language is very specific, given the ways the police department has used these funds, it is possible that it may be legal to grant these funds out as part of their operational needs. This would likely require support from multiple city legal experts and could be difficult to achieve, especially given the challenges associated with staffing police departments locally and statewide. While changing the interpretation of the existing language may be challenging, changing this language could be possible in future election cycles. The new language could make it clear that a portion of these funds should be reinvested in community-based programming intended to improve public safety outcomes. It is also important to note that there have been significant fund balances in this fund. For example, the fund balance documented in the 2023 Pueblo City indicates that there was a $2.5 million unexpended fund balance from the previous year (City of Pueblo 2023). This suggests that the tax revenue and funding available, which is projected to increase overtime, has room for criminal justice reinvestment initiatives.

Opioid Settlement Funds

EXHIBIT 26. Funding Details

FY 2023 Funding	Multiple funding streams
Trend	Increasing
Type	Restricted by the Colorado Opioids Settlement Memorandum of Understanding (Colorado Attorney General's Office)

Description	In 2020–2021, settlements were reached nationwide with large drug distribution companies to resolve claims by state and local governments. As part of the MOU framework, each region is required to create a regional council to develop and implement a two-year rolling plan outlining the funding uses. Funding is distributed using a formula-based approach: • 10 percent directly to the State • 20 percent directly to participating local governments • 10 percent to specific abatement infrastructure projects • 60 percent directly to regions (see below)



Source: Colorado Attorney General's Office

Impact: *Positive.* These funds are restricted for "approved purposes" as outlined by the MOU, which provides dozens of forward-looking potential programs and services that are intended to abate the opioid epidemic (Colorado Attorney General's Office). There are many allowable programs and services, listed in Exhibit 27, many of which are connected to evidenced-based models that have been shown to improve outcomes, including many for "criminal justice involved persons." These funds can be used for "law enforcement expenditures relating to the opioid epidemic" which could result in these funds supporting police and sheriff spending with much less specificity on their use.

EXHIBIT 27. Sample of Approved Purposes for Opioid Settlement Funding by Category

Category and Strategy	Approved Programs and Services (Excerpts)
Treatment	
Treatment of opioid use disorder and its effects	Medication-assisted treatment (MAT), supportive housing, mental health, scholarships for counselors, healthcare provider training, development of databases and curricula
Intervention	Screening, brief intervention and referral to treatment, emergency medical systems supports, engagement with nonprofits and faith community support treatment options
Criminal justice–involved persons	Pre-arrest diversion, pretrial services, MAT and other treatments, recovery support, harm reduction strategies, reentry programming, Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion programs, Drug Abuse Response Team models
Women who are or may become pregnant	MAT, child and family supports, training for healthcare personnel
People in treatment and recovery	Medical detox, peer support services, counseling, case management, community navigators, training and development of procedures for government staff, engaging nonprofits and faith community as a system to support family members
Prevention	
Prescribing practices	Training for healthcare providers, academic detailing, support for non-opioid treatment alternatives
Misuse of opioids	Public education on drug disposal, school-based programs, community coalition support, community education campaigns
Overdose deaths and other harms	Naloxone distribution, training and education for first responders, data tracking software, syringe service programs, expanded testing and treatment for HIV and other infectious diseases
Additional Areas	
Services for children	Childrens services, including supportive housing and foster care
First responders	Law enforcement expenditures relating to the opioid epidemic
Community leadership	Regional planning, government dashboards
Staffing and training	Cross-system coordination
Research	Opioid abatement, harm reduction, and MAT research
Other	Administrative costs for approved purposes

Source: Colorado Opioids Settlement Memorandum of Understanding

Action Step: *Multiple*. Two funding streams could be leveraged. The City of Pueblo will receive over 2 million dollars over the next 18 years, which the city council will allocated (Hutting, 2023). The Southeast Colorado Opioid Region (SECOR) settlement board will also receive funds to support services in the area, which includes Pueblo. As did many other Region 19 jurisdictions, Pueblo County opted out of receiving direct funds, so its allocations will be added to the amount under the control of the regional settlement board.

