

Govistics Provides Window on Government Spending

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It's a sign of the times ... the term "budget shortfall" has become a hard one to dodge in discussions of state and local government finance. Budgets are tight, and many state and local governments are facing serious financial challenges.

But do we really know where governments are spending their funds? Enter a website called [Govistics](#).

Govistics, a product of the [Center for Governmental Research](#), was launched in July 2010, as part of its mission to inform and empower citizens, government officials, non-profit organizations, and researchers.

The website allows users to view total and per capita spending for state and local governments in the following categories: Administration; Education; Environment and Housing; Miscellaneous; Public Safety; Social Services; Transportation; and Utilities.

It also provides information regarding school district spending, broken down into five categories: Capital Outlay; Instruction; Miscellaneous; Other; and Support Services.

But if you're expecting numbers in flat tables, fasten your seat belt! This website provides graphs, charts, and other visual representation of data that really helps illustrate the allocation of funds.

"There is a lot of excitement about this tool," says Joseph Stefko, Director of Public Finance with the Center for Government Research. "Government leaders, business people, and citizens really like the fact that it presents in one place and in a consistent format government financial data in easily accessible fashion - using visuals to help bring data alive."

In order to view detailed spending data for a specific local government, users will need to upgrade from the free "Lite" platform to the more sophisticated, fee-based "PRO" service, a fee-based account that provides more detailed trend data with enhanced download capabilities.

The website derives its data from the U.S. Census of Governments, published by the [Bureau of the Census](#). An enhanced version of the website is due to launch soon.