

THE CASE FOR STRENGTHENING PERSONAL NETWORKS IN CALIFORNIA LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Understanding local government innovation and how it spreads

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Summary

The term “innovation” is often applied to products emerging from the private sector. When innovation is discussed in the context of government, commentators generally concentrate on achievements at the federal level. The popular press rarely devotes attention to innovation in local government, or examines innovation as a process, rather than an output. Yet cities and counties have the capacity to engage and impact wide sectors of the public through innovative policies, practices and programs; many are already doing just that. In order to encourage the spread of new approaches to address existing community need, local government staffers, elected officials, third parties that serve them, and researchers must have a deeper understanding of how innovation is perceived and pursued in cities and counties.

Drawing on original survey and interview data, this report examines why and how city and county administrators in California adopt new approaches, and the processes through which they learn about potential solutions for problems in their communities. The report highlights the important role of knowledge sharing in the diffusion of innovations from one locale to another, and identifies personal connections as a significant source of information when it comes to innovation. In addition, it shows

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the obstacles faced by local government leaders who hope to pursue new approaches. Among the report's key findings are the following:

- City and county administrators perceive the exchange of information related to innovation in local government as vitally important to the effective diffusion of innovation from one locale to another.
- Local government staffers often cite internal organizational and managerial processes -- especially those concerning service delivery -- as innovative, rather than concentrating on truly new or public-facing programs.
- A desire to reduce costs and/or increase organizational efficiency is the most significant motivation for innovation in local government, while lack of resources -- financial, human and time -- is a significant obstacle to innovation.
- Local government administrators are deeply concerned with addressing community need, but the influence of community members and civic opposition in developing proposed solutions is relatively muted.
- The vision and leadership of elected officials and legislative mandates can be powerful reasons for investigating and adopting new approaches in local government, though both factors can also result in less-than optimal solutions to problems.
- When it comes to receiving and sharing knowledge around innovation, local government administrators rely primarily on personal contacts, particularly those working in similar positions within the same geographic area.
- Those working in local government view professional associations as a moderately valuable source as they research and implement new approaches, but they regarded the specific technological tools and knowledge sharing programs offered by such associations as less valuable.
- There are significant divides between urban and rural communities when it comes to perceptions of civic innovation and the ways in which knowledge about innovation is acquired and shared.

Together these data serve as a starting point for a conversation about which specific practices and programs can advance effective knowledge sharing for the purpose of encouraging innovative programs that ultimately produce more adaptive and responsive local governments.

Introduction

Compared with their colleagues in state or federal government or the private sector, it often appears that local governments aren't innovating. Cities and counties rarely pull off headline-grabbing, high cost projects of the type that the federal government often pursues, or have the ability to attract the household names that occupy key positions in higher levels of government. On the other hand, local governments are at the forefront

of civic engagement, serving as the primary governmental service delivery arm for most Americans. Far more than their counterparts in Sacramento and Washington, DC, local government staffers in California respond directly to community needs, and develop inventive and exciting approaches for doing so. At the same time, they face enormous obstacles in resources -- financial and human alike. Sometimes the biggest challenge of all is trying to figure out what the possible solutions to the problem are. This

obstacle to innovation is heightened by the small size and budgets of local government, and is especially acute for administrators who serve smaller, rural, and less-well-resourced communities.

What does innovation mean to those who work in local government? Is it an entirely new approach to an existing problem or a previously unrealized need? Or is innovation relative to the resources of the community that is pursuing it? How do external forces such as the economy or the size of individual local governments affect cities and counties' abilities to innovate and administrators' perceptions and implementations of innovations? What is the process through which innovation takes root, and what motivates it? Without access to large research teams, panels of experts, or far-flung personal contacts, do local government administrators in California and elsewhere share knowledge around innovation? This knowledge might include many things: approaches to solving common problems, tips on implementation, suggestions on how to modify solutions to fit a particular community's needs, and resources for others to consult. What is the impact of sharing and receiving such information on communities' abilities to innovate? Furthermore, if knowledge sharing is a significant aspect of the innovation process, how can those both inside and outside of local government promote it more effectively? These are the questions that the California Civic Innovation Project investigated in a recent survey of and series of interviews with California's city managers and county administrators -- the top unelected administrative positions in local governments (Appendix 1).

The findings of the survey and interviews are striking. For those who work in local government, innovation is responsive to realities and community needs, and more often than not involves a process or organizational change, rather than the introduction of a new program or technology visible to the public. City managers

and county administrators often cite changes and improvements to existing service delivery models through consolidation and regional approaches rather than civic engagement projects or partnerships as the most important innovations undertaken in their communities. For many local government administrators, the term "innovation" did not refer to an entirely new approach, or even to one that was new for the city or county that was implementing it. In many cases, external factors such as cost considerations and legislative mandates motivate local government executives to innovate, though internal factors like the vision of elected officials also prove important. Ultimately, addressing community need and finding solutions to long-lasting problems drive innovation at the local level. But the problems that local administrators choose to address and their approaches to doing so are dictated by fiscal realities.

What does innovation mean to those who work in local government?

These realities also impact the process through which potential approaches are discovered, evaluated and implemented. Knowledge sharing among local governmental leaders is hugely important to the diffusion of innovations from one locale to another, but local governmental leaders often lack systematic ways of learning about new approaches. Local government administrators are burdened by other responsibilities and dwindling budgets. Such realities also prevent city and county executives from actively sharing their achievements with others in local government in order to promote a new approach's spread. Furthermore, respondents and interviewees often point to the sensitive nature of many of the discussions in which they engage around innovation; for them, personal connections are not

only the easiest sources to pursue when it comes to evaluating new approaches, but also the most trustworthy. Professional associations can play a major role in facilitating connections, though some other specific offerings of professional associations – online message boards, webinars and newsletters, for example -- are less successful in promoting innovation.

Many of the data culled through the survey and interview responses correspond with what other studies have shown about perceptions of innovation, how policy diffuses, and the relationship between networks, knowledge sharing, and innovation. Political scientist Jack L. Walker's pioneering work of the late 1960s showed the power of knowledge sharing in promoting innovation from state-to-state, identifying the importance of professional associations and geographic proximity in promoting innovation in government.¹ In the years since, scholars have built on Walker's work, contributing empirical data, applying innovation and diffusion concepts to local government, and utilizing a vast array of new methodologies including social network analysis. While many aspects of the survey data confirm earlier findings, they are instructive. They provide a window into the decision-making strategies and views of local government leaders at a moment of fiscal crisis, evaluating not whether local governmental leaders are innovating, but how they perceive innovation, and how an array of organizations and local governmental leaders can work together to improve knowledge sharing to advance innovation.

While the survey did not focus on the innovation adoption process, many of the findings are relevant for assessing the relationship between knowledge sharing and the implementation of new

approaches. The innovation process involves multiple stages, during which externally acquired knowledge may or may not be used: idea generation, feasibility analysis, persuasion, implementation, and sharing. There is no guarantee that acquired knowledge will lead to the implementation of innovative practice, or that adoption relies on knowledge acquisition. This report highlights some preliminary findings about innovation adoption in local government, but there is certainly much more to investigate on this front.

This policy brief explores the finding from the survey and follow-up interviews. A methodology and demographics section and accompanying appendix (Appendix 2) explain why and how the study was conducted. The remainder of the report presents the findings, with the survey questions and data presented in an appendix (Appendix 1). The policy brief addresses the following topics: the role of knowledge sharing in the diffusion of innovation, how local governmental leaders understand innovation within their own communities, motivations for innovating, obstacles to innovating, methods and application of knowledge sharing between local governments, the role of professional associations, and how city and county administrators share their achievements.

While we have included ways that professional associations, local government leaders and others might interpret and act upon data points throughout the report, we have not presented a comprehensive set of recommendations based on the findings. We plan to use these findings in conversations with various stakeholders to accomplish two goals: 1) identify specific ways in which knowledge sharing between local governments around innovation can be improved and; 2) to encourage a reframing of conversations around innovation in local government to reflect not only difficult fiscal realities, but also the enormous promise of cities and counties to re-imagine their relationship with residents through responsive, adaptive, and innovative leadership.

¹ Jack L. Walker, "The Diffusion of Innovations among the American States," *American Political Science Review* 63 (1969): 880-99.

Methodology and Demographics

The survey and interviews were conducted among city managers, deputy city managers, county administrators and deputy county managers in California (Appendix 2). Surveying elected officials or staff at different levels within local government organizations would likely have produced different and interesting results. However, we determined that concentrating on non-elected local government administrators would allow us to understand how high-level decisions were made and priorities determined. Because we wished to examine knowledge sharing between cities and counties, rather than knowledge sharing within individual local governments, we focused on a group that we hypothesized would have greater reason and ability to share information around innovation. And finally, city and county executives in California generally have strong connections to professional associations. We were interested in understanding the role and potential of such organizations to promote knowledge sharing and innovation. By partnering with the California branch of the International City/County Management Association (Cal-ICMA) and the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) to administer the survey, we expected a greater ability to reach our targeted audience.

We received a total of 78 responses, achieving an overall response rate of 16%. This figure represents responses from 36% of California's counties and 11% of California's municipalities. In addition, we conducted structured interviews with 14 individuals (Appendix

3). These data are generally consistent, allowing us to extrapolate from survey responses to the larger population of local government administrators.

Survey respondents came from communities of varying sizes (Appendix 4). Approximately three-fourths of respondents served in executive roles, with the remainder in deputy or other non-executive positions. Length of term in their current position varied widely, from one month to 29 years.

Knowledge Sharing to Promote Innovation

Confirming our hypothesis and supporting policy diffusion literature, city managers and county administrators both cited knowledge sharing between cities and between counties as very valuable for the diffusion of new approaches from city to city or county to county. 76% of respondents cited knowledge sharing as very valuable in this process, with another 22% indicating that knowledge sharing was moderately valuable. Zero respondents considered knowledge sharing not valuable to the innovation diffusion process (Figure 1).

