

FutureGov
電子化公共參與措施
研究報告摘要



研究方法

本報告所載研究是於二零一零年十月進行，所使用的研究方法包括直接研究和間接研究。這些研究的詳細資料載於下文。

間接研究

首個研究階段包括進行大規模間接研究工作，在網上查閱公共資訊來源。這些來源包括政府網站、專責小組報告書和白皮書。

有關需求方面的直接研究

為了解其他國家對公眾參與的看法和他們所採用的措施，我們進行電話問卷調查，訪問了多國政府合共 40 名高級政府官員和政府資訊科技總監，以收集他們對所屬機構的公眾參與措施的意見。

目的

本研究報告旨在就其他政府（例如美國、英國、澳洲和新加坡）的電子化公共參與措施，向香港特別行政區政府資訊科技總監辦公室報告調查結果，並會闡述其他成熟經濟體系如何使用 Web 2.0 和其他現有技術來推行更以民為本的電子化公共參與措施。

綜合國家報告

I. 引言

在提供服務方面，世界各地日益重視創新和改革，這是因為各國政府均認同透過創新和改革除了可以達到預期的政策成果，更可以加強市民對政府的信任。

現時，市民期望政府所提供的服務能達到可媲美私營機構的水平。明顯地，政府所提供的服務與市民對政府的信任存在密切關係。

雖然人們常認為政府在提供服務方面落後於私營機構，但這種觀念正在改變。有些政府正落實推出創新措施，為公共服務進行改革。另一方面，多國政府也正透過 Web 2.0 聽取民意，並把民意納入整體政策大綱內，使社會更具包容性。

II. 公眾參與

a. 概覽

亞太區各國政府現正朝着發展數碼經濟體系的方向邁進。

現在是資訊主導的世界。如果政府員工能簡易地取得所需資訊，可為公共服務帶來多少改善？資訊管理越趨簡化，對最終用戶、政府服務，以及政府與市民的關係又會有甚麼影響？

亞太區內的公共服務機構明白到透過有效率的資訊管理作業模式，可以妥善管理資訊和記錄，從而提升公共服務的成效和水平。

公營部門經紙張和電子方式傳遞的資訊，均記錄了政府制訂政策和進行交易的過程。政府必須確定這些資訊的真確性和重要性，並須確保資訊來源可靠，以體現問責精神。

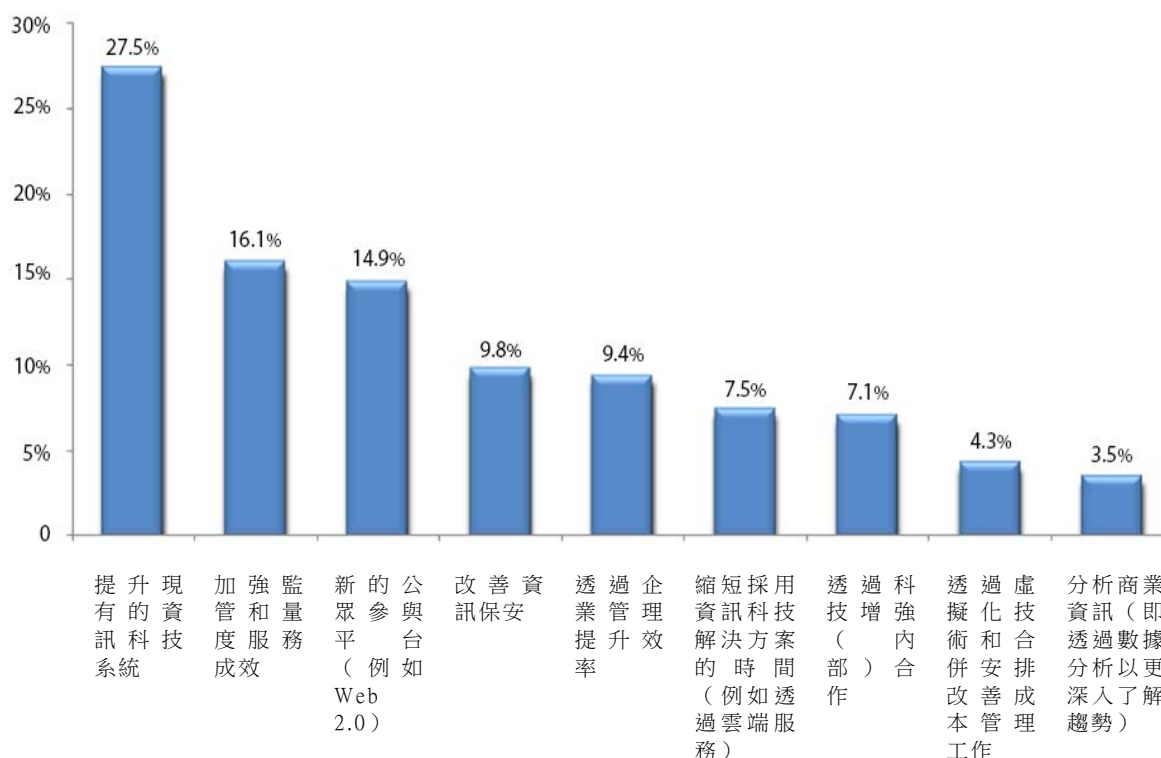
FutureGov Research 最近進行的研究也支持這個觀點。當被問到在未來 12 至 18 個月會優先處理什麼工作或主要的公營部門決策者會優先處理什麼工作時，受訪者均明確表示會優先處理資訊管理工作。121 名亞太區公營部門官員表示，他們的首要工作是提升現有的資訊科技系統，其次是推行兩項與公共服務有關的工作：加強監管和量度服務成效，確保公營部門承擔責任；以及設立新的平台，推動公眾參與。（見圖 1）

因此，為了致力建立開放的政府，這些政府正研究如何簡化有關推廣和協調資訊及通訊科技應用的工作，以助其落實政策、提供資訊、推行計劃和服務。

明顯地，各政府部門和機構現時所注重的，是如何有效率和有效地透過資訊及通訊科技提供策略建議、推行活動和提出意見，使資訊及通訊科技能應用於政府的行政管理、資訊和服務上。

這些政府也正研究如何加強其在資訊及通訊科技方面的整體管理工作，以及如何確保資訊及通訊科技可以發揮最大效益，藉以提升效率和優化服務。

圖 1：各國公營部門在未來 12 至 18 個月優先處理的工作



b. 政府作為內容創作者

自社交網絡急速擴展以來，政府與市民的關係已出現顯著轉變。作為記錄管理者的政府為此作出適應的同時，亦漸漸成為儲存了寶貴資訊的內容創作者。

現時決策者會按照一種新的模式制定政策，他們不但須評估有關內容開發、製作和發放的價值鏈，而且還須擔當內容製作者的角色。

這個角色須處理整個資訊生命週期內的各項工作 — 由獲取、儲存、整理、整合、分析資訊，到最終提供適時和相關資訊供決策之用。

加快整個資訊生命週期，並同時確保所採取的做法符合成本效益和不會擾民，是另一項須應付的挑戰。不過，對於數碼經濟體系的政府而言，他們亦應要克服這項挑戰。

c. 個人化服務水平

在現今全球化的社會中，政府與市民溝通時，不但要加快整個過程，還須應付另一項日益艱巨的挑戰。隨着國與國之間的移民情況日趨普遍，政府現時須透過多種語言與市民溝通。很多亞洲國家都有這種現象（即使新加坡這個細小的城市國家也有四種官方語言），而在一些傳統以英語為母語的國家，這更甚至變成規範。

以預先印製的文件為例，現時通常都需要以多種語言印製。根據以民為本的原則，市民可接收以其所選用語言印製的政府信件，而政府機構亦可以其所選用語言印製相關文件。

為市民提供這個水平的個人化服務，是現今的實際情況，展示了可讓公眾參與的程度。政府可透過適當的策略和解決方案，進一步在語言以外的範疇推行個人化服務。

電子郵件和流動電話產生前所未有的大量數據，令數據成為一個需要持續處理的問題。儘管政府難以應付數據管理工作，但他們所取得的數據卻越來越多。現時的趨勢是把大部分的數據儲存在公眾領域內。

國際預算伙伴所發表的「公開預算調查」報告建議各國政府在網上刊載所有已編製的預算資訊，並邀請公眾參與，以提高透明度和增強問責性。

該份報告提到：「政府應將他們編製的文件全部公開。此舉不涉及太多額外的人力物力，卻可令多個國家和地方的預算更為公開。」

隨着 Web 2.0 日趨普及，資訊及通訊科技已成為市民生活不可或缺的一部分，而政府 2.0 則成為了現今的流行語。多國政府現已加強與各方的連繫，並更趨開放。在提供公共服務方面，政府現今的目標是提升效率和效益，並注重成效。鑑於政府更多透過「公營部門與私營機構合作」方式推行項目，公營部門和私營機構可因應雙方目標發揮協同效應。政府推動公眾參與的方式亦有所改變，重點從為市民提供服務和資訊，轉變為主動積極地推動市民參與制定政策。

政府的角色轉變是全球趨勢。各國政府利用市民的知識、專業技能和意見，確保制定合適的政策以處理各項受關注的事宜。Web 2.0 工具讓政府能迅速取得有關資訊並採取適當行動。在三藩市，市民可透過「SeeClickFix」應用程式，即時通知市政廳有關火車車廂過熱的事故。世界各地的城市均於網上發布更多公共資訊，而流動應用程式開發商亦正開發「混搭」應用程式，使用家能更方便地使用這些資訊。社會很可能因此而進入基層民主的新時代。在華盛頓，市民可透過應用程式拍下塗鴉和坑洞的照片，然後將照片傳送到城市資料庫，該資料庫會立刻通知相關部門處理。該等照片已連結至全球定位系統，讓政府官員和其他市民能確定有關位置和看到問題所在。

在現今社會上，市民除了擔當監察的角色，向當局舉報問題外，還可用積極和具建設性的方式參與公共事務。政府可鼓勵市民更多參與對話，以便他們參與制定政策。

III. 與持份者進行訪問調查所得結果（概述）

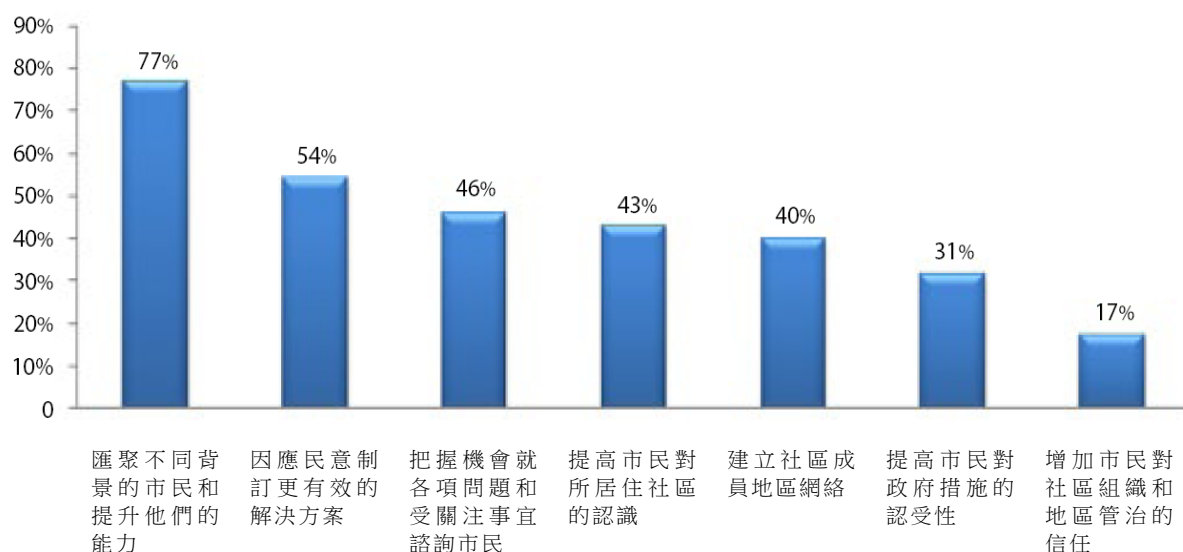
a. 推動因素

作為研究的一部分，我們訪問了 40 名來自不同國家的高級公營部門官員。這些國家已推行重要的公眾參與措施。我們詢問受訪者有什麼因素推動他們推行公眾參與措施。從下圖 2 可見，絕大部分受訪者都表示希望「匯聚不同背景的市民和提升他們的能力」。

這清楚顯示，這些政府均致力發展具包容性和自主性的社會，讓市民能對其周遭環境有自主權，尤其是讓他們能與政府互相溝通。事實上，接着兩項受訪者的回應亦支持這個研究調查結果。大部分受訪者表示希望因應民意制訂更有效的解決方案，亦有部分受訪者表示希望把握機會就各項問題和受關注事宜諮詢市民。

匯聚不同背景的市民亦是相當重要的，因為可讓這些市民對其個人生活和所居住的社區有更大的自主權。有人說，當不同社區的市民匯聚一起後，他們往往會發現，大家的共通點較所想像的多。

圖 2：請列出推動市民參與公共事務的最主要原因

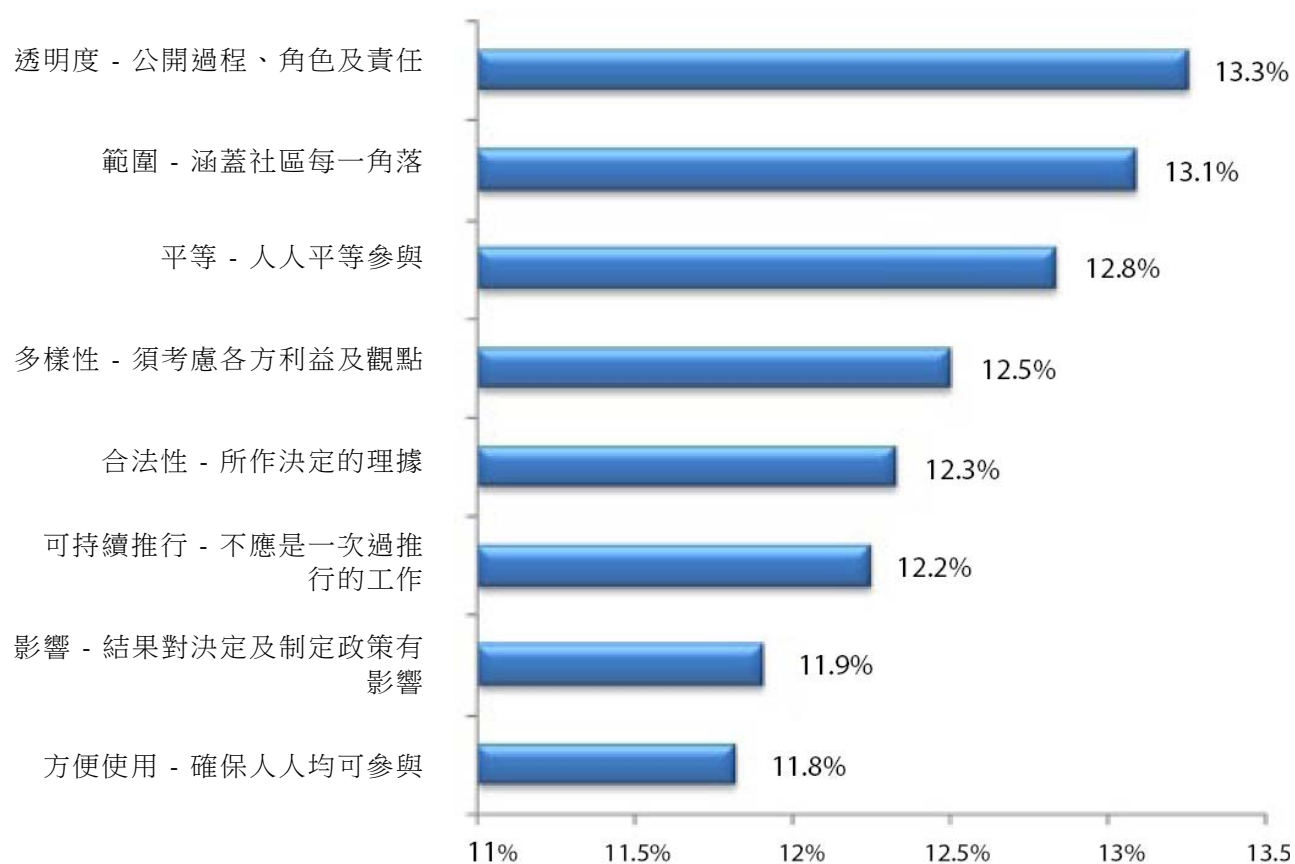


b. 主要原則

在訪問期間，我們也詢問了外地政府官員在設計公眾參與措施時所採用的原則。我們希望了解他們最重視的原則，以及他們如何應用這些原則。從下圖 3 的回應可見，在公眾參與方面，雖然所有原則均屬重要，但最受重視的是透明度、公開性和平等。

透明度可分為兩個層面，即社區層面和政府層面。對於市民要求他們所選出的官員(包括制定政策的官員和面對市民的前線政府人員)提高其工作透明度和問責性，我們都不會感到陌生。儘管面對市民的公務員不一定經由選民選出，但他們代表了經選舉選出的政府。這些公務員必須讓人覺得他們的工作能滿足其政治主人(即市民)的要求。

圖 3：請依次序排列設計公眾參與平台時所採用的原則



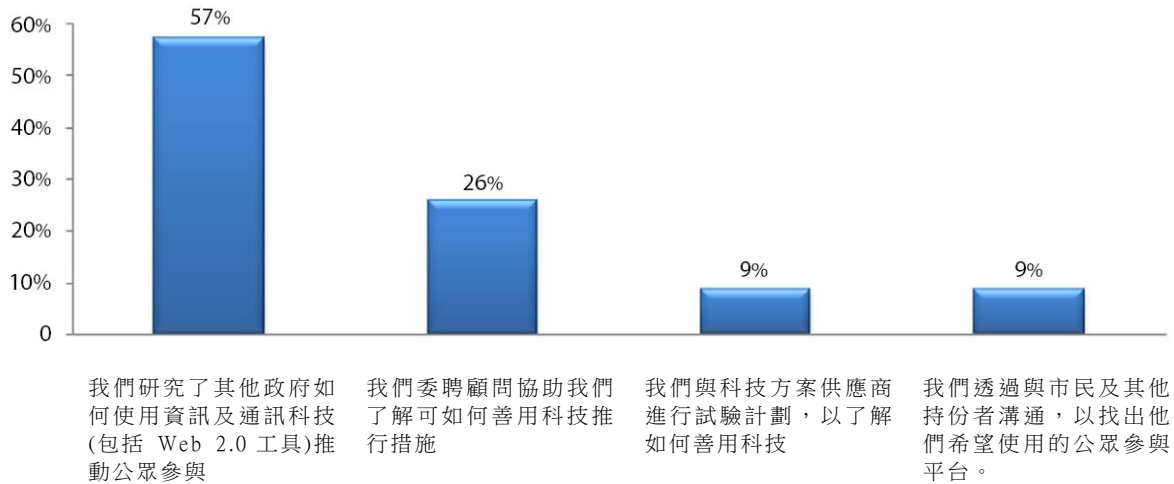
c. 定出公眾參與措施

當被問及如何定出及設計公眾參與措施時，大部分受訪者表示會研究其他政府的做法，了解如何使用資訊及通訊科技以定出及設計公眾參與措施，並會委聘顧問就如何善用科技向他們提供意見(見下圖 4)。在應用新科技於政府服務方面，很多外地政府官員往往表示不希望成為「市場領導者」。這項研究調查結果印證了這一點。

許多政府均伺機率先推出或使用新技術或服務。此舉通常是出於政治動機，藉以使市民受惠，並向準投資者展示其創新技術或服務（發展中的經濟體系尤甚）。

大部分政府亦常常透過顧問服務，以了解最新的技術趨勢和如何善用這些技術推行措施。同樣地，就公眾參與措施而言，慣常有效的方法是參照其他曾就相類似措施徵詢意見或推行相類似措施的政府的做法，藉以採用「最佳作業模式」透過科技推行措施。

圖 4：如何定出和設計公眾參與措施？



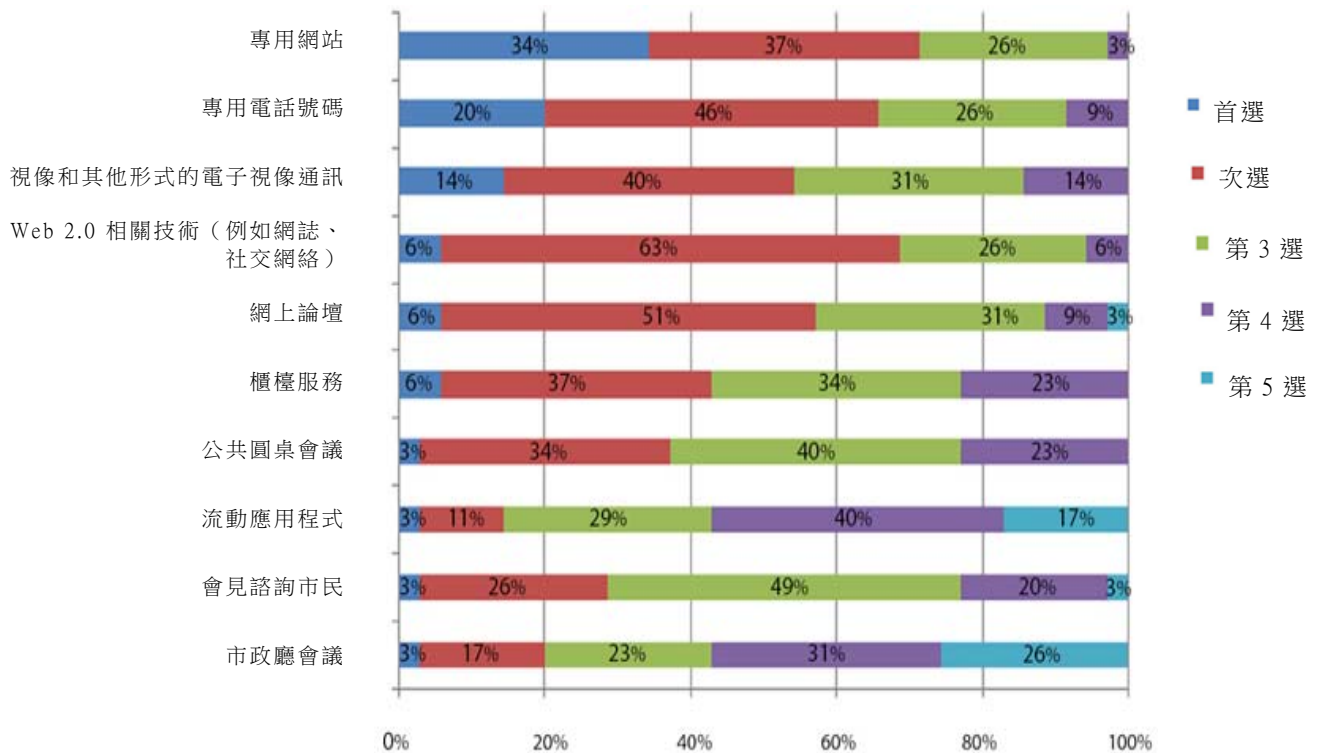
d. 一般公眾參與平台的成效

在訪問期間，我們請外地政府官員依次序排列下圖 5 所示一般公眾參與平台的相對成效。根據經整理的意見，設立專用網站看來是推動公眾參與的最有效途徑，其次是設立讓市民聯絡政府的渠道，第三是使用 Web 2.0 相關技術。

市民一般喜歡自己搜尋資訊。他們會在有需要時才直接聯絡政府，以免費時失事。網站配合電話專線，最能切合他們這方面的需要。有了電話專線，市民便可在需要時直接聯絡政府和取得服務，而毋須（如電郵般）等候回應答覆。

值得注意的是，受訪者把 Web 2.0 相關技術排在第三位，顯示他們雖然認為這類技術重要，但就政府服務而言，他們可能對這類技術有所保留。這進一步支持以下觀點，就是在採用“較新”的技術時，大部分政府(即使是那些推動公眾參與的主要國家)，均會傾向採取審慎態度。

圖 5：請依次序排列以下一般公眾參與平台的成效



e. 推行公眾參與活動的機構

我們必須了解有關各國作出公眾參與決定的背景，這是十分重要的。我們詢問受訪者誰參與設計有關措施和誰受該等措施所影響。所得的意見可分五類（見表 1），前兩類是政府機構的意見，其他三類則是政府以外機構的意見。

值得注意的是，雖然人們認為大多數公眾參與措施應由面對市民的部門設計，但常見的情況是，許多計劃都是交由機構的傳訊部門或對外溝通的部門負責，包括參與社區照顧服務的部門或其他外間政府機構，特別是與資訊科技有關的機構。

大多數政府機構通常會委聘專家或顧問推行公眾參與措施，這亦顯示出這些政府機構明白本身並非這方面的專家，而對於委聘專家或顧問推行公眾參與事宜，他們亦持開放態度。鑑於許多措施會逐漸採用電子化公共參與模式，因此有關資訊科技的專業知識便顯得十分重要。按理政府應會要求屬下資訊科技團隊和外間顧問了解並切合有關機構及公眾的需要。

許多受訪者均表示，他們還安排政府以外的機構／人士(由普通市民以至非政府機構和教育機構等)參與有關工作，以助達到所訂目的。讓來自廣泛界別的持份者參與是很重要的，可符合包容、平等、多樣性和合法性等設計原則。

這項安排同時適用於政治組織和私人公司，因為這些組織和公司亦是所提及的持份者，均有份設計公眾參與活動和受到該等活動影響。

表 1：有份設計公眾參與措施或受到該等措施影響的主要機構。

<p>a. 政府部門及機構</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 機構的傳訊部門• 社區照顧服務發展部門• 專注特定事宜的中央政府部門• 信託委員會• 其他政府機構• 相關的政府小組
<p>b. 政府資訊科技相關部門及機構</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 專家• 顧問• 由內部網頁設計師設立的平台• 資訊科技機構或其他資訊科技部門• 資訊科技社羣或團體
<p>c. 外間政府相關機構</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 特殊團體• 大學和專家• 科學組織
<p>d. 非政府機構（包括市民）</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 專注特定事宜的志願團體• 網絡社區和活動團體• 非政府機構• 相關的非政府小組• 市民

- 所諮詢的民間團體及非政府機構

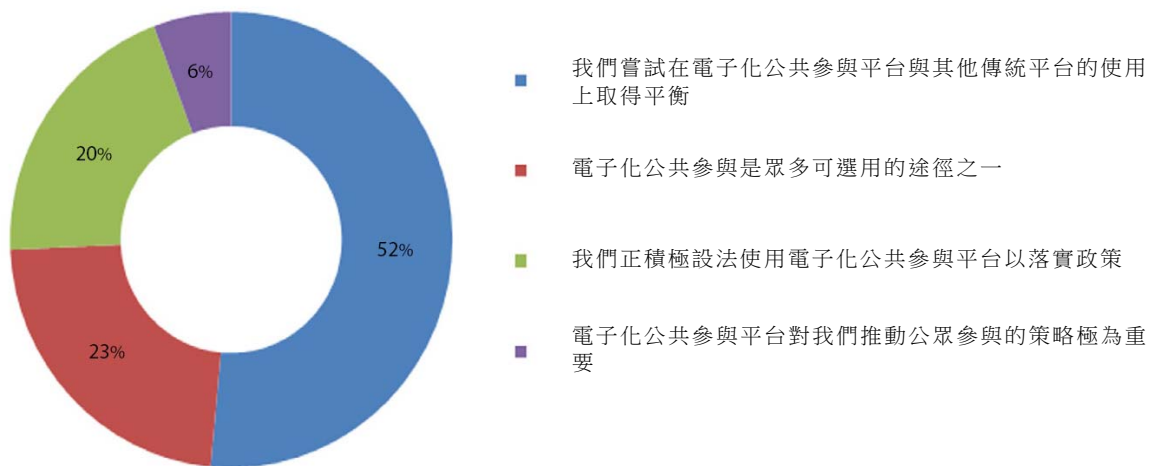
e. 政治組織及私營機構

- 政治組織
- 私人公司

f. 電子化公眾參與方式

為了解所使用的電子化公共參與平台和傳統採用的方式，我們詢問受訪者如何為電子化公共參與措施定出優先次序。值得注意的是，大多數受訪者表示會嘗試「在電子化公共參與平台與其他傳統平台的使用上取得平衡」（見圖 6）。儘管較發達的經濟體系在技術開發和使用能力方面已達到高水平，但他們認為這方面使用科技並非萬全之策，這可能在令人感到意外，也許在推行電子化公眾參與方面，這才是成熟的表現。對於許多發展中的經濟體系而言，情況剛好相反，他們均視科技和電子化公共參與平台為與市民溝通的主要途徑。

圖 6：哪項陳述最能說明你如何為各項電子化公共參與措施定出優先次序

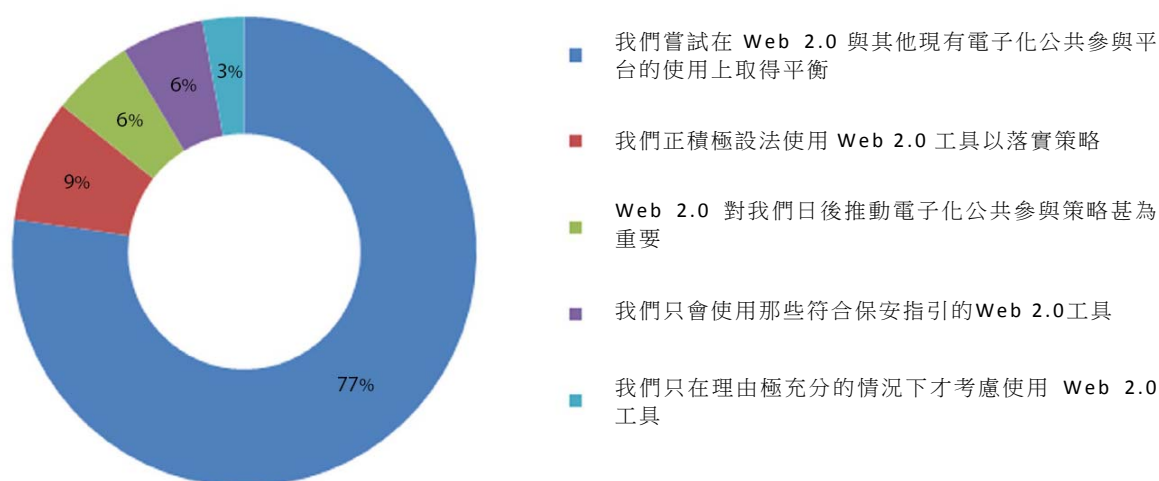


g. Web 2.0 和社交媒體

特別就電子化公共參與平台而言，我們希望了解 Web 2.0 和社交媒體如何影響政府設計這類平台。大部分受訪者(77.2%)表示，他們會嘗試在 Web 2.0 與其他現有電子化公共參與平台的使用上取得平衡(見圖 7)。這顯示，儘管 Web 2.0 工具已迅速成為推動市民參與公共事務所採用的主要技術，但傳統技術(例如電子郵件)仍為政府重用，因為這些技術可提供多種可用渠道，以切合不同社羣的需要。

