

Department of Water Management BGA Policy 2026 Budget Snapshot

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Departmental Highlights

Snapshot: Appropriation & Staffing Changes from 2025 Budget

	2025 Budgeted	2026 Proposed	Net Change	Percent Change	Average Annual Rate of Change (2011- 2025)	Inflation- adjusted Rate of Change (2011- 2024)
Appropriations	\$417,185,283	\$774,039,573	\$356,854,290	85.5%	4.6%	1.4%
Positions & FTEs	2492	2492	0	0.0%	1.0%	NA

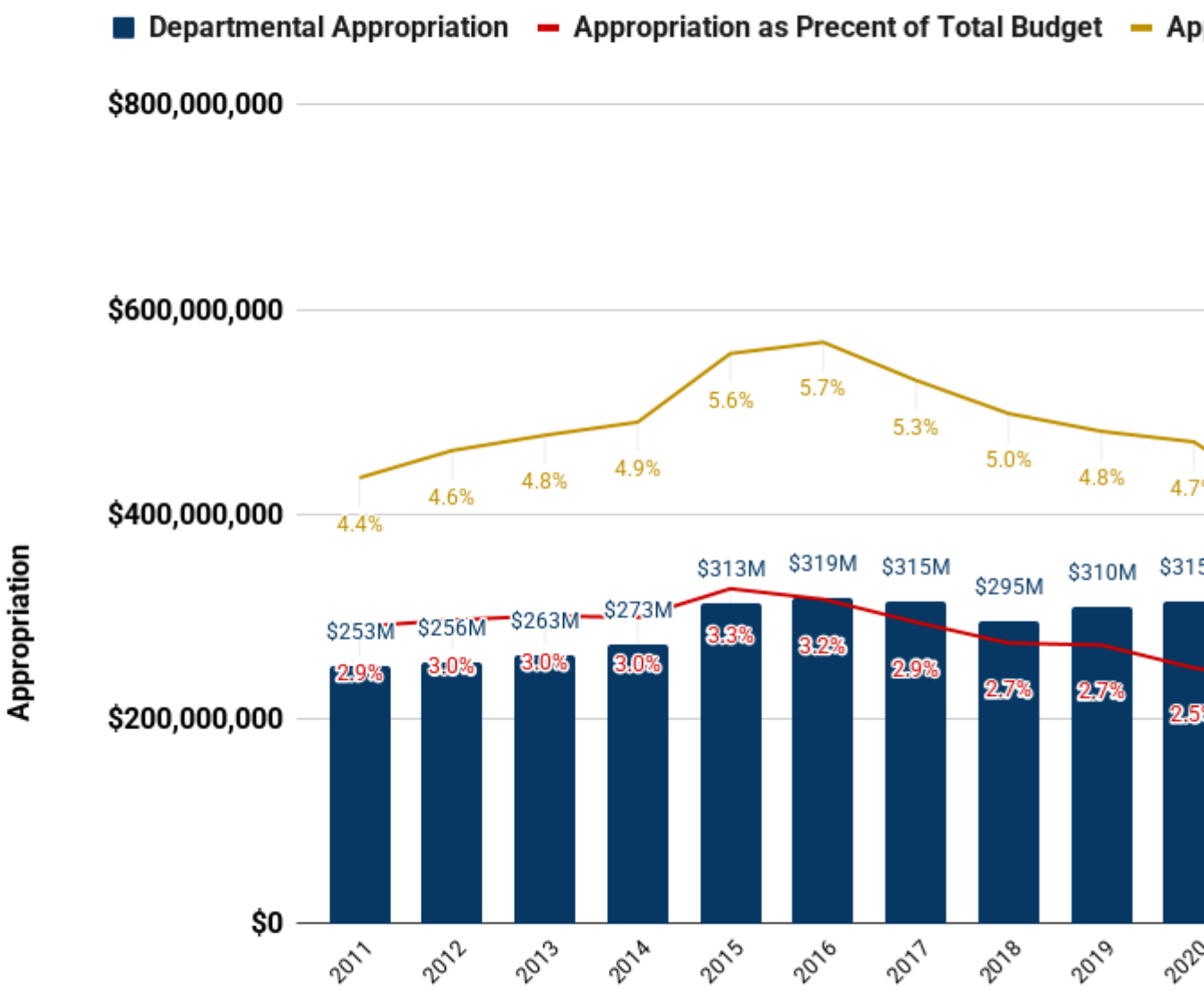
- DWM’s budget nearly doubled, driven by an influx of grant-funded appropriations:
 - \$318.1 million in appropriations from the Disaster Recovery Fund, a newly created grant fund in this year’s budget that according to the Grant Detail supplement is CDBG-based, of which \$283.4 million is earmarked for construction of building and structures and \$34.7 million for professional and technical services (outside contracting).

