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CITY OF CHICAGO RECEIVES "A" GRADE FOR TRANSPARENCY IN CITY SPENDING

Illinois PIRG Gives City of Chicago Top Score in Report

Chicago received an "A" grade for transparency in city spending in a report released by the Illinois Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) that reviewed the online accessibility of government spending and service request data of the country's 30 largest cities. Chicago and New York tied for the highest score, 98, for making easily and publicly available budgetary information.

"This grade reflects the progress the City of Chicago has made in creating an accessible and open city and administration," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "I remain committed to a transparent, honest government that is held accountable to its residents. We will take under consideration the recommendations made by the Illinois PIRG and all other groups that seek to improve the quality and efficiency of government."

The report, entitled "Transparency in City Spending: Rating the Availability of Online Government Data in America's Largest Cities," graded the thirty cities on their websites' comprehensiveness, as well as having a "one-stop, one-click" destination for city budget data.

In the report, Illinois PIRG called Chicago a "leading city" for its central data portal, which publically releases information on how budgetary dollars are spent, including releasing salary information and payments data. The report referred to both Chicago and New York as "models for how cities should make spending data accessible to the public." Illinois PIRG also praised the ease of use of the city's searchable portal, saying, "Citizens and watchdog groups can use the Chicago, New York, and San Francisco websites to monitor government spending and priorities quickly and easily."

Since Mayor Emanuel took office, the City has focused on expanding the City of Chicago's data portal, data.cityofchicago.org, which now hosts more than 400 datasets and has been viewed 2.3 million times.

Illinois PIRG's report also included several recommendations for improvement, including providing increased information on tax-increment financing, which the City has been working towards. Early in his administration, the Mayor appointed a TIF Reform Task Force that made several recommendations that are being implemented, including the release of significantly more project performance metrics, integrating TIF spending into the budget process, and setting strategic criteria for TIF investments.

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