

Texas State Agency Websites:  
A Descriptive Assessment of Attributes that  
Support Online Citizen Engagement

By

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this applied research project is to describe attributes of State of Texas agency websites that support online citizen engagement. A review of the literature informs the development of a conceptual framework comprising three descriptive categories: design, transparency, and communication.

Descriptive categories identified in the literature informed the development of a conceptual framework. The researcher used this framework to develop a coding protocol through which to conduct a content analysis of Texas state agency websites. Thirty websites were selected for the sample based upon agency size as indicated by agency budget.

The presence and prominence of website attributes that support online citizen engagement varied. Most agencies clearly prioritize disability access, but there is a general lack of priority given to readability and foreign language access. In addition, while most agencies do publish information about the agency mission, goals, values, and public hearings, few provide contact information for specific employees in agency departments. Regarding online communication, few agencies provide a variety of ways for citizens to access agency information, such as blogs, subscription services, or multimedia. Finally, while most agencies do provide a feedback mechanism for citizens, very few engage citizens through the use of social networking and none host an online forum or message board.

Public administrators charged with designing, developing, and implementing agency websites should consider incorporating the website attributes described in this applied research project to support online citizen engagement.

## **About the Author**

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Developments in information technology are shifting the dynamics of the government-citizen relationship. Just as the Industrial Age of the late 1800's helped give rise to modern bureaucracy, currently emerging digital technologies have set the stage for a redefined public administration model in which citizens are not passive actors but are clients, customers, owners, collaborators, innovators, and partners (Eggers 2005, Vigoda 2002).

Before examining the current role of technology in supporting citizen engagement, this chapter provides the historical context within which this area of inquiry has evolved.

### *History*

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Industrial Revolution was marked by a national focus on efficiency and scientific management (Eggers 2005). Thus, the Industrial Revolution brought about the rise of the administrative state and an era of progressive reform (Scavo and Shi 2000, Eggers 2005). Through administrative reforms, government became a “bureaucratic machine,” characterized by an assembly line, one-size-fits-all philosophy; division of labor; and rigid, vertically hierarchical organizations in both the private and public sectors (Reschenthaler and Thompson 1996, Eggers 2005).

Government-citizen interaction during this era was channeled through elected representatives and there was little opportunity for citizen participation or engagement beyond the citizen's basic role as a voter on Election Day (Roberts 2004, Vigoda 2002). This model of the administrative state is known as “overhead democracy” (Redford 1969).

Dissatisfaction with government policies and citizen frustration with the status quo reached critical mass during the mid-twentieth century - calls for reform grew louder and public managers were increasingly expected to be more responsive to the particular needs of citizens (Vigoda 2002).

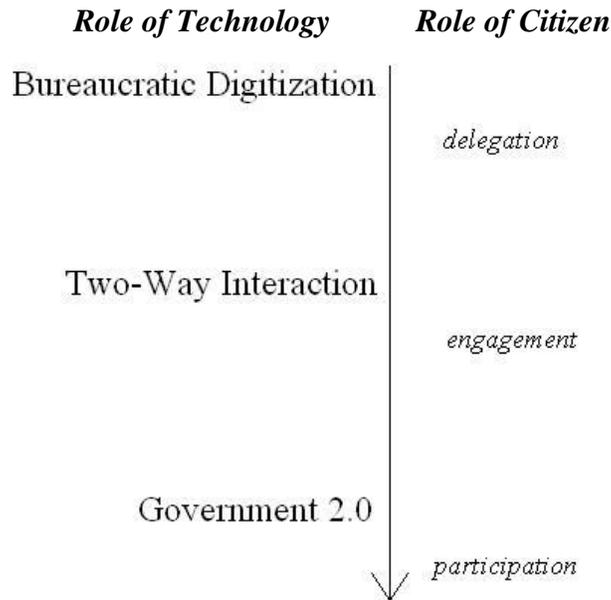
Concurrently, developments in technology began the transition from the industrial age to the information age, and the use of computers in public administration became more widespread as agencies began to realize their cost-savings potential and implications for greater productivity and transparency. By the late 1980's, the federal government was substantially invested in information technology equipment and technology support staff (Kraemer and King 2006). During this period, information technology was primarily used by public administrators to reinforce current administrative structures (Eggers 2005).

By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, trust in government was at its lowest point in decades (Kellam 1995). The landscape was ripe for philosophical, structural, and technological administrative reform.

### ***Reform and Information Technology***

Researchers have attempted to develop a theoretical model for the evolution of the government-citizen (often called G2C) relationship, but many of these models are speculative, at best (Coursey and Norris 2008). In general, these models move from less technology to more technology and from less citizen engagement to more citizen engagement. Figure 1.1 illustrates a parallel shift from bureaucratic digitization toward Government 2.0 and from citizen delegation, in which citizens delegate authority to the bureaucracy, to a participative model, in which citizens are more like owners or collaborators than subjects (Roberts 2004, Vigoda 2002).

**Figure 1.1: Government-Citizen Interaction**



Ted Gaebler and David Osborne recognized that technological and social changes were rendering the top-down hierarchical model of the Industrial Age obsolete (Osborne 1993). In 1992, Gaebler and Osborne published a book entitled Reinventing Government, and in 1993, the first report of the National Performance Review, headed by Al Gore, was released, formalizing the movement that Gaebler and Osborne’s book helped to initiate (Kellam 1995). The purpose of “Reinventing Government” was to make government more efficient, in large part by adopting new technologies (Osborne 1993). The Reinventing Government movement is significant because it represents the first major reform movement that included the use of technology to improve government, however, its use primarily meant the digitization of existing bureaucratic structures (Eggers 2005).

## ***E-Government***

Rather than seeing Reinventing Government as a “*revolutionary* movement,” it is more appropriately described as an “*evolutionary* movement” (Kettl 1998, viii). Many of the ideas and principles from Reinventing Government remained salient and were integrated in the next wave of administrative reform: *e-government*. E-government is defined as the use of the “internet and the world-wide-web for delivering government information and services to citizens” (United Nations 2001, 1).

In December 1999, President Bill Clinton issued the first White House memorandum on e-government. The memo detailed the administration’s vision for the use of technology in government reform. Paramount among Clinton’s concerns were user-centric information organization, citizen-focused information and service delivery methods, two-way communication between the public and citizens, and the protection of citizens’ security and privacy (Seifert and Chung 2009). In 2001, George W. Bush’s President’s Management Agenda (PMA) further institutionalized and legitimized the e-government movement.

In 2002, the Bush Administration built upon the PMA’s e-government expansion initiative by releasing its “E-Government Strategy” – which represents a blend of Reinventing Government principles and e-government during the Clinton presidency. Later that year, the E-Government Act of 2002 was signed into law, which established the Office of Electronic Government within the OMB and sought to improve IT management, reduce costs, increase citizen participation, promote collaboration, and increase transparency and accountability (Seifert and Chung 2009).

The series of federal e-government initiatives during the Clinton and Bush presidencies represent the growing synthesis between theoretical public administration reform and

developments in information technology. E-government represents the beginning of a shift from a bureaucratic paradigm, characterized by “standardization, departmentalization, and operational cost-efficiency” toward a paradigm characterized by “coordinated network building, external collaboration, and customer services” (Ho 2002, 434).

### ***Government 2.0***

Government 2.0 is currently emerging as a public administration reform movement and is both technology-centered and theoretically reformative in terms of supporting citizen engagement (Vigoda 2002, Eggers 2005). Government 2.0 may also go by other names: e-gov 2.0, iGov, e-governance, or digital governance, among others. One weakness in Government 2.0 research is the fact that these terms are often used interchangeably without clearly defining how one term differs from another. For the purposes of this project, Government 2.0 is defined as the use of emerging technology, such as social networking, to engage citizens as active participants, characterized by two-way online interaction.

Philosophically, Government 2.0 shares some roots with Reinventing Government and e-government, specifically in its emphasis on decentralization, improving intra- and inter-agency cooperation, and encouraging citizen engagement (Roberts 2004).

However, Government 2.0 takes the shift in the government-citizen relationship further than previous reform movements. The role of the citizen in Government 2.0 moves beyond that of a customer to a role of partners in collaboration (Vigoda 2002). The idea of citizens as collaborators with, or owners of, government is not original to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but its emergence as a mainstream philosophy in public administration, rather than a minority criticism of mainstream thought, is noteworthy (Dutil et al 2007). During the mid-1990’s, while Reinventing

Government was at its peak, critics argued that the mainstream idea of a citizen as a *customer* draws flawed parallels between the public and private sectors, creates a passive citizen relationship with government, and discourages civic engagement, whereas the role of citizens as *collaborators* would represent an unprecedented level of direct citizen involvement in modern American public administration (Schachter 1995).

The flattening of the relationship between government and its citizens may also yield greater trust. Research suggests that relationships that are less hierarchical and top-down and more horizontal and networked lead to greater citizen trust in government and increased citizen participation (Dutil et al 2007). However, it's important to note that this assertion is not entirely apolitical, and the debate about appropriate organizational structure will undoubtedly continue.

Citizens have positively responded to government attempts to engage them online. In the past twelve months, 82% of online Americans, or 61% of all adult Americans, visited a government website to complete a transaction or to gather information about the agency, a policy, or service (Smith 2010). As more citizens choose to interact with government online, it becomes increasingly important that state agencies develop websites with citizens' needs and preferences in mind.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of this applied research project is to describe attributes of State of Texas agency websites that support online citizen engagement. A review of the literature informs the development of a conceptual framework comprising three descriptive categories: design, transparency, and communication. The conceptual framework serves as a roadmap, guiding a

content analysis of a sample of Texas state agency websites of varying size as defined by the size of the agency's budget (Shields and Tajalli 2006).

### *Summary of Chapters*

In Chapter 2, a review of the literature informs the development of a conceptual framework that will serve as a roadmap for a descriptive assessment of attributes of Texas state agency websites that support online citizen engagement. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology used to describe attributes of Texas state agency websites that have been shown in the literature to support online citizen engagement. Chapter 4 presents the results of the content analysis; Chapter 5 outlines best practices, draws conclusions based upon the data presented, and details recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Introduction***

Scholars from many disciplines have examined the use of technology in public administration at every level of government. There are many approaches to e-government research, and researchers are increasingly shifting focus from technology alone to technology as it applies to the government-citizen relationship.

#### ***Purpose***

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a conceptual framework based upon the literature that will serve as a roadmap for a descriptive assessment of attributes of Texas state agency websites that support online citizen engagement (Shields and Tajalli 2006). It is important to note that measuring citizen engagement is beyond the scope of this descriptive research project. The concept is defined and discussed as it relates to the development of the conceptual framework and descriptive categories, but no attempt is made to quantify or directly measure citizen engagement.

E-government research has evaluated and described government websites in terms of “supply side” and “demand side” website development, content, and management (Panoupoulou et al 2009). “Supply side” analysis looks at what features a website does or does not have, whereas “demand side” assessments focus on the citizen’s interaction with the website (Chen and Dimitrova 2006). This research uses the “supply side” approach.

The first three sections of this chapter discuss indicators that are justified by scholarly literature and are organized into three descriptive categories. The first section of the chapter discusses characteristics of website *design*. Necessary but not sufficient indicators of

*transparency* are described in the second section of the chapter. The third section discusses online *communication*.

## ***Design***

Design, for the purposes of this paper, refers to attributes of government websites that support access to government website content. This category is addressed first because the citizen's ability to access and comprehend content on a government website is fundamental to that citizen's ability to engage with the government agency online. In the private sector, customers who encounter a poorly designed website can choose to visit a competitor's site. Citizens, however, are a captive audience, and cannot simply choose to visit another government site to renew a driver's license or find agency-specific information (Wang et al 2005). Therefore, government agencies should design websites with accessibility and the citizen's comprehension in mind. Lack of attention to these design features can effectively alienate segments of the public that the website should serve (Government Information Quarterly 2006).

This descriptive category focuses on three specific indicators supported by the literature: *readability*, *foreign language access*, and *disability access* (West 2000-2008; Gant and Gant 2002; Henriksson et al 2006; Criado and Ramilo 2003; Theofanos and Mulligan 2004; Golubeva 2007; Holzer et al 2003-2008). *Readability* is important because content that is not comprehensible to the average citizen does not encourage engagement. *Foreign language access* is critical to ensure that citizens who primarily speak languages other than English can access government information, possibly through the use of a third party translation site, a mirror site presented in alternate languages, or the availability of translation software on the government site. *Disability access* is critical to ensuring equal access to government website content for

citizens with a disability and includes design elements such as alternative text captions for website graphics.

## **Readability**

The most wide-reaching design element that supports citizen engagement is *readability*, or the comprehension level at which website text is written. Readability is important to citizen engagement because if the website text is written above the reading comprehension level of the citizen attempting to access it, the citizen is not able to engage with that agency online. This design element is addressed first because it has the potential to impact a large percentage of citizens.

According to national statistics, approximately half of Americans read at an eighth grade level or below (West 2008). In a 2008 evaluation of state and federal government websites, West found that, on average, government website content is written at almost a twelfth grade reading level. West's research should prompt public administrators to consider whether some citizens do not access government websites because content of these websites is simply unapproachable and difficult to understand.

The standard test used to measure readability is the Flesch-Kincaid metric, which uses the average number of syllables in words and length of sentences to determine reading level (West 2008; Henriksson et al 2006). It is important to note, though, that this metric does not directly measure comprehension.

To date, most evaluations of government websites have not included readability as a checklist item. This may be because readability does not lend itself to the dichotomous coding often employed in the "supply-side" approach. However, the focus of this section of the

literature review is design features of government websites that can either support or hinder citizen access to and comprehension of website content. If website content is written above the average reading comprehension level of the public, it presents a serious access issue, and is thus not supportive of online citizen engagement. As Goldberg points out, one of the recommendations made by President Obama's Transition Team was to review federal website content to ensure that it is "written in a style all citizens would understand" (2009, 10).

### **Foreign Language Access**

A second critical design characteristic of State of Texas agency websites that supports citizen engagement is *foreign language access* (West 2000, 2008; Henriksson et al 2006; Criado and Ramilo 2003). While not as wide reaching as readability, the number of families who speak a language other than English in the home has continuously increased over the past thirty years. Almost fourteen million Americans either do not speak English well or at all (Shin and Kominski 2010). While this is an important issue at all levels of government, it may be even more important in states and local communities with large populations of non-English speakers. In Texas, over 25% of people over the age of five do not speak English well or at all. This equates to nearly 5.5 million people for whom access to government websites in languages other than English is critical in order for them to engage with the agency online (Shin and Kominski 2010).

