

eTransparency Survey

Today there is an expectation that information will be readily available on the internet. When this is true of the information related to our government, it facilitates citizen involvement, and can provide confidence that our elected and appointed officials are making decisions in the public interest.

We have reviewed the information available on the internet related to the governance of many of our local elected and appointed public bodies. This review was structured to identify those providing the best information needed for the public to understand and participate in the democratic process. The review was not intended to be comprehensive or evaluate how well websites meet the day-to-day needs of that government's constituents.

Statement of Position on the Citizen's Right to Know/Citizen Participation, as Announced by National Board, June 1984:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation at all levels of government. The League further believes that governmental bodies must protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible.

Our Goals

- To evaluate websites in the context of a citizen's right to know about the decision making process as it impacts their lives and communities.
 - who makes decisions (board info)
 - how and when the decisions will be made (board meetings, agendas, policies)
 - how one can access information that influences those decisions (FOIA)
 - how public money is collected and spent (budget)
- To review for transparency best practices rather than minimum standards set by state law.
- To show which government bodies are doing a good job and which need improvement.

Overview of the Process

A group of local volunteers that have experience as elected and appointed officials, government staff, and community activists designed a survey of the information they felt should be readily available on the optimal public website. They did this with a novice member of the public in mind, perhaps someone wishing to weigh in on an issue of concern for the first time: when and where are the meetings, who is on the board/council, what will be discussed, how can I participate, how do I get more details?

Information the volunteers felt all governments should publish was identified: budgets and proposed

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budgets, financial audit results, the full packet of detailed documents explaining what is behind each agenda item.

After this survey was developed, a group of League members used it to evaluate the websites of many local government bodies. The completed surveys were compiled, and the raw scores across surveyors averaged. A relative weighted scoring system was developed that assigned a higher multiplier to the questions that were deemed the most important. Then based on the scores, grades were assigned.

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Overall Results	
City of Peoria	A
City of East Peoria	A
Peoria District 150	A
ICC	A
City of Morton	B
Tazewell County	B
Dunlap School District	B
City of Pekin	B
Morton School District	B
IVC (Chillicothe) School District	B
City of Washington	B
Peoria Park District	B
Pekin School District	C
Springdale Cemetery Authority	C
Village of Chillicothe	C
Village of Bartonville	C
Peoria Heights School District	C
Village of Peoria Heights	C
Peoria City County Health Department	C
Richwoods township	C
Peoria County	C
Washington School District	C
Limestone School District	C
City Link	C
Village of Dunlap	C
Tri-County Regional Planning Commission	C
Pekin Park District	C
East Peoria School District	D
Village of West Peoria	D
Peoria Township	D
Peoria Housing Authority	D
Fondulac Park District	D
Civic Center Authority	D
Chillicothe Park District	D
Peoria Public Library Board	D
Peoria Election Commission	F
Morton Park District	F
Metro Peoria	F
Peoria Airport Authority	F
Limestone township	F

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Board Information (Member names, phone, email, address, term)		Meeting Information (Time, Location, Contact, Agenda, Packet)	
Village of Bartonville	A	Washington School District	A
Peoria Park District	A	City of Washington	A
City of Morton	A	ICC	A
Village of Chillicothe	A	City of East Peoria	A
Springdale Cemetery Authority	A	Dunlap School District	A
City of Pekin	A	Richwoods township	A
Peoria Township	A	Morton School District	A
Richwoods township	A	Village of Peoria Heights	A
Tazewell County	A	City of Peoria	A
Peoria County	A	Pekin School District	B
City of Peoria	A	East Peoria School District	B
City of Washington	A	Pekin Park District	B
Village of West Peoria	B	Village of Bartonville	B
City of East Peoria	B	City Link	B
Morton School District	B	Chillicothe Park District	B
Peoria District 150	B	IVC (Chillicothe) School District	B
Village of Dunlap	B	Peoria Housing Authority	B
Dunlap School District	C	Limestone School District	B
Peoria Public Library Board	C	Village of Chillicothe	B
East Peoria School District	C	City of Morton	B
City Link	C	Peoria Heights School District	B
IVC (Chillicothe) School District	C	Peoria Park District	B
Peoria Heights School District	C	Village of West Peoria	B
Washington School District	C	Peoria City County Health Department	B
Pekin School District	C	Springdale Cemetery Authority	B
ICC	D	Tazewell County	B
Peoria City County Health Department	F	Peoria District 150	B
Tri-County Regional Planning Commission	F	Tri-County Regional Planning Commission	B
Pekin Park District	F	City of Pekin	C
Fondulac Park District	F	Peoria Election Commission	C
Morton Park District	F	Village of Dunlap	C
Peoria Housing Authority	F	Peoria County	C
Peoria Election Commission	F	Civic Center Authority	C
Village of Peoria Heights	F	Morton Park District	C
Peoria Airport Authority	F	Peoria Township	C
Limestone School District	F	Fondulac Park District	D
Civic Center Authority	F	Peoria Public Library Board	D
Metro Peoria	F	Metro Peoria	F
Limestone township	F	Peoria Airport Authority	F
Chillicothe Park District	F	Limestone township	F

