Helping You Shape the Future.

NIU’s Center for Governmental Studies helps decision-makers create and implement efficient, sustainable, and cost-effective approaches to social, economic, and information management issues. CGS adds value for our clients and partners in many different ways. Following are highlights of our work in seven main practice areas.

Association Management

Association Management offers administrative and financial services to organizations serving the public sector. We strive to craft cost-effective solutions to core association needs through services that include:

- Professional executive management
- Resource development
- Board governance
- Conference and meeting management
- Accounting and bookkeeping services
- Internal Communications and member/constituent relations
- External communications and public relations

Current Clients:

**Illinois City/County Management Association:** ILCMA’s more than 750 members are professionals who share a common interest in promoting effective local government. Members include city, village, and county managers and administrators and their assistants, persons interested in local government management, students, consultants, and other management professionals.

**ILCMA Affiliates:**
- Illinois Association for Municipal Management Assistants
- Downstate City/County Management Association
- Metropolitan Management Association
- The Legacy Project
- Illinois Association of County Administrators

**American Planning Association – Illinois Chapter:** The APA-IL strives to inform, educate, and connect its 1,700 members to resources and tools that advance the practice of urban planning throughout Illinois.

**Illinois Local Government Lawyers Association:** The ILGL enables local government lawyers to share information and solutions to problems of mutual interest by providing an open forum for the exchange of ideas and discussion of issues.

**Midwest Leadership Institute:** The MLI supports local government leaders in connecting interpersonally and emotionally with other leaders so they may better lead themselves and others.

**Wisconsin City/County Management Association:** The WCMA promotes professional and ethical local government management by providing an inclusive, collegial environment in which its members can pursue public service excellence.
Community and Economic Development

The Community and Economic Development Team works with local, state, and federal agencies to create an attractive local and regional investment environment and address quality of life issues.

Services include:
- Economic and community development strategies
- Community development planning
- Demographic and economic trend analyses
- Business attraction and retention
- Policy analysis
- Local government efficiency assessment dashboard
- Economic and fiscal impact analysis
- Redevelopment and housing studies
- Entrepreneurship development
- Rural development
- Labor market analyses and profiles

Community and Economic Development Project Highlights

- **Tourism Studies**: Tourism based on local heritage or natural resources plays an important role in rural economies. The potential for the Galena History Museum to broaden its focus and develop a new campus was examined to estimate future visitation, revenue growth, and the economic impact on the area. A study for Starved Rock State Park examined current visitor needs and the potential impact of anticipated demographic changes on recreation interests. Strategies were developed using information gathered in the park and surrounding area, fiscal and economic factors, and best practices from state and national parks across the U.S.

- **Housing Analyses**: CGS provided the City of DeKalb with databases on housing supply and related economic and demographic features at a detailed geographic level. This information is useful in designing economic and community development initiatives to improve housing and related issues at the neighborhood level. A needs assessment for Monmouth, IL, combined several approaches to estimate market support for housing and recommended strategies for successful residential development.

- **Economic and Community Development Strategies**: Over a dozen communities in DeKalb County were assisted in developing economic and/or community development strategies. Each community was provided with information on its key economic and demographic features, assets and challenges, and stakeholder input. Facilitated meetings enabled residents, business owners and municipal officials to work through suggested goals and strategies, and develop a list of prioritized projects to undertake. Ongoing technical assistance is encouraging successful implementation and/or community development strategies.

- **Community Supported Enterprises**: A project was conducted with University of Wisconsin-Extension and Michigan State Extension to study Community Supported Enterprises as a way to finance essential businesses in small rural communities facing population declines. CGS prepared a report analyzing 20 CSEs in 2016 and in 2019 prepared a guidebook for practitioners to start such enterprises. CGS held several webinars on this project and is compiling a research volume with examples from eight countries.

- **Local Government Cost-Savings**: CGS staffed a Governor’s Task Force on Government Consolidation and Unfunded Mandates examining ways to help local governments collaborate to reduce costs and property taxes. CGS then created a Local Efficiency Assessment Plan (LEAP) with a guidebook and electronic database that guides local officials through a process to identify potential collaborations and cost-savings for services.

Workforce Development

Workforce development team members prepare labor market analyses and profiles; research innovative workforce development models and strategies; integrate workforce initiatives with economic and community development efforts; and support policy development to better align workforce supply and demand.

Services include:
- Policy and program development
- Policy and program evaluation
- Workforce data analysis and reporting
- Workforce development strategies
Workforce Development Project Highlights

- **Illinois Workforce Innovation Board Policy Development**: Under direction from the State Workforce Board, CGS staff conduct research to help inform policy development and evaluation with a particular focus on the implementation of federal workforce legislation at the state and local levels and apprenticeship programs. CGS has been instrumental in developing applications that have earned over $5 million in federal grants to support the expansion of apprenticeships in Illinois.

- **Policy and Program Evaluation**: CGS provides state and local agencies with guidance and studies focused on improving services and participant outcomes. Current work includes examining the outcomes of Illinois’ recently implemented Minimum Training Expenditure policy and a process evaluation of Illinois local workforce areas service integration self-assessment process.

