

# Following the Money 2014

How the 50 States Rate in Providing  
Online Access to Government Spending Data

Florida PIRG Education Fund

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# Executive Summary

Every year, state governments spend tens of billions of dollars through contracts for goods and services, subsidies to encourage economic development, and other expenditures. Accountability and public scrutiny are necessary to ensure that the public can trust that state funds are well spent.

In recent years, state governments across the country have created transparency websites that provide checkbook-level information on government spending—meaning that users can view the payments made to individual companies as well as details about the purchased goods, services or other public benefits. These websites allow residents and watchdog groups to ensure that taxpayers get their money's worth.

Last year was the first time that all 50 states operated websites to make information on state spending accessible to the public. These web portals continue to improve. For instance, in 2014, 38 states' transparency websites also provide checkbook-level detail on subsidies for economic development. Many states are also disclosing information that was previously “off budget” and are making it easy for outside

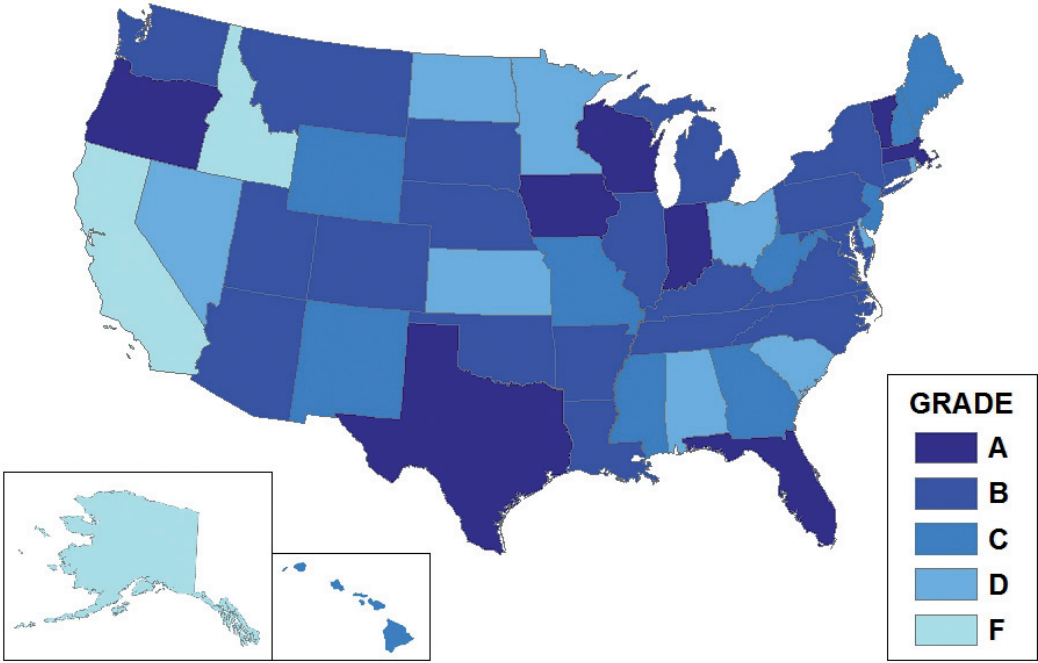
researchers to download and analyze large data sets about government spending.

This report, U.S. PIRG Education Fund's fifth annual evaluation of state transparency websites, finds that states are making progress toward comprehensive, one-stop, one-click transparency and accountability for state government spending. Over the past year, new states have opened the books on public spending and several states have adopted new practices to further expand citizens' access to critical spending information. Many states, however, still have a long way to go to provide taxpayers with the information they need to ensure that government is spending their money effectively.

**Over the past year, several states have launched new websites or made substantive upgrades to their existing websites.** For example:

- Wisconsin launched *OpenBook Wisconsin*, which enables users to browse the payments made to vendors based on the vendor's name, the purchasing agency or the type of expenditure. The checkbook is updated every

Figure ES-1: How the 50 States Rate in Providing Online Access to Government Spending Data



## Transparency Websites Should Be Comprehensive, One-Stop and One-Click

**Comprehensive:** A user-friendly web portal provides residents the ability to search detailed information about government contracts, spending, subsidies and tax expenditures for all government entities.

**One-Stop:** Residents can search all government expenditures on a single website.

**One-Click Searchable and Downloadable:** Residents can search data with a single query or browse common-sense categories. Residents can sort data on government spending by recipient, amount, legislative district, granting agency, purpose or keyword. Residents can also download data to conduct detailed off-line analyses.

## Confirmation of Findings with State Officials

To ensure that the information presented here is accurate and up-to-date, U.S. PIRG Education Fund researchers sent initial assessments and a list of questions to transparency website officials in all 50 states and received feedback from such officials in 45 states. State transparency officials were given the opportunity to alert us to possible errors, clarify their online features, and discuss the benefits of transparency best practices in their states. For a list of the questions posed to state officials, please see Appendix C.

two weeks and contains expenditure information dating back to fiscal year 2008.

- Vermont unveiled a new checkbook tool that enables users to view the state's payments to vendors from 66 departments, agencies and other government entities dating back to fiscal year 2011.

**States have made varying levels of progress toward improved online spending transparency. (See Figure ES-1 and Table ES-1.)**

- *Leading States ("A" range):* The eight states leading in online spending transparency have created user-friendly websites that provide visitors with accessible information on an array of expenditures. Not only can ordinary citizens find information on specific vendor payments through easy-to-use search features, but experts and watchdog groups can also download and analyze the entire checkbook dataset.
- *Advancing States ("B" range):* Twenty states are advancing in online spending transparency, with spending information that is easy to access but more limited than Leading States.

Most Advancing States have checkbooks that are searchable by recipient, keyword and agency.

- *Middling States ("C" range):* Ten states are middling in online spending transparency, with comprehensive and easy-to-access checkbook-level spending information but limited information on subsidies or other "off-budget" expenditures.
- *Lagging States ("D" range):* Checkbook-level spending in the nine Lagging States is less accessible to users than checkbook-level spending in other states. For example, while these states provide the public with the ability to search for specific payments, residents cannot download and analyze the entire dataset.
- *Failing States ("F" range):* Three states are failing to meet several of the standards of online spending transparency. For instance, while these states provide checkbook-level information, the spending data are not available in searchable online tools.

**Some states are innovating new features for online transparency.** They have developed new protocols and datasets,

giving the public unprecedented ability to monitor and influence how their government allocates resources. For instance:

- *Massachusetts* has awarded more than \$300,000 in grants to six cities to post their spending information online. In total, Massachusetts plans to help 20 cities post their spending information online by January 2015.
- *South Dakota* audits its checkbook every year, which enables users to have greater confidence in the veracity of the data and to report publicly on facts and trends they find in state spending.
- *Tennessee* posts the value of payments excluded from the checkbook for confidentiality reasons—such as for foster care and adoption assistance—enabling users to better understand even those state payments that policies prevent from being listed in the checkbook database.

**All states, including Leading States, have many opportunities to improve their transparency.**

- Not a single state provides checkbook-level spending information on all of its quasi-public agencies—which demand particular openness because they typically remain outside the normal checks and balances of the budget process.
- Fifteen states do not provide any recipient-specific details on the benefits—either projected or actual—of economic development subsidies. Only six states provide checkbook-level information on the subsidy recipients for each of the state’s most important economic development programs.
- The checkbooks in three states—Alaska, California and Ohio—cannot effectively be searched at all.
- Seventeen states do not allow users to download the entire checkbook dataset for offline analysis.
- Six states do not provide tax expenditure reports that detail the impact on the state budget of specific targeted tax credits, exemptions or deductions.



Table ES-1: How the 50 States Rate in Providing Online Access to Government Spending Data

State	Grade	Point Total	State	Grade	Point Total
Indiana	A-	94	Oklahoma	B-	82
Oregon	A-	93.5	Utah	B-	82
Florida	A-	92.5	Arkansas	B-	82
Texas	A-	91	Mississippi	C+	79
Massachusetts	A-	90.5	New Jersey	C+	79
Iowa	A-	90	New Mexico	C+	77
Vermont	A-	90	Maine	C+	76
Wisconsin	A-	90	Missouri	C+	75
South Dakota	B+	89.5	New Hampshire	C+	75
North Carolina	B+	88.5	Georgia	C	74
Illinois	B+	88	West Virginia	C	72
Louisiana	B+	88	Hawaii	C	71
New York	B+	88	Wyoming	C-	68
Virginia	B+	87	Minnesota	D+	64
Michigan	B	86.5	Delaware	D+	63
Colorado	B	86	South Carolina	D+	63
Montana	B	86	Rhode Island	D+	62
Washington	B	85	North Dakota	D	56
Arizona	B	84	Alabama	D	55
Connecticut	B	83	Nevada	D-	52
Kentucky	B	83	Ohio	D-	51
Tennessee	B	83	Kansas	D-	50
Maryland	B-	82.5	Idaho	F	44
Pennsylvania	B-	82.5	Alaska	F	43
Nebraska	B-	82	California	F	34

# Introduction



“[W]e might hope to see the finances of the Union as clear and intelligible as a merchant’s books, so that every member of Congress, and every man of any mind in the Union, should be able to comprehend them, to investigate abuses, and consequently to control them.”

*Thomas Jefferson to Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin, 1 April 1802<sup>1</sup>*

Thomas Jefferson recognized that government finances must be transparent if citizens in a democracy are to exercise their right to participate in decisions about how common resources are spent. After years of rule by monarch, Jefferson wanted budget transparency to be an important virtue of America.

More than 200 years after Jefferson’s ideals shaped the fledgling United States, Americans continue to adhere to the principle that, when it comes to government spending, citizens should be able to follow the money.

We now have tools at our disposal of which Jefferson never could have dreamed—tools such as state government transparency websites that increasingly help Americans keep an eye on govern-

ment finances to improve spending, weed out wasteful outlays or subsidies to special interests, and can be used to hold contractors responsible for their performance.

This report, the fifth in U.S. PIRG Education Fund’s *Following the Money* series, documents the dramatic improvement of many states where officials have opened their books to the public since last year. The study challenges states to further improve their transparency efforts in the year ahead. By continuing to improve access to information about government spending to the public, state governments can further realize the America Thomas Jefferson aspired towards—a country in which every citizen has the tools to evaluate and speak out about how his or her tax dollars are spent.

# Transparency Websites Empower Citizens to Track Government Spending

Practically speaking, public information is not truly accessible unless it is online. Government spending transparency websites give citizens and government officials the ability to monitor many aspects of state spending—saving money, preventing corruption, reducing potential waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars, and encouraging the achievement of a wide variety of public policy goals.

## Transparency Websites Make Government More Effective and Accountable

States with good transparency websites have experienced a wide variety of benefits. Transparency websites have helped governments find ways to save money and meet other public policy goals.

### Transparency Websites Save Money

States with transparency websites often realize significant financial returns on their

investment. The savings come in forms big and small—more efficient government administration, more competitive bidding for public projects and less staff time spent on information requests, to name just a few—and can add up to many millions of dollars. Harder to measure is the potential abuse or waste that is avoided because government officials, contractors and subsidy recipients know that the public will be looking over their shoulder. Transparency websites also help citizens ensure that government contractors and vendors deliver the goods or services at a reasonable price.

Transparency websites can save money in a variety of ways, including:

- **Negotiating contracts and increasing competition.**
  - o Texas was able to renegotiate its copier machine lease to save \$33 million over three years. The state was also able to negotiate prison food contracts to save \$15.2 million.<sup>2</sup>
  - o In 2011, Massachusetts reported that by posting information on

state contracts and bidding opportunities through the state's checkbook-level procurement website, Comm-Pass, bids for transportation projects funded by Recovery Act funds came in 15-20 percent below the state's initial estimates.<sup>3</sup> Posting contracts enables potential new vendors to see opportunities to win lower-cost bids, and empowers losing contractors to raise the alarm if they perceive that the best bids are not selected.

- o Increased competition, partially resulting from the launch of Florida's contract database, has allowed the state to re-procure and re-negotiate contracts at lower costs, saving \$3.2 million between October 2012 and June 2013.<sup>4</sup>

- **Identifying and eliminating inefficient spending.**

- o In Texas, the comptroller's office used its transparency website over the first two years it was launched to save \$4.8 million from more efficient administration.<sup>5</sup> For example, the office avoided spending \$328,000 on a new mail sorter by instead setting up separate post office boxes to receive different types of mail.<sup>6</sup>
- o Once South Dakota's new transparency website was launched, an emboldened reporter requested additional information on subsidies that led legislators to save about \$19 million per year by eliminating redundancies in their economic development program.<sup>7</sup>
- o Once Utah's transparency website revealed that the state government was spending \$294,000 on bottled

water every year, the state reduced its annual bottled water expenditure to approximately \$85,000.<sup>8</sup>

- o The Arkansas Teacher Retirement System downloaded and analyzed travel spending data to ensure state employees are carpooling together when possible, reducing the agency's travel costs.<sup>9</sup>

- **Reducing costly information requests.**

- o Mississippi estimates that every information request fulfilled by its transparency website rather than by a state employee saves the state between \$750 and \$1,000 in staff time.<sup>10</sup>
- o Massachusetts' procurement website has saved the state \$3 million by eliminating paper, postage and printing costs associated with information requests by state agencies and paperwork from vendors. Massachusetts has also saved money by reducing staff time for public records management, retention, provision, archiving and destruction.<sup>11</sup>
- o In Utah, the State Office of Education and the Utah Tax Commission save about \$15,000 a year from reduced information requests.<sup>12</sup>
- o South Carolina open records requests initially dropped by two-thirds after the creation of its transparency website, reducing staff time and saving an estimated tens of thousands of dollars.<sup>13</sup>
- o Kentucky's website eliminates an estimated 40 percent of the administrative costs of procurement assistance requests, and could reduce the

costs associated with open records requests by as much as 10 percent.<sup>14</sup>

- o Alaska’s online checkbook has “almost completely eliminated” information requests to the Department of Administration, and the few requests that are received can usually be answered with the online data.<sup>15</sup>
- o Since the launch of Delaware’s transparency website, the Department of Finance has reported a “significant reduction” in Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, saving valuable staff time.<sup>16</sup>
- o Florida’s Division of Accounting and Auditing similarly attributes the reduction in information requests to the information available on the transparency website.<sup>17</sup>

### **Online Transparency Provides Support for Achieving Policy Goals**

Transparency websites provide states tools to assess their progress toward community investment, affirmative action and other public policy goals. Governments often stumble when trying to meet public policy goals because managers struggle to benchmark agencies, spread best practices, or identify contractors who best advance these goals. Online transparency portals allow states to better measure and manage the progress of such programs.

