2013 Transparency Report Card

- Bringing state & local government to light

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Bringing state & local governments to light

Kristin McMurray

Managing Editor, Sunshine Review

SUNSHINE REVIEW

Bringing state & local government to light.
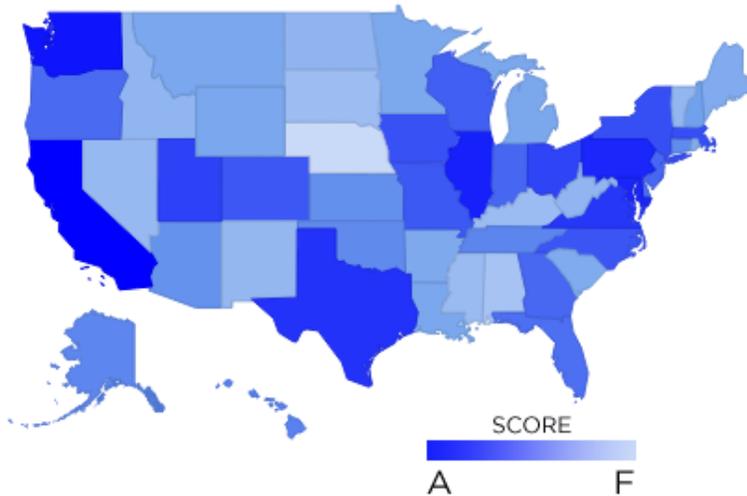
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Executive Summary

Transparency is an American issue, not a partisan issue for Republicans or Democrats to showboat. In 2008, Sunshine Review developed the original 10-point transparency checklist. Since then, Sunshine Review used the checklist to evaluate state, county, city, and school district websites for transparency practices.

During the past year, Sunshine Review used these transparency checklists to conduct its first nationwide report on the proactive disclosure of government information. The report

OVERALL TRANSPARENCY GRADES

examines the websites of each state government, the five largest counties and cities in each state, and the ten largest school districts in each state.

Evaluations confirmed what the Sunny Awards indicated since 2010—transparency is not a fad, but rather, it is a staple of good government.

State government websites outperformed local government websites, with 26 percent of state websites scoring in the "A" range, and 60 percent scoring a "B" or above. In contrast, 28 percent of county websites scored a "B" or above, and 44 percent of cities scored a "B" or above. School district websites had the most dismal grades with just 20 percent of school districts scoring a "B" or above.

States continue to struggle with proactively disclosing lobbying data, how to obtain public records, and with increasing the ease of finding supplemental data.

Both counties and cities struggled with reporting the cost of government sector lobbying costs, publishing contracts and disclosing how to obtain public records. School districts failed to comprehensively report contract agreements, how to obtain public records, publish audits, or provided statements about their funding.

All government entities, however, successfully disclosed how to contact elected officials, annual budgets, and meeting minutes. All state websites reported tax revenue data and disclosed audit information, and 70 percent of school districts posted information about their academic performance.
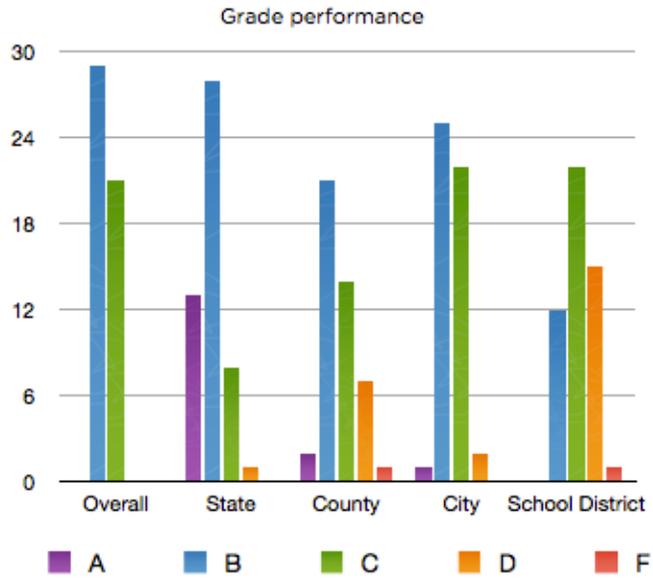
The five states earning the highest grades are California, Illinois, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Washington. The five worst states are Alabama, Kentucky Mississippi, Nebraska, and South Dakota. Even California, the best performing state, failed to attain an "A" average, which is a disservice to citizens.

Grade performance

Category	Grade	States
Exceeds Expectations	B+	California, Illinois, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, and Washington
Above Average	B	Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Utah, and Wisconsin
Acceptable	B-	Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut, Kansas and Oklahoma
Lagging	C+	Arkansas, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Wyoming
Poor	C	Alabama, Idaho, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia

Changing the way governments do business

Sunshine Review's mission focuses on state and local government transparency, engaging citizens, and changing the way governments do business. After developing the original transparency checklist in 2008, Sunshine Review launched the Sunny Awards in 2010 and rated all 3,140 counties in America. Sunny Awards were given to websites that earned an "A" grade, and in that first year, only 40 websites merited a "Sunny Award." When asked why we did not report on the biggest failures in 2010, the answer was that there were simply too many to report.

