

ICMA Survey-Profile of Local Government Service Delivery Choices

The survey was conducted in the summer and fall of 2012. Surveys were mailed to 7,515 city-type governments and to all county governments. An online option was also available. The survey response rate is 21%, with 2,184 local governments responding.

The summary below shows the percentages that provided answers in response to each individual question. Not all local governments answered each question, so the percentages are not based on all survey respondents. The number reporting (N) is provided for each question.

BACKGROUND

The term *private service delivery* includes for-profit firms, non-profit organizations, and private industries.

Has your local government studied the feasibility of adopting private service delivery within the past five years?

- Yes = 48% (n=1,044)
- No = 52% (n=1,128)

If “yes,” which of the following factors spurred your local government’s decision to study the feasibility of adopting private delivery alternatives within the last five years?

Factor	Percent reporting
External fiscal pressures, including restrictions placed on raising taxes, e.g., Proposition 13 (n=574)	59%
Internal attempts to decrease costs of service delivery (n=848)	87%
State or federal mandates tied to intergovernmental financing (n=116)	12%
Change in political climate emphasizing a decreased role for government (n=221)	23%
Active citizen group favoring privatization (n=79)	8%
Unsolicited proposals presented by potential service providers (n=168)	17%
Concerns about government liability (n=96)	10%
Other (n=104)	11%

Note: 970 responded to this question. The percentages are based on 970.

Who inside your local government was involved in evaluating the feasibility of private service delivery?

Person/position involved	Percent reporting
Manager/CAO (n=896)	87%
Assistant manager/CAO (n=310)	30%
Management and/or budget analysts (n=282)	27%
Department heads (n=773)	75%
Finance/accounting officer (n=510)	49%
Attorney (n=3040)	29%
Procurement/purchasing officer (n=124)	12%
Line employees (n=1040)	10%
Elected officials (n=506)	49%
Other (n=42)	4%

Note: 1,036 responded to this question. The percentages are based on 1,036.

Who outside your local government organization was involved in evaluating the feasibility of private service delivery?

Person/position involved	Percent reporting
Potential service deliverers (n=466)	61%
Professional consultants with expertise in particular service areas (n=296)	39%
Service recipients/consumers (n=94)	12%
Managers/CAOs of other local governments who have experience using private service delivery (n=160)	21%
Citizen advisory committees (n=158)	21%
State agencies, leagues, or associations (n=54)	7%
Other (n=35)	5%

Note: 760 responded to this question. The percentages are based on 760.

Has your local government undertaken any activities to ensure success in implementing private service delivery?

- Yes = 31% (n=660)
- No = 69% (n=1,458)

If “yes,” which of the following activities has your government undertaken to ensure success in implementing private service delivery?

Activity	Percent reporting
Identified successful uses of private alternatives in other jurisdictions (n=465)	71%
Established a citizens’ advisory committee on private alternatives (n=53)	8%
Hired consultants to analyze feasibility of private alternatives (n=168)	26%
Allowed government departments to compete with the private sector in the bidding process (n=150)	23%
Developed programs to minimize the effect on displaced public employees (n=108)	17%
Recommended changes in state laws (n=44)	7%

Recommended changes in local laws (n=48)	7%
Proposed implementation of private alternatives on a trial basis (n=167)	26%
Applied private alternatives to new services (n=1410)	22%
Applied private alternatives to growing services (n=133)	20%
Surveyed citizens (n=83)	13%
Kept the service complaint mechanism in-house (n=137)	21%
Provides ongoing opportunities for citizens to review contracts and implementation (n=53)	8%
Other (n=44)	7%

Note: 652 responded to this question. The percentages are based on 652.

Has your local government encountered any obstacle in adopting private service delivery?

- Yes (n=667) 32%
- No (n=1,434) 68%

If “yes,” which of the following obstacles have been encountered?

