

# FAST System for Fire Districts: Introduction and User Guide

(September 2020)

## ***What is FAST?***

FAST is the “Financial Automation Submission & Tracking” system that was developed to streamline the process of submitting budgets, financial statements, etc. to the Division of Local Government Services (“the Division”). Instead of mailing documents to the Division, local governments perform data entry or upload documents into FAST and submit to the Division electronically.

FAST has been implemented for municipalities and counties, who submit their Annual Debt Statement, Supplemental Debt Statements, Annual Financial Statement, Budget, and Audit through the system each year. Fire districts are transitioning to the FAST system for the 2021 Budget Year. Once live in FAST, fire districts will not be permitted to submit paper copies of documents to the Division.

## ***Accessing FAST***

FAST is built on a platform developed by Microsoft and is available to use on any computer with a proper internet connection. Internet Explorer is no longer a supported internet browser. A more modern browser such as Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Microsoft Edge, or Safari is required. Only designated officials from a fire district may have a username and password that provide access to FAST.

Division staff have been working with Fire Districts to provide access to FAST for the purposes of submitting documents to the Division. Any fire district that does not have designated official with access to FAST should contact the Division at [FireDistricts@dca.nj.gov](mailto:FireDistricts@dca.nj.gov) for an account to be setup. Not all officials from a fire district will need access to FAST. **Access is limited to individuals who are a confirmed designated official of the fire district that may submit documents to the Division for review.** Designated officials include the Secretary to the Board of Fire Commissioners, the Treasurer of the Board of Fire Commissioners, and administrative officers that are employees of the fire district and responsible for the day-to-day operations of the fire district, including the completion and execution of the budget. Paid professionals will not be granted access to the fire district budget module in FAST.

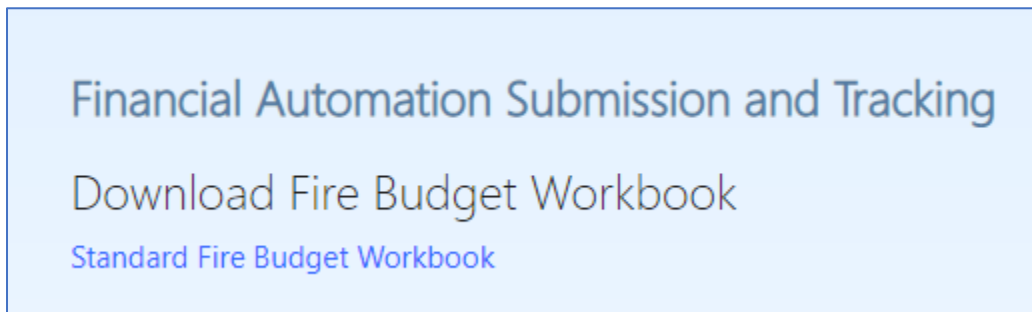
FAST can be accessed at: <https://njdca.dynamics365portals.us/SignIn>

## ***Accessing the Fire Budget Document***

The Fire District Budget excel workbook provided by the Division must be used exclusively by all fire districts. No user-generated excel workbooks will be accepted. All formulas and codes are standardized and secured within the authorized workbook to ensure complete and accurate transmission through FAST. From the standardized excel workbook, data can be directly mapped into the FAST database. This facilitates review, certification, and analysis of the submitted information.

An individual must first have access to the FAST portal in order to access the Fire District Budget workbook. Upon logging into FAST, the designated official should click the “FAST” icon towards the upper right corner of the screen and select “Fire Budgets.” On the page that appears, a link for the

“Standard Fire Budget Workbook” will be available for users to download an excel file. This single file is the only Fire District Budget that should be submitted to the Division; there are no longer two separate forms that make up the Fire District Budget.