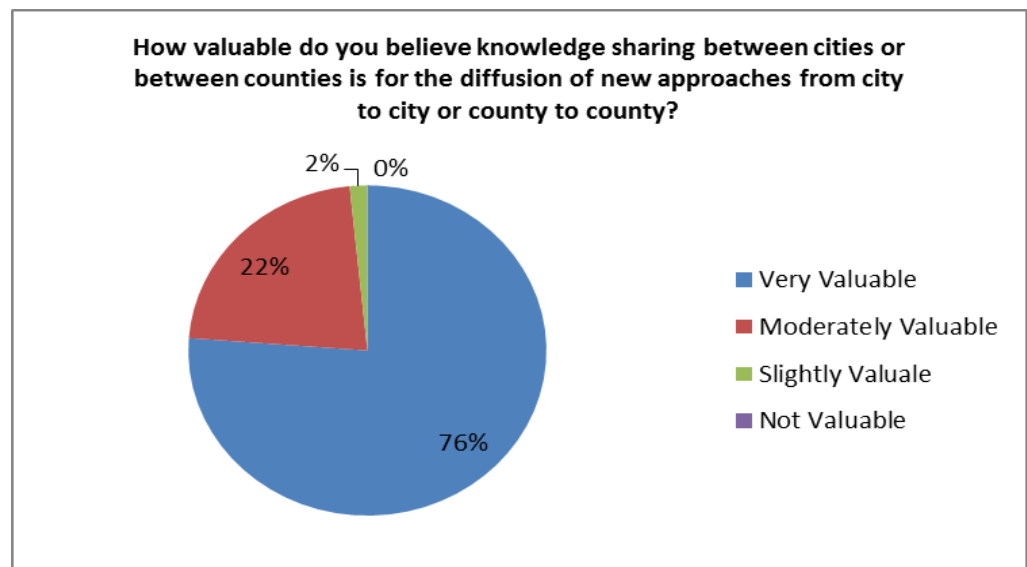


Figure 1. Value of Knowledge Sharing for Innovation Diffusion

The importance of external knowledge sharing to innovation diffusion should not be used to discount the importance of other factors in policy diffusion. Among other important elements identified in the academic literature, cited in interviews and alluded to by survey data were leadership, vision from elected officials, employee engagement, legislative requirements and other types of coercion, competition with other locales, and other types of learning that do not involve knowledge sharing. Some of these factors may overlap. For example, survey respondents identified “fulfilling the vision of elected officials” and “new legislative/administrative requirements” as moderately important reasons for innovating, ranking them fourth and fifth respectively on a list of ten factors. Knowledge sharing may be a part of the process to implement innovations designed to fulfill these objectives, but it should not be assumed that knowledge sharing alone was enough to advance a policy or secure adoption.

Nor should it be assumed that knowledge sharing between local governments through both official governmental sources such as meetings between colleagues in neighboring communities and third parties such as professional associations is the only way that knowledge sharing operates to advance innovation. Our data do not examine the extent of knowledge sharing within individual local governments (cross-departmental exchanges, for example), the impact of knowledge management systems, or institutional memory. Such internal communication may also be important to knowledge sharing.

Whatever factors may be involved, local government leaders perceive knowledge sharing as a crucial element of innovation diffusion. There is, however, variation in how they define innovation.

Defining Innovation: An Emphasis on Service Delivery

When asked to name the most important new approach instituted by their cities or counties in the last five years, most respondents cited internal organizational or managerial changes to improve service delivery while reducing costs (Table 1). Many of these projects involved regional collaborations, especially the implementation of shared services and departmental consolidation across towns and counties. In addition, for county administrators, a significant number of projects were responsive to a new legislative requirement to accommodate certain categories of state prisoners in county jails. As the County Administrative Officer in a rural county explained, “This was forced on us by the state legislature. It was not a deal we wanted.”

Table 1.
Types of Projects Defined as Innovative

Type of Project Defined as Innovative by Respondents	% of Respondents
Service Delivery	35
Regional Collaboration	28
Civic Engagement	11
E-Government	11
Budget Cuts	4
Internal Processes	4
Strategic Plan/Feasibility Study	4
Public-Private Partnership	3

Note: Responses were coded according to the above categories. Responses sometimes fit into multiple categories. In addition, there were a number of responses that were not included in this breakdown: one response from a CSAC member (PACE - California’s Property Assessed Clean Energy program), two responses from non-members (city-sponsored and funded initiative to improve local education; and investment policies and procedures to ensure adequate reserves are maintained) and five responses from Cal-ICMA members (collaboration on energy, managed competition, surveying of other cities for best practices, public art as graffiti deterrent, and economic development). Because the descriptions of the innovations were brief, not all overlapping categorizations may have been captured here. For example, it is possible to imagine a civic engagement project that involved a public-private partnership, or a regional collaboration that had a strategic plan element.

Public-private partnerships, e-government and civic engagement are the buzzwords for local government innovation at conferences, among commentators, and for academics. But the vast majority of city managers and county administrators do not regard such projects as the most important innovations pursued in their communities. Rather, the primary goal of most cited projects is to address budget shortfalls or improve service delivery. Internal improvements to service delivery may involve public-private partnerships, e-government or civic engagement, but this is not generally the focus. For example, the Assistant City Manager in one city described how his organization engaged the public in discussion about whether to solve a multi-million dollar budget deficit through service reductions or by exploring alternative ways to deliver service which could balance the budget without cutting service. In such a case, public engagement was just a small piece of a larger project, not the end goal.

Not only do most local government administrators cite non-public-facing service delivery improvements as the most innovative projects undertaken in their communities, but they also indicate that they believe that innovation exists on a sliding scale; that is, a majority does not believe that the newness of the project or policy is an essential aspect of its significance as a new approach. Instead, local government administrators regard innovation as relative to place and circumstance. Indeed, interviewees often explained that they were unlikely to adopt a wholly new, and potentially costly approach if it had not been successfully implemented elsewhere. The risks of doing so were too high, especially for smaller,

less well-resourced communities. 65% of respondents indicated that the most innovative project adopted in their communities in the last five years were firsts for their cities or counties. Another 16% reported that the projects they listed as the most important new approaches in their communities were not even new for their cities or counties (Figure 2).

While many administrators are understandably cautious about implementing as-yet unproven approaches, or spending large amounts of taxpayer money to launch new projects, this risk aversion often leads to repeated implementations of approaches that may or may not be the best ones for different circumstances. Professional groups and transparency mechanisms can help to promote a culture in which failure is an accepted part of the innovation process and informed and conscious risk-taking prevails. Risk aversion in local government is understandable, but it must be tempered by a desire to seek out the best approaches for solving the existing problem. In such cases, active civic engagement can be helpful in shifting the blame from government when projects produce unfavorable results, and can help to generate new ideas and gain public support

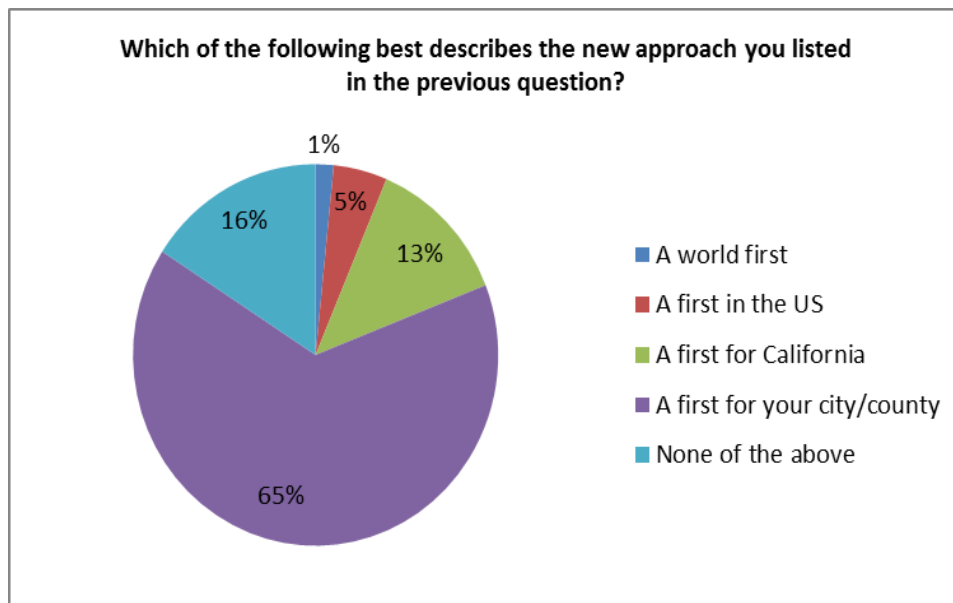


Figure 2. Newness of Projects Described as Innovative

from the outset. The fact that so many projects identified by respondents as innovative were not entirely new is not a bad thing, in and of itself, but such approaches must be empirically evaluated for the community in relation to newer ideas, rather than adopted simply because others have said they are effective.

Of those projects that fit the more common definition of innovation as something that had never before been implemented in the world, the United States or the State of California, 83% were from suburban or urban cities or counties. (This compares to 69% of overall responses from administrators representing suburban or urban communities.) A third of innovation firsts in the United States and California were submitted by urban administrators, compared to 22% of administrators representing urban communities in the overall survey responses. None of the projects cited as a world first or a first in the United States was submitted by rural administrators (Table 2).

In follow-up interviews, city managers and county administrators from rural communities often explained that they did not have the resources to pursue large scale projects around e-government or civic engagement of the sort that might have been undertaken in cities like San Francisco, San Jose, Los Angeles or San Diego. In a few instances, rural administrators also cited cultural reluctance to increased government spending in their locales as a key reason for not pursuing such projects. Interestingly, many administrators perceived innovations undertaken by big cities as costly financially even as they perceived their own innovations as reducing costs. In the case of these smaller communities, there was generally not a problem of knowing about the existence of innovations, even if the details were not known precisely. But deeper knowledge sharing around costs and outcomes might have led to greater adoption of newer approaches. Greater understanding of costs and benefits – particularly

Table 2. Local Government Innovation Firsts

First in the World

1. Sonoma County Energy Independence Program, a PACE program producing private sector jobs in energy retrofit (Sonoma County)

First in the United States

1. Open government initiatives, leading to alternate service delivery policies and pension reform (San Jose)
2. The use of public art as a graffiti deterrent (Hayward)
3. AB-109 Implementation Strategies (Unidentified County)

First in California

1. A new city-sponsored and funded initiative to improve local education” (Shafter)
2. A project to lease mineral rights to an oil company and to establish a trust for the city (Unidentified City)
3. Collaboration on energy (Unidentified City)
4. Shared services: unique approach to increasing services while reducing costs (San Carlos)
5. Shared services (Unidentified City)
6. AB-109 redevelopment wind down center for leadership and transformation (Unidentified County)
7. Collaborative, inclusive, cross-departmental AB-109 process to prevent recidivism and involve community providers (San Joaquin County)
8. Regional services for Farm Advisor and Child Support Services (Unidentified County)

Note that respondents answered the following question: Which of the following best describes the new approach you listed in the previous question?

the costs of *not* pursuing a particular approach – is essential, and this can be achieved in part by effective knowledge sharing. In many cases, this work is already happening, though not always systematically.