Agencies can address foreign language access a number of ways. The website may have a link to a foreign language version of the webpage, which can either mirror the original layout and content, or both layout and content may be modified from the English version.

Alternatively, the website may provide a link to a third party translation site. Other sites may provide translating software on the website (West 2000). In his first assessment of state and

federal government websites, West (2000) found that only 4% of government sites had a foreign language access feature. In 2008, the percentage of government websites with foreign language access features had grown to 40% (West 2008). While this shows that governments have paid attention to this issue in the past decade, the fact remains that the majority of government sites are inaccessible to a large population because of a language barrier.

### **Disability Access**

Governments have a legal and ethical obligation to ensure that website design complies with very specific *disability access* standards. In 1998, the US Congress amended the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to require that federal agencies' electronic information be accessible to people with disabilities; these standards are commonly known as "Section 508" standards (Solis 2000, 16; Section 508, 1998). These core standards are complemented by standards and guidelines established by the W3C, or WorldWideWeb Consortium (Theofanos and Mulligan 2004).

Solis (2000) assessed Texas state agency website accessibility using standards defined by the Texas Department of Information Resources (DIR) and West's research (2000-2008) at Brown University. One example of the accessibility standards Solis examined is the presence of text equivalents for all website images (2000). This enables visually impaired citizens who use a screen reading software like JAWS to hear a verbal description of what is on the site (Spencer 2001).

Because such standards are highly technical and can be time consuming to evaluate, researchers often turn to online accessibility evaluation tools like the BOBBY analysis tool and its successor, WAVE 4.0, in order to evaluate the accessibility of government websites (Gant and

Gant 2002; West 2008; Holzer et al 2008; Henriksson et al 2006). These tools allow the user to input a website address, then the tool tests the website for compliance with Section 508 (29 U.S.C. 794d) accessibility standards, then presents an image of “error” or “alert” icons on the website over areas where it identified issues (Goldberg 2009).

Instead of using an online tool, Goldberg assessed Texas municipal websites by checking for the presence of a disability access or accessibility statement that outlines compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 508 standards (2009).

Solis found that 64% of select Texas state agency websites’ information was “generally accessible” (2000). In a subsequent study, Goldberg found that over 80% of municipal websites assessed did not provide a disability accessibility statement (2009).

Each of these indicators of website design provides a specific segment of the public with access to government information and services online, thereby supporting citizen engagement. The next sections of this paper will discuss indicators of transparency and online communications in State of Texas agency websites.

## ***Transparency***

Trust is necessary in order for citizens to engage with government, and a major component of the public’s trust in government is transparency (Gant and Gant 2002). Eggers says that “freedom, accountability, and trust in government institutions all rely on easy and free access to public information” (2005, 125).

Transparency is a complex concept that is hard to study because its definition is so subjective. As such, for the purposes of this project, transparency refers to elements of government websites that are necessary but not sufficient to provide the citizen with confidence

in the legitimacy of the website and agency, thereby supporting online citizen engagement. The majority of agencies now publish transparency-promoting documents online, such as the budget, so when an agency chooses not to do so, that falls outside the norm and therefore harms trust and discourages citizen participation.

It is important that a public sector website contain a clear and focused statement of the organization's *mission, goals, and values* in order for the citizen to understand the purpose of the site and know what to expect from the agency. Posting of *official proceedings* information, such as public calendars and meeting minutes, online also provides a sense of openness that can give the citizen confidence in the legitimacy of the agency. The online availability of agency personnel *contact information* is also critical to fostering transparency and legitimacy.

### **Mission, Goals, and Values**

Perhaps foremost among indicators of transparency is a clear and focused description of the *agency's mission, goals, and values*. On a website, this can be indicated by the availability of the agency's mission statement, strategic plan, budget, or other policy documents (Holzer et al 2008; Panopoulou et al 2009; Criado and Ramilo 2003; Gant and Gant 2002). These documents provide the citizen with an understanding of the website's purpose and set the citizen's expectations regarding what information and services will be available on the website.

While there has been some debate about the value of mission statements in agencies, mission statements and other strategic agency documents do provide insight into an organization's values and priorities (Weiss and Piderit 1999). Goldberg found that 80% of assessed city websites contained an agency mission statement and 83% provided budget information online (2009). Similarly, West found that 98% of agency websites provided online

publications (2008). These results indicate that government officials are aware of the public of transparency-promoting value of these documents and post this information online in order to promote trust, which in turn supports online citizen engagement.

### **Official Proceedings**

Another important indicator of transparency is the presence of information related to *official proceedings*, including a public calendar and meeting minutes (Holzer et al 2008; Panopoulou et al 2009; Gant and Gant 2002; Goldberg 2009). According to Eggers, such information available online allows citizens to “scrutinize” government to a degree never before possible (2005, 135). Goldberg’s assessment of municipal websites found that 100% of sites posted meeting minutes or agendas online and 74% provided an online events calendar (2009). While this finding is encouraging, it is still important to include this indicator in the transparency category because the absence of this information would be of great concern and would undermine the website’s legitimacy, which would in turn be unsupportive of citizen engagement.

### **Contact Information**

A third indicator of transparency is the presence of *contact information* for agency personnel (West 2000, 2008; Gant and Gant 2002; Criado and Ramilo 2003; Golubeva 2007; Holzer et al 2008). Much like agency mission, goals, and values and official proceedings information, availability of contact information provides the citizen with confidence in the legitimacy of the website and agency. Further, this indicator is also related to website design in that there are citizens who may visit a government website and, for whatever reason, decide that telephone, mail, or in-person contact is more appropriate to meet their needs. If the website does

not have easily accessible contact information for agency personnel, this places a burden upon the citizen, potentially discouraging future engagement. Solis found that only 24% of Texas state agency websites included a toll-free phone number on the website home page (2000). This places a burden upon low-income citizens for whom long distance telephone calls may not be affordable.

Thus far, this paper has discussed important indicators of website design and transparency that support online citizen engagement. The next section will discuss communication on State of Texas agency websites that supports citizen engagement.

### ***Communication***

New technology has shifted the way that governments communicate with citizens online. Henriksson et al explain it is necessary to constantly re-evaluate descriptive categories surrounding online government communication because available technology is changing at such a rapid pace (2006). Online communication falls into two categories: **informational**, typically one-way communication, and **relational** communication, which has at least the potential for two-way interaction.

Examples of informational communication include *blogs*, *subscription services*, such as email newsletters or RSS feeds, and *multimedia*, such as video clips or podcasts. Relational communication not only allows the government to provide information to the citizen, it also gives the citizen an opportunity to provide information or feedback to the government organization. Examples include: *feedback mechanisms*, such as polls, surveys, or online feedback forms; *forums or message boards*; and the use of *social networking* sites, such as Facebook or MySpace.

## **Informational Online Communication**

Informational online communication is the provision of information on a government website. For the purposes of this research project, informational communication is defined as online communication that allows governments to provide citizens information in alternative formats (Chang and Kannan 2008). Instead of looking at *what* information is provided online, this research describes *how* information is provided online. The benefit to providing the public with information in a variety of formats is that it allows the citizen to consume information in a format comfortable for him or her, thereby encouraging citizen engagement not only through information provision but also through the way the information is presented.

### Blogs

One way in which governments may communicate information online is through the use of *blogs* (Panopoulou et al 2009; Smith 2010; O'Reilly 2005; Kingsley et al 2009; Chang and Kannan 2008). A blog is like an online journal entry that is stored in chronological order. The writing style associated with "blogging" is typically less formal and more personal than an agency press release. Public agency officials may blog in an effort to keep employees or citizens informed about agency news, upcoming events, and strategic initiatives. For example, experts at the Library of Congress blog about their work in an effort to share knowledge with the public and promote awareness of the Library's work (Chang and Kannan 2008).

### Multimedia

Informational online communication is also characterized by the use of *multimedia*, such as video clips or podcasts to provide citizens with information (West 2000; Kingsley et al 2009;

Smith 2010; Theofanos and Mulligan 2004; Holzer et al 2008; Chang and Kannan 2008).

Multimedia content provides citizens who prefer visual or auditory stimulation the opportunity to receive information in a format that is comfortable and engaging to them. These media can also often be downloaded to a personal mobile device and replayed at the user's convenience.

Many governmental entities at different levels make use of multimedia to communicate with citizens. For example, on the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website, the agency publishes podcasts, which are audio files that can either be listened to online or downloaded to be played on a portable media player (Chang and Kannan 2008). The Texas Department of Transportation uploads public awareness campaign videos and clips about agency activities to YouTube, a third party website that allows users to upload and share videos (YouTube – TXDOT). West's research shows an increase in multimedia use by governments. In 2000, only 4% of sites included video clips, and in 2008, that number increased to 48%.

### Subscription Services

A third indicator of informational online communication that supports citizen engagement is the presence of online *subscription services*, such as email newsletters or RSS feeds (West 2000; Kingsley et al 2009; Holzer et al 2008; Smith 2010; O'Reilly 2005; Golubeva 2007; Chang and Kannan 2008). These communication strategies allow citizens to choose when and where they receive government information. Rather than having to visit the agency's website to see what content is new, citizens can subscribe online to receive updates as they occur. These updates might be sent to a citizen's email account, aggregated in an RSS reader, or sent to the user via text message.

Goldberg found that 71% of assessed city websites give citizens the option to sign up for an electronic newsletter (2009). At the federal and state level, West found that only 44% of sites allowed users to sign up for email updates (2008).

A newer subscription option is RSS, which stands for Really Simple Syndication. When a user subscribes to an RSS “feed,” a notification is sent to the user’s email, mobile device, or an online “reader” that aggregates the user’s feed subscriptions into a chronological list (O’Reilly 2005). This technology is becoming increasingly relevant as the number of mobile internet users grows. No studies were found that examined the availability of RSS feeds on government websites, possibly because the technology is relatively new.

### **Relational Online Communication**

As discussed above, informational online communication provides citizens with the freedom to receive government information how, when, and where they choose, thereby supporting citizen engagement. Relational online communication provides citizens with the opportunity to communicate online with government. In relational communication, a citizen’s role changes from being a passive consumer of information to an active communicator or collaborator (Vigoda 2002). According to Moreira et al, citizens are encouraged to engage in government when an agency makes an effort to communicate interactively with them online (2009).

### Feedback

The most basic way in which government can provide an opportunity for citizens to communicate online is through the use of *feedback mechanisms*, such as online surveys, polls, or

feedback forms (West 2008; Henriksson et al 2006; Panopoulou et al 2009; Holzer et al 2008; Golubeva 2007; Criado and Ramilo 2003; Gant and Gant 2002). These methods can help support online citizen engagement by giving citizens a voice in government (Holzer et al 2008). West finds that the percentage of state and federal websites that offer citizens the opportunity to provide feedback increased from 15% in 2000 to 48% in 2008. While this increase does indicate a shift in government website orientation toward supporting citizen engagement, it is revealing that less than half of sites provided a feedback mechanism beyond an email link.

### Forums/Message Boards

Another indicator of relational online communication is the presence of online forums or message boards on a government website (West 2000, 2008; Smith 2010; Henriksson et al 2006; Panopoulou et al 2009; Holzer et al 2008). Much like surveys or polls, discussion forums can help encourage citizen engagement. In this instance, though, citizens not only have the opportunity to communicate with the government, but they can also communicate with each other through the forum on a government website. The presence of these forums indicates a discretionary choice made by the agency to provide citizens with an opportunity to discuss issues that the citizens find relevant. The city of Winona, Minnesota, hosts an online forum in which citizens and city officials, including the mayor, discuss matters as local as tree-trimming and as global as the war on terror (Eggers 2005). According to Steve Kranz, who administers the forum, when citizens know that their leaders are listening, “it helps make them feel like insiders in the community, which usually makes them more active citizens” (Eggers 2005, 147).

## Social Networking

One final indicator of relational online communication is an agency's participation in social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace (Kingsley et al 2009; Smith 2010; Chang and Kannal 2008). Social networking is often a very low-cost way for agencies to broadcast a message to citizens. Further, the use of social networking sites does not require a lot of time or technical expertise (Drapeau and Wells 2009).

Emerging public administration theory says that while it is important to have a government website that is well designed, transparent, and provides citizens the opportunity to communicate, it is equally important for agencies to look beyond their own websites to sites where citizens are already communicating (Chadwick 2009). Agencies should not only maintain their official agency website but should also monitor and engage citizens on social media sites like Facebook or Twitter. Links to these pages, usually in the form of recognizable "badges," or icons, should appear consistently and prominently on the agency's main website and sub-pages (Kingsley et al 2009). To date, research on social media use in government is either highly theoretical, like Chadwick's discussion of the relationship between social media and e-democracy, or very specific case studies (Drapeau and Wells II 2009). There has been no inventory of Texas state agency use of social media.

According to a recent report published by the Pew Foundation, 31% of online Americans engaged with government on a social media site within the past year (Smith 2010). This number may seem low at first glance, but these platforms are relatively new. Additionally, utilization of these social networking sites may also provide government the opportunity to reach historically underrepresented minority populations. African Americans and Latinos are just as likely as whites to interact with government using social networking and are more likely to agree that

government outreach using social media “helps people be more informed about what the government is doing” and “makes government agencies and officials more accessible” (Smith 2010).

Examples of these technologies in action at all levels of government abound. The federal government’s website, [www.webcontent.gov](http://www.webcontent.gov), publishes a matrix of various social media platforms and examples of agencies that use them. On [www.govtwit.com](http://www.govtwit.com), a list of government agencies and officials that post information on Twitter is currently at 2,742.

In addition to technological and administrative barriers to implementing these technologies, there are valid theoretical debates about the appropriate role of citizens and government that may cause agencies to resist engaging in social networking. Further, there is a certain degree of control of the message that is lost when an agency chooses to engage in social networking. However, as utilization of social networking by the public continues to grow, government should consider expanding communications strategies to include public outreach on these sites.

### ***Conceptual Framework***

The previous sections synthesized a broad body of literature and organized indicators into three specific themes. Together, these themes provide a framework for describing attributes of Texas state agency websites that support online citizen engagement. These themes represent the descriptive categories of the conceptual framework developed in this study and are reflected in Table 2.1. The three descriptive categories are design, transparency, and communication.

