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GREAT budget analysis tool now available online for local officials

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Madison, Wis.--Local officials entering the budget season will now have online information about revenue and expense trends in Wisconsin communities at their fingertips.

The Graphing Revenues, Expenditures, and Taxes (GREAT) program automatically displays revenue and expense information for individual counties, cities, villages and towns in simple graphs using statewide databases from 1987-2011.

The online program, available at http://www.apl.wisc.edu/great/, replaces an earlier version that was available only on CD. In the new program, officials can access a series of templates developed for use by every unit of local government in the state based on the most current data available (2011).

GREAT lets local governments track revenue and expenditures such as law enforcement, highway maintenance and debt service, and compare them to other communities’ expenses. UW-Extension county educators, graduate students, academics and other professionals also use the program in their work.

A simple drop-down menu provides access to information that offers a unique look at budget activity in a community over time. This information can be used to initiate county board and council discussions based on actual data.

GREAT is a joint effort of the UW-Extension Local Government Center, the UW-Madison Dept. of Agricultural and Applied Economics, UW-Madison Applied Population Laboratory, the UW-Oshkosh Dept. of Public Administration, and Northern Illinois University.

For more information about the GREAT program, visit: http://lgc.uwex.edu

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