

Profile of Local Government Service Delivery Choices, 2007

The *Profile in Local Government Service Delivery Choices* survey was conducted in summer and fall 2007. Surveys were mailed to the Chief Administrative Officers in municipalities with populations 10,000 and over, in counties with populations 25,000 and over, and to a random sample of one in eight municipalities from 2,500 to 9,999 in population and one in eight counties with populations from 2,500 to 24,999. Of the 6,095 municipalities and counties that received surveys, 1,599 responded (26.2%).

For more information on the ICMA's *Profile in Local Government Service Delivery Choices* survey, please contact [Survey Research](#).



[Click here to buy the complete dataset from bookstore.icma.org.](http://bookstore.icma.org)

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

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

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

- 49.6** Yes
- 50.4** No

A. If "yes," which of the following factors spurred your local government's decision to study the feasibility of adopting private delivery alternatives within the last five years? (*Check all applicable.*)

- 50.3** External fiscal pressures, including restrictions placed on raising taxes, e.g., Proposition 13
- 86.7** Internal attempts to decrease costs of service delivery
- 9.9** State or federal mandates tied to intergovernmental financing
- 14.0** Change in political climate emphasizing a decreased role for government
- 3.9** Active citizen group favoring privatization
- 15.9** Unsolicited proposals presented by potential service providers
- 10.1** Concerns about government liability
- 12.1** Other

2. Who inside your local government was involved in evaluating the feasibility of private service delivery? (*Check all applicable.*)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 87.0 Manager/CAO | 30.5 Attorney |
| 38.0 Assistant manager/CAO | 18.9 Procurement/purchasing officer |
| 35.2 Management and/or budget analysts | 13.5 Line employees |
| 78.3 Department heads | 44.6 Elected officials |
| 52.1 Finance/accounting officer | 2.1 Other |

3. Who outside your local government organization was involved in evaluating the feasibility of private service delivery? (*Check all applicable.*)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 61.6 Potential service deliverers | 18.8 Citizen advisory committees |
| 48.2 Professionals/consultants with expertise in particular service areas | 8.5 State agencies, leagues, or associations |
| 12.6 Service recipients/consumers | 4.6 Other |
| 21.1 Managers/CAOs of other local governments who have experience using private service delivery | |

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

37.9 Yes

62.1 No

A. If “yes,” which of the following activities has your government undertaken to ensure success in implementing private service delivery? (*Check all applicable.*)

64.8 Identified successful use of private alternatives in other jurisdictions

8.6 Established a citizens’ advisory committee on private alternatives

30.1 Hired consultants to analyze feasibility of private alternatives

22.5 Allowed government departments to compete with private sector in the bidding

19.3 Developed programs to minimize the effect on displaced public employees

5.9 Recommended changes in state laws

5.6 Recommended changes in local laws

29.1 Proposed implementations of private alternatives on a trial basis

29.1 Applied private alternatives to new services

24.2 Applied private alternatives to growing services

24.9 Surveyed citizens

23.4 Kept the service complaint mechanism in-house

5.8 Other

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

39.4 Yes

60.6 No

A. If yes, which of the following obstacles have been encountered? (*Check all applicable.*)

29.1 Opposition from citizens

39.3 Opposition from elected officials

46.6 Opposition from local government line employees

26.4 Opposition from department heads

39.5 Restrictive labor contracts/agreements

15.2 Legal constraints

31.1 Insufficient supply of competent private deliverers

12.6 Lack of staff with sufficient expertise in contract mgmt

23.1 Lack of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of private alternatives

17.0 Lack of precedent; institutional rigidities

11.6 Problems with contract specifications

12.6 Lack of adequate contract monitoring system

5.5 Other

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

45.4 Yes

54.6 No

A. If yes, which of the following aspects of service delivery are evaluated? (*Check all applicable.*)

57.6 Citizen satisfaction

82.0 Cost

77.6 Compliance with delivery standards specified

4.0 Other

B. What techniques are used to evaluate the above aspects of service delivery? (*Check all applicable.*)

30.9 Conducting citizen surveys

67.9 Monitoring citizen complaints

70.0 Conducting field observations

71.6 Analyzing data/records

3.5 Other

7. Service Delivery

Definitions

Franchises/concessions: The local government awards a right (exclusive or non-exclusive) to private firms to deliver a public service within a specific geographic area. Cable TV is an example of a service in which franchises often exist. A snack bar at a park is an example of a concession. In both cases, the citizen/consumer pays the delivering firm for a service and usually defines the level of service desired. (This alternative excludes licensing solely for health, safety, or revenue-raising purposes.)