這種“數碼用戶與非數碼用戶”之間的平衡，以及“數碼用戶”內 X 世代與 Y 世代之間的平衡，可顯示外地政府規劃人員處事已見成熟，能顧及不同社羣的需要，並可視為資訊科技發展完備的政府的主要特點。

圖 7：哪項陳述最能說明你使用 Web 2.0 和其他社交媒體的情況？

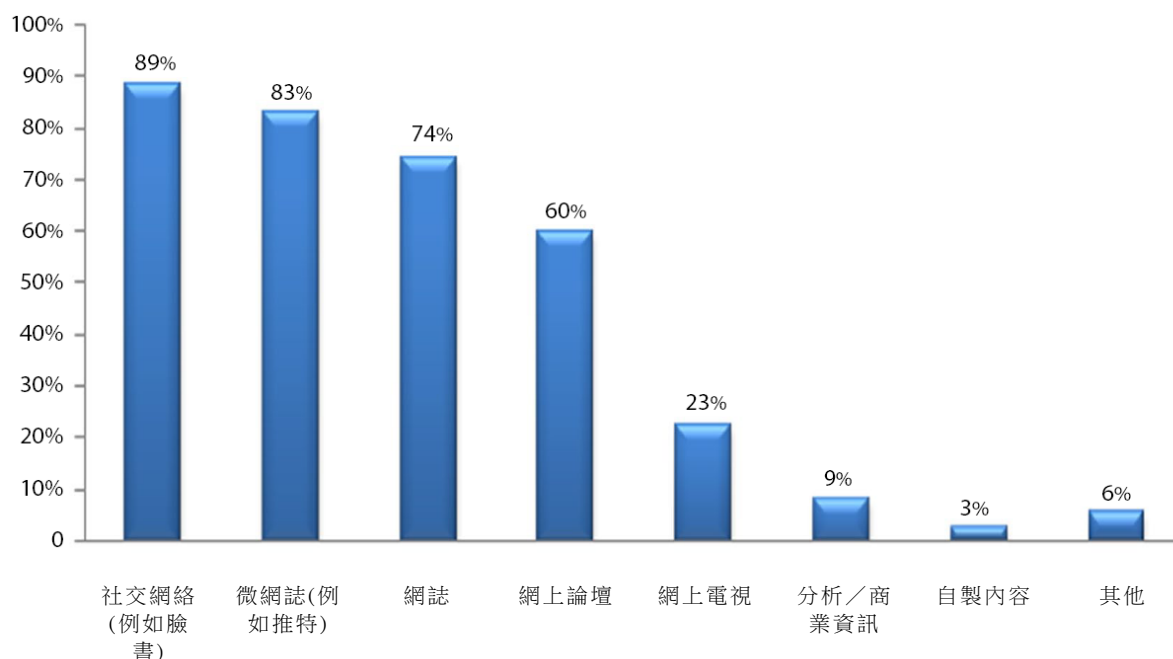


h. 主要的 Web 2.0 技術

了解如何利用 Web 2.0 推動電子化公共參與後，我們希望知道所使用的是哪些特定技術。受訪者表示，這方面所使用的技術主要有兩種，即社交網絡和微網誌(見圖 8)。鑑於社交網絡大行其道，且為很多市民使用，利用這類網絡推動電子化公共參與的做法，實不足為奇。這種做法也顯示政府較注重與市民互動交流，特別是與較年輕和熟悉資訊科技的市民溝通。網誌是政府昔日推動市民參與公共事務所使用的主要工具，雖然現時仍獲使用，但看來已開始被社交網絡超越，因為有些政府會優先選用社交網絡作為電子化公共參與工具。

一些曾提及的其他工具包括使用錄像短片(例如 YouTube)。值得注意的是，雖然這些工具均不如社交網絡和網誌般普及，但多個政府對錄像短片的使用卻越來越感興趣，並正研究開發類似 YouTube 的政府網絡。

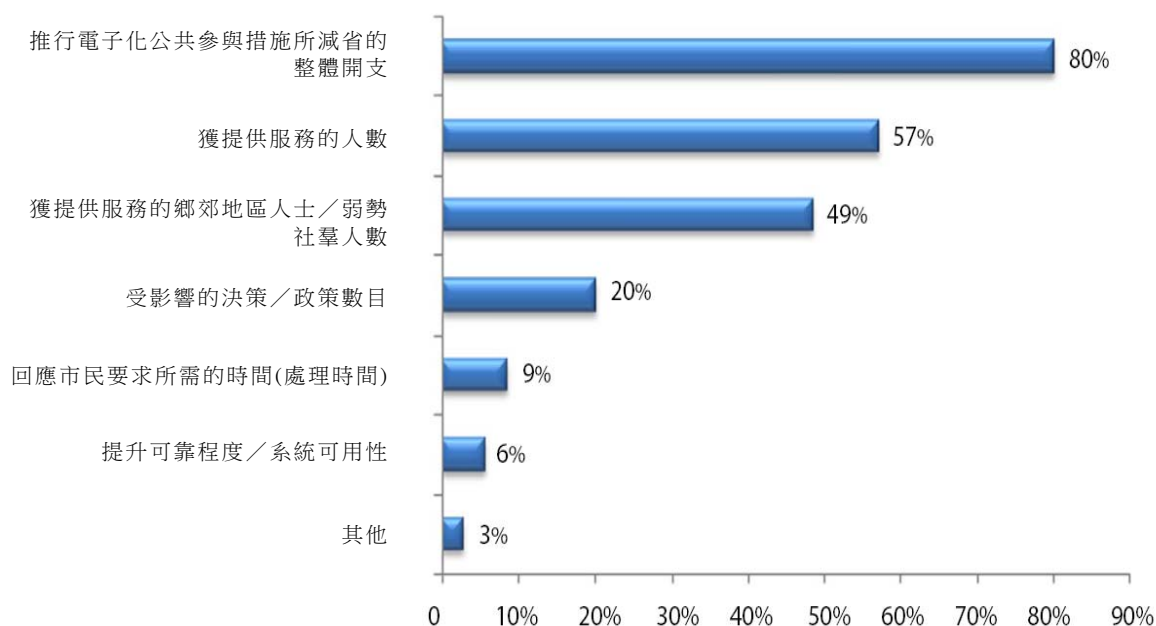
圖 8：現時哪種 Web 2.0 技術對電子化公共參與影響最大？



i. 衡量電子化公共參與的效益

知道所使用的是哪些工具，並了解該等工具與傳統工具的相對效益後，我們希望知道如何衡量該等工具的效益。一如所料，大部分受訪者表示，他們沿用市民滿意度作為衡量效益的主要方法(見圖 9)。不過，值得注意的是，亦有大部分受訪者表示，他們會以減省整體開支作為另一個主要衡量指標，這顯示推動市民參與公共事務固然重要，但推行有關措施時，政府通常都考慮所涉及的開支。這與我們所知道的情況相同，過去數年市民一直要求政府用較少經費求取較大效益，而控制開支便是一項政府須處理的重點工作。

圖 9：如何衡量電子化公共參與措施的效益？



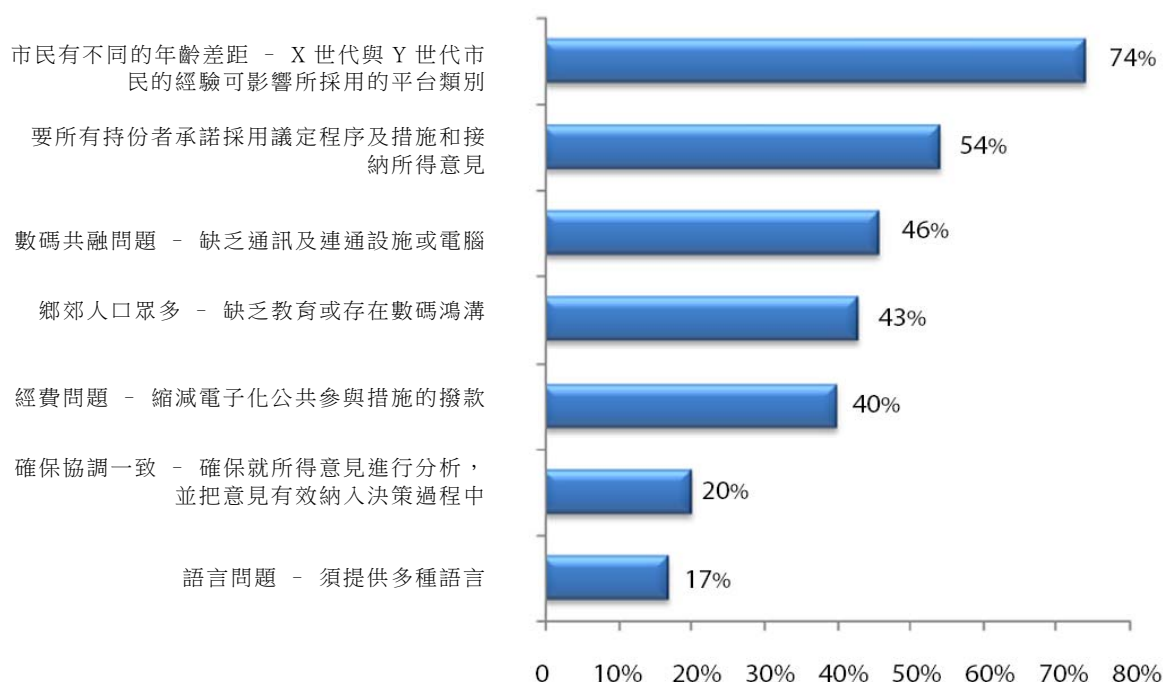
j. 挑戰

為了解推行電子化公共參與措施所遇到的障礙，我們詢問受訪者所面對的挑戰。大部分受訪者表示主要的挑戰是代溝問題，鑑於 X 世代與 Y 世代市民在經驗上存在差異，故須審慎考慮不同類型的電子化公共參與平台(見圖 10)。

部門與機構通常視資訊科技為促進彼此協作的方法，因此帶來另一項主要挑戰，即「要所有持份者承諾採用議定程序及措施和接納所得意見」。在討論政府所面對的挑戰時，大部分受訪的政府官員指出，這是眾所周知和存在已久的問題。

有趣的是，屬研究對象的國家，即使已發展成熟，但對於數碼共融(或數碼鴻溝)這個問題，亦表示關注。這顯示所有國家均存在數碼共融問題，只是所側重處理的工作卻各有不同。舉例來說，新加坡的主要挑戰在於應付通訊費用負擔能力的問題，以及高齡人口可能被忽略的問題。另一方面，澳洲還須應付因幅員遼闊而帶來的挑戰。

圖 10：在推行電子化公共參與措施時遇到什麼主要挑戰？



k. 不宜以電子方式處理的申請

我們或許已知道不同的電子化公共參與平台可處理哪類申請，但我們亦希望了解是否有任何不宜以電子化方式處理的申請。根據所得意見，其中一種是涉及須保密處理敏感資料(例如可識別個人身分的資料或政府財務資料)的申請。此外，須提供「身分證明」的申請亦不宜以電子方式處理(見表 2)。即使有創新方案解決部分問題，但有關方案可能費用過高，或令推動市民參與公共事務的工作變得更複雜。例如，在制定認證規約及提供有關設備後，市民或可以較安全的方式進行電子交易。然而，這會令當中過程變得更複雜(或不方便市民使用)，因此有關解決方案未必為政府機構所接受。

另一類不宜以電子方式處理的申請，是需要透過某種形式的查核或某程度上的個人接觸來處理。以福利申請為例，政府不僅要防止詐騙行為，更重要的是要確保有關福利發放予適當的人士。另一例子是保護兒童個案，個案主任須親身到場評估情況，包括對個案所涉及的兒童、提供照顧者和實際家居環境進行評估。

需要參考大量專家意見來處理的申請，亦是不宜以電子方式處理的。這顯示，屬例外情況的申請，較適宜由人手處理。須注意的是，並非

所有申請都適宜以電子方式處理，而重要的是，必須分辨哪些是適宜或不宜以電子方式處理的申請。

表 2：不宜以電子方式處理的申請類別

<p>a. 已全面採用電子方式處理的申請(不擬採用更多電子方式)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 大部分的申請均以電子方式處理• 想不到有什麼其他電子方式可採用
<p>b. 涉及敏感或保密資料的申請</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 內部財務系統• 保密網絡• 需要提供身分證明的申請
<p>c. 需要透過某種互相接觸形式處理的申請</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 查核客戶遞交的文件• 就特定服務(例如福利申請評估和保護兒童個案)而言，個人接觸對處理申請甚為重要• 涉及互相通訊的申請• 需要透過親自接觸來處理的申請
<p>d. 涉及複雜情況的申請</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 需要參考大量專家意見來處理的申請

1. 成功要素

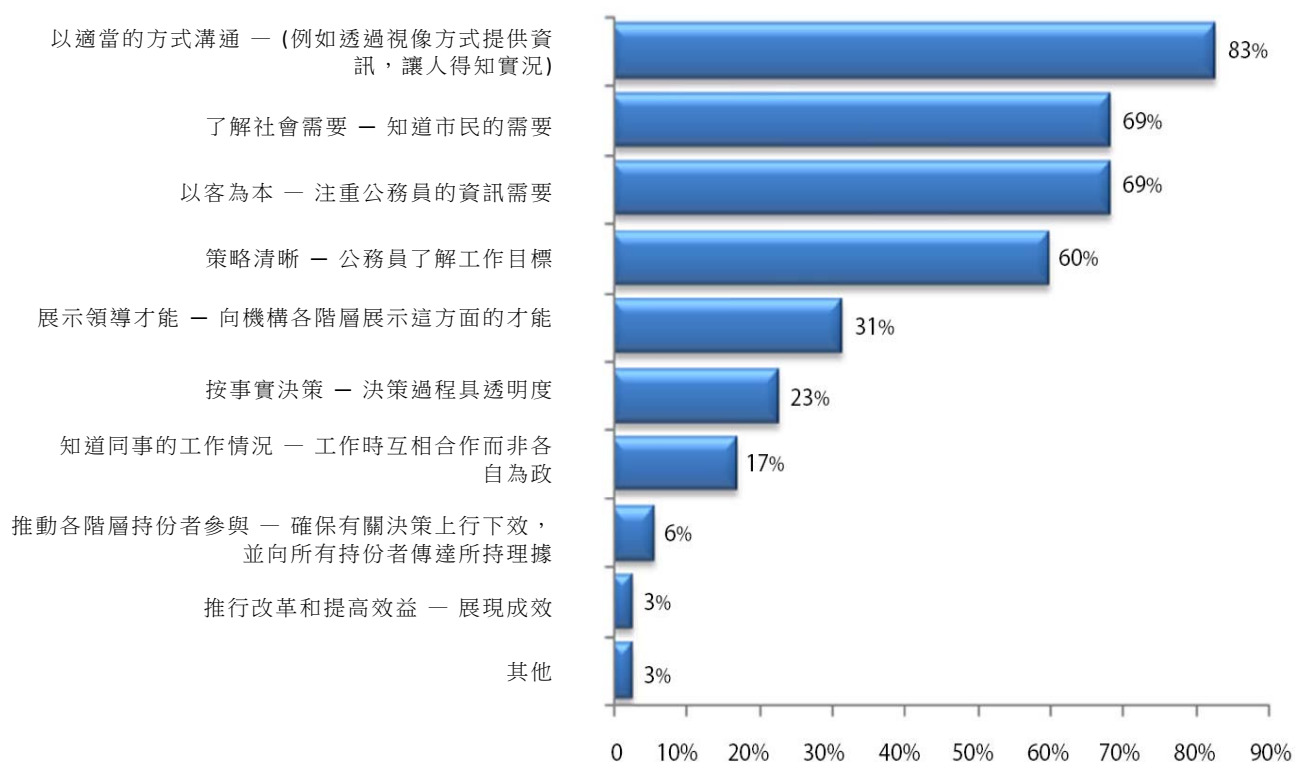
說到底，最重要的是政府須因應各類市民的需要，制訂可推動他們參與公共事務的措施。為此，我們請受訪者列舉一些成功要素。絕大部分受訪者表示，成功與否，關鍵在於能否有效溝通，即以適當的方式溝通(例如透過視像方式提供資訊)(見圖 11)。

眾所周知，任何系統如在使用上過於複雜，便不易獲採用。這正是問題的關鍵所在，市民定希望以方便有效的方式與政府溝通。

大部分受訪者還提及另外兩個成功要素，即以客為本和了解社會需要。前者所強調的是，須確保公務員在適當時獲提供適當的資訊以應付市民的需要，讓市民無須多次接觸政府部門，便能得到所需服務。

後者強調了解「客戶」需要的重要性。在這情況下，政府在了解市民所需後，可設計合適的解決方案，有效地滿足市民的需要。

圖 11：你認為哪些是推動市民參與公共事務的成功要素？



— 完 —



E-ENGAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES IN AUSTRALIA, SINGAPORE,
UNITED KINGDOM AND UNITED STATES

This study is conducted by Alphabet Media Pte Ltd.

Disclaimer: This report as shown represents the views or comments of the independent Consultant based on its findings during the consultancy study. The publication of the report does not necessarily mean that the Government has adopted or endorsed or otherwise any views, recommendations or conclusions of the Consultant.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

▶ PREFACE	3
▶ METHODOLOGY	4
▶ OBJECTIVE	4
▶ COMBINED COUNTRY REPORT	
I. Introduction	5
II. Citizen Engagement	
a. Overview	6
b. Government as content creators	7
c. Level of personalisation	8
III. Findings from Interviews with stakeholders	
a. Drivers	9
b. Key Practices	10
c. Identifying Citizen engagement initiatives	11
d. Effectiveness of common citizen engagement platforms	12
e. Organisations involved in citizen engagement activities	13
f. E-engagement approach	15
g. Web2.0 and social media	15
h. Key web2.0 technologies	16
i. Measuring the effectiveness of e-engagement	17
j. Challenges	18
k. Applications that cannot be e-enabled	19
l. Key Success Factors	20
▶ AUSTRALIA COUNTRY REPORT	
I. Introduction	22
II. Drivers	23
III. Key practices	25
IV. Identifying engagement practices and effectiveness of types of platform	26
V. Effectiveness of common citizen engagement platforms	27
VI. E-engagement approach	28
VII. Web2.0 technologies	30
VIII. Measuring the effectiveness of e-engagement	31
IX. Challenges	32
X. Applications that cannot be e-enabled	33
XI. Key Success Factors	35
XII. Conclusions	36

TABLE OF CONTENTS

▶ SINGAPORE COUNTRY REPORT	
I. Introduction	37
II. Drivers	39
III. Key practices	40
IV. Identifying engagement practices and effectiveness of types of platform	41
V. Effectiveness of common citizen engagement platforms	42
VI. E-engagement approach	43
VII. Web2.0 technologies	45
VIII. Measuring the effectiveness of e-engagement	46
IX. Challenges	47
X. Applications that cannot be e-enabled	48
XI. Key Success Factors	49
XII. Conclusions	51
▶ UNITED KINGDOM COUNTRY REPORT	
I. Introduction	52
II. Drivers	53
III. Key practices	54
IV. Identifying engagement practices and effectiveness of types of platform	55
V. Effectiveness of common citizen engagement platforms	56
VI. E-engagement approach	57
VII. Web2.0 technologies	58
VIII. Measuring the effectiveness of e-engagement	60
IX. Challenges	61
X. Applications that cannot be e-enabled	62
XI. Key Success Factors	63
XII. Conclusions	65
▶ UNITED STATES COUNTRY REPORT	
I. Introduction	66
II. Drivers	70
III. Key practices	70
IV. Identifying engagement practices and effectiveness of types of platform	72
V. Effectiveness of common citizen engagement platforms	73
VI. E-engagement approach	74
VII. Web2.0 technologies	75
VIII. Measuring the effectiveness of e-engagement	76
IX. Challenges	77
X. Applications that cannot be e-enabled	78
XI. Key Success Factors	79
XII. Conclusions	80

PREFACE



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E-engagement perspectives in Australia, Singapore, United Kingdom and United States is a FutureGov Research report. The views may not necessarily reflect those of the sponsor. This report was researched, written and prepared by FutureGov Research. The principal contributors were Nilotpal Chakravarti, Chris White and Raphael Phang. The cover was designed by Brigitte Suba. Our sincere thanks go out to all those that contributed their time for the interviews.

The research conducted for this report was executed on October 2010. The methodology employed included primary research, and secondary research. Additional details on each of these research elements are provided below.

Secondary Research

The first research phase involved an extensive secondary research exercise to scan public information sources on the Internet. Key information sources included Government websites, taskforce reports and white papers.

Demand-side Primary Research

In order to inject user perceptions and adoption into the research methodology, a total of 40 senior government officials and government CIOs were interviewed. Interviews were conducted over the phone through a structured questionnaire that gathered qualitative inputs on each organisation's approach to citizen engagement.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research paper is to provide the OGCIO of HKSAR Government some key insights on the e-engagement practices of some governments like the US, UK, Australia and Singapore. The paper will provide the OGCIO with an understanding into how other mature economies have put in place such e-citizen engagement practices using Web2.0 and other existing technologies to provide a more citizen centric model of engagement.

COMBINED COUNTRY REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

Innovation and transformation in service delivery are gaining ground across the world as governments now recognise the value that can be achieved by this - both in terms of desired policy outcomes and increased citizen trust in government.

Citizens now have come to expect the same level of service delivery from government that they experience in the private sector. It is obvious that there is a strong link between service and the trust and confidence citizens have in government.

While governments have often been perceived to lag behind the private sector in service, this perception is shifting. Some governments are adopting truly innovative practices to effect change in service delivery to their citizens. On the flip side, governments are also leveraging the Web 2.0 to listen to the citizenry, and incorporate views and ideas in the overall policy framework to make the society more inclusive.

II. CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

a. Overview

Governments across the Asia Pacific are today straddling a development curve towards embracing digitally-mobilised economies.

It is a world in which information plays a lead role. How much could service to citizens improve if government employees had the information they needed at their fingertips? What effect could more streamlined information management have on end users, service delivery and the government-to-citizen relationship?

Public service agencies in the region are seeing that well-managed information and record management leads to more effective performance and higher levels of citizen service through efficient information management practices.

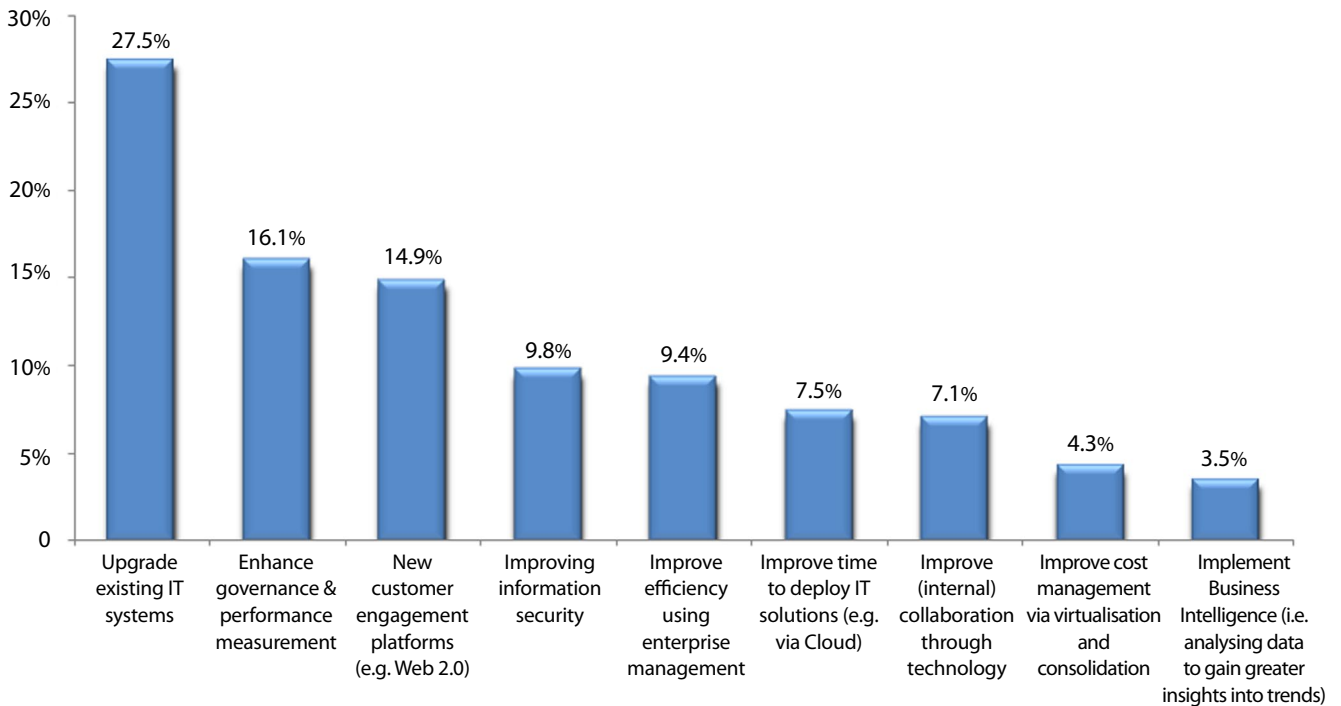
All information that passes through the public sector, both paper and electronic, document the formation of policies, transactions and practices of governments. Their authenticity and value must be assured and a trusted source of information to support accountability.

Recent surveys by FutureGov Research support this too. When asked what their top initiatives or projects that leading public sector decision makers expected to implement in the next 12-18 months, they were unequivocal in the role of information management. According to 121 public sector officials across the Asia Pacific, upgrading existing IT systems was ranked top; the next two priorities were related to service to citizens: enhancing governance and performance measurement to ensure public sector accountability and new customer engagement platforms to increase citizen engagement. (see figure 1).

Thus, what is apparent that with the focus firmly on Open Government, governments are looking to a more streamlined approach relating to the promotion and coordination of the use of new information and communications technology to deliver Government policies, information, programs and services?

The emphasis is now clearly on the efficient and effective use of information and communication technologies (ICT) by various departments and agencies to provide strategic advice, activities and representation relating to the application of ICT to government administration, information and services.

The governments are also looking to strengthen the whole-of-government management of ICT and maximise the benefits from ICT to drive greater efficiency and better services.



► Figure 1: Top initiatives (or projects) that you expect to implement in the next 12-18 months

b. Government as content creators

The government to citizen relationship, after all, has changed dramatically since the explosion of social networking. While on the one hand being encouraged to adapt, as the keeper of records, governments are becoming content creators themselves with valuable information resources in storage.

Policy is being dictated by a new paradigm where decision makers are expected to not only assess the value chains for content development, production and delivery, but to be content producers themselves.

That role effects the whole information life cycle—from acquisition to storage to cleansing, integration and analysis to, ultimately, deliver timely and relevant information for decision making.

Speeding up the entire process while ensuring it is cost-effective and citizen-friendly is a separate challenge in itself, but one in which governments in a digital economy are to be expected to deliver.

c. Level of personalisation

Apart from just speeding up the entire process, there is another increasing challenge that governments face when communicating with citizens in today's globalised society. With the migration of peoples between countries becoming more prevalent, we are now experiencing the phenomenon of having to communicate with citizens in multiple languages. While this has been the experience of many countries in Asia (even the small city state of Singapore has four official languages), we are seeing this becoming the norm even in the traditional English speaking countries.

The need to address this extends to pre-printed documents that are often being produced with multiple languages. One example of citizen centricity in this instance is to allow the citizen to select the desired language he wishes to receive his correspondence from the government and for the government organisations to be able to produce the relevant documents in their desired language.

This level of personalisation is today a reality and demonstrates the level of citizen engagement that is possible and can be further extended beyond languages with the right strategy and solutions in place.

Data is an ongoing problem with larger volumes of it being produced than ever before through email and remotely through mobile phones. Government data management is unsustainable, but governments are acquiring more and more of it and there is now a movement to see a larger portion of it in the public domain.

A report by the International Budget Partnership called the Open Budget Survey recommended governments publish online all of the budget information they already produce and invite public participation to improve transparency and accountability.

"Governments should make public all the documents they produce, which would require virtually no additional effort or cost by the governments involved but would dramatically improve the openness of budgets in large parts of the world," the report said.

Government 2.0 has become one of the new buzz words especially with the Web 2.0 tools becoming ever popular in way ICT dominates lives of people. Governments today are becoming more connected and open. From an objective of delivering public services to citizens the goal today is more on improving efficiency and effectiveness with a focus on outcomes. With the greater use of Public Private Partnerships for Government projects, increasingly there is more synergy between the Public and the Private Goals. There is a transformation happening in the way Government engages citizens also. From a scenario, where the prime focus was on delivering services to citizens and making information available to citizens, the shift now is engaging citizens proactively in the process of policy formulation.

Such a shift in government's role is part of the global trends of governments using citizens' knowledge, expertise and ideas to ensure that the right policies are formulated and all concerns are addressed. Web 2.0 tools are allowing governments to benefit from getting information promptly and taking the right action. In San Francisco, the City Hall can get an instant report on an overheated train car from a citizen through an application called SeeClickFix. Cities across the world are releasing more and public information to the web and mobile application developers are creating "mash up" applications to make it easy to use. This has a great potential in ushering a new era of grassroots democracy. In Washington, the DC 311 iPhone application allows users to take photos of graffiti, potholes, etc., and send them to a city database that straightaway sends teams for the various work requests. The photos are linked to a GPS location so that officials as well as other citizens can see the problem.

However, the role of a citizen in today's world can be more than a mere fault finder. There has to be a more positive and constructive way to engage the citizens rather than just conducting oversight. The citizens can be involved more in dialogue with the Government that ensures participation of citizens in policy formulation.

