



**Call for Papers**  
**International Journal for Public Administration (IJPA) Special Issue**

***Understanding Local Government Fiscal Condition from an International  
and Comparative Perspective***

**Background and Topics of Interests**

Fiscal condition, as a government's capacity to meet its financial and service obligations, is essential for the operation of local governments (Maher, Park, McDonald, and Deller 2023). From an organizational management standpoint, local fiscal condition indicates how and to what extent local governments appropriately respond to inputs from myriad factors such as socio-economic conditions, institutional settings, external pressures, and internal structures. Further, fiscal condition is also about whether local governments can develop and implement relevant policy actions to maintain or improve their fiscal outcomes. Local governments may fail to assure an appropriate quantity and quality of public services provided to residents when fiscally stressed or unhealthy. In other words, local government fiscal health is one crucial necessary condition for the sustainable provision of public services and, by doing so, for the promotion of public values and interests.

Based on the significance of fiscal condition in terms of local management and public policy, the literature has been advanced in three major streams. First, scholars have strived to develop a theoretical framework to understand and explain local fiscal condition (Berne and Schramm 1986; Hendrick 2011; Honadle, Costa, and Cigler 2004; Nollenberger, Groves, and Valente, 2003). More recently, Maher et al. (2023) synthesizes these extant frameworks and suggests an open-system framework of local fiscal condition. Second, studies have focused on developing measures of local fiscal condition (Brown 1993; Kloha, Weissert, and Kleine 2005; Maher 2022; Wang, Dennis, and Tu 2007). Along this line, third, consistent efforts have been made to empirically assess and examine local fiscal condition using various measures (Maher and Deller 2013; McDonald and Maher 2020; Stone et al. 2015).

While the fiscal condition literature has blossomed over the last some decades, there remains room for further development. We particularly echo what Padovani and Scorsone (2011) suggested several years ago: "there remains a lack of any international comparisons of how fiscal health is identified and measured across countries" (p.93). Arguably, the fiscal condition literature has heavily built on the experience of American local governments. In our view, it could prevent us from building an agreed definition of local fiscal condition and having widely

acceptable and applicable fiscal condition measures. Equally or even more troublesome is that our heavy focus on local governments in the U.S. could impact theory and generalizability when it comes to fiscal condition. We suggest that international studies can help us because, as stressed by Padovani and Scorsone (2011), they can “spur cross border learning and innovation” (p.93).

This special issue aims to call for international attention to the analysis of local fiscal condition, particularly encouraging research to cover all or some of the following major themes:

- 1) Conceptualization and definition of local fiscal condition or fiscal stress
- 2) Local fiscal condition or fiscal stress measures and their historical development
- 3) Empirical assessment of local fiscal condition or fiscal stress
- 4) Developing and testing theories of local fiscal condition or fiscal stress
- 5) Implications for the literature and practice

This is not an exhaustive list. We seek international studies that can contribute to scholarship, policy and practice by discussing operationalizations of fiscal condition or fiscal stress and its measures. We also look for studies that assess local fiscal condition or fiscal stress and examine its determinants and consequences. A comparative perspective is welcome; we also welcome different theoretical and methodological approaches.

### **Submission Instructions and Key Dates**

Abstracts shall be submitted to the symposium editors directly at [sungho.park@ua.edu](mailto:sungho.park@ua.edu) by January 15, 2023, with the email subject line, “IJPA special issue: fiscal condition.” The submitted abstract should be no more than 500 words (excluding references).

The symposium editors will inform authors of decisions on proposals by February 28, 2023. All proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- The relevance of the paper to some of the major themes above
- The research question(s) and method – the theoretical/conceptual foundations for the research, a brief description of methods and data
- The results to be reported
- The significance of the research – why it is distinctive and its contribution to the field

Please note that acceptance of an abstract does not guarantee final publication, nor does feedback from the symposium editors. All manuscripts will be subject to peer-review by relevant subject-matter experts. Because IJPA is a global journal, authors are encouraged to engage with the prior academic scholarship on local fiscal condition, and contribute to knowledge from an international and comparative perspective.

The key dates are listed below:

- 1) Paper proposal due: January 15, 2023
- 2) Decisions on the proposal: February 28, 2023

- 3) Full paper due to the symposium editors for initial feedback: August 15, 2023
- 4) Virtual workshop of symposium participants/the symposium editors' initial feedback on each paper: September 8, 2023
- 5) Revised paper submitted to the journal for peer review: September 29, 2023

### **Symposium Editor(s) Contact Information**

Craig S Maher, University of Nebraska at Omaha, email: [csmaher@unomaha.edu](mailto:csmaher@unomaha.edu)

Sungho Park, University of Alabama, email: [sungho.park@ua.edu](mailto:sungho.park@ua.edu)

Bruce McDonald III, North Carolina State University, email: [bmcadona@ncsu.edu](mailto:bmcadona@ncsu.edu)

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## **About International Journal of Public Administration (IJPA)**

Founded in 1979, IJPA is a truly international journal. Starting March 2022, the Journal is under a new editorial team with Dr. Elaine Yi Lu as the Editor-in-Chief as well as a global editorial board. Its goal is to expand the footprint of IJPA in the field of public administration and policy research, theory, and practice. The three-pronged approach consists of scholarship, collegiality, and impact.

- We seek scholarship that is both theoretically sound and empirically rigorous.
- We value collegiality and interact collaboratively with authors, reviewers, and readers.
- We assess impacts that include but are not limited to: citations, social media engagement, and theory-practice dialogue.