

Redbook

LBO Analysis of Executive Budget Proposal

Ohio Expositions Commission

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LBO Redbook

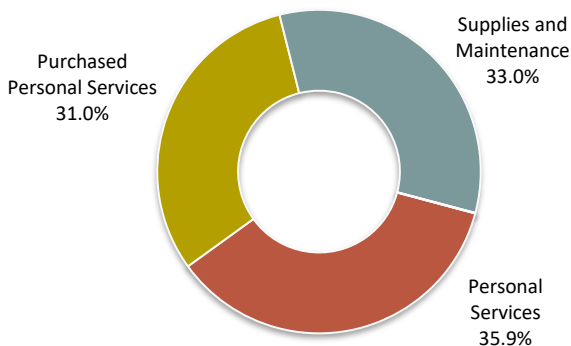
Ohio Expositions Commission

Quick look...

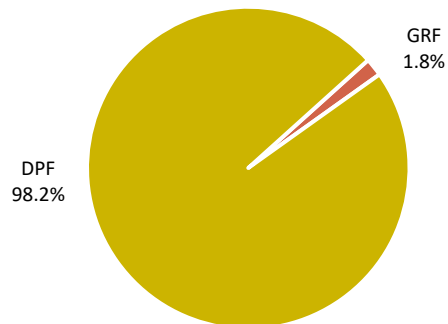
- The Ohio Expositions Commission (EXP) produces the annual Ohio State Fair and operates the Ohio Expo Center, a year-round multipurpose convention and meeting facility.
- The Commission is governed by a 14-member board, consisting of nine gubernatorial appointees; directors of the Department of Development, Agriculture, and Natural Resources; and chairs of the House and Senate standing committees that deal with agricultural issues.
- The Commission employs around 50 full-time permanent staff, and about 800 seasonal workers.
- The executive recommends \$42.1 million in funding over the biennium. Uses of the budget are as follows: 35.9% for personal services, 33.0% for supplies and maintenance, 31.0% for purchased personal services, and \$20,000 (0.05%) for transfers and nonexpense.

Fund Group	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
General Revenue	\$368,960	\$380,000	\$380,000	\$380,000
Dedicated Purpose	\$50,766,830	\$159,656,539	\$20,650,000	\$20,650,000
Total	\$51,135,790	\$160,036,539	\$21,030,000	\$21,030,000
% change	--	548.4%	87.1%	0.0%
GRF % change	--	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%

**Chart 1: EXP Budget by Expense Category
FY 2026-FY 2027 Biennium**



**Chart 2: EXP Budget by Fund Group
FY 2026-FY 2027 Biennium**



Biennial total: \$42.1 million

Agency overview

The Ohio Expositions Commission (EXP) is responsible for maintaining the buildings and grounds on an approximately 360-acre site in Columbus that is used as a year-round venue for large events and exhibitions. The Commission is governed by a 14-member board. The EXP staff roster includes 55 full-time employees and 800 seasonal workers. Overall, there are over 1 million square feet of event space in the 14 buildings that are part of the Ohio Expo Center. In addition to hosting the annual Ohio State Fair, the Expo Center brings in approximately 150 events and exhibitions.

Typically, receipts from these sources make up the bulk of operating revenue under EXP’s budget. However, for the FY 2024-FY 2025 biennium, EXP was supported by a cash transfer of FY 2023 GRF surplus revenue. This funding was to support projects detailed in the Ohio Expo 2050 Master Plan for the Expo Center and State Fair. Beyond what is appropriated for operating expenses in the main operating budget, EXP receives funding under the capital budget. The capital funding goes toward modernizing the buildings and grounds in order to keep the Expo Center competitive among other venues in bidding for shows and exhibitions.

Analysis of FY 2026-FY 2027 budget proposal

Overall, the executive recommended budget for EXP is approximately \$21.0 million in FY 2026 and \$21.0 million in FY 2027. Almost all of the funding is supported by fees related to the annual Ohio State Fair and other events held on the grounds. A very small part of the budget, a subsidy related to the Junior State Fair, is from the GRF.

Approximately 35.9%, or \$15.1 million of the total biennial budget, is for payroll and fringe benefits. About 33.0%, approximately \$13.9 million, is for supplies, maintenance, and other costs. Purchased personal services make up 31.0% of budgeted expenses or about \$13.1 million. The remaining \$20,000 of the total is for transfers and nonexpense items.

