Local Government Customer Service Systems, 2007

The *Local Government Customer Service Systems* surveys were mailed in winter and spring 2007 to the Chief Administrative Officers of municipalities with populations 25,000 and over and to the Chief Administrative Officers of counties with the council-administrator or council-elected executive form of government. Of the 2,287 municipalities and counties that received surveys, 710 local governments responded (31.0%)

For more information on the ICMA's *Local Government Customer Service Systems* survey, please contact Evelina Moulder.

For more information on obtaining the *Local Government Customer Service Systems* dataset, please contact 311 Dataset.

Following is the survey text with the aggregate results shown next to each answer. Each answer represents the percentage reporting for that question, except where noted.

Customer service systems: Defined for this study as a non-emergency customer service program that centralizes contacts from the public into one system. Some programs will consolidate existing service phone numbers into a single number, "311," or a specific 7-digit hotline number, and some programs will operate with calls placed to any agency phone number. All systems will route the phone calls and other forms of contact from the community into a centralized customer service system.

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1. Does your local government use a centralized customer service system?   **14.6** Yes   **85.4** No

A. If "yes," which of the following best describes how the system can be accessed?
8.7   1. Our system operates using a single access phone number. We use 311.
18.5 2. Our system operates using a single access phone number. We use another publicized "hotline" number.
43.5 3. Our system does not operate using a single access phone number. The customer can dial any local government number, and the staff taking the call enters it into a customer service system.
14.1 4. Other (Please describe:)_____
15.2 5. Web-based (written in)

2. If your local government has a centralized customer service system, skip to question 5.

3. If your local government does not have a centralized customer service system, please identify the reason(s). (Check all applicable.)

33.8 a. Too expensive
21.0 b. Not necessary
9.3   c. Unfamiliar with the technology
13.9 d. Lack of support from elected officials
2.7   e. Lack of technical expertise on staff
2.8   f. Outcome of feasibility study
33.5 g. Application process involved in obtaining a 311 designation
35.1 h. Other (Please describe: _____)
6.0   i. Other (Please describe: _____)

4. If your local government <u>does not have</u> a centralized customer service system, is your local government considering implementing one?   **33.9** Yes   **66.1** No

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If your local government does not *currently* have a centralized customer service system, you do not need to complete the rest of the survey. Please return the survey to Evelina Moulder, Director of Surveys, ICMA, 777 N. Capitol St., NE, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20002.

The remainder of the survey is for completion by local governments that have a centralized customer service system.

5. When was your centralized customer service system implemented?   **2001 Average**

6. Does your centralized customer service system cover more than one jurisdiction?
   7.6   Yes   **92.4**   No

7. What was the main driving force supporting implementation of the centralized customer service system? (Check only one.)

17.6 1. Public pressure/expectations for   **1.1** 4. Expectation of reduced costs
             customer service   **42.9** 5. Goal to improve service despite
7.7   2. Elected official pressure   increased cost
5.5   3. Staff requests   **0.0** 6. Inspiration from other agency
25.3 7. Other (Please describe: _____)

8. Please check the box below that best describes the type of call intake software (technology) that supports the centralized customer service system your local government uses. (Check only one.)

12.2 1. Off-the-shelf, no modifications/customization necessary
40.0 2. Off-the-shelf with modifications/customization
17.8 3. Custom design; developed by in-house staff
11.1 4. Custom design; developed by consultants
10.0 5. Custom designed; developed by in-house staff and consultants
8.9   6. Other (Please describe: _____)

Coverage of centralized customer service systems
9. Which of the following best describes your centralized customer service system? (Check only one.)