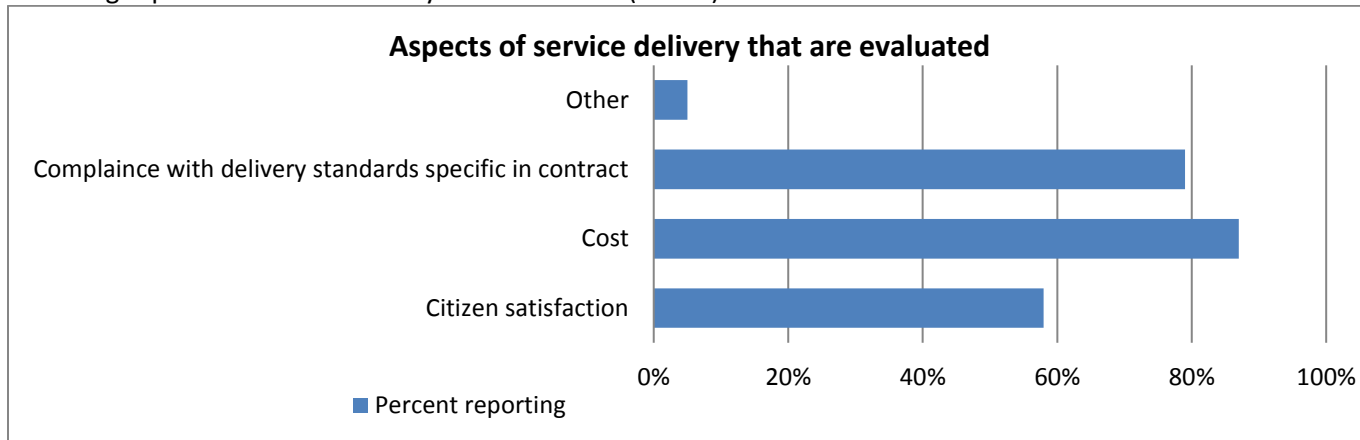
Obstacle	Percent reporting
Opposition from citizens (n=236)	35%
Opposition from elected officials (n=287)	43%
Opposition from local government line employees (n=376)	56%
Opposition from department heads (n=215)	32%
Restrictive labor contracts/agreements (n=239)	36%
Legal constraints (n=126)	19%
Insufficient supply of competent private deliverers (n=153)	23%
Lack of staff with sufficient expertise in contract management (n=78)	12%
Lack of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of private alternatives (n=155)	23%
Lack of precedent; institutional rigidities (n=108)	16%
Problems with contract specifications (n=79)	12%
Lack of adequate contract monitoring system (n=69)	10%
Other (n=43)	6%

Note: 667 responded to this question. The percentages are based on 667.

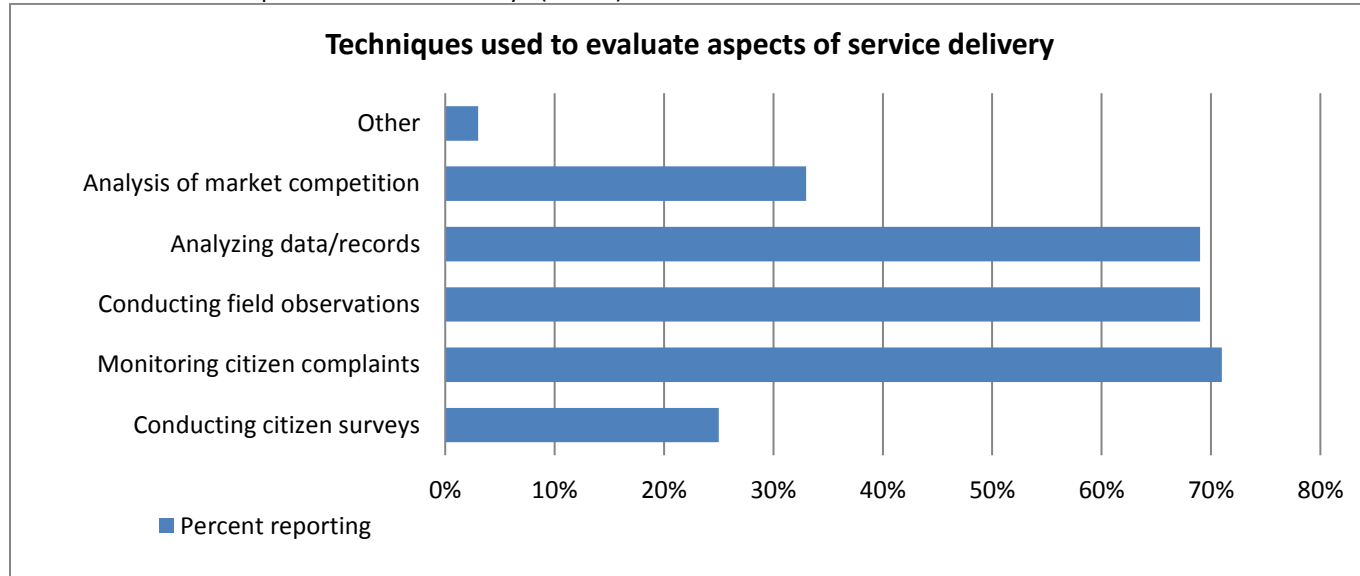
Does your local government use any techniques to systematically evaluate its private service delivery?

