Top 2013 Trends for State and Local Government

THREE TRENDS THAT MAY CHANGE HOW YOU WORK THIS YEAR
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Executive Summary

As part of its ongoing research into public sector communications, digital communications provider GovDelivery surveyed more than 400 individuals in U.S. state, county, and city government organizations to identify the most important trends for 2013.

The potential trends included today's hot topics, such as big data, cloud computing, and cybersecurity:

- Big data/open data
- Budgets
- Citizen/customer service
- Cloud Computing
- Collaboration
- Cybersecurity
- Mobile government/Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)
- Technology

Respondents were asked to look at these trends through three distinct filters:

- Trends taking center stage in 2013 (affecting their agencies and others)
- Trends directly affecting their own work
- Trends that their organizations were already addressing

While there are differences between state, county and city government responses, all levels of government shared the top three trends overall:

1. Collaboration with other agencies and with citizens
2. Citizen/customer service
3. Mobility and bring your own device (BYOD)

This paper examines the survey responses and the implications for state and local government moving forward in 2013.

Trend: Collaboration is Critical

Collaboration tops the list in the trends taking center stage for most state and local agencies. The question was framed to include collaboration with other government organizations as well as citizens.

![Figure 1: Trends identified as taking center stage in 2013](image-url)
Collaboration has always been part of doing business at the state and local level. County and city governments must work with state and federal agencies to implement programs. And cross-agency collaboration is clearly critical for public safety, law enforcement, public health and other vital services that cross jurisdictions. Streamlining inter-agency collaboration can reduce costs and duplication of effort.

At the same time, citizens are starting to want to collaborate with their local governments—providing input on social media or other channels, for example, and interacting with government organizations on their own terms, using their own devices.

Most of the surveyed individuals felt that collaboration affected their jobs directly and that their agencies were already addressing the trend.

![Figure 2: Collaboration is already a key focus for most organizations](image)

Looking at other questions on the survey, it is clear that there is room for improvement, particularly as new technologies create new channels for efficient collaboration. For example, when asked about whether they use social media to find information that affects their own jobs and organizations, just over half responded positively. Particularly in county governments, many respondents are not yet making use of social media for collaborative purposes.

![Figure 3: Percentage of respondents using social media to get information affecting their jobs](image)
IMPLICATIONS

In 2013, expect state and local government organizations to expand their use of digital technologies in support of collaboration:

- Supporting collaboration with other agencies and citizens through pervasive social media channels
- Cross-promoting programs and communications with other agencies through websites and digital technologies
- Using dedicated communities and channels for inter-agency collaboration

**Trend: Customer Service is a Top Priority**

For state and city government respondents, the top trend identified as affecting their own jobs and currently being addressed was citizen/customer service. (For county governments, citizen service ranked second behind collaboration.)

![Figure 4: Top trends that will affect your current job in 2013](image)

The focus on customer service is not surprising. In an era of lean budgets and difficult decisions, local governments need to build strong relationships with their taxpaying base. In fact, the focus on citizen service is strongest at the city government level. Being closer to their constituents and taxpayers, they realize the importance of proving their value to the citizens who directly impact their budgets.

Communication with customers is the first critical stage of customer service for many organizations, and the ‘low hanging fruit’ when it comes to improving service delivery. Within the state and local sectors, city governments have made the greatest strides in using social media to share news and information from their organizations.

![Figure 5: Respondants using social media to share information from their organizations](image)
Email and text messaging are other important channels for improving service through communications. Letting citizens subscribe to the information they need helps government agencies communicate more effectively and thus, serve the public more effectively.

The Washington State Department of Transportation has more than 400,000 subscribers to its email and text messaging alerts about transportation, including traffic conditions, road closures, mountain pass conditions and information for freight haulers.

**IMPLICATIONS**

2013 should bring broader adoption of both social media and other digital channels in support of customer service initiatives across all branches of government. Happily, there are many successful examples that government agencies can emulate, without having to reinvent the wheel.

**Trend: Embracing Mobile Government**

Rounding out the top three topics, “Mobile government/bring your own device” is a major concern for government organizations at all levels.

Internally, many employees want to use their own devices to access applications and data. While not one of the top three issues, cloud computing was identified as an important trend by more than a third of respondents, and cloud applications are defined in part by their accessibility from any device and location.

By making government applications accessible through personal devices, governments can empower their employees to be responsive to citizen requirements. Enabling mobile access to government systems improves productivity while reducing government costs to provision devices to employees and contractors.

Externally, citizens and constituents are embracing mobile technologies and mobile apps at a rapid pace—creating new opportunities for government agencies to engage with citizens.

Dedicated mobile apps are taking hold at the state government level. The state of California offers a wide range of mobile apps for interacting with the State Board of Equalization, Veterans’ Affairs, State Parks and Motor Vehicles, among other agencies. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources offers mobile-optimized websites for finding lakes and fall color.

Mobile is an important channel for information distribution, particularly time-sensitive communications such as public safety alerts.

The rapid growth in mobile adoption may be outpacing some government efforts. While around half of the respondents listed mobile/BYOD as a top trend, fewer said that their agencies were currently addressing the issue.

1 Washington State Department of Transportation: [http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Communications/WebToolKit/GovDelivery/](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Communications/WebToolKit/GovDelivery/)
2 State of California Mobile Gallery: [http://ca.gov/mobile](http://ca.gov/mobile)
3 Minnesota Department of Natural Resources: [http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mobile/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mobile/index.html)
Figure 6: Agencies still need to address mobile government and BYOD

IMPLICATIONS

Clearly, getting a handle on mobile and personal devices is a top priority for all types of state and local government organizations:

- Externally, government organizations need to find ways to engage with citizens and constituents on their mobile devices, whether on dedicated government mobile apps and mobile-optimized websites or through email and text messaging.
- Internally, government organizations need to develop policies around using personal devices and security protections for their most vital systems. Mobile devices and applications can help employees be more responsive and collaborative with their colleagues and others; as the demand for higher customer satisfaction grows in the public sector, so will the need for mobile devices.
Summary

State and local agencies already have full agendas for 2013. The trends identified in this paper can help them fulfill their core missions more efficiently.

- Better engagement with citizens and stakeholders helps organizations fulfill their missions—whether it's making sure people know about relevant legislation and program or streamlining essential citizen-focused processes.
- Better collaboration increases efficiency, both within and between government organizations.
- Taking advantage of the growth in mobile devices, including smart phones and tablets, will help government organizations reduce their costs while enhancing productivity, collaboration and customer service.

There’s a great deal of overlap in these trends. A single initiative to better interact with citizens through text messaging, mobile-optimized websites with self-service options, and integrated digital communications can address all three objectives of improving customer service, supporting mobility and improving collaboration.

For specific resources on how others are addressing these trends in the public sector, visit the resources page at govdelivery.com/resources.

About GovDelivery

GovDelivery, the leading provider of government-to-citizen communication solutions, helps more than 550 government organizations around the world, with a presence in more than 40 states, transform their communications by maximizing direct connections with the public to inform and engage citizens, streamline service with proactive communications and support collaboration.

For more information, visit govdelivery.com.