



ALLEGHENY INSTITUTE

FOR PUBLIC POLICY

October 29, 2025

Policy Brief: Volume 25, Number 36

Allegheny County's headcount changes

Summary: Allegheny County's operating employment headcount is proposed to decrease from 6,149 to 5,484 (665 positions, or 10.8 percent) next year. Despite this, expenses for personnel and fringe benefits are projected to grow from \$546.4 million to \$568.4 million (\$22 million, or 4 percent).

On Oct. 7, Allegheny County's chief executive presented the 2026 Comprehensive Fiscal Plan (Plan), outlining proposed spending on operations (\$1.19 billion); capital projects (\$119.7 million); grants (\$1.48 billion) and special accounts (\$170.5 million). The grand total comes to \$2.96 billion. County Council is deliberating on the Plan.

The press release accompanying the Plan noted \$15 million in operating budgetary savings were achieved. One of the contributing factors was "[c]losing approximately 675 vacant county positions. About 30 of these positions are funded vacant positions, the rest were unfunded."

The Plan's "Full-time Operating Headcount By Department" table shows 2025's adopted budget has 29 departments (this includes separately elected row offices and the Court of Common Pleas) with 6,149 positions. As recommended for 2026, there would be 28 departments with 5,484 positions. Thus, the "variance" is a decrease of 665 positions. The table does not indicate which positions that would be eliminated are funded or unfunded.

The budget impact (by object code and character level) on personnel (mostly salaries and overtime) and fringe benefits (mostly pension, health and medical) from eliminating the vacant positions won't decrease either of those expenses. Personnel would rise from the current level of \$388.9 million to \$402.9 million (\$13.9 million, or 3.6 percent) and fringe benefits would rise from \$157.5 million to \$165.6 million (\$8 million, or 5.1 percent). This is likely due to salary and benefit increases for positions that will remain filled.

Comparing 2025 and 2026 personnel and fringe benefits on a per position basis with the elimination of vacant positions is useful. The 2025 adopted personnel expense of \$388.9 million spread over an adopted headcount of 6,149 results in \$63,246 per position. That year's fringe benefits would be \$25,618 per position, for a combined \$88,864.

If the decrease of 665 positions happened this time last year, and if personnel and fringe benefits stayed at the adopted 2025 amounts, the resulting per position totals would be \$70,916 and \$28,724, resulting in a combined \$99,640.

Based on the Plan's proposed 2026 personnel and fringe benefits—\$402.9 million and \$165.6 million—and the proposed headcount, the resulting per position amounts would be \$73,462 and \$30,190 for a total of \$103,652. Thus, the per position expense would increase 17 percent over 2025's adopted level.

There are additional expenses in each department (supplies, services and other) to be accounted for in addition to employee expenditures.

Below is an analysis of how departments are proposed to change for headcount and expenditures:

No variance in positions: Eight departments with a total of 609 positions would retain that same number. These departments include the county executive, council, police and sheriff, with the latter two representing over 80 percent of the eight departments' positions. There would be a small overall spending increase from \$92.9 million to \$93.8 million (\$841,630, or 0.9 percent).

Positive variance in positions/reorganization: There would be an increase of one position for the public defender to reach 157 positions. Equity and inclusion would be shuttered and its 12 positions moved to a renamed Department of Management and Budget (formerly budget and finance). It is possible positions from other departments may be moving into management and budget but the table does not specifically make that clear. In this group, there would be a total of 199 positions. Spending would increase from \$17.2 million to \$20.8 million (\$3.6 million, or 21.1 percent).

Negative variance in positions: Eighteen departments would have a decrease in headcount, falling from a combined 5,362 to 4,676 positions (686 positions, or 12.8 percent). Over half of the decrease—380 positions—would come from the Kane Regional Centers, which would see headcount fall from 1,100 to 720. The Department of Human Services would have 565 positions, down from 670 (105 positions, or 15.7 percent). The county's jail, where inmate population was pointed to as a major expense driver, would see headcount decrease from 804 to 727 (77 positions, or 9.6 percent). The remaining departments would see decreases of anywhere from 1 to 20 or so positions. Despite the headcount decrease, spending would grow overall from \$857.3 million to \$889.7 million (\$32.5 million, or 3.8 percent).

The \$15 million in savings amounts to 1.3 percent of the Plan's operating budget of \$1.19 billion, which overall is proposed to increase 1.5 percent over this year. Recall the 2025 Plan would have led to a 2.2 mill property tax increase and a spending boost of 13.9 percent over the 2024 level. Council pushback led to an agreement on a 1.7 mill increase and spending grew 11.4 percent.

Is no tax increase and \$15 million in savings palatable to County Council? Or is there a desire to save more? The county's Home Rule Charter has the tools to examine whether the functions being performed are in the best interest of the county's taxpayers.

The 2025 sunset review will cover police, jail, medical examiner and emergency services. The police and emergency services would not change in headcount under the Plan while the jail and medical examiner would decrease in headcount.

In addition, the Government Review Commission, which convenes once a decade, now has all nine appointees. It is not clear what topics that body will take up. But with a year to complete its work it won't have an impact on 2026.

Those reviews should be helping elected officials determine the core, necessary functions of county government in the short- and long-term. They should strive to make county government more efficient and less costly. Allegheny County taxpayers deserve nothing less.

Eric Montarti, Research Director

Alex Sodini, Research Associate

Policy Briefs may be reprinted as long as proper attribution is given.

Allegheny Institute for Public Policy
305 Mt. Lebanon Blvd.* Suite 208* Pittsburgh PA 15234
Phone (412) 440-0079
E-mail: aipp@alleghenyinstitute.org
Website: www.alleghenyinstitute.org
X (Twitter): [AlleghenyInstil](https://twitter.com/AlleghenyInstil)