

Citizen-Centric Reporting

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AGA's Citizen-Centric Reporting Initiative

New Reports Make it Easier for Citizens to Follow Their Government's Finances

Many governments struggle to communicate the business of government to residents, particularly when presenting information about how taxpayers' money is allocated and spent. Traditionally, financial information has been presented in forms accessible only to trained accountants — reams of information, which, though vital, have little meaning for the average person.

AGA's Citizen-Centric Government Reporting Initiative is intended to foster innovative means of communication between governments and their citizenry. AGA believes that government financial information should be provided to citizens in forms that are clear and understandable, updated regularly and often, delivered to all, easy to locate, honest in breadth and technically accurate in detail. In fact, as the owners of government, citizens have a right to this information.

AGA citizen-centric based reports detail government finances in a visually appealing, clear and understandable four-page document. The suggested format shows community information—such as population figures, regional characteristics and government goals for the community—on the first page, and the second page presents a performance report on key missions and service. The third page details cost and revenue information, and the fourth looks forward to the year ahead.

AGA believes that these reports will make governments more accountable to their citizens, and will help Americans become better educated and better able to participate in government activities.

In 2008, [AGA surveyed](#) the public on the effectiveness of government fiscal reporting. Eighty-nine percent said that, as taxpayers, they are entitled to transparent financial management information, and 57 percent said that government has an obligation to provide it. They further indicated that government is failing to meet its financial management reporting needs, and that poor performance has created a problem of trust between residents and their governments. The survey showed that governments need new innovative means of communication to overcome those challenges.

AGA's citizen-centric reports are designed to help remedy this. The program is an easily adoptable reporting option for all governments, including [guidelines for content](#), a [design template](#) and [completed reports](#).

The AGA Citizen-Centric Government Reporting Initiative is steadily expanding. The U.S. Departments of the Interior and Defense as well as the U.S. Coast Guard have produced reports at the federal level. The states of Oregon, Nevada, South Carolina, Tennessee and Washington as well as cities and counties such as Saco, ME, Tallahassee, FL, Portland, OR, and Blount County, TN, have produced Citizen-Centric Reports to the benefit of their citizens. Many others are in the works.

We encourage you to take the initiative to work with your government employer or with the city, town or state where you live and persuade them to produce a similar report. AGA is ready and waiting to help with free consulting advice, a template and other tools to help you accomplish this goal. Please visit www.agacgfm.org/citizen/construct.aspx or call [Susan Fritzlen](#) at 800.AGA.7211 for more details.

"Thank you AGA for developing these tools to help governments be accountable to the citizens they serve! Keep up the good work."

Christa Brooks,
Special Projects Coordinator,
Division of Administration
Missouri Department of Health
& Senior Services

"We know that governments have a reputation for being good at collecting taxes but not necessarily as good at being accountable for how those tax dollars are spent, Saco wants to change that. This report has both the good and the bad. And while I'm glad to say there's more 'good' to report in Saco these days, this report is chock full of challenges coming down the pike. We're hoping to inform a thoughtful debate on these issues."

Mayor Mark Johnston
City of Saco, Maine