

**OFFICE OF THE CITY REPRESENTATIVE AND SPECIAL EVENTS
FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET TESTIMONY**

INTRODUCTION

Good Morning, President Johnson and Members of City Council. I am Jazelle Jones, City Representative and Director of Special Events. I am pleased to provide testimony on the Office of City Representative and Special Events' Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget.

DEPARTMENT MISSION & PLANS

Mission: The Office of the City Representative and Special Events (OCRSE) strengthens and expands the local and regional special event industry by serving as Philadelphia's one-stop shop for event planning, production, permitting, and licensing. OCRSE'S mission is to promote the healthy growth of the event industry through the adoption of sustainable best practices, fostering positive and collaborative relationships within the local and regional events community, and advancing a safer, cleaner, and greener city that creates access to economic opportunity for all. OCRSE's vision is to celebrate and foster Philadelphia's visibility and diversity through citywide event creation, community engagement, and innovative experiences. As stated in the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter, Sections 4-200 and 4-201, under the Mayor's direction, the City Representative serves as the ceremonial representative of the City, managing proclamations, citations, and official gifts. The Office oversees public relations, including marketing the City's image, maintaining design standards for City media, and coordinating ceremonial and special events, as well as public-private event participation on public property.

Plans for Fiscal Year 2026:

As Philadelphia prepares to take center stage in 2026 for what promises to be a once-in-a-generation opportunity to showcase our city to the world, the Office of City Representative and Special Events (OCRSE) will play a pivotal role in ensuring our readiness—both operationally and in how we present ourselves to a global audience.

Formed through a strategic merger of the Office of the City Representative and the Office of Special Events in calendar year 2024, this new Department has quickly become a powerhouse within City government. By consolidating the permitting, licensing, producing, and marketing of special events under one roof, OCRSE has created a streamlined, efficient, and accessible process for hosting events within city limits. This "one-stop shop" approach is already making it easier to do business in Philadelphia and will be even more critical as we welcome the world in 2026.

Philadelphia, a certified Welcoming City, is preparing to host hundreds of national and international dignitaries in 2025 and 2026. We are adapting the Mayoral Gift Program with creativity and care to ensure that visiting heads of state and dignitaries are received with humility, dignity, and honor.

OCRSE is increasing its ability to support special events of all scales—including mega events—by expanding access to critical equipment rentals such as portable restrooms, barricades and fencing, and transport vehicles. These resources are essential to ensuring safe, accessible, and successful

OFFICE OF THE CITY REPRESENTATIVE AND SPECIAL EVENTS

events. In fact, these rentals played a vital role in the success of the 2025 Philadelphia Eagles Super Bowl Parade, and their seamless coordination was managed solely through OCRSE.

In addition to outward-facing services, OCRSE is also looking inward—conducting a comprehensive audit of its special event policy. This includes a detailed review of its permitting fee structure to ensure alignment with current best practices, both within other City permitting departments and across other major cities. This internal work is essential to maintaining a fair, transparent, and modern approach to event management.

Looking ahead, OCRSE is enhancing its operations to further simplify the event planning experience while ensuring that Philadelphia continues to raise its international profile. The Department's efforts in fostering strategic partnerships with the city's hospitality and tourism stakeholders, managing ceremonial documentation and gift programs, and supporting initiatives such as the Sister Cities International program and the World Heritage City Organization are vital to our identity as a Welcoming City.

Through its leadership, innovation, and dedication to service, OCRSE is not only shaping how the world experiences Philadelphia in 2026 but also strengthening the civic pride and global reach of our city for years to come.

PROPOSED BUDGET OVERVIEW & OTHER BUDGET DRIVERS

General Fund Financial Summary by Class						
	FY24 Original Appropriations	FY24 Actual Obligations	FY25 Original Appropriations	FY25 Estimated Obligations	FY26 Proposed Appropriations	Difference: FY26 Proposed-FY25 Estimated
Class 100 - Employee Compensation	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,529,682	\$1,529,682
Class 200 - Purchase of Services	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,252,500	\$1,252,500
Class 300/400 - Materials, Supplies & Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$170,000	\$170,000
	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,952,182	\$2,952,182

The Department has no contracts.