- Yes (n=777) 37%
- No (n=1,341) 63%

If “yes,” which of the following aspects of service delivery are evaluated? (n=759)



What techniques are used to evaluate the above aspects of service delivery? (n=755)



Within the last five years, has your local government brought back in house any services that were previously contracted out?

- Yes (n=386) 18%
- No (n=1,738) 82%

If “yes,” which of the following factors played a part in your decision to bring back the service(s)?

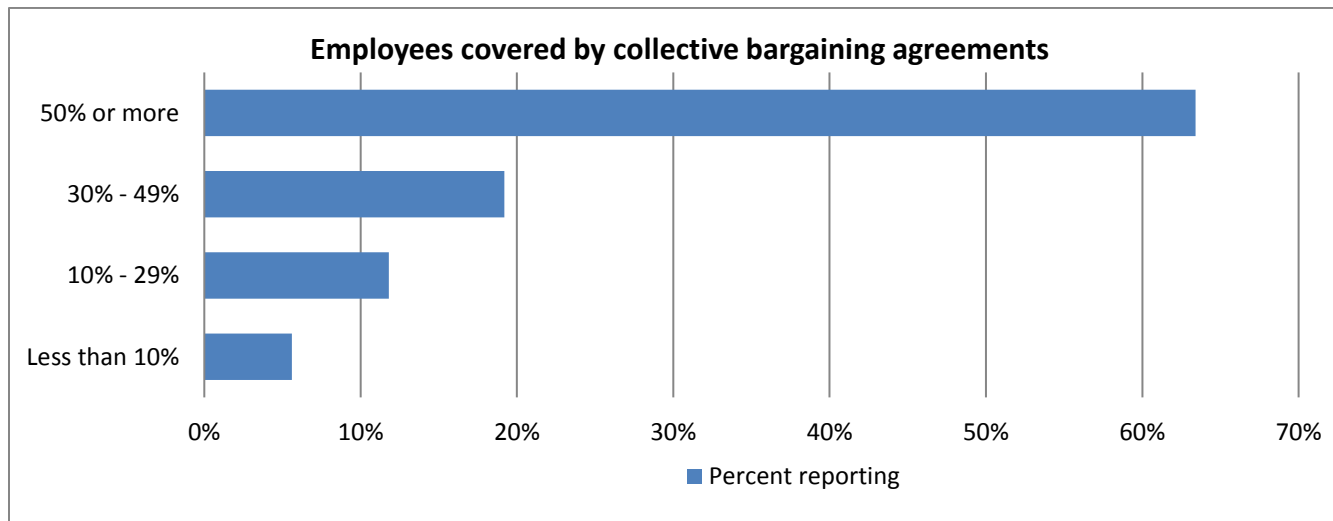
Factor	Percent reporting
Service quality was not satisfactory (n=196)	51%
There were problems with the contract specifications (n=38)	10%
There were problems monitoring the contract (n=49)	13%
The cost savings were insufficient (n=200)	53%
Local government efficiency improved (n=116)	30%
There was strong political support to bring back the service delivery (n=57)	15%
Lack of competitive private bidders (n=27)	7%
Successful proposal by in-house staff (n=89)	23%
Other (n=46)	12%

The percentages are based on 381 reporting.

