



FY27 Heads Up

Budget Retreat, January 2026



Agenda

**The Heads-Up
Process**

**Common Issues
Identified by
CITs**

**Takeaways for
the FY27**

The Heads-Up Process

Heads Up is an opportunity for county departments to identify and detail internal or external issues, trends, or opportunities using historical and current year data, often from performance and financial measures, that may impact them in the upcoming budget year.

Due in November, Heads Up issues and their common themes provide a more holistic context for budget requests submitted in January and February and potential operational or budgetary pressures that departments might face.

The Heads-Up Process

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NOV

Heads
Up



DEC

Follow-Up &
Retreat Prep

JAN

Expansion
Requests

FEB

Continuation
Requests

MAR - MAY

Budget
Balancing

The Heads-Up Process

What Departments Submit

Questions on the form include identifying the root cause of the problem, its financial, safety, or compliance impacts, and how it affects operations and residents/customers.

Departments also categorize the issue by theme.

The Heads-Up Process

Themes for categorizing Heads Up issues include

**Access to
Technology**

**Application
Support &
Infrastructure**

Equity

**Hurdles to
Commissioner
Goals**

**Internal Process
Management**

**Legislative
Impacts**

**Safety of the
Public and/or
Staff**

**Service
Availability &
Capacity**

Budget Functional Area CITs

Administration	Culture, Education, & Recreation	General Government	Human Services	Natural Resource Management	Public Safety
CCACC Attorney Court Facilities Facilities + Fleet Finance GIS Human Resources & Risk Manager's Office IT	CCCC Chatham County Schools Cooperative Extension Library Parks, Recreation, & Cultural Resources	Elections Governing Board Register of Deeds Tax Administration	Aging Services Chatham Trades Chatham Transit DSS Human Services – Non-Profits Public Health Vaya – Mental Health	Central Permitting & Inspections CVB EDC Planning Soil & Water Sustainability Solid Waste & Recycling* Watershed Protection	Diversion & Advocacy Programs Emergency Operations EMS Fire Inspections Sheriff's Office

Heads Up **Themes by CITs**

	Administration	Culture, Education, & Recreation	General Government	Human Services	Natural Resource Management	Public Safety
Access to Technology	X	X			X	
Application Support & Infrastructure	X				X	
Equity	X	X		X	X	X
Hurdles to Commissioner Goals	X	X	X	X	X	
Legislative Impacts	X		X	X	X	
Internal Process Management	X	X	X	X	X	
Safety of the Public and/or Staff	X	X		X	X	X
Service Availability & Capacity	X	X	X	X	X	X

Heads Up Themes by Core Issue

	Administration	Culture, Education, & Recreation	General Government	Human Services	Natural Resource Management	Public Safety
Application Support & Infrastructure	X				X	
Equity		X		X		
Hurdles to Commissioner Goals					X	
Legislative Impacts			X	X	X	
Internal Process Management		X	X	X		
Service Availability & Capacity	X	X	X	X	X	X

Application Support & Infrastructure

FY
25

FY
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FY
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Administration

Manager’s Office

Lacking a unified platform, current methods for media monitoring are decentralized, resulting in reduced efficiency and response times.

DOJ updates to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires all digital content to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1, Level AA.

GIS

DJI, a leading drone manufacturer, is a Chinese company that may not meet an upcoming FCC security audit. FCC & FAA regulations may affect the county’s fleet of DJI drones.

Natural Resources Management

Inspections

With 120 internal users, the administration of OpenGov software is exceeding staff capacity.

10%

12%

7%

Equity

Human Services

Diversion & Advocacy Programs

Driver’s license suspension is a barrier to stability and employment. Community members and those navigating reentry need structured support.