- \$13.4 million from the Entitlement fund, likewise a new, CDBG-based grant fund, of which \$6.8 million is earmarked for construction of buildings and structures and \$6.6 million held in reserve.
 - According to the Grant Detail supplement, the construction appropriations funded by the Disaster Recovery fund include local sewer line construction and cleaning and stormwater infrastructure construction. The entitlement fund appropriation is earmarked for lead service line replacement.
- Overall headcount has stayed the same, with changes to the number of positions budgeted for some individual titles. Among the largest shifts not balanced by retitling or addition of similar positions: Eight construction laborer positions and three motor truck drivers were eliminated, while 10 new stores laborer positions and three district clerks were added.
 - Most appropriation-level budget cuts were relatively modest at the scale of DWM's budget, with the largest reductions a -\$500,000 (-9.1%) reduction to maintenance and construction and -\$100,000 reductions to office and building services and technical meeting costs the largest negative adjustments.

Historical Context

Driven by a massive influx of grant funding, DWM's proposed 2026 budget nearly doubles the previous year's appropriations, the largest single-year increase in the department's recent history. Prior to this year's proposed 85.5% increase, DWM's appropriations had increased at an average annual rate of 4.6% from 2011-2025, compared to a citywide rate of 8.3%.

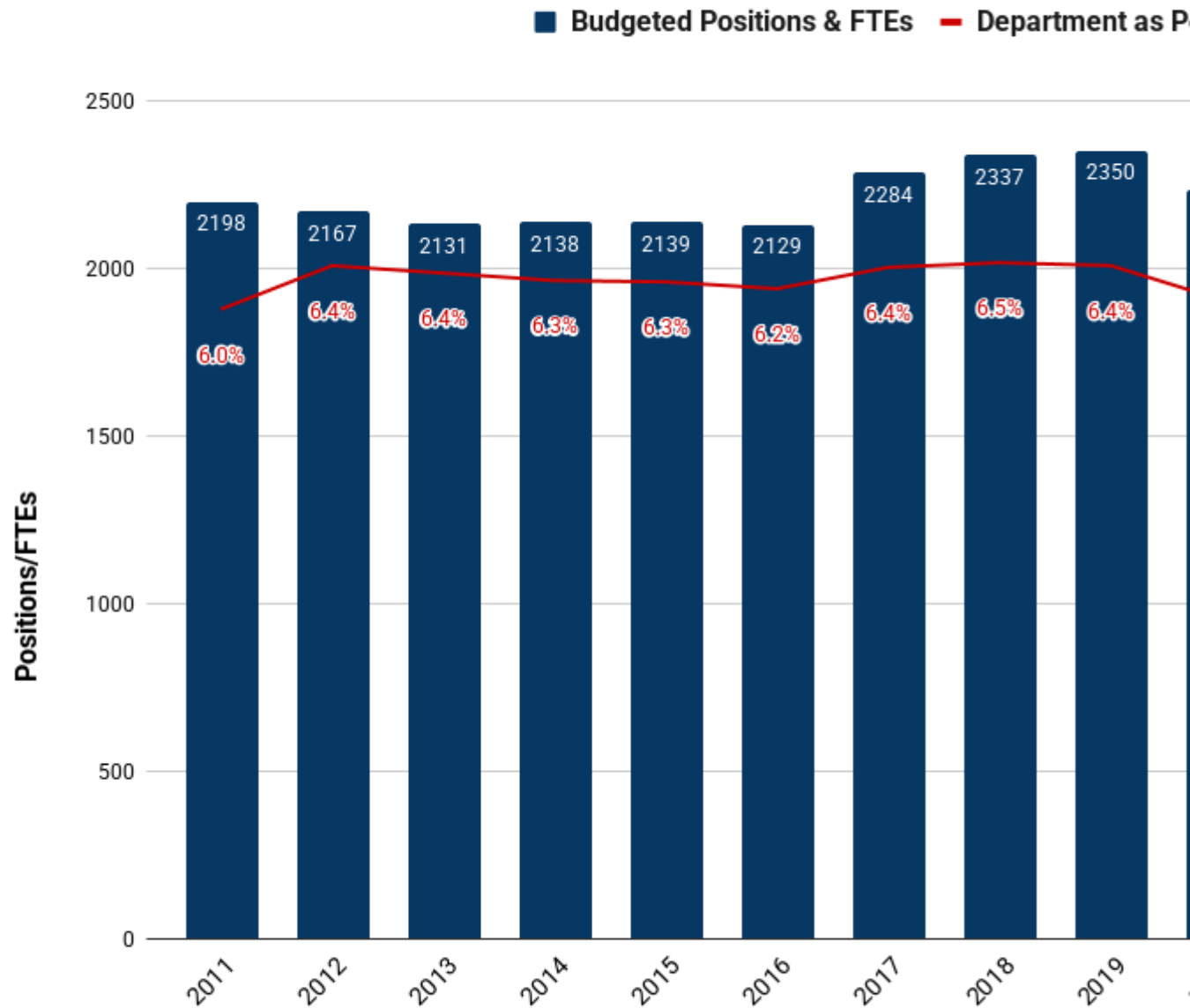
DWM Appropriation, Chicago City Budgets



Over the past three complete budget years for which local fund actuals/encumbrances data is available, DWM spent on average 94.9% of its locally funded budget, compared to the citywide average 86.4% local fund spend.

DWM staffing levels have been relatively stable for the department’s recent history, with the number of budgeted positions increasing by an average annual rate of 1% from 2011-2025, compared to a citywide average annual change of -0.1%. Because the influx of grant funding this year is appropriated for construction and contracting purposes, departmental headcount has not increased correspondingly with the jump in appropriations.

DWM Budgeted Workforce, 2011-2026 (p



From February through September of 2025, the months for which the city released full-time position vacancy data, DWM averaged a 13% vacancy rate, compared to the citywide average of 11.2%.

240 of the department's budgeted full-time positions were persistent vacancies, meaning that the same title/division/section/subsection combination was vacant for all eight months of available data.

Staffing

DWM’s total workforce in terms of budgeted positions has not changed, but a number of titles have seen increased or reduced headcount.

Among the largest title-level changes not balanced by title changes or addition of similar positions: Eight construction laborer positions and three motor truck drivers were eliminated, while 10 new stores laborer positions and three district clerks were added.

Appropriations

