

## **Financial Effectiveness and Efficiency Analysis of Magelang Regency After the Central Government's Budget Efficiency Policy**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study analyzes the financial effectiveness and efficiency of Magelang Regency following the implementation of the 2025 central government budget efficiency policy. Using a mixed-method approach with sequential exploratory design, data were collected through interviews and budget reports. Quantitative analysis employed descriptive ratio methods to assess effectiveness and efficiency, while qualitative data explained the implementation dynamics. Results show that budget planning remained highly effective (99.56%) and efficient (27.76%), though capital expenditure absorption was only 4.02%. Internal audit, program prioritization, and disciplined reallocation supported fiscal stability despite reduced transfer funds. The study concludes that while the efficiency policy fostered fiscal prudence, it also slowed capital project execution. Findings suggest the need for balanced fiscal discipline and development acceleration.

**Keywords :** Budget Efficiency, Fiscal Performance, Regional Finance, Magelang, Public Expenditure

## INTRODUCTION

The management of regional finances lies at the heart of Indonesia's decentralized governance framework, serving as a critical determinant of local development and public service delivery (Halim, 2018). Since the onset of the Reformasi era in 2001, significant administrative and political authority has been devolved to local governments. However, this decentralization has been characterized by a persistent paradox: while regional leaders hold substantial administrative mandates, their fiscal autonomy remains severely constrained. The central government continues to control the lion's share of revenue sources, leaving local governments heavily reliant on intergovernmental transfers (TKD) to fund their operations (Le & Guo, 2021; Sharma & Xu, 2023). This structural dependency creates a fundamental tension between the political promise of regional autonomy and the fiscal reality of central control, a tension that is amplified by national-level policy shifts (Purwadi, Sanjaya 2025).

This fiscal dependency has been thrown into sharp relief by the central government's 2025 budget efficiency policy. Initiated under Presidential Instruction (Inpres) No. 1 of 2025, the policy mandated the reallocation of IDR 306.7 trillion from various ministries, agencies, and transfer funds to prioritize President Prabowo Subianto's flagship Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) program (Prabowo Subianto, 2025). The MBG program, a national priority aimed at providing nutritious meals to millions of schoolchildren and vulnerable groups, saw its budget increase substantially, from an initial IDR 71 trillion to a total of IDR 171 trillion for 2025 (Ajefu & Ogebe, 2023). While the policy underscores a commitment to social welfare, its implementation has reduced the fiscal space available to regional governments, compelling them to make difficult decisions regarding their own expenditure priorities amidst stagnating or shrinking transfers (Pablo et al., 2024; Lapitan & Garciano, 2024).

The effectiveness and efficiency of local government financial management are key indicators of their capacity to navigate such fiscal constraints (Purwadi, Sanjaya, Widyantoro, et al., 2025). Effectiveness refers to the degree to which an organization achieves its stated goals and targets, such as realizing budgeted expenditures (Purwadi, Andriani Kumala, & Fitriani, 2025). Efficiency, by contrast, concerns the optimal use of resources in achieving desired outputs, often measured as the ratio between inputs (expenditure) and outputs (revenue or services) (Azzahra & Dewi, 2025). These concepts are particularly salient during periods of fiscal tightening, as they reveal how well local governments can adapt their spending to align with new financial realities. While a substantial body of literature has analyzed regional financial performance in Indonesia, it has largely focused on the impact of specific events like the COVID-19 pandemic (Tang et al., 2024) or on measuring performance through standard ratios (Adanu, 2021; Sugiyarto & Laura et al., 2025). A significant gap exists in studies that specifically analyze the immediate and direct impact of a national-level budget efficiency policy like the MBG-driven reallocation on the day-to-day fiscal management and strategic adaptation of a local government. This study addresses this gap by moving beyond a static ratio analysis to examine the dynamic interplay between a national policy shock and local fiscal behavior (Purwadi, 2025).