For example, when government bodies in Ohio—including cabinet agencies, the General Assembly, counties, townships, boards, public corporations, universities and school districts—purchase goods and services, they are obligated to use vendors who employ persons with disabilities.<sup>17</sup> The goal of this practice is to provide gainful employment and training to residents with work-limiting disabilities.<sup>18</sup> The transpar-

ency website enables government offices to find these vendors by providing a list of certified companies already conducting business with the state along with details on the goods or services each provides.<sup>19</sup>

### **Online Transparency Costs Little**

The benefits of transparency websites have come with a surprisingly low price tag, both for initial creation of the websites and ongoing maintenance. Several states—including Delaware, Georgia, Ohio and Oregon—created and update their websites with funds from their existing budgets. For websites that required a special appropriation or earmark, the cost is usually less than \$300,000 to create the website and even less to keep it updated. (See Table 1.) Jurisdictions that are concerned about the costs of contracting out to expensive information technology programmers can instead use New York City’s top-notch code available in an open source, nonproprietary format.<sup>20</sup>

### **Transparency Websites Are Important and Useful to Residents**

Residents and watchdog groups use the tools and access the information available on transparency websites. Several websites have reported large numbers of visits:

- New York’s transparency website has recorded 2 million visits since its launch in June 2008.<sup>27</sup>
- Florida’s online checkbook for contracts has recorded 282,000 visits from 88,000 users since its launch in June 2012. The number of page views totals 5.5 million.<sup>28</sup>
- Mississippi’s transparency website recorded more than 16,000 hits per month in 2013—a large increase from 8,000 hits per month in 2012.<sup>29</sup>

Table 1: Cost to Create and Maintain a Transparency Website<sup>21</sup>

State	Start-Up Costs	Annual Operating Costs
Alabama	\$125,000	Less than \$12,000
Alaska	\$5,000	"Nominal"
Arizona	\$72,000, plus existing staff time	Approximately \$90,300
Arkansas	\$558,000	\$175,000
Colorado	\$200,000 from existing budget, plus existing staff time	\$169,400 from existing budget
Connecticut	Existing budget	Existing budget
Delaware	Existing budget	Existing budget
Florida	Existing budget	\$233,504
Georgia	Existing budget	Existing budget
Hawaii	Existing budget	Existing budget
Idaho	Approximately \$28,000 from existing budget	Existing budget
Illinois	Approximately \$100,000	Approximately \$10,000
Iowa	Less than \$330,000 over three years	
Kansas	\$150,000 from existing budget	Existing budget
Kentucky	\$150,000	\$10,000-\$15,000
Louisiana	\$325,000	"Minimal"
Maine	\$30,000	
Maryland	\$65,000	\$5,000
Massachusetts	\$540,000 <sup>23</sup>	\$431,000
Michigan	Existing budget	Existing budget
Minnesota	Existing budget	
Mississippi	\$2,200,000 <sup>24</sup>	\$300,000
Missouri	\$293,140 from existing budget	Less than \$5,000, plus a website upgrade of less than \$25,000 in staff time
Montana	Existing budget	Existing budget
Nebraska	\$30,000-\$60,000	\$10,000-\$15,000
Nevada	\$78,000	\$30,000
New Hampshire	Existing budget	Existing budget
New Jersey	Existing budget	Approximately \$40,000, plus 30 percent of one full-time employee's time

State	Start-Up Costs	Annual Operating Costs
New Mexico	\$230,000	\$125,000
New York	Existing budget	
North Carolina	\$624,000 <sup>25</sup>	\$80,600
North Dakota	\$231,000	\$30,000
Ohio	Existing budget	Existing budget
Oklahoma	\$8,000, plus existing staff time	\$5,000
Oregon	Existing budget	Existing budget
Pennsylvania	\$900,000	Existing budget
Rhode Island	Existing budget	
South Carolina	\$30,000 in existing staff time	Existing staff time
South Dakota	Not tracked (nominal)	Existing budget
Tennessee	Existing budget	\$60,000 for a website upgrade that came from the existing budget
Texas	\$310,000	Existing budget
Utah	\$192,800, plus existing staff time (\$100,000)	\$63,400, plus one fulltime staff member (\$66,000), plus website modifications by vendor (\$17,700)
Vermont	Existing budget	Existing budget <sup>26</sup>
Virginia	\$500,000 from existing budget	\$400,000 from existing budget
Washington	\$300,000	Existing budget
West Virginia	Existing budget	
Wisconsin	\$160,000	
Wyoming	\$1,600	

Note: Some costs are approximations; many “Annual Operating Costs” are left blank because states have not tracked these costs or did not provide information. Funds for many websites for which states provided specific costs (as opposed to “existing budget”) came from the agency’s existing budget allocation as opposed to a separate appropriation. To see a list of the agencies or departments responsible for administering the transparency website in each state, see Appendix D.

- In 2013, users accessed Washington’s checkbook tool over 80,000 times, and ran approximately half a million reports.<sup>30</sup>

A survey from the Association of Government Accountants also shows the importance of spending transparency to the public. An overwhelming majority—91 percent—of Americans believe that they are entitled to transparent financial management information from their government. Approximately three-quarters of respondents said that it is personally very or extremely important to have financial management information about their state government available to them. Nearly one-third of respondents have searched the Internet for information about how their state government generates and spends taxpayer dollars.<sup>31</sup>

## Transparency Websites Give Users Detailed Information on Government Expenditures

Transparency websites that meet current standards for best practices offer information on government expenditures that is comprehensive, one-stop and one-click.

### Comprehensive

Transparency websites offer spending information that is broad and detailed, and that helps citizens answer three key questions: how much is the government spending on particular goods and services, which companies receive public funds for these goods and services, and what is the public getting for its money? Topflight transparency websites empower citizens to answer those questions for every major category of state spending, including:

- **Payments to private vendors and nonprofits:** Many government agencies spend large portions of their budgets on outside vendors—through contracts, grants and payments made outside the formal bidding process.<sup>32</sup> Compared to civil servants, these vendors are generally subject to fewer public accountability rules, such as sunshine laws, civil service reporting requirements or freedom of information laws.
- **Subsidies such as tax credits for economic development:** State and local governments allocate an estimated \$50 billion each year to private entities in the form of economic development subsidies.<sup>33</sup> These incentives—which can take the form of grants, loans, tax credits and tax exemptions—are awarded with the intent to create jobs and spur growth, yet many governments still fail to disclose adequate company-specific information on these expenditures and their outcomes. When information is lacking on whether companies deliver on promised benefits, state officials cannot hold them accountable or make fully informed decisions to improve economic development policies in the future. States that follow transparency standards allow citizens and public officials to hold subsidy recipients accountable by listing the public benefits specific companies were expected to provide and what they actually delivered, such as the specific number of jobs.<sup>34</sup> When governments recoup funds from companies that fail to deliver on the agreed-upon public benefits, websites should also provide information on the funds recouped.
- **Other tax expenditures:** “Tax expenditures” are subsidies bestowed through the tax code in the form of



Figure 1: Arkansas' Transparency Website Provides Checkbook-Level Detail on State Payments to Private Vendors and Non-Profits

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Arkansas Transparency Website. The page title is "Expenditures" and it features several navigation tabs: Overview, By Agency, By Vendor, By Classification, By Function, Agency Details, and Other Transactions. Below the tabs, there is a section for "Expenditures" with a filter input field. A table lists various vendors and their corresponding expenditure amounts.

Vendor	Vendor DBA	Expenditure
UPPER ROOM MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL		\$765,922.19
B R MCGINTY MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS		\$765,092.12
SYSTEMEDIC INC		\$763,733.61
MERCY CLINIC SPRINGFIELD COMMUNIT		\$761,999.98
DEPT OF CAREER EDUCATION		\$760,984.49
AR ALLIANCE OF BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS		\$759,214.64
EASTER SEALS ARKANSAS		\$756,666.32
APAC-TENNESSEE INC		\$754,644.66
APPRISS INC		\$750,723.72
BENAFIELD J W	JWB COMPANY	\$749,553.75
NUCOR STEEL MARION INC		\$749,542.07
WAL MART PHARMACY 100016		\$747,071.09

special tax exemptions, credits, deferments and preferences. Once created, tax expenditures often escape oversight because they do not appear as state budget line items and rarely require legislative approval to renew. For these reasons, spending through the tax code is in particular need of disclosure. States that follow transparency standards provide transparency and accountability for tax expenditures, usually by linking their transparency portal to a tax expenditure report, which details a state's tax credits, deductions and exemptions with the resulting revenue loss from each program.

- **Spending through quasi-public agencies:** Quasi-public agencies are independent government corporations that are created through enabling legislation to perform a particular service or a set of public functions. Because quasi-public agencies typically collect fees or some other form of their own revenue, they do not rely solely, or

often even significantly, on an annual appropriation from the legislature. As a result, their expenditures often fall outside the "official" state budget and are difficult for the public and government officials to scrutinize without strong transparency. They operate on the federal, state and local levels, providing services such as waste management, toll roads, water treatment, community development programs and pension management. Over time, quasi-public agencies have delivered a growing share of public functions.<sup>35</sup> According to a study by MASSPIRG Education Fund from 2010, revenues from quasi-public agencies in Massachusetts amounted to at least \$8.76 billion—equal to one-third of the state's general budget.<sup>36</sup>

- **Leases and concessions to private companies:** States sometimes sell or lease to private companies the right to construct or operate a public asset or service in return for the right to collect

and retain user fees from the public or to receive contracted payments from the government. These arrangements are most common for toll roads, garages, parking meters and water systems. They have also become more common at state parks and in the operation of fee-collecting services such as motor vehicle licensing. Reporting on spending and user fees collected through these “public-private partnerships” is often lacking, which is a problem since these arrangements are often not governed by standard public protections such as civil service, conflict of interest and freedom of information rules.<sup>37</sup>

For each of these forms of spending, taxpayers deserve to know exactly which businesses and organizations are receiving state money and details on what is being purchased.

### **One-Stop**

Transparency websites in leading states offer a single portal from which citizens can search all government expenditures. With one-stop transparency, residents and public officials can access comprehensive information on direct spending, contracts, tax expenditures and other subsidies in a single location. While expert users who already know what they are looking for may not be stymied by the need to identify and visit different websites at different agencies, ordinary citizens may be impeded by the need to navigate a variety of obscure, bureaucratic sources in order to find important information on government spending.

One-stop transparency is particularly important for public oversight of subsidies. Subsidies come in a dizzying variety of forms—including direct cash transfers, loans, equity investments, contributions of property or infrastructure, reductions or deferrals of taxes or fees, guarantees of loans or leases, and preferential use of

government facilities—and are administered by a variety of government agencies. Few people already know the range of these programs, their official names, or which agency’s website they should search to find them.

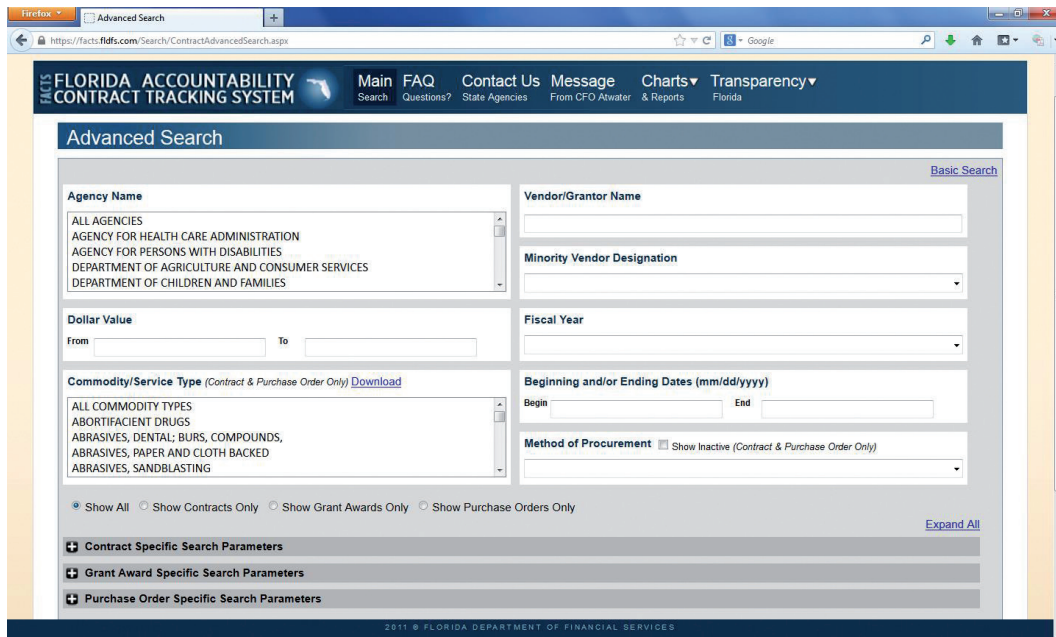
Making all data about government subsidies reachable from a single website empowers closer scrutiny. For example, when Minnesota began to require agencies to submit reports on the performance of subsidized projects, the reports revealed that numerous projects were receiving assistance from two or more funding sources—that is, Minnesota taxpayers were sometimes double- and triple-paying for the creation of the same jobs. After the centralized publication of those reports, the double-dipping stopped.<sup>38</sup>

### **One-Click Searchable and Downloadable**

Transparent information is only as useful as it is accessible, which means easily searchable. Transparency websites in leading states offer a range of search and sort functions that allow residents to navigate complex expenditure data with a single click of the mouse. States that follow the best transparency standards allow residents to browse information by recipient or category, and to make directed keyword and field searches.

Citizens who want to dig deeper into government spending patterns typically need to download and analyze the data in a spreadsheet or database program. Downloading whole datasets enables citizens to perform a variety of advanced functions—such as aggregating expenditures for a particular company, agency or date—to see trends or understand total spending amounts that might otherwise be lost in a sea of unrelated data. Leading states enable citizens to download much or all of the most important information from their transparency websites.

Figure 2: Florida's Transparency Website Allows Visitors to Search for Specific Vendor Payments



## Transparency Websites Should Be Comprehensive, One-Stop and One-Click

**Comprehensive:** A user-friendly web portal provides residents the ability to search detailed information about government contracts, spending, subsidies and tax expenditures for all government entities.

**One-Stop:** Residents can search all government expenditures on a single website.

**One-Click Searchable and Downloadable:** Residents can search data with a single query or browse common-sense categories. Residents can sort data on government spending by recipient, amount, legislative district, granting agency, purpose or keyword. Residents can also download data to conduct detailed off-line analyses.