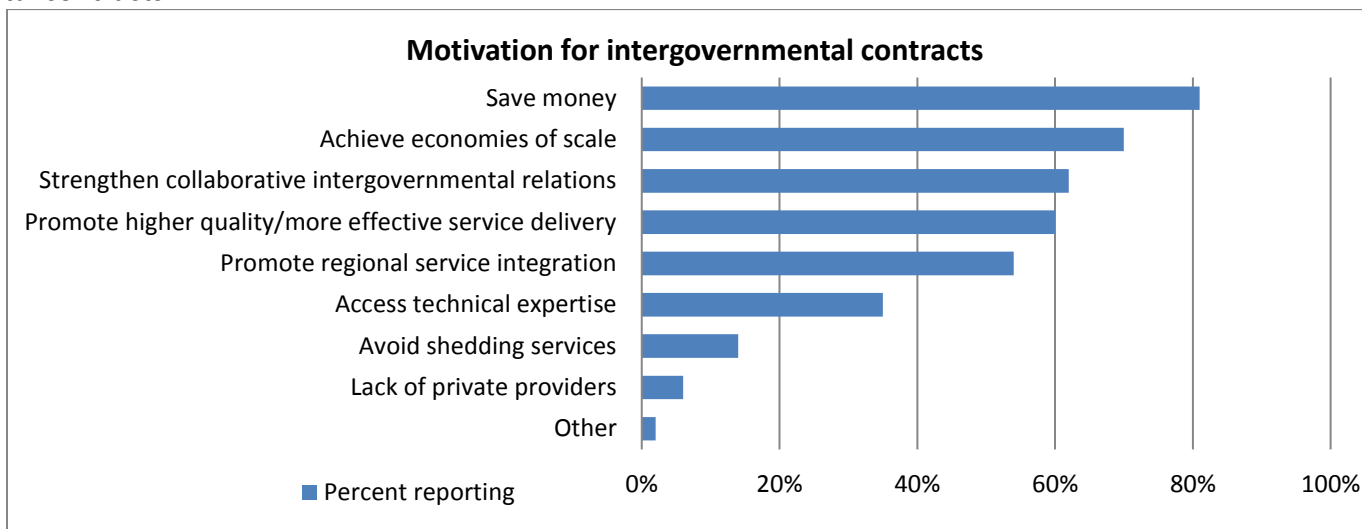
Are any of your employees covered by collective bargaining agreements?

- Yes (n=1,182) 56%
- No (n=946) 45%

If “yes,” what proportion?



If your local government uses intergovernmental contracting, please check the reasons that motivate your government to enter into intergovernmental contracts.



If your local government has faced any obstacles to contracting with other local governments, districts, or authorities, please identify them below.

Obstacle	Percent reporting	Obstacle	Percent reporting
Concern about loss of community control	69%	Internal opposition from employees	29%
Lack of common vision, shared mission	46%	Different employment arrangements/union contracts	26%
Liability concerns	21%	Concern about difficulty in monitoring intergovernmental agreements	16%
Lack of trust	43%	Need to create new accountability structures	11%
Internal opposition from elected officials	38%	Incompatible funding streams, data systems, planning horizons	15%
Opposition from citizens	22%	No neighboring government willing to enter into an agreement	12%

Note: The percentages are based on 1,279 reporting.

Do you participate in a regional council of governments, metropolitan planning organization, or regional planning agency?

- Yes = 82%
- No = 18%

If you do participate, which issues does the organization address?

Issue	Percent reporting	Issue	Percent reporting
Public safety	31%	Environmental management	38%
Economic development	62%	Disaster planning	46%
Public transit	54%	Affordable housing	28%
Roads and highways	69%	Human services	22%

Note: The percentages are based on 1,644 reporting.

Does your local government finance service delivery through any of the following alternative mechanisms?

Mechanism	Percent reporting	Mechanism	Percent reporting
User fees	82%	Business improvement districts	16%
Payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTS)	32%	Taxes dedicated to specific services	25%
Tax increment financing	39%	Hotel occupancy taxes	46%
Tax base sharing	6%	Development review fees	52%
Public-private partnership financing for infrastructure	10%	Mortgage or property transfer fees	17%
Sales of government assets	17%	Local impact fees or developer exactions	37%
Private homeowner associations	8%		

Service Delivery

Note: The percentages shown under each method of service delivery, e.g., employees entirely, employees in part, another gov't or authority, etc., is based upon only those who reported that their local government currently provides the service and who reported how the service is provided (this is the second number in parentheses).

