

More local governments in Michigan using data to make decisions amid fiscal crisis

June 21 2012, by William Foreman

Just over two-thirds of Michigan's local governments say they use "data-driven decision making" as they try to cut costs and boost efficiency amid tough economic times, a new University of Michigan survey reports.

Local governments collect and analyze a wide range of data on their operations and [costs](#). Examples include emergency response times, comparative employee wages and the amount of [trash](#) collected. This information is used to help make better-informed decisions about budgets, policy and management.

The survey from U-M's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy reports that 68 percent of Michigan's local governments say they use data for decision making in some fashion. Just under one-third (29 percent) said they do not use data in any significant way.

The use of performance data is growing, with 36 percent of these [local governments](#) reporting that their jurisdictions began using data within the last five years, according to the survey—part of the Michigan Public Policy Survey series by the Ford School's Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy.

Other key findings include:

- Most jurisdictions (70 percent) that use data do so on an ad hoc basis, rather than a systematic or formal basis, while nearly a quarter (24

percent) say they collect and use data as part of a formal performance-measurement and management program.

- Large percentages of those who use data believe the efforts are effective for a wide range of purposes, especially for guiding budget decisions (88 percent) and identifying cost savings or program efficiencies (83 percent).
- For those who do not use performance data, one of the biggest perceived barriers is the expected costs related to data use. However, few jurisdictions that do use data today say that costs have been a significant problem.

The poll was conducted from Oct 3 to Nov. 23, 2011, and involved online and hardcopy surveys sent to the top elected and appointed officials in all counties, cities, villages and townships in Michigan. A total of 1,330 jurisdictions returned valid surveys, resulting in a 72 percent response rate. The margin of error was plus or minus 1.43 percentage points.

The report is available online at closup.umich.edu .

Provided by University of Michigan

Citation: More local governments in Michigan using data to make decisions amid fiscal crisis (2012, June 21) retrieved 10 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-06-local-michigan-decisions-fiscal-crisis.html>

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