

**2009 NACCED Conference: Social Media Applications
for Government Agencies - Presentation Handout**

**Increasing Communication,
Collaboration and Citizen
Participation in Governments
through Social Media**

**Arlington County, VA and Travis County, TX
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Why talk about Social Media & Gov't

- **It's significantly changing the way people communicate and interact**
- **It's increasingly being discussed in government agencies**
- **Some are using social media tools with great success**
- **Others are not because of perceived or real barriers**

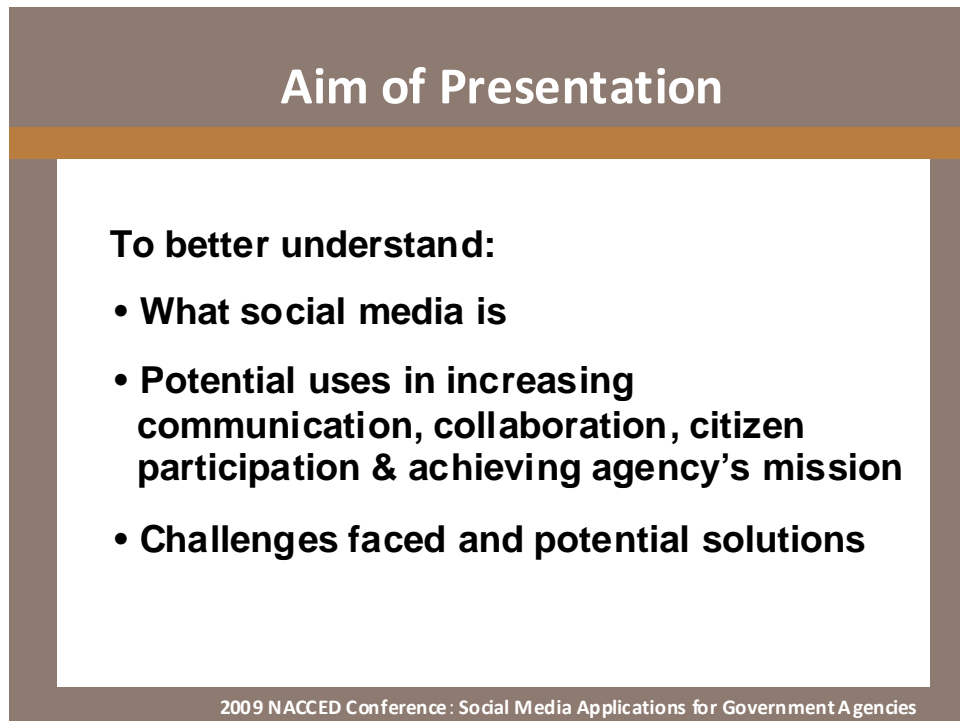
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Why Have this Conversation?

- Social media is relevant because it's changing the ways in which we interact and communicate with one another - one of our most basic human behaviors
- The number of social media users is changing drastically – it used to be that internet usage was highly correlated to education and income level – but that is changing. Increasingly, people from different socio-economic backgrounds and ages are using the internet and social media tools more and more. Also as the younger generations – the so-called “digital natives” age their expectations about the way to conduct business will change
- Social media in government is increasingly being discussed within government agencies at the national, state, and local level
- Some agencies are already using social media tools with great success, transforming how agencies engage the public and adding measurable value to the work they do
- Others are not using these tools, either because of perceived or real lack of resources, cultural resistance, legal or other barriers

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Given this context the aim of this presentation will be:



Aim of Presentation

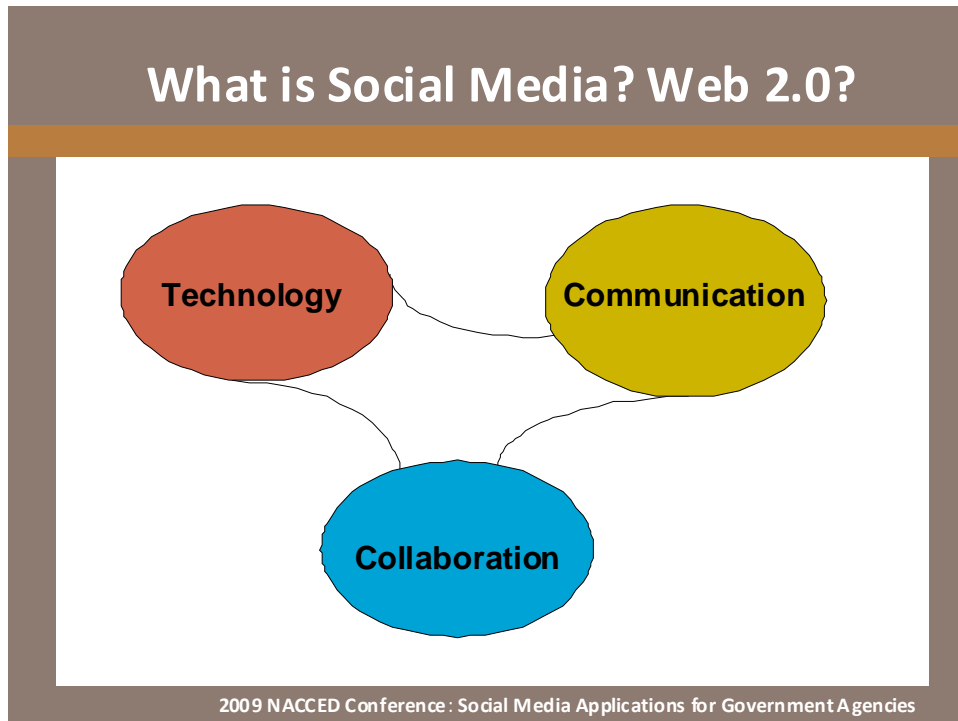
To better understand:

- **What social media is**
- **Potential uses in increasing communication, collaboration, citizen participation & achieving agency's mission**
- **Challenges faced and potential solutions**

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- This presentation is the result of research done online and the examples shared are used to communicate ways in which social media can be used in government practices - in no way do the examples selected represent a political or commercial endorsement
- This presentation will be about engaging and interacting through the internet – so it won't apply to audiences that have limited or no access at all to technology, thus the importance to continue traditional public engagement methods

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Defining Social Media/Web 2.0

- Social Media and Web 2.0 are umbrella terms describing a variety of activities that integrate technology, collaboration and communication
- In the past the Internet was a one-way information medium, but today, through social media, the audience can respond, can react to what they see and read, can create, organize and edit content, and can share information on a grass-roots level, across geographical and institutional boundaries
- Short video on “Social Media in Plain English” – the video was created by Common Crafts – a small company based out of Seattle:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpIOCIX1jPE&feature=Playlist&p=951884BC648DF61B&index=1>

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Social Media Tools

- **RSS and other syndicated web feeds**
- **Blogs and micro-blogs**
- **Wikis**
- **Photo-sharing, video-sharing, and podcasts**
- **Social networks**
- **Social bookmarking**
- **Mashups**
- **Widgets, virtual worlds, and more**

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Social Media Tools

<p>RSS A newsfeed technology that allows people to subscribe to timely updates from favored websites or to aggregate feeds from many sites into one place.</p>	<p>Wikis A collaborative website which can be directly edited by anyone with access to it. Wikipedia is one of the best known examples.</p>	<p>Social Bookmarking A method for Internet users to store, organize, search, and manage bookmarks of web pages on the Internet.</p>
<p>Blog A website that allows users to reflect, share opinions, and discuss various topics in the form of an online journal while readers may comment on posts. Entries typically appear in reverse chronological order.</p>	<p>Photo & Video Sharing The publishing or transfer of a user's digital photos or videos online, thus enabling the user to share them with others.</p>	<p>Mashups A webpage or application that combines data or functionality from two or more external sources to create a new service.</p>
	<p>Podcasts An audio broadcast available for downloading from a website to a personal computer or other device.</p>	<p>Widgets A small program that you can easily put on your website, blog, or personalized start page.</p>
<p>MicroBlogs A blog that allows up to 140 characters-long posts. Twitter is the most popular and allows text messaging for blog postings via cell phone.</p>	<p>Social Networks Online communities of people who share interests and/or activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others.</p>	<p>Virtual Worlds A computer-based simulated environment intended for its users to inhabit and interact via avatars. It has educational applications, especially for training.</p>

