

## Engage Gwinnett Recommendations Status – Internal Services

Updated 2010 – 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	Updated 2011 - 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	Updated 2011 – 2nd Quarter
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Service Area	Status Quo, Declining Tax Digest, or General	Recommendation	Status	Actions Taken	Budget Impact
	Status Quo	We are very concerned about how much additional work the Internal Services departments can handle without serious threat to their abilities to function. Therefore, we recommend that proposed changes in the funding and operations of Internal Services departments be subject to an intense review and analysis process. All possible consequences should be fully investigated, and projected benefits should be carefully balanced with the risks associated with the proposed changes.	Complete	These changes have been implemented with great care, incorporating multiple perspectives when changes have been considered. Continuing to shift the cost of health and retirement benefits to employees is one such example where internal service departments help to drive better fiscal policies. As part of the 2011 business planning and budget process, internal service departments had the opportunity to review the plans and budgets of all other departments to assess any potential impact to the services each department provides to them and adjust their plans accordingly.	No budget impacts.
	Status Quo	In fact, we believe that the Internal Services areas may have been cut to a point at which their ability to support the rest of County government may be in jeopardy. Accordingly, we recommend that the County closely examine the potential shortfalls in service which are likely and the impact these will have on other County operations.	Complete	The Internal Services departments met together as a group during the 2011 budget process in order to ensure that all considered changes and their impacts were discussed and planned. Examinations of potential shortfalls in service will continue. Although the Internal Service departments operate independently, their core missions to support the organization are consistent. Synergies among these departments will be explored in the future to align improvements and efficiencies across all support functions.	No budget impacts.
	Status Quo	We urge that the County consider continuing with technological improvements that have been delayed, since the improvements would allow some Internal Services areas to accomplish more with their existing staff. This would be particularly helpful for Finance and HR.	Complete	Technology and innovation remain critical to the building blocks for efficiencies and coordinated efforts in 2010 and beyond. A technology plan has been implemented and improvements to SAP are currently being studied.	No budget impacts.
	Status Quo	We recommend that the Internal Services departments identify appropriate localities and organizations to use for benchmarking purposes. Comparisons with these peer localities and organizations should be an ongoing and formalized process. While we acknowledge that such comparisons are difficult and imperfect, we believe that it is important to demonstrate how Internal Services areas in Gwinnett County government compare with their counterparts across the country.	In Progress	This recommendation is under review. While staff concurs with the recommendation and the ability to gain information from peer organizations for both benchmarking and best practice identification, resources are not yet available to dedicate to this project.	

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	Status Quo	As part of this benchmarking effort, we urge the Internal Services departments to identify and evaluate the best practices of other progressive Internal Services departments, including how these departments are addressing cuts in funding.	In Progress	This recommendation is under review. While staff concurs with the recommendation and the ability to gain information from peer organizations for both benchmarking and best practice identification, resources are not yet available to dedicate to this project.	
Tax Assessors	Status Quo	We are alarmed by the level of risk associated with production of the County's tax digest under current economic and regulatory conditions, especially when coupled with the shifting of some appraisal functions to external firms. To allay potential problems, we recommend that the County assign additional staff with needed background and experience to manage the contractual relationships and to perform quality control for the entire appraisal process. This should be done even if it can only be accomplished by hiring additional experienced staff or contracting for quality-control services.	Complete	Gwinnett County was the first county in Georgia to get its digest approved in 2010. The state Department of Audits "Sales Ratio Study" results for 2010, using 2009 data, put Gwinnett at 38.63, well within the 36-44 range. For 2010 our appraisal staff reviewed all valid sales and made adjustments to properties where needed. Also for 2010, over 140,000 assessment notices were sent. Of these notices we had 9,915 appeals with 47 remaining open, most of which are now moving into Superior Court. We fully expect to be within the state-mandated range again for the 2010 data. Additionally, we are meeting the requirements for SB 346 by: utilizing technology to enable filing of returns electronically and managing data more effectively; implementing LEAN process improvements to increase throughput; launching a communication strategy to tax representatives and the public on how the process has changed and aiding their education; managing contractors so that flexibility in staffing needs is available dependent upon actual volumes of appeals received.	No budget impacts.
Tax Assessors	Status Quo	We recommend that the County carefully monitor the volume of appeals and other activities associated with the production of the tax digest and be prepared to provide additional resources to the Tax Assessors Office in the form of temporary staff or contractual services should these be necessary.	Complete	The Tax Assessor's Office has handled their increased workload through contracted services. This approach will continue into 2011, with expanded contracts to manage a greater amount of activity and the requirements attributable to new legislation.	No budget impacts.
Tax Assessors	Status Quo	We recommend that the Board of Tax Assessors assume a leadership role in determining the resources needed by the Tax Assessors Office and seeking these from the County.	Complete	The Board of Assessors has been briefed and officially approved and adopted the Office of the Tax Assessors' business plan for 2011, which includes all the enhancements being implemented.	No budget impacts.
	Declining Tax Digest	Establish minimum levels that must be maintained for certain services, without which fundamental operations cannot continue. For example, the County must produce payroll checks and meet payroll reporting requirements set by the federal and state governments.	Complete	The reductions in support departments that occurred in 2008, 2009, and 2010 will continue into 2011. Additional reductions in these areas will handicap these departments from being able to provide core services.	No budget impacts.

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	Declining Tax Digest	Involve the other departments, which are customers of the Internal Service areas, in determining internal services that can be eliminated or reduced. This may involve a poll or roundtable discussions to identify the services that each County department is willing to give up.	In Progress	Roundtable discussions are under consideration. Although this was conducted during the formulation of the 2011 budget process and resulted in some adjustments, it has not been completed for existing service levels.	
	Declining Tax Digest	Analyze fully any proposed changes for the potential risk associated with the change, as well as the possibility of unintended consequences that may negate or offset the savings projected to be generated by the change.	Complete	During the business planning and budget preparation process, the back office departments met as a group to go over all of the requests for service enhancements and reductions. An analysis was conducted of the impact any changes would have on the organization. This type of collaboration and analysis will continue moving forward.	No budget impacts.
	Declining Tax Digest	Work through this process and develop the plan for reductions in advance so that implementation is not delayed should reductions be necessary.	Complete	The 2011 General Fund budget was adopted with a \$38 million deficit. As part of the financial management plan, staff deployed a very organized mission to engage all service delivery areas in discussions about additional expenditure reductions and revenue enhancements. Meetings were held, and continue to be held, to discuss the current financial position of the County and to discover ways in which we can continue to prepare for our financial future. Although fiscal year 2011 has been effectively balanced, the Board of Commissioners and staff continue to find ways in which the County's five year financial plan can be improved. Efforts have shifted from our current fiscal year deficit to the forecasted and projected deficits of fiscal year 2012 through 2016. Staff will continue to incorporate the Engage Gwinnett recommendations into how we work towards a balanced financial future.	No budget impacts.