In 2011 the number of Sunny Award winners jumped to over 100, and in 2012 the number doubled again, with more than 200 government entities earning an "A" grade. In 2012, U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) also reported that 46 states had established transparency portals allowing citizens access to the state's checkbooks,[1] proving that transparency is not a fad, but an established part of the political landscape.

In 2012, Sunshine Review spoke to hundreds of government officials about how to better serve their constituents through their websites. The best place to start putting good governance into practice is by disclosing information on the government website.

A tale of two counties

Two of the best examples of improvements come from the state of Colorado.

Douglas County was the first county in Colorado to earn an "A+" website transparency grade from Sunshine Review. The county dedicated itself to incorporating transparency into the way it governed, in its mission, vision and code of conduct. In short, Douglas County officials viewed transparency as an essential part of their jobs and citizens responded very positively to their actions by building stronger relationships and filing fewer public records requests.

Then there is the story of Adams County, Colorado. Adams county was under investigation

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[1] US. PIRG, Following the Money, March 2012

for a number of corruption charges including theft, bribery, sexual harassment, unlawful perks in the manner of free cars, and ultimately bilking taxpayers out of at least $1.8 million.[2],[3] After seeing the successes in Douglas County, Adams County officials decided they needed to correct their approach to governing, and in May 2011 they committed to sweeping ethics reforms.

Where did this reform take the county? By February 2012, the county had created a transparency portal modeled after Sunshine Review's checklist, earning the county its first Sunny Award. In April 2012, the county created a "Transparency Hotline" and exactly one year after committing to government transparency, the county officials reported saving $1 million from their reform efforts.[4]

What these two counties have in common is that they were not just dedicated to earning an

> *"A responsibility of the Board, on behalf of our citizens and taxpayers, is to see to it that Douglas County Government is open and transparent. We recognize that nothing is more critical to building a reputation for stability and credibility as stewards of public assets than public trust and – especially for government – informational and fiscal transparency is foundational to that achievement." -*
> *Commissioner Jill Repella,*
> *Douglas County, Colorado*

A+ from Sunshine Review, but that they were dedicated to ensuring that citizens have access to information. The two counties also illustrate the differences between proactive and reactive approaches to transparency. Achieving good governance by enacting transparent practices before a problem emerges benefits government officials and constituents alike.

While government can achieve great reform in the wake of scandal, a reactive approach does not change alter that citizens' money has been wasted and their trust shattered. The onus is on the citizens to change the way governments do business.

In contrast, proactive disclosure ensures that citizens have the information necessary to hold their local governments accountable by making sure they are are conducting business properly and honestly in the first place.

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[2] Denver Post, Adams County officials get deals on county cars, Jan. 30, 2011

[3] Denver Post, Adams manager must pay $1.8 million in Quality Paving restitution, Oct. 17, 2012

[4] Denver Post, Adams County's reform pledge, one year later, May 30, 2012

The best, worst of government websites

State websites

Overall, state websites were graded better than local government websites. Every state met Sunshine Review's criteria for disclosing tax revenues, audits and contact information for administrative officials. Every state, with the exception of Alabama, disclosed information necessary to contact elected officials.

However, only three states fully complied with Sunshine Review's lobbying requirements, including disclosure of state funded lobbying activity, agency lobbying and of a database of registered lobbyists. Arizona, Massachusetts, and Washington did disclose this information.

Only 32 percent of states provided contact information for all public information officers in a central location. Over half, 60 percent, of state websites included features like an internal search function, which increases user's ease of access.

Overall State Performance
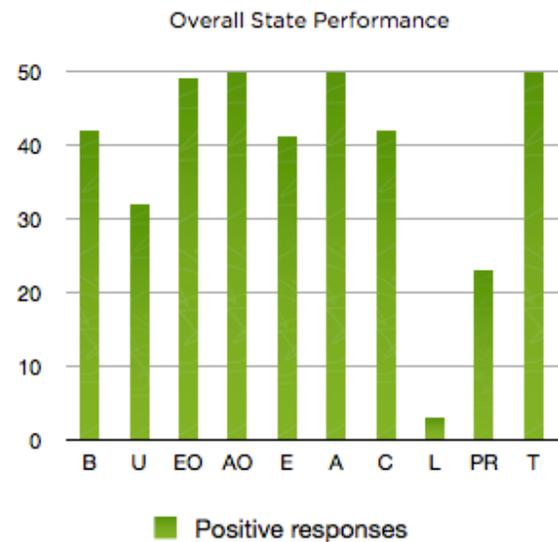
* Each letter stands for a point on the transparency checklist. See Appendix C for checklist definitions.
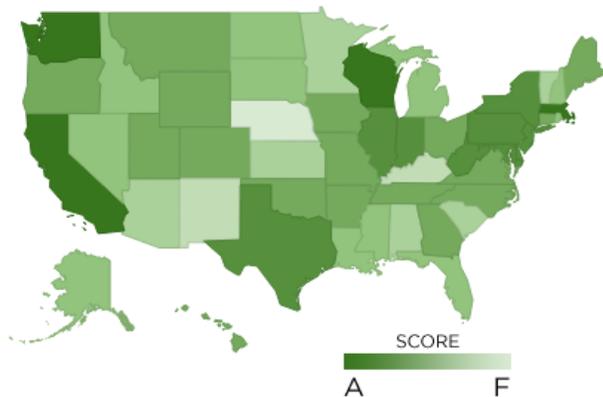
The highest performing states, California, Massachusetts, Washington, and Wisconsin all earned an "A+."

