INNOVATION PARTNERSHIPS
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Open Source Inline XBRL Instance Generator

TECHNOLOGY NUMBER: 2025-204

OVERVIEW

Intuitive ACFR Inline XBRL filing tool for non-technical government employees

- Eliminates need for programming or XBRL expertise for compliant ACFR filings
- Streamlined financial reporting, regulatory compliance, and transparency for local governmentS

BACKGROUND

Financial reporting and transparency are critical for good governance, particularly as local governments must provide annual financial reports, known as Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports (ACFRs). Historically, creating filings that comply with e-government reporting standards—especially Inline eXtensible Business Reporting Language (iXBRL)—has required specialized programming, deep familiarity with XBRL taxonomy, or the use of expensive third-party software. Traditional processes are time-consuming, error-prone, and often place heavy burdens on finance departments with limited technical resources. Many smaller governments lack the capacity for in-depth technical training, making compliance challenging and costly. Consequently, there is a pressing need for an intuitive, accessible system that empowers typical office staff to produce valid filings without requiring them to learn advanced IT skills or complex reporting languages.

INNOVATION

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Category
Software
Software & Content

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This invention introduces an easy-to-use software tool that enables local government employees, who are proficient with Microsoft Office but not programming, to generate Inline XBRL-compliant ACFR filings directly from familiar interfaces like Word or Excel. By integrating XBRL tagging and validation processes into the Office environment, the solution abstracts technical complexities and automates much of the file preparation. Visual guides, drag-and-drop taxonomy assignment, and real-time error checking eliminate manual coding and reduce the learning curve. The technical advance lies in bridging regulatory requirements with user-friendly automation, empowering non-technical staff to submit valid, acceptable filings independently. Potential applications include improved efficiency and reduced costs in government financial reporting, broader adoption of open data standards, increased transparency, and easier compliance for thousands of local agencies nationwide.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

PROJECT LINKS:

- Project Website
- Github Repository

DEPARTMENT/LAB:

- Stephanie Leiser, Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP)

LICENSE:

- MIT