**Table 2.1: Conceptual Framework**

<b>Descriptive Categories</b>	<b>Supporting Literature</b>
<b>1. Design</b>	
Readability (Flesch-Kincaid)	West 2008 Henriksson et al 2006 Criado and Ramilo 2003 Theofanos and Mulligan 2004
Foreign Language Access	West 2000, 2008 Goldberg 2009 Solis 2000 Henriksson et al 2006 Criado and Ramilo 2003
Disability Access	West 2000, 2008 Gant and Gant 2002 Henriksson et al 2006 Gov't Information Quarterly 2006 Goldberg 2009 Spencer 2001 Solis 2000 Criado and Ramilo 2003 Theofanos and Mulligan 2004 Golubeva 2007 Holzer et al 2008
<b>2. Transparency</b>	
Agency Mission, Goals, Values	Holzer et al 2008 Panopoulou et al 2009 Goldberg 2009 Criado and Ramilo 2003 Gant and Gant 2002
Public Hearings (Calendar/Minutes)	Holzer et al 2008 Goldberg 2009 Panopoulou et al 2009 Gant and Gant 2002
Contact Information - Personnel	West 2000, 2008 Gant and Gant 2002 Goldberg 2009 Solis 2000 Criado and Ramilo 2003 Golubeva 2007 Holzer et al 2008

<b>3. Communication</b>	
<b>3a. Informational Communication</b>	
Blogs	Panopoulou et al 2009 Smith 2010 O'Reilly 2005 Kingsley et al 2009 Chang 2008
Subscription Service	Holzer et al 2008 Smith 2010 Goldberg 2009 Kingsley et al 2009 O'Reilly 2005 West 2000 Golubeva 2007 Chang 2008
Multimedia	West 2000 Kingsley et al 2009 Smith 2010 Theofanos and Mulligan 2004 Holzer et al 2008 Chang 2008
<b>3b. Relational Communication</b>	
Feedback	West 2008 Henriksson et al 2006 Golubeva 2007 Goldberg 2009 Criado and Ramilo 2003 Gant and Gant 2002 Panopoulou et al 2009 Holzer et al 2008
Forums/Message Boards	West 2000, 2008 Smith 2010 Goldberg 2009 Henriksson et al 2006 Panopoulou et al 2009 Holzer et al 2008
Social Networking	Kingsley et al 2009 Smith 2010 Chang 2008

## ***Conclusion***

A review of the literature has revealed three key categories of attributes of Texas state agency websites that support online citizen engagement. These three categories are design, transparency, and communication.

Website design that supports citizen engagement is indicated by readability, foreign language access, and disability accessibility. The ability to access and comprehend government content is critical to supporting citizen engagement because all the content and communication in the world does a person no good if he or she cannot access the information. Transparency is critical to establishing legitimacy and trust between the citizen and the agency thereby supporting citizen engagement; websites that are transparent contain information about the agency's mission, goals, and values; posted information regarding official proceedings; and contact information for agency personnel. Online communication can be either informational or relational. Both provide the citizen with the opportunity to engage with government on his or her own terms, and each provides the government with new and innovative ways to provide the public with valuable information, often at very little cost. The concepts and indicators outlined in this chapter provide a thorough and research-based framework within which to describe attributes of Texas state agency websites that support online citizen engagement.

The next chapter will describe the methodology used to describe attributes of State of Texas agency websites that support online citizen engagement.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research methodology used to describe attributes of Texas state agency websites that have been shown in the literature to support online citizen engagement. The descriptive categories developed in the literature review form the conceptual framework within which a content analysis of the websites is conducted. The purpose of this research is limited to describing website attributes that have been shown in the literature to support online citizen engagement, therefore this project does not attempt to directly measure or quantify citizen engagement in any way. However, it is a safe assumption that these characteristics are necessary but not sufficient steps government websites can take to increase citizen engagement.

#### ***Population***

The unit of analysis in this research project is State of Texas agency websites. Agencies were identified using a comprehensive document published by the Legislative Budget Board that lists all state agencies (Fiscal Size Up 2008-2009). This document provides a summary of the General Appropriations Act and is inclusive of all state agencies except for 14 Court of Appeals Districts and the Professional Licensing Boards.

Stratified sampling is used in order to decrease sampling error and increase representativeness of the sample (Babbie 2004). A list of the eighty-seven agencies was ranked from highest to lowest in terms of total budget. The list was divided into thirds. From each third, ten agencies were randomly chosen using systematic sampling: a random start with a skip interval of three. This method was chosen to ensure that the sample would include agencies of various sizes and capacities for website development. Of the total population of eighty-seven,

thirty websites were chosen using stratified sampling (Table 3.1). The Commission of Uniform State Laws was thrown out of the sample because it does not have a website and would skew the data.

Of the twenty-nine remaining agencies, twenty-seven were bureaucratic agencies, one was the Texas Supreme Court, and one was the Texas Senate. Those two organizations were included in the sample because like bureaucratic agencies, the judiciary and the legislature provide a public service.

**Table 3.1: Sample Websites**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Website</b>
Commission on Uniform State Laws	NONE
Bond Review Board	<a href="http://www.brb.state.tx.us/">http://www.brb.state.tx.us/</a>
Pension Review Board	<a href="http://www.prb.state.tx.us/">http://www.prb.state.tx.us/</a>
State Commission on Judicial Conduct	<a href="http://www.scjc.state.tx.us/">http://www.scjc.state.tx.us/</a>
Office of Public Insurance Counsel	<a href="http://www.opic.state.tx.us/">http://www.opic.state.tx.us/</a>
Office of Public Utility Counsel	<a href="http://www.opc.state.tx.us/">http://www.opc.state.tx.us/</a>
Sunset Commission	<a href="http://www.sunset.state.tx.us/">http://www.sunset.state.tx.us/</a>
Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education	<a href="http://www.tcleose.state.tx.us/">http://www.tcleose.state.tx.us/</a>
Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending	<a href="http://www.sml.state.tx.us/">http://www.sml.state.tx.us/</a>
Securities Board	<a href="http://www.ssb.state.tx.us/">http://www.ssb.state.tx.us/</a>
Office of Injured Employee Counsel	<a href="http://www.oiec.state.tx.us/">http://www.oiec.state.tx.us/</a>
State Office of Administrative Hearings	<a href="http://www.soah.state.tx.us/">http://www.soah.state.tx.us/</a>
Racing Commission	<a href="http://www.txrc.state.tx.us/">http://www.txrc.state.tx.us/</a>
Animal Health Commission	<a href="http://www.tahc.state.tx.us/">http://www.tahc.state.tx.us/</a>
State Auditor's Office	<a href="http://www.sao.state.tx.us/">http://www.sao.state.tx.us/</a>
Supreme Court of Texas	<a href="http://www.supreme.courts.state.tx.us/">http://www.supreme.courts.state.tx.us/</a>
Senate	<a href="http://www.senate.state.tx.us">http://www.senate.state.tx.us</a>
Legislative Council	<a href="http://www.tlc.state.tx.us/">http://www.tlc.state.tx.us/</a>
Historical Commission	<a href="http://www.thc.state.tx.us/">http://www.thc.state.tx.us/</a>
Secretary of State	<a href="http://www.sos.state.tx.us/">http://www.sos.state.tx.us/</a>
Commission on State Emergency Communications	<a href="http://www.911.state.tx.us/">http://www.911.state.tx.us/</a>
Public Utility Commission of Texas	<a href="http://www.puc.state.tx.us/">http://www.puc.state.tx.us/</a>
Parks and Wildlife Department	<a href="http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/">http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/</a>
Texas Lottery Commission	<a href="http://www.txlottery.org">http://www.txlottery.org</a>

Railroad Commission	<a href="http://www.rrc.state.tx.us/">http://www.rrc.state.tx.us/</a>
Office of the Governor	<a href="http://www.governor.state.tx.us/">http://www.governor.state.tx.us/</a>
Comptroller of Public Accounts	<a href="http://www.window.state.tx.us/">http://www.window.state.tx.us/</a>
Texas Workforce Commission	<a href="http://www.twc.state.tx.us/">http://www.twc.state.tx.us/</a>
Department of State Health Services	<a href="http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/">http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/</a>
Department of Transportation	<a href="http://www.dot.state.tx.us/">http://www.dot.state.tx.us/</a>

### ***Research Method***

In order to describe attributes of State of Texas agency websites that support online citizen engagement, it is most appropriate to examine the website itself using content analysis.

Content analysis has the advantage of being relatively low-cost in terms of both time and money and allows for mistakes to be easily corrected (Babbie 2004). Further, content analysis allows for future researchers to build upon this data easily with consistency (Babbie 2004).

However, because this content analysis only involves websites, there are limitations to the study's applicability. For instance, the study does not survey agencies regarding the utilization of specific website attributes. No generalizations can be drawn from this study beyond the descriptive categorization of State of Texas website attributes that the literature has shown to support online citizen engagement.

Any part of a social science research study is prone to human error. This can be due to fatigue, bias, or other factors. It is important to ensure the study's reliability by having a second party independently evaluate a number of the websites and compare those scores to the evaluator's. If a great discrepancy exists, the research design and coding mechanism must be reconsidered. In order to ensure reliability, an independent coder coded three of the sample websites using the same coding sheet as the primary researcher. The independent evaluator's results matched the primary researcher's results exactly. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the primary researcher's findings are reliable.

## *Limitations*

Because of the descriptive nature of this research and time constraints, there are certain limitations to the project that should be understood. First, this research makes no attempt to directly measure citizen engagement, so no causal statements about the relationship between the presence or absence of specific website attributes and citizen engagement can be made based upon this project. Second, the coding tool includes twenty questions, so a tradeoff was made to gather more data with less depth than might have been achieved with fewer questions. Third, no attempt is made to assess the quality of information posted, such as its timeliness or accuracy. Finally, this research project uses descriptive analysis and does not attempt to gauge the state of an agency website against a quantified standard or best practice.

## Operationalization Table

The conceptual framework developed in the literature review chapter is the basis for the Operationalization Table (Table 3.2) and Coding Sheet (Table 3.3).

**Table 3.2: Operationalization Table**

Descriptive Categories		Criteria	Level
<b>1. Design</b>			
Readability (Flesch-Kincaid)	At what reading level is the text on the agency's home page?	Int	
	At what reading level is the text on the agency's FAQ page?	Int	
Foreign Language Access	Does the website offer comparable website content in Spanish?	Ord	
	Does the website offer comparable website content in a language other than English or Spanish?	Ord	
Disability Access	How many errors does the WAVE 4.0 test find for this website?	Ord	
	Does the website have an accessibility statement?	Ord	
<b>2. Transparency</b>			
Agency Mission, Goals, Values	How prominently is the agency's mission statement published on the website?	Ord	
	How prominently is the agency's budget published on the website?	Ord	
	How prominently is the agency's strategic plan published on the website?	Ord	
Official proceedings (Calendar/Minutes)	How prominently is a public calendar of official proceedings published on the website?	Ord	
	How prominently are meeting minutes or agendas published on the website?	Ord	
Contact Information - Personnel	Does the website provide individual contact information for agency employees in specific departments?	Ord	
	Is a toll-free number published on the website?	Nom	

<b>3. Communication</b>			
<b>3a. Informational Communication</b>			
Blogs	Does the agency publish a link to an official agency blog on its website?		Ord
Subscription Service	Does the website provide users with the ability to subscribe to agency updates?		Ord
Multimedia	Does the website contain multimedia clips?		Ord
<b>3b. Relational Communication</b>			
Feedback (Email, polls, surveys)	Does the website provide a feedback mechanism for citizens?		Ord
Forums/Message Boards	Does the website host a discussion forum or message board?		Ord
Social Networking	Does the website have a link to an official social networking site such as Facebook, MySpace, or Twitter?		Nom
	If yes, which site?		Nom

### ***Coding Sheet***

There are twenty unique variables within the Operationalization Table. The specific questions and the coded responses are detailed in the Coding Sheet (Table 3.3).

**Table 3.3: Coding Sheet**

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Coding</b>
1	At what reading level is the text on the agency's home page?	Int	Integer greater than 0
2	At what reading level is the text on the agency's "about" page?	Int	Integer greater than 0
3	Does the website offer comparable website content in Spanish?	Ord	<b>0</b> - Not present, <b>1</b> - Present, but content not comparable, <b>2</b> - Present, identical content
4	Does the website offer comparable website content in a language other than English or Spanish?	Ord	<b>0</b> - Not present, <b>1</b> - Present, but content not comparable, <b>2</b> - Present, identical content
5	How prominently is the agency's mission statement published on the website?	Ord	<b>0</b> - Not present, <b>1</b> - Present, but >2 clicks from homepage, <b>2</b> - Present, within 2 clicks of homepage

6	How many errors does the WAVE 4.0 test find for this website?	Int	Integer greater than or equal to 0
7	How prominently is the agency website accessibility statement published on the website?	Ord	<b>0</b> - Not present, <b>1</b> - Present, but >2 clicks from homepage, <b>2</b> - Present, within 2 clicks of homepage
8	How prominently is the agency's budget published on the website?	Ord	<b>0</b> - Not present, <b>1</b> - Present, but >2 clicks from homepage, <b>2</b> - Present, within 2 clicks of homepage
9	How prominently is the agency's strategic plan published on the website?	Ord	<b>0</b> - Not present, <b>1</b> - Present, but >2 clicks from homepage, <b>2</b> - Present, within 2 clicks of homepage
10	How prominently is a public calendar of official proceedings published on the website?	Ord	<b>0</b> - Not present, <b>1</b> - Present, but >2 clicks from homepage, <b>2</b> - Present, within 2 clicks of homepage
11	How prominently are meeting minutes or agendas published on the website?	Ord	<b>0</b> - Not present, <b>1</b> - Present, but >2 clicks from homepage, <b>2</b> - Present, within 2 clicks of homepage
12	Does the website provide individual contact information for agency employees in specific departments?	Ord	<b>0</b> - Not present, <b>1</b> - Present, only department phone numbers provided, <b>2</b> - Present, department names, contact names, and phone numbers provided
13	Is a toll-free number published on the website?	Nom	<b>0</b> - Not present, <b>1</b> - Present
14	Does the agency publish a link to an official agency blog on its website?	Ord	<b>0</b> - Not present, <b>1</b> - Present, public comments not allowed, <b>2</b> - Present, public comments allowed
15	Does the website provide users with the ability to subscribe to agency updates?	Nom	<b>0</b> - Not present, <b>1</b> - Email newsletter subscription, <b>2</b> - Text message subscription, <b>3</b> - RSS feeds, <b>4</b> - Other
16	Does the website contain multimedia clips?	Ord	<b>0</b> - Not present, <b>1</b> - audio clips, <b>2</b> - video clips, <b>3</b> - audio and video clips
17	Does the website provide a feedback mechanism for citizens?	Ord	<b>0</b> - Not present, <b>1</b> - email or online form, <b>2</b> - poll (one question), <b>3</b> - survey (multiple questions)

18	Does the website host a discussion forum or message board?	Ord	<b>0</b> - Not present, <b>1</b> - Present, public not allowed to initiate thread, <b>2</b> - Present, public allowed to initiate thread
19	Does the website have a link to an official social networking site such as Facebook, MySpace, or Twitter?	Nom	<b>0</b> - Not present, <b>1</b> - Present
20	If yes, which site?	Nom	<b>0</b> - Not applicable, <b>1</b> - Facebook, <b>2</b> - MySpace, <b>3</b> - Twitter, <b>4</b> - Other

### *Variables*

Many of the variables are coded to not only measure whether or not a given element is present on a website, but also how prominently it is displayed. A website is made up of a number of webpages, which can be thought of in tiers. The first tier of a website is the homepage. It is reasonable to expect that higher priority content will be closer to the homepage, but not all content can reside on the homepage. For those variables coded to measure an element’s prominence, the possible responses are that the element is not present; the element is present, but is more than two clicks from the agency’s homepage; or the element is present and is accessible within two clicks of the agency’s homepage.

