

Connecticut General Assembly



OFFICE OF FISCAL ANALYSIS

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

January 15, 2018

Senator Cathy Osten, Co-Chair
Senator Paul Formica, Co-Chair
Representative Toni Walker, Co-Chair
Representative Melissa Ziobron, Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee
LOB, Room 2700
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Sen. Osten, Sen. Formica, Rep. Walker, and Rep. Ziobron:

Under C.G.S. Section 2-531, OFA is required to maintain an on-line searchable database of state expenditures and to annually report on the database to the Appropriations Committee including any recommendations for improvement.

This is the sixth annual status report for the on-line searchable database known as Transparency CT.¹ The site, which is located at transparency.CT.gov² went live in June 2011 with the inclusion of FY 10 data. The site now includes seven years (FY 10 - FY 16) of expenditure data. In 2017, the website had 481,711 visitors from over 100 countries.³

The database⁴ includes expenditures for all funds (appropriated and non-appropriated) including employee compensation, contracts, vendors, grants, and pensions. For FY 17, the data that is available on the transparency website includes total expenditures of \$39.8 billion.

¹PA 12-1 (JSS) modified the reporting requirement for the searchable database by making it an annual, rather than quarterly requirement, beginning on January 15, 2013. (See Appendix A)

²A link to the site is also provided on the OFA website homepage.

³Since its inception, transparency.CT.gov has had over 1,100,000 visitors.

⁴The primary source of information for the searchable database is the state's accounting system CORE-CT, in addition to vendor payment information for UConn and the UConn Health Center. Pension payment information is provided by the Office of the State Comptroller.

Site Rating

U.S. PIRG (the Federation of state Public Interest Research Groups) published an evaluation of state transparency websites in its *Follow the Money* report through 2016. They did not issue a rank in 2017. Their last report identified each state's transparency portal and evaluated the scope and accessibility of data. In 2012, the Office of the State Comptroller developed the OPEN CT website.⁵ Though the state has two transparency sites, U.S. PIRG rated only one. Since 2014, U.S. PIRG selected OPEN CT as the primary state transparency site. U.S. PIRG gave OPEN CT an "A" rating in 2015 and 2016; up from a "B" rating in 2014.

Recommendations

It seems reasonable that in order to develop the best transparency site, resources should be dedicated to developing one site. A governing board or oversight body would be helpful to assist in providing guidance.

Acknowledgements

As in past reports, I should note again that without the assistance and cooperation of the State Comptroller's staff, the staff of our CGA Information Technology Services office and that of UConn/UCHC, and the Board of Regents for Higher Education the site would not be operational or as inclusive as it is.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Neil Ayers
Director

cc: Appropriations Committee Members
Timothy B. Kehoe, Permanent Assistant Clerk, Senate Clerk's Office
Garey E. Coleman, Senate Clerk
Frederick Jortner, House Clerk
Ann M. Clark, Permanent Assistant Clerk, House Clerk's Office
Kendall F. Wiggin, State Librarian
Honorable Kevin Lembo, State Comptroller
Ken Greene, Office of Information Technology Services
Stephanie D'Ambrose, Office of Legislative Research

⁵<http://www.osc.ct.gov/openCT.html>

Appendix A

Connecticut General Statutes Section 2-53l

Electronic databases showing state expenditures. (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 4-69, 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 January 15, 2013, and annually thereafter, the legislative Office of Fiscal Analysis shall report, in accordance with section 11-4a, 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, 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.