

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

THE FUTURE OF TECHNOLOGY IN LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES: A STUDY OF NEW JERSEY E-GOVERNMENT PRACTICES AND TRENDS

By Tony J. Carrizales

This research empirically studies the future of e-government in local municipalities. Unlike previous research, the focus here is municipal managers' perceptions and expectations of e-government. The majority of e-government research has focused on highly populated cities. Moreover, e-government research has been restricted to surveying current practices. This study adds to the growing research and literature of e-government by surveying municipal managers in cities and towns with populations less than 50,000 residents, and focusing on the managers' expectations for the use of information and communication technologies in their municipalities.

The following research question is addressed: in what direction is e-government headed in U.S. municipalities? The study employs the following research methods: an analysis of an existing database of e-government practices, a content analysis of municipal strategic plans, and a survey of municipal managers. The 2004 ICMA e-government survey supports our overall findings that New Jersey municipalities are predominantly in the earliest stages of development of e-government. The content analysis of strategic plans highlights various factors that influence e-government development, especially the availability of financial resources. The most significant findings are derived from the survey of New Jersey municipal managers. With a response

rate of 50%, the survey highlights how advanced developments of e-government are not practiced in municipalities with fewer than 50,000 residents. This study also takes a different approach in its analysis of e-government, utilizing a framework based on four broad, but distinct, e-government functions: e-organization, e-services, e-partnering, and e-democracy. The overall findings suggest that in the future e-government should expect advanced developments in e-organization and e-services. Moreover, the use of technology for the functions of e-partnering and e-democracy are currently in their earliest stages of development. The future of e-government is dependent on organizational factors of influence, such as IT departments, strategic planning and financial resources. However, it has become clear that having managerial support for specific functions of e-government is critical for its development. This study provides an additional method for the study of e-government, an area of research that will require constant reexamination in order to keep pace with the evolution of technology.