

## Profile of Local Government Service Delivery Choices, 2002-2003

The *Profile in Local Government Service Delivery Choices* survey was conducted in fall 2002 and spring 2003. Letters 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. The letter provided each local government with a web address (URL), where they could either download and complete a PDF file or complete the survey online in a web form. Of the 5,370 municipalities and counties that received surveys, 1,283 responded (23.9%).

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



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*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?
  - 58.0** Yes
  - 42.0** 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.*)

  - 49.6** External fiscal pressures, including restrictions placed on raising taxes, e.g., Proposition 13
  - 88.2** Internal attempts to decrease costs of service delivery
  - 9.5** State or federal mandates tied to intergovernmental financing
  - 15.5** Change in political climate emphasizing a decreased role for government
  - 6.3** Active citizen group favoring privatization
  - 21.1** Unsolicited proposals presented by potential service providers
  - 12.5** Concerns about government liability
  - 13.3** Other
  
2. Who inside your local government was involved in evaluating the feasibility of private service delivery? (*Check all applicable.*)
 

<b>86.9</b> Manager/CAO	<b>36.3</b> Attorney
<b>39.9</b> Assistant manager/CAO	<b>21.4</b> Procurement/purchasing officer
<b>33.9</b> Management and/or budget analysts	<b>16.6</b> Line employees
<b>83.8</b> Department heads	<b>51.4</b> Elected officials
<b>52.1</b> Finance/accounting officer	<b>4.3</b> Other
  
3. Who outside your local government organization was involved in evaluating the feasibility of private service delivery? (*Check all applicable.*)
 

<b>53.6</b> Potential service deliverers	<b>22.6</b> Citizen advisory committees
<b>53.0</b> Professionals/consultants with expertise in particular service areas	<b>9.8</b> State agencies, leagues, or associations
<b>15.3</b> Service recipients/consumers	<b>7.1</b> Other
<b>19.8</b> 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?

