

County of Santa Barbara
On-line Policies & Procedures Manual
Fees

Activated - 1/5/94

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Policy

Where allowed or mandated, the County will charge a fee for services provided at a level consistent with the criteria listed below. Departments are responsible for insuring that all legally allowed fees and charges are presented to the Board for adoption and for reviewing/adjusting as appropriate. Fees should be reviewed at least annually by departments to determine that fee levels are consistent with current cost basis and/or established current criteria.

Procedures

A. Level of Fees - user fees, licenses, permits, and other charges for service will be determined consistent with:

- public purpose served by the fee;
- costs incurred by the County to provide the service;
- restrictions of law; and
- prevailing rates charged by comparable or neighboring jurisdictions

B. Fees based on actual cost should be increased by an appropriate annual adjustment factor (e.g., cost of salary increases or other more relevant inflation factors) each year so that expensive cost analyses are required only periodically and so that massive fee increases are avoided, if possible.

Departments are responsible for periodically working with the Auditor-Controller to conduct cost analyses of services to determine their actual costs.

C. Departments are responsible for insuring that all legally allowed user fees and charges are presented to the Board for adoption.

D. Waiver/Reduction of Fees - Wherever allowed by law the Board of Supervisors may waive or reduce user fees for a specific service. All such waivers and reductions must be reaffirmed annually when the fees are adjusted.

E. New Fees - When a new fee is proposed, the Auditor-Controller's Office should be involved at the outset to assist in determining costs and charging methods.

F. Fee amendments may be accomplished by resolution; the institution of a new fee, however, may require an ordinance. Both resolutions and ordinances require approval "as to form" by County Counsel and review by the Auditor-Controller.

The following outline should generally be used when preparing Board letters requesting routine increases in departmental user fees:

A. Cover Letter

- Describe the general reason for adjusting user fees;
- Indicate any new fees or changes in the method of charging the fee;
- Indicate any major increases;
- Indicate the total revenue collected from the fees and the approximate increased revenue to be generated. Also note whether the increased revenue has been anticipated in the County budget;
- Indicate that fee determination has been reviewed by the Auditor-Controller.

B. Attachments (listing of individual fees)

- Give the title of the fee and a brief description of the service for which the fee is charged;
- List the current fee and the proposed level;
- Note the basis for calculating the fee (i.e., actual cost, legal maximum, etc.) and the reason for increasing the fee (cost-of-living, change in cost, etc.).

Authority: County Administrator Memo 82-18

Board Minute Order 11/10/81

Board Minute Order 03/08/82