A subject guide to our blog posts between January 4 and March 31, 2017

We realize that our blog does not (yet) have a good search mechanism. Key words at the bottom of posts are helpful to some extent, but we wanted to give our readers an additional way to keep up with what we’ve written.

Our plan is to provide an index, of sorts, each quarter with a subject-headed list of what we’ve written about. In the list below, there is a tiny bit of duplication, but we tried to keep it to a minimum. Most recent items are listed first.

Our first blog post, describing our intentions for the blog, was published on the first day this website went live, January 4, 2017. You can find it [here](#).

B&G Report Subject Guide, first quarter 2017

Audit Watch

**Procurement: Life after the contract is signed**, March 30, 2017 - Procurement officials work hard on negotiating prices for commodity contracts that cover government-wide purchases, but an Atlanta audit finds that actual purchase prices often stray from those agreements.

**Audit hurdles**, March 20, 2017 - The hassle auditors confront when departments don’t cooperate.

**Construction bidding: Fairness and accountability**, March 15, 2017 - An Oregon audit examines the impact of inaccuracies in initial bids, which can lead to project costs that are greater than expected and may also compromise the fairness of competitive bidding.

**Overdoing overtime: A story of cops and gravediggers**, March 6, 2017 - Audits in states and local governments focus on the increase in overtime costs, which often go hand in hand with hiring troubles.

**Lost water: Leaky pipes and leaky accounting systems**, February 22, 2017 - Local audits have been tapping into the multiple problems that affect both water revenue and actual water resources. This post looks at Kansas City Water Services’ issues and flags recent and upcoming audits elsewhere.
Auditors tackle police-community relations, February 4, 2017 - Our look at recent audits in Austin, Lawrence, KS, San Jose, and Washington that focus on the often tense relationship between police and the communities they serve.

How independent should auditors be? January 26, 2017 - Portland’s auditor explains to the City Council why the city charter interferes with the independence of her office.

Do internal audit departments follow best practices, January 26, 2017 - Louisiana has 35 internal audit offices, but many don’t adhere to recommended practices, according to a January audit by the legislative auditor.

Mysteries of transportation project selection, January 23, 2017 - A short post looks at a critical state audit that found fault with Georgia’s benefit-cost analysis, selection-criteria and transparency for picking projects.

Budget and Finance

Budget exhibits: An unknown story in public administration, March 28, 2017 - Background details about the new slideshow on our home page, which features the story of early 20th Century efforts at engaging and educating citizens about budget matters.

Schools: How to make a village, March 27, 2017 - We look at the Government Finance Officers Association’s Smart School Spending program and how it gets finance and program officials to work together.

The pot tax conundrum, March 23, 2017 - When recreational marijuana use is legalized, states must adapt to new ways of collecting taxes from an industry that is largely cash-based.

Are all late financial reports accidental? February 23, 2017 - Most of the time financial reports are late because of technological issues or due to the complexity of implementing new rules. Sometimes, however, there are more questionable reasons for delay - like the desire to keep information from coming out at an inopportune time.

Civic education

The civic education crisis, March 7, 2017 - A blog post prompted by a webinar we moderated at the Council of State Governments, where we’re senior fellows, and by the bleak results from the Annenberg Public Policy Center’s most recent survey on civic knowledge.
A bright Nebraska idea, January 30, 2017 - Nebraska’s energy benchmarking effort uses high school students to do energy efficiency reviews of buildings. The payoff: energy savings and increased civic knowledge.

County government

Why counties don’t get no respect, February 9, 2017 - A longtime county official and director of the California Institute for Excellence in County Government talks with us about the widespread lack of knowledge about what counties do.

Demographics

What do Florida, Maine, Montana, Pennsylvania, Vermont and West Virginia have in common? March 17, 2017 - A short post features a map from the Pennsylvania State data center which highlights the percentage of older people in each of the 50 states.

Evaluation, measurement and research

How to get governments and universities to work together, March 21, 2017 - We relay the key messages of an excellent forum at the Sanford School of Public Policy, which brought practitioners, decision-makers and researchers together to talk about ways to achieve more productive collaborations.

Two more benchmarking reports, February 18, 2017 - We follow up on our Feb. 16 blog post by flagging the second and third part of San Francisco’s benchmarking effort, which came out later in the week.

Benchmarking data for 17 large cities, February 16, 2017 - The audit division in San Francisco's Controller's office compared San Francisco to 16 other cities on a variety of demographic and quality of life issues - info that is useful to the other cities as well.

Evidence-based practices: How does your state stack up? February 1, 2017 - Highlights from a new Results First report, which looks at the processes and laws in place in each of the 50 states to promote evidence-based practices. (We are advisors to this Pew Charitable Trusts project).