**43.6** Yes

**56.4** No

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

**70.5** Identified successful use of private alternatives in other jurisdictions

**10.8** Established a citizens' advisory committee on private alternatives

**34.2** Hired consultants to analyze feasibility of private alternatives

**26.5** Allowed government departments to compete with private sector in the bidding

**19.8** Developed programs to minimize the effect on displaced public employees

**6.3** Recommended changes in state laws

**6.9** Recommended changes in local laws

**28.3** Proposed implementations of private alternatives on a trial basis

**27.1** Applied private alternatives to new services

**27.9** Applied private alternatives to growing services

**18.5** Surveyed citizens

**33.6** Kept the service complaint mechanism in-house

**7.1** Other

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

**41.4** Yes

**58.6** No

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

**29.6** Opposition from citizens

**43.8** Opposition from elected officials

**55.7** Opposition from local government line employees

**29.0** Opposition from department heads

**32.4** Restrictive labor contracts/agreements

**18.0** Legal constraints

**31.3** Insufficient supply of competent private deliverers

**13.4** Lack of staff with sufficient expertise in contract mgmt

**21.7** Lack of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of private alternatives

**17.7** Lack of precedent; institutional rigidities

**17.5** Problems with contract specifications

**13.8** Lack of adequate contract monitoring system

**8.6** Other

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

**47.3** Yes

**52.7** No

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

**69.0** Citizen satisfaction

**86.8** Cost

**84.0** Compliance with delivery standards specified

**3.5** Other

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

**30.2** Conducting citizen surveys

**74.5** Monitoring citizen complaints

**71.3** Conducting field observations

**74.1** Analyzing data/records

**3.9** 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.

<b>Services provided (Number reporting service delivery method)</b>	<b>Currently provided by your government</b>	<b>No longer provided by your government</b>	<b>Never been provided by your government</b>	<b>Your employees entirely</b>	<b>Your employees in part</b>	<b>Another government or authority</b>	<b>Private for profit</b>	<b>Private non-profit</b>	<b>Franchises/concessions</b>	<b>Subsidies</b>	<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>Has the method of service delivery changed in the last 5 years?</b>
<b>Public Works/Transportation</b>												
1. Residential solid waste collection (620)	56.9	9.3	33.8	44.5	10.5	3.5	39.4	0.6	15.6	0.3	0.0	29.8
2. Commercial solid waste collection (408)	37.9	12.0	50.1	33.3	18.1	3.9	43.1	0.2	19.9	0.0	0.0	17.0
3. Solid waste disposal (504)	47.6	16.6	35.9	32.7	17.7	18.1	38.1	1.4	9.7	1.0	0.0	12.8
4. Street repair (971)	92.2	0.7	7.1	41.7	52.9	6.8	35.3	0.6	0.7	0.4	0.2	19.9
5. Street/parking lot cleaning (787)	75.5	2.5	22.1	70.9	18.8	3.4	18.3	0.9	0.9	0.0	0.1	17.0
6. Snow plowing/sanding (739)	72.6	0.4	27.1	75.2	21.9	6.2	12.6	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.1	10.6
7. Traffic sign/signal installation/maintenance (864)	81.3	1.9	16.8	43.4	41.2	17.5	27.1	0.2	1.0	0.5	0.0	11.3
8. Parking meter maintenance and collection (229)	23.1	13.5	63.4	79.5	14.8	3.5	9.6	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0	2.1
9. Tree trimming and planting on public rights of way (904)	85.2	2.8	12.0	39.6	49.4	5.5	38.3	2.7	1.4	0.7	3.4	19.1
10. Maintenance and administration of cemeteries (384)	37.7	3.2	59.1	67.7	21.6	3.4	12.2	4.4	0.5	0.8	3.9	6.4
11. Inspection/Code enforcement (981)	93.3	0.7	6.0	82.3	15.2	5.4	7.2	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.3	14.9
12. Operation of parking lots and garages (379)	38.1	2.6	59.3	65.4	22.2	4.2	20.6	2.1	1.3	0.5	0.0	7.8
13. Operation/maintenance of bus transit system (258)	25.1	3.5	71.4	30.2	21.3	34.5	20.9	11.2	1.9	5.4	0.4	5.7
14. Operation/maintenance of paratransit system (240)	23.5	3.2	73.3	30.4	21.3	32.1	19.2	15.8	1.7	7.1	0.4	5.7
15. Operation of airports (302)	29.9	2.4	67.8	42.4	28.5	25.8	20.5	1.3	4.3	3.0	1.7	5.0
16. Water distribution (694)	66.4	3.0	30.6	75.9	14.3	14.1	7.2	0.4	0.9	0.4	0.0	4.3
17. Water treatment (619)	59.3	4.7	36.0	71.4	12.3	17.9	6.3	0.6	0.6	0.0	0.0	3.5
18. Sewage collection and treatment (743)	69.7	4.5	25.8	60.8	22.5	25.7	8.3	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.0	7.1
19. Disposal of sludge (559)	52.4	6.5	41.2	42.0	19.3	20.4	30.8	1.1	1.3	0.2	0.0	8.5
20. Disposal of hazardous materials (399)	36.9	4.0	59.1	22.8	31.6	28.1	38.3	4.3	3.5	2.0	2.8	5.0
<b>Public Utilities</b>												
21. Electric utility operation and management (172)	16.2	1.9	82.0	48.3	8.7	16.3	26.7	4.1	11.0	0.0	0.0	5.0
22. Gas utility operation and Management (113)	10.3	1.4	88.3	28.3	6.2	14.2	42.5	3.5	19.5	0.0	0.0	15.0
23. Utility meter reading (593)	55.6	2.2	42.2	77.6	9.4	6.6	12.1	1.3	2.7	0.0	0.0	70.0
24. Utility billing (637)	59.5	2.1	38.4	76.1	13.3	7.8	12.4	1.4	2.5	0.2	0.0	65.0