**PLEASE NOTE:** When saving the Fire District Budget workbook on your computer, the document must be named <<fire district muni code>>\_introbudget\_2021 and <<fire district muni code>>\_adoptbudget\_2021, for introduction and adoption, respectively. Muni codes are a six-digit identifier based on the fire district’s municipality and district number. A list of fire district muni codes are available on the Division’s FAST webpage: <https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dlgs/fast.html>

### ***Completing the Fire Budget Document***

Page by page instructions for completing the Fire District Budget excel workbook can be found in this section. Before completing the Fire District Budget excel document, please read the following:

- 1) When the document is opened, navigate to the “Key Inputs” tab. This should be completed before any other portion of the document as the information on this page, such as the year, district name, names of commissioners, and more will populate throughout the document.
- 2) Fire districts are not permitted to upload attachments of responses to questions, financial schedules, etc. unless otherwise noted. Space has been provided in each section for users to enter information directly in the document. This includes details for Revenues and Appropriations, Questionnaire responses, and Vehicle Lists. Supplemental documents related to the Budget, such as a contract, shared service agreement, or grant agreement may be uploaded as an attachment in FAST, as applicable, as they are not components of the Budget itself. A standard naming convention with the muni code, description of the attachment, and year should be used for all attachments. For example, 0201-01\_shareservice\_2021 could be used for naming shared service agreement.
- 3) The same template is used to be used for Introduction and Adoption. After submitting their Introduced Budget, fire districts should make a copy of their completed document. That copy is to then be named as <<fire district muni code>>\_adoptbudget\_2021 and be updated to reflect any changes or amendments between introduction/approval and adoption.
- 4) **Users may copy information from other documents, but must use the “Paste Values” option in excel when pasting into the Fire District Budget workbook.** For reference, see the picture of the “Paste Values” icon in excel:

	A	B	C	D	F
1	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Expense</b>			
2	104	£ 36.4			
3	60	£ 21.0			
4	25	£ 8.7			
5	240	£ 84.0			
6	55	£ 19.2			
7					
8					
9					

- 5) Throughout the document, fields where users may enter information are highlighted grey or yellow. Cells that are white are locked and will not allow information to be entered.

## **Key Inputs**

The Key Inputs tab serves as the “home” tab for the Fire District Budget. On this page, the following should be completed:

- 1) Enter the current year. This will populate the correct years throughout the entire document.
- 2) Select your Fire District name from the dropdown menu. This will automatically choose the county where the district is located and populate the name and county throughout the document.
- 3) Select the month that elections are held (February or November). If a fire district has moved to a November election, documentation indicating such should be attached in FAST.
- 4) Enter the names of each commissioner next to their title (Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary/Clerk, and Commissioner).
- 5) Enter the contact information under the “Certification Sections.” When names and contact information are entered in this section, they will automatically populate throughout the document. When the Budget is introduced and adopted, the signatures on the certification pages should be consistent with the contact information entered. The Adoption Certification should not be completed until a fire district is completing their Adopted Budget.

## **Certifications Section**

**Cover Sheet, Certification Section, and Division Cert.:** These pages are not editable.

Certification pages are completed in accordance with each step of the budget process. Upon introduction of the document, the Preparer, Preparer – Other Assets, Internet Certification, Approval Certification, and Approval Resolution must be completed. Upon adoption of the budget, the fire district must complete the Adoption Certification and Adoption Resolution.

**Preparer and Preparer – Other Assets Certifications:** Users will see their name and contact information populate from the Key Inputs page. The individual preparing the document is required to enter their email address in the “Preparer’s Signature” line for both pages.

To ensure the integrity of the budget submission and certification process, only designated officials of a Fire District, as defined earlier in this guide, may access the Fire District module in FAST. The Fire District Budget workbook can be downloaded from FAST by a designated official and provided to a paid preparer for completion. It must then be returned to a designated official to upload and submit in FAST. The individual that prepared the document for the Fire District, regardless of whether they are a Fire District official or paid preparer, is to complete the Preparer and Preparer – Other Assets certifications.

**Internet Certification:** This page has built-in check boxes to be used to certify compliance with each of the website requirements. Clicking a box will make a check mark appear within the box. The individual certifying this page is required to enter their email address on the “Signature” line.

**Approval Certification:** The individual certifying the Approved Budget is required to enter their email address into the signature line. The open public meeting date that is referenced on this page will be entered on the Approval Resolution tab, which immediately follows this page in the workbook.