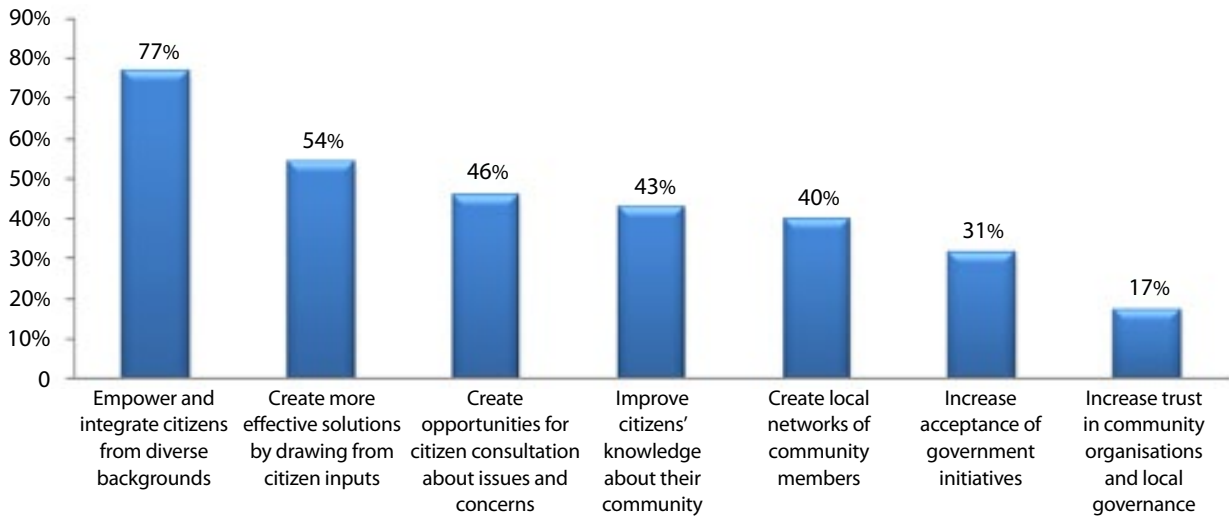
III. FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH STAKEHOLDERS (Overall)

a. Drivers

As part of this study, we interviewed 40 senior public sector officials from the countries who are globally acknowledged to have implemented leading citizen engagement initiatives. We asked about the drivers for citizen engagement and as can be seen in figure 2 below, an overwhelming number said that they wanted to "empower and integrate citizens from diverse backgrounds".

This provides a strong indication that governments are keen to develop an inclusive and empowered society where citizens are given ownership of their environment, especially in their interactions with the government. In fact the next two responses support this finding with a majority saying they wanted to tap into citizen's inputs to create more effective solutions and a number also saying they wanted to create opportunities to consult citizens about issues and concerns.

It was also important to integrate citizens from different backgrounds so that they can gain greater control over their lives and their community. It has been said that when people from diverse parts of a community come together, they often find that they share more in common than they realise.

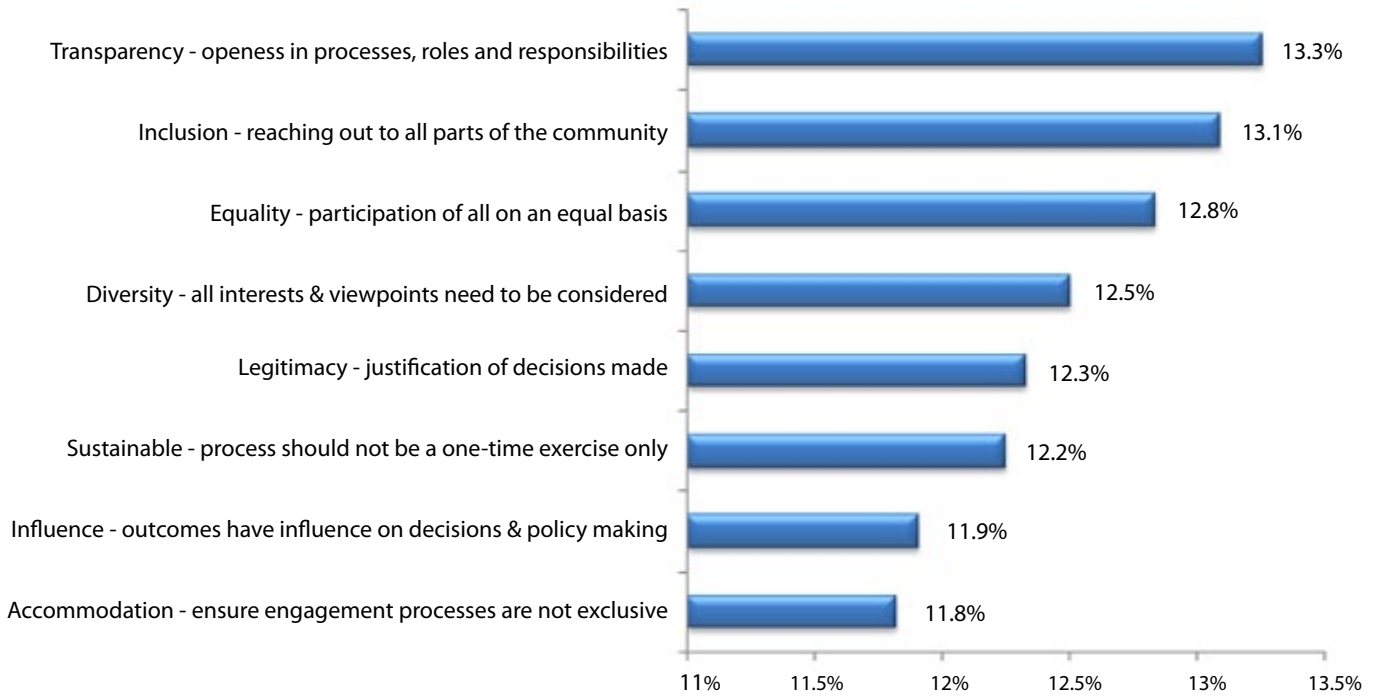


► Figure 2: What are the key reasons for engaging citizens?

b. Key Practices

In the interviews, we also asked the government officials about their practices when designing citizen engagement initiatives. We wanted to understand the principles that were most important to them and how they applied these principles. From the responses in figure 3 below, we find that, while all the principles of citizen engagement were equally important, the ones that stood out overall were transparency, openness and equality.

There are two levels of transparency that we can see here, one at the local community level and the other at the government level. We are all familiar with the demands from citizens for greater transparency and accountability of their elected officials and this extends across all levels from those who set policies to those on the ground who come face to face with constituents. This latter group of people may not be elected by constituents but nevertheless are seen to represent the elected government. These are the government servants who often operate within their own silos and it is important that they are seen to be in-line with what is being demanded by citizens of their political masters.



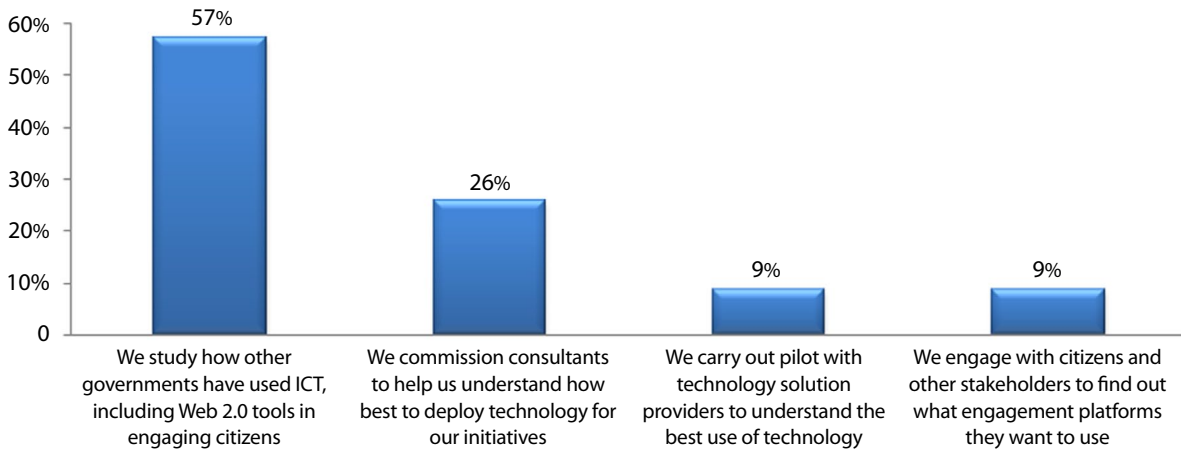
▶ Figure 3: Please rank the following principles when designing your citizen engagement platforms?

c. Identifying Citizen engagement initiatives

When asked about the how they would identify and design their citizen engagement initiatives, a majority of those interviewed said that they would study how other government have done so using ICT followed by engaging consultants to advise them on how best to deploy technology (see figure 4 below). It is common to hear many government officials say that they do not wish to be 'market leaders' when it pertains to the deployment of new technologies in government services and this finding validates this understanding.

Paradoxically, many governments are also keen where an opportunity arises, to be the first to launch or deploy a new technology or service. This is often done more with a political motivation for the benefit of their citizenry and to demonstrate innovation to potential investors (especially in the case of developing economies).

The use of consultants is often another route that most governments use in understanding the latest trends in technology and how best to deploy these technologies for their initiatives. It is no different in the area of citizen engagement initiatives where it is often an effective means of adopting "best practices" of how such initiatives can be can be technology enabled through learning from those who have actually consulted or implemented similar initiatives for other governments.



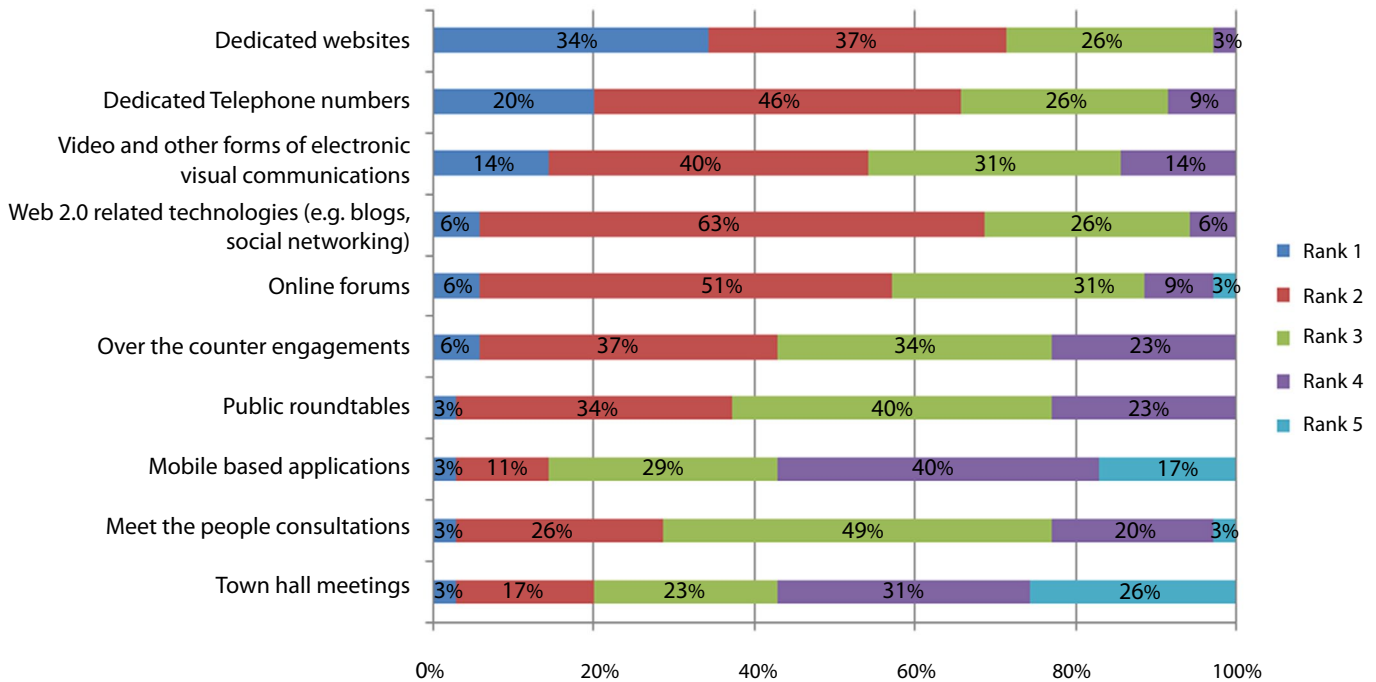
► Figure 4: How do you identify and design your citizen engagement initiatives?

d. Effectiveness of common citizen engagement platforms

In the interviews, we asked the government officials to rank the relative effectiveness of each of the common citizen engagement platforms as seen in figure 5 below. Based on the consolidated responses, having a dedicated website appeared to be the most effective means of engaging with citizens. This was followed by having a means for citizens to contact the government with the deployment of web2.0 related technologies coming in third.

On the surface, it can be said that citizens typically prefer to find out information for themselves and only when they want to, contact the government directly without any fuss. The website / telephone combination serves this model well. The availability of a dedicated telephone line also indicates that citizens expect to be able to contact the government and obtain services when they want and not have to wait for someone to respond (as in writing in via email).

It is interesting to note that web2.0 related technologies came in third, indicating that while important, may not be fully understood within the context of government services. This further supports the view that most governments, even those from the leading countries in citizen engagement, tend to adopt a cautious approach when it comes to 'newer' technologies.



▶ Figure 5: Please rank the effectiveness of the following common citizen engagement platforms

e. Organisations involved in citizen engagement activities

It was important to understand the context within which decisions on citizen engagement are made and we asked who was involved in designing and who was impacted by the various initiatives in the respective countries. The responses we received can be grouped into five different categories (see table 1), with the first two being within the government and the other three outside the government machinery.

Interestingly, while one would expect most citizen engagement initiatives to be designed or at least greatly influenced by the line departments dealing with the citizens, many were instead often designed by either corporate communications or another department responsible for external communications. These included those involved in community care or other external government agencies, especially the IT related organisations.

The fact that experts or consultants were often brought in to work on such projects also indicates a realisation by most government organisations that they were not the experts in the area of citizen engagement and that they are open to engage with those who are. IT related expertise appears to be a major theme with many such initiatives moving towards the e-engagement model. It stands to reason that governments should then demand that their in-house IT teams and external consultants understand and are in tune with the needs of both the agencies as well as their citizen constituents.

The fact that many of those interviewed shared that they were also engaging those outside the governments, from ordinary citizens to non-governmental organisations and educational institutions augers well for what they are trying to achieve. The engagement a broad spectrum of stakeholders is important and supports the design principles of inclusion, equality, diversity and legitimacy.

This extends to the inclusion of political organisations and private companies who were also mentioned as stakeholders both involved in the design of and impacted by citizen engagement activities.

Table 1: Key organisations involved in designing or are impacted citizen engagement initiatives.

a. Government departments & agencies

- Corporate communication division
- Community care development division
- Central government departments around specific groups
- Board of trustees
- Other government agencies
- Concerned government divisions

b. Government IT related departments & agencies

- Experts
- Consultants
- Majority of platforms by in house web designers
- IT agencies or other IT divisions
- Mostly from the information technology community or group

c. External Government related organisations

- Special groups
- Universities and specialists
- Scientific organisations

d. Non-Governmental Organisations (including citizens)

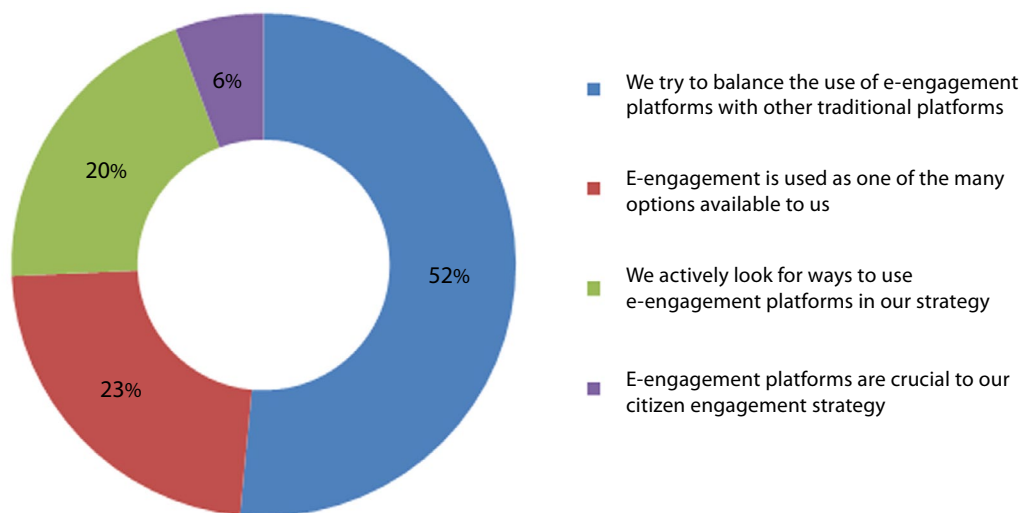
- Voluntary sector groups around specific issues
- On-line communities and campaign groups
- NGOs
- Concerned non-government divisions
- Citizens themselves
- Citizen groups and NGOs for consultations

e. Political and private organisations

- Political organisations
- Private companies

f. E-engagement approach

In trying to understand the approach to using an e-engagement platform as opposed to traditional approaches, we asked how e-engagement initiatives were prioritised. Interestingly, a majority said that they try to “balance the use of e-engagement platforms with other traditional platforms” (see figure 6). Given the level of development and capability of the more developed economies to use technology, it is a surprising finding and perhaps an indication of the maturity of e-engagement experience – a realisation that the use of technology is not a silver bullet. This is in contrast with anecdotal evidence of what is being seen in many developing economies that see the use of technology and e-engagement platforms as a key means of engaging citizens.



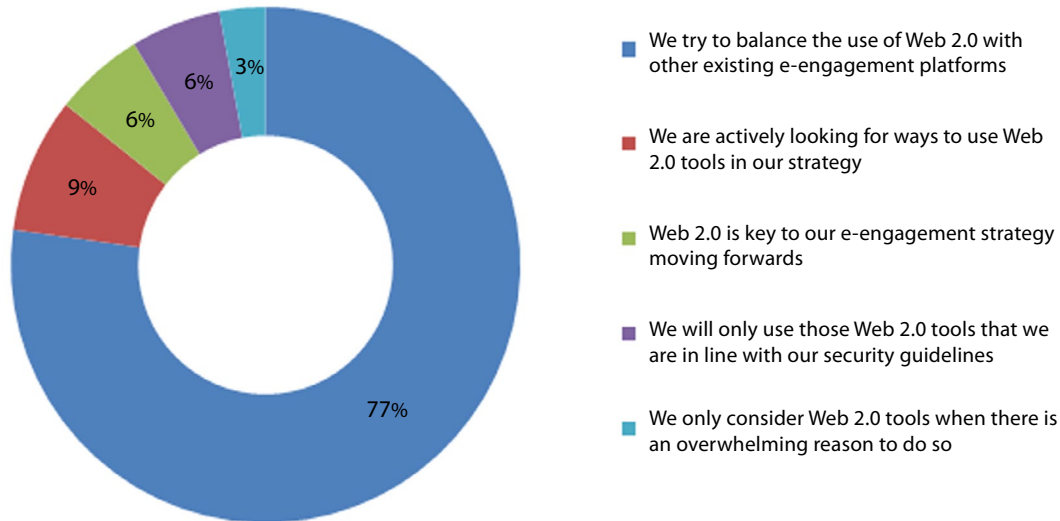
▶ Figure 6: Which statement best describes how you prioritise your e-engagement initiatives?

g. Web2.0 and social media

Focusing specifically on e-engagement platforms, we wanted to understand what role web2.0 and social media played in changing how governments designed their e-engagement platforms. An overwhelming majority of 77.2% said that they would try to balance the use of web2.0 with other existing e-engagement platforms (see figure 7). This indicates that while web2.0 tools have surged ahead in becoming a key technology to deploy in the area of citizen engagement, traditional technologies such as email continue to remain important and provide a diversity of available channels, in no small part driven by the need to cater to a diverse group of citizens.

This balance between the “digital haves and have-nots”, and the balance within the group of “digital haves” between gen X and gen Y citizens

indicates a maturity among government planners to the realisation of the need to cater to the diverse group of citizens and can be taken as a key characteristic of an IT mature government.

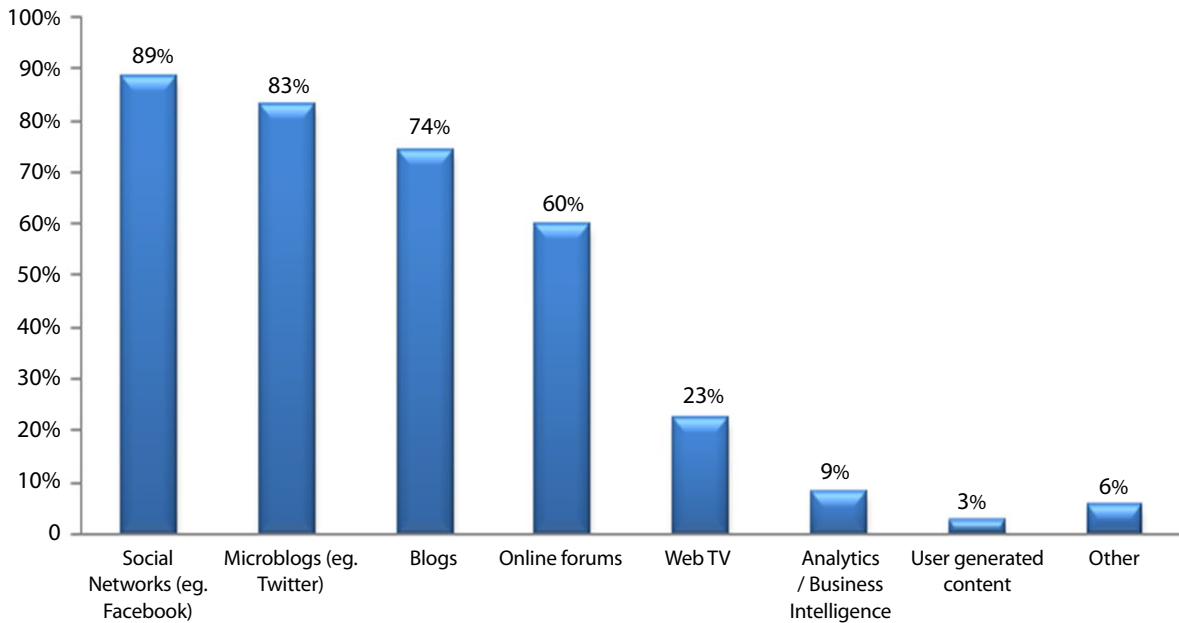


▶ Figure 7: Which statement best describes your use of Web2.0 and other social media?

h. Key web2.0 technologies

Understanding how web2.0 is being deployed for e-engagement, we wanted to know which particular technologies were used. In response, two main technologies were highlighted and these were social networks; micro-blogs (see figure 8). The use of social networks for e-engagement should not be surprising given its popularity and reach across a large section of the population. It also indicates a greater focus on interactivity especially in engaging the younger and IT savvy segment of the population. While blogs were previously seen as a key tool for engaging citizens, and continue to be used, this appears to have been superseded by the use of social networks as the preferred e-engagement tool of choice.

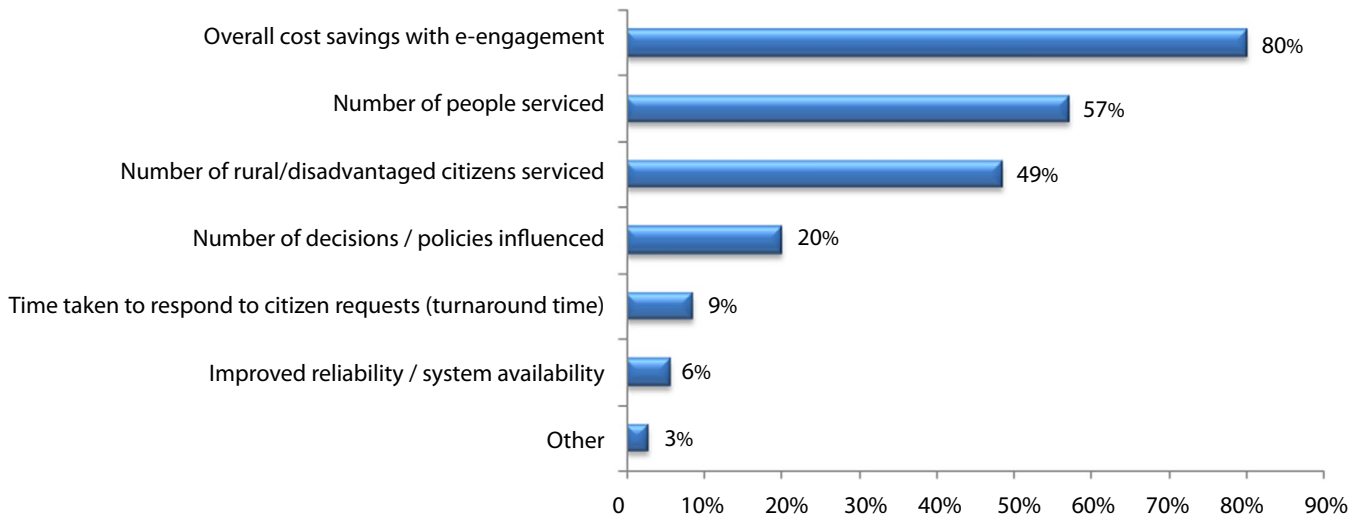
Some of the other tools mentioned include the use of videos (e.g. You-tube) and crowd sourcing. It is interesting to note that while both are not as popular; there is increasing interest in the use of video with a number of governments looking to develop their own government you-tube equivalent networks.



▶ Figure 8: Which Web2.0 technologies had the greatest impact in e-engagement to date?

i. Measuring the effectiveness of e-engagement

Knowing which tools are being used and understanding the relative benefits between its uses over traditional tools, we wanted to know how its effectiveness was being measured. Not surprisingly, a majority said that they continued to use citizen satisfactions ratings as a primary means of measuring effectiveness (see figure 9). However it is also important to note that overall cost savings was cited by a majority as another key measure and indicates that while citizen engagement was of paramount importance, this was often carried out with consideration to the cost of the initiative. This is in line with what we know of governments over the past few years having been asked to do more with less budgets, where managing costs is a key business priority.



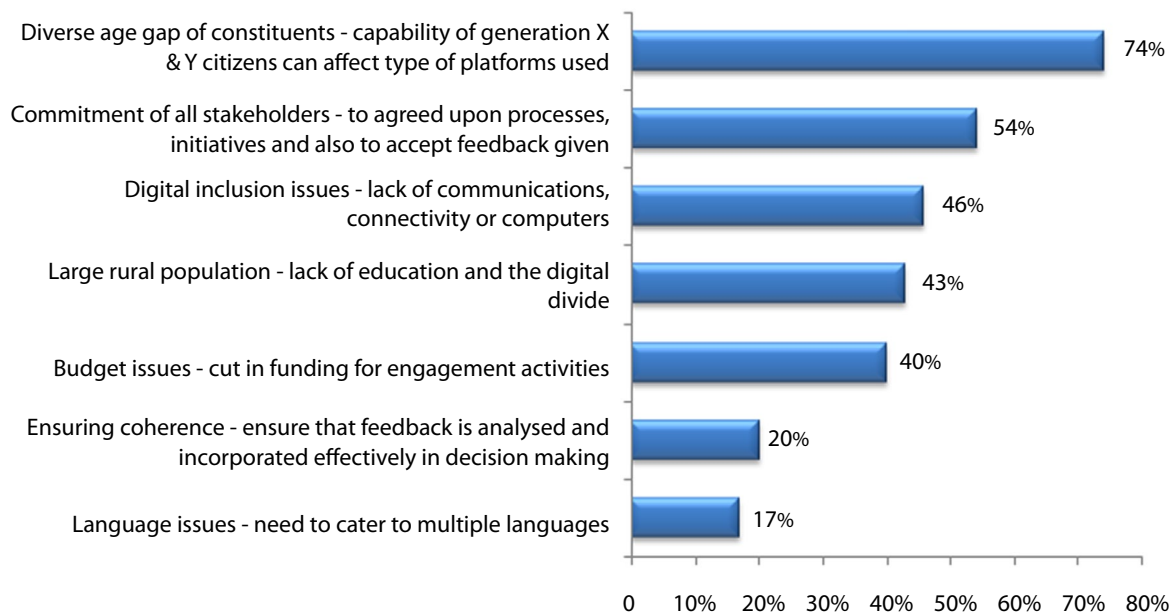
▶ Figure 9: How do you measure the effectiveness of e-engagement initiatives?

j. Challenges

In attempting to understand the impediments faced when looking to implement e-engagement initiatives, we asked interviewees about the challenges that they faced. A majority said that the generation gap was their main challenge, where the different capabilities of those from generation X and Y meant that careful consideration of the different types of e-engagement platforms was needed (see figure 10).

A “commitment from all stakeholders to agreed-upon processes, initiatives and to accept feedback given” was another key challenge raised. This is a well-known and perennial issue raised by most government officials when discussing challenges in government, for which the use of IT technology is often seen as a means to overcome the lack of collaboration between departments and agencies.

Interestingly, the issue of digital inclusion (or the digital divide) was also a concern though not a top priority given the maturity of the countries’ studied. This is important to note as digital inclusion issues exists in all countries, but will tend to focus on different aspects. For example, the key challenges in Singapore will focus on the affordability of connectivity as well as the aging population who may be left out. On the other hand, Australia will have in addition, the challenge of vast geographical distances to contend with.



▶ Figure 10: What are some of the key challenges that you face in implementing your e-engagement initiatives?

k. Applications that cannot be e-enabled

While we may know the types of applications on the various e-engagement platforms, we wanted to understand if there were any types of applications that did not lend themselves to be e-enabled. Based on the feedback, one of the types of applications mentioned were those that involved sensitive data that needed to be secured such as personally identifiable information or government financial information. In addition, those applications that required 'proof of identity' were also mentioned as one that could not be e-enabled (see table 2). While there may be innovative solutions to overcome some of the concerns mentioned, they may come with too high a cost or add to the complexity of the citizen engagement process. For example, with the availability authentication protocols and devices, it would be possible to transact electronically in a relatively secure manner. This however will add a level of complexity (or inconvenience to the citizen) which may not be an acceptable solution to the respective government agencies.

Another type of application is those that require either some form of physical verification or those that require a degree of personal interaction. An example cited was in the area of welfare benefits where it was important to not only prevent fraud but more importantly ensure that the right person receives the relevant welfare benefits. Another area mentioned was in the area of child protection where it was important to have a case officer physically present to assess the situation, which may include the child involved, the care givers and the physical home environment.

Another interesting area cited was one that required much effort from experts to achieve. This would indicate the process for exceptions was better managed with human intervention. Although there was only one such case cited, it was important to note that not all applications can be e-enabled and that it was important to discern between the two.

