

Research group targets region

How much residents paying for government is among goals of study

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A nonprofit research group will begin studying governments and school districts throughout Northeast Ohio next week to determine how much residents are really paying for their government and whether it's too much.

The study, by the Center for Governmental Research Inc. in Rochester, N.Y., will examine the Akron, Canton, Cleveland and Youngstown metropolitan areas and compare costs with other regions.

The goal is to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of local governments, and figure out if there should be more collaboration or even consolidation among "Northeast Ohio's fragmented governance structure," according to the Fund for Our Economic Future, a partnership of more than 100 area philanthropic institutions.

The fund announced the undertaking Wednesday. Along with the fund, the Youngstown-Warren Regional Chamber of Commerce, Greater Cleveland Partnership, and Samuel H. and Maria Miller Foundation are paying for the \$175,000 study.

"Taking an objective look at the structure and cost of local governments in the region will provide a fact-based starting point for identifying opportunities to improve how local government services are provided in Northeast Ohio," CGR research director Charles Zettek Jr. said in a prepared statement.

The fund wants to bring factual research to an emotional debate, said Chris Thompson, a spokesman for the fund. "What do the facts say, and what's the true cost of government?" he said.

Summit County the fourth-most populous county in the state has 31 cities, villages and townships and 17 school districts.

For more details, go online to <http://www.futurefundneo.org> and <http://www.cgr.org>.

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