**Approval Resolution:** Users should do the following:

- 1) Enter the date of the open public meeting where the Budget was approved in cell I9. Entering the date here will populate it on the Approval Certification page and in the Approval Resolution.
- 2) The Secretary to the Board of Commissioners is required to enter their email address on the signature line and the date of the resolution.
- 3) The Secretary to the Board of Commissioners is required to enter an “X” in the “Aye,” “Nay,” “Abstain,” and “Absent” columns, as applicable, based on the vote of each commissioner. The names of the commissioners will automatically appear.
- 4) Finally, enter the date that the budget will be considered for adoption in cell I33, a grey box to the right of the page.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The Total Revenue, Amount to be Raised by Taxation, and Total Appropriation amounts will automatically populate from the financial schedules. Users do not have the ability to enter these amounts manually.

**Adoption Certification** requires the entry of an email address on the signature line. The date on this page will populate from the Adopted Resolution page, similar to how the date on the Approval Resolution populated to the Approval Certification page.

**Adoption Resolution (*please read these instructions carefully*):**

- 1) In cell I9, enter the date the meeting to adopt the budget was held.
- 2) Under where the meeting date is entered, you will see three questions:

- a. Compliant with the Property Tax Levy Cap Law?
- b. Referendum to Exceed Amount to be Raised?
- c. Referendum to Use Restricted Fund Balance?

Put an “X” in the grey box for the question that is applicable to your fire district. If you are holding a referendum of any kind, enter the referendum amount in the field that says “Amount.” Any of the information that is entered here will automatically populate the correct language in the resolution. Users cannot edit the resolution itself.

- 3) The Secretary to the Board of Commissioners should enter an “X” in the “Aye,” “Nay,” “Abstain,” and “Absent” columns, as applicable, based on the vote of each commissioner. The names of the commissioners will automatically appear based on information previously entered.
- 4) Finally, enter the date that the Budget was adopted in cell I33, a grey box to the right of the page.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The Total Revenue, Amount to be Raised by Taxation, and Total Appropriation amounts will automatically populate from the financial schedules. Users do not have the ability to enter these amounts manually.

## **Narrative and Information Section**

**Message and Analysis:** Use the following as a guide for answering the questions in this section.

- 1) The annual election month will automatically populate based on the answer from “KEY INPUTS”. If the fire district holds a November election, answer the question as to whether or not a resolution was submitted to the Division.
- 2) For questions 2, 3, and 4, use the grey boxes to enter your response. Please do not attach separate sheets with answers unless otherwise noted in the document. Supporting documentation (grant agreement, shared service agreement, fee schedule) for variances of +/- 10% may be uploaded into FAST, but the items themselves that increased or decreased by 10% should still be described within the grey box for question 3.
- 3) Similar to questions 2, 3, and 4, questions 5, 6, 7 and 8 are completed by entering a response in the grey boxes. Answers should not be attached for any of these questions.
- 4) Question 9 is answered using the Yes/No dropdown in cell K11. If the answer to this question is Yes, please list in the grey box the names of the applicable organizations and amounts appropriated to them.
- 5) For question 10, enter the Assessed Valuation of the Fire District and Proposed Tax Rate.
- 6) If the Fire District is providing first year funding for a Length of Service Awards Program (LOSAP) in the current budget, place an “X” in the “Yes” box and enter the appropriation amount. Otherwise, place an “X” in the “No” box.

## **Contact Information:**

Some of the information on this page will populate since it was entered earlier in the document. If certain information, like an address, are the same for multiple officials, copy and paste values may be used to reduce data entry. Please note that contact information should be entered for the Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer of the Board of Fire Commissioners, in addition to the Preparer and Auditor.

## **Questionnaire:**

Answers for the Questionnaire are entered in the grey boxes next to each question. Most questions will only allow “Yes” or “No” to be selected from the dropdown menu. Exceptions to this include question 1 and 2, where the exact amount should be entered, and questions related to the Length of Service Awards Program (LOSAP), which are more specific.

If any questions require the fire district to provide an explanation for their answer, the answers are to be entered on the pages of the document labeled “Questionnaire Details.” These pages have grey text boxes that allow users to enter explanations, as necessary.

If the Fire District contracts with another entity to provide fire protection or EMS services within the Fire District, upload a copy of the agreements as attachments in FAST.

