

Franklin County Government Sector

Why Is This Important?

Government serves citizens in numerous ways, from offering services like vehicle registration to providing information such as election results. While it is common for people to feel disengaged from the everyday actions of state and local government, technology has allowed governments to begin closing that gap. On the state level, Ohio has developed www.ohio.gov, a comprehensive website that provides government services and information to all citizens. On this site, residents can purchase and update hunting licenses, car dealers can access title searches on cars and citizens can monitor the progress of legislation when the General Assembly is in session. By bringing the services of the state government to the convenience of residents' homes, the ohio.gov site provides participants a greater sense of relevance in the actions of state government.

Local governments have also seen the importance of an online presence. They provide communities with many services that offer a great deal of local information and encourage public involvement and awareness. With a web presence, local governments can distribute information to more citizens, provide increased opportunities for interaction with the agencies that affect them and make transactions that previously required a drive to the courthouse accessible online.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Franklin County had a population of 736,359 in 2007. 48.9% of the population are families with no children, 51.1% are families with children. 25.1% of the population is under the age 18, and 29.8% is over the age of 45. 58.7% of the population has attended some college or higher. The median household income is \$42,734.

Franklin County Government

- Franklin County Government, www.co.franklin.oh.us/fc/
- Franklin County Department of Job & Family Services, www.co.franklin.oh.us/commissioners/jafs/
- State of Ohio, www.ohio.gov
- Ohio General Assembly, www.legislature.state.oh.us
- Geographic Information, www.puco.ohio.gov/PUCO/GIS/?navitem=leftsidebar
- Public Utilities, www.PUCO.ohio.gov
- State Senate Districts, www.puc.state.oh.us/pucogis/NewDistricts/Senate_links.pdf
- State House Districts, www.puc.state.oh.us/pucogis/NewDistricts/House_links2.pdf

Municipalities in Franklin County include the following:

- County Seat, Columbus city - population 736,359
- Gahanna - population 33,701
- Grove City - population 33,113

Where Are We Today?

Franklin County residents utilize the Internet to conduct business through a variety of methods at a rate slightly higher than the state average. Uses of the Internet by Franklin County residents are as follows:

- 80% of residents research products online (77% statewide)
- 75% of residents purchase products online (70% statewide)
- 58% of residents use online banking (55% statewide)
- 55% of residents search for jobs online (50% statewide)
- 32% of residents conduct online government transactions (35% statewide)

The State of Ohio has taken a leadership role in the development of online government services through its portal at www.ohio.gov. Many of the services available are targeted at local residents. Visiting Ohio's website allows users to access state laws and regulations, renew driver's licenses, locate local colleges and public schools, apply for unemployment services and hundreds of other services. Information about business, education, travel, employment and government is also available to residents.

All entities within the government sector understand that technology is important to conduct the government's business more effectively. Broadband is viewed as a way to better communicate with the residents of the cities and county. With the use of Broadband, the government sector wants to utilize applications that take advantage of that infrastructure.

Franklin County Government is well connected with several different providers offering options. There is a major fiber and wireless infrastructure in place. Current providers have built a 90 mile 16 conduit fiber system that covers from US 70 on the South side, New Albany on the East side, Worthington and Westerville on the North side, and Dublin/Hilliard on the West side.

All government facilities are connected with a private network using fiber. In most cases the connection is Ethernet. The ODOT has deployed web cams throughout the region and the video stream is available through their website, www.buckeyetraffic.org.

New Albany, Dublin, Westerville, Columbus, Gahanna have municipal-owned fiber networks that serve government and community facilities. Some of the networks are open for providers to use as backbone infrastructure.

Government Sector Assessment Overview			
Category	Current Assessment	Future Vision	Additional Comments
Networked Places	4	5	Grow municipal applications that continue to justify deployment and that support economic development.
Applications & Services	4	5	
Leadership	4	5	Work together to develop and adopt a regional strategic technology plan.

The Franklin County eCommunity Leadership Team found that the government sector is just beginning to use technology to its advantage and believes the Internet to be essential to business operations.

- **Networked Places** – In the category of networked places, Franklin County’s government sector is currently at stage 4 on a 0 to 5 scale. Some field workers use wireless networks to upload and download data in the field. Some employees use desktop videoconferencing. Sensors and webcams monitor locations, such as rivers that are important to public safety. Desktop videoconferencing is widely available.
- **Applications & Services** – In the category of technology applications & services, the government sector is currently at stage 4 on a 0 to 5 scale. Customers can make routine payments, such as parking fines, online using credit cards or electronic fund transfer. Parks and recreation classes have online registration. Employees can enter building inspections and violations from the field.
- **Leadership** – In terms of technology leadership within the government community, Franklin

County is currently at stage 4 on a 0 to 5 scale. Some agencies have a formal policy that allows some employees to work from home at least one day a week. Rights-of-way and tower siting policies are in place. Elected officials understand the importance of the network for economic development and quality of life.

Where Do We Need To Be?

The Franklin County eCommunity Leadership Team has developed goals to provide a framework for robust government functions within the next two years. The team has set goals to move networked places from stage 4 to stage 5, applications & services from stage 4 to stage 5, and leadership from stage 4 to stage 5, all on a 0 to 5 scale. The team's vision includes:

- The telephone system is being converted to VoIP to save money. Many field workers use wireless networks to upload and download data in the field. Critical traffic signals are connected.
- Interactive applications, such as customer relationship management, online GIS and videostreaming are in regular use. Employees manage benefits programs on an intranet. Emergency response teams can reliably communicate across jurisdictions. Council meetings are indexed and available for searching and retrieval online.
- The government has telecommunications, e-government and information technology master plans in place to guide its efforts. Innovative processes are used to collaborate with the private sector.

How Do We Get There?

Project Ideas

- Must work to connect all Central Ohio communities to CFN in order to increase municipal applications but also to increase the regions' economic development position
- Establish a regional Broadband consortium to advocate capital development and connectivity
- Create a technical workforce that understands the needs of tomorrows industry.
- Create a mobile public safety network.
- Implement intelligent traffic systems.
- Establish connectivity to downtown Columbus, Rickenbacker, OSU, Battelle.

Other Potential Projects

- Establish a formal multi-jurisdiction technology group.
- Create a public utility for Broadband access.
- Develop more thorough employee technology training programs.
- Allow for donation of appropriate surplus computers to organizations and individuals.
- Encourage inter-governmental sharing of software, information and ecommerce concepts.
- Initiate and complete a new information technology strategic plan to improve all automated systems, re-engineer manual procedures and evaluate how departments collaborate.
- Ensure that government is utilizing “best practices” in data storage and security.

The eCommunity Leaders within the Government sector include:

Tom Kneeland, City of Gahanna
Gary Cavin, City of Columbus
Jennifer Chrysler, City of New Albany
Denis Walsh, OARNet
Ed Roberts, Senator Brown's Office
Brad Cavener, MORPC

In working toward the implementation of the sector-specific goals, Connect Ohio recommends that additional participants be brought into the process, which may include technology providers, subject matter experts, other community organizations, funding sources, and the resources of agencies and commercial providers of products and services to the government sector.

Brad McMillen State Operations Manager for Connect Ohio will continue to work with the sector leaders to advance selected projects toward their completion. By leveraging Connect Ohio’s project management process, its research information, and its partners, projects will be defined, developed, and reviewed to help assure that the local teams are equipped to execute them. Connect Ohio will assist in the identification of funding sources, introducing technical resources, and helping to define the measurable goals and timelines that will ensure that the projects are actionable, measurable, and valuable.