

## Chapter 2

# E-Participation and Citizen Relationship Management in Urban Governance: Tools and Methods

**Jim P. Huebner**  
*University of Waterloo, Canada*

### ABSTRACT

*Citizen relationship management (CiRM) is a combination of management approaches and information technologies for improving citizen services and citizen participation used at all levels of government. As an adaptation of private sector customer relationship management (CRM), CiRM is experiencing significant public sector adoption rates globally. However, while private sector CRM has demonstrated significant impact in the private sector, CiRM benefits are limited, and particularly lagging in the area of citizen e-participation in urban governance. This chapter provides an overview of the scope of CiRM functionality, with particular regard to the CRM origins and CiRM extensibilities, to develop a broader perspective of CiRM's capacity for addressing e-participation. Developing this perspective further, theoretical and methodological approaches to e-participation are presented and evaluated in four categories: generic CiRM participation models, e-government CiRM, democratic CiRM, and strategic CiRM. Further research opportunities are highlighted within the context of emerging organizational, technological, and societal trends.*

### INTRODUCTION

Citizen relationship management (CiRM) is a collection of management methods and information technologies used by governments to interact effectively with citizens (Schellong, 2008). CiRM evolved from commercial customer relationship

management (CRM) technologies, and is most commonly used by municipalities as a set of information technology tools and processes to answer citizen phone enquires, route email requests, provide information via web site, and process online transactions. Increasingly, CiRM is also being used to facilitate and manage citizen online

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participation, or e-participation, in a variety of forms, with the potential to substantially improve how citizens participate in civic affairs and how governments utilize citizens' inputs (Chang & Chen, 2007; Hildreth, 2007).

CiRM technologies are widely used to improve citizen service levels by, for example, accepting citizen enquiries and routing them to the appropriate department. This chapter discusses most common CiRM implementations that include citizen relationship tools and methods such as 911 and 311 response systems, online transaction and bill payment, information delivery and discussion portals, volunteer management, and call centre applications, among others, typically categorized as e-government CiRM. Citizen service representatives use CiRM systems to track citizen enquiries, record details of telephone conversations and outcomes throughout the steps of each enquiry, and finally note the resolution and citizen satisfaction level achieved. An underlying purpose of e-government CiRM is to enhance citizen participation through the use of Internet technologies, or e-participation. This chapter also explores other approaches to e-participation through CiRM, including several democratic and strategic approaches.

The theoretical underpinnings for CiRM-based e-participation draw from democratic governance and citizen participation, as well as organizational theory including structure, strategy and processes. An important perspective of e-participation is the relationship between government and citizens, particularly the communication patterns and transactions that form the relationship. These theories are examined in this chapter as they pertain to each of the CiRM approaches discussed.

Finally, CiRM increasingly plays a central role in developing citizen relationships. In business, CRM (customer relationship management) is used to track and analyse customer interactions to learn how to relate more effectively with customers, thereby understanding how to provide more

desirable products and services, and increasing the company's value (King, 2007; Souder, 2001). Similarly, governments use CiRM to relate more effectively with citizens, for transparency and accountability (Castells & Cardoso, 2006), and to analyse what services are valued and how citizens would like them improved, and further, how citizens envision the future of their communities (Lorinc, 2006).

This chapter examines citizen-government relationships in view of democratic governance, and how e-participation is impacting those relationships in theory and in practice through CiRM tools and methods.

## **BACKGROUND**

CiRM is described as a strategy that enables a technological focus on citizens' needs and encourages citizen participation (Reddick, 2010). Giving meaning to such a broad definition requires an examination of the background of CiRM, particularly its origins and growth in the private sector. To be clear, this chapter shall consistently distinguish between CRM as private sector *customer* relationship management and CiRM as public sector *citizen* relationship management, and CRM/CiRM where concepts apply equally to both private and public sector. Although CRM is now a powerful tool in business, it has taken a decade of trial and error to realize CRM's potential. Government has not yet arrived at a strategic understanding of how to apply CiRM effectively and maximize citizen participation. Therefore an examination of CRM is appropriate and necessary to developing a more complete understanding of the power, potential, and pitfalls of CiRM. This examination will include an overview of CRM as a strategy and management approach, CRM technological extensibility, and current trends that are significantly broadening CRM applicability in the private sector including cloud services, the

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