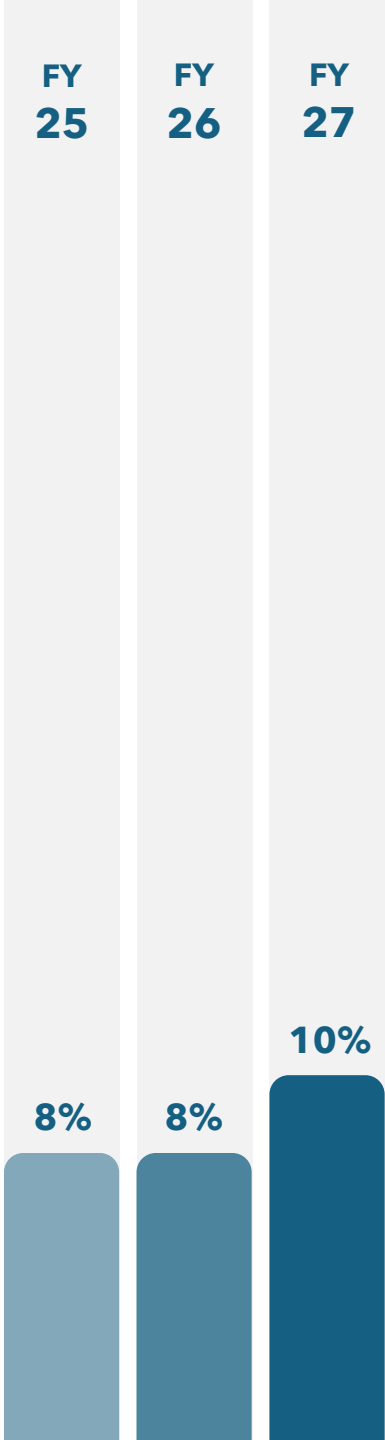
Public Health

There is not currently a mechanism to provide additional compensation for Spanish-speaking staff. Bilingual staff are paramount for providing equitable, culturally appropriate services.

Culture, Education, & Recreation

Library

Outreach Services requires greater investment to support programming across the county. The long-term goal is to provide “Exemplary” level service, as defined by state library standards, to residents unable to visit library branches.



Hurdles to Commissioner Goals

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FY
27

Natural Resource Management

Planning

UDO updates to comply with Senate Bill 382 will require mass property notifications related to rezonings and user-friendly code hosting software.

UDO regulations necessitate arborist or landscape architect expertise to assess tree protection, planting, and surveying for project submittal reviews.

Increasing the number of sites surveyed for the Natural Heritage Program (NHP).

Implementing a Conservation Dashboard to track Plan Chatham’s Conservation Goals.

Implementing Phase II of MoveChatham to develop a Multimodal Transportation Plan.

Sustainability

Development of a climate action plan that focuses on mitigation and resilience.

EDC

The Business Retention Program (BRE) has continued to provide new opportunities to connect existing industries with a network of established firms. Event costs associated with cultivating and expanding the local business community have strained the program’s budget.

Watershed Protection

County-owned Stormwater Control Measures (SCM’s) require repair to function as designed, and risk regulatory non-compliance with state and county regulations.

4%

11%

14%

Legislative Impacts

Human Services

Public Health

Title X Family Planning funds are facing a 10% cut, Medicaid a 3% cut, and some grants are not expected to be funded in the future, such as the Childhood Lead Program.

DSS

FNS/SNAP - 25% cut to administrative support (position funding), and programmatic changes. States will be responsible for partial cost of SNAP benefits based on eligibility determination error rates. Costs may be passed down from the state to counties.

Medicaid - Medicaid expansion recipients must be recertified every 6 months instead of annually, doubling caseworker workloads.