# New Transparency Websites and Features Open the Books on Spending

Over the past year, many states created new transparency websites and features. These websites post new data online, consolidate important spending information, or make existing transparency tools more user-friendly. Below are highlights from the many new and improved web portals around the country.

## Colorado

In February 2014, the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade opened the books on the state's subsidy payments. From the transparency website, residents now have access to the details of over 19,000 subsidy awards granted between January 2011 and June 2013. The aggregate value of the subsidies now available on the transparency website totals over \$500 million. The data, downloadable in a spreadsheet, cover the five most important subsidy programs assessed in this report.

## Hawaii

As of the end of 2013, Hawaii was one of only a few states that did not have a website to aggregate spending information and

make it accessible to the public. In January 2014, Hawaii's Department of Budget and Finance launched a new transparency website that creates a one-stop source for Hawaii's expenditure and financial information, and provides the data in charts, graphs, reports and tables.

The website is easy to use and allows visitors to access recipient-specific government spending information from clearly-marked links. Recipient-specific contract information is provided for spending on health and human services, construction, and other goods and services. The website also provides a link to the state's tax expenditure reports and tax collection reports.

While some of this information was available online in previous years, never before has it been compiled into a central website. This one-stop tool is a major improvement and demonstrates the state government's commitment to transparency in spending.

In the next year, the Department of Budget and Finance should improve the new website by posting information on economic development subsidies granted through Employment and Training Fund grants, Enterprise Zone tax breaks, and

other programs. The transparency website should enable citizens to assess the performance of development programs by providing details of the individual subsidies awarded to companies, such as the subsidy value, projected public benefit to be created, and actual public benefit created.

## Indiana

In May 2013, the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) launched a new website to shine a light on the state's economic development subsidies. The new IEDC website is accessible from Indiana's transparency website, supporting the standard that all state spending information should be centrally accessible. The site is user-friendly—allowing visitors to create targeted searches that filter through the list of recipient companies and download the results for offline analysis. The website even provides copies of subsidy contracts—a best practice followed by too few other states.

Indiana also tracks when economic development dollars are reclaimed because subsidy recipients failed to deliver on promised benefits. The IEDC inserts *clawback clauses* into subsidy contracts that allow the state to recoup these funds, and the new website provides details on the funds recouped—an exemplary standard that development agencies in other states should follow.

While Indiana's transparency efforts for economic development subsidies have excelled in many ways, there remains room for improvement. Most importantly, the IEDC should post the number of jobs reportedly created by company recipients. Presently, visitors can view the number of jobs agreed to be created and the funds recouped if companies fail to create them, but visitors cannot view the number of jobs actually created. This missing link is necessary to provide residents with a complete picture of the companies' performance in generating promised economic benefits.

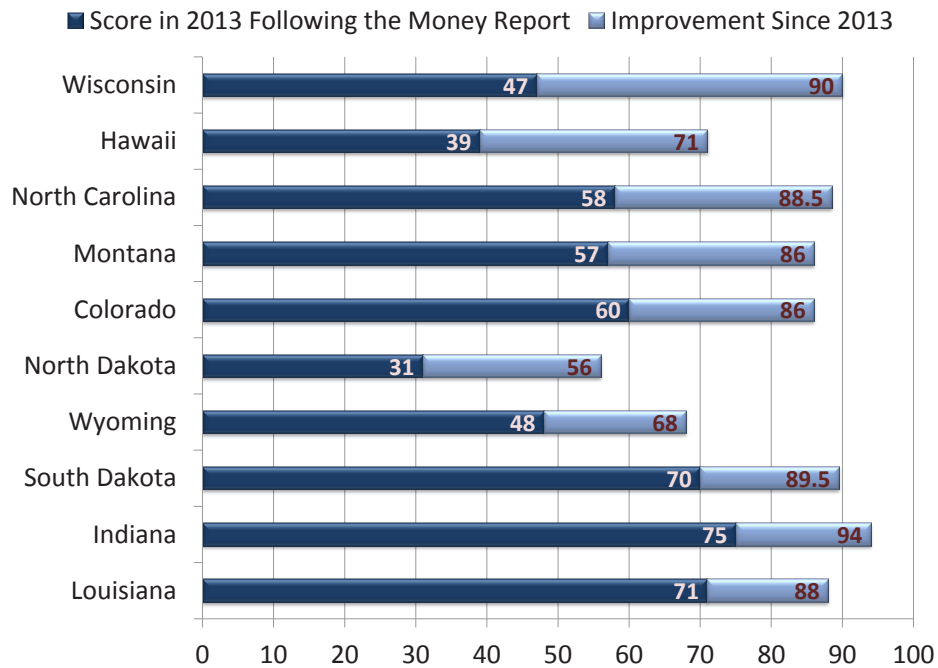
Figure 3: Indiana's New Economic Development Corporation Website Shines a Light on State Subsidies

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the IEDC website's search results. The search filters are set to: Recipient (blank), County (All Counties), Fund Type (W21), Contract Year (From: blank, To: blank), and Contract Status (All Statuses). The search results table is as follows:

Project ID	Recipient Name	City	County	Fund Type	Contract Yr	Contract Amt
335647	ATTC Manufacturing, Inc.	Tell City	Perry	SEF	2007	\$62,500.00
335794	Iroquois Bio-Energy Company, LLC	Rensselaer	Jasper	SEF	2007	\$36,500.00
335984	TFX Plating Company, LLC	Muncie	Delaware	HBI	2006	\$123,806.00
335987	BioStorage Technologies, Inc.	Indianapolis	Marion	HBI	2005	\$2,174,151.00
336084	Zotec Partners, LLC	Carmel	Hamilton	EDGE	2005	\$1,000,000.00
336305	Clequent Consumer Products, Inc.	South Bend	St. Joseph	EDGE	2005	\$200,000.00
336484	Dynaloy, LLC	Indianapolis	Marion	HBI	2006	\$51,000.00
336486	Gilchrist & Soames, Inc.	Indianapolis	Marion	HBI	2006	\$247,500.00
336675	Peg Perego USA, Inc.	Fort Wayne	Allen	HBI	2005	\$2,067,195.00
336675	Peg Perego USA, Inc.	Fort Wayne	Allen	EDGE	2005	\$200,000.00
336927	Caito Foods Service, Inc.	Indianapolis	Marion	HBI	2006	\$2,100,000.00
337810	Transilwrap Company, Incorporated	Richmond	Wayne	SEF	2006	\$36,500.00
337822	Eagle Creek Aviation Services, Inc.	Indianapolis	Marion	SEF	2006	\$50,000.00
338410	Dolgencorp, Incorporated d/b/a Dollar General	Marion	Grant	SEF	2007	\$286,000.00
338799	First Advantage Tax Consulting Services, LLC	Indianapolis	Marion	SEF	2005	\$100,000.00
338876	ConAgra Foods Packaged Foods, LLC	Indianapolis	Marion	SEF	2008	\$43,000.00
339063	Oak Security Group, LLC	Indianapolis	Marion	SEF	2006	\$11,000.00
339195	Norton Packaging, Inc.	Hamlet	Starke	SEF	2008	\$5,900.00

## Figure 4: Top 10 Most Improved Transparency Websites from 2013 to 2014

The new transparency portals and major improvements in the past year increased the scores for many states. Wisconsin saw the largest improvement with an increase of 43 points. In order, the states with the highest increase in score from last year are as follows:



### Montana

In 2013, Montana improved its website to provide centrally accessible information on tax expenditures and economic development subsidies. Every year, Montana spends millions of dollars on deductions and special tax exemptions and exclusions given to individuals and corporations, which have the same bottom-line effect on the state budget as direct state spending since they must be offset by cuts to other programs or by raising other taxes. In 2013, Montana made information on these expenditures available from the

transparency website by providing a link to the state's tax expenditure reports.

Similarly, state officials linked the transparency website to the Department of Commerce's portal for economic development subsidies, which empowers Montanans to monitor the awards given to companies to grow the economy. The portal contains award information for 17 programs dating back to 1989. While it features recipient-specific information on the number of jobs that were supposed to be created by each subsidy, the portal is missing information on the number of jobs actually created.<sup>39</sup>

## South Dakota

South Dakota improved its transparency website by posting information on tax expenditures. Users can now view the hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue the state loses to sales tax deductions, exclusions, exemptions and preferential rates. The tax expenditures cover a wide range of programs, such as those for cattle feed, radio and television broadcasting, and packing materials.<sup>40</sup>

## Tennessee

In last year's *Following the Money* assessment, Tennessee scored a "C" because checkbook-level data were hard to access. While the payments could be sorted by purchasing department, users could neither find specific payments by searching by vendor or description, nor download the data for offline analysis. Early in 2014, however, Tennessee updated its transparency website by adding a new checkbook tool, making the data much more accessible. With the new search feature, users

can find details on the payments made to vendors for all types of expenditures—such as highway construction, training and data processing. With the new download functionality, users can access the raw checkbook data to uncover trends over time, evidence of favoritism to certain contractors, or ways the state could spend money more effectively.

Since the tool excludes checkbook-level information on confidential payments—such as for foster care and adoption assistance—the website details the aggregated amount of excluded payments by program. This feature enables visitors to nonetheless understand the full extent of the payments in the checkbook tool and explains why visitors might not be able to locate details on certain payments.

## Vermont

In the past year, Vermont unveiled the state's checkbook tool on its transparency website, *SPOTLIGHT*. The tool enables users to view the state's payments to vendors

Figure 5: Vermont's New Checkbook Tool Provides Details on Payments Made to Individual Vendors

**SPOTLIGHT, vermont.gov**

Note: Payments made by the Office of the State Treasurer, Department of Taxes, Department of Labor, and the Agency of Human Services may represent the movement of funds for electronic payments (i.e. wires, Automated Clearing House (ACH) payments, etc.) distributed to multiple payees and beneficiaries by these units of government on behalf of the State of Vermont. For additional payment details, please contact the State agency or department (business unit) generating the payment.

Filter: state -state-  
 department -dept-  
 year FY2014 filter/sort  
 vendor name  
 purpose  
 Sort: -sort by- -then by- filter/sort

Results: 41560 - page 1 (max of 100 per page) Total for results: \$1,126,399,849

Quarter Ending	Department	Vendor	State	Purpose	Amount
9/2013	Fish & Wildlife	#1 Auto Parts Inc	VT	Rep & Maint - Motor Vehicles	\$9.98
9/2013	Agency of Transportation	#1 Auto Parts Inc	VT	Other General Supplies	\$29.90
9/2013	Fish & Wildlife	#1 Auto Parts Inc	VT	Rep & Maint - Motor Vehicles	\$141.67
9/2013	Agency of Transportation	116 Main Street LLC	VT	Property - Land	\$2,024.44
9/2013	Agency of Transportation	116 Main Street LLC	VT	Property - Land	\$8,675.56
9/2013	Liquor Control	116 Wine & Spirits	VT	DLC - Bottle Redemption Exp	\$34.10
9/2013	Liquor Control	116 Wine & Spirits	VT	DLC - Agency Commissions	\$11,965.67
9/2013	Housing & Comm Development	12 Gauge Electric LLC	VT	Other Repair & Maint Serv	\$463.26
9/2013	Agency of Transportation	1st Run Computer Services Inc	NY	Rep&Maint-Info Tech Hardware	\$4,825.00
9/2013	Vermont Veterans' Home	210 Innovations LLC	CT	Freight & Express Mail	\$33.00
9/2013	Vermont Veterans' Home	210 Innovations LLC	CT	Building Maintenance Supplies	\$1,280.00
9/2013	Information & Innovation	2nd Century Technologies, Inc	NI	Cost of Monstrk Home Soft	\$4,340.00

**Jeb Spaulding**  
 Secretary  
 (802) 828-3322

**Jim Reardon**  
 Finance Commissioner  
 (802) 828-2376

from 66 departments, agencies and other government entities dating back to fiscal year 2011.<sup>41</sup> The entries in the checkbook total \$12.3 billion dollars.<sup>42</sup>

The checkbook tool is easy to use. Not only can users search for payments by department, vendor and purpose, but they can also filter the results to find specific payment information more easily. In addition, the website provides users with the ability to download expenditure information for offline data analysis.

While the checkbook does not include the payments from all quasi-public agencies—such as the Vermont Telecommunications Authority and the Vermont Lottery Commission—website officials have made available a comprehensive list of the government entities excluded from the checkbook. This list explains the limitations of the checkbook and why users would not be able to find particular kinds of government payments.<sup>43</sup>

## Wisconsin

In late 2013, Wisconsin launched *OpenBook Wisconsin*, which brings a far greater level of transparency to government spending by posting the state’s checkbook. Visitors can browse the payments made to vendors based on the vendor’s name, purchasing agency or type of expenditure. The checkbook is updated every two weeks, and even though the site is new, the administrators have posted expenditure information back to fiscal year 2008.<sup>44</sup>

*OpenBook Wisconsin* also follows the “one-stop” practice by providing a link to subsidy information on the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation’s (WEDC) webpage. While the data on *OpenBook Wisconsin* allows users to view the recipient-specific details on payments for goods and services, the data on the WEDC site allow users to view recipient-specific details on subsidies intended to grow the economy.

Figure 6: Wisconsin’s New Transparency Website Opens the Books on State Spending

The screenshot shows the OpenBook Wisconsin website interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, Expenditures, Other Resources, Common Questions, and Contact Us. Below the menu, there are search filters for Fiscal Year (2014), Agency Name (Natural Resources, Department of), Category Code (PROF), and Category Name (Professional and Contractual Services). A search bar is present with a 'New Search' button. Below the filters, there are tabs for Sub-Categories (10), Agencies (1), and Vendor (578). The Vendor tab is selected, showing a search bar and a table of vendor names and amounts.