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	Has the method of service delivery changed in the last 5 years?
<b>Public Safety</b>												
25. Crime prevention/patrol (1,001)	96.0	0.3	3.7	85.6	9.4	8.1	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.1	3.4	26.7
26. Police/fire communications (925)	87.7	5.8	6.4	69.1	18.3	24.3	0.2	0.8	0.1	0.3	1.2	42.2
27. Fire prevention/suppression (821)	79.3	2.3	18.4	74.4	12.3	10.4	0.7	1.8	0.2	0.9	12.9	17.8
28. Emergency medical service (724)	68.7	4.8	26.5	52.2	28.5	15.3	12.6	8.4	1.5	1.0	10.1	28.9
29. Ambulance service (575)	54.4	6.1	39.4	45.9	19.8	14.8	20.5	8.3	2.4	1.6	11.3	35.6
30. Traffic control/parking enforcement (854)	81.9	1.0	17.1	85.4	9.8	7.3	1.3	0.2	0.4	0.0	2.7	13.3
31. Vehicle towing and storage (473)	44.0	2.7	53.3	7.2	13.3	3.8	79.5	1.5	6.1	0.4	0.2	6.7
<b>Health and Human Services</b>												
32. Sanitary inspection (520)	49.9	3.7	46.4	59.0	17.7	31.2	3.5	0.0	0.4	0.4	0.0	10.7
33. Insect/rodent control (409)	38.9	3.3	57.9	45.0	27.1	31.8	16.4	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.2	7.1
34. Animal control (809)	76.2	4.4	19.4	63.4	14.6	17.7	5.8	8.8	0.2	0.9	1.2	33.9
35. Operation of animal shelters (508)	49.0	6.0	45.0	44.5	15.0	21.1	6.7	21.7	0.2	2.6	5.9	25.0
36. Operation of daycare facilities (124)	12.1	2.6	85.3	29.0	29.8	10.5	37.9	34.7	1.6	11.3	2.4	7.1
37. Child welfare programs (248)	24.6	2.2	73.2	28.2	34.7	37.5	11.3	25.0	0.8	10.1	7.3	7.1
38. Programs for the elderly (614)	57.9	1.5	40.6	27.5	51.3	26.2	7.3	30.6	0.8	8.1	17.1	30.4
39. Operation/management of hospitals (67)	6.8	5.5	87.7	14.9	14.9	43.3	25.4	28.4	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.8
40. Public health programs (350)	33.5	2.2	64.3	30.9	36.6	44.6	11.1	19.4	1.7	6.3	5.7	19.6
41. Drug and alcohol treatment programs (256)	24.2	2.1	73.7	9.4	37.1	38.3	18.4	46.5	2.0	12.1	5.5	8.9
42. Operation of mental health/mental retardation programs and facilities (201)	19.6	1.9	78.5	14.9	30.3	45.3	19.4	36.3	2.5	10.4	4.5	12.5
43. Prisons/jails (457)	44.5	8.6	46.9	61.3	19.5	32.4	1.8	1.1	0.2	0.4	0.4	12.5
44. Operation of homeless shelters (124)	11.5	1.5	87.0	6.5	16.1	22.6	4.8	62.1	3.2	15.3	8.9	7.1
45. Workforce development/ job training programs (261)	25.1	2.8	72.1	18.8	37.2	48.3	11.5	31.0	1.5	6.9	3.8	19.6
46. Intake/eligibility determination for welfare programs (219)	21.7	2.3	76.0	49.3	19.2	37.9	2.3	9.6	0.5	1.4	0.9	5.4
<b>Parks and Recreation</b>												
47. Operation and maintenance of recreation facilities (940)	88.3	1.3	10.4	70.0	26.4	8.4	8.7	7.3	3.3	1.7	8.6	64.2
48. Parks landscaping and maintenance (949)	89.1	1.4	9.5	66.3	27.7	5.6	18.1	2.0	0.8	0.4	5.5	56.6
49. Operation of convention centers and auditoriums (274)	26.6	1.6	71.8	54.7	20.4	18.2	15.3	9.1	2.9	3.3	2.9	34.0
<b>Cultural and Arts Programs</b>												
50. Operation of cultural and arts programs (417)	40.6	1.8	57.6	23.7	49.2	13.4	9.8	44.6	0.7	12.5	26.9	65.6
51. Operation of libraries (617)	59.4	3.9	36.7	55.9	13.1	28.5	0.5	6.5	0.2	3.7	8.4	37.5
52. Operation of museums (290)	28.0	2.3	69.7	24.8	25.9	12.4	4.5	35.2	1.0	12.1	30.7	28.1
<b>Support Functions</b>												
53. Buildings and grounds maintenance (1,028)	98.3	0.3	1.4	58.3	39.1	1.8	30.4	1.9	1.1	0.3	1.5	32.1
54. Building security (799)	78.0	0.7	21.3	70.8	19.9	2.5	19.1	1.0	0.4	0.4	0.1	17.3

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55. Fleet mgmt/vehicle maintenance: Heavy equipment (963)	91.8	1.1	7.1	50.9	45.1	1.6	37.2	0.6	0.4	0.1	0.0	16.0
56. Fleet mgmt/vehicle maintenance: Emergency vehicles (907)	86.2	2.0	11.7	45.8	44.7	3.7	39.9	0.9	0.4	0.3	1.1	18.5
57. Fleet mgmt/vehicle maintenance: All other vehicles (972)	93.1	1.8	5.1	53.8	39.8	1.3	36.0	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.0	13.6
58. Payroll (1,024)	98.5	0.5	1.0	92.3	5.8	0.5	5.5	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	14.8
59. Tax bill processing (674)	65.6	5.3	29.1	66.8	16.8	23.3	7.4	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.0	13.6
60. Tax assessing (546)	53.9	5.5	40.6	58.1	13.6	29.5	8.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.0	12.3
61. Data processing (938)	91.1	1.1	7.8	74.0	22.8	3.8	17.3	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.0	24.7
62. Collection of delinquent taxes (653)	63.3	5.7	31.0	52.8	23.3	24.8	17.9	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.0	13.6
63. Title records/plat map maintenance (565)	56.2	2.2	41.7	63.4	21.4	25.3	6.4	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	8.6
64. Legal services (838)	80.7	1.2	18.1	31.9	32.5	2.6	55.7	1.7	0.5	0.6	0.0	9.9
65. Secretarial services (960)	92.7	0.4	6.8	91.9	7.8	0.2	5.3	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.5	7.4
66. Personnel services (982)	94.3	0.4	5.3	88.0	10.8	0.9	8.6	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.0	12.3
67. Public relations/public information (944)	90.8	0.4	8.7	82.3	15.7	1.0	11.9	1.4	0.2	0.4	1.1	19.8

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

22.2 Yes

77.8 No

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

72.7 Service quality was not satisfactory

15.1 There were problems with the contract specifications

20.4 There were problems monitoring the contract

51.0 The cost savings were insufficient

35.9 Local government efficiency improved

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

12.7 Other