Natural Resource Management

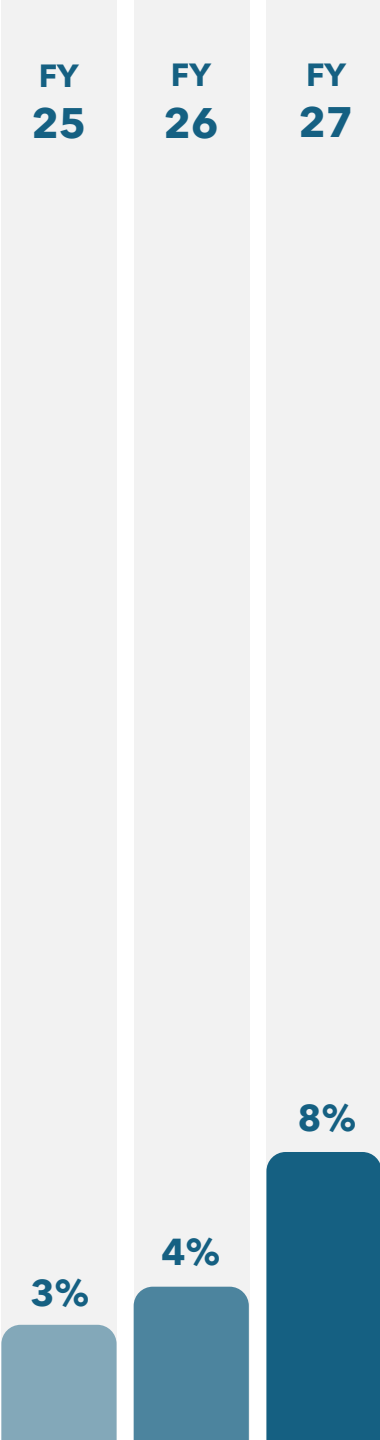
Sustainability

Federal tax credits for solar projects end June 30, 2026.

General Government

Elections

NC Senate Bill 747 has increased workloads for processing absentee ballots.



Internal Process Management

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27

Human Services

Public Health

Span of control limitations and an increased need for operations support require adding capacity to the current leadership structure.

Culture, Education, & Recreation

Parks, Recreation, & Cultural Resources

Park maintenance needs have outpaced current staffing and supervisory capacity, limiting the ability to perform preventative maintenance and support staff development.

General Government

Governing Board

Growth in population, meeting volume, and public engagement has increased administrative work, support needed for Boards and Committees, and emphasis on transparency and records compliance.

Elections

Competitive pay for election workers is critical to recruit, train, and retain qualified personnel to maintain election integrity, meet statutory deadlines, and manage growing operations effectively.

14%

14%

14%

Service Availability & Capacity

Public Safety

Diversion & Advocacy Programs

During reentry or when entering treatment and recovery programs, many client challenges stem from a lack of consistent, peer-driven support during critical transition periods.

Emergency Operations

Workload across divisions is outpacing capacity, affecting planning, training, maintenance, and supervision.

Administration

Facilities

Maintenance and janitorial staffing has not kept pace with the growth of county facilities.

Human Services

Aging Services

There is a lack of local vendors that can provide both a quality food product and meet program nutritional requirements.

DSS

Family Services is facilitating a greater number of Child Medical Evaluations (CMEs), and wait times have steadily increased over time at surrounding clinics and hospitals

FY
25
34%

FY
26

FY
27

28%

27%

Service Availability & Capacity

Culture, Education, & Recreation

Library

Erosion of purchasing power from the inflation of print, audiovisual, and electronic resources costs.

Parks, Recreation, & Cultural Resources

Staffing support is needed for continued progress on countywide trail development and to meet the needs of emerging projects from partnerships and grant opportunities.

General Government

Tax

The growing number of sales/transfers/property splits or plat map recordings is straining staff capacity. Land records are a vital part of the tax system and inaccuracies or delays can cause issues for appraisal values, exemptions and exclusions, collections, or the many departments who rely on accurate data.

Natural Resource Management

Solid Waste & Recycling

Insufficient parking capacity at the main facility for staff, fleet, and public.

CVB

Staffing support is needed to keep up with the growth of tourism and hospitality business, events and festivals, and the number of special projects taken on by the department, such as America 250 and Cycle NC.

FY
25
34%

FY
26

28%

FY
27

27%

Major Themes

FY 25

**Service Availability &
Capacity**

Safety of the Public
and/or Staff

Internal Process
Management

FY 26

**Service Availability &
Capacity**

Internal Process
Management

Safety of the Public
and/or Staff

FY 27

**Service Availability &
Capacity**

Hurdles to
Commissioner Goals

Internal Process
Management

Key Takeaways

- Growing compliance requirements and system complexity are increasing demands on application support capacity.
- Barriers related to mobility, language access, and service reach continue to affect equitable access to county resources.
- Advancing commissioner goals will require continued alignment of staffing, funding, and systems with implementation needs.
- Departments are actively adjusting operations and planning to respond to evolving state and federal policy changes.
- Organizational growth has increased the need to strengthen internal structures, supervision, and support systems to sustain effective operation.
- As service demand grows, additional capacity will help maintain timely access, service quality, and program effectiveness.

FY 27

Next Steps

- Departments will begin their budget requests, both continuation and expansion.
- Staff will meet with departments and help identify solutions and alternatives.
- The Budget team and CIT leads will evaluate expansion requests.
- The Recommended budget will be presented to the BOC in May 2026.

Thank You

Questions?