



Online Public Engagement in Indiana

**Accelerate Indiana Municipalities Capstone
SPEA-V 600, Section 6013
Spring 2021**



O'NEILL
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Table of Contents

1. Capstone Members	4
2. Executive Summary	5-19
3. Literature Review	20-25
4. Research Design and Methodology	26-33
<i>Overview</i>	26-27
<i>Interview Research</i>	27-28
<i>Survey Analysis</i>	29-30
<i>Web Scrubbing</i>	30-33
5. Data Analysis and Findings	34-66
<i>Overview</i>	34
<i>Interview Research</i>	34-44
<i>Survey Analysis</i>	44-61
<i>Web Scrubbing</i>	61-66
6. Discussion and Synthesis	67-74
<i>Overview</i>	67
<i>Interview Research</i>	67-70
<i>Survey Analysis</i>	70-72
<i>Web Scrubbing</i>	72-74
7. Recommendations	75-84
<i>Overview</i>	75
<i>Recommendations for Aim</i>	75-80
<i>Recommendations for Aim Members</i>	80-83
<i>Recommendations from Case Stories</i>	83-84
8. Conclusion	85-86
<i>Overview</i>	85
<i>Interview Research</i>	85
<i>Survey Analysis</i>	85-86
<i>Web Scrubbing</i>	86
<i>Final Conclusion</i>	86

9. Acknowledgments	87
10. Appendices	88-183
<i>Capstone Appendices</i>	<i>88-106</i>
Capstone Overview	89
Literature Review References	90-91
Research Design and Methodologies References	91
Signed Statement of Work (SOW)	91-99
Initial Progress Report to Client	100-103
Second Progress Report to Client	103-106
<i>Case Stories Appendices</i>	<i>107-130</i>
Case Stories Overview	108
Interview Case Stories	109-115
Web Case Stories	116-130
<i>Interview Appendices</i>	<i>131-137</i>
Interview Overview	132
Initial Email Solicitation and Consent Form	133-134
Interview Protocol and Questions	134-137
<i>Survey Appendices</i>	<i>138-154</i>
Survey Overview	139
Survey Initial Email Solicitation	140
Survey Client Reminder Email Solicitation	140-141
Survey Protocol and Question	141-150
Survey Coding Protocol	150-154
PowerBI Data Link	154
<i>Web Appendices</i>	<i>155-183</i>
Web Overview	157
Indiana Municipal Inventory and Overview	157-181
ANOVA Analysis-Comparison of Social Media Utilization	182-183

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Executive Summary

The 2021 Capstone worked throughout the semester in service to the client, Accelerate Indiana Municipalities (Aim), to examine policies and practices of online public engagement for municipalities across the state of Indiana. In addition to reviewing online public engagement, a list of five project goals, made in collaboration with the client, guided the Capstone:

1. Provide a detailed inventory of the latest online participation and engagement practices by Aim members around the state.
2. Document both successes and challenges associated with these efforts.
3. Provide a summary of guidance points and best practices for effective online public engagement gathered through the experiences of Indiana municipalities that could be useful across Indiana.
4. Highlight forms of online public engagement-related information resources by using case stories and examples throughout the United States.
5. Document what municipalities want and need to know about online public engagement, relating to technologies, capacities, resources, strategies, and purposes.

To meet these goals, the Capstone divided into three research groups to collect data through Interview Research, Survey Analysis, and Web Scrubbing across a range of Indiana municipalities. To expand on the work the 2019 Capstone completed on public engagement across Indiana, the 2021 Capstone chose to conduct a statewide survey to thoroughly research Indiana municipalities public engagement practices and how they evolved due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To collect relevant and representative information, data collection covered a range of municipalities across population categories, as designated by the Indiana University's Public Policy institute. The sample of municipalities, by size and Capstone research group, is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

	Smallest municipalities (<5,000)	Small municipalities (5,000-15,000)	Mid-sized municipalities (15,000-50,000)	Urban municipalities (>50,000)	Total
Count	418	90	40	19	567
Interview Sample	1	6	9	8	24
Survey Sample	58	13	5	1	77
Web Sample	-	6	9	15	30

Table 1. Number of Municipalities in Each Research Group Sample.

The table displays the total number of municipalities from the four population categories by Capstone research group.

Interview Research

Overview

The primary goal of the Interview Group was to gather qualitative data from municipalities regarding their online public engagement efforts and experiences. To collect data on online public engagement directly from municipal officials, the Interview Group drafted an interview protocol consisting of 29 questions. The Interview Group completed a total of 25 interviews with 24 municipalities.

Interview questions focused on three general themes:

1. Current state of online public engagement in the municipality
2. Goals for future online public engagement
3. Municipal resources required to reach those goals

Within these categories, interview questions focused specifically on benefits and challenges, representation and accessibility, success stories, changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and engagement strategies. Aim approved the interview protocol and then the Interview Group solicited a sample of representative Indiana municipalities. The Capstone reviewed the sample to ensure it consisted of urban, mid-sized, small, and the smallest municipalities. From the interviews, the Interview Group discovered and catalogued five particularly relevant case stories that focus on online public engagement successes in municipalities across Indiana. These case stories and details of the programs are in the Interview Appendices.

Methodology

Students conducted the interviews over Zoom, with all lasting approximately one hour. The students did not ask all respondents every question in the Interview Protocol due to time

restrictions, but obtained information regarding online public engagement from each interview. To analyze the data collected during the interviews, the Interview Group classified responses into seven thematic categories and utilized NVivo coding software to identify trends and themes.

Findings and Analysis

Analysis of the interview responses found that some trends in online public engagement varied based on the size of the municipality, while others were consistent across municipality size.

Benefits of Online Public Engagement

Most municipalities found that pursuing online public engagement increased the overall levels of engagement from residents, and increased transparency between the municipality and their residents. The Interview Group defined transparency as the ability to share information with residents openly and honestly. Another benefit respondents noted was the convenience of online public engagement. Nearly 50% of interviewees mentioned that the online format of public meetings allowed for improved communication between the municipality and its residents compared to an in-person format. Figure 1 displays the various benefits that respondents mentioned during their interviews.

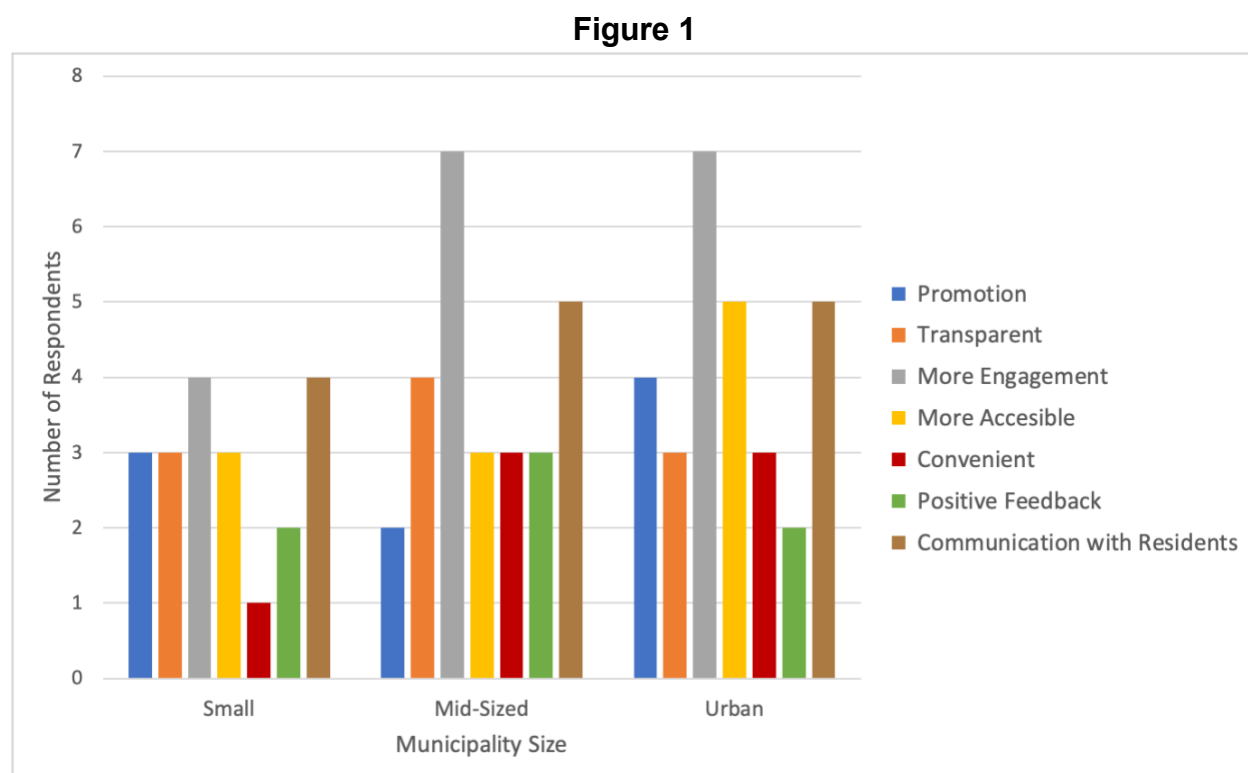


Figure 1. Benefits of Online Public Engagement.
Sample of Municipalities' Opinions about Benefits of Online Public Engagement.

Challenges of Online Public Engagement

Across municipality sizes, respondents cited a lack of technical skills as a challenge for both the municipality's staff and residents. Several municipalities cited challenges with inappropriate

behavior on online platforms. Respondents also mentioned broadband access as a challenge for their residents. The prevalence of this challenge increased with the size of the municipality, suggesting that broadband access is an issue that is present beyond rural areas. The Interview Group asked about experiences with social media within the respondent's municipality. Within the sample, mid-sized municipalities were more likely to have negative experiences with social media, potentially pointing to a particular difficulty among mid-sized municipalities with online platforms and interactions. These negative experiences often took the form of vulgarity while on the social media platform. Respondents from urban, small, and the smallest municipalities did not mention this challenge as frequently.

Accessibility and Representation

The Interview Group asked municipalities about their efforts to improve representation and accessibility in online public engagement. While the topics of representation and accessibility are important to the overall discussion of online public engagement, a majority of municipalities do not have targeted efforts to address either. The reasons for this vary and appear to include insufficient funding, lack of information, or lack of formal training regarding accessibility or representation. Representation and accessibility are two areas for growth in future public engagement efforts in Indiana municipalities, whether online or in-person.

Needs for Future Success

Respondents from all municipality sizes expressed interest in best practices and guidance about state law regarding how to improve their engagement efforts. Figure 2 displays responses relating to resources to meet online public engagement goals. Urban and mid-sized municipalities requested additional training resources from Aim more frequently. In the future, a majority of respondents communicated interest in expanding their online presence and engagement efforts in the coming years, regardless of their current practices. Across municipalities, the most anticipated challenge is technical knowledge, while the most anticipated benefit is increased engagement.

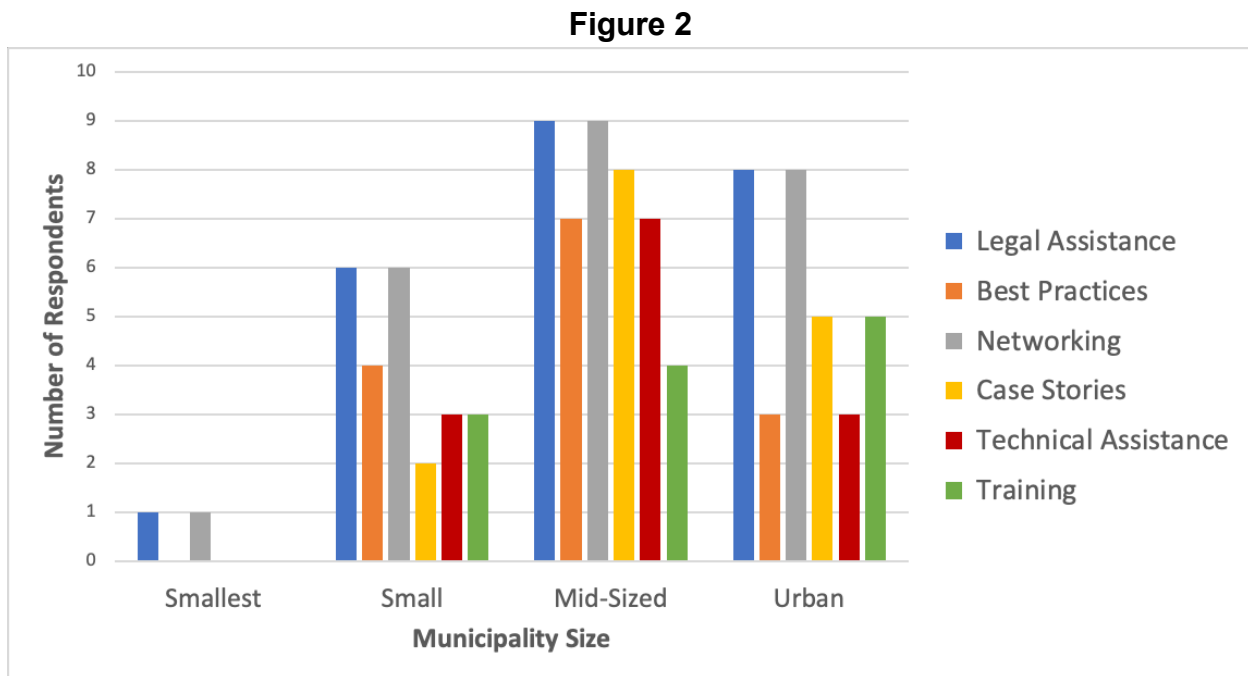


Figure 2. Desired Resources from Aim.

This figure shows the resources that municipalities most desire from Aim in order to improve online public engagement.

Given these responses and trends surrounding growing online public engagement, the Interview Group expects municipalities to continue and further expand their online public engagement efforts in the coming years. Meeting the needs of municipalities in terms of resources, training, and technical support is vital in enhancing online public engagement for all Aim members.

Survey Analysis

Overview

The Survey Group's goal was to gather quantitative and qualitative data to understand online public engagement efforts and experiences across municipality sizes. The survey consisted of 52 questions across five categories:

1. Overview of public engagement
2. Engagement structure and maintenance
3. Employee development and system management
4. Response to COVID-19
5. Aim-specific questions

The survey data illustrates current strengths, weaknesses, and perspectives related to online public engagement across Indiana. This included an investigation into the tools and platforms municipalities use to engage residents, how they manage their technology and online public engagement budgets.

Methodology

The Survey Group constructed and disseminated a survey to Indiana municipalities to collect data on their online public engagement efforts. Once the Capstone Instructors and Client Representative approved the survey, Aim distributed the survey to 508 of its members who are municipal officials throughout Indiana, such as Clerk-Treasurers, Mayors, or Town Managers. The Survey Group opened the survey to participants for 5 business days and Aim sent a reminder to municipalities to complete the survey on the final business day.

Analysis and Findings

The survey yielded 77 complete responses from a diverse group of municipalities across Indiana. Approximately 75% of respondents belong to the smallest municipality category (population less than 5000), 17% to the small municipality category (population between 5000 and 15000), 6% to the mid-size municipality category (population between 15,000 and 50,000), and less than 1% to the urban municipality category (population more than 50,000).

The survey results often varied based on the municipalities' size, with some notable generalizations across groups. For example, regarding the current state of online public engagement, nearly every municipality reported that they operate their own website regardless of population size, as shown in Figure 3. However, several respondents from the smallest and small municipalities indicated that their municipality does not have a website. In a later survey question, three respondents belonging to the smallest municipalities noted that their office lacked internet access, which acts as a barrier for the municipality in providing online public engagement opportunities for their residents.

Figure 3

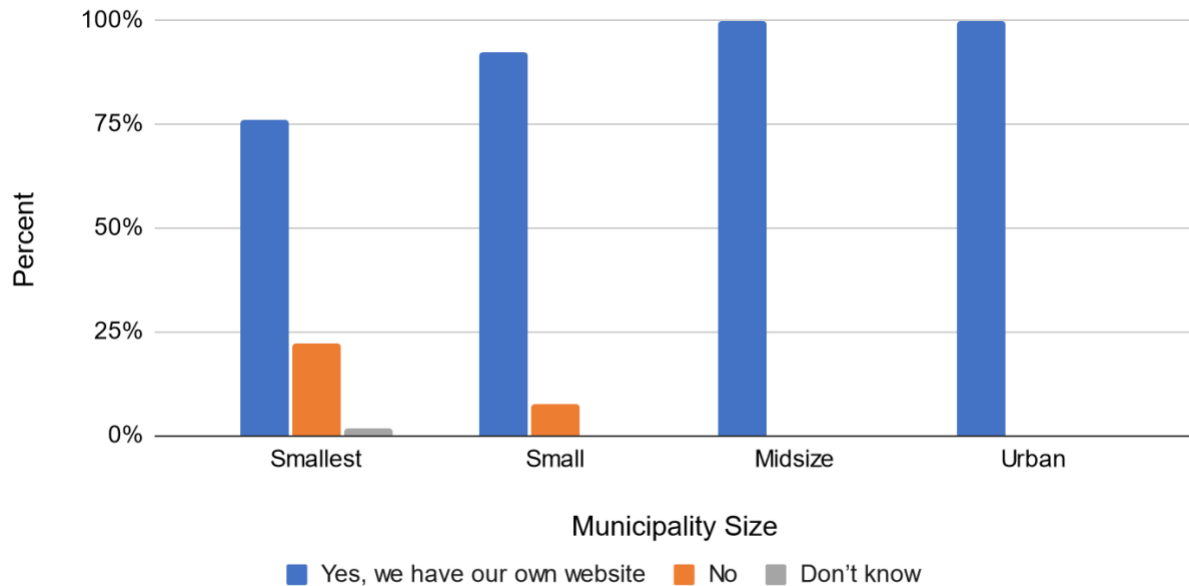


Figure 3. Municipalities Operating Their Own Websites.

The figure shows the percent of municipal governments that have their own website or share their website with another municipality.

Online Public Engagement Platforms and Strategies

Across municipalities, Zoom is the most popular tool for interacting synchronously online for all forms of public engagement, from public events to city council meetings. For interacting with the public about ongoing municipal activities, such as public event announcements and reminders, municipalities use a variety of social media platforms. The most popular platforms municipalities use include Facebook, followed by Instagram, as seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4

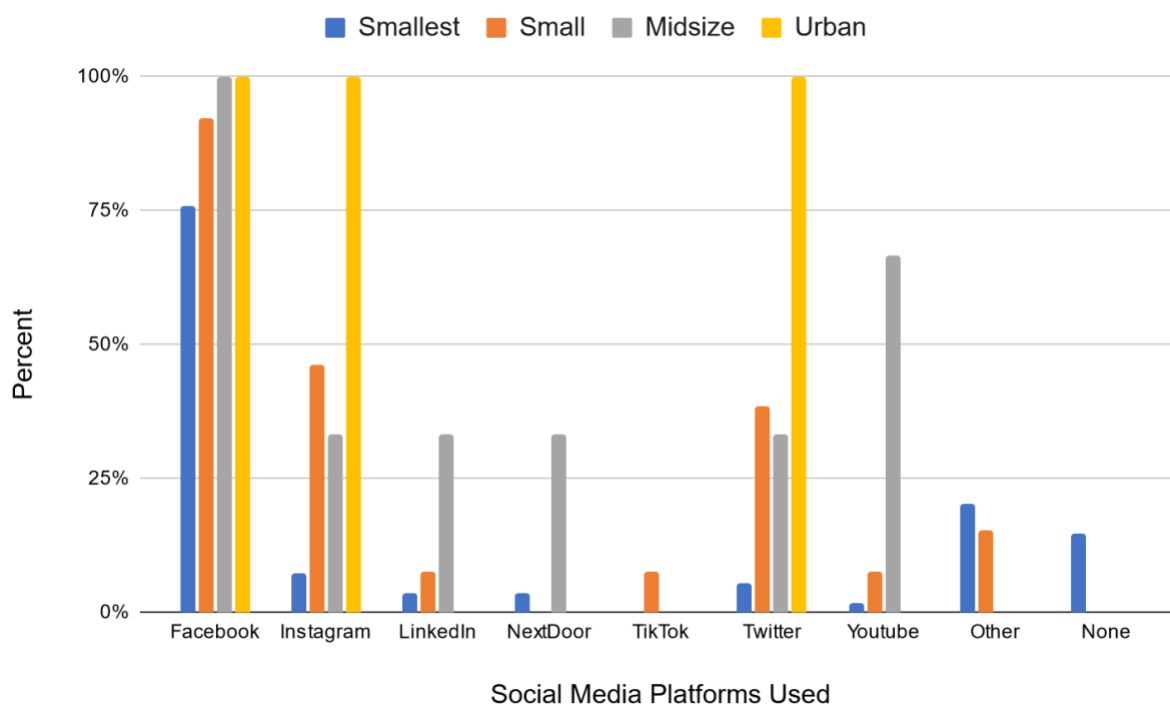


Figure 4. Municipality Presence on Social Media.

The figure displays the social media platforms that the municipalities use to engage with residents.

Accessibility and Representation

From the survey responses, respondents indicated that their municipality experiences challenges regarding online public engagement. As the survey results demonstrate, 76% of all respondents indicated fewer than ten people regularly attend their online city or town council meetings. Across municipality sizes, participants' responses varied in the level of accessibility of online public engagement efforts for residents with hearing impairments, vision impairments, limited internet access, flexible work schedules, and who work from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.. Regarding accessibility for residents with mobility impairments, 19% of the smallest and 33% of mid-size municipalities indicated that their online public engagement efforts were either inaccessible or somewhat inaccessible. Comparatively, 48% of respondents from the smallest, 64% of small, and 33% of mid-size municipalities indicated that their municipality's online public engagement efforts are accessible or somewhat accessible for individuals with mobility impairments.

The COVID-19 Pandemic and its Effect on Online Public Engagement

When reviewing the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on municipalities, nearly half of all respondents indicated that the pandemic impacted how their municipality's public engagement occurred. Nine respondents noted that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, their municipality's

online presence increased, and its content is more easily accessible after transitioning their efforts online. Almost half (46%) of respondents' municipalities had to purchase equipment when moving public engagement events online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many respondents indicated that it is highly likely or somewhat likely that their municipality will continue online public engagement in the future. Nearly 25% of the smallest municipalities indicated that they are unsure if their municipality will continue online public engagements in the future. This demonstrates possible barriers present for smaller municipalities when it comes to accessing online public engagement technologies and engaging with residents. Figure 5 displays the municipality's likelihood to continue online public engagement after the COVID-19 pandemic.

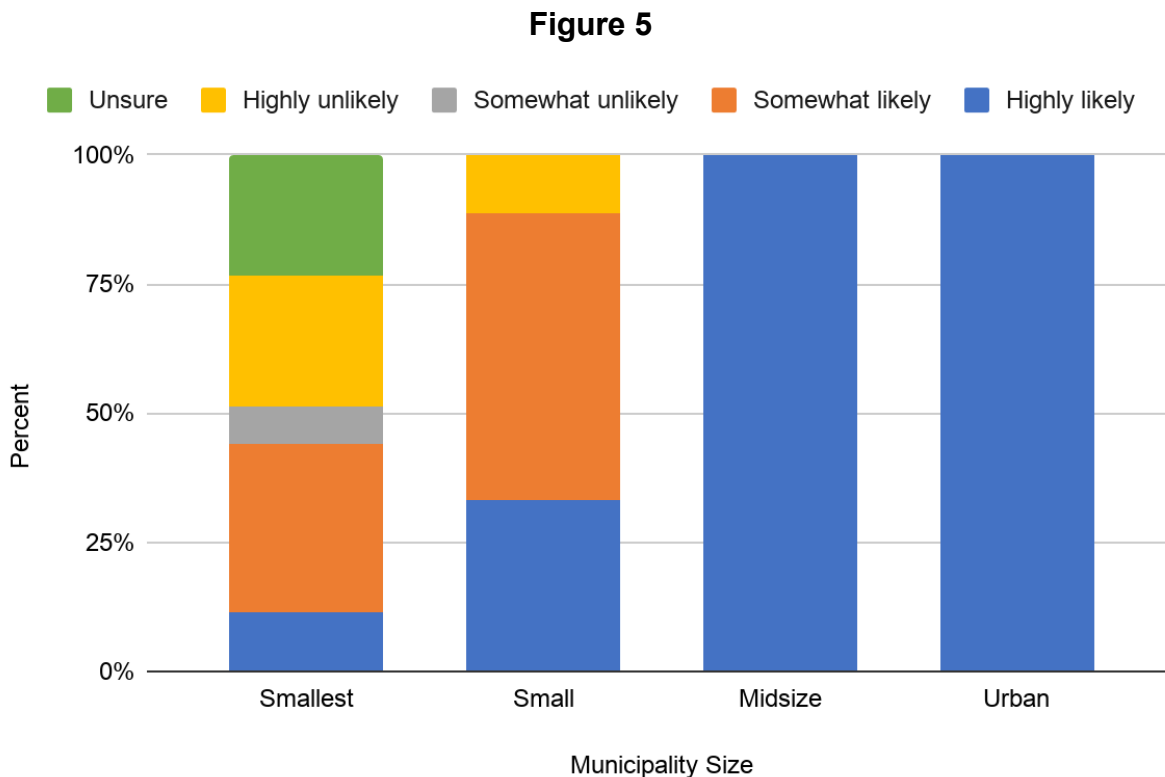


Figure 5. Likelihood to Continue Online Public Engagement Efforts After the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The figure displays the municipality's likelihood to continue online public engagement efforts after the pandemic.

Needs for Future Success

The Survey Group found several trends regarding the resources municipalities rely on to enhance their online public engagement efforts. Overall, most municipalities rely on Aim or other Indiana municipalities to learn about online public engagement. Aim currently meets critical needs related to online public engagement information for its members, and will play a key role in the future success of online public engagement in Indiana. Figure 6 demonstrates the percentage of various resources municipalities use to learn about online public engagement.

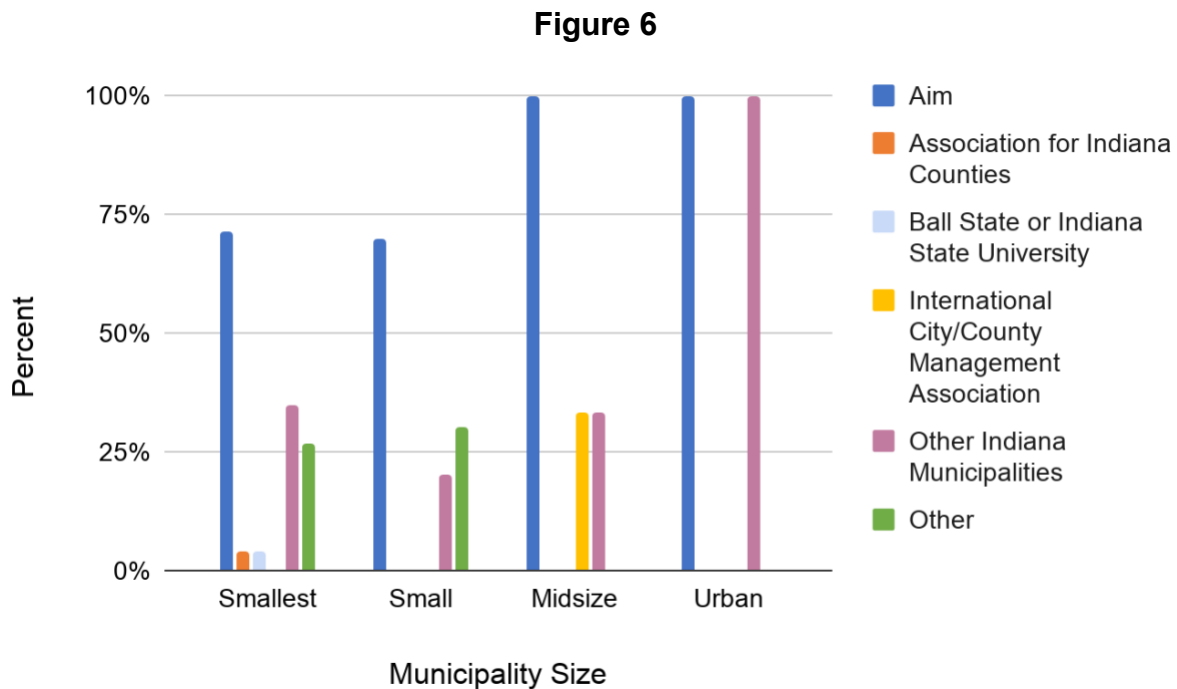


Figure 6. Resources Used to Learn About Online Public Engagement.
The figure shows the percentage of different resources used by municipalities to learn about online public engagement strategies and tools.

Web Scrubbing

Overview

The goal of the Web Group was to scrape the Internet for data in order to provide an accurate and detailed representation of the online participation and engagement practices that Aim members undertake. The Web Group focused data collection around three primary topics:

1. Public information accessibility
2. Scope of available online services
3. Successful public engagement examples
4. Ordinances surrounding public engagement

The Web Group's research focused on 30 municipalities selected to represent a descriptive subset of community types in Indiana, across all population sizes and geographic regions.

Table 2

	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southeast	Southwest
Urban municipalities (15)	Anderson Indianapolis Kokomo Lafayette Greenwood	Elkhart Fort Wayne Muncie	Gary South Bend	Columbus Jeffersonville	Bloomington Evansville Terre Haute
Mid-sized municipalities (9)	Plainfield Zionsville	Marion Warsaw	Logansport Valparaiso	Richmond New Castle	Jasper
Small municipalities (6)			Monticello Rensselaer	Rushville Vernon	Princeton Sullivan

Table 2. Web Sample by Region and Municipality Size.

The table outlines the municipalities' categorization and the 30 municipalities' names selected for the Web review.

Table 2 displays the 30 municipalities organized by population size and geographic location that the Web Group reviewed. Selected municipalities include a sample from all four population categories: Urban, mid-sized, small, and Indiana's smallest municipalities. For ease and increased likelihood of reliable information collection, the Web Group only included municipalities identified by PPI that serve as county seats as part of their sample. Although two of the municipalities the Web Group selected were in the smallest municipality category, their county seat status changed their PPI classification to the small municipality group.

Methodology

To collect data, the Web Group members reviewed websites and social media accounts of the selected 30 municipalities using a standardized protocol. After reviewing the information online, the Web Group analyzed each municipality through a series of binary questions, such as the use of certain online platforms, existence of certain social media accounts, and questions related to laws governing Indiana municipalities. The Web Group generated qualitative data by including summaries of key website features in the standardized protocol. The Web Group, using collected quantitative data, conducted statistical analysis to understand trends in online public engagement relating to population size and municipalities' demographic information.

Analysis and Findings

Social Media

The Web Group researched the status of social media accounts in 42 municipalities by adding

12 municipalities to the 30 municipalities initially selected. Through this analysis, the Web Group found that all municipalities in the sample use Facebook. Comparatively, municipalities' YouTube utilization rate increased with the municipality's size. The difference in usage between the two platforms may be due to the way YouTube requires content to be published on the website. Because YouTube is solely a video production platform, municipalities may experience budget constraints due to the professional level of content curation needed to use the platform.

The Web Group also examined the correlation between population and social media based on Facebook, since every municipality has a Facebook account. The analysis found that the larger the municipality's population size, the greater the number of followers the account had. However, the smaller the municipality's population size, the more Facebook followers the municipality had per capita, as displayed in Figure 7.

Figure 7

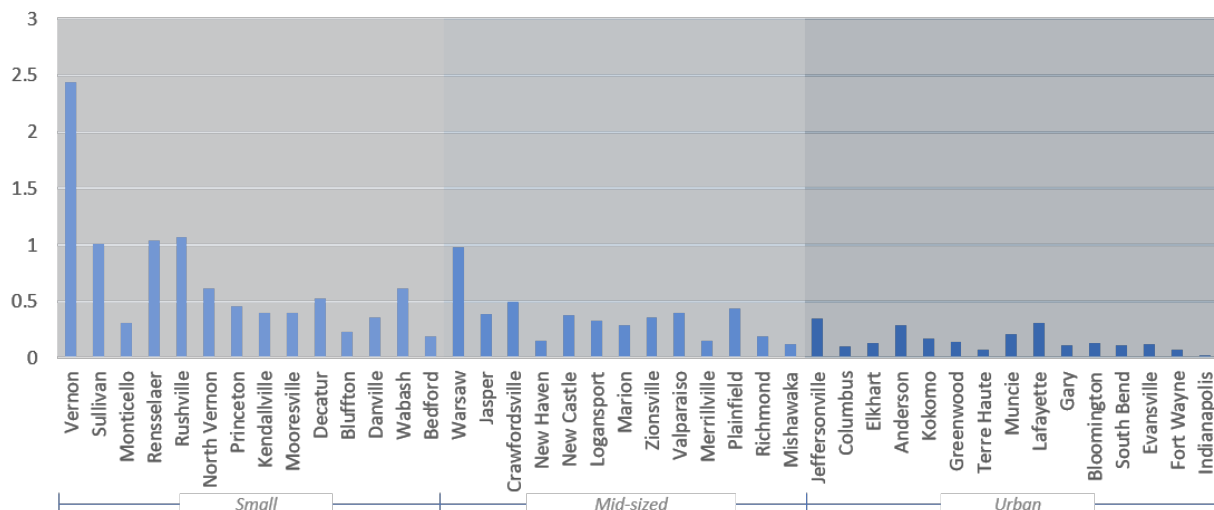


Figure 7: Facebook Followers by Municipality per 100 people (Smallest to Greatest by Population Size).

The figure above shows the total number of followers municipalities have on Facebook per 100 municipal residents.

From these findings, the Web Group concluded that smaller municipalities may have a more limited budget for online public engagement. Following these trends, social media platforms allow small municipalities to reach a larger proportion of their population and provide a unique opportunity for effective communication that urban and mid-size municipalities cannot do.

Legal Frameworks for Public Engagement

The Web Group sought to identify how state law shapes online public engagement efforts by reviewing local ordinances and regulations from the sample of 30 municipalities. While many of

the municipalities surveyed by the Web Group did not have an online public participation ordinance, there are some notable exceptions. In Jeffersonville, their 2017 police policy manual states that social media provides new and potentially valuable means of problem-solving, investigative, crime prevention, and related objectives. Jeffersonville's policy highlights the idea that innovation and improvement on existing processes can be one of the most significant benefits from improved and ongoing public engagement.

In Columbus, an urban municipality, there are internal procedures regulating the use of social media that apply to all official departments. One notable part of this ordinance is that city personnel must monitor public information shared through the municipality's social media to gauge resident satisfaction, and engagement levels. Columbus uses this information as part of their assessment toolbox to evaluate a variety of their engagement efforts--both online and in person. Columbus's toolbox provides a working model for how public engagement policy can be used to enhance various municipal activities.

The Web Group collected information regarding the Open Door Law (Indiana Code 5-14-1.5-1), amended in 2012, which allows open access to public meetings from municipal agencies. The law provides a legal basis for all general public participation in municipal meetings, with a few exceptions. The Open Door Law includes provisions that allow public agencies to be sanctioned for violating their obligations in the law, such as informing residents of the availability and time of public meetings. The Open Door Law may provide municipalities with more active online public engagement opportunities depending on the upcoming amendments, such as opening meetings through online and offline media channels and codifying processes for gathering opinions from residents.

Case Stories from Within and Beyond Indiana

In addition to aggregating and analyzing information on online public engagement, the Web Group constructed an inventory of case stories of positive implementations of online public engagement, drawing on examples across Indiana, within the United States, and in other nations.

A notable case story is Evansville Regional VOICE. Regional VOICE is a platform created in conjunction with Evansville, Indiana and five surrounding counties (Vanderburgh, Posey, Warrick, Gibson, and Henderson). Regional Voice's mission is to share ideas for community development and enable citizens to participate in policy making. Regional VOICE's first initiative started as Evansville VOICE and launched in partnership with the City of Evansville Mayor's Office-- Leadership Everyone. The leaders of Regional VOICE developed their initiative based on the success of Evansville VOICE to develop an inclusive, long-term vision planning process in the surrounding counties. VOICE created a platform for individuals to participate and share the ideas of community development, develop bridging and bonding social capital, and work collectively towards regional goals.

The Web Group investigated a variety of cases outside Indiana. At the recommendation of the Client, the Web Group reviewed online public engagement in Colorado. The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) collects opinions from residents on various roads in Colorado through a system called Virtual Public Engagement (VPE). Colorado collected

opinions on transportation policies before the installation of VPE, but the COVID-19 pandemic caused CDOT to become more active in using web-based tools. VPE serves as the most critical platform for direct engagement with residents on transportation issues. Similar to VPE, the City of Littleton, Colorado, has a dedicated survey platform called "Open Littleton" to gather opinions from residents. Open Littleton is the municipality's online public engagement platform which collects feedback on policies, allowing residents who cannot attend workshops or meetings to provide their perspectives from home. As with any public comment process, participation in Open Littleton is voluntary and supplementary to feedback provided from other open channels.

Across all case stories, there exist models for successful, inexpensive, and meaningful public engagement practices at multiple scales. While a perfect replica of these cases is not the goal in addressing Indiana's unique needs, these cases provide a foundation for Indiana municipalities to innovate and expand their own scope of engagement with residents.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Aim and its Members

The findings and analysis of all three data sources provides a high-level understanding of what Indiana municipalities need from Aim to adapt and improve their online public engagement. These findings expand on ideas and recommendations presented by the 2019 Capstone for Aim and its members related to public engagement across Indiana. Based on the results, the Capstone recommends seven cornerstone actions detailed in the report that Aim can use to provide the foundation for a strong future of online public engagement in Indiana municipalities:

1. Providing free training for Aim members related to social media best practices, accessibility, and management for enhanced online public engagement
2. Creating a network of municipal officials who hold online public engagement as part of their explicit job duties
3. Attempting to create a partnership with a third party geared towards shared website management
4. Creating a list of assessment standards for municipalities to gauge their online public engagement efforts
5. Communicate directly with Indiana's smallest municipalities regarding the viability of online public engagement in their community
6. Host regular workshop opportunities for continual professional development related to online public engagement
7. Develop a living list of accessibility considerations that members need to ensure they meet individual needs when hosting online public engagement events and standards for accessibility evaluation

In addition to these actions for Aim, the Capstone recommends four direct actions, detailed in the report, for Aim members to undertake to bolster their online public engagement work:

1. Take advantage of free social media platforms and free social media training opportunities

2. Utilize a public video sharing site, such as YouTube, to share video content of municipal engagements
3. Consider website sharing with other municipalities
4. Consider appointing a single person to manage online public engagement efforts
5. Utilize all available platforms with a cohesive brand in order to effectively advertise synchronous online public engagement events

All of these recommendations result from not only the data findings, but also from the relationship of Aim with its members. For many municipalities the transition to reliable, regularly occurring, and effective online public engagement will provide both a challenge and opportunity for exceptional growth in terms of resident involvement, municipal communication and education, and innovation in public engagement across Indiana.

Literature Review

The existing literature on public engagement provides a strong foundation for municipalities to implement online and in-person engagement methods. This literature review considers public engagement through lenses of economics, inequality, and changing demographics to assist Indiana municipalities as they adapt to current practices. The recommendations outlined in the literature serve as a practical toolkit and thoughtful analysis of work from experts in the field. The literature presented supplements the data gathered in this report and provides further insight into municipalities' public engagement methods.

A full citation of all sources with a URL is available in the Capstone Appendices.

Innovation in Public Engagement

The section highlights innovative practices and theories of public engagement. The research provides frameworks for holistic, contemporary, and/or citizen-centered public engagement.

In *A Ladder of Citizen Participation*, Arnstein (1969) explains that public participation in local government is fundamental to a functioning, democratic society. However, governments rarely implement public participation to its full potential because they exclude minority groups and low-income populations from the governance process. Arnstein (1969) seeks to develop a framework that explains what citizen participation is and how it relates to social needs to enhance engagement across groups. The researcher notes the ongoing "empty ritual of participation" in Community Action Programs and Model Cities in the United States. Still, the issue scales to any democratic society, especially in the Global North.

In a democratic state, Dzur (2019) found that innovation is increasing, specifically in the form of administrative intervention. Public administration is civil service-focused and professional policymakers drive it by trust between themselves. When implementing democratic professionalism into the workplace, public managers face fiscal constraints, diminished voter faith, and increased complexity. Additionally, democratic innovation labels voters as "clients" (Dzur, 2019). When there is little engagement, public administrators infer that their citizens are "mildly satisfied" with the current administration (Dzur, 2019).

Local governments continue to develop new methods to encourage constituents' participation in their engagement efforts as they experience budget constraints and increased demand. Fung (2015) argues that governments must encourage effectiveness, legitimacy, and social justice values to address public engagement changes. Fung (2015) found that future challenges in creating successful civic engagement stem from three main areas:

1. The absence of systematic leadership
2. The lack of popular or elite consensus on the place of direct citizen participation
3. The limited scope and powers of participatory innovations

The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (NDCC) (2010) provides examples of two framework charts, Engagement Streams and Process Distinctions. The Engagement Streams framework builds on previous efforts to categorize or describe the public engagement and conflict transformation fields. The Engagement Streams chart categorizes engagement techniques into four “streams” based on primary intentions or purpose. The four streams listed are Exploration, Conflict Transformation, Decision Making, and Collaborative Action. The Engagement Streams chart outlines which of the best-known methods are effective in each stream. The Process Distinctions chart details 24 dialogue and deliberations methods, including group size, meeting type, and participant selections. NDCC (2010) defines the different processes within the two charts. In general, NDCC (2010) designed the charts to assist public engagement experts in deciding which engagement approach best suits their circumstances.

Public value creation is a critical challenge for the public administration field. Yang (2016) introduces four existing approaches to create public values: managerial expertise, ethical values, representation, and participation. He addresses the limitations of the four approaches:

1. Public officials solve problems using expertise and political neutrality in the traditional public administration field. Criticisms of this manager-centered approach stem from the reality that managers cannot always make the best decisions because of self-interests and other realistic limitations.
2. Ethical value approach emphasizes identifiable ethical values which individuals should follow. This approach’s effectiveness is problematic because converting public values into operational directives is tricky.
3. Through the representation approach, voting for policies based on the public’s interest creates shared values. This representation method raises concerns related to the intransitivity of voting and elected officials’ self-interests.
4. To address concerns for the representation approach, Yang presents the citizen participation approach. In the participation approach, individuals create public values through communicating their individual preferences.

To create public value and institutional innovation, Yang (2016) identifies an iterative framework based on the existing four public value approaches by analyzing four cases. Starting with an aggregation of public values, the integrative process of participation, legitimation, and implementation helps create the communities’ shared values. Through a deliberative process which all actors can participate with equal standing, the results indicate an agreement equilibrium. At equilibrium, the legitimation process should authorize and institutionalize legal outcomes. Once the community creates the public values, the community can implement them. Yang (2016) expects that operational capacity aligns with the community’s values. Since communities face different challenges and shared values, the process of participation, legitimation, and implementation should be iterative. Yang (2016) suggests that communities

apply this process in specific contexts of public management, such as planning, because of their data limits.

Yang (2016) had several comments on a growing mistrust of public institutions among citizens and how the suspicion influences public engagement. To improve transparency and relationships between citizens and municipalities, a municipal website should be a platform that offers information on upcoming engagement opportunities for its citizens, such as a calendar of city council meetings. To better support public engagement strategies, municipalities should implement goals that incorporate shaping, sharing, affiliating, adapting, funding, producing, and complying with citizens' interests. Civic engagement will continue to transform as communities adapt to future conditions.

Lee and Levine (2016) discuss the changing landscape of public engagement and highlight the widespread impact that comprehensive volunteering has on communities. The researchers emphasize a volunteering approach centered around "results-driven citizen engagement" and argue that volunteering has the most effective and lasting impacts when it is deliberative and collaborative (2016). Lee and Levine (2016) cite the *Love Your Block* initiative, which offers small grants to groups that reflect a want and need to improve their communities. The program analysts found that this initiative produced positive results in both the short- and long-term. For example, when a community received a grant to collect trash and plant trees, they experienced a decrease in crime rates across their communities over time. The researchers attribute the crime rate reduction to the relationships that the volunteers cultivated between their community members, which lead to greater civic and public engagement.