Feasibility: *High.* With two funding sources, there is significant opportunity to identify and potentially secure resources for community-based programming. While these funds are more closely tied to opioid epidemic abatement, public safety agencies will be working to secure these resources and there are many currently or formerly incarcerated citizens impacted by this crisis. Also, these resources are going to provide significant opportunities for program investment without an increase in taxes at the city or county levels.

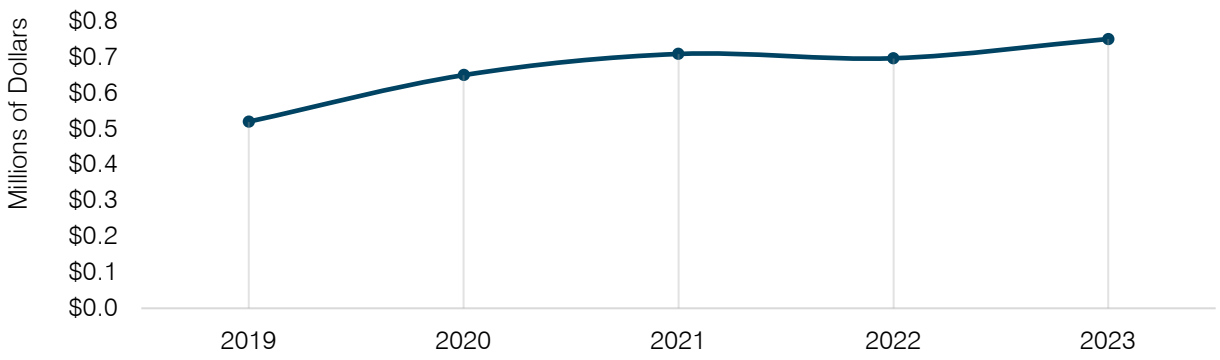
At the regional level, it is anticipated that SECOR will receive $35.6 million between 2022 and 2038, with $4.7 million already being available as of September 2023 (Colorado Attorney General's Office). While not all this funding will go directly to the Pueblo area, it is the largest population center in this region. In addition to these funds, the city and county will receive their own allocations. So far, it appears that most funds are being allocated based on requests for proposals. The board meets regularly and recently voted on how to distribute its initial funds for harm reduction services in October 2023 (SECOR 2023). Monitoring this board and engaging funding opportunities could result in seed funds for community-based programs. However, this funding is time-limited, but initial investments could still be valuable for starting new initiatives.

At the local level, the City has already dedicated some money for addiction and prevention services (Barreto 2023). It has flexibility within MOU-determined approved purposes to determine how the funds are used and may be willing to support interventions and programs after the settlement funds are exhausted. Allocations for these funds do not appear to always align with regular budget processes, so it is critical to carefully track local allocation updates. For example, in spring 2023, the city council distributed $55,000 to the Pueblo Department of Public Health and Environment and then in June allocated another $450,000 to Pueblo School District 60 to support drug abuse prevention and life skills programming over the next three years (Bartolo 2023). While smaller than those of SECOR, the city's funding levels are still valuable resources that could support community-based programming and services.

School Resource Officers–City of Pueblo

EXHIBIT 28. Funding Details

FY 2023 Funding	$750,791
Trend	Gradual increase
Type	General fund
Description	This funding pays for the personnel, training, and operating expenses of SROs who work in District 60. These officers provide district schools with D.A.R.E programming, conflict resolution services, law enforcement, and school safety plan support. The police department has offered to provide more officers at more than the five current after school events, which are currently part of the scope of work at the rate of $95.77 per hour.



Sources: City of Pueblo annual budgets, 2019–2023

Impact: *Mixed.* Research results on SROs is relatively mixed, with studies showing positive, neutral, and negative impacts. For example, a 2017 University of Maryland study found that increasing SROs resulted in an increase in the number of "drug- and weapon-related offenses and exclusionary disciplinary actions for treatment schools relative to comparison schools" (Gottfredson et al. 2020). A RAND Corporation study, using data from the U.S. Department of Justice COPS Office and Office of Civil Rights, found that while SROs reduce some forms of serious non-gun-related in-school violence, SRO presence also intensified the use of suspension, expulsion, police referral, and arrest of students. They also found that the increase in disciplinary and police actions were consistently larger for Black students, male students, and students with disabilities (Sorensen et al. 2023). A local analysis of SRO and police contact did find that while there were over 400 interactions that resulted in a summons or arrest, that racial disparities were not evident at the district level.[4]

Action Step: *Ordinance.* Every year the city council must approve an agreement between District 60 and the police department. SRO agreements are approved in the fall each year and are likely negotiated earlier in the year. The council can reject or approve the agreement, but any changes would likely need to be made during contract discussions between District 60 and the police department, as the council's role is simply to approve or reject the agreement.