37.9 1. The central call-center staff are trained to handle the calls. They attempt to respond to all calls on the first call and transfer the caller to another department only when absolutely necessary. Our call system is intended to be a "one-stop shop."
27.6 2. The central call center staff make a record of the call and then put the caller in touch with the department that can respond to them. Our system is designed to help callers navigate government structure.
34.5 3. Other (Please describe: _____)

10. How many calls are received by the centralized customer service system annually?
47,607 annually **Average**

11. Please complete the following for each service department listed: **(Provide the number of external calls received either annually or monthly, whichever is easiest to report.)**

Service department	Is the department integrated into the centralized customer service system	How many calls are received for information or services of that department (Average)
a. City/County management or administration	84.1 Yes 15.9 No	11,534 calls annually 289 calls monthly
b. Elected officials' offices	58.2 Yes 41.8 No	5,445 calls annually 7 calls monthly
c. Parks and recreation	80.8 Yes 19.2 No	8,259 calls annually 824 calls monthly
d. Code enforcement	87.5 Yes 12.5 No	11,894 calls annually 167 calls monthly
e. Refuse collection and disposal	77.6 Yes 22.4 No	15,383 calls annually 941 calls monthly
f. Public works	95.1 Yes 4.9 No	14,948 calls annually 736 calls monthly
g. Animal control	53.8 Yes 46.2 No	5,009 calls annually 22 calls monthly
h. Health/social services	26.8 Yes 73.2 No	77 calls annually 10 calls monthly
i. Water	66.7 Yes 33.3 No	14,357 calls annually 1,436 calls monthly
j. Non-emergency police	56.8 Yes 43.2 No	1,584 calls annually 104 calls monthly

Note: A small proportion of local governments reported information on the number of calls. Respondents had the option of reporting annual or monthly calls.

Impact on 911 systems

12. Has your local government measured non-emergency calls to 911 since the centralized customer service system was implemented?   **100.0** Yes   **0.0** No
  Note: Only 28 local governments reported.

  A. If "yes," have the non-emergency calls that go to 911
    42.9 1. Decreased **3.6** 2. Increased **14.3** 3. Stayed the same **39.3** 4. Don't know

  B. If they have increased or decreased, by what percent have they increased or decreased?   1. Decreased **23.3** 2. Increased **0.0**

Types of requests received

13. Please identify in the list below the types and percentage of requests that your centralized customer service system receives.

Types of calls	This type is received by centralized customer service system		% of total calls that fall into this category.
a. Requests for service, such as pothole repair, burned out street lights	98.8 Yes	1.2 No	45.4
b. Requests for information about local government services, schedules, etc.	84.7 Yes	15.3 No	29.8
c. Complaints about graffiti, vacant lots	91.5 Yes	8.5 No	11.6
d. Suggestions, general feedback, or comments on a specific issue	81.3 Yes	18.7 No	9.8
e. Other (Please describe: _____)	Yes	No	28.1
f. Other (Please describe: _____)	Yes	No	16.7

Communication methods

14. In addition to a telephone call, which other communication method(s) may citizens use to contact the centralized customer service system? (Check all applicable.)

88.6 a. Internet, e.g., local government web site
90.9 b. Email
61.4 c. Fax
75.0 d. Regular mail
5.7 i. Other (Please describe: _____)

76.1 e. In person / at the counter
10.2 f. Automated touch tone
0.0 g. Voice recognition
34.1 h. After-hours answering service

15. Do you track contact and location information?   **83.7** Yes   **16.3** No

   A. If "yes," do you track by (Check all applicable.)
70.4 1. Phone number
90.1 2. Customer name or account
81.7 3. Street address of caller

88.7 4. Street address of issue
22.5 5. Other (Please describe):

16. Does your centralized customer service system use GIS?   **44.3** Yes   **55.7** No

Response to users

17. When a customer submits a request for service via the centralized customer service system, does your system include a *customer response mechanism*, such as the estimated repair time or notification that the repair has been made?   **93.2** Yes   **6.8** No

A. If "yes," please check the box(es) that best describe the response mechanism(s) you use. (Check all applicable.)
71.0 1. The caller is given a tracking number so that the caller can track the progress of the resolution.
50.0 2. Issue-specific information is available so the operator can give an estimated date of resolution.
51.6 3. An automated email goes out with a copy of the request and additional information.
32.3 4. An automated call or email goes out at different stages of resolution.

