

E-participation/E-democracy Survey

August 2011

The Electronic Government 2011 survey was mailed to all city-type governments with a population of 2,500 or greater and to all county governments that have either elected executives or appointed managers. An online option was also provided. The survey response is 28%. The survey is collaboration with Dr. Donald F. Norris, Dr. Christopher Reddick, and ICMA, and the data are proprietary.

1. Does your local government have a website?

- Yes = 96%
- No = 4%

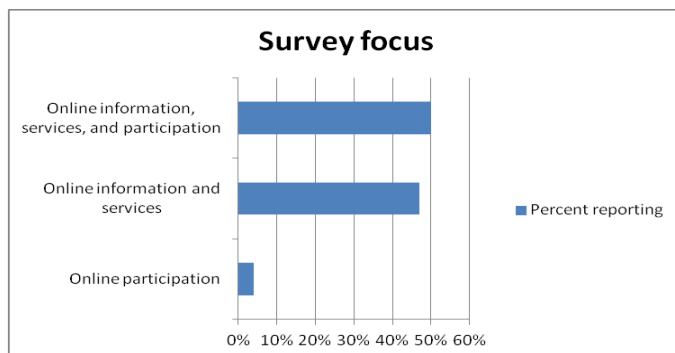
The following instructions were given to respondents:

For the purposes of this survey, the local government **website** is the official website. **This does not include websites produced by the Chamber of Commerce or other organizations (e.g., tourist bureau, economic development agency, etc.).** If your local government **DOES NOT HAVE** a website, you do not need to complete the rest of the survey. Please return it to ICMA. **Electronic participation or electronic democracy is defined as the use of electronic means, principally although not solely through local government web sites and the Internet, to promote and enhance citizen engagement with and participation in governmental activities, programs and decision-making.** For purposes of this survey, we will use the term e-participation to refer to both e-participation and e-democracy.

2. Within the past three (3) years, has your local government surveyed residents to determine what types of online information, services, or participation they want available on the local government website?

- Yes = 24%
- No = 76%

2A. If yes, what was the focus of the survey(s)? (Check only one.)



3. Does your local government have *concrete plans* to survey residents within the next 12 months to determine what types of online information, services, or participation they want? (Check only one.)

- 84% have no concrete plans to conduct a survey
- 6% plan to conduct a survey about online information and services
- 1% plan to conduct a survey about online participation
- 9% plan to conduct a survey about online information, services and participation

4. Please indicate whether your local government has done any of the following **electronically** (e.g., via your website or otherwise via the Internet) within the past 12 months and whether it has any *concrete plans* for doing any of them electronically within the next 12 months.

Activities	No, not done in past 12 months	Yes, done in past 12 months	Concrete plans to do in next 12 months
a. Conducted one or more narrated or guided discussion forums about important local issues	82%	11%	4%
b. Conducted one or more non-narrated or guided discussion forums about important local issues	80%	13%	2%
c. Facilitated or operated chat rooms	89%	4%	1%
d. Conducted public consultations, e.g., engage public in the budget process	68%	24%	5%
e. Enabled citizens to participate in a poll or survey	52%	39%	8%
f. Enabled citizens to view a hearing or a meeting	41%	51%	9%
g. Enabled citizens to participate in a hearing or meeting	77%	15%	4%
h. Permitted or facilitated electronic citizen petitions	88%	4%	1%
i. Enabled citizens to vote in an election or referendum	87%	7%	1%
j. Conducted electronic town halls	73%	3%	2%
k. Enabled citizens to post comments	51%	41%	8%
l. Other (Please specify)	20%	5%	1%

If you answered **YES to any** of these activities (4a-4l), please complete all of the questions in this survey. If you answered **NO to all** of these activities, go to question 16, and **do not** answer questions 5 through 15.

5. Why does your local government engage in e-participation projects and activities? (Check all that apply.)

Demanded or required by local elected officials	28%
Demanded or required by top administrators	29%
Demanded by citizens (that is, citizens in general)	21%
Demanded by local interest groups that have clout in the community	6%
It is the right thing to do	56%
To keep up with other local governments in our area or peer local governments elsewhere	22%
Other	10%

5A. Of the reasons you cited in question 5, which is the **most important** reason? 61% reported “it’s the right thing to do.”

6. Which organization in your local government has principal responsibility for e-participation projects and activities? (Check only one.)

City/county manager/administrator office	41%
Mayor/county executive office	5%
IT department	21%
CIO office	1%
CTO office	0%
Public Information Office	21%
Other	12%

7. Please circle the number that best describes the extent to which your local government's e-participation projects and activities today mostly involve communication from the local government to citizens or mostly involve communication from citizens to the local government.

Mostly local government to citizen		A mix of both, about half and half		Mostly citizen to local government
1	2	3	4	5
35%	34%	27%	2%	2%

8. Please circle the number to indicate the extent to which your local government takes seriously and acts upon the results of e-participation projects and activities in their decisions and actions.