The poorest performing states were Kentucky, New Mexico, and Nebraska, which satisfied only five out of the 10 checkpoints and earned just a "C" grade.

County websites

Forty-five states have active county govern-

STATE TRANSPARENCY GRADES

SCORE

A   F

COUNTY TRANSPARENCY GRADES

ments. States without active county government include: Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Colorado and Illinois counties all received high marks, earning an "A" average. A total of 40 percent of counties earned an average above a "B" grade.

Counties diligently disclosed a current annual budget and archived budgets for at least three years—97 percent of counties meeting all of Sunshine Review's criteria. (See Appendix C, Table C-2) However, counties failed to disclose approved vendor contracts, government sector lobbying information, and how to obtain
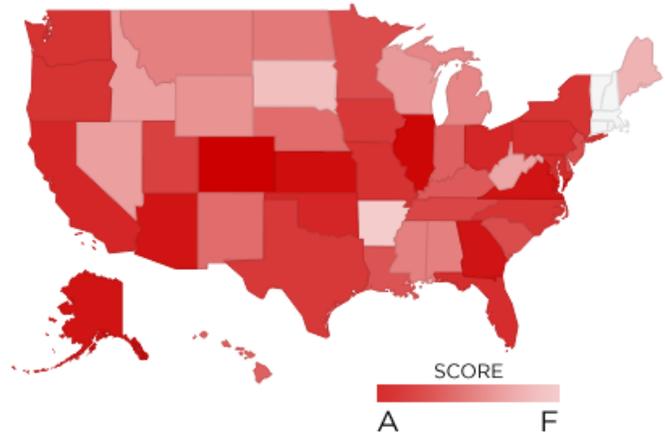
public records. Only 12 percent accurately disclosed government sector lobbying information and less than half fully disclosed information about contracts and contract information for public officials.

Overall County Performance

Positive responses

* See Appendix C for checklist definitions.

Highest grades

State	Score	Grade
Colorado	92.00%	A-
Illinois	90.00%	A-
Kansas	88.00%	B+
Alaska	86.00%	B+
Arizona	86.00%	B+
Georgia	86.00%	B+
Virginia	86.00%	B+

Lowest grades

State	Score	Grade
Idaho	42.00%	D+
Nevada	42.00%	D+
West Virginia	40.00%	D
Maine	36.00%	D-
South Dakota	32.00%	D-
Arkansas	28.00%	F

City websites

Sunshine Review evaluated the five most populous cities in every state. In thirteen states

Overall City Performance

■ Positive responses
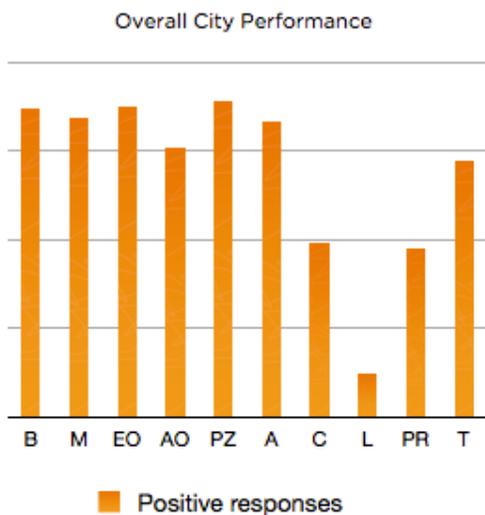
* See Appendix C for checklist definitions.

the capital city is not among the five largest cities. In such instances, Sunshine Review evaluated the five largest cities and the state capital. (See Appendix B).

Kansas' cities averaged an "A" grade, while 44 percent of states averaged a "B" or above.

