

Best Practices Worksheet CY 2013/SFY2014

		Summit City (Union)	
2018		<i>Please see Color Key at bottom of sheet for limits on answers</i>	
Answer		Question	Comments
General Management - GM			
1	Yes	Sharing services has been promoted for many years as a means to control costs. In addition to sharing resources such as labor, facilities and equipment with a county or with neighboring communities, shared services include similar agreements with school boards, independent authorities and fire districts. Shared services do not include cooperative purchasing, cooperative pricing or commodity resale agreements. Did your municipality actively negotiate (i.e. meet with representatives from a neighboring town, your county or another local unit) and/or enter into at least one new shared service agreement in the preceding year?	
2	Yes	Has your municipality reviewed its policies and staffing requirements for providing traffic safety around utility and construction work, and implemented policies to assure that the most efficient and cost-effective approach is taken? Traffic safety policies for utility and construction work should balance the interests of public safety with those of controlling costs. For example, uniformed police officers controlling a cul-de-sac may be excessive; while parking a policeman in a patrol car on a major highway to act in lieu of a "crash truck" may be insufficient and could endanger the officer. An appropriate traffic safety plan should include parameters governing when police officers, flag men and safety apparatus are used in different circumstances.	
3	Yes	Has your municipality adopted a vehicle use policy prohibiting personal use of municipal vehicles, and providing that employees authorized to use such vehicles for commuting to/from work have a fringe benefit value added to the gross income reported on the employee's W-2 (unless the vehicle meets the "qualified non-personal vehicle" criteria specified by the IRS)?	Our policy prohibits personal use; however, one employee who is not a public safety officer does not have fringe benefit value added to gross income.
4	Yes	Has the appropriate administrative official reviewed the <u>State Comptroller's June 25, 2013 Report</u> with respect to local government legal fees, and does your municipality follow the best practices outlined in the checklist annexed as an Appendix to the report?	

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5	No	Municipalities and their agencies are allowed to prohibit the award of public contracts to business entities that have made certain campaign contributions exceeding \$300 and to limit the contributions that the holders of a contract can make during the term of a contract to \$300. A model ordinance concerning pay-to-play can be found at http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dlgs/resources/muni_st_docs/pay_to_play_ordinance-contractor.doc . Has your municipality adopted a pay-to-play ordinance pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:11-51 that is more restrictive than state statutory requirements?	Adopted State's version
6	Yes	Does your municipality maintain an up-to-date municipal website containing at minimum the following: past three years adopted budgets; the current year's proposed budget including the full adopted budget for current year when approved by governing body; most recent annual financial statement and audits; notification(s) for solicitation of bids and RFPs; easily accessible contact information for elected and appointed officials, municipal administrator or manager, municipal clerk, police chief, municipal court administrator and all department heads; and meeting dates, minutes and agendas for the governing body, planning board, board of adjustment and all commissions?	
7	Yes	Does your municipality require its elected officials to attend on an annual basis at least one instructional course, approved for continuing education credit by DLGS, covering the responsibilities and obligations of elected officials (for example: ethics, municipal finance, labor relations, risk management, shared services, purchasing, land use administration, personnel, technology etcetera)? This item may also be satisfied through in-house education provided by a professional, vendor or staff member provided they have significant expertise in their profession and routinely prepare public presentations.	Public Officials required to attend classes through our Joint Insurance Fund (covers Labor Relations and Ethics, among other topics)
8	Yes	Are ordinances codified on an annual basis, with both the code and any uncodified ordinances (including salary ordinances) made available online?	

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9	Yes	With regard to your municipality's collective bargaining agreements that replaced contracts expiring on or after 1/1/11, is the overall impact of the aggregate economic costs limited to an average increase of 2% or less per year over the contract term? An example of such analysis can be found on the " <u>PERC Summary Form; Public Sector; Non-Police and Non-Fire; Section V Impact of Settlement</u> " and " <u>PERC Summary Form; Police and Fire; Section VII Impact of Settlement</u> "	PERC forms to be submitted
Financial Standards & Procurement - FS			
10	Yes	Internal accounting control processes, procedures and authorizations are designed to safeguard assets and to limit the risk of loss or misstatement. Does your CFO evaluate and discuss this risk assessment annually with your governing body or an appropriate subcommittee of the governing body (such as the Audit or Finance Committee) with a focus on developing accounting control processes, procedures and authorizations <u>designed to limit the risk of loss or misstatement?</u>	Discussed with auditor
11	No	An accounting policy manual documenting all internal accounting control processes, procedures and authorizations is of great value for staff to understand these safeguards. Are internal accounting control processes, procedures and authorizations documented and communicated to staff?	