Some respondents may have inflated or deflated their projects' significance based on inaccurate information about what kinds of projects had been tried elsewhere. In addition, among projects listed simply as "shared services" or "AB-109 implementation strategies," it is unclear what characteristics allow respondents to define projects as anything more than a first for the community, unless follow-up interviews were conducted with these respondents. After all, many communities in California are pursuing both of these initiatives. Finally, other survey data points reveal that administrators in urban communities are more likely to publicize their achievements than colleagues in rural and suburban districts. This may account for an overrepresentation of urban projects in the United States and California firsts categories. Rural administrators, in particular, may be less likely to believe their projects are firsts, owing to lack of information about other projects, or lack of practice at publicizing achievements. Programs that match urban and rural administrators can help to bridge this gap in publicity. Professional associations that recognize innovative projects in communities of different sizes through awards and newsletters also help to address this problem.

Perhaps for similar reasons of reporting and resources available, local government administrators who identify their communities as possessing a culture where innovation is more likely to flourish are more likely to be urban. Overall, a majority of respondents (56%) indicated that their cities and counties were willing to experiment with new approaches. This was the highest ranking of four options: pioneers and early

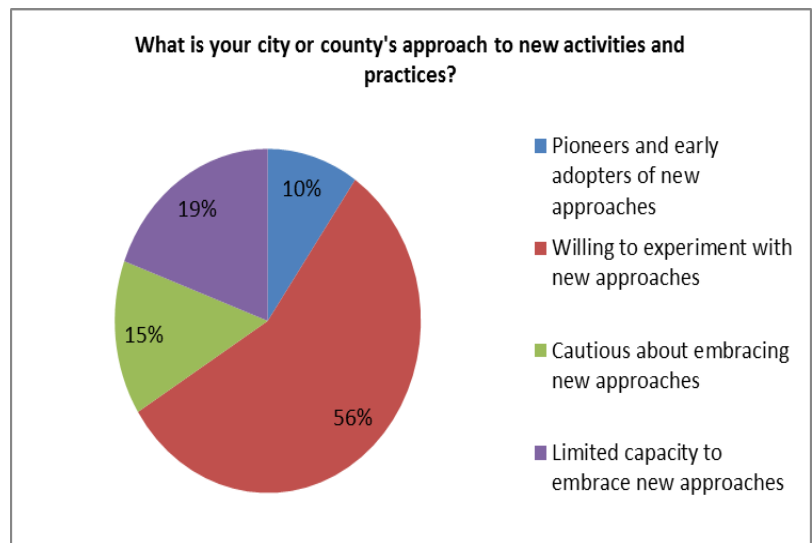


Figure 3. Approach to New Activities and Practices

adopters of new approaches, willing to experiment with new approaches, cautious about embracing new approaches, and limited capacity to embrace new approaches (Figure 3).

One-quarter of urban administrators identified their communities as pioneers and early adopters of new approaches, compared with 9% of suburban managers and 0% of rural administrators. Respondents from rural cities and counties were also much more likely to indicate that they had limited capacity to embrace new approaches in their locales. 44% of rural administrators felt this way, compared with 13% of those in suburban communities and 0% of those in urban communities. This finding about the perception of more limited options to implement innovative programs and policies in rural communities was also borne out in interviews in which rural administrators emphasized the impact of the economic downturn on their already under-resourced communities. As the City Manager in a rural city explained, "people [in local government] don't have time for extras" like innovative projects they perceive as requiring additional capacity and investment. Administrators in rural towns seem less willing to experiment with new approaches because of the perceived high cost of new approaches, and are less willing to take a chance on

potentially risky investments due to tighter budgets than their colleagues in urban and suburban communities face.

Motivations for Innovation: The Power of the Price Tag

Not only do cost and resource considerations dictate what innovations city and county administrators feel they can implement, but they drive a lot of the new approaches that survey respondents identified as significant in their communities. When asked to rate the importance of various reasons for adopting new approaches in their cities or counties, respondents put reducing cost/increasing organizational efficiency at the top, with 87% identifying this reason as very important and the remainder citing it as moderately important (Table 3).

The fiscal crisis has exacerbated the cost reduction impetus for innovating in local government. But it has not necessarily reduced the desire or ability of local government managers to innovate, even if it may have created fewer options for implementing resource-heavy projects. In some cases, the poor economy may have actually created an environment conducive to innovation as city and county administrators try to find creative ways of

adapting to the new normal. The resulting reduced revenue for cities and counties and publicity surrounding municipal bankruptcies in California may have also increased knowledge sharing, as local governments are more cautious about spending and recognize the need to evaluate potential solutions systematically.

In an open-ended question about the effect of the fiscal crisis on the approach local government administrators take to investigating innovations, respondents presented a mixed portrait of the economic downturn’s effect on knowledge sharing. Some respondents indicated that severe cuts in local government budgets have made thorough investigation difficult. As a County Administrator from a rural county explained, the fiscal crisis “accelerated the need [to innovate], but also drained the resources to implement” innovative projects. For others, the poor economy has forced consideration of new approaches, sometimes for the first time. “The fiscal crisis has made us much more open to trying new approaches and looking at innovative ways to solve problems,” a Town Manager from a suburban community wrote. But regardless of their approach, nearly all respondents indicated that the innovations that they investigated were designed to reduce costs and

Table 3. Reasons for Adopting New Approaches

Reasons for Adopting New Approaches	Mean Response (1-4)	Median Response
Reducing cost/increasing organizational efficiency	3.9	Very Important
Ability of new approach to address existing community need	3.5	Very Important
Finding solutions to long-lasting problems	3.4	Very Important
Fulfilling the vision of elected officials	3.3	Moderately Important
New legislation/administrative requirements	3.2	Moderately Important
Increasing civic engagement	2.8	Moderately Important
Pressure from community members	2.7	Moderately Important
Ease of implementing new approach	2.5	Moderately Important
Time pressure to deliver quick remedies	2.3	Slightly Important
To be seen as a leader among other cities/counties	2.1	Slightly Important

Note that respondents answered the following question: In general, how important are the following reasons for adopting new approaches in your city or county?

increase efficiency. For many this has meant a more cautious approach to research and implementation. As the City Administrator of a rural city explained, his organization takes a “measure twice, cut once” approach as it “proceed[s] with greater caution” and “prioritizes opportunity” more than in the past.

There is an opportunity for external groups, including professional associations, to play a role in helping cities and counties with this process. By consolidating approaches, and also offering tools to evaluate those approaches systematically relative to the problem to be addressed, external groups can save local government administrators from duplicating the work that others have already done. There will necessarily be some modification to particular types of communities, and the unique problems to be solved, but external groups in consultation with city and county staffers can leverage their expertise to help under-resourced communities in their efforts to be more systematic in evaluating solutions. This evaluation already occurs around specific policy areas, such as transparency, and could be included within knowledge sharing databases. The idea should not be just to identify best practices, but critically and thoroughly to measure specific areas of impact relative to cost.

While reducing costs and increasing organizational efficiency are the most important reasons that city and county managers innovate, a host of other factors is also significant.

Two factors related to impact -- addressing community need and finding solutions to long lasting problems -- were also judged to be very important by pluralities of respondents, though the former was more significant for city managers than for county administrators. County administrators whom we interviewed saw themselves as serving the public, but they also saw themselves as chiefly responsible for delivering mandated services in innovative, effective and

efficient ways, modifying programs to accommodate new needs, and responding to new threats and problems within the jurisdiction of county government, rather than developing a host of new programs in response to community need and demand. This was in contrast to city managers who more often saw themselves as having the freedom to create new projects in response to a public with whom they had more direct contact. Results may have been different had we surveyed department heads within county government rather than administrators; department heads are often charged with managing community relations and responding to inquiries and suggestions from the public. But in both the cases of county and city administrators, pluralities saw serving community need as very important. From these data we can see that external effects of implemented solutions are important to local government leaders, even if the approach was designed to reduce costs. If greater efficiencies and cost reductions do not serve a vital community need -- e.g. maintaining basic services like fire and police protection -- they are not worth implementing.

Reducing costs and increasing organizational efficiency are the most important reasons that city and county managers innovate.

At the same time, local government leaders’ perception of what constitutes community need or long-lasting problems in their jurisdictions is not influenced by community members as much as one might expect. Neither is increasing civic engagement an especially important motivation for innovating, though it may be a secondary goal or a means to a larger end of many innovative projects around cost reduction or to address community needs or finding solutions to long-lasting

problems. Interviewees often explained this seeming divergence between their desire to address community need and the relatively low significance attached to the views of residents by citing evidence that community members who mobilized to support or oppose particular initiatives were not representative of the community as a whole.

This created a certain wariness among city and county administrators about trusting such sources. For example, the City Manager of a suburban city told us about a case in which a community of neighborhood residents agitated for the renovation of an older ballpark while other newer ballparks existed elsewhere in the city. Rather than turning the space into something more useful, or spending the renovation money on another project, the City bowed to the pressure of community members. In this case, the City Manager suspects that the group lobbying for the renovation was not representative of the community as a whole, and that its position did not address the larger community need.

On the other hand, city and county administrators report holding their ground against such civic opposition. When asked to rate obstacles to adopting innovations in their communities, a majority said that civic opposition was slightly or not significant. However, comments in interviews indicate that this understanding may be somewhat aspirational. It is also possible that for many types of internal organizational or managerial innovations, civic opposition was not especially pronounced. Even so, this points to the need to find new ways for local government administrators to engage deeper cross-sections of the public in acquiring knowledge, developing and implementing solutions. Community groups are often well positioned to do research on new approaches, and they are often skilled at using existing forums for making their voices heard. But in order to address administrators' concern about the representativeness of such groups, local governments need to find other approaches for

engaging more community members to create a more accurate portrait of needs, and to draw on such people as knowledge sources in their own right. This, itself, requires innovation.

Motivations for Innovation: Internal Considerations and Pressures from Above

City managers and county administrators are more driven by pressure from elected officials and legislative mandates than they are by community input. Fulfilling the vision of elected officials was cited as a moderately important reason for innovating, and follow-up interviews confirmed the importance of the support and leadership of the Council, Mayor, or Board of Supervisors in advancing innovative approaches. As one City Manager put it, "leadership of elected officials makes all the difference." Interviewees consistently cited cases in which they were able to push an innovative project only after a newly elected official or Board made it a priority, empowering the administrator to develop new solutions or push a previously tabled program. In some cases this involved a public official allocating more funding for the initiative or focusing press attention on a problem. In other cases the pressure from above came in the form of a direct proposal from a Mayor or Board, or a declaration of intent to tackle a particular policy area during an upcoming term. This commitment often translated into more staff time allocation to pursue the objective, even if it meant that other projects were occasionally left by the wayside in the meantime. Assuming the administrator was on board with the project or policy priority, this often had the effect of energizing local government staff members and causing them to work harder toward the projects they were previously pursuing while taking on new responsibilities at the same time.