Subsidies: The local government makes a financial or in-kind contribution to a private organization or individuals to encourage them to deliver a public service at a reduced cost to consumers. An example of an in-kind contribution is a local government's offer of free space in a public building to a private day care center.

Services provided (Number reporting service delivery method)	Currently provided by your government	No longer provided by your government	Never been provided by your government									
				Your employees entirely	Your employees in part	Another government or authority	Private for profit	Private non-profit	Franchises/concessions	Subsidies	Volunteers	
Public Works/Transportation												
1. Residential solid waste collection (932)	66.5	5.3	28.2	33.9	6.4	5.0	47.4	1.5	13.5	0.2	0.2	
2. Commercial solid waste collection (699)	50.0	7.8	42.2	22.2	10.4	4.9	56.2	1.7	13.6	0.0	0.0	
3. Solid waste disposal (851)	63.1	8.9	28.0	25.9	9.0	20.7	42.7	1.8	8.7	0.0	0.1	
4. Street repair (1,180)	93.7	0.8	5.5	38.7	51.5	6.7	30.6	0.7	0.2	0.3	0.0	
5. Street/parking lot cleaning (1,035)	83.0	2.4	14.6	67.0	18.6	5.1	16.0	0.7	0.6	0.0	0.3	
6. Snow plowing/sanding (917)	78.2	0.5	21.3	74.2	20.1	7.2	9.6	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	
7. Traffic sign/signal installation/maintenance (1,070)	85.3	1.9	12.8	46.8	35.1	16.4	21.3	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.1	
8. Parking meter maintenance and collection (279)	25.4	13.0	61.5	69.5	11.5	11.1	10.4	0.7	0.0	0.4	0.0	
9. Tree trimming and planting on public rights of way (1,066)	85.9	1.8	12.4	40.4	46.8	5.0	32.5	1.7	0.1	0.1	3.4	
10. Maintenance and administration of cemeteries (513)	43.2	2.8	54.0	62.0	17.2	6.4	13.5	6.4	0.2	0.6	3.5	
11. Inspection/Code enforcement (938)	93.4	0.9	5.8	81.6	13.2	5.0	7.7	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1	
12. Operation of parking lots and garages (454)	39.3	2.5	58.3	63.7	17.2	8.6	18.5	2.6	0.4	0.0	0.2	
13. Operation/maintenance of bus transit system (403)	31.5	3.5	65.0	24.1	9.2	39.7	18.6	11.9	1.2	4.0	0.2	
14. Operation/maintenance of paratransit system (366)	29.3	2.8	67.9	21.6	10.4	36.6	18.0	18.0	1.6	4.9	0.8	
15. Operation of airports (422)	34.5	2.0	63.6	38.6	20.4	33.9	13.0	2.6	1.4	1.4	0.9	
16. Water distribution (908)	71.2	2.4	26.4	72.5	9.1	15.7	5.7	1.7	0.3	0.1	0.0	
17. Water treatment (851)	66.3	3.0	30.7	64.6	7.4	24.2	5.5	1.5	0.2	0.2	0.0	
18. Sewage collection and treatment (942)	72.8	2.3	24.9	58.1	16.5	27.1	7.1	1.4	0.3	0.2	0.0	
19. Disposal of sludge (782)	60.1	3.9	35.9	36.7	13.9	24.9	28.9	2.0	1.0	0.0	0.3	
20. Disposal of hazardous materials (615)	48.0	3.3	48.7	16.1	20.7	37.6	31.7	3.6	2.0	0.5	2.0	
Public Utilities												
21. Electric utility operation and management (387)	29.0	1.6	69.4	27.6	3.9	12.9	47.8	4.9	9.6	0.8	0.0	
22. Gas utility operation and management (315)	22.5	1.9	75.5	14.6	1.3	9.8	190	5.7	11.4	1.0	0.0	
23. Utility meter reading (794)	61.1	2.1	36.8	68.8	8.2	7.1	17.8	1.8	1.9	0.3	0.0	
24. Utility billing (818)	63.3	2.2	34.5	69.6	10.6	6.4	16.1	2.4	1.6	0.2	0.0	

