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5 Reasons Why Local Government Tracking Should be Part of Your Strategy

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Tracking key issues in local government can be a tough but essential job. However, when you tap into the wealth of business information found in government meeting minutes and agendas, you can create the right conditions for your organization to thrive.

Here's how:



Mitigating Risk

Organizations can operate with less friction when they protect themselves from unwelcome surprises, such as sudden fee increases or new laws restricting your or your member's operations.



Seizing Opportunities

Civic intelligence is an overlooked source of leads and opportunities in the modern business environment. It allows you to spot high-dollar projects early in the process.



Competitive Intelligence

Beating the competition or helping your members find new business opportunities while staying informed on their movements helps you maintain and grow market share.

When you create a process, aided with the right technology, to stay on top of local policy discussions and changes, you have the opportunity to shape the business environment.

By staying in the know with actionable municipal information and proactively getting involved in local issues, you can create millions of dollars in value for your organization or your members. Fall behind, and your competitors might eat your lunch.

Here are five of the most impactful ways businesses can benefit from civic intelligence.

1. ANTICIPATE LOCAL POLICY CHANGE

Local policy change is a major risk, particularly for organizations that operate across large geographical regions and are subject to dozens of local lawmaking entities.

Moratoriums on certain energy sources, new gas pumps, and new developments are examples of how local governments can directly impact an industry's ability to operate in existing locations or expand into new locations.

Another example is restrictive ordinances. For instance, if a city creates a restrictive ordinance banning single-use plastic or Styrofoam, this would affect restaurants, hotels, and grocery stores. The organizations whose products use these materials would also have a major disruption to their operations.

Policy changes like these move fast. Not only do they come up for vote quickly, but they also spread rapidly across regions. It might not start in your territory, but if a neighboring city or county adopts a policy that could be detrimental to your industry, it could soon show up in your territory too. This is why it is so important to leverage a municipal civic intelligence platform that empowers you to monitor what is happening across an expanded area.

By using technology to track local government discussions, organizations can stay ahead and proactively prepare and implement strategies to

For Example

A Curate client adopted the technology to automatically monitor individual agendas for multiple counties, primarily focusing on county and city commission agendas. This is how they spotted an item on an upcoming planning commission agenda that indicated it was considering a modification to the approval process for future development.

At the time, the organization had a project under construction and two more planned in that county. The proposal was of significant concern, as it would make future approvals more difficult. More importantly, it represented a possible change in sentiment on similar development within the county.

present their side before unexpected ordinances cost you years of progress.

When relying on stakeholders and news briefs to stay informed, even the most experienced government affairs professionals miss things that can end up costing their organizations thousands of dollars.

Your advocacy efforts must start when your municipality begins considering a policy change, or even before. The right technology can even help you identify a policy trend in neighboring cities so you can begin talking to your elected officials about what impact that policy could have on your industry before they even bring it up in a public meeting

2. SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS

When you tap into the wealth of information found in minutes and agendas of every county, city board, strategic planning group, the potential pool of opportunities for your organization grows. But manually doing this across a plethora of locations is nearly impossible.

Here are a few of the opportunities you can tap into when leveraging the right tools at the local levels of government.

Future Projects

Long before a city has a budget for a major project or issues a Request for Proposal (RFP), readers of meeting minutes can see when new projects are being considered.

A municipal civic intelligence tracking tool will automatically alert you when topics about projects you're most interested in show up in local government meeting minutes. With this information, you can start gleaning additional intelligence, fostering relationships, and have ample time to put together proposals.



Selling Products and Services to Municipalities

When organizations sell to municipalities, contracts to supply products such as computers or paper towels are what come to mind. But more municipalities are looking to hire contracted services or incorporate new software tools, and they often discuss the pain points they're trying to solve in public meetings.

These discussions show up in meeting minutes long before they turn into an RFP. Getting alerts when these items come up gives you a regular stream of new, relevant leads, and you'll be the first to know when a municipality is looking to purchase your service or product.

Even if municipalities aren't currently one of your sales verticals, you can find leads about private organizations in many local government meeting minutes. When businesses in the private sector want to expand, they have to bring every detail of their plans before a variety of city committees. When they show up to a meeting with a complaint about an issue affecting them, they're laying their pain points out on the table for anyone to see. A sales person's dream.

[Discover how Curate can help!](#)



New Funding

An influx of new funds at the local level are the **Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds**; \$130 billion were designated to counties and municipalities as part of the American Recovery Plan Act.

Although there are guidelines on what these funds can be used for, interpretation is left up to local governments. One acceptable use is broadband expansion. Where many local governments had plans for these projects, they now have the funds to implement them, and many have already decided to allocate funds to these projects.