## **List of Vehicles:**

The Division has provided two pages within the workbook titled “Vehicle List” for the listing of all vehicles in the Fire District. This page does allow for information to be copied and pasted from an existing document into the budget. Users must use the “Paste Values” option in excel so the information correctly populates without altering the formatting of the document. **Users may not upload a list of their vehicles as a separate document.**

## **Schedule of Commissioners:**

Applicable Commissioners and Officers should be listed on this page. Enter all information requested for work hours, position held, and compensation from the fire district.

The total number of employees and independent contractors who received more than \$100,000 in total reportable compensation for the most recent fiscal year completed is entered at the bottom of the page.

## **Health Benefits:**

The Proposed Budget refers to the year for which the budget is being prepared, while the Current Year is the year that the Fire District is currently in. For the 2021 Budget, 2021 is the Proposed Year, while 2020 Current Year.

The number of covered members for each type of coverage is entered in columns B and E. The annual cost estimate per employee should be entered in columns C and F. The Total Cost for both the Proposed and Current Year will be calculated from this information, as will the dollar and percentage increase or decrease from one year to the next.

For the Employee Cost Sharing Contribution, enter the amount as a negative so it is correctly subtracted from the subtotal and grant total amounts.

Finally, respond “Yes” or “No” as to whether medical and/or prescription drug coverage are provided by the State Health Benefits Program (SHBP).

### **Accumulated Absences:**

Individuals eligible for accumulated absence compensation are listed on this page, along with the gross number of accumulated absence days and the dollar value of those days. Place an “X” in the Approved Labor Agreement, Resolution, or Individual Employment Agreement for each individual to indicate the legal basis for receiving accumulated absence compensation.

Each page in this section will display the total for that page **only**. The final accumulated absences page will display the grand total for all pages.

Enter all accumulated absences information in the document and should not upload this information as a separate attachment.

## **Financial Schedules Section**

**Please note: All amounts entered on the financial schedules should include exact change amounts. Amounts entered will not round up as they had in prior years.** Further, the Amount to be Raised by Taxation will automatically calculate the difference between Estimated Revenues and Proposed Appropriations for the current year, to the exact change amount.

**Information Sheet:** Complete this page as it was in prior years. Unlike prior year documents, the name of fire district, county, and year will automatically populate based on previously entered information.

**F-1 Budget Summary:** Amounts will populate from throughout the document. No data entry will take place on this page.

**F-2 Revenues (Proposed) and F-3 Appropriations (Proposed)** are configured the same as they were in prior years, with a combination of editable fields and fields linked from schedules throughout the document.

For fire districts with supplemental schedules that contain numerous items, the Division has provided “Revenue Detail” and “Appropriation Detail” pages within the budget document. Any individual accounts that are listed as part of a supplemental schedule are required to be listed on these detail pages. As these pages are now provided in the document itself, do not upload this information as a separate attachment in FAST. All supporting line items should be listed directly on the detail pages. Please see examples in the screenshots below.

Please note that the amounts entered on the detail page can be totaled by entering =SUM( ) and entering the applicable cells in the section. This is the “TOTAL ADMINISTRATION” line in the example below. The total you place on this page will not automatically link to the F-3 Appropriation page; that amount should be entered directly on F-3.

**Page F-3: Appropriations**

<i>Administration - Other (List)</i>				
Elections	1,000.00	1,000.00	-	0.0%
Insurance	50,000.00	48,000.00	2,000.00	4.2%
Supplemental Schedule (Appropriation Detail)	133,000.00	121,450.00	11,550.00	9.5%
Contingent Expenses			-	0.0%

**Appropriation Detail:**

<i>Line Item:</i>	<i>Proposed 2021 Amount</i>	<i>Adopted 2020 Amount</i>	<i>\$ Change Proposed vs. Adopted</i>	<i>% Change Proposed vs. Adopted</i>
ADMINISTRATION			-	0.0%
Membership Dues	4,000.00	4,000.00	-	0.0%
Office Expenses	20,000.00	19,000.00	1,000.00	5.3%
Professional Services	100,000.00	90,000.00	10,000.00	11.1%
Community Education	8,600.00	7,800.00	800.00	10.3%
Supplies	400.00	650.00	(250.00)	-38.5%
TOTAL ADMINISTRATION	133,000.00	121,450.00	11,550.00	9.5%

**F-4 Salary and Benefit Schedule**

This page is unchanged from prior years and is to be completed as usual. If a fire district requires more positions to be listed than the amount currently allowed, list additional positions and associated information on the “Salary & Benefit Detail” page. Like the Revenue and Appropriation Detail pages, this page takes the place of individual documents being attached and instead allows for supporting information to be entered directly into the document.

