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## Corporation failed to spend 10% of last year budget

CHENNAI: Another budget has been presented and new outlays made, but the corporation has not spent what it had set apart for different kinds of civic work. According to its own records, it has not spent 314 crore - more than 10% of the 2,922 crore budget - in 2012-13. This underlines the ad hoc preparation of budgetary estimates and the lack of political will to execute projects, experts say.

In every budget, the civic body allocates a significant portion as capital expenditure for infrastructure like roads and storm water drains as well as for education but by the end of the year most of the money is still unspent. The result: Roads have potholes, drains are clogged, and [garbage](#) bins overflow. More importantly, these funds lapse and cannot be carried forward to the next financial year.

Records reveal that the civic body underutilizes several crores sanctioned for the corporation schoolchildren. Though the schools remain ill-equipped, the education department has spent only 18% of the funds allotted to it. It spent just 2.7 crore of the 15 crore sanctioned for corporation schools last year. Some sources in the civic body said that 31 corporation schools were closed since 2009 due to lack of students.

The [buildings department](#) has spent only 34.6 crore of the 82 crore it received. It is yet to construct public toilets because of the poor response from private firms. In July, the buildings department announced that it would construct 5,000 modern toilets across the city. It later revised this number to 2,000. So far, not one toilet has been built.

Close to 10 crore has been unused in the 15 corporation zones. Despite complaints about uncleared garbage, the solid waste management department has let close to 20% of its funds lapse. The second highest number of complaints the corporation receives relates to non-functioning street lights but the electrical department has spent less than half its allocation (44%). However, the health department spent 2.69 crore more than its allocation and the mechanical department overran its budget by 10.7 crore.

A senior corporation official said, "There is no clear strategy or plan about utilizing funds. There is little coordination among various departments in the civic body." Experts blame inefficiencies while planning and preparing the budget. M G Devasahayam, social activist and former civil servant, said, "The priorities of the civic body are wrong. If projects are slow to take off or complete, it shows the civic body's inability to fully use its finances."