To address this gap, this study focuses on the Magelang Regency Government in Central Java. Magelang Regency provides a particularly salient case due to its high fiscal dependency on central transfers, which account for the vast majority of its revenue (Purwadi, Sanjaya, Widyantoro, et al., 2025). Between 2018 and 2022, the region's fiscal decentralization rate averaged 97.50%, indicating that its revenue base is almost entirely dependent on transfers from Jakarta (Rashied et al., 2024). This high dependency makes Magelang Regency acutely vulnerable to national-level fiscal policy changes, making it an ideal test case for analyzing the consequences of the 2025 efficiency policy (Handoko et al., 2025). Moreover, existing research on Magelang

Regency has noted a consistent prioritization of indirect and operational expenditures over capital spending for long-term development (Chalee & Saengsrichan, 2024; Liu et al., 2022), a pattern that may be exacerbated by the current fiscal squeeze.

This study, therefore, seeks to analyze how the implementation of the central government's 2025 budget efficiency policy has influenced the financial effectiveness and efficiency of the Magelang Regency Government. It aims to answer three key research questions: (1) How was the budget efficiency policy implemented by the Magelang Regency Government? (2) What impact did this policy have on the effectiveness and efficiency of its regional financial management? (3) What factors determined the success or challenges in its implementation? By doing so, this research contributes to the literature on intergovernmental fiscal relations in Indonesia by providing a granular, empirical assessment of a specific local government's response to a national policy shock. The findings offer practical insights for policymakers and local administrators on strategies for achieving fiscal adaptability and resilience in an environment of increasing fiscal centralization.

### **Method**

This study uses a mixed approach that combines qualitative and quantitative techniques (Creswell, 2010). The research design follows a sequential exploratory strategy, where qualitative data is collected first through semi-structured in-depth interviews to understand the implementation of central government budget efficiency policies and the factors influencing them. Based on the results of interviews and information mining, researchers can find answers and understand to be able to explain quantitative data. Quantitative data was then analyzed descriptively to measure the level of effectiveness and efficiency in financial management in Magelang Regency. Qualitative findings are used to support and explain quantitative results. This research was carried out on the Magelang Regency Regional Government, because the fiscal proportion of Magelang Regency is still supported by the central government. The selection of informants for the qualitative approach was carried out by purposive sampling by determining the agencies involved in the preparation and evaluation of the budget as many as 3 (three) regional apparatus, namely Bappedalitbangda, Inspectorate, and BPPKAD. Bappedalitbang was chosen as a regional apparatus that is authorized to design and plan the budget. The Inspectorate is authorized to review and supervise the budget, and BPPKAD is authorized to design, implement, and control the budget. Primary data was obtained through interviews, observations, and questionnaires with local government officials related to the implementation of budget policies, while secondary data was collected from official documents, reports, and archives from relevant agencies, which served as supporting materials for the analysis.

Institution-based qualitative data analysis units and document-based quantitative data analysis. Data analysis was carried out using a thematic analysis approach based on the Interactive Model of Miles and Huberman (2014), which involved three main stages: (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, and (3) conclusion drawing and verification. Then a qualitative data validity test was carried out using the triangulation technique using the source triangulation technique, which is asking and digging information from different sources related to one problem topic. In addition, triangulation techniques are used, in the form of in-depth observations, documentation studies, and literature.

Quantitative analysis is used to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of regional budget management by calculating the ratio between realized expenditure, realized revenue, and budgeted revenue. The data used in quantitative research uses secondary data, in the form of realization reports and budget data. Budget efficiency measurement follows Mahmudi (2019), who defines efficiency as the relationship between the output produced and the resources used. Formally, efficiency is expressed as:

$$\text{Effectiveness Ratio} = \frac{\text{Realized Expenditure}}{\text{Budgeted Expenditure}} \times 100\%$$

Where the result is realized revenue and budgeted revenue. The level of efficiency can be determined by comparing the realization of expenses with the realization of income.

$$\text{Efficiency Ratio} = \frac{\text{Realized Productive Expenditure}}{\text{Total Realized Expenditure}} \times 100\%$$

While output is the realization of expenses, and output is the realization of income.