Table 2: Types of applications that do not lend themselves to be e-enabled

a. Fully adopted (Not looking at more e-enablement)

- Most of their applications are e-enabled
- Cannot think of anything
- None

b. Sensitive or secured applications

- Internal financial systems
- Secured networks, because there's no such thing as guaranteed security
- Those requiring proof of identity

c. Where some form of physical interaction required

- Physical verification of document submitted by customers
- Complex personal engagements for specific services where identity is essential along with intervention. Examples include welfare benefits assessments and child protection
- More likely the sending of some correspondences
- Those that require a personal touch e.g. exclusive engagements

d. Complex applications

- Only one which required much effort from experts

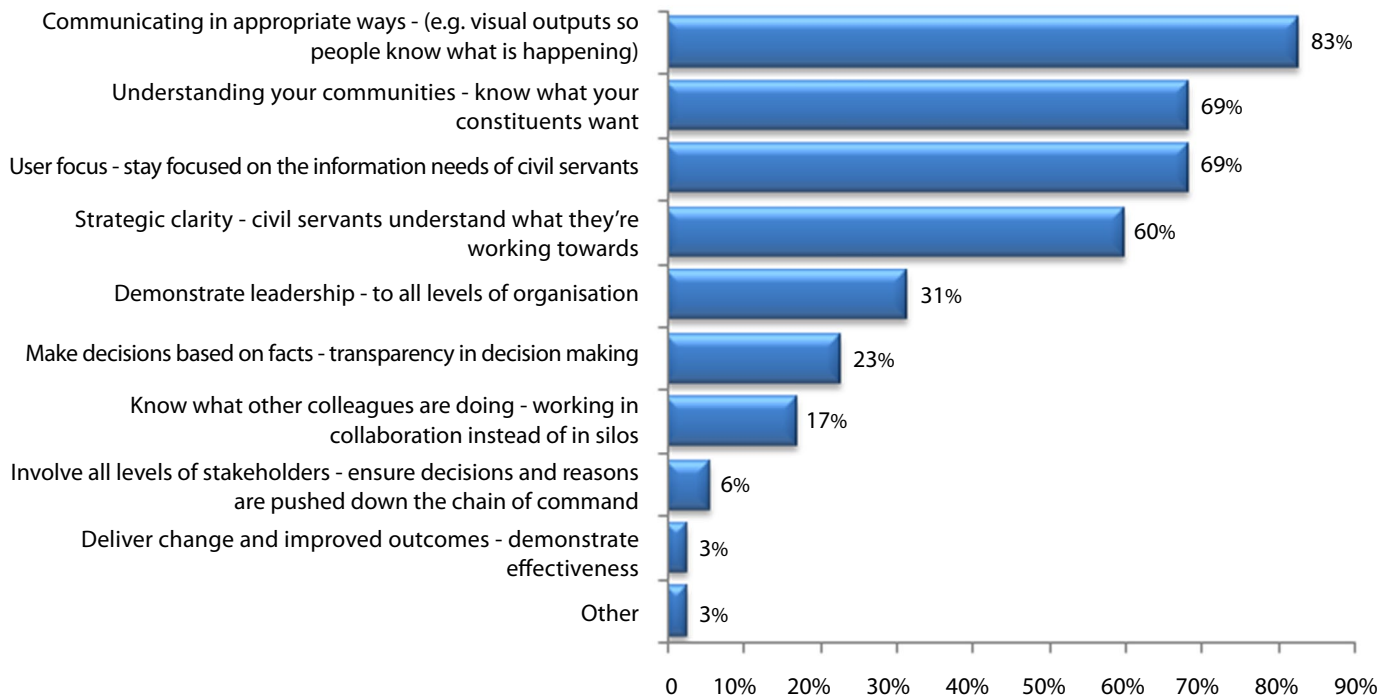
I. Key Success Factors

Ultimately, what is important to governments is to successfully design citizen engagement initiatives that meet the needs of their citizen constituents. Towards this end, we asked interviewees for some of their key success factors (KSF). An overwhelming majority of those interviewed said that effective communication was the key – communicating in appropriate ways (e.g. visual outputs) (see figure 11).

It is universally acknowledged that if any system is too complicated to use, it will not be readily adopted. This is the crux of the issue where citizens will want to communicate with their government when they want to in a convenient and effective manner.

The other two key success factors mentioned by a majority of those interviewed were to stay focused (user focus – on information needs of civil servants) and understanding your communities (know what your constituents want). The first KSF highlights the importance for civil servants to have available to them the right information at the right time when dealing with citizens. This reduces the number of interactions and touch points needed to satisfy the citizen and enables them to service citizens in an efficient manner.

The second KSF highlights the importance of knowing what your ‘customer’ wants. In this case, know what citizens require allow governments to design the right engagement solutions that meet their constituents’ needs effectively.



▶ Figure 11: In your opinion, what are some of the key success factors in engaging citizens?

I. INTRODUCTION

The Australian Government has declared that, in order to promote greater participation in the country's democracy, it is committed to open government based on a culture of engagement, built on better access to and use of government held information, and sustained by the innovative use of technology. This reflects the central recommendation of the Government 2.0 Taskforce's report, which has helped set the agenda and frame the discussion of what Government 2.0 will mean in the Australian federal government context.

The possibilities for open government depend on the innovative use of new internet-based technologies and the government has announced that agencies will develop policies that support employee-initiated, innovative Government 2.0-based proposals.

The Australian Government's support for openness and transparency in Government has three key principles:

Informing: Strengthening citizen's rights of access to information, establishing a pro-disclosure culture across Government agencies including through online innovation, and making government information more accessible and usable;

Engaging: Collaborating with citizens on policy and service delivery to enhance the processes of government and improve the outcomes sought; and

Participating: Making government more consultative and participative.

Encouragingly, the Government has commenced the program of initiatives outlined in its response to the Taskforce's report in accordance with the agreed implementation timetable.

The Gillard Government is committed to creating a culture of public sector openness, transparency and engagement.

Examples of Web 2.0 in Australia

- A good example at the national level is Australia's Future Using Education Technology (<http://www.dest.gov.au/afuet/>). This uses online documents as background for both face to face and online consultations.

- The government runs the Australian Youth Forum (AYF), which is an online communication channel between the government, young people (aged 15 – 24) and the youth sector. It aims to engage young people and the youth sector in on-going public debate and to get their input into policy and decision making on issues that affect young people's lives now and in the future.
- The City of Melbourne was the first government in Australia to use an interactive online tool for public engagement. More than 6,500 people visited the Future Melbourne wiki to view, comment, discuss and directly edit the draft city plan. The wiki included input from Melbourne's young people and school students citywide.
- A good example of information provision that is active rather than passive is the new portal Window on Women (www.windowonwomen.gov.au) of the federal government's Office of the Status of Women. The web site provides access to data from selected Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) sources to allow the enquirer to compile the data in the specific way they want. The new Window on Women portal's provision of access to relevant data is a model that could be applied to other major areas of citizen interest in public policy such as education, health and the environment.
- Have Your Say is a website that promotes online discussion between citizens and government and act as a forum for consultations about government programs and services. Using a suite of the latest Web 2.0 tools, Have Your Say is available for all Victorian government departments and agencies to use and host blogs, forums and polls. The availability of one consultation entry point will improve access for citizens to participate and have their say.

The enthusiasm of public agencies, public servants and the public themselves are all necessary for Government 2.0 to take root. In this regard Australia is well placed and some Australian Government agencies have become recognised as international leaders in their embrace of Government 2.0 approaches.

II. DRIVERS

As part of this study, we interviewed 8 senior public sector officials (including Directors, Chief Executives and Assistant Commissioners) from Australia who have been instrumental in leading citizen engagement initiatives in the country. We asked about the drivers for citizen engagement and as can be seen in figure 1 below, an overwhelming number (88%) said that they wanted to "empower and integrate citizens from diverse backgrounds".

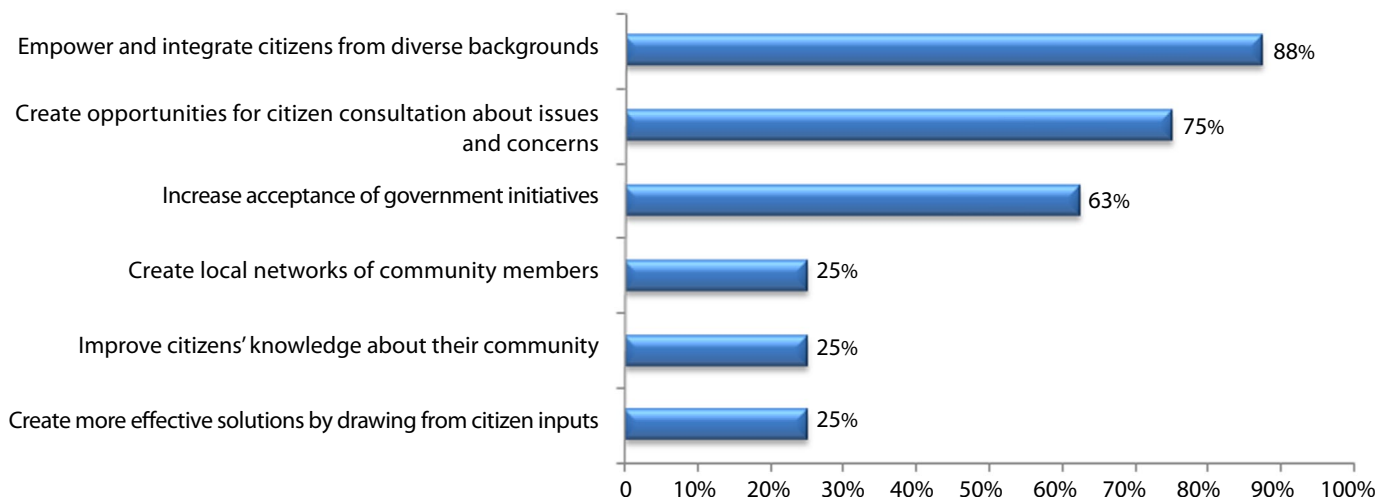
This provides a strong indication that the Australian government is keen to develop an inclusive and empowered society where citizens are given ownership of their environment, especially in their interactions with the government. In fact, the next two responses support this finding with 75% of the respondents mentioned that one of the reasons for engaging with citizens is to create opportunities for citizen consultation about issues and concerns.

On the other hand, 63% of the respondents mentioned that increase acceptance of government initiatives were their top reason for engaging with the citizens.

It is also important to integrate citizens from different backgrounds so that they can gain greater control over their lives and their community. It has been said that when people from diverse parts of a community come together, they often find that they share more in common than they realise.

According to Mr Nicholas Gruen, Head – Gov 2.0 Taskforce, Australia, public agencies and public servants should engage more using the tools and capabilities of ‘collaborative web’ or Web 2.0. Forming or joining existing online communities of interest around issues of relevance to government policy, service delivery and regulation will help public agencies and their officers become more informed, responsive, innovative and citizen-centric. According to Mr Gruen, this is set out to be one of the desired outcomes of the Gov 2.0 Taskforce report.

Q: What are the key reasons for engaging citizens? ©FutureGov Research 2011



▶ Figure 1: Key Reasons for Engaging Citizens

III. KEY PRACTICES

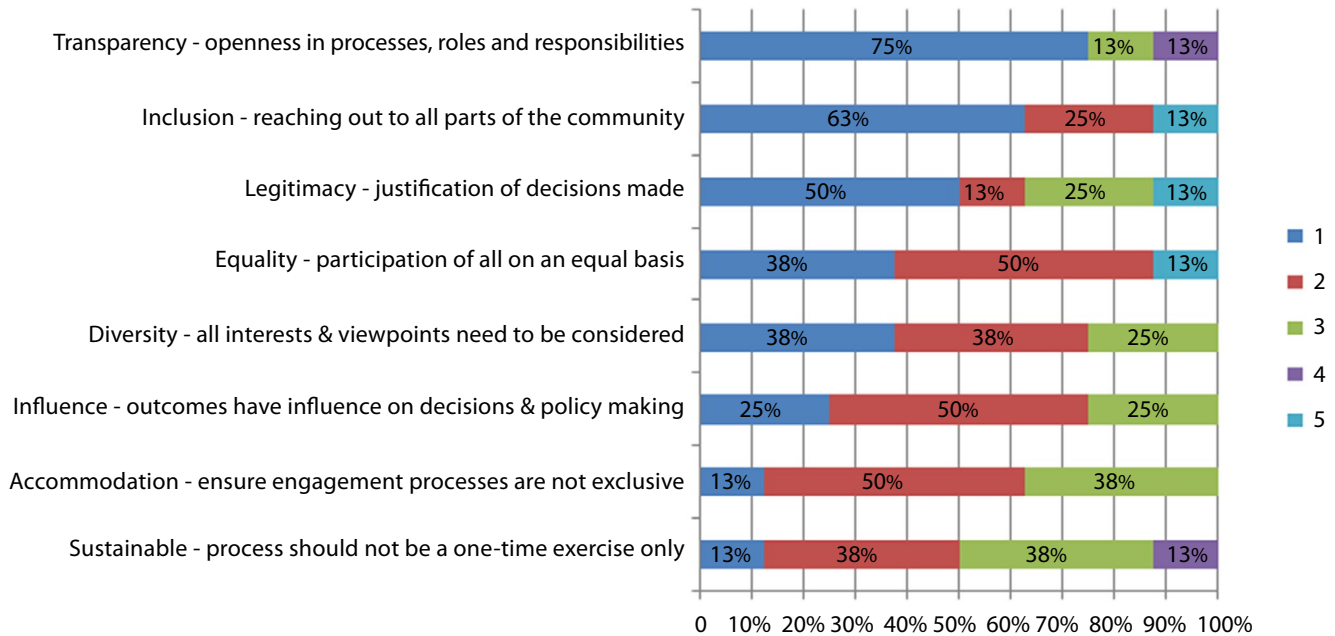
In the interviews, we also asked the government officials about their practices when designing citizen engagement initiatives. We wanted to understand the principles that were most important to them and how they applied these principles.

The landscape of community engagement in Australia remains a mixed one and we have seen a directed effort by government to enhance their work with communities. Engagement is increasingly being considered in policy development, program planning and service delivery. Several major initiatives have been put in place to mediate communication between government and community members such as Community Cabinets and Regional Ministerial Community Forums. Training and development in community engagement has been expanded, such as the Queensland Government Community Engagement Training Package, and specific community engagement and development training has been developed in most other States. Major community development projects, such as the Community Capacity Building Initiative in Victoria and Community Builders, have incorporated extensive community engagement.

From the responses in figure 2 below, we find that, while all the principles of citizen engagement were equally important, the ones that stood out overall were transparency and legitimacy of the engagement.

There are two levels of transparency that we can see here, one at the local community level and the other at the government level. We are all familiar with the demands from citizens for greater transparency and accountability of their elected officials and this extends across all levels from those who set policies to those on the ground who come face to face with constituents. This latter group of people may not be elected by constituents but nevertheless are seen to represent the elected government. These are the government officials who often operate within their own silos and it is important that they are seen to be in-line with what is being demanded by citizens of their political masters.

Q: Please rank the following principles when designing your citizen engagement platforms? ©FutureGov Research 2011 (Rank on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1= Most Important and 5=Least important)



► Figure 2: Principles for Designing Citizen Engagement Platform

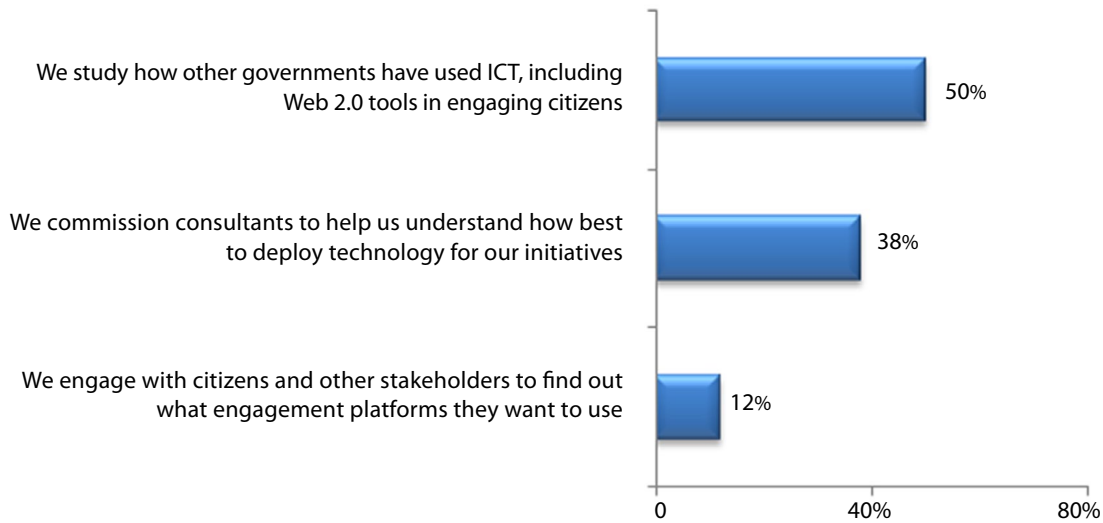
IV. IDENTIFYING ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES AND EFFECTIVENESS OF TYPES OF PLATFORM

When asked about the how they would identify and design their citizen engagement initiatives, a majority of our respondents said that they would study how other government have done so using ICT followed by engaging consultants to advise them on how best to deploy technology (see figure 3 below). It is common to hear many government officials say that they do not wish to be 'market leaders' when it pertains to the deployment of new technologies in government services and this finding validates this understanding.

The use of consultants is often another route that most governments use in understanding the latest trends in technology and how best to deploy these technologies for their initiatives. It is no different in the area of citizen engagement initiatives where it is often an effective means of adopting "best practices" of how such initiatives can be technology enabled through learning from those who have actually consulted or implemented similar initiatives for other governments.

12% of the respondents also mentioned that they would engage with citizens and other stakeholders to find out what engagement platform they would prefer to use for their convenience.

Q: How do you identify and design your citizen engagement initiatives? ©FutureGov Research 2011



► Figure 3: Identifying Citizen Engagement Initiatives

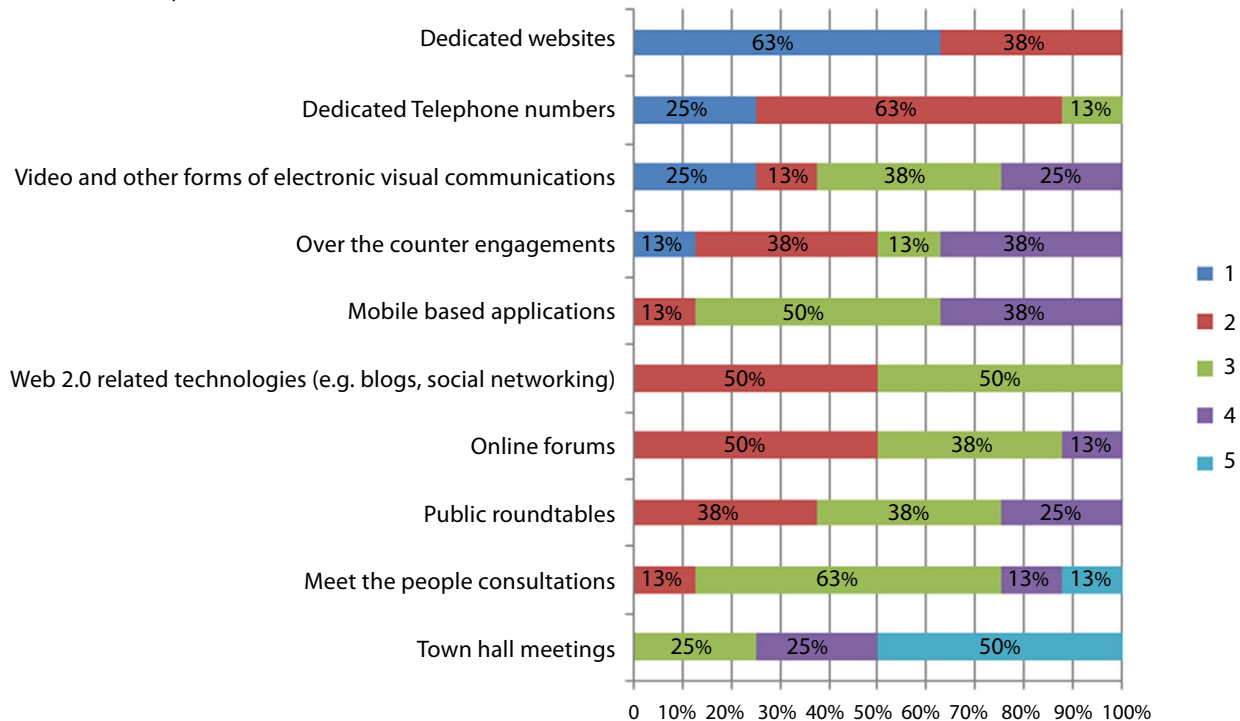
V. EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMON CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT PLATFORMS

In the interviews, we asked the government officials to rank the relative effectiveness of each of the common citizen engagement platforms as seen in figure 4 below. Based on the responses, having a dedicated website and dedicated telephone numbers appeared to be the most effective means of engaging with citizens. This was followed by having a means for citizens to contact the government with the deployment of Web 2.0 related technologies coming in third.

On the surface, it can be said that citizens typically prefer to find out information for themselves and only when they want to, contact the government directly without any fuss. The website / telephone combination serves this model well. The availability of a dedicated telephone line also indicates that citizens expect to be able to contact the government and obtain services when they want and not have to wait for someone to respond (as in writing in via email).

It is interesting to note that Web 2.0 related technologies came in third, indicating that while important, it may not be fully understood within the context of government services. This further supports the view that most governments, even those from the leading countries in citizen engagement, tend to adopt a cautious approach when it comes to 'newer' technologies.

Q: Please rank the effectiveness of the following common citizen engagement platforms.
©FutureGov Research 2011 (Rank on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1= Most Important and 5=Least important)



▶ Figure 4: Effectiveness of Common Citizen Engagement Platforms

VI. E-ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

In trying to understand the approach to using an e-engagement platform as opposed to traditional approaches, we asked how e-engagement initiatives were prioritised. Interestingly, a majority said that they try to “balance the use of e-engagement platforms with other traditional platforms” (see figure 5). Given the level of development and capability of a developed country like Australia, it is a surprising finding and perhaps an indication of the maturity of e-engagement experience – a realisation that the use of technology is not a silver bullet. This is in contrast with anecdotal evidence of what is being seen in many developing economies that see the use of technology and e-engagement platforms as a key means of engaging citizens.

According to the Taskforce 2.0 report, Government 2.0 will be central to delivering on critical national objectives including delivering on National Innovation Agenda including the aspiration for a more innovative public sector. It will be central to addressing the desire of the Advisory Group on the Reform of Australian Government Administration to establish in Australia the world’s best public service, which puts citizens at the centre of everything it does. It is envisioned to be an important component of the Department of Human Services’ service delivery reform agenda as it can improve social inclusion.

The positivity of public agencies, public servants and the public themselves are all necessary for Government 2.0 to take root and in this aspect, one can say that Australia is well placed. Some Australian government agencies have become recognised as international leaders in their embrace of Government 2.0 approaches.

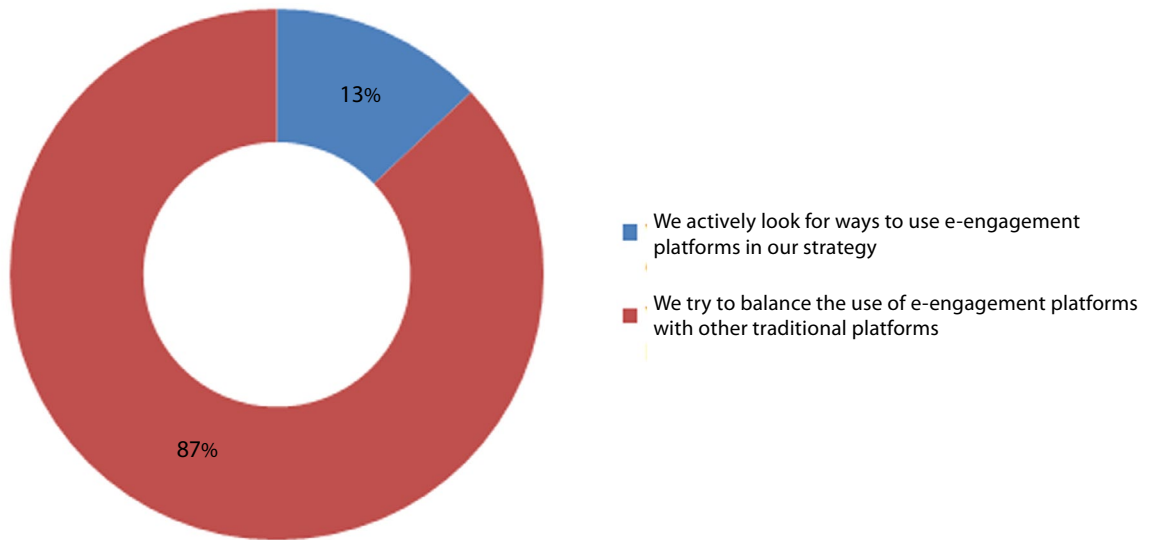
In 2001, the Australian Government's Spatial Data Access and Pricing Policy was one of the first substantial programs in the world in which government data, which had previously been sold, was made available without charge. Today both the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Geoscience Australia are licensing much of their output using Creative Commons licences which permit others to freely use and remix it.

The National Library of Australia (NLA), National Archives of Australia (NAA) and a number of Museums such as the National Museum of Australia (NMA) and Sydney's Powerhouse Museum, have engaged Australia's citizenry in contributing their own time and content to enrich and improve national historical collections of text and visual material. Some government agencies and some individual public officials maintain blogs where they share their expertise and have informal discussions of professional matters of public interest.

In the past decade, Australian governments at all levels have made enormous changes to the ways they do business, inform and interact with citizens. This has corresponded to an exponential increase in the use of online technologies by all sectors. The overwhelming balance of government effort has gone into providing information more efficiently to citizens and streamlining payments and transactions.

However, in recent years a number of Australian jurisdictions have adopted programs and policies to assist active citizenship, both on and off-line. At the federal level, 'closer citizen engagement' is one of six elements in the federal government's e-government strategy. There is currently little sign of a cohesive approach to what this might mean in practice, although many agencies are integrating electronic communications in their policy development and reviews. There have also been several non-governmental experiments with electronic democracy, mostly in the form of consultative processes.

Q: Which statement best describes how you prioritise your e-engagement initiatives?
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► Figure 5: Preferred E-Engagement Approach

VII. WEB2.0 TECHNOLOGIES

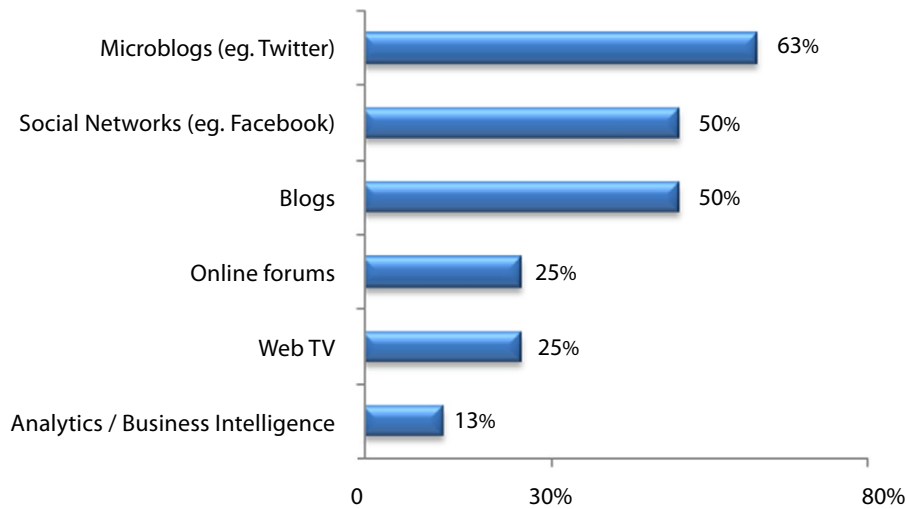
Understanding how web2.0 is being deployed for e-engagement in Australia, we wanted to know which particular technologies were used. In response, two main technologies were highlighted and these were micro-blogs and social networking sites (see figure 6).

The use of microblogs and social networks for e-engagement should not be surprising given its popularity and reach across a large section of the population. It also indicates a greater focus on interactivity especially in engaging the younger and IT savvy segment of the population.

While blogs were previously seen as a key tool for engaging citizens, and continue to be used, this appears to have been superseded by the use of social networks as the preferred e-engagement tool of choice.

Some of the other tools mentioned include the use of Web TV and business intelligence. It is interesting to note that while both are not as popular; there is increasing interest in the use of Web TV with a number of government agencies looking to develop their own government you-tube equivalent networks.

Q: Which Web2.0 technologies had the greatest impact in e-engagement to date?
©FutureGov Research 2011



▶ Figure 6: Preferred Web 2.0 Technologies

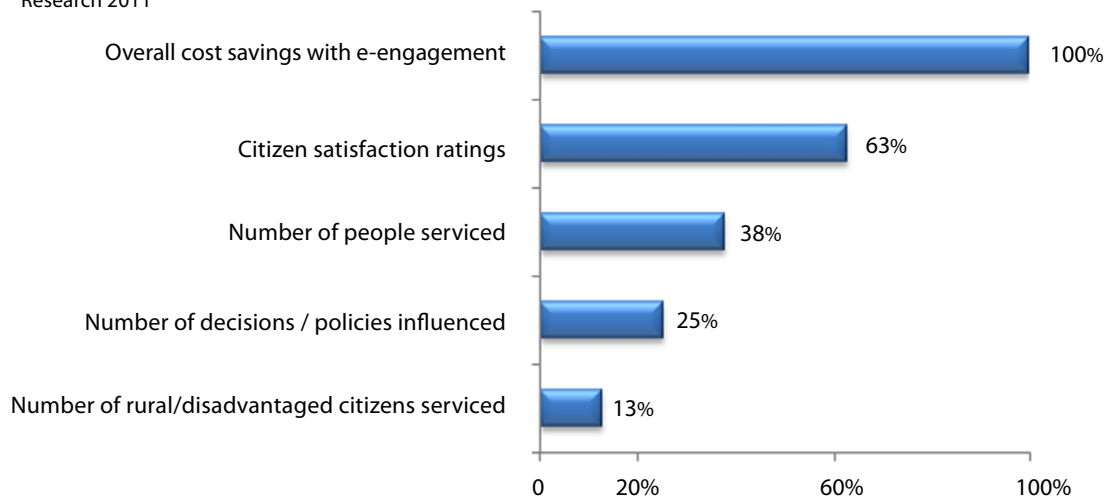
According to Mr. Gruen, these tools enable communities of interest to develop rapidly to find people with local knowledge or technical expertise to build understanding of issues and solve problems as they emerge.

According to Mr. Gruen, blogs can be a very valuable source of intelligence. The Australian Government 2.0 Taskforce used its blog to post numerous 'blegs' or requests for information. But this was possible because the government built up the quality of the blog and the community around it and people in that context were very keen to have their say (because it was listened to) and simply to help out. The website <http://gov2.net.au/> and agimo.govspace.gov.au are perfect examples of the initiative.