Lee and Levine (2016) cite studies conducted at Stanford, Harvard, and Texas A&M that found a correlation between community involvement, increased prosperity, and community organizing. The researchers argue that communities will become increasingly participatory in local affairs and decision-making when volunteers establish meaningful relationships with community members and those serving the community. The researchers found that as communities become more participatory in their local government, the area becomes more prosperous for all its residents. To accomplish this, volunteers must reframe their service to focus on deliberation, collaboration, and connection. By fostering these qualities during community engagement, groups and organizations can take the first step towards improving their neighborhoods.

Legal Frameworks for Public Engagement

Many key aspects of implementing online public engagement policies relate to the guidelines, restrictions, and opportunities present in the law. Leighninger et al. (2013) suggest that current citizen participation laws in the United States are insufficient to create meaningful public participation. Municipalities continue to use outdated forms of participation, including the standard "three minutes at the microphone" formula that gives citizens three-minute increments to ask questions or make comments. Current public meetings, including zoning hearings or city council meetings, offer residents few chances to interact or deliberate meaningfully with other members of their community. These policies can stifle innovation, discourage future engagement, and prevent local officials from effectively reaching their residents. To improve

public engagement, Leighninger et al. (2013). suggest that officials should offer more intensive and deliberative forms of participation, either in-person or online.

To provide historical context, Amsler (2014) describes the foundation of public participation laws in local government. In the early 19th century, courts saw municipalities as “creatures of the state,” effectively limiting municipalities’ ability to conduct their local affairs outside of powers delegated to them by the state. Dillon’s Rule lays out these views, structuring municipalities within this framework. Efforts in the late 19th century attempted to shift states to Home Rule, strengthening municipalities’ powers. Home Rule changed who was eligible to participate in the public process—not just property owners or business actors but a wider variety of the public, including professional public administrators.

Amsler (2014) similarly outlines the long history of public participation in the United States. At the federal level, the New Deal helped to create the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), which requires federal agencies to give the public opportunities for notice and commenting when enacting new regulations. In recent years, the Obama administration’s Executive Memorandum on Transparent and Open Government set forth requirements for more robust participation. At the state level, these laws vary depending on the local context. Federal and state public participation laws are similar because they rarely define what “public participation” is. Amsler (2014) suggests that this ambiguity may prevent public officials from finding methods for innovating public participation. Instead of using more deliberative and experimental approaches, officials rely on standard techniques to engage the public. Amsler (2014) argues that this existing framework is problematic because it may prompt officials to maintain minimal state standards. Instead, Amsler (2014) encourages officials to identify innovative opportunities to engage the public within their authority not prohibited by current legislation.

violation, the Open Door Law, individuals may contact the Public Access Counselor of the state and city-county to file a formal complaint. If the complaints are accepted, the counselor may provide public agencies advice; however, public agencies are not strictly bound by that advice.. Judicial remedies may be available; policy decisions and actions during the meetings that are proven to violate the Open Door Law can be voided. Public employees or officials may be subject to a civil penalty in violation of this law.

Open Door Law

The Indiana Legislature is considering changes in the Open Door Law at the time the 2021 Capstone wrote this report. Amended in 2012, the Indiana Legislature enacted the Open Door Law (Indiana Code 5-14-1.5-1) to allow public access to meetings from public agencies. The term “public agencies” encompasses any:

- 1) Board, commission, department, an agency under administration and legislative power of the state and
- 2) county, township, a city that is exercising administrative and legislative power of delegated local government power.

This law permits all members of the public to access public meetings with a few exceptions. One exception is that the public agencies close meetings related to “executive sessions.” These can be discussions relating to security, litigation, bargaining, and information classified as confidential under state or federal law.

The Open Door Law requires public agencies to give public notice of any public meetings or executive sessions at least 48 hours in advance with an exact date, time and location. The Open Door Law does not require meeting agendas to be posted 48 hours in advance. The Open Door Law guarantees individuals the right to record and videotape the meeting. However, the law does not guarantee an individual's right to speak at public meetings unless the governing body provides an opportunity for comments and discussion to the general public.

In the case of an Open Door Law violation, individuals may contact the city-county or Indiana Public Access Counselor to file a formal complaint. If the Counselor accepts the complaints, they may provide public agencies with legal advice. However, the law does not strictly bound public agencies to those recommendations. If the Indiana Courts may void any policy decisions or actions during these meetings that violate the Open Door Law. If found guilty of a violation, the Courts may subject public employees or officials with civil penalties.

Equity in Public Engagement

In addition to innovation and law, promoting equity is vital for municipalities when considering public engagement efforts. A large volume of the public engagement literature underscores the importance of equity, specifically commenting on how facets of individual identity intersect with the public process.

There are several ongoing challenges in making public engagement inclusive. Siu (2015) addresses the ongoing challenge of perceptions in public engagement settings. The researcher found that strong biases based on race, gender identity, and education exist in individuals' perception of influential figures. Siu (2015) also found that strong perceptions of inequality (based on race, gender identity, and education level) exist in people's perception of other residents. A possible solution to this is structuring municipal meetings to ensure each resident has equal speaking time, an equally advantageous physical position, and an opportunity to respond directly to questions and statements.

Another challenge is that the process of consensus-building within public engagement often excludes marginalized communities. To address this, Zapata (2015) describes scenario planning as another approach to circumvent challenges around consensus building. Scenario planning engages community stakeholders in a series of workshops to evaluate scenarios, reason through outcomes, and understand the community's future. In a case study, the Valley Futures Project used scenario planning amongst non-Latino, white, and Latino participants and analyzed the different demographic responses. The results showed that Latino participants wanted to continue the discussion and review all their options, even if they did not make a decision. As a result, Zapata (2015) recommends scenario planning for urban planners' stakeholder engagement to highlight a range of ideas and build a space for cultural exchange.

Although cross-cultural exchanges offer rich perspectives for public engagement, challenges can arise when people from different backgrounds engage with one another. Siu and Stanisevski (2006) found that municipalities can use deliberative civic engagement to negotiate cross-cultural conflicts. Deliberative civic engagement calls for individuals to carefully weigh their arguments and listen to competitive views before emerging with reasonable opinions.

However, there are two obstacles for implementing deliberative civic engagement: external exclusion and internal exclusion. External exclusion occurs when a majority assembles with the authority to exclude minority groups from the public discussion process. Comparatively, internal exclusion can occur when minority groups participate in the public discussion process. For internal exclusion, minorities may experience obstacles to voice their opinions or influence the decision.

To address these challenges Siu and Stanisevski (2006) suggest:

1. Mandatory inclusion, which ensures minority groups have equal opportunities to speak in public discussions and deliberation meetings.
2. Increased Information, where the organizer assumes that all citizens are unfamiliar with the specific policy issues.
3. Moderators, where educated forum moderators or discussion facilitators balance the speaking opportunities among participants.
4. Deliberative Reciprocity, which encourages participants to ask questions that compromise with others' opinions and vice versa.
5. Alternative Modes of Communication, where participants use different communication methods to understand others' experiences to mitigate inequality and exclusion.
6. Consensus and Concurrent Decision Making, where groups coordinate their opinions to reach an agreement.

These practices could be introduced in general to increase public engagement efforts amongst all residents in an equitable manner, while overcoming barriers.

Research Design and Methodology

Overview

The Research Design and Methodology section highlights the processes, goals, and logistics of the data collection process the Capstone's three research groups conducted. All data collection and analysis worked to address the primary goals of the Capstone, outlined below:

1. Provide a detailed inventory of the latest online participation and engagement practices by Aim members around the state.
2. Document both successes and challenges associated with these efforts.
3. Provide a summary of guidance points and best practices for effective online public engagement gathered through the experiences of Indiana municipalities that could be useful across Indiana.
4. Offer an inventory of online public engagement-related information resources from throughout the US.
5. Document what municipalities want and need to know about online public engagement, relating to technologies, capacities, resources, strategies, and purposes.

To conduct research, the Interview, Survey, and Web Groups followed the municipality classification system based on population size. The Capstone categorized the sample of municipalities from Aim's directory into four groups based on the population criteria outlined in Indiana University's Public Policy Institute (2016) "Thriving Communities, Thriving State." The population classifications are available in Table 1 with the most updated population sizes for municipalities.

Table 1

	Smallest municipalities (<5,000)	Small municipalities (5,000-15,000)	Mid-sized municipalities (15,000-50,000)	Urban municipalities (>50,000)	Total
Count	418	90	40	19	567
Interview Sample	1	6	9	8	24
Survey Sample	58	13	5	1	77
Web Sample	-	6	9	15	30

Table 1. Number of Municipalities in Each Research Group Sample.

The table displays the total number of municipalities from the four population categories by Capstone research group.

Additionally, the Interview, Survey, and Web Groups adhered to a set of accepted best practices and self-regulating protocols for both qualitative and quantitative research, detailed in the sections below.

Incorporating Current Practices

To incorporate current best practices in survey design, the Survey Group completed a review of publications relevant to qualitative research, implementation, and analysis. In *Online Survey Design*, Toepoel (2017) outlines various best practices for designing survey questions, including the numbering of survey questions and showing a set number of questions at a time. Additional best practices include sliding bars for scalar questions, checkboxes for questions with multiple acceptable answers, and drop-down menus for questions with many possible answer options, and a “welcome” and “thank you” screen for participants.

In the *Internet, Phone, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*, Dillman (2014) reviews the professionalism and structure needed for data collection across various research methods. Guidelines include the use of multiple points of contact when sending surveys and ensuring that the survey messages differ across reminders. By changing the message, researchers grab the participants' attention, which increases the survey response rate. Dillman (2014) also suggests that researchers undertake strategic communication with the survey population and survey reminders, explaining that compared to traditional surveys, participants often ignore online surveys and need more frequent email reminders, as many as six reminders in a single month.

In *Making Sense of the Social World*, Chambliss et al. (2019) explain the intricacies of data analysis and its role in social research. The authors highlight how data analysts tell a story from the data collected rather than a story based on the analyst's personal biases. Chambliss et al. (2019) underscore the importance of structure in data analysis, specifically the need for well-defined categories, patterns, and relationships throughout the process. The authors offer reservations regarding evaluations in a qualitative study, underscoring that there is no set standard for evaluating the authenticity of conclusions. Therefore, analysts need to carefully consider the evidence and methods in which they conduct a study to ensure its viability.

Interview Research

The Interview Group obtained relevant and insightful information about municipalities' online public engagement efforts through qualitative interviews. The study uses a representative sample of 30 municipalities throughout Indiana, chosen according to their size and region in accordance with the protocol designed by the Web Group. Given the size distribution across the state, the Interview Group's sample included 15 urban, 9 mid-sized, 5 small municipalities, and one of the smallest municipalities, as displayed in Table 1. The Interview Group needed 30 interviews with individual municipalities to conduct viable T-tests and chi-squared analysis for statistical significance (Lind et al., 2017). After consulting with the Client Representative, the Interview Group contacted an additional 10 municipalities beyond the initial list to meet the

needs for statistical analyses. When selecting the additional 10 municipalities, the Interview Group used the initial methodology provided by the Web Group.

Aim sent the interview solicitation via email to the relevant contact(s) in each municipality to facilitate a higher response rate. The interview email solicitation, available in the Interview Appendices, includes information on the Capstone's goals, contact information for Capstone personnel, and instructions for interview scheduling using Calendly. Municipalities could directly schedule meetings with the interviewers over the course of four weeks, ending on April 2. The Interview Group worked with the Client Representative through multiple rounds of follow-up emails and calls to encourage participation from unscheduled municipalities. After not reaching the 30 interviews needed for statistical analysis, the Interview Group attempted to secure interviews from more municipalities in underrepresented categories to counteract the low response rate and reduce bias in the results. The underrepresented categories included two central urban, one northeastern urban, one mid-sized northeastern, and one southeastern municipality. From the 45 solicited municipalities, the Interview Group conducted 25 interviews with 24 municipalities.

The Interview Group completed all interviews virtually using Zoom. In one hour, the interviewers asked up to 29 standardized interview questions. The interview questions attempted to gain insight into current online public engagement practices, successes, challenges, and desired resources to improve engagement efforts. The Interview Group maintained a list of the most important questions to ask in the event there was insufficient time to ask every interview question. The essential questions the Interview Group identified related to the topics of benefits and challenges (Questions 4, 5, 15, 19, 22, 25, and 26), the COVID-19 pandemic (Question 6), accessibility and engagement (Questions 7, 11, and 13), and the role of Aim in supporting future online public engagement efforts (Question 24 and 27). The interview protocol, containing the standardized questions, is available in full in the Interview Appendices.

Before each interview, the Interview Group secured permission from each participant to record them by completing a consent form. Once recorded, the Interview Group stored the interviews on Indiana University's secure server and transcribed them using YouTube's transcription tool. To use YouTube's transcription tool, the Interview Group uploaded them as unlisted videos and exported the transcriptions without timestamps into individual documents. The Interview Group exported the transcriptions and then deleted the videos off YouTube after. The Interview Group stored the individual transcription documents securely on the Capstone's Indiana University Google Drive. The Capstone instructors limited access to the Google Drive to only Capstone members and further limited the folder with the interview transcriptions to only the Interview Group, Project Managers, and the Instructors.

To assist the interview coding process, the Interview Group divided the transcriptions by municipality size and into blocks of text for every question. The Interview Group further divided each answer and sub-answer into text blocks relating to the questions asked during the interviews.

Survey Analysis

Sample Selection

The Survey Group constructed and disseminated a survey to 508 municipalities across Indiana to collect online public engagement data. Aim selected the sample of municipalities based on their Aim membership status and contact information availability.

Initially, the Survey Group collected contact information for all the listed municipalities from the directory on the Aim website. The Survey Group divided the search for municipal officials' contact information across four group members who scrubbed the web for the e-mail addresses, contact names, phone numbers, and website contacts for Indiana municipal officials. From this process, the Survey Group gathered contact information for 251 municipalities. The Survey Group uploaded the contact information into Qualtrics, which sent automated emails drafted by the Survey Group to distribute the survey to the municipal officials.

Survey Solicitation

Initially, the Survey Group sent an introductory email to 251 municipalities at 8 a.m. Eastern Time (ET) on March 9. The Survey Manager sent the initial email through Qualtrics early in the morning to increase visibility, per findings from Dillman (2014). On March 15 at 8 a.m. ET, the Survey Manager sent a reminder email to every municipality that did not complete or start the survey at that time. On March 23, the Client Representative sent a second survey reminder through an email solicitation. The Survey Manager sent a final reminder email at 3 p.m. ET on March 26 that the Survey Group set the survey to close on March 26 at 11:59 p.m. ET.

On March 26 at 4 p.m. ET, the Survey Group began downloading the survey data for an initial review and found a URL error that caused participants to only be able to respond to the first eight questions in the survey. With the Client Representative's permission, the Survey Group constructed an updated email solicitation for Aim to send directly to their members and inform them of the survey changes. On March 29 at 11 a.m., the Client Representative sent the updated email solicitation to Aim's members, which included the new URL to the survey. The Client Representative sent a reminder email to municipalities on April 2 at 10 a.m. ET to inform them that the survey was closing that day. The Survey Group closed the survey on April 2 at 11:59 p.m. ET. The email solicitations beginning on March 26 are available in the Survey Appendices.

Survey Design

To gather information relating to the primary goals, the Survey Group identified five main categories to organize the questions, including:

1. An overview of public engagement,
2. Engagement structure and maintenance,
3. Employee development and system management,
4. Response to COVID-19, and
5. Aim-specific questions.

The Survey Group designed the questions using research and best practices gathered through the survey literature review. In total, the survey contained 52 questions; however, the survey only triggered some questions depending on specific participant answers. Throughout the survey, participants had the opportunity to answer quantitative and qualitative questions. The full list of survey questions is available in the Survey Appendices. Before launching the initial survey, the Instructors and Client Representative reviewed and approved the questions to ensure they met the project goals. After the URL error, Ashley Clark, the Director of the Center for Survey Research at Indiana University, reviewed the questions and the URL to provide suggestions for improvement to ensure the Survey Group resolved the initial error. After incorporating Director Clark's feedback, the Survey Group relaunched the survey.

Survey Data Cleaning

Once the survey closed, the Survey Manager exported the data from Qualtrics into Microsoft Excel. The Survey Manager completed several initial data cleaning steps to ensure that the responses were in a usable format. The Survey Manager's measures included, in order:

1. Removing responses that occurred before the launch of the survey on March 29
2. Removing the following columns of extraneous information: Status, IP Address, Last Name, First Name, E-mail, External Reference
3. Removing any instances where respondents did not input data
4. Removing duplicates for two municipalities

Additional data cleaning steps included fixing spelling errors, changing cases to reflect any proper nouns, and ensuring all open responses fit into their respective categories. As a final step, the Survey Manager transported the qualitative responses into a separate document to analyze independently from the quantitative data for the purpose of graph creation and coding. A full copy of the Survey Coding Protocol is available in the Survey Appendices.

Web Scrubbing

Sample Selection

The Web Group reviewed 567 Aim members to define web searching targets and gather preliminary information on the latest online public participation and engagement practices of Aim members. To determine the focus sample, the Web Group conducted a brief analysis of the research subjects and relied on the directory from Aim's website for the sample municipalities.

Table 2

	Smallest municipalities (<5,000)	Small municipalities (5,000-15,000)	Mid-sized municipalities (15,000-50,000)	Urban municipalities (>50,000)	Total
Count	418	90	40	19	567
Percentage of Total Sample	74%	16%	7%	3%	100%

Table 2. Municipalities in Each Size Category, by Count and Percent.

The table displays the total number of municipalities from the four population categories by Capstone research group.

As shown in Table 2, 74% of the municipalities belong to the smallest municipalities category. For the smallest municipalities, it was difficult to find online public engagement information on the municipal websites to have a representative sample. As a result, the Web Group decided not to use the smallest municipalities in their final sample except for municipalities that also serve as county seats.

After excluding the smallest municipalities, the Web Group's target sample included 149 municipalities. Due to limited capacities, the Web Group selected 30 municipalities from the target sample as their representative sample to conduct their data analysis. The Web Group established a sample size of 30 because it is the minimum number needed to have statistically significant results during data analysis, per Lind et al. (2017). The Web Group divided the sample into regions based on Aim and the 2019 Capstone's classifications. The four regional classifications include Central, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, and Southwest. Table 3 shows the Web Group's final sample based on size and region, which includes 15 urban, 9 mid-sized, and 6 small municipalities.

Table 3

	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southeast	Southwest
Urban municipalities (15)	Anderson Indianapolis Kokomo Lafayette Greenwood	Elkhart Fort Wayne Muncie	Gary South Bend	Columbus Jeffersonville	Bloomington Evansville Terre Haute
Mid-sized municipalities (9)	Plainfield Zionsville	Marion Warsaw	Logansport Valparaiso	Richmond New Castle	Jasper
Small municipalities (6)			Monticello Rensselaer	Rushville Vernon	Princeton Sullivan

Table 3. Complete Web Sample Organized by Region and Municipality Size.
The table outlines the municipalities' categorization and the 30 municipalities' names selected for the Web review.

Data Collection

The Web Group used various methods to collect information on the sample size of 30 municipalities. The Web Group speculated initially that there might be valuable information in news articles related to online public engagement in Indiana, but a broad search yielded few results. Eventually, the Web Group determined that individual website searches were not the most prudent approach. Instead, the Web Group developed a standardized protocol and checklist to work from for each municipality. This checklist is as follows:

1. Website usage
 - 1.1 Public information accessibility: List of available information
 - Archived public meeting agenda
 - Can citizens hear, see, and or comment in public hearing examples and availability?
 - Event calendar
 - Elected/non-elected officials contact information
 - Social media usage (Facebook, Instagram)
 - Municipal location information
 - Job opening information
 - Cultural and community resources
 - 1.2 Online services: List of available services (write only services that are available)
 - Job applications
 - Pay utilities

- Report claims
- Accessibility for disabilities
- Online public meeting participation (whether citizens have access to public meeting online, streaming services, and they can comment and interact to public meetings via online)

2. Case examples and related ordinances

2.1 Implementations

2.2 Related ordinances

To collect more specialized information, the Web Group searched related websites, such as tourist information or archive sites. Most municipalities operate common menus on their websites such as Living, Business, Visitors, and Government in addition to providing useful services such as pay centers for utility bills, places to report concerns, or Town Council Meeting Agenda and Minutes archives.

Analysis Approach

The Web Group analyzed each municipality's website in the sample for publicly accessible data to examine their resources and capacity for online public engagement. Additionally, the Web Group gathered demographic information for each municipality. The demographic data gathered included population size, median age, education attainment rate, unemployment rate, median household income, internet access rate. The Web Group examined the municipality's tendency to use social media in relation to their demographics and classification.

Lastly, the Web Group gathered and analyzed the municipal policies and ordinances from the sample and across the United States. Related municipal policies and ordinances for specific municipalities is on pages 159-181 in the "Indiana Municipal Inventory and Overview" section within the Web Appendices. Based on our research, the Web Group structured the most effective and relevant online public engagement practices into case stories.

Data Analysis and Findings

Overview

The Data Analysis and Findings section details the analysis conducted on the data from all three research groups. This section provides insight into many of the key trends and observations related to online public engagement discovered through the three research methodologies.

Interview Research

To facilitate discussion of the findings, the Interview Group divided the interview responses into thematic sections that encompass most of the interview questions. Utilizing the qualitative coding software Nvivo, the Interview Group classified responses into the following seven categories:

- 1) Benefits and challenges
- 2) Online public engagement and the COVID-19 pandemic
- 3) Online platform usage
- 4) Representation and accessibility
- 5) Strategies for online public engagement
- 6) Desired tools and resources
- 7) Plans and goals for future online public engagement

The following subsections outline a general summary of the Interview Group's findings in the seven interview question categories outlined above. Since the selected municipalities were representative of the size and distribution of Indiana municipalities, obtaining fewer than that amount influences the representativeness of this sample. The Interview Group recognizes that these limitations reduce the generalizability of the results to the municipalities that participated in the interviews. Figure 1 highlights the distribution of interviewees by municipal population size classification.

Figure 1

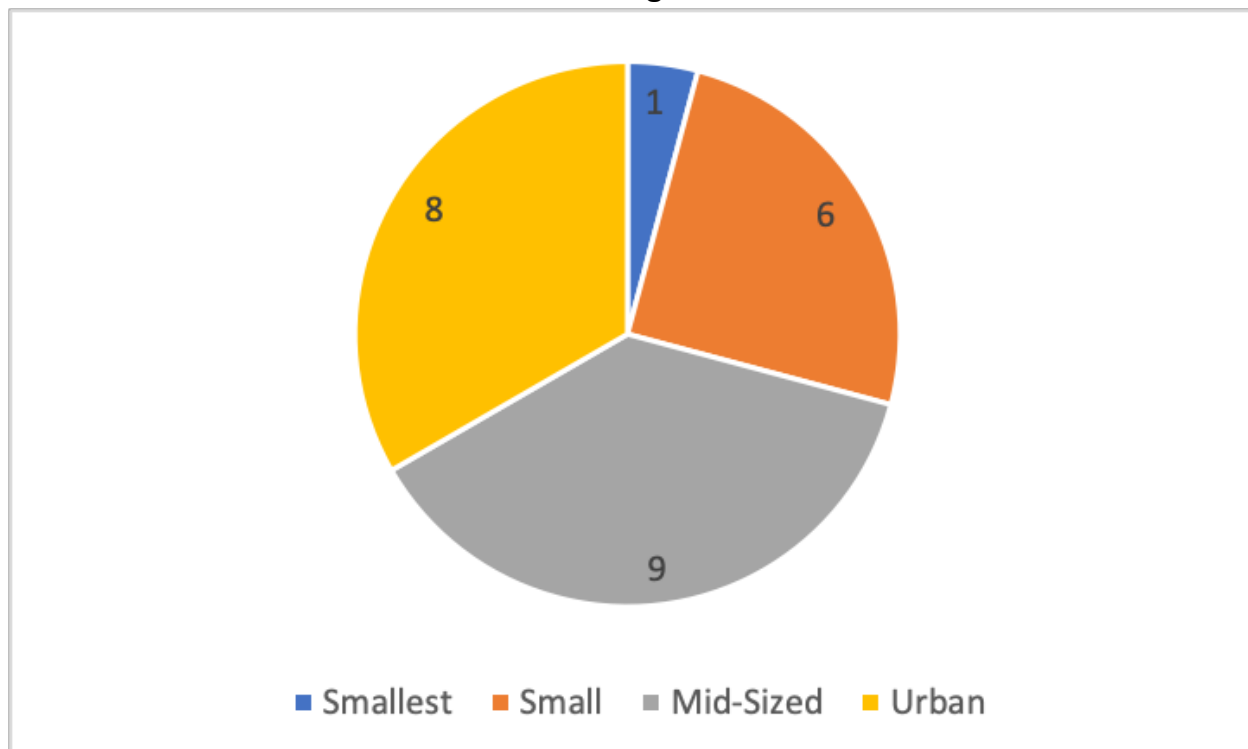


Figure 1. Number of Municipality Respondents by Population Size.

The figure displays the total number of interview respondents based on their classification in the four population categories.

Benefits of Online Public Engagement

The Interview Protocol includes several questions about the benefits of online public engagement in the respondents' municipalities from the perspective of both residents and municipal officials. Overall, 75% of respondents mention higher levels of online public engagement while 46% mentioned better accessibility for residents. Across respondents, 29% state that the online format for public engagement is more convenient and 38% mention better promotion of engagement opportunities since moving online. From the interviews, 42% of respondents mention increased transparency since moving public engagement efforts online. The Interview Group defined transparency as a municipality's ability to share information with residents openly and honestly. This same 42% of respondents state that greater transparency led to improved trust in local government, and they emphasize that increased transparency was a desirable goal for their future online public engagement efforts.

Overall, 58% of respondents found that the online format of public meetings allows for better communication with residents compared to an in-person format. All the interview respondents found that online public engagement efforts benefited their municipalities in some way, and nearly 90% of respondents indicated that their municipality benefited in multiple ways. Figure 2 outlines the responses regarding the benefits of online public engagement by municipality size.

The Interview Group excluded the smallest municipality category from Figure 2 due to non-response regarding the survey question “Benefits of Online Public Engagement.”

Figure 2

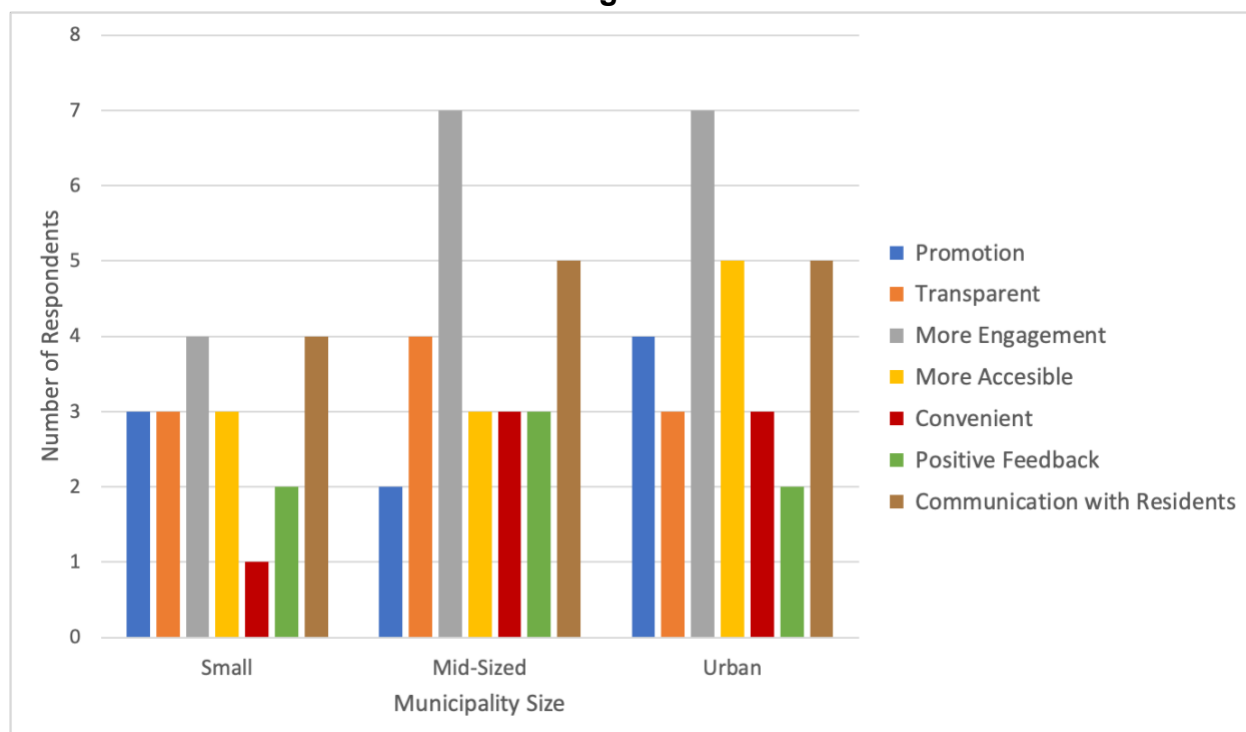


Figure 2. Benefits of Online Public Engagement.
Sample of Municipalities’ Opinions about Benefits of Online Public Engagement.

Challenges of Online Public Engagement

Interviewees expressed a range of challenges their municipality faced when providing online public engagement opportunities. Across municipalities, 58% of respondents cite challenges due to a lack of technical knowledge or skills to conduct or participate in online public engagement. Respondents mention audio and camera issues during live stream meetings, difficulties maintaining municipal websites, and technical challenges for their residents when accessing engagement opportunities. Figure 3 outlines these challenges and more, categorized by municipality size.

Figure 3

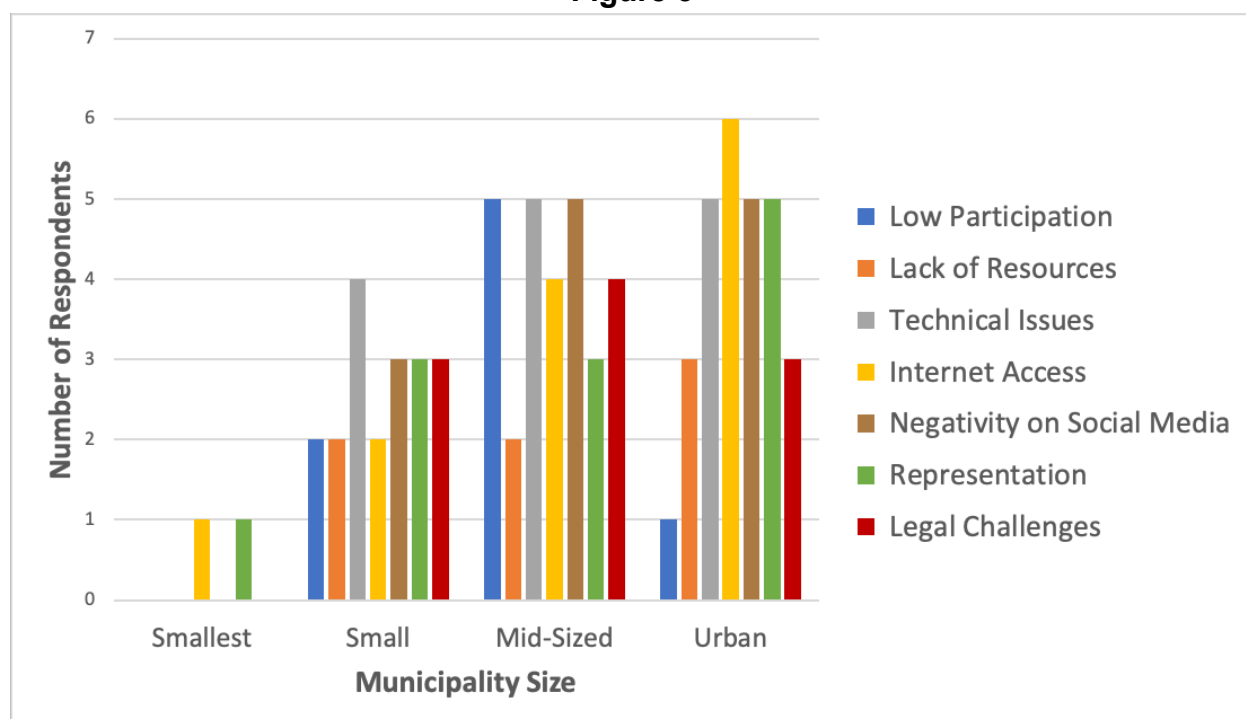


Figure 3. Challenges in Online Public Engagement.

This figure displays the challenges municipalities face in their online public engagement efforts. Responses are categorized by municipality size.

Other challenges municipalities experienced range from access, utilization, and participation. Across municipalities, 54% of respondents cite internet access issues as a challenge for their residents. Interviewees frequently mention that broadband internet access is a problem for their residents, with 100% of the smallest municipalities, 33% of small municipalities, 44% of mid-sized municipalities, and 66% of urban municipalities citing internet access as a significant challenge.

For 29% of respondents, a lack of resources to properly conduct online public engagement is a significant challenge. For municipalities that are pursuing online public engagement efforts, 33% experienced challenges with obtaining or maintaining levels of online public participation. Overall, nearly 63% of respondents experienced some sort of technical issue during their online public engagement efforts, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4

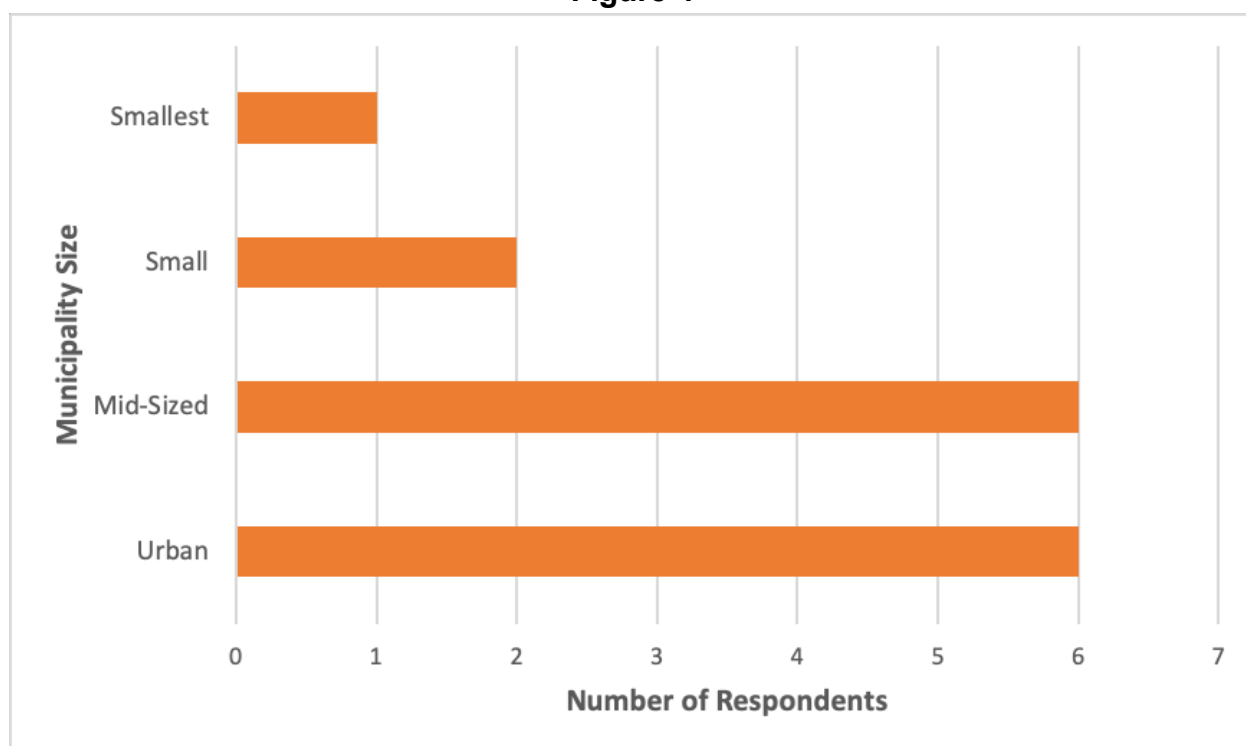


Figure 4: Respondents Who Faced Technical Challenges.

This table shows the number of municipalities that indicated technical challenges during online public engagement efforts.

Another challenge is inappropriate or negative interactions with residents online, which nearly 54% of respondents experience during online public engagement opportunities. The inappropriate interactions most frequently take the form of profanity, threats, or misinformation on social media platforms. Additionally, 8% respondents cite instances of disruptive behavior during video conferences and live streams. Another challenge respondents cited is the lack of representation of diverse groups of residents at online engagement events. Of the municipalities interviewed, 50% mention ongoing concerns with representation as a challenge for online public engagement.

Of respondents, 42% experience uncertainty regarding the legal options for online public engagement, especially in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. More specifically, respondents communicate uncertainty surrounding their legal rights and protections to delete comments from social media posts, especially when the content was abusive or threatening.

Online Public Engagement and the COVID-19 Pandemic

This section includes all questions in which respondents mentioned the COVID-19 pandemic. Across municipalities, 83% of respondents indicate an increase in online public engagement efforts during the period of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Figure 5 shows that municipalities' level of

online public engagement increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, which, in large part, suspended in-person engagement efforts.

Figure 5

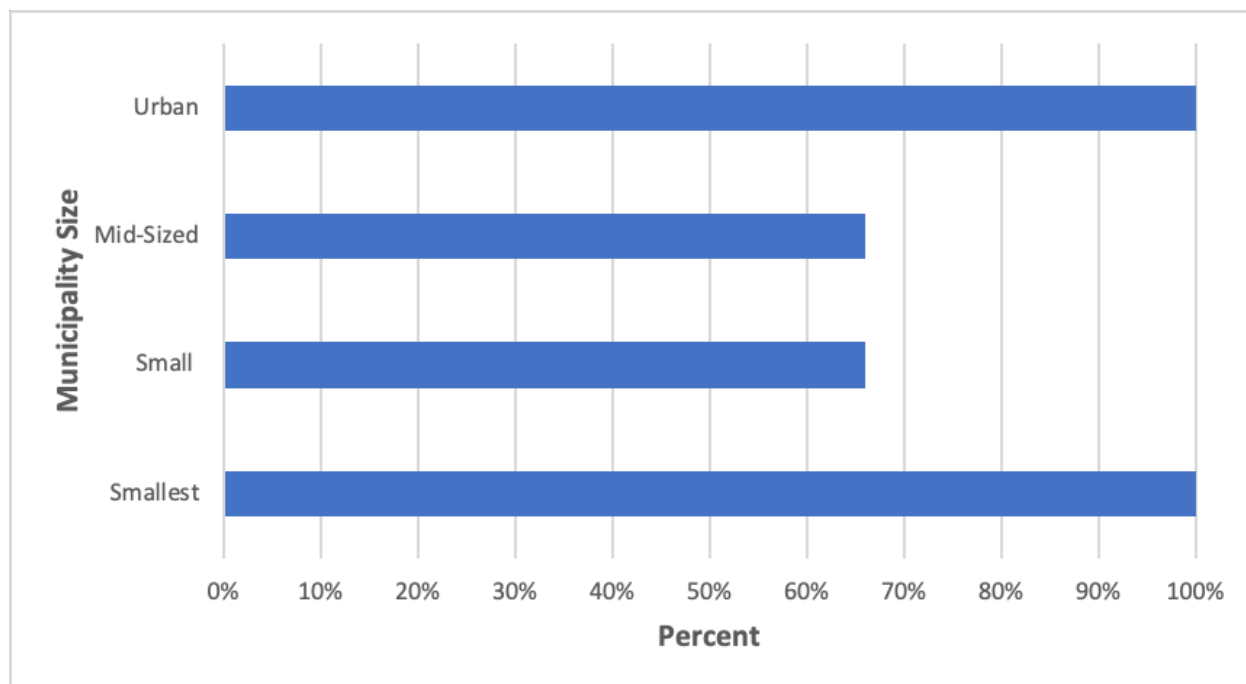


Table 5. Increased Engagement During COVID-19.

This figure shows the percentage of municipalities in each size category that indicated they experienced an increase in online public engagement during the pandemic.

As a result of this increase, 16% of respondents state that the COVID-19 pandemic forced them to find new and innovative ways to engage with their residents online. Additionally, 32% of interviewees cite a renewed appreciation for the importance of online platforms due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Interview protocol includes questions on whether the COVID-19 pandemic necessitates language updates on municipal websites or social media platforms in order to increase accessibility. Of respondents, 32% municipalities state that they need language updates, while 4% indicate an interest in language updates but did not implement any changes.

Strategies for Online Public Engagement

The interview protocol includes questions related to municipalities' decision-making strategies for online public engagement actions. Responses to these questions help explain how officials make decisions for online public engagement and which municipal attributes and departments influence these decisions.

Of respondents, 33% municipalities mention best practices as their deciding factor for choices related to online public engagement--best practices developed internally or those found from outside resources. In total, 66% of respondents maintain an established strategy for online public engagement outside of best practices. Of the respondents that mentioned strategy, almost all expressed different approaches to online public engagement efforts. Some notable strategies include positivity or a welcoming attitude, strong reliance on social media platforms, and a strong reliance on their municipal website. Of the 32% of respondents that mentioned positivity as an engagement strategy, the interviewees emphasized the necessity of welcoming all residents as an added measure to increase engagement.

Another notable trend was the variation in social media management. Across the interviews, 13% of respondents indicated that their municipality operates with a dedicated or official social media manager. Across respondents, 21% note that social media management varies across departments and 4% of respondents indicate a desire to consolidate management and present a more coherent brand across platforms.

Online Platform Usage

Usage of and experiences with online platforms varies widely across municipalities. From the sample, 88% of respondents mention that their municipality utilizes social media platforms. Across social media platforms, respondents' municipalities report a range of positive and negative experiences. The negative experiences often centered around residents' aversions on platforms (such as Facebook or Twitter) and confusion over addressing comments that may be disruptive or include profanity.

Respondents also mention that they often did not know what content to post on online platforms. Overall, 87% of respondents indicate that their lack of a general social media manager made the engagement process more difficult, as responsibility for posting becomes spread out across different departments and made presenting a coherent brand a challenge.

Of the interviewees, 54% of respondents state that their municipality utilizes a website for online public engagement. In total, 79% of respondents indicate that their municipality uses a video meeting platform, such as Zoom, WebX, or Facebook Live, to live-stream public meetings. Of these, 4% of respondents did not start live-streaming public meetings until after the COVID-19 pandemic began. Of respondents that do utilize these platforms, most intend to continue doing so the COVID-19 pandemic. Figure 6 outlines responses regarding online media usage.

