

**LFN 2018-09**

**February 23, 2018**

# Local Finance Notice

Philip D. Murphy  
 Governor

Sheila Y. Oliver  
 Commissioner & Lieutenant Governor

Timothy J. Cunningham  
 Director

## Contact Information

### Director's Office

V. 609.292.6613  
 F. 609.633.6243

### Legislative and Regulatory Affairs

V. 609.292.6110  
 F. 609.633.6243

### Financial Regulation and Assistance

V. 609.292.4806  
 F. 609.984.7388

### Local Finance Board

V. 609.292.0479  
 F. 609.633.6243

### Mail and Delivery

101 South Broad St.  
 PO Box 803  
 Trenton, New Jersey  
 08625-0803

### Web:

[www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dlgs](http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dlgs)

E-mail: [dlgs@dca.nj.gov](mailto:dlgs@dca.nj.gov)

### Distribution

Municipal CFOs  
 Municipal Clerks  
 Auditors

## Financial Automation Submission Tracking (FAST) Solution Update: Division Defers Mandatory Utilization for Calendar Year 2018 Budgets

Local Government Officials and Employees:

The Division is excited that the process to modernize and streamline the financial reporting structure for Local Government entities is underway. This process has been a long time in the making and when we set out in late 2016 to undertake this monumental task, we knew that the timeline set forth was aggressive, but we took the challenge. We recognize that the technological and logistical benefits that the FAST Solution will provide to local units in the years to come are numerous and without question. To ensure that this program came to fruition after decades of setbacks, I purposely directed the Division and its partners to press forward and deal with issues immediately as they were known, in order to keep momentum moving forward.

After careful consideration and contemplation of our constituents' concerns, the time has come to take a step back and realign our timeline for implementation so as not to continue to stress our local entities. Throughout the development of the FAST Solution and the implementation of the Annual Debt Statement and Annual Financial Statement modules, concerns have been raised by stakeholders, and the Division has been listening. We have therefore made the decision to defer the mandatory utilization of the FAST Solution for Calendar Year Budget submissions until 2019. Local Units operating on the **Calendar Year** will not be required to utilize the FAST Solution for **2018** Budget submissions. However, Local Units operating on the **State Fiscal Year** will continue to be expected to file **SFY 2019** budgets through the FAST Solution in the coming months. For counties, the previous deferral of submission of the Budget Document through FAST until 2019 remains intact. While I realize that this process has not been simple in its implementation, I felt that it was imperative that the Division sustain momentum in order to carry this project over the finish line after decades of starts and stops.

The Division will be taking the Budget Module off-line in the month following this decision, allowing the Division and its technology partners to dedicate additional time and talent to extensively test the system and make all adjustments that will be necessary to have a clean roll out for use with Fiscal Year 2019 budgets. The concerns raised by the many public officials and employees who have engaged with the process and attended the Division's workshop sessions are valid and the Division has heard you.

This momentary delay in the process will ultimately result in a clear, concise, and logistically efficient process that will benefit all our local units and, in turn, the taxpayers of New Jersey. The Division's goal of a cost-effective, labor-saving, and transparent budget process is nearly met. I thank those who have participated and offered constructive feedback. Please see the accompanying Frequently Asked Questions attachment for additional information.

Sincerely,



Timothy J. Cunningham, Director

This section will cover Frequently Asked Questions about the process roll out as well as questions anticipated following this notice. Please read on.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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

**Answer:** Yes. All municipalities operating on a Calendar Year will be required to submit their 2019 Budget Document through the FAST Solution. By taking the system offline for an additional enhancement and testing period, the Division is confident that the submission of 2019 Budget Documents through FAST will be a seamless and user-friendly process.

**Question:** *Will State Fiscal Year municipalities be able to properly enter their 2019 Budget information into the FAST Solution?*

**Answer:** Yes. The majority of the configuration of the Budget Document is complete and remaining open items will be addressed during the period in which the system is offline. The Division is confident that SFY municipalities will be submitting their information through a complete Budget module that has been sufficiently tested and refined.

**Question:** *What will happen to the Budget information that has already been entered into FAST?*

**Answer:** Any Budget information entered into FAST thus far will remain in the system and be available for final updating as soon as all testing has been completed. Your efforts thus far have not been wasted, as you will be able to enter information in addition to what is already in the system. This will also allow for an easier 2019 Budget cycle as 2018 Budget information will roll over.

**Question:** *Can the FAST Solution continue to be used by registered portal users who wish to gain familiarity with the FAST Solution in preparation for use in subsequent years?*

**Answer:** The Budget Document section of the FAST Solution will be temporarily inactive for testing and enhancements. In a few weeks the Budget Document will be active once again and users will be able to, and are encouraged to, continue entering 2018 information into the Budget Document to gain experience navigating the system and allow for the roll over functionality of the system for the 2019 Budget cycle.

**Question:** *Will those Calendar Year municipalities who are comfortable with the FAST Solution be permitted to submit the 2018 Budget Document through the FAST Solution?*

**Answer:** Possibly. The FAST Solution will be immediately reopened following the testing and enhancement period. We cannot guarantee the exact length of this process, so we recommend preparing a paper document for introduction and potentially adoption. As previously stated, adoption of the document through FAST will not be mandatory for Calendar Year 2018.

**Question:** Will I be required to file a User-Friendly Budget document for the 2018 Calendar Year Budget?

**Answer:** Yes, municipalities operating on a Calendar Year will still be required to submit a User-Friendly Budget document for 2018 as required by statute. The User-Friendly Budget may be submitted on paper, but can also be generated from FAST once 2018 Budget information has been entered in the system. The Division will recognize an allowance of time beyond the legally mandated date for submissions generated through the FAST Solution due to any delays caused by system enhancements.

**Question:** *Will the Division be providing updates prior to the deadline for Fiscal Year 2019 Budget submissions?*

**Answer:** Yes! As this process has unfolded the Division has increased the level of communication with stakeholders and will continue to communicate regularly. The Division will periodically update local officials and employees as enhancements are completed and deadlines approach.

**Question:** What do these changes mean for the submission of the Annual Financial Statement and Annual Debt Statement documents through FAST?

**Answer:** These modules will remain active. Filers are reminded that the Annual Financial Statement is due Monday, February 26, 2018. The decision to defer the submission of the Budget Document through FAST will allow for the full resources of the Division and its technology partner to assist local entities in completing their Annual Financial Statement. As a reminder, the Department of Community Affairs HelpDesk remains open for those local units seeking assistance with the FAST Solution.

**Question:** *Who can I contact if I am having trouble during practice sessions with the FAST Solution or if I would like to volunteer as a tester?*

**Answer:** For assistance with the FAST Solution [helpdesk@dca.nj.gov](mailto:helpdesk@dca.nj.gov) or call **609.292.8134**.

---

Approved: Timothy J. Cunningham, Director