**Fiscal Facts: New Data Tool Compares Fiscal, Demographic Data on every City and Village in Wisconsin**

The 2019 Municipal DataTool is the new way to compare public finances and demographics for all 601 of the state’s cities and villages. Created by the Wisconsin Policy Forum, the tool is a digital version of MunicipalFacts, previously published annually by one of the Forum’s predecessor organizations, the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance. It merged in 2018 with the Public Policy Forum to form the Wisconsin Policy Forum, now the state’s leading source for independent, nonpartisan research on state and local public policy.

The new tool includes data on every municipality in Wisconsin — from the village of Big Falls (population 57) to the city of Milwaukee. Data is grouped into the following areas: property taxes, spending, debt, shared revenue and property values, and income and population. The latest five years of data are provided, enabling users to see trends over time (generally from 2013 to 2017).

Overall findings from the data show that in all 601 cities and villages, net operating spending per capita remained at $953 in 2017, unchanged from 2016. Spending on police was the only major municipal spending category to grow, rising from $270 per capita in 2016 to $274 per capita in 2017. Municipal debt rose, reaching $1,688 per capita in 2017 — an increase of nearly 12% since 2013. This came as the Consumer Price Index, a widely used measure of inflation, rose 5.2% in the same span.

These trends, at least in part, may reflect policy decisions at the state level that limit key revenues such as property taxes and state aid. Since 2012, property tax growth generally has been limited to the increase in the value of net new construction within a municipality. Property tax levies rose modestly each year from 2014 to 2018. But property tax rates declined overall as growth in property value outpaced growth in tax levies.

*This information is a service of the Wisconsin Policy Forum, the state’s leading resource for nonpartisan state and local government research and civic education. Learn more at wispolicyforum.org.*