Figure 6

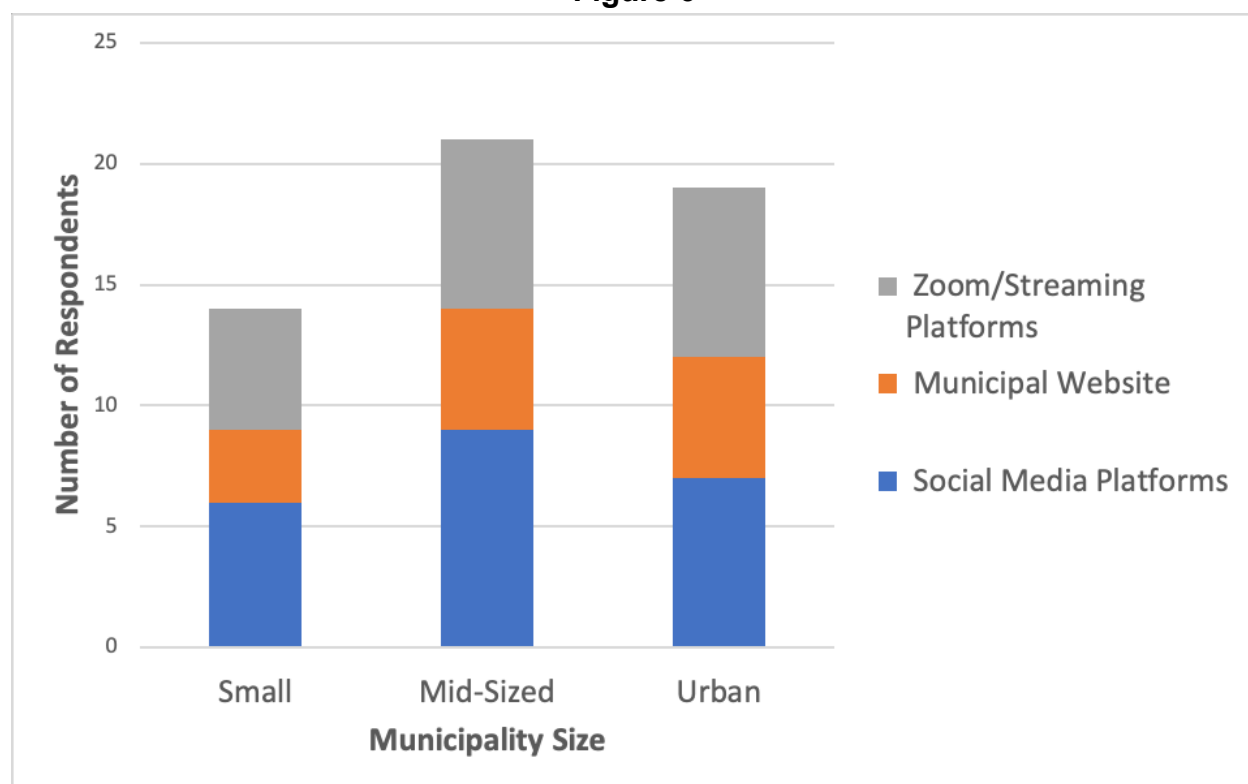


Figure 6. Online Platform Usage in Municipalities.

This figure shows which online platforms municipalities use in order to facilitate online public engagement efforts.

Representation and Accessibility

This section includes all questions in which respondents discuss their municipalities' efforts to improve representation and accessibility in online public engagement. Across municipalities, 50% of interviewees cite challenges with diverse representation in online public engagement efforts. These challenges may be connected to internet access, further pointing to difficulties in online access for certain groups based on factors such as income, age, or geographic location. Across all interviews, 21% of respondents state that their municipality provides alternative text or closed captions for online resources, while 21% express interest in providing this resource in the future. Additionally, a majority of municipalities do not operate targeted efforts to improve either representation or accessibility. Of those respondents, five interviewees expressed a desire to improve representation in their municipalities.

Needs for Future Success

In terms of needs for the future, 100% of respondents indicate a desire for general guidance on the Open Door Law and online public engagement. Many interviewees cited a lack of knowledge when it comes to the legality of engaging with the public online, including when to delete disruptive comments or when to allow comments in general. Respondents also discuss a

desire for knowledge and support in the context of the governor’s executive order on virtual public meetings. Many expressed feelings of insecurity about the continuing legality of virtual public meetings and a desire for Aim continue communications regarding any relevant updates.

Along with communication from Aim, 100% of respondents expressed a desire for networking opportunities and 58% mention a desire for information regarding best practices. Both are rooted in the desire to learn from successful peer municipalities and to incorporate lessons learned as part of their online public engagement efforts. Respondents mention an interest in replicating successful online public engagement efforts in their own municipalities, rather than “reinventing the wheel.” Additionally, 50% of respondents indicated a desire for Aim to provide training materials and technical training in general. Of those, 6 respondents showed interest in social media training specifically.

To further integrate the success of other municipalities, 63% of participants plan to utilize case stories to help with their online public engagement efforts. Based on four interviews, the Interview Group wrote case stories to address the need for information sharing, which are in the Case Story Appendices. Figure 7 outlines all the resources the municipalities requested that Aim provide.

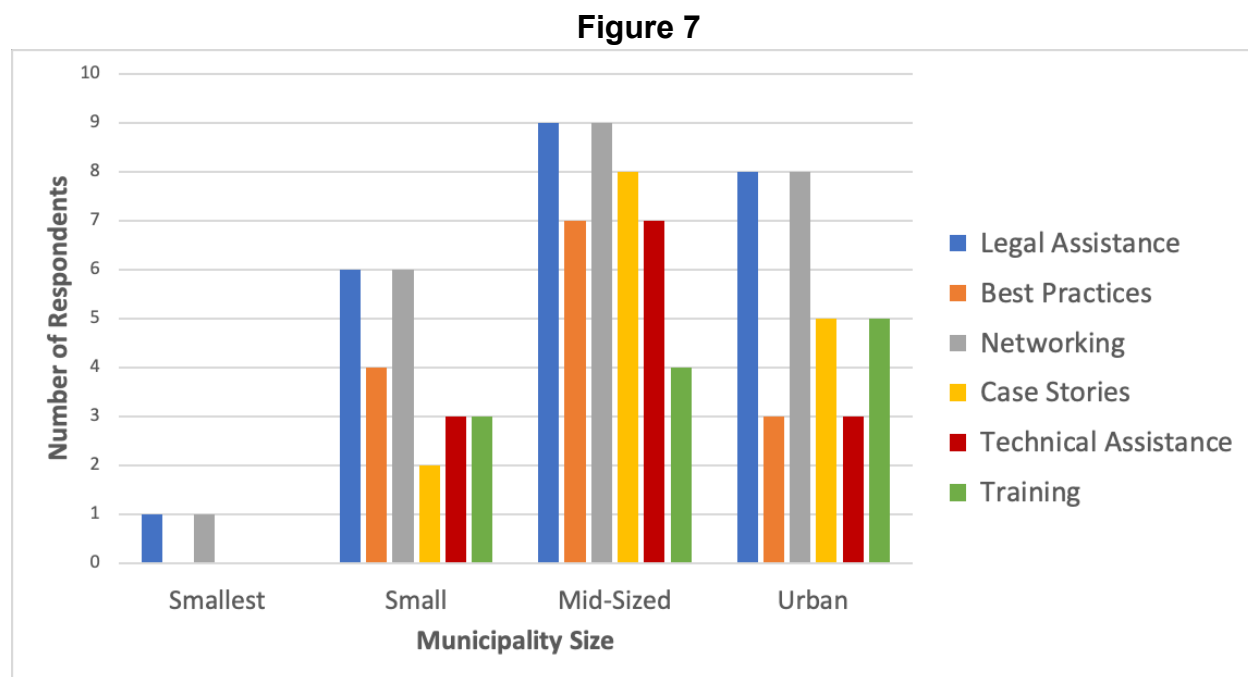


Figure 7. Desired Resources from Aim.

This figure shows the resources that municipalities most desire from Aim in order to improve online public engagement.

Plans and Goals for Future Online Public Engagement

When asked about what they hoped online public engagement would look like in the future, 58%

of respondents indicate that their municipality hopes to continue, or expand on, their current level of online public engagement. For those respondents, most indicate this would take the form of continuing to improve technology or utilizing new social media platforms. Some respondents include unique goals for the future, such as collaboration with other municipalities and developing a coherent municipal brand. Across interviews, 8% of participants mention that they have an interest in developing a municipal dashboard that combines all online resources into one location. Additionally, 8% of respondents anticipate continued usage of online meetings or broadcast in some capacity using Zoom, while 4% state clear goals to shift entirely back to in-person meetings. Figure 8 shows the municipalities that intend to continue online public engagement efforts by municipality size; however, it does not include the smallest category of municipalities because they did not respond to this question.

Figure 8

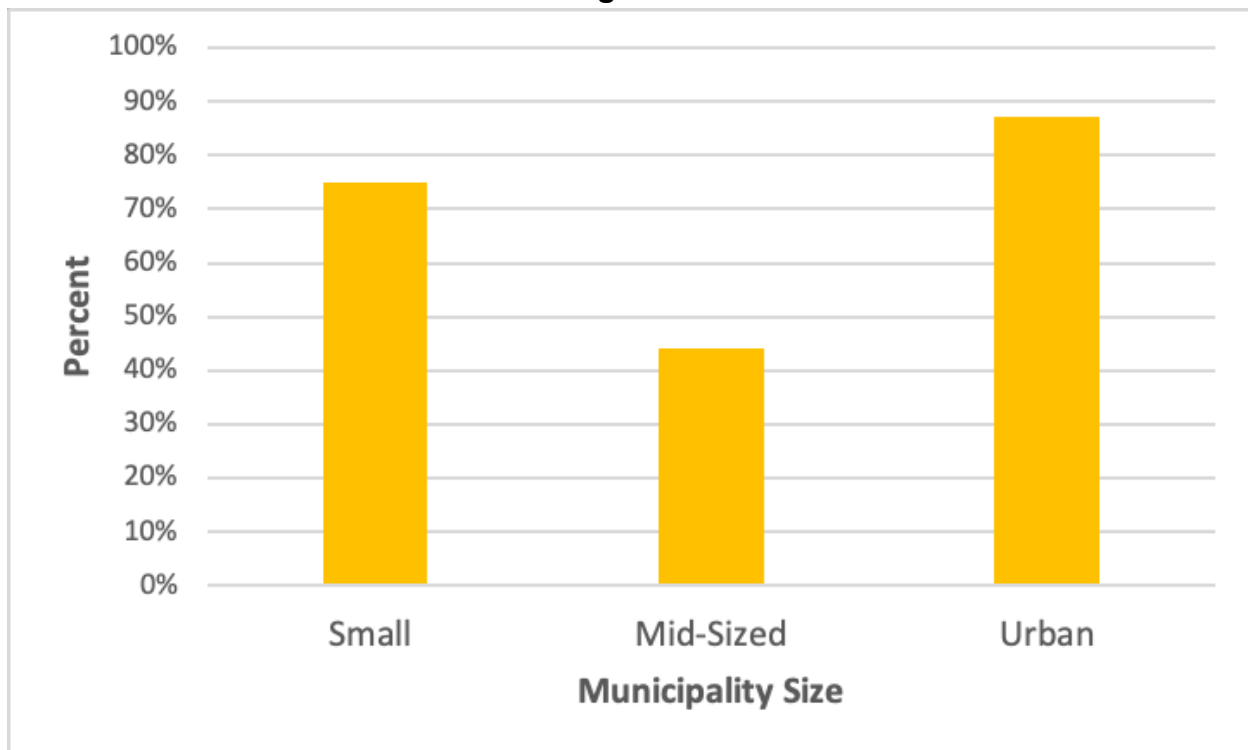


Figure 8. Respondents Who Intend to Continue Engagement Efforts.

This figure shows the frequency of responses that indicate the municipality intends to continue the same level of online public engagement in the future.

Several questions address the lessons learned and guiding principles municipalities use for online public engagement. Of respondents, 25% emphasized the importance of technology in the context of online public engagement efforts and state their own plans to improve on those skills in the future. Nearly 67% of respondents cite their challenges with negativity on online platforms as important learning experiences and plan to implement more stringent rules of engagement for comments on platforms, like Facebook and Twitter. Across municipalities, 33%

of respondents mention that online public engagement highlights the importance of effective management within their municipality.

Given these responses, a broad base of knowledge and experience regarding online public engagement already exists within Aim members. Taking into consideration the needs of specific members and incorporating them in the next steps will provide a firm foundation for the future of online public engagement across Indiana municipalities.

Survey Analysis

Analyzing survey responses offers a unique insight into the role of online public engagement within Indiana municipalities. The Survey Group structured the survey analysis and findings into the same municipality sizes as the Interview and Web Groups. The Survey Group organized the following subsections based on the survey question categories. The question categories and a complete list of questions are available for review in the Survey Appendices. Throughout the subsections, the Survey Group analyzes questions that provide the most insight into the participants' responses. It is necessary to note that of the 77 complete responses, only one respondent belonged to the urban size category. Due to this low response rate, urban municipalities are absent from some discussion and graphics as our sample is not representative of urban municipalities across Indiana.

A large portion of the survey findings focus on municipal use of social media. Social media is the most common means of online public engagement for municipalities and residents, and analysis of social media is critical in understanding the state of online public engagement in Indiana. Social media platforms serve as a means for hosting municipal events, communicating changes to municipal operations, and allowing residents online contact with municipal officials.

Survey Findings

The survey yielded 77 complete responses. Approximately 75% of respondents belong to the smallest municipality category, 17% to the small municipality category, 6% to the mid-size municipality category, and less than 1% to the urban municipality category. Figure 9 displays the number of responses received for each municipality size.

Figure 9

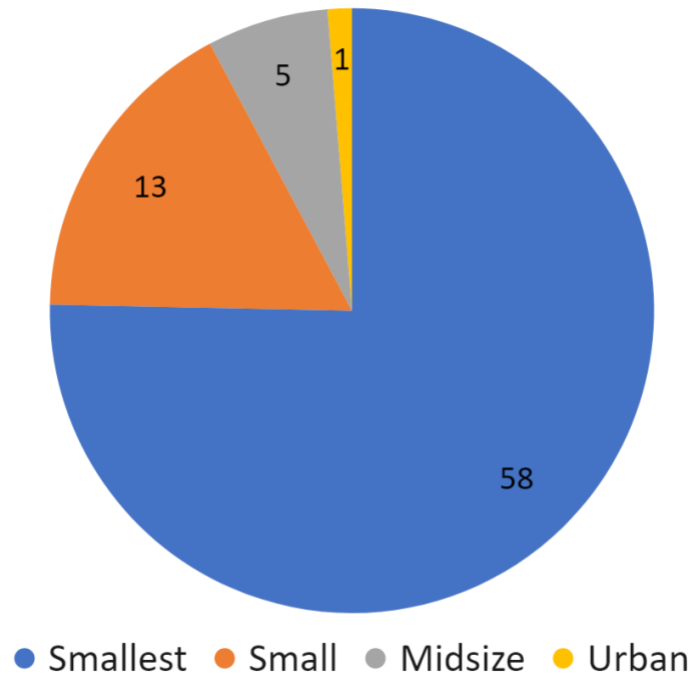


Figure 9. Number of Municipality Respondents by Population Size.

The figure displays the total number of survey respondents and the number of municipalities from the four population categories.

Introduction

The introduction section of the survey consisted of three questions that sought to understand who the key online public engagement actors are for each municipality. Figure 10 displays the respondent's role in completing the survey sorted by municipality size.

Figure 10

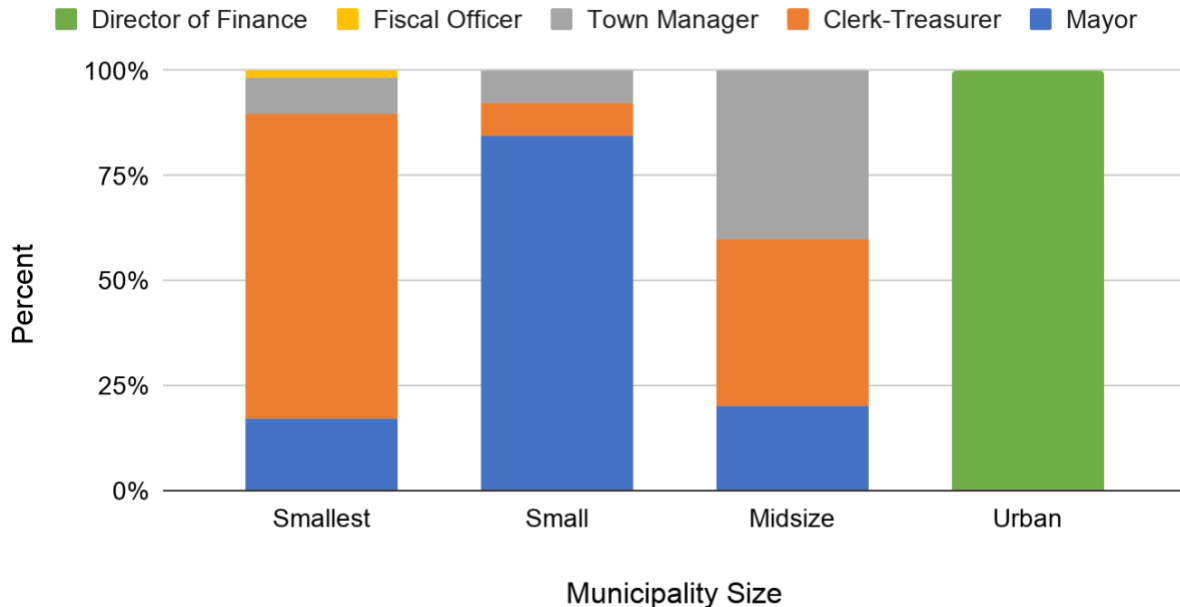


Figure 10. Percent of Positions Completing the Survey.

The figure displays the percentage of each municipal role for survey respondents across the four population categories.

For respondents representing the smallest municipalities, 72% identify their role as a Clerk-Treasurer. For the small municipalities, 85% identify their role as the Mayor. For mid-size municipalities, respondents' roles shift to either a Town Manager (40%) or Clerk-Treasurer (40%). A correlation exists between which official holds responsibility for online public engagement activities and community size. Larger municipalities with more substantial budgets appear more likely to have a specific, non-elected municipal official overseeing engagement. Comparatively, many mid-size, small, and some of the smallest municipalities in Indiana operate their public engagement through the Office of the Mayor, Clerk-Treasurer, or Town Manager. As Indiana municipalities grow in population size, Mayors often become the lead official instead of a Town Manager, which results in more instances of mayoral oversight for public engagement.

Public Engagement Overview

In the public engagement overview section of the survey, respondents completed between six to nine questions relating to their municipality's public engagement practices. Questions included a range of topics, such as how a municipality engages with their residents online or budget for online public engagement. Figure 11 displays the social media platforms that respondents' municipalities use to engage with residents.

Figure 11

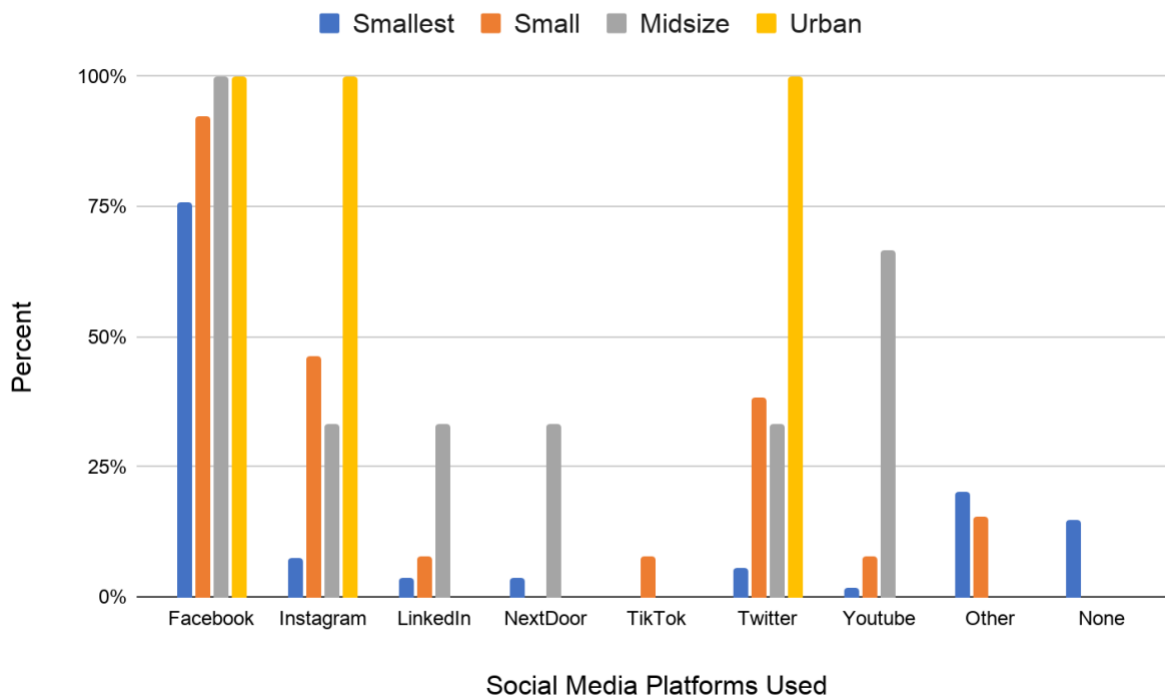


Figure 11. Municipality Presence on Social Media.

The figure displays the social media platforms that the municipalities use to engage with residents.

Across municipality sizes, 80% of respondents have a presence on Facebook, which may be due to the platform's popularity across age groups and the perceived ease of use. This result differs from that found by the Web and Interview Groups, who found that 100% municipalities had a Facebook presence. The Web and Interview Groups likely found a different result because they limited their samples to include only one of Indiana's smallest municipalities.

Of respondents, 25% of municipalities use more than one social media platform. Among the municipalities with more than one social media presence, 13% are among the smallest, 61% are small, 66% are mid-size, and 100% are urban municipalities. The urban municipality has a presence on Twitter and Instagram. While many respondents were present on at least one social media platform, 11% of all respondents indicated that their municipality does not have a presence on any social media platform. Of the 11%, all respondents belong to the smallest municipalities category.

Regardless of municipality size, most respondents indicated that their municipality has its own website. However, several respondents from the smallest and small municipalities indicated that their municipality does not have a website. In a later survey question, three respondents belonging to the smallest municipalities noted that their office lacked internet access, which acts as a barrier for the municipality in providing online public engagement opportunities for their

residents. Figure 12 displays the percentage of respondents that indicated if their municipality has its own website.

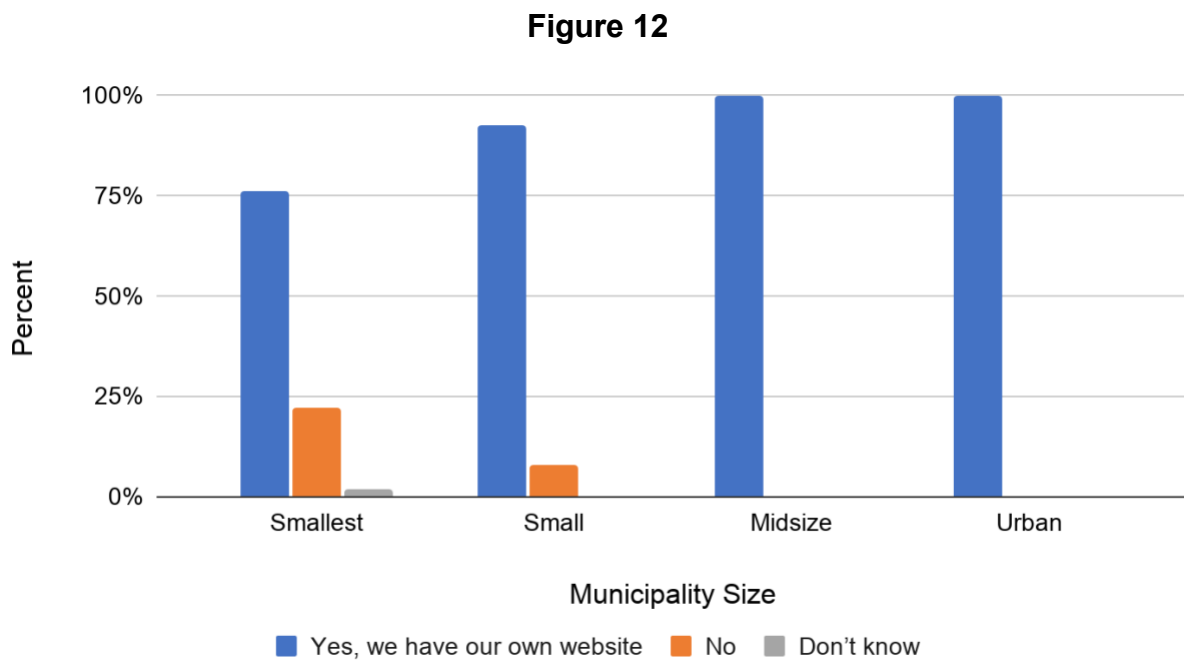


Figure 12. Municipalities Operating Their Own Websites.

The figure shows the percent of municipal governments that have their own website or share their website with another municipality.

Figure 13 displays the platform(s) municipalities use to host online public engagement events. Zoom and Facebook Live are the most used public engagement platforms across municipalities. Both mid-sized and urban municipalities all use some sort of online public engagement platform. In comparison, only one of the small municipalities indicated that they do not host online meetings or engagement events. However, over 25% of the smallest municipalities indicated that their municipality does not host online meetings or engagement events.

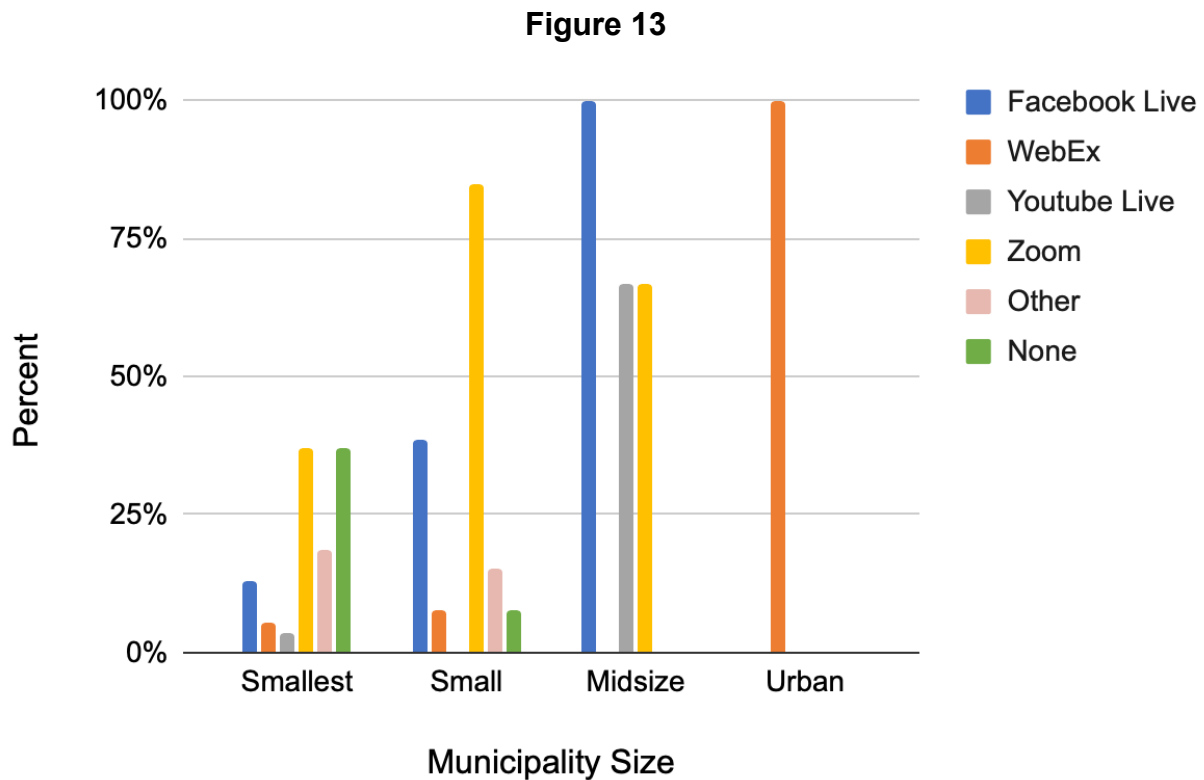


Figure 13. Platforms Used by Municipalities for Online Public Engagement.
The figure displays the online public engagement platforms that the municipalities use.

When asked about specific engagement policies, 81% of respondents from the smallest, 76% from small, and 100% from mid-size municipalities indicated that their municipality had a public engagement policy or general open meeting participation policy. When asked about a virtual meeting policy, 17% of respondents from the smallest, 31% of small, and 33% of mid-size municipalities indicated that they do have a meeting policy. However, five respondents from the smallest and small municipalities indicated that they do not have any engagement policies.

The following question prompted respondents to consider the strategies they regularly use to engage with residents. Overall, 70% of all respondents indicated that their municipality regularly engages with residents through their municipal website or social media. Across municipality sizes, 62% of respondents from the smallest, 92% from small, and 100% from mid-size municipalities indicated their municipality regularly uses its website or social media to engage with residents. Even more respondents, 80% of them, indicated that their municipality regularly engages through the municipality's scheduled meetings. Across municipality size, 85% of respondents from the smallest, 92% from small, and 100% from mid-size municipalities regularly engage with residents through scheduled meetings. Respondents also noted many other strategies their municipality uses to engage its residents, including notices on utility bills, town clean-ups, and monthly newsletters.

Regarding online meeting attendance, 76% of all respondents indicated that fewer than 10 people regularly attend their online city or town council meetings. Across municipality size, 76% of respondents from the smallest, 67% from small, and 67% from mid-size municipalities experience regular attendances of 10 citizens or less at their meetings. Alternatively, 24% of respondents in the smallest, 33% of small, and 33% of mid-size municipalities indicated that their municipality regularly had more than 10 people attend their online city or town council meetings.

To finish this section of the survey, respondents answered a question regarding their municipality's budget for online public engagement. From the responses, 15% of the smallest and 7% of small municipalities indicated that their municipality has a budget for online public engagement. Of the smallest municipalities that stated they have a budget for online public engagement, 75% stated that this budget was less than 1% of their municipality's most recent budget. All mid-size municipalities stated that they do not have a budget for online public engagement. This may potentially be due to the response rate from mid-size municipalities as only five mid-size municipalities responded to the survey.

Engagement Structure and Maintenance

The engagement structure and maintenance section of the survey reviews the respondents' understanding of the accessibility of their municipality's online public engagement practices and their overall satisfaction with their municipality's engagement processes.

Overall, most municipalities record and post some or all of their online public engagement events. From the responses, 51% of the smallest, 62% of the small, and 100% of mid-size municipalities indicated that they post some or all of their online public engagement efforts.

Regarding satisfaction with online public engagement, the smallest, small, and mid-sized municipalities were primarily either somewhat satisfied or satisfied with their efforts. Of these municipality sizes, 51% of the smallest, 72% of the small, and 33% of mid-size municipalities indicated they were either satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their engagement efforts. Some respondents chose the neutral option (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) to describe their satisfaction with their municipality's online public engagement efforts. Of the smallest municipalities, 31% of respondents indicated the neutral option, along with 18% of the small and 33% of the mid-size municipalities.

Additional questions prompted respondents to explain why they were satisfied or dissatisfied with their engagement efforts. Seven respondents cited limited internet access and their municipality's size as a barrier. Eight respondents noted that their municipal government is small and lacks the staffing to proactively engage with the public online. Overall, 15 respondents were satisfied with their municipality's online public engagement efforts. For respondents who indicated their satisfaction with their municipality's online public engagement efforts, their reasonings ranged from satisfaction with the availability of recorded meetings to a large following on social media platforms. After this question, respondents indicated how satisfied they felt their constituents were with their municipality's online public engagement efforts.

Across municipality sizes, 27% of the smallest, 64% of the small, and 33% of mid-size municipalities indicated that their constituents were satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their municipality's online public engagement efforts.

Accessibility

The following subsection of survey questions sought to understand how accessible the municipalities' online public engagement efforts are across various identities. Accessibility could be defined as ensuring that people of all abilities and schedule limitations can meet and collaborate with one another during a public event. For the smallest and small municipalities, respondents indicated that accessibility is a challenge for their municipality's online public engagement. Among respondents from the smallest and small municipalities, 97% indicated that public meetings and/or meeting minutes were only available in English. Of the municipalities that offer translation services, the second language option is Spanish.

The next set of prompts focused on the accessibility of municipal online public engagement efforts for those with mobility, hearing, and vision impairments, as well as individuals with limited internet access, flexible work schedules, and who work from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Questions asked respondents to rank the accessibility of their meetings on the following categories on a four-point scale, from inaccessible, somewhat inaccessible, somewhat accessible, and accessible.

Mobility

A response of accessible indicates that those with mobility impairments are fully able to participate, while a response of inaccessible indicates that those with mobility impairments are unable to participate. For individuals with mobility impairments, 19% of the smallest and 33% of mid-size municipalities indicated that their online public engagement efforts were either inaccessible or somewhat inaccessible. Comparatively, 48% of respondents from the smallest, 64% of small, and 33% of mid-size municipalities indicated that their municipality's online public engagement efforts are accessible or somewhat accessible for individuals with mobility impairments. Figure 14 displays respondents' assessment of their municipality's accessibility for those with mobility impairments.

Figure 14

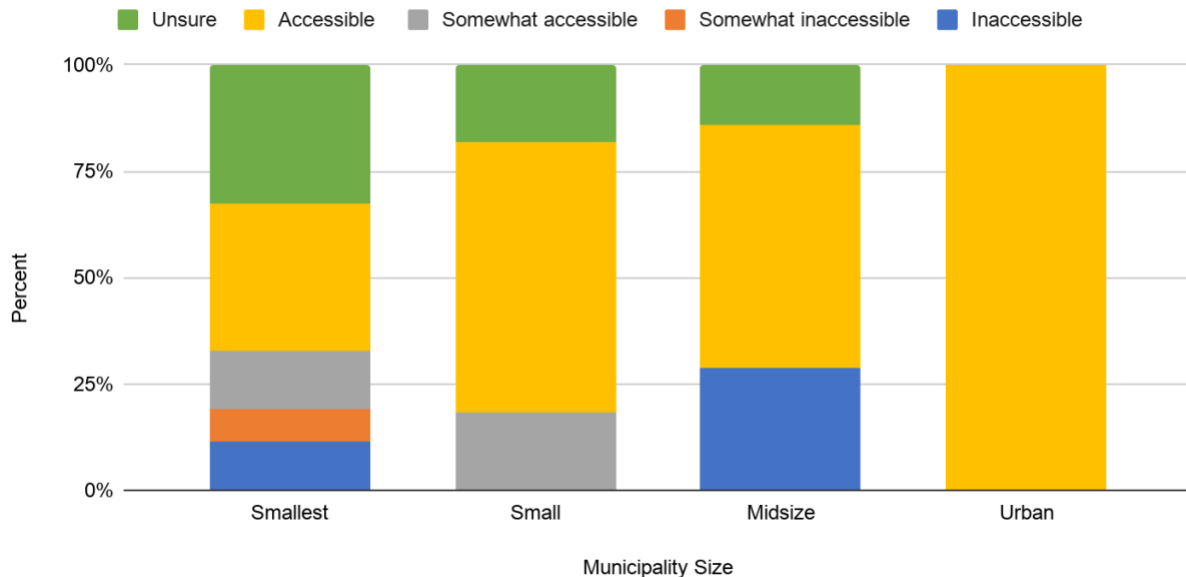


Figure 14. Municipal Assessment of Mobility Impairment Accessibility for Online Public Engagement.

The figure displays the municipality's assessment of its accessibility for individuals with mobility impairments.

Hearing

A response of accessible indicates that those with hearing impairments are fully able to participate, while a response of inaccessible indicates that those with hearing impairments are unable to participate. For individuals with hearing impairments, 44% of respondents from the smallest, 36% of small, and 33% of mid-size municipalities indicated that their municipality's online public engagement efforts are either inaccessible or somewhat inaccessible. Comparatively, 15% of respondents from the smallest, 45% of small, and 33% of mid-size municipalities indicated that their municipality's online public engagement efforts are either accessible or somewhat accessible for individuals with hearing impairments. Figure 15 displays respondents' assessment of their municipality's accessibility for those with hearing impairments. One method to increase accessibility for hearing and vision impaired individuals is to include closed captioning services during online public engagement efforts and publishing the transcripts afterwards. Various video conference applications, such as Zoom and YouTube, support closed captioning for its live meetings and webinars.

Figure 15

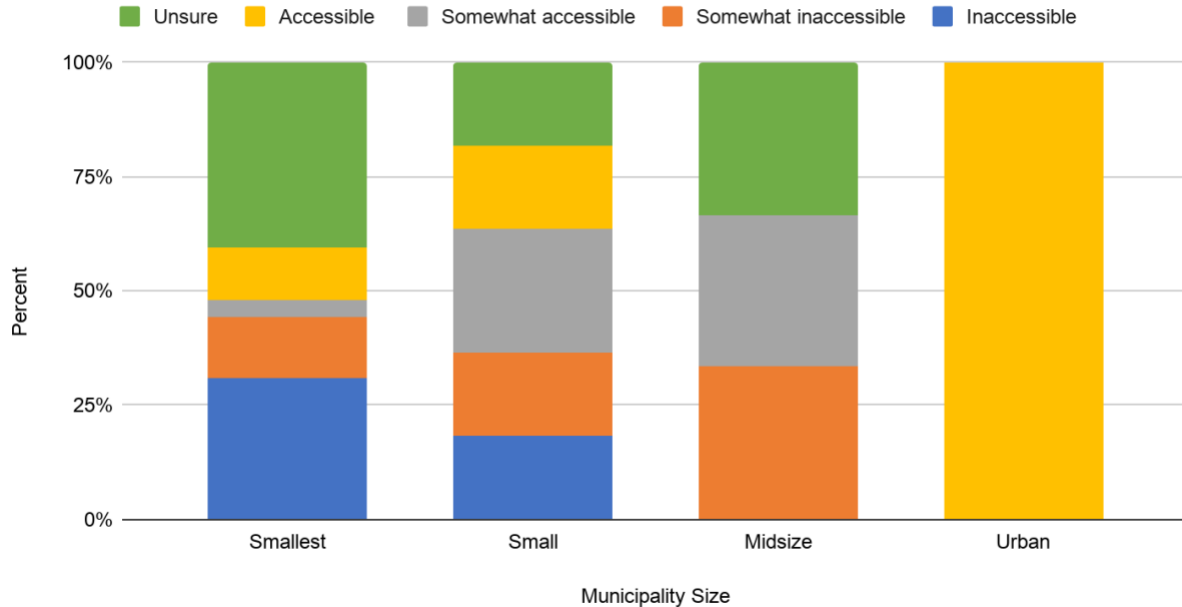


Figure 15. Municipal Assessment of Hearing Impairment Accessibility for Online Public Engagement.

The figure displays the municipality's assessment of its accessibility for individuals with hearing impairments.

Vision

A response of accessible indicates that those with vision impairments are fully able to participate, while a response of inaccessible indicates that those with vision impairments are unable to participate. For individuals with vision impairments, 38% of respondents from the smallest, 36% of small, and 33% of mid-size municipalities indicated that their municipality's online public engagement efforts are either inaccessible or somewhat inaccessible. While 21% of respondents from the smallest, 54% of small, and 33% of mid-size municipalities indicated that their municipality's online public engagement efforts are either accessible or somewhat accessible for individuals with vision impairments. Figure 16 displays respondents' assessment of their municipality's accessibility for those with vision impairments.

Figure 16

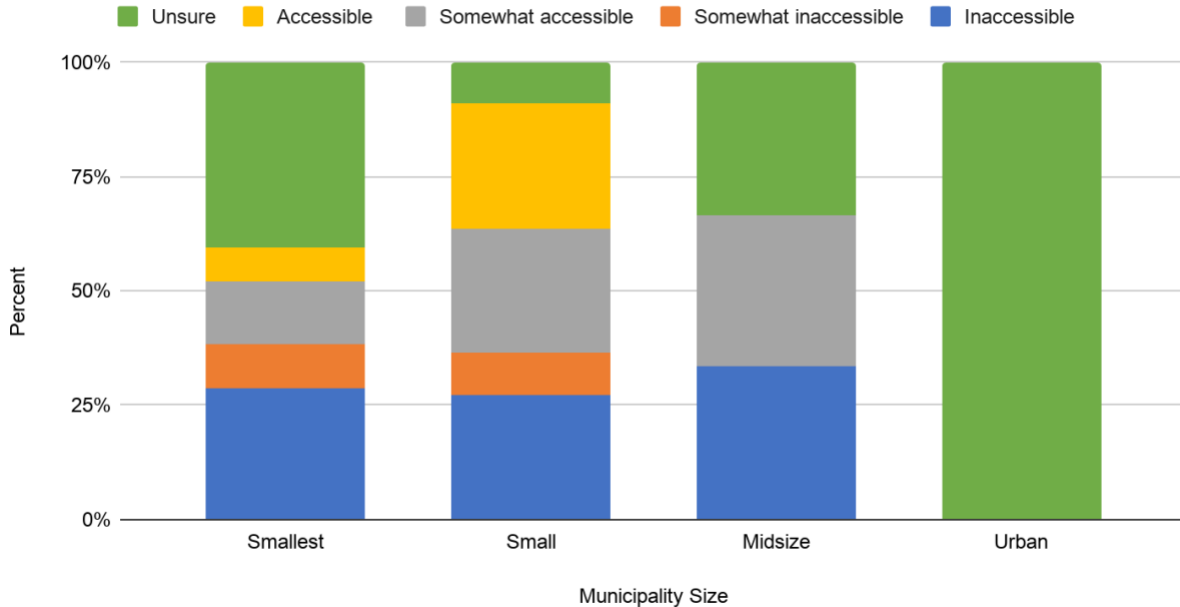


Figure 16. Municipal Assessment of Vision Impairment Accessibility for Online Public Engagement.

The figure displays the municipality's assessment of its accessibility for individuals with vision impairments.

Limited Internet

A response of accessible indicates that those with limited internet access are fully able to participate, while a response of inaccessible indicates that those with limited internet access are unable to participate. For individuals with limited internet access, 42% of respondents from the smallest, 18% of small, and 33% of mid-size municipalities indicated that their municipality's online public engagement efforts are either inaccessible or somewhat inaccessible. While 31% of respondents from the smallest, 81% of small, and 66% of mid-size municipalities indicated that their municipality's online public engagement efforts are either accessible or somewhat accessible for individuals with limited internet access. Figure 17 displays respondents' assessment of their municipality's accessibility for those with limited internet access. A method to increase accessibility for individuals with limited internet access is to allow multiple modes of outreach, such as online newsletters and posting meeting recordings.

Figure 17

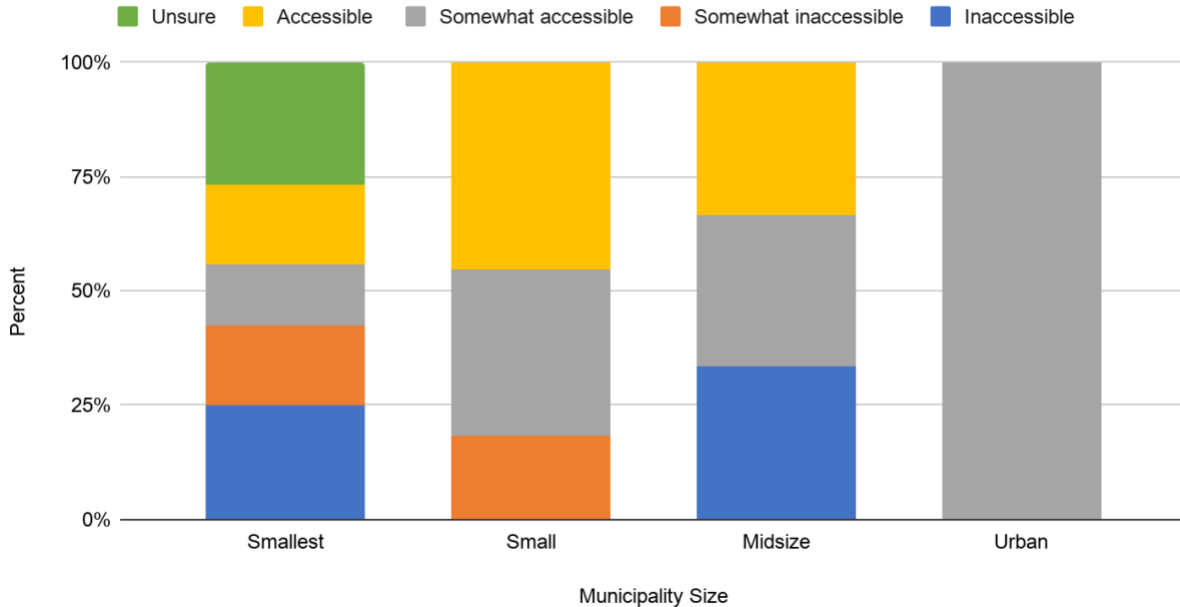


Figure 17. Municipal Assessment of Limited Internet Access for Online Public Engagement. *The figure displays the municipality's assessment of its accessibility for individuals with limited internet access.*

Flexible Work Schedules

A response of accessible indicates that those with flexible work schedules are fully able to participate, while a response of inaccessible indicates that those with flexible work schedules are unable to participate. For individuals with flexible work schedules, 21% of respondents from the smallest, 18% of small, and 33% of mid-size municipalities indicated that their municipality's online public engagement efforts are either inaccessible or somewhat inaccessible. In contrast, 62% of the smallest, 81% of respondents from the smallest, and 66% of mid-size municipalities indicated that their municipality's online public engagement efforts are accessible or somewhat accessible for those with flexible work schedules. Figure 18 displays respondents' assessment of their municipality's accessibility for those with flexible work schedules. A method to increase accessibility for individuals with flexible work schedules is to allow multiple modes of outreach, such as online newsletters and posting meeting recordings.