Questions 1 and 2 are interval level variables that measure the reading level at which the text on the agency’s homepage and the “Frequently Asked Questions” or “About the Agency” page is written. The Flesch-Kincaid scale is the metric by which the reading level is measured using an online reading level calculator (<http://www.addedbytes.com/code/readability-score/>). On the Flesch-Kincaid scale, the reading level score corresponds with a grade level in the American public education system. For example, a score of seven would mean that the text is written at a level that the average seventh grader could comprehend. Scores greater than twelve indicate high school graduation plus additional years of schooling. For example, a score of

sixteen would indicate high school graduation plus four years of higher education. Possible responses are integers greater than zero.

Question 3 is an ordinal variable that measures whether or not the agency's website offers comparable website content in Spanish. Possible responses are that the website is not available in Spanish; the website is available in Spanish, but the website content is not comparable; or the website is available in Spanish, and the website content is comparable. Because the researcher is not fluent in Spanish, the general appearance of the website will be used to determine comparability. For example, if the Spanish-language version of the site is a mirror image, it is reasonable to assume that the content is comparable. If there are significant differences in layout and images presented, or if all that is provided is an online text translator, the content is not comparable.

Question 4 is an ordinal variable that measures whether or not the agency website offers comparable content in a language other than English or Spanish. Possible responses are that the website is not available in a language other than English or Spanish; the website is available in a language other than English or Spanish, but the website content is not comparable; or the website is available in a language other than English or Spanish, and the website content is comparable. Because the researcher is not fluent in languages other than English, the general appearance of the website will be used to determine comparability. For example, if the foreign language version of the site is a mirror image, it is reasonable to assume that the content is comparable. If there are significant differences in layout and images presented, or if all that is provided is an online text translator, the content is not comparable.

Question 5 measures the number of errors detected by the Wave 4.0 test for each individual website. This is an interval-level measurement and will provide an indicator of how

accessible each website is in terms of disability access. Possible responses are any integer greater than or equal to zero.

Question 6 is an ordinal variable that measures the presence of an agency's website disability accessibility statement and how prominently the statement is published on the website. Possible responses include that the statement is not present; the statement is present, but is more than two clicks from the agency's homepage; or the statement is present and is accessible within two clicks of the agency's homepage. The agency's homepage is the site identified in Table 1.

Question 7 is an ordinal variable that measures how prominently the agency's mission statement is published on the website. Possible responses include that the statement is not present; the statement is present, but is more than two clicks from the agency's homepage; or the statement is present and is accessible within two clicks of the agency's homepage. The agency's homepage is the site identified in Table 1.

Question 8 is an ordinal variable that measures how prominently the agency's budget is published on the website. Possible responses include that the statement is not present; the statement is present, but is more than two clicks from the agency's homepage; or the statement is present and is accessible within two clicks of the agency's homepage. The agency's homepage is the site identified in Table 1.

Question 9 is an ordinal variable that measures how prominently the agency's strategic plan is published on the website. Possible responses include that the statement is not present; the statement is present, but is more than two clicks from the agency's homepage; or the statement is present and is accessible within two clicks of the agency's homepage. The agency's homepage is the site identified in Table 1.

Question 10 is an ordinal variable that measures how prominently a public calendar of official proceedings is published on the website. Possible responses include that the statement is not present; the statement is present, but is more than two clicks from the agency's homepage; or the statement is present and is accessible within two clicks of the agency's homepage. The agency's homepage is the site identified in Table 1.

Question 11 is an ordinal variable that measures how prominently agency meeting minutes or agendas are published on the website. Possible responses include that the statement is not present; the statement is present, but is more than two clicks from the agency's homepage; or the statement is present and is accessible within two clicks of the agency's homepage. The agency's homepage is the site identified in Table 1.

Question 12 is an ordinal variable that measures whether or not the website provides individual contact information for agency employees in specific departments. Possible responses include that contact information is not present; contact information is present but only department phone numbers are provided; or contact information is present, and department name and contact names are provided with phone numbers.

Question 13 is a dichotomous nominal-level variable and measures whether or not the agency website has a toll-free phone number published on it. Possible responses are not present or present.

Question 14 is an ordinal level variable that measures whether or not the agency publishes a link to an official agency blog on its website. Possible responses are that a link to a blog is not present; a link is present and public comments are not allowed; or a link is present and public comments are allowed.

Question 15 is a nominal variable that measures which, if any, options an agency website provides users to subscribe to agency updates. Possible responses include that there are no subscription options; email newsletter subscription; text message subscription; RSS feeds; or other. More than one response may be selected.

Question 16 is an ordinal level variable that measures what types of multimedia clips, if any, the website contains. Possible responses include that there are no multimedia clips present; audio clips are present; video clips are present; or both audio and video clips are present.

Question 17 is an ordinal level variable that measures what mechanisms, if any, the website provides for citizens to give feedback. Possible responses are that there are no feedback mechanisms in place on the website; email or online feedback forms are present; single-question polls are present; or multiple-question surveys are present.

Question 18 is an ordinal level variable that measures whether or not the website hosts a discussion forum or message board. Possible responses include that no discussion forum or message board is present; a discussion forum or message board is present, but the public cannot initiate a thread or discussion; or a discussion forum or message board is present and the public is able to initiate a thread or discussion.

Question 19 is a nominal variable that measures whether or not the website has a link to an official social networking site, such as Facebook, MySpace, or Twitter. Possible responses include that a link to a social networking site is either present or not present.

Question 20 is a follow-up question to Question 19 and measures which social networking site, if any, an agency website provides a link to. Possible responses are: not applicable, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, or other. Multiple responses may be selected.

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter presented the population and sample to be described, the rationale behind using content analysis for the description, the operationalization of the conceptual framework, and the coding mechanism. This research design supports the research purpose to describe attributes of State of Texas agency websites that support online citizen engagement.

The next chapter presents the results of the content analysis of attributes of Texas state agency websites that support online citizen engagement.

## Chapter 4 Results

### *Purpose*

The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyze the results of the data collected using the coding protocol outlined in the previous chapter. Examples of best practices and conclusions are presented in the next chapter.

Thirty Texas state agency websites were selected for analysis using a stratified sampling method. One of the thirty agencies selected did not have a website, so only twenty-nine websites were analyzed. Of those twenty-nine, twenty-seven sites are hosted by bureaucratic agencies, one belonged to the Texas Supreme Court, and one to the Texas Senate.

The results for each descriptive category are presented below. The values assigned to each of the selected websites is reported in Appendix A.

### *Design*

Design refers to attributes of government websites that facilitate the ability of the maximum number of users to access government website content. Attention to design is essential because the citizen's ability to access and comprehend content on a government website is fundamental to that citizen's ability to engage with the government agency online.

Government agencies should design websites with the citizen's physical disabilities and reading comprehension in mind because lack of attention to these design features can effectively alienate segments of the public that the website should serve (Government Information Quarterly 2006).

This descriptive category focuses on three specific indicators supported by the literature: *readability*, *foreign language access*, and *disability access*.

## **Readability**

Readability is defined as the reading comprehension level at which website text is written. Readability is important to citizen engagement because if the website text is written above the reading comprehension level of the citizen attempting to access it, the citizen is not able to engage with that agency online. Readability is examined for two key website pages—the “home page” and the “Frequently Asked Questions” page. In circumstances where an agency “Frequently Asked Questions” page is not available, an “About the Agency” page was coded instead. These pages were chosen because it is reasonable to assume that first-time visitors to the site would interact with these pages first. The means and standard deviation are reported in Table 4.1.

According to national statistics, approximately half of Americans read at an eighth grade level or below (West 2008). None of the state websites examined are written at the reading comprehension level of the average American. The State Office of Administrative Hearings website had the lowest reading level and scored a Flesch-Kincaid reading level score of nine. The website with homepage text at the highest reading level was the Pension Review Board, with a Flesch-Kincaid reading level score of 25.7.

The average reading level of text on Texas state agency homepages was 14.19 with a standard deviation of 4.22, indicating a relatively wide distribution of values. Eight of the websites did not contain text other than links on their homepage and were excluded from this calculation (see Table 4.1).

The Secretary of State’s website “Frequently Asked Questions” or “About the Agency” reported the lowest Flesch-Kincaid reading level (6.8) compared to Texas Parks and Wildlife

Department with a score of 19.8 on these pages. The average reading level on these pages was 12.08 with a standard deviation of 3.89, indicating a wide dispersion of values.

These findings suggest that public administrators responsible for writing agency website content are generally not considering text readability as an important design factor. There were no obvious trends in what types of agencies published lower reading level content.

Of the twenty-nine pages analyzed, only 18% contained text below an eighth grade reading level and 61% contained text written at a grade level higher than twelfth grade. Since half of adult Americans read below the eighth grade level, this presents a serious access issue for a large number of citizens and is thus not supportive of online citizen engagement.

<b>Table 4.1: Readability</b>					
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Number of Pages</b>
<b>Home Page</b>	<b>14.19</b>	<b>4.22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>25.7</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>FAQ Page</b>	<b>12.08</b>	<b>3.89</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>28</b>

### **Foreign Language Access**

Agencies can address foreign language access with a variety of approaches. The ideal from the standpoint of maximum access is publishing a mirror version of the webpage in a language other than English. Websites can also be linked to a third party translation site that does an adequate job translating but is not a mirror image. Websites can also provide a link to a foreign language page that provides basic information about the site in a language other than English, but does not provide translation of all of the website’s content. Other sites may provide translating software on the website that allow the user to select a language into which the site is translated (West 2000).

This study examines whether or not website content is available in a language other than English, and if so, how comparable that content is to the English content; these results are presented in Table 4.2.

Forty-eight percent provide content in English only, and 41% provide content in Spanish that is not comparable to the content in English. Only 10% of agencies provide comparable website content in Spanish, meaning that through one mechanism or another, the website provides the same information in the same layout in both English and Spanish. For languages other than English, only 7% provide comparable content.

More than 25% of Texans (5.5 million residents) over the age of five do not speak English well or at all (Shin and Kominski 2010). In Texas, it is reasonable to assume that many of those 5.5 million citizens speak Spanish and do not read English very well if at all.

Nearly 50% of Texas state government websites offer content only in English. This lack of attention to Spanish language users is problematic, but perhaps not surprising. There is an ongoing debate about whether or not English should be the official language of the United States, so it may be that there is not public support for providing government information and services in languages other than English.

<b>Table 4.2: Foreign Language Access</b>			
	<b>Not Present</b>	<b>Present, but not Comparable</b>	<b>Present and Comparable</b>
<b>Spanish</b>	48% (14)	41% (12)	10% (3)
<b>Other Languages</b>	93% (27)	0% (0)	7% (2)

### **Disability Access**

Governments have a legal and ethical obligation to ensure that website design complies with very specific *disability access* standards. The two measures of accessibility used in this

study are the number of accessibility errors detected by the WAVE 4.0 test and the prominence of the agency website accessibility policy, which is measured in terms of the number of clicks from the homepage it takes the user to locate the accessibility policy (see Table 4.3).

Over one third of agency websites had no accessibility errors detected by the WAVE 4.0 test. The average number of errors was approximately three with a standard deviation of 8.31. This indicator is thrown off, though, by the presence of two major outliers. The Office of Public Utility Council homepage contained ten accessibility errors and the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) website contained forty-four errors. Based upon the appearance of the TXDOT website, it seems likely that the site was recently redesigned, and either certain accessibility standards were inadvertently overlooked or have simply not yet been implemented. The errors detected on the page clearly violate the agency accessibility policy published on their website.

The most common error (59%) was missing alternate text for images on the webpage. When coding a website, the developer can insert text that describes images on the page into the code that is not visible on the webpage but that can be read aloud by screen readers for the visually impaired. This provides the visually impaired with information about what images are present on the page. Some webpages have very little text on the homepage, so the absence of alternative text on such webpages provides a serious access issue for the visually impaired. Images on agency websites may communicate certain agency values or convey important information. For example, an image of a map of a program's service area that was not coded with an alternative text tag would communicate the program's service area to a sighted citizen but would provide no information at all to a visually impaired citizen.

The majority (90%) of agencies publish the agency website accessibility statement on the website homepage or within two clicks of the homepage. Coupled with the fact that most (86%) website homepages contained three or fewer accessibility errors, it appears that Texas state agencies have prioritized disability access in website design, which thereby supports online citizen engagement. However, it is important to note that the WAVE 4.0 test and the presence of a website accessibility statement are necessary but not sufficient indicators of website accessibility. Furthermore, only the agency homepage was tested. Future researchers should consider a more comprehensive assessment of State of Texas agency website accessibility.

<b>Table 4.3: Disability Access</b>					
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b># Pages</b>
<b>WAVE 4.0 Errors</b>	2.96	8.31	0	44	28
	<b>Not Present</b>	<b>Present, &gt;2 clicks from homepage</b>		<b>Present, within two clicks of homepage</b>	
<b>Accessibility Statement</b>	10% (3)	0% (0)		90% (26)	

### ***Transparency***

Trust is necessary in order for citizens to engage with government, and a major component of the public’s trust in government is transparency (Gant and Gant 2002).

Transparency is a complex and subjective term, so for the purposes of this project, transparency refers to elements of government websites that are necessary but not sufficient to provide the citizen with confidence in the legitimacy of the website and agency, thereby supporting online citizen engagement.

The degree to which an agency prioritizes transparency can be inferred from the online presence and prominence of certain transparency-promoting agency information, such as the

agency mission statement, strategic plan, and budget; public hearing information; and contact information.

### **Mission, Goals, and Values**

One indicator of transparency includes a clear and focused description of the agency's *mission, goals, and values*. On a website, this can be indicated by the availability of the agency's mission statement, strategic plan, budget, or other policy documents (Holzer et al 2008; Panopoulou et al 2009; Criado and Ramilo 2003; Gant and Gant 2002).