This pressure from above points to the need for supportive and visionary leadership among elected officials when it comes to the successful implementation of innovative approaches within local government. Interviewees explained that they could sometimes play a role in educating elected groups with the knowledge they acquired about programs worthy of consideration. However, this knowledge was most often used at the persuasion stage of the innovation process, and busy elected officials were not always included in the practice of knowledge sharing in order to generate and select ideas.

For county administrators, new legislative requirements -- especially the implementation of AB-109, the bill to put more responsibility on county jails -- was an especially powerful motivator for innovating. But there, too, elected officials' vision was important. Legislative mandates at once motivated a change in policy, but they did not always result in the most innovative approaches to solving problems. In the case of AB-109, for example, some counties did not fundamentally rethink the services that they provided to inmates or to crime prevention, even if they did accommodate the new law by housing prisoners formerly in state prisons. Legislation from the state or federal level can require changes to how local governments operate or the services they provide, but they do not generally require new ways of addressing problems, in and of themselves. In fact, in some instances, legislative requirements can actively work against the possibility of new approaches if they prescribe a one-size-fits-all solution. Interviewees often cited the lack of funding to think strategically about how to turn mandates like AB-109 into opportunities to rethink the way they deployed services and the purposes that those services fulfilled as an obstacle to innovation.

Apart from these pressures from above, factors internal to organizations or to the wider local government community were comparatively less

important relative to the solution's ability to fulfill different objectives, whether cost reduction or community need. The ease of implementing the new approach, time pressure and the desire to be seen as a leader among cities or counties were all viewed as less important than other reasons for innovating. Though it does not diminish awards and recognitions from professional groups as a source of knowledge sharing, such programs are less useful as motivators of innovation. And the fact that ease of implementation and time pressures were not especially important factors should be viewed optimistically; local government administrators are interested in finding sound long-term solutions to existing problems, not in producing quick and easy fixes, innovative though they may be. On the other hand, city and county leaders sometimes expressed frustration that they sometimes had to implement less-than-perfect approaches, rather than having the time to invest in innovation. In other words, because of their understandable desire to evaluate all outcomes and approaches, and their risk aversion due to cost concerns, city and county managers may be disincentivized to innovate when they have to act quickly, especially in the case of implementing legislative mandates and requirements.

This pressure from above points to the need for supportive and visionary leadership among elected officials.

Other factors were much more important when it came to adoption of innovations. Internal factors regarding capacity to implement the solution and employee engagement were very important to a majority of respondents. Adequate capacity and employee engagement were also routinely cited by interviewees as critical to the successful implementation of innovations. For example, the

County Administrator in a suburban county reported that expertise and enthusiasm of county staffers was essential to the decision by the County’s Board to adopt an innovative, but complicated project around energy efficiency financing. “We had a team of enthusiastic and brilliant people from across all departments who, working with the guidance of the Auditor Controller, created a program which was innovative and built trust with the community and the Board that it would be effective,” the County Administrator reported. Perhaps because of such dedicated and engaged staff, city and county administrators did not identify lack of employee engagement as a significant obstacle when it came to innovating. This finding may be related to the self-reported nature of the information and concerns about publicly airing dirty laundry. Still, employee engagement is different than employee expertise and capacity, which respondents considered moderately significant barriers to innovation adoption (Figure 4).

Obstacles to Innovation: The Heavy Weight of Cost Considerations

Perhaps not surprisingly, the significant obstacles to innovation faced by city and county administrators were mirror opposites of important motivators and enablers to the adoption of new approaches in local government. From a list of sixteen factors in choosing to use acquired knowledge in decision-making or implementation of new approaches, only one received a median rating of very significant: lack of access to funds and financing. The second most important obstacle was closely related: the high cost of developing new approaches (Table 4).

This concern over financing innovative projects -- no doubt intensified by the poor economy of the last several years -- is also connected to other obstacles judged to be significant. Declining city and county budgets have forced employees to do more with less, reducing the time employees can devote to researching, customizing and

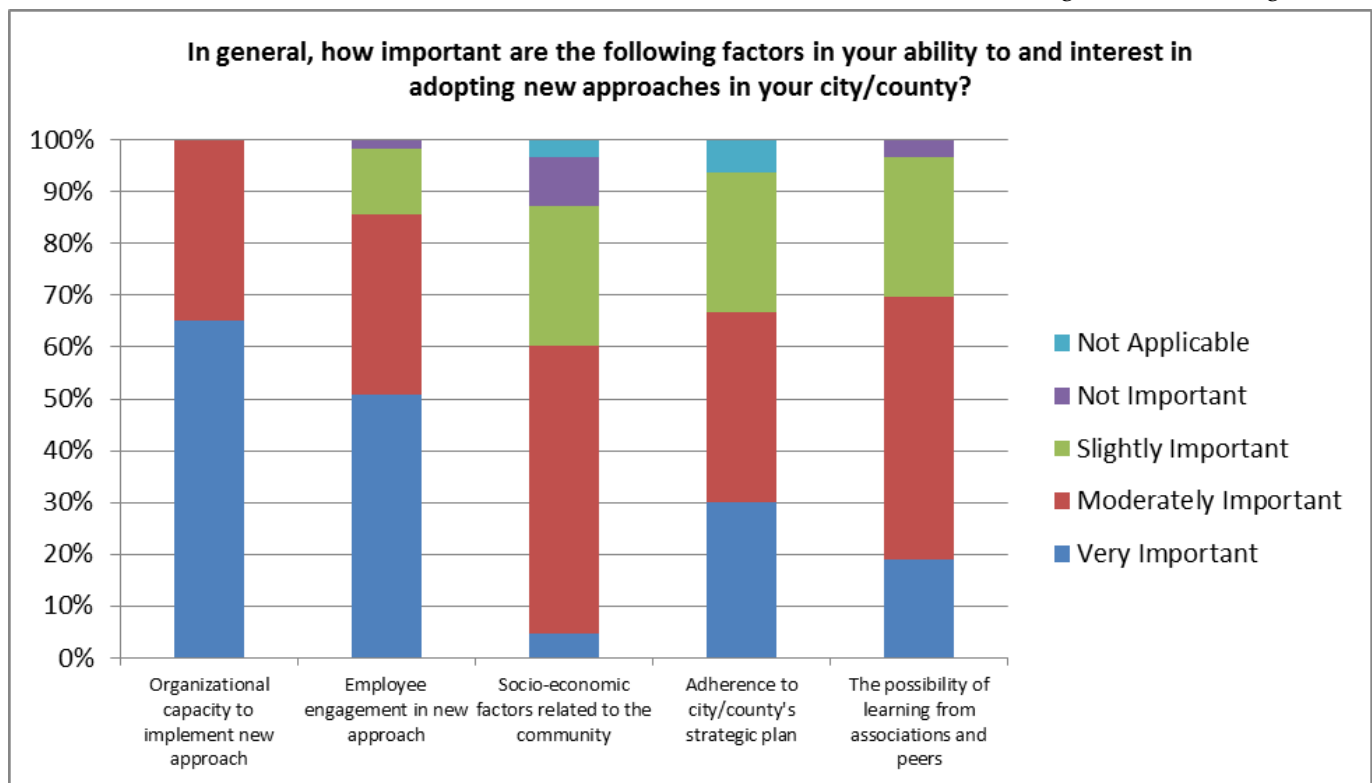


Figure 4. Importance of Internal Factors in Adopting New Approaches

implementing new approaches. Expenditures on new technological infrastructure and continued funding for one-time or grant-funded budget items are increasingly hard to justify for local government officials. As a result, it is not surprising that the seven obstacles judged with a median response of “moderately significant” had to do with concerns about capacity (skills, time and infrastructure), customization and sustainability.

On the other hand, most respondents did not report that the information they received about implementing innovations was problematic. Nor did they believe that the skills mismatch could be improved through access to external technical and consultant support services. This points to the need for external organizations -- whether funders, or non-profits -- to work toward a goal of developing internal capacity in local government, not simply bringing on potentially costly external

consultants and technical support for use on a particular project. As noted elsewhere, civic opposition and lack of employee engagement were not especially significant obstacles to innovation. And red tape -- either legal requirements or complex administrative/approval procedures -- was not viewed as significant, either.

Interviewees sometimes explained that in certain circumstances or for particular projects these factors could be important, but they were not true across the board. For example, the County Administrator in a suburban county told us about a project around energy efficiency that led the County to partner with the State of California Attorney General’s office in order to overcome federal resistance to this program. Although legal efforts have as yet been unsuccessful, the County is moving forward through Congress to protect innovation. These legal problems were not present

Table 4. Obstacles to Using Knowledge in Decision-Making and Implementation of New Approaches

Factor in Choosing to Use Acquired Knowledge in Decision-Making or Implementation of New Approaches	Mean Response (1-4)	Median Response
Lack of access to funds and financing	3.4	Very Significant
High cost of developing new approaches	3.1	Moderately Significant
Lack of time for employees to implement the new approach	2.8	Moderately Significant
Lack of capability to customize solutions for my city/county	2.7	Moderately Significant
Lack of qualified or skilled personnel	2.7	Moderately Significant
Lack of managerial capabilities	2.6	Moderately Significant
Inadequate technological infrastructure	2.5	Moderately Significant
Lack of ability to sustain the new approach	2.4	Moderately Significant
Lack of relevance of received information	2.4	Slightly Significant
Legal requirements	2.3	Slightly Significant
Lack of ability to vet acquired knowledge	2.3	Slightly Significant
Lack of employee engagement	2.2	Slightly Significant
Civic opposition	2.2	Slightly Significant
Lack of information on how to implement the new approach	2.1	Slightly Significant
Complex administrative/approval procedures	2.1	Slightly Significant
Lack of external technical and consultant support services	2.0	Slightly Significant

Note that respondents answered the following question: Over the course of the last five years, how significant has each of the following factors been in your choice to use acquired knowledge in decision-making or your decision to implement and sustain new approaches?

for public health initiatives that the County undertook. This points to the need for local governments to assess the weight of potential obstacles relative to the projects they hope to pursue, and the area of innovation in which potential solutions exist. Doing so ahead of time can give county and city leaders a more realistic portrait of whether the obstacles are worth confronting, and what tools will need to be in place in order to overcome them.

