

What Texas' Local Leaders Are Saying About Transparent Government

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Did You Know?

As of December 2010, over 250 cities, counties, school districts, and special districts had been recognized by the Texas Comptroller's office for their efforts to adopt basic standards of transparency.

Randall County found that the cost of creating a "searchable database" was as low as \$10,000—not the \$500,000 some have said.

Roby CISD put its budget and check register online at NO cost to taxpayers—the work was done in-house.

The City of Tyler put its check register online at no additional cost to taxpayers—again, everything was done in-house.

Anthony ISD found that the setup time required to post information online "took less than a week."

To update Big Spring ISD's financial information online it takes "no more than two to three hours per month of staff time."

Texas' state and local governments are saving over \$50 million every year through a new online ordering system called TexasSmartBuy.

Financial transparency—the timely, meaningful, and reliable disclosure of government budget and spending information—is fast-becoming standard practice among many of Texas' local governments as officials discover just how much time and money can be saved by opening up their books to taxpayers.

The excerpts below, compiled from TexasTransparency.org, describe why a growing number of officials believe this move for open government is important and how it is benefitting Texas taxpayers everywhere.

"...the more open government is, the more people participate. A great many people have lost faith in our government leaders, with the lack of disclosure, especially in financial matters. The least we can do is to make them feel they can still participate in their local governments and know they have some control when it comes to how their tax dollars are spent."

~ *Donna Welsh, Copper Canyon Town Administrator*

"Transparency has saved taxpayer dollars by saving time not producing masses of books, using copying machines, paper, binding materials, postage, maintenance, repairs and overtime creating all the budget books and CAFRs."

~ *Joan Fisher, Burnet County Auditor*

"The best benefit is having relevant and timely financial and operational data available to the public online 24/7. The ultimate goal is to have the most transparency possible to members of the general public."

~ *Wallace Hardgrove, El Paso County Budget and Finance Manager*

"...it sends the message to the public that we are partners, we have nothing to hide, this is how we spend."

~ *Orlando Sanchez, Harris County Treasurer*

"Implementing transparency was easy ... Adding the check register didn't cost anything, just an hour or two of staff time."

~ *Karen Kantor, Randall County Auditor*

"There is no excuse for any school district not to post budgets and check registers online."

~ *Bob Foster, Hart ISD Technology Coordinator*

"We hope that by making as much information available as possible on our website, we let our community see how we are using their money to educate their children."

~ *David Hale, Roby CISD Superintendent*