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Research

Survey: Local governmental services face cuts

By Dana Conroy
Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy

Many local governments across Michigan expect to cut service levels in the next year, according to a new survey by the Center for Local, State and Urban Policy, a research center at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy.

With the recession continuing to have far-reaching effects and the state transitioning from a manufacturing-based economy, local governments in Michigan are struggling to cope with rising costs and falling revenues. Leaders believe they lack appropriate financing for economic development and could increase existing substantial efforts at regional cooperation.

CLOSUP, in partnership with the Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Association of Counties and Michigan Townships Association, recently surveyed local government leaders to determine the crucial fiscal and economic issues for Michigan's communities. This survey was the first in a new ongoing program called the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS).

The researchers intend that the MPPS will improve policymaking and the quality of life in Michigan communities by identifying critical issues facing local governments. The survey also is designed to inform state and local policymakers as well as foundations, community groups and others of the priorities and challenges facing Michigan's local governments.

The MPPS is the first of its kind nationwide — it is the only survey to poll every unit of general-purpose local government in an entire state.

"The MPPS is unique because it provides significant insight into the situations currently facing the leaders of local governments of all types, across the whole state," says Brian Jacob, professor of public policy and economics and CLOSUP director. "We can learn a great deal about how Michigan's communities are responding at the grassroots level to today's economic challenges."

The first MPPS survey was sent to all of Michigan's 1,858 local units of governments, of which 1,204 jurisdictions replied.

Reports are forthcoming on individual jurisdictions and issue areas.

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