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NEW JERSEY'S BEST MUNICIPAL WEBSITES

West Long Branch, NJ – The Monmouth University Polling Institute and Graduate Program in Public Policy announced the results of their New Jersey E-Government Municipal Website Evaluation today. The project assessed 540 municipal websites in New Jersey for both content and ease of use.

The top municipal website according to the evaluation is Middletown Township in Monmouth County. This website scored highest on combined content availability and ease of use. The top ten evaluated websites are:

1. Middletown Township (Monmouth)
2. Franklin Lakes Borough (Bergen)
3. West Windsor Township (Mercer)
4. Princeton Township (Mercer)*
5. Robbinsville Township (Mercer)
6. Randolph Township (Morris)
7. North Brunswick Township (Middlesex)
8. Lawrence Township (Mercer)
9. Old Bridge Township (Middlesex)
10. Fort Lee Borough (Bergen)

* Evaluation conducted prior to the Princeton merger

These municipalities and other top performers in specific categories will be recognized at an awards ceremony and seminar on best practices in municipal website design at Monmouth University on Thursday, March 21st at 6:30 pm. The event is free and open to the media and the public.

"Municipal websites can be critical tools to inform and engage the public while creating efficiencies in the provision of public services. Efforts to incorporate technology into public sector service delivery and public interaction need to be supported in order to promote best practices statewide," said Kathryn Kloby, director of the Monmouth University Graduate Program in Public Policy.

The study found that nearly all municipal websites in New Jersey provide the names of council members (98%), mayor (97%), and town clerk (94%), as well as the municipal hall address (96%). About two-thirds of town websites provide an email link or message function to directly reach the clerk (66%), mayor (61%), or council members (58%). Just under half provide department emails (48%). However, if

a constituent does not know which department should be contacted, only 20% of websites provide a general email address to reach town hall.

It is worth noting that the coding team could not clearly locate the municipal budget on 15% of the websites, which is a state statutory requirement. At the other end of the spectrum, content that is unlikely to be provided on municipal websites are video recordings of city council meetings (6%), crime statistics (3%), and online pet licensing (1%).

"Websites are probably the single most important tool for citizens to find local information. According to a poll we conducted in 2011, Garden State residents are far more likely to visit a municipal website than to call or write a town official," said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

The project also evaluated a website's ease of use based on the average time it took to find four key pieces of information on each website. Overall, locating permit information took an average of 31 seconds to locate. Information about the mayor and the municipal budget each took about 35 seconds to find. Information about trash pick-up took the longest, 61 seconds on average.

The amount of content available on a municipal website correlates significantly to the size of the town. In other words, the larger the town, the more content the website is likely to provide. About three-quarters (74%) of websites for municipalities with populations of 10,000 or more include at least half of the 86 content items used in the evaluation. That declines to 64% among towns with populations between 5,000 and 10,000. There is a significant drop off to 38% of towns with populations between 2,500 and 5,000 who have at least half of the evaluated items on their websites, and a further drop to just 23% of towns with fewer than 2,500 people.

There is no clear relationship, though, for the ease of use component of the study. The Ease of Use score does appear to improve slightly among towns with larger populations, but it drops off at the top category of 25,000 residents or more.

Municipal spending appears to have limited impact on website quality. In fact, there seems to be a bell-shaped relationship between per capita spending and website content. Specifically, for towns whose municipal budget equates to between $750 and $2,000 per resident the average Content Score ranges along a narrow band from 35.0 to 35.7. This score is lower, though, for towns at either end of the per capita spending continuum, including those that spend over $2,000 per resident (32.5) and those that spend less than $750 per resident (31.3).

The evaluation also found that websites designed by third-party vendors with multiple clients tend to perform better than those which are designed by single-client designers (or volunteers) or by municipal staff. The average Content Score for multiple-client vendor sites is 37.6 compared to 31.1 for other third-party designers and 33.9 for municipal staff designed sites. The Ease of Use Score is also higher for multiple-client vendor sites (41.4) than it is for other third-party designers (38.5) and municipal staff designed sites (37.5).

Methodology: The project evaluated each website for the inclusion of 86 separate content items in four categories: information for citizens, citizen interaction, online government services, and social networking. The research team also assessed each municipal website for "ease of use" in finding four key pieces of information: mayor's or mayor-equivalent's contact information, building permit form or information, municipal budget, and trash/recycling information. Ease of use was determined by the amount of time it took to locate each piece of information on the website. Initial content scoring was done from March to June 2012 and ease of use evaluations were conducted from July to September 2012. More information on the study methodology can be found in the full report.

The full report **New Jersey E-Government: Best Practices for Municipal Websites** can be found at www.monmouth.edu/polling . The complete list of municipal rankings and scores can be found in the full report.

