



PUBLIC MEETINGS BENCHMARK REPORT 2024

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# Public Interactions Through Meeting Technology



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# Introduction

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With digital transformation creating improved experiences and higher expectations in the public sector, adapting the latest technology has become the new normal for staff at all levels of government. But few are seeing the impact of this technology more than clerks and staff working with public meetings, boards, and commissions.

Public meetings at the local level provide the most impactful points of interaction between government and the public. These critical interaction can help improve public trust, combat misinformation, and improve public policy decision making.

Clerks are crucial to the success and smooth operation of public meetings. But the importance of that position can lead to heavy workloads on tight timelines. Those demands can be eased when clerks are armed with the tools to automate agenda and meeting processes, build and distribute agendas efficiently, and complete key public meeting activities securely and reliably. However, achieving those goals must be done with an attention to security balanced with an effort to reach more residents and businesses to account for the needs of the whole community, collecting more feedback while maximizing budget and staff efficiency.

This is the current state of clerks as reflected in a survey conducted by Granicus to help better understand the trends and issues facing clerks, meeting managers, and organizations focused on public meetings. From agenda processes to meeting recordings and broadcast to the potential impact of future technologies, the feedback from clerks using Granicus tools to conduct public meetings helps give a picture of how technology is improving the public meeting process and where opportunities exist for future growth.



# A snapshot of clerks and meetings

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While technology has delivered time savings when creating meeting agendas and provided the tools to increase access to meetings for more of the public, a great deal of pressure remains on clerks:



Ensuring virtual meeting compliance and accessibility



Collecting and communicating input from the community digitally



Ensuring cybersecurity amid growing risks



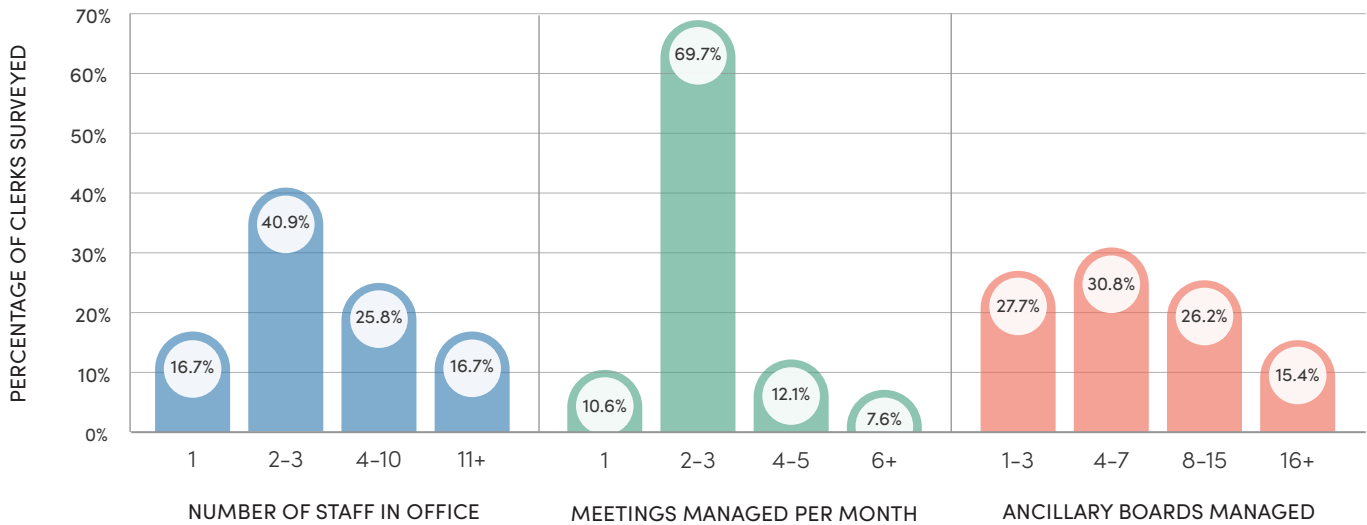
Compiling agendas from staffs that are frequently remote and always busy with other things

However, as shown in the Granicus survey results, most of this work is being done by small staffs. About 41% of those surveyed stated that they work in a clerks' office of two or three people; nearly 17% of those surveyed work as the only clerk in their office. Less than 20% responded that they worked in larger staffs (seven to 10 staff members). And with most respondents stating that they have been in their role for about two years, the impact of job turnover is also worth considering.

Despite the smaller staff sizes, clerks are facing multiple meetings each month, with more than two-thirds (69.7%) of respondents stating that they are managing two to three meetings per month. A smaller portion (7.6%) see more than six meetings per month. Most clerks are serving boards of five or seven members (42.2% and 29.7%, respectively). And, contrary to popular assumptions, 7.5% of respondents served boards with an even number of members, but the smallest of those was eight members.

The duration of board meetings continues to be the somewhat standard two to three hours, based on responses. Fifty percent stated that as the average meeting length, with 28.8% stating their average meetings ran four to five hours, and 12.1% of managed meetings lasting over 6 hours. That consistency is reflected in the fact that most respondents stated that speaker time limits were capped at two to four minutes per speaker, while only 6% of responses stated that they allowed unlimited speaking time. When considering that these meetings take place, for the most part, in the evenings (after a full-day of work for clerks) these long meetings can present a significant strain on clerks.

## CLERKS OFFICE OVERVIEW



The number of ancillary boards managed by clerks is somewhat less consistent, according to the survey. Just over 30% of clerks manage four to seven other boards while another quarter manage eight to 15 boards. Meanwhile, nearly 30% have more than 16 boards to look after. These additional boards also see a significant increase in workload for some clerks, as nearly 30% of clerks surveyed manage more than six ancillary board meetings each month. However, an equal number of clerks state that their ancillary boards only meet once per month.

The issues discussed in these meetings present an interesting reflection between what municipal leaders see as the most important topics in their communities and the agenda items presented in meetings. Over a quarter of those asked about their top community concerns cited homelessness, while crime keeps only 3% up at night. Managing growth worries almost one-fifth of city and county leaders, while political segmentation and partisanship concerns almost 10%.

However, the most common agenda topics according to survey respondents are still somewhat traditional: Budget; infrastructure maintenance; managing growth; attracting business and commerce; and sustainability concerns are the top five most common subjects of agendas per the survey.

# Agenda creation

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Perhaps the largest area where technology is transforming the work of clerks is in the area of agenda preparation and the compilation of meeting materials. More clerks than ever are using automated systems to help them create their agendas and packets as shown in responses to the Granicus Clerk Survey, with more than 8 in 10 clerks stating that they now use an automated solution, and slightly less than 20% still assembling packets manually. Slightly more than half of all clerks who responded have held positions in which they assembled packets manually.

Being able to integrate automation into their workflows is becoming critical for clerks, as respondents reflect an overall increase in the size of meeting agenda material packets. Of those surveyed, 50% of meeting managers reported their average meeting agenda has 10 or more items to include, while one-third have five to 10 items.

One area where digital automation assists clerks is in improving opportunities for cross-departmental collaboration. While almost 60% of clerks say that they are still primarily responsible for agenda management, another quarter reported that the city manager's office leads that effort, with almost 10% saying that the mayor or chief elected official holds the responsibility. Cross-departmental assistance is also part of the creation process, with two-