Of course, this research has limitations in research methods, namely in terms of data sources that use secondary data for quantitative purposes and time limitations in using qualitative research approaches.

## Results

This study employs a mixed-methods approach using a sequential exploratory strategy to analyze the level of effectiveness and efficiency in the budget management of the Magelang Regency Government. The analysis is based on data from the 2025 Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD) and its mid-year adjustment, which serves as a proxy for actual realization to measure the impact of the national budget efficiency policy implemented during the fiscal year.

### *Budget Effectiveness Analysis*

Budget execution effectiveness measures the extent to which local governments have carried out their planned expenditures. The calculation compares actual expenditures, adjusted for the initial spending targets, using the following formula:

$$\text{Effectiveness Ratio} = \frac{\text{Realized Expenditure}}{\text{Budgeted Expenditure}} \times 100\%$$

Based on the 2025 Magelang Regency APBD data, the following calculations were obtained:

**Table.1** Effectiveness of Magelang Regency Government Budget FY 2025

| Description                     | Amount (Rp.)         |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Budgeted Expenditure            | 2.761.071.569.373,00 |
| Realized (Adjusted) Expenditure | 2.748.888.592.373,00 |
| Effectiveness Rate              | 99,56%               |
| Category                        | Effective            |

*Source: Processed data, 2025*

The calculation results show an effectiveness level of **99.56%**, which falls within the “Effective” category (90–100%). This indicates that the Magelang District Government succeeded in maintaining expenditure realization in line with the revised target, reflecting sound budget discipline despite fiscal constraints.

### **Budget Efficiency Analysis**

Budget efficiency assesses the relationship between outputs produced and the inputs utilized. In this study, efficiency was measured by comparing the realization of productive expenditures namely goods and services spending and capital expenditure against total realized spending.

Given that the 2025 Regional Budget structure uses a new classification (Operating, Capital, Unexpected, and Transfer Expenditures), the efficiency formula from the literature, which uses the old classification (Direct and Indirect Expenditures), needs to be adapted. In this analysis, the expenditures considered to represent output are Goods and Services Expenditures and Capital Expenditures, as both are directly related to service provision and asset development.

$$\text{Efficiency Ratio} = \frac{\text{Realized Productive Expenditure}}{\text{Total Realized Expenditure}} \times 100\%$$

**Table.2** Efficiency of Magelang Regency Government Budget FY 2025

| <b>Description</b>                             | <b>Amount (Rp.)</b>  |
|--|----------------------|
| <b>Realized Goods and Services Expenditure</b> | 584.148.145.591,38   |
| <b>Realized Capital Expenditure</b>            | 178.970.764.653,62   |
| <b>Total Productive Expenditure (Output)</b>   | 763.118.910.245,00   |
| <b>Total Realized Expenditure (Input)</b>      | 2.748.888.592.373,00 |
| <b>Efficiency Rate</b>                         | 27,76%               |
| <b>Category</b>                                | Sangat Efisien       |

*Source: Processed data, 2025*

An efficiency ratio of 27.76% indicates that the Magelang Regency Government has successfully implemented its budget with a high level of fiscal control. An organization or program is considered efficient when it achieves a certain output with minimal input or, conversely, produces maximum output with a given amount of input (spending wisely). Therefore, a lower ratio indicates greater efficiency in controlling expenditures.

### **Budget Absorption Analysis in Semester I 2025**

The budget absorption rate measures the percentage of expenditures actually made relative to the total allocated budget. As of the end of the first semester (June 30, 2025), the Magelang City Government’s realized expenditures reached Rp1,073,794,632,445.00 out of a total budget of Rp2,748,888,592,373.00, equivalent to an absorption rate of 39.06%.

Compared to the same period in the previous year, this absorption rate shows a slight increase, as in the first semester of 2024, budget absorption was recorded at 36.60%. However, when broken down by type of expenditure, significant differences in budget absorption rates emerge.