Local Government Legislation Tracking Software

Advanced government affairs teams no longer rely on Google Alerts or manual review of local government meeting minutes and agendas. They're leveraging software tools to become better informed, stay ahead of discussions and make their processes more efficient. **[Review this guide](#)** to learn more about how local legislative tracking software will improve your government relations programs.

If you're not able to automatically look for mentions of grants and financial programs across municipalities, you may be missing out when new projects are being planned.

In addition to uncovering opportunities, technology can also help you to monitor advancements and make sure you're present at the relevant meetings. More importantly, you need to know your competition isn't taking advantage of an opportunity you're missing.

3. MONITOR YOUR COMPETITION AND REPUTATION

Competitive Intelligence

The activities of local government meetings are public record. So when a competitor wants to open their business in a municipality, they essentially need to declare their intentions to the whole world.

When you're aware of your competitor's movements early on, you might not always be able to stop them but you can be more proactive with your strategies rather than finding out after they're in your market.

Your Reputation

The strength of a business' or industry's reputation can open doors and pave roads, but a good reputation is hard to restore after a breach of trust.

That's why smart organizations proactively manage their reputation by using technology to keep track of the public's attitude toward them, the policies they support, and their industry as a whole. One of the most underused ways to do that is to know exactly what people are saying about your organization at government meetings.

For
Example

Leveraging Curate's municipal civic intelligence tool, a company learned about a new businesses entering their market, causing them to go on the offensive and roll out campaigns to offer discounts and other promotions to secure customers. They also put in additional effort to reinforce the value of the business in the community to citizens and local government leaders.

Even before an organization enters a community, local stakeholders may be forming opinions about it and discussing them at local government meetings.

Whether it's one local government official or the majority of citizens, a poor reputation could represent a major challenge to any organization. Make sure you're getting ahead

and ensuring smooth sailing for your organization by monitoring local government discussions for any mention of your org and the competition with the right municipal civic intelligence platform.

4. PLAN FOR PROPOSED TAX AND FEE INCREASES

Local governments rely on fees to generate about 30 percent of their annual revenue, which they use to provide essential services to businesses and residents. When tax revenue drops because of an economic crisis, municipalities have to find creative sources of new revenue — which often means new fees.

For Example

A municipality proposed to increase sewer connection fees by 400% from one year to the next.

Local real estate developers, who stood to see a huge increase in their annual expenses, were proactive using Curate's technology to monitor municipal discussions and successfully lobbied to delay the increase and spread it out over the next eight years, giving them time to gradually absorb the costs.

As with any other local policy change, getting involved in advocacy early is key to being able to influence the results. Sometimes, even if you cannot stop a fee from being raised, you can influence the timing of its implementation.

5. EMPOWER ENGAGEMENT IN LOCAL ADVOCACY

Often, the people spotting issues and opportunities in local government are not the people directly involved in government relations. As soon as an issue is identified, the information needs to be shared with key stakeholders.

If you're not leveraging technology to actively monitor municipal minutes and agendas, the information isn't getting shared and resources aren't allocated to addressing these items. There are dozens — even hundreds — of different levels of government where your organization may need to promote its interests and protect itself from harmful policy changes.

A small town in Michigan proposed to ban all short-term rentals for six months while they studied the pros and cons. The statewide realtors association uses Curate's municipal civic intelligence technology and was alerted early on allowing them to immediately jump on the issue. They sent a local realtor to the council meeting where the ban was discussed to make a case for the positive impact of short-term rentals, convincing the council to drop the ban. Local property owners could continue making money on short-term rentals, and the statewide association resolved an issue without having to lobby at the state level.

For
Example

That's why it's crucial for organizations operating across regions and states to embrace technology that can check every agenda item and meeting note for every council meeting. Orgs that track discussions and alert specific members when there is a relevant issue gain a leg up in their advocacy efforts.

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)

More industries and organizations are considering an ESG team important to incorporate their values and concerns (generally related to one of those three broad areas of interest) into their operations.

Aligning with local governments on policies and initiatives is a great way organizations can put their values into action. Using the right technology, orgs can easily seek out these opportunities in local government, as they typically don't get the coverage national issues do.

SUMMARY

To be an informed and connected leader in your community, it's critical to get ahead of local government decisions that could impact your business.

The challenge is that agendas and minutes from city council meetings are difficult to find. Once you find them, manually uncovering relevant municipal information means you'll likely miss things. When you do find issues, you're left with little time to act. Adding the right municipal civic intelligence technology that automatically collects this information and makes it efficient to review crucial issues will allow your organization to thrive in the marketplace.



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STAY AHEAD OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT DISCUSSIONS

Want to know how the most comprehensive AI-powered database of local government meeting minutes and agendas can help you and your team efficiently track local government discussions?

[Learn More About Curate](#)