- **Colorado Department of Labor and Employment Evidence Based Practice Academy**: Workforce Development Team member are partnering with state and local workforce development leaders to develop a holistic model of Evidence Based Practice (EBP). This model reflects a continuum of proficiency and capacity, with a goal of establishing where participating organizations are on the EBP continuum and providing the training and resources to help them progress toward full integration.

Informatics

Informatics Team members design, build, manage, and mine databases of all sizes to support public organizations in their problem-solving and decision-making. The team serves as a technical consultant for various state departments and agencies to provide professional data and analytical support and build advanced, dynamic applications. SAS (Statistical Analysis System) is a primary use tool, but other programming languages such as SQL, HTML, CSS, JavaScript, C# and .NET are also used. All of the team’s work meets the highest standards of data security and confidentiality requirements.

Services include:
- Dynamic web applications
- Ad hoc reporting
- Data preparation
- Data warehousing ETL (Extract, Transform, Load)
- Data modeling, mining, and analysis
- Data Integration (cross-matching, modification, calculation, and manipulation)
- Online analytical processing

Informatics Project Highlights

- **Centralized Demographic Dataset Administrator (CDDA)**: CGS was selected as the CDDA by a Illinois State agencies involved in the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS). The purpose of the CDDA was to link records across seven state agencies and generate a unique client identifier to ease and improve record matching for research purposes. The unique IDs also provide increased security potential for shared data.

- **Early Childhood Project**: The purpose of this project was to answer basic questions about children served by early childhood programming in Illinois. Project outcomes included counts of the number of children served, demographic and descriptive characteristics, and information on service providers. This project is entering its third phase in FY 2020.

- **IDOT MISTIC Project**: The Bureau of Materials in the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) needed to more quickly and effectively access information related to road building materials for projects throughout the state. CGS worked with IDOT to create and support an on-line system in response to this need.

Data Visualization

CGS's Data Visualization team specializes in working with public data.

Services include:
- Providing data access, interpretation and visualization tutorials, presentations and workshops
- Designing and supporting data portals
- Data dashboard creation to assist communities in monitoring trends
- Mapping assistance
Data Visualization Project Highlights

- **Environmental Scans**: CGS produces reports that provide a demographic, economic, social, and educational snapshot and trends for a specific region. The report is primarily used by community colleges to understand their external environment as a prelude to the strategic planning process, although local governments are discovering the value of understanding their environment.

- **Data Dashboards**: Websites providing access to custom and publicly available data have been created for various communities. The goal is to provide indicators to monitor phenomena important to their residents and policy-makers.

- **Data Assistance**: As a State Data Center network agency, CGS partners with the Census Bureau to assist the public in accessing and interpreting Census data. Current activity is centered on the 2020 Census and getting the word out to make sure everyone is counted, only once, and in the right place.

- **Financial Reporting Digitization**: CGS staff are co-leading the XBRL US State and Local Government Disclosure Modernization Working Group. Their efforts focus on maintaining a national governmental taxonomy for aggregating and sharing financial information to increase the efficiency and transparency of government. A recent collaboration produced the first use case of digital annual audit data shared on a public website in Will County, IL.

Public Management and Training

Public Management and Training offers services for units of local government, state and federal agencies, and non-profit organizations. CGS supports public administrators, policy makers, and elected officials by providing:

- Professional development for public and nonprofit sector personnel
- Strategic planning
- Team building and organizational development
- Governance and executive policy processes
- Organizational assessment, design, and redesign
- Performance measurement and performance data review
- Process improvement analysis

Public Management and Training Project Highlights

- **Customized Training**: The Civic Leadership Academy is in its fifth season with over 2,000 registrants/attendees participating since 2009. CGS also conducts and custom-designs 'in-house' training academy/staff development programs for municipalities, local governments, and non-profit consortia.

- **Strategic Planning**: Public Management and Training staff have conducted or lead over 75 strategic planning engagements for municipalities, libraries, school districts, townships, counties and non-profit associations since 2015.

- **Organizational Development**: CGS staff undertake a variety of organizational process, staffing, performance measurement and management projects for local governments ranging in population from 10,000-50,000.

Survey Research

CGS offers a full range of survey research services, all of which may be customized depending on the clients' requirements. The Survey Research Team is staffed by individuals from a wide range of fields to provide multi-disciplinary survey research services. Clients include local governments, health and mental health organizations, non-profit organizations, libraries, school districts, park districts, and colleges and universities.

Services include:

- Internet surveys
- Mail surveys
- Telephone interviewing
- In-person interviews
- Focus groups
- Multi-mode methodologies

Survey Research Project Highlights

- **Greater Round Lake Area Study**: Study examined the potential for the Villages of Round Lake, Round Lake Beach, Round Lake Park, and Round Lake Heights to share services and included a community survey of satisfaction and importance of village services, as well as perceived benefits of the villages sharing services.

- **St. Charles Public Library Survey**: As part of the library’s strategic planning process, Survey Research Team staff conducted a community survey to assess satisfaction with the current library facilities and determine interest in the renovation and expansion of the library.

- **Rockford Regional Health Council Healthy Community Study**: Conducted a community survey and a key informant survey to determine health needs in Winnebago and Boone County.