**Table.3** Budget Absorption by Expenditure Type (Semester I FY 2025)

| <b>Expenditure Type</b>        | <b>Budget (Rp)</b>          | <b>Realization (Rp)</b>     | <b>Absorption (%)</b> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Operational Expenditure</b> | 1.898.022.922.298,38        | 765.158.586.988,00          | <b>40,31%</b>         |
| – Employee Expenditure         | 1.207.227.134.084,00        | 560.996.458.803,00          | 46,46%                |
| – Goods and Services           | 584.148.145.591,38          | 193.616.357.185,00          | 33,14%                |
| <b>Capital Expenditure</b>     | 178.970.764.653,62          | 7.196.410.228,00            | <b>4,02%</b>          |
| <b>Unexpected Expenditure</b>  | 22.875.000.000,00           | 191.496.000,00              | <b>0,83%</b>          |
| <b>Transfer Expenditure</b>    | 649.019.905.421,00          | 301.248.139.229,00          | <b>46,41%</b>         |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>       | <b>2.748.888.592.373,00</b> | <b>1.073.794.632.445,00</b> | <b>39,06%</b>         |

*Source: Processed data, 2025*

The most notable finding is the extremely low level of capital expenditure, which stood at just 4.02% at mid-year—slightly above the 3.66% recorded during the same period in 2024. This indicates ongoing challenges in executing expenditures for asset development. On the other hand, routine and mandatory expenditures such as Personnel Expenditures (46.46%) and Transfer Expenditures (46.41%) showed absorption rates approaching the proportional target of 50%.

## **Discussion**

### ***High Effectiveness Level as a Policy Response***

The analysis results show that the Magelang Regency Government was able to maintain its expenditure effectiveness at the “Effective” level (99.56%). This figure, which is very close to 100%, indicates that actual expenditures were almost entirely consistent with the adjusted targets. This is reinforced by Sari (2022), who states that budget effectiveness levels fall within the 90–95% range and fall into the “Effective” category, indicating that local governments are able to execute the majority of their budgets in accordance with planned targets. Although the effectiveness rate is relatively high, this does not mean there are no challenges; rather, it demonstrates the local government’s ability to quickly adjust expenditure planning (targets) in response to changes in revenue conditions, particularly those affected by central government policies.

Data from the adjusted APBD shows a decrease in transfer receipts from the central government, particularly in the General Allocation Fund (DAU) component, amounting to more than Rp12.18 billion. This revenue decline directly forced the local government to implement efficiency measures. Based on interviews with the Magelang Regency Inspectorate, one of the main strategies adopted in response to the efficiency policy was to focus on key priorities and adjust programs.

This high level of effectiveness reflects the success of the strategy, as reinforced by Kende’s (2024) statement that budget effectiveness is a measure of a local government’s success in achieving development goals through the utilization of available funds. In other words, the higher the ratio of actual expenditure to the planned budget, the higher the level of effectiveness in managing the local budget. As demonstrated by the Magelang Regency government in its

budget management, the local government was able to reallocate and adjust budget ceilings across various expenditure items, including a significant reduction in official travel expenses of over Rp25 billion, in accordance with the efficiency directives confirmed in the interview. Therefore, the achieved effectiveness illustrates budget discipline in implementing programs aligned with the revised targets.

### ***Optimal Efficiency Through Spending Prioritization***

A budget efficiency rate of 27.76% (Highly Efficient) indicates that the majority of the district's budget allocations are directed toward categories outside of goods/services and capital expenditures, such as personnel expenses and transfer payments. However, in the context of efficiency policies, this low ratio can be interpreted positively. It indicates that the local government has successfully reduced wasteful spending and reallocated resources to more strategic sectors without drastically cutting productive expenditures. According to Sapay (2025), government budget efficiency policies aim to prevent waste and ensure that every expenditure yields optimal benefits for the community. These policies are implemented by limiting non-priority spending, such as ceremonial activities and official travel, and redirecting resources to more strategic development programs. The efficiency measures implemented by the Magelang Regency Government, as confirmed through interviews with the Inspectorate, include:

- a. Reduction of non-priority items: such as the purchase of office supplies, ceremonial events, and official travel;
- b. Risk-Based Audits: The Inspectorate, as the internal oversight body, prioritizes the monitoring of departments with large budgets and high risks to prevent irregularities;
- c. Review of Budget Documents: The Inspectorate actively reviews the Work Plan and Budget (RKA) to ensure that all expenditures are planned efficiently.