Operating Expenses (ALI 723601)

FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
Fund 5060 ALI 723601, Operating Expenses					
\$7,109,403	\$15,763,954	\$19,440,881	\$19,126,000	\$20,000,000	\$20,000,000
% change	121.7%	23.3%	-1.6%	4.6%	0.0%

This ALI is used to pay all expenses related to operations at the Expo Center. Also, any additional expenses for the Junior Fair portion of the Ohio State Fair in excess of the GRF subsidy for that purpose is absorbed by funding provided in this ALI. The Ohio Expositions Fund (Fund 5060) is comprised of fees charged during the annual State Fair and nonfair events. Income is derived from space rentals, exhibit entries, admissions, parking, and other such sources. Nonfair revenues consist of charges for building rentals, parking, and concession income from the 150 or so events held at the Expo Center throughout the year. Overall, FY 2024 receipts from the State Fair and nonfair events totaled approximately \$17.3 million. Of that amount, approximately \$11.6 million (67.1%) was from the 2024 State Fair. The 2024 Ohio State Fair generated a small

loss for the state. More information on the financial results of the 2024 Ohio State Fair can be found in LBO's Budget Footnotes publication (February 2025 [Issue Update](#)).

Grounds Maintenance and Repairs (ALI 723604)

FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
Fund 5060 ALI 723604, Grounds Maintenance and Repairs					
\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
% change	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

This ALI provides supplementary support for maintenance and repairs on the grounds of the Expo Center. It is also funded by receipts from the State Fair and other events that are deposited into Fund 5060. Upgrades to the fairgrounds are undertaken with the goal of making the property more attractive to potential customers and increasing the number of nonfair events held at the fairgrounds. Any such costs that exceed the amount recommended would be paid from appropriation item 723601, Operating Expenses.

In addition to this funding, EXP typically receives capital funding for building and grounds renovations, upgrades, and new construction. H.B. 2, the capital budget for the FY 2025-FY 2026 capital biennium, provided \$205.9 million for projects at the fairgrounds, almost all of which was to support the first phase of the Expo 2050 Master Plan.

EXPO 2050 (ALI 723605)

FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
Fund 5ZN0 ALI 723605, EXPO 2050					
\$0	\$0	\$21,257,163	\$142,395,539	\$0	\$0
% change	0.0%	N/A	569.6%	-100.0%	0.0%

This ALI supports the Ohio Expo 2050 Master Plan that was revealed in December 2022. The master plan includes a new overall organization of the Expo Center property, including the renovation, modernization, or demolition of several buildings. It also involves new exhibition facilities, parking garages, and other areas to enhance guest experience. Another component is improving access between the Expo Center and the nearby Ohio History Connection. Funding for this ALI was supported by a cash transfer of FY 2023 GRF surplus revenue deposited into the EXPO 2050 Fund (Fund 5ZN0).

Junior Fair Subsidy (ALI 723403)

FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
GRF ALI 723403, Junior Fair Subsidy					
\$350,643	\$362,650	\$368,960	\$380,000	\$380,000	\$380,000
% change	3.4%	1.7%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%

This ALI is used to support the Junior Fair portion of the Ohio State Fair, which includes (1) premium payments to participants, (2) payments for judges, meals, and lodging for the All-Ohio State Fair Band and Choir, and (3) other related costs. The Junior Fair Subsidy paid out approximately \$369,000 in FY 2024 and about \$362,000 in FY 2025.

Ohio State Fair Harness Racing (ALI 723602)

FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
Fund 4N20 ALI 723602, Ohio State Fair Harness Racing					
\$287,405	\$316,766	\$297,195	\$350,000	\$350,000	\$350,000
% change	10.2%	-6.2%	17.8%	0.0%	0.0%

This ALI is used to pay cash awards for harness races held in conjunction with the State Fair. The Ohio State Fair Harness Racing Fund (Fund 4N20) is a pass-through account which holds entry fee receipts for the harness races collected by the Commission. These amounts are then disbursed to Scioto Downs, where these races are held. The executive provides \$350,000 in each fiscal year of the biennium for cash awards. Overall, Fund 4N20 collected approximately \$73,000 in receipts and disbursed approximately \$297,195 in awards in FY 2024.