

**OFFICE OF THE CITY REPRESENTATIVE AND SPECIAL EVENTS  
FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET TESTIMONY**

**INTRODUCTION**

Good morning, Council 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 2027 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 2027:**

Philadelphia is prepared 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) has played a pivotal role in ensuring our readiness—both operationally and in how we will present ourselves to a global audience. This work will culminate in FY27 with the triumphant return of the Philadelphia Cycling Classic, an internationally recognized professional cycling event that is expected to draw up to one hundred thousand fans over Labor Day Weekend.

OCRSE remains focused on consolidating the permitting, licensing, producing, and marketing of special events in Philadelphia. These ongoing efforts have created a streamlined, efficient, and accessible process for hosting events within city limits. This "one-stop shop" approach is making it easier to do business in Philadelphia and will continue to foster the growth and proliferation of special events in FY27 and beyond. In furtherance of this mission, OCRSE plans to launch a new application and permitting system in FY27.

OCRSE is continuing to increase its ability to provide interdepartmental support for special event operations by expanding access to critical equipment rentals such as portable restrooms, barricades and fencing, and transport vehicles. These resources are essential to ensuring that City personnel have the necessary equipment to execute safe, accessible, and successful events.

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In addition to outward-facing services, OCRSE is also looking inward—conducting a comprehensive audit of its special event policy in 2026. 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 will continue to shape how the world experiences Philadelphia while simultaneously strengthening the civic pride and global reach of our fine city.

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**PROPOSED BUDGET OVERVIEW & OTHER BUDGET DRIVERS**

<b>General Fund Financial Summary by Class</b>				
	FY26 Original Appropriations	FY26 Estimated Obligations	FY27 Proposed Appropriations	Difference: FY27 Proposed-FY26 Estimated
Class 100 - Employee Compensation	\$1,794,682	\$1,863,226	\$2,068,492	\$205,266
Class 200 - Purchase of Services	\$1,252,500	\$1,252,500	\$1,202,500	(\$50,000)
Class 300/400 - Materials, Supplies & Equipment	\$195,000	\$195,000	\$170,000	(\$25,000)
	<b>\$3,242,182</b>	<b>\$3,310,726</b>	<b>\$3,440,992</b>	<b>\$130,266</b>

*\*Prior to FY26, the OCRSE units were integrated in the Mayor's Office and Managing Director's Office, so data from before FY26 is not available.*

*\*The department has no large professional services contracts to report.*

<b>Total S/LBE Contract Participation Goal (Public Works; Services, Supplies &amp; Equipment; and Professional Services combined)</b>			
	FY25	FY26	FY27 Projected
S/LBE Contract Participation Goal	N/A	N/A	N/A

*\*S/LBE not yet available as the City works to build the S/LBE registry and begin setting small and local business participation goals.*

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### **Proposed Funding Request:**

The proposed Fiscal Year 2027 General Fund budget totals \$3,440,992, an increase of \$130,266 over Fiscal Year 2026 estimated obligation levels. This increase is primarily due to transfer of certain staff from the Commerce Department to OCRSE. This transfer aligns international relations efforts with the Office of the City Representative.

The proposed budget includes:

- \$2,068,492 in Class 100, a \$205,266 increase over FY26 estimated obligations. This funding will enable OCRSE to maintain the staff required to support major events and includes the transfer of two employees from the Commerce Department, consolidating the City's international relations efforts under the City Representative.
- \$1,202,500 in Class 200, a \$50,000 decrease from FY26 estimated obligations due to one-time funding in FY26 related to 2026 special events preparations. This funding will support the Department's ability to rent critical equipment and professional services in connection with special events, maintain application/permitting software, and support existing events within the OCRSE portfolio, including Philadelphia Marathon, Living Flame Memorial Ceremony, Holiday Tree Lighting, Welcome America Morning Ceremony, and a number of other public events.
- \$170,000 in Class 300/400, a \$25,000 decrease from FY26 estimated obligations due to one-time funding in FY26 related to 2026 special events preparations. This funding will support the purchasing of supplies and equipment.

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**STAFFING LEVELS**

The department is requesting twenty-two (22) budgeted positions for FY27, an increase of two (2) positions over FY26.

This increase is attributable to the transfer of certain staff from the Commerce Department to OCRSE. This transfer aligns international relations efforts with the Office of the City Representative.

