

### **Social Media Tools: Limited Use in Policy or Planning by Municipal Managers**

A 2012 survey<sup>1</sup> of municipal managers from five hundred randomly selected municipalities throughout the United States found that nearly 28% of municipal managers responded that social media tools were not used for input on policy or planning in their municipalities, but those that did report use had an average of nearly three tools used for input on policy or planning. Of the social media tools named as used for policy or planning, Facebook was the most commonly cited.

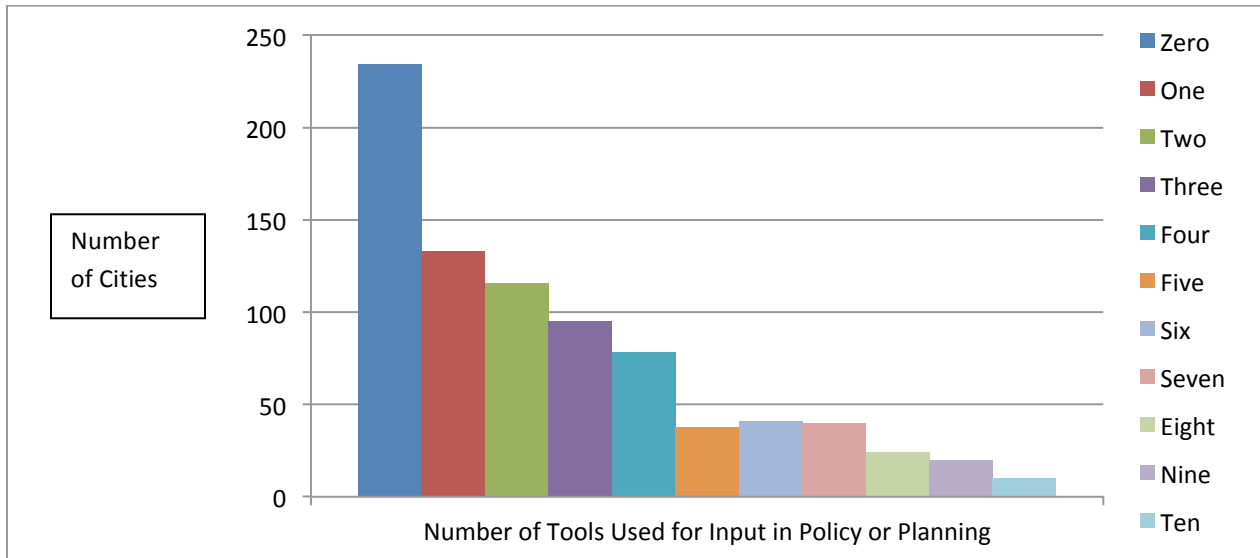
The survey of municipal managers was conducted by Dr. Mary K. Feeney, Dr. Eric W. Welch and Dr. Megan K. Haller of the University of Illinois at Chicago with funding from the Institute for Policy and Civic Engagement. The survey collected responses from municipal managers in five departments (mayor's office, community/economic development, finance, police and parks and recreation) concerning civic engagement and technology use in municipal governments within the United States. As part of the technology use questions, municipal managers were asked if their cities used social media tools for any purpose, and if the answer was yes, the managers were further asked to name the social media tools that were used. Within a series of questions regarding technology use, managers were asked which of their named social media tools were used for input on planning or policy.

Of the 845 responses to the survey that were received, nearly 28% of the municipal managers reported no social media tools were used for input in planning or policy, with nearly 16% reporting just one social media tool used for this purpose. An additional 14% reported two tools used, while 11% reported use of three tools for input in planning or policy. The chart illustrates the sharp drop in social media tools used for input in planning or policy after four

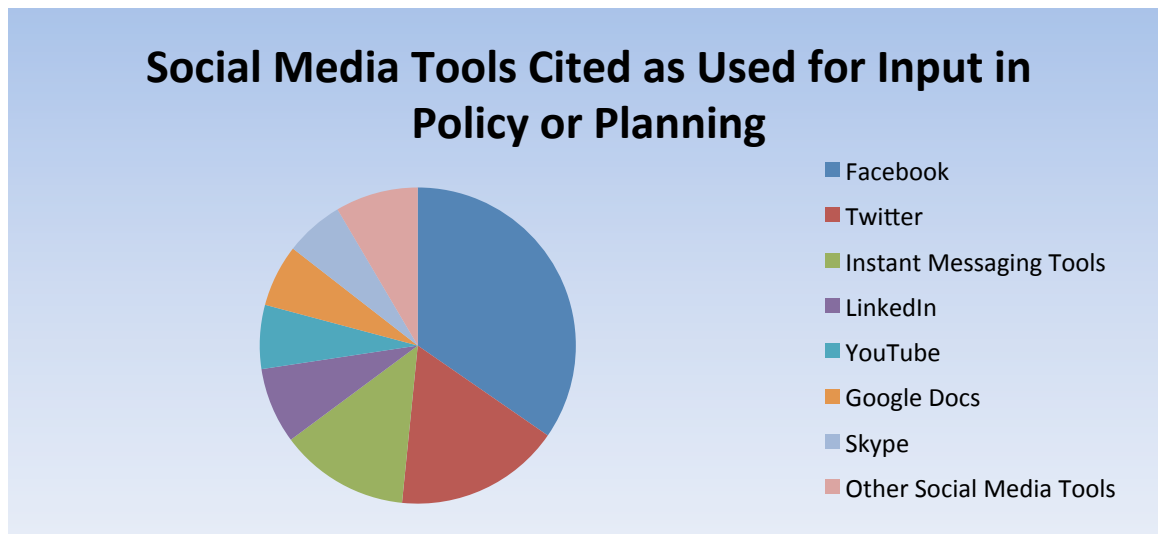
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<sup>1</sup> Feeney, M. K., Welch, E. W., & Haller, M. (2012). *Survey of Local Governments: A Study of E-Government and Civic Engagement*.

tools, with a gradually diminishing number of tools named. The average number of tools used for input in policy and planning was nearly three tools.



Of the social network tools named by municipal managers as used for input on policy and planning, the 2:1 winner was Facebook, with 196 municipal managers citing its use. Twitter was the second most popular with 96 municipal managers citing use, with Instant Messaging Tools such as Google Talk, Blackberry Messenger and MSN Messenger coming in third, with 75 municipal managers citing use. Other tools named were LinkedIn at 44 responses, YouTube with 37 responses, Google Docs with 36 responses and Skype with 34 responses. Other social media tools mentioned include Nixle, Gov Loop, MySpace and Flickr and these collectively received 48 responses.



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