Public Works/Transportation	Currently provided by local government	No longer provided by local government	Never provided by local government	Local government employees entirely	Local government employees in part	Another government or authority	Private for profit	Private non-profit	Franchise/concession	Subsidy	Volunteers
Residential solid waste collection (n=2,071) (1,213 reported how provided)	67%	8%	34%	28%	5%	6%	51%	1%	15%	1%	0%
Commercial solid waste collection (n=2,047) (947 reported how provided) (947 reported how provided)	52%	7%	41%	19%	8%	6%	60%	1%	14%	0%	0%
Recycling (n=1,679) (748 reported how provided)	55%	8%	38%	32%	18%	7%	40%	3%	10%	2%	2%
Solid waste disposal (n=1,637) (652 reported how provided)	51%	7%	42%	39%	11%	15%	33%	1%	9%	1%	0%
Street repair (n=2,068) (1,454 reported how provided)	93%	1%	7%	42%	48%	6%	29%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Street/parking lot cleaning (n=1,815) (1,040 reported how provided)	79%	2%	19%	75%	15%	2%	14%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Snow plowing/sanding (n=1,991) (1,163 reported how provided)	78%	1%	22%	75%	20%	6%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Traffic sign/signal installation/maintenance (n=2,041) (1,240 reported how provided)	79%	2%	19%	49%	32%	18%	19%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Parking meter maintenance and collection (n=1,824) (235 reported how provided)	19%	11%	70%	74%	18%	4%	13%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Street tree trimming and planting (n=2,022) (1,205 reported how provided)	78%	3%	20%	43%	44%	4%	30%	2%	1%	0%	3%
Maintenance/administration of cemeteries (n=1,922) (634 reported how provided)	44%	2%	54%	67%	16%	5%	10%	8%	1%	1%	4%
Inspection/code enforcement (n=2,049) (1,384 reported how provided)	90%	2%	10%	75%	17%	7%	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Operation of parking lots & garages (n=1,888) (410 reported how provided)	29%	3%	68%	70%	13%	8%	15%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Operation/maintenance of bus transit system (n=1,917) (390 reported how provided)	24%	3%	73%	26%	9%	47%	15%	9%	1%	3%	1%
Operation/maintenance of paratransit system (n=1,883) (343 reported how provided)	21%	3%	76%	24%	10%	40%	17%	13%	1%	3%	1%
Operation of airports (n=1,902) (395 reported how provided)	28%	3%	70%	46%	19%	28%	17%	1%	1%	1%	2%

Public Works/Transportation continued	Currently provided by local government	No longer provided by local government	Never provided by local government	Local government employees entirely	Local government employees in part	Another government or authority	Private for profit	Private non-profit	Franchise/concession	Subsidy	Volunteers
Water distribution (n=2,028) (1,082 reported how provided)	70%	3%	28%	73%	10%	15%	6%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Water treatment (n=2,029) (1,027 reported how provided)	65%	4%	32%	68%	8%	22%	6%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Sewage collection and treatment (n=2,037) (1,124 reported how provided)	70%	4%	27%	60%	16%	27%	6%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Disposal of sludge (n=1,987) (908 reported how provided)	56%	5%	39%	36%	13%	25%	30%	2%	1%	0%	0%
Disposal of hazardous materials (n=1,941) (639 reported how provided)	39%	4%	57%	19%	20%	36%	32%	3%	1%	1%	1%

Public Utilities	Currently provided by local government	No longer provided by local government	Never provided by local government	Local government employees entirely	Local government employees in part	Another government or authority	Private for profit	Private non-profit	Franchise/concession	Subsidy	Volunteers
Electric/gas utility operation and management (n=1,979) ((429 reported how provided)	25%	3%	72%	32%	6%	14%	42%	6%	10%	0%	0%
Utility meter reading & billing (n=1,796) (716 reported how provided)	54%	3%	44%	82%	11%	4%	8%	1%	1%	0%	0%