Feasibility: *Medium.* It is unlikely that repurposing these dollars for community-based alternatives is unlikely and program elimination is likely to face significant opposition. The ordinance approving the SRO program and budget had no public comments and was approved six to one, with Councilor Ortega being the only vote in opposition to the agreement. It is worth emphasizing that action by the school board or city council could result in the modification of this agreement. Changes do not require voter approval and only need to be approved by all parties.

[4] The data upon which this analysis was based are unpublished data.

Tier Two: Engagement Opportunities

ICCS Pueblo

EXHIBIT 29. Funding Details

FY 2023 Funding	$2,814,224
Trend	None
Type	Restricted
Description	In July 2023, the board of commissioners renewed a contract between the county and ICCS following a request for proposal (RFP) process and a recommendation from the correctional services department. These are state funds that are restricted for the placement of diversion, transitional, and parole of "state offenders" in corrections services located within the region (Pueblo County Board of Commissioners 2023).

Impact: *Unclear.* While many evidence-based community corrections programs and practices have demonstrated positive impacts on key outcomes, it is unclear whether ICCS delivers high-quality services. For example, ICCS states it offers diversion and treatment programming, but there is no detail on how those services are offered and the number of clients they have served under previous contracts. Despite investigation by local journalists, it remains unclear whether ICCS's program improves client outcomes (Rice 2023).

Action Step: *Resolution.* The ICCS contract was renewed for five years in July 2023, but the board of commissioners resolution extends only through July 2024 (Rice 2023). Regardless of the contract timeline, the board has jurisdiction over this process and the award of these state funds.

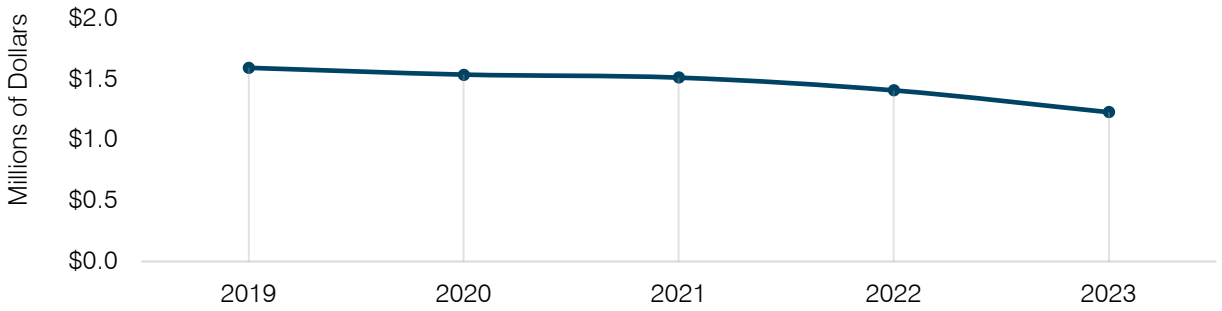
Feasibility: *Low.* Repurposing these dollars for community-based alternatives is not likely, but community leaders may want to consider engaging in greater oversight over this contract and look for opportunities to improve and expand the services this funding is intended to support. Correctional services leadership indicated that there was only one bidder on this contract and that ICCS was able to meet the minimum qualifications. Publicly available documents do not show any performance metrics (which may be available to the department), but the community could press for greater transparency in how these valuable taxpayer funds are being used.

The Pueblo County Community Corrections Board also has a role to play in this process and have citizen members. It governs the establishment and operation of all community correction in the county and is supposed to be monitoring standards and managing contracts in this area. These boards exist across the state, but the quality of their work is often highly variable and there may be opportunity to build relationships and improve services through this entity.

