Information Sources for Policymakers: Congressional Budget Office 101

A Presentation at the Academy Health 2020 Health Policy Orientation

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For information about the venue, see www.academyhealth.org/page/2020-hpo-agenda-fall.
Role

CBO was created by the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974 to give the Congress a stronger role in budget matters.

CBO provides analysis of budgetary and economic issues that is objective and impartial.

CBO is strictly nonpartisan and does not make policy recommendations.
Structure

CBO’s Director is appointed jointly by the Speaker of the House and the President pro tempore of the Senate and has a four-year term.

CBO hires its employees solely on the basis of professional competence without regard to political affiliation.

About 260 people work at CBO. Most have advanced degrees.
Responsibilities

The Budget Act requires CBO to provide:

- Baseline budget projections, which are detailed in annual reports on projected spending, revenues, and deficits under current law; and

- Cost estimates for legislation that summarize the legislation’s incremental budgetary effects relative to the baseline.
CBO’s yearly output typically includes:

- Producing roughly 750 formal cost estimates and related mandate statements;
- Fulfilling thousands of requests for technical assistance, typically from committees and Members before legislation is formally introduced; and
- Publishing about 70 reports, testimonies, and working papers.
CBO’s work reflects:

- A detailed understanding of federal programs and the tax code;
- Careful reading of the relevant research literature;
- Extensive analysis of data collected and reported by the government’s statistical agencies and by private organizations; and
- Consultation with numerous outside experts.

All reports and analyses of public proposals are shared widely and made available at www.cbo.gov.