

## Community, Natural Resource and Economic Development Providing fiscal information to local governments: UW-Extension Local Government Center



### Situation

Too often, legislation is made in a comparative vacuum with relatively few parties clearly aware of the fiscal or policy consequences. This is especially true of the state's budget process. Local government officials across Wisconsin were concerned about the progress of the 2003-05 state budget as it pertained to shared revenue and limitations on the property tax.

### Response

It is a natural role for county Community, Natural and Economic Development (CNRED) educators to help local officials keep track of the state budget process in

order for them to appropriately respond. The UW-Extension Local Government Center kept CNRED educators abreast of proposed changes to these important programs. The fiscal impacts were brought home by including the Legislative Fiscal Bureau's estimates of specific dollar reductions for each local government

### Outcomes

CNRED educators and department heads shared this information with their county board chairs, administrator, and finance and extension committees. Several educators indicated that they keep an email list of municipal and county officials, which they used to pass on the budget information to local officials. Based on a survey of the usefulness and impact of this information, only four out of 30 counties responding reported that they did not use or pass on the information in some manner.



Based on the survey, the information was widely shared by county educators and department heads with local officials. Here are some of the comments from the counties:

"This information helps me keep on top of things and helps me inform elected officials as to what is looming ahead" (*Taylor Co.*)

"The information was very helpful. It greatly improved my knowledge and ability to respond to local officials' questions about the impact on their municipality. Administrators used the information to increase the awareness and knowledge of local elected and appointed officials so they could make informed decisions and lobby their legislators on their positions." (*Washington Co.*)

“I very much appreciated the timely updates. Especially this year, with so much riding for locals on the state budget, the information helped to somewhat alleviate fears, while at the same time “debunking” mis-information.” (*Oconto Co.*)

“The information was the basis for some of our conversations as we were working through budget items. Also, it helped the county finance director realize our connection to the UW System and our links statewide.” (*Outagamie Co.*)

The information provided by the Local Government Center helped open up the state budget process for local governments, strengthened county UW-Extension ties with local governments, and helped forge some new local relationships.

## Contact

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