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Gov 2.0

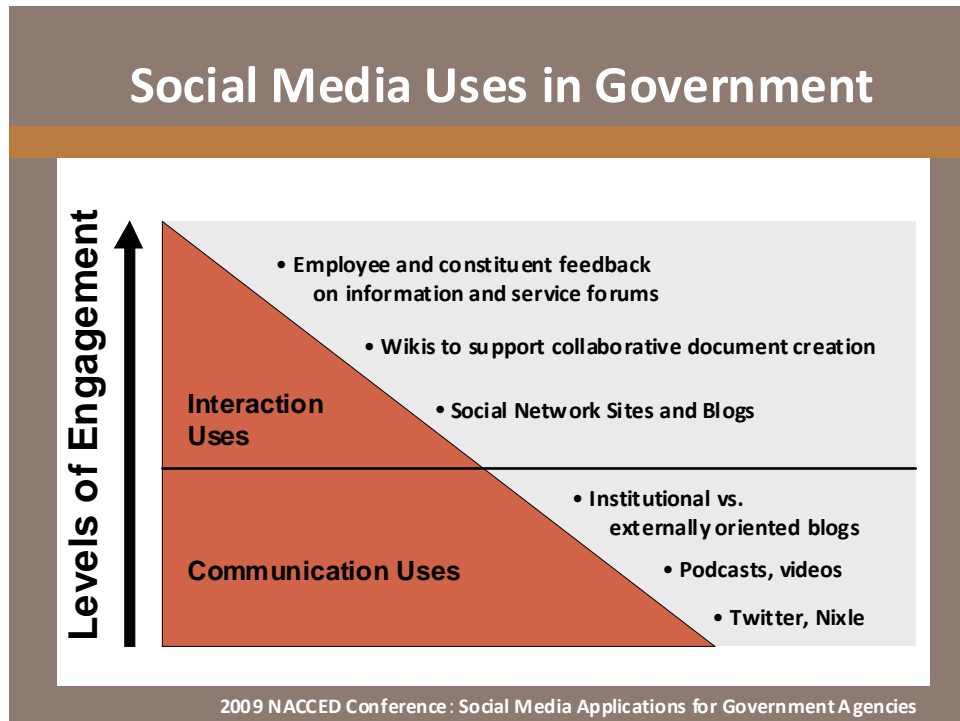
- **Application of Web 2.0 to government practices**
- **2-way information medium**
- **Platform for interaction**
- **Platform for collaborative problem-solving**

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Social Media Uses in Governments

- Gov 2.0 describes the application of Web 2.0 to government practices
- Gov.2 “moves us beyond the traditional one-way release of services and information and instead establishes a framework of collaborative government in which stakeholders have not only the ability to become informed about governmental decisions but rather have at their disposal more and easily facilitated participation in such decisions” Munigov.com
- It leverages the web as a platform, moving towards transparency, participation and collaboration. It has the potential to use the power of technology to solve pressing problems at the local, regional, national and international level
- At a surface level, social media might seem like just new technologies tools but there is much more to it – it’s about human interaction and communication and a cultural shift in conducting human activities
- It’s a phenomenon that must be understood so it can be leveraged strategically. It isn’t some panacea in-an-of itself, it’s got to be integrated into an agency’s existing communications and collaboration strategies
- Understanding the tools is just a stepping stone, the path is about communicating and working differently, more collaboratively

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Social media can be thought as having both communication and interactive applications with various levels of engagement

- At the communication level, it can be used to disseminate government information that is relevant to citizens as wide as possible so that citizen groups can 1) gain an increased awareness of the content and 2) have easy access to the information whenever they are.
- At a more engaging level - it allows the government:
 - to interact with citizens (and employees) to get their feedback on policies, issues, service designs and delivery, and plans and
 - to connect government to citizens, promoting social inclusion and more effectively distributing responsibility
- From a citizen's perspective it allows them to:
 - influence policy and service design
 - develop satisfying partnerships with community and government, having increased confidence in dealing with government

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Tools & Local Government Applications

Twitter <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Travis County– Following HUD, NACO– Twitter Search	Wikis <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Wikis in Plain English– Great for developing a procedures manual
Social Networks <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Govloop– Facebook– LinkedIn	Virtual Worlds <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Federal Consortium of Virtual Worlds– Second Life

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Social Media Tools and Local Government Applications

Twitter

- Twitter is a microblog or blog that allows up to 140 characters-long posts- it's a great way to inform the public and be informed
- Travis County Page, Twitter Search in plain English
- Nixle: www.nixle.com : A mass-communication system that allows local government and law enforcement agencies to connect with local residents over cell phone, email and web. Information can be targeted on a geographical basis.

