LFN 2018-16	**Local Finance Notice**
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Governor	*Commissioner & Lieutenant Governor*	*Director*

Financial Automation Submission Tracking (FAST) Solution Update:
Reopening of the Budget Module for Municipalities
Required Use for Fiscal Year Municipalities,
Encouraged Use for Calendar Year Municipalities and Counties

Local Government Officials and Employees:

The Division continues to make progress with the implementation of the FAST Solution. Consistent with Local Finance Notice 2018-09, the Division promulgated a working test group, which utilized 2018 adopted budget data to field test the FAST Budget Module. As part of the test group process, the Division provided ongoing support and held twice-weekly conference calls to discuss questions or concerns raised by the test group. The test group provided the Division with significant feedback and suggestions, the vast majority of which have been implemented by our technology partner. The Division would again like to acknowledge those individuals who have taken the time to ensure that the utilization of the FAST Solution is a seamless and user-friendly process.

The Division is excited to announce the reopening of the FAST Budget Module. As you are aware, the Division is requiring the use of FAST for the submission of State Fiscal Year 2019 municipal submissions of the Annual Debt Statement, Annual Financial Statement, and budget documents. The previous deferral of submission of the budget document through the FAST Solution remains intact for counties and municipalities operating on a Calendar Year. Calendar Year municipalities and counties will be required to enter their budgets into FAST starting in 2019. However, the FAST Budget Module does contain a "roll-over" feature that will allow information from one year to populate in the corresponding field(s) in the following year's budget document, so the Division is strongly encouraging Calendar Year municipalities and counties to enter their adopted 2018 budget information into the FAST Solution.

The Division is confident that the deliberate delay in the process of implementing the FAST Solution has resulted in a more user-friendly process for submitting information through the Budget Module. I again thank those who have participated in the process of testing the FAST Solution and those who have offered constructive feedback.

Sincerely,

Timothy J. Cunningham, Director

This section will cover Frequently Asked Questions about the roll out of the FAST Budget Module as well as questions anticipated following this notice.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: *Will submission of the 2019 Budget Document through the FAST Solution be mandatory for State Fiscal Year municipalities?*

Answer: Yes. All SFY municipalities are required to submit their 2019 financial documents, including their budgets, through FAST. The Budget Module has been significantly tested during the period in which it was offline and the Division is confident that submission of 2019 budget documents will be a more user-friendly process.

Question: *I have existing 2018 budget information in FAST. Am I required to complete my 2018 budget document in FAST after it has already been both introduced and adopted on paper?*

Answer: If a Calendar Year municipality has already introduced and adopted its 2018 budget on paper, they are encouraged, but are not required, to fully enter their 2018 budget into FAST. If a municipality's 2018 budget is entered into FAST, that budget information will roll-over to its 2019 budget record. This will significantly reduce the data entry time necessary for users to submit their 2019 budgets through FAST. Any 2018 budgets that remain in FAST as active, but are not verified as adopted, will not roll-over to CY 2019.

Question: *Do any outstanding issues raised by the working test group remain unresolved?*

Answer: The Percentage of Tax Collections on the Explanatory Statement section is currently displaying as a decimal and the Division is working with its technology partner to correct this so that the value correctly displays as a percentage. All other identified issues have been fixed.

Question: *Has the speed and ease of data entry of the FAST Solution been addressed?*

Answer: Yes. The Division has been working with its technology partner to configure fields in a manner that will allow for faster calculations and ease in navigation. Users will notice an improvement in the speed of the FAST Solution when navigating the Budget Module specifically in relation to those with a Utility Fund.

Question: *Will I be required to file a separate User-Friendly Budget document for the SFY/CY 2019 budget?*

Answer: No. In addition to generating a standard budget document, users will also be able to generate a User-Friendly Budget document from FAST. The Budget Module contains a User-Friendly Budget Narrative where users will enter information unique to the User-Friendly Budget. The UFB document will populate using data from the Budget Module, UFB Narrative, and the local government entity's Annual Debt Statement.

Question: *Will the Division be providing updates during the 2019 budget process?*

Answer: Yes! The Division continues to increase the level of communication with its various stakeholders and will continue to update local officials as any significant updated are made to the FAST Solution.

Question: *Who can I contact if I am having difficulty while entering my budget information into FAST?*

Answer: For technical assistance with the FAST Solution, contact HelpDesk@dca.nj.gov or call (609) 292-8134.