Sheriff Fees

EXHIBIT 30. Funding Details

FY 2023 Funding	$1,230,00
Trend	Stable
Type	Restricted
Description	These sheriff fees are collected from the public and those detained in the county jail. The funds are restricted because they come from fines and fees, but it is unclear what they are specifically being used for using only publicly available documents.



Sources: Pueblo County adopted budgets, 2019–2023

Impact: *Negative.* These funds are being extracted from the public and incarcerated people and it is unclear how they are being used. It is likely the funds support sheriff operations alongside other general and restricted funds, but that information is not included in the publicly available budget documents. While all these fees may be of interest to the community, the detention bureau fees listed below are most relevant to this analysis.

EXHIBIT 31. Pueblo Sheriff's Department Fees–Detention Division

Description	2023 Adopted Budget Amount
Prisoner housing fees	$350,000
Commissary delivery revenue	$15,000
Inmate health services fees	$7,000
Inmate bonding fees	$14,000
Inmate defaults	$35,000
Inmate booking fee	$120,000
Commission pay phone	$225,000
Total	**$766,000**

Source: Pueblo County n.d.

Action Step: *Budget*. These funds are restricted because they are accrued from fees and fines, but it is currently unclear how they are being used. The annual budget process provides an opportunity for engagement on these fines and fees.

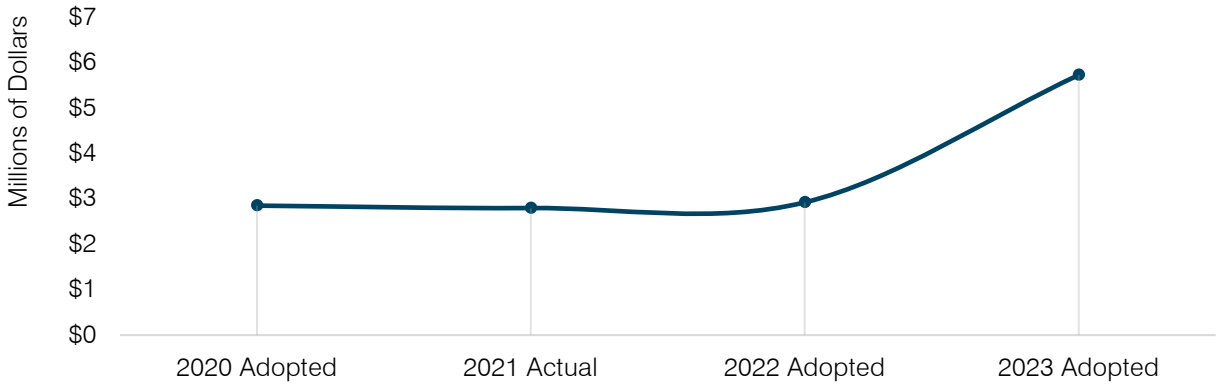
Feasibility: *Medium*. The extent to which community leaders want to influence this funding stream's collection and use is likely to vary depending on strategy. Some may want to advocate for abolishing these fees, particularly those charged to individuals in sheriff's office custody, but others may determine that doing so would be too difficult and opt for a strategy to ensure these funds are dedicated to in-custody or community-based programming. The sheriff's office is not likely to support these efforts, but given that these fees and fines provide a relatively small amount of overall department revenue, there may be room for discussion. However these funds are being used, it is likely that that spending could be supported by other revenue sources. That said, it is possible the department believes there are other benefits associated with charging these fees that may complicate these conversations.

Tier Three: Prospects

Law Enforcement Grants

EXHIBIT 32. Funding Details

FY 2023 Funding	$5,726,868
Trend	Increase
Type	Unclear
Description	Publicly available budget documents do not provide information on use of funds.



Note: While these grants were clearly funded based on actual spending being reported in the 2023 budget, this line item was not specifically identified in the adopted 2021 budget.
Sources: Pueblo County adopted budgets, 2019–2023

Impact: *Unclear*. With no information provided in publicly available documents identified by PSC, it is impossible to assess the potential impact of this spending.

