CPAR Presents:

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA
CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

A Data and Research Series for Community Impact

September 28, 2022 | #NebraskaByTheNumbers

Tips to Ensure Impact:

Finding and Applying Financial Data to Governance Challenges

Craig Maher, Ph.D.

Director

School of Public Administration, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Outline

- Survey of data, resources and tools
    - Data sources
    - Data uses
    - Detailed example of data usage: how to conduct financial condition analysis

Data Sources: US Census Bureau

Census Survey of State and Local Government Finances

- Nationwide voluntary survey every year since the 1960s;

- The first year the Census Finance Survey data is available is 1967.

- While the Census Bureau has collected information on selected municipalities (relatively larger municipalities in general) in most years, a census has been conducted in years ending 2 and 7.

- Focusing only on those years ending 2 and 7, therefore, the Census Finance Survey is the only database that covers all municipalities in the U.S.

- The Census Finance Survey includes almost 130 revenue categories, more than 270 expenditure categories, and over 100 categories for other activities such as debt, cash, and investment securities.

US Census data – compiled data

[Willamette University – The Government Finance Database](#)

[The Urban Institute](#)

[Lincoln Institute – Fiscally Standardized Database](#)

| CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

US Census Bureau fiscal data - Drawbacks

- These fiscal data are self-reported; municipal officials may vary in interpreting and reporting those 600 uniform categories offered by the Census Bureau

- The information reported in the Census Finance Survey may not correspond to actual financial statements or accounting measures.

- Census Finance Survey is most appropriate for describing fiscal trends over time

State-specific data

- Most states require local governments submit financial information

- Typically used for intergovernmental aid distribution (e.g., WI), tax limit assessment (e.g., NE) and/or monitoring (e.g., CA)

| CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

Example - WI

- WI County and Municipal financial reports: https://www.revenue.wi.gov/Pages/FAQS/slf-finrep.aspx

- Revenues and expenditures: https://www.revenue.wi.gov/Pages/Report/county-municipal-revenues-expenditures.aspx

- Local government dashboard: https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/research.policy/viz/LocalGovernmentDashboard_0/LocalGovernment

Example - NE

- NE Auditor's Office: https://www.nebraska.gov/auditor/reports/index.cgi?audit=1

- NE State and Local Government Finance Lab

- These are budget data

CA – Data collection

California State Comptroller's Office

[By the Numbers](#)

[Audited Financial Data](#) – not really clear if ACFR data

Annual Comprehensive Financial Report

- Meets compliance requirements specified by the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB)

- The benefit is consistency in reporting

- Not an accounting session ☺

- Draw your attention to 3 key elements

    - Government wide statements

    - Fund statements

    - Statistical Section

Douglas County, NE

- [County Financial Reports](#)

- MDA – offers comprehensive overview

- Government-wide statements (beginning p. 18)
  - Best for comparisons and analysis over time

- Fund statements (beginning p. 20)
  - Most salient to stakeholders
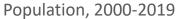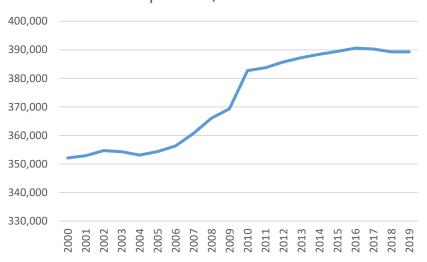
- Statistical section (beginning p. 112)

Data use

- I frequently use these data for:
    - Trend analysis and forecasting
    - Story telling
    - Financial data analysis
    - [Financial data monitoring](#)
- For what purposes do you want financial data?

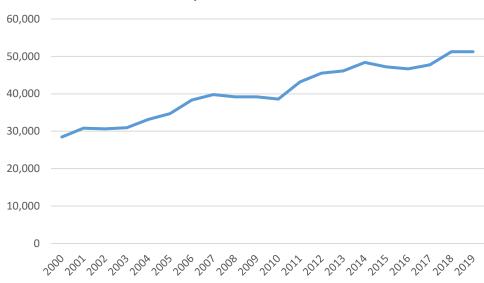# My Approach to data usage

- [Financial Condition Analysis](#)

- Need to link contextual information to financial information

  - External environment

    - Economic and demographic trends

    - State policies toward local governments (TELs, debt limits, etc)
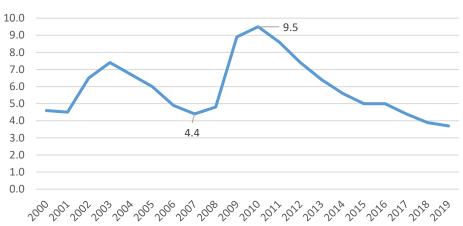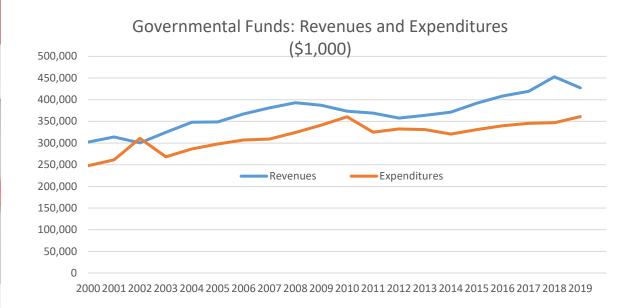
  - Internal management

Wichita, KS

Population, 2000-2019
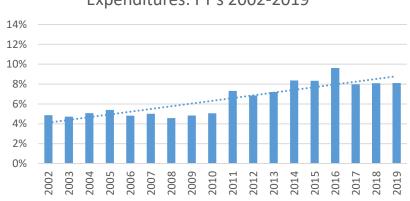
Per Capita Personal Income

Unemployment Rate: 2000-2019

CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

Financial Analysis

Governmental Funds: Revenues and Expenditures ($1,000)

Cash, Investments and Receivables as Percentage of Current Liabilities, FY's 2007-2019

G.F. Unreserved Fund Balance as Pct. of GF Expenditures: FY's 2002-2019

General Obligation Debt and Debt Service: FYs 2000-2019

Other Approaches: FTMS

- Salina

- Golden

- Washtenaw County, MI

- Northborough, MA

Ｏ | CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

Summary

- There are an array of financial data
- Identifying the most appropriate is a function of your objective
    - Trend analysis for a given entity relative to overall average – US Census
    - Within state comparisons – state sources
    - Financial analysis – ACFRs
        - Downside is time lag

| CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

Questions?

THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING THE
2022 A DATA AND RESEARCH SERIES
FOR COMMUNITY IMPACT!

[CPAR.UNOMAHA.EDU]

Follow CPAR: 🐦 @UNOmahaCPAR   ▶ cpar.unomaha.edu/youtube

#NebraskaByTheNumbers