2013 New Jersey E-Government Award Recipients

NEW JERSEY'S TEN BEST MUNICIPAL WEBSITES			
OVERALL RANK	COUNTY	MUNICIPALITY	WEBSITE URL
1	Monmouth	Middletown Township	http://www.middletownnj.org/
2	Bergen	Franklin Lakes Borough	http://www.franklinlakes.org/
3	Mercer	West Windsor Township	http://www.westwindsornj.org/
4	Mercer	Princeton Township*	http://www.princetontwp.org/
5	Mercer	Robbinsville Township	http://www.robbinsville-twp.org/
6	Morris	Randolph Township	http://www.randolphnj.org/
7	Middlesex	North Brunswick Township	http://www.northbrunswicknj.gov/
8	Mercer	Lawrence Township	http://lawrencetwp.com/
9	Middlesex	Old Bridge Township	http://www.oldbridge.com/
10	Bergen	Fort Lee Borough	http://www.fortleenj.org/
HONORABLE MENTION			
OVERALL RANK	COUNTY	MUNICIPALITY	WEBSITE URL
11	Middlesex	South Brunswick Township	http://www.twp.south-brunswick.nj.us/
12	Bergen	Englewood City	http://cityofenglewood.org/
13	Morris	Washington Township	http://www.washtwpmorris.org/
14	Morris	Mendham Township	http://www.mendhamtownship.org/
15	Camden	Cherry Hill Township	http://www.cherryhill-nj.com/
16	Morris	Roxbury Township	http://www.roxburynj.us/
17	Middlesex	Sayreville Borough	http://www.sayreville.com/
18	Bergen	Glen Rock Borough	http://www.glenrocknj.net/
19	Essex	Montclair Township	http://www.montclairnjusa.org/
20	Bergen	Bergenfield Borough	http://www.bergenfieldboro.com/
21	Gloucester	Woodbury City	http://www.woodbury.nj.us/
22	Monmouth	Red Bank Borough	http://www.redbanknj.org/
23	Essex	Livingston Township	http://www.livingstonnj.org/
24	Gloucester	Woodbury Heights Borough	http://www.bwhnj.com/
25	Camden	Magnolia Borough	http://www.magnolia-nj.org/

* Note: study was conducted before the Princeton municipal merger.

The following municipalities are recognized for their performance in specific areas:

BEST WEBSITES FOR EASE OF USE
[Note: Must be among top 1/5th overall to qualify.]

OVERALL RANK	COUNTY	MUNICIPALITY	WEBSITE URL
18	Bergen	Glen Rock Borough	http://www.glenrocknj.net/
89	Monmouth	Manasquan Borough	http://www.manasquan-nj.com/
105	Monmouth	West Long Branch Borough	http://www.westlongbranch.org/
58	Bergen	Dumont Borough	http://www.dumontnj.gov/
63	Bergen	Oradell Borough	http://www.oradell.org/
7	Middlesex	North Brunswick Township	http://www.northbrunswicknj.gov/
64	Bergen	Demarest Borough	http://www.demarestnj.us/
1	Monmouth	Middletown Township	http://www.middletownnj.org/
25	Camden	Magnolia Borough	http://www.magnolia-nj.org/
36	Camden	Lindenwold Borough	http://www.lindenwoldnj.gov/
42	Burlington	Bordentown Township	http://www.bordentowntownship.com/

BEST WEBSITES FOR CITIZEN INTERACTION
[Note: Must be among top 1/5th overall to qualify.]

OVERALL RANK	COUNTY	MUNICIPALITY	WEBSITE URL
15	Camden	Cherry Hill Township	http://www.cherryhill-nj.com/
76	Bergen	Emerson Borough	http://www.emersonnj.org/
1	Monmouth	Middletown Township	http://www.middletownnj.org/
8	Mercer	Lawrence Township	http://lawrencetwp.com/
32	Mercer	Trenton City	http://www.trentonnj.org/
3	Mercer	West Windsor Township	http://www.westwindsornj.org/
6	Morris	Randolph Township	http://www.randolphnj.org/
2	Bergen	Franklin Lakes Borough	http://www.franklinlakes.org/
30	Essex	Fairfield Township	http://www.fairfieldnj.org/
54	Camden	Winslow Township	http://www.winslowtownship.com/

HONORABLE MENTION FOR OVERALL CONTENT
[Note: Must be among top 1/5th overall to qualify.]

OVERALL RANK	COUNTY	MUNICIPALITY	WEBSITE URL
32	Mercer	Trenton City	http://www.trentonnj.org/
34	Atlantic	Egg Harbor Township	http://www.ehtgov.org/
27	Bergen	Washington Township	http://www.twpofwashington.us/
33	Gloucester	Washington Township	http://www.townshipnj.com/
44	Middlesex	Metuchen Borough	http://www.metuchennj.org/
53	Burlington	Mount Holly Township	http://www.mountholly.info/
51	Gloucester	Monroe Township	http://www.monroetownshipnj.org/

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