

URP510: FISCAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

Fall 2023

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URP510 is designed to provide urban planners and related professionals with the theories and techniques of public financial management. The course aims to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to be able to assess a community's financial conditions and examine the fiscal impacts of proposed developments. The course will first discuss the major revenue sources for local governments, including property tax, local income/sales tax, and user charges and fees. It will then examine debt financing, budgeting, and capital improvement plan to understand how local governments plan and finance local public services and infrastructure development. The course will also introduce several commonly-used local fiscal tools in promoting and managing urban development, including tax increment financing, fiscal impact analysis, business improvement districts, and public investment analysis.

Learning Goals:

By the end of the term, students will be able to

- Articulate the mechanics of major local revenue instruments such as property tax, local income/sales tax, user charges and development fees, and their potential contributions to municipal fiscal health.
- Construct basic financial analysis to identify the tradeoff communities have to make in balancing their revenue and expenditure and determine local property tax liability.
- Collect, analyze, and interpret data to examine a community's budgeting document or capital improvement plan, identify how communities define priorities in resource allocation and service provision, and develop key financial indicators to help communities monitor their long-term fiscal health.
- Identify the causes and consequences of fiscal disparities across jurisdictions and fiscal stress that many communities have experienced.
- Develop financial analysis using some of the commonly-used tools such as tax increment financing and fiscal impact analysis. Understand the strength and weakness of these tools and be able to identify what planners can do to help ensure a more equitable outcome in the application of these tools.
- Construct cash-flow analysis to examine the financial feasibility of public investment projects.

Course requirements:

Course assignments for two-credit students include two problem sets, a group project and an exam. Students who take the course for three credits will have one additional problem set.