Most (83%) agency websites publish the agency mission statement within two clicks of the homepage. Fewer agencies (69%) publish budget information within two clicks of the homepage, and less than two-thirds publish the agency strategic plan on the website. These findings are summarized in Table 4.4. Goldberg's 2009 assessment of Texas municipal websites found a similar percentage of municipalities posting mission statements online (80%), but far more (83%) municipalities posted budget information online than the Texas state agencies in this study (69%). This may be due to the fact that all agency budget information is available through the Legislative Budget Board (LBB). Agencies may choose not to publish budget information on the agency website because it is thought that if citizens want that information, they can access it through the LBB. While this is technically true, it is a better practice to provide citizens access to transparency-promoting information on the agency's official website rather than require citizens to go hunt for it on another agency website.

<b>Table 4.4: Mission, Goals, and Values</b>			
	<b>Not Present</b>	<b>Present, &gt;2 clicks from homepage</b>	<b>Present, within two clicks of homepage</b>
<b>Mission Statement</b>	17% (5)	0% (0)	83% (24)
<b>Agency Budget</b>	28% (8)	3% (1)	69% (20)
<b>Strategic Plan*</b>	31% (9)	3% (1)	62% (18)

\*Senate website - State Senate does not have a "strategic plan" as it is not an "agency"

### **Public Hearings**

Another important indicator of transparency is the presence of information related to *official proceedings*, including a public calendar and meeting minutes (Holzer et al 2008; Panopoulou et al 2009; Gant and Gant 2002; Goldberg 2009). Sixty-two percent of agencies provide a public calendar within two clicks of the homepage, but only 34% also provide meeting agendas and/or minutes. Differences in whether or not an agency provides a public calendar of official proceedings and meeting agendas or minutes may be due to the nature of the agency's mission. For example, the Supreme Court of Texas publishes a docket calendar online, but because its "official proceedings" are court hearings, "minutes" are not published online.

<b>Table 4.5: Public Hearings</b>			
	<b>Not Present</b>	<b>Present, &gt;2 clicks from homepage</b>	<b>Present, within two clicks of homepage</b>
<b>Calendar</b>	38% (11)	0% (0)	62% (18)
<b>Agenda or Minutes</b>	55% (16)	7% (2)	34% (10)

\*Supreme Court of Texas publishes docket but no "minutes" available for hearings

### **Contact Information**

Much like agency *mission, goals, and values* and *official proceedings* information, availability of *contact information* provides the citizen with confidence in the legitimacy of the website and agency. If the website does not have easily accessible contact information for agency personnel, this places a burden upon the citizen, potentially discouraging future engagement.

Most agencies (76%) do not provide specific names and contact information for agency staff, and 69% do not provide any contact information other than one main agency phone number. In 2000, Solis found that only 24% of Texas state agencies provide a toll-free number. Today, 59% of agencies provide a toll-free number. The increase does indicate progress, but there is still a large percentage (41%) of Texas state agencies that do not provide a toll-free number. This places a burden on low-income citizens for whom long-distance calling is cost prohibitive. These results are summarized in Table 4.6.

<b>Table 4.6: Contact Information</b>			
	<b>Not Present</b>	<b>Present, &gt;2 clicks from homepage</b>	<b>Present, within two clicks of homepage</b>
<b>Specific Employee Contact Information</b>	69% (20)	7% (2)	24% (7)
	<b>Not Present</b>	<b>Present</b>	
<b>Toll-free Number</b>	41% (12)	59% (17)	

## ***Communication***

New technology has the potential to shift the way that governments communicate with citizens online. Online communication falls into two categories: informational, typically one-way communication, and relational communication, characterized by two-way interaction.

### **Informational Online Communication**

Informational online communication is the provision of information on a government website. Because of the diversity of agency purposes, this research focuses on the format in which agency information is provided rather than what kind of information is provided online.

## Blogs

One way in which governments may communicate information online is through the use of *blogs* (Panopoulou et al 2009; Smith 2010; O'Reilly 2005; Kingsley et al 2009; Chang and Kannan 2008). A blog is like an online journal entry that is stored in chronological order. Blogs are typically written in a more informal style than other agency publications might be, which provides an agency administrator with the opportunity to present information in a way to which citizens can relate. As indicated in Table 4.7, none of the agency websites in the sample contained a blog or a link to a blog on a third party website. While it is reasonable to say that state agencies are not usually early adopters of new technology trends, blogs couldn't really be called new or trendy anymore, so it's unlikely that has to do with why no agencies publish a blog. It is more likely a choice by agency administrators due to the informal nature of blogging. It may be that agencies do not prefer to be seen as communicating informally, even though the provision of agency information in an easily approachable format would be supportive of online citizen engagement.

	<b>Not Present</b>	<b>Present, Public Comments not Allowed</b>	<b>Present, Public Comments Allowed</b>
<b>Blogs</b>	100% (29)	0% (0)	0% (0)

## Subscription Services

Another indicator of informational online communication that supports citizen engagement is the presence of online *subscription services* such as email newsletters or RSS feeds (West 2000; Kingsley et al 2009; Holzer et al 2008; Smith 2010; O'Reilly 2005; Golubeva 2007; Chang and Kannan 2008). As indicated in Table 4.8, 55% of websites do not provide any

subscription option, 34% do provide the option of subscribing to email updates, and 21% provide users with the ability to subscribe to agency updates with an RSS feed.

<b>Table 4.8: Subscription Services</b>					
	<b>Not Present</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Text Message</b>	<b>RSS Feeds</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Subscription Services</b>	55% (16)	34% (10)	0% (0)	21% (6)	0% (0)

### Multimedia

Informational online communication is also characterized by the use of *multimedia*, such as video clips or podcasts to provide citizens with information (West 2000; Kingsley et al 2009; Smith 2010; Theofanos and Mulligan 2004; Holzer et al 2008; Chang and Kannan 2008).

Multimedia content provides citizens the opportunity to receive information in a format that is comfortable and engaging to them.

As presented in Table 4.9, the majority (72%) of websites do not publish audio or video clips online. No websites publish only audio clips. Fourteen percent publish only video clips and another 14% publish audio and video clips. Future research might look at why agencies do or do not choose to publish multimedia clips online. Budget restrictions and lack of internal resources may be barriers to use of multimedia content.

<b>Table 4.9: Multimedia</b>				
	<b>Not Present</b>	<b>Audio Clips</b>	<b>Video Clips</b>	<b>Audio and Video Clips</b>
<b>Multimedia</b>	72% (21)	0% (0)	14% (4)	14% (4)

### **Relational Communication**

Relational online communication provides citizens with the opportunity to communicate online with government.

## Feedback

The most basic way in which government can provide an opportunity for citizens to communicate online is through the use of *feedback mechanisms*, such as online surveys, polls, or feedback forms (West 2008; Henriksson et al 2006; Panopoulou et al 2009; Holzer et al 2008; Golubeva 2007; Criado and Ramilo 2003; Gant and Gant 2002). Most agency websites (93%) provide some feedback mechanism. Seventy-six percent invite feedback through an online form or a form that can be emailed to the agency, and 17% publish a survey on the website. These findings imply a reactive approach to citizen feedback rather than a proactive approach. It is encouraging that such a majority of agencies seek feedback online, but this research does not measure what happens with that feedback once a citizen submits it. Future researchers might consider surveying agencies to determine what kind of response (automated or personalized) a citizen receives after submitting feedback and how long it takes the agency to respond.

<b>Table 4.10: Feedback</b>				
	<b>Not Present</b>	<b>Email or Online Form</b>	<b>Poll (One Question)</b>	<b>Survey (Multiple Questions)</b>
<b>Feedback</b>	7% (2)	76% (22)	0% (0)	17% (5)

## Forums/Message Boards

A third indicator of relational online communication is the presence of online forums or message boards on a government website (West 2000, 2008; Smith 2010; Henriksson et al 2006; Panopoulou et al 2009; Holzer et al 2008). The presence of these forums indicates a discretionary choice made by the agency to provide citizens with an opportunity to discuss issues that the citizens find relevant. None of the agencies in this study provided a forum or message board on its website. Future researchers might consider presenting case studies of governmental

entities that host forums or message boards and describe attributes of those entities that contribute to the forum’s success. It may be that forums or message boards may not be appropriate for an individual agency’s purpose. For example, it would be reasonable for an administrator at the Texas Workforce Commission to consider the public benefits of hosting an online message board related to job searches and the costs to the agency associated with records retention and redirection of customer service inquiries to more appropriate channels.

<b>Table 4.11: Forums or Message Boards</b>			
	<b>Not Present</b>	<b>Present, Public not Allowed to Initiate Thread</b>	<b>Present, Public Allowed to Initiate Thread</b>
<b>Forums or Message Boards</b>	100% (29)	0% (0)	0% (0)

Social Networking

One final indicator of relational online communication is an agency’s participation in social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace (Kingsley et al 2009; Smith 2010; Chang and Kannal 2008). Twenty-eight percent of agency websites included a link to an official agency profile on a social networking site. Seven percent of the websites included a link to a Facebook profile, 10% included a link to Twitter, and 10% included a link to another social networking site, such as YouTube, Flickr, or Picasa, which are media sharing sites. No agencies hosted a profile on MySpace, perhaps because that site is most frequently associated with musicians rather than businesses or government. Sites such as Facebook have made a concerted effort to develop and promote ways for businesses, non-profits, and government agencies to use its platform to engage with the public.

<b>Table 4.12: Social Networking</b>					
	<b>Not Present</b>	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>MySpace</b>	<b>Twitter</b>	<b>Other*</b>
<b>Social Networking</b>	72% (21)	7% (2)	0% (0)	10% (3)	10% (3)

*\* YouTube (3), Flickr (2), Picasa (1)*

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter presented and analyzed the results of the content analysis of Texas state agency website attributes that support online citizen engagement. The coding mechanism used to gather these results is based upon a conceptual framework supported by scholarly literature. The next and final chapter will summarize the results, present best practices, and make recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 5 Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the results discussed in Chapter 4, present best practices from those results, and outline recommendations for future research. Public administrators charged with the design, development, and implementation of agency websites can refer to these best practices and should consider incorporating them in order to support online citizen engagement.

### ***Summary of Results***

In brief, this study finds that while most agencies clearly prioritize disability access, there is a general lack of priority given to readability and foreign language access. In addition, while most agencies do publish information about the agency mission, goals, and values and public hearings, few provide contact information for specific employees in agency departments. Regarding online communication, few agencies provide a variety of ways for citizens to access agency information, such as blogs, subscription services, or multimedia. Finally, while most agencies do provide a feedback mechanism for citizens, very few engage citizens through the use of social networking and none host an online forum or message board.

These major findings are summarized with other findings in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1: Summary of Results**  
**Design**

<i>Readability</i>	Very few websites contained text written at or below an 8th grade reading level. The average reading level of the text on both agency homepages and “Frequently Asked Questions” pages is above a twelfth grade reading level.
<i>Foreign Language Access</i>	Most agencies do not provide website content in a language other than English. Those websites that do offer content in languages other than English do not typically provide translated content identical to English content.
<i>Disability Access</i>	Most agencies publish an accessibility policy prominently on the website, and the majority of agency homepages have fewer than three accessibility errors.

**Transparency**

<i>Mission, Goals, Values</i>	Most agencies publish official agency documents, such as mission statement, budget, and strategic plan online and within two clicks of the agency's homepage.
<i>Public Hearings</i>	Most agencies publish an official calendar online, but fewer than half publish meeting agendas or minutes online.
<i>Contact Information</i>	Only 24% of agencies publish individual names and contact information for agency department employees online. Most agencies provide only one main phone number for the agency.

**Communication**

**Informational**

<i>Blogs</i>	No agencies in the sample publish an official agency blog.
<i>Subscription Services</i>	Most agencies do not provide any subscription options; of those that do, most offer email subscription and a few offer RSS feeds.
<i>Multimedia</i>	Nearly three-fourths of agencies do not publish audio or video clips. Those that do either publish video clips only (14%) or audio (podcasts) and video clips (14%).

**Relational**

<i>Feedback</i>	Most agencies provide an opportunity for citizens to submit feedback, usually through an online form or emailed form. Some websites publish a feedback survey. Surveys were typically either customer service surveys or website feedback surveys.
<i>Forums or Message Boards</i>	No agencies in the sample host an online forum or message board.
<i>Social Networking</i>	Nearly three-fourths of agencies do not publish a link to an official social networking profile. Those that did have profiles most commonly on Facebook or Twitter, and a few also had profiles on YouTube, Flickr, or Picasa.

## ***Best Practices***

The purpose of this section is to present examples of some of the best practices identified through this research project in order to advance the adoption of website characteristics that support online citizen engagement. It is important to note that the purpose of this research project is to describe attributes of State of Texas agency websites that support online citizen engagement, not to gauge individual websites against a practical ideal type. The best practices presented in this section are examples of website features that support online citizen engagement.

Some agency websites stood out as examples of best practices for specific indicators, but interestingly, no single website included all of the attributes that support online citizen engagement. For example, the Texas Department of Transportation engages citizens on more social networking sites than other agencies, but had the highest number of accessibility errors on its homepage.

### **Best Practices: Design**

#### **Readability**

Since over half of Americans read at below an eighth grade reading level, a practice supportive of citizen engagement would be for state agencies to publish website content written at below an eighth grade reading level.

Most agencies published text written well above an eighth grade reading level. The State Office of Administrative Hearings had the lowest reading level text on its homepage.

The following is an excerpt from the SOAH homepage:

*SOAH has proposed rules implementing the requirements of H.B. 2256 regarding health benefit claim disputes. The proposed rules are also located in Volume 35 of the Texas Register, p. 3562, May 7, 2010.*

### Foreign Language Access

A significant number of citizens cannot speak English well or at all; therefore, providing comparable website content in languages other than English is a best practice that should be considered by public administrators responsible for website design and development.

The Office of Public Utility Council is one of the only websites to offer mirror site translation into multiple languages other than English. The Google Translate Tool is embedded in the agency's homepage and allows the user to choose one of many languages into which the page is translated. Figure 5.1 shows an example of the Google Translate Tool embedded into the Texas Office of Public Utility Council website.

Figure 5.1: Office of Public Utility Counsel

**Texas Office of Public Utility Counsel**

Home About Us Publications Resources Complaints Media Center Employment Contact Us

**POWER UP!**

Electricity Basics  
Regulatory Agencies  
ERCOT  
How to Shop for Electric Rates  
Shop for Electric Rates  
Retail Electric Provider Scorecard  
How Electric Choice Works  
Electric Customer Low-Income Assistance  
Find Telephone Services

**Welcome**

Thank you for visiting the home page of the Texas Office of Public Utility Counsel. The goal of this website is to provide useful information and resources related to residential and small commercial electric and telephone utilities in a clear, concise, and user-friendly format.