VIII. MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF E-ENGAGEMENT

Knowing which tools are being used and understanding the relative benefits between its uses over traditional tools, we wanted to know how its effectiveness was being measured. Not surprisingly, a given that we are all just recovering from a major economic downturn, the effectiveness is measured by the overall cost savings managed with e-engagement. (see figure 7). It is also important to note that overall cost savings is a key measure and indicates that while citizen engagement was of paramount importance, this was often carried out with consideration to the cost of the initiative. This is in line with what we know of governments over the past few years having been asked to do more with less budgets, where managing costs is a key business priority.

Q: How do you measure the effectiveness of e-engagement initiatives? ©FutureGov Research 2011



► Figure 7: Measuring the Effectiveness of e-Engagement

IX. CHALLENGES

In attempting to understand the impediments faced when looking to implement e-engagement initiatives in Australia, we asked interviewees about the challenges that they faced. A majority of the respondent (63%) said cut in budgetary funding for engagement activities remain a key challenge towards e-engagement initiatives.

Most governments have been cautious in their budgetary spends following the recession, and it seems the Australian government – both at the federal and the provincial level are still moving cautiously on discretionary spends.

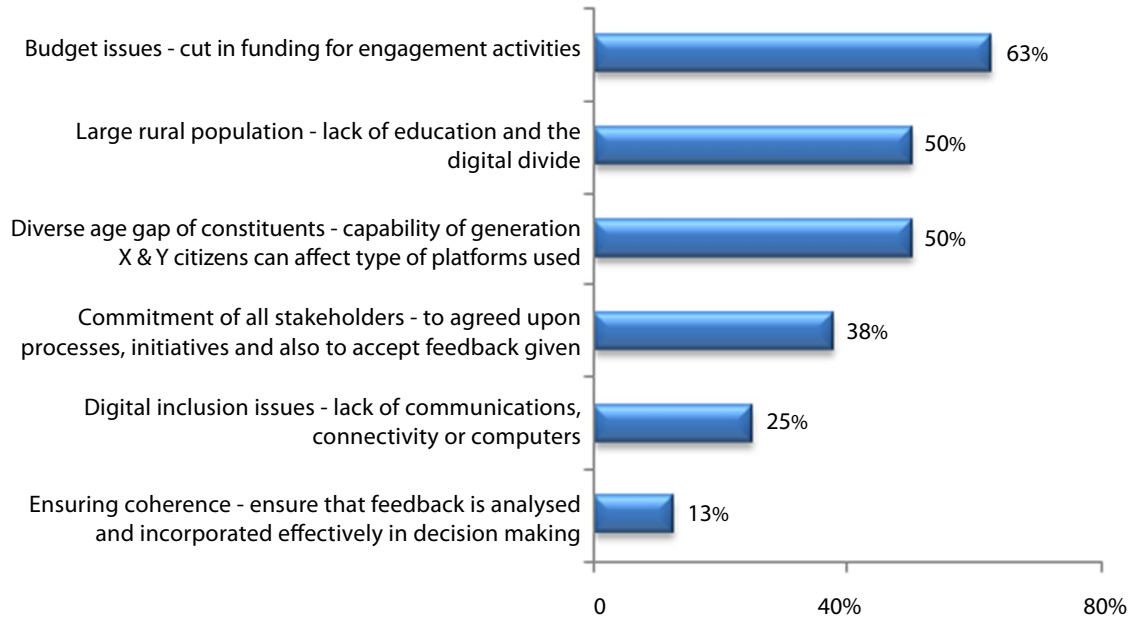
50% of the respondents however said that large population, and lack of education and the digital divide is a key challenge towards e-engagement initiatives. The remotest corners of Australia are still bereft of connectivity, and a large indigenous population is still struggling to come in the mainstream life – largely because there still remains large-scale illiteracy, unemployment and the digital divide. Thus, to fructify the e-engagement initiatives in these areas remain a challenge in Australia. Also it must be remembered that Australia will have in addition, the challenge of vast geographical distances to contend with.

50% of the respondents also said that the generation gap was their main challenge, where the different capabilities of those from generation X and Y meant that careful consideration of the different types of e-engagement platforms was needed.

A “commitment from all stakeholders to agreed-upon processes, initiatives and to accept feedback given” was another key challenge raised. This is a well know and perennial issue and Australia is no different. The use of IT technology is often seen as a means to overcome the lack of collaboration between departments and agencies.

According to Mr. Gruen, addressing these challenges is equally relevant for large private and civil society organisations as well as for those in the public sector. While policy change can assist in the transition, a good deal of the change will only happen as a result of increased training and support.

Q: What are some of the key challenges that you face in implementing your e-engagement initiatives? ©FutureGov Research 2011



► Figure 8: Key Challenges to e-Engagement Initiatives

X. Applications that cannot be e-enabled

While we may know the types of applications on the various e-engagement platforms, we wanted to understand if there were any types of applications that did not lend themselves to be e-enabled.

Based on the feedback, one of the types of applications mentioned were those that involved sensitive data that needed to be secured such as personally identifiable information or government financial information. In addition, those applications that required 'proof of identity' were also mentioned as one that could not be e-enabled (see table 1).

While there may be innovative solutions to overcome some of the concerns mentioned, they may come with too high a cost or add to the complexity of the citizen engagement process. For example, with the availability authentication protocols and devices, it would be possible to transact electronically in a relatively secure manner. This however will add a level of complexity (or inconvenience to the citizen), which may not be an acceptable solution to the respective government agencies.

One kind of application is one that requires either some form of physical verification or those that require a degree of personal interaction. An example cited was in the area of welfare benefits where it was important to not only prevent fraud but also more importantly ensure that the right person receives the relevant welfare benefits.

Another area mentioned was in the area of child protection where it was important to have a case officer physically present to assess the situation, which may include the child involved, the caregivers and the physical home environment.

Another interesting area cited was one that required much effort from experts to achieve. This would indicate the process for exceptions was better managed with human intervention. Although there was only one such case cited, it was important to note that not all applications can be e-enabled and that it was important to discern between the two.

According to Mr. Gruen, there is a need to develop a better practice guide (or 'how to' guide) to assist agencies in the effective, efficient and secure use of Web 2.0 tools and how to undertake associated risk assessment.

Table 1: Types of Applications that do not Lend Themselves to be e-Enabled

a. Fully adopted (Not looking at more e-enablement)

- Most of their applications are e-enabled
- Cannot think of anything
- None

b. Sensitive or secured applications

- Internal financial systems
- Secured networks, because there's no such thing as guaranteed security
- Those requiring proof of identity

c. Where some form of physical interaction required

- Physical verification of document submitted by customers
- Complex personal engagements for specific services where identity is essential along with intervention. Examples include welfare benefits assessments and child protection
- More likely the sending of some correspondences
- Those that require a personal touch e.g. exclusive engagements

d. Complex applications

- Only one which required much effort from experts

XI. KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

In order to ensure that its initiatives are successful, the Australian government has to make sure that it successfully designs citizen engagement initiatives that meet the needs of their citizen constituents. Towards this end, we asked interviewees for some of their key success factors (KSF). An overwhelming majority of those interviewed (88%) said that effective communication was the key – communicating in appropriate ways (e.g. visual outputs) (see figure 9).

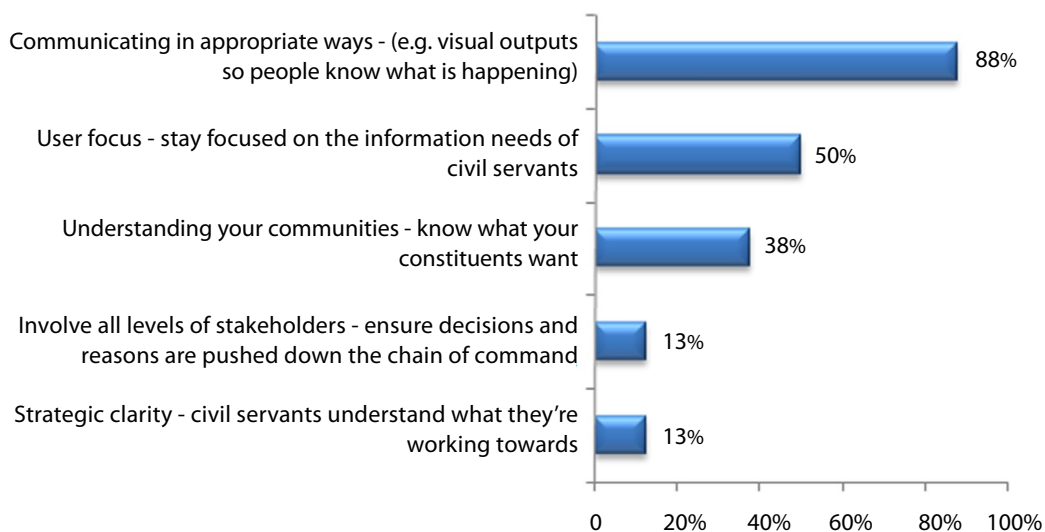
It is universally acknowledged that if any system is too complicated to use, it will not be readily adopted. This is the crux of the issue where citizens will want to communicate with their government when they want to in a convenient and effective manner.

The other two key success factors mentioned by a majority of those interviewed were to stay focused (user focus – on information needs of civil servants) and understanding the communities (know what your constituents want). The first KSF highlights the importance for civil servants to have available to them the right information at the right time when dealing with citizens. The KSFs reduce the number of interaction and touch points needed to satisfy the citizen and enables them to service citizens in an efficient manner.

The second KSF highlights the importance of knowing what your ‘customer’ wants. In this case, know what citizens require allow governments to design the right engagement solutions that meet their constituents’ needs effectively.

Q: In your opinion, what are some of the key success factors in engaging citizens?

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▶ Figure 9: Key Success Factors

XII. CONCLUSIONS

In Australia, in spite of expensive broadband and a number of broadband access issues, Internet connectivity is driving Australian early adoption of communications technology, and driving communications innovation.

With the change of federal government to Labor, the true potential of ubiquitous high bandwidth will be realised as the National Broadband Network is rolled out and the digital divide will be dramatically narrowed. When considered alongside the latest statistics around Internet usage and users in Australia, this increases the importance of government participating online as a serious platform for citizen engagement.

Another important shift occurred at the last federal election: The Prime Minister gave a commitment to openness, accountability and transparency in Government. This commitment is reflected in the new Freedom of Information and Information Commissioner Bills prepared by Senator Faulkner in his former role as Special Minister for State. Senator Joe Ludwig has confirmed his commitment to these important reforms.

For the Australian government, an opportunity to construct the three pillars of Open Government is there to implement as each of these pillars assume the basic principle of citizen engagement at every possible opportunity to both empower people, and to ensure the results are actually appropriate and useful.

However, for Australia to achieve the aspirations outlined, it will require stronger, more coordinated governance, policy improvements and a renewed public service culture of openness and engagement. It is essential to find ways that government can adapt to the new paradigm of open and transparent government.

As a step forward, coinciding with the release of the Government's Gov 2.0 Taskforce report response, AGIMO launched its new blog and blogging platform at AGIMO.Govspace.gov.au.

More than simply a Departmental blog, Govspace, is a blogging - and eventually a wiki - platform available for other Departments to use. The Govspace platform is powered by Wordpress. There are tens of thousands of 'skins' to change the design with the option to customise, plus there are thousands of plug-ins adding different kinds of functionality to the Wordpress service.

However, each State government has its own social media platform, or is devising one to engage more closely with its citizenry.

Reference:

- 1) *Gov 2.0 Task Force* <http://gov2.net.au/>
- 2) *Principles for ICT-enabled Citizen Engagement*
<http://www.finance.gov.au/e-government/better-practice-and-collaboration/docs/Principles.pdf>
- 3) *Gov 2.0 in Australia*
<http://showcase.govspace.gov.au/>
- 4) <http://agimo.govspace.gov.au>

I. INTRODUCTION

Like many governments in the world, Singapore is also evaluating how best to deliver services and engage with its citizens through new technologies.

In its 30-year e-government journey, the Singapore government has been exploiting information and communication (infocomm) technologies to radically transform public administration and service delivery. This has, in many ways, benefited the public sector in the form of greater productivity and efficiency gains. Similarly, the citizens and the business community have enjoyed higher levels of convenience and cost savings when using public services.

In light of this endeavour, almost all public services are now delivered online. However, the Singapore government has now devised plans to roll out more initiatives in the next five years leveraging on social media to facilitate two way communications with its citizens. The government has realised that the growing popularity of social media cannot be ignored.

The government agencies are keen to even experiment with new ways to tap on the collective wisdom and resources of netizens in the search for answers, under the new e-Government master plan that will take place over the next five years.

The new master plan, announced recently, sets to facilitate, and enable a major shift from a "Gov-to-You" mindset to a "Gov-with-You" mindset.

It is hoped that this move will fuel innovation and encourage co-creation with the people. Under the new "Gov-with-You" approach, the public sector is expected to embrace a collaborative culture where it accepts that some services can be more effectively developed and delivered in partnership with the private and people sectors.

The government however expects active participation from the citizens and businesses, since the possibilities for open government depend on the innovative use of new internet-based technologies and the government has announced that agencies will develop policies that support employee-initiated, innovative Government 2.0-based proposals.

Examples of Web 2.0 in Singapore

- Some government agencies in Singapore are already adopting new models. One example is the OneMap initiative launched by the Singapore Land Authority in collaboration with IDA in March 2010. It serves as an online geospatial platform with advanced mapping technologies that allow users to create new applications on a common base map of Singapore. Using the OneMap platform, citizens and businesses contribute information about shops, eateries, recreational activities and landmarks in and around their community. They can also build on this information and create heritage or food trails in their own portal for use by residents or even tourists. One popular service that is already offered under OneMap is SchoolQuery. This service gives anxious parents information on whether their homes are within one or two kilometres of their preferred primary school.
- Another example is how Singapore business registry, ACRA, is providing businesses with easy access to analyse corporate financial statements. Open Analytics is a pioneering financial analysis application developed through a public-private partnership between ACRA and Crowe Horwath to allow monitoring and trend analysis of the financial performance of companies or any specific industry sector.
- Besides seeking to co-create in service delivery, the Singapore Government has actively sought to connect with its citizens, be it through news and information portals such as www.gov.sg, to involve them in the shaping of public policies.

Citizen engagement is not new to Singapore. Back in 1985, the Singapore government set up the Feedback Unit to provide Singaporeans with a forum to offer views, understand policies, and participate in national debates. In 2006, the Unit was revamped and renamed 'REACH', which is short for Reaching Everyone for Active Citizenry @ Home. Singaporeans were encouraged to go beyond merely giving feedback, and to take on a more active role in the public consultation process by participating in the process of change.

The portal uses various approaches to engage citizens – from publishing eConsultation papers to conducting online discussion forums and ePolls. There are online consultation spaces for business, youth and oversees Singaporeans. Citizens can provide feedback to government on national issues, provide suggestions on cutting waste in government, and provide suggestions on cutting red tape.

II. DRIVERS

Technology has presented itself with new possibilities and platforms for closer citizen engagements. In Singapore, the use of Web 2.0 technologies or social media has grown significantly over the past two years. The government realise the fact that this growing popularity of social media cannot be ignored. 'REACH' and government agencies alike have started to leverage these social media sites to reach out and connect with a larger segment of the population. One example is the annual National Day Rally Feedback Exercise, where members of the public can follow live updates and participate in real-time discussions posted on the REACH Facebook or "tweet" their views.

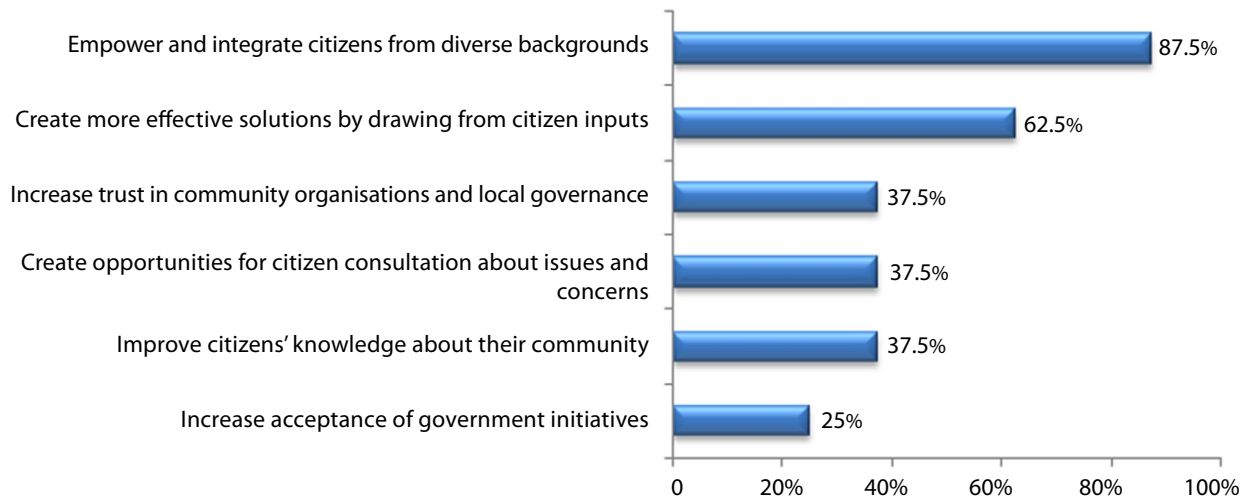
As part of this study, we interviewed 8 senior public sector officials (including Directors, Chief Executives and Assistant Commissioners) from the government of Singapore who have been instrumental in leading citizen engagement initiatives in the country. We asked about the drivers for citizen engagement and as can be seen in figure 1 below, an overwhelming number (88%) said that they wanted to "empower and integrate citizens from diverse backgrounds".

This is indicative of the fact that the Singapore government is keen to develop an inclusive and empowered society where citizens are given ownership of their environment, especially in their interactions with the government. In fact, this trend is backed up by 38% of the respondents who mentioned that one of the reasons for engaging with citizens is to create opportunities for citizen consultation about issues and concerns.

On the other hand, 63% of the respondents mentioned that increase acceptance of government initiatives were their top reason for engaging with the citizens. The key to the success of web 2.0 initiatives remain the fact that it is of paramount importance to integrate citizens from different backgrounds so that they can gain greater control over their lives and their community. It has been said that when people from diverse parts of a community come together, they often find that they share more in common than they realise.

However, Ng Siau Yong, Director, Land Information Centre, Singapore Land Authority, said that while the government is keen to create effective solution by drawing from citizen inputs, yet the key is that because of the anonymous nature of internet, it is common for people to make irresponsible remarks. Thus, if governments were to use this channel to get a feel of the ground, it must first figure out how to distinguish the real sentiments from the noise. Here in lies the success of the web 2.0 initiatives of the government.

Q: What are the key reasons for engaging citizens? ©FutureGov Research 2011



▶ Figure 1: Key Reasons for Engaging Citizens

III. KEY PRACTICES

In the interviews, we also asked the government officials about their practices when designing citizen engagement initiatives. We wanted to understand the principles that were most important to them and how they applied these principles.

Singapore has succeeded in leveraging the web to create one of Asia's most engaged citizenries. A typical Singaporean phenomenon has seen the use of technology to enable greater government transparency, accountability and accessibility.

Measured purely in terms of participation, the Republic's e-government efforts have dramatically increased the avenues for Singaporeans and residents to interact with public agencies. Tax returns in Singapore are one of the prominent examples of government modernisation, and citizens have voted online. Taking much of the pain out of what is generally one of the most fractious interactions between government and governed has helped provide the momentum to spread e-government transformation throughout much of the rest of government.

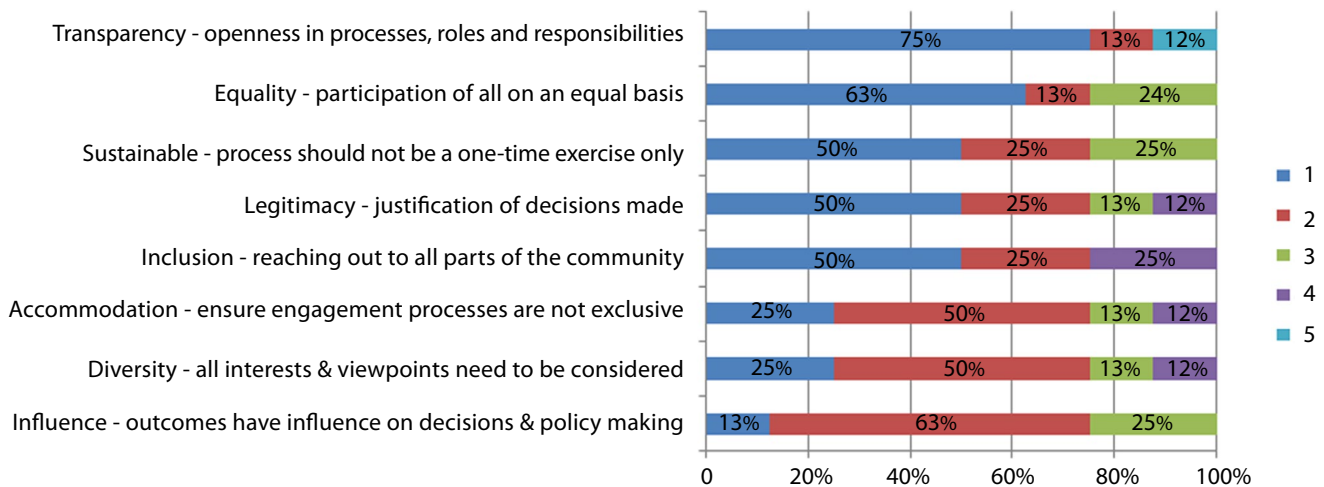
Also, the government's strong reputation for clean government and information integrity has clearly encouraged users to trust the new online communication channels.

From the responses in figure 2 below, we find that, while all the principles of citizen engagement were equally important, the ones that stood out overall were transparency, equality and inclusiveness of the engagement.

We are all familiar with the demands from citizens for greater transparency and accountability of their elected officials and this extends across all levels from those who set policies to those on the ground who come face to face with constituents. This latter group of people may not be elected by constituents but nevertheless are seen to represent the elected government. These are the government officials who often operate within their own silos and it is important that they are seen to be in-line with what is being demanded by citizens of their political masters.

Q: Please rank the following principles when designing your citizen engagement platforms?

©FutureGov Research 2011 (Rank on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = Most important and 5 = least important)



► Figure 2: Principles for Designing Citizen Engagement Platform

IV. IDENTIFYING ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES AND EFFECTIVENESS OF TYPES OF PLATFORMS

When asked about the how they would identify and design their citizen engagement initiatives, a majority of our respondents said that they would study how other government have done so using ICT followed by engaging consultants to advise them on how best to deploy technology (see figure 3 below).

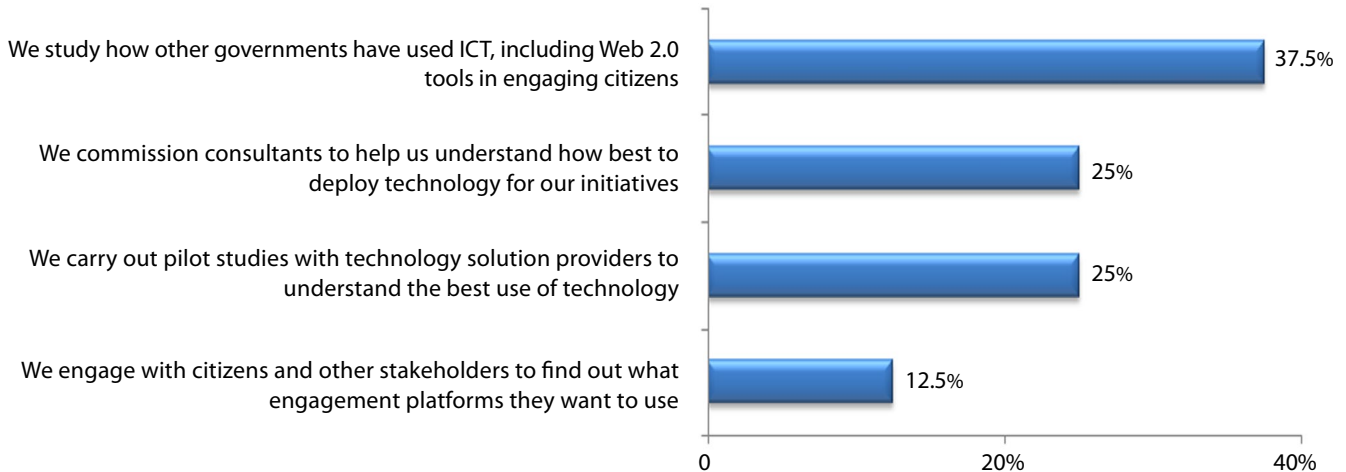
Similar to other countries, Singapore also wants to evaluate the best practices of other countries, and devise their own way of identifying engagement practices with citizens. The IDA constantly monitors worldwide information and communication (infocomm) developments so that Singapore is aligned with new technology trends. The IDA continues to identify new emerging technologies that will give Singapore a competitive edge in business.

There is a general belief among many government officials that they do not wish to be 'market leaders' when it pertains to the deployment of new technologies in government services and this finding validates this understanding, even though it is little strange for the fact that Singapore has always been at the forefront of effective technology deployment for effective governance.

The use of consultants is often another route that most governments use in understanding the latest trends in technology and how best to deploy these technologies for their initiatives. It is no different in the area of citizen engagement initiatives where it is often an effective means of adopting “best practices” of how such initiatives can be technology enabled through learning from those who have actually consulted or implemented similar initiatives for other governments. 25% of the respondents mentioned that they commission consultants to help them understand how to deploy best practices.

25% of the respondents in Singapore also mentioned that they would carry out pilot projects with technology solution providers to better understand the use of technology.

Q: How do you identify and design your citizen engagement initiatives? ©FutureGov Research 2011



▶ Figure 3: Identifying Citizen Engagement Initiatives

V. EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMON CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT PLATFORMS

In the interviews, we asked the government officials to rank the relative effectiveness of each of the common citizen engagement platforms as seen in figure 4 below. Based on the responses, having a dedicated website and dedicated telephone numbers appeared to be the most effective means of engaging with citizens in Singapore. This was followed by having a means for citizens to contact the government with the deployment of Web 2.0 related technologies coming in third.

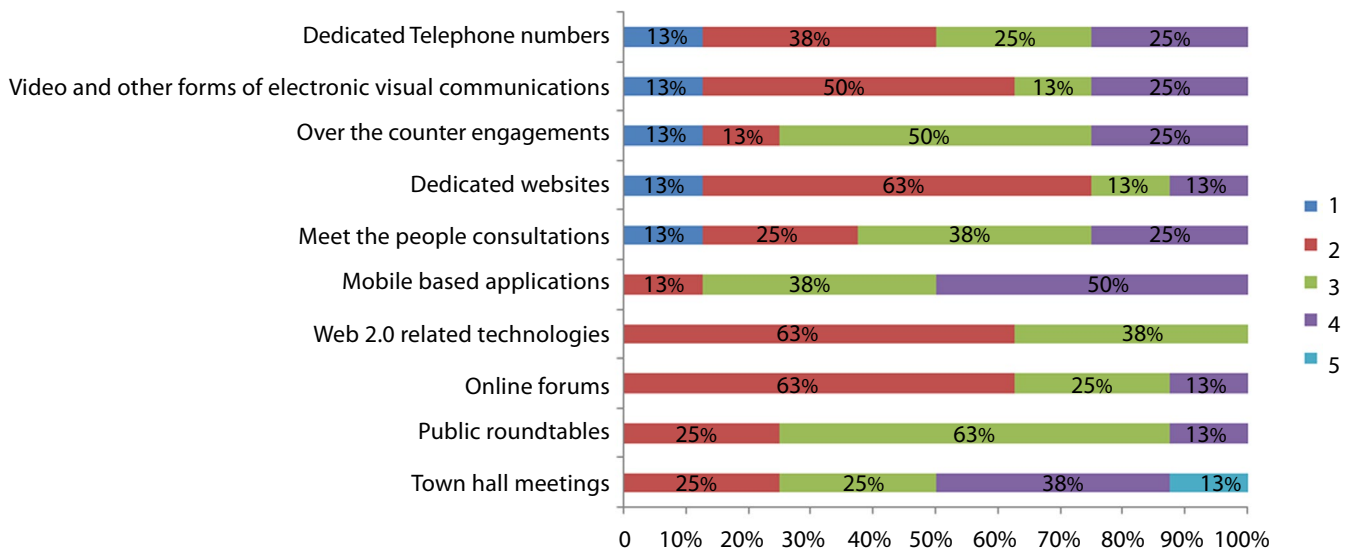
On the surface, it can be said that citizens typically prefer to find out information for themselves and only when they want to, contact the government directly without any fuss. The website / telephone combination serves this model well. The availability of a dedicated telephone line also indicates that citizens expect to be able to contact the government and obtain services when they want and not have to wait for someone to respond (as in writing in via email).

It is interesting to note that Web 2.0 related technologies came in third, indicating that while important, it may not be fully understood within the context of government services. This further supports the view that most governments, even those from the leading countries in citizen engagement like Singapore, tend to adopt a cautious approach when it comes to 'newer' technologies.

Singaporeans in general are less forthcoming in engaging the government on national policies, which is why Web 2.0 has not yet become the most effective tool of engaging with citizens. This is however set to change in days to come with more and more citizens becoming aware and more open to use web 2.0 tools to engage directly with the government.

Q: Please rank the effectiveness of the following common citizen engagement platforms.

©FutureGov Research 2011 (Rank on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1= Most Important and 5=Least important)



▶ Figure 4: Effectiveness of Common Citizen Engagement Platforms

VI. E-ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

In trying to understand the approach to using an e-engagement platform as opposed to traditional approaches, we asked how e-engagement initiatives were prioritised. Interestingly, a majority said that they try to “balance the use of e-engagement platforms with other traditional platforms” (see figure 5).

The Singapore government is keen to increase the citizen’s mindshare in e-engagement. Accessing public information, participating in public policy consultations and providing feedback to Government can now all be done online with ease, however iGov2010 seeks to continue to complement existing non-electronic service delivery initiatives and allow citizens to be actively engaged in the policy-making process.

Given the technological advancements and the uptake of technology among the citizenry in Singapore, it is rather strange that officials try to balance the use of e-engagement with other traditional platforms.

To improve the richness of services, the Singapore government is keen to improve e-service offerings, by developing insights into customers' needs as well as preferences and to enhance the quality of e-Services.

The other strategy that is being worked out is to integrate processes and services across organisational boundaries, including those of private sector entities, with the aim of minimising the number of interactions between customers and Government in completing their transactions.