Services provided (<i>Number reporting service delivery method</i>)	Currently provided by your government	No longer provided by your government	Never been provided by your government	Your employees entirely	Your employees in part	Another government or authority	Private for profit	Private non-profit	Franchises/concessions	Subsidies	Volunteers	
Public Safety												
25. Crime prevention/patrol (<i>1,206</i>)	96.8	0.4	2.8	88.0	6.1	8.2	0.5	0.2	0.0	0.2	2.7	
26. Police/fire communications (<i>1,157</i>)	91.7	3.0	5.4	66.5	13.4	24.8	1.1	1.6	0.3	0.2	2.0	
27. Fire prevention/suppression (<i>1,044</i>)	83.1	1.4	15.5	71.6	8.5	11.6	0.8	2.5	0.1	0.5	13.0	
28. Emergency medical service (<i>940</i>)	74.7	2.8	22.6	48.9	18.6	17.3	16.9	2.3	1.0	0.9	8.4	
29. Ambulance service (<i>860</i>)	66.1	3.7	30.2	40.5	11.0	18.0	22.2	9.5	1.9	1.4	8.1	
30. Traffic control/parking enforcement (<i>1,028</i>)	84.0	1.2	14.8	83.5	8.0	8.3	4.0	0.5	0.1	0.1	1.2	
31. Vehicle towing and storage (<i>422</i>)	53.4	2.5	44.1	12.3	13.3	6.4	65.4	5.5	3.1	0.2	0.0	
32. Sanitary inspection (<i>731</i>)	60.1	2.3	37.6	56.8	9.7	32.4	4.5	1.2	0.0	0.1	0.1	
33. Insect/rodent control (<i>597</i>)	45.7	2.5	51.8	34.8	14.6	35.0	21.1	3.2	0.3	0.0	0.0	
34. Animal control (<i>1,022</i>)	79.0	2.7	18.3	57.9	12.1	23.0	5.0	7.6	0.6	0.9	1.1	
35. Operation of animal shelters (<i>772</i>)	57.7	3.8	38.5	33.5	8.8	30.4	8.7	22.2	0.8	1.6	3.6	
36. Operation of daycare facilities (<i>320</i>)	22.8	2.5	74.7	13.8	9.4	13.4	53.8	32.8	1.9	3.1	1.6	
37. Child welfare programs (<i>411</i>)	31.4	2.0	66.5	21.2	14.8	52.6	9.7	14.8	0.5	4.9	2.7	
38. Programs for the elderly (<i>799</i>)	61.8	1.7	36.5	23.9	42.4	27.3	7.4	28.5	0.5	5.1	11.4	
39. Operation/management of hospitals (<i>253</i>)	18.7	4.2	77.1	2.8	2.4	31.6	39.5	37.5	0.0	3.2	0.4	
40. Public health programs (<i>512</i>)	40.5	2.2	57.3	24.6	21.3	52.0	6.1	13.1	0.2	3.1	2.1	
41. Drug and alcohol treatment programs (<i>395</i>)	30.4	1.6	68.0	7.1	21.0	48.6	20.3	35.9	0.5	5.3	2.0	
42. Operation of mental health/mental retardation programs and facilities (<i>369</i>)	28.0	1.6	70.4	6.8	16.3	57.5	14.4	32.2	0.3	5.1	1.4	
43. Prisons/jails (<i>648</i>)	51.9	4.5	43.6	48.0	12.8	43.7	1.7	1.1	0.2	0.3	0.3	
44. Operation of homeless shelters (<i>288</i>)	20.6	2.0	77.4	2.8	5.9	37.2	4.5	56.3	0.0	7.6	4.5	
45. Workforce development/ job training programs (<i>409</i>)	30.9	1.9	67.2	9.0	21.3	58.9	6.6	24.7	0.2	2.7	0.7	
46. Intake/eligibility determination for welfare programs (<i>388</i>)	30.2	2.1	67.7	30.2	7.7	59.3	1.8	7.7	0.0	0.5	0.3	
Parks and Recreation												
47. Operation and maintenance of recreation facilities (<i>1,130</i>)	89.9	1.6	8.6	72.7	22.2	7.1	7.6	3.7	0.8	0.4	5.3	
48. Parks landscaping and maintenance (<i>1,141</i>)	91.1	1.1	7.8	67.7	25.2	5.0	15.1	1.2	0.2	0.1	3.8	
49. Operation of convention centers and auditoriums (<i>381</i>)	31.3	1.8	66.9	50.7	15.0	21.5	15.5	6.3	2.1	1.6	1.6	
Cultural and Arts Programs												
50. Operation of cultural and arts programs (<i>567</i>)	44.7	2.0	53.3	26.6	34.2	12.9	6.9	35.3	1.1	7.8	20.6	
51. Operation of libraries (<i>792</i>)	61.3	2.9	35.9	50.5	9.3	33.8	1.4	6.4	0.5	3.4	7.7	
52. Operation of museums (<i>433</i>)	33.6	2.1	64.2	23.8	15.0	20.3	3.9	38.3	0.2	6.2	19.4	

