

Colorado Municipal League

Case Study: State of Our Cities and Towns

ABOUT CML:

The Colorado Municipal League (CML) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has served and represented Colorado's cities and towns since 1923. Currently, 267 of Colorado's 271 municipalities (representing more than 99 percent of the state's municipal population) are members of CML and benefit from their advocacy, information and training services.

CML's mission is twofold: to represent cities and towns collectively in matters before the state and federal government, and to provide a wide range of information services to assist municipal officials in managing their governments.

HISTORY

The State of Our Cities and Town report grew out of earlier efforts to collect data on tax rates, budgets, and other statistics. CML realized this data in itself was not as valuable as it could be, and in 2008 they sought to reconfigure their efforts and data collection to tell a more complete story of what municipalities in Colorado were currently facing. *The State of Our Cities and Town* research has been conducted each fall ever since.

CORONA'S SOLUTION

Corona worked with CML to review past research conducted as well as assess their current needs. Surveys were designed to collect accurate information on

“CML has been very pleased with the partnership we have created with Corona Insights to conduct our annual “State of our Cities & Towns” survey. Their team is responsive, helpful, and eager to assist us in whatever ways they can.

Mark Radtke, Legislative and Policy Advocate,
Colorado Municipal League

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various municipal topics and to allow both comparability from year to year and to capture information on current hot topics. Corona worked with CML to conduct the survey and maximize response to ensure the results represented as many municipalities as possible. This included providing municipalities multiple ways to respond, including hard copy or online.

Corona crafted the analysis depending on the nature of the data and expected use. In some cases, this meant segmenting the findings by size of municipality or by region; in other cases data was presented as a database for reference only. In all cases, analysis was custom and took into account the type of data and needs of the end user. As a final step Corona worked with CML to ensure the data was interpreted correctly and all key themes were identified for their own communications.

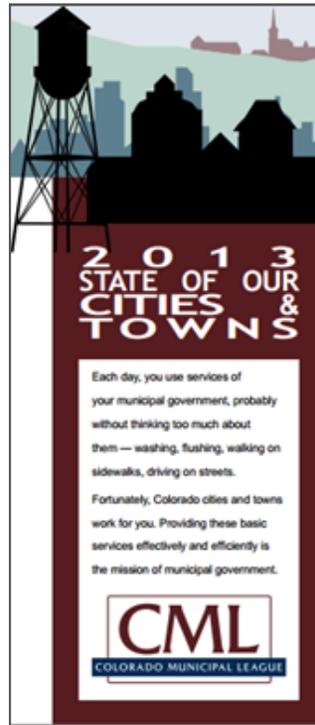


THE OUTCOME

Corona's data and reports have been used extensively by CML, their members, and state government. The annual report provides a beautiful snapshot of the current year, but the continuum of the data over several years allows analysis of the data within context of the bigger picture. The "long-data" provides a robust big picture view of trends and context that gives the data greater relevance. Data from the "State of Our Cities and Towns" report highlights current challenges, successes, and the overall state of municipal government. This report is distributed widely to inform state policy making.



CML's video, brochure, and report used to disseminate the *State of Our Cities and Towns* Research.



FOLLOW-UP

CML created a formal marketing video, brochure, and an online PDF of the report. The online video, brochure, and report allow for greater distribution and therefore vigilance of the issues most important to towns and cities. To read the full report and view the video, you can visit:

http://www.cml.org/state_of_our_cities_and_towns.aspx



This CML *State of Our Cities & Towns* report provides key findings from the survey of Colorado's municipalities. Complete findings for each question on the survey are also included, including graphs and tables showing results on issues regarding municipalities' infrastructure and transportation, economic development, and revenue challenges.

Methodology

RESEARCH DESIGN

The survey instrument was designed by Corona Insights and approved by the Colorado Municipal League (CML). The current survey was designed to gather key data from municipalities, including infrastructure projects and needs, economic development activity, and revenue challenges. The survey was largely unchanged from the previous year to facilitate comparison to last year's results, where appropriate (see reporting notes for additional information regarding comparisons). This year's survey, like previous years' surveys, was updated based on past results and current issues. The goal of each year's survey is to collect the most meaningful information to help inform both CML and municipal decision makers.

Overall length and user-friendliness also was considered when designing the questionnaire. In 2012, the survey was again shortened to reduce the burden on respondents. In addition to providing a better survey experience for the respondent, these changes also likely increased the quality of data collected.

EXECUTION

The survey was conducted by mail, and respondents either could return the paper survey by mail or respond via an online option. For the mail survey, CML handled printing and mailing of the questionnaire to staff at each municipality. One survey was sent to each municipality, and municipalities returned completed surveys directly to Corona Insights' offices. To boost response rates, CML staff made several attempts to contact nonresponding municipalities. All data entry and cleaning was performed by Corona's internal staff, additional follow-ups were made by Corona to verify any unclear or out-of-range answers. The execution period went from Sept. 5, 2012, through Oct. 24, 2012.

ANALYSIS

This report provides tables and graphs of responses from the CML *State of Our Cities & Towns* survey. Responses are provided for all municipalities and also are broken down for municipalities of different sizes as well as for different geographic regions of Colorado. Size thresholds were chosen so similar-size municipalities were analyzed together. The goal was to provide segments that produced meaningful results to the reader. The size categories are provided below with the response rate for each category. Size ranges used for segments are the same as last year, but do vary from years prior to 2011.

Municipal population	Number in Colorado (2010 Census)	Number of responses	Response rate
25,000 or Larger	25	12	49%
2,000 to 24,999	87	30	34%
Less than 2,000	159	46	29%
Eastern Plains	N/A	17	N/A
Western Slope	N/A	28	N/A
Overall	271	88	32%

REPORTING NOTES

When reading the following tables and graphs, it is important to keep the following points in mind.

- All percentages refer to the raw percentage of survey respondents giving a particular response. Percentages have not been weighted to reflect the proportion of municipalities of each size. As a result, the "Overall" results presented are the overall results of the survey respondents and are not generalizable to the population of all municipal governments in the state. Weighting was not practical both because of the small sample size of the survey and because there is no way to determine whether those municipalities responding are representative of all municipalities of their size.
- On all graphs, labels of 3 percent and less have been removed for ease of reading.
- On graphs that should sum to 100 percent, the labels occasionally may not add to 100 percent due to rounding, or non-response.
- Comparing this year's data to previous years' data (or future years' data) could be misleading depending on which municipalities respond in any given year. Due to the relatively small sample size, and possible large differences