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12	Yes	With respect to note sales, proper disclosure and communication with potential bidders can yield optimal results for a municipality. Knowing when to sell on a negotiated or competitive basis, aggregating note sales as much as possible, along with casting a "wide net" to attract the maximum number of bidders for a competitive note sale, is critical to achieving the lowest possible interest rate. Is your municipality doing all of the following: 1) comparing any negotiated proposals with actual market data to assess whether a competitive sale is more optimal; 2) marketing note sales beyond publishing the notice required by N.J.S.A. 40A:2-30 and beyond displaying a notice on your municipal website; 3) consolidating note sales to a single sale per year, unless unexpected circumstances lead to an unavoidable need for a second sale; 4) issuing a prospectus, official statement or other document to potential lenders disclosing all material financial and budget information; and 5) refraining from conducting competitive note sales around the time of major holidays (such as, but not limited to, the period between Christmas and New Year's Day) except only in those circumstances where notes are coming due and need to be renewed?	
13	Yes	Changes in energy markets could potentially offer substantial savings for local governments. <u>Local Finance Notice 2012-12</u> provides important guidance on the competitive procurement of energy. Has your CFO, head purchasing official or other appropriate municipal official evaluated and discussed with your governing body (or an appropriate subcommittee thereof) whether the cooperative or competitive procurement of energy would benefit your municipality?	
14	Yes	Having a Finance Committee can provide an efficient means to represent the governing body by performing in depth research, plans and reviews in fiscal areas such as audit, budget and accounting workflow rules, as well as evaluating vendor, professional and labor contracts. Does your municipality have a Finance Committee made up of at least one governing body member, the chief administrative officer, CFO, head purchasing agent and other appropriate personnel, as may be needed, that meets at least monthly and discusses all significant financial issues?	

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15	No	Audit findings address areas needing improvement. Ignoring these findings devalues the process; therefore, municipalities should correct noted deficiencies. Have all audit findings from the 2011 audit been 1) identified in the corrective action plan and 2) addressed such that they are not repeated in the 2012 audit? If the answer is no, please list the repeat findings in the comments section and, upon appeal by the municipality, the Director shall determine based on the comment(s) whether the finding(s) is/are sufficiently material to warrant a "no" answer.	Some repeated findings: Unfunded Ordinances over five years (recurrent subject to budgetary constraints); Fixed Assets (updated for additions); Police Outside Duty Escrow (staffing issues)
16	Yes	The CFO should be capable of preparing the annual financial statement, annual debt statement and budget schedules. Excessive auditor assistance on these documents could create a perception that the auditor is not truly independent of the client in auditing the client's financial statements. At a minimum, each CFO should prepare balanced and reconciled financial records including books of original entry, general ledgers, subsidiary ledgers and other computer reports that accurately analyze and reflect the municipality's financial position. These records should have sufficient detail for an accountant with sufficient knowledge of New Jersey's municipal accounting system to extract information necessary to prepare financial and debt statements. This requires that, within acceptable tolerance, all financial transactions (cash and non-cash) be posted in the general ledger and that all general ledger accounts be supported by subsidiary ledgers, reports, reconciliations or are otherwise analyzed. <u>A "yes" answer is appropriate for this question if 1) your CFO prepares the annual financial statement, annual debt statement and annual budget, or 2) your CFO presents balanced and reconciled financial records, or 3) you are retaining outside assistance to do so from an individual or entity separate from your municipality's audit firm.</u> Please note that item #2 cannot count as a "yes" answer if the Report of Audit contains comments and recommendations regarding the General Ledger or Cash Account balances not reconciled.	

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17	Yes	The Local Finance Board recently adopted new rules, outlined in <u>Local Finance Notice 2013-17</u> , expanding municipalities' ability to purchase goods and services with procurement cards. The most significant change is the elimination of the prior per-transaction monetary limitation on P-Cards (15% of local unit's bid threshold) where a Qualified Purchasing Agent manages a local unit's P-Card program. Has your CFO, head purchasing official or other appropriate municipal official evaluated and discussed with your governing body (or an appropriate subcommittee thereof) how and whether a procurement card program could benefit the municipality or, if a procurement card program already exists, whether the program complies with the new regulations?	
18	Yes	Grant programs can create a significant burden on a municipality's cash flow if program expenses are either not timely reimbursed or are charged to other operating accounts instead of to the grant. Are all grant revenues, along with their corresponding appropriations, reviewed at least quarterly to determine that all program expenses have 1) been filed for reimbursement and 2) have been properly charged to the grant, with follow up communication to grantor agencies in instances where payments are delayed?	
Budget Preparation and Presentation - BP			
19	Yes	Has your municipality fully and accurately disclosed in the "Budget Message" section of your CY2013/SFY 2014 budget the following: Revenues at Risk; Non-Recurring Cost Reductions; Anticipated CY2014/SFY 2015 Appropriation Increases; and Structural Balance Offsets as detailed in Local Finance Notice 2011-37?	
20	Yes	In preparing your annual budget it is important for both the governing body and public to understand the concept of surplus and how it accumulates (or declines) over the years. A formal policy regarding surplus serves as a basis for decisions concerning future financial solvency, and the lack of a policy could lead bond rating agencies to downgrade your municipality's credit rating. In developing said surplus policy your CFO should analyze and explain at least a five-year trend of surplus; illustrating the factors causing each annual increase or decrease. A surplus policy with realistic and sustainable goals can then be determined. Does your municipality have a written policy goal for the amount of surplus available in support of municipal operations, and is this goal evaluated annually?	