<b>Employment Levels (as of November 2025)</b>			
	FY26 Budgeted	Filled as of November 2025	FY27 Proposed
Number of Full-Time Positions	20	15	22
Number of Exempt Positions	20	15	22
Number of Executive Positions (deputy level and above)		7	
Average Salary of All Full-Time Positions		\$102,381	
Median Salary of All Full-Time Positions		\$95,000	

**NEW HIRES**

*\*The department has no new hires to report.*

**VACANCY RATE AND ALLOWANCE**

<b>Vacancy Rate Summary (General Fund)</b>						
	FY25 Actual Vacancy Rate	FY26 Budgeted Vacancy Allowance	FY26 Vacancy Rate	FY26 Budgeted Vacancy Allowance Rate	FY27 Budgeted Vacancy Allowance	FY27 Budgeted Vacancy Allowance Rate
Departmental Total	N/A	(\$82,664)	25.0%	4.5%	(\$91,222)	4.4%

*\*Prior to FY26, the OCRSE units were integrated in the Mayor's Office and Managing Director's Office, so data from before FY26 is not available.*

**OTHER BUDGETARY IMPACTS**

**Federal and State (Where Applicable)**

N/A

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**CONTRACTING EXPERIENCE**

*The department has no large professional services contracts to report and Non-Profit Vendor Demographics are not applicable.*

**PROGRAM BASED BUDGETING:**

**Program Name:** City Representative (OCR)

**Program Number:** 01

**FY27 Proposed General Fund:** \$1,736,549

**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.

**FY27 Strategic Goals:**

- **Event Recruitment:** OCR is advancing a strategic approach to recruiting new, high-impact events that require competitive bidding, positioning Philadelphia as a premier global destination for travel, tourism, and major convenings. Through this effort, OCR seeks events that reflect Philadelphia’s unique character while advancing the Mayor’s vision pillars of safe, clean, green, and access to economic opportunity for all, ensuring that recruited events deliver lasting cultural, economic, and community benefits for the city.
- **Branding and Visual Enhancements:** OCR is advancing a coordinated branding and visual enhancement strategy to ensure a consistent, recognizable City identity across major events and public spaces. In collaboration with the Director of 2026, OCR is continuing its efforts to extend and integrate the “Ring It On” branding throughout calendar year 2026, reinforcing Philadelphia’s role on the global stage. Additionally, OCR is modernizing the City’s official gift program with new equipment and materials that reflect the Parker Administration’s values and visual identity.
- **Calendar Year 2026 Recap:** OCR set a goal to provide a comprehensive recap of 2026, highlighting the City’s achievements in event management, global recognition, and economic impact. This includes measuring and analyzing the outcomes of major events, tracking tourism and visitor engagement, and quantifying the overall contribution of City-sponsored and recruited events to Philadelphia’s economy. The recap will serve as a tool to showcase Philadelphia’s rising profile as a world-class destination and guide future planning for sustainable event growth and community benefit.

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**FY27 Performance Measures:**

Measure	CY2024 Actual	CY2025 Actual	CY2026 Target
Number of events produced directly or in partnership <sup>1</sup>	61	80	80
Number of engagements, including international cultural exchanges and meeting with dignitaries and delegations <sup>2</sup>	63	67	80
Number of events where OCR represented the Mayor through speaking engagements and meetings <sup>3</sup>	N/A	175	175

<sup>1</sup> OCR partners with both internal City agencies and external partners to host events. Several 2026 events span multiple days or weeks, requiring sustained operational support while classified as single events for planning purposes.

<sup>2</sup> The CY2026 target has increased from CY2025 to account for anticipated international engagements during the FIFA World Cup and semiquincentennial celebrations.

<sup>3</sup> CY24 data is not applicable for comparison as OCR adjusted its method for tracking results for this measure to more accurately reflect all instances in which the Office represented the Mayor through engagements and meetings. Results beginning in CY25 more fully capture outcomes for this measure.

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**Program Name:** Special Events

**Program Number:** 02

**FY27 Proposed General Fund:** \$1,704,443

**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.

**FY27 Strategic Goals:**

- **Continued Enhancement of Intake and Processing Capabilities:** In FY27, OSE will implement new application and permitting software as part of the PHL Open for Business initiative to improve constituent experience and streamline internal workflows. In FY27, OSE will onboard additional departments into the system and move towards a single public-facing special event application with back-end utility for all departments involved in event permitting and operations.
- **Large-Scale Event Management:** OSE will continue to manage large-scale events, including those related to the U.S. Semiquincentennial, the July 4<sup>th</sup> Concert and Fireworks, the Major League Baseball All-Star Week public events, and the Philadelphia Cycling Classic on Labor Day Weekend.
- **Increase Staffing Levels:** OSE will increase staffing levels by filling budgeted vacancies and building capacity through those new employees for addressing the vast number of special events and associated requests for services. Filling those budgeted positions levels will allow the Department to deliver high-quality, safe, and impactful civic events and increase bandwidth for new initiatives and projects.

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**FY27 Performance Measures:**

Measure	CY2024 Actual	CY2025 Actual	CY2026 Target
Number of applications processed <sup>1</sup>	1,738	1,950	1,950

<sup>1</sup> 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 OCR-OSE's control.