

Governments in the US are using a variety of methods to find out what citizens want from e-government services. Different methods generate different kinds of results, with different levels of reliability. The Center for Technology in Government at the University at Albany is conducting current practice research into several areas of e-government. One practice that we are investigating is how governments solicit input from citizens. This first report from our study relies mostly on responses to an e-mail posting to the member listserv of the National Association of State Information Resource Executives (NASIRE). NASIRE represents state chief information officers and information resource executives and managers from the 50 states, six U. S. territories, and the District of Columbia. We supplemented this source by contacting other states directly. In both cases we asked, "Who is asking citizens what services government should provide electronically?" and "What do citizens say they want?"

Overall, we received information from 14 states, four nonprofit organizations, and three private sector companies. The responses included information about particular e-government initiatives and references to various articles, reports and surveys, as well as general knowledge about these questions. Three states said they are in the process of conducting surveys or analyzing results and promised to share them as soon as they are available.

These efforts are being conducted in a variety of ways, with different levels of formality and statistical reliability. A few are professionally designed public opinion surveys with random selection of respondents and formal statistical analyses. Others are informal efforts that ask citizens who visit state Web sites what they think about e-government services. Another kind of effort invites people to attend events where they discuss their needs and opinions.

The professional and informal surveys tend to offer respondents a fixed list of potential e- government services, and the same choices tend to be included from place to place. In response to these surveys, driver's licenses and voter registration usually top the list of desired e-services. The discussion method offers greater opportunity to explore ideas from different points of view and in more depth and therefore tend to generate longer lists of potential e- services that are tied to life events or areas of economic activity.