DWM is 56.1% locally-funded in this year’s budget proposal, a dramatic change from previous years in which the department was mostly locally funded. Only 4% of the department’s 2025 budget came from grants, compared to 43.4% in the current proposal.

The bulk of the change comes from \$318.1 million in appropriations from the Disaster Recovery Fund, a newly created grant fund in this year’s budget that according to the Grant Detail supplement is CDBG-based. A further \$13.4 million is appropriated from the Entitlement fund, likewise a new, CDBG-based grant fund.

The bulk of the new grant funding (\$283.4 million from the Disaster Recovery fund and \$6.8 million from the Entitlement fund) is earmarked for construction of building and structures, with a further \$34.7 million from Disaster Recovery for professional and technical services (outside contracting) and \$6.6 million from Enterprise held in reserve.

According to the Grant Detail supplement, the construction appropriations funded by the Disaster Recovery fund include local sewer line construction and cleaning and stormwater infrastructure construction. The entitlement fund appropriation is earmarked for lead service line replacement.

Fund	2025 Budgeted	2026 Proposed	Net Change from 2024	Percent Change from 2025	Percent of 2026 Funding
Water Fund	\$298,231,356	\$326,250,778	\$28,019,422	9.4%	42.1%
Disaster Recovery Fund	\$0	\$318,175,000	\$318,175,000	New Fund	41.1%
Sewer Fund	\$102,275,927	\$108,122,795	\$5,846,868	5.7%	14.0%
Entitlement Fund	\$0	\$13,392,000	\$13,392,000	New Fund	1.7%
Community Development Block Grant Year LI	\$14,718,000	\$6,481,000	-\$8,237,000	-56.0%	0.8%
Federal Grant Fund	\$1,960,000	\$1,618,000	-\$342,000	-17.4%	0.2%

Largest Appropriations

\$290.2 million for construction of buildings and structures is the largest proposed DWM appropriation this year, a dramatic change from the previous year when it had been cut from \$23 million down to \$4.8 million.

Salaries and wages, usually the department's largest appropriation, was second-largest this year due to the construction increase.

DWM's budget in 2024 was primarily locally-funded, meaning local fund actuals and encumbrances provide a reasonably close point of comparison for budgeted appropriations. In 2024, the most recent year for which full-year actuals data is available, DWM spent 96.3% of its budgeted local funds, spending between 85-100% in all major categories without overspending.

Change from Previous Year

The most dramatic change in DWM's proposed budget is the influx of more than \$300 million in grant funding, the majority of which is earmarked for construction of buildings and structures. That appropriation is up \$285.5 million overall, a nearly 6000% increase from the previous year.

The department's next-largest increase was a \$35.2 million (149.3%) increase in outside contracting through the professional and technical services appropriation, also driven by the new grant funding.

Most appropriation-level budget cuts were relatively modest at the scale of DWM's budget, with the largest reductions a -\$500,000 (-9.1%) reduction to maintenance and construction and -\$100,000 reductions to office and building services and technical meeting costs the largest negative adjustments.