Mourning deceased government programs, January 19, 2017 - Why we miss the Kentucky Long-Term Research Center and other worthwhile organizations that have been de-funded by state legislatures.
Governors

**The attributable governor: Wisconsin!** March 31, 2017 - There are lots of similarities in governor state of the state addresses, and one big difference in Wisconsin - the transcript of the speech is fully sourced with links that show where the governor got his information.

**Executive orders: From droughts to blizzards with some opiates in between,** March 14, 2017 - We look across the 50 states to see what topics stood out in the nation’s gubernatorial executive orders during the last month and a half.

**Executive orders: Not just in the White House,** February 13, 2017 - Our blog post looks at the way governors use their executive orders and introduces a new feature on our Resources page, an interactive map providing links to executive orders from each of the 50 states (minus Kentucky and West Virginia, which we couldn’t find.)

Management, general

**State chief operating officers: In defense of the governors' legacies,** March 1, 2017 - A follow up post to our March 2017 Governing column, “The Rise of COOs in State Government.”

**The TEN BIG LIES of state and local government,** February 20, 2017 - Our collection of commonly heard remarks from public officials that stretch the truth. (We’ve expanded on this blog post in an upcoming Governing magazine column.)

**Lagging government inspections. Are you safe?** February 6, 2017 - A follow-up to our February 2017 Governing magazine column, “From Food to Buildings: Safety Inspections Are Lagging”. As with many government programs, funding and implementation challenges make it hard to meet the requirements written into policies.

**“Just a citizen?” Argggh,** February 2, 2017 - The person who answers the phone in a government office can do a lot of damage to the caller’s perception of government.
Procurement

Procurement: Life after the contract is signed, March 30, 2017 - Procurement officials work hard on negotiating prices for commodity contracts that cover government-wide purchases, but an Atlanta audit finds that actual purchase prices often stray from those agreements.

Construction bidding: Fairness and accountability, March 15, 2017 - An Oregon audit examines the impact of inaccuracies in initial bids, which can lead to project costs that are greater than expected and may also compromise the fairness of competitive bidding.

Recommended reading

Twenty years later: Lessons from welfare reform, March 22, 2017 - We recommend an excellent brief from the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin, which delves into the dramatic effects of the twenty-year-old law that changed the nation’s approach to welfare.

Looking for scintillating studies? March 13, 2017 - We start a new feature with the first recommendations focused on two excellent resources for learning about new studies and reports.

Transportation

Transportation stats: The good news and the bad, February 15, 2017 - We pull out the facts we find most interesting from the annual U.S. Department of Transportation statistical compilation.

Do you know whose road you’re on? February 7, 2017 - Citizens are often confused about which government provides which service. Roads provide a classic example.

Misleading road signs, January 24, 2017 - We wonder why out-of-date lane-closure signs near our home have been left up for more than a year.

Mysteries of transportation project selection, January 23, 2017 - A short post looking at a critical state audit that found fault with Georgia’s benefit-cost analysis, selection-criteria and transparency for picking projects.
Workforce issues (public employees)

Do you feverishly dislike meetings? March 16, 2017 - The downside of too many meetings and seven suggestions for making necessary ones more productive.

Daylight savings time: WATCH OUT! March 9, 2017 - The former CIO of Connecticut, now director of the public service practice at Kronos, gives advice on how to make the time shift easier for employees.

The state employee engagement problem: Follow-up comments, March 8, 2017 - Experts in the human resources field consider why state government employees appear to be less engaged than other workers.

Overdoing overtime: A story of cops and gravediggers, March 6, 2017 - Audits in states and local governments focus on the increase in overtime costs, which often go hand in hand with hiring troubles.

Why to think twice about a hiring freeze, March 2, 2017 - A report from Pennsylvania shows how a hiring freeze failed to save money and, instead, increased corrections department costs.

The state employee engagement problem, February 28, 2017 - A new survey finds that local government employees are just as engaged in their work as private sector employees. That’s not true of the people who work for state governments.

Succession planning: The Challenges, February 2, 2017 - The director of management and budget for Carroll County, Maryland, tells us about the difficulties in implementing a succession plan.

Water

Water lost and found: Policy solutions, February 25, 2017 - A follow up to our “Lost water” blog post.

Lost water: Leaky pipes and leaky accounting systems, February 22, 2017 - Local audits have been tapping into the multiple problems that affect both water revenue and actual water resources. This post looks at Kansas City Water Services’ issues and flags recent and upcoming audits elsewhere.

Eek! The mushrooming cost of water infrastructure, February 10, 2017 - The Massachusetts auditor reports the results of a municipal impact study that found the commonwealth’s municipalities face a whopping $17.8 billion in water infrastructure needs over the next 20 years.