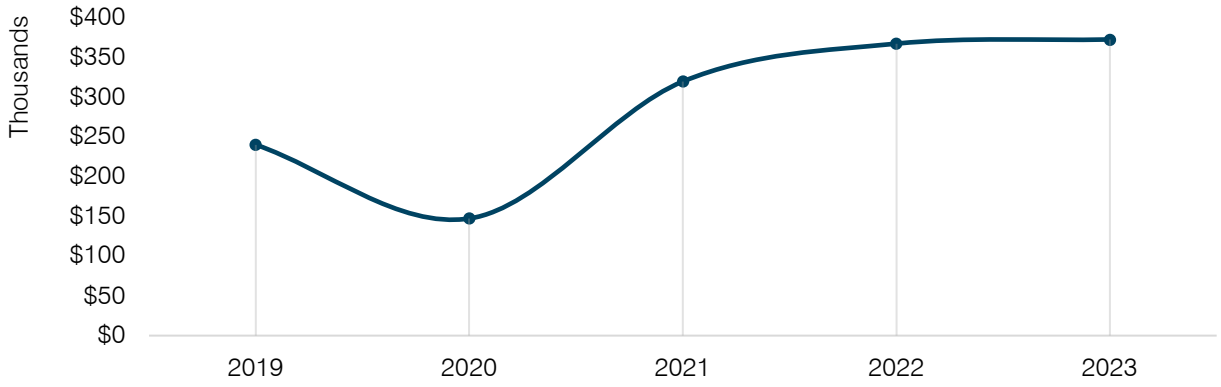
Action Step: *Unclear*. It is difficult to determine whether these grants are funded through the general fund or a different restricted fund. More information on the governing authority for these grants is needed to determine what action step(s) might be required to shift or repurpose this funding.

Feasibility: *Low.* Given the lack of detail on this line item, it is likely not a strong candidate for the repurposing of funds for community-based alternatives, particularly in the short term. These grants may be just pass-throughs of funding to local law enforcement departments. That said, there is a potential that these grants could serve as a vehicle for community-based programming over the medium to long term if more information becomes available on how funds are used, governed, distributed, etc.

District Attorney Grants

EXHIBIT 33. Funding Details

FY 2023 Funding	$372,594
Trend	Gradual increase
Type	Restricted
Description	These funds appear to be general funds, but is possible that there are some restricted funds that are supporting these grants (e.g., sales tax, state grants, etc.). Based on a review of the expenditures and revenues within the grant fund, it appears that these resources are being used for crime victim supports and juvenile diversion.



Sources: Pueblo County adopted budgets, 2019–2023

Impact: *Mixed.* The largest expenditures for this line item are related to the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and the State Victim Assistance and Law Enforcement (VALE) programs, but there is also a small amount of funding for juvenile diversion. VOCA and VALE are both intended to provide support to victims of crime. The former is a federal grant program that is intended to provide resources to support crisis intervention, emergency services, counseling, legal advocacy, court supports, and volunteer training (Colorado Department of Public Safety 2023a). The latter is a state-based program that provides agencies at the local level that support victims of crime. VALE supports are managed by

an administrator, which for Pueblo is Hope Martinez at the District Attorney's Office according the 2023 annual report (Colorado Department of Public Safety 2023b). Funding for the VALE program was distributed to the organizations listed in Exhibit 34 in 2021, which is the most recent year of available data.

EXHIBIT 34. Funding Details

Category/Organization	2021
General Victim Services	
Colorado Legal Services	$25,000
Tenth Judicial District Probation Department	$28,113
YWCA of Pueblo	$83,721
Intervention	$4,500
Sexual Assault Services	
Pueblo Rape Crisis Services	$38,800
Child Victim Services	
CASA of Pueblo	$30,000
Pueblo Child Advocacy Center	$29,500
Law Enforcement Services	
Pueblo County Sheriff's Office	$34,678
District Attorney Office Services	
Victim Witness Unit	$64,490
Total	**$338,802**

Source: Colorado Department of Public Safety 2023b

Juvenile diversion is also funded through this line item and only received $25,000 in 2023 adopted budget. Meta-analytic research has shown that juvenile diversion programs can have a positive impact on recidivism (DOJ 2015).

Action Step: *Budget and RFP.* The programs in this line item are either restricted by state or federal guidelines and budgets. That said, it is possible that budget advocacy could result in non-State or federal resources being directed to juvenile diversion or a shift in how the district attorney's office allocates the grant funds it manages for the Tenth Judicial District. It appears that applications for VALE funding are due to the program administrator each fall, with awards being made in November each year.

