

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

February 1, 2011

Senator Toni Harp, Co-Chairperson
Representative Toni Walker, Co-Chairperson
Senator Robert Kane, Ranking Member
Representative Craig Miner, Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee
Room 2600
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Sen. Harp, Rep. Walker, Sen. Kane, 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 second communication is intended to satisfy the 2/1/11 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 concerns, 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 description of the progress made since the 11/1/10 report. I have attached a copy of PA 10-155 as Attachment A for your reference.

I. Status

Public Interface - a) developed a site design that permits users to view and filter information about state agency spending, state employee payroll, vendor payments, state contracts and state grants; b) further refined the data "views" from CORE-CT that

will populate and support the on-line searchable database; and c) began testing the transmittal of data from CORE-CT. The anticipated site name is "Transparency CT."

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 continuing to evaluate the balance between completeness and reliability (more detail below).

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

We are developing the on-line database with in-house resources of ITS. It should be noted that the resources available to ITS are limited and that this project has been added to several other projects that require attention including the development of a new budget and planning system.

Next Steps

The next quarter, which ends April 30th, will involve the following activities: a) validating the data received from CORE-CT; b) modifying data views, as needed; c) constructing the searchable database; d) building on-line reports; e) developing useful contextual information to explain the information contained in the reports; and f) continuing to work towards resolving any confidentiality and privacy issues related to protected information.

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

Sincerely,



Alan Calandro

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

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