Figure 18

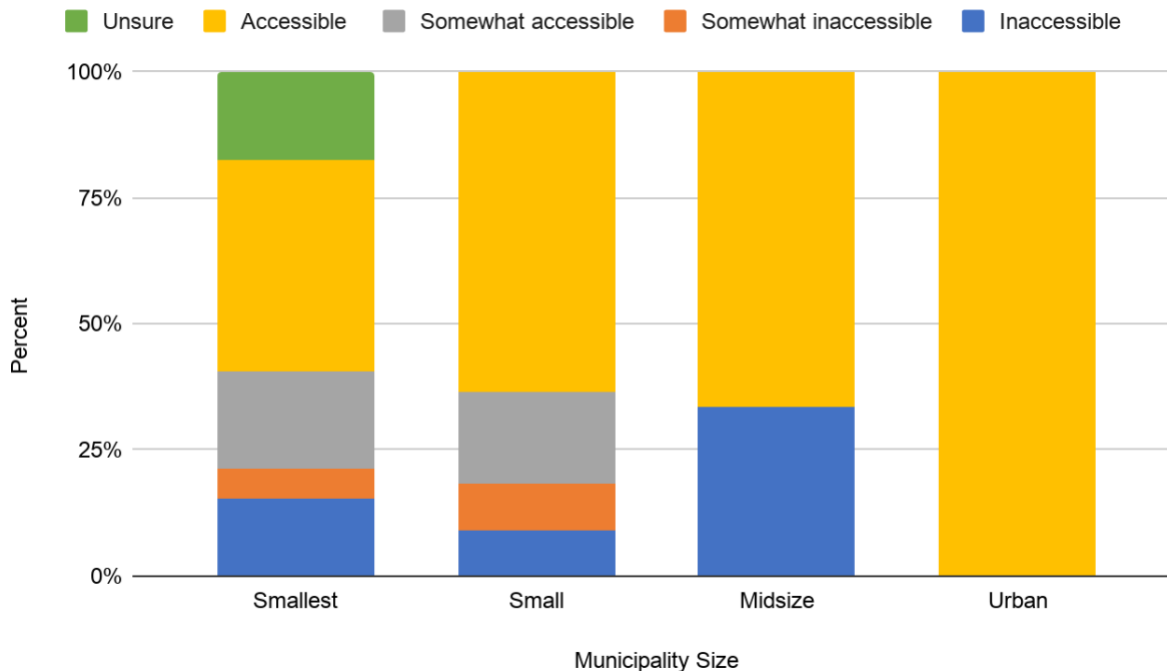


Figure 18. Municipal Assessment of Flexible Work Schedule Accessibility for Online Public Engagement.

The figure displays the municipality's assessment of its accessibility for individuals with flexible work schedules.

Individuals Who Work 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

A response of accessible indicates that individuals who work from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. are fully able to participate, while a response of inaccessible indicates that individuals who work from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. are unable to participate. For individuals who work from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., 13% of respondents from the smallest and 18% of small municipalities indicated that their municipality's online public engagement efforts are either inaccessible or somewhat inaccessible. Comparatively, 69% of respondents from the smallest and 72% of small municipalities indicated their municipality's online public engagement efforts are either accessible or somewhat accessible. Figure 19 displays respondents' assessment of their municipality's accessibility for those who work from 9 am to 5 pm. A method to increase accessibility for individuals who work 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. is to allow multiple modes of outreach, such as online newsletters and posting meeting recordings.

Figure 19

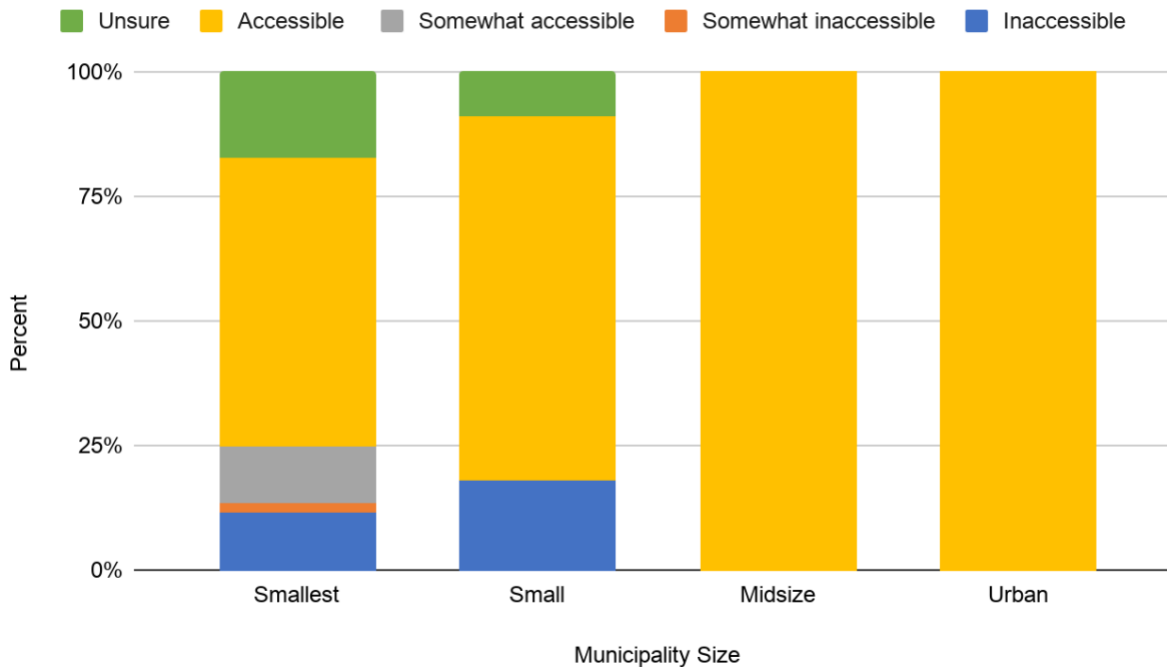


Figure 19. Municipal Accessibility Assessment for Individuals Who Work from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. for Online Public Engagement.

The figure displays the municipality's assessment of its accessibility for individuals who work from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Employee Development and System Management

The employee development and system management section prompted respondents with up to eight questions relating to their municipality's continuing education and training opportunities for their employees.

The first question prompted respondents with how often their municipality updates their website to incorporate upcoming events. Of the smallest municipalities, 38% of respondents update their municipality's website multiple times a month. However, 2% of the smallest municipalities update once a year, and 8% never update their municipality's website. Comparatively, 81% of the small and 100% of the mid-size municipalities update their websites more frequently, often updating the website multiple times a month.

Figure 20 displays the sources municipalities use for training and continuing education. Many municipalities use Aim for training and educational purposes--71% of the smallest municipalities, 70% of small municipalities, and 100% of mid-size municipalities. Of the smallest municipalities, 35% of respondents use other Indiana municipalities as learning opportunities for training and educational purposes. In addition to these training and education opportunities, two respondents' municipalities use the Indiana League of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers (ILMCT). One other respondent's municipality uses the Indiana Department of Local

Government Finance (DLGF) and the Indiana State Board of Accounts (SBOA) as other resources for training and educational purposes. Although the survey asked about other sources, including Indiana University Research Institutes (such as the Center for Rural Engagement or the Public Policy Institute) and the American Society for Public Administration, no respondents indicated that their municipality uses them for public engagement information.

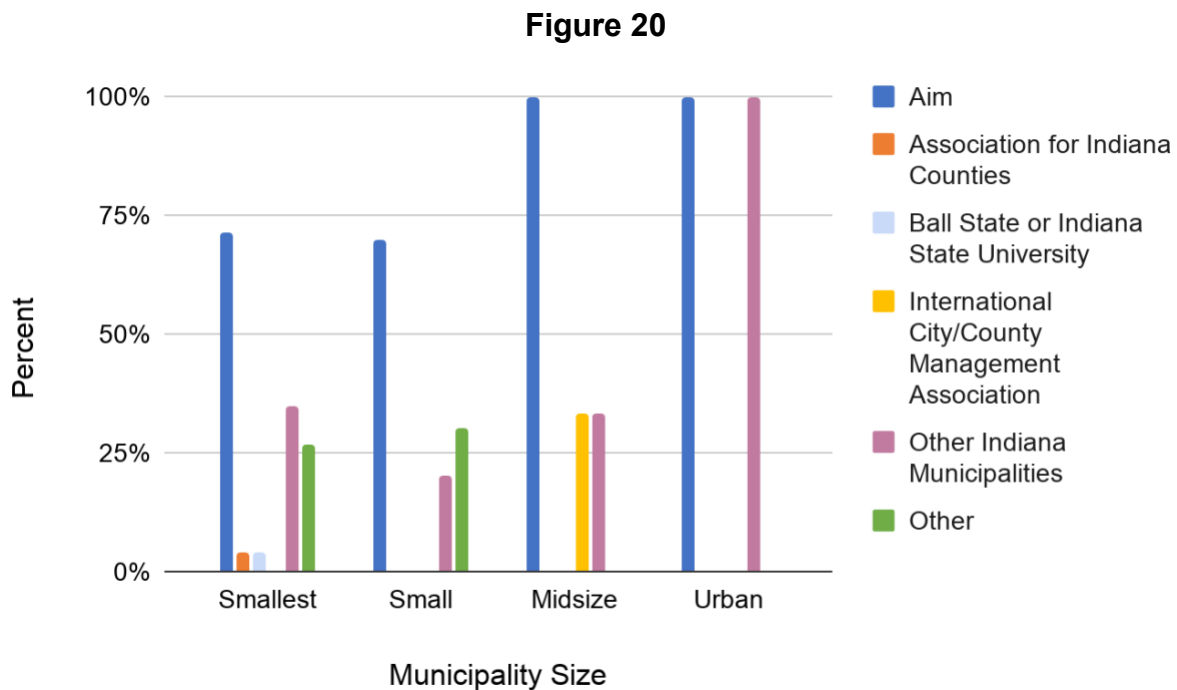


Figure 20. Resources Used to Learn About Online Public Engagement.

The figure shows the percentage of different resources used by municipalities to learn about online public engagement strategies and tools.

The following question prompted respondents about the management of their municipality's information technology (IT) services and the extent to which they review or assess the effectiveness of their public engagement practices. Information technology services, for the purpose of this survey, include the management of data, software support, website design and updates, and data processing. Of all respondents, 56.5% of them indicated that their municipality contracts out their IT services. Contracting out refers to hiring third party organizations to carry out certain tasks or services. Across municipality sizes, 54% of the smallest, 60% of small, and 100% of mid-size municipalities contract a third party for their IT services. The survey findings show that IT services are in-house for 31% of the smallest and 40% of small municipalities. When asked about the review or assessment of a municipality's public engagement practices, 28% of respondents from the smallest, 30% of small, and 33% of mid-size municipalities reported that their municipality does review the effectiveness of their public engagement practices.

Response to the COVID 19 Pandemic

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic section of the survey prompted respondents with up to 12 questions regarding their municipality's public engagement response in relation to the pandemic.

The first question asked respondents about the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their municipality's online public engagement efforts. Across municipalities, 40% of the smallest, 60% of the small, and 33% of mid-size municipalities indicated moderate to high impacts on their engagement efforts due to the pandemic. Overall, 49% of the smallest, 30% of small, and 33% of mid-size municipalities indicate only slight impacts or no impacts at all. Nine respondents noted that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, their municipality's online presence increased, and its content is more easily accessible after transitioning their efforts online. Figure 21 displays the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on municipalities' public engagement practices.

Figure 21

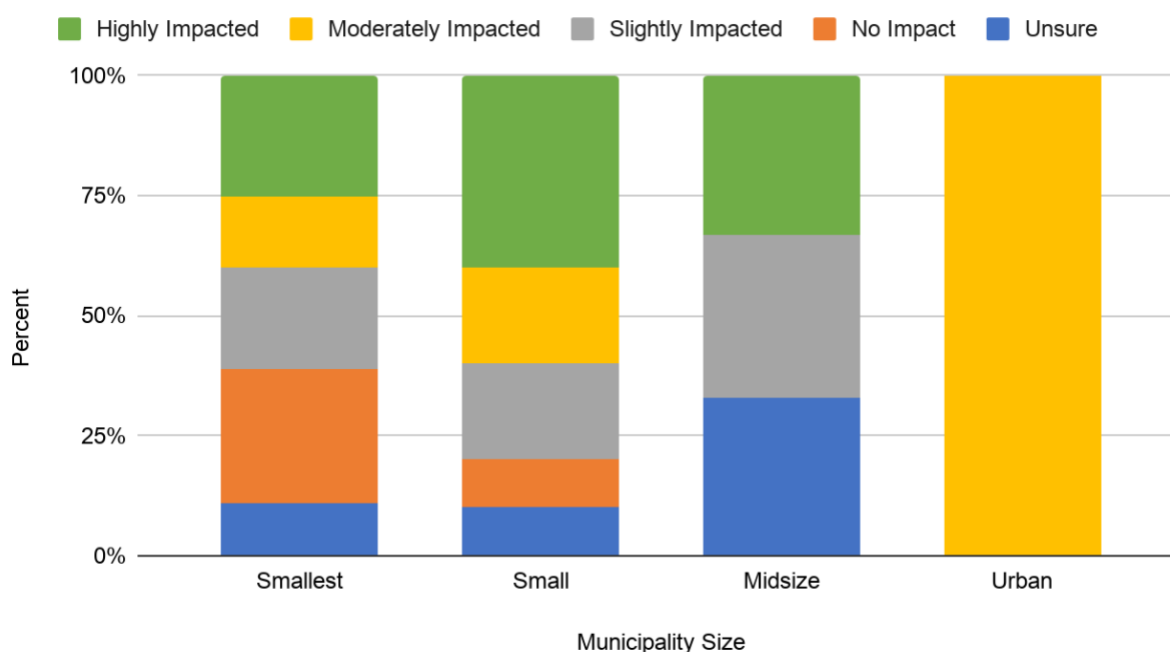


Figure 21. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Online Public Engagement.
The figure displays the impact respondents indicated that the pandemic had on their municipality's online public engagement.

Overall, almost half (46%) of respondents' municipalities had to purchase equipment when moving public engagement events online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Across municipalities, 36% of the smallest, 78% of small, and 100% of mid-size respondents indicated that their municipality had to purchase equipment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of attendance, 73% of the smallest municipalities did not notice an increase in attendance since

January 1, 2020. Overall, 66% of small and 66% of mid-size municipalities noticed an increase in attendance at some or all engagement events.

After understanding the changes municipalities experienced when moving engagement online, the survey asked respondents about their municipality's likelihood to continue online public engagement efforts following the COVID-19 pandemic. Across municipality sizes, survey participants' answers varied. Of the smallest municipalities, 44% indicated they were highly likely or somewhat likely to continue online public engagement efforts, with 33% highly unlikely or somewhat unlikely to continue. For small municipalities, 89% indicated they were highly likely or somewhat likely to continue online public engagement efforts, with 11% highly unlikely or somewhat unlikely to continue. All mid-size municipalities were highly likely to continue online public engagement efforts. Figure 22 displays the results of a municipality's likelihood to continue online public engagement efforts following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 22

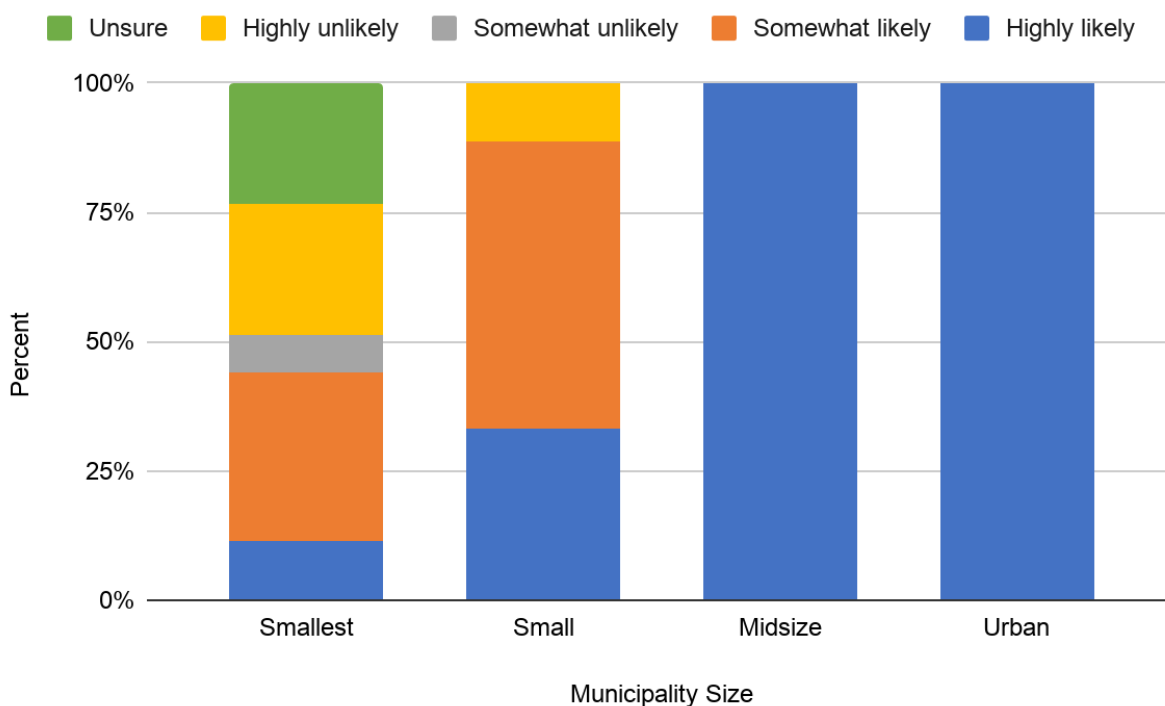


Figure 22. Likelihood to Continue Online Public Engagement Efforts After the COVID-19 pandemic.

The figure displays the municipality's likelihood to continue online public engagement efforts after the pandemic.

Aim Specific

The final survey questions asked respondents to indicate and state how Aim can better assist their municipality with online public engagement knowledge, information, and/or capacities. Of respondents from the smallest municipalities, 40% indicated an interest in resources on public

engagement strategies and best practices, and 26% mentioned an interest in webinars for employees and personnel. From the small municipalities, 56% of respondents expressed an interest in more information about the Open Door Law and webinars for employees and personnel. For mid-size municipalities, 66% of respondents indicated an interest in resources on public engagement strategies, best practices, and conferences for employees and personnel. Figure 23 displays the resources municipalities indicated they would like Aim to provide.

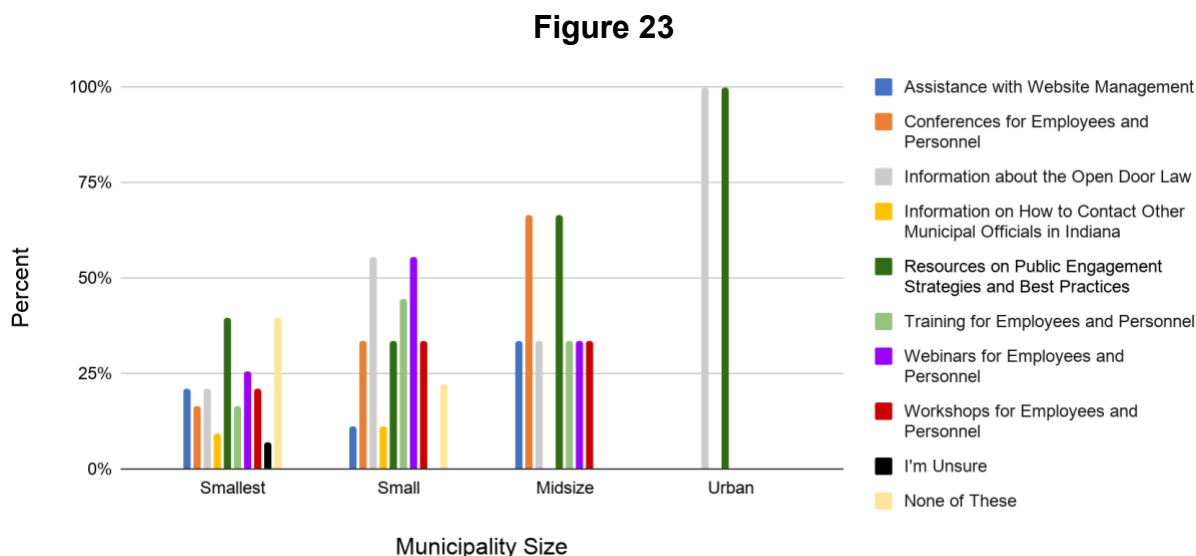


Figure 23. Methods Aim Can Use to Assist Municipalities With Online Public Engagement. *The figure displays ways that municipalities indicated they would like Aim to help them learn about online public engagement and their capacities for online public engagement.*

The survey analysis yielded insight into the needs and state of engagement for municipalities across the state, for Indiana’s smallest municipalities. For these Aim members, online public engagement presents both unique opportunities for expanding their reach through social media and other practices, as well as challenges related to internet access, limited resources, and minimal training in online public engagement. Moving forward, the relationship these municipalities share with each other and with Aim will be crucial in creating a strong basis for online public engagement for all Indiana residents.

Web Scrubbing

General Findings by Web Searching for the 30 Municipalities

The Web Group found many efforts by the majority of municipalities to enhance residents’ online public engagement. Three common techniques include:

1. Recording and uploading the council and committee meetings
2. Immediate update of agendas and meeting minutes
3. Municipal-operated live stream channels

Several municipalities examined by the Web Group exemplify these practices and provide potential models for other Aim members. The City of South Bend, for example, posts its budget and expenditures online through its “Transparency and Budget” menu as part of its website. The City of Greenwood’s website maintains not only a page containing useful links, live streams, and social media platform information, but also includes pictures of areas across the city. The City of Marion motivates resident online public engagement through its “Champion of the Month” corner of its website, which highlights resident efforts to engage online. Another example of best practices is Fort Wayne-Allen County’s Comprehensive Plan, called “All in Allen.” After collecting resident opinions through All in Allen, the City of Fort Wayne now provides residents with online public engagement options, such as Zoom and Facebook events, to encourage participation from a larger portion of residents.

In addition to these municipal successes, the Web Group selected specific case stories to further review. First, the Web Group reviewed the Regional VOICE platform created in conjunction with Evansville and five counties to share ideas of community development and enable citizens to participate in policies. The full details of this case story is available in the Web Appendices. Second, the Web Group analyzed the Open Door Law, which is an Indiana law that allows for public access to public meetings, available in the Literature Review of this report.

Beyond information regarding the municipality’s online public engagement efforts, the Web Group spent considerable time investigating each municipality’s social media use because of the ability social media has to interact with residents online. To understand municipal social media use, the Web Group examined how social media engagement can encourage citizen public participation. Managing social media accounts and consistently posting content can be a significant burden for municipalities, especially those with limited staffing. While social media is a key tool for maintaining effective online public engagement, it is necessary to analyze the benefits and costs of operating various platforms against the residents’ expressed needs.

Social Media Usage of Municipalities

The Web Group checked the social media use of each municipality while investigating their online public engagement. Through this research, the Web Group found that each municipality uses social media mainly to introduce their local policies to inform the public, encourage citizens’ participation, or share the results with citizens.

The Web Group analyzed social media usage based population classifications. Initially, the sample consisted of 30 municipalities, but the Web Group conducted a final count of 42 municipalities’ social media operations to provide a more robust analysis of statewide trends. The 42 municipalities consist of 15 urban, 13 mid-sized, and 14 small municipalities.

Social media serves as another level of communication compared to traditional methods. Social media can provide details on and linkages between municipal policies and online public engagement with those policies. Different social media platforms offer varying approaches to resident communication, such as:

- Facebook posts tend to include text messages that briefly introduce municipal policy, photos representing the policy or relevant initiatives, and include links to relevant pages on municipal websites.
- Twitter mainly functions to inform the public in quick, catchy pieces.
- Instagram allows municipalities to post pictures of municipal events, design effective promotional materials, and share links to other resources.
- YouTube, similar to Instagram, allows municipalities to upload video clips of various events, including more formal public engagement efforts such as city council or commission meetings.

The leading social media platforms, based on accounts across municipalities, are as follows:

1. Facebook (100%)
2. Twitter (69%)
3. YouTube (50%)
4. Instagram (40%)

In addition to monitoring the frequency of use for each social media platform, the Web Group examined connections between platforms and changing demographic trends. For example, all municipalities the Web Group investigated operate a Facebook page, regardless of size. Comparatively, the frequency of municipal YouTube operations increases as the population size grows. This shift seems reasonable when factoring in costs associated with video production needed for an active, creative-content-based YouTube channel compared to picture and text-oriented posts on Facebook or Instagram. Highlighted in the graph below, the percentage of local governments operating YouTube channels overall is 36% for small municipalities, 29% for mid-sized municipalities, and 86% for urban municipalities. Municipalities that have YouTube channels upload promotional videos and recordings of their public meetings to make them accessible to the public. Figure 16 shows the total number of social media platforms municipalities use to engage with residents.

The Web Group analyzed the number of followers on Facebook, which operates in all 42 municipalities. As expected, the larger the municipality's population, the more the Facebook followers

Figure 24

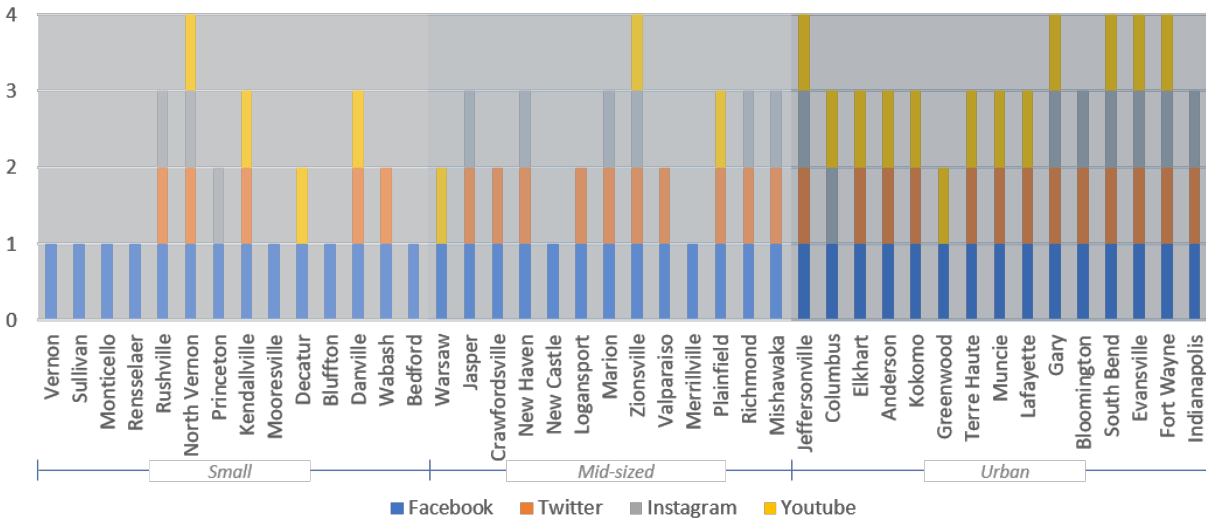


Figure 24. Municipal Social Media Presence (Smallest to Greatest by Population Size).
The figure shows the total number of social media platforms municipalities use to engage with residents.

The size and scope of social media operations correlate with the population size of municipalities. The Web Group calculated the average number of social media platforms operated between Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Urban municipalities had an average of 3.2 channels, mid-sized municipalities had an average of 2.5 channels, and the small municipalities had an average of 2.0 channels. The ANOVA (Scheffe) test performed to statistically validate this data shows that the difference in number of social media operational channels between the bigger and smaller groups is statistically significant. In short, large municipalities are running more social media channels than smaller municipalities. The conducted ANOVA tests are available in the Web Appendices.

The Web Group also investigated whether residents of large municipalities are more active in communicating with residents through social media. The Web Group analyzed the number of followers each municipality has on Facebook. As expected, the larger the municipality's population size, the more Facebook followers they have, as shown in Figure 25.

Figure 25

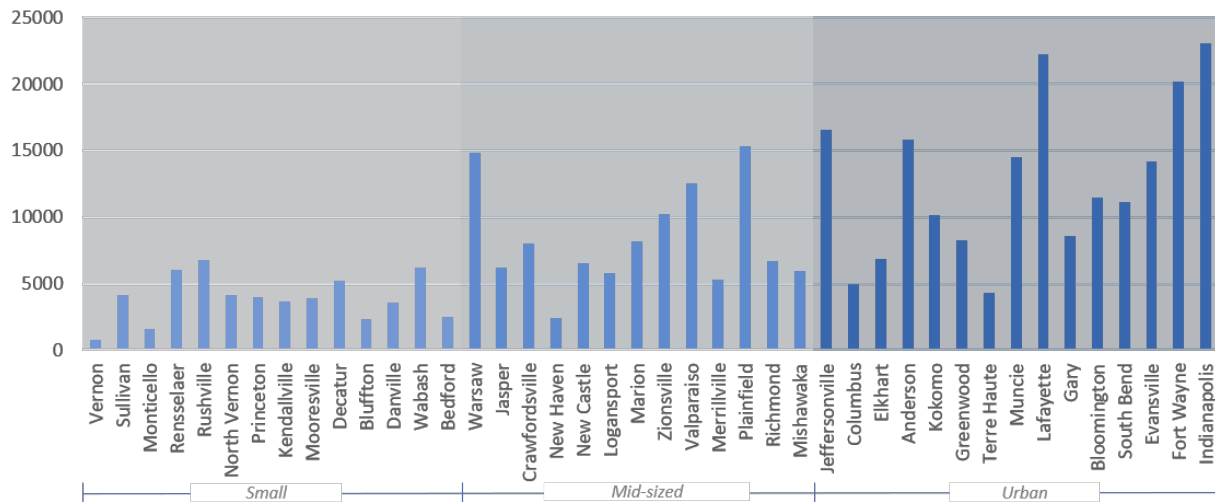


Figure 25. Facebook Followers by Municipality (Smallest to Greatest by Population Size).
The figure above shows the total number of followers municipalities with Facebook Pages.

Through an additional analysis of Facebook followers, the Web Group found that the smaller the municipality's population size, the more Facebook followers they have per 100 people. So, per 100 people, the smallest municipalities have the largest number of followers, which is in Figure 26.

Figure 26

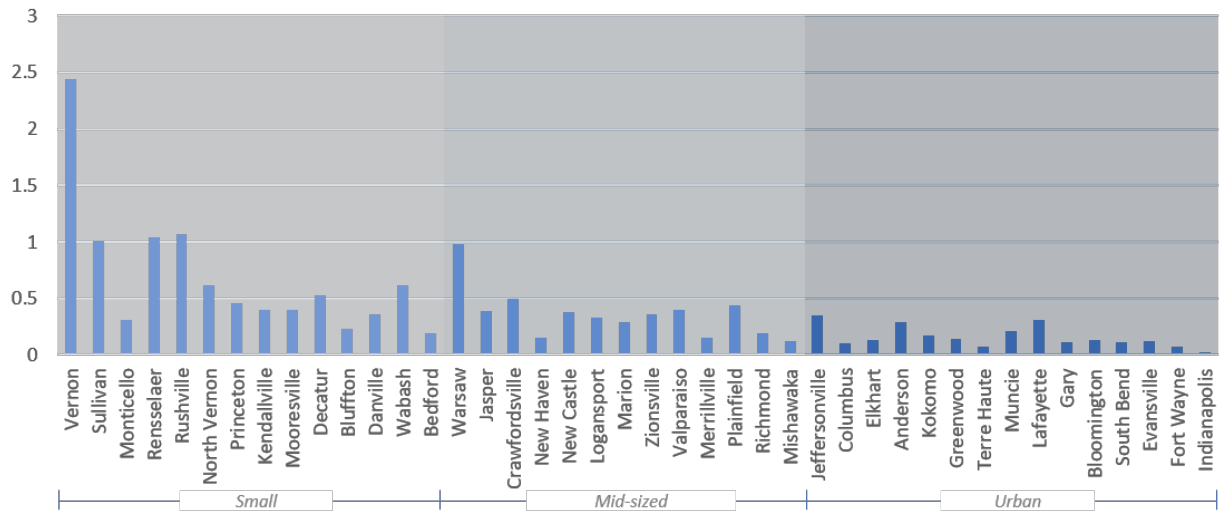


Figure 26. Facebook Followers by Municipality per 100 people (Smallest to Greatest by Population Size).

The figure above shows the total number of followers municipalities have on Facebook per 100 municipal residents.

Overview of Social Media Use

The larger the municipality is the more active it tends to be using social media, especially YouTube, which can be cost-prohibitive to maintain. The level of social media use on Facebook, however, which can promote and spread policies at a low cost and allow for effective, two-way communication with residents, is unrelated to the municipality's size. Instead, even small municipalities can use Facebook, and potentially other social media sites such as Twitter or Instagram, more actively than large local governments. For small municipalities, the data support these platforms as free and effective ways to disseminate information with a high level of engagement relative to the population.

Discussion and Synthesis

Overview

The Discussion and Synthesis section details each Capstone research groups' findings, interpretations, and potential benefits and challenges.

Similarities across research groups indicate several key factors relative to the successes and challenges of online public engagement for Aim members. All research groups found that municipality size is a prominent factor when considering the scope, satisfaction, and viability of online public engagement. The size of municipalities affects the number of social media platforms, the likelihood of an independent online public engagement budget, the appointment of a specific online public engagement manager, and the amount of training provided to employees. Across research groups, the Capstone identified other significant factors that impact online public engagement in Indiana municipalities.

All research groups found that resources and funding are consistent barriers to engagement across all municipalities, a fact exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although funding can impact the quantity and quality of online public engagement efforts, many municipalities want to continue online public engagement efforts following the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of accessibility, all municipalities report fairly equal levels of accessibility for residents and express a similar desire to improve the accessibility of online public engagement opportunities. Most municipalities, regardless of size, show some level of involvement on social media, the most prominent platform being Facebook with other platforms dependent on factors such as budgeting, technical know-how, and designation of a specific person or office for online public engagement management.

As the Indiana Open Door Law continues to evolve regarding online public engagement efforts in the coming years, municipalities expressed interest in increasing their understanding of how it affects the ability to engage with residents. The majority of municipalities cite Aim as their primary provider of information, resources, and support for their efforts in online public engagement. Due to the foundation that Aim provides as an organization to foster learning and encourage resource sharing, municipalities will likely continue to turn to Aim to better understand the future of online public engagement in Indiana.

Interview Research

The interviews revealed several trends across Indiana municipalities. The Interview Group identified which trends are prevalent across urban, mid-sized, and small municipalities. Analysis of which issues affect which category of a municipality offers insight into how Aim can better serve its members of any size.

Benefits

The interviewees consistently identified a pattern of benefits of online public engagement in their municipalities. One of the most cited benefits was higher levels of engagement among residents: 87% percent of urban municipalities, 77% of mid-sized municipalities, and 66% of small municipalities mentioned this benefit, showing a fairly even distribution of this benefit for Aim members across municipal size. Reasons for this increase could be due to the rise of virtual meeting formats that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. These formats may be more convenient for highly engaged citizens, making it easier for them to participate in meaningful ways.

Supplementing this is the finding that 33% of mid-sized municipalities and nearly 38% of urban municipalities found online public engagement more convenient than in-person engagement. The virtual format may eliminate some barriers to active participation such as limited time due to work schedules. The prevalence of this benefit suggests that if municipalities desire more meaningful engagement from their residents, online public engagement should continue after the pandemic is over.

Respondents also stated that online public engagement increased transparency within their municipalities. The most frequently cited benefit by small municipalities, with 50% of respondents mentioning increased transparency, meaning that it was easier for the administration to share information with residents openly and honestly. Online public engagement is a powerful tool for government transparency because it allows these small municipalities to communicate with residents directly in a way that is both quick and affordable. Through municipalities utilizing live streaming features, residents can casually participate in meetings, discussions, or deliberations that may have previously been inaccessible to them. Online public engagement similarly helps municipalities provide more accessible engagement options for their residents. Of small municipalities, 50% mentioned this benefit. This increased accessibility may come from the removal of barriers to engagement. Rather than requiring physical presence at a meeting, online public engagement allows residents to join meetings from their own homes.

Similarly, online public engagement helps municipalities increase their reach: 50% of urban, 22% of mid-sized, and 50% of small municipalities cited utilizing social media, the city website, and other platforms to promote materials and events as a beneficial use of online public engagement. Urban municipalities may have more resources to promote their events through social media, or a higher likelihood to have a dedicated social media manager may play a role in this. Of the three respondents that mentioned having a dedicated social media manager, 66% were from urban municipalities. These municipalities bring more participants into the influence of their digital infrastructure and communicate with them more effectively: 62% of urban, 55% of mid-sized, and 66% of small municipalities cited better communication with residents as a primary benefit of online public engagement.

Challenges

Inappropriate interactions online pose a challenge for many communities. These include comments that qualify as harassment, threats, misinformation and disinformation, vulgarity, sexism, racism, or other inappropriate behavior. Municipalities were often unsure of how to interact with these types of comments, and most simply let them be for fear of actual or perceived legal repercussions for removing them. A notable trend is that the larger the community, the more frequently cited this problem is: 62% of the urban communities expressed this as a problem, compared to 55% of mid-sized municipalities and 50% of small municipalities.

Municipalities of all sizes cited a lack of technical skills such as website design or familiarity with computer programs as a significant challenge. Municipalities mentioned this as a problem for both their staff and their residents, which prevents them from taking full advantage of their municipality's online public engagement efforts. There is a need for municipalities to increase their technical capacities: 62% of urban, 55% of mid-sized, and 66% of small municipalities described this as a barrier to effective online public engagement.

Internet access also emerged as a challenge across various sizes of municipalities: Seventy-five percent of urban, 44% of mid-sized, 33% of small, and 100% from Indiana's smallest municipalities indicated that their residents face issues in obtaining fast and reliable internet access. This challenge is interestingly more prevalent in urban municipalities, rather than small municipalities where broadband access is a known problem. This indicates that internet access is not simply a rural issue—larger municipalities should also pay attention to this challenge if their goal is to increase online public engagement. Additional challenges such as legal concerns and low participation are distributed fairly evenly across municipality sizes.

Social Media and Website Engagement

All municipalities in the Interview Group's sample utilize social media platforms and/or a municipal website platform to engage with residents. Of the total sample, 62% of urban, 55.5% of mid-sized, and 50% of small municipalities mentioned that they use a website for online public engagement. While more municipalities beyond this sample may also operate a website, these results could point to a stronger reliance on municipal websites in urban municipalities. Urban municipalities often have more resources, capacity, and money to create and maintain a website. These responses may validate this trend: 87% of urban, 77% of mid-sized, and 83% of small municipalities noted that they use a video meeting platform, such as Zoom or Facebook Live. This indicates that, regardless of potential resource or capacity issues, smaller municipalities recognize the importance of these tools and use them to engage residents.

Potential Resources From Aim

Municipalities cited guidance on the Open Door Law, limits on social media abuse, and networking opportunities as their top potential resources from Aim that would be beneficial. Fully 100% of all municipalities, across all size categories, asked for these resources. This suggests that legal concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic are relevant and at least partially unclear to all municipalities, regardless of size. Many respondents also indicated that they would appreciate recommended best practices for online public engagement from Aim. Of all

respondents, 37.5% of urban, 77% of mid-sized, and 66.6% of small municipalities mentioned this explicitly. Similarly, respondents asked for case stories, with 88.8% of mid-sized municipalities requesting them, to highlight potential opportunities. Many of the communities know what they ought to be doing but struggle with understanding how to do it. Mid-sized municipalities in the Interview Group's sample seem to have a desire to learn from other communities in the context of online public engagement.

Respondents requested training materials and technical assistance with almost the same frequency. Training materials can help municipal officials understand how to use technical equipment or social media platforms. These are different from best practices in that they are intended for learning novel resources, not for how to use existing ones more effectively. Sixty-two percent of urban municipalities, 44% of mid-sized municipalities, and 50% of small municipalities indicated that they desire training from Aim. Urban municipalities seem to have more capacity to take on new platforms and tools, which would explain why they request training at a higher frequency than other sizes. Interestingly, 77% of mid-sized municipalities mentioned a desire for technical assistance, pointing to a desire to improve on and expand their online public engagement capacities.

The Future of Online Public Engagement

When asked about their vision for the future of online public engagement in their municipality, 87% of urban, 44% of mid-sized, and 75% of small municipalities intend to continue utilizing online public engagement in the future. The overrepresentation of urban municipalities could indicate that they have greater capacity to carry forward these efforts, compared to municipalities of other sizes. However, 55% of mid-sized municipalities also expressed a desire to improve upon and expand their online public engagement efforts in the coming years, showing that the potential benefits are recognized for all sizes of municipality. Mid-sized municipalities may see the benefits of an expanded online presence and recognize the areas they can improve. Aim should use this desire to help shape future initiatives in Indiana municipalities, focusing on facilitating this vision of increased online media usage.

Survey Analysis

Discussion

Overall, several key themes emerged during the analysis of survey respondents. These themes are discussed below and provide information regarding the dynamics of online public engagement across municipalities of different sizes, the needs of these municipalities for online public engagement tools from Aim, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on online public engagement.

A correlation exists between which official holds responsibility for online public engagement activities and community size. Larger municipalities appear more likely to have a specific, non-elected city official overseeing engagement. This is likely due to the increased budget of these municipalities and their ability to be more innovative and assertive in terms of their outreach. Many mid-size, small, and some of the smallest municipalities in Indiana operate their public engagement through the Office of the Mayor, Clerk-Treasurer, or Town Manager. Facebook

was the dominant social media platform used by most municipalities, including all urban and mid-sized municipalities. This is primarily attributed to ease of use and name recognition among municipalities. Findings show that as a municipality increases in size, they are more likely to use more than one social media platform.

Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Survey Group believed that it was necessary and relevant to ask municipalities about how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their online public engagement use and needs. All municipalities indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their online public engagement use or needs in some way. The findings of the survey highlighted three key areas:

1. General use of online public engagement,
2. Cost and technological barriers to online public engagement, and
3. Future use of online public engagement.

Current Use of Online Public Engagement

The survey findings indicated that online public engagement use has increased to some extent during the COVID-19 pandemic for all municipality sizes, and almost all individual municipalities. These methods of engagement include event creation and sharing, disseminating information on updated policies, regularly hosting municipal meetings, and more. The increase in online public engagement makes sense, as stay-at-home orders and social distancing has required many institutions to limit in-person meetings and interactions in the past year. However, findings indicate that the most variability due to the COVID-19 pandemic on online public engagement occurred in the smallest and small municipalities. This suggests that there may be gaps in knowledge and access to online public engagement technologies and strategies for these municipality sizes. This could be important to Aim, as it indicates that smaller municipalities within the program may need more assistance from them in developing their online public engagement presence than larger municipalities moving forward.