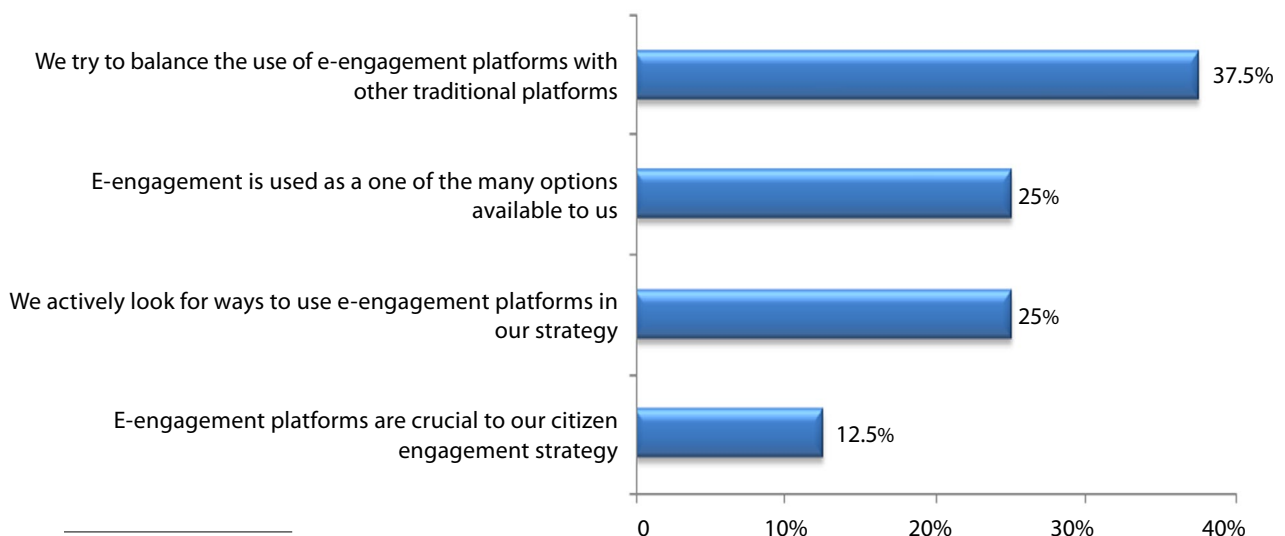
To extend the reach of the services, anyone who wishes to transact online with the Government needs to be provided with easy and convenient access to do just that, regardless of whether he or she has the means to do so.

CitizenConnect and BizHelper are initiatives of the Singapore government aimed at achieving that. Citizens without access to the Internet can use facilities at CitizenConnect Centres in their neighbourhood Community Clubs, at no charge, to transact with Government. Dedicated service staff are at hand to assist in using the e-Services. Similar helper services are available for business owners for a nominal fee at privately-run BizHelper Centres.

Efforts are also on to take advantage of Singapore's deep mobile phone penetration to extend the reach of e-services to customers. For example, the mPAL service by the Central Provident Fund Board, allows employers of fewer than 10 employees to submit their CPF contribution details in three steps using a mobile phone. This provides an easy and hassle-free way of transacting with the Government while on the move.

Q: Which statement best describes how you prioritise your e-engagement initiatives?

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► Figure 5: Preferred E-Engagement Approach

VII. WEB2.0 TECHNOLOGIES

Understanding how web2.0 is being deployed for e-engagement in Singapore, we wanted to know which particular technologies were used. In response, two main technologies were highlighted and these were social networks and blogs (see figure 6).

The use of social networks and blogs for e-engagement should not be surprising given its popularity and reach across a large section of the younger population. It also indicates a greater focus on interactivity especially in engaging the younger and IT savvy segment of the population.

While blogs were previously seen as a key tool for engaging citizens, and continue to be used, this appears to have been superseded by the use of social networks as the preferred e-engagement tool of choice.

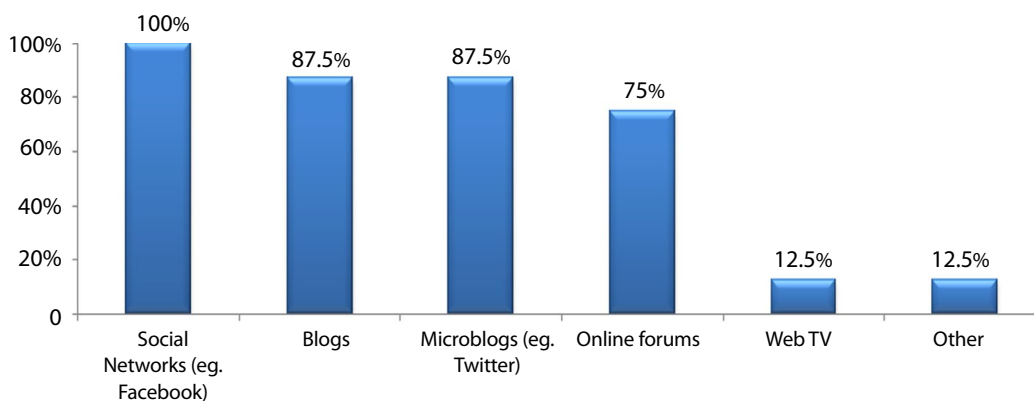
Some of the other tools mentioned include the use of micro blogs, online forums. It is interesting to note that while both are not as popular; there is increasing interest in the use of Web TV with a number of government agencies looking to develop their own government you-tube equivalent networks.

Under the new e-governance master plan, the government is seeking to co-create in service delivery, a collaborative government to connect with its citizens and involve them in shaping public policies and is veered towards connecting for active participation.

Social networking tools such as blogs, Youtube, Facebook and Twitter are excellent channels for mass collaboration and reaching out to large segments of the population quickly and efficiently. Singapore government agencies are beginning to use such social networking tools to extend their reach to connect with citizens – in spite of uncertainties, unknowns and even risks involved. Even some of the government ministers are discussing their respective ministry's plans and thinking through blogs.

Q: Which Web2.0 technologies had the greatest impact in e-engagement to date?

©FutureGov Research 2011



▶ Figure 6: Preferred Web 2.0 Technologies

According to Ng Siau Yong, human nature has not really changed; it just that the medium and channel has changed. Governments must understand this. "In the past, we look at magazines to find new friends and develop pen pals. Today, the same thing is happening, but on a different platform, such as My Space and Facebook. So if the government wants to engage the citizens of this generation, we need to be on these new platforms."

As Singapore citizens become more information and communication (infocomm) savvy, the Singapore Government recognises that using infocomm to better serve citizens need not be just about providing more information, but also about leveraging non-traditional channels, such as social networking sites, to provide the essential information in an environment that they are familiar with.

The Singapore Police Force (SPF) has created a Facebook group for users to receive the latest security issues and updates. A team of two regular officers in the Public Affairs department is assigned to develop all of SPF's social media activities, including responding to online conversations to "take the pulse of netizens".

Citizens' comments are investigated and often acted upon, as are suggestions for how to improve the page, although the team does not operate for 24 hours a day.

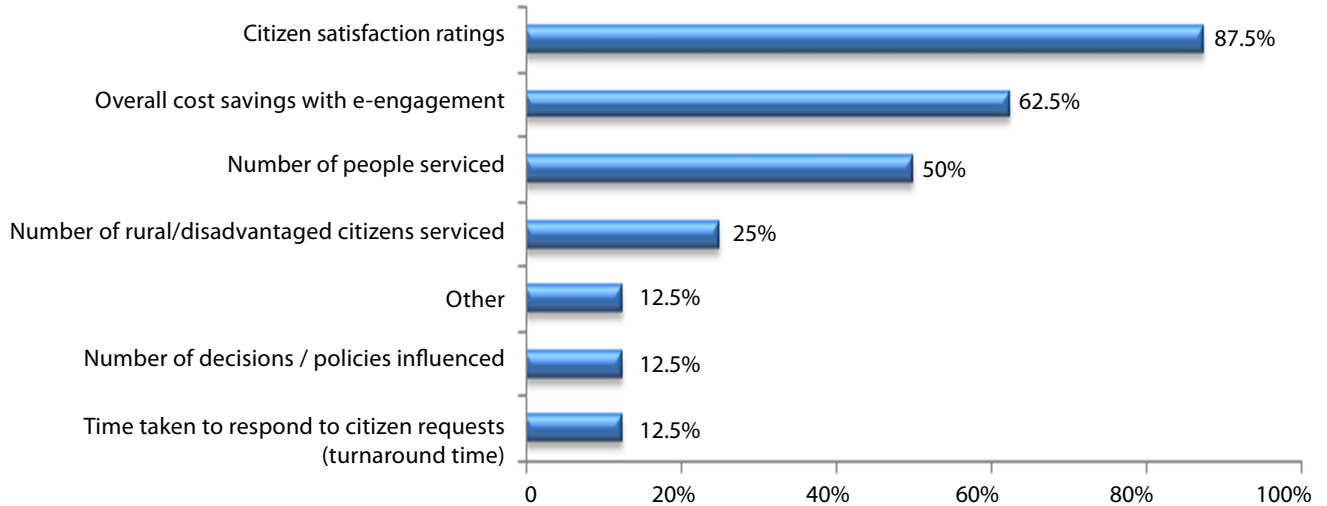
SPF is taking a measured approach to comments posted by citizens. Occasionally fans use the page to report suspected criminal activity. Even though SPF keeps an open mind in listening and acting on feedback from fans, they are reminded not to use the Facebook Wall for reporting crime. They are re-directed to the proper channels - 999 for emergencies, or 1800-2550000 and spf_police_information@spf.gov.sg to provide information.

Recently, the H1N1 situation in Singapore prompted the Ministry of Health to collaborate with developers to launch iHealth Sg, which provides a comprehensive guide to all healthcare facilities in Singapore, including the Pandemic Preparedness Clinics (PPCs) that are equipped to diagnose and treat H1N1. The application is essentially a mash-up of existing services to allow the public to search for, map and locate healthcare facilities nearby by using the Global Positioning System, and to view live webcam images of waiting areas in polyclinics.

VIII. MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF E-ENGAGEMENT

Knowing which tools are being used and understanding the relative benefits between its uses over traditional tools, we wanted to know how its effectiveness was being measured. Not surprisingly, in Singapore, it is measured by the level of citizen satisfaction, and overall cost savings (see figure 7).

Q: How do you measure the effectiveness of e-engagement initiatives? ©FutureGov Research 2011



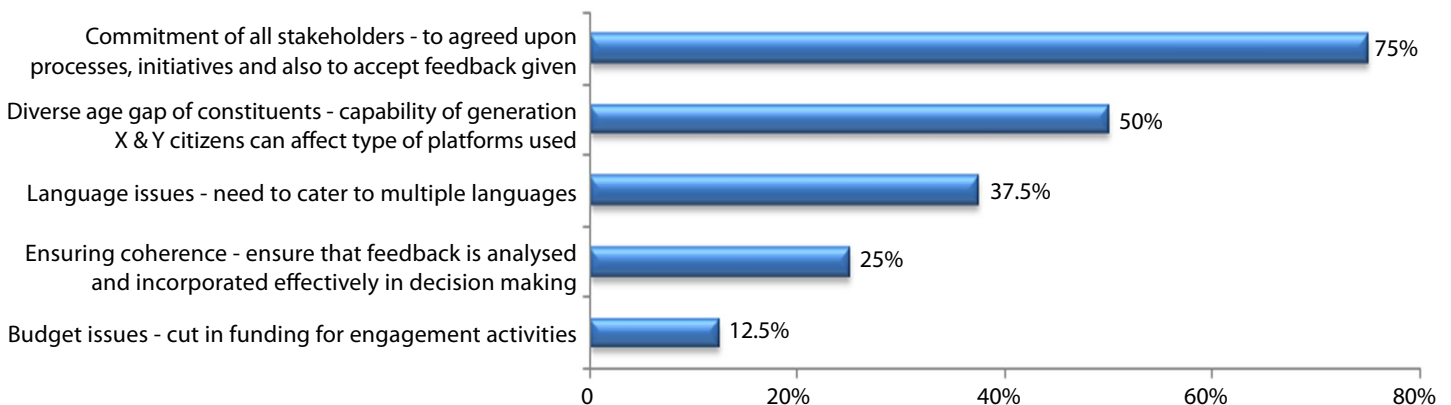
▶ Figure 7: Measuring the Effectiveness of e-Engagement

IX. CHALLENGES

In attempting to understand the impediments faced when looking to implement e-engagement initiatives in Singapore, we asked interviewees about the challenges that they faced. A majority of the respondent (75%) said commitment of all stakeholders remain a key challenge towards e-engagement initiatives. Enhancing government-citizen e-engagement where more ministries and netizens are interacting is a challenge that needs to be addressed.

This is a well know and perennial issue and Singapore is no different. The use of IT technology is often seen as a means to overcome the lack of collaboration between departments and agencies.

Q: What are some of the key challenges that you face in implementing your e-engagement initiatives? ©FutureGov Research 2011



▶ Figure 8: Key Challenges to e-Engagement Initiatives

X. APPLICATIONS THAT CANNOT BE E-ENABLED

While we may know the types of applications on the various e-engagement platforms, we wanted to understand if there were any types of applications that did not lend themselves to be e-enabled.

Based on the common feedback, one of the types of applications mentioned were those that involved sensitive data that needed to be secured such as personally identifiable information or government financial information. In addition, those applications that required 'proof of identity' were also mentioned as one that could not be e-enabled (see table 1).

While there may be innovative solutions to overcome some of the concerns mentioned, they may come with too high a cost or add to the complexity of the citizen engagement process. For example, with the availability authentication protocols and devices, it would be possible to transact electronically in a relatively secure manner. This however will add a level of complexity (or inconvenience to the citizen), which may not be an acceptable solution to the respective government agencies.

One kind of application is one that requires either some form of physical verification or those that require a degree of personal interaction. An example cited was in the area of welfare benefits where it was important to not only prevent fraud but also more importantly ensure that the right person receives the relevant welfare benefits.

Another area mentioned was in the area of child protection where it was important to have a case officer physically present to assess the situation, which may include the child involved, the caregivers and the physical home environment.

Another interesting area cited was one that required much effort from experts to achieve. This would indicate the process for exceptions was better managed with human intervention. Although there was only one such case cited, it was important to note that not all applications can be e-enabled and that it was important to discern between the two.

Table 1: Types of Applications that do not lend themselves to be e-Enabled

a. Fully adopted (Not looking at more e-enablement)

- Most of their applications are e-enabled
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b. Sensitive or secured applications

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c. Where some form of physical interaction required

- Physical verification of document submitted by customers
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- More likely the sending of some correspondences
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d. Complex applications

- Only one which required much effort from experts

XI. KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

In order to ensure that its initiatives are successful, the Singapore government has to make sure that it successfully designs citizen engagement initiatives that meet the needs of their citizen constituents. Towards this end, we asked interviewees for some of their key success factors (KSF). An overwhelming majority of those interviewed (88%) said that effective communication was the key – communicating in appropriate ways (e.g. visual outputs) (see figure 9).

It is a given that that if any system is too complicated to use, it will not be readily adopted. This is the crux of the issue where citizens will want to communicate with their government when they want to in a convenient and effective manner.

The other two key success factors mentioned by a majority of those interviewed were to stay focused (know what your constituents want), and Strategic clarity (civil servants understand what they're working towards.)

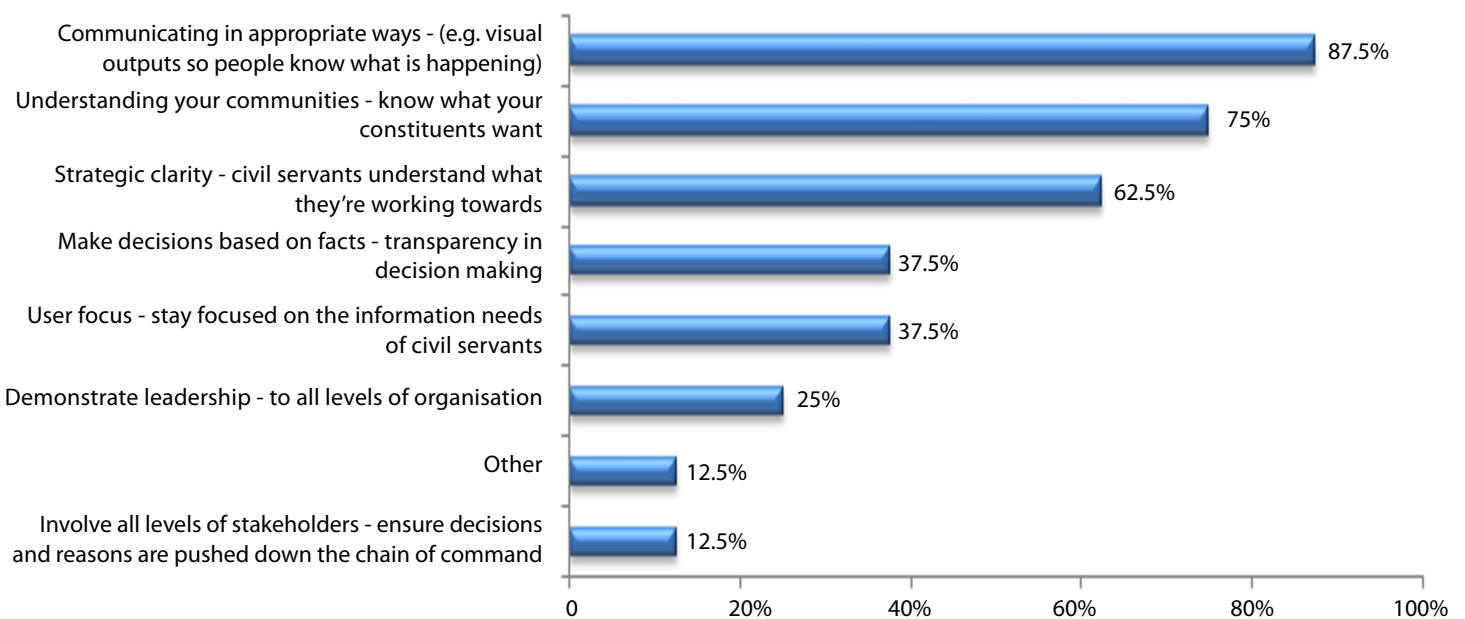
Government agencies in Singapore seek to engage citizens on community-based issues and interests. The National Heritage Board fronts a blog, Yesterday.sg, that shares information and news on Singapore's history, heritage buildings and monuments, museums, etc. It also encourages fans of similar interests to sign up as members and post on the blog to share their thoughts, pictures and recommendations.

The Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports is behind Youth.sg, an online portal for Singapore youths as a platform for them to get more resources and information on community projects. The aim is to facilitate link-ups to experienced resource persons or organisations that can guide or partner them, resources for starting a youth organisation, etc. The eventual goal is for the portal to become an online space where a network of community-oriented youth can emerge and thrive.

This orientation towards closer citizen ties has been the key to citizen engagement practices in Singapore.

Q: In your opinion, what are some of the key success factors in engaging citizens?

©FutureGov Research 2011



▶ Figure 9: Key Success Factors

XII. CONCLUSIONS

The progress of Singapore e-Government has been guided by a vision to delight customers and connect citizens through information and communication (infocomm). This is manifested in the various e-government master plans developed over the past 30 years. As citizens become more infocomm savvy and increasingly rely on the government to deliver high-quality and efficient e-services that match their needs, Singapore depends on sound leadership and management to steer its e-Government progress. This has resulted in the development of many e-services for citizens and programmes for the public sector, which exploit and push the boundaries of infocomm technology.

The 30 years of Government infocomm journey has evolved in tandem with the larger National infocomm journey of Singapore. While the Government infocomm plans such as the Civil Service Computerisation Programme, e-Government Action Plan I and II and iGov2010 set the key thrusts and strategies for transforming the government sector, the National Infocomm Plans are directed at transforming the industry and society.

The development of the iGov2010 Masterplan thus plays an integral component of Singapore's national information and communication (infocomm) master plan, iN2015. The vision is a Singapore where infocomm will help to create an environment conducive for flourishing businesses, smart workforce and a well-connected society.

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3) *REACH*

<http://www.reach.gov.sg/AboutREACH/Overview.aspx>

4) <http://yesterday.sg/>

I. INTRODUCTION

In a major policy decision that was some time back, the British government has identified Web 2.0 as the basis to provide and improve public sector interaction with citizens and businesses. The open government and online engagement agenda in the UK has achieved a lot, according to Director of Transparency & Digital Engagement, Mr. Andrew Stott.

Digital engagement had been adopted by the newly elected UK government to influence and form policy. Since the new government was elected in the UK, the government has used collaborative tools on major areas of policy. An example was The Spending Challenge, part of the Government's program of deficit reduction, which was used to identify scope for efficiencies and savings in public services.

The project has resulted in citizen feedback that hadn't been gathered through the usual channels.

The new UK government is also committed to increasing transparency, having published numerous new datasets since coming to power. These technologies provide an ideal outlet for this kind of information while also enabling the government to better understand and make use of its existing data.

In the UK, thus, there is now a very clear directive from central government that the public sector must embrace the Web 2.0 philosophy for disseminating data. An early product of this assertion has been the 'Show Us A Better Way' competition – a public prize to be awarded to the best idea for 'mashing up' public sector data using Web 2.0 techniques. As part of the competition, several data sources have been made available as web 2.0-style data services, including small area Neighbourhood Statistics from ONS (which has been independently trialling 'web services' as a way of feeding data to customers without requiring them to physically download data by visiting the website).

Examples of Web 2.0 in the UK

- Tentative first moves are being made within central government to consult with the public over policy. One of the few departments embracing the idea of e-consultation is the Environment Agency. The agency conducts around 300 consultations a year. A recent e-consultation on the subject on how the government manages its fisheries attracted 900 responses from anglers and other interested parties.

- The results are still being analysed - another problem with e-consultation is how to manage all the responses that are received in a meaningful way - but there will be scope to adapt the policy based on the submissions, Ms Beaver promised.
- At a local government level, councils are beginning to take on some of the applications begun by citizen groups, such as FixMyStreet and Pledgebank, websites set up by civic charity MySociety.
- The London Borough of Redbridge has incorporated both these ideas in its new website, dubbed "Redbridge i".
- The site grew out of a desire to make information even more localised. Using Google maps visitors can define their own neighbourhood to within 50 metres of their property.
- Redbridge has also instigated an online conversation to get direct feedback from residents about how council money is spent.
- NHS Choices has been identified as one of the government's so-called supersites. The website gets 24 million hits a year, a pretty decent number for a government website. The site allows people to check definitive health information as well as the performance of individual hospitals and even, if they so wish, the mortality rates for particular procedures.

The enthusiasm of public agencies, public servants and the public themselves are all necessary for Government 2.0 to take root. In this regard, the UK is well placed and some key UK public sector agencies have set a benchmark in their embrace of Government 2.0 approaches.

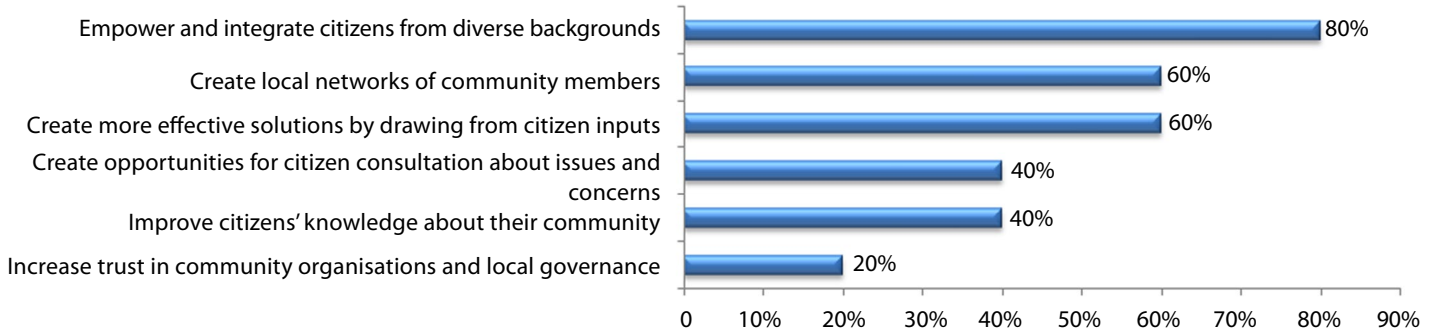
II. DRIVERS

As part of this study, we interviewed 8 senior public sector officials (including Directors, Chief Executives and Assistant Commissioners) from the UK who have been instrumental in leading citizen engagement initiatives in the country. We asked about the drivers for citizen engagement and as can be seen in figure 1 below, an overwhelming number (80%) said that they wanted to "empower and integrate citizens from diverse backgrounds".

This is indicative of the fact that the government is committed to develop an inclusive and empowered society where citizens are given ownership of their environment, especially in their interactions with the government. In fact, the next two responses lay credence to this finding with 60% of the respondents each mentioning 'create local network of community members' and 'create more effective solutions by drawing from citizen inputs' as the key reasons for engaging with citizens.

Similar to the trends as seen in other countries, it is apparent that the key is to integrate citizens from different backgrounds so that they can gain greater control over their lives and their community. It has been said that when people from diverse parts of a community come together, they often find that they share more in common than they realise.

Q: What are the key reasons for engaging citizens? ©FutureGov Research 2011



▶ Figure 1: Key Reasons for Engaging Citizens

III. KEY PRACTICES

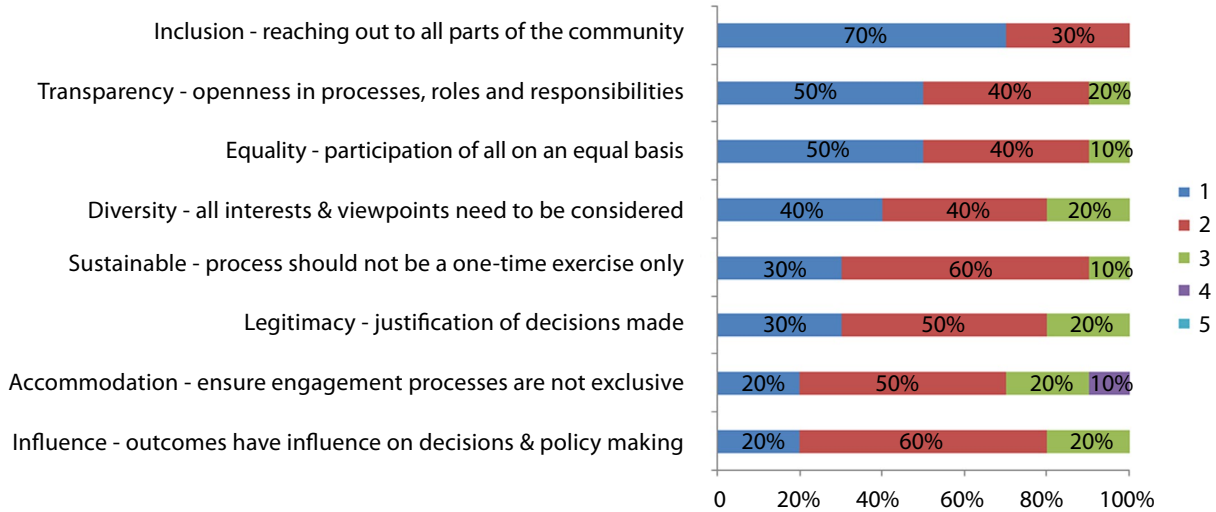
In the interviews, we also asked the government officials about their practices when designing citizen engagement initiatives. We wanted to understand the principles that were most important to them and how they applied these principles.

Inclusive forms the focal point of citizen engagement practices in the UK. Majority of the respondents maintained that for Web 2.0 policies to become successful, the key is to include everyone in the whole gamut of society. This is especially key in the UK given the fact that the British society is a diverse one.

From the responses in figure 2 below, we find that, while all the principles of citizen engagement were equally important, the ones that stood out overall were inclusion, transparency and equality of the engagement.

When it comes to transparency, there are two levels of transparency that can be mapped here - one at the local community level and the other at the government level. We are all familiar with the demands from citizens for greater transparency and accountability of their elected officials and this extends across all levels from those who set policies to those on the ground who come face to face with constituents. This latter group of people may not be elected by constituents but nevertheless are seen to represent the elected government. These are the government officials who often operate within their own silos and it is important that they are seen to be in-line with what is being demanded by citizens of their political masters. This is true for all countries, both in the Americas, Europe, Asia or Africa.

Q: Please rank the following principles when designing your citizen engagement platforms? ©FutureGov Research 2011 (Rank on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1= Most Important and 5=Least important)



▶ Figure 2: Principles for Designing Citizen Engagement Platform

IV. IDENTIFYING ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES AND EFFECTIVENESS OF TYPES OF PLATFORMS

When asked about the how they would identify and design their citizen engagement initiatives, a majority of our respondents said that they would study how other government have done so using ICT. An overwhelming 80% of the respondents echoed this view – and this trend in actuality is seen across all the countries where we conducted interviews. (see figure 3 below). It is common to hear many government officials say that they do not wish to be ‘market leaders’ when it pertains to the deployment of new technologies in government services and this finding validates this understanding.

10% of the respondents also mentioned that they would engage with citizens and other stakeholders to find out what engagement platform they would prefer to use for their convenience.

Q: How do you identify and design your citizen engagement initiatives? ©FutureGov Research 2011



▶ Figure 3: Identifying Citizen Engagement Initiatives

V. EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMON CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT PLATFORMS

In the interviews, we asked the government officials to rank the relative effectiveness of each of the common citizen engagement platforms as seen in figure 4 below. Based on the responses, having a dedicated website and dedicated telephone numbers appeared to be the most effective means of engaging with citizens. This was followed by having a means for citizens to contact the government with the deployment of Web 2.0 related technologies.

On the surface, it can be said that citizens typically prefer to find out information for themselves and only when they want to, contact the government directly without any fuss. The website / telephone combination serves this model well. The availability of a dedicated telephone line also indicates that citizens expect to be able to contact the government and obtain services when they want and not have to wait for someone to respond (as in writing in via email).

The government has an obligation to communicate key messages to citizens in many classes and demographics; and the web is unquestionably one of the most cost-effective methods of achieving this.