Methods and Application of Knowledge Sharing: Personal Networks Predominate

When it comes to actually acquiring and using information that will be useful for implementing innovative programs and policies, survey respondents also tended to cite methods and techniques requiring less upfront investment in time and money. By far, personal contacts were the most valuable source of knowledge for city and county administrators investigating and implementing the new approach they identified as most significant in the last five years (Table 5).

This points to the importance of local government officials cultivating such personal relationships in advance of when they are investigating innovative projects. Third parties like professional associations should and often do play a significant role facilitating such contact.

Geographic proximity also played a role in how valuable these connections were. Community groups were valuable to city managers as a knowledge source. Interviewees often explained this reliance on community group knowledge as related to geography; such groups understood how to customize solutions for a particular locale and were often motivated to alert city managers to solutions undertaken in other communities. Geography was also an important factor when it came to city/county staffers as a source of information. While other city/county staffers ranked second on the list of options, city/county staffers outside of California ranked near the bottom. Interviewees explained that people who held similar positions in local governments in California were more attuned to particular rules governing California’s counties and cities, and the impacts of California’s unique referenda policies.

Table 5. Sources of Information Used in Researching and Implementing New Approaches

Source of Information	Mean Response (1-4)	Median Response
Personal contacts	3.4	Very Valuable
Other city/county staffers in California	3.0	Moderately Valuable
Community groups	2.8	Moderately Valuable
Internet search	2.7	Moderately Valuable
Formal partners (non-profits, foundations, businesses, etc.)	2.6	Moderately Valuable
Consultants (people hired to provide advice)	2.5	Moderately Valuable
Vendors (companies providing products)	2.1	Slightly Valuable
List-servs from sources other than professional associations	2.1	Slightly Valuable
Colleges and universities	2.0	Slightly Valuable
City/county staffers outside of California	2.0	Slightly Valuable
Academic literature	2.0	Slightly Valuable

Note that respondents answered the following question: Think about the most important new approach adopted by your city/county in the last five years. How valuable were the following sources of information as you researched and implemented this new approach?

In addition, they often had dealt with similar regionally-specific concerns -- e.g. earthquake preparedness, accommodation of Spanish-speaking immigrants, or water resources. While geographically diverse gatherings can be important spaces for exchanging ideas, geographically targeted groups seem to be more effective for developing the kind of relationships that are most likely to lead to collaboration and knowledge sharing around innovation for communities in California.

In interviews, administrators explained that personal exchanges allowed them to obtain potentially sensitive information and that those in their immediate region or in the state had a much better sense of the particular circumstances they faced. Furthermore, respondents typically had much deeper personal relationships with those in communities nearby, as they worked together on regional issues and often had joint meetings locally. This inspired trust that allowed them to make inquiries. On the other hand, interviewees often reported that they had no qualms about cold-calling staffers in communities in which they had no personal contacts. But in such cases, they first had to have knowledge of the innovative approach, something that was possible, though less likely, with no previous personal connections. And they were less inclined to trust the information they received.

Interviewees explained that there was a sequencing issue in how they used the different sources of knowledge. Internet searches ranked quite highly on the list of knowledge sources, but interviewees typically used internet searches to identify interesting solutions which

they then investigated through conversations with personal contacts, other city/county staffers and community groups. Though considered far less valuable than internet searches, list-servs were often used in a similar way, at the initial stages of an investigation. Interviewees often considered list-servs valuable for basic day-to-day information sharing, but not for innovative approaches that required more prolonged and trusting exchange than list-servs provided. And though academic literature was the least valuable tool for researching and implementing the new approach, interviewees often explained that they used academic literature at the end of the process as support for proposals they brought before elected officials for approval.

Other interview data shows that most respondents used knowledge for all pieces of the innovation process (idea generation, feasibility analysis, persuasion and implementation), though only a minority shared that information with others (Figure 5). But the types of information used for each piece of this process differ significantly. This points to the need for groups that promote knowledge sharing to develop tools for all parts of the innovation process, not just the initial stage of knowledge discovery, as list-servs, databases and

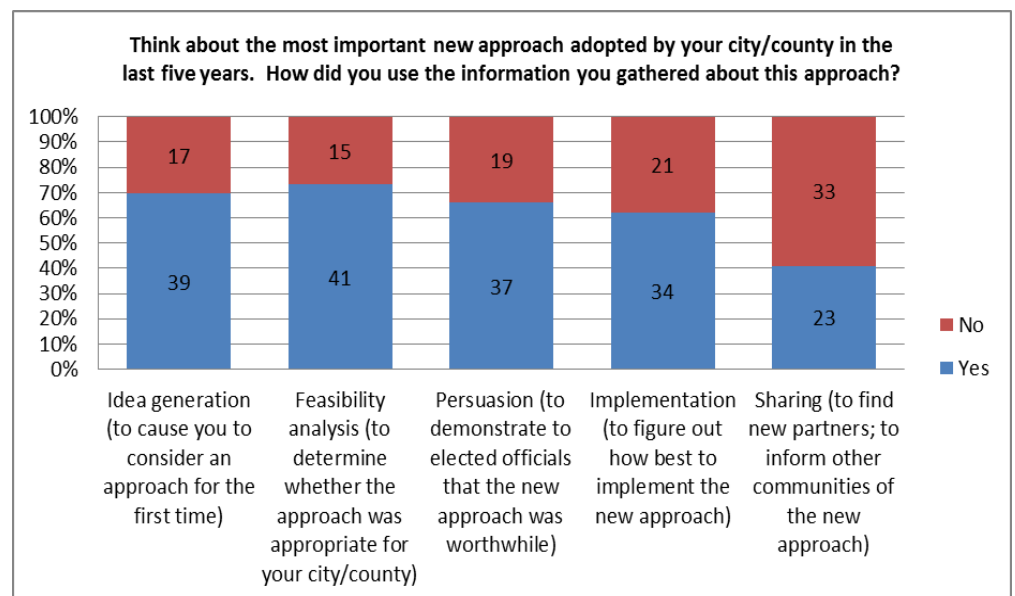


Figure 5. Use of Acquired Information

newsletters are best designed to address.

Though much of the discussion on civic innovation has focused on public-private partnerships, formal partnerships were a mixed bag as a source of knowledge around innovation. There was a wide divergence in responses, as 54% of those who had engaged in formal partnerships rated them very or moderately valuable, and 46% regarded them as slightly or not valuable. This is not to say that such partnerships are not valuable in and of themselves, but as knowledge sources related to innovation, there were mixed opinions. This was true even within a particular city or county. The City Manager of a suburban city described many public-private partnerships in which his community had engaged, stating that some were more successful than others. He explained, “We’ve been successful in identifying what our expectations are. It’s essential to have a plan B in case things don’t work, though.”

Like formal partners, other types of external assistance -- consultants, vendors and colleges and universities -- received mixed reviews as sources of information when researching and implementing innovations (Table 6). Interviewees often explained this divergence as relational to the problem at hand. Consultants, vendors and colleges and universities were more effective or less effective as knowledge sources depending on the innovation being discussed, and the particular people involved. Many city managers and county administrators also distrusted the motives of vendors. At the same time, vendors were often a low-hanging fruit that presented information -- however slanted -- to local government officials in easily digestible form, without city and county staffers having to seek out that information themselves. This indicates the need for more trusted organizations to push out requested, targeted information to local government officials, rather than requiring administrators to sift through existing resources in databases. Some organizations already have some version of this,

allowing managers to select topic areas about which they would like to receive more information electronically and automatically sending related posts when they appear. But such content is often not well curated or certified, and the information can be overwhelming.

Table 6.
Value of Selected Sources of Information in Researching and Implementing New Approaches

Source	% Very or Moderately Valuable	% Slightly or Not Valuable
Consultants	56	44
Vendors	33	67
Colleges and Universities	26	74

Note that respondents answered the following question: Think about the most important new approach adopted by your city/county in the last five years. How valuable were the following sources of information as you researched and implemented this new approach? Percentages are calculated based on the total number of people who indicated using the source.

The Role of Professional Associations: More Valuable than the Tools They Offer

As sources of information around innovation, professional associations were somewhere in the middle. On the one hand, survey respondents indicated that the possibility of learning from associations and peers was a moderately important factor in their ability and interest in adopting new approaches. Indeed, 70% viewed this factor as very or moderately important. But city and county administrators evaluated professional associations and the knowledge sharing programs they offered as less valuable than other sources (Table 7).

As with sources not offered by professional associations, interviewees explained that tools such as list-servs, professional development

opportunities, webinars, magazines, and online message boards are often valuable for gaining information about topics unrelated to innovation. But respondents judged them as lacking in sources of information for knowledge related to new approaches, even as they were more valuable than equivalent sources not provided by professional associations. This finding comes from a comparison of the data on the value of list-servs offered by professional associations versus those offered by others, and also from interview data. Interviewees explained that when these tools were useful, it was primarily during the first, information-gathering phase of the innovation process, not for the later stages of evaluating potential solutions, persuading others of the value of the approach, and implementing the innovation.

The exact tools for knowledge sharing offered by professional association were less valuable than the professional associations themselves. Confirming the importance of personal contacts and strong networks to knowledge sharing and the diffusion of innovation, interviewees often spoke about the value of professional associations in terms of the value they offered as connectors, not in terms of the explicit services offered to members. The City Manager of a suburban city offered a typical response: “The most useful part of belonging to a professional association is the opportunity to interface with colleagues at conferences and to have informal discussions, like the ones we have

here through the area association of city managers.”

In interviews, city managers and county administrators described the importance of personal -- preferably face-to-face -- meetings. Professional association meetings need not always occur in-person, but they must help to create trusting, personal relationships, something that was nurtured through initial face-to-face meetings. This is something that list-servs, webinars, magazines and online message boards presently do not facilitate. In addition, while professional development opportunities do often involve some face-to-face contact, they are generally designed to offer information about a particular topic, rather than to share and learn from colleagues in an unstructured way. Interviewees continually cited this kind of relationship building and peer-to-peer learning facilitated by organizations with connecting ability as essential to the value and effectiveness of professional associations as conduits for knowledge sharing around innovation.

This desire for relationship-building facilitated by professional associations also emerges in data about the value of different characteristics of professional associations needed for effective knowledge sharing related to new approaches. While the quality of content provided ranked as the most important factor related to the value of the professional association, opportunities for discussion with other cities/counties in California

Table 7. Value of Knowledge Sharing Services Offered by Professional Associations

Source of Information	Mean Response (1-4)	Median Response
Professional associations, in general	2.5	Moderately Valuable
List-servs from professional associations	2.5	Slightly Valuable
Professional development opportunities from professional associations	2.4	Slightly Valuable
Webinars from professional associations	2.4	Slightly Valuable
Magazines and newsletters from professional associations	2.3	Slightly Valuable
Online message boards from professional associations	2.1	Slightly Valuable

Note that respondents answered the following question: Think about the most important new approach adopted by your city/county in the last five years. How valuable were the following sources of information as you researched and implemented this new approach?