Do not take seriously				Take very seriously
1	2	3	4	5
1%	6%	25%	35%	32%

9. Regarding the e-government projects and activities that your local government currently provides, how are they developed? (Check all that apply.)

56%	a. Developed in-house by local government staff	3%	e. Developed by a local government association
27%	b. Developed by consultants and local government staff	4%	f. Developed through a public-private partnership
15%	c. Outsourced to Application Service Providers	2%	g. Other (Please describe.)
20%	d. We purchased programs from vendors		

10. From the list in question 9 above, please identify which method is **most commonly used** by your local government to develop/acquire e-government services? 62% reported that development in-house by local government staff is most common.

11. Has your local government conducted **formal planning** for e-participation projects or efforts?

- Yes = 28%
- No = 72%

11A. If "yes," were these **formal planning** activities solely about e-participation or did they involve other aspects of information technology (IT) or electronic government? (Check all applicable.)

Planning for e-participation only	5%
As part of planning for local government IT	11%
As part of planning for local government e-government	11%

12. Has your local government conducted **formal cost benefit analyses** or other formal analyses of e-participation projects or activities before undertaking them?

- Yes = 15%
- No = 85%

13. Has your local government conducted formal impact or effectiveness analyses of e-participation projects or activities after undertaking them?

- Yes = 14%
- No = 87%

14. As a result of e-participation, has your local government experienced any of the following impacts?

Impact	Increased	No difference	Decreased	Don't know
a. Workload or time demands on local government technology personnel (N=883)	51% (452)	31% (273)	8% (72)	10% (86)
b. Workload or time demands on local government line and staff personnel (N=883)	51% (452)	31% (273)	8% (72)	10% (86)
c. Quantity of information available to local officials for decision-making (N=873)	61% (531)	29% (253)	0% (1)	10% (88)
d. Quality of information available to local officials for decision-making (n=874)	51% (442)	37% (325)	1% (5)	12% (102)
e. Quantity of citizen participation (N=879)	61% (532)	28% (248)	0% (4)	11% (95)
f. Quality of citizen participation (N=874)	36% (317)	45% (397)	2% (21)	16% (139)
g. Better decision-making by local officials (N=873)	35% (307)	45% (389)	0% (1)	20% (176)
h. Citizen trust in government (N=874)	35% (309)	33% (290)	1% (12)	30% (263)
i. Other (N=90)	19% (17)	27% (24)	0% (0)	54% (49)

14A. Of the changes that you identified in question 14 above, which one is the most significant **positive** change that your local government faces regarding e-government? The highest percentage (23%) is for an increase in the quantity of citizen participation.

14B. Of the changes that you identified in question 14 above, which one is the most significant **negative** change that your local government faces regarding e-government? The highest percentage (42%) is workload or time demands on local government technology personnel.

15. Some of the literature about e-participation says that it will **radically transform** the relationship between citizens and governments by significantly improving it. Have you observed either of the following **due to e-participation** in your local government?

	Improved	No change	Deteriorated
a. Due to e-participation, the relationship between citizens and local government elected officials has:	40%	59%	2%
b. Due to e-participation, the relationship between citizens and the local government administrators has:	43%	55%	1%

16. Which, if any, of the following barriers to providing e-participation has your local government encountered? (Check all that apply.)

Barriers	Yes	No
Need to upgrade technology infrastructure	70%	30%
Lack of technology expertise	50%	50%
Lack of technology staff	67%	33%
Lack of funding	84%	16%
Lack of demand by citizens	50%	50%
Lack of demand by elected officials	46%	54%
Lack of support from elected officials	26%	74%
When we have provided opportunities or mechanisms for e-participation, few citizens have participated	49%	51%
Issues around privacy	39%	61%
Issues around security	45%	55%
Concerns that unrepresentative groups would dominate e-participation channels	47%	53%
Concerns that the digital divide would prevent participation by some citizens	52%	49%
Lack of demand from elected officials	39%	61%
Lack of support from top administrators	14%	86%
Lack of information about e-participation applications	35%	65%
Inadequate bandwidth	27%	73%
Difficulty justifying the cost of e-participation applications	54%	46%
Other (Only 109 people provided an answer.)	39%	61%

16A. Of the barriers that you identified in question 16 above, which is most the difficult one that your local government faces regarding e-participation projects and activities? The highest percentage (39%) reported lack of funding.

17. On the whole, do officials in your local government actively promote or give attention to e-participation? Please use the following 1 to 5 scale to indicate the extent to which they do or do not. Circle the appropriate number.

	Don't promote, give little or no attention to				Actively promote, give great attention to
a. elected officials	1 20%	2 22%	3 30%	4 20%	5 8%
b. top appointed officials	1 12%	2 16%	3 31%	4 29%	5 13%

18. Are citizen grass-roots groups or organizations actively pushing for e-participation opportunities within your local government? Please circle the appropriate number to indicate whether there is any grassroots demand for e-participation.

No grassroots demand				Significant grassroots demand
1	2	3	4	5
50%	28%	16%	5%	1%