This policy has resulted in the postponement of some less urgent programs, while at the same time ensuring that limited funds are utilized optimally. The low efficiency ratio (indicating that the use of input funds for output is relatively small compared to total inputs) reflects success in controlling consumptive and administrative expenditures, thereby allowing for a larger allocation to mandatory expenditures such as employee salaries and village fund transfers.

### ***Implementation of the Budget Efficiency Policy***

The implementation of efficiency measures was prompted by adjustments to local government revenues, particularly a reduction in transfer payments from the central government. Data shows a decrease in the General Allocation Fund (DAU) of more than Rp12.18 billion. In response, the Magelang Regency Government implemented significant budget cuts in expenditure categories deemed non-essential.

The most notable efficiency measures are as follows:

- a. Reduction in Official Travel Expenditure: The official travel budget was cut by more than Rp25 billion, aligning with the Inspectorate's statement that travel expenses were among the main targets of efficiency.
- b. Efficiency in Other Operational Expenditures: Other affected categories included the purchase of office supplies, meeting refreshments, and ceremonial events.

These measures enable local governments to maintain fiscal balance and reallocate resources to higher-priority programs, thereby achieving revised spending targets with high effectiveness. Based on research findings, these efficiency gains demonstrate that efficiency policies can enhance fiscal discipline and strengthen the performance of local financial management (Lawata, 2026).

### ***Factors Influencing Implementation***

The success and potential failure of policy implementation were influenced by several key factors.

#### Success Factors:

- a. **Focus on Priority Programs:** The primary success factor lies in the government's ability to identify and prioritize strategic programs, ensuring that budget cuts did not disrupt essential public services.
- b. **Active Internal Oversight:** The Inspectorate played a crucial role in overseeing the efficiency policy. Its oversight included risk-based audits, reviews of Work Plans and Budgets (RKA), monitoring, and providing guidance to local government agencies (OPD) to ensure proper budget utilization.
- c. **Resource Optimization:** In addition to expenditure reductions, the local government sought to optimize local revenue potential (PAD) and promote innovation through the use of information technology to improve service efficiency.

#### Potential Failure Factors and Challenges:

- a. **Risk of Low Budget Absorption:** One of the main challenges was the presence of fear or hesitation among officials in utilizing the budget due to potential legal risks. This often led to low absorption levels despite available funds.
- b. **Delay of Non-Priority Programs:** As a logical consequence of efficiency, some programs deemed less urgent experienced delays in implementation.
- c. **Limited Oversight Capacity:** The Inspectorate acknowledged internal constraints, such as the number of auditors being disproportionate to the workload and limited operational funds for conducting supervision. These limitations may hinder the optimal implementation of efficiency measures across all departments.

### ***Constraints and Financial Management Strategies***

Efficiency policies have successfully promoted fiscal discipline, as reflected in local governments' ability to adjust expenditure planning (planning effectiveness) and control budget allocations (allocation efficiency). However, actual expenditure data reveal an unintended side effect of slower budget execution, particularly in expenditure categories critical to development.

Although quantitative analysis indicates strong performance, the process is not without challenges. The Inspectorate reports that officials' fear of potential legal consequences sometimes leads to hesitation in utilizing allocated funds, contributing to low absorption rates. This is supported by research findings cited by Sudarwati (2017), who notes that psychological factors and legal risks can influence budget implementation performance. Additionally, the limited number of auditors and operational oversight funds pose significant challenges.