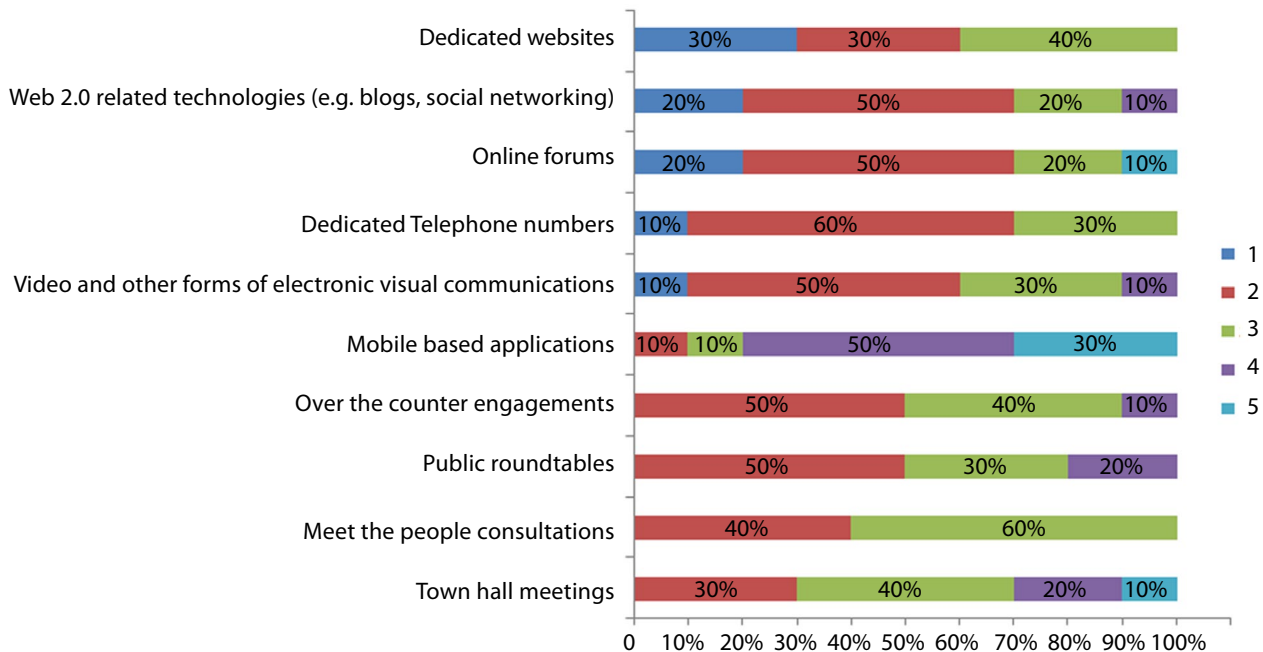
It is interesting to note that Web 2.0 related technologies came in second, indicating that while important, it may not be fully understood within the context of government services. This further supports the view that most governments, even those from the leading countries in citizen engagement, tend to adopt a cautious approach when it comes to 'newer' technologies.

Glyn Evans, Assistant to the Chief Executive on Transformation, Birmingham said "We should ensure that civil servants aware of both the opportunities and challenges that using social media present." This will ensure the most effective utilisation of web 2.0.

Also, the widely varying communities with which government websites must engage, however, also demand another key characteristic - relevance. Consumers come in all shapes and sizes; and they demand knowledge that is tailored and personalised to be just right for their individual needs. Helping the jobless to help themselves, for example, demands that a 50 year old ex-farmer receives entirely different messaging from a 17 year old school leaver.

Q: Please rank the effectiveness of the following common citizen engagement platforms.

©FutureGov Research 2011 (Rank on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1= Most Important and 5=Least important)



▶ Figure 4: Effectiveness of Common Citizen Engagement Platforms

VI. E-ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

In trying to understand the approach to using an e-engagement platform as opposed to traditional approaches, we asked how e-engagement initiatives were prioritised. Interestingly, a majority said that e-engagement is one of the many options available in the country, while 50% of the respondents said they try to “balance the use of e-engagement platforms with other traditional platforms” (see figure 5). Given the level of development and capability of a developed country like the UK, this seems more of an orthodox method, simply due to the fact e-engagement is yet to become the sole means to engaging with citizens. This view gets credence from the 50% of the other respondents who mentioned that that they try to balance the use of e-engagement platforms with the traditional ones.

In the past decade, the UK governments at all levels have made significant changes to the way they do business, inform and interact with citizens. This has corresponded to an exponential increase in the use of online technologies by all sectors. The overwhelming balance of government effort has gone into providing information more efficiently to citizens and streamlining payments and transactions.

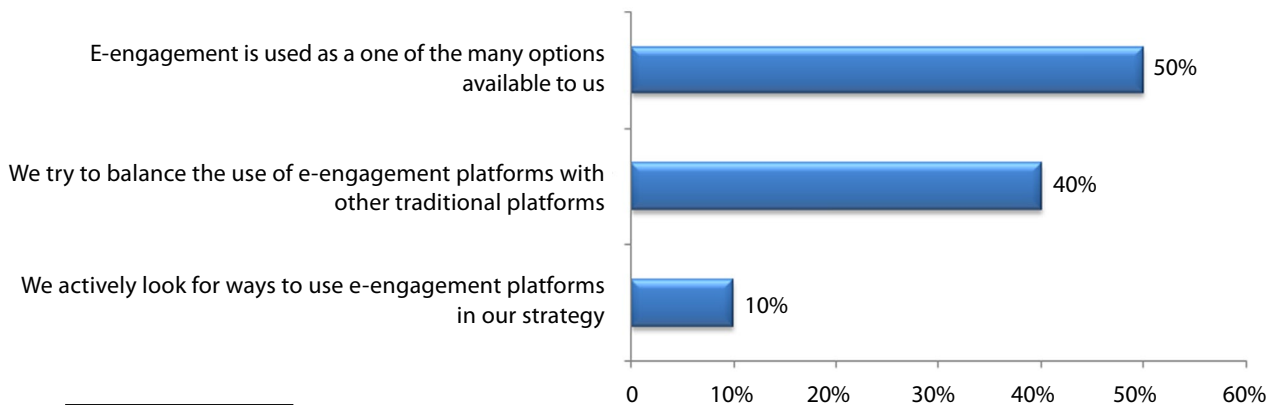
However, in recent years a number of UK jurisdictions have adopted programs and policies to assist active citizenship, both on and off-line. At the federal level, ‘closer citizen engagement’ is one of the directives in the government’s e-government strategy.

According to Glyn Evans, there is a widespread adoption of social media tools. This he said, will have two aspects. First, it will be external, improving citizens' ability to engage with their local authority and with each other, and will result in a demand for greater transparency, provide new lobbying opportunities to which councils will need to respond and bring new challenges to the services. For example, in Birmingham a group of local web developers are creating their own, 'improved' version of Birmingham's website through scraping and revamping the content. It will have a Wiki-based approach, so content can be amended, with interesting the implications for accountability.

Secondly, social media tools will increasingly be used internally within councils and across local government in order to maximise the contribution from the knowledge and experience of the employees.

Q: Which statement best describes how you prioritise your e-engagement initiatives?

©FutureGov Research 2011



▶ Figure 5: Preferred E-Engagement Approach

VII. WEB2.0 TECHNOLOGIES

Understanding how web2.0 is being deployed for e-engagement in the UK, we wanted to know which particular technologies were used. In response, two main technologies were highlighted and these were micro-blogs and social networking sites (see figure 6).

The use of microblogs and social networks for e-engagement should not be surprising given its popularity and reach across a large section of the population. It also indicates a greater focus on interactivity especially in engaging the younger and IT savvy segment of the population.

While blogs were previously seen as a key tool for engaging citizens, and continue to be used, this appears to have been superseded by the use of social networks as the preferred e-engagement tool of choice.

Some of the other tools mentioned include the use of online forums, Web TV and user generated content.

The UK Government is turning towards social media in an attempt to please voters and give them more of a say. Recently Prime Minister David Cameron held a meeting with the founder of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg; the agenda focused on how the government could get more out of websites like Facebook. There has been a Facebook page available for a while now where people can go and share their ideas with the government. It is now expected that this website, Democracy UK, will be further expanded to allow even more interaction with the tens of millions of Facebook users in the UK. In theory this should mean that there will be a lot more accountability in Britain and that the policies of the government will actually have taken into account the views of the people.

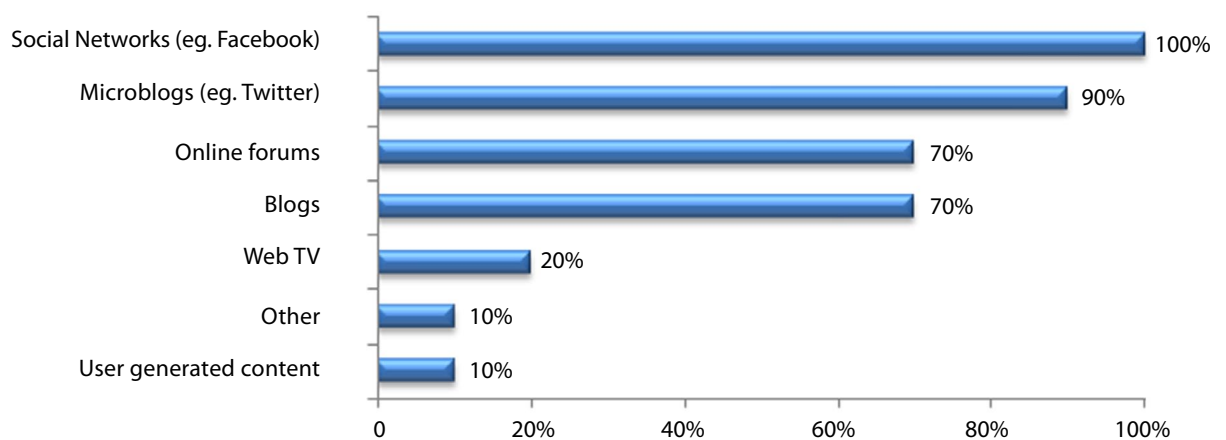
The new Prime Minister, David Cameron, has completely revamped his government's social media strategy. They have changed their accounts to have a single, shared username: Number10Gov. The UK government can now be easily found on their home webpage, Flickr, Twitter, and Youtube using this name. And the changes appear to be more than simply superficial: they have updated their Twitter with a link to their Flickr account for photos of the Prime Minister's first full day in office, and they are in the process of combining their news feeds onto their iPhone app as well.

However, despite having a set of guidelines on how to use Twitter, Facebook and other social media, the government's intranet bans access to them. Even in local authorities, only around half of the UK's councils allow employees access to such sites.

This dichotomy perhaps best sums up the current contradictory attitude and wider government circles when it comes to closer engagement with citizens.

Q: Which Web2.0 technologies had the greatest impact in e-engagement to date?

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▶ Figure 6: Preferred Web 2.0 Technologies

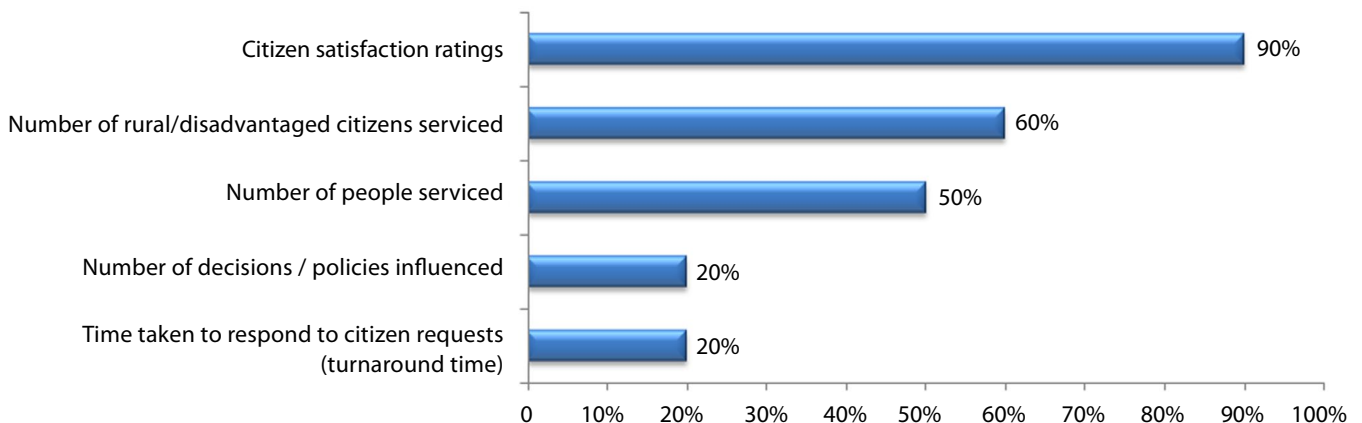
VIII. MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF E-ENGAGEMENT

Knowing which tools are being used and understanding the relative benefits between its uses over traditional tools, we wanted to know how its effectiveness was being measured. Not surprisingly, citizen satisfaction ratings and number of rural/disadvantaged citizens that are serviced are the guiding principles in the UK. (see figure 7). This is not surprising simply because the government does want to want to use all the latest technology and give the average person more of a platform to have a say; which perhaps the earlier administration failed to a certain extent.

As a means to improve citizen satisfaction, the UK government is promoting a multi-channel approach, based on the presumption that citizens and businesses want to resolve issues at the first point of contact and want that contact to be as convenient and as quick as possible.

Also, 60% of the respondents mentioned that number of rural/disadvantaged citizens serviced is the key to measure the effectiveness of citizen engagement measures. In the UK, departments are governed by a strong legislative and policy framework to ensure the rights of disadvantaged/ disabled people. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), originally enacted in 1995 and updated in 2005, makes it unlawful for service providers to treat disabled people less favourably than other people for a reason related to their disability. Service providers have to make "reasonable adjustments" to the way they deliver their services so that disabled people can use them.

Q: How do you measure the effectiveness of e-engagement initiatives? ©FutureGov Research 2011



▶ Figure 7: Measuring the Effectiveness of e-Engagement

IX. CHALLENGES

In attempting to understand the impediments faced when looking to implement e-engagement initiatives in the UK, we asked interviewees about the challenges that they faced. A majority of the respondent (90%) said diverse age group of constituents remain a key challenge towards e-engagement initiatives.

The different capabilities of those from generation X and Y mean that careful consideration of the different types of e-engagement platforms was needed, and also thought must be put to consider the different sensibilities – this has emerged as the main challenge in UK when it comes to engaging with citizens.

A “commitment from all stakeholders to agreed-upon processes, initiatives and to accept feedback given” was another key challenge raised. This is a well know and perennial issue and UK is no different. The use of IT technology is often seen as a means to overcome the lack of collaboration between departments and agencies.

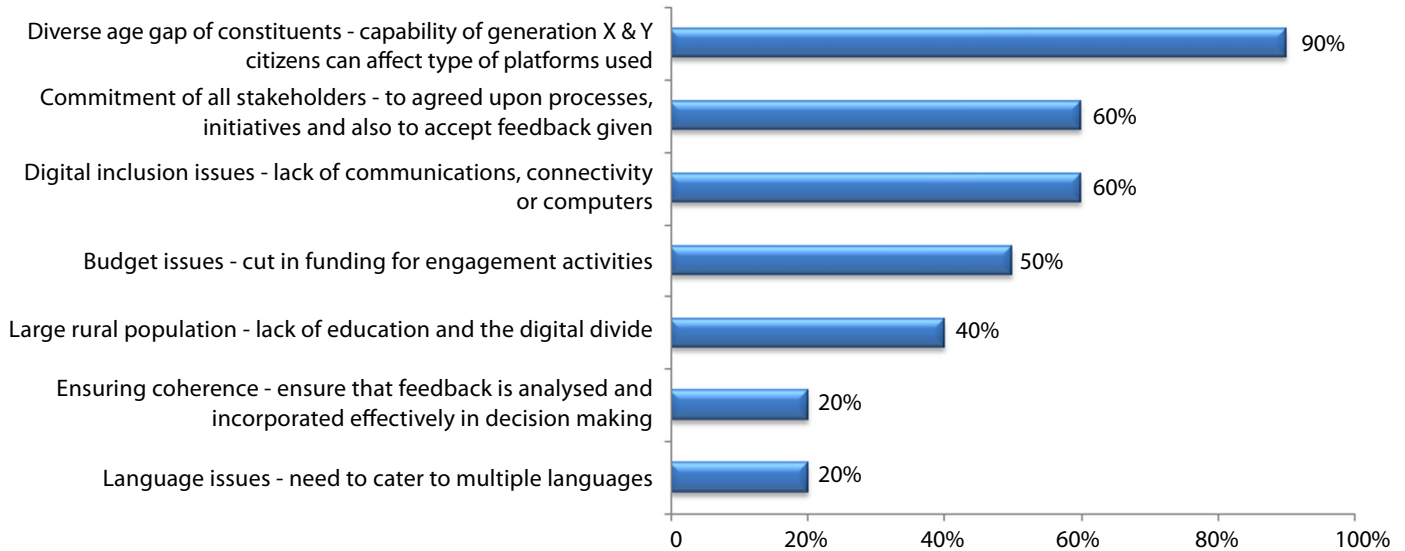
Digital inclusion also remains a key challenge in the e-engagement initiatives in the UK. The government is trying to leverage digital technologies to support citizen empowerment particularly by support for innovation in new technology around community and social media and debate.

Despite the number of examples for promoting more inclusive participation, the challenge on how to really strengthen the voices and engagement of vulnerable and marginalised groups remain. Who these groups are may differ from place to place. In some places exclusion may be based on income and class, in other places the focus is more on gender, or caste, or even on political affiliation. Whatever the group, the challenge of how to gain more inclusive participation in participatory governance processes remains strong.

The government, as mentioned earlier, however is trying out several initiatives to bridge the divide. For example: the Digital Dialogues project promoting dialogue between government and the public; the Building Democracy Innovation Fund supporting innovative community engagement; the creation of a programme for Digital Mentors, as announced in Communities in control, to enable local communities to make better use of social media; and, by the use of e-petitions for local government.

Government is exploring the Digital Mentors scheme in deprived areas. These mentors are meant to support groups to develop websites and podcasts and use digital photography and online publishing tools to develop short films and to improve general media literacy. The Digital Mentors is also aimed to create links with community and local broadcasters as part of their capacity building, to enable those who want to develop careers in the media to do so. Depending on the success of these pilots, this scheme could be rolled out to deprived areas across England, and will be a key to address the challenges of inclusiveness in the e-engagement initiatives.

Q: What are some of the key challenges that you face in implementing your e-engagement initiatives? ©FutureGov Research 2011



▶ Figure 8: Key Challenges to e-Engagement Initiatives

X. APPLICATIONS THAT CANNOT BE E-ENABLED

While we may know the types of applications on the various e-engagement platforms, we wanted to understand if there were any types of applications that did not lend themselves to be e-enabled.

Based on the various feedbacks, one of the types of applications mentioned were those that involved sensitive data that needed to be secured such as personally identifiable information or government financial information. In addition, those applications that required 'proof of identity' were also mentioned as one that could not be e-enabled (see table 1).

While there may be innovative solutions to overcome some of the concerns mentioned, they may come with too high a cost or add to the complexity of the citizen engagement process. For example, with the availability authentication protocols and devices, it would be possible to transact electronically in a relatively secure manner. This however will add a level of complexity (or inconvenience to the citizen), which may not be an acceptable solution to the respective government agencies.

One kind of application is one that requires either some form of physical verification or those that require a degree of personal interaction. An example cited was in the area of welfare benefits where it was important to not only prevent fraud but also more importantly ensure that the right person receives the relevant welfare benefits.

Another interesting area cited was one that required much effort from experts to achieve. This would indicate the process for exceptions was better managed with human intervention. Although there was only one such case cited, it was important to note that not all applications can be e-enabled and that it was important to discern between the two.

Table 1: Types of Applications that do not lend themselves to be e-Enabled

a. Fully adopted (Not looking at more e-enablement)

- Most of their applications are e-enabled
- Cannot think of anything
- None

b. Sensitive or secured applications

- Internal financial systems
- Secured networks, because there's no such thing as guaranteed security
- Those requiring proof of identity

c. Where some form of physical interaction required

- Physical verification of document submitted by customers
- Complex personal engagements for specific services where identity is essential along with intervention. Examples include welfare benefits assessments and child protection
- More likely the sending of some correspondences
- Those that require a personal touch e.g. exclusive engagements

d. Complex applications

- Only one which required much effort from experts

XI. KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

In order to ensure that its initiatives are successful, the UK government has to make sure that it successfully designs citizen engagement initiatives that meet the needs of their citizen constituents. Towards this end, we asked interviewees for some of their key success factors (KSF). An overwhelming majority of those interviewed (80%) said that user focus on the part of the policy formulators was the key to engagement successes so far.

Knowing what your 'customer' wants is critical to any engagement model, and in this case, know what citizens require has allowed the government to design the right engagement solutions that meet their constituents' needs effectively.

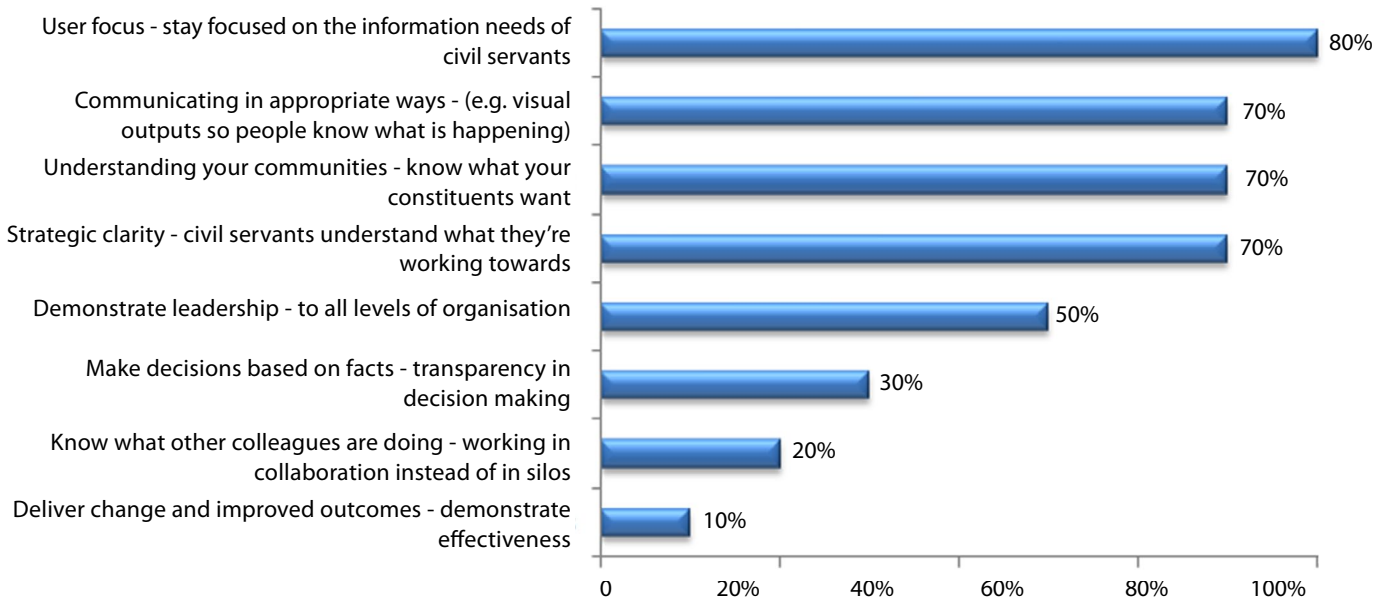
Strong user focus is underpinned by core values, such as honesty, inclusiveness, fairness and realism. In the UK, those councils that are succeeding in engaging users are committed to these and similar values and demonstrate them in their organisational behaviours and priorities. In Gateshead Council, councillors and staff have a shared goal – improving people's quality of life – and a focus on the needs of the customers in delivering services. This translates into the council's

priorities, which mirror those set out in the community strategy, developed through extensive consultation with residents and partners. In councils that are more successful in engaging users the council leadership also plays a key role. Westminster Council's leadership, for example, ensures that the customer is placed at the heart of the service delivery agenda. Both the leader and the chief executive share a strong vision – to provide quality services at an affordable cost and to engage and enthuse the whole community.

Some of the prime examples where councils are able to communicate with users in an appropriate ways are where the councils are using a combination of approaches that enable people to communicate with their council at a time and in a manner that suits them. North Lincolnshire uses a range of channels to identify issues that are important to local people. These include quality of life surveys, community/citizens' panels, service satisfaction surveys, their websites and surveys about specific issues. Those councils that are most successful at engaging users do not rely solely on traditional 'paper-based' methods of consultation and are always looking to develop their range of consultation channels.

Q: In your opinion, what are some of the key success factors in engaging citizens?

©FutureGov Research 2011



▶ Figure 9: Key Success Factors

XII. CONCLUSIONS

The British government during former Prime Minister Gordon Brown's tenure had outlined three steps to ensure the UK realizes the ambition to become a leader in the next stage of the digital revolution - digitise and improve the digital communications infrastructure; personalise service delivery and government interactions; and harness the power of technology to economise.

The impressive growth of citizen engagement platforms has truly extended beyond 10, Downing Street. The government is moving on a path to consolidate its multitude of web sites into three main portals (Directgov, BusinessLink and NHS Choices).

Reference:

1) *AUDIT COMMISSION REPORT*

WWW.AUDIT-COMMISSION.GOV.UK

2) *GOVERNMENT ICT STRATEGY: NEW WORLD, NEW CHALLENGES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES*

[HTTP://WWW.UKAUTHORITY.COM/NEWSARTICLE/TABID/64/DEFAULT.ASPX?ID=2646](http://WWW.UKAUTHORITY.COM/NEWSARTICLE/TABID/64/DEFAULT.ASPX?ID=2646)

3) *DATA.GO.UK*

[HTTP://DATA.GOV.UK/](http://DATA.GOV.UK/)

4) [HTTP://WWW.JUSTICE.GOV.UK/PUBLICATIONS/DOCS/CITIZEN_ENGAGEMENT.PDF](http://WWW.JUSTICE.GOV.UK/PUBLICATIONS/DOCS/CITIZEN_ENGAGEMENT.PDF)

I. INTRODUCTION

The Obama administration is striving to become one of the most open and transparent administration in U.S. history. Based on community organizing principles and practices and a high level of comfort with social media technologies, the administration is granting access to the White House in new and creative ways. Citizens are now being engaged through the Obama campaign apparatus to lobby Congress and promote the administration's agenda with the public; through the White House, citizens are being invited to ask questions and to vote on those questions deemed to be most important for the President to address; through departments and agencies, citizens are being convened for town hall meetings and community forums to give input on policy matters, and they are being invited to convene their own community forums to solicit stories and ideas related to different policy areas.

The moot point of the administration has been Public participation, Citizen empowerment, Transparency and Openness in government, which forms the basis of an open government.

Transparency promotes accountability by providing the public with information about what the government is doing. Participation allows members of the public to contribute ideas and expertise so that their government can make policies with the benefit of information that is widely dispersed in society. Collaboration improves the effectiveness of government by encouraging partnerships and cooperation within the Federal government, across levels of government, and between the government and private institutions.

The administration has also experimented with social and internet technologies to engage citizens with the White House, with Congress, or with each other. For instance, the Administration has twice utilized a process of co-production of citizen participation. In other words, the Administration has asked volunteer citizens to convene community forums at a time and place of their choosing. Volunteer conveners received discussion questions but were otherwise left on their own with the only request being that they report on the discussions to the Administration. In December 2008, during the transition from the Bush to Obama Administration, citizens were asked to convene health care community forums. More than 3200 such forums were convened around the country, and the Department of Health and Human Services issued a report several months later providing a thorough analysis of the information they received. This process was repeated in December 2009, when the Administration asked citizens to convene community forums on the issue of jobs creation.

In addition to these social technologies, the Administration has utilized internet media and technology in various ways. Early in the Administration's tenure, officials facilitated an electronic town hall meeting (see <http://www.whitehouse.gov/openforquestions>). Citizens were invited to submit questions electronically that they wanted President Obama to answer during the town hall. Empowering citizens to decide which questions should be answered in the limited time of the town hall meeting, the President agreed to answer the questions receiving the most votes by citizens on an interactive website. More than 100,000 questions were submitted and 1.5 million votes cast.

Examples of Web 2.0 in the US

- The U.S. Department of Defence's lead intelligence agency is using wikis, blogs, RSS feeds and enterprise "mashups" to help its analysts collaborate better.
- During the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, traditional technologies were applied to mitigating the damage, like dispersants or floating booms to protect fragile wetlands. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is tracking the oil spill and NASA satellites are tracking the slick. Also, NOAA launched a website with near-real-time information about the response to the Deepwater Horizon BP oil spill. The site, GeoPlatform.gov features data on the oil spill's path, fishery closed areas, wildlife and place-based Gulf Coast resources such as pinpointed locations of oiled shoreline and daily positions of research ships, into one customizable interactive map powered by Google. The launch of GeoPlatform.gov is aimed at providing communication and coordination among a variety of users, including federal, state and local responders to local community leaders and the public. This Web site provides users with an expansive, yet detailed geographic picture of what's going on with the spill; Gulf Coast fisherman, recreational boaters, beach users and birders are able to become more informed.
- The Severe Weather Data Inventory (SWDI) at NOAA's National Climatic Data Centre (NCDC) provides users access to archives of several datasets critical to the detection and evaluation of severe weather. These datasets include:
 - NEXRAD Level-III point features describing general storm structure, hail, mesocyclone and tornado signatures
 - National Weather Service Local Storm Reports collected from storm spotters
 - National Weather Service Warnings
 - Lightning strikes from Vaisala's National Lightning Detection Network (NLDN)

- However, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), also used its existing social media muscle to communicate how it is monitoring and responding to potential public health and environmental concerns. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson shared news and her observations on Twitter as @LisaPJackson and on her Facebook page. The agency set up a website, deepwaterhorizonresponse.com, with a dedicated Twitter account at @Oil_Spill_2010 and on Facebook at Deepwater Horizon Response. Following the principles set out by the Obama administration's Open Government Directive, the EPA is releasing oil spill data it collects from monitoring in open formats.
- Emergency management agencies like the Federal Emergency Management Agency (@FEMAinFocus) or state first responders like the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (@VDEM) are already on Twitter, sharing information during crises. Now, the National Weather Service (NWS) is experimenting with getting information back from the online community. Government storm spotters are now searching for geolocated tweets that contain "significant" weather information. Although Twitter storm reporting is still an experimental effort, there's evidence that the NWS believes this will be valuable, as indicated by their statement that "access to information from this widely used social media tool will help to enhance and increase timely and accurate online weather reporting and communication between the public and their local forecast offices."
- First Lady Michelle Obama has taken on the issue of childhood obesity with a "Let's Move" campaign. The Department of Agriculture is doing more than spreading information through its @USDAgov Twitter account or Facebook.
- San Francisco and the District of Columbia have joined hands on Open 311. Open 311 is a standard for citizens to communicate with their local governments. For instance, SeeClickFix integrates with Open 311 to communicate service requests directly into a city customer relationship management (CRM) system by reporting issues through the Web, widgets or smartphone applications. Citysourced is also using Open311. Now that D.C. and San Francisco have standardized on the API, developers across the nation can create applications that will work in any city that uses Open 311. That means citizens will be able to tell their governments what's happening where they live, participating in improving their own communities.
- In May 2009, the Administration launched Data.gov, a website that makes economic, health care, environmental, and other information available in multiple electronic formats, allowing the public access to more government information online than ever before. Data.gov also offers access to handy software tools, such as one for tracking performance of flights. Having a website where agencies can make their information available is helping to make transparency real in practice as well as in principle.

