

Connecticut General Assembly



OFFICE OF FISCAL ANALYSIS

Alan Calandro, Director
PHONE: (860) 240-0200
FAX: (860) 240-0052
<http://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa>

ROOM 5200
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT. 06106-1591
ofa@cga.ct.gov

November 1, 2010

Senator Toni Harp, Co-Chairperson
Representative John Geragosian, Co-Chairperson
Senator Dan Debicella, Ranking Member
Representative Craig Miner, Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee
Room 2600
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Sen. Harp, Rep. Geragosian, Sen. Debicella, and Rep. Miner:

As you may recall, PA 10-155 requires OFA to establish an on-line searchable database of state expenditures by 7/1/11. It also requires quarterly reports to the Appropriations Committee on our progress toward this goal beginning 11/1/10 and thereafter. This communication is intended to satisfy the 11/1/10 requirement.

In summary, we are on track to achieve the July 1, 2011 implementation date. There are many challenges that go into the development of this database including privacy issues, data storage, access and integrity, as well as resources. I have been fortunate to have had the cooperation of the Department of Administrative Services, the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC), Information Technology Services (ITS) as well as several able and dedicated staff from this office.

The following is a detailed description of the progress to date. I have attached a copy of PA 10-155 as Attachment A for your reference.

I. Status

Public Interface - surveyed content, style, and ease of use of other states' online databases to identify preliminary template.

Expenditure Data - OFA and ITS have built a payroll and expenditure database that will be able to feed a portion of the website's required information. On-going consultation with CORE-CT is necessary to determine additional CORE-CT fields that are reliable for the remaining portion.

Privacy/Legal - coordinated with affected agencies, including ITS, CORE-CT, OSC, and DCJ to discuss and resolve confidentiality issues, HIPAA regulations, and other potentially protected information which will need to be excluded from database. Other legal concerns are still under discussion.

Technical/Resources - currently assessing in-house capabilities as well as additional software and related support services which may be necessary for: 1) going live with database; 2) ensuring functionality for customers and administrators; and 3) maintaining integrity of the data.

II. Current Challenges

Data Integrity

The statewide accounting system (CORE-CT) will be the primary source of data for the online searchable database. Any limitations or inconsistencies within CORE-CT will therefore diminish the completeness and usefulness of the searchable database. We are currently evaluating the balance between completeness and reliability.

Limited Scope Agencies

Some state agencies do not participate fully in CORE-CT. As a consequence of this limited participation, some of these agencies' data (e.g., position titles) may be too generic to use, missing or erroneous (e.g., payroll transaction details).

Inconsistent Agency Usage of Data fields

Some agency-entered information about contracts may be invalid because state agencies appear to have entered invalid maximum contract amounts or used hundreds of entries to describe a contract and changes to it. Agencies' descriptions of vendors may also include sensitive information (e.g., client names or SSNs) in some cases.

Resources

Implementation of the online searchable database was envisioned to take place concurrent with a new budget system. The development and assessment of an updated budgeting system is still on-going. No additional resources have been provided for either. Resources will likely be necessary for training, software licensing and consultants to assist in implementation of a budget system. The on-line database would be a component of the future system.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan Blawie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

cc: Appropriations Committee Members
Thomas P. Sheridan, Senate Clerk
Garey E. Coleman, House Clerk
Kendall F. Wiggin, State Librarian
Office of Legislative Research
John Clark, Office of the State Comptroller
Mary Yabrosky, Department of Administrative Services
Michael Murphy, OFA
Don Chaffee, OFA
Bill Lederman, OFA
Evelyn Arnold, OFA
Susan Marsh, ITS

Attachment A

Public Act No. 10-155

AN ACT REQUIRING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEARCHABLE DATABASE FOR STATE EXPENDITURES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) On or before July 1, 2011, the legislative Office of Fiscal Analysis shall establish and maintain searchable electronic databases on the Internet and located on said office's Internet web site for purposes of posting state expenditures, including state contracts and grants.

(b) Each budgeted agency, as defined in section 4-60 of the general statutes, shall submit, in a timely manner, any information requested by the legislative Office of Fiscal Analysis for the purpose of establishing and maintaining the electronic databases.

(c) On or before November 1, 2010, and quarterly thereafter, the legislative Office of Fiscal Analysis shall report, in accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies on the establishment and maintenance of the electronic databases, with any recommendations for improving or expanding the operation or capacity of such databases.

(d) Following the establishment of the electronic databases, the Auditors of Public Accounts shall review the procedures and security used to develop the electronic databases and report, in accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes, any findings or recommendations based on such review to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies.

(e) Nothing in this section shall be construed to require a state agency to: (1) Create unavailable financial or management data or an information technology system that does not exist, or (2) disclose consumer, client, patient or student information otherwise protected by law from disclosure.

Approved June 7, 2010