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21	No	In preparing your annual budget for the current year it is important that the impact that these decisions may have on future years' budgets be presented, evaluated and considered before final action is taken. Long term plans concerning revenue, appropriations, tax levy, tax levy cap and surplus are critical toward sustaining (or achieving) a solid fiscal condition. Are projections calculated and discussed in sufficient detail so that the governing body understands the impact that the current year's budget may have on the future tax levy (as restricted by the levy cap) and future surplus balances for at least two (2) future year's budgets?	Multi-year budget projections are reviewed by the finance committee of the governing body.
22	N/A	Certain municipalities have indirectly pledged prompt payment (i.e. issued a guarantee) of debt service with respect to debt issued by counties, independent authorities or developers. Bond Rating Agencies (e.g. Moody's, Fitch, Standard & Poor's) have downgraded certain municipalities' bond ratings to below investment grade for lack of preparation in the event a lender calls in a debt guarantee. If your municipality guarantees any debt, are direct service revenues that may be pledged against debt repayment monitored by the municipal CFO; and to the extent that cash flow from pledged revenue will not satisfy the debt repayment, are sufficient funds held in reserve to satisfy the guarantee or is an existing authorization in place to issue debt (e.g. a bond ordinance) in the event a lender calls in the guarantee?	
23	Yes	Do elected officials receive status reports at least quarterly on all budget revenues and appropriations as they correspond to the annual adopted budget?	
24	No	Given the potential fiscal impact of property tax appeals on municipalities, the Tax Assessor and CFO should review the status of filed appeals on a regular basis to determine their effect on future budgets and plan accordingly. With input and approval from the governing body, this plan should include an evaluation of current assessment values and should consider setting aside an adequate estimated reserve to fund potentially successful state tax court appeals. <u>Has your municipality considered a property reassessment/revaluation to counter the effect of successful residential tax appeals?</u> In answering this question, a yes answer indicates that the municipality either 1) determined after reviewing assessed values that a reassessment/revaluation is unnecessary due to assessed values accurately reflecting market values (resulting in a small number of successful appeals); or 2) if the impact of appeals is significant, a revaluation plan has been filed with your County Board of Taxation.	Finance Committee/Governing Body had many discussions regarding revaluation over past few years, including discussions with Tax Counsel; no formal action to date.

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25	Yes	In developing your multi-year capital plan, is your municipality dedicating sufficient revenues to fund maintenance, repair and eventual replacement of infrastructure such as roads, storm sewers, sanitary sewers and water systems?	
26	No	N.J.S.A. 40A:4-62.1 allows for the creation of a dedicated trust fund to reserve funds budgeted during years with relatively little snowfall for use in future years when excessive snowfalls may exceed budgeted funds. In your 2013 Budget, has your municipality appropriated at least the average of snow removal expenses incurred over a minimum of 3 years?	Our 2013 snow reserve is double the average from prior three years; in 2013 the budgeted amount was 65% of the three-year average
Health Insurance - HI			
27	Yes	Does your municipality exclude from healthcare coverage part-time elected and appointed officials (less than 35 hours per week)?	
28	Yes	Does your municipality conduct a monthly review of health benefit covered lives itemized on health insurance invoices to determine that health insurance invoices do not include employees, former employees, spouses or dependents who should no longer be receiving coverage?	
29	Yes	As explained in Local Finance Notices <u>2011-20R</u> and <u>2011-34</u> , P.L. 2011 c. 78 requires employees to contribute toward healthcare based on a percentage of total premium cost, subject to a four-year phase-in. Has your municipality implemented the employee healthcare contribution provisions contained in P.L.2011 c. 78?	
30	N/A	Municipalities frequently contract with or designate insurance brokers to secure healthcare coverage from insurance carriers. Brokers are typically paid by third-party administrators (TPA's) hired to collect, review and pay healthcare bills. The municipality pays the TPA, who in turn pays the broker. Broker fees are often directly related to the amount of insurance premiums or fees paid by the municipality (i.e. the higher the premium, the larger the broker's commission). Thus, the municipality-broker-TPA arrangement is vulnerable to abuse because brokers could face conflicting incentives in seeking lower-cost insurance alternatives. <u>If your municipality contracts with or otherwise designates an insurance broker, is the structure for broker payments set at a flat-fee rather than on a commission basis</u> (so as to mitigate the risk of brokers recommending more expensive insurance coverage to earn higher fees)?	

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31	N/A	The State Health Benefits Program (SHBP) offers medical, prescription and dental coverage options for more than 850,000 participants, including employees, dependents and retirees. All plans have substantial networks of healthcare providers, and provide services nationwide. 62% of municipalities, and 33% of counties, within New Jersey participate in SHBP. If your municipality has non-SHBP coverage, as your collective bargaining agreements come up for renegotiation, do your municipality's negotiation proposals seek contract provisions allowing its employees to be switched to SHBP or another non-SHBP plan of lesser cost?	
32	N/A	If your municipality does not participate in the State Health Benefits Program (SHBP), have competitive proposals for health insurance been solicited in the last three years (including from the Division of Pensions and Benefits for SHBP health insurance coverage)?	