18. How is the response communicated? (Check all applicable.)
41.5 a. By the same method in which it was received (e.g., voice, email)
46.3 b. Email
26.8 c. Mail
34.1 d. Phone
42.7 e. Based on the preference the caller indicates for the specific request
3.7   f. Other (Please describe: _____)

19. Are routing and tracking of requests for service handled *within* the centralized customer service system?   **88.6** Yes **11.4** No

A. If "yes," are departments alerted by the centralized customer service system when a request for service is submitted?   **93.5**   Yes   **6.5**   No

B. If routing and tracking of requests for service are *not* handled within the centralized customer service system, how are they handled?
69.2 1. By department specific work order systems, such as code enforcement work order systems
46.2 2. Other (Please describe: _____)
0.0   3. Other (Please describe: _____)

20. When requests for service are completed, is the centralized customer service system updated to reflect the job status?   **91.9**   Yes   **8.1** No

A. If "yes," how is the system updated? (Check all applicable.)
67.1 1. The system is updated directly
36.7 2. The work order is updated and then the centralized customer service system is updated
3.8   3. Other (Please describe: _____)

System reporting capabilities
21. Which of the following reporting capabilities are available in your system? (Check all applicable.)
70.2 a. Reports on time taken to complete service request
67.9 b. Reports on repeat requests
96.4 c. Reports on types of service requests
54.8 d. Reports by neighborhood/geographic area
16.7 e. Other (Please describe: _____)
4.8   f. Other (Please describe: _____)

22. How is the information contained in the reports used? (Check all applicable.)
55.6 a. Resource allocation/budget development
79.0 b. Performance measurement & management
37.0 c. Employee performance appraisals/development
43.2 d. Meetings with residents
35.8 e. Capital maintenance planning, e.g., calls on water leaks indicate the need for replacement pipes
35.8 f. Annual report
17.3 g. Other (Please describe: _____)
2.5   h. Other (Please describe: _____)
1.2   i. Other (Please describe: _____)

23. Does your local government conduct customer satisfaction surveys to determine the level of user satisfaction with the centralized customer service system?   **47.1** Yes   **52.9** No

24. If you do not conduct customer satisfaction surveys, do you use any other means to evaluate customer satisfaction with the centralized customer service system?

25.0 Yes **75.0** No

A. If yes, please describe_____

Promoting Use of the Centralized Customer Service System
25. Which of the following marketing tools has your local government used to promote the centralized customer service system? (Check all applicable.)

25.0 a. Paid advertisements
22.4 b. Promotional give-aways
34.2 c. Free advertisements (e.g. radio announcements)
53.9 d. Town meetings
18.4 e. Posters

22.4 f. Notices on public vehicles
42.1 g. Media outreach campaign
46.1 h. Citizens engaged to spread by word of mouth
75.0 i. Newsletter articles, reminders
34.2 j. TV announcements

38.2 k. Other (Please describe:) _____
14.5 l. Other (Please describe:) _____

Financial information
Please provide the financial information requested below. If you are unable to provide the information, please check the box designating that it can't be provided. **Averages**

Note: Few local governments provided financial information.

26. Development and implementation expenditures (include planning, design, consulting, and staff time—do not include hardware and software costs) **$ 526,542** ☐ Unable to provide

27. Capital expenditures (include hardware and software purchased) to implement the system
$ 221,143 ☐ Unable to provide

28. Annual operating expenses (include staffing, training, supplies, software, and non-capital hardware)
$ 303,059 ☐ Unable to provide

29. Regardless of whether you are able to answer the three questions above, do you have a detailed project cost document that you would be willing to share with us for possible follow-up with a brief telephone interview? **27.8** Yes **72.2** No