Cost and Technological Barriers to Online Public Engagement

Survey findings demonstrated that nearly half of all municipalities surveyed had to purchase new equipment to transition their public engagement events online due to the COVID-19 pandemic such as laptops, speaker equipment, and video cameras. This suggests that barriers to municipality use of online public engagement tools are not always knowledge-based, but also resource-related and logistical in some cases. The ability of municipalities to participate and expand their online public engagement may depend largely on budget constraints, particularly for smallest, small, and mid-size municipalities. Providing information to municipalities about free social media platforms, training, and other resources available to use for online public engagement and developing partnerships with outside organizations or companies that could provide necessary technologies at a lower cost to Aim members are some steps that may address this barrier.

Future Use of Online Public Engagement

Findings indicated that many of the municipalities surveyed would continue to use online public engagement tools moving forward following the COVID-19 pandemic. In total, 55% of survey respondents found that their municipality is highly likely or somewhat likely to continue online public engagement efforts following the COVID-19 pandemic. This demonstrates possible barriers present for smaller municipalities when it comes to accessing online public engagement technologies and better engaging with residents.

Another key question asked on the survey was how Aim could help municipalities develop their online public engagement knowledge, information, and capacities into the future. Suggested methods included providing various training and workshops, providing information on relevant laws and best practices for public engagement, and providing resources for assisting with website management. Overall, there was high variability across municipalities for the types of assistance they would like to see from Aim. However, many municipalities, regardless of size, requested information about the Open Door Law, as well as resources on online public engagement strategies and best practices for online public engagement. Other commonly requested options were training workshops and webinars, and conferences for employees on online public engagement.

Providing foundational training on online public engagement best practices and social media management, as well as information on the Open-Door Law, would be the best way for Aim to provide general assistance to municipalities for developing their online public engagement presence. This strategy would cover a broad range of issues found relating to online public engagement across municipalities efficiently and at a low cost, but would also help to standardize online public engagement knowledge and use across Indiana municipalities.

Web Scrubbing

The findings of the Web Group both support and supplement findings from both the interview research and survey analysis. The quantitative information collected provides greater insight on not only the realities of social media importance in online public engagement, but on other practices that determine the success of online public engagement efforts in Indiana.

Social Media and Website Management

The sample municipalities that the Web Group investigated operate an official website. Most homepages of Indiana municipalities include a calendar of major events and public meetings, city departments' contact information, access to public documents, and an online utility payment service. Some functions that could reasonably be accessed on many municipalities' official websites, such as accessibility or accommodation for disabled citizens, or access to voter registration are not commonly available.

The 42 municipalities the Web Group examined use at least one major social media platform. Facebook is the most popular social media platform for municipalities and the use of YouTube channels is closely related to the city size. The larger the municipality, the higher possibility they

will manage an official YouTube account. Although the Web Group expected to find similar rules in using other major social media platforms, the frequency of use of Facebook accounts does not correlate with municipality size. It is possible to observe that small municipalities are more active and engage more on Facebook than larger municipalities. Small municipalities tend to have a larger percentage of Facebook followers relevant to their population size--highlighting Facebook as a key tool for the future of online public engagement in these smaller municipalities.

Case Stories Beyond Indiana

The Web Group searched for additional case story information outside of Indiana to collect more ideas surrounding best practices for online public engagement. The Interview Group received a list of states from the Client Representative. The Web Group found five case stories from other states and one case story from South Korea, which is considered to have the most effective online public engagement strategy in the world. The Case Stories include:

- Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Virtual Public Engagement
- Open Littleton as an Online Discussion (Littleton, Colorado)
- Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Online Public Engagement
- Webinar on Transparency, Public Access & Trust by Institute for Local Government (ILG) of California (April 1, 2020)
- Kalamazoo's "Imagine Kalamazoo 2025" Public Participation Plan
- Jon Shanahan v. City of Minneapolis
- South Korea's Digital Government

These case stories contain detailed and differing approaches to online public engagement that relate to factors such as population size, population density, and legality surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. Detailed information about these case stories can be found in the Case Stories Appendices.

By reviewing online public engagement in governments outside and inside of Indiana, the Web Group found many applicable case story examples containing recommendations and potential best practices, for example, the online public engagement platform of Littleton, Colorado, or the VOICE platform in Evansville, Indiana, as described in the Case Story Appendices. Either of their online public engagement platforms could function as a template for Indiana municipalities to create a similar platform and provide multiple channels for public engagement. If such a platform is established statewide for Indiana municipalities, it would provide Indiana residents with a means of providing feedback and concerns about their municipality's policies and increase overall public engagement.

Recently, the Florida Department of Transportation established an online public engagement handbook which could also be a resource because it provides a set of action items and guidelines for both officials and residents. This is similar to the Virtual Public Engagement system utilized by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) that provides a direct, open platform for residents across the state to engage with ongoing and upcoming projects.

Similar platforms operating in Indiana may provide a way for municipalities to engage with each other as well as residents as all municipalities continue to navigate the expansion of online public engagement.

From their review of Indiana ordinances, the Web Group found that most Indiana municipalities do not provide legal guidance or structure for online public engagement. It may be possible, through Aim, to aid in the creation for each category of population size.

Recommendations

Overview

This Online Public Engagement in Indiana final report provides recommendations based on the data collection, analysis, and compilation gathered throughout the Capstone. The first section details seven cornerstone recommendations for Aim and its members related to online public engagement. This second section highlights a list of five suggested best practices for Aim members for more effective and accessible online public engagement efforts. The final section details recommendations derived from specific case stories applicable to Aim and Aim members.

Recommendations for Aim

This portion of the Final Report provides the outline and justification of the seven cornerstone recommendations for Aim as an organization.

Recommendation One

Training for Aim Members Related to Social Media Best Practices, Accessibility, and Management to Enhance Online Public Engagement

To facilitate more accessible and effective online public engagement, the Capstone recommends that Aim provide free, foundational training for all interested members on the core pieces of online public engagement and social media management. While most Aim members reported using at least one social media platform, many municipal employees who oversee online public engagement do not have formal training in social media management or online public engagement.

Topics to include in this potential program or training, based on survey and interview responses, are:

1. A discussion of what accessibility means for online public engagement and best practices for addressing different kinds of accessibility to improve residents' ability to engage virtually.
2. Umbrella coverage of best practices for free social media platforms, specifically Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, on topics such as writing engaging posts, how frequently to post to keep followers interested, and how to track engagement with residents on posts.
3. Specific workshops on how to deal with topics such as: moderating social media comments without impacting resident engagement, designing banners and graphics for social media using freely accessible tools, and linking social media pages with other municipal information such as an official municipal website.

Providing training on these topics and others as seen fit by Aim will allow for a low-cost, high-impact option for municipalities to train employees on online public engagement. These training sessions can cover a broad range of related issues while also standardizing the online public engagement experience for Indiana residents.

Recommendation Two

Creating a Network of Municipal Officials Who Hold Online Public Engagement as Part of Their Explicit Job Duties

Responsibility for online public engagement varies widely across municipalities. In some municipalities, the Mayor oversees online public engagement, while in others, it may be Interns, Council Members, or Clerk Treasurers. Professionals want to connect with municipal officials in similar roles. Without a sense of standardization, there are limits on municipal officials' capacity to connect with other professionals and share pertinent information, such as learned best practices or anecdotal areas for improvement.

The Capstone recommends two specific actions to help build a system for these officials to create a professional support network:

1. Create an online forum explicitly dedicated to public engagement, maintained by Aim and available to officials in Aim member municipalities. This forum will serve as a place for public engagement officials to:
 - a. Ask and respond to questions;
 - b. Find sources to help and support their initiatives;
 - c. Directly contact Aim staff;
 - d. Share effective samples of online public engagement work; and
 - e. Build connections with officials serving in similar capacities.
2. Create a basic job or duties description for officials who would oversee online public engagement and provide this to Aim members as part of their hiring or election process. A clear description ensures that online public engagement expectations exist as an official part of an individual or team's job description. This standardizes expectations across the state for those officials who oversee online public engagement. Having clearly defined expectations (or goals) helps municipal officials communicate their responsibilities, identify other municipal officials who share those responsibilities, and track online public engagement progress and effectiveness.

Creating the online forum and job description draft for online public engagement employees is crucial in creating an effective, cohesive professional network that benefits all Aim members as they grow their public engagement efforts, whether online or in-person.

Recommendation Three

Attempting to Create a Partnership with a Third Party Geared Towards Shared Website Management

The majority of interviewed and surveyed municipalities expressed a struggle with website management. The Capstone found that most municipalities update their website once per month, with some municipalities using social media platforms like their website. The Capstone recommends that Aim pursue a third-party partnership with a website management company or organization to coordinate with Aim members to develop, maintain, and organize their official municipal websites.

The primary benefit of such a partnership is that Aim, rather than individual municipalities, could negotiate a less expensive partnership deal for all interested Aim members. Few municipalities dedicate portions of their budgets to online public engagement, and no surveyed city had an online public engagement budget of higher than three percent. Without a specified budget for online public engagement, any expenditure related to it could strain municipal finances. However, a majority of municipalities expressed a clear interest in improving online public engagement by developing more effective websites for residents. If Aim serves as the link between its members and a third party, there are more opportunities for cost reduction, development of shared (and thus shared cost) municipal websites, and a more standardized online public engagement experience for residents across Indiana.

This strategy could be especially effective for smaller municipalities that would not otherwise be able to afford a third-party developer for their website or who might not otherwise coordinate a shared website with another municipality. The partnership would allow for municipalities to either operate an individual website at a lower cost or facilitate joint-website operations more easily between municipalities.

From their research, the Capstone found that several larger municipal and county governments coordinate with third-party developers to create and maintain their websites. These connections could provide some footing for Aim to communicate with these vendors.

Recommendation Four

Creating a List of Assessment Standards for Municipalities to Gauge Their Online Public Engagement Efforts

One of the primary roadblocks for municipalities to engage with residents is being unable to assess the effectiveness of their efforts. Many municipalities do not evaluate their efforts because they lack tools for their engagement's effectiveness. To improve engagement assessment for all Aim members, Aim could create a simple, but thorough, set of standards and practices municipalities can use to gauge effectiveness for regularly occurring city functions such as council meetings as well as more basic aspects of social media and website management. Some of these standards might include:

1. Does the municipality have a regular posting schedule for social media and website updates?
2. Does the municipality announce official meetings and hearings across Web platforms?
3. What is the follower count on municipal social media platforms? (With proportional comparisons based on population)
4. What range of services are available from the municipal website's home page?
5. Are there any necessary services that require looking through multiple locations?
6. Are all links and the municipal website's contact information updated with current city operations?

These standards, in addition to others Aim finds pertinent, provide municipalities with an idea of what public engagement can look like. These standards create a foundation for public engagement enhancement and innovation by responding to unique municipal needs while ensuring residents across Indiana can engage with their municipality online.

Recommendation Five

Communicate with Indiana's Smallest Municipalities Regarding Online Public Engagement in Their Community

A common barrier cited by municipalities with fewer than 5,000 residents stem from their belief that online public engagement is not viable in the long-term for their municipality. Limited resources, restricted experience of residents in using online tools, lack of training for employees, and perceived lack of interest from residents present barriers for municipalities considering the future of online public engagement opportunities for their residents. Without intervention from Aim, these municipalities will likely decide not to pursue an involved or extensive online public engagement policy once the state fully reopens following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Capstone recommends outreach to all municipalities with a population of less than 5,000 and work with them to develop a realistic, low-cost, high-impact plan for their city to continue (or begin) online public engagement efforts. While the number of residents in these municipalities represents a small percentage of the total population, the collective group represents a large portion of the state and many diverse residents. Building a framework in these smaller municipalities is critical in improving engagement statewide and providing a solid foundation for online public engagement initiatives in the future.

Recommendation Six

Host Regular Workshop Opportunities for Continual Professional Development Related to Online Public Engagement

Online public engagement best practices change regularly with the adoption of new social media platforms, new data on how people engage with their government, and demographic shifts at local, state, and national levels. For Aim members to stay updated on these changes, the Capstone recommends that Aim embed resources for best practices for online public engagement in their regular offerings to member municipalities.

These resources may take many forms, including:

- a. Virtual or in-person workshops;
- b. Walkthrough guides on changes to best practices;
- c. Short explanatory videos that can be accessed through the recommended online public engagement forum;
- d. Identifying a designated contact person within Aim to develop these programs and handle specific requests from member municipalities; or,
- e. Partnering with researchers through groups such as the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs or Luddy School of Informatics to provide insight and training on needed structural changes.

The most important aspect of these training opportunities is not necessarily the structure but the frequency. The frequency of training opportunities that can keep Aim members up to date with current practices is vital. Online public engagement practices are in constant fluctuation with the launch of new social media platforms, changes to the laws governing online public engagement, and more. By providing regular, detailed training, Aim can ensure that the practices utilized by municipalities are in fact the most up to date.

Recommendation Seven

Develop a living list of accessibility considerations that members need to ensure they meet individual needs when hosting online public engagement events and standards for accessibility evaluation

Accessibility in online public engagement varies widely across Indiana municipalities. For many Aim members, it is unclear which areas of accessibility need to be addressed when developing online public engagement events. For most municipalities, there are limits on language accessibility, flexible scheduling, access for those with hearing and vision impairments, and more. It is the recommendation of the Capstone that Aim create a living list, meaning it can be continuously edited, of accessibility considerations for communities to make when planning and hosting online public engagement events. Some examples of considerations may include:

1. Inclusion of Language Beyond English
2. Hearing Impairment
3. Vision Impairment
4. Alternative Work Schedules
5. Mobility Impairments
6. Limited Internet Access

To assist Aim members in learning about the variety of accessibility issues that exist within online public engagement, the Capstone suggests that Aim provides fundamental information regarding the type of accessibility issues that can exist. Giving municipalities the framework to learn about these issues will provide them an opportunity to consider constituents they may not have access to before.

Examples of effective inclusion efforts can be seen in municipalities within Indiana and beyond such as in the case story of Jon Shanahan v. City of Minneapolis. In the outcome of this case, the City of Minneapolis now provides live closed captions from a City Official in order to ensure equitable access to city events for those with hearing impairments.

Recommendations for Aim Members

This section details a selected list of best practices for Aim members related to various facets of online public engagement.

Recommendation Eight

Take Advantage of Free Social Media Platforms and Free Social Media Training Opportunities

One of the most frequent constraints seen across municipalities is the lack of formal training for employees for online public engagement events. While most Aim members engage with residents on some form of social media, many only communicate via Facebook pages or municipal websites, which they update in a limited capacity.

To better engage residents, the Capstone recommends that all municipalities (regardless of size or scope of services) develop a presence on at least three of the following five social media platforms, ranked in order of preference based on the number of potentially engaged users and other municipalities:

1. Facebook (Most preferred)
2. Twitter
3. Instagram
4. TikTok
5. NextDoor (Least preferred)

Each of these platforms offers unique opportunities to interact with residents through event postings, long informational posts, short announcements, visual graphics and aids, multimedia

options for content, and more. Additionally, not only are all of these platforms completely free, but all of them offer free tutorials, webinars, and resources on how to design engaging, informative, and appropriate content. Taking full advantage of social media helps build a strong foundation for engagement in any municipality.

Recommendation Eight

Utilize a Public Video Sharing Site, Such as YouTube, to Share Video Content of Municipal Engagements

Providing recorded video content of municipal engagements such as City/Town Council Meetings, special City Announcements, or Instructions for Completing Paperwork (such as Taxes) meets many citizens' needs at once. In addition to allowing content to be accessed at will by citizens who may be unavailable during regular meeting times, posting videos on a public site also improves accessibility for many individuals.

Having a copy of content that is pausable, volume-adjustable, contains closed captions, and that can be replayed helps meet the needs of many individuals with hearing or auditory processing impairments. Having an available audio copy of a meeting, event, or instructions allows individuals with visual impairments to access materials. Additionally, having a free and available copy of municipal proceedings for at-will access helps all interested residents who may have limited internet access or work from 9 to 5 pm. Many municipalities cited uncertainty regarding the accessibility of municipal proceedings--uploading content to a video sharing page managed by the municipality provides a free, straightforward way to begin making strides towards equal access for all citizens.

Recommendation Nine

Consider Website Sharing with Other Municipalities

While some municipalities operate individual websites, the Capstone recommends that many municipalities--particularly those with populations under 10,000-- consider website sharing to split costs and labor and provide better overall engagement. Many municipalities cited issues with website management and updating their websites. The Capstone recommends updating municipal websites at least once a month with information, events, and content. Low rates of updates make it difficult for residents to stay engaged with website content and means that some content is usually out of date.

Maintaining a website is difficult, especially without the dedicated staff and given financial limitations, which is the case in most smaller municipalities. Sharing a website with a neighboring or similar municipality offers the opportunity for joint maintenance and shared costs. If each municipality maintains the recommended rate of posting once per month, the website's interactions double. Sharing websites also provides unique opportunities to showcase collaborative efforts between municipalities and their communities to share information on upcoming events (such as festivals) or resources (such as helplines or emergency services).

Recommendation Ten

Consider Appointing a Single Person to Manage Online Public Engagement Efforts

Although many officials may be involved in developing content or maintaining websites, social media pages, and any content sites, the Capstone recommends that every municipality appoint a single person to manage online public engagement efforts. This role will likely vary between municipalities based on need with the same three primary functions:

1. Ensure regular posts and updates are available on municipal websites, and social media accounts.
2. Ensure a mechanism for feedback is available to residents for online public engagement efforts.
3. Keep involved staff informed of needed changes, professional development opportunities, and potential growth opportunities related to public engagement.

The Capstone recommends this management role be part of a formal job description for either an appointed, hired, or elected official within the municipality and be updated as needed in coordination with statewide online public engagement efforts made through Aim.

Recommendation Eleven

Utilize All Available Platforms With a Cohesive Brand to Effectively Advertise Synchronous Online Public Engagement Events

One of the most prevalent struggles municipal officials cite is difficulty in enticing residents to attend synchronous online public engagement events such as meetings, or hearings. In order to address this issue, the Capstone recommends that municipalities utilize every online platform available to them in order to advertise events effectively. These platforms include social media pages, municipal websites front pages, and community newsletters that encourage regular resident engagement. Ensuring that posts are engaging, accurate, and approachable while also matching across platforms is a key component to moving towards a more involved public. Some specific recommendations related to branding include:

1. Utilizing familiar logos (such as the city logo)
2. Utilizing similar color schemes across platforms
3. Repeating familiar language across platforms
4. Providing opportunities for people to sign up or add events to personal calendars
5. Repeating date, time, and access instructions frequently across posts
6. Regular reminders of upcoming events

Effective utilization of social media platforms in order to maximize reach can be seen in the Interview Group's case story on the City of Rushville. Rushville similarly collaborated with community groups to reach a larger audience, partnering with economic development groups,

school districts, and the Chamber of Commerce in order to amplify their posts. These methods helped the city to obtain high response rates on its resident surveys.

Recommendations from Case Stories

This section details specific recommendations pulled directly from case stories investigated by the Capstone. These recommendations relate to Aim and Aim members and provide unique ideas and insight for possible means of effective engagement.

Recommendation Twelve:

Regular, Repeated Opportunities For Engagement With the Seymour Mayor

The Mayor of Seymour, Matt Nicholson, engages residents through a weekly Facebook column that addresses a wide range of the municipality's efforts to engage the public, including discussions on resident concerns, upcoming events, and lifestyle pieces. These posts do not incur costs beyond the Mayor's time and offer an opportunity for residents to engage directly with their highest-ranking municipal official.

A similar approach could be adopted by many Aim members to increase opportunities for online public engagement in their own communities. Facebook and other social media platforms offer a free, easily accessible, and long-lasting means for cataloging important municipal events and milestones that residents can respond to directly. Because of these weekly engagement efforts, Seymour experienced growth in social media followers and resident satisfaction with officials. Establishing a schedule for regularly planned posts with relevant, transparent content presents a unique engagement opportunity for municipalities of all sizes.

Recommendation Thirteen

Surveying for Citizen Satisfaction and Input in Rushville

The City of Rushville disseminates a biannual survey related to resident needs and satisfaction as well as public thoughts on upcoming projects and expenditures. The municipality promotes the survey through a variety of online and personal channels, but is most prominently featured on Rushville's social media pages, which residents can access at any time from any location at no cost. The surveys provide feedback on recent initiatives such as Rushville's goals and objectives outlined in the municipality's comprehensive plan. Importantly, Rushville utilizes existing social capital networks to further push out the survey by partnering with local organizations, such as the Rushville Chamber of Commerce and Rush County Community Foundation, to reach a broader intersection of residents.

This cornerstone practice in Rushville relates to two main ideas that other municipalities may adopt:

1. Providing a regular, easily accessible mechanism for residents to provide honest and constructive feedback
2. Utilizing existing community capital to better engage with residents

Within all Indiana municipalities, these two ideas offer significant potential for keeping residents invested and active in their local government while providing municipalities working feedback from improvement.

Recommendation Fourteen:

Organizing Online Public Engagement Opportunities for Large Projects Similar to Colorado

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) developed an extensive guide and list of regulations for online public engagement as part of their plans for statewide transportation initiatives. Colorado's low population density makes in-person engagement difficult at the best of times; CDOT, rather than pushing for in-person opportunities for public comment and review, mandates a certain standard of online public engagement opportunities for every new project.

It is possible that this or similar guidance could work for Aim members as well. Municipalities could engage more in regular opportunities with their residents if Aim recommends a standard or set of best practices for effective policies to guide online public engagement opportunities (with the appropriate resources to ensure its success). CDOT and other organizations have materials that Aim could use to structure their own standards or guidance to encourage municipalities to set specific engagement efforts. These materials could include guides to engaging online and designing public comment policies, all of which could be the basis for making municipalities more comfortable engaging residents online. By recommending a level of online public engagement for large scale projects, Aim could help set the standard for communication for Indiana municipalities.

Conclusion

Overview

The 2021 O'Neill Capstone, in partnership with Aim, investigated the current state and potential future of online public engagement for Indiana municipalities. Through direct interviews, a statewide survey of Aim members, and extensive web searching, the Capstone developed an inventory of relevant data and analysis.

Below is a brief, concluding summary of the work and implications of the findings of each individual research group:

Interview Research

The Interview Group's primary goal was to gather information directly from municipal representatives to allow the Capstone to discover trends and patterns in Indiana municipalities' online public engagement efforts. The Interview Group determined trends in current online public engagement practices to further enhance municipalities' efforts, including successful strategies, common challenges, and barriers. From these trends, the Interview Group identified several areas where municipalities need assistance in reaching their online public engagement goals. The Interview Group's analysis revealed that urban, mid-sized, and small municipalities experience online public engagement differently, such as inappropriate interactions with residents and limited social media presence. Despite differences across municipality sizes, municipalities also share several key trends in online public engagement, including budgeting constraints and technical knowledge to engage with residents online. Municipalities of all sizes cited best practices and guidance on relevant law as highly desirable resources for Aim to provide them. Aim can use this information to inform its continued efforts in providing resources and improving online public engagement across the state.

Survey Analysis

The Survey Group's three main goals consisted of collecting information on current online public engagement, identifying best practices for such engagement across a wide array of municipality sizes, and identifying areas where officials from municipalities of all sizes require assistance. Survey findings show that a municipality's size has one of the largest impacts on its online public engagement practices. Municipalities are more likely to partake in online public engagement as they increase in size, reflected in trends such as an increase in the total number of social media platforms used to publish public engagement events. As municipalities increase in size, oversight of public engagement becomes more specialized, such as assigning specific municipal officials to manage engagement other than the Mayor or Town Manager. Municipalities break this pattern, however, when it comes to accessibility. Regardless of size, all municipalities report similarly on the ability to provide accessible online public engagement opportunities for individuals with vision and hearing impairments.

Aim plays a key role in enhancing its members' online public engagement efforts. In terms of training, nearly half of municipalities use Aim for employee training related to public engagement. When asked how they feel Aim could better assist its members, the results

differed based on municipality size. For the smallest municipalities, officials requested resources on public engagement strategies, best practices, and training for employees. For small municipalities, officials requested information on the Open Door Law and webinars for municipal employees. For mid-size municipalities, officials requested resources on public engagement strategies, best practices, and conferences for employees. Across municipality sizes, there was overwhelming support for including online public engagement efforts in their future to communicate with residents. As online public engagement efforts continue across municipalities, the Survey Group's research can act as a guide for Aim and its members to further improve engagement and accessibility, regardless of municipality size.

Web Scrubbing

The primary goal from web research consisted of providing a detailed inventory of the latest online participation and engagement practices. Our contribution serves to represent information related to online public engagement strategies from 30 municipalities across Indiana. As Indiana municipalities continue to grow their online public engagement efforts, appointed individuals need to manage social media effectively to sustain community connection.

From our inventory, the resources offered by several Indiana municipalities highlight the standard practices, success stories, and challenges associated with public administrator's online public engagement with citizens. By searching various platforms like municipality websites, social media accounts, and other related platforms, the Web Group found that various management implementation efforts can enhance the online public engagement environment and connect with community members. To better understand the impact and opportunity of various engagement activities, several case stories outside of Indiana are in the appendix to review fresh and innovative perspectives.

Final Conclusion

From each group's findings, the Capstone constructed a series of recommendations for Aim and its member municipalities. These recommendations include insight collected from all three research groups and attempt to integrate both the perception and realities of online public engagement in Indiana. These recommendations cover a broad scope of topics, including potential steps for providing training resources, best practices for social media management, options for creating evaluation standards for public engagement, and insight into potentially applicable best practices from outside the state of Indiana.

The findings of this Capstone provide a foundation for Aim and its members to move towards a successful future for online public engagement in Indiana.

Acknowledgments

The Capstone wishes to acknowledge the contribution and support of many individuals and organizations who aided in the creation and support of this project. In no particular order:

- Matt Greller, *Chief Executive Officer of Aim*
- Terry Amsler and Lisa Blomgren Amsler, *Capstone Instructors*
- Ashley Clark, *Director of the Indiana University Center for Survey Research*
- Mark Levin, *Professor at the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs*
- Susie Van Doren *of the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs*
- Devta Kidd, *City of Bloomington Director of Innovation*
- Interview and Survey participants from across Indiana

Capstone Appendices

Capstone Overview

The Capstone Appendix includes Literature Review citations and Research Design and Methodology citations. These sources from the literature guided the Capstone in understanding the public engagement foundation for municipalities to implement online and in-person engagement methods. The sources consider public engagement through lenses of economics, inequality, and changing demographics to assist Indiana municipalities as they adapt to current practices. The remaining documents in the Capstone Appendix are documents the Capstone submitted to Aim, which includes the Signed Statement of Work (SOW), the Initial Progress Report to the Client, and the Second Progress Report to the Client. The SOW guided the Capstone as the Capstone members established research groups and developed deliverable timelines. The First and Second Progress Reports to the Client provided Aim with updates throughout the project to ensure the Capstone met client expectations.

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Signed Statement of Work (SOW)

Scope of Services

Indiana University's O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs Capstone Class V600 Section 6013 and Accelerate Indiana Municipalities (Aim) hereby agree to collaborate on research related activities and studies pursuant to the Statement of Work (SOW) in this Agreement. The SOW shall describe the respective contribution and services of each Party (Aim and the Capstone). Any services provided by one of the Parties under this Agreement are referred to as the "Services." All Services provided in the SOW are negotiated between the Parties and shall be in writing and executed by both Parties.

The SOW will set forth, among other things: (a) a description of the Services to be performed; (b) the responsibilities of the Parties; (c) an estimated timeline; (d) project milestones and all agreed upon deliverables (the "Deliverables"); and (e) costs for the Services. If a Party requests a change to the SOW, the Parties shall execute a written change order (the "Change Order"), which shall identify in reasonable detail: (a) a complete summary of the change requested; (b) the impact on the project schedule; (c) the impact on Deliverables and Services; and (d) the

impact on the project Fees, if any. All Change Orders are subject to the written approval of both Aim and the Capstone.

Overview

Aim was established in 1891 to provide Indiana municipal officials a means to congregate, educate, and advocate their interests before the state and federal governments. Indiana is one of the first states to form a municipal association and has a rich tradition of serving municipal government and elected officials. A not-for-profit association, Aim advocates on behalf of municipalities before state lawmakers and provides education and information to members. Aim's statement of purpose is "to foster, promote, and advocate for the success of Hoosier municipalities as laboratories of innovation, hubs of talent, and the engines driving our state's economy."

As requested by Aim, the Capstone will identify and document how municipalities across Indiana are able to engage with residents through online platforms, policies, and practices. The Capstone will have three primary areas of focus which serve as the working groups for the project: Interviews, Surveys, and Web Sourcing. Two project managers will administer the general function and organization of the project.

During these interviews, the group will gather qualitative information on best practices around online engagement. The Survey group will design and distribute a survey in order to gather quantitative and qualitative data. The data gathered from the survey will supplement the data collected by the Interview group and Web Sourcing group (Web group) regarding municipal online engagement. The Web group will search for publicly available data to explore how municipalities within Indiana engage with their communities online.

The Capstone will produce a report that includes recommendations for Aim based on these findings and case stories for possible publication.

Project Objectives

Interview

The Interview group will perform outreach and conduct interviews with the list of potential subjects provided by Aim. Interviews will provide information regarding a municipality's current level of online public participation, best practices for engagement, the effectiveness of various engagement programs, and recommendations on strategies for improvement. Once the Interview group finishes data collection, they will analyze the data and interpret the results as they relate to the broader goals of the Capstone project.

Survey

The Survey group will gather data for Aim regarding the policies and practices of online public participation and engagement in Indiana municipalities. The group will create, draft, and analyze the survey to collect data in support of the broader goals of the Capstone project. Additionally,

the Survey group will provide a well-organized quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Key findings and results from the survey will provide:

- A definition for online engagement
- Technology used for online engagement
- A list of best practices for online engagement techniques
- A list of advantages and disadvantages of online engagement from the perspective of a public official/employee

Web Sourcing

The Web group will provide comprehensive information and insight about online engagement through research using data collection, analysis, and web-based study. The Web group will research online engagement information across the five Aim member regions of the state of Indiana, including the geographic and social background of the regions, the citizens' needs and the rate of participation for online engagement.

The Web group's deliverables will be a report that draws conclusions from synthesizing statistical data and qualitative case story data, in order to provide social/geographic context and support project recommendations.

Project Personnel Responsibilities

Instructors

Terry Amsler
Lisa Blomgren Amsler

Project Managers

Julia Bauer
Hannah Gibbs

Chief Communicators

Lyn Beasley - Web
Grayson Hart - Interview
Zion Myers - Survey

Chief Editors

Elizabeth Brader - Interview
Shelbie Francescon - Survey
Zach Richardson - Web

Project Plan

Role Descriptions

Every Capstone member will be assigned a primary and secondary role within their small group (Interview, Survey, or Web) to guide their work throughout the project. Roles are described in detail below.

Interview Group

- 1) **Interviewer:** Individuals responsible for interviews of trustees, mayors, deputy mayors, department heads, or additional representatives as recommended by Aim.
- 2) **Data Coder:** Individuals responsible for compiling primary and secondary data, as well as identifying patterns within the feedback and creating recommendations.
- 3) **Data Collector:** Individuals responsible for collecting primary data from the completed interviews.

Survey Group

- 1) **Survey Manager** - Individual responsible for the management of the survey through Qualtrics and responds to all survey participant inquiries.
- 2) **Analyst** - Individuals responsible for the analysis and visualization of survey data.
- 3) **Developer** - Individuals responsible for the development of survey questions.
- 4) **Writer** - Individuals responsible for the written portion of the analysis and results.

Web Group

Web group data collection will be divided between areas inside the state of Indiana by region and areas outside of the state of Indiana if needed to provide salient examples of online engagement platforms, policies, and practices. Three (3) members of the group will be assigned to each of these sections.

- 1) **Data Scrubber-** Individuals responsible for data collection, cleaning, and analysis.
- 2) **Writer/Editor-** Individuals responsible for generating case stories and final analysis for data.

Role Implementation

Group	Name	Primary Task	Secondary Task
Interview	Elizabeth Brader	Chief Editor	Data Coder
Interview	Sabrina Brant	Data Coder	Editor
Interview	Grayson Hart	Chief Communicator	Interviewer
Interview	Elijah Orth	Data Collector	Writer
Interview	Kendyll Owens	Data Collector	Writer

Interview	Alexie Schwarz	Interviewer	Writer
Survey	Julia Bauer	Project Manager	Developer
Survey	Shelbie Francescon	Chief Editor	Survey Manager
Survey	Hannah Gibbs	Project Manager	Developer
Survey	Laura Morales	Analyst	Writer
Survey	Zion Myers	Developer	Writer
Survey	Thomas Nunn	Analyst	Writer
Survey	Katie Pacholski	Analyst	Writer
Web	Lyn Beasley	Chief Communicator	Data Scrubber
Web	Soonjeong Hong	Data Scrubber	Writer/Editor
Web	Seongbeom Kim	Data Scrubber	Writer/Editor
Web	Jongmin Lee	Data Scrubber	Writer/Editor
Web	Zach Richardson	Chief Editor	Data Scrubber
Web	Man Shi	Data Scrubber	Writer/Editor

Tasks and Schedules

The following table details project tasks and a timeline for their completion. The completion deadlines may be modified upon agreement of Aim and the Capstone, or under extenuating circumstances, in which case the party requiring a change to the due date will promptly notify the other party.

Work Milestones	Group Title	Deadline
Draft Survey and Interview Questions	Capstone	February 12, 2021
Survey Questions to Instructors	Survey	February 15, 2021
Interview Questions to Instructors	Interview	February 15, 2021

Survey Protocol to Instructors	Survey	February 17, 2021
Interview Protocol to Instructors	Interview	February 17, 2021
Web Protocol to Instructors	Web	February 19, 2021
Survey Questions to Client	Survey	February 19, 2021
Interview Questions to Client	Interview	February 19, 2021
Data Report	Survey	February 22, 2021
Survey Testing	Survey	February 24, 2021
Launch Survey	Survey	February 26, 2021
Schedule Interviews	Interview	February 2021
Complete Interviews	Interview	February/March 2021
Qualtrics Reminder	Survey	March 15, 2021
Close Survey	Survey	March 29, 2021
Download Survey Data	Survey	March 31, 2021
Transcribe Interview Responses	Interview	March 2021
Code Interview Responses	Interview	March 2021
Draft Case Stories	Capstone	March/April 2021
Final Web Data Collection	Web	April 1, 2021
Survey Analysis	Survey	April 7, 2021
Final Analysis	Capstone	April 15, 2021
Final Case Stories	Capstone	April 15, 2021

Project Deliverables

The following table details project deliverables and a timeline for their completion. The completion deadlines may be modified upon agreement of Aim and the Capstone, or under

extenuating circumstances, in which case the party requiring a change to the due date will promptly notify the other party.

Deliverable	Projected Completion Date
Statement of Work to Aim	February 17, 2021
Written Progress Report to Aim	March 3, 2021
Written Progress Report to Aim	April 5, 2021
Draft Final Report and Case Stories to Instructors	April 7, 2021
Revisions on Final Written Report and Case Stories to the Instructor	April 19, 2021
Final Written Report and Recommendations to Aim	April 26, 2021
Final Presentation to Aim	May 3, 2021 or To Be Determined

Methodology

Web Group

The Web group will use the internet as a tool for basic research on online public engagement tools and strategies in Indiana. The group will provide general knowledge such as the benefits and challenges of using online engagement tools and successful online engagement cases. The Web group will collect data related to online engagement and compare data from across Indiana. The Web group will conduct a primary literature review on online engagement in the United States to provide an inventory of resources and salient examples of online engagement platforms, policies, and practices.

The Web group will classify data collection targets within the state of Indiana based on the designations provided by Aim, such as the five Aim member regions. Each member of the group will work within these specific parameters to collect information.

The Web group will investigate various online public engagement tools and programs provided to residents by public organizations in each region. The group will analyze the data derived from the survey and conduct a cross-analysis with demographic findings.

Interview Group

The Interview group will conduct interviews with local officials from a representative sample of Indiana cities and towns as recommended by Aim. Research and interview protocols will be consistent with standards for human subjects research in social science. The Interview

questions are designed to best inform the recommendations for effective online public engagement.

Survey Group

The Survey group will administer a survey to officials and employees from a representative sample of Indiana municipalities. Research and survey protocols will be consistent with standards for human subjects research in social science. The survey group will send the survey to a list of pre-determined municipalities selected by the client. Survey questions will focus on:

- Technology that municipalities use for online engagement
- Barriers for online engagement
- Advantages and disadvantages of online engagement from the municipality's perspective
- The municipality's use of online engagement across a range of departments, organizations, and offices
- Specific municipal events that the city or town advertized or participants attended primarily online in the past year
- How the municipality adjusted the structure, including time and forum, of events to meet the needs of now-primarily-online engagement opportunities for residents

From the administered survey, the group will compile a broad range of best practices used across the state, organized by municipal designation (city, township, etc). The interview group will complement the best practices providing additional case-based stories.

Use of Information

The Capstone reserves the right to use aggregate information collected during the period of performance for future publications.

Client Requirements

Aim will provide:

1. The Indiana Elected Municipal Official Handbook
2. Initiative Introduction between city and town officials and Capstone participants
 - a. If clients are unresponsive, Aim will take additional steps to identify and contact officials within the same region for interview
3. Maintain communications with the Project Managers and instructors via the mutually chosen channels;
4. Pay O'Neill an engagement fee of \$2,500 for Capstone Work.

Period of Performance

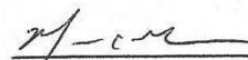
The Aim Capstone Project began on January 20, 2021, and shall end when the O'Neill students provide Aim with the final report and presentation, no later than May 3, 2021.

Acceptance of Authorization

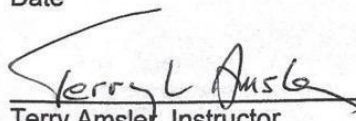
The terms and conditions apply in full to the services provided under this Statement of Work.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto each acting with proper authority have executed this Statement of Work, under seal.




Lisa Blomgren Amsler, Instructor


Matt Greller, Aim Chief Executive Officer

3-2-21
Date


Terry Amsler, Instructor

3-2-21
Date

2-25-2021
Date


Student Representatives

3/1/2021
Date

Initial Progress Report to Client

MEMORANDUM

To: Matt Greller, Chief Executive Officer of Aim
From: Julia Bauer and Hannah Gibbs, Capstone Project Managers
CC: Terry Amsler and Lisa Blomgren Amsler, Capstone Instructors
Date: March 3, 2021
Re: Initial O'Neill Capstone Progress Report

Executive Summary

The Capstone consists of 19 students divided into three groups to collect data through interviews, surveys, and web scrubbing. The Capstone dedicated time to establish group protocols for data collection, begin collecting data, and outline larger goals for the project.

The Capstone established regular meetings to advance the project goals, which were organized amongst the groups. The Capstone established communication protocols for contacting our client, Accelerate Indiana Municipalities (Aim). The Capstone finalized the Statement of Work (SOW), which will function as our framework for the project. The SOW was signed by the two Project Managers, Instructors, and Client Representative, Matt Greller on March 2, 2021.

For the next stages of the project, the Capstone will continue collecting, coding, and analyzing data within each group and progress towards other deadlines as outlined in the SOW.

Work Accomplished to Date

Interview Group

Organizationally, the Interview Group assigned roles and responsibilities to all group members including Chief Communicator, Chief Editor, Editor, Interviewer, Writer, Data Collector, and Coder. The Interview Group crafted the Interview Protocol to ensure consistency across the interviews. The Client Representative received the Interview Protocol on February 26, 2021, and approved the Interview Protocol on March 1, 2021. With O'Neill Capstone funding and permission from the Instructors and the O'Neill School, the Interview Group purchased a subscription to the online scheduling software Calendly. The Interview Group will use Calendly to simplify the scheduling process for municipal representatives, who are the selected participants for the interviews.

Survey Group

To self-organize, the Survey Group assigned each member to two roles: Chief Communicator, Chief Editor, Survey Developer, Writer, or Data Analyst. After self-organizing, the Survey Group authored the Survey Protocol, which defines online public engagement for the purposes of the survey. The Survey Protocol outlines the scope of the survey, survey procedures for participants, survey questions, and includes a consent form for participants. The Survey Group

divided the survey questions into main categories of interest, including an overview of online public engagement, online public engagement structure and maintenance, employee development and system management, municipal response to COVID-19, and requests for resources from Aim. The Client Representative received the Survey Protocol on March 1, 2021.

To distribute the survey to the participants, the Survey Group collected contact information for officials in all 567 Aim member municipalities. The roles of these officials cover a range of responsibilities and titles, with each participant selected for their ability to accurately respond to the survey questions.

Web Group

To organize the group members, the Web Group assigned each member to two roles, either: Chief Communicator, Chief Editor, Data Scrubber, or Writer/Editor. The Web Group developed guidelines to evaluate online public engagement and social media platforms for Indiana municipalities using quantitative and qualitative metrics. The Web Group aggregated the data from the engagement platforms with a list of municipal demographic information and other characteristics to allow for statistical analysis.

The Web Group produced a representative sample of 30 municipalities through preliminary data collection. The Web Group selected the sample based on a variety of demographics that represent Indiana geographically and in terms of population size. The primary sample is in Table 1 and is organized by the initial size and geographic designations. The Web Group identified an additional 10 Aim members that satisfy the criteria for the Interview Group to guarantee an interview sample size of 30 municipalities in the case of non-response.

Table 1

	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southeast	Southwest
Urban (15)	Anderson Indianapolis Kokomo Lafayette Greenwood	Elkhart Fort Wayne Muncie	Gary South Bend	Columbus	Bloomington Evansville Terre Haute
Mid-sized (9)	Plainfield Zionsville	Marion Warsaw	Logansport Valparaiso	Jeffersonville Richmond New Castle	Jasper
Small (6)			Monticello Rensselaer	Rushville Vernon	Princeton Sullivan

Next Steps

Interview Group

The Interview Group will construct a letter for the client to include in their email solicitations to recruit municipalities for the interviews. The email solicitation will include contact information for questions, the means to return signed consent forms, and instructions on scheduling interviews. The list of municipalities the Interview Group will solicit consists of the 30 municipalities the Web Group identified in Table 1. The Interview Group will include 10 additional cities to the interview solicitation list: Crane, Crawfordsville, Franklin, Greencastle, Kankakee, Michigan City, Mooresville, Paoli, Rocky Ripple, and Seymour. The client will have the opportunity to provide feedback on all additional cities added to the sample. Once the Interview Group provides the client with the updated sample and the client approves the additions, the client will send the email solicitation for municipalities to begin scheduling their interviews.

The Interview Group anticipates that the interviews with the participants will last approximately one hour. Two student representatives will be present in each interview, with one representative acting as a note-taker and the other as the main interviewer. Following the interviews, the Interview Group will use YouTube to transcribe the interviews. As information from the interviews is collected, the Interview Group will code the data based on a pre-determined system of analysis.

Survey Group

The Survey Group will distribute the survey invitation to participants to begin data collection once the group completes the contact list. At least a week prior to the survey closing, the Survey Group will send an email reminder to participants who have yet to respond to the survey.

The Survey Group will begin coding survey responses as the group receives them. Per the SOW, the group will present preliminary findings in mid-March.

Web Group

The Web Group will begin collecting data for a broader collection of municipalities across Indiana and the sample of 30 municipalities selected for interviews in Table 1. Upon further development of the dataset and analysis, the Web Group may use GIS to develop maps of Indiana that indicate trends in online public engagement across the state. Table 2 illustrates the quantitative data the Web Group will gather on municipalities, and Table 3 illustrates the qualitative data that will inform our case stories.

Table 2

Quantitative Data Type	Criteria
Demographic Data	Bachelor's Degree or More, City/Town, Class, County, H.S Diploma or More, Internet Access Rate, Land Area, Median Age, Median Household Income, Median Family Income, Population, Population Density, Poverty Rate, Region, Unemployment Rate
Social Media Utilization Level	Followers, Number of Likes per Post, Posting Numbers, Social Media Account Existence, Views Across Social Media Platforms, Website Existence

Table 3

Qualitative Data Source	Criteria
Municipal Ordinances	Cases that have incorporated online participation, Engagement as part of the public project process, Rules and regulations about social media or online engagement
Website	Accessibility of online services, Community events, Council meeting agendas and videos, Public data accessibility, News updates, Social media integration, Types of online services

Second Progress Report to Client

MEMORANDUM

To: Matt Greller, Client Representative and Chief Executive Officer of Aim
From: Julia Bauer and Hannah Gibbs, Capstone Project Managers
CC: Terry Amsler and Lisa Blomgren Amsler, Capstone Instructors
Date: April 7, 2021
Re: Final O'Neill Capstone Progress Report

Executive Summary

Since March 19, the Capstone completed various objectives related to the overall project goals, particularly those related to data collection. The Interview Group completed 25 interviews with municipal officials. The Survey Group collected responses from 93 municipalities, all of which

are Accelerate Indiana Municipalities (Aim) members. The Web Group completed the accumulation of data from all 30 of the initial target municipalities outlined in the project's early stages.