With so much happening in the world of electricity and telecommunications, it's important to stay informed on the issues affecting you, your family, and your business. We strive to provide the most up-to-date information available in order to inform, assist, and protect Texans with regards to the electric and telecommunications industries.

**New!! OUPC NEWS**

Chinese (Simplified)  
Chinese (Traditional)  
Croatian  
Czech  
Danish  
**Dutch**  
Estonian  
Filipino  
Finnish  
French  
Galician  
German  
Greek  
Haitian Creole  
Hebrew  
Hindi  
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## Disability Access

State agencies are under legal and ethical obligations to provide access to website content for disabled citizens. Best practices include ensuring zero accessibility errors and publishing the agency website accessibility statement prominently on the website.

Many agency sites had zero accessibility errors and published the agency website accessibility statement prominently. These include:

Bond Review Board	<a href="http://www.brb.state.tx.us">www.brb.state.tx.us</a>
Pension Review Board	<a href="http://www.prb.state.tx.us">www.prb.state.tx.us</a>
State Commission on Judicial Conduct	<a href="http://www.scjc.state.tx.us">www.scjc.state.tx.us</a>
Office of Public Insurance Counsel	<a href="http://www.opic.state.tx.us">www.opic.state.tx.us</a>
Office of Public Utility Counsel	<a href="http://www.opc.state.tx.us">www.opc.state.tx.us</a>
Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending	<a href="http://www.sml.state.tx.us">www.sml.state.tx.us</a>
State Office of Administrative Hearings	<a href="http://www.saoh.state.tx.us">www.saoh.state.tx.us</a>
State Auditor's Office	<a href="http://www.sao.state.tx.us">www.sao.state.tx.us</a>
Public Utility Commission of Texas	<a href="http://www.puc.state.tx.us">www.puc.state.tx.us</a>
Comptroller of Public Accounts	<a href="http://www.cpa.state.tx.us">www.cpa.state.tx.us</a>
Texas Workforce Commission	<a href="http://www.twc.state.tx.us">www.twc.state.tx.us</a>

## **Best Practices: Transparency**

### Mission, Goals, Values

Transparency promotes trust in government, which in turn supports citizen engagement, so publishing transparency-promoting documents online promotes online citizen engagement.

Some agencies publish multiple transparency-promoting documents online. Those that prominently (within two clicks of the homepage) publish the agency mission statement, budget, and strategic plan include:

Bond Review Board	<a href="http://www.brb.state.tx.us">www.brb.state.tx.us</a>
Pension Review Board	<a href="http://www.prb.state.tx.us">www.prb.state.tx.us</a>
Office of Public Insurance Counsel	<a href="http://www.opic.state.tx.us">www.opic.state.tx.us</a>
Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education	<a href="http://www.tcleose.state.tx.us">www.tcleose.state.tx.us</a>
Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending	<a href="http://www.sml.state.tx.us">www.sml.state.tx.us</a>
Securities Board	<a href="http://www.ssb.state.tx.us">www.ssb.state.tx.us</a>

Office of Injured Employee Counsel	www.oiec.state.tx.us
State Office of Administrative Hearings	www.soah.state.tx.us
Racing Commission	www.trc.state.tx.us
Animal Health Commission	www.tahc.state.tx.us
Public Utility Commission of Texas	www.puc.state.tx.us
Parks and Wildlife Department	www.tpwd.state.tx.us
Railroad Commission	www.rrc.state.tx.us
Texas Workforce Commission	www.twc.state.tx.us
Department of State Health Services	www.dshs.state.tx.us
Department of Transportation	www.dot.state.tx.us

## Public Hearings

Ten agencies publish both a public calendar and meeting agendas and minutes online.

One example is the Railroad Commission of Texas. The RRC publishes open meeting schedules as well as the agenda for each meeting and meeting minutes. Figure 5.2 illustrates the RRC's Open Meeting webpage, which includes the meeting date, agenda (under Additional Information) and meeting minutes.

**Figure 5.2: Railroad Commission of Texas**

The screenshot shows the Railroad Commission of Texas website page for 'Commission Open Meeting Agendas'. The page includes a navigation menu on the left with categories like 'About the Agency', 'Compliance & Enforcement', 'Data & Statistics', 'Doing Business with the RRC', 'Education & Training', 'Safety', 'Public Awareness & Involvement', 'Environmental Services', 'Forms, Maps & Publications', and 'Meetings, Hearings, Orders & Rules'. The main content area is titled 'Commission Open Meeting Agendas' and is updated as of 10/26/10. It contains a table of meeting dates and agendas for 2010, from January to October. The table has columns for Date, Additional Information, Minutes, Date, Additional Information, and Minutes. The meetings listed are for January 12, 2010 (cancelled), January 26, 2010, February 9, 2010, February 23, 2010, March 9, 2010 (cancelled), and March 23, 2010. Each meeting entry includes links to 'Part I', 'Part II', and 'Part III' of the agenda, and a link to the 'Minutes'.

Date	Additional Information	Minutes	Date	Additional Information	Minutes
January 12, 2010	<a href="#">Part I</a> <a href="#">Part II</a> <a href="#">Part III</a>	<a href="#">Minutes</a>	July 20, 2010	Cancelled	
January 26, 2010	<a href="#">Part I</a> <a href="#">Part II</a>	<a href="#">Minutes</a>	August 10, 2010	<a href="#">Part I</a> <a href="#">Part II</a> <a href="#">Part III</a>	<a href="#">Minutes</a>
February 9, 2010	<a href="#">Part I</a> <a href="#">Part II</a>	<a href="#">Minutes</a>	August 24, 2010	<a href="#">Part I</a> <a href="#">Part II</a> <a href="#">Part III</a> <a href="#">Part IV</a>	<a href="#">Minutes</a>
February 23, 2010	<a href="#">Part I</a> <a href="#">Part II</a>	<a href="#">Minutes</a>	August 30, 2010	<a href="#">Part I</a>	<a href="#">Minutes</a>
March 9, 2010	<a href="#">Part I</a> <a href="#">Part II</a>	<a href="#">Minutes</a>	September 7, 2010	Cancelled	
March 23, 2010	<a href="#">Part I</a> <a href="#">Part II</a>	<a href="#">Minutes</a>	September 14, 2010	<a href="#">Part I</a> <a href="#">Part II</a>	<a href="#">Minutes</a>

## Contact Information

Another transparency-promoting website attribute that supports online citizen engagement is the availability of contact information for specific agency department staff and the presence of a toll-free phone number option for citizens.

Only three agencies publish both a toll-free agency phone number and specific contact information for department staff. These include the Animal Health Commission, Texas Workforce Commission, and the Texas Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending. Figure 5.3 illustrates the Texas Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending's staff directory.

**Figure 5.3: Texas Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending**



## **Best Practices: Communication**

### Informational Communication

#### **Blogs**

No agencies in the sample publish an official blog. Administrators interested in supporting online citizen engagement should consider exploring the use of a blog to provide citizens access to agency information in an informal, easily approachable format.

## Subscription Services

Different citizens may prefer different formats in which to receive agency updates. In order to support online citizen engagement, agencies should consider these differing preferences and offer subscriptions to agency updates in a variety of formats, such as RSS feeds, email, or text message.

Only three agencies offer multiple subscription options to citizens. These three are the Office of Public Utility Council, the Office of the Governor, and the Texas Historical Commission. The orange “Subscribe” button at the top of Figure 5.4 illustrates the Texas Historical Commission’s use of RSS feeds.

Figure 5.4: Texas Historical Commission

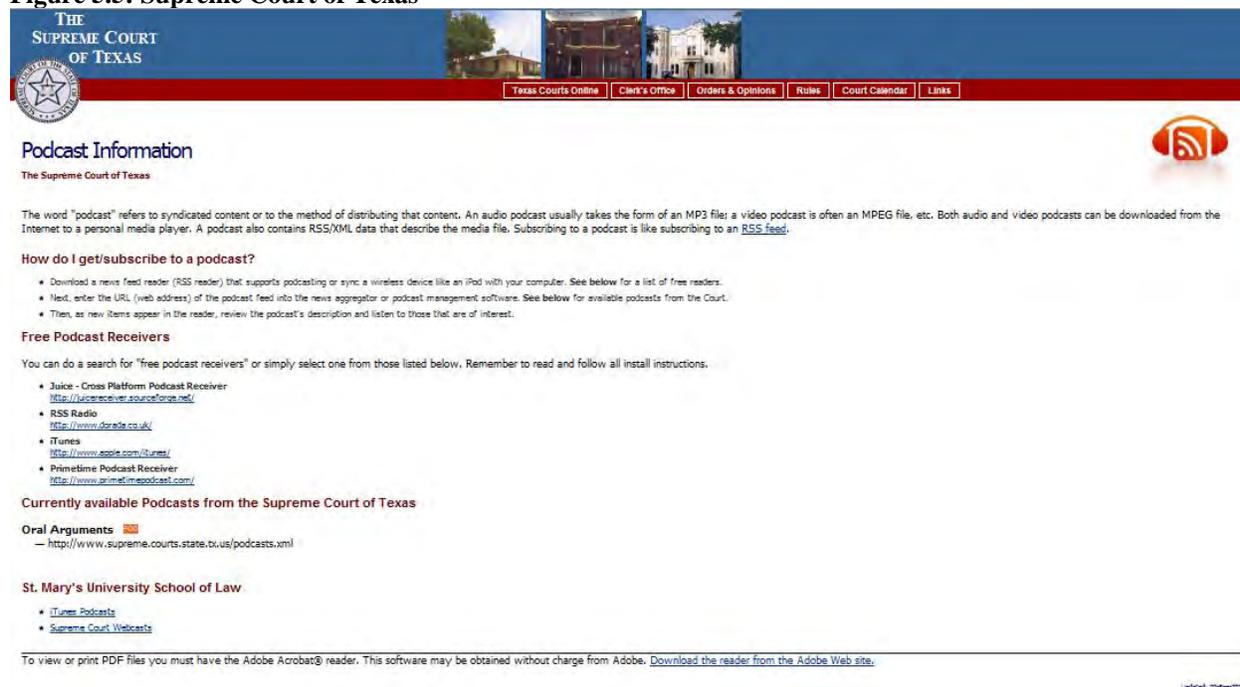
The screenshot displays the Texas Historical Commission website. At the top, the header reads "TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION" in white text on a black background. Below the header is a navigation bar with a prominent orange "SUBSCRIBE" button and links for Home, About Us, Calendar, Friends of the THC, Jobs, News, Store, and The Medallion. A left-hand navigation menu lists various services such as Atlas, Archeology, Cemeteries, and Courthouses. The main content area features a large photograph of the Fayette County Courthouse with a crowd of people in front. Below the photo are three promotional banners: "FALL WORKSHOPS for Texas Museums", "TEXAS ARCHEOLOGY MONTH" with an image of an artifact, and "AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT". At the bottom, there is a search bar, a "Sign up for Our Email Newsletter" form with an email input field and a "Go" button, and a footer with contact information and the tagline "real places telling real stories".

## Multimedia

Citizens may also have differing preferences regarding how to consume agency information on the agency website. A best practice for administrators who seek to support online citizen engagement is the use of various multimedia formats, such as audio and video clips, for publishing agency information.

Three agencies publish both audio clips (podcasts) and video clips online. One of these is the Supreme Court of Texas, which not only publishes multimedia content, but it also explains how to access. Figure 5.5 illustrates the Supreme Court of Texas' webpage dedicated to audio and video content.

Figure 5.5: Supreme Court of Texas



The screenshot shows the 'Podcast Information' page of the Supreme Court of Texas website. The page features a blue header with the court's name and a navigation bar with links for 'Texas Courts Online', 'Clerk's Office', 'Orders & Opinions', 'Rules', 'Court Calendar', and 'Links'. Below the header, there is a section titled 'Podcast Information' with a sub-header 'The Supreme Court of Texas'. The main content area explains the concept of a podcast and provides instructions on how to get or subscribe to a podcast. It lists several free podcast receivers, including Juice, RSS Radio, iTunes, and Primitime. The page also lists currently available podcasts from the Supreme Court of Texas, specifically 'Oral Arguments' and 'St. Mary's University School of Law'. At the bottom, there is a footer with a note about PDF files and a small logo.

**Podcast Information**  
The Supreme Court of Texas

The word "podcast" refers to syndicated content or to the method of distributing that content. An audio podcast usually takes the form of an MP3 file; a video podcast is often an MPEG file, etc. Both audio and video podcasts can be downloaded from the Internet to a personal media player. A podcast also contains RSS/XML data that describe the media file. Subscribing to a podcast is like subscribing to an [RSS feed](#).

**How do I get/subscribe to a podcast?**

- Download a news feed reader (RSS reader) that supports podcasting or sync a wireless device like an iPod with your computer. See below for a list of free readers.
- Next, enter the URL (web address) of the podcast feed into the news aggregator or podcast management software. See below for available podcasts from the Court.
- Then, as new items appear in the reader, review the podcast's description and listen to those that are of interest.

**Free Podcast Receivers**

You can do a search for "free podcast receivers" or simply select one from those listed below. Remember to read and follow all install instructions.

- Juice - Cross Platform Podcast Receiver  
<http://juicereceiver.sourceforge.net/>
- RSS Radio  
<http://www.dgrade.co.uk/>
- iTunes  
<http://www.apple.com/itunes/>
- Primitime Podcast Receiver  
<http://www.primitime-podcast.com/>

**Currently available Podcasts from the Supreme Court of Texas**

**Oral Arguments**   
— <http://www.supreme.courts.state.tx.us/podcasts.xml>

**St. Mary's University School of Law**

- [iTunes Podcasts](#)
- [Supreme Court Webcasts](#)

To view or print PDF files you must have the Adobe Acrobat® reader. This software may be obtained without charge from Adobe. [Download the reader from the Adobe Web site.](#)

Updated: 09-09-2008

## Relational Communication

### Feedback

Agencies that seek citizen feedback support online citizen engagement by helping the citizen feel heard; best practices include the solicitation of citizen feedback through email or online forms, online polls, or online surveys.

Five agencies publish surveys soliciting feedback from citizens; one of these is the Secretary of State's office. The SOS publishes a link to an online customer service survey on its homepage. Figure 5.6 is a screenshot of the Secretary of State online customer service survey.

Figure 5.6: Texas Secretary of State



### Secretary of State Customer Satisfaction Survey

**My Responses are for:**

- Corporations  Elections  Border Affairs  
 Statutory Documents (includes Notaries Public and Service of Process)  
 Texas Register  Uniform Commercial Code  Not Applicable

**I. GENERAL/OVERALL:**

Overall, I am satisfied with the services I received.