Vendor Name	Amount
ALPHA TECHNOLOGY GROUP LLC	\$9,990.00
ALPHAGRAPHICS	\$30.00
AMER INDUSTRIAL MEDICAL INC	\$2,502.00
AMERICAN EXPRESS TRS CO	\$2.25
AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY	\$5,000.00
AMERICAN SECURITY LLC	\$735.00
ANDERSON, DIANE G	\$2,370.00
ANDY HAAS DESIGN INC	\$2,253.15
APCO INTL INC	\$125.00



# Making the Grade: Scoring States' Online Spending Transparency

Last year was the first time that all 50 states operated websites to make information on state spending accessible to the public. These web portals continue to improve. For instance, in 2014, 38 states' transparency websites also provide checkbook-level detail on subsidies for economic development. Many states are also disclosing information that was previously "off budget" and are making it easy for outside researchers to download and analyze large datasets about government spending.<sup>45</sup>

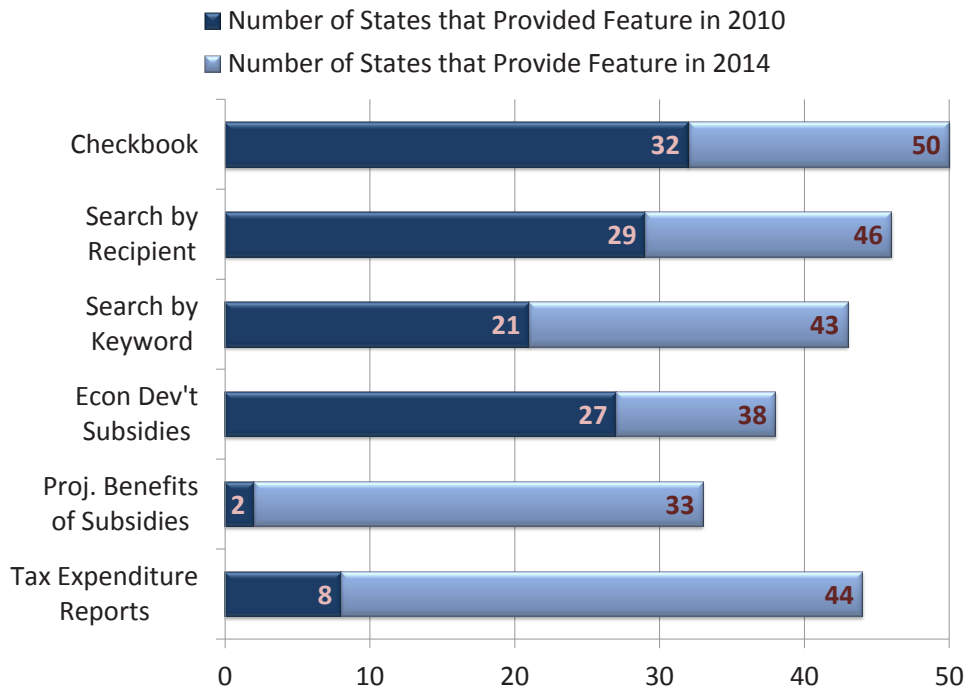
Each state's transparency website was analyzed and assigned a grade based on its searchability and the breadth of information provided. (See Appendix B for the complete scorecard, and Appendix A for a full explanation of the methodology and how the scoring system was applied to each state's specific website.) An initial inventory of each state's website and a set of questions were first sent to the administrative offices

believed to be responsible for operating each state's transparency website. (For a list of questions sent to state officials, see Appendix C.) Follow up e-mails and—if necessary—phone calls were made to these offices. Officials from 45 states responded with substantive information, clarifying or confirming information about their websites. In some cases, our research team adjusted scores based on this clarifying feedback. Alabama, California, Illinois, New Mexico and Texas did not respond to our inquiries.

Based on the grades assigned to each website, states can be divided into five categories: Leading States, Advancing States, Middling States, Lagging States and Failing States.

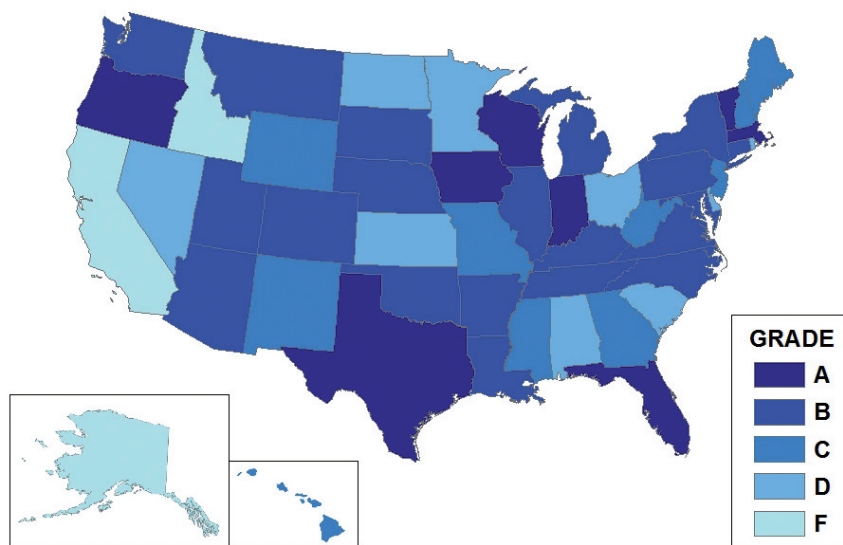
The following sections summarize common traits shared by the states in each of these categories to highlight their strengths and weaknesses.

Figure 7: States Have Rapidly Made Spending Information Available Online



Note: Data on the number of states that offered each feature in 2010 came from U.S. PIRG Education Fund's 2010 *Following the Money* report. For the methodology used to compare criteria between the 2010 report and this year's, see "Comparing Features in 2014 to Features in 2010" in Appendix A. States are considered to have each feature based on whether it is accessible from the transparency website.

Figure 8: How the 50 States Rate in Providing Online Access to Government Spending Data



## Changes to the Grading Criteria for 2014

Reflecting rising standards for government transparency and new frontiers of transparency best practices, the grading criteria changed slightly for the 2014 *Following the Money* report, as it has for previous reports. Changes in the criteria were:

- The *excluded information* criterion for checkbook-level expenditures was added. To receive full credit, states must provide a statement about the types of payments excluded from the checkbook. Disclosing all financial transactions is often not appropriate or lawful, and users should be able to ascertain which expenditures or entities are missing from the data.
- The scope of the *downloadable* criterion for checkbook-level expenditures was expanded. Last year, states received full credit if a portion of their checkbook could be downloaded (via file formats such as xlsx or csv) for offline analysis. This year, states that receive full credit must enable users to download their entire checkbook datasets.
- The *quasi-public agencies* criterion was revised. Last year, states received credit if expenditures from quasi-public agencies were accessible from the transparency website via a link or downloadable PDF. To receive credit this year, payments from quasi-public agencies must be included in the checkbook tool.
- The scope of the *economic development subsidies* criteria was expanded. Last year, states received full credit for providing recipient-specific subsidy information—such as the value of the award and details on the public benefits created—for at least *one* subsidy program. This year, states that receive full credit must provide recipient-specific subsidy information for *several* of the state’s most important programs.<sup>46</sup> Partial credit is awarded when such information is given for only some of these programs.
- In areas where best practices have become near universal, some criteria were eliminated in order to place a greater importance on other transparency features. For example, some of the sub-criteria in both the *tax expenditure reports* criterion and the *grants* criterion from last year were eliminated.

The more rigorous criteria have resulted in some lower grades for some states that simply improved less rapidly than others this year.<sup>47</sup> A lowered grade does not necessarily mean that transparency was reduced. For example:

- Georgia—which dropped three points from last year—failed to make the entire checkbook-level dataset downloadable in one file. Last year, this would not have resulted in lost points.
- Nevada—which dropped 10 points from last year—still failed to post to its transparency website any recipient-specific information on the state’s economic development subsidies.
- Kentucky—which dropped nine points from last year—still failed to make the subsidy information in its Financial Incentive Database downloadable and failed to make general checkbook expenditure data bulk downloadable.

## Leading “A” States

State	Grade	Point Total
Indiana	A-	94
Oregon	A-	93.5
Florida	A-	92.5
Texas	A-	91
Massachusetts*	A-	90.5
Iowa	A-	90
Vermont	A-	90
Wisconsin	A-	90

\*After U.S. PIRG researchers finished the assessment, Massachusetts improved its transparency website by publishing a report on the Economic Development Incentive Program that provides recipient-specific details on the jobs retained and created. Massachusetts’ score in this table and elsewhere in this report does not reflect this improvement—which would have increased the grade to 91.5.

The eight states leading in online spending transparency have created user-friendly websites that provide visitors with accessible information on an array of expenditures. Not only can ordinary citizens find information on specific vendor payments through easy-to-use search features, but experts and watchdog groups can also download the entire checkbook dataset to conduct offline analyses. Every Leading State’s checkbook contains the payments from several quasi-public agencies, which usually fall outside legislatures’ general appropriations.

While the checkbooks in these states do not cover all aspects of state spending—either because of limitations in the states’ accounting systems or privacy rules—seven of these states provide details on the types of expenditures excluded, allowing users to understand why they might not be able to find certain types of expenditures.

Leading States also provide visitors with recipient-specific information on subsidy awards. For example, Indiana, Florida,

Massachusetts, Vermont and Wisconsin provide information on the value of the subsidies received by companies through most of the state’s important subsidy programs. Indiana, Oregon, Florida, Texas and Iowa also provide information on the funds recouped from subsidy recipients that fail to deliver on the agreed-upon public benefits—a topflight practice followed by few other states.

Leading States still have opportunities to improve transparency. For example, Wisconsin is the only state that provides complete information on the public benefits delivered by recipients of economic development subsidies. In addition, not a single state makes recipient-specific information for all subsidy programs available to be downloaded for analysis.

## Advancing “B” States

State	Grade	Point Total
South Dakota	B+	89.5
North Carolina	B+	88.5
Illinois	B+	88
Louisiana	B+	88
New York	B+	88
Virginia	B+	87
Michigan	B	86.5
Colorado	B	86
Montana	B	86
Washington	B	85
Arizona	B	84
Connecticut	B	83
Kentucky	B	83
Tennessee	B	83
Maryland	B-	82.5
Pennsylvania	B-	82.5
Nebraska	B-	82
Oklahoma	B-	82
Utah	B-	82
Arkansas	B-	82

Twenty states are advancing in online spending transparency, with spending information that is easy to access but more limited than Leading States.

Advancing States, with the exception of Maryland, have checkbooks that are searchable by recipient, keyword and agency.<sup>48</sup> Advancing States also, with the exception of Pennsylvania, allow users to download all or part of the checkbook data for offline analysis. In addition, all Advancing States follow the best practices of producing and posting online their tax expenditure reports, which provide summaries of the tax revenue forgone from tax exemptions, credits and other breaks.

All Advancing States provide information on the value of subsidies received by companies for at least two of the state’s important subsidy programs. More than half of the states provide this information in a form that can be downloaded for offline analysis.<sup>49</sup>

Most Advancing States also provide some information on the public benefits—either anticipated or actual—of the subsidies. However, few Advancing States provide information on the funds recouped from subsidy recipients who fail to deliver on the agreed-upon public benefits.

### Middling “C” States

Ten states are middling in online spending transparency, with comprehensive and easy-to-access checkbook-level spending information but limited information on subsidies.

The online checkbooks in Middling States cover a wide range of spending. Their checkbooks have the same search functionality as that in Leading and Advancing States. Nine of the states allow users to download all or part of the checkbook data. Eight of the states provide

State	Grade	Point Total
Mississippi	C+	79
New Jersey	C+	79
New Mexico	C+	77
Maine	C+	76
Missouri	C+	75
New Hampshire	C+	75
Georgia	C	74
West Virginia	C	72
Hawaii	C	71
Wyoming	C-	68

checkbook-level information on the payments made by quasi-public agencies.

The information provided on subsidies in Middling States is more limited than the subsidy information provided by Leading and Advancing States. The majority of Middling States provide recipient-specific information on only one key subsidy program, and only two states provide recipient-specific information on the projected and actual benefits created by the subsidy funds.

### Lagging “D” States

State	Grade	Point Total
Minnesota	D+	64
Delaware	D+	63
South Carolina	D+	63
Rhode Island	D+	62
North Dakota	D	56
Alabama	D	55
Nevada	D-	52
Ohio	D-	51
Kansas	D-	50

Checkbook-level spending in the nine Lagging States is less accessible to users than checkbook-level spending in other

states. For example, while the transparency websites provide residents with the ability to search for specific payments, citizens cannot download and analyze the entire dataset to examine trends over time, uncover evidence of favoritism to certain contractors, or discover ways the state could spend money more effectively. In addition, all lagging states—with the exception of Ohio—do not provide any recipient-specific information on economic development subsidies.

## Failing “F” States

State	Grade	Point Total
Idaho	F	44
Alaska	F	43
California	F	34

Three states are failing to follow many of the standards of online spending transparency. While these states provide check-book-level information, the spending data for Alaska and California are not available in searchable online interfaces, and the spending data for Idaho are only searchable by agency. In addition, transparency websites of Failing States do not provide any information on the recipients of development subsidies.

## Democrats and Republicans Support Government Transparency

The political leaning of a state provides little indication of its level of transparency. Neither Republican-leaning states nor Democratic-leaning states tend to be more transparent than the other.

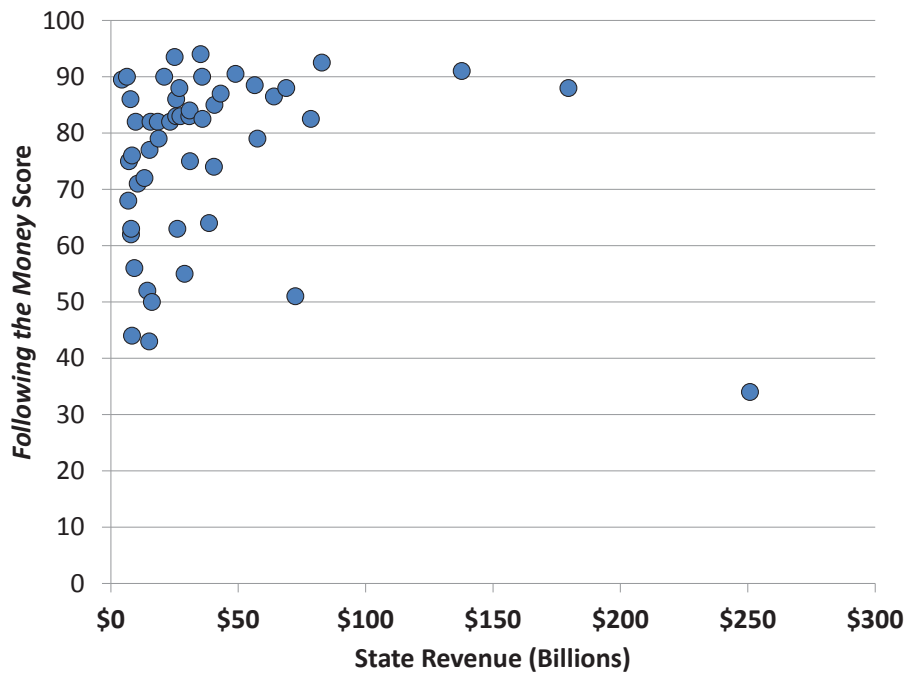
States with a Democratic governor averaged a transparency score of 78.1 in our study—near the average score of those states with Republican governors, 74.9.<sup>50</sup> Likewise, there was no significant difference in the average transparency score of states with single-party, Democratic legislatures (74.9) and those with single-party, Republican legislatures (75.4).<sup>51</sup> Similarly, states that voted for Governor Romney in the 2012 presidential election had almost the same average transparency score (74.8) as did states that voted for President Obama (77.7).<sup>52</sup>

## Figure 9: State Revenue Size Does Not Determine the Level of Transparency<sup>53</sup>

There appears to be little relationship between the size of a state's budget and its level of transparency. While states with smaller budgets may have more difficulty investing in topflight information technology systems, they may have an easier time wrangling agencies into conforming to data standards. As the figure below shows, some states with small revenue streams earned high transparency scores, while some states with large revenue streams earned low scores. California has the largest budget of any state, yet received 34 points, the lowest score. In contrast, South Dakota and Vermont have the lowest annual revenues in the country, yet they earned some of the highest scores at 89.5 and 90.0, respectively.