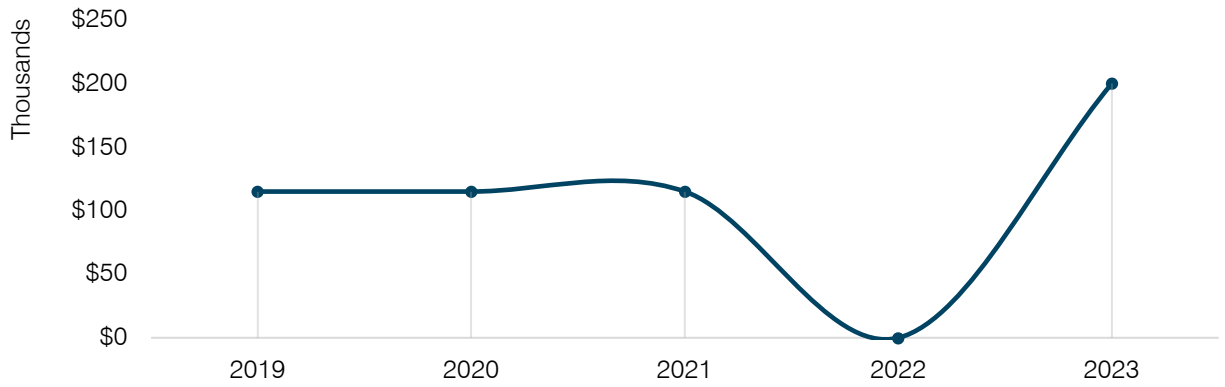
Feasibility: *Low.* Given that these are restricted funds, repurposing them would be challenging. That said, this line item could provide an opportunity for greater investment in juvenile diversion, which currently appears to be primarily supported through a state reimbursement. Greater investment of county resources could increase access to these diversion services even if the State does not contribute

more funding to local district attorney's offices. Also, victim-services funding is competitive and community-based organizations could build relationships and strong funding applications to secure these resources if there is interest in providing these types of services to victims of crime.

Vacancy Savings

EXHIBIT 35. Funding Details

FY 2023 Funding	$200,000
Trend	None
Type	General fund
Description	If the Pueblo Sheriff's Department, or another department, does not fill all available positions, the department accrues savings from not spending resources on staff. These savings are referred to as vacancy savings. Many of these savings are not cataloged in the annual budget, but are documented when the department plans to hold some positions open and wants to reflect those savings in the budget. In FY 2023, the adopted budget indicates that that department's law enforcement planned to save $200,000 in potential expenditures through vacancy savings.



Sources: Pueblo County adopted budgets, 2019–2023

Impact: *N/A*. Not spending these resources is not intended to have a positive or negative impact on outcomes of interest.

Action Step: *Budget*. These funds appear to be general fund savings and their restricted revenues are not being sacrificed for these unfilled positions. Repurposing general funds can be done through the annual budget process.

Feasibility: *Low.* Repurposing personnel funding is always challenging, but vacancy savings may be even more difficult to move. First, they are very difficult to fully quantify. While the FY 2023 budget indicates the department expects to save $200,000 through vacancy savings, it is likely not the total. Law enforcement divisions across the state and nation are struggling to fill vacancies and recruiting classes, so it is possible that the actual number will be much larger than $200,000. Second, even when

the full amount is known, it only represents a point in time and departments can use these general funds to cover other expenses. This results in applying vacancy savings elsewhere in the budget by the end of the year. As shown in Exhibit 35 on the previous page, over the last five years there have been anticipated vacancy savings in the adopted budget that do not end up showing up in the actuals when those are reported later. Finally, vacancy savings are likely to become more important if there is a downturn in the economy or one-time infusions of state and federal funding are not replaced. The inability to fill positions and the savings that come with that challenge may start to be perceived as a critical place to reduce spending without formally trimming the budget. That said, advocates could continue to monitor reports on vacancies and look for opportunities to engage with departments and policymakers about the possibility of repurposing these adopted savings because that would not require an increase in taxes or an increased budget.

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