The following Financial Schedule sections remain unchanged from prior years:

- 1) F-5 Capital Budget Proposed
- 2) F-6 Debt Service – Principal
- 3) F-7 Debt Service – Interest
- 4) F-8 Fund Balance
- 5) F-9 Referendums
- 6) F-10 Levy Cap Summary
- 7) F-11 Shared Services
- 8) F-12 Cap Exclusions

**Printing the Fire District Budget Document**

When printing the workbook, navigate and select the first tab you would like to print. Hold the “Ctrl” key and select the > arrow on the bottom left corner of the workbook to navigate to the last tab of the workbook, which is the final page of the document. Release the “Ctrl” key, depress the “Shift” key, and click the last tab to highlight all tabs to be printed. Select File>Print to print the workbook for your records and posting to the fire district’s website. The “Instructions” and “KEY INPUTS” tabs do not need to be printed as a part of the official Fire District Budget document.



## Uploading the Fire District Budget Document

### Introduction

Log into the FAST portal and navigate to the Fire District Budget module. Choose the 2021 *Introduced* Budget record.

Aberdeen Township FD No. 2 2021 Budget (Introduced)

Aberdeen Township FD No. 2

2021

After ensuring the introduced budget is properly named <<fire district muni code>>\_introbudget\_2021, upload the introduced standardized budget workbook as approved by the Board of Fire Commissioners. On this same screen, upload any supporting documentation, including contracts with other entities, shared service agreements, etc. Click the “Choose Files” button, browse for the documents that need to be uploaded, and click “Open” or “Save,” depending on the internet browser you are using. Remember to click the blue save button on the screen itself.

Home > FAST > Fire Budgets > FAST Fire Budget Report Upload

Upload Introduced Fire Budget  
Submit for Review

### Financial Automation Submission and Tracking

Fire Districts must utilize the Division’s standardized Fire District Budget workbook. The file must remain in excel format and be saved as follows: <<fire district muni code>>\_introbudget\_2021. Upon completion of the Fire District Budget workbook and certification by all applicable officials, the Fire District Budget workbook and all supplementary budget documents must be uploaded and saved to this page. After successfully uploading and saving all budget documents, a designated official of the Fire District shall navigate to the “Submit for Review” tab to transmit the budget documents to the Division of Local Government Services. This step completes the submission process.

There are no notes to display.

Attach a file  
Choose Files No file chosen

Save

To submit the document, navigate to the “Submit for Review” tab, enter the public hearing date of the budget, check all applicable boxes, and click the submit button. Upon successful submission, an email confirmation will be generated and sent to the email address listed for the submitter. The submission information on the screen will also populate.

Home > FAST > Fire Budgets > FAST - Fire Budget Submit for Review

Upload Introduced Fire Budget  
Submit for Review

### Financial Automation Submission and Tracking

I understand that by selecting the “Submit” button I am transmitting my complete and approved Introduced Budget and supporting documents to the Division of Local Government Services in accordance with the applicable statutes.

Submission Information

Submitted On	Submitted By
—	—

Introduced Checklist

Introduction Public Hearing Date \*

8/27/2020

- Introduced Budget
- CNC-3
- Special Meeting Documentation
- Contract Agreements
- Special Item of Revenue Documentation

Please upload a file first before attempting to submit.

Once successfully submitted, the Budget will be considered for Division review.

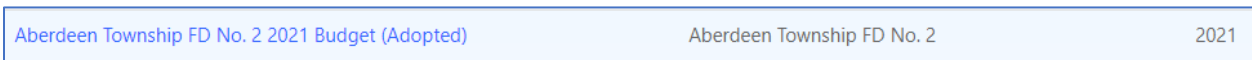
### **Amendments**

Any resolutions to amend the budget passed before adoption must be uploaded to the fire district's 2021 Adopted Budget record in the FAST portal.