- strongly agree  agree  neutral  disagree  strongly disagree  not applicable

If I had other options, I would still choose to get services from this agency/institution.

- strongly agree  agree  neutral  disagree  strongly disagree  not applicable

Overall, I am satisfied with my experience.

## **Forums or Message Boards**

The presence of forums or message boards on an agency website would indicate a discretionary choice made by the agency to provide citizens with an opportunity to discuss issues that the citizens find relevant.

No agencies in the sample host a public forum or message board.

## **Social Networking**

Social networking is emerging as a new way agencies can support online citizen engagement. Eight agency websites included a link to an official agency presence on a social networking site such as Facebook or Twitter. Because social networking is a relatively new technology for state agencies to use and the many barriers to social networking in public administration, this finding is somewhat surprising. Future researchers should consider studying what attributes of state agencies make them more or less likely to engage citizens through social networking. Case studies of agencies that have successfully implemented social networking strategies would also be useful.

Interestingly, the announcement of a new social media presence for the Animal Health Commission was made just three hours before the AHC website was coded and analyzed. Figures 5.7 and 5.8 are screenshots of the Animal Health Commission website and Facebook page.

Figure 5.7: Texas Animal Health Commission



Figure 5.8: Texas Animal Health Commission Facebook Page



### Recommendations for Future Research

This research project is limited in scope for a number of reasons. Future researchers may consider using a survey to measure citizen satisfaction with specific website attributes or citizen

prioritization of website attributes. A survey of state agencies could also reveal the actual utilization of specific website attributes. Further, because it is relatively new, few agencies engage citizens through the use of social networking sites. Future researchers may consider doing a case study of early adopting agencies, such as those agencies identified in this study as engaging in social networking.

The coding mechanism used in this project could also be retooled to allow the researcher to analyze the quality of information posted rather than just the prominence of the information. For example, the researcher might look to see how frequently an agency posts information on its social networking profile or how timely the agency updates on the homepage are.

Finally, future researchers might also consider simply re-using the coding mechanism used in this applied research project in order to see how the attributes of Texas state agency websites that support online citizen engagement change over time.

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Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	Website	1 - Raw	1 - Coded	2 - Raw	2 - Coded
Commission on Uniform State Laws	NONE				
Bond Review Board	<a href="http://www.brb.state.tx.us/">http://www.brb.state.tx.us/</a>	10.1	10.1	10.7	10.7
Pension Review Board	<a href="http://www.prb.state.tx.us/">http://www.prb.state.tx.us/</a>	25.7	25.7	15.6	15.6
State Commission on Judicial Conduct	<a href="http://www.scjc.state.tx.us/">http://www.scjc.state.tx.us/</a>	12.6	12.6	No FAQ or About the Agency page	XX
Office of Public Insurance Counsel	<a href="http://www.opic.state.tx.us/">http://www.opic.state.tx.us/</a>	9.8	9.8	18	18
Office of Public Utility Counsel	<a href="http://www.opc.state.tx.us/">http://www.opc.state.tx.us/</a>	15	15	7.9	7.9
Sunset Commission	<a href="http://www.sunset.state.tx.us/">http://www.sunset.state.tx.us/</a>	15.3	15.3	8.7	8.7
Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education	<a href="http://www.tcleose.state.tx.us/">http://www.tcleose.state.tx.us/</a>	11.4	11.4	7	7
Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending	<a href="http://www.sml.state.tx.us/">http://www.sml.state.tx.us/</a>	No text on homepage other than links	xx	13.8	13.8
Securities Board	<a href="http://www.ssb.state.tx.us/">http://www.ssb.state.tx.us/</a>	12.2	12.2	17	17
Office of Injured Employee Counsel	<a href="http://www.oiec.state.tx.us/">http://www.oiec.state.tx.us/</a>	15.9	15.9	15.3	15.3

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	Website	1 - Raw	1 - Coded	2 - Raw	2 - Coded
State Office of Administrative Hearings	<a href="http://www.soah.state.tx.us/">http://www.soah.state.tx.us/</a>	9	9	13.4 had to use About Rick Perry	13.4
Racing Commission	<a href="http://www.txrc.state.tx.us/">http://www.txrc.state.tx.us/</a>	14.6	14.6	7.4	7.4
Animal Health Commission	<a href="http://www.tahc.state.tx.us/">http://www.tahc.state.tx.us/</a>	12.3	12.3	13.8	13.8
State Auditor's Office	<a href="http://www.sao.state.tx.us/">http://www.sao.state.tx.us/</a>	20.9	20.9	12.8	12.8
Supreme Court of Texas	<a href="http://www.supreme.courts.state.tx.us/">http://www.supreme.courts.state.tx.us/</a>	10.5	10.5	12.9	12.9
Senate	<a href="http://www.senate.state.tx.us">http://www.senate.state.tx.us</a>	11.5	11.5	15	15
Legislative Council	<a href="http://www.tlc.state.tx.us/">http://www.tlc.state.tx.us/</a>	19.2	19.2	7.4	7.4
Historical Commission	<a href="http://www.thc.state.tx.us/">http://www.thc.state.tx.us/</a>	No text on homepage other than links	xx	16.4	16.4
Secretary of State	<a href="http://www.sos.state.tx.us/">http://www.sos.state.tx.us/</a>	14.7	14.7	6.8	6.8
Commission on State Emergency Communications	<a href="http://www.911.state.tx.us/">http://www.911.state.tx.us/</a>	15.4	15.4	16.4	16.4
Public Utility Commission of Texas	<a href="http://www.puc.state.tx.us/">http://www.puc.state.tx.us/</a>	No text on homepage other than links	xx	7.9	7.9

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	Website	1 - Raw	1 - Coded	2 - Raw	2 - Coded
Parks and Wildlife Department	<a href="http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/">http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/</a>	No text on homepage other than links	XX	19.8	19.8
Texas Lottery Commission	<a href="http://www.txlottery.org">http://www.txlottery.org</a>	No text on homepage other than links	XX	10.3	10.3
Railroad Commission	<a href="http://www.rrc.state.tx.us/">http://www.rrc.state.tx.us/</a>	19.2	19.2	16.4	16.4
Office of the Governor	<a href="http://www.governor.state.tx.us/">http://www.governor.state.tx.us/</a>	12.6	12.6	9.8	9.8
Comptroller of Public Accounts	<a href="http://www.window.state.tx.us/">http://www.window.state.tx.us/</a>	No text on homepage other than links	XX	9.5	9.5
Texas Workforce Commission	<a href="http://www.twc.state.tx.us/">http://www.twc.state.tx.us/</a>	No text on homepage other than links	XX	9.4	9.4
Department of State Health Services	<a href="http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/">http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/</a>	10	10	14.3	14.3
Department of Transportation	<a href="http://www.dot.state.tx.us/">http://www.dot.state.tx.us/</a>	No text on homepage other than links	XX	14.6	14.6

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	3 - Raw	3 - Coded	4 - Raw	4 - Coded
Commission on Uniform State Laws				
Bond Review Board	No	0	No	0
Pension Review Board	No	0	No	0
State Commission on Judicial Conduct	Yes, but limited pages in Spanish, not comparable	1	No	0
Office of Public Insurance Counsel	Link to Google Translate with instructions in Spanish	1	No	0
Office of Public Utility Counsel	No	0	No	0
Sunset Commission	No	0	No	0
Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education	Yes, identical webpages (all) in Spanish	2	No	0
Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending	No	0	No	0
Securities Board	No	0	No	0
Office of Injured Employee Counsel	Link to "Informacion en Espanol" on Homepage directs to a general overview page in Spanish. Not a mirror site.	1	No	0

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	3 - Raw	3 - Coded	4 - Raw	4 - Coded
State Office of Administrative Hearings	No	0	No	0
Racing Commission	No	0	No	0
Animal Health Commission	Yes, but only one page is in Spanish, not comparable content	1	No	0
State Auditor's Office	Google Translate Utility Installed, provides mirror site in Spanish	2	Google Translate Utility Installed, provides mirror site in Multiple Languages	2
Supreme Court of Texas	No	0	No	0
Senate	Yes, but only one page is in Spanish, not comparable content	1	No	0
Legislative Council	Yes, there is an uncomparable Spanish language page but there is also a translate tool that translates the site into multiple other languages, including Spanish	2	Yes, there is an uncomparable Spanish language page but there is also a translate tool that translates the site into multiple other languages, including Spanish	2
Historical Commission	No	0	No	0
Secretary of State	No	0	No	0
Commission on State Emergency Communications	Yes, but only one page is in Spanish, not comparable content	1	No	0
Public Utility Commission of Texas	No	0	No	0

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	3 - Raw	3 - Coded	4 - Raw	4 - Coded
Parks and Wildlife Department	Yes, but only one page is in Spanish, not comparable content	1	No	0
Texas Lottery Commission	No	0	No	0
Railroad Commission	No	0	No	0
Office of the Governor	Yes, but only one page is in Spanish, not comparable content	1	No	0
Comptroller of Public Accounts	Yes, but only some pages are translated, not comparable	1	No	0
Texas Workforce Commission	Yes, but limited pages in Spanish, not comparable	1	No	0
Department of State Health Services	Yes, but limited pages in Spanish, not comparable	1	No	0
Department of Transportation	Yes, but limited pages in Spanish, not comparable	1	No	0

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	5 - Raw	5 - Coded	6 - Raw	6 - Coded
Commission on Uniform State Laws				
Bond Review Board	0	0	Linked on Homepage	2
Pension Review Board	2 errors: Marquee (scrolling text) and a form label missing	2	Linked on Homepage	2
State Commission on Judicial Conduct	1 empty link	1	Link one click from homepage	2
Office of Public Insurance Counsel	0	0	Linked on Homepage	2
Office of Public Utility Counsel	10 Errors: 1 Orphaned form label and 9 images missing alt text	10	Linked on Homepage	2
Sunset Commission	4 errors: 1 form label missing, 1 empty link, 2 alternative text labels missing	4	Linked on Homepage	2
Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education	1 - Form label missing	1	Not available	0
Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending	1 - Form label missing	1	Linked on Homepage	2
Securities Board	WAVE unable to process page	XX	Link one click from homepage	2
Office of Injured Employee Counsel	0	0	Linked on Homepage	2

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	5 - Raw	5 - Coded	6 - Raw	6 - Coded
State Office of Administrative Hearings	3 Errors: 2 form labels missing, one image missing alt text	3	Linked on Homepage	2
Racing Commission	1 - Form label missing	1	Linked on Homepage	2
Animal Health Commission	1 - Empty link	1	Linked on Homepage	2
State Auditor's Office	0	0	Linked on Homepage	2
Supreme Court of Texas	0	0	Not available	0
Senate	2 - Form labels missing	2	Linked on Homepage	2
Legislative Council	4 Errors: 1 empty heading, 3 empty links	4	Linked on Homepage	2
Historical Commission	1 - Image missing alt text	1	Not available	0
Secretary of State	1 empty link	1	Link one click from homepage	2
Commission on State Emergency Communications	0	0	Link one click from homepage	2
Public Utility Commission of Texas	0	0	Linked on Homepage	2

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	5 - Raw	5 - Coded	6 - Raw	6 - Coded
Parks and Wildlife Department	0	0	Linked on Homepage	2
Texas Lottery Commission	3 Errors: 2 form labels missing, one image missing alt text	3	Link one click from homepage	2
Railroad Commission	0	0	Linked on Homepage	2
Office of the Governor	2 Errors: 1 form label missing, one image missing alt text	2	Linked on Homepage	2
Comptroller of Public Accounts	2 Errors: 1 form label missing, one empty link	2	Linked on Homepage	2
Texas Workforce Commission	0	0	Linked on Homepage	2
Department of State Health Services	0	0	Linked on Homepage	2
Department of Transportation	44 Errors: 34 Alt text missing links, 8 images missing alt text, 2 form labels missing	44	Linked on Homepage	2

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	7 - Raw	7 - Coded	8 - Raw	8 - Coded
Commission on Uniform State Laws				
Bond Review Board	Mission Statement published on homepage.	2	Link to LAR and Operating Budget one click from homepage	2
Pension Review Board	Mission Statement in Strategic Plan, 2 clicks from Homepage	2	Link to FY10-11 Legislative Appropriations Request 2 clicks from Homepage	2
State Commission on Judicial Conduct	Mission statement on homepage	2	Link to LAR and financial reports on homepage	2
Office of Public Insurance Counsel	Text on Homepage	2	Link to "Where the Money Goes" on Homepage. Link to FY10 Operating Budget 2 clicks away	2
Office of Public Utility Counsel	No "mission statement" but purpose of court is described clearly on homepage.	2	Link to LAR and Operating Budget on Homepage	2
Sunset Commission	Link to Mission Statement on Homepage	2	Link to Operating Budgets, LARs and Fiscal Reports 1 click from Homepage	2
Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education	No mission statement and no "about" page to substitute	0	No link to financial information on website	0
Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending	Mission Statement published on homepage.	2	Link to Where the Money Goes on Homepage, LAR one click from homepage	2
Securities Board	Mission Statement one click from homepage	2	Link to Operating Budget and LARs one click from homepage	2
Office of Injured Employee Counsel	Link to Mission Statement on Homepage	2	Link to FY11 Operating Budget on Homepage	2

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	7 - Raw	7 - Coded	8 - Raw	8 - Coded
State Office of Administrative Hearings	Mission Statement not linked on Website	0	No link to financial information on website	0
Racing Commission	Mission Statement in Strategic Plan, linked on homepage	2	Link to Operating Budget and LARs one click from homepage	2
Animal Health Commission	Mission Statement not linked on Website	0	No link to financial information on website	0
State Auditor's Office	Link to Mission Statement on Homepage	2	Link to "Where the Money Goes" on Homepage, Operating Budget not Published on Website	0
Supreme Court of Texas	Mission Statement not linked on Website	0	Link to "Where the Money Goes" on Homepage. Link to Operating Budget not on Website	0
Senate	Link to Mission Statement on Homepage	2	Expenditure report linked on homepage	2
Legislative Council	Mission Statement in Strategic Plan 1 click from homepage	2	Link to LAR one click from homepage	2
Historical Commission	Mission Statement not linked on Website	0	No link to financial information on website	0
Secretary of State	Link to Mission Statement one click from homepage	2	Link to LAR 1 click from homepage	2
Commission on State Emergency Communications	Mission Statement one click from homepage	2	No link to financial information on website	0
Public Utility Commission of Texas	Mission Statement in Strategic Plan, 1 click from Homepage	2	Link to "Where the Money Goes" on Homepage. Link to FY10 Operating Budget 1 click away	2

