

TENNESSEE COUNTY  
COMMISSIONERS  
ASSOCIATION

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# TCCA News

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## Energy Grants for Counties

The Department of Economic and Community Development announced this month that \$9.3 million in federal stimulus funds will be available to small- and medium-sized cities and counties through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program. The competitive grants are available to assist local governments in conserving energy and reducing fossil fuel emissions. If you were at the TCSA fall conference in Chattanooga earlier this month, this is the program that was described by Dan Hawk during our membership meeting. Areas of funding that will be given priority include: developing an overall energy effi-

ciency and conservation strategy; retrofitting existing buildings with cost effective energy efficient measures; implementing renewable energy technologies on government buildings; and replacing traffic signals and street lighting with energy efficient lighting technologies. The 17 largest cities and 10 largest counties in Tennessee may apply directly to the U.S. Department of Energy for EECBG funds. All other cities and counties may apply through the state of Tennessee by **5 p.m. CST on December 30, 2009**. Applications and more information about the program are available at <http://tneecd.gov/recovery/eecbg.html>. The maximum grant amount will

be \$100,000 and partial funding may be awarded. ECD will host two application workshops on Nov. 2, 2009 in Nashville at the Ellington Agricultural Center from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. and again from 1 – 4 p.m. CST. The meeting will focus on the guidelines and application process and offer suggestions for making an application more competitive. Applications will be scored based on the local government's strategy, feasibility, readiness to proceed, impact, partnerships and the ability to extend funding impact beyond a one time use. If you have difficulty accessing the materials, contact our office.

## THDA Mortgage Program Report

The Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA) research division has released a report on homeownership penetration in the counties across the state and the use of that agency's loan programs. The report details the use of four different mortgage programs in Tennessee's three grand divisions, by Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), and by

county. These four programs include the Great Rate, Great Advantage, Great Start and New Start mortgages. For more information about these programs, THDA or the information in this report, contact Toni Harris at THDA via e-mail at [THarris@thda.org](mailto:THarris@thda.org) or by phone at 615-815-2182. The report can be accessed here: <http://www.thda.org/Research/mortstat/fy09.pdf>



## Tennessee SCORE Releases Final Report

On October 22, the Tennessee State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) released its final report entitled "A Roadmap to Success: A Plan to Make Tennessee Schools #1 in the Southeast Within Five Years." The report contains a detailed roadmap of how to achieve this goal based on four key strategies: 1) Embrace High Standards, 2) Cultivate Strong Leaders, 3) Ensure Excellent Teachers, and 4) Utilize Data To Enhance Student Learning. The report contains over 60 specific recommendations for how to pursue these four strategies, identifies who is responsible for implementing each of these specific recommendations, and details a timeline on which these

recommendations can be completed. The plan requires no new state funding in the short-term, although four priorities for long-term state investment are identified. The report concludes by identifying specific actions 14 different stakeholder groups can take to implement this plan, including recommendations for local governments. As you know, TN SCORE made presentations at our TCCA Regional Meetings this year and was very interested in reaching out to and hearing from county commissioners. Former U.S. Senator Bill Frist, Chairman of the Tennessee State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE), sent TCCA a special message directed to county commissioners that discusses your

involvement in this process and the recommendations for local governments. Click [here](#) to read this message. For more information about SCORE and to view an electronic copy of the SCORE final report, you may visit [www.tennesseescore.org](http://www.tennesseescore.org).



## New Guidelines for Municipal and County Financing

The Tennessee State Funding Board has approved a sweeping set of changes implementing enhanced requirements to the guidelines that govern cities and counties that propose to enter into interest rate swaps and other exotic financial transactions. The revised guidelines are aimed at eliminating potential conflicts of interest by prohibiting individuals or companies from representing more than one side in derivative transactions. These revisions require greater transparency in the way information

is reported and communicated about the transactions and require comprehensive disclosure of fees paid. Cities and counties will have to demonstrate that they employ people with sufficient expertise to understand these complex transactions, including a chief financial officer and an accountant. Cities and counties must also meet minimum outstanding debt requirements and have an audit committee and a capital improvement plan. Communities that do not meet all the requirements

laid out in the guidelines have the option of appearing before state Comptroller Justin P. Wilson or his staff to explain that they fully understand all the risks involved and can comply with their debt and derivative management policy and the ongoing risk monitoring and reporting requirements. The guidelines can be viewed at the Comptroller's web site: <http://www.tn.gov/comptroller/lf/lfsfundbd.htm>.



## Office of Legislative Budget Analysis Releases 2009 County By County Report

This detailed report, which attempts to estimate how state dollars are benefiting each county in the state, is now available online. You may access all ninety-five reports by visiting <http://www.capitol.tn.gov/joint/staff/budget-analysis/county-reports/>. Please note these reports are an indicator of how state dollars are benefiting a particular county. Many of the funds listed in the report are administered by a state agency - not allocated directly to the county itself. Items are reported in the following eight categories: State Shared Taxes; K-12 Education; Health and Social Services; Law, Safety and Corrections; Recreation, Tourism and Preservation; Economic Development and Higher Education; Capital Outlay; and Transportation.