Wikis

- A collaborative website which can be directly edited by anyone with access to it. Wikipedia is one of the best known examples.
- Wikis in Plain English
<http://www.commoncraft.com/video-wikis-plain-english>

Social Networks

- GovLoop Social Network for governments: www.govloop.com
- Facebook – Travis County CDBG Page

Virtual Worlds

- Federal Consortium of Virtual Worlds
<http://www.ndu.edu/irmc/fcvw/fedconsortium.html>

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Tools & Government Applications	
<p>Santa Cruz City Budget http://budget.santacruzcityca.gov/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Community feedback portal – UserVoice Forum 	<p>The White House http://www.whitehouse.gov/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – FB, YouTube, twitter, Flickr and more – “Open for Questions”
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Others Tools/Examples

<p>City of Santa Cruz http://budget.santacruzcityca.gov/</p> <p>The City launched a special community feedback portal, which gives residents an opportunity to offer City leadership constructive suggestions to the City’s fiscal problems.</p>	<p>The White House http://www.whitehouse.gov/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The White House is using a variety of social media tools. • <i>Open for Questions</i> – allowed registered users to submit questions and vote on questions submitted by others for a two day period.
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There are other interesting ways that government agencies are using these tools for example:

<p>Fix My Street: http://www.fixmystreet.com/</p> <p>A website that allows residents to report their neighborhood problems online: the site lets the local council know about the problems and ensures that the problems are reported to the correct department and the right people. Residents can check back to see what progress has been made.</p>	<p>What do they know: http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/</p> <p>A website that allows users to file and explore Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to UK government departments and public authorities. Includes search facility and FOI advice.</p>
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Arlington County is Using Social Media

- **Promote safety - Police on MySpace**
- **Highlight 2010 Census activities**
- **Feature Volunteer opportunities**
- **Reach new audiences - Facebook**
- **Share successes**
- **Announce events - Twitter**
- **Share current issues and hot topics**

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Arlington County is using Social Media

- The County is gradually wading into various types of social media
- Rather than coming to you with “best practices” I am here to show a work in progress, and “good enough to try” illustrations.
- The Housing Division is just now using some social media avenues to develop our new Five Year Con Plan. I like the description in our County’s Social Media Policy where it says “sometimes we just have to be brave and try something new. Instead of going for the gold standard, sometimes the “tin standard” will do!
- Show examples of Census page

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Arlington County: Promoting the ConPlan

- **Housing Division page with RSS feeds and blogs**
- **Allows the County to post:**
 - **Draft documents, photos, maps**
 - **Sections of the Plan for review**
 - **Summaries of the Community Forum**
 - **Online resident survey on housing needs and priorities**

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Arlington County: Promoting the Consolidated Plan

- <http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/CPHD/housing/CPHDHousingHousingDivision.aspx>
- Similar to the hot issues page, the Housing Division launched a Consolidated Plan page that encourages ongoing communication with the stakeholders. It is set up with RSS feeds and a section for blogs <http://conplan.arlingtonapps.com/>
- We have included our Draft Analysis of Impediments, Fair Housing Plan, photos and summary of Community Forum for those who could not attend; link to the online housing needs survey, as well as links to relevant documents translated into Spanish

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Arlington County: Promoting the ConPlan

- **Encourages community conversation**
- **Builds network of supporters and advocates**
- **Engages a broader audience: including – Hispanic-Net on Facebook; young adults**
- **Allows staff to listen to community and respond strategically**

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Arlington County: Promoting the Consolidated Plan

- The county will evaluate the impact of these new efforts after the Consolidated Plan is completed. As you've already heard, this method is simply another tool in our civic engagement kit. We'll continue to seek the input of the stakeholders in various ways, in person, in meetings, in cyberspace!

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Travis County CDBG Public Engagement

- **Traditional oral testimonies at Commissioners Court**
- **Public forums as facilitated discussions**
- **Technical assistance to neighborhoods: site visits, assessment of projects' eligibility and feasibility**
- **Participation - important factor when selecting projects**
- **Currently developing social media strategy to increase participation and collaboration**

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Travis County and CDBG Public Engagement

- Public forums as facilitated discussions in each one of the four County precincts – looking for interaction instead of one-way communication
- Quality and level of engagement is significantly different in the public hearings in the public forums from those at the Commissioners Court
- Over 130 citizens and 25 agencies have participated in the CDBG public processes over the past four years
- Participation plays an important role when selecting projects. The participation of residents not only allows the county to identify community needs, and select from presented projects, but also proves crucial in the implementation of projects.
- Travis County CDBG Page: www.co.travis.tx.us/CDBG - it has participation forms available during the development of the action plan. It also has project proposal forms available all year-round

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Challenges when using Social Media

Org. Culture	Policy	Technology
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Risk-averse• Top-down complex hierarchical structures• Dismissive attitudes towards social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employees Wasting time• Roles• Terms of service• Advertisement and endorsement• Procurement• Privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Security Risks• Bandwidth• 508 compliance

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Some Solutions

- **Secure support of senior leaders**
- **Develop a clear strategy with specific objectives, target audience, channels and measurement metrics**
- **Work cross-functionally to resolve challenges**
- **Develop a social media policy**
- **Consider a pilot as a proof-of-concept**