(as opposed to opportunities for discussion with other cities/counties outside of California, which ranked much lower), opportunities for discussion with others in the same position in city/county government, and the trust between members of the professional association all garnered median responses of very important, with no respondents indicating that these factors were not important (Table 8).

Structural and reputational elements of professional associations were relatively unimportant to survey respondents. City and county administrators ranked the selectivity and prestige of the professional association and opportunities for awards and leadership positions in the professional association as only slightly important, and size of the group was unimportant, though respondents came down on the side of larger associations by small margins. Selectivity and leadership and awards opportunities were

more important to administrators in urban communities than in rural ones, though it was not especially important to this group either. As the Town Manager from a suburban city explained, “One of the things you learn early on as a town manager is that credit isn’t important. It’s elected officials who are in the spotlight.” She and her colleagues looked to professional associations as a place to learn and share, and grow professionally, not as a space to receive recognition.

Two terms embedded within these factors held different meanings for participants. 45% of respondents identified the culture of the professional association as very important when it came to knowledge sharing around innovation, and no respondents indicated that this factor was unimportant. But interviewees supplied different understandings of what constituted a desirable culture. In most cases, favorable culture involved opportunities for honest exchange and

Table 8. Value of Characteristics of Professional Associations for Knowledge Sharing

Characteristic of Professional Association	Mean Response (1-4)	Median Response
Quality of content provided	3.8	Very Important
Opportunities for discussion with other cities/counties in California	3.6	Very Important
Opportunities for discussion with others in your position in city/county government	3.6	Very Important
Trust between members of the professional association	3.5	Very Important
Culture of the professional association	3.3	Moderately Important
Opportunities for in-person meetings through the professional association	2.9	Moderately Important
Opportunities for discussion with other cities/counties outside of California	2.5	Slightly Important
Selectivity/prestige of professional association	2.4	Slightly Important
Large size of the professional association	2.1	Slightly Important
Opportunities for awards and leadership positions in the professional association	2.0	Slightly Important
Small size of the professional association	1.9	Slightly Important

Note that respondents answered the following question: What characteristics of professional associations are most important for knowledge sharing related to new approaches?

relationship-building, and an environment that prized discussion of new approaches, rather than PR blitzes. Similarly, though it was ranked the highest factor, the quality of content provided was not understood in the same way by all respondents. Some interviewees explained that for them, quality was determined by the members and the applicability of solutions offered by those members to their own locales. But other interviewees rated the quality of materials produced directly by professional associations. In such cases, they tended to rate the usefulness of particular tools -- professional development workshops, webinars, conferences, etc. -- as places through which innovations relevant to them were shared. In either case, relevance and applicability were key factors to determining the quality of received information.

Sharing Achievements: Making Use of Personal and Local Channels

City managers and county administrators report that they are less likely to push information about their innovations out to other communities than they are to solicit information about new approaches. While a majority used acquired information for idea generation, feasibility analysis, persuasion and implementation, only 41% reported sharing information and learnings with others. Interviewees explain that this is due to three primary reasons.

First, city managers -- if not their county counterparts -- share information with the public rather than with their colleagues in other communities. Many view paper newsletters or website updates about city services or events to be an essential piece of their strategy to demonstrate transparency and keep the public informed. They do not feel the same responsibility to colleagues. Second, outward sharing requires time and energy that many local government officials do not have. This contrasts with soliciting information needed

to make a decision. Lack of capacity to share with colleagues in other communities also explains why urban cities and counties are more likely to share than their colleagues in rural cities and counties. And finally, sharing in public ways like newsletters, list-servs and webinars requires a certain comfort with the outcome of the project. Risk averse managers may be concerned about opening themselves and their staffs up to such scrutiny. As noted elsewhere, professional groups can help to promote a culture in which failure is tolerated, expected and evaluated relative to purpose and cost of continuing a project. This may help to facilitate more sharing. While we did ask what type of information was shared through these channels, there was no discernible pattern in the resulting data. Our interview data indicates that more sensitive data is often shared through more personal channels.

This final finding partially explains why city and county administrators are most likely to share information through sources involving personal connections and personal conversations (Figure 6). This criterion is explicitly true of the top three mechanisms for sharing -- informal conversations, formal face-to-face meetings, phone conversations with acquaintances -- and implicitly true of the fourth top source -- conferences, at which personal connections are forged during networking breaks and Q+A sessions. The only other source through which a majority of administrators shared were press releases, which interviewees report developing as a way to make media aware of innovative projects. Thus, sharing with colleagues through press releases may also be an easy way to repurpose an already existing medium.

Respondents indicated a preference for sharing through sources that required no explicit technological element. The three web-based sources -- list-servs, webinars and email blasts -- were the least frequently used to push out information, while low tech solutions like in-person meetings and phone calls were much more

frequently used to share innovative approaches with colleagues. This may be due to the informality of the latter methods. In addition, interviewees often cited a preference for sharing with trusted colleagues, relationships that were much more easily cultivated through one-on-one and in-person contact. This preference for limited sharing with known contacts is partially a by-product of a culture in local government that does not incentivize sharing around failure or reporting potentially ambiguous results. There is a first-mover problem in this; cities and counties will be unwilling to share learnings with others if they feel that they are alone in doing so. This is where professional associations, foundations and other external organizations can play an important role in encouraging more open discussion, and rewarding those who participate.

The fact that much of the sharing occurs through personal contacts is also explained by the people with whom city managers and county

administrators are sharing information. When asked to list the three cities or counties with which they shared most often, named communities were almost exclusively in close geographic proximity to the community where the local government administrator worked. In cases in which it was possible to establish whether there was a multi-directional flow of information, we found that information almost always flowed both ways. Divergent cases were often explained by the previous work placements of the city manager or county administrator. This geographic proximity both enabled regional collaborations and shared services projects and also allowed deeper, more personal relationships to form. Many interviewees stated that with reduced travel budgets, they also tended to rely more on their colleagues nearby. Another motivation for this tendency to share with neighbors was a belief that such communities faced similar problems and demanded similar solutions.

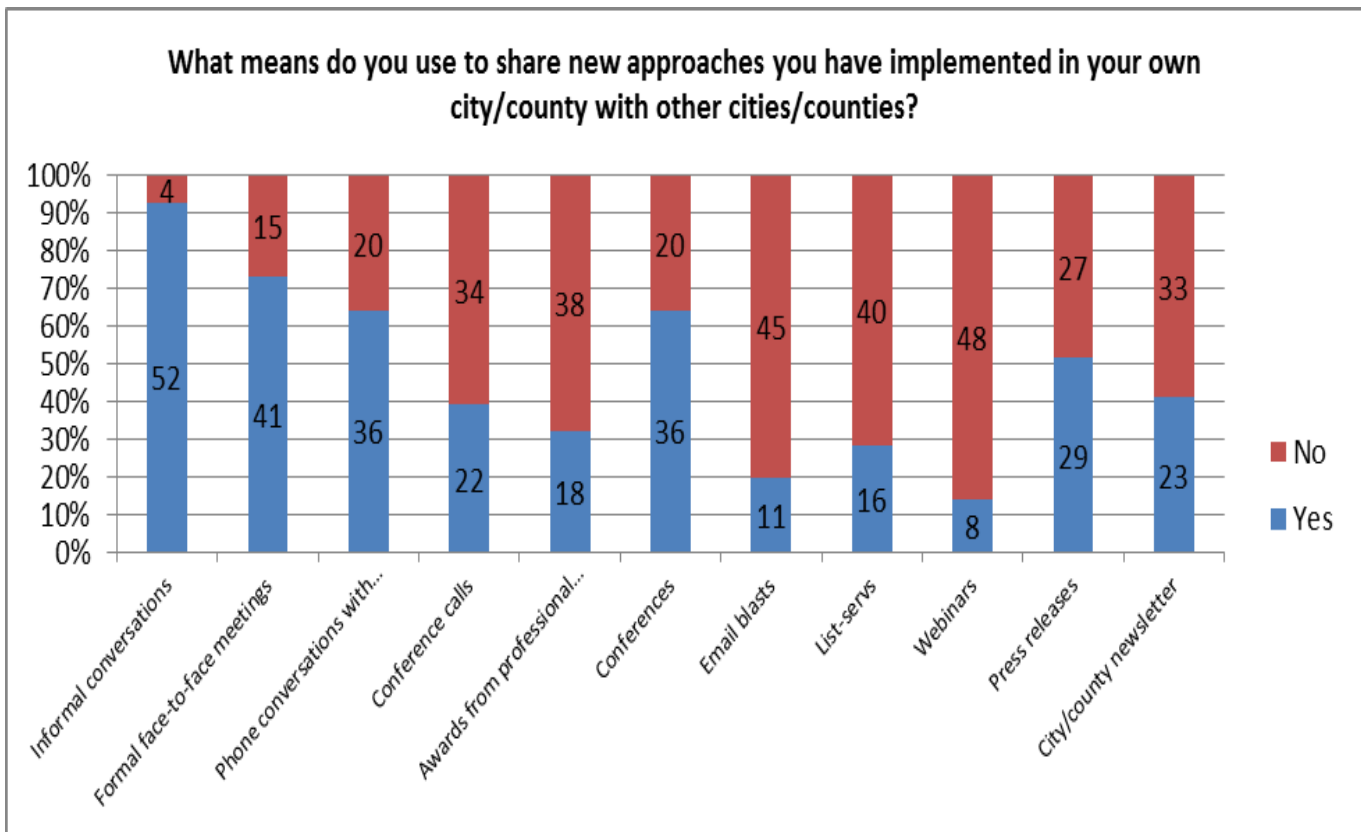


Figure 6. Means of Sharing Information with Others

Conclusion

Knowledge sharing is an essential aspect of the innovation process in local government, yet it is one that is given little systematic attention by either local government administrators or by member organizations that serve those in local government. Effective tools for knowledge sharing already exist and are often utilized. One-on-one conversations with personal contacts in close geographic proximity are key among this arsenal of effective methods for knowledge sharing. But the larger problem is not the identification of tools, but the institutionalization of the importance of networks for those groups most able to help develop them for local government staffers. Rather than thinking about their value as a set of services, professional organizations and other groups need to think about their convening capabilities as their chief asset when it comes to promoting the diffusion of innovation. They also need to recognize that knowledge sharing to promote innovation looks different from knowledge sharing for other purposes. For their part, local government staffers need to take advantage of such networks, following-up with contacts and committing to distribute their learnings to the networks established by convening groups.

