
NEWS RELEASE

DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE



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State partnership advances transparency for Hoosiers

INDIANAPOLIS (July 8, 2011) – The Indiana Department of Local Government Finance (“Department”), in cooperation with the Indiana Business Research Center (“IBRC”) at Indiana University’s Kelley School of Business, launched a new online data collection system that will dramatically increase transparency and accessibility of local government finance information for Hoosiers.

In its first phase, the system, known as the Indiana Gateway for Government Units (“Gateway”), will allow local officials to submit 2012 budget forms electronically, modernizing the way the Department collects and publishes local government information. Once Gateway is fully implemented, the financial data can be cross-referenced with other datasets: economic data like unemployment rates or median income, population data to analyze per capita, and comparisons with other units based on a number of different possible criteria like sizes, incomes, etc. Additionally, GIS technology allows for the creation of maps, giving users the opportunity to look at other communities near them.

“Gateway will offer units of government and taxpayers an important tool for understanding the services local governments provide and the cost of providing them,” Department Commissioner Brian Bailey said.

After local officials complete and submit the budget forms, they will be available online for all to view. Budget figures also will become part of an interactive, taxpayer-friendly research website where figures can be easily compared against other units, analyzed per capita, and put in the context of economic conditions. This research website will be available shortly after the November 1 local budget adoption deadline.

Local officials will also use Gateway to submit annual reports to the State Board of Accounts, allowing users to tie budget information to expenditure information easily for the first time. They will also begin reporting debt information through Gateway, providing taxpayers with information about borrowing costs and overall indebtedness.

“The entering of electronic data is just the beginning of what Gateway will allow the public to do” IBRC Deputy Director and Chief Information Officer Carol Rogers said. “By linking local government finance to the other data hosted on Stats Indiana, policy makers and businesses will have information at their fingertips to help them make fiscal decisions in the context of their overall community, or communities they may consider joining.”

The initiative is a joint effort of the Department, IBRC, and the State Board of Accounts through the Information for Indiana (“IFI”) program, a collaborative project launched by Governor Mitch Daniels in July 2005.

Additionally, last year, the State launched the Indiana Transparency Portal, www.in.gov/itp, which provides Hoosiers with access to information on how the State is utilizing its resources and includes information on state contracts, employee salaries, budget, revenue data, state debt authority and more.

Gateway builds upon the success of the award-winning Indiana Transparency Portal and extends the transparency to local units of government.

In addition to the increased transparency Gateway will provide to taxpayers, it will also help Indiana government operate more efficiently. Gateway will reduce the cost of printing, storing, and transporting paper documents. In the past, 92 county auditors collected all local government unit budgets and then worked with the Department to transport boxes full of paper forms to Indianapolis every year. The electronic data will enable the Department to more quickly process local budget certifications, giving local officials more time to calculate and send property tax bills. Finally, the amount of time that State and local officials spend on fulfilling public information requests will be reduced because of the accessibility of the data. Taxpayers will have access to local government data with the click of a mouse, rather than having to wait for public information requests to be fulfilled.

The Department is furnishing local officials with a number of resources to ensure a successful transition to the new system. Resources, which can be found at www.in.gov/dlgf/8918.htm, include a detailed User Guide with screenshots, a video tour, and a list of on-call Gateway experts and trainers.

More information about the Indiana Transparency Portal is available at <http://www.in.gov/itp/>.

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