Proposed Funding Request:

The proposed Fiscal Year 2026 General Fund budget totals \$2,952,182. This figure represents combined funding for the Office of the City Representative and the Office of Special Events which, as of FY26, are one department. Since OCRSE is a new department starting in FY26, prior year funds are not listed in the table above

The proposed budget includes:

- \$1,529,682 in Class 100. This funding will enable OCRSE to maintain the staff required to support major events in FY26.
- \$1,252,500 in Class 200. This funding will expand the Department's capacity to rent critical event support equipment, onboard event management and permitting software, and engage with professional service providers to ensure adequate coverage and management capacity for large-scale upcoming events in FY26. This funding will also support existing events under the purview of OCRSE, including the Philadelphia Marathon, Living Flame Memorial Ceremony, Holiday Tree Lighting, Welcome America Morning Ceremony, and a number of other public events throughout the year.
- \$170,000 in Class 300/400. This funding will support the purchasing of office supplies and equipment and allow for the purchase of collateral in support of the Mayoral Gift Program.

OFFICE OF THE CITY REPRESENTATIVE AND SPECIAL EVENTS

STAFFING LEVELS

The Department is requesting 18 budgeted positions for FY26. OCRSE is currently staffed by (12) full-time, exempt employees.

Employment Levels (as of November 2024)			
	FY25 Budgeted	Filled as of November 2024	FY26 Proposed
Number of Full-Time Positions			18
Number of Exempt Positions			18
Number of Executive Positions (deputy level and above)			
Average Salary of All Full-Time Positions			
Median Salary of All Full-Time Positions			

Note: Department 41 is a new department as of FY26.

NEW HIRES

Department 41 is a new department as of FY26.

OFFICE OF THE CITY REPRESENTATIVE AND SPECIAL EVENTS

PROGRAM BASED BUDGETING:

Program Name: City Representative (OCR)

Program Number: 01

FY26 Proposed General Fund: \$1,446,281

Program Description:

As the marketing and promotional office of the City of Philadelphia, the Office of the City Representative (OCR) strives to positively position Philadelphia both as a must-visit destination and a great place to live, work, play, and build a business, furthering the Mayor's vision for the city. OCR celebrates and enhances Philadelphia's visibility, diversity, and desirability through event creation, community engagement, innovative experiences, and collaborations. OCR recognizes extraordinary residents, visiting dignitaries, and notable individuals through ceremonial events and acknowledgements. The Philadelphia Honors Diversity Flag Raising Program was launched by the City of Philadelphia in 2018 and celebrates its rich diversity as the nation's first World Heritage City. The program honors residents with international heritage with the goal of making Philadelphia a more welcoming city for immigrants. The program has raised more than 45 flags each year since its inception in 2018. The City Representative represents the Mayor at public events through speaking engagements and other gatherings upon request. Through board service and partnerships, the OCR team collaborates with tourism/hospitality agencies (Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau or PHLCVB, VisitPhilly, etc.), non-profit organizations, the Commerce Department, and other entities to tap into opportunities that promote and enhance Philadelphia and build the City's brand integrity to help produce and attract big events and conventions that will create a positive economic impact.