Public Safety	Currently provided by local government	No longer provided by local government	Never provided by local government	Local government employees entirely	Local government employees in part	Another government or authority	Private for profit	Private non-profit	Franchise/concession	Subsidy	Volunteers
Crime prevention/patrol (n=1,904) (1,296 reported how provided)	96%	1%	4%	87%	7%	9%	0%	1%	0%	0%	3%
Police/fire communications (n=1,794) (1,011 reported how provided)	79%	9%	12%	67%	16%	24%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Fire prevention/suppression (n=2,016) (1,276 reported how provided)	82%	2%	16%	59%	9%	21%	1%	3%	0%	0%	16%
Emergency medical service (n=2,024) (1,170 reported how provided)	71%	6%	23%	40%	15%	26%	13%	9%	1%	1%	10%
Ambulance service (n=2,019) (1,097 reported how provided)	64%	7%	29%	30%	9%	28%	23%	11%	1%	1%	8%
Traffic control/parking enforcement (n=1,988)	80%	2%	19%	83%	8%	10%	2%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Vehicle towing and storage (n=1,988) (764 reported how provided)	43%	3%	54%	12%	9%	7%	69%	5%	4%	0%	0%
Prisons/jails (n=2,017) (975 reported how provided)	58%	7%	34%	35%	9%	58%	2%	1%	0%	0%	0%

Health and Human Services	Currently provided by local government	No longer provided by local government	Never provided by local government	Local government employees entirely	Local government employees in part	Another government or authority	Private for profit	Private non-profit	Franchise/concession	Subsidy	Volunteers
Sanitary inspection (n=1,984) (885 reported how provided)	55%	3%	42%	38%	11%	51%	4%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Insect/rodent control (n=1,953) (657 reported how provided)	40%	3%	57%	21%	13%	45%	26%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Animal control (n=2,027) (1,125 reported how provided)	71%	4%	25%	55%	14%	26%	6%	7%	0%	0%	1%
Operation of animal shelters (n=1,989) (735 reported how provided)	44%	6%	50%	32%	10%	35%	8%	20%	1%	1%	5%
Operation of daycare facilities (n=1,935) (288 reported how provided)	16%	3%	81%	13%	6%	23%	49%	26%	1%	1%	1%
Child welfare programs (n=1,952) (423 reported how provided)	24%	2%	74%	17%	16%	59%	6%	12%	1%	3%	2%
Programs for the elderly (n=1,976) (744 reported how provided)	46%	2%	53%	25%	31%	38%	8%	23%	1%	3%	7%
In-home safety improvements for seniors (n=1,931) (397 reported how provided)	23%	2%	75%	13%	18%	45%	14%	25%	1%	2%	6%
Home health care/visiting nurse (n=1,955) (381 report how provided)	22%	3%	76%	13%	12%	41%	28%	24%	1%	1%	1%
Programs to address hunger (n=1,945) (467 reported how provided)	27%	2%	71%	5%	22%	38%	6%	48%	0%	6%	8%
Elder nutrition programs, e.g., Meals-on-Wheels (n=1,973) (625 reported how delivered)	36%	2%	62%	9%	18%	37%	5%	41%	1%	5%	11%
Operation/management of hospitals (n=1,953) (488 reported how provided)	26%	3%	71%	3%	1%	37%	37%	36%	0%	1%	1%
Public health programs (n=1,518) (263 reported how provided)	24%	2%	74%	40%	30%	30%	5%	14%	1%	3%	3%
Drug and alcohol treatment programs (n=1,962) (433 reported how provided)	25%	2%	74%	9%	12%	51%	19%	34%	1%	4%	2%
Operation of mental health/mental retardation programs and facilities (n=1,773) (397 reported how provided)	24%	2%	74%	7%	11%	58%	17%	30%	1%	4%	2%
Operation of homeless shelters (n=1,926) (307 reported how provided)	16%	2%	82%	3%	5%	46%	8%	52%	1%	3%	4%
Workforce development/job training programs (n=1,939) (417 reported how provided)	24%	2%	74%	9%	15%	66%	9%	23%	1%	2%	1%
Youth employment programs (n=1,930) (389 reported how provided)	23%	3%	75%	12%	19%	55%	7%	24%	1%	1%	3%
Intake/eligibility determination or welfare programs (n=1,952) (426 reported how provided)	25%	2%	73%	27%	10%	59%	4%	10%	0%	1%	1%

