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Government Collaboration Builds Growth

May 31, 2011 6: 48 a.m.

CLEVELAND -- The role that efficient, effective local government would play in improving northeast Ohio's economic future is the focus of a new report issued by Advance Northeast Ohio, the economic competitiveness component of the Fund for Our Economic Future, and an accompanying website.

The report, "Opportunity Abounds: Local Government Collaboration Can Be a Building Block to Economic Competitiveness," illustrates the status of government spending compared to economic indicators using data provided by the Center for Government Research.

"More than ever, government efficiency and collaboration are relevant and timely topics in our region," said Robert Jaquay, vice president of the Fund for Our Economic Future and associate director of The George Gund Foundation. "We are beginning to see the positive results collaboration can bring, including significant savings to protect vital services and ensure our communities invest in innovation and education to create jobs and keep the region competitive in the global economy."

Among the key findings of the Opportunity Abounds report

- The rate of local government spending in Northeast Ohio is 70 times the region's population growth, 2.8 times its inflation rate and 2.4 times its economic output.
- Across the region's 16 counties, 868 separate government entities spend \$20 billion to operate. That is the equivalent of one government for every 4,000 citizens and more than 10% of the region's economy.
- Our region's population has grown 1% and our developed land has increased by 60% over the past few decades resulting in the "growth gap" -- the difference between population and physical growth. Translation: higher taxes, declining services, and far fewer dollars for the investments in education, innovation, and business attraction critical to a more vibrant future. We are subsidizing the region's economic destruction by adding physical infrastructure at a rate that is out of whack with our flat rate of population growth.

The report recommends local government collaboration as an essential way to close the growth gap and counter government inefficiencies and fragmentation. Based on the findings, officials said, three action items will be pursued in partnership with Advance Northeast Ohio:

- A common financial reporting system for all local governments that will enable residents and officials to view transparent and accurate assessments of the relative efficiency of the delivery of government services.

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