- President Obama's promise to increase government transparency through technology has come to fruition in the following ways:
 - o A revamped Whitehouse.gov has an issues tab that allows citizens to track progress made on each major issue facing the country. The site features Obama's weekly YouTube video address.
 - o His staff updates a blog.
 - o People can subscribe via RSS to ensure they don't miss an important piece of content.
 - o People can bookmark posts on Whitehouse.gov to their favourite social networks, including Facebook, Twitter and MySpace.
 - o The administration launched recovery.org to help citizens track where the government spends and allocates their tax dollars. They can also report abuses they see in the spending of government funds.
- However, all of these initiatives have lacked one characteristic that only a site like Facebook can address: the ability to make information social by providing tools that instantly enable users to publish their thoughts on critical issues. On Whitehouse.org, users cannot comment on posts. Instead, they find themselves directed to the "contact us" form.
- Facebook, on the other hand, has created a two-way conversation. As an example, the most current blog post on Whitehouse.org is posted on the Facebook public profile, where it enjoys many comments.
- President Obama's efforts to utilize Facebook to improve government transparency and communicate with citizens are welcome, but the administration should be more aggressive and original in its efforts. As of now, the Facebook page merely republishes information posted to Whitehouse.gov.
- The administration should post more content that is original to Facebook, giving users added incentive to visit the page. Finally, the profile page is too faceless. While it is not expected that the president will comment on every item posted to the page, the members of his staff should make efforts to participate in the conversations occurring there. Their names and faces should be front and centre, letting citizens know the new government hears their opinions and will respond to them.
- The enthusiasm of public agencies, public servants and the public themselves are all necessary for Government 2.0 to take root. In this aspect, the US is well placed with active support from the government to engage more closely with its citizens.

II. DRIVERS

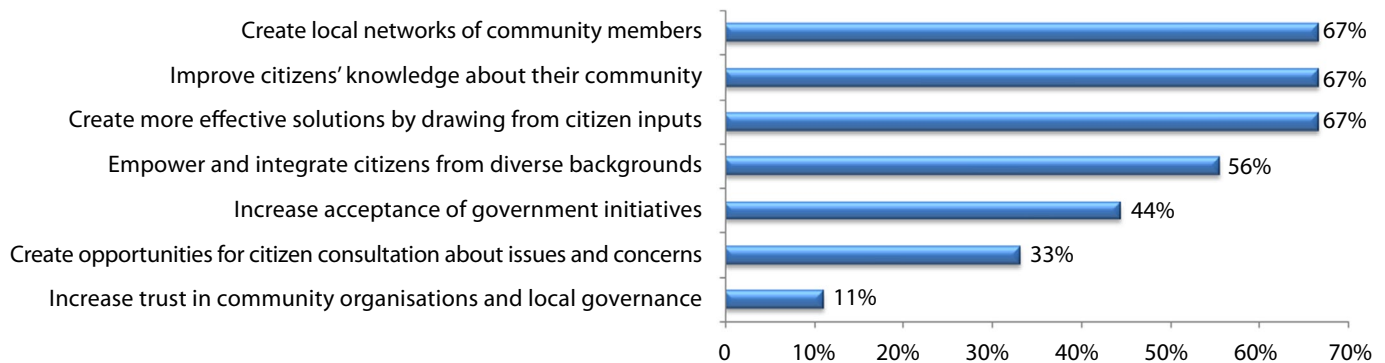
As part of this study, we interviewed 9 senior public sector officials (including Directors, Chief Executives and Assistant Commissioners) from the US administration who have been instrumental in leading citizen engagement initiatives in the country. We asked about the drivers for citizen engagement and as can be seen in figure 1 below, a majority 67% of the respondents each mentioned that the main drivers are to create a local network of community members, improve citizen's knowledge about their community and to create more effective solutions drawing from citizen inputs.

This amplifies the fact that the Obama administration is committed to an inclusive government governed by the principles of transparency, collaboration and openness. On the other hand, 63% of the respondents mentioned that increase acceptance of government initiatives were their top reason for engaging with the citizens.

It is also important to integrate citizens from different backgrounds so that they can gain greater control over their lives and their community. It has been said that when people from diverse parts of a community come together, they often find that they share more in common than they realise.

Q: What are the key reasons for engaging citizens?

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▶ Figure 1: Key Reasons for Engaging Citizens

III. KEY PRACTICES

In the interviews, we also asked the government officials about their practices when designing citizen engagement initiatives. We wanted to understand the principles that were most important to them and how they applied these principles.

The American society is a milieu of diverse people comprising of various cultures, race and language. As such, engagement is increasingly being considered in policy development, program planning and service delivery. Several major initiatives have been put in place to mediate communication between government and community members.

From the responses in figure 2 below, we find that, while all the principles of citizen engagement were equally important, the ones that stood out overall were transparency and equality.

There are two levels of transparency that we can see here, one at the local community level and the other at the government level. We are all familiar with the demands from citizens for greater transparency and accountability of their elected officials and this extends across all levels from those who set policies to those on the ground who come face to face with constituents. This latter group of people may not be elected by constituents but nevertheless are seen to represent the elected government. These are the government officials who often operate within their own silos and it is important that they are seen to be in-line with what is being demanded by citizens of their political masters.

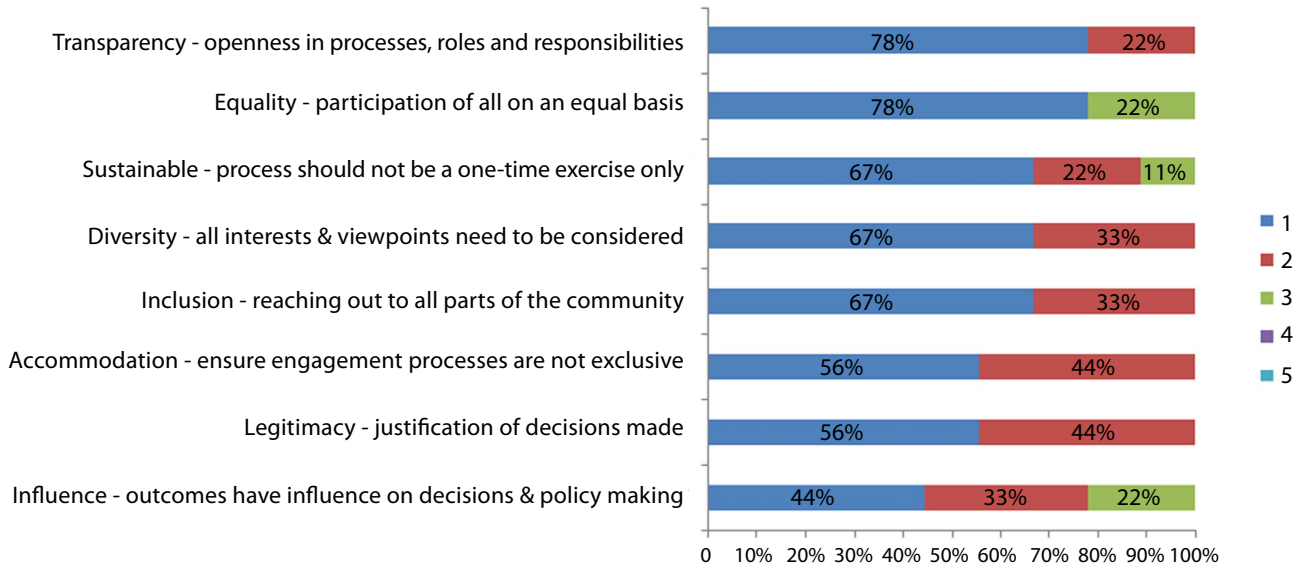
The administration has provided unprecedented visibility into the expenditure of taxpayer dollars by visualizing the investments and impact of stimulus dollars (Recovery gov), general expenditures (USAspending gov), and IT budgets (IT USAspending gov) in easy-to-understand “dashboards.” The Administration has empowered agencies and the public to spot, and halt, wasteful projects.

Under the Obama administration, agencies are publishing data to drive entrepreneurship and economic growth, increasing access to small business grants and licensing opportunities and connecting entrepreneurs to useful resources and to one another via Entrepreneurship gov and Business gov.

The administration is also making available “high-value” data that helps promote national priorities. When the Department of Agriculture makes nutritional information available, parents can plan smarter meals for their families. When the Department of Transportation makes information on the status and causes of airport delays available, travellers, and those waiting for them, can better plan their work and play. When the Department of Labour makes safety information available, employers can better protect their workers.

Inspired by the President’s call for more open government, agencies are formulating plans to across the various parts of the country to create more open and transparent society.

Q: Please rank the following principles when designing your citizen engagement platforms? ©FutureGov Research 2011 (Rank on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1= Most Important and 5=Least important)



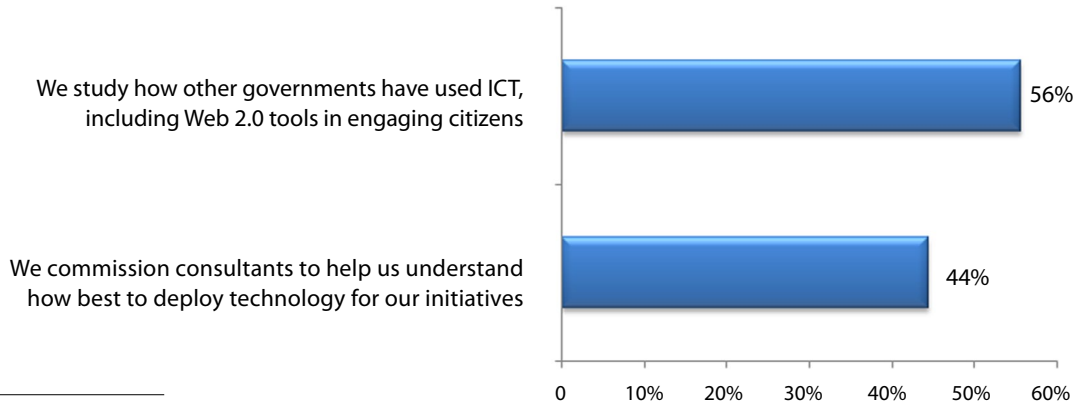
▶ Figure 2: Principles for Designing Citizen Engagement Platform

IV. IDENTIFYING ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES AND EFFECTIVENESS OF TYPES OF PLATFORMS

When asked about the how they would identify and design their citizen engagement initiatives, a majority of our respondents said that they would study how other government have done so using ICT followed by engaging consultants to advise them on how best to deploy technology (see figure 3 below). It is common to hear many government officials say that they do not wish to be 'market leaders' when it pertains to the deployment of new technologies in government services and this finding validates this understanding, and this is also true for an advanced government like the US.

The use of consultants is often another route that most governments use in understanding the latest trends in technology and how best to deploy these technologies for their initiatives. It is no different in the area of citizen engagement initiatives where it is often an effective means of adopting "best practices" of how such initiatives can be technology enabled through learning from those who have actually consulted or implemented similar initiatives for other governments.

Q: How do you identify and design your citizen engagement initiatives? ©FutureGov Research 2011



▶ Figure 3: Identifying Citizen Engagement Initiatives

V. EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMON CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT PLATFORMS

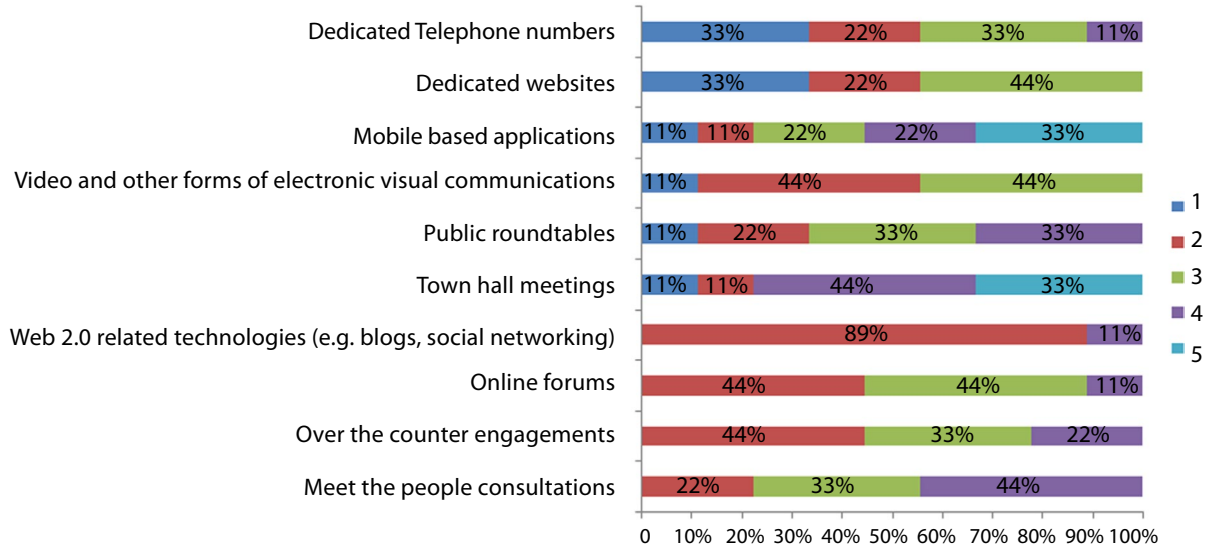
In the interviews, we asked the government officials to rank the relative effectiveness of each of the common citizen engagement platforms as seen in figure 4 below. Based on the responses,

Web 2.0 related technologies has emerged as the most potent indicating that the uptake of social media tools unlike in other countries surveyed, is more acceptable and understood in the right context. This is indicative of the advancements the American society has made when it comes to using technology. This also indicates the massive penetration of broadband services in the country.

However, a certain section (33%) also said having dedicated telephone numbers also most important, which suggests that a certain segment typically prefer to find out information for themselves and only when they want to, contact the government directly without any fuss. The website / telephone combination serves this model well. The availability of a dedicated telephone line also indicates that citizens expect to be able to contact the government and obtain services when they want and not have to wait for someone to respond (as in writing in via email).

Greater access to information about how the government does its work, drives greater citizen participation. This administration's commitment to public participation is based on the simple notion that many of the best ideas come from outside of Washington.

Q: Please rank the effectiveness of the following common citizen engagement platforms. ©FutureGov Research 2011 (rank on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = most important and 5 = least important)



▶ Figure 4: Effectiveness of Common Citizen Engagement Platforms

VI. E-ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

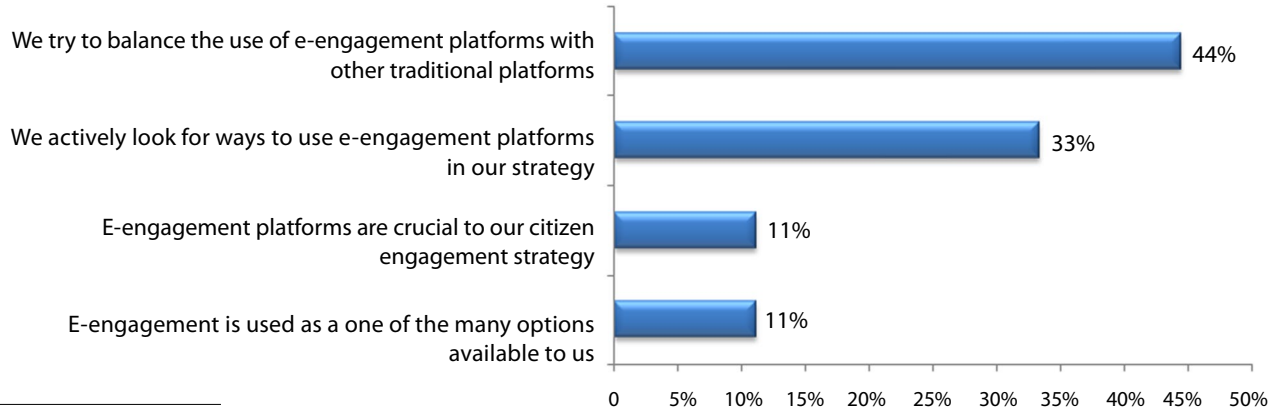
In trying to understand the approach to using an e-engagement platform as opposed to traditional approaches, we asked how e-engagement initiatives were prioritised. Interestingly, a majority said that they try to “balance the use of e-engagement platforms with other traditional platforms” (see figure 5). This suggests that even though the American society is more akin to the uptake of technology usage, yet the government is sensitive enough to also consider the sensibilities of those who are not tech savvy and devise plans accordingly, keeping the sensibilities of all concerned.

The administration’s most ambitious initiative toward a more accountable government is the Open Government Directive released by the White House Office of Management and Budget in December 2009. This policy guidance, called for by President Obama in his first executive memorandum, is designed to intertwine accountability and accessibility into government institutions. It is the product of an unprecedented outreach effort to tap the public’s ideas for what the Directive should include.

First, the directive instructs agencies to provide information to the public online in open, accessible, machine-readable formats. Agencies are required to develop a timeline for publishing new, high-value information that will increase agency accountability and responsiveness; improve public knowledge of the agency and its operations; further the core mission of the agency; create economic opportunity; or respond to need and demand as identified through public consultation.

This is directly responsive to what the administration heard consistently from the public and government workers.

Q: Which statement best describes how you prioritise your e-engagement initiatives?©FutureGov
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▶ Figure 5: Preferred E-Engagement Approach

VII. WEB2.0 TECHNOLOGIES

Understanding how Web 2.0 is being deployed for e-engagement the US, we wanted to know which particular technologies were used. In response, two main technologies were highlighted and these were social networking and micro-blogs (see figure 6).

The use of microblogs and social networks for e-engagement should not be surprising given its popularity and reach across a large section of the population. It also indicates a greater focus on interactivity especially in engaging the younger and IT savvy segment of the population.

While blogs were previously seen as a key tool for engaging citizens, and continue to be used, this appears to have been superseded by the use of social networks as the preferred e-engagement tool of choice.

Some of the other tools mentioned include the use of Web TV and business intelligence. It is interesting to note that while both are not as popular; there is increasing interest in the use of Web TV with a number of government agencies looking to develop their own government you-tube equivalent networks.

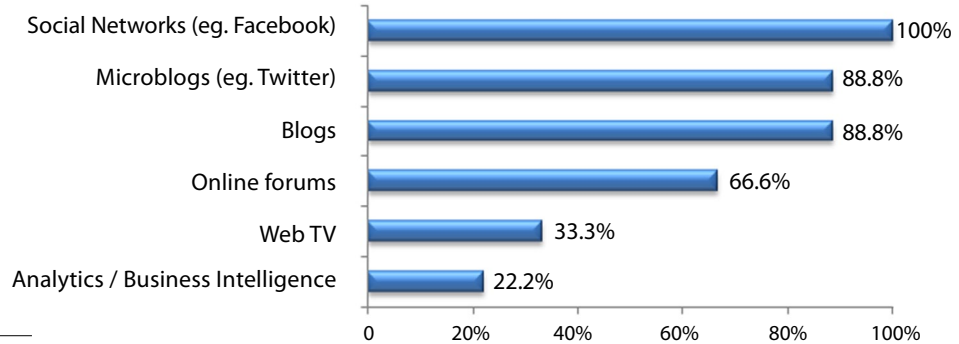
The administration has already taken rapid steps in opening up to technological innovation. In his first full day in office, Obama signed an Executive Order calling for all departments and agencies to “establish a system of transparency, public participation and collaboration.” At the same time, White House lawyers, working with other federal agencies, have sought to create new “terms of use” agreements with private companies that will allow government to sign up for social networks like MySpace, YouTube and Facebook as if they were just another person.

At present, government lawyers have drafted agreements with ten private social-networking companies, and six other private-sector products, including iTunes, are being considered for further expansion. More details can be found here:

https://forum.webcontent.gov/?page=TOS_agreements

Q: Which Web2.0 technologies had the greatest impact in e-engagement to date?

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▶ Figure 6: Preferred Web 2.0 Technologies

VIII. MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF E-ENGAGEMENT

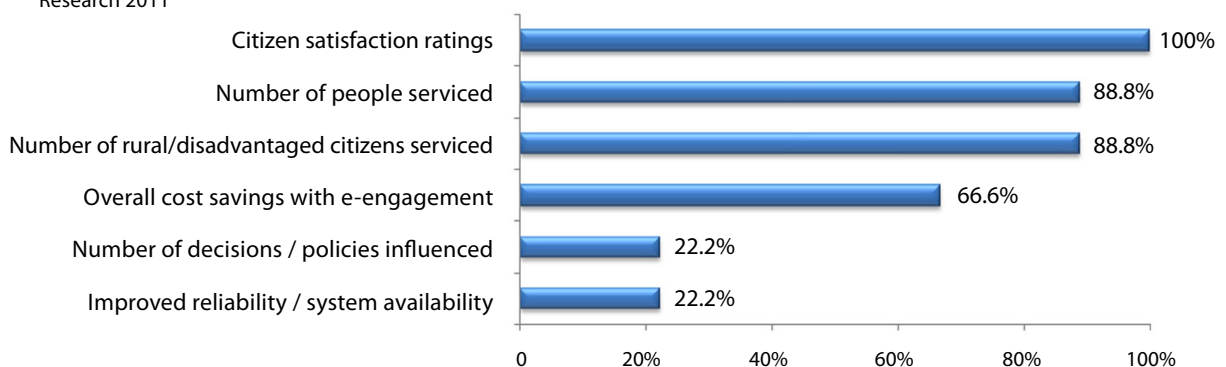
Knowing which tools are being used and understanding the relative benefits between its uses over traditional tools, we wanted to know how its effectiveness was being measured. Not surprisingly, given the priority of the government towards a more open and inclusive society, citizen satisfaction ratings is one of the most important yardstick to measure the effects given that we are all just recovering from a major economic downturn, the effectiveness is measured by the overall cost savings managed with e-engagement. (see figure 7).

Also, since the government is keen to reach out to the whole society – even the marginalised section – the number of people serviced is another key criteria to measure the effectiveness of the engagement on the part of the government.

However, with the government just coming out of the economic slump, overall cost savings with e-engagement is also of much importance when measuring the effectiveness of the engagement model.

This is in line with what we know of governments over the past few years having been asked to do more with less budgets, where managing costs is a key business priority.

Q: How do you measure the effectiveness of e-engagement initiatives? ©FutureGov Research 2011



▶ Figure 7: Measuring the Effectiveness of e-Engagement

IX. CHALLENGES

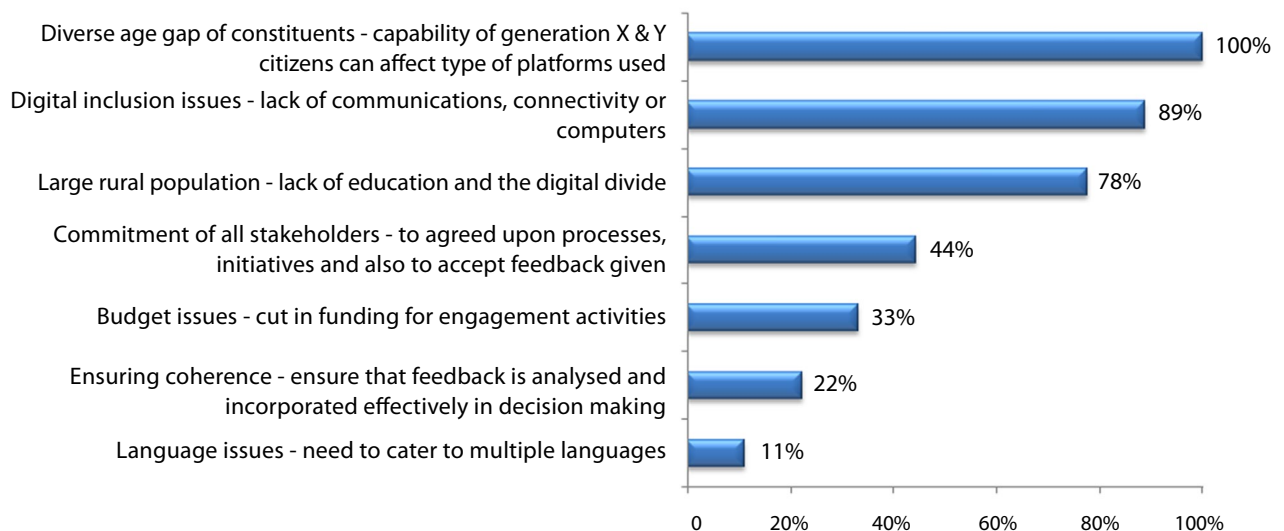
In attempting to understand the impediments faced when looking to implement e-engagement initiatives in the US, we asked interviewees about the challenges that they faced. A majority of the respondent (100%) said the generation gap was their main challenge, where the different capabilities of those from generation X and Y meant that careful consideration of the different types of e-engagement platforms was needed.

89% of the respondents also said that the key challenge was to include all sections of the society digitally. Despite the advancements made in the country – digital divide is still an issue with a fair section of the society still being deprived of connectivity and computers. Disparities in digital access, especially among the less educated and poor, contribute to the alienation, and possible disenfranchisement, which the administration is seeking to address.

While, the government is keen to include all the sections towards its endeavour to a more open society, there remains some work to be done until the goal of open, inclusive society is achieved.

A “commitment from all stakeholders to agreed-upon processes, initiatives and to accept feedback given” was another key challenge raised. This is a well know and perennial issue and the US is no different. The use of IT technology is often seen as a means to overcome the lack of collaboration between departments and agencies.

Q: What are some of the key challenges that you face in implementing your e-engagement initiatives? ©FutureGov Research 2011



▶ Figure 8: Key Challenges to e-Engagement Initiatives

X. APPLICATIONS THAT CANNOT BE E-ENABLED

While we may know the types of applications on the various e-engagement platforms, we wanted to understand if there were any types of applications that did not lend themselves to be e-enabled.

Based on the feedback, one of the types of applications mentioned were those that involved sensitive data that needed to be secured such as personally identifiable information or government financial information. In addition, those applications that required 'proof of identity' were also mentioned as one that could not be e-enabled (see table 1).

While there may be innovative solutions to overcome some of the concerns mentioned, they may come with too high a cost or add to the complexity of the citizen engagement process. For example, with the availability authentication protocols and devices, it would be possible to transact electronically in a relatively secure manner. This however will add a level of complexity (or inconvenience to the citizen), which may not be an acceptable solution to the respective government agencies.

One kind of application is one that requires either some form of physical verification or those that require a degree of personal interaction. An example cited was in the area of welfare benefits where it was important to not only prevent fraud but also more importantly ensure that the right person receives the relevant welfare benefits.

Table 1: Types of Applications that do not lend themselves to be e-Enabled

a. Fully adopted (Not looking at more e-enablement)

- Most of their applications are e-enabled
- Cannot think of anything
- None

b. Sensitive or secured applications

- Internal financial systems
- Secured networks, because there's no such thing as guaranteed security
- Those requiring proof of identity

c. Where some form of physical interaction required

- Physical verification of document submitted by customers
- Complex personal engagements for specific services where identity is essential along with intervention. Examples include welfare benefits assessments and child protection
- More likely the sending of some correspondences
- Those that require a personal touch e.g. exclusive engagements

d. Complex applications

- Only one which required much effort from experts

XI. KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

In order to ensure that its initiatives are successful, the US government has to make sure that it successfully designs citizen engagement initiatives that meet the needs of their citizen constituents. Towards this end, we asked interviewees for some of their key success factors (KSF). An overwhelming majority of those interviewed (100%) the two key success factors were to stay focused (user focus – on information needs of civil servants) and understanding the communities (know what your constituents want). The first KSF highlights the importance for civil servants to have available to them the right information at the right time when dealing with citizens. The KSFs reduce the number of interaction and touch points needed to satisfy the citizen and enables them to service citizens in an efficient manner.

88% of the respondents said the second KSF was effective communication – communicating in appropriate ways (e.g. visual outputs) (see figure 9).

It is universally acknowledged that if any system is too complicated to use, it will not be readily adopted. This is the crux of the issue where citizens will want to communicate with their government when they want to in a convenient and effective manner.

Q: In your opinion, what are some of the key success factors in engaging citizens?

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▶ Figure 9: Key Success Factors

XII. CONCLUSIONS

The White House directive for a more open and transparent administration is gaining ground in the US. In recent months, both the Department of Energy and the Department of Housing and Urban Development have opened up employee access to social-networking tools. The Defence Department has also been going online, with a new Air Force Twitter page and a Facebook page.

Thus, the entire exercise of making the government social-network-friendly is still in its infancy. As it stands, the government controls about 24,000 websites but is only beginning to utilize the social-networking sites on which citizens are spending an increasing amount of their time. Yet the historic bureaucratic resistance to adapting to new media has clearly begun to fade.

According to Bev Godwin, Director of Online Resources and Interagency Development at the White House, there will be a huge increase in use across the government of social-networking tools.

If the online world is becoming the central destination for sharing, exchanging, and formulating opinions on issues that improve the nation, all people need to be involved in the conversation. Promoting ubiquitous access and broadband adoption for all citizens thus must be a priority for the administration in order to ensure that a new information divide does not emerge as the next civil rights issue for marginalized groups.

Gaining the maximum amount of diversity of background and opinion is also critical to positioning the Internet as the future of civic engagement, if the vision of the Obama administration of a more opens, transparent and inclusive society is to be achieved.

The initial steps have already been taken to incorporate the e-engagement dialogues into tangible policy making decisions.

From February 6, 2010 to March 19, 2010, the US General Service Administration (GSA) conducted an online discussion where federal employees and the public had a conversation about open government at GSA. The goal of this dialogue was to collect information on three main topics: 1. public input into the creation of this Open Government Plan; 2. proposed data sets to be published by GSA; and 3. data that should be on a Web site.

Using the online tool IdeaScale, users went to <https://opengsa.ideascale.com/> where they could peruse ideas and comments or register to share ideas, comment on existing ideas, and vote on ideas.

At the end of the six weeks, 74 ideas had been posted by 52 people. The 256 registered users submitted 132 comments and cast 446 votes. These were postings not moderated, although moderators were assigned to ensure that ideas and comments did not violate the terms of participation. Moderator also solicited feedback from visitors and sent ideas and comments to GSA service offices for comments and/or actions. They did not edit the ideas in any way.

Many ideas and comments focused on broad, theoretical items that did not lend themselves to immediate action. However, 11 ideas were subject to immediate action. These ideas were sent to service and staff offices with the request that they act immediately to implement this idea or explain why that would not be feasible.

The 11 ideas can be seen here: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104267>

Reference

- 1) [HTTP://WWW.USA.GOV/TOPICS/MULTIMEDIA.SHTML](http://www.usa.gov/topics/multimedia.shtml)
- 2) [WWW.USA.GOV](http://www.usa.gov)
- 3) [WWW.GSA.GOV](http://www.gsa.gov)
- 4) [HTTP://WWW.WHITEHOUSE.GOV/BLOG/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/)

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