BUNCOMBE COUNTY GOVERNMENT
TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE
OPEN CHECKBOOK PROJECT STATUS
9/28/2018

OVERVIEW

The "Open Checkbook" project has been identified by the Board of Commissioners as a step toward improving transparency for Buncombe County government. The following is a status summary of this project.

PROJECT GOAL

To provide the public with an accessible, online listing of payments made to suppliers and vendors by Buncombe County government.

PROJECT STATUS

This project is currently in development, and a draft of the "Online Checkbook" portal has been created. The major challenge to overcome for this project is in regard to privacy requirements around some of the data to be included. The following points outline this issue:

- Not all detailed payment information can be public. Providing certain information could be a breach of the HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996) or PII (Personally Identifiable Information) laws. Additionally, publication of certain information could lead to exposure of an undercover public safety officer in the line of duty. Examples of information falling into these categories include the names of human services clients, self-insurance claimants, or elections workers; and payments made in relation to public safety investigations.
- County staff are developing a review process to redact sensitive information while maintaining maximum transparency for clearly public information.
- Determining which payments have sensitive information is a new process that requires thorough validation by many different departments.

In an order to make progress while maintaining the integrity of sensitive data, a multi-phased rollout approach is planned, as outlined in the timeline below.

PROJECT TIMELINE

- 10/2/2018 – **Status update to Board**
- 10/16/2018 – **Phase I Rollout**
  - "Online Checkbook" site initial launch
  - Data reported from FY2019, Q1 (July thru September)
  - Dataset to include General Fund, General Government cost centers
    - This is a "low-risk" data set for sensitive data
    - Delaying rollout of "high-risk" cost centers like Public Safety and Human Services allows additional time to validate compliance with privacy requirements.
- 1/1/2019 – **Phase II Rollout**
  - Data reported through FY2019, Q2 (adding October thru December)
  - Dataset to include all General Fund cost centers
- 2/1/2019 – **Phase III Rollout**
  - Dataset reported for FY2019 to date
  - All other funds to be included
- Monthly refreshes of data moving forward