



# Fine-Tuning the Budget for 1998

By Steve and Suz Trusty

It's neither rocket science nor fun and exciting, but it may have as much impact on your professional life in 1998 as anything else you do. The budget you submit for the coming year is your game plan for the maintenance practices that follow. While you may have some flexibility within the budgetary parameters, the hard cold facts are: the better you plan, the more you can accomplish.

## Where Do You Stand?

Before you wrap up plans for the 1998 budget, know exactly where you stand for 1997. Pull out your original budget proposal and if changes were made, as usually happens, the final version. Compare both of these to your actual expenditures, by month and, if possible, by project and by field or facility. For example, check your

monthly totals for labor; supplies; and equipment operation, purchase and maintenance. Then break down your investments in labor, products and equipment usage for such categories as the baseball stadium, the soccer/football practice fields, and the construction of the new softball practice field.

Anticipate expenditures to the end of the year within the same categories. Now compare each of these compiled figures with both versions of the 1997 budget. Were you on target with the final version? With the original proposal? Where and when did variations occur? How much did they differ from the two proposals? Can you pinpoint why these variations occurred? How many of these variations are in areas you can control? How many are weather-related? How many are one-time occurrences?

If you were able to "live within" a

budget reduced from your original proposal, how did you do it? Could you do it again if necessary, or are the results of limited resources making a major impact on field quality?

## Was 1997 an "Average" Year?

Compare your 1997 budget figures with budget figures from the past five years. If possible, compare the category breakdowns as well as the totals. Are there any surprises? Are you moving forward as planned?

Are you balancing growth with budget increases, or are you struggling to do more with less? Have you added new fields and facilities or increased the number of sports, sport-related events or other activities on some of the fields without increasing the budget? Have you developed new sources of funding or volunteer labor? Have

you experienced major changes in your own staff, your supervisory entities, or within your field-user groups? If so, how have these changes impacted your maintenance procedures and your budget?

### What Changes Are Ahead?

What's on the horizon for your facility? Are you anticipating new construction, reconstruction of existing facilities, or acquisition of more property? Is your park district in a growing community, or a declining one? Is your school or university experiencing growth or decline in student populations and student participation in athletics?

What lies ahead within the ownership and management of your facility? What about the directors, coordinators, and coaching staffs of your major field users? What is the status of volunteer groups that provide support? If your relationship with all these entities is not strong enough for you to be "in the loop" on plans for the future, you're putting your own program at risk. That doesn't mean you need to be on the board or have a say in key decisions, but you do need to be aware that discussions are underway and changes are being considered, and have the ability to provide input on issues that directly affect your program.

If your own research and planning show the need for major changes, have you taken the proper steps to convey this information to those who can make such decisions? Have you gathered enough data to make a good case for the project? Have you enlisted the assistance of others who may be affected by the projected change?

### Where Would You Cut or Add?

As you fine-tune your 1998 budget proposal, keep in mind the question, "Where could I cut?" Do you have a built-in "fudge factor" that has allowed you to avoid making those little changes that trim a few dollars here and there? Have you explored alternate sources for labor or equipment on specific procedures that might help trim the budget, but haven't taken the time to give them a

conditional try-out? Have you considered different purchasing procedures that would result in additional discounts or extended payment options?

Be able to support your budget requests with solid figures from past budgets and well-researched cost projections for the coming year.

Do you have areas where money

spent in 1998 will result in budget savings in the long-term? For example, will replacing an old mower with a new one save in overall expenses by reducing downtime and repair costs? Would the new machine cover more area in a shorter time, or improve the quality of cut? Would extra education and training raise the ability of cer-



## Turfco Helps You Build A Turf That Gets Noticed.

Turfco offers you a strong team of turf building equipment. They're the fastest and most versatile equipment to let you build hardier and healthier turf. Your sports fields become safer to play on and easier to maintain. Originators of Mete-R-Matic® top dressers in 1961, Turfco's professional equipment gives your field a look that gets noticed.