The Capstone will continue to focus on data analysis, specifically coding the qualitative and quantitative data from the interviews and surveys. As we finalize the report, the Capstone will generate recommendations for Aim to provide to its members. On April 12, the Capstone will meet with the Client Representative to discuss the final report and presentation. The Capstone will deliver the final presentation to the Client on May 3 at 3:15 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The Client Representative will invite Aim members and staff for the final presentation.

Work Accomplished to Date

Interview Group

The Interview Group made several efforts to increase participation to reach a total of 30 interviews. In anticipation of a low response rate, the Interview Group contacted an additional 10 municipalities for a total of 40 solicitations. On March 8, Aim sent the initial interview solicitation email to the selected municipalities.

On March 16, Aim provided the Interview Group with the contact information for municipalities that had not scheduled an interview. The Interview Group used the information to call the unscheduled municipalities and encourage their participation. On March 22, the Interview Group sent an email reminder to the remaining outstanding municipalities. At the Interview Group's request, Aim called the remaining municipalities on March 23 to encourage their participation. When it became clear the Interview Group could not solicit 30 interviews, the group asked the Client to solicit five interviews from a new list of municipalities. The Interview Group requested that the Client Representative contact municipalities from underrepresented city sizes (such as urban, midsize, and small) and regional categories (such as southeast, central, and northwest) to obtain a more representative sample. None of the additional municipalities scheduled an interview within the final two and half days they had the opportunity to do so.

The Interview Group conducted two interviews the week of March 8, five the week of March 15, eight the week of March 22, and 10 the week of March 29. In total, the Interview Group conducted 25 interviews during the four-week window allocated for interviews. In addition to completing the interviews, the Interview Group wrote portions of the final report, including parts of the literature review and case stories, and began preparations for the final presentation.

Survey Group

After downloading the survey responses on March 26, the Survey Group found an error that caused the participants to see only the first eight survey questions. To address the issue, the Survey Group contacted the instructors to establish the group's next course of action. After the group met with the instructors, the Project Managers contacted the Client Representative to explain the issue and the proposed solution. With the Client Representative's approval, the Survey Group sent the updated survey to Ashley Clark, Director of the IU Center for Survey

Research, for review. The Survey Manager incorporated Director Clark's feedback, and the Project Managers sent the Client Representative the updated email solicitation to send to participants. The Client Representative sent the email solicitation to 508 municipalities across Indiana on March 29. The Client Representative sent the final email solicitation to the remaining municipalities that had yet to complete or start the survey on April 2 at 10 a.m. EDT. On April 2 at 11:59 p.m. EDT, the Survey Group closed the survey with 80 complete responses and 23 partial responses.

After the survey closed, the Survey Group developed a coding protocol for data analysis. The data protocol included how the group plans to code the data, the group's software for data analysis, and the types of data analysis the group will perform. In addition to finishing the survey, the Survey Group completed their literature review and methodology sections of the final report. Throughout March and April, a few Survey Group members assisted in the interview and data analysis processes at the Interview Group's request. During the interviews, several Survey Group members acted as second interviewers to take notes.

Web Group

The Web Group collected demographics from 30 municipalities to understand the context of online municipal engagement in Indiana. Additionally, the Web Group collected specific policies or government ordinances from those municipalities with publicly available data. The Web Group included links for detailed information and an overview of individual websites, available resources, and engagement opportunities, all of which will be available in the final report. Additionally, the Web Group reviewed the 30 municipalities' websites to research their public meeting notices, calendar functions, and access documents (such as ordinances for citizens).

The Web Group researched social media usage status for 42 municipalities, including all 30 of the originally identified municipalities. The Web Group identified the social media platforms that each municipality uses and whether there are differences in social media utilization levels depending on the municipality's size (by population). Additionally, the Web Group identified case stories within Indiana, which outline some best online public engagement practices.

Next Steps

Interview Group

Once the Interview Group transcribes the remaining interviews and finalizes the coding protocol, the group will begin the coding process. One Survey Group member and one Web Group member are assisting the Interview Group in coding their qualitative data to make up the Interview Group's coding team. The coding process will require separating the transcripts into questions and answers and running the text through the coding software NVIVO. The coders created a hierarchy of nodes, or index terms, to organize the interviews' feedback. The coding team will categorize the nodes' information and filter through the data to indicate patterns and outliers. Once the coding is complete, the Interview Group members will begin the analysis, guided by the coding protocol, and begin working on the final report draft.

Survey Group

The Survey Group is beginning the coding process using the survey coding protocol to guide the analysis. The Survey Group will finalize the analysis of the survey results the week of April 5. Regarding the Interview Group's data analysis process, one Survey Group member is assisting the Interview Group in coding their qualitative data.

The Survey Group will continue to progress on the final report's written aspects. In the next two weeks, the Survey Group will begin preparations for the final presentation by finalizing their sections of the final report. Additionally, the Survey Group is working to construct a list of recommendations for the final report. The Survey Group will work with the other Capstone members to finalize the recommendations for the Client.

Web Group

The Web Group is continuing to research case stories for the final report. Specifically, the Web Group is identifying other states that excel in online public engagement (including the states of Colorado, California, and Florida) and will prepare case stories from these states. Regarding the Interview Group's data analysis process, one Web Group member is assisting the Interview Group in coding their qualitative data using NVivo.

The Web Group will continue to progress on the final report's written aspects. In the next two weeks, the Web Group will begin preparations for the final presentation by finalizing their sections of the final report. The Web Group will work with the Capstone to establish recommendations and evaluations for the Client that will follow a final assessment of online municipal engagement capacity in Indiana.

Case Stories Appendices

Case Stories Overview

The Case Stories Appendices includes the 11 case stories reviewed by the Interview and Web Groups. The Interview Group solely analyzed four cases from within Indiana municipalities, including cases from Seymour, Rushville, Plainfield, and Sullivan. The Web Group reviewed seven cases, including Evansville's Regional VOICE, Colorado Department of Transportation, Open Littleton (Online Discussion) Littleton in Colorado, Florida Department of Transportation, California Webinar on Transparency, The City of Kalamazoo's "Imagine Kalamazoo" 2025, Jon Shanahan v. City of Minneapolis, and South Korea's Digital Government.

Interview Case Stories

Seymour Mayor Reaches Residents Over Weekly Facebook Column

Summary

City of Seymour's Mayor Matt Nicholson embraces online public engagement in order to make his administration transparent and approachable. Since his election in early 2020, Mayor Nicholson adopted a strategy of engagement and outreach that lets Seymour's residents know how their city is working for them. Using a weekly column, bimonthly radio appearances, and the city's local newspaper, his outreach works to build trust and foster a collaborative political environment.

Mayor Nicholson started writing weekly columns on his Facebook page in January 2020 and continued this practice throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In these columns, the Mayor shares with his followers what it looks like to sit in his seat in 3-5 paragraphs a week. A recent post discussed meeting 3rd graders at a local elementary school, while another details a visit with the Seymour Department of Public Works where he helped with the commercial recycling route. These posts also address more controversial topics, such as recent sewer rate increases. While the content of the columns changes weekly, all share an attention to the details of the Mayor's day-to-day duties.

Social media allows Mayor Nicholson to reach Seymour residents more consistently and more meaningfully. While his posts on Facebook help to engage one demographic, he attributes some of his success to cross-publishing in the local newspaper. Similarly, Mayor Nicholson live streams from two local radio stations after city council meetings. The content of these live streams often aligns with the content of his weekly columns, and he focuses on providing the necessary information for informed participation among Seymour residents. A city podcast, titled "Seymour Moments," is available on SoundCloud and boasts 17 episodes. In these podcasts, Mayor Nicholson welcomes guests from across the city, such as a City Engineer in the most recent episode, to discuss timely topics related to the city.

Highlights

- Mayor Nicholson has written close to 60 weekly columns since his January 2020 election.
- The weekly columns have garnered positive attention from Seymour residents, attracting multiple likes, comments, and shares from the page's 3,000 followers.
- These posts help strengthen the administration's focus on transparency. The Mayor hopes to make his "open door" policy known: residents have the chance to offer feedback on city policies, and he is always open to hearing their views.

Lessons Learned

1. Using several different platforms increases the reach of the Mayor's messages. Because each platform tailors to different demographics, the City maximizes engagement when every available platform is utilized.
2. Opening the columns with popular quotes or poems keeps his followers engaged and often offers a cohesive theme for the post.

Results

Fostering a dialogue between Seymour's administration and residents is a necessary precursor to an engaged community. By leveraging social media and other platforms like radio and newspaper, Mayor Nicholson is able to broadcast his "open door" policy and build trust in his administration. Mayor Nicholson emphasized his desire to increase access to information, regardless of age or skill level in technology. He doesn't want policy changes to come as a shock to residents, and his columns succeed in spreading his message across several demographics. With every share on Facebook or publication in the local newspaper, Mayor Nicholson gains several new followers and is further along the road to a fully engaged community.

To Learn More

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Rushville uses Surveys to Identify Needs, Build Legitimacy, and Drive Engagement

Summary

Beginning in 2014, the City of Rushville distributes a biannual online survey via Qualtrics and promotes the survey via Facebook, the City's website, and other local media outlets. The Survey gauges public perception of the current and proposed city and county projects and initiatives. Survey responses provide invaluable data to identify recent successes and future needs, justify current or future projects, and motivate local officials and leaders for future action.

Survey results influence timely local policy discussions: the 2014 and 2020 surveys informed the 2014 City of Rushville Comprehensive Plan and the 2020 City of Rushville Comprehensive plan. The City uses survey results to determine if previous comprehensive plans achieved their objectives and solidified and prioritized new planning goals and objectives.

The proliferation and use of the surveys show Rushville the power of utilizing social networks and partner organizations to disseminate information, the utility of keeping tabs on the sentiment of the population, and various lessons on how to increase the efficacy of online public engagement at each stage of the process.

Highlights

Rather than relying solely on public meetings or newspaper articles for public engagement, the City of Rushville frequently reaches a large audience on social media. The City amplifies the reach of its important messaging by coordinating with numerous community groups such as the Rush County Community Foundation, Rush County Economic and Community Development Corporation (ECDC), Rush County Schools, Heart of Rushville, Rush County Chamber of Commerce, and all individual City departments pages to share their posts. Additionally, the City utilizes a network of several key community leaders, including current Mayor Pavey, Director of Special Projects Sheehan, Department Heads, the ECDC Director, the Heart of Rushville Director, City Councilpersons to share essential posts.

Survey results from each year of the survey compare results to previous years in a combined spreadsheet. Comparing data allows Rushville to see how attitudes have changed across time, quantify their successes and identify the areas that need to focus on future development. Rushville actively uses the survey results to inform engagement strategies about related topics and obtains survey response rates corresponding to about 1/6 of their entire population.

Methods

- Online survey – Using a Qualtrics paid subscription, Rushville can monitor responses in real-time and can turn off the link once it has reached a sufficient number of responses. The link stays live for roughly three weeks.
- Facebook promotion – As highlighted above, the City posts the survey on Facebook, and several influential organizations and community leaders share the post. Rushville periodically posts updates on Facebook to ensure that it remains fresh in its residents' feeds.
- Email promotion – Rushville sends the survey link to all of their county businesses via Constant Contact utilizing a database of contact information they built for those purposes. They reach out more personally to their major employers (Intat, Trane, Rush Memorial Hospital) and ask them to share the survey with their employees. After monitoring the demographics of the survey responses, Rushville noticed that they did not have many youth respondents. As a result, they asked Rushville High School to share it with their students.
- Personal pleas – Key officials make personal pleas to residents like, "here is your chance to shape the next 20-30 years of our city's history." Comments like these to residents who have expressed concerns about not being involved helps them to feel heard.

Lessons Learned

Rushville learned that monitoring social media even beyond business hours is essential to its success. Several Facebook admins closely monitor key posts after business hours. If there is a question or unfair comment posted in the comments section of a post, one of their admins can quickly address it. Timely responses are crucial to ensuring that misinformation about government business doesn't spread.

Rushville learned that having staff specialize in certain types of social media posts is important. Prior to recent years, any Facebook admin from Rushville would post when deemed individually necessary. They have adapted such that the Mayor's secretary posts about all community events, the Director of Special Projects posts messages, and shares information about city projects and new investments. The Mayor creates posts with specific messages (often about holidays or important moments in history) from the Mayor himself. When the interns are working for Rushville during the summer, they utilize their social media savviness to create unique content.

The use of surveys has helped Rushville better manage complex social media interactions. They have learned not to engage with negative comments in kind. Responses to angry or accusatory comments should be facts-based, absent of opinion, quick and concise to ensure that additional confusion doesn't occur. If deemed necessary enough for a response, specific comments should lead to offline conversations – Rushville does not engage in a battle in the comments section. In these conversations, they often invite contrarians or aggressors to be a part of the solution but find that entreaties for direct dialogue often are avoided or otherwise cause those users to choose not to comment as frequently in the future.

Regarding the administration of the surveys themselves, Rushville learned the importance of consistency and context. They often provide context as to why they are asking certain questions to help obtain better-informed answers. They find a balance between keeping the survey brief and digestible but detailed enough to engage participants more fully. Rushville also finds a great benefit to keeping their survey generally consistent year after year. Many of the questions are the same, but they keep particular sections similar year after year to ensure that comparisons to previous years are accurate.

Results

Rushville obtains high response rates for its surveys because of its use of social networks and social media, which informs its use of both. Out of a population of roughly 6,300 people, Rushville obtained: 1018 responses for its 2014 survey, 699 from 2016; 1134 from 2018; and 1036 from 2020. Its 2020 survey post garnered 47 shares and reached 2,400 responses. The City uses the survey results to gauge its citizen's satisfaction with an index of 30 city benchmarks and sees a marked increase in these scores every year. Rushville uses the survey results to prove the legitimacy of certain city efforts, which they find particularly useful when addressing contrarian social media posters.

To Learn More

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Town of Plainfield Notifies Residents Through Town App

Summary

The Town of Plainfield directly participates in online public engagement through a number of platforms, including its most recent endeavor, the town app. Launched in 2018, the town's app advises participating residents of town events, traffic concerns, and other news. Residents can also choose whether to get push notifications with this information directly on their home screen. It also gives residents a way to contact city officials directly to file complaints and pay for utilities. Due to the increasing number of phone users, engaging residents on their everyday devices is increasingly necessary for local governments. Apps or applications are software that can be downloaded onto mobile devices and usually have a specific purpose. In the case of local governments, this purpose aligns with transparent, direct public engagement on individuals' most used platform- their cell phone.

The idea for the Plainfield town app was sparked initially in 2017 by the former park manager, Clay Chafin. It was originally solely for the parks department but then widened to benefit the city as a whole. Reach Media Network, a signage software company, developed the app for Plainfield. Currently, the communications director manages the app and pushes notifications from other directors of what information to upload on the app.

Highlights

- Today, 4,735 devices have downloaded the app, providing over 4000 android and iphone users with public engagement access.
- The app includes:
 - All social media posts from Facebook and Twitter
 - Quick links social media pages and the Town's website
 - Contact information for all town officials
 - Maps of Plainfield and popular hiking trails
 - A calendar detailing parks and recreation events, council meetings, and trash pickup schedules
 - Access to online utility payments

Lessons Learned

- Plainfield's plethora of online engagement platforms allows for transparency and communication between residents and city officials.
- Plainfield's app is a cost effective way to engage the public, as it simply requires programming and the capacity to send push notifications.
- Push notifications directly notify residents without calling for an individual to step away from their daily social media scroll

Results

Plainfield's app is the first of its kind in Indiana and connects 4,000 residents to their local government. Plainfield's app also highlights the usefulness of having such a program

specifically dedicated to city affairs. City apps in addition can be used for a number of other services. As cities become more ingrained with sensor technology, town apps can be used as an environmental tool to track individual home water and electricity consumption, full waste containers, and air quality levels. These measures could significantly decrease city expenses, and in addition, save vital natural resources. Apps can also notify residents of crime incidents, traffic delays and infrastructure construction. Finally, with an app reporting feature, residents can notify officials of crimes, and necessary infrastructure fixes.

To Learn More

Stephanie Singh

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Sullivan Mayor Utilizes Social Media to Brand his Town

Summary

In the age of social media, controlling the narrative can be extremely difficult. Anyone, anywhere, can say anything they like about a city with almost to an audience of dozens, hundreds, or even thousands - often without any repercussions. In a world where every voice has an equal platform, how does a small-city administration drown out potential negativity and shape their image in a positive way? Mayor Clint Lamb has one suggestion: branding. In the city of Sullivan, slogans are everything. Browsing the city's Facebook page, a resident can find updates on new banner placings with the hashtag "Feels Good to Be Here," a solicitation for donations to help repair their public pool with the caption "It Takes Us All," or even just a simple appreciation post with the city's slogan "Take Time to Care."

It takes more than a hashtag or a nice picture to brand your city, Mayor Lamb concedes - and small towns have more than their fair share of limitations. Funding, personnel, capacity, and demand can all affect a municipality's efforts to control their brand, and Sullivan's mayor will be the first to admit it. "In a smaller city everybody kind of wears multiple hats" he said, emphasizing how difficult it can be to monitor social media interactions day-to-day when the administration lacks the funding or personnel to do so full-time, especially when we live in a society today where "we expect a lot more from each other, we expect more of our community, and we definitely expect more from our local officials." For now, Mayor Lamb's efforts have primarily focused on Facebook, where he and some of his colleagues post regularly. More than that, he has deliberately cultivated a relationship between the city administration and residents of Sullivan that allows for open dialogue and communication.

Despite challenges the administration has faced, the City of Sullivan's branding efforts persist. Looking to the future, Mayor Lamb hopes to hire a full-time outreach coordinator that will be, in part, tasked with maintaining and expanding the city's online presence on all major platforms. During his monthly "First Friday Chats" posted on Facebook and the city website, the city's

“Take Time to Care” slogan is plastered in the background in bright yellow letters. At the end of every post is a sign-off with a collection of hashtags meant to reflect the message that Sullivan is the place to be. On the city’s website is a Q&A, profiles and contact information for municipal employees, and a slideshow highlighting the most eye-catching parts of town: all meant to drive home the image of a transparent, open-door, close-to-home government that happily serves its community.

Highlights

- Mayor Lamb has formed a number of campaign and city slogans, including “Paths to Progress,” “It All Starts Here,” “Feels Good to Be Here,” and “It Takes Us All.”
- Combining quick, easily digestible slogans with regular updates, reminders, and appreciation posts allows for positive messaging that sticks in the minds of viewers - both local and non-local.
- For a city of just 4,200 year-round residents, these branding efforts are able to garner dozens, sometimes even hundreds, of likes, shares, and comments.
- The City of Sullivan has reported positive population growth every year since 2017.

Lessons Learned

1. Expectations for social media engagement can be demanding and even unrealistic. However, it is still important to engage as often as possible and make your constituents feel heard.
2. Simply posting content is not enough. Branding is not just about being on social media: the message is just as important as the messenger.

Results

For decades, Sullivan has reported a decrease in population - an unfortunate trend in many smaller and rural communities. However, for the last 3 years, the city has reported positive population growth: something Mayor Lamb attributes, in large part, to his administration’s efforts to positively brand the City of Sullivan. “If you can stop the mass exodus, get people excited again, and show them the true potential of what’s going on... it can be truly transformational.”

To Learn More

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Web Case Stories

Civic participation platform (Regional VOICE) from Evansville and five counties (Vanderburgh, Posey, Warrick, Gibson, and Henderson)

Summary

Regional VOICE's first initiative started as Evansville VOICE; launched in partnership with the City of Evansville Mayor's Office, Leadership Everyone, and EXTENDED COMMUNITY (currently, EXTEND GROUP) from 2012 to 2014. Leadership Everyone is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization located in Evansville, Indiana. Leadership Everyone has planned "Celebration of Leadership," "Community leadership training programs," and "VOICE" under the vital mission and vision toward promoting collaboration, volunteerism, engagement in transforming the community. EXTEND GROUP had built the technical base of VOICE, which enables online participation and archives community engagement progress.

In Evansville VOICE, over 3,000 people participated in sessions where a diverse population expressed their visions and ideas about the community. The city developed three significant themes through sessions: Healthy Green Spaces, City Core, and Experiences. Conversations and ideas around these themes were collected. Those sessions built the city's projects and plans, such as Regional Cities, The Promise Zone Initiative, and Evansville's Downtown Master Plan. Also, Evansville VOICE motivated the few servant-leader-led projects such as ParksFest, The Franklin Street Bazaar, Evansville's Cultural Districts, and the Haynie's Corner Arts District revitalization. According to the initiative's statistics, this initiative found support among 200 volunteers and 250,000 people impacted through this action. (VOICE, n.d.)

Regional VOICE has been developed based on Evansville VOICE's case, in the urge of having an inclusive visioning process between five regional counties: Vanderburgh, Posey, Warrick, Gibson, and Henderson. VOICE has created a platform where individuals can participate and share the ideas of community development. VOICE's data collection plan guarantees that the citizens can influence immediate actions through policy change and public projects. VOICE aims to represent the missing voice into the table of discussion through implementing online participation methodology. The platform provides online courses for those in the five regional counties that cannot attend in-person VOICE sessions—staff archive data and reports as public information.

Highlights

1. Active and immediate actions from the city and county officials

Due to the success of Evansville VOICE, this initiative is spreading into larger geographic bases. A vital part of this success lies in the city and county officials' active and immediate actions. Community and individuals' quality-based participation can last a long time when that participation yields tangible results. Evansville's city turned the voice and data collected from the community into meaningful projects such as Evansville's Cultural Districts and plan such as The Promise Zone Initiative.

2. Data archive and collection

Regional VOICE values the importance of the collection and archive of the data. Archived information is a great source to be used to motivate new participants through sharing the actual

cases and to be used as a rationale for the policy change. After they have implemented the online session, archived reports for the online session are open to the public.

3. Transition to online engagement

Regional VOICE implemented online engagement to expand participants' diversity and hear the voices not heard in the community. Adaptation toward the online method will give VOICE more chances to develop an inclusive and diverse participation environment. Through both in-person and online engagement, VOICE can expand its constituency and raise the initiative's effectiveness if the methodology of the data collection in both types can be coordinated and build consistency.

Lessons Learned

VOICE implies two critical factors for the success of online engagement in the municipalities. Tangible and visible policy change and city projects motivated the higher quality and broader range of community engagement. Also, because policy change and a project cannot proceed without the solid foundation of data collection, a practical and feasible way for data collection in community engagement will be the core parts to be considered when launching a public/online engagement initiative.

Methods

Online courses/ online participations consist of 1) an overview of what VOICE is doing and shared visions from past sessions and 2) a set of questions that aims to learn more about participants and their thoughts about community engagement. It serves as both educational materials for community engagement and a route to genuine participation.

Results

As statistical results have proven, over 3,000 people participated, and 200 volunteers and contributions have supported and 250,000 people impacted through Evansville VOICE. More importantly, community and individuals participation led to policy change in the city across numerous projects and plans. Sharing the experience of success in public engagement served as a strong impetus toward a more extensive regional initiative: Regional VOICE.

To Learn More

- Leadership Everyone
- Phone: 812-425-3828
- Website: <https://leadershiveveryone.org>
- Evansville VOICE Outcomes: <https://voicecommunity.org/evansville-voice/>
- Online Regional VOICE Session Outcomes: <https://voicecommunity.org/online-sessions-report/>
- VOICE Session reports: <https://voicecommunity.org/session-reports>

Virtual Public Engagement of Colorado Department of Transportation

Summary

Due to its geographical layout, gathering opinions from a wide range of Colorado residents through in-person meetings is difficult. The COVID-19 pandemic further adds to this difficulty while serving as an opportunity for local governments in Colorado to choose online methods to engage participating residents.

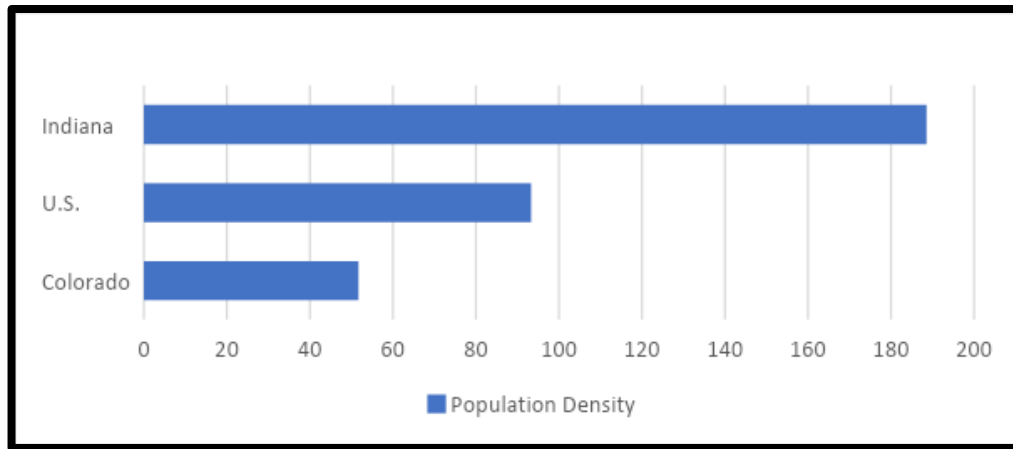


Figure 1. Population Density (Statista 2020)

The tourism industry is one of Colorado's primary industries because of the Rocky Mountains, which account for two-fifths of its total area. Colorado is also famous for having the highest paved roads in North America. The road from Trail Ridge Road to Continental Divide is 12,183 feet above sea level, and the road from Idaho Springs to Mount Evans via I-70 is 14,258 feet. The same may be true for any region, but for Colorado, roads, or transportation systems, can be considered unique.

Highlights

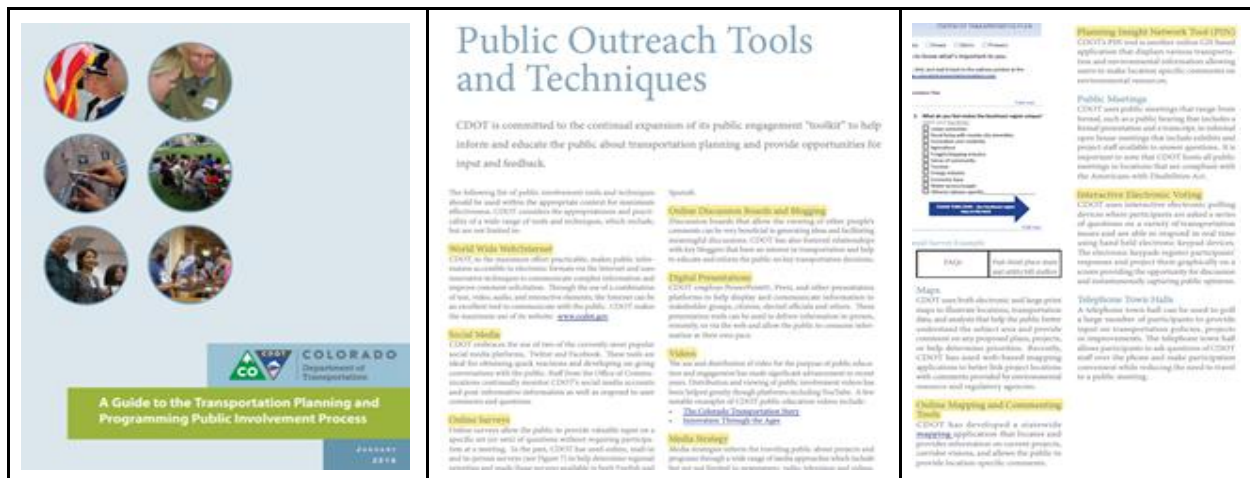
The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) has already been actively promoting public participation. CDOT already published "A Guide to the Transportation Planning and Programming Public Involvement Process" in 2016. CDOT began using "Virtual Public Engagement," a public opinion gathering function online, in their project planning stage last year when COVID-19 was spreading.

Lessons Learned

As mentioned earlier, it is not easy to bring many people together in a sparsely populated state like Colorado. COVID-19, in particular, added to this problem. Under these circumstances, the online public engagement method chosen by CDOT is very appropriate. It is essential to collect and reflect the residents' opinions from the road construction and maintenance project, which significantly affects the lives of Colorado residents. By incorporating the already developed online technology into CDOT's project, CDOT will dramatically increase its public participation in its business operation.

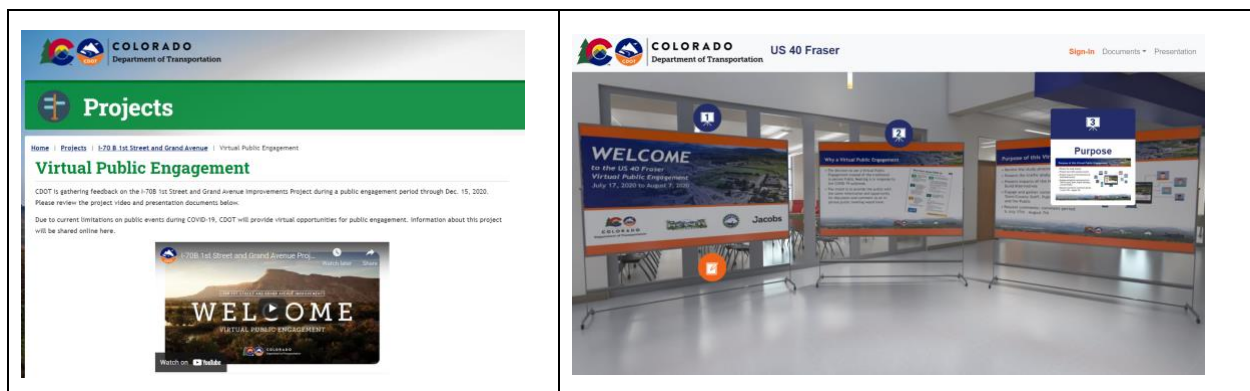
Methods

CDOT recognizes that public participation is crucial in developing regional and statewide transportation plans and other planning products. So CDOT already created the "CDOT Public Involvement Guide" to set up the framework for public engagement in the CDOT policy. It provides email subscribers with data on transportation plans and opportunities to develop long-distance transportation plans of CDOT.



A Guide to the Transportation Planning and Programming Public Involvement Process

In particular, CDOT introduced the Virtual Public Engagement program last year and implemented virtual public participation throughout the state. Virtual Public Engagement uses digital technology to encourage individual residents to participate and visualize projects and plans. Virtual Public Engagement applies to the planning stage of the project. The person in charge of the project posts a presentation video describing the CDOT website's project and receives citizens' opinions through the CDOT website, text messages, and email. The "Feasibility Study Virtual Room" also virtually implements an actual meeting room. People can view presentations and post comments directly. After that, various information, such as the project's progress, will be released through various channels such as the homepage, Facebook, and Twitter.



Aim can potentially introduce this program to cities/towns in Indiana and suggest applications. Cities/towns governments must prioritize their various projects in the budgeting process. However, the scope of participation is bound to be very limited. Thus, Virtual Public Engagement programs can be an easy alternative to collecting general opinions. In particular, Aim may propose applying the entire city/town government project to propose this program at a specific department level because each resident has different areas of interest. For example, if a city with an annual project worth more than \$100M could make a provision that requires Virtual Public Engagement at the planning stage, regardless of which department spends more than \$3M on public projects. They can also disclose such opinions to citizens and inform them of how to apply them. Then it could dramatically increase the level of civic participation and transparency of their governmental activities.

Results

CDOT continues to collect online feedback on the projects it carries out. In particular, during the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual opportunities for public engagement will be provided further. They also update the information so that citizens can get more information about the projects of CDOT. CDOT announced that they will document, record and review comments, and the opinions will be considered in the final design with other factors. And CDOT says CDOT encourages public input on all projects.

To Learn More

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- Email: elise.thatcher@state.co.us

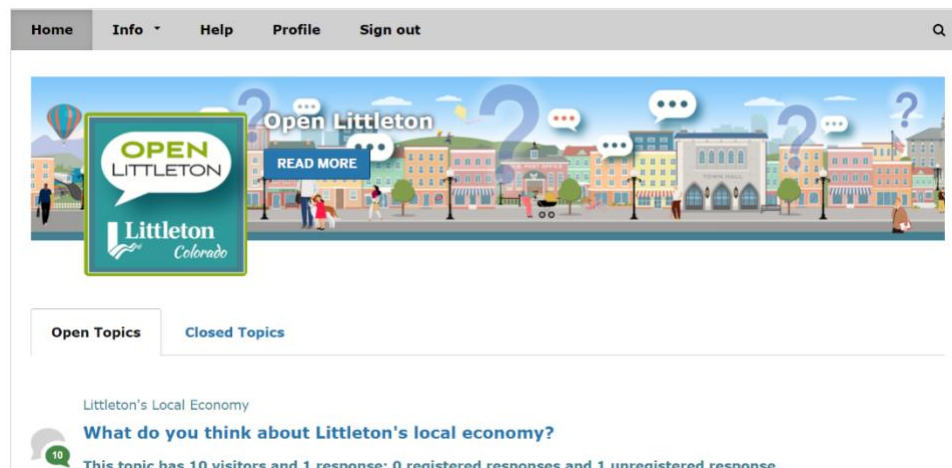
Open Littleton (Online Discussion) Littleton, Colorado

Summary

Open Littleton is the City of Littleton, Colorado's online public engagement platform to collect feedback about many topics for making policies continuously, allowing community members who cannot attend workshops or meetings to offer thoughts and opinions from home. As with any public comment process, participation in Open Littleton is voluntary; city officials consider input from this forum and all other participation channels.

Highlights

To run Open Littleton, the Littleton government cooperated with the non-profit organization Peak Democracy, a non-partisan group whose mission is to broaden civic engagement and build public trust in government.



The most prominent feature and advantage of Open Littleton is the survey platform. When each department of government posts topics about their policies on the platform, the residents of Littleton and out of Littleton are able to answer the multiple-choice and short answer questions. Furthermore, anyone can then immediately see the visualized answered data of the respondents.

Lesson Learned

The survey provides accurate figures of the data that the questioner wants to see. When reflecting citizens' opinions in the policy, it becomes more influential in appealing that public officials reflect on many people. In other words, surveys give representation to individuals' perspectives. The survey also provides systematic communication opportunities between public entities and residents. When the government makes policies, its stakeholders may want to express their opinions; however, someone may not know what to say if they have not thought about the policy in detail. If the city uses a structured survey, respondents can present their opinions systematically. While many local governments are already using various survey tools to establish policies, it is a different level for local governments to create and operate policy survey platforms. The platform design makes policy-conscious residents loyal stakeholders.

Methods

As mentioned earlier, the Communications Department of Littleton, Colorado, runs the platform. It is collaborated by the non-profit organization Peak Democracy. Questions are related to developing and improving various policies, such as improving parks, attracting tourists, revitalizing the local economy, and maintaining facilities. There are many covered topics, as shown in the following table.

Categories	Topics
Community Impact	How has COVID-19 impacted your daily life?
Promoting Visitors	What leisure activities and attractions do one enjoy in Littleton? What are your thoughts on promoting Littleton to visitors?
Enhancing Public Communication	How can Littleton staff members improve public communications and outreach methods to inform and engage the community more effectively?

Example: Survey Topics of Open Littleton, C

Each question subdivides into four categories.

Categories	Questions
Introduction	Include the purpose of each question, relevant policy (plan) explanation, et cetera.
Feedback	Visualize data from people who have responded to the survey
Your Response	My answer to that question
Outcome	Results of policy reflection of survey results for the question

Four Categories of Each Question

The survey asks respondents to answer questions about their names and home addresses. While Data is confidential, responses are classified whether the respondent's response is from a Littleton neighborhood or out of Littleton. These questions further increase the objectivity of the responses to the survey.



Results

The platform currently has 15 Open Topics and a total of 20 Closed Topics. Based on these 20 Closed Topics, the total number of visitors to these questions was 4,200, with 1,374. Each question has 210 visitors and 68.7 responses. To put this figure differently, 210 people attended each hearing or meeting, and 68.7 people raised their hands to make the remarks.

To Learn More

- Name: Kelli Narde
- Title: Director of Communications
- Phone number: 303-795-3733
- Email: comkn@littletongov.org
- Info Source: www.openlittleton.org

Florida Department of Transportation Online Public Engagement Resources

Summary

Florida's Department of Transportation (FDOT) website for public engagement is an example of how resources can be accessed and better shared across stakeholder parties, especially in the light of current global conditions. FDOT published a detailed handbook for public involvement as recently as February 2021. More resources are available for both practitioners and the public to become more involved with events and activities. There is information on how decisions are made regarding transportation, meeting notices, and other linked sources to aid in engagement. FDOT also has information about recent research projects that evaluate, assess, and enhance Florida's public engagement between stakeholders.

Highlights

General guidance on best engagement practices for meetings and hearings is available on FDOT's website. It is worth noting that the group has additional resources to help users troubleshoot issues concerning accessibility issues, technology compliance, and other ways to better engage with the community and stakeholders. In light of current pandemic conditions, FDOT recommends a hybrid approach for future engagement events. Incorporating diverse engagement opportunities will allow participation for traditional in-person traditional meetings and involve other citizens virtually through various platforms.

In 2018, the group also published "Use of Communication Technologies to Enhance Public Involvement in Transportation Projects" to assess and induce participation that is more inclusive for Florida citizens. They found that several communication tools were successful in increasing public participation. Examples of tools identified include extensive email and texting programs, various social media platforms, and multiple virtual meetings to expand online social engagement with citizens.

Lessons Learned

To monitor the success of public engagement goals, FDOT has created evaluation criteria to indicate positive trends in engagement activities. The report provided can quickly act as a starting point for interested stakeholders to later adapt and implement in their communities. There are also examples and recommendations for policies in the information provided, which promote approaches that increased online public engagement. One crucial piece of advice from the document is for departments to establish a *communication policy*.

Methods

To better understand the impact of online public engagement in an FDOT assessment, the authors highlight stakeholders of interests and the various forms of social media communication platforms that work best for different demographics. The summary table below highlights practical tools for increasing engagement from a diverse range of citizens.

Communication Media		General Public & People with Physical Impairment	Older Population	Minority Population	Low-income Population	People with LEP	Hearing-Impaired People	Vision-Impaired People
Disseminate Information	Twitter	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Feeder	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
	RapidFeeds	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
	Blogger	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
	Broadcast Forums	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
	Email-Blasts	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Textedly	Yes	Yes	May be	May be	Yes	Yes	No
Facilitate Two-way Communication	Skype	May be	May be	May be	May be	No	Yes	Yes
	GoToMeeting	Yes	Yes	Yes	May be	No	No	No
	Adobe Connect Meetings	May be	May be	May be	May be	No	No	No
	Facebook	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	May be	Yes	Yes
	YouTube	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	SurveyMonkey	May be	May be	May be	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	WhatsApp	No ¹	No ¹	No ¹	No ¹	No ¹	No ¹	No ¹
Assist in Participation	Google Maps	Yes	Yes	Yes	May be	Yes	Yes	Yes
	MetroQuest	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
	Podcasts	Yes	May be	Yes	Yes	No	May be ²	Yes

¹ Not recommended because of privacy issues; ² Only if podcast transcripts are available.

Results

Continued from FDOT's "Use of Communication Technologies to Enhance Public Involvement in Transportation Projects," contributors explain that "the main objective of this project was to increase participation in public involvement activities by making effective use of today's increasingly available communication media. FDOT achieved its objective through the following tasks:

- Explore and evaluate the different communication technologies that could potentially increase public involvement.
- Review the state's current practices in using communication technologies at public meetings.
- Survey the general public and the public meeting attendees to document the public perspective using communication technologies for public involvement activities.
- Identify appropriate technology-based communication platforms for different underrepresented population groups such as the older population, minority population, people with limited English-speaking skills, et cetera.
- Develop detailed procedures and guidelines for deploying the recommended communication media. "

To Learn More

For more information about Public Involvement, contact Rusty Ennemoser at 850-414-5337 or by email.

California Webinar on Transparency, Public Access & Trust by Institute for Local Government (ILG) of California on April 1, 2020

Summary

ILG held a webinar titled "Transparency, Public Access & Trust: Keeping Local Government Open through Social Distancing." On this webinar, ILG and its partner law firm shared information about new legal guidelines and tips on how to navigate and comply with the current requirements in an ever-changing environment while maintaining public access and trust. Introducing the purpose of the meeting, the webinar host said that "while the mode of operations may change, values should remain the same: transparency, ethics, responsiveness, and public involvement."

The meeting discussed vital transparency topics, including the Brown Act, Public Records Act, and conflicts of interest. In the Q&A session, the Group identified several valuable tips that might help Indiana municipalities.

Highlights: Common Questions and Answers

1) Public Meetings and the Brown Act

What are the technology requirements for virtual public meetings?

- The public must be able to observe and address the meeting
- The notice must be posted promptly (72 hours for regular meeting, 24 hours for special meeting)
- The notice must clarify how the public can attend and provide comment
- Reasonable accommodations must be provided. (Think through visual and hearing needs, prepare with your technology department, and plan for exceptional cases.)

How can a local government make sure to maintain control of and manage disruptions during public meetings?

- From a technology standpoint, try to pre-plan what disruptions may occur. Agency staff should brainstorm solutions to various scenarios in advance.
- Ensure your meeting logistics team has complete control of and full access to your technology (IT team, meeting chair, clerk, et cetera.).
- Designate the meeting chair as responsible for announcing any disruptions and the solution to maintain the meeting's flow.
- Keep members of the press and media informed and consistently participate if an agency needs to clear the virtual room.

What is the best way to handle closed sessions with online or teleconference platforms?

- Create a separate conference call line or virtual platform for closed sessions. Only provide the closed session information to essential participants, including the governing body and key staff.
- Transparency is essential now, which means most discussions about the emergency should occur in an open session. There may be a justification for the closed session under limited circumstances, such as labor negotiations, facility security risks, or specific litigation threats.

How should we handle roll call voting?

- Roll call votes are required under the Brown Act for teleconference meetings. Ensure that your agency's roll-call voting procedure is clarified and adequately described at the beginning of the meeting. Develop a meeting script to explain the approach and ensure that your meeting chair and all voting members understand the process.
- For consent calendars, one vote is sufficient unless an item is pulled from consent. In that instance, the pulled item would need its vote.

We usually post agendas at a location that is currently closed to the public. How can we make sure to comply with the posting requirements?

- Document the posting of your agendas and post them in as many traditional places as possible within required periods. See Temecula's affidavit of posting as an example. Ensure that the agenda is also posted on the agency's website.

2) Public Comment

What are the best ways to comply with public comment requirements when holding virtual public meetings?

- Agenda Language. When noticing the meeting, provide public participation instructions. (They were providing sample agenda.)
- Tailor Your Solution to Your Community. Agencies must still allow for public comments, but that can take many different forms. Some agencies may use a dedicated email address, webinar comments, a teleconference line, or a physical location to drop off comments. Make sure to consider who is in your community and what methods will best serve your community when deciding on how one are going to receive public comments.

3) Public Records Requests

Are we still required to comply with the Public Records Act?

- Yes, responses are still due within ten days. Production of all documents within that time might not be reasonable given remote work circumstances. Demonstrate good faith in your response to explain what is available, when the agency will follow up, et cetera. Ensure that all email replies and voice messages to the requestor clearly outline the process and expected timelines.

4) Conflicts of Interest

How should we handle possible conflicts of interest

- For conflicts identified during a meeting, the decision-maker should announce the conflict, leave the meeting and rejoin later. A best practice is to leave the meeting by ending the conference line or leaving the webinar and then rejoining once the agenda item discussion is complete. If not feasible, the decision-maker should mute their line and not participate.
- Form 700 Filing: The deadline extends until June 1, but officials are encouraged to file as soon as possible.

