

Money, Choices, Services

Trace how Georgia local governments raise and spend public money.

SS8CG6.b "Describe how local government is funded and how spending decisions are made."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each source of local government money, and circle each step in the public budget process. These marks will help you connect funding sources to spending decisions.

A Community Budget at Work

- ① In Georgia, county and city governments pay for services such as police protection, fire stations, road repair, parks, libraries, and water systems. A major source of local revenue is property tax, paid by owners of homes, land, and businesses. Local governments may also receive money from local sales taxes approved by voters for named purposes, such as capital projects. State and federal grants can help pay for certain programs. These grants often have rules about how the money may be used.
- ② Not all payments to local government are taxes. Residents may pay a fee for a service, such as water or trash collection, and applicants may pay charges for permits. A fine is different: it is a penalty for breaking a law or rule, not payment for a service. Borrowing through bonds can provide money for a large project, but the government must repay the debt, usually with interest. Each source has limits, so officials cannot treat every dollar as flexible.
- ③ Spending decisions are made through a public budget process. Department leaders estimate needs and costs, then send requests to the city council or county governing authority. Officials compare expected revenue with proposed spending and decide which services or projects should receive funds. Residents can speak at public meetings or hearings and may comment on priorities. The elected governing body adopts the final budget by a vote. During the year, officials monitor spending and may change the budget through another public action when needs or revenue change.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 Explain one difference between property taxes and state or federal grants.

2 How is a permit charge different from a fine?

3 What do officials compare when making a budget, and who adopts the final budget?

4 Why must a local government plan carefully before using bonds for a large project?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Imagine a Georgia town is planning its next budget. Write four sentences that name two funding sources, choose one spending priority, and explain one way residents or elected officials would take part in the decision.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each source of local government money, and circle each step in the public budget process. These marks will help you connect funding sources to spending decisions. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Explain one difference between property taxes and state or federal grants.	Property taxes are paid by owners of homes, land, and businesses. State and federal grants come from other levels of government and often have rules for how the money may be used.
2	How is a permit charge different from a fine?	A permit charge is a payment connected to an application for a permit. A fine is a penalty for breaking a law or rule, not payment for a service.
3	What do officials compare when making a budget, and who adopts the final budget?	Officials compare expected revenue with proposed spending. The elected city council or county governing authority adopts the final budget by a vote.
4	Why must a local government plan carefully before using bonds for a large project?	Bonds provide money for a large project, but the government must repay the debt, usually with interest.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A town expects property-tax revenue and a state grant that must support a water program. I would use the grant for water-pipe repairs and property-tax revenue for park maintenance. Department leaders should estimate the costs before submitting requests. Residents should comment at a public hearing before the council votes on the budget.

Accept accurate funding sources from the passage and a logical spending choice. The response should also include a valid budget-process action, such as a department request, a public hearing comment, or a governing-body vote.