### Economy Aerator

Now you can afford to breathe life into any sports field. This low cost, 62" aerator has no hydraulics or mechanical linkages for easy use and low maintenance. Hooks up to any vehicle in seconds.

### Precision Top Dresser

Fast, uniform, versatile. Patented chevron belt lets you handle top dressing, lime, crumb rubber, gypsum, calcine clay, compost and even overseeding with precision. Level fields and amend soil consistently.

### Large Area Top Dresser

Large, 4 cubic yard capacity with patented chevron belt applies material with precision. Top dress from 1/32" to 6" to quickly handle large areas. Material conveyor and spinner attachment for added versatility.



For details and the name of your local dealer, call

**1-800-679-8201**

**Turfco Manufacturing Inc.**

1655 101st Avenue Northeast  
Minneapolis, MN 55449-4420

*Choice Performers,  
Choice Fields.*

**TURFCO**

Call 1(800) 817-1889 use **FastFax # 1081097** and/or **Circle 108** on postage free card

tain crew members to enable them to tackle additional tasks or do a better job at tasks already assigned? Can you show the dollar savings in all of these areas? Can you pinpoint the payback time for each investment?

**What's on Your Wish List?**

If you had an unlimited budget, what would you do differently? Have you shared those dreams with anyone? Have you asked your crew and your field-user groups to consider the ideas and provide their own input? If not, why not? You never know what is possible unless you ask. Even if the powers that be all say no, you haven't lost anything.

What aspects of that wish list could you put into practice with a little more creativity or some additional support internally or externally? Analyze the end result of what you want to achieve. Are there other ways to accomplish the same results?

**Is Alternate Funding Available?**

Have you tapped into every available resource? It's been said there are hundreds of potential volunteers in the stands willing to lend their support and just waiting to be asked.

Have your school's teams formed any ties with other student groups? How active are your booster clubs? Do the grandparents of players of your user groups attend games? Have you asked them to lend a hand with pre-game preparations or post-game clean-up? Have you asked them to form a fund-raising, calling chain?

Have you offered your services as a speaker for local community service organizations? Even if you don't raise funds or drum up volunteers in these meetings, you'll at least have the opportunity to explain the basics of field maintenance and why it matters — which should have an impact on the overall support of your program.

**Look to the Future**

Where do you want your facility and your maintenance programs to be in the next two years, five years, 10 years? How do you plan to get there? What steps are you taking to raise your own level of professionalism? Have you budgeted for STMA membership at the national and chapter levels, for chapter-meeting and annual-conference attendance, for steps toward certification? Does your budget include professional development funds for your assistant and other crew members?

Like any game plan, your budget is only as good as the effort that goes into it. Take the time now to fine-tune your budget for 1998. Your time investment will pay major dividends. □

*Steve and Suz Trusty are partners in Trusty & Associates, an industry consulting firm located in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Steve is executive director of the Sports Turf Managers Association.*

**OVERSEEDER LEADER.**



**LAND PRIDE** 

**OVERSEEDERS**

- 48" and 72" widths
- Variable knife spacing: 2" or 3"
- Full width seeding pattern or slit-seeding
- Adjustable depth from 0" to 1.5"
- Cast notched roller

*The Land Pride family . . . quality from the ground up.*

Call 785-823-3276 for your nearest dealer

Circle 109 on postage free card

*Make Plans Now to Attend America's Premier Turf Event*

**December 8-11, 1997**

**Greater Columbus Convention Center  
Columbus, Ohio**



**NEW**

- ◆ Expanded Trade Show - Free Admission Thursday
- ◆ Four Day Program - Keynote Speaker, Workshops
- ◆ State Pesticide Applicator Recertification Credits
- ◆ GCSAA Accreditation

For more information, contact: Ohio Turfgrass Foundation 888-OTF-3445

Circle 110 on postage free card