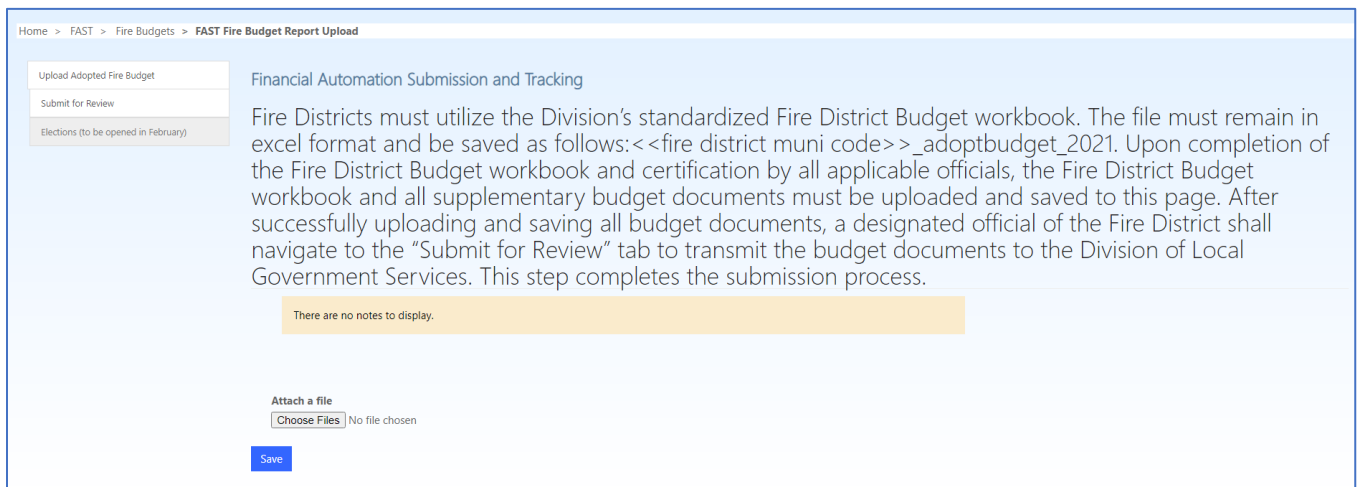
### **Adoption**

Once the review of the budget is complete and approved by the Division for adoption, the fire district's designated official will receive a notification email indicating that the budget has been approved for adoption.

Log into the FAST portal, navigate to the Fire District Budget module, and choose the 2021 *Adopted* Budget record.



After, ensuring the adopted budget is properly named <<fire district muni code>>\_adoptbudget\_2021, upload the adopted standardized Budget workbook as approved by the Board of Fire Commissioners. On this same screen, upload any supporting document to related to adoption, as required by the Division.



To submit the document, navigate to the "Submit for Review" tab, check all applicable boxes, and click the submit button. Upon successful submission, an email confirmation will be generated and sent to the email address listed for the submitter.

Home > FAST > Fire Budgets > FAST - Fire Budget Submit for Review

Upload Adopted Fire Budget

Submit for Review

Elections (to be opened in February)

### Financial Automation Submission and Tracking

I understand that by selecting the "Submit" button I am transmitting my complete and approved Adopted Budget and supporting documents to the Division of Local Government Services in accordance with the applicable statutes.

#### Submission Information

Submitted By	Submitted On
—	—

#### Adopted Checklist

Adopted Date \*

  
 Adopted Budget  
 Amendments  
 Ratified Contract Agreements

## **Election Results Reporting**

In FAST, there is a tab on the Adopted Fire Budget record for reporting election results. This tab will be made available in February, after the annual fire district elections. Further information regarding the completion of the "Elections" tabs will be forthcoming.

## **Levy Certification**

Upon successful passage of the Fire District Budget by district voters (as applicable), the Director of the Division of Local Government Services will initiate the process of certifying tax levies to the municipal assessor. The status of the Adopted Fire District Budget within the FAST portal will be updated to reflect that the Adopted Budget and tax levy were certified.

## ***Technical Assistance***

For technical assistance with the FAST system, please email [helpdesk@dca.nj.gov](mailto:helpdesk@dca.nj.gov) or call (609) 292-8134. During high volume periods, users should email the help desk, so that we may direct your inquiry to the FAST support team more efficiently.