Parks and Recreation	Currently provided by local government	No longer provided by local government	Never provided by local government	Local government employees entirely	Local government employees in part	Another government or authority	Private for profit	Private non-profit	Franchise/concession	Subsidy	Volunteers
Operation/maintenance of recreation facilities (n=2,031) (1,357 reported how	86%	2%	12%	72%	20%	9%	6%	5%	1%	1%	7%
Parks/landscaping maintenance (n=2,047) (1,357 reported how provided)	87%	11%	12%	68%	24%	6%	14%	2%	0%	1%	5%
Operation of convention centers and auditoriums (n=1,905) (417 reported how	28%	3%	70%	51%	16%	20%	13%	8%	2%	1%	3%
Before/after school programs or summer camps	49%	4%	48%	47%	22%	21%	8%	20%	1%	1%	6%
Youth recreation programs (n=1,998) (1,027 reported on how provided)	64%	4%	32%	49%	27%	15%	6%	19%	1%	1%	12%
Senior recreation programs (n=1,970) (859 reported how provided)	54%	35	43%	45%	27%	19%	5%	19%	1%	2%	10%

Cultural and Arts Programs	Currently provided by local government	No longer provided by local government	Never provided by local government	Local government employees entirely	Local government employees in part	Another government or authority	Private for profit	Private non-profit	Franchise/concession	Subsidy	Volunteers
Operation of cultural and arts programs (n=1,938)	34%	2%	64%	22%	33%	17%	9%	38%	1%	4%	18%
Operation of libraries (n=2,000) (903 reported on how provided)	56%	3%	42%	47%	10%	36%	1%	9%	0%	3%	9%
Operation of museums (n=1,924) (476 reported how provided)	28%	2%	70%	19%	16%	23%	5%	40%	0%	6%	21%

Community Development	Currently provided by local government	No longer provided by local government	Never provided by local government	Local government employees entirely	Local government employees in part	Another government or authority	Private for profit	Private non-profit	Franchise/concession	Subsidy	Volunteers
Comprehensive land use planning (n=2,024)	88%	1%	11%	67%	22%	10%	11%	2%	0%	0%	3%
Land use review and permitting (n=2,017) (1,394 reported how provided)	91%	0%	9%	78%	16%	7%	8%	1%	0%	0%	3%
Affordable housing (n=1,950) (707 reported how provided)	44%	3%	53%	27%	30%	41%	10%	21%	1%	3%	2%
Economic development (n=1,980) (1,253 reported how provided)	82%	3%	15%	42%	35%	23%	6%	17%	1%	3%	4%

Support Functions	Currently provided by local government	No longer provided by local government	Never provided by local government	Local government employees entirely	Local government employees in part	Another government or authority	Private for profit	Private non-profit	Franchise/concession	Subsidy	Volunteers
Buildings and grounds maintenance (n=2,035)	97%	0%	3%	68%	28%	1%	19%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Building security (n=1,956) (1,079 reported how provided)	75%	2%	24%	73%	15%	2%	18%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Fleet management/vehicle maintenance (n=2,035)	90%	2%	8%	58%	33%	2%	25%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Payroll (n=2,067) (1,492 reported how provided)	98%	1%	1%	88%	7%	1%	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Tax bill processing (n=2,017) (1,109 report how provided)	70%	4%	26%	57%	13%	30%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Tax assessing (n=2,008) (995 reported how provided)	60%	4%	35%	44%	11%	42%	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Data processing (n=2,183) (1,279 reported how provided)	87%	1%	12%	71%	19%	8%	12%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Collection of delinquent taxes (n=2007) (1,080 reported how provided)	71%	4%	29%	48%	17%	35%	12%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Title records/plat map maintenance (n=1,989) (954 reported how provided)	59%	2%	39%	46%	17%	40%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Legal services (n=2,006) (1,158 reported how provided)	72%	2%	27%	33%	18%	5%	51%	3%	0%	0%	0%
Secretarial services (n=1,991) (1,277 reported how provided)	87%	1%	13%	93%	5%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Personnel services (n=2,004) (1,324 reported how provided)	89%	1%	10%	89%	9%	1%	5%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Public relations/public information (n=1,825)	87%	1%	13%	89%	10%	1%	5%	1%	0%	0%	1%