The conversation should not begin and end with knowledge sharing, however. Those working within and for the benefit of local government also need to have a more involved and systematic discussion about the meaning and promise of innovation in their communities. Most of the city managers and county administrators we interviewed for this study had never heard the term “civic innovation,” though they could offer guesses about its meaning. Yet this is a term that circulates in academic and advocacy groups, if not professional groups, with great frequency. This isn’t just a matter of rethinking dominant terminologies, though. Instead, it points to the disconnect between local government staffers and

those who purport to serve them. Both groups could benefit from discussing their radically different understandings of innovation, and the potential to expand beyond standard interpretations -- internal reorganization to service delivery through cost reduction on the one hand, and the deployment of new technology products to engage the public more effectively on the other hand. Local government staffers face serious constraints when it comes to deploying new innovations in their communities, but they also have the capacity to rethink how their organizations can address existing and eventual community need. Doing so requires more effective and efficient knowledge sharing, and the participation of varied voices in the discussion. We hope that the release of this report will help to start a conversation among all stakeholders about which specific practices and programs can best accomplish these twin goals of more effective knowledge sharing and a reframing of the discussion about innovation in local government.

Appendix 1: Snapshot Results of Survey

Part I: Demographic Information

1. What is the name of the city or county in which you are employed? [open-ended response]
2. What is your position within city or county government? [open-ended response]
3. What type of city or county do you serve?
 - a. Rural - 31%
 - b. Suburban - 47%
 - c. Urban - 22%
4. How many years have you served in your current role? [open-ended response]

Part II: Organizational Characteristics and Major Achievements

5. How valuable do you believe knowledge sharing between cities or counties is for the diffusion of new approaches from city to city or from county to county?
 - a. Very Valuable - 76%
 - b. Moderately Valuable - 22%
 - c. Slightly Valuable - 2%
 - d. Not Valuable - 0%
6. In the last five years, what was the most important new approach instituted by your city or county (e.g. new approach to civic engagement, shared services, regional collaboration, budgetary processes, e-government, etc.)? [open-ended response]
7. Which of the following best describes the new approach you listed in the previous question?
 - a. A world first - 2%
 - b. A first in the US - 5%
 - c. A first for California - 13%
 - d. A first for your city or county - 65%
 - e. None of the above - 16%
8. What is your city or county's approach to new activities and practices?
 - a. Pioneers and early adopters of new approaches - 10%
 - b. Willing to experiment with new approaches - 56%
 - c. Cautious about embracing new approaches - 15%
 - d. Limited capacity to embrace new approaches - 19%
 - e. Other (please specify) - 0%
9. In general, how important are the following reasons for adopting new approaches in your city or county?
 - a. New legislation/administrative requirements
 - i. Very Important - 35%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 48%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 13%
 - iv. Not Important - 2%
 - v. Not Applicable - 2%
 - b. Reducing cost/increasing organizational efficiency
 - i. Very Important - 87%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 13%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 0%
 - iv. Not Important - 0%
 - v. Not Applicable - 0%
 - c. Fulfilling the vision of elected officials
 - i. Very Important - 49%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 37%

- iii. Slightly Important - 14%
- iv. Not Important - 0%
- v. Not Applicable - 0%
- d. Pressure from community members
 - i. Very Important - 6%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 59%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 29%
 - iv. Not Important - 6%
 - v. Not Applicable - 0%
- e. Time pressure to deliver quick remedies
 - i. Very Important - 3%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 44%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 35%
 - iv. Not Important - 16%
 - v. Not Applicable - 2%
- f. Finding solutions to long-lasting problems
 - i. Very Important - 52%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 35%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 11%
 - iv. Not Important - 2%
 - v. Not Applicable - 0%
- g. Increasing civic engagement
 - i. Very Important - 22%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 43%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 30%
 - iv. Not Important - 5%
 - v. Not Applicable - 0%
- h. To be seen as a leader among other cities or counties
 - i. Very Important - 6%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 32%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 27%
 - iv. Not Important - 33%
 - v. Not Applicable - 2%
- i. Ease of implementing new approach
 - i. Very Important - 11%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 43%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 32%
 - iv. Not Important - 13%
 - v. Not Applicable - 2%
- j. Ability of new approach to address existing community need
 - i. Very Important - 59%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 37%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 5%
 - iv. Not Important - 0%
 - v. Not Applicable - 0%
10. In general, how important are the following factors in your ability to and interest in adopting new approaches in your city or county?
 - a. Organizational capacity to implement new approach
 - i. Very Important - 65%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 35%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 0%
 - iv. Not Important - 0%
 - v. Not Applicable - 0%
 - b. Employee engagement in new approach
 - i. Very Important - 51%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 35%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 13%
 - iv. Not Important - 2%
 - v. Not Applicable - 0%
 - c. Socio-economic factors related to the community

- i. Very Important - 5%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 56%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 27%
 - iv. Not Important - 10%
 - v. Not Applicable - 3%
- d. Adherence to city or county's strategic plan
- i. Very Important - 30%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 37%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 27%
 - iv. Not Important - 0%
 - v. Not Applicable - 6%
- e. The possibility of learning from associations and peers
- i. Very Important - 19%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 51%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 27%
 - iv. Not Important - 3%
 - v. Not Applicable - 0%

- h. Vendors (companies providing products)
- i. Very Valuable - 5%
 - ii. Moderately Valuable - 24%
 - iii. Slightly Valuable - 37%
 - iv. Not Valuable - 22%
 - v. Not Used - 12%
- i. Academic literature
- i. Very Valuable - 5%
 - ii. Moderately Valuable - 19%
 - iii. Slightly Valuable - 39%
 - iv. Not Valuable - 31%
 - v. Not Used - 7%
- j. Internet search
- i. Very Valuable - 15%
 - ii. Moderately Valuable - 49%
 - iii. Slightly Valuable - 24%
 - iv. Not Valuable - 8%
 - v. Not Used - 3%

Part III: Finding Useful Information

11. Think about the most important new approach adopted by your city or county in the last five years. How valuable were the following sources of information as you researched and implemented this new approach?

- a. Personal contacts
- i. Very Valuable - 59%
 - ii. Moderately Valuable - 27%
 - iii. Slightly Valuable - 10%
 - iv. Not Valuable - 3%
 - v. Not Used - 0%
- b. Community groups
- i. Very Valuable - 27%
 - ii. Moderately Valuable - 32%
 - iii. Slightly Valuable - 27%
 - iv. Not Valuable - 10%
 - v. Not Used - 3%
- c. Other city or county staffers in California
- i. Very Valuable - 29%
 - ii. Moderately Valuable - 41%
 - iii. Slightly Valuable - 29%
 - iv. Not Valuable - 2%
 - v. Not Used - 0%
- d. City or county staffers outside of California
- i. Very Valuable - 5%
 - ii. Moderately Valuable - 12%
 - iii. Slightly Valuable - 44%
 - iv. Not Valuable - 20%
 - v. Not Used - 19%
- e. Formal partners (non-profits, foundations, businesses, etc.)
- i. Very Valuable - 14%
 - ii. Moderately Valuable - 37%
 - iii. Slightly Valuable - 36%
 - iv. Not Valuable - 8%
 - v. Not Used - 5%
- f. Consultants (people hired to provide advice)
- i. Very Valuable - 10%
 - ii. Moderately Valuable - 41%
 - iii. Slightly Valuable - 29%
 - iv. Not Valuable - 12%
 - v. Not Used - 8%
- g. Colleges and universities
- i. Very Valuable - 5%
 - ii. Moderately Valuable - 17%
 - iii. Slightly Valuable - 39%
 - iv. Not Valuable - 24%
 - v. Not Used - 15%

- k. List-servs from sources other than professional associations
- i. Very Valuable - 7%
 - ii. Moderately Valuable - 17%
 - iii. Slightly Valuable - 40%
 - iv. Not Valuable - 24%
 - v. Not Used - 12%
- l. List-servs from professional associations
- i. Very Valuable - 12%
 - ii. Moderately Valuable - 34%
 - iii. Slightly Valuable - 34%
 - iv. Not Valuable - 14%
 - v. Not Used - 7%
- m. Professional associations, in general
- i. Very Valuable - 12%
 - ii. Moderately Valuable - 41%
 - iii. Slightly Valuable - 31%
 - iv. Not Valuable - 14%
 - v. Not Used - 3%
- n. Magazines and newsletters from professional associations
- i. Very Valuable - 7%
 - ii. Moderately Valuable - 34%
 - iii. Slightly Valuable - 32%
 - iv. Not Valuable - 20%
 - v. Not Used - 7%
- o. Webinars from professional associations
- i. Very Valuable - 5%
 - ii. Moderately Valuable - 39%
 - iii. Slightly Valuable - 34%
 - iv. Not Valuable - 14%
 - v. Not Used - 8%
- p. Online message boards from professional associations
- i. Very Valuable - 5%
 - ii. Moderately Valuable - 19%
 - iii. Slightly Valuable - 39%
 - iv. Not Valuable - 24%
 - v. Not Used - 14%
- q. Professional development opportunities from professional associations
- i. Very Valuable - 15%
 - ii. Moderately Valuable - 24%
 - iii. Slightly Valuable - 37%
 - iv. Not Valuable - 17%
 - v. Not Used - 7%

12. What characteristics of professional associations are most important for knowledge sharing related to new approaches?

- a. Culture of the professional association
- i. Very Important - 45%

- ii. Moderately Important - 36%
- iii. Slightly Important - 19%
- iv. Not Important - 0%
- b. Trust between members of the professional association
 - i. Very Important - 61%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 27%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 12%
 - iv. Not Important - 0%
- c. Large size of the professional association
 - i. Very Important - 5%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 31%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 37%
 - iv. Not Important - 27%
- d. Small size of the professional association
 - i. Very Important - 4%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 23%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 35%
 - iv. Not Important - 39%
- e. Quality of content provided
 - i. Very Important - 84%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 14%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 2%
 - iv. Not Important - 0%
- f. Opportunities for discussion with other cities or counties in California
 - i. Very Important - 63%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 37%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 0%
 - iv. Not Important - 0%
- g. Opportunities for discussion with other cities or counties outside of California
 - i. Very Important - 15%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 34%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 41%
 - iv. Not Important - 10%
- h. Selectivity/prestige of professional association
 - i. Very Important - 12%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 33%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 34%
 - iv. Not Important - 21%
- i. Opportunities for in-person meetings through the professional association
 - i. Very Important - 25%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 49%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 17%
 - iv. Not Important - 8%
- j. Opportunities for awards and leadership positions in the professional association
 - i. Very Important - 3%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 25%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 33%
 - iv. Not Important - 38%
- k. Opportunities for discussion with others in your position in city or county government
 - i. Very Important - 62%
 - ii. Moderately Important - 33%
 - iii. Slightly Important - 5%
 - iv. Not Important - 0%
- 13. How has the fiscal crisis since 2008 changed your approach to investigating new approaches? [open-ended response]

Part IV: Applying Information

- 14. Think about the most important new approach adopted by your city or county in the last five years. How did you use

the information you gathered about this approach? (Check all that apply.)