Overall, states with larger revenue streams show slightly higher scores, but with clear exceptions. The average score of the 10 smallest-revenue states was 71.0, while the average score of the ten largest-revenue states was 78.1. Among the eight Leading States, three had total revenues below the national median.

The data below show that small states with small budgets can create and maintain comprehensive and user-friendly transparency websites. Likewise, states with large budgets do not automatically become leaders in state spending transparency.



# States Innovate with Cutting-Edge Practices

Some innovative states have introduced new transparency practices. They have developed new tools, protocols and datasets on government expenditures, giving residents new ability to view, analyze, monitor and influence how their government allocates resources.

**Massachusetts Encourages City Spending Transparency:** Some state checkbooks were created with the capacity and intent to incorporate spending information from municipal governments, but many cities have been slow to post their spending information to the state's checkbook. Massachusetts has awarded more than \$300,000 in Community Innovative Challenge (CIC) grants to six cities to post their spending information online. One of these cities, Woburn, is encouraging other cities that did not receive a CIC grant to use its model and post their spending information on Massachusetts' transparency website as well. In total, Massachusetts and Woburn plan to help 20 cities post their spending information online by January 2015.<sup>54</sup>

**South Dakota Audits Its Checkbook:** Many transparency websites do not verify that the checkbook-level data are correct, and instead provide disclaimers that the data are unaudited or should be verified with the purchasing agency. South Dakota follows the best practice of auditing its checkbook every year, which allows users to rely on the veracity of the data and report and publicize facts and trends they find in state spending.<sup>55</sup>

**Tennessee Posts the Aggregate Expenditures Excluded from the Checkbook:** Due to data limitations or protocols to protect private information, states' checkbook websites exclude payments for some types of expenditures. While some transparency officials address this by detailing the types of payments excluded from the checkbook, most states do not also list the value of the excluded payment types. Tennessee's checkbook, however, posts the value of the excluded payments by program—such as for foster care and adoption assistance—enabling users to understand the portion of vendor payments actually available.



# Continuing the Momentum Toward Greater Transparency: How States Can Improve their Transparency Websites

Despite the continued improvements on state transparency websites, not a single state excelled in all the best practices of online spending transparency. In the next year, state officials should continue to update their websites to expand the scope and user-friendliness of their online checkbooks and subsidy information.

Every state's transparency website still has room for improvement:

- Not a single state provides checkbook-level spending information on all quasi-public agencies. In each state, our researchers were able to identify such an agency that was missing from the checkbook level data. Adding all quasi-public agencies to states' checkbooks would allow users to monitor spending from government bodies that fulfill important public functions but often do not receive appropriations from legislatures.
- 23 states do not provide details on the specific types of payments excluded from the checkbook. If visitors do not find information about a certain type of transaction, they should know that it may exist but just might be missing from the transparency website.
- Only six states provide checkbook-level information on the recipients of each of the state's most important subsidy programs. While many other states provide checkbook-level information for *some* of these programs, disclosure for all programs would provide greater transparency and accountability.
- The checkbooks in four states have limited searchability, and the checkbooks in three states—Alaska, California and Ohio—cannot be searched at all.
- Seventeen states do not allow users to download the entire checkbook dataset for offline analysis.
- Six states do not provide tax expenditure reports.

- Fifteen states do not provide any recipient-specific details on the benefits—either projected or actual—of economic development subsidies. Without this information, watchdog groups and concerned citizens cannot ensure that taxpayers are getting their money’s worth from the subsidy programs.
- Only 11 states provide informa-

tion on the funds recouped from companies that fail to deliver on the agreed-upon public benefits laid out in subsidy agreements.

With continued progress toward online transparency, citizens will have greater opportunity to monitor government spending, evaluate budgetary decisions and ensure that contracts to private companies are smart choices for the state.

# Appendix A: Methodology

Grades for the scorecard were determined by assigning points for information included on (or in some cases, linked to) a state’s transparency website or another government website that provides information on government spending. (See the “Criteria Descriptions and Point Allocation for the Scorecard” table in the methodology for a detailed description of the grading system.)

## What We Graded

Only one website was graded for each state. If states had a designated transparency website, that site was graded. If a state had more than one transparency website, we graded the transparency website that earned the highest score. If states lacked a designated transparency website, we graded the state website that earned the highest possible score.

The grades in this report reflect the status of state transparency websites as of January 2014, with the exception of cases

in which state officials alerted us to oversights in our evaluation of the websites or informed us of changes that had been made to the websites prior to mid-February 2014. In these cases, Frontier Group and U.S. PIRG Education Fund researchers confirmed the presence of the information pointed out by the state officials and gave appropriate credit for that information on our scorecard.

A state’s grade reflects the entire state government’s provision of tools to access spending data through an online transparency portal. The grades do not just measure the effort of the office that manages the transparency website. Improving transparency may require other offices or quasi-independent agencies to provide information in a usable format, additional funding from the state legislature, or changes to laws and regulations outside the control of the managing office. Best practices in spending transparency typically require collaboration from several parts of state government. The grades in this report are scores of the success of that collaboration.

## How We Inventoried and Assessed the Websites

The researchers reviewed websites and corresponded with state officials as follows:

- During January 2014, U.S. PIRG Education Fund researchers evaluated every accessible state transparency website based on the criteria laid forth in the “Criteria Descriptions and Point Allocation for the Scorecard” table of the methodology.
- In late January and early February, state agencies administering transparency websites were sent e-mails with our evaluation and were asked to review it for accuracy by February 14, 2014. For a few states that requested extensions, the deadline was extended.
- In February 2014, U.S. PIRG Education Fund researchers reviewed the state officials’ comments, followed up on potential discrepancies, and made adjustments to the scorecard as warranted. In some cases, our researchers continued to correspond with state officials into March, clarifying the criteria and discussing websites’ features.

## Calculating the Grades

States could receive a total of 100 points. Based on the points each state received, grades were assigned as listed in Table A-1.

States were given full credit for making particular categories of information available on their websites, regardless of

Table A-1: Grading Scale

Score	Grade
95 to 100 points	A
90 to 94 points	A-
87 to 89 points	B+
83 to 86 points	B
80 to 82 points	B-
75 to 79 points	C+
70 to 74 points	C
65 to 69 points	C-
60 to 64 points	D+
55 to 59 points	D
50 to 54 points	D-
1 to 49 points	F

whether we could ascertain if the data evaluated were complete. For example, if a state’s contract checkbook contains only a portion of the payments the state made to vendors through contracts, full credit is awarded.

To determine which subsidy programs to assess, our researchers relied on *Show Us the Subsidized Jobs*, published in January 2014 by Good Jobs First, a non-partisan research group that promotes corporate and government accountability in economic development programs. Good Jobs First maintains a database of hundreds of thousands of economic development subsidies and has determined the five—or in some cases four—most important subsidy programs in each state based on cost and other factors.<sup>55</sup> As far as we know, this is the best available list of the most important economic development subsidy programs for each state.

## Comparing Features in 2014 to Features in 2010

To examine nationwide changes in state spending transparency from 2010, we compared states' performance on this year's scorecard to states' performance on the scorecard in our 2010 *Following*

*the Money* report according to the criteria listed in Table A-2.<sup>56</sup> Because some of the terminology or measures have been adjusted over time, this table explains those differences.

Table A-2: Criteria for Evaluating Progress from 2010 to 2014

Feature	Criteria in this year's (2014) <i>Following the Money</i> Report	Criteria in the 2010 <i>Following the Money</i> Report
<b>Checkbook</b>	"Checkbook-Level"	"Checkbook-Level Web Site"
<b>Search by Recipient</b>	"Searchable by Recipient"	"Search by Contractor"
<b>Search by Keyword</b>	"Searchable by Keyword or Fund"	"Search by Activity"
<b>Economic Development Subsidies</b>	Received at least five points for "Checkbook-Level" criterion for Economic Development Subsidies	Received at least five points for "Economic Development Incentives Information" (five points were awarded if vendor-specific grants and subsidies were included)
<b>Projected Benefits of Subsidies</b>	Received at least one point for "Projected Public Benefits" subcriterion for Economic Development Subsidies	Received 10 points for "Economic Development Incentives Information" (10 points were awarded if a detailed description of the incentive was provided, including estimates for the number of jobs created)
<b>Tax Expenditure Report</b>	"Tax Expenditure Reports"	"Tax Subsidy Information Provided in the Database or Linked"

## Criteria Descriptions and Point Allocation for the Scorecard

Checkbook-Level Spending			
Criteria	Description	Partial Credit	Points
<b>Checkbook</b>	A list or database of individual expenditures made to individual recipients. Payments made through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act are not eligible for credit.	No partial credit.	24
<b>Searchable by Recipient</b>	Ability to search checkbook-level expenditures by recipient (e.g. contractor or vendor) name. Search feature must be part of the checkbook tool.	No partial credit.	8
<b>Searchable by Keyword or Fund</b>	Ability to search checkbook-level expenditures by type of service, item purchased, or the paying government fund. Search feature must be part of the checkbook tool.	No partial credit.	8
<b>Searchable by Agency</b>	Ability to search checkbook-level expenditures by the purchasing entity of the government. Search feature must be part of the checkbook tool.	No partial credit.	8
<b>Excluded Information</b>	Statement about the <i>specific</i> types of transactions and/or government entities excluded from the checkbook. (Since disclosing all financial transactions is often not appropriate or lawful, users should be able to know which expenditures or entities are missing from the data.)	2 points are awarded for a statement about more <i>general</i> types of transactions and/or government entities excluded from the checkbook (e.g. “confidential data” or “salaries”). General statements that the checkbook excludes payments outside the state accounting system will not receive credit.	4
<b>Bulk Downloadable</b>	The complete dataset—by year, quarter, or month—can be downloaded for data analysis (via xlsx, csv, xml, etc.).	3 points are awarded if a portion of the dataset is downloadable.	6
<b>Quasi-Public Agencies</b>	Expenditures from all quasi-public agencies are included in the checkbook, which enables search by purchasing agency or downloads that indicate purchasing agency.	If the checkbook includes some quasis but excludes others, 4 points are awarded.	6

Economic Development Subsidies			
Criteria	Description	Partial Credit	Points
<b>Checkbook-Level*</b>	A list or database of individual payments made through the state's five most important economic development subsidy programs. These programs have been previously listed by Good Jobs First. <sup>58</sup>	<p>5 points if the payments made by one of the state's subsidy programs are available.</p> <p>9 points if the payments made by two subsidy programs are available.</p> <p>12 points if the payments made by three subsidy programs are available.</p> <p>14 points if the payments made by four subsidy programs are available.**</p> <p>15 points if the payments made by the five subsidy programs are available.</p>	15
<b>Downloadable*</b>	Checkbook-level subsidy information can be downloaded for data analysis (via xlsx, csv, xml, etc.).	<p>1 point if subsidy information is downloadable for one of the five most important programs.</p> <p>2 points if subsidy information is downloadable for two programs.</p> <p>3 points if subsidy information is downloadable for three programs.</p> <p>3.5 points if subsidy information is downloadable for four programs.**</p> <p>4 points if subsidy information is downloadable for five programs.</p>	4

Economic Development Subsidies (cont'd)			
Criteria	Description	Partial Credit	Points
<b>Projected Public Benefits*</b>	The public benefits, such as the number of jobs, intended to be produced by specific private recipients of economic development subsidies (in the form of tax credits, grants, or other types of programs) are included.	<p>1 point if projected public benefits information is available for one of the five most important programs.</p> <p>2 points if projected public benefits information is available for two programs.</p> <p>3 points if projected public benefits information is available for three programs.</p> <p>3.5 points if projected public benefits information is available for four programs.**</p> <p>4 points if projected public benefits information is available for five programs.</p>	4
<b>Actual Public Benefits*</b>	The public benefits, such as the number of jobs, actually produced by the specific private recipients of economic development subsidies (in the form of tax credits, grants, or other types of programs) are included.	<p>1 point if actual public benefits information is available for one of the five most important programs.</p> <p>2 points if actual public benefits information is available for two programs.</p> <p>3 points if actual public benefits information is available for three programs.</p> <p>3.5 points if actual public benefits information is available for four programs.**</p> <p>4 points if actual public benefits information is available for five programs.</p>	4



Economic Development Subsidies (cont'd)			
Criteria	Description	Partial Credit	Points
<b>Extra Credit: Recouped Funds*</b>	Subsidies recouped through clawback clauses are available. No credit is awarded for a subsidy program that does not have a clawback clause.	<p>1 point if the funds recouped are available for one of the five most important programs.</p> <p>2 points if the funds recouped are available for two programs.</p> <p>3 points if the funds recouped are available for three programs.</p> <p>3.5 points if the funds recouped are available for four programs.</p> <p>4 points if the funds recouped are available for five programs.</p>	4

Tax Expenditure Reports			
Criteria	Description	Partial Credit	Points
<b>Tax Expenditures from Multiple Years</b>	The state's tax expenditure report is available from the transparency website.	6 points plus one additional point for every year detailed in the tax expenditure reports, excluding the most recent, for a maximum of 9 points.	9

\*In general, we relied on Good Jobs First's *Show Us the Subsidized Jobs* report to discern the subsidy programs that satisfied the criteria for our initial inventory. In some instances—such as when state officials responded that they had updated their website after the release of *Show Us the Subsidized Jobs*—we relied on our own assessment.

\*\*In instances when Good Jobs First determined that only four subsidy programs in a state (as opposed to the five) should be designated as most important, full credit was then awarded for providing the appropriate information on the four programs.