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Support Services											
53. Buildings and grounds maintenance (1,222)	98.5	0.3	1.2	62.2	34.4	1.2	21.3	1.5	0.2	0.0	1.3
54. Building security (958)	79.9	0.7	19.4	70.1	17.1	1.4	18.8	0.7	0.2	0.0	0.3
55. Fleet mgmt/vehicle maintenance: Heavy equipment (1,140)	92.5	0.8	6.7	56.1	36.7	1.7	26.0	1.1	0.1	0.0	0.1
56. Fleet mgmt/vehicle maintenance: Emergency vehicles (1,085)	86.8	1.3	11.9	48.5	38.0	4.1	29.5	1.7	0.1	0.3	0.5
57. Fleet mgmt/vehicle maintenance: All other vehicles (1,152)	92.8	0.9	6.4	55.0	35.7	1.7	26.5	1.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
58. Payroll (1,228)	99.1	0.5	0.4	89.0	7.4	0.7	7.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
59. Tax bill processing (903)	73.7	2.4	23.9	56.1	14.7	29.1	7.9	0.7	0.0	0.1	0.0
60. Tax assessing (821)	64.8	2.7	32.5	45.6	11.7	40.3	7.9	0.9	0.1	0.1	0.0
61. Data processing (1,090)	90.6	0.9	8.5	74.6	19.7	5.0	10.7	0.6	0.1	0.1	0.1
62. Collection of delinquent taxes (890)	71.1	3.0	25.8	47.0	18.7	29.2	14.7	0.8	0.1	0.2	0.0
63. Title records/plat map maintenance (797)	64.2	1.4	34.4	49.3	18.4	34.4	8.3	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
64. Legal services (1,042)	80.2	1.3	18.5	31.0	24.0	4.6	51.9	2.7	0.4	0.2	0.1
65. Secretarial services (1,107)	90.7	0.4	8.9	92.1	6.9	0.7	4.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.2
66. Personnel services (898)	94.6	0.2	5.2	88.5	10.6	1.2	5.8	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
67. Public relations/public information (1,116)	92.3	0.5	7.2	83.2	13.7	1.0	8.8	1.3	0.2	0.1	0.4

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

21.6 Yes

78.4 No

A. If "yes," which of the following factors played a part in your decision to bring back the service(s)? (*Check all applicable.*)

61.2 Service quality was not satisfactory

10.0 There were problems with the contract specifications

17.0 There were problems monitoring the contract

52.4 The cost savings were insufficient

33.9 Local government efficiency improved

17.0 There was strong political support to bring back the service delivery

13.3 Other

9. If your local government uses intergovernmental contracting, please check the reasons that motivate your government to enter into intergovernmental contracts: (*Check all applicable.*)

63.7 To strengthen collaborative intergovernmental relations

59.0 To promote regional service integration

7.3 To avoid shedding services

77.4 To achieve economies of scale

37.1 To access technical expertise

80.2 To save money

7.0 There is a lack of private providers

2.9 Other

10. If your local government has faced any obstacles to intergovernmental contracting, please identify them below: (*Check all applicable.*)

32.4 Concern about difficulty in monitoring intergovernmental agreements

18.8 External opposition from citizens

42.9 Internal opposition from employees, elected officials

64.1 Concern about loss of community control

16.5 No neighboring government willing to enter into an agreement

8.0 Other