- a. Idea generation (to cause you to consider an approach for the first time) - 70%
- b. Feasibility analysis (to determine whether the approach was appropriate for your city or county) - 73%
- c. Persuasion (to demonstrate to elected officials that the new approach was worthwhile) - 66%
- d. Implementation (to figure out how best to implement the new approach) - 62%
- e. Sharing (to find new partners; to inform other communities of the new approach) - 41%
- 15. Over the course of the last five years, how significant has each of the following factors been in your choice to use acquired knowledge in decision-making or your decision to implement and sustain new approaches?
 - a. Lack of capability to customize solutions for my city or county
 - i. Very Significant - 22%
 - ii. Moderately Significant - 31%
 - iii. Slightly Significant - 28%
 - iv. Not Significant - 11%
 - v. Not Applicable - 7%
 - b. Lack of relevance of received information
 - i. Very Significant - 15%
 - ii. Moderately Significant - 30%
 - iii. Slightly Significant - 26%
 - iv. Not Significant - 25%
 - v. Not Applicable - 4%
 - c. Lack of ability to vet acquired knowledge
 - i. Very Significant - 6%
 - ii. Moderately Significant - 33%
 - iii. Slightly Significant - 39%
 - iv. Not Significant - 18%
 - v. Not Applicable - 4%
 - d. High cost of developing new approaches
 - i. Very Significant - 31%
 - ii. Moderately Significant - 46%
 - iii. Slightly Significant - 17%
 - iv. Not Significant - 4%
 - v. Not Applicable - 2%
 - e. Lack of managerial capabilities
 - i. Very Significant - 17%
 - ii. Moderately Significant - 38%
 - iii. Slightly Significant - 27%
 - iv. Not Significant - 17%
 - v. Not Applicable - 0%
 - f. Lack of access to funds and financing
 - i. Very Significant - 54%
 - ii. Moderately Significant - 31%
 - iii. Slightly Significant - 8%
 - iv. Not Significant - 6%
 - v. Not Applicable - 2%
 - g. Lack of qualified or skilled personnel
 - i. Very Significant - 23%
 - ii. Moderately Significant - 31%
 - iii. Slightly Significant - 35%
 - iv. Not Significant - 12%
 - v. Not Applicable - 0%
 - h. Lack of employee engagement
 - i. Very Significant - 10%
 - ii. Moderately Significant - 19%
 - iii. Slightly Significant - 50%
 - iv. Not Significant - 19%
 - v. Not Applicable - 2%
 - i. Complex administrative/approval procedures
 - i. Very Significant - 8%
 - ii. Moderately Significant - 25%

- iii. Slightly Significant - 29%
- iv. Not Significant - 35%
- v. Not Applicable - 2%
- j. Lack of time for employees to implement the new approach
 - i. Very Significant - 31%
 - ii. Moderately Significant - 31%
 - iii. Slightly Significant - 27%
 - iv. Not Significant - 10%
 - v. Not Applicable - 0%
- k. Civic opposition
 - i. Very Significant - 10%
 - ii. Moderately Significant - 27%
 - iii. Slightly Significant - 24%
 - iv. Not Significant - 31%
 - v. Not Applicable - 8%
- l. Inadequate technological infrastructure
 - i. Very Significant - 16%
 - ii. Moderately Significant - 37%
 - iii. Slightly Significant - 24%
 - iv. Not Significant - 22%
 - v. Not Applicable - 2%
- m. Legal requirements
 - i. Very Significant - 10%
 - ii. Moderately Significant - 33%
 - iii. Slightly Significant - 37%
 - iv. Not Significant - 20%
 - v. Not Applicable - 0%
- n. Lack of information on how to implement the new approach
 - i. Very Significant - 2%
 - ii. Moderately Significant - 29%
 - iii. Slightly Significant - 39%
 - iv. Not Significant - 24%
 - v. Not Applicable - 6%
- o. Lack of external technical and consultant support services
 - i. Very Significant - 6%
 - ii. Moderately Significant - 22%
 - iii. Slightly Significant - 36%
 - iv. Not Significant - 32%
 - v. Not Applicable - 4%
- p. Lack of ability to sustain the new approach
 - i. Very Significant - 8%
 - ii. Moderately Significant - 44%
 - iii. Slightly Significant - 24%
 - iv. Not Significant - 22%
 - v. Not Applicable - 2%

18. Please name the three cities or counties with which you share knowledge most often. [open-ended response]

Part V: Sharing Achievements

16. What means do you use to share new approaches you have implemented in your own city or county with other cities or counties? (Check all that apply.)
- a. Informal conversations - 93%
 - b. Formal face-to-face meetings - 73%
 - c. Phone conversations with acquaintances - 64%
 - d. Conference calls - 39%
 - e. Awards from professional associations - 32%
 - f. Conferences - 64%
 - g. Email blasts - 20%
 - h. List-servs - 29%
 - i. Webinars - 14%
 - j. Press releases - 52%
 - k. City or county newsletter - 41%
17. What types of information do you share with other cities or counties? [open-ended response]

Appendix 2: Methodology and Demographics

CCIP’s survey was sent electronically to 483 city managers, deputy city managers, county administrators and deputy county administrators in California between November 15, 2012 and January 16, 2013. The survey was sent to three different groups: the city manager and deputy city manager members of the California branch of the International City/County Management Association (Cal-ICMA); the county administrator and deputy county administrator members of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC); and city managers and deputy city managers in California who were not members of Cal-ICMA. Cal-ICMA and CSAC distributed the survey directly to their members, while CCIP sent the survey to the final group based on an email list compiled from city websites. Among these three groups, there was a combined response rate of 16.1%, for a total of 78 responses (Table A-1).

Table A-1.
Survey Response and Completion Rates

Survey Group	Response Rate	Completion Rate
CSAC members (county administrators and deputy county administrators)	26.1%, 24/92	75.0%, 18/24
Cal-ICMA members (city managers and deputy city managers)	13.9%, 34/244	73.5%, 25/34
Non-Cal-ICMA members (city managers and deputy city managers)	13.6% 20/147	65.0%, 13/20
Combined Total	16.1%, 78/483	71.8%, 56/78

In addition CCIP staff conducted structured follow-up interviews with 14 individuals who indicated their interest on the survey (Appendix 2). Three of these were county administrators or deputies, and the remaining 11 were city managers or deputies.

The number of responses (78, inclusive of staff members in 21 counties and 51 cities) represents a significant percentage of city and county administrators in California. Survey takers came from 36% of California’s counties, and 11% of California’s municipalities. Because there was general consistency in the survey results, we are confident that it is possible to extrapolate from this group to the larger population of city and county administrators in California. In some cases we did not have enough data in different categories to identify clear cross-tabulations, but among other groups we were able to observe discernible trends. We recognize that there is a sample bias in the type of individual who elects to participate in a survey on innovation and knowledge sharing. If anything, the survey results may over-represent the extent of knowledge sharing and innovation among local governments in California.

Respondents represented 72 different cities and counties (Appendix 4). These cities and counties were of varying sizes, with just under half identifying their communities as suburban (Table A-2).

Table A-2.
Size of City or County Served by Participants

Size of City or County	% of Respondents
Urban	21.8
Suburban	47.4
Rural	30.8

Approximately three-fourths of respondents identified as city managers or county administrators, and the remaining one-fourth served as deputy administrators or other non-executive roles. Survey respondents had also served in their current roles for varying lengths of time, ranging from one month to 29 years with a median of 4 years and a mean of 5.4 years. This compares with a mean tenure of 7.4 years in office for municipal managers in 2009, and of 8.1 years for county manager in 2006, according to ICMA figures (Table A-3).²

Table A-3.
Years Served in Current Role

Range of Years Served	% of Respondents
0-1 Year	20.8
1+ to 3 Years	26.0
3+ to 5 Years	24.7
5+ to 10 Years	18.2
10+ Years	10.4

² “Statistics and Data.” Retrieved March 22, 2013, from: http://icma.org/en/icma/career_network/education/data.

Appendix 3: Interviewees

John Bramble, City Manager, Merced, California

Troy Butzlaff, City Administrator, Placentia, California

Leon Churchill, City Manager, Tracy, California

Veronica Ferguson, County Administrator, Sonoma County, California

Scott Hurlbert, Assistant City Manager, Shafter, California

Jim Leddy, Community and Government Affairs Manager, Sonoma County, California

Kelly McAdoo, Assistant City Manager, Hayward, California

Brian Moura, Assistant City Manager, San Carlos, California

Martin Nichols, County Administrative Officer, Lassen County, California

Ed Shikada, Assistant City Manager, San Jose, California

Susan Stanton, City Manager, Greenfield, California

Kurt Starman, City Manager, Redding, California

Jason Stilwell, City Administrator, Carmel-by-the-Sea, California

Debra Stutsman, Town Manager, San Anselmo, California

Appendix 4: California Cities and Counties Represented among Survey Respondents

Alameda County	Mt. Shasta
Arcadia	County of Nevada
Beverly Hills	Oakland
Butte County	Oakley
Carmel-by-the-Sea	Ojai
Cathedral City	Palm Desert
Colusa	Placentia
Contra Costa County	Placer County (2)
Covina	Placerville
Cupertino	Redding
Del Norte County	Rosemead
Downey	Sacramento
Duarte	San Anselmo
East Palo Alto	San Carlos
El Dorado County	Santa Clara County
Fairfield	Santa Cruz County
Gardena	San Diego
Gilroy	San Jacinto
Greenfield	San Joaquin County
Hayward (2)	San Jose
Hermosa Beach (2)	San Luis Obispo County
Holtville	Sausalito
Humboldt County	Seaside
Imperial Beach	Shafter
Kern County	Shasta County
County of Kings	Shasta Lake
Lassen County	Sonoma County (2)
Lemoore	Stanton
Lindsay	Torrance
Madera	Tracy
Mariposa County	Tuolumne County (2)
Martinez	Ukiah (2)
Menlo Park	Vernon
Merced	Villa Park
Mono County	Whittier
Morro Bay	Yolo County



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