Lessons Learned

In this webinar, a city clerk spoke: Randi Johl, Legislative Director and City Clerk of the City of Temecula. Another speaker was Michael Maurer, who is a lawyer of the partner law firm of ILG. It can be possible to find a good benchmark between Indiana municipalities and hold a webinar

to share helpful online engagement tips. Also, online engagement may have legal ramifications, so it remains pertinent to get direct help from lawyers.

Methods

California municipality leagues (The League of California Cities, The California State Association of Counties, and The California Special Districts Association) have ILG as their institution for serving local officials" information. ILG has plenty of experience and information. Of course, ILG is a good model for Aim. However, economies of scale in California as opposed to Indiana, and the budget limit of Aim must be considered. It may be best for Aim to share information with other institutions like ILG and try to hold a webinar like this case.

To Learn More

- Melissa Kuehne, Senior Program Manager of ILG
 - <https://www.ca-ilg.org/institute-team>
- Randi Johl, Board member of ILG, City clerk of the city of Temecula
 - <https://www.ca-ilg.org/profile/randi-johl>

The City of Kalamazoo's "Imagine Kalamazoo 2025" Public Participation Plan

Summary

When preparing to develop their plans for 2025, the City of Kalamazoo implemented a Public Participation Plan to ensure the city's citizens were appropriately engaged in developing the plan. Through this public participation plan, the city sought to create a shared vision between the city and citizenry, incorporate public decision-making into all city departments, develop tools to be used in public engagement, and refine their public participation model.

Highlights

Their public participation program contacted nearly four thousand (3,802) community stakeholders, over two years from 2015 to 2017. In addition to traditional public engagement methods, the City of Kalamazoo used online surveys, online and social media announcements, and an Open Town Hall online forum that allowed citizens to discuss city issues without attending meetings in person.

Lessons Learned

The Planning Department notes that there is no "one size fits all" approach to public engagement. However, it is possible to draw on this program's successes to see that the breadth and scope of the tools available to the City of Kalamazoo were beneficial. Surveys and one-way announcements, mainly through digital media, were critical in disseminating information to the citizenry.

To Learn More

- The Kalamazoo Planning Department (269) 337-8000
- 245 N Rose Street, Kalamazoo, MI.

Jon Shanahan v. City of Minneapolis

Summary

The COVID-19 emergency and Minnesota Governor Walz's Executive Order 20-20 ("Stay Home MN") requires city councils to make alternative meeting plans, such as remote public meetings, and still comply with the state Open Meeting Law.

North Minneapolis resident Jon Shanahan, a person with hearing loss, wanted to participate when the Charter Commission was taking comments on a City Council proposal to replace the Minneapolis Police Department in the wake of George Floyd's death. Shanahan contacted the city asking for a sign language interpreter but there was no accommodations during the meeting. Although the City of Minneapolis had automated captioning services, Shanahan believed he was at a disadvantage because he could not fully understand what the other speakers had said. Shanahan decided to file a discrimination charge with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights and entered mediation with the city.

Highlights

1. Minnesota Open Meeting Law

Under the Minnesota Open Meeting Law, “a meeting of any public body (state or local) may be conducted by telephone or other electronic means if a health pandemic or other emergency makes meeting in person impractical or imprudent and all of the same conditions as for other meetings held by telephone or other electronic means are met” (Minnesota Open Meeting Law, 2017). The conditions mentioned above include: “all members of the body can hear one another and can hear all discussion and testimony” (Minnesota Open Meeting Law, 2017).

2. Minneapolis Code of Ordinances

The city of Minneapolis suggested Shanahan submit a comment to participate in the meeting. The Minneapolis Code of Ordinances require “public comments or testimony must be addressed to the presiding officer” (Minneapolis, Minnesota - Code of Ordinances, 2021).

Lessons Learned

The federal government guarantees the fundamental right which allows citizens to participate in public affairs. The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) requires that an individual with a disability should not be denied the opportunity to participate in any government program, service or activity because a public entity's facilities are inaccessible.

When planning public meetings, the government should assure that the meetings are accessible to members of the public who have a disability. Not only about physical access, the government agencies should provide access to the information communicated through the meetings.

Methods

For citizens with some functional hearing limitation, or people who only partially understand the language presented, caption allows the meeting to be accessible to people in need. The most common type of captions are “Closed” captions, which can be turned on or off. The city of Minneapolis adopted an automated closed caption system in early 2020 which is used during the meeting Shanahan attended. The automated closed captioning allows the city to reduce the time devoted to captioning by utilizing artificial intelligence.

Results

The city agreed to provide live, human-generated closed captioning for most public meetings which would better ensure accessibility for the city residents who are deaf or hard of hearing. The settlement also requires the city to provide sign language interpretation for public hearings if residents request it at least seven days in advance.

To Learn More

Minneapolis 311
City of Minneapolis

South Korea's Digital Government

Summary

South Korea designated the establishment of the digital government as a national focus project and continued intensive investment for a long time. After establishing the Electronic Government Act in 2009, All the public entities of South Korea have been making a Digital Government Master Plan every five years. As a result, it made enormous progress in a short period of time and won the number one in the e-participation index of the UN (2020).

Highlights

The Web group used open source data from a Korean government official in the Bureau of Digital Government of MOIS (the Ministry of the Interior and Safety). The Korean government uses the material to introduce the Korean Digital Government to foreigners.

South Korea overcame various difficulties, including Korean War and made tremendous progress within a short period of time. The development of the digital government of South Korea is a main performance of them. It was based on Korean particular density and Information and Communication Technology infrastructure.

The material consists of three parts, History, Achievement and Innovation Plan. There are some tips Indiana municipalities can review. First, there are six points of achievements, e-Document System (connected with all the entities of all the level governments), Gov24 (one-stop service application), HomeTax (very convenient Online Tax Service), e-People (online communication with all the entities of the governments), Petition to the President (Directly to the President) and the number one e-participation index of UN (2020). Second, there are 12 factors of Korean success. Some of them are not fit with Indiana municipalities' situation but we can consider several factors such as i) Innovative and early-adapting culture, ii) Visionary mid/long term plans, iii) Standardized data, iv) dedicated project funding and prioritizing essential services and v) Reviewing and amendment of IT projects from planning to inspection phase. Last is the factors of Innovation Plan. Korean government picked four factors of innovation including i) Service, ii) Data, iii) Infrastructure and iv) Private-Public Collaboration. In preparing and analyzing the online engagement of each municipality, I think these factors can be good criteria.

Lessons Learned

- Making a master plan and bold investing can be helpful to set up the environment for online engagement
- When making law on online engagement, municipalities can refer to other country's act such as Korean Electronic Government Act

To Learn More

- The Bureau of Digital Government of MOIS (the Ministry of the Interior and Safety)
 - <https://www.mois.go.kr/eng/a01/engMain.do>

- Electronic Government Act
<https://www.law.go.kr/LSW/eng/engLsSc.do?menuId=2§ion=lawNm&query=electronic+government+act&x=0&y=0#iBgcolor0>

Interview Appendices

Interview Overview

The Interview Appendix includes the Interview Initial Email Solicitation and Consent Form and the Interview Protocol and Questions. The Interview Group used the Interview Initial Email Solicitation and Consent Form template to request interviews with their sample of selected Indiana municipalities. Specifically, the Consent Form allowed participants to agree to being recorded during the interview. The Interview Group used the Interview Protocol and Questions to guide their interviews. The Interview Group maintained a list of the most important questions to ask in the event there was insufficient time to ask every interview question. The essential questions the Interview Group identified related to the topics of benefits and challenges (Questions 4, 5, 15, 19, 22, 25, and 26), the COVID-19 pandemic (Question 6), accessibility and engagement (Questions 7, 11, and 13), and the role of Aim in supporting future online public engagement efforts (Question 24 and 27).

Initial Email Solicitation and Consent Form

Hello,

We are reaching out to you today through a partnership between Accelerate Indiana Municipalities (Aim) and the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University. We are interviewing select municipalities across Indiana to collect information on their practices, opportunities, and challenges related to online public engagement.

The information provided will be used by Aim to help in their work furthering the growth and development of Indiana municipalities. Answers to our questions will help to establish a list of best practices for municipalities based on various demographic factors, help Aim to provide needed resources for future online engagement practices, and provide insight as to how specific municipalities may be affected by the Open Door Law in the Indiana State Legislature. Answers will be used to determine general data trends and needs, as well as specific information about practices being used for engagement. Though answers may be connected to specific municipalities, any personal information about the individual completing the interview will be kept private.

Please plan for the interview to take one hour. It will include a variety of questions on topics related to online public engagement. Your answers to these questions are an invaluable resource to Aim and its work in providing needed resources across the state. Please have the person most knowledgeable about your municipality's online public engagement strategies schedule an interview with us. **Please note that interview dates will not be available after 4/2/2021.**

Follow this link to schedule the interview. Simply select an available day and time window and video conferencing details will be made available:

<https://calendly.com/aimcapstone21/interview>

Please sign and return to us the attached consent to be recorded form before your interview. **You must return a signed recording consent form to be interviewed.** The recordings are for review and analysis purposes only and will never be made public. You may provide an additional signature if you wish for your municipality's participation in our report to be named.

For questions about the interview and to return your signed consent forms, please email: Grayson Hart at grayhart@iu.edu

For more information regarding the O'Neill Capstone Program, please email: Julia Bauer at juhbauer@iu.edu or Hannah Gibbs at hrgibbs@iu.edu

Interview Consent Form

Please sign this line to indicate that you give consent for this 2021 Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs Capstone class to list the name of your municipality as a participant in our final report.

Printed Name and Title

Signature

Date

Please sign this line to indicate that you give consent for this 2021 Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs Capstone class to record your interview for the purposes of gathering complete information for internal accuracy of our survey and store the recording for the duration of our course. The interview recording will be stored on IU's secure server until the first week of May 2021, and it will then be deleted.

Printed Name and Title

Signature

Date

Interview Protocol and Questions

Accelerate Indiana Municipalities: Supporting Online Engagement in Indiana Cities and Towns

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this project to help Accelerate Indiana Municipalities (Aim) determine how it can support Indiana municipalities' online public participation practices.

We are graduate students helping Aim to answer these questions as part of our capstone course in public affairs.

Your responses are confidential. We will only share an aggregate summary of all responses with Aim, and only after community and interviewee names have been removed. We hope you will respond completely and honestly about your experience with online public participation and/or public engagement. Thank you for participating!

Pre-Interview Question:

1. Can you please provide your full name, professional title, and organization you work for?

BEGIN RECORDING HERE

What is the state of online public engagement now?

These first questions will help us to understand the present state of online public engagement in your community. For the purposes of this interview, we are defining online public engagement as a variety of public engagement methods that occur online that bring people/citizens together to address issues of public importance. Online public engagement may also fall under the following terms: citizen engagement, community engagement, stakeholder involvement, collaborative governance, etc.

2. What is the name of your municipality, and how would you classify its size?
3. Does your municipality have any current online engagement efforts? Can you please describe some of them?
 - a. Example: Zoom access to city meetings, Facebook, feedback forms, online forums, use of municipal websites to inform and view public meetings, videos, etc.
4. In what ways do your government and your community benefit from online public engagement?
5. Have you encountered any challenges and/or drawbacks from online public engagement?
6. How have your efforts to offer or improve online engagement opportunities been affected by COVID-19?
 - a. Were the changes minor or major, and in what ways?
7. What examples of online public engagement efforts in your municipality have been the most successful?
 - a. What prompted you to make the effort?
 - b. What made it a success?
 - c. Have you written about the effort?
8. What specific factors contribute to your municipality's decisions about the use of online public participation?
 - a. Example: Effectiveness, cost, etc.

9. What platforms do you use to fulfill online public engagement?
 - a. Have you had any particularly positive experiences with any platforms?
 - b. For what sort of events or engagements do these platforms work best?
 - c. Have you had any particular challenges or negative experiences with any platforms?
 - d. Is there a designated position, or positions in different departments, within your municipality aimed at addressing, developing, or managing online engagement?
10. Do you track if participation is representative of your residents, and if so, how?
11. Is your municipality finding ways to better ensure fuller and more inclusive resident online participation?
 - a. Are there steps your municipality would like to take to increase such inclusion and participation?
12. What is your municipality doing to ensure greater accessibility in online public engagement?
 - a. Example: closed captions on online meetings, alternative text on websites, etc.
13. How does your municipality identify and attract participants for online engagement opportunities?
 - a. How do you ensure that those who wish to participate have access, are well informed, or are otherwise prepared?
14. Do you have any targeted information programs that assist community residents with online participation?
 - a. Example: One city specifically targets online engagement of Disabled citizens by providing a resources portal for them. This portal includes info specific to that community, such as resources, feedback forms, and contact information to relevant city officials.
15. What lessons have you learned from previous online participation to build a foundation for future online capacities and projects?

Where do you want it to be?

These next questions are to help us understand how you envision the use of online community engagement in the future.

16. What are the goals for your municipality's online public engagement efforts?
17. Do you plan to continue the same level of online engagement after the pandemic is over?
18. Are there online engagement capacities, practices or lessons that you'll expand on or carry forward?
19. What are the greatest obstacles or barriers to successful online public engagement in your municipality right now?
20. What are the greatest incentives or benefits from online public engagement for your municipality presently?
21. Are more, the same number, or fewer people participating online than participated in person before Covid?

22. What is the biggest challenge you believe your residents face when using online public engagement?
23. Have you developed a set of “best practices” or other rules or policies which your municipality follows when doing online engagement?
 - a. What are they? Are they written down? If so, can you provide them to us?

What do you need to get there?

These questions will help us to better understand what would help your community reach your online public engagement goals.

24. What kinds of online engagement-related resources would your municipality like Aim to provide?
 - a. Example: Best practices, case studies, stories, research, training, etc.
25. What does your municipality need in order to effectively provide online engagement?
 - a. Example: Better internet access, reliable phone service, community tech training
 - b. Are there any specific types of training/education needed to improve your public engagement practices?
26. Since Jan. 1, 2020, has your municipality encountered any legal obstacles or barriers to online public engagement? If yes, please describe.
27. Do municipalities need clearer legal authority in regard to online public engagement? If yes, please describe.
28. Do you have any other questions or comments regarding online public engagement in your municipality?
29. Do you have any questions about our Capstone research for Aim?

Survey Appendices

Survey Overview

The Survey Appendix includes all materials used by the Survey Group throughout the Capstone, including the Survey Initial Email Solicitation and the Survey Reminder Client Reminder Email Solicitation sent to Aim members, the Survey Protocol and Questions containing the survey questions and response options, and links to the PowerBI data analysis charts presented to the Client as part of the final deliverable. The Survey Group used the Initial Email Solicitation and the Survey Reminder Client Reminder Email Solicitation template to request participants from Aim's 508 municipalities. Specifically, the Consent Form allowed participants to agree to being recorded during the interview. The Survey Group used the Survey Protocol and Questions to input the questions into Qualtrics for participants to complete the survey. The PowerBI data analysis link is part of the final deliverable presented to Aim and contains detailed data mapping of survey responses.

Survey Initial Email Solicitation

Hello,

We are reaching out to you today through a partnership between Accelerate Indiana Municipalities (Aim) and the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University. We are surveying municipalities across Indiana to collect information on their practices, opportunities, and challenges related to online public engagement. **Due to an error, the original survey URL was invalid. We kindly request you to complete this survey again. Please find below the new URL.**

Link: https://iu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0U7DNq54WtqG8js

The information provided will be used by Aim to help in their work furthering the growth and development of Indiana municipalities. Answers to questions will help to establish a potential list of best practices for municipalities based on various demographic factors, help Aim to provide needed resources for future online engagement practices, and provide insight as to how specific municipalities may be affected by the Open Door Law in the Indiana State Legislature. Answers will be used to determine general data trends and needs, as well as specific information about practices being used for engagement. Though answers may be connected to specific municipalities, any personal information about the individual completing the survey will be kept private.

The survey should take between **15-25 minutes to complete**, and will include a variety of questions on topics related to online public engagement. Your answers to these questions are an invaluable resource to Aim and its work in providing needed resources across the state. Please note that the **survey will close on April 3, 2021**. Thank you for your time and interest.

For more information regarding the survey, please contact:
Shelbie Francescon at snfrance@iu.edu

For more information regarding the O'Neill Capstone Program, please contact:
Julia Bauer at juhbauer@iu.edu or Hannah Gibbs at hrgibbs@iu.edu

Survey Client Reminder Email Solicitation

Hello,

We are reaching out to you today through a partnership between Accelerate Indiana Municipalities (Aim) and the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University. We are surveying municipalities across Indiana to collect information on their practices, opportunities, and challenges related to online public engagement. **If your municipality already completed the survey, please disregard this message.**

The information provided will be used by Aim to help in their work furthering the growth and development of Indiana municipalities. Answers to questions will help to establish a potential list of best practices for municipalities based on various demographic factors, help Aim to provide needed resources for future online engagement practices, and provide insight as to how specific municipalities may be affected by the Open Door Law in the Indiana State Legislature. Answers will be used to determine general data trends and needs, as well as specific information about practices being used for engagement. Though answers may be connected to specific municipalities, any personal information about the individual completing the survey will be kept private.

The survey should take between **15-25 minutes to complete**, and will include a variety of questions on topics related to online public engagement. Your answers to these questions are an invaluable resource to Aim and its work in providing needed resources across the state. Please note that the **survey will close on March 25, 2021**. Thank you for your time and interest.

Link: https://iu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7P9LEzLOG2wDUFM

For more information regarding the survey, please contact:
Shelbie Francescon at snfrance@iu.edu

For more information regarding the O'Neill Capstone Program, please contact:
Julia Bauer at juhbauer@iu.edu or Hannah Gibbs at hrgibbs@iu.edu

Survey Protocol and Questions

Survey Consent Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this project to help Accelerate Indiana Municipalities (Aim) determine how they can best support Indiana municipalities' online public participation practices. We are interested in understanding your municipality's online public participation and online engagement techniques.

This survey is a part of Indiana University's O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs Capstone course. Students enrolled in the Capstone course are working with Aim to understand online public participation and engagement in local municipalities across Indiana.

This survey covers the topic of online public engagement. For the purpose of this survey, Nabatchi and Amsler (2014) define online public engagement as the variety of methods that occur online that bring people/citizens together to address issues of public importance, such as public participation in public municipal meetings. Online public engagement may also fall under the following terms: citizen engagement, community engagement, stakeholder involvement, collaborative governance, etc.

We would like to know about what online public engagement your local government has done. Your responses are confidential. We will only share an aggregate summary of all responses with Aim, and only after community and interviewee names have been removed. We hope you will respond completely and honestly about your experience with online public participation and/or public engagement. If you have questions prior to or following the survey please contact Shelby Francescon (snfrance@iu.edu).

Thank you for participating!

Survey Close Date: April 2, 2021
Expected Survey Time: 15-25 minutes
Total Number of Questions: 52 questions

Survey Questions

Introduction

1. What is the name of the town/city that you serve?
 1. Required
 2. Open-ended, Text box
2. What position do you hold in your town or city government? (Example: Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Department Head, other)
 1. Optional
 2. Open-ended, Text box
3. Who oversees online public engagement in your municipality? Please state their roles and department.

For the purpose of this survey, Nabatchi and Amsler (2014) define online public engagement as the variety of methods that occur online that bring people/citizens together to address issues of public importance, such as public participation in public municipal meetings. Online public engagement may also fall under the following terms: citizen engagement, community engagement, stakeholder involvement, collaborative governance, etc.

1. Optional
2. Open-ended, Text box

Public Engagement Overview

4. What are the social media platforms that your municipality has a presence on? Please select all that apply.
 1. Check all that apply
 1. Facebook
 2. Instagram
 3. LinkedIn
 4. NextDoor
 5. TikTok
 6. Twitter

7. Youtube
8. Other, please specify:
9. None
2. Required
5. Does your municipality use an official website or webpage (beyond social media) for online public engagement?
 1. Multiple Choice
 2. Yes, we have our own website
 3. Yes, we share a website with other municipalities
 4. No
 5. Don't know
6. What platforms does your municipality use to host its online public meetings or other online public engagement events? Please select all that apply.
 1. Required
 2. Check all that apply
 1. Facebook Live
 2. Instagram Live
 3. TikTok Live
 4. WebX
 5. Youtube Live
 6. Zoom
 7. Other, please specify:
7. Does your municipality have any of the following policies? Please select all that apply.
 1. Required
 2. Check all that apply
 1. General open meeting public participation or public engagement policy
 2. Public comment policy (e.g., sign up and microphone time)
 3. Online or virtual public meeting policy
 4. Open online or virtual meeting public comment policy
 5. Other, please specify: [text box]
8. What strategies does your municipality regularly use now to engage with residents? Please select all that apply.
 1. Required
 1. Ongoing or regular municipal communication with residents about services through the municipal website, social media, etc.
 2. Online tools for residents to report problems, ask for help or get updates about, ongoing problems/emergencies).
 3. Public participation at scheduled meetings of the municipality (councils, commissions, committees, and the like);
 4. Public participation for other special engagement opportunities (e.g., a compost or leaf collection project; or any municipality's comprehensive, land use/zoning-related, transportation, or other plan development);
 5. Other, please specify: [text box]
 2. Then, based on which ones they check:

1. How many people regularly attend your online city or town council meetings?
 - Required.
 - List options as ranges
 - 10 or less
 - 11-25
 - 26-50
 - 51-100
 - 101-150
 - 151+
9. Does your municipality have a budget for online engagement?
 1. Required
 2. Multiple Choice
 1. Yes
 2. No
 3. If yes: Which department(s) maintain(s) the online engagement budget? (If unsure, type, "I'm unsure")
 1. Text box
 2. Required
 4. If yes: How much of your municipality's most recent budget was dedicated to online public engagement?
 1. Range
 - Less than 1%
 - Between 1 to 5%
 - 6% or greater
 - Unsure

Engagement Structure and Maintenance:

10. Does your municipality record and post your online public meetings or other engagement events for public view?
 1. Required, multiple choice
 1. Yes, all
 2. Yes, some
 3. No
 2. If yes: Where are these recordings posted or archived?
 1. Text box
11. Are your municipality's public meetings or meeting minutes available in languages other than English? (i.e Spanish, Burmese, or others as relevant to your community)
 1. Required
 2. Multiple choice
 1. Yes
 2. No
 3. If yes:
 1. What languages are the meetings or meeting minutes available in?

- Text box

12. The following questions relate to the accessibility or inaccessibility of your municipality's online engagement. Please fill in the blank of the following items. Our online engagement is _____ for people:

1. Required, matrix table, scale: inaccessible, somewhat inaccessible, somewhat accessible, accessible, unsure
2. Check all that apply
 1. With mobility impairments
 2. With hearing impairments
 3. With vision impairments
 4. With limited internet access
 5. Who work from 9 am to 5 pm.
 6. With flexible work schedules

13. How satisfied are you with how your municipality is able to engage the public online?

1. Linear scale 1-5, multiple choice
 1. Dissatisfied
 2. Somewhat dissatisfied
 3. Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
 4. Somewhat satisfied
 5. Satisfied

14. Why are **you** satisfied/dissatisfied with how your municipality is engaging the public online?

1. Optional
2. Text box

15. How satisfied are **your constituents** with how your municipality is able to engage the public online?

1. Linear scale 1-5, Optional
 1. Dissatisfied
 2. Somewhat dissatisfied
 3. Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
 4. Somewhat satisfied
 5. Satisfied
 6. Unsure

16. Why are your constituents satisfied/dissatisfied with how your municipality is engaging the public online?

1. Optional
2. Text box

Employee Development and System Management:

17. How often is your municipality's website updated to incorporate upcoming events?

1. Multiple Choice
 1. Multiple times a month
 2. Once a month
 3. Every few months

4. Once a year
 5. Never
 6. We do not have a website
 2. Optional
18. Where does your municipality's staff go to learn about online public engagement strategies, resources, tools, or practices? Please select all that apply.
1. Required
 2. Check all that apply
 1. Accelerate Indiana Municipalities (Aim)
 2. American Society for Public Administration
 3. Association for Indiana Counties
 4. Ball State University or Indiana State University
 5. Indiana University (E.g, Public Policy Institute, Center for Rural Engagement, Ostrom Workshop, Environmental Resilience Institute, O'Neill School of Public & Environmental Affairs)
 6. International City/County Management Association
 7. Other Indiana Municipalities
 8. Other, please specify: [text box]
19. Where does your municipality's staff receive education or training regarding online public engagement strategies? Please select all that apply.
1. Required
 2. Multiple choice with options:
 1. A third party provides training
 2. Aim provides training
 3. Our municipality provides in-house training
 4. Training is not currently provided (exclusive)
 5. Other, please specify:
 3. If training is provided by a third party is selected: Who is the third party training provider?
 1. Text box
20. How are your municipality's IT services managed?
1. Required
 2. Multiple Choice
 1. In-house
 2. Contracted Out
 3. Other, please specify:
 3. If contracted out: Who manages your IT services?
 1. Text box
21. Is your municipality reviewing or assessing the effectiveness of your public engagement practices at least once a year?
1. Optional
 2. Multiple Choice
 1. Yes
 2. No

22. Please answer all that apply and provides examples when possible. How is your municipality _____?

- i. Assessing the public's online participation capacity
 - Text box
- ii. Assessing who participates
 - Text box
- iii. Assessing the effectiveness of municipal education about online participation
 - Text box

Response to COVID-19

The following questions refer to the state of online engagement as a result of COVID-19. Please answer these questions with your municipality's experience from January 1, 2020 to present day. Please click 'Next >>' to continue.

23. To what extent has your municipality's online public engagement efforts been affected by the pandemic?

- 1. Linear scale 1-5
 - 1. No impact
 - 2. Slightly impacted
 - 3. Moderately impacted
 - 4. Highly impacted
 - 5. Unsure
- 2. Required
- 3. If slightly impacted, moderately impacted, or highly impacted is selected: If you feel comfortable, please share how your municipality's online public engagement efforts have been affected by the pandemic
 - 1. Text box

24. Did your municipality have the capacity for online public engagement before Jan. 1, 2020?

- 1. Required
- 2. Multiple Choice
 - 1. Yes
 - 2. No

25. Did your municipality have budget appropriations for online or in-person public engagement before Jan. 1, 2020?

- 1. Required
- 2. Multiple Choice
 - 1. Yes
 - 2. No

26. Since Jan. 1, 2020, has your municipality experienced any **legal** obstacles or barriers to online public engagement?

- 1. Yes

2. No
3. If yes: Please check all legal obstacles or barriers to online public engagement your municipality experienced.
 1. Open Door Law
 2. Did not have a policy for online public meetings and public engagement
 3. Governor's executive order about Open Door Law
 4. Indiana Public Access Counselor
 5. Other, please specify: [text box]
27. Since Jan. 1, 2020, has your municipality experienced obstacles or barriers to hosting public engagement events online?
 1. Required
 2. Multiple choice
 1. Yes
 2. No
 3. If yes: What obstacles or barriers has your municipality experienced to hosting public engagement events online?
 1. Optional
 2. Text box
28. Since Jan. 1, 2020, or since moving your municipality's public events online, have you noticed a change in attendance at the meetings?
 1. Required
 2. Multiple choice
 1. Yes, attendance has **increased**
 - If, yes, please estimate the percentage increase in attendance:
 - 1-10%
 - 11-20%
 - 21-30%
 - 31-40%
 - 41-50%
 - Greater than 50%
 2. Yes, attendance has **decreased**
 - If, yes, please estimate the percentage decrease in attendance:
 - 1-10%
 - 11-20%
 - 21-30%
 - 31-40%
 - 41-50%
 - Greater than 50%
 1. No, there has **not been a change** in attendance
29. Since moving public events online, has your municipality noticed a shift in who attends in terms of demographics and/or representation?
 1. Optional

2. Multiple choice
 1. Yes, for all online events
 2. Yes, for some online events
 3. No
3. If yes: What demographic shifts has your municipality visibly noticed during your online engagement events?
 1. Optional
 2. Text box
30. Has your municipality changed its open meeting public comment policy since moving public engagement online?
 1. Optional
 2. Multiple choice
 1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Is yes: How has your municipality changed its public comment policy, rules, or practices since moving public engagement online?
 1. Optional
 2. Text box
31. Did your municipality need to purchase equipment to transition their public engagement events online?
 1. Optional
 2. Multiple choice
 1. Yes
 2. No
 3. If yes, What equipment did you need to purchase to transition your public engagement events online?
 1. Optional
 2. Text box
32. Is your municipality likely to continue online engagement techniques following the COVID-19 pandemic?
 1. Required
 2. Multiple Choice
 1. Highly likely
 2. Somewhat likely
 3. Somewhat unlikely
 4. Highly unlikely
 5. unsure
33. Why is your municipality likely/unlikely to continue online engagement events following the COVID-19 pandemic?
 1. Optional
 2. Text box

Aim Specific

34. How can Aim better assist your municipality with online engagement knowledge, information, and/or capacities?

1. Required
2. Check all that apply
 1. Assistance with Website Management
 2. Conferences for Employees and Personnel
 3. Information about the Open Door Law
 4. Information on how to contact other municipal officials in Indiana
 5. Resources on Public Engagement Strategies and Best Practices
 6. Training for Employees and Personnel
 7. Webinars for Employees and Personnel
 8. Workshops for Employees and Personnel
 9. None of these
 10. I'm unsure

35. Are there any other services you would be interested in Aim providing to further your municipality's work in online public engagement?

1. Text box
2. Optional

End of Survey Message

Thank you so much for participating in this survey. If there are others in your organization who may be interested in participating in this survey, please feel free to forward them the link you received in your email.

Survey Coding Protocol

Q3. Who oversees online public engagement in your municipality? Please state their roles and department.

- Coded by job title
 - Clerk treasurer
 - Mayor
 - Town manager
 - Town council

Q4. What are the social media platforms that your municipality has a presence on? Please select all that apply.

- Frequency

Q5. Does your municipality use an official website or webpage (beyond social media) for online public engagement?

- Binary

Q6. What platforms does your municipality use to host its online public meetings or other online public engagement events? Please select all that apply.

- Frequency

Q7. Does your municipality have any of the following policies? Please select all that apply.

- Frequency
- Other, please specify coded into categories based on response

Q8. What strategies does your municipality regularly use now to engage with residents? Please select all that apply.

- Frequency
- If *Public participation at scheduled meetings of the municipality (councils, commissions, committees, and the like)* is selected, then: How many people regularly attend your online city or town council meetings?
 - Frequency

Q9. Does your municipality have a budget for online engagement?

- Binary
- If **yes** is selected, then: Which department(s) maintain(s) the online engagement budget? (If unsure, type, "I'm unsure")
 - Frequency
 - If **yes** is selected, then: How much of your municipality's most recent budget was dedicated to online public engagement?
 - Frequency

Q10. Does your municipality record and post your online public meetings or other engagement events for public view?

- Frequency
- If **yes** is selected, then: Where are these recordings posted or archived?
 - Coded into categories based on response

Q11. Are your municipality's public meetings or meeting minutes available in languages other than English? (i.e Spanish, Burmese, or others as relevant to your community)

- Frequency
- If **yes** is selected, then: What languages are the meetings or meeting minutes available in?
 - Frequency
 - Coded into categories based on response

Q12. The following questions relate to the accessibility or inaccessibility of your municipality's online engagement. Please fill in the blank of the following items. Our online engagement is _____ for people:

- Frequency

Q13. How satisfied are you with how your municipality is able to engage the public online?

- Frequency

Q14. Why are **you** satisfied/dissatisfied with how your municipality is engaging the public online?

- Positive/Negative response as a binary
- Coded into categories based on response

Q15. How satisfied are **your constituents** with how your municipality is able to engage the public online?

- Frequency

Q16. Why are your constituents satisfied/dissatisfied with how your municipality is engaging the public online?

- Positive/Negative response as a binary
 - Coded into categories based on response
- Q17. How often is your municipality's website updated to incorporate upcoming events?
- Frequency
- Q18. Where does your municipality's staff go to learn about online public engagement strategies, resources, tools, or practices? Please select all that apply.
- Frequency
 - Other, please specify coded into categories based on response
- Q19. Where does your municipality's staff receive education or training regarding online public engagement strategies? Please select all that apply.
- Frequency
 - Other, please specify coded into categories based on response
- Q20. How are your municipality's IT services managed?
- Frequency
 - Other, please specify coded into categories based on response
 - If *contracted out* is selected, then: Who manages your IT services?
 - Coded into categories based on response
- Q21. Is your municipality reviewing or assessing the effectiveness of your public engagement practices at least once a year?
- Frequency
- Q22. Please answer all that apply and provide examples when possible. How is your municipality _____?
- Coded into categories based on response
- Q23. To what extent has your municipality's online public engagement efforts been affected by the pandemic?
- Frequency
 - If *slightly impacted, moderately impacted, or highly impacted* is selected, then: If you feel comfortable, please share how your municipality's online public engagement efforts have been affected by the pandemic
 - Coded into categories based on response
- Q24. Did your municipality have the capacity for online public engagement before Jan. 1, 2020?
- Binary
- Q25. Did your municipality have budget appropriations for online or in-person public engagement before Jan. 1, 2020?
- Binary
- Q26. Since Jan. 1, 2020, has your municipality experienced any **legal** obstacles or barriers to online public engagement?
- Binary
 - If **yes**, then: Please check all legal obstacles or barriers to online public engagement your municipality experienced.
 1. Open Door Law
 2. Did not have a policy for online public meetings and public engagement
 3. Governor's executive order about Open Door Law
 4. Indiana Public Access Counselor

5. Other, please specify coded into categories based on response

Q27. Since Jan. 1, 2020, has your municipality experienced obstacles or barriers to hosting public engagement events online?

- Binary
- If *yes* is selected, then: What obstacles or barriers has your municipality experienced to hosting public engagement events online?
 - Coded into categories based on response

Q28. Since Jan. 1, 2020, or since moving your municipality's public events online, have you noticed a change in attendance at the meetings?

- Binary
- If *Yes, attendance has increased* is selected, then: Please estimate the percentage increase in attendance:
 - Frequency
- If *Yes, attendance has decreased* is selected, then: Please estimate the percentage decrease in attendance:
 - Frequency

Q29. Since moving public events online, has your municipality noticed a shift in who attends in terms of demographics and/or representation?

- Binary
- If *yes* is selected, then: What demographic shifts has your municipality visibly noticed during your online engagement events?
 - Coded into categories based on response

Q30. Has your municipality changed its open meeting public comment policy since moving public engagement online?

- Binary
- If *yes* is selected, then: How has your municipality changed its public comment policy, rules, or practices since moving public engagement online?
 - Coded into categories based on response

Q31. Did your municipality need to purchase equipment to transition their public engagement events online?

- Binary
- If *yes* is selected then, What equipment did you need to purchase to transition your public engagement events online?
 - Coded into categories based on response

Q32. Is your municipality likely to continue online engagement techniques following the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Frequency

Q33. Why is your municipality likely/unlikely to continue online engagement events following the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Coded into categories based on response

Q34. How can Aim better assist your municipality with online engagement knowledge, information, and/or capacities?

- Frequency

Q35. Are there any other services you would be interested in Aim providing to further your municipality's work in online public engagement?

- Coded into categories based on response

PowerBI Data Link

[https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjojNGUwNmEwOWMtYmYyOS00OWYwLWFIYWItMmUzMWFIOWI1M\[...\].6ljExMTNiZTM0LWFIZDEtNGQwMC1hYjRiLWNkZDAyNTEwYmU5MSlslmMiOjN9](https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjojNGUwNmEwOWMtYmYyOS00OWYwLWFIYWItMmUzMWFIOWI1M[...].6ljExMTNiZTM0LWFIZDEtNGQwMC1hYjRiLWNkZDAyNTEwYmU5MSlslmMiOjN9)

Web Appendices

Web Overview

The Web Appendix includes the “Indiana Municipal Inventory and Overview” and “ANOVA Analysis-Comparison of Social Media Utilization.” The Web Group investigated the official website of the 30 municipalities selected by the Web Group as a sample with certain criteria. The Web Group found that some of the municipalities had websites with functions that met the criteria, while others had websites that lacked functionality compared to others. Finally, the Web Appendix includes the results from the ANOVA analysis. The Web Group conducted an ANOVA analysis to verify the statistical validity of the difference of social media usage across municipality sizes.

Indiana Municipal Inventory and Overview

1. Vernon

Small, Southeast

Website: <http://www.vernonindiana.org/>

Public data accessibility

Agendas and public documents related to meetings are under the Departments-Town Council tab. There are only written minutes and agendas for meetings that have taken place after 2018. Even with the COVID, city officials have been holding meetings in person.

Vernon has a population of only about 300. The numbers indicate that its website may not have more information than other bigger cities and towns. The website does not have calendar, contact information, or job openings, which typically include homepages of other cities and towns in Indiana. Instead, the website has a brief introduction, [history](#), [events](#), and [one video](#) on its official website.

The town's website has a [link](#) to a Facebook account. But the link is linked to a Facebook account for a nonprofit organization called 'Friends of Historical Vernon'.

2. Jeffersonville

Mid-sized, Southeast

Website: <https://cityofjeff.net>

Public data accessibility

Agendas and public documents related to meetings are under the public [documents](#) tab. Minutes are available only in written document form. There is no sign of online citizens' engagement in public meetings besides accessing archived documents and online streaming of council meetings via Youtube and Facebook. Council and commission meetings update in the calendar, and search features can help users find the information quickly. As a user, one can maneuver the calendar by changing month and year, check [events](#) by week, month, and daily with calendar/google calendar options where one can save the meeting's information on a personal computer. The online and general [contact information](#) of representatives of the council has been presented clearly, without omitting information. The website covers the contact and responsibilities of [departments](#) and the [mayor's](#) office. Information about [job openings](#) for the city government is open to the public under the career tab. [Citizens](#) can pay [sewer](#) bills, search public positions online. Citizens also can report a concern by the automated link on the website. "Quick links," "Frequently asked questions," "HOW to DO I.." and the search feature in the website makes it more user-friendly. Due to COVID-19, temporarily, the city has implemented online participation in a public hearing.

The city has several social media accounts: [Facebook](#), Twitter, Instagram, Youtube Live stream archives of city [council meetings](#) can be viewed online through the city's [YouTube](#) Channel and Facebook. Due to the governor's executive order allowing for virtual public meetings due to the declared public health emergency, all public meetings unless otherwise stated will be held via Zoom and streamed to the City Facebook Page. Public hearings are

taking place to live through Facebook, and comments can be submitted online and by mail. [Map interactive service](#) is well-implemented. Under the business tab, different kinds of demographic, geographic information are easily interpretable. Such information includes downtown property, land use map, ongoing project map. However, links are not correctly functioning. Public forms and links appear under the "human resources" tab. Jeffersonville sends a [newsletter](#) via online mail to residents upon registration. The newsletter contains information on the ongoing city and private projects and community news and events. This newsletter can be a convenient source where citizens can receive updated information on the community and city's projects. <https://cityofjeff.net/communications/>

Online services

- [Job applications](#)
- Pay utilities
- Report claims

The temporary implementation of online participation in public meetings

Case example

Jeffersonville Public art [commission](#) has implemented public voting via online and public surveys in the Claysburg arts installation decision.

Related ordinances

Online participation/engagement has appeared in the policy manual of 2017 from the Jeffersonville police department.

322.2 Policy

"Social media provides a new and potentially valuable means of assisting the department and its personnel in meeting community outreach, problem-solving, investigative, crime prevention, and related objectives. This policy identifies potential uses that may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by administrative and supervisory personnel. The department also recognizes the role that these tools play in the personal lives of some department personnel. The personal use of social media can have a bearing on departmental personnel in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as prohibitions on the uses of social media by department personnel."

3. Columbus

Urban, Southeast

Website: <https://www.columbus.in.gov>

Public data accessibility

[Meetings](#) from the city council and commission are recorded and uploaded as video forms on the website. Also, along with video archives, upcoming meetings and agendas are posted under Meetings/[Events](#). Council and commission meetings [update](#) in the calendar, and search features can help users find the information quickly. As a user, one can maneuver the calendar by changing month and year, check events by week, month, and daily. By using "export events," users can save the data on their computers. The online and [general contact information](#) of representatives of the council has been presented clearly, without omitting information. The

website covers the contact and responsibilities of [departments](#) and the [mayor's](#) office. Information about [job openings](#) for the city government has open to the public under the career tab.

The city has several social media accounts: [Facebook](#), Twitter, Instagram, [Youtube](#) [Live](#) stream archives of city [council meetings](#) can be viewed online through the city's YouTube Channel and Facebook. Due to the governor's executive order regarding COVID-19, public hearings are remote online due to COVID-19. Agenda and WebEx Meeting link and password are available. Under the [visit tab](#), users can easily find different kinds of demographic, geographic, cultural [information](#).

Online services

- Job applications
- [Pay utilities](#)
- [Report claims](#)

The temporary implementation of online participation in public meetings

Case example

Users can find communication and public information in a newsletter. Upon request through accessing to "get updates," residents can receive the newsletter to the email. By clicking to additional areas of interest among railroad, riverfront, state street projects, community reminders, and special events, residents can receive additional information related to those areas.

Residents can register for COVID testing online, and related news and information update on the website. Residents can make online payments regarding issues from few departments: animal care services, clerk Treasurer, engineering, planning, police department. [The trash/recycling](#) schedule is updated online and makes requests of concern via online form. Also, an online form is available for a job application, and users can find information about job openings via a webpage.

Related ordinances

The city has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is "announced" or "spoken" on behalf of the city on social media sites. This policy establishes internal procedures for the use of social media. This policy covers all departments within the City of Columbus. Social media refers to activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and content creation. This media allows people to generate, organize, share, edit, and comment on web content through RSS. Other web feeds, blogs, mashups, widgets, wikis, podcasts, and photos video-sharing, to name a few.

City personnel monitors all posts subject to municipal governments' public information laws as outlined by the State of Indiana. Staff archive posts for such a purpose.

4. New Castle

Mid-sized, Southeast

Website Usage (<https://www.cityofnewcastle.net/>)

Public data accessibility

City staff upload [meetings](#) from the city council and commission as word file forms on the website. Also, along with file archives, upcoming meetings and agendas are posted under "upcoming meetings." However, there is no notification that the meetings are via an online platform due to COVID. Council and commission meetings update in the calendar, and search features help users find the information quickly. As a user, one can maneuver the calendar by changing month and year, [check events](#) by week, month, and daily. The online and general contact information of representatives of the [council](#) has been presented clearly, without omitting information. The website covers the contact and responsibilities of [departments](#) and the [mayor's](#) office. Residents can make online utility payments and make requests of concern via online form. Also, online forms for a job application are available. Users can find information about job openings via a webpage. Trash collection info and helpful community links are available.

The city has no presence in social media accounts: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube. Under the [business](#) tab, a few statistics and maps about the city are present. Users can find information about [job openings](#) for the city government open to the public under the career tab. However, information after 2006 is not available. The website's community links page is providing the list of [community resources](#) as a directory. Links to community-related organizations are embedded in the site and enable access to organizations' websites.

Online services

- Job applications
- Pay utilities
- Report claims

5. Fort Wayne

Urban, Northeast

Website: <https://www.cityoffortwayne.org>

Public data accessibility

The "Public Meetings Agendas" page of Fort Wayne's City provides various links to access "Zoning Hearing Officer, Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, et cetera. In other words, users must click several times to check the actual [agendas](#). Fort Wayne has a channel called City TV, and several public meetings recorded can be seen on the page. Unlike other cities usually do, Fort Wayne does not expose the [calendar](#) to the main page. We can check the various information about Fort Wayne's events, such as Boards & Commissions, Council, Mayor Appearances, Park Events, et cetera. The homepage does not have a staff directory. The [contact information](#) for City Council members is found only by clicking on each council member's profile. Citizens can pay their [utilities](#) through the "Fort Wayne City Utilities Payment Portal." Fort Wayne provides '[311 Citizen Services](#)'. Citizens request some services such as "Resident Services (Solid Waste, Neighborhood Code Compliance)," "Repair Services (Street Lighting, Streets, Water Maintenance)," et cetera. This feature is available by smartphone app.