## State-by-State Scoring Explanations

Below is a state-by-state list of explanations for point allocations beyond the information provided in the expanded scorecard in Appendix B.

- **Colorado:** Half credit (four points) was awarded for Search by Recipient because the vendor search feature only allows users to search by entering the first and second letter of the vendor's name. Visitors who do not already know what they are looking for are unlikely to identify a relevant vendor this way.
- **Iowa:** One of Iowa's five most important subsidy programs is the High Quality Job Program (HQJP). This program was considered to have information available on the Actual Public Benefits because, although actual job data are not yet available, all the HQJP projects have yet to reach the reporting stage. In the judgment of Good Jobs First, based on practices of related programs, once the projects reach the reporting stage, the actual public benefits will be disclosed.
- **New York:** While Good Jobs First considered the Start-Up NY a key subsidy program, Start-Up NY was excluded from our assessment because the first report that would have information to assess is due in December 2014. New York's four other subsidy programs were assessed using the same point distribution as a state for which Good Jobs First determined that there were only four key subsidy programs.
- **Oklahoma:** While Good Jobs First considered the Quick Action Closing Fund a key subsidy program, the Quick Action Closing Fund was excluded from our assessment because, according to the website, no "distributions" have been made. Eleven points were awarded for Checkbook-Level Economic Development Subsidies because recipient-specific subsidy information is available for two of the three key programs. Two points were awarded for Downloadable Economic Development Subsidies because recipient-specific subsidy information is available for one of the key three programs.
- **South Dakota:** While there was not a link to a separate tax expenditure report, full credit was awarded for Tax Expenditure Reports because, unlike most states—which aggregate tax expenditure information into a single state report (PDF)—South Dakota aggregates tax expenditure information into a tool (called "Tax Expenditures") on the transparency website.
- **Washington:** One of Washington's five most important subsidy programs, the Aerospace Non-Manufacturing Tax Incentive, was not awarded credit for Checkbook-Level Economic Development Subsidies. Although Washington's "Tax Incentive Public Disclosure Reports" have a column for the Aerospace Non-Manufacturing Tax Incentive that would have the value of the subsidy award, the column is blank.

Below is a list of the subsidy programs assessed in each state and which criteria were fulfilled. Programs that received extra credit for the “Recouped Funds” criterion are also noted. For descriptions of the criteria see the previous section titled “Criteria Descriptions and Point Allocation for the Scorecard.”

### **Alabama**

- Alabama Industrial Development Training: no credit.
- Enterprise Zone Credit: no credit.
- Film Production Rebates: no credit.
- Income Tax Capital Credit: no credit.
- Industrial Development Grant: no credit.

### **Alaska**

- Commercial Fishing Revolving Loan Program: no credit.
- Development Finance Program: no credit.
- Film Industry Tax Credit: no credit.
- Oil and Gas Production Tax Credits: no credit.

### **Arizona**

- Arizona Competes Fund: checkbook-level, downloadable, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Arizona Jobs Training Program: checkbook-level and downloadable.
- Military Reuse Zone: no credit.
- Quality Jobs Tax Credit Program: no credit.
- Research and Development Tax Credit: no credit.

### **Arkansas**

- Advantage Arkansas Income Tax Credits: no credit.
- ArkPlus Income Tax Credit: no credit.
- Business and Industry Training Program: checkbook-level and downloadable.
- Create Rebate Program: checkbook-level and downloadable.
- InvestArk Sales and Use Tax Credits: no credit.

### **California**

- California Research Credit: no credit.
- Employment Training Panel: no credit.
- Enterprise Zone Hiring Tax Credit: no credit.
- Film and Television Production Tax Credit: no credit.

### **Colorado**

- Colorado First Training Program: checkbook-level and downloadable.
- Enterprise Zone Program: checkbook-level and downloadable.
- Existing Industry Training Program: checkbook-level and downloadable.
- Job Growth Incentive Tax Credit: checkbook-level, downloadable, projected public benefits, and actual public benefits.
- Strategic Fund: checkbook-level, downloadable and projected public benefits.

**Connecticut**

- Enterprise Zone and Urban Jobs Tax Credits: no credit.
- Film and Digital Media Tax Credit: no credit.
- Job Creation Tax Credit: checkbook-level, downloadable and actual public benefits.
- Manufacturing Assistance Act: checkbook-level, downloadable and actual public benefits.
- Small Business Express: checkbook-level, downloadable and actual public benefits.

**Delaware**

- Bank Franchise Tax Credits: no credit.
- Blue Collar Training Grant: no credit.
- Delaware Strategic Fund: no credit.
- New Jobs Creation: no credit.
- New Jobs Infrastructure Fund: no credit.

**Florida**

- Economic Development Transportation Fund: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Enterprise Zone Program: no credit.
- Film & Entertainment Incentive: checkbook-level and actual public benefits.
- Qualified Target Industry Tax Refund: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Quick Action Closing Fund: checkbook-level, projected public benefits, actual public benefits and recouped funds.

**Georgia**

- Economic Development, Growth and Expansion (EDGE) Fund: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Film, Television and Digital Entertainment Tax Credit: no credit.
- Job Tax Credit: no credit.
- Quality Jobs Tax Credit: no credit.
- Regional Economic Business Assistance (REBA): no credit.

**Hawaii**

- Capital Goods Excise Tax Credit: no credit.
- Employment and Training Fund Statewide Training Grants: no credit.
- Enterprise Zones: no credit.
- Film & Digital Media Income Tax Credit (Act 88): no credit.

**Idaho**

- 3% Investment Tax Credit: no credit.
- Business Advantage Program: no credit.
- Hire One Tax Credit: no credit.
- New Jobs Tax Credit: no credit.
- Research and Development Activity Income Tax Credit: no credit.

## **Illinois**

- EDGE Tax Credit: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Enterprise Zone Expanded M&E Sales Tax Exemption: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Film Production Services Tax Credit: no credit.
- IDOT Economic Development Program: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Large Business Development Assistance Program: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.

## **Indiana**

- Economic Development for a Growing Economy: checkbook-level, downloadable, projected public benefits and recouped funds.
- Enterprise Zone Program: no credit.
- Hoosier Business Investment Tax Credit: checkbook-level, downloadable, projected public benefits and recouped funds.
- Skills Enhancement Fund: checkbook-level, downloadable, projected public benefits and recouped funds.
- Twenty-First Century Research and Technology Fund: checkbook-level.

## **Iowa**

- Enterprise Zones: checkbook-level, downloadable, projected public benefits, actual public benefits and recouped funds.
- High Quality Jobs Program: checkbook-level, downloadable, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Industrial New Jobs Training (260E): no credit.
- Iowa Industrial New Jobs Tax Credit (aka New Jobs Tax Credit): no credit.
- Research Activities Credit: checkbook-level.

## **Kansas**

- High Performance Incentive Program: no credit.
- Investments in Major Projects and Comprehensive Training Program (IMPACT): no credit.
- Promoting Employment Across Kansas (PEAK): no credit.
- Research Credit: no credit.
- Star Bonds: no credit.

## **Kentucky**

- Bluegrass State Skills Corporation Grant-in-Aid Program: Checkbook-level, projected public benefits and recouped funds.
- Coal Used in the Manufacture of Electricity: no credit.
- Kentucky Business Investment Program: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Kentucky Enterprise Initiative Act: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Machinery for New and Expanded Industry and Certain Industry Machinery: no credit.

**Louisiana**

- Enterprise Zones: checkbook-level, downloadable and projected public benefits.
- Industrial Tax Exemption: checkbook-level, downloadable and projected public benefits.
- Motion Picture Investor Tax Credit: checkbook-level, downloadable and projected public benefits.
- Purchases of Manufacturing Machinery and Equipment Exemption: no credit.
- Quality Jobs Program: checkbook-level, downloadable and projected public benefits.

**Maine**

- Business Equipment Tax Reimbursement Program (BETR): checkbook-level.
- Employment Tax Increment Financing: no credit.
- Pine Tree Development Zones: no credit.
- Research Expense Tax Credits and Super R&D Tax Credit: no credit.
- Business Equipment Tax Exemption: no credit.

**Maryland**

- Film Tax Credits: checkbook-level, downloadable and actual public benefits.
- Job Creation Tax Credit: actual public benefits.
- MEDAAF: checkbook-level, downloadable, projected public benefits, actual public benefits and recouped funds.
- One Maryland Tax Credit: actual public benefits.
- R&D Tax Credit: checkbook-level.

**Massachusetts**

- Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP): checkbook-level, downloadable and projected public benefits.
- Film Tax Credit: checkbook-level and downloadable.
- Investment Tax Credit: no credit.
- Life Sciences Investment Tax Credit: checkbook-level, downloadable and projected public benefits.
- Research Tax Credit: checkbook-level and downloadable.

**Michigan**

- Brownfield Redevelopment TIF & MBT: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Film and Digital Media Tax Credit: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Michigan Economic Growth Authority (MEGA) Tax Credits: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Michigan Business Tax Battery Credit: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Renaissance Zone Program: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.

**Minnesota**

- Business Development Public Infrastructure Grant Program: no credit.
- Job Opportunity Building Zones (JOBZ): no credit.
- Job Skills Partnership Program: no credit.
- Minnesota Investment Fund: no credit.
- Research and Development Tax Credits: no credit.

**Mississippi**

- Jobs Tax Credit: no credit.
- Major Economic Impact Act: checkbook-level, downloadable, projected public benefits, actual public benefits and recouped funds.
- Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit: no credit.
- Rural Economic Development (RED) Credits: no credit.
- Advantage Jobs Rebate Program: projected public benefits.

**Missouri**

- Business Use Incentives for Large Scale Development (BUILD): checkbook-level, downloadable, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- New Jobs Training (aka Community College New Jobs Training Program): checkbook-level and downloadable.
- Quality Jobs Program: checkbook-level, downloadable, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- State Supplemental Tax Increment Financing: no credit.

**Montana**

- Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Oil and Natural Gas Production Exemption: no credit.
- Primary Sector Workforce Training Grant: checkbook-level and actual public benefits.
- Qualified Research Credit: no credit.
- Wood Products Revolving Loan Fund (State): checkbook-level and projected public benefits.

**Nebraska**

- LB 775/Employment and Investment Growth Act: projected public benefits.
- Nebraska Advantage Act: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Nebraska Advantage Job Training Program: checkbook-level and downloadable.
- Nebraska Research and Development Act: no credit.
- Quality Jobs Program: projected public benefits.

**Nevada**

- Catalyst Fund: no credit.
- Personal Property Tax Abatement: no credit.
- Sales and Use Tax Abatement: no credit.
- Silver State Works Employee Hiring Incentive: no credit.
- Train Employees Now: no credit.

**New Hampshire**

- Community Development Investment Program: no credit.
- Economic Revitalization Zone Tax Credits: no credit.
- Job Training Fund: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Research and Development Credit: no credit.

**New Jersey**

- Business Employment Incentive Program: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Economic Redevelopment and Growth (ERG) Program: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Film Production Tax Credit: no credit.
- Grow New Jersey Assistance Program: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Urban Enterprise Zone Program: no credit.

**New Mexico**

- Film Tax Credit: no credit.
- High Wage Jobs Tax Credit: no credit.
- Job Training Incentive Program: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Manufacturer's Investment Tax Credit: no credit.
- Technology Jobs Tax Credit: no credit.

**New York**

- Empire State Film Tax Credit: no credit.
- Excelsior Jobs Program: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Industrial Development Agencies: checkbook-level, downloadable, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Brownfield Tax Credit Program: checkbook-level.

**North Carolina**

- Article 3J Tax Credits for Growing Businesses: checkbook-level and actual public benefits.
- Film Production Tax Credit: checkbook-level and actual public benefits.
- Job Development Investment Grant: checkbook-level, projected public benefits, actual public benefits and recouped funds.
- One North Carolina Fund: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and recouped funds.
- William S. Lee (Article 3A) Tax Credits: checkbook-level and actual public benefits.

**North Dakota**

- Income Tax Exemption for New or Expanding Businesses: no credit.
- New Jobs Training: no credit.
- North Dakota Development Fund: no credit.
- Renaissance Zones: no credit.
- Wage and Salary Credit: no credit.



## **Ohio**

- Facilities Establishment Fund: checkbook-level and downloadable.
- Job Retention Tax Credit: projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Job Creation Tax Credit: projected public benefits.
- Motion Picture Tax Credit: no credit.
- Ohio Incumbent Workforce Training Voucher: checkbook-level and downloadable.

## **Oklahoma**

- Investment/New Jobs Tax Credit: checkbook-level.
- Quality Jobs/21<sup>st</sup> Century Quality Jobs: checkbook-level and downloadable.
- Training for Industry: no credit.

## **Oregon**

- Enterprise Zone Program: checkbook-level, downloadable, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Oregon Investment Advantage: projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Qualified Research Activities Tax Credit: no credit.
- Renewable Resource Equipment Manufacturing Facilities: checkbook-level, downloadable, projected public benefits and recouped funds.
- Strategic Investment Program: checkbook-level, downloadable, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.

## **Pennsylvania**

- Film Tax Credit: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Job Creation Tax Credit: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Keystone Innovation Zone Tax Credits: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Keystone Opportunity Zone Program: no credit.
- Pennsylvania First Grant: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.

## **Rhode Island**

- Corporate Income Tax Rate Reduction (aka Jobs Development Act/Corporate Income Tax Reductions): no credit.
- Enterprise Zone Tax Credits (aka Distressed Areas Economic Revitalization Act—Enterprise Zones): no credit.
- Job Training Tax Credits: no credit.
- Manufacturing and High Performance Manufacturing Investment Tax Credits: no credit.
- Motion Picture Tax Credits: no credit.

## **South Carolina**

- Economic Impact Zone Investment Credit: no credit.
- Governor's Closing Fund: no credit.
- Job Development Credits: no credit.
- Job Tax Credit: no credit.
- readySC Training: no credit.

### **South Dakota**

- Agricultural Processing and Export Loan Program (APEX): checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Jobs Grant Program: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Revolving Economic Development and Initiative (REDI) Fund: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- SD Works: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Workforce Development Program: checkbook-level.

### **Tennessee**

- FastTrack programs: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Headquarters Tax Credit: no credit.
- Jobs Tax Credit: no credit.
- Tennessee Job Skills: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.

### **Texas**

- Film Tax Credits: no credit.
- Skills Development Fund: no credit.
- Texas Economic Development Act (Ch. 313): checkbook-level, downloadable, projected public benefits, actual public benefits and recouped funds.
- Texas Emerging Technology Fund: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Texas Enterprise Fund: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and recouped funds.