FY26 Strategic Goals:

- **Branding and Visual Enhancements:** OCR is updating City branding ahead of the large-scale special events in 2026, which include the America250 Semiquincentennial celebration, FIFA World Cup Games, and Major League Baseball (MLB) All-Star Week events. These visual enhancements will reflect recognizable Parker Administration branding.
- **Resuming Signature Special Events at Pre-Pandemic Levels:** As OCR returns to pre-pandemic staffing numbers, it aims to reintroduce some special events that were paused during the COVID-19 pandemic. OCR can resume these events and elevate engagements and celebrations throughout the city that unite residents and communities alike and cement Philadelphia's reputation as a Big Event city.
- **Raising International Profile and Strengthening Relationships:** OCR set a goal to enhance its ceremonial gifts and recognition program with a fresh slate of equipment and materials that better represent the Parker Administration. The ceremonial gift presentations will also be used to increase Philadelphia's visibility not only within the region and state, but also nationally and internationally, serving to strengthen and increase relationship building as well as further elevate the City's designation as a World Heritage City.

OFFICE OF THE CITY REPRESENTATIVE AND SPECIAL EVENTS

FY26 Performance Measures:

Measure	CY23 Actual	CY24 Actual	CY25 Target
Number of events produced directly or in partnership ¹	N/A	52	55
Number of engagements, including international cultural exchanges and meeting with dignitaries and delegations ²	80	54	60
Number of events where OCR represented the Mayor through speaking engagements and meetings ³	199	45	60

¹ OCR partners with both internal City agencies and external partners to host events.

² There has been a noticeable increase in larger, more meaningful cultural and international engagements, particularly around re-energizing Sister City relationships and re-engaging with international economic and civic partners. The City Representative, who also serves as the Director of Special Events, has taken on expanded responsibilities to manage both high-level cultural diplomacy and major international event planning. This is reflected in the CY24 actual and CY25 target.

³ The Mayor has been personally present at more engagements, reflecting her commitment to direct community and stakeholder engagement.

OFFICE OF THE CITY REPRESENTATIVE AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Program Name: Special Events

Program Number: 02

FY26 Proposed General Fund: \$1,505,901

Program Description:

The [Office of Special Events \(OSE\)](#) expands the local and regional special event industry by serving as Philadelphia's one-stop shop for special event planning, production, permitting, and licensing. OSE also schedules and distributes City-owned equipment and services for events.

OSE strives to be the most comprehensive and efficient municipal special event support agency in the nation, with a focus on promoting the healthy growth of all facets of the event industry through the implementation of sustainable best practices and the cultivation of positive, collaborative relationships with the local and regional event community. Primary responsibilities of OSE include:

- Special Event Application intake and processing;
- Generation and distribution of Department service requests and work orders;
- Special event billing and revenue collection;
- Frontline customer service and community outreach;
- Special Event Request for Proposal management;
- Event recruitment, marketing, and promotion; and,
- Event management, planning, and oversight.

FY26 Strategic Goals:

- **Enhancement of Intake and Processing Capabilities:** OSE will implement new application, permitting, and invoicing procedures in an effort to create efficiencies within internal workflows while improving the constituent experience when navigating various City processes.
- **Increase Staffing Levels:** The Department will increase staffing levels by filling vacancies, building capacity for addressing the vast number of special events and associated requests for services.
- **Large-Scale Event Management:** The Office will enhance municipal capacity for hosting large-scale events in the immediate term (2025 and 2026) and future to advance investment in Philadelphia and create broad economic opportunity for all sectors of the event and hospitality industry.

OFFICE OF THE CITY REPRESENTATIVE AND SPECIAL EVENTS

FY26 Performance Measures:

Measure	CY23 Actual	CY24 Actual	CY25 Target
Number of applications processed ¹	1,312	1,738	1,640

¹ This measure includes Special Event Applications, Festival Street Closure Applications, and City Sponsored Event Applications. This measure is dependent on the number of applicants, which is beyond OCRSE's control. The CY2025 target represents a 2.5% increase from the CY2024 target of 1,600.

OFFICE OF THE CITY REPRESENTATIVE AND SPECIAL EVENTS

OTHER BUDGETARY IMPACTS

Federal and State (Where Applicable)

N/A

OFFICE OF THE CITY REPRESENTATIVE AND SPECIAL EVENTS

CONTRACTING EXPERIENCE

N/A