The city of Fort Wayne operates [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#) channels. Fort Wayne does not provide direct cultural and community resources on its website. Because they have a separate "[Visit Fort Wayne](#)" homepage, we can access the "Visit Fort Wayne" website

through links on its website to find information such as things to do, hotels, restaurants, and events. Users can check Citizens Square's address (Cityhall) by clicking "[Contact Us](#)" on the website.

Online services

- [Pay utilities](#)
- [Report an Issue](#)

Implementations

Fort Wayne has been establishing 'the Fort Wayne-Allen County Comprehensive Plan (All in Allen)' with Allen County since the 2020 winter. The plan is to create a new blueprint for the next 20 years of Allen County and Fort Wayne. Fort Wayne divided the project into seven stages for this work and emphasized 'Engagement' to collect residents' opinions. Fort Wayne is preparing various meetings to promote public participation. In particular, they are actively utilizing online platforms such as Zoom and Facebook Live and share the progress of in-person meetings with the public by recording and posting them on their website.

Related ordinances

§ 32.59 PUBLIC HEARINGS.

(A) Public hearings shall be held on all ordinances and resolutions as required by Indiana Statutes in the manner prescribed by said statute, after the due notice required by law.

(B) A motion to conduct a public hearing duly made and passed by Common Council requires a public hearing on any other resolution or ordinance when such public hearing is not otherwise required by law.

(C) A committee chair may call for public comment during consideration of an ordinance or resolution before a committee session of Common Council, any member of Common Council may request a citizen be recognized for public comment during such consideration or, before a meeting of Common Council, a citizen may request to make a public comment by contacting a member of the council. Such a request made by a Council member or a citizen shall not be unreasonably denied.

6. Plainfield

Mid-sized, Central

Website: <https://www.townofplainfield.com>

Public data accessibility

This town also has the Agenda Center page on its website. We will find the [agenda](#) for each board/commission in the town, including the Board of Zoning Appeals, Economic Development Commission, Plan Commission, et cetera. It also provides the contents of the meetings in the form of transcripts (partial). Located in the center of the website's main page, the town's [calendar](#) provides information on events, meetings, and garbage collection schedules. The [council members' email addresses](#) are open on the website, but phone numbers are not available.

Meanwhile, all of the town's staff's email addresses and phone numbers are available on the website's [staff directory](#). Plainfield is releasing information about government [jobs](#) on the

Employment Opportunities page. Job seekers can click on the [job](#) search notice on the website, check the information, and even apply right away. Moreover, there is the Pay Bills banner on the Plainfield homepage. Residents of Plainfield can create accounts and [pay for utilities](#) charged by the town online. It also has a "Report an Issue" banner, allowing people to report and track their concerns for this town.

Plainfield has major social media channels used mainly by people, such as [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#). The town's physical address is on the "[About Plainfield](#)" page of its website. The town also offers maps linked to Google Maps. The town provides information such as the town's [attractions](#) and area [resources](#) (links) through its community page.

Online services

- [Job applications](#)
- [Pay utilities](#)
- [Report an Issue](#)

Related ordinances

§ 30.05 TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS.

(A) Notice of the time and place of regular meetings must be posted in the Town Hall and sent once a year to all news media who have filed a written request for such notice.

(B) Notice of special meetings must be given in the same manner at least 48 hours in advance unless an emergency exists.

§ 31.02 POWERS AND DUTIES.

(B) The Town Clerk-Treasurer may perform all duties prescribed by law, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

(7) Attend all Town Council meetings and maintain a recording of its proceedings.

7. Elkhart

Urban, Northeast

Website: <https://elkhartindiana.org>

Public data accessibility

The city of Elkhart has features such as a Windows file directory on its website. There are various document types in this folder, including [Agendas & Minutes](#). We can check the public meeting agenda of this city in the folder. Of the many public meetings, meetings through Zoom are on the [Elkhart Live](#) page. The city [mayor](#)'s phone number and email address are not open on the website. However, the contacts of the mayor's secretaries are open. [Council](#) members' email addresses and phone numbers are available on the website. A staff directory was hard to find on this website. Entering each department page, some groups like the [communication department](#) disclose their contacts, while others do not. Located in the center of the website's main page, the city's [calendar](#) provides information on events, meetings. Elkhart has the "[Career](#)" banner on the main screen of the homepage. Click on the banner to see job ads for each department in this city hall. Citizens can also pay various [utilities](#) through the Utility Billing page. Elkhart also developed an app called "[MyElkhart311](#)" and provides it to citizens. The app allows citizens of the city to use features such as reporting a problem, requesting a service, reading about city news, and getting city announcements.

Elkhart has major social media channels used mainly by people, such as [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#). Suppose someone clicks "[Visit](#)" on the website. They can check information such as upcoming events, events pictures, city bikeways, parks & recreation, et cetera., provided by Elkhart.

Online services

- [Job applications](#)
- [Pay utilities](#)
- [Report an Issue](#)

Accessibility for disabilities: It provides 'Accessibility Adjustments' on the main page. People who want to use the function can choose the proper accessibility profiles like safe seizure profile, vision-impaired profile, cognitive disability profile, ADHD social profile, et cetera.

Related ordinances

§ 30.08 COMMITTEE MEETINGS.

The President of the Council shall schedule committee meetings of the whole council as necessary and shall give Council members written notice of the meeting at least 48 hours before the meeting. After consultation with the Council President, any three council members may also call a committee meeting of the whole council in the same manner as the Council President. The committee meetings shall be open to both the press and public, as are all the council's regular and special meetings. The President shall call the council to order at the prescribed time, or in his or her absence, the Vice-President shall act in his or her stead. Although the parliamentary rules governing procedures for speech and debate may be set aside at the discretion of the President at such committee meetings, all other rules and regulations governing decorum and standards of conduct shall be in full force and effect whenever a Council member performs any of the duties, obligations, and services mandated by his or her office.

8. Warsaw

Mid-sized, Northeast

Website: <https://warsaw.in.gov>

Public data accessibility

The City of Warsaw has a "[Meeting Agenda & Minutes](#)" page on its website. The page provides agendas and minutes of the common council and other boards to anyone looking for data. The city also places a [calendar](#) on its web page's main screen that provides various information about upcoming events. The city's mayor and [department](#) employee's email addresses and phone numbers are in the Staff Directory. The email addresses and phone numbers of [city council](#) members are also in the common council contact.

The city has a [Facebook](#) address and [YouTube](#) channel and is providing a Beacon [mapping service](#). The main page consists of three main [menus](#) of Live, Work, and Explore. There are submenus of Parks & Recreation, Biking & Walking, and Downtown Warsaw in Explore menu.

Online services

- [Pay Utilities](#)

- [Report a Concern](#)

Case examples

The city's website is straightforward and easy to find. There are only three main menus of Live, Work, and Explore. In the Live menu, there is various information about official service and data. In the Explore menu, we can find some parks and recreation activities.

9. Marion

Mid-sized, Northeast

Website: <https://cityofmarion.in.gov>

Public data accessibility

The City of Marion has a "Minutes & Agendas" page in the Government category. The page provides [agendas](#) and minutes of the common council and other boards to anyone looking for data. The city does not provide a [calendar](#) menu. However, in the [News & Event](#) menu, we can find upcoming events and past news. The city provides email addresses and phone numbers of members of the [council](#). On the Department page, we can find the managers' [contact](#) information for each department. The city has a website for utility services. On the website, citizens can pay bills or request services.

The city has [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) addresses. There is a map at the bottom of the web page and a brief introduction to the city's location. The main page consists of four main menus of Live, Business, Visit, and Government. In the [Visit](#) menu, we can find some parks, attractions, and activities.

Online services

- [Pay utilities](#)
- [Report an Issue](#)

Case examples

Champion of the Month- The city operates the corner of [Champion of the Month](#). Citizens can share a story of someone, and the city selects the champion of each month. Users can find the story on the main page of the city's website. The event can be a good motivation for citizen's participation and the unity of the community.

10. Muncie

Urban, Northeast

Website: <https://www.cityofmuncie.com>

Public data accessibility

The city of Muncie has a [Meeting Center](#) page on its website. The page provides council meeting minutes, agendas, and minutes of other boards & commissions to anyone looking for data. The city also places a [calendar](#) on its web page's main screen that provides various information about upcoming events. The city's mayor and department employee's email

addresses and phone numbers are in the [Staff Directory](#). Meanwhile, city council members' email addresses are open on the [City Council](#) page, but phone numbers are not available. Muncie's homepage has a "Recreation," "Community" page, but it is difficult to use any information about cultural and [community resources](#). Only the official documents of the department related to recreation were on the page. Muncie's [Online Payment](#) page only has features to pay fines and tickets. Citizens can submit complaints about the city's services by clicking "Report it!" on its website or entering the Action Center Home.

The city of Muncie has [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#) channels. Although Muncie has a banner as "[Map](#)" on the main screen on its webpage, it is impossible to use (There is no data to use).

Online services

- [Pay utilities](#)
- [Report an Issue](#)

Related ordinances

Sec. 31.13. - Board of public works and safety.
(K)Contract compliance rules and regulations.
(2)Any such procedural rules and regulations may be adopted by the board of works after a public hearing and a majority vote of the works' board. Said rules and regulations shall be made available to the public through the contract compliance officer and the works' board.

11. Greenwood

Urban, Central

Website: <https://www.greenwood.in.gov/>

Public information accessibility

The homepage of City of Greenwood is not only easy for new visitors to navigate, but also contains an aesthetic sense. The [event](#) page provides schedules for meetings of different departments, such as Board of Public Works and Safety meetings, and important activities, such as heavy trash pick up days. General public who wish to observe the meetings or participate in the hearing may find out a Zoom link listed on the event calendar page. All meeting agendas and public documents, such as annual budget, could be archived under the [document center](#) tab. Based on the type of meetings, public attendees may have to muted and video disabled themselves, but may be allowed to unmute during the public comment procedures. Contact information of the Major, members in the City Council, City Court, Boards and Commissions are listed under the [Greenwood government](#) page. Moreover, [City maps](#) could be located under this page.

On the other hand, Greenwood also provides dining, housing and entertainment information under the [visit](#) tab for the visitors. Residents of Greenwood could follow the official city [Facebook](#) account to receive local news and events notification and the official city [YouTube](#) channel to re-watch public meetings. The city releases current governmental jobs and future opportunities in the [employment opportunities](#) page. The homepage provides [an application form](#) for job seekers to fill out and [address](#) to return. The [Play](#) page includes cultural and community resources of Greenwood such as information about Greenwood Community Center.

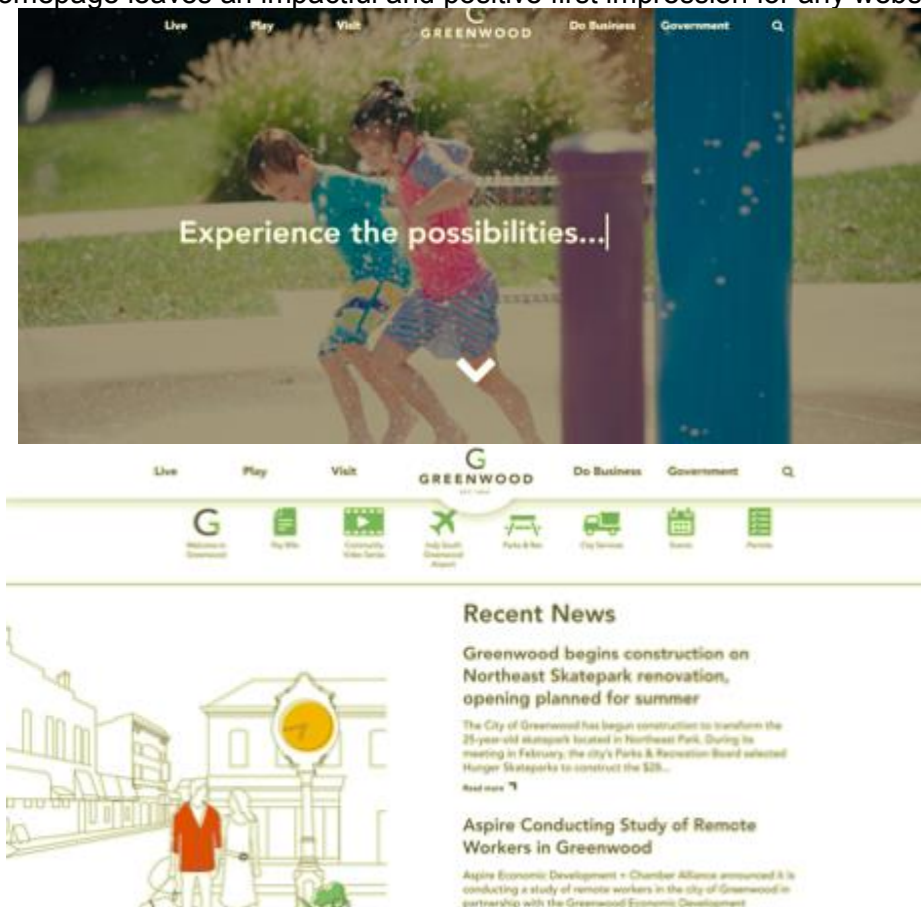
Online service

Residents of Greenwood are able to pay utility bills online in the [Pay Your Bills](#) page. Contact information of the utility billing is also listed on the same page. If the residents have questions, concerns and comments, they could submit an inquiry under [Contact the City of Greenwood](#) page.

Case examples and related ordinances

- Attractive web design

Attractive homepage leaves an impactful and positive first impression for any website visitors.



Related ordinances

The information below is provided under every meeting agenda.

“In accordance with the American with Disability Act, the City of Greenwood is required to provide reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities wishing to attend public meetings. Accommodations are available upon request to persons with disabilities who require alternately formatted materials, auxiliary aids, or reasonable modifications to policies and procedures to ensure effective communication and access to the public meetings. If you require accommodation to attend the meeting, please contact Daniel Johnston, Public Access ADA Coordinator, at 300 S. Madison Avenue, Greenwood, Indiana 46142, Tel: (317) 887-5000, Fax:

(317) 887-5616, or contact Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) at 711 to relay your request to Mr. Johnston. Please allow at least two business days to arrange for accommodations.”

12. Anderson

Urban, Central

Website: <https://www.cityofanderson.com/>

Public information accessibility

[Calendar](#) page lists past events, such as city workshops, and public meetings. The public could attend the meeting by using the Zoom link shown in the calendar. By clicking the [Notify Me](#) button, the public will receive notification about the latest events, such as public hearings, of the city of Anderson. Citizens could archive the meeting agenda in the [agenda center](#) page. Contact information for different government departments is listed under the [staff directory](#) page. Residents of Anderson could follow the official city [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) account to receive local news and events notification. The official city [YouTube](#) channel uploaded community events and public hearings for residents to view online. The city releases governmental jobs information in the [job opportunities](#) page. By clicking the [apply online](#) button, the job seekers are able to apply for their dream jobs online. The [community resources](#) page provides information such as neighborhood programs.

Online services

Residents of Anderson are able to pay utility bills online in the [Pay Your Bills](#) page. Contact information of the utility department is also listed on the same page. Residents could ask questions, report concerns and claims under the [RequestTracker](#) page.

Related ordinances

While moving the public meeting online during the pandemic, the city will provide an opportunity for all residents and service providers to address and comment on the issues discussed in the public hearing.

13. Kokomo

Urban, Central

Website: <http://www.cityofkokomo.org/>

Public information accessibility

[Calendar](#) page lists the time and location of major events such as the City Council Meeting. Currently, public meetings are held in the city hall. Virtual public hearing, could be watched through [KGOV 2 live station](#). Citizens are allowed to make public comments by sending the comments through emails to the city up to 30 minutes prior to the meeting start time. Citizens may also be allowed to speak in the public hearing only if they contact KHCP@cityofkokomo.org at least 30 minutes prior to the meeting start time. [Staff Directory](#) page links to the contact information of public agents in different departments. Residents of Kokomo could follow the official city [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) account to receive local news and events notification. The official [YouTube](#) account uploads records of public hearings and also

news in Kokomo. By clicking the [Visitors](#) button, cultural and community resources such as historical sites, landmarks and museums could be archived.

Online service

Residents of Kokomo are able to pay utility bills online under the [Online Payments](#) page. Citation could also be paid online through the [Pay Citation](#) button. Residents could ask questions, report concerns and claims by clicking the [Report a Nuisance](#) button on the same page.

Related ordinances

The city listed the ordinance that “Accommodation for persons with disabilities, hearing impairments or limited English proficiency are available upon request” at the end of the public hearing agenda.

14. Lafayette

Urban, Central

Website: <https://www.lafayette.in.gov/>

Public information accessibility

[Calendar](#) page lists the time and location of major events such as the City Council Meeting and construction of public work. Currently, public meetings are held in the city council chamber. Verbal and written comments are allowed in public hearings. [Agenda Center](#) provides all public meeting agendas for citizens to read. Contact information of all public agents are listed in the [City Officials](#) page. Residents of Kokomo could follow the official city [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) account to receive local news and events notification. All public meetings could be viewed on the official [YouTube](#) account of the city of Lafayette. Job seekers in Lafayette could apply for job opportunities on the [Employment Opportunities](#) page. Cultural and community resources could be found under the [Our Community](#) page.

Online service

Residents of Kokomo are able to pay utility bills online under the [Self Services Portal](#) page. Citation could also be paid online through the [Parking Portal](#) button. Residents could ask questions, report concerns and claims by clicking [Compliments and Concerns](#) button.

Related ordinances

For virtual public hearings, citizens who seek a formal written response, must submit complaints in writing to the City or Grant Administrator. A written answer will be provided within fifteen working days, if practicable.

15. Indianapolis

Urban city, central

Website: <https://www.indy.gov/>

Public information accessibility

The homepage of the City of Indianapolis not only looks fancy but also easy to navigate. [Calendar](#) page lists time and location of public meetings, such as City-County Council Ethics Committee meetings. Based on the type of meetings, the public could attend the meetings either in-person in the City-County Building, or use the Webex link provided in the calendar. Citizens could archive the meeting agenda in the [Council Meeting Agendas](#) page. Stakeholders of issues discussed in the hearing will be given opportunities to be heard in reference to the issues. By clicking the [Subscribe to City-County Newsletters](#) button, the public will receive some digital newsletters about news in the local government. Contact information for different government departments is listed under [Meet the City County Agencies](#) page.

Residents of Indianapolis could follow the official city [Facebook](#) and Twitter accounts in different departments such as the [Department of Public Works](#) to receive events and public works notification. The [Channel 16 Live Web Stream](#) televises the city-county meetings both on live and on schedule. The city releases governmental jobs information in the [Job Opportunities with the City-County](#) page. By clicking the [Start Here](#) button, the job seekers are able to apply for their dream jobs online.

Online service

Residents of Indianapolis are able to pay property taxes online in the [Pay Your Property Taxes or View Current Tax Bill](#) page. Residents could schedule an appointment for in-person City-County services online in the [Schedule An Appointment](#). If the residents have questions, concerns and comments, they could submit an inquiry under the [File a Tort Claim](#) page.

Case examples

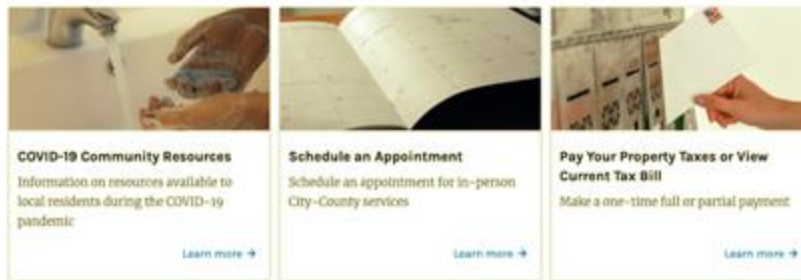
- Well design of homepage

Attractive homepage leaves an impactful and positive first impression for any website visitors.



Popular Services

These digital services make it easier to get what you need. New services are added regularly.



Related ordinances

“As part of the City-County Council’s effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19, constituents who wish to submit public comments on proposals currently pending before the full City-County Council may do so online using the form and instructions below.

Just as you would if you were physically present at a meeting of the Council, to submit a form you must provide:

- Your name and County of residence
- The number of the specific proposal on which you wish to comment
- A brief comment (no more than 300 words) addressing that proposal only (**Please note that when testimony is accepted at Full Council meetings, a time limit of two [2] minutes is observed. Any comments submitted online will be read aloud at the meeting, but will also be subject to the two-minute time limit, so please keep your comments concise and to the point so that they are not cut off before your main point is conveyed.*)

To make a comment, select the “Full Council Meeting” form.

All comments received at least 2 hours before a public meeting of the Council will be delivered to either the full Council or members of the designated committee. Submissions will not receive a personal response.

16. Zionsville

Mid-sized, Central

Website: <https://www.zionsville-in.gov>

Public data accessibility

Related documents, such as Zionsville's [agenda](#) for public meetings, are stored at the Agenda Center on the website and can be viewed by anyone. The meeting site has recordings and stores them on Zionsville's official [YouTube](#) channel. Recorded videos date back about a year, and 18 meetings have been available on YouTube channels so far. Zionsville places a [calendar](#) in the center of its homepage that introduces public meetings and event schedules. The calendar allows people to check the schedule, location, et cetera. of various events that will take place in Zionsville. The email addresses and phone numbers of the mayor of Zionsville and members of the council are on the website. The email addresses and phone numbers of all employees working at Zionsville are also available in the [Staff Directory](#). The town of Zionsville is releasing information about government jobs on the [Job Opportunities](#) page. Job seekers can click on the job search notice on the website, check the information, and even apply right away.

Furthermore, there is a Utility Billing banner on the Zionsville homepage. Residents of Zionsville can create accounts and pay for utilities charged by the town online. Unfortunately, the website does not have report claims and accessibility for disabilities function.

Zionsville operates all social media channels used by people, such as [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#). The city's location information is the only address available on the main page of the website. Zionsville has posted about its [Events & Attractions](#) information on the website. The information includes event schedules and park information.

Online services

- [Job applications](#)
- [Pay utilities](#)

Implementations

Zionsville provides a form to apply for Board/Commission participation on their website. Residents interested in participating can directly select and apply for the board or commission they are interested in on the website.

Related ordinances

§ 31.02 DEPUTY MAYOR

(E) Performance of technical tasks. The Deputy Mayor shall perform technical tasks, including, but not limited to:

(7) Investigating citizen complaints or problems and making recommendations to the executive for changes in policies or ordinances.

(F) Performance of managerial tasks. The Deputy Mayor shall perform managerial tasks, including but not limited to:

(10) Engaging citizen involvement in planning and problem solving, serving as consensus-building facilitator.

17. South Bend

Urban, Northwest

Website: <https://www.southbendin.gov>

Public data accessibility

The City of South Bend has a website for [document](#) search, and there is a lot of data about all the councils and boards. However, it is somewhat confusing and seems in need of renewal. The city does not provide a calendar menu. However, in the News and Public Meeting menu, we can find upcoming events and past news. The city provides email addresses and phone numbers of members of the council and some [elected officials](#). On the "[Department](#)" page, we can find the managers' contact information for each department. The city has a website for [utility services](#). On the website, citizens can pay bills or request services. In the SB311 webpage, citizens can [report](#) an issue. However, the menus seem to be confusing.

The City of Marion has [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#) addresses and [YouTube](#) channels. There is no map link on the website. The city has an excellent website; it includes nearby areas of the city of Mishawaka and Notre Dame University, and there is much [helpful information](#) for a visit. However, it is not easy to find the website's link on the city's main webpage.

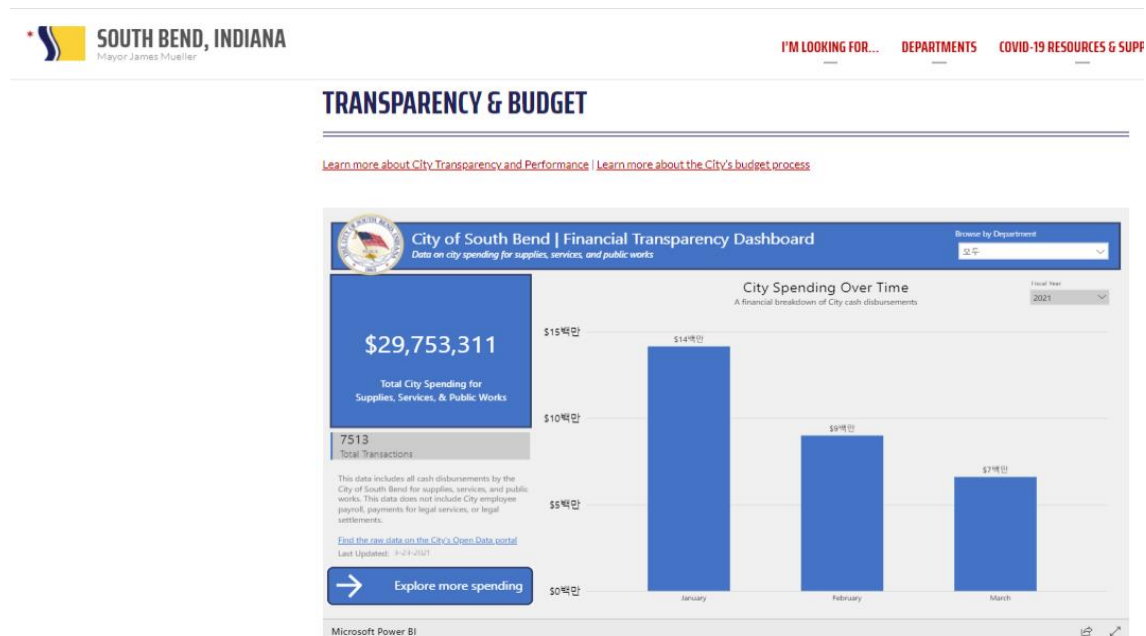
Online services

- [Pay utilities](#)
- [Report an Issue](#)

Case examples

- Transparency & Budget

The city provides some information about its spending on the main page.



18. Gary

Urban, Northwest

Website: <https://gary.gov/>

Public data accessibility

The homepage of the City of Gary is colorful and fancy. However, it is tough to find the agendas and minutes on the website. The city does not provide a calendar menu. The city has a website for the common council, and we can find the council members' contact information. On the [Department](#) page, we can find the managers' contact information for each department. The city has its cable TV channel. With several cable TV platforms, citizens can watch on the channel. In the citizen-3-1-1 webpage, citizens can create a [service request](#).

The city of Gary has [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) addresses, and [YouTube](#) channels. There is no map link on the website. There are no resources concerning culture or recreational activities.

Online services

- [Report Issue](#)

19. Rensselaer

Small, Northwest

Website: <https://www.cityofrensselaerin.com>

Public data accessibility

In the City Council menu, we can find [Agendas](#) and Minutes of council and some boards. The city does not provide a calendar menu. However, there is an event [calendar](#) in the council menu. In the council section, there are email address links for the members of the council. However, it does not work well. In the Government menu, we can find the managers' contact information for each [department](#).

The City of Rensselaer has a [Facebook](#) address. There is no map link on the website. In the Lifestyle section, there are several [cultural resources](#), attractions, and activity links.

Online services

- [Pay utilities](#)

Case examples

The city is a small town, so there are not many businesses downtown. The website introduces 14 restaurants and three inns.

20. Terre Haute

Urban, Southwest

Website: terrehaute.in.gov

Public information accessibility

Under the City Council tab, community members can see current council contact information and other documents about public engagement. Additionally, there are archives of past meetings and policy. In the "News" tab, users can access and see upcoming public meeting notices. Each notice announcement gives the option of viewing the live broadcast on the city's YouTube channel, a link for the agenda, and any relating documents. Direct contact information for a citizen to comment, question, or other inquiries about the proceedings before a public meeting. The main website interface has an interactive event and news widget, highlighting upcoming engagement and community interactions. The mayor's office information is on the main website. There are also links for government departments that provide contact information for many public figures and departments. There is a "Top Requests" box at the bottom of the main screen featuring Employment Opportunities. The website directly links to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and a Share function that provides additional services. YouTube is a way the city archives public meetings or public information.

Online services

- Job applications
- Pay utilities
- Report claims
- Accessibility for disabilities

Online public meeting participation

Related ordinances

Sec. 5-10 Meetings and Quorum⁸⁹

A. All meetings of the board are open to the public. The board shall fix its regular meetings' time and place, but it shall meet quarterly.

B. Special meetings of the board may be called by the President or by any two (2) members by written request to the secretary. The secretary shall send to each member, at least two (2) days before a special meeting, a written notice fixing the time, place, and purpose of the meeting. Written notice of a special meeting is not required if the particular meeting time is fixed at a regular meeting or if all members are present at the special meeting.

C. At its first regular meeting each year, the board shall elect a president and vice president. The vice-president may act as a president during the absence or disability of the President. The Board may select a secretary either from within or outside its membership.

Sec. 3-3 Council Meetings⁵⁷

The members elect of the Common Council shall hold their first regular meeting on the first Monday in January, at 7:30 p.m. At this meeting, the council members shall elect, by a majority of the council, a President and a Vice-president to serve for one (1) year. At this meeting, the council shall set the date and time of its regular meetings and its non-voting public hearings (also known as the "Sunshine Session"). (Res. No. 16, 1992; IA, 5-14-92)

21. Jasper

Mid-sized, Southwest

Website: <https://www.jasperindiana.gov>

Public information accessibility

There is a [calendar](#) on the main website noting upcoming events and past events or relevant news. At the bottom of the page, there is a phone number of contact options like a staff [directory](#) for the community. For [employment](#) opportunities, a widget directs interested applicants. If there is a utility emergency, there is a direct link and number at the top of the page; also, there is an option for translation at the bottom of the main website page.

There is no map for viewers of the municipal location. However, the local time and weather conditions are displayed. Social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, are linked on the website. Jasper has a "Live" tab that highlights current life in the city. There are numerous pictures displayed of the community on their website. They have an exciting program called "Sister City" to recognize their German heritage.

Online services

- [Job applications](#) widget

- [Pay utility](#) widget
- Report claims or issues is not available
- Accessibility for disabilities: not available

Online public meeting participation: search yielded very dated archived meetings but nothing current.

Related ordinances

Sec. 1.04.020 time and place of meetings.

The regular meetings of the legislative body of the City of Jasper, known as the Common Council of the City of Jasper, Indiana, shall be held on the Wednesday after the third Monday of each month at the hour of 5:30 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers in the said city unless notice is given that such date, time and location have changed. (Ord. 2019-39, S1, November 20, 2019) (Ord. 2006-13, S1, April 19, 2006)

Sections: 1.70.010 Special meetings of Plan Commission or Board of Zoning Appeals 1.70.010 Special meetings of Plan Commission or Board of Zoning Appeals. All requests for a special meeting of either the Plan Commission or the Board of Zoning Appeals of the city of Jasper, Indiana, shall be accompanied by a fee of twenty-five dollars. (Ord. 1033, S1, 1981).

22. Princeton

Small, Southwest

Website: <https://www.princeton.in.gov>

Public information accessibility

On the main page, there is a widget for "[agendas and minutes](#)" that takes the user to a list of department boards and commissions with contact information for additional information on meeting dates, the agendas, and prior meeting minutes. It is hard to navigate and find [documents](#), however. Events appear within the week they occur, alongside an [event calendar](#) with more information. At the bottom of the page, there is a phone number and email address for contact information. Also, tabs link the mayor's office, city council, government officials, police, fire, and other helpful department information.

The same group that worked with Jasper designed Princeton's web platform. Their Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter pages link together on the website for users. There is no map or mention of location, but there are local pictures displayed. At the top of the page, there are tabs that direct users towards the [community](#) and [life](#) in Princeton and ways to "[play](#)."

Online services

- [Job](#) opportunities
- [Pay utilities](#)
- Reporting a [pothole](#),
- Accessibility for disabilities: not available

Online public meeting participation: much of Princeton's platform is half-developed, but the structure is there to engage.

Related ordinances

It was challenging to find a current municipal ordinance for the community. However, there was a 2016 document for Princeton's [police](#) department.

23. Sullivan

Small town, Southwest

Website: <https://www.cityofsullivan.org/>

Public information accessibility

There is a tab function to take the user to information for [city meetings](#) for several departments and [boards](#), including the common council, plan commission, and redevelopment commission. No events or calendars appear on the main page for Sullivan. There is the contact information for several [officials](#), but there is no direct contact on the main page for users. There is a tab with current [job opportunities](#).

Facebook is the only linked social media. There is a map showing Sullivan's location that includes a video tour welcoming users and highlights the quality of life and downtown. Also, the mayor has posted "greetings" on the main page for users to see what is happening.

Online services

- [Job](#) applications
- [Pay utilities](#)
- Report claims or issues not available
- Accessibility for disabilities not available

Online public meeting participation: The website is minimal and does not offer many options for engagement.

24. Bloomington

Urban, Southwest

Website: <https://bloomington.in.gov>

Public information accessibility

The [news](#), events, and [calendar](#) are on the main page of the website. Several government departments, including public safety, [boards and commissions](#), [city council](#), and other [elected officials](#) like the [mayor](#), have widgets that redirect users to more information. Another notable feature of the website is the "[top services](#)" that provide several resources for citizens. There is a link again at the bottom of the page for interested parties to notice [employment](#) opportunities. Small icons link Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram at the very bottom of the main page. There are pictures of the community on the website and additional information [about](#) how the community operates. There is no specific map of the community. However, there are multiple [interactive maps](#) offered through a widget, and the website has additional [municipal](#) information available.

Online services

- [Job availability](#)
- [Pay utilities](#)
- [Report claims](#)

Accessibility for disabilities

Online public meeting participation (whether citizens have access to public meeting online, streaming services, and they can comment and interact with public meetings online)

Related ordinances

Article II. - Meetings and Rules of Procedure

Sec. 2.04.050 - Regular meetings. (Ord. 90-48 § 3, 1990). (Ord. No. 13-05, § 2, 3-6-2013; Ord. No. 16-42, § 1, 11-16-2016)

With the exceptions noted in subsections (b) through (g) of this section, the council shall meet in regular sessions on the first and third Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. local time. The council may agree by majority vote to dispense with any regular session or change the day or hour of any meeting. However, the council shall meet at least once a month.

The council shall not meet on legal holidays as enumerated in Indiana Code § 1-1-9-1. The council may agree by majority vote to meet at an alternative time should such a holiday fall on a Wednesday.

By Indiana Code § 36-4-6-7, the council shall hold its first regular meeting at 6:30 p.m. one evening no later than the second Wednesday in January to elect officers in the year following its election. Should the council president of the previous year still be a member of the council, they shall preside over new officers' election. Suppose the President of the previous year is no longer on the council. In that case, the majority party shall designate a council member to preside over officers' election. The council may decide by majority vote to reschedule a regularly scheduled Wednesday meeting and conduct other official business at this first meeting of the year.

By Indiana Code § 36-4-6-8, in years after the year immediately following its election, the council shall meet at 6:30 p.m. one evening no later than the second Wednesday in January to elect officers. The council president of the previous year shall preside over the election of officers. The council may decide by majority vote to reschedule a regularly scheduled Wednesday meeting and conduct other official business at this meeting.

The council shall go into recess upon adjournment of the first regular session in August and reconvene on the first Wednesday in September. No legislation shall be heard for the first reading at the August meeting.

The council shall not meet on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving Day. The council may, by majority vote, decide to combine the meeting scheduled for this date with the meeting scheduled for the previous or following Wednesday.

The council shall go into recess upon adjournment of the second regular session held in December and reconvene in January. No legislation for the first reading shall be heard at the last regular session of December.

Sec. 2.04.060 - Special meetings—Emergency meetings.

Special meetings of the council may be held on call of the mayor, the President, or any three council members. It shall be the President's duty or the members calling the special session to notify the city clerk of the meeting, date, hour, and agenda. At least forty-eight hours before the time set for the meeting, the city clerk shall notify each member of the council, either in person, by telephone, or by notice left at the member's place of residence. Notice shall also be given forty-eight hours in advance of the meeting to the news media and the public as required by state law.

Emergency meetings may be held provided there is compliance with the notice requirements of state law. (Ord. 83-15 § 1 (part), 1983).

Sec. 2.04.320 - Ordinances and resolutions—Public inspection and publication.
For public inspection, the city clerk shall provide copies of ordinances and resolutions to the Monroe County Public Library no later than twenty-four hours after introducing legislation at the council.

Copies of proposed legislation shall be made available to the public before and during meetings when the legislation is considered.

All ordinances and resolutions passed by the council shall be recorded by the clerk. Due proof of publication of all ordinances requiring publication shall be obtained by the clerk and attached to the original ordinance. Ordinances and resolutions shall be made available for public inspection and copying at all times during regular business hours. (Ord. 92-4 § 2, 1992; Ord. 79-97 § 2 (part), 1979). (Ord. No. 13-05, § 7, 3-6-2013)

25. Evansville

Urban, Southwest

Website: <https://www.evansvillegov.org/city/>

Public data accessibility

City staff upload meetings from the city council and commission as both word files and video forms on the website. Also, along with file archives, the date and time of upcoming meetings and agendas are posted under "[upcoming meetings](#)." Council and commission meetings appear in the [calendar](#), and search features can help users find the information quickly. As a user, one can maneuver the calendar by changing month and year, check events by week, month, and daily. The online and general [contact information](#) of representatives of the council has been presented clearly, without omitting information. The website covers the contact and responsibilities of [departments](#) and the [mayor's office](#). Information about [job openings](#) for the city government has open to the public is under the career tab. However, no one has updated that information since 2006.

The city has several social media accounts: [Facebook](#), Twitter, Instagram, [Youtube](#)
An online stream of public meetings is available via Facebook. The Evansville Department of Parks and Recreation implemented virtual programming, bringing recreation events to a Facebook page or head to YouTube. [GIS](#) services and maps about the city are available. Through running [E is for Everyone](#), a community branding initiative, the city creates a platform where everyone can connect with someone or something new, find a unique way to contribute to the community, and celebrate together what makes our region great. Networking via social media is available, and staff has posted open volunteer positions.

Online services

- [Job](#) applications
- Pay utilities
- Report claims
- Stream via online in public meetings

For residents: Residents can make online payments and make requests of concern via online form. Also, information about job openings is available via a webpage.

<http://in-vanderburgh-treasurer.governmax.com/svc/>

<https://ewsu.firstbilling.com/Account/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f>

<https://www.evansvillegov.org/egov/apps/action/center.egov>

<https://www.evansvillegov.org/egov/apps/services/index.egov?view=detail;id=13>

Case example

"Regional VOICE" develops a fair, open process to help our region envision a preferred future through civic dialogue in Vanderburgh county. This dialogue addresses issues using the lens of what is possible rather than what is wrong.

Participation online

This online course is for anyone in Vanderburgh, Warrick, Posey, or Gibson County in Indiana and Henderson County in Kentucky who cannot attend an in-person Regional VOICE session. By completing this unique set of questionnaires, one will help us gather accurate data for strategic change. The data collected will strengthen and grow our community as a whole and the individual communities within. This session consists of eight (8) videos. A set of questions will follow each video to learn more about the community and its future vision.

Also, reports from in-person sessions are available on the webpage.

<https://voicecommunity.org/news/#get-in-touch>

Related ordinances

Chapter 2.200*

ONLINE AUDIO AND VIDEO AND ARCHIVED RECORDINGS OF PUBLIC MEETINGS OF GOVERNMENT OR ADVISORY BODIES

Chapter 2.160

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

2.160.030 Joint information technology department/

2.160.040 information technology advisory council

26. Logansport

Mid-sized, Northwest

Website: <http://www.cityoflogansport.org/>

Public data accessibility

Logansport's online presence is highly accessible. Key activities appear in bright, bold colors immediately upon loading the web page. The government web page is available in eight different languages. The city government broadcasts and retains copies of public meetings, and

they publish notices, news, and updates prominently. The city also has social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram.

Online services

On the city website, residents can do the following:

- Pay utility bills
- Access public records
- Contact city government offices
- Apply for permits

27. Valparaiso

Midsized, Northwest

Website: <https://www.ci.valparaiso.in.us/>

Public data accessibility

On Valparaiso's website, residents can easily watch city meetings (though they cannot interact in these meetings). Options to learn about parks and transit and voice concerns about the community are also prominently displayed. The website maintains a calendar of upcoming public meetings. The "I Want To..." tab provides residents with a straightforward path to find the city services they require. The city also maintains social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram

Online services

In the "I Want To...", residents can do the following:

- Apply for permits
- Find information on the city and its services
- Reports problems in the community
- Request park facility rentals
- Contact city employees

28. Monticello

Small, Northwest

Website: <https://www.monticelloin.gov/>

Public data accessibility

Monticello's city government website maintains a prominently displayed announcement board and a calendar of upcoming city meetings. They maintain a record of meeting minutes but not recordings of the meetings themselves. Accessing detailed information on the departments and the city's services requires navigating through multiple pages and drop-down menus. News page releases are updated multiple times weekly, in both English and Spanish. The city maintains social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram.

Online services

On the city website, residents can do the following:

- Pay utility bills
- Request street repair
- Schedule parks services
- Contact city employees

29. Rushville

Small, Southeast

Website: <https://cityofrushville.in.gov/>

Public data accessibility

The city website opens with a welcome letter from the mayor. A sidebar displays options to request repairs and reports concerns, as well as social media connections. The city maintains social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Most of the city's services are in the drop-down banner on the top of the web page. Recordings and minutes of city meetings either do not exist or are exceedingly challenging to find.

Online services

On the city website, residents can do the following:

- Request records
- Request utility and street maintenance
- Report concerns
- Contact city employee

30. Richmond

Mid-sized, Southeast

Website: <https://www.richmondindiana.gov/>

Public data accessibility

Information on the COVID-19 pandemic, the farmer's market, and sewer billing are prominent on the city website. Residents can find most information in the drop-down menu that shows options for city government departments and contact information for employees. Public records, such as meeting recordings, are not readily available on the website. The city maintains social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Online services

On the city website, residents can do the following:

- Pay utility bills
- Report concerns
- Contact city employees

ANOVA Analysis-Comparison of Social Media Utilization

Before ANOVA test

Normality test

```
. swilk numbermedia
```

Shapiro-Wilk W test for normal data

Variable	Obs	W	V	z	Prob>z
numbermedia	42	0.98995	0.412	-1.870	0.96926

H0: The data are normally distributed.

H1: The data are not normally distributed.

As the result of the Shapiro-Wilk test, the p-value is greater than 0.05. Therefore, we cannot reject the null hypothesis. It means that the data are normally distributed.

Equality of variance test

```
. oneway numbermedia size, sc
```

Analysis of Variance					
Source	SS	df	MS	F	Prob > F
Between groups	10.6549451	2	5.32747253	7.01	0.0025
Within groups	29.6307692	39	.759763314		
Total	40.2857143	41	.982578397		

Bartlett's test for equal variances: chi2(2) = 2.3478 Prob>chi2 = 0.309

H0: Variance is equal across all groups.

H1: Variance is not equal across all groups.

As the result of Bartlett's test, the p-value is greater than 0.05. Therefore, we cannot reject the null hypothesis. It means that variance is equal across all groups.

ANOVA test

```
. anova numbermedia size
```

Number of obs = 42 R-squared = 0.2645
Root MSE = .871644 Adj R-squared = 0.2268

Source	Partial SS	df	MS	F	Prob>F
Model	10.654945	2	5.3274725	7.01	0.0025
size	10.654945	2	5.3274725	7.01	0.0025
Residual	29.630769	39	.75976331		
Total	40.285714	41	.9825784		

H0: The average number of social media operations in each group is the same.

H1: The average number of social media operations in each group is not the same.

ANOVA test shows that the p-value is smaller than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected at a significance level of 5%. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a difference in the average values of each of the three groups separated by the size of the city's population/town.

After ANOVA test

Scheffe test

Comparison of numbermedia by size (Scheffe)		
Row Mean- Col Mean	1	2
2	.461538 0.397	
3	1.2 0.003	.738462 0.095

The above results show that the p-value between group1 and group3 is less than 0.05. Thus, differences in the number of social media operations in Group1 and Group3 can be seen as statistically significant differences.