### **Utah**

- Economic Development Tax Increment Financing: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Economic Opportunity Incentive: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Enterprise Zone Program: no credit.
- Life Science and Technology Investment Tax Credits: no credit.
- Motion Picture Incentive Fund: no credit.

### **Vermont**

- Economic Development Authority Loans: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Vermont Employment Growth Incentive (VEGI): checkbook-level and downloadable.
- Vermont Training Program: checkbook-level and actual public benefits.
- Workforce Education & Training Fund: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.

### **Virginia**

- Enterprise Zone Real Property Investment Grant: projected public benefits.
- Governor's Opportunity Fund: checkbook-level, projected public benefits, actual public benefits and recouped funds.
- Major Business Facility Job Tax Credit: no credit.
- Special Performance: checkbook-level.
- Virginia Investment Partnership and Major Eligible Employer: checkbook-level, downloadable, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.

**Washington**

- Aerospace Manufacturer Preferential Tax Rate: actual public benefits.
- Aerospace Non-Manufacturing Tax Incentive: actual public benefits.
- High Technology Research and Development B&O Tax Credit: checkbook-level and downloadable.
- High Technology Sales and Use Tax Deferral: checkbook-level and downloadable
- Data Center Sales and Use Tax Exemption: actual public benefits.

**West Virginia**

- Economic Opportunity Tax Credit: no credit.
- Film Industry Investment Act: no credit.
- Governor's Guaranteed Work Force Program: checkbook-level, downloadable, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit: no credit.
- Strategic Research and Development Tax Credit: no credit.

**Wisconsin**

- Business Retention and Expansion Investment: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Economic Development Tax Credit Program: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Enterprise Zone Jobs Tax Credit: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Jobs Tax Credit: checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.
- Transportation Economic Assistance (aka Transportation Facilities Economic Assistance and Development Program/TEA): checkbook-level, projected public benefits and actual public benefits.

**Wyoming**

- Business Ready Communities Grants: checkbook-level, projected public benefits, actual public benefits and recouped funds.
- Business Ready Communities Managed Data Center Cost Reduction Grants: checkbook-level and projected public benefits.
- Data Center Sales Tax Exemption: no credit.
- Film Industry Financial Incentive: checkbook-level.
- Pre-hire Workforce Training Grant: no credit.

# Appendix B: Transparency Scorecard

State	Grade	Point Total	Contracts and Expenditures					
			Checkbook-Level	Search by Recipient	Search by Keyword	Search by Agency	Bulk Downloadable	Quasi-Public Agencies
<b>Total Possible</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>
Indiana	A-	94	24	8	8	8	6	4
Oregon	A-	93.5	24	8	8	8	6	4
Florida	A-	92.5	24	8	8	8	6	4
Texas	A-	91	24	8	8	8	6	4
Massachusetts	A-	90.5	24	8	8	8	6	4
Iowa	A-	90	24	8	8	8	6	4
Vermont	A-	90	24	8	8	8	6	4
Wisconsin	A-	90	24	8	8	8	6	4
South Dakota	B+	89.5	24	8	8	8	6	4
North Carolina	B+	88.5	24	8	8	8	3	4
Illinois	B+	88	24	8	8	8	6	4
Louisiana	B+	88	24	8	8	8	6	4
New York	B+	88	24	8	8	8	6	4
Virginia	B+	87	24	8	8	8	6	4
Michigan	B	86.5	24	8	8	8	3	4
Colorado	B	86	24	4	8	8	3	4
Montana	B	86	24	8	8	8	6	4
Washington	B	85	24	8	8	8	6	4
Arizona	B	84	24	8	8	8	6	4
Connecticut	B	83	24	8	8	8	6	0
Kentucky	B	83	24	8	8	8	3	4
Tennessee	B	83	24	8	8	8	6	4
Maryland	B-	82.5	24	8	0	8	6	4
Pennsylvania	B-	82.5	24	8	8	8	0	4
Nebraska	B-	82	24	8	8	8	6	4
Oklahoma	B-	82	24	8	8	8	6	4
Utah	B-	82	24	8	8	8	6	4
Arkansas	B-	82	24	8	8	8	6	4
Mississippi	C+	79	24	8	8	8	6	4
New Jersey	C+	79	24	8	8	8	6	0
New Mexico	C+	77	24	8	8	8	6	4
Maine	C+	76	24	8	8	8	6	4
Missouri	C+	75	24	8	8	8	6	0
New Hampshire	C+	75	24	8	8	8	6	4
Georgia	C	74	24	8	8	8	3	4
West Virginia	C	72	24	8	8	8	3	4
Hawaii	C	71	24	8	8	8	6	4
Wyoming	C-	68	24	8	8	8	0	4
Minnesota	D+	64	24	8	8	8	3	4
Delaware	D+	63	24	8	8	8	0	4
South Carolina	D+	63	24	8	0	8	6	4
Rhode Island	D+	62	24	8	8	8	3	0
North Dakota	D	56	24	8	8	8	0	4
Alabama	D	55	24	8	8	8	3	4
Nevada	D-	52	24	8	8	8	0	4
Ohio	D-	51	24	0	0	0	0	0
Kansas	D-	50	24	8	0	8	0	4
Idaho	F	44	24	0	0	8	3	0
Alaska	F	43	24	0	0	0	6	0
California	F	34	24	0	0	0	6	4

Excluded Information	Economic Development Subsidies				Tax Expenditure Reports	Extra Credit: Recouped Funds	Website URL
	Checkbook-Level	Downloadable	Projected Public Benefits	Actual Public Benefits			
4	15	4	4	4	9	4	
4	14	3	3	0	9	3	www.in.gov/itp
4	12	3	3.5	3	9	1	www.oregon.gov/transparency
4	14	0	3	3.5	9	1	www.myfloridacfo.com/transparency
4	12	1	3	2	9	2	texasransparency.org
4	14	3.5	2	0	9	0	www.mass.gov/informedma
4	12	2	2	2	9	1	data.iowa.gov
4	15	1	2	1	9	0	spotlight.vermont.gov
2	15	0	4	4	7	0	openbook.wi.gov
4	15	0	3.5	0	9	0	open.sd.gov
2	15	0	2	3.5	9	2	www.ncopenbook.gov
0	14	0	3.5	3.5	9	0	accountability.illinois.gov
0	14	3.5	3.5	0	9	0	wwwprd.doa.louisiana.gov/latrac
4	12	1	2	2	9	0	www.openbooknewyork.com
2	12	1	3	2	8	1	datapoint.apa.virginia.gov
0	15	0	4	3.5	9	0	www.michigan.gov/openmichigan
4	15	4	2	1	9	0	tops.state.co.us
4	12	0	2	1	9	0	transparency.mt.gov
4	9	2	0	3	9	0	fiscal.wa.gov
4	9	2	1	1	9	0	openbooks.az.gov
2	12	3	0	3	9	0	www.osc.ct.gov/openct
2	12	0	3	1	9	1	opendoor.ky.gov
4	9	0	2	1	9	0	www.tn.gov/opengov
4	12	2	1	3.5	9	1	spending.dbm.maryland.gov
4	14	0	3.5	0	9	0	www.pennwatch.pa.gov
2	9	1	3	0	9	0	nebraskaspending.gov
2	11	2	0	0	9	0	data.ok.gov
4	9	0	2	0	9	0	utah.gov/transparency
4	9	2	0	0	9	0	transparency.arkansas.gov
2	5	1	2	1	9	1	www.transparency.mississippi.gov
0	12	0	3	1	9	0	yourmoney.nj.gov
4	5	0	1	0	9	0	www.sunshineportalnm.com
4	5	0	0	0	9	0	opencheckbook.maine.go
2	12	3	2	2	0	0	mapyourtaxes.mo.gov/map
2	5	0	1	0	9	0	www.nh.gov/transparentnh
4	5	0	1	0	9	0	www.open.georgia.gov
0	5	1	1	1	9	0	transparencywv.org
4	0	0	0	0	9	0	transparency.hawaii.gov
0	12	0	2	1	0	1	www.wyoming.gov/transparency.html
0	0	0	0	0	9	0	www.mmb.state.mn.us/tap
4	0	0	0	0	7	0	www.delaware.gov/topics/transparency
4	0	0	0	0	9	0	www.cg.sc.gov/fiscaltransparency
2	0	0	0	0	9	0	www.transparency.ri.gov
4	0	0	0	0	0	0	data.share.nd.gov/pr
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	open.alabama.gov
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	open.nv.gov
4	9	2	2	1	9	0	www.ohio.gov/government/transparency
0	0	0	0	0	6	0	kanview.ks.gov
0	0	0	0	0	9	0	transparent.idaho.gov
4	0	0	0	0	9	0	doa.alaska.gov/dof/reports/transparency.html
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	www.dgs.ca.gov

# Appendix C: List of Questions Posed to Transparency Website Officials

U.S. PIRG Education Fund researchers sent a list of questions and an initial assessment of each state's transparency website to the officials responsible for their state's site and received responses from such officials in 45 states (all except Alabama, California, Illinois, New Mexico and Texas). Our researchers used the response to ensure that the information gathered from the websites was up-to-date and to supplement the content of the report. Below is a list of questions posed to state officials:

1. The attached spreadsheet lists each item for which your transparency website could have received credit, followed by either a **Y** (yes), **N** (no), or **P** (partially) indicating whether we found that feature on the site. If you believe that our scoring gives less credit than appropriate, **please explain to us exactly how to find the feature so we can confirm it is on the website.** If you believe that our scoring gives more credit than appropriate, please also let us know. If you are able to update the website by February 14 to include a transparency feature currently missing or incomplete, please notify us and we will do our best to incorporate the update into this year's report.
2. Please identify specific efficiency gains or cost savings resulting from the transparency website. For instance, some states have identified savings from reduced information requests, consolidated procurement, enlarged contracting pools, or recognition of redundancies. If possible, please include an estimate of the dollar value of these savings. Other anecdotes will also help us describe the gains from your transparency efforts.
3. Our prior research shows the start-up cost of the website to be \$[dollar amount] and the annual operating cost to be \$[dollar amount]. Please let us know if there is more updated information. Have upgrades to the website over the past year changed the cost?<sup>59</sup>
4. Has your state created innovative features that track government finances or interface spending data with other information, but are not part of our inventory? We would like the text in our report to bring attention to innovative features, even when they do not affect the summary score.
5. Please tell us about any special challenges with implementing best practices in your state, such as jurisdictional, technological or legal issues.<sup>60</sup>

## Appendix D: Agencies or Departments Responsible for Administering Transparency Websites by State

State	Who Is Responsible for the Transparency Website?	Transparency Website Address
Alabama	State Comptroller's Office, Department of Finance	<a href="http://open.alabama.gov">open.alabama.gov</a>
Alaska	Division of Finance, Department of Administration	<a href="http://doa.alaska.gov/dof/reports/transparency.html">doa.alaska.gov/dof/reports/transparency.html</a>
Arizona	General Accounting Office, Department of Administration	<a href="http://openbooks.az.gov">openbooks.az.gov</a>
Arkansas	Department of Finance and Administration	<a href="http://transparency.arkansas.gov">transparency.arkansas.gov</a>
California	Department of General Services	<a href="http://www.dgs.ca.gov">www.dgs.ca.gov</a>
Colorado	Office of the State Controller, Department of Personnel and Administration	<a href="http://tops.state.co.us">tops.state.co.us</a>
Connecticut	General Assembly's Office of Fiscal Analysis	<a href="http://www.osc.ct.gov/openct">www.osc.ct.gov/openct</a>
Delaware	Cooperation between Office of Management and Budget, Government Information Center, and Department of Finance	<a href="http://www.delaware.gov/topics/transparency">www.delaware.gov/topics/transparency</a>
Florida	Department of Financial Services	<a href="http://www.myfloridacfo.com/transparency">www.myfloridacfo.com/transparency</a>
Georgia	Department of Audits and Accounts	<a href="http://open.georgia.gov">open.georgia.gov</a>
Hawaii	State Procurement Office, Department of Accounting and General Services	<a href="http://transparency.hawaii.gov">transparency.hawaii.gov</a>
Idaho	Office of the State Controller	<a href="http://transparent.idaho.gov">transparent.idaho.gov</a>
Illinois	Office of the Comptroller, Department of Central Management Services	<a href="http://accountability.illinois.gov">accountability.illinois.gov</a>
Indiana	State Auditor's Office	<a href="http://www.in.gov/itp">www.in.gov/itp</a>
Iowa	Department of Management	<a href="http://data.iowa.gov">data.iowa.gov</a>
Kansas	Department of Administration	<a href="http://kanview.ks.gov">kanview.ks.gov</a>
Kentucky	Governor's Office: E-Transparency Task Force, a multi-agency effort led by officials of the Finance and Administration Cabinet	<a href="http://opendoor.ky.gov">opendoor.ky.gov</a>
Louisiana	Division of Administration	<a href="http://wwwprd.doa.louisiana.gov/latrac">wwwprd.doa.louisiana.gov/latrac</a>
Maine	Office of the State Controller	<a href="http://opencheckbook.maine.gov">opencheckbook.maine.gov</a>
Maryland	Department of Budget and Management	<a href="http://spending.dbm.maryland.gov">spending.dbm.maryland.gov</a>