Although budget effectiveness and efficiency are high, the most significant problem and challenge lies in the low absorption rate of capital expenditure. The capital expenditure absorption rate of only 4.02% by mid-year strongly indicates obstacles to implementing physical projects. This directly underscores the constraints specifically highlighted by the Inspectorate: "fear of budget utilization" and concerns about potential "legal issues." The complexity of the procurement process, compounded by excessive caution among officials, often serves as the primary cause of delays in capital budget implementation. This is one of the factors leading to low capital expenditure absorption; if this occurs, allocated but unused funds become ineffective and fail to yield any impact.

Thus, a dilemma arises: on the one hand, efficiency policies successfully curb waste and ensure prudent spending; on the other hand, this cautious approach risks slowing down physical development and budget absorption, which directly impacts economic growth and the delivery of public services.

Despite this issue, the overall budget absorption rate in 2025 (39.06%) was slightly higher than in 2024 (36.60%). However, accelerating capital expenditure remains a major challenge. These findings underscore that the success of efficiency policies is not only measured by how much money is saved, but also by how effectively the remaining budget can be utilized to achieve development targets. Thus, it can be said that although regional budget performance is considered effective and efficient, attention must still be paid to the performance of capital expenditure absorption. On one hand, weak budget absorption can create a perception of inefficiency; on the other hand, this reflects the government's efficiency and prudence in absorbing and implementing the budget. The situation is such that, regarding the unabsorbed budget expenditures, the local government endeavors to reallocate funds to strategic budget items and priority programs in the revised APBD.

To address these challenges, the Magelang Regency Government has implemented various strategies, including optimizing local revenue sources, strengthening cross-sectoral coordination, and promoting innovation through information technology to improve service efficiency. These efforts, combined with strict internal oversight, are key to maintaining fiscal stability amid the central government's efficiency policies.

## CONCLUSION

The findings reveal a complex and somewhat paradoxical fiscal outcome. On one hand, the local government demonstrated remarkable adaptive capacity in the planning phase. In response to a reduction in transfer revenues, particularly the General Allocation Fund (DAU), the administration swiftly implemented a disciplined budget rationalization. This resulted in a high planning effectiveness rate, demonstrating the ability to realign expenditure targets with a newly constrained fiscal reality. Concurrently, the government achieved a high degree of fiscal efficiency by successfully curtailing non-priority spending, such as official travel and ceremonial activities, thereby safeguarding allocations for more essential programs. These successes underscore the critical role of adaptive internal controls and strategic prioritization in navigating sudden fiscal contractions.

However, this narrative of fiscal prudence is sharply contrasted by significant obstacles encountered during the execution phase, most notably in capital expenditure. The absorption rate for capital projects reached only 4.02% in the first semester, a persistent challenge that highlights a fundamental dilemma: the tension between maintaining fiscal discipline and accelerating physical development. The primary inhibiting factors were not a lack of funds, but rather deep-seated procedural and behavioral constraints, including officials' apprehension about legal risks in procurement processes and the complexity of administrative procedures. This finding contributes a crucial nuance to the existing literature on regional financial management, demonstrating that the effectiveness of budget planning does not automatically translate into the effective implementation of development programs. It suggests that in an environment of heightened fiscal scrutiny, risk-averse bureaucratic behavior can become a significant bottleneck, neutralizing the potential benefits of fiscal efficiency.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its elucidation of the micro-dynamics of intergovernmental fiscal relations. By moving beyond a purely macro-level analysis of transfer dependency, it provides a granular account of how a local government internalizes and responds to a national policy shock.

This research is not without limitations. The analysis was necessarily constrained by the use of mid-year (semester) proxy data to represent the full impact of the 2025 policy, as the complete fiscal year had not yet concluded. Furthermore, the qualitative insights, while valuable, were primarily drawn from interviews with a limited number of key informants, and broader access to officials across all local government agencies could have provided a more comprehensive view of the operational challenges. Future research should therefore extend this analysis to cover the full 2025 fiscal year to assess whether the trends observed in the first semester persisted. A comparative study across multiple local governments with varying degrees of fiscal dependency would also be valuable in determining whether the patterns observed in Magelang Regency are idiosyncratic or indicative of a broader systemic response.

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