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	7 - Raw	7 - Coded	8 - Raw	8 - Coded
Parks and Wildlife Department	Mission Statement in Strategic Plan 1 click from homepage	2	Link to LAR and proposed FY11 budget one click from Homepage	2
Texas Lottery Commission	Mission statement in strategic plan, one click from homepage	2	No link to financial information on website	0
Railroad Commission	Link to Mission Statement on Homepage	2	Link to LAR and financial statements one click from homepage	2
Office of the Governor	Link to Mission Statement two clicks from Homepage	2	Link to LAR and financial reports 2 clicks from homepage	2
Comptroller of Public Accounts	Link to Mission statement 2 clicks from homepage	2	Financial information 3 clicks from homepage	1
Texas Workforce Commission	Mission Statement in Strategic Plan 1 click from homepage	2	Financial Information (LAR) 1 click from homepage	2
Department of State Health Services	Mission statement in strategic plan two clicks from homepage	2	Financial information 2 clicks from homepage	2
Department of Transportation	Link to MissionStatement one click from homepage	2	Link to financial information 2 clicks from homepage	2

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	9 - Raw	9 - Coded	10 - Raw	10 - Coded
Commission on Uniform State Laws				
Bond Review Board	Link to Strategic Plan one Click from Homepage	2	Docket published one click from homepage	2
Pension Review Board	Link to Strategic Plan two Clicks from Homepage	2	No Calendar Published on Website	0
State Commission on Judicial Conduct	Strategic Plan 1 click from homepage	2	Link to Calendar 1 click from Homepage	2
Office of Public Insurance Counsel	Link two clicks from Homepage.	2	Link to Calendar 1 click from Homepage	2
Office of Public Utility Counsel	Strategic Plan not Published on Website	0	Link to Calendar on Homepage	2
Sunset Commission	Link to Strategic Plan one Click from Homepage	2	Meeting schedule published but not labeled clearly, labeled as "commissioner's corner" on homepage	2
Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education	Not applicable	XX	Link to multiple calendars on homepage	2
Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending	Link to Strategic Plan one Click from Homepage	2	No Calendar Published on Website	0
Securities Board	Link to Strategic Plan on homepage	2	Link to Calendar on Homepage	2
Office of Injured Employee Counsel	Strategic Plan not Published on Website	0	No Calendar Published on Website	0

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	9 - Raw	9 - Coded	10 - Raw	10 - Coded
State Office of Administrative Hearings	Strategic Plan not Published on Website	0	No Calendar Published on Website	0
Racing Commission	Link to Strategic Plan on homepage	2	Link to Calendar on Homepage	2
Animal Health Commission	Strategic Plan not Published on Website	0	No Calendar Published on Website	0
State Auditor's Office	Strategic Plan not Published on Website	0	Link to Calendar on Homepage	2
Supreme Court of Texas	Strategic Plan not Published on Website	0	Link to Calendar on Homepage	2
Senate	Strategic Plan not Published on Website	0	Link to Calendar on Homepage	2
Legislative Council	Link to Strategic Plan one Click from Homepage	2	No Calendar Published on Website	0
Historical Commission	Strategic Plan not Published on Website	0	No Calendar Published on Website	0
Secretary of State	Link to Strategic plan 1 click from homepage	2	Link to Calendar 1 click from Homepage	2
Commission on State Emergency Communications	Strategic Plan not Published on Website	0	No Calendar Published on Website	0
Public Utility Commission of Texas	Link one click from Homepage	2	Link to Calendar on Homepage	2

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	9 - Raw	9 - Coded	10 - Raw	10 - Coded
Parks and Wildlife Department	Link to Strategic Plan one Click from Homepage	2	No Calendar Published on Website	0
Texas Lottery Commission	Link to Strategic Plan one Click from Homepage	2	Link to Calendar on Homepage	2
Railroad Commission	Link to Strategic Plan one Click from Homepage	2	Link to Calendar on Homepage	2
Office of the Governor	Link to Strategic Plan 2 clicks from homepage	2	Link to Calendar on Homepage	2
Comptroller of Public Accounts	Link to Strategic Plan 3 clicks from homepage	1	No Calendar Published on Website	0
Texas Workforce Commission	Strategic Plan 1 click from homepage	2	Link to calendars 1 click from homepage	2
Department of State Health Services	Strategic plan 2 clicks from homepage	2	No Calendar Published on Website	0
Department of Transportation	Strategic plan 2 clicks from homepage	2	Link to Calendar on homepage	2

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	11 - Raw	11 - Coded	12 - Raw	12 - Coded
Commission on Uniform State Laws				
Bond Review Board	No Minutes or Agendas Published on Website	0	No, only general contact information provided for central and field offices	1
Pension Review Board	No Minutes or Agendas Published on Website	0	No, only general contact information provided	0
State Commission on Judicial Conduct	Link to minutes one click from homepage	2	No, only departmental information provided	0
Office of Public Insurance Counsel	Link to Minutes on Homepage	2	Yes, the link for Staff information is one click from the Homepage	2
Office of Public Utility Counsel	No minutes, but meetings are court proceedings, so not applicable	XX	No, only general contact information provided	0
Sunset Commission	No Minutes or Agendas Published on Website	0	Yes, detailed information includes staff name and phone number by department	2
Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education	Link to video recordings, transcripts, etc one click from homepage	2	No, only general contact information for each Senate office	0
Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending	No Minutes or Agendas Published on Website	0	No, only general contact information provided	0
Securities Board	Link to Minutes on Homepage	2	Yes, email addresses provided for specific staff in individual departments	2
Office of Injured Employee Counsel	No Minutes or Agendas Published on Website	0	No, only general contact information provided	0

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	11 - Raw	11 - Coded	12 - Raw	12 - Coded
State Office of Administrative Hearings	No Minutes or Agendas Published on Website	0	No, only general contact information	0
Racing Commission	Transcripts one click from homepage	2	Yes, email addresses provided for specific staff in individual departments	2
Animal Health Commission	No Minutes or Agendas Published on Website	0	No, only general contact information is provided	0
State Auditor's Office	No Minutes or Agendas Published on Website	0	No, only general contact information provided	0
Supreme Court of Texas	Link to Minutes on Homepage	2	No, only general contact information provided	0
Senate	Link to Minutes and Agenda on Homepage	2	No, only general information provided	0
Legislative Council	No Minutes or Agendas Published on Website	0	No, contact information for each department is given but not for specific employees	1
Historical Commission	No Minutes or Agendas Published on Website	0	No, only general contact information provided	0
Secretary of State	Link to minutes 2 clicks from homepage	2	No, only general information provided	0
Commission on State Emergency Communications	No Minutes or Agendas Published on Website	0	Yes, email addresses provided for specific staff in individual departments	2
Public Utility Commission of Texas	Link to Minutes and Agenda on Homepage	2	No, only general contact information provided	0

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	11 - Raw	11 - Coded	12 - Raw	12 - Coded
Parks and Wildlife Department	No Minutes or Agendas Published on Website	0	Yes, email addresses provided for specific staff in individual departments	2
Texas Lottery Commission	No Minutes or Agendas Published on Website	0	No, only general contact information provided	0
Railroad Commission	No Minutes or Agendas Published on Website	0	Yes, but you have to know the staff member's name	0
Office of the Governor	Minutes two clicks from homepage	2	No, only general contact information is provided	0
Comptroller of Public Accounts	Link to minutes and agenda 3 clicks from homepage	1	No, only general information provided	0
Texas Workforce Commission	No Minutes or Agendas Published on Website	0	No, only general information provided	0
Department of State Health Services	No Minutes or Agendas Published on Website	0	Yes, local WDB contacts	2
Department of Transportation	Link to agendas 3 clicks from homepage	1	No, only departmental information provided	0

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	13 - Raw	13 - Coded	14 - Raw	14 - Coded	15 - Raw	15 - Coded
Commission on Uniform State Laws						
Bond Review Board	Not present	0	No blog	0	No	0
Pension Review Board	Not present	0	No blog	0	No	0
State Commission on Judicial Conduct	Yes	1	No blog	0	Email	1
Office of Public Insurance Counsel	Not present	0	No blog	0	No	0
Office of Public Utility Counsel	Not present	0	No blog	0	RSS	3
Sunset Commission	Not present	0	No blog	0	Online newsletter but does not provide subscription option	0
Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education	Not present	0	No blog	0	No	0
Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending	Not present	0	No blog	0	No	0
Securities Board	Yes	1	No blog	0	Email news updates	1
Office of Injured Employee Counsel	Yes, on the Homepage	1	No blog	0	No	0

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	13 - Raw	13 - Coded	14 - Raw	14 - Coded	15 - Raw	15 - Coded
State Office of Administrative Hearings	Yes	1	No blog	0	Email, RSS	1, 3
Racing Commission	Not present	0	No blog	0	No	0
Animal Health Commission	Yes	1	No blog	0	RSS	3
State Auditor's Office	Yes	1	No blog	0	Email updates and RSS	1, 3
Supreme Court of Texas	Not present	0	No blog	0	No	0
Senate	Yes	1	No blog	0	Email updates	1
Legislative Council	Yes	1	No blog	0	No	0
Historical Commission	Not present	0	No blog	0	No	0
Secretary of State	yes	1	No blog	0	No	0
Commission on State Emergency Communications	Not present	0	No blog	0	Email news updates	1
Public Utility Commission of Texas	Yes, one click from homepage	1	No blog	0	No	0

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	13 - Raw	13 - Coded	14 - Raw	14 - Coded	15 - Raw	15 - Coded
Parks and Wildlife Department	Yes	1	No blog	0	Email updates for Residential Mortgage Loan Originators, not general public	1
Texas Lottery Commission	Not present	0	No blog	0	Email, RSS	1, 3
Railroad Commission	yes	1	No blog	0	No	0
Office of the Governor	Yes	1	No blog	0	Email	1
Comptroller of Public Accounts	Yes	1	No blog	0	No	0
Texas Workforce Commission	Yes	1	No blog	0	Yes, RSS	3
Department of State Health Services	yes	1	No blog	0	No	0
Department of Transportation	Yes	1	No blog	0	Email	1

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	16 - Raw	16 - Coded	17 - Raw	17 - Coded	18 - Raw	18 - Coded
Commission on Uniform State Laws						
Bond Review Board	No	0	Yes, email	1	No	0
Pension Review Board	No	0	Yes, "Contact Us" Form	1	No	0
State Commission on Judicial Conduct	No	0	Email address	1	No	0
Office of Public Insurance Counsel	No	0	Yes, Customer Service Survey on Homepage	3	No	0
Office of Public Utility Counsel	Video, podcasts	3	Yes, email	1	No	0
Sunset Commission	No	0	Yes, email form. Customer Service survey leads to "coming soon" page	1	No	0
Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education	Video, podcasts	3	No	0	No	0
Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending	No	0	Yes, email form for various departments	1	No	0
Securities Board	No	0	Yes, email	1	No	0
Office of Injured Employee Counsel	No	0	No	0	No	0

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	16 - Raw	16 - Coded	17 - Raw	17 - Coded	18 - Raw	18 - Coded
State Office of Administrative Hearings	Video	2	Yes, email and form	1	No	0
Racing Commission	No	0	Yes, Customer Service Survey on Homepage	3	No	0
Animal Health Commission	No	0	Yes, Customer Service Survey on Homepage	3	No	0
State Auditor's Office	No	0	Email address	1	No	0
Supreme Court of Texas	No	0	Yes, "Contact Us" Form	1	No	0
Senate	No	0	Yes, contact us form	1	No	0
Legislative Council	No	0	Yes, email address	1	No	0
Historical Commission	No	0	Yes, email and feedback form	1	No	0
Secretary of State	No	0	Yes, Customer Service Survey on Homepage	3	No	0
Commission on State Emergency Communications	No	0	Yes, email form for website feedback	1	No	0
Public Utility Commission of Texas	No	0	Yes, "Contact Us" Form	1	No	0

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	16 - Raw	16 - Coded	17 - Raw	17 - Coded	18 - Raw	18 - Coded
Parks and Wildlife Department	No	0	Yes, email	1	No	0
Texas Lottery Commission	No	0	Yes, email form for website feedback	1	No	0
Railroad Commission	Video	2	Yes, email	1	No	0
Office of the Governor	Video (YouTube)	2	Yes, form	1	No	0
Comptroller of Public Accounts	Video	2	Yes, email	1	No	0
Texas Workforce Commission	Video, podcasts	3	Website survey	3	No	0
Department of State Health Services	No	0	Yes, email	1	No	0
Department of Transportation	Video, podcasts	3	Email	1	No	0

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	19 - Raw	19 - Coded	20 - Raw	20 - Coded
Commission on Uniform State Laws				
Bond Review Board	No	0	N/A	0
Pension Review Board	No	0	N/A	0
State Commission on Judicial Conduct	No	0	N/A	0
Office of Public Insurance Counsel	No	0	N/A	0
Office of Public Utility Counsel	No	0	N/A	0
Sunset Commission	Yes, Twitter	1	Twitter	3
Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education	No	0	N/A	0
Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending	No	0	N/A	0
Securities Board	Yes, Facebook and Twitter. Interestingly, the social media announcement was made three hours before the researcher visited the site to evaluate it.	1	Facebook, Twitter	1, 3
Office of Injured Employee Counsel	No	0	N/A	0

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	19 - Raw	19 - Coded	20 - Raw	20 - Coded
State Office of Administrative Hearings	Yes, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Picasa	1	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Picasa	1, 3, 4
Racing Commission	No	0	N/A	0
Animal Health Commission	No	0	N/A	0
State Auditor's Office	No	0	N/A	0
Supreme Court of Texas	No	0	N/A	0
Senate	No	0	N/A	0
Legislative Council	Yes, Facebook and Twitter	1	Facebook, Twitter	1, 3
Historical Commission	No	0	N/A	0
Secretary of State	No	0	N/A	0
Commission on State Emergency Communications	No	0	N/A	0
Public Utility Commission of Texas	No	0	N/A	0

Appendix A: DATA.xls

Agency Name	19 - Raw	19 - Coded	20 - Raw	20 - Coded
Parks and Wildlife Department	No	0	N/A	0
Texas Lottery Commission	No	0	N/A	0
Railroad Commission	Yes, Twitter	1	Twitter	1
Office of the Governor	Yes, Twitter, Flickr, Youtube	1	Twitter, Flickr, Youtube	3, 4
Comptroller of Public Accounts	No	0	N/A	0
Texas Workforce Commission	Yes, Twitter	1	Twitter	1
Department of State Health Services	No	0	N/A	0
Department of Transportation	Yes, Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, Flickr	1	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr	1, 3, 4