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Challenges	Considerations/Possible Solutions
Risk-averse culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Top-down, complex hierarchical organizational structures ▪ Dismissive attitudes towards social media ▪ Defining the rules of engagement ▪ Fear of making a commitment of information sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Having a clear mission, considering a pilot as a proof-of-concept, securing support of senior leaders ▪ Creating dialogue to engage multiple departments
Employees Wasting Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This should be addressed by agency managers as a management issue, not a technology problem
Roles Can employees use Web 2.0 tools to speak on behalf of their agency?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some agencies have developed a permission/governance structure indicating the roles played by agency staff to interact officially on third party web sites
Terms of Service: Indemnification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many companies have been willing to negotiate on these issues
Advertisement and Endorsement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advertising online is no different than advertising in a magazine, newspaper, radio, or TV, where you can't control exactly how your content will appear in context ▪ Set criteria for your agency for when such ads are acceptable
Procurement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gratuitous services and gift authority ▪ Choosing winners without competition ▪ Contract authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Each agency should work with their procurement and ethics attorneys to ensure that they can use free web products and services and can set criteria for deciding which ones to use
Privacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is no guarantee that social media sites will protect people's privacy to the same degree as government agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agencies should use a standard disclaimer alerting the public that they are no longer on the agency's site and that the private sector site's own privacy policy applies
Security Risks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IT security specialists raise concerns that these high traffic sites pose a greater risk for malware and spyware 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agencies can implement security measures to mitigate these risks, just as they do for other high traffic sites such as Google and Yahoo
Bandwidth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agencies need to budget for this, as they do for other infrastructure needs. If opening all computers to all sites is an issue, agencies should at least provide access to agency staff that need to understand and use these tools to communicate with the public
Accessability/508 Section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disabled accessible technology like auto-captioning video software presents opportunities for comprehensive government-wide solutions to Section 508 concerns

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Social Media Policy for Counties

- **Cumberland County (Pennsylvania)**
- **Roanoke County (Virginia)**
- **Boulder County (Colorado)**
- **Arlington County (Virginia)**
- **Fairfax County (Virginia)**

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Social Media Policies for Local Governments

Elements of social media policies and guidelines

- Encourage use of social media to further the goals of counties
- Set the boundaries and general rules of engagement (monitoring offensive content vs. censorship)
- Define web-based interactivity in the workplace to mission-centric uses (contextually appropriate ways to support work objectives)
- Set out guidelines for not compromising the privacy of the organization
- Set out guidelines for employees to conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the county – using official accounts for official business
- Use governance/permission structure to approve what social media outlets may be suitable, and define the roles of agency staff while interacting on third party websites
- Discuss copyright, records retention, Freedom of Information Act, First Amendment, privacy laws and public disclosure laws
- You can find examples of various County Social Media Policies at www.munigov.org

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Sources Used for Presentation

<p>The Collaboration Project http://www.collaborationproject.org</p> <p>Government and Social Media http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/documents/Government_and_Social_Media.pdf</p> <p>Gov 2.0 Summit 09: "Showcasing Innovators for Government" http://www.blip.tv/file/2607097</p> <p>Innovating with Social Media in Government http://www.slideshare.net/charleneli/innovating-with-social-media-in-government</p>	<p>Introduction to Government 2.0 http://www.slideshare.net/NathanaelB/introduction-to-government-20</p> <p>Leveraging Web 2.0 in Government http://www.businessofgovernment.org/pdfs/ChangReport2.pdf</p> <p>MuniGov 2.0 http://munigov.org/</p> <p>Social Media 101: Social Media for Government http://www.slideshare.net/mixtmedia/social-media-for-government-32309-1185070</p>
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The Collaboration Project

<http://www.collaborationproject.org>

Government and Social Media

http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/documents/Government_and_Social_Media.pdf

Gov 2.0 Summit 09: "Showcasing Innovators for Government"

<http://www.blip.tv/file/2607097>

Innovating with Social Media in Government

<http://www.slideshare.net/charleneli/innovating-with-social-media-in-government>

Introduction to Government 2.0

<http://www.slideshare.net/NathanaelB/introduction-to-government-20>

Leveraging Web 2.0 in Government

<http://www.businessofgovernment.org/pdfs/ChangReport2.pdf>

MuniGov 2.0

<http://munigov.org/>

Social Media 101: Social Media for Government

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<http://www.slideshare.net/mixtmedia/social-media-for-government-32309-1185070>

Thank you for your time!

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