State	Who Is Responsible for the Transparency Website?	Transparency Website Address
Massachusetts	Executive Office for Administration and Finance	<a href="http://www.mass.gov/informedma">www.mass.gov/informedma</a>
Michigan	Office of Financial Management, State Budget Office, Department of Technology, Management and Budget	<a href="http://www.michigan.gov/openmichigan">www.michigan.gov/openmichigan</a>
Minnesota	Minnesota Management and Budget	<a href="http://www.mmb.state.mn.us/tap">www.mmb.state.mn.us/tap</a>
Mississippi	Department of Finance and Administration	<a href="http://www.transparency.mississippi.gov">www.transparency.mississippi.gov</a>
Missouri	Office of Administration	<a href="http://mapyourtaxes.mo.gov/map">mapyourtaxes.mo.gov/map</a>
Montana	Department of Administration	<a href="http://transparency.mt.gov">transparency.mt.gov</a>
Nebraska	State Treasurer's Office	<a href="http://nebraskaspending.gov">nebraskaspending.gov</a>
Nevada	Budget and Planning Division, Department of Administration	<a href="http://open.nv.gov">open.nv.gov</a>
New Hampshire	Department of Administrative Services and the Department of Information Technology	<a href="http://www.nh.gov/transparentnh">www.nh.gov/transparentnh</a>
New Jersey	Office of the Treasurer	<a href="http://yourmoney.nj.gov">yourmoney.nj.gov</a>
New Mexico	Department of Information Technology	<a href="http://sunshineportalnm.com">sunshineportalnm.com</a>
New York	Office of the State Comptroller	<a href="http://www.openbooknewyork.com">www.openbooknewyork.com</a>
North Carolina	Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM) with substantial help from the Department of Administration (DOA), the Office of the State Controller (OSC), and the Office of Information Technology Services (ITS)	<a href="http://www.ncopenbook.gov">www.ncopenbook.gov</a>
North Dakota	Office of Budget and Management	<a href="http://data.share.nd.gov/pr">data.share.nd.gov/pr</a>
Ohio	Department of Administrative Services	<a href="http://www.ohio.gov/government/transparency">www.ohio.gov/government/transparency</a>
Oklahoma	Office of State Finance	<a href="http://data.ok.gov">data.ok.gov</a>
Oregon	Enterprise Information Strategy and Policy Division, Department of Administrative Services	<a href="http://www.oregon.gov/transparency">www.oregon.gov/transparency</a>
Pennsylvania	Office of Administration	<a href="http://www.pennwatch.pa.gov">www.pennwatch.pa.gov</a>
Rhode Island	Office of Digital Excellence	<a href="http://www.transparency.ri.gov">www.transparency.ri.gov</a>
South Carolina	Comptroller General's Office	<a href="http://www.cg.sc.gov/fiscaltransparency">www.cg.sc.gov/fiscaltransparency</a>
South Dakota	Bureau of Finance and Management	<a href="http://open.sd.gov">open.sd.gov</a>
Tennessee	Department of Finance and Administration	<a href="http://www.tn.gov/opengov">www.tn.gov/opengov</a>
Texas	Comptroller of Public Accounts' Office	<a href="http://www.texasransparency.org">www.texasransparency.org</a>
Utah	Division of Finance, Department of Administrative Services	<a href="http://www.utah.gov/transparency">www.utah.gov/transparency</a>
Vermont	Department of Finance and Management	<a href="http://spotlight.vermont.gov">spotlight.vermont.gov</a>
Virginia	Auditor of Public Accounts	<a href="http://datapoint.apa.virginia.gov">datapoint.apa.virginia.gov</a>
Washington	Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program and the Office of Financial Management	<a href="http://fiscal.wa.gov">fiscal.wa.gov</a>
West Virginia	State Auditor's Office	<a href="http://transparencywv.org">transparencywv.org</a>
Wisconsin	Department of Administration	<a href="http://openbook.wi.gov">openbook.wi.gov</a>
Wyoming	Department of Administration and Information	<a href="http://www.wyoming.gov/transparency.html">www.wyoming.gov/transparency.html</a>



## Notes

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- 2 Beth Hallmark, Office of the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, personal communication, 11 February 2011.
- 3 Ramesh Advani, Massachusetts Executive Office for Administration and Finance, personal communication, 11 February 2011.
- 4 Christina Smith, Florida Department of Financial Services, personal communication, 14 February 2014; Rick Sweet, Florida Department of Financial Services, personal communication, 10 March 2014.
- 5 Tracy Loew, “States Put Spending Details Online; Public Can Check Where Their Taxes Go,” *USA Today*, 23 February 2009.
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- 8 Brenda Lee, Utah State Division of Finance, personal communication, 27 January 2012.
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- 14 Greg Haskamp, Kentucky Office of Policy and Audit, personal communication, 1 February 2011.
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21 For more information on New York City's open source code, see Benjamin Davis, Frontier Group, and Phineas Baxandall and Ryan Pierannunzi, U.S. PIRG Education Fund, *Transparency in City Spending: Rating the Availability of Online Government Data in America's Largest Cities*, January 2013.

22 Note: Researchers could not ascertain the costs for some states. Alabama: Mike Hudson, Office of the Alabama State Comptroller, personal communication, 27 January 2012; Alaska: Scot Arehart, Alaska Division of Finance, personal communication, 26 January 2012; Arizona: Jennifer Verhelst, Arizona Department of Administration, personal communication, 14 February 2014; Arkansas: Paul Louthian, Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration, personal communication, 1 February 2013; California: (cost of website, [www.transparency.ca.gov](http://www.transparency.ca.gov), which has been dismantled) Office of the Governor, State of California, *Gov. Schwarzenegger Expands*

*Transparency Web Site Creating Greater Accountability to the People* (press release), 8 September 2009; Colorado: David McDermott, Colorado State Controller, personal communication, 31 January 2012; Connecticut: Jacqueline Kozin, Connecticut Office of the State Comptroller, personal communication, 7 February 2013; Delaware: Mike Mahaffie, Delaware Government Information Center, personal communication, 27 January 2012; Florida: \$233,504 is for fiscal year 2012-2013, Christina Smith, Florida Department of Financial Services, personal communications, 26 January 2012 and 14 February 2014; Georgia: Lynn Bolton, Georgia Department of Audits, personal communication, 31 January 2012; Hawaii: Luis Salaveria, Hawaii Department of Budget and Finance, personal communication, 10 February 2014; Idaho: Scott Phillips, Office of the Idaho State Controller, personal communication, 8 February 2013; Illinois: Karl Thorpe, Illinois Department of Central Management Services, personal communication 22 February 2013; Iowa: Scott Vander Hart, Iowa Department of Management, personal communication, 19 February 2014; Kansas: Martin Eckhardt, Kansas Office of Management Analysis and Standards, personal communication, 25 January 2012; Kentucky: Greg Haskamp, Kentucky Office of Policy and Audit, personal communications, 24 January 2012 and 8 February 2013; Louisiana: Steven Procopio, Louisiana Division of Administration, personal communication, 3 February 2012; Maine: Douglas Cotnoir, Deputy State Controller, Office of the State Controller, personal communication, 4 February 2013; Maryland: Robin Sabatini, Maryland Department of Budget and Management, personal communication, 31 January 2012; Massachusetts: Ramesh H. Advani, Massachusetts Executive Office for Administration and Finance, personal communications, 26 January 2012, 23 February 2012, and 8 February 2013; Michigan: Paul McDonald, Michigan Office of Financial Management, personal communication, 24 January 2012 and 13 February 2013; Minnesota: Joel Ludwigson, Minnesota Management and Budget, personal com-

munication, 30 January 2012; Mississippi: Cille Litchfield, Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration, personal communications, 26 January and 21 February 2012, and Jenny Bearss, Department of Finance and Administration, personal communication, 14 February 2014; Missouri: Tim Robyn, Missouri Office of Administration, personal communications, 26 January 2012, 7 February 2013, and 17 February 2014; Montana: Sheryl Olson, Montana Department of Administration, personal communication, 7 February 2013; Nebraska: Jason Walters, Nebraska State Treasurer's Office, personal communications, 27 January 2012, 8 February 2013 and 14 February 2014; Nevada: Lesley Henrie, Nevada Department of Administration, personal communication, 6 February 2012; New Hampshire: Robert Beaulac, New Hampshire Department of Administrative Services, personal communication, 8 February 2013; New Jersey: Jennifer D'Autrechy, New Jersey Office of the Treasurer, personal communications, 20 February 2013 and 18 February 2014; New Mexico: Estevan Lujan, New Mexico Department of Information Technology, personal communication, 30 January 2012; New York: Nick Ladopoulos, New York Office of the State Comptroller, personal communication, 27 January 2012; North Carolina: Jonathan Womer, North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management, personal communication, 27 January 2012; North Dakota: Toby Mertz, North Dakota Office of Management and Budget, personal communication, 19 January 2012; Ohio: Chris Wilkin, Ohio Department of Administrative Services, personal communication, 27 January 2012; Oklahoma: Center for Fiscal Accountability, *Transparency in Government Spending: Cost vs. Savings*, downloaded from [www.fiscalaccountability.org/userfiles/cost&savings.pdf](http://www.fiscalaccountability.org/userfiles/cost&savings.pdf), 16 February 2012 and Dan Ross, Office of Management & Enterprise Services, personal communication, 14 February 2014; Oregon: Sean L. McSpaden, Oregon Enterprise Information Strategy and Policy Division, personal communication, 25 January 2012; Pennsylvania: Dan Egan, Pennsylvania Office of

Administration, personal communication, 14 February 2014; Rhode Island: Treasury Online Checkbook, State of Rhode Island, *Frequently Asked Questions*, downloaded from [www.treasury.ri.gov/opengov/faq.php](http://www.treasury.ri.gov/opengov/faq.php), 14 September 2009; South Carolina: James Holly, South Carolina Comptroller General's Office, personal communication, 3 February 2012; South Dakota: Colin Keeler, South Dakota Bureau of Finance and Management, personal communication, 24 January 2012; Tennessee: Lola Potter, Tennessee Department of Finance and Administration, personal communication, 3 February 2012, and Jan Sylvis, Tennessee Department of Finance, personal communication, 14 February 2014; Texas: Beth Hallmark, Office of the Texas State Comptroller, personal communication, 27 January 2012; Utah: John C. Reidhead, Utah State Department of Administrative Services, *Letter to Derek Monson, Sutherland Institute*, 29 January 2009, and Brenda Lee, Utah Department of Finance, personal communications, 27 January 2012, 8 February 2013, and 14 February 2014; Vermont: Susan Zeller, Vermont Department of Finance and Management, personal communication, 5 February 2013; Virginia: April Gunn, Office of the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, personal communication, 7 February 2013; Washington: Jerry Brito and Gabriel Okolski, Mercatus Center, George Mason University, *The Cost of State Online Spending-Transparency Initiatives*, April 2009, and Michael Mann, Washington State Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program Committee, personal communication, 8 February 2013; Wisconsin: Stephanie Marquis, Wisconsin Department of Administration, personal communication, 12 February 2014; Wyoming: Joyce Hefenieder, Wyoming Department of Administration and Information, personal communication, 27 January 2012.

23 The cost listed is part of a larger information technology upgrade.

24 The cost listed includes the cost to expand and update the state's previous information technology system (MERLIN,

established in 1995), the product of which was the current transparency website, [www.transparency.mississippi.gov](http://www.transparency.mississippi.gov).

25 The cost listed includes operation of the state's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) website.

26 Vermont's new searchable checkbook tool costs \$5,000/year for two years; Sue Zeller, Agency of Administration, personal communication, 14 February 2014.

27 Nick Ladopoulos, New York Office of the State Comptroller, personal communication, 11 February 2014.

28 See note 17.

29 Numbers reported are averages. Jenny Bearss, Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration, personal communications, 14 February 2014 and 14 March 2014. "16,000 hits per month in 2013" measures the hits per month from July-December. The Department of Finance and Management did not track the hits from January-June 2013.

30 Michael Mann, Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program, personal communication, 14 February 2014.

31 Harris Interactive, *AGA 2009 Tracking Survey: Perceptions of Governmental Financial Management*, 29 December 2009 (prepared for the Association of Government Accountants).

32 See, e.g., Stephen Goldsmith and William D. Eggers, "Government for Hire," *New York Times*, 21 February 2005.

33 In 2002 a University of Iowa study estimated a total of \$40 to \$50 billion in state investment subsidies were distributed, a figure that has surely grown with the increasing use of these incentives. See Alan Peters and Peter Fisher, "The Failures of Economic Development Incentives," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 70(1): 28, 2004; Massachusetts' economic

development tax expenditures, for example, cost the state nearly \$1.5 billion a year: Bruce Mohl, "Subsidizing the Stars," *CommonWealth*, Spring 2008. During its decades of expansion, Wal-Mart alone has received over \$1 billion in state and local subsidies: Barnaby Feder, "Wal-Mart's Expansion Aided by Many Taxpayer Subsidies," *New York Times*, 24 May 2004.

34 For a detailed description of states' disclosure on economic development incentives, not limited to those listed on states' transparency portals, see: Philip Mattered, Thomas Cafcas, Leigh McIlvaine, Kasia Tarczynska, Elizabeth Bird and Greg LeRoy, Good Jobs First, *Show Us the Subsidized Jobs: An Evaluation of State Government Online Disclosure of Economic Development Subsidy Awards and Outcomes*, January 2014.

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39 Montana Department of Commerce, *Business Resources Division Project Information*, downloaded from [svc.mt.gov/doc/publicreporting](http://svc.mt.gov/doc/publicreporting), 27 January 2014.

- 40 OPEN SD, *Tax Expenditures*, downloaded from open.sd.gov, 27 January 2014.
- 41 Vermont Agency of Administration, Department of Finance & Management, *Vendor Payments*, downloaded from spotlight.vermont.gov/expenditures/vendors, 27 January 2014.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Department of Finance and Management, *Statewide VISION Financial System Usage for Transactions by Components Units, Enterprise Funds and Fiscal Agent Management Funds*, downloaded from spotlight.vermont.gov, 2 March 2014.
- 44 OpenBook Wisconsin, *Expenditures*, downloaded from openbook.wi.gov/expenditures.aspx, 27 January 2014; Openbook Wisconsin, *Common Questions*, downloaded from openbook.wi.gov/CommonQuestions.aspx, 27 January 2014.
- 45 While 27 states provided checkbook-level information on subsidies in 2010, one of the 27 states—South Dakota—did not also provide checkbook-level information on general spending.
- 46 Philip Mattera, et al., *Good Jobs First, Show Us the Subsidized Jobs: An Evaluation of State Government Online Disclosure of Economic Development Subsidy Awards and Outcomes*, January 2014.
- 47 In a few cases, it is possible that the grades of states that made no improvements to their websites increased because the sites already included the criteria weighted more heavily this year.
- 48 Colorado’s “Search by Recipient” function has limited searchability. Users can search for the first and second letter of the recipient’s name.
- 49 Eleven out of 20 Advancing States provide information on the value of subsidies received by companies in a form that can be downloaded for offline analysis.
- 50 National Conference of State Legislatures, *State and Legislative Partisan Composition*, downloaded from www.ncsl.org/documents/statevote/legiscontrol\_2014.pdf, 19 February 2014.
- 51 Ibid. The five states with mixed party legislatures were not included in either average. In addition, Nebraska, which has a unicameral, nonpartisan legislature, was not included in the average calculations.
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- 55 Open SD, *About State Financial Information*, downloaded from open.sd.gov, 28 January 2014.
- 56 See note 46.
- 57 Kari Wohlschlegel, Frontier Group, and Phineas Baxandall, U.S. PIRG Education Fund, *Following the Money: How the 50 States Rate in Providing Online Access to Government Spending Data*, April 2010.
- 58 See note 46.
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- 60 In certain instances we added additional features or comments specific to individual states. For example, we asked Utah officials why they charged users one dollar to download the entire checkbook dataset.