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Freedom of Information Act (Form, How to submit)		Financial Information (Budget, Audit)	
Peoria District 150	A	Peoria District 150	A
Village of Dunlap	A	ICC	A
Tri-County Regional Planning Commission	A	Tazewell County	A
City of East Peoria	A	City Link	A
Peoria City County Health Department	A	Peoria County	A
City of Morton	A	City of Morton	A
Tazewell County	A	Peoria Heights School District	A
City of Peoria	A	City of Pekin	A
Village of Bartonville	A	Village of Peoria Heights	A
Civic Center Authority	A	City of Peoria	A
ICC	A	Pekin School District	A
City of Pekin	A	IVC (Chillicothe) School District	A
IVC (Chillicothe) School District	A	City of East Peoria	B
Peoria Park District	B	Springdale Cemetery Authority	C
Fondulac Park District	B	Washington School District	C
Morton School District	B	Limestone School District	C
Limestone School District	B	Dunlap School District	C
Village of Chillicothe	C	East Peoria School District	D
Peoria Public Library Board	C	Village of Chillicothe	D
City of Washington	C	Tri-County Regional Planning Commission	D
Dunlap School District	C	City of Washington	F
Pekin Park District	C	Peoria Township	F
Village of Peoria Heights	C	Peoria Park District	F
Pekin School District	D	Village of Dunlap	F
Peoria Housing Authority	F	Morton School District	F
Peoria County	F	Peoria Airport Authority	F
Chillicothe Park District	F	Village of West Peoria	F
Washington School District	F	Village of Bartonville	F
Peoria Heights School District	F	Peoria Housing Authority	F
Morton Park District	F	Metro Peoria	F
East Peoria School District	F	Morton Park District	F
City Link	F	Peoria City County Health Department	F
Peoria Airport Authority	F	Pekin Park District	F
Limestone township	F	Limestone township	F
Metro Peoria	F	Peoria Election Commission	F
Peoria Township	F	Fondulac Park District	F
Village of West Peoria	F	Chillicothe Park District	F
Richwoods township	F	Civic Center Authority	F
Peoria Election Commission	F	Richwoods township	F
Springdale Cemetery Authority	F	Peoria Public Library Board	F

Details

The following additional documents are included:

- [Definitions and relative weighting factors for each survey question](#)
- [Summary score cards for government bodies](#)

Conclusions

- Many websites were wonderful for meeting the needs of a typical consumer of services. For example, several school websites offered good information to parents and teachers, and were quite attractive and easy to use. However, these same websites did not all easily give access to the information needed to engage with the school board.
- Since the review process involved multiple volunteers evaluating how easy it was to find information on these websites, the scores are subjective and scores were averaged for each question. Just because that volunteer didn't find the information doesn't mean it isn't there somewhere, just that it was not found within a few minutes of looking.
- The majority of websites provided good information about their public meetings, but more should publish full detailed agenda packets, and be very clear on how to make public comments.
- The number of websites that seem to lack Freedom of Information Act instructions was disturbing.
- There is room for improvement in providing budget, audit and other financial information.
- Too many websites failed to provide details on how to contact elected or appointed officials.

Selected reviewer comments

- "I hate seeing advertising on these public websites. Did a search on a school sex education curriculum, and got some inappropriate ads."
- "The size of the staff of the government body does not appear to have a direct relation to the quality of the website."
- One question that was not included on the survey, that should have been is: Are there instructions on where to direct questions or complaints (e.g., Please direct questions to the administrator, if you do not get a satisfactory response please contact your representative or the chairman of the Board.)
- Morton School Board
"Meeting location: Somewhat unclear what the Education and Administration Center was as no

street address given.”

“Of all the sites I visited, the Morton School site was the most welcoming for users trying to find out how the Board operates and how to interact with the Board.”

- Peoria County

“I was surprised how hard things were to find on the website, when I've attended meetings they seem open and transparent, and have lots of detail published with their agendas.”

- City of Peoria

“Despite the good survey results, after the surveys were completed I noticed that a special meeting I'd heard about was not on the calendar on the City's website. After much digging after the meeting, I did find it buried deeper on a City Council page. Probably was just a clerical error, or maybe they wanted to minimize public participation?”

Next Steps

- The League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria has sent each of the surveyed government bodies a copy of this report, an explanation of the evaluation process, and their score card. Our hope is that this information can be used in a constructive way to see where they are perceived to be doing well, and where opportunities for improvement exist.
- The League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria will send a press packet with a copy of this report, an explanation of the evaluation process, and the individual government score cards.