CITY TRANSPARENCY GRADES

SCORE

A   F
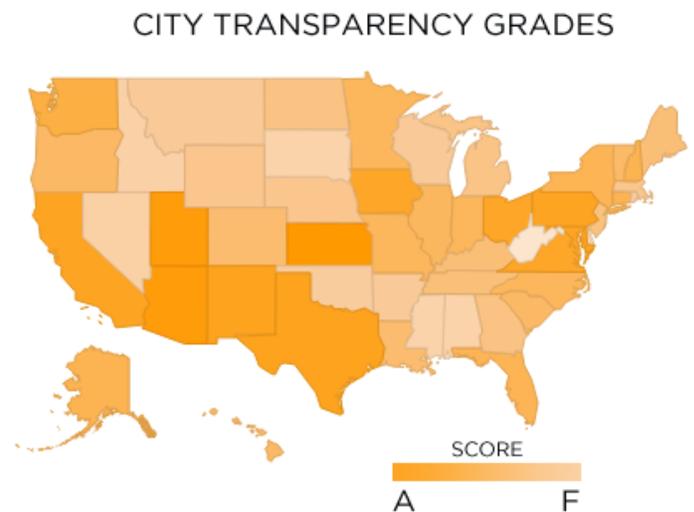
Cities outperformed counties at disclosing permit applications and ordinances with 93 percent meeting Sunshine Review's criteria. Largely due to the number of cities in charge of planning ordinances and zoning. Other successes include 92 percent posting contact information for public officials and 91 percent of cities disclosing the most current budget and budgets for the past three years.

Like counties, cities struggled to disclose information on approved contract statements with only half of evaluated cities meeting the criteria. Even fewer disclosed how to attain public records and only 12 percent completely disclosing lobbying information to the public.

Highest grades

State	Score	Grade
Kansas	90.00%	A-
Arizona	88.00%	B+
Utah	88.00%	B+
Texas	84.00%	B+
New Mexico	84.00%	B+

Lowest grades

| State	Score	Grade
Alabama	50.00%	C-
Mississippi	50.00%	C-
South Dakota	49.70%	C-
Delaware	48.00%	D+
West Virginia	28.00%	D-

School district websites

There are over 14,000 school districts in the

US, and education spending accounts for roughly 30 percent of most state budgets.[5] Sunshine Review evaluated the 10 largest school districts in each state, with the exception of Tennessee. There, Sunshine Review evaluated 11 school districts due to an upcoming school district merger.

Overall, school districts performed the poorest on the transparency checklist. Not a single district averaged an "A" grade and only 14 percent of districts evaluated, or seven states, managed to average a "B" grade. Twenty-four states had school districts averaging lower than a "C" grade and 14 states with districts scoring in the "D" range. West Virginia is the only state to earn a a failing grade.

SCHOOL DISTRICT TRANSPARENCY GRADES

SCORE

A   F

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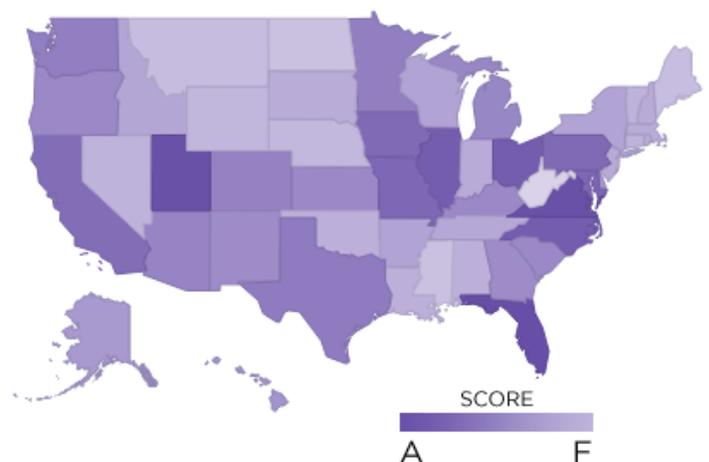
[5] State Budget Solutions, Throwing Money at Education isn't Working, September 2012

School districts also had the lowest percentages for fully disclosing how to contact elected and administrative officials. Only 72 percent disclosed contact information for administrative officials and 66 percent provided contact information for school board members.

Overall School District Performance
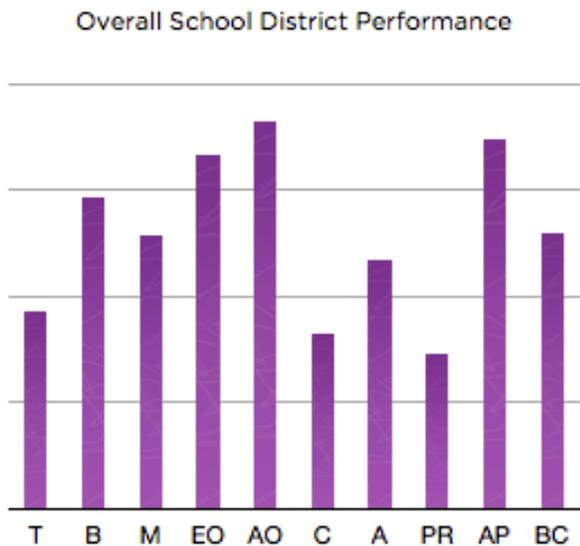
Positive responses
* See Appendix C for checklist definitions.

Academic performance reports were provided by 69 percent of school districts. A mere 58 percent provided information on current and archived budgets, as opposed to the near 90 percent of county and city governments that made that information available to citizens on their website.

Like counties and cities, school districts also struggled to provide information on vendor and labor agreements, with just 32 percent able to meet Sunshine Review's criteria (See Appendix C, Table C-3). School district websites rarely provided information on how to request public records (only 28 percent).

Highest grades

State	Score	Grade
Florida	87.00%	B+
Utah	86.00%	B+
Virginia	86.00%	B+
Ohio	81.00%	B
North Carolina	81.00%	B
Illinois	81.00%	B

Lowest grades

State	Score	Grade
Montana	36.00%	D-
Maine	35.20%	D-
North Dakota	32.00%	D-
Mississippi	32.00%	D-
West Virginia	18.00%	F

The future of state & local government transparency

Transparency data mandates trickling down

Over the past five years, individuals largely drove transparency by creating an array of innovations and a multitude of practices for maintaining data. When the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (DATA Act) in 2012 it put into motion the idea of mandating how data is maintained.[6] States like California, Georgia[7] and Indiana are also working to incorporate local data into their state websites. The biggest complaint from state officials thus far is the different practices for maintaining local information. Local officials do not see why they have to resubmit information that is already disclosed online. In Georgia, local budgets over $1 million must be submitted to the University of Georgia to be posted online, but in 2012 only 33 percent of cities, 57 percent of counties, and 83 percent of school districts complied.[8]

If the Senate passes the DATA Act in 2013, it is more likely that state lawmakers will put forth similar legislation regulating how local data is maintained and shared with state legislatures.

While that could be a possible long-term benefit, such legislation could lead to a short-term increase in spending on data that is already available to citizens.

The future of Sunshine Review's Transparency Checklist

In 2013 Sunshine Review will implement changes to its transparency checklist. For the 2013 Sunny Awards, Sunshine Review will re-evaluate all state websites according to an updated state website evaluation. (Changes noted in Appendix D)

In April, Sunshine Review, working with other pro-transparency advocates, will conduct a survey to create new requirements for county, city, and school district websites. In July, Sunshine Review will share these requirements with local officials. Officials will then have time and assistance to transition to the new transparency checklist before Sunshine Review releases its 2014 Transparency Report Card and announces the 2014 Sunny Awards.

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[6] *Sunlight Foundation,* Red line of DATA Act, September 21, 2012

[7] General Assembly of Georgia, HB 122

[8] *CBS Atlanta*, Ga. governments fail to post electronic budgets, July 23, 2012

Appendix A: Transparency scorecard

State	Overall %	Overall Grade	State %	State Grade	Counties %
Alabama	53.52%	C	60.00%	C	52.00%
Alaska	69.88%	B-	70.00%	B-	86.00%
Arizona	68.40%	B-	60.00%	C	86.00%
Arkansas	62.72%	C+	80.00%	B	28.00%
California	88.10%	B+	100.00%	A+	80.00%
Colorado	76.32%	B	80.00%	B	92.00%
Connecticut	69.25%	B-	80.00%	B	NA
Delaware	73.27%	B	90.00%	A-	69.70%
Florida	73.10%	B	70.00%	B-	78.00%
Georgia	74.08%	B	80.00%	B	86.00%
Hawaii	70.72%	B	80.00%	B	62.00%
Idaho	58.52%	C	70.00%	B-	42.00%
Illinois	83.80%	B+	90.00%	A-	90.00%
Indiana	74.28%	B	90.00%	A-	62.00%
Iowa	77.12%	B	80.00%	B	74.00%
Kansas	68.72%	B-	60.00%	C	88.00%
Kentucky	56.09%	C	50.00%	C-	64.00%
Louisiana	63.64%	C+	70.00%	B-	66.00%
Maine	62.02%	C+	80.00%	B	36.00%
Maryland	83.10%	B+	90.00%	A-	78.00%
Massachusetts	77.50%	B	100.00%	A+	NA
Michigan	63.51%	C+	70.00%	B-	50.00%
Minnesota	63.28%	C+	60.00%	C	68.00%
Mississippi	56.44%	C	70.00%	B-	52.00%
Missouri	76.06%	B	80.00%	B	76.40%
Montana	63.65%	C+	80.00%	B	52.00%
Nebraska	50.44%	C	50.00%	C-	58.00%
Nevada	57.10%	C	70.00%	B-	42.00%
New Hampshire	65.75%	C+	70.00%	B-	NA
New Jersey	74.25%	B	90.00%	A-	68.00%
New Mexico	57.80%	C	50.00%	C-	58.00%
New York	77.50%	B	90.00%	A-	76.00%
North Carolina	76.64%	B	80.00%	B	76.00%
North Dakota	59.00%	C	70.00%	B-	54.00%
Ohio	78.88%	B	80.00%	B	80.00%

State	Overall %	Overall Grade	State %	State Grade	Counties %
Oklahoma	69.28%	B-	80.00%	B	80.00%
Oregon	73.60%	B	80.00%	B	76.00%
Pennsylvania	82.92%	B+	90.00%	A-	78.00%
Rhode Island	61.25%	C+	70.00%	B-	NA
South Carolina	62.32%	C+	60.00%	C	68.00%
South Dakota	55.75%	C	70.00%	B-	32.00%
Tennessee	70.00%	B	80.00%	B	70.00%
Texas	81.32%	B+	90.00%	A-	74.00%
Utah	79.36%	B	80.00%	B	72.00%
Vermont	58.18%	C	60.00%	C-	NA
Virginia	80.64%	B+	80.00%	B	86.00%
Washington	85.30%	B+	100.00%	A+	76.00%
West Virginia	58.76%	C	90.00%	A-	40.00%
Wisconsin	75.28%	B	100.00%	A+	44.00%
Wyoming	63.68%	C+	80.00%	B	46.00%

Transparency scoreboard continued

State	County Grade	Cities %	Cities Grade	School %	School District Grade
Alabama	C	50.00%	C-	45.00%	D+
Alaska	B+	74.00%	B	58.00%	C
Arizona	B+	88.00%	B+	66.00%	C+
Arkansas	F	60.00%	C	54.00%	C-
California	B	83.10%	B+	75.00%	B
Colorado	A-	68.00%	C+	67.00%	C+
Connecticut	NA	74.00%	B	43.00%	D
Delaware	B-	48.00%	D+	59.00%	C
Florida	B	73.10%	B	87.00%	B+
Georgia	B+	64.00%	C+	63.00%	C
Hawaii	C+	NA	NA	60.00%	C
Idaho	D+	52.00%	C-	53.00%	C-
Illinois	A-	71.50%	B	81.00%	B
Indiana	C+	72.00%	B	49.00%	C-
Iowa	B-	82.00%	B	76.00%	B-
Kansas	B+	90.00%	A-	64.00%	C+
Kentucky	C+	66.30%	C+	64.00%	C+
Louisiana	C+	68.00%	C+	45.00%	D+

State	County Grade	Cities %	Cities Grade	School %	School District Grade
Maine	D-	66.40%	C+	35.20%	D-
Maryland	B	83.10%	B	77.00%	B
Massachusetts	NA	62.00%	C+	48.00%	D+
Michigan	C	63.20%	C+	65.00%	C+
Minnesota	C+	72.00%	B	68.00%	C+
Mississippi	C	50.00%	C-	32.00%	D-
Missouri	B-	72.00%	B	77.00%	B
Montana	C	59.80%	C	36.00%	D-
Nebraska	C	62.00%	C+	39.00%	D
Nevada	D+	53.10%	C-	43.00%	D
New Hampshire	NA	74.00%	B	49.00%	C-
New Jersey	C+	64.80%	C+	50.00%	C-
New Mexico	C	84.00%	B+	63.00%	C
New York	B-	73.10%	B	54.00%	C-
North Carolina	B-	72.00%	B	81.00%	B
North Dakota	C	64.00%	C+	32.00%	D-
Ohio	B	82.00%	B+	81.00%	B
Oklahoma	B	58.00%	C	45.00%	D+
Oregon	B-	70.00%	B-	64.00%	C+
Pennsylvania	B	83.00%	B+	76.00%	B
Rhode Island	NA	58.00%	C	47.00%	D+
South Carolina	C+	70.00%	B-	64.00%	C+
South Dakota	D-	49.70%	C-	48.00%	D+
Tennessee	B-	66.00%	C+	51.50%	C-
Texas	B-	84.00%	B+	69.00%	B-
Utah	B-	88.00%	B+	86.00%	B+
Vermont	NA	69.70%	B-	43.00%	D
Virginia	B+	82.00%	B+	86.00%	B+
Washington	B-	76.60%	B	68.00%	C+
West Virginia	D	28.00%	D-	18.00%	F
Wisconsin	D+	60.00%	C	54.00%	C-
Wyoming	D+	62.00%	C+	40.00%	D

Appendix B: Methodology

How websites are audited

Sunshine Review evaluated websites according to our 10-point transparency checklist, which evaluates websites based on items of information provided on government-sponsored websites. (See Table B-1, B-2, and B-3 for definitions of these points.)

Sunshine Review conducts comprehensive annual evaluations of official government websites across the nation. These evaluations include the official state website to county and municipal website and also school district websites.

Sunshine Review then conducts audits on the five largest counties and cities and the ten largest school districts. Target locations are determined by the population size for each entity as reported by the 2010 Census. Currently the US has 3,140 counties, over 19,000 municipalities[9] and more than 14,000 school districts.[10] Sunshine Review evaluated the five most populous counties, cities, the capital, and ten largest school districts designated by enrollment in each each state, evaluating one government-sponsored website for each entity, ensuring an equal representation in each

state. In total, for this report Sunshine Review examined 50 state websites, 225 county websites, 238 city websites, and 501 school district websites, a total of 1,014 government websites.

Five states do not use county governance; these including Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. For these exceptions, only the state, cities and school districts grades were evaluated for the overall transparency score.

In thirteen states the capital city is not among the five largest cities. In these instances Sunshine Review evaluated the five largest cities and the state capital city and determined the average of all six. These states included: California, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Vermont, and Washington.

Other outliers include Hawaii, which has no cities with functioning governments, and in Tennessee where eleven school districts were evaluated due to an upcoming school district merger. Also, Hawaii has only one school district, the Department of Education.

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[9] United State Census Bureau, Census of Governments, 2002

[10] United States Census Bureau, School Districts, 2010

Sunshine Review conducted its evaluations from January of 2012 to December of 2012, with final evaluations in January of 2013 by associate writers. Upon the completion of each state evaluation, Sunshine Review alerts elected officials to the review and provides them a two-week period to correct, update information, or discuss concerns about their grade, and we address those issues before the information is released to the media. Media release takes place on a rolling state-by-state basis.

Before publication of the 2013 Transparency Report Card, Sunshine Review gave elected officials one month to complete further updates, corrections, etc. Over 100 officials responded and these changes were incorporated in the report.

Calculating grades

Sunshine Review engages in an eight-step process to produce the transparency grades. The first step in the process was developing the 10-point transparency checklist. Three checklists were created for state websites, county websites & city websites, and school district website evaluations (Appendix B).

These criteria resulted from a coordinated effort of over 100 pro-transparency organizations, including the Goldwater Institute, the Lucy Burns Institute, the Sunlight Foundation, Open City, Webitects, and the Journalism Department of Columbia College.

Points	Grade
10	A+
9	A-
8	B
7	B-
6	C
5	C-
4	D
3	D-
0-2	F

Next, Sunshine Review identified the appropriate websites to review, and reviewed the entity according to the appropriate checklist. Sunshine Review associate writers audited each website. Grades reflected the number of points on the checklist for which criteria were completely met. When an entity partially met the criteria, no point was awarded. A point scale determined the letter grade awarded for each fulfilled point. For example, 0-2 qualified for an "F" grade, 3-4 for a "D" grade and so on.

Afterward, Sunshine Review calculated the score for each level of the state's government by tallying the total points for all the reviewed sites and finding the average. These averages were then compared to the checklist point scale.

After processing these scores, Sunshine Review calculated the overall grade for each state was calculated using a weighted scale. State websites accounted for half of the overall grade due to their size and impact on constituents' lives. County, city, and school district website grades accounted for the other 50 percent of the grade(16 percent each). In cases where states did not use county government, cities and schools each accounted for 25 percent of the overall score. The importance of each level of local government for education funding, permits applications, and public health and safety overlapped across city, county and school district levels, and affected the weight we gave each entity.

Finally, Sunshine Review publicized grades were publicized to the media in a timely manner to ensure state and local government would be held accountable to their performance and encouraged to provide missing items from the transparency checklist.

Appendix C: Checklist definitions

Table C-1: State checklist

Item	Definition
Budget	• The most current budget is available online. • Budgets are archived for 3 years. • All appropriation bills are posted online. • Check register is available. • Graphs available that show spending and revenue over time.
Usability	• Consistent use of web domains. • Website has functional internal search. • Information is ideally found within 6 clicks or less. • Information is presented in a clear and concise manner. • Has a consistent easy-to-use interface.
Elected officials	• Contact information, including emails, is available for all officials. • Terms of office and next election date are disclosed. • Party affiliation is disclosed. • Conflict of interest agreements are published. • Committee appointments are online. • Voting records are available.
Administrative officials	• Contact information, including emails, is available for all officials.
Ethics	• Ethic commission is formed, and guidelines of ethical behavior of officials are posted online. • Process for reporting ethics violations is available online. • Results of ethics investigations are posted online.
Audits	• Information about regular audits is available. • Audits results are posted online, as well as performance audits. • Schedules for audits are posted online.
Contracts	• Rules governing contracts disclosed. • Bids and approved contract statements for vendors over $10,000 posted.

Item	Definition
Lobbying	• Disclosure of state-paid lobbying activity. • Database of register lobbyists. • Agency lobbying contracts disclosed. • All grants given to non-profit organizations and reasons for the grant disclosed.
Public records	• Contact information, including an email, for the public information officer for every state agency and department disclosed in a central location.
Taxes	• Information about state tax rates and total revenues will be disclosed.

Table C-2: County and city checklist

Item	Definition
Budget	•Budget for current fiscal year. •Budgets for the past three years.
Meetings	• Meeting minutes and agendas for the current year. • Archives of meeting minutes and agendas for three years. • A meeting calendar that discloses the time and location of public meetings.
Elected officials	• Contact information, including emails, is available for all officials. • Terms of office and next election date are disclosed.
Administrative officials	• Contact information, including emails, is available for all officials.
Permits, zoning	• Zoning ordinances are disclosed. • Permit applications can be downloaded on the site.

Item	Definition
Audits	• Current audit is posted. • Audits for the past three years are available.
Contracts	• Bids and RFPs are available. • Contracts statements for vendors over $10,000 are available.
Lobbying	• Total number of lobbyists employed and total spent on lobbying is disclosed. • Membership to government sector lobbying associations is disclosed, along with membership dues.
Public records	• Contact information, including an email, for the public information officer. • Information regarding local policies for requesting public records is available.
Taxes	• Information about local tax rates and total revenues will be disclosed.

Table C-3: School district checklist

Item	Definition
Taxes	• District discloses federal, state, and local tax revenues that fund the school.
Budgets	• Current budget is posted. • Budget for past three years are available.
Meetings	• Meeting minutes and agendas for the current year. • Archives of meeting minutes and agendas for three years. • A meeting calendar that discloses the time and location of public meetings.

Item	Definition
Elected officials	• Contact information, including emails, is available for all officials. • Terms of office and next election date are disclosed.
Administrative officials	• Contact information, including emails, is available for all officials.
Contracts	• Bids and RFPs are available. • Approved vendor contract statements for $10,000 and above are disclosed. • Labor agreements are disclosed and/or pay scales.
Audits	• Current audit is posted. • Audits for the past three years are available.
Public records	• Contact information, including an email, for the public information officer. • Information regarding local policies for requesting public records is available.
Background checks	• Guidelines for conducting criminal background checks for staffs is published online. • Teacher certification requirements are disclosed.

Appendix D: 2013 Checklist changes

Table D-1: 2012 v. 2013 State Transparency checklist comparison

Item	2012 Requirements	2013 Additions
Budget	• The most current budget is available online. • Budgets are archived for 3 years. • All appropriation bills are posted online. • Check register is available. • Graphs available that show spending and revenue over time.	• Proposed budget will be posted 7 days before being voted on. • Publish Governor's proposed budget. • Published enacted budget. • Publish quarterly and annual reports. • Publish reports regarding tax expenditures. • SR will review more than one government sponsored website when looking for these documents.
Usability	• Consistent use of web domains. • Website has functional internal search. • Information is ideally found within 6 clicks or less. • Information is presented in a clear and concise manner. • Has a consistent easy-to-use interface.	• Databases will be downloadable. • All PDF's, financial data, and legislation will be searchable.
Elected officials	• Contact information, including emails, is available for all officials. • Terms of office and next election date are disclosed. • Party affiliation is disclosed. • Conflict of interest agreements are published. • Committee appointments are online. • Voting records are available.	• Salaries and pension benefits are disclosed for elected officials. • SR will separate review of executive and legislative branches.

Item	2012 Requirements	2013 Additions
Administrative officials	• Contact information, including emails, is available for all officials.	• Will be replaced by Executive and Legislative reviews.
Ethics	• Ethic commission is formed, and guidelines of ethical behavior of officials is online. • Process for reporting ethics violations is available online. • Results of ethics investigations are posted online.	• None.
Audits	• Information about regular audits is available. • Audits results are posted online, as well as performance audits. • Schedules for audits are posted online.	• None.
Contracts	• Rules governing contracts disclosed. • Bids and approved contract statements for vendors over $10,000 posted.	• Complete statements for awarded contracts must be disclosed.
Lobbying	• Disclosure of state-paid lobbying activity. • Database of register lobbyists. • Agency lobbying contracts disclosed. • All grants given to non-profit organizations and reasons for the grant disclosed.	• Executive and Legislative lobbying recorded. • Lobbying databases will specify lobbyist, company, client, agency being lobbied, and purpose of lobbying.

Item	2012 Requirements	2013 Additions
Public records	• Contact information, including an email, for the public information officer for every state agency and department disclosed in a central location.	• Citizens will be able to request public records online, either by email or a submission form. • Information regarding public information violations and how to pursue them is disclosed. • Executive sessions and appropriation meetings will be broadcast online or archived. • At least 24 hours of notice is given prior to a public meeting. • Annual compliance surveys will be posted online that measure the number of public record requests submitted, number fulfilled, average time for compliance, and reasons for denials.
Taxes	• Information about state tax rates and total revenues will be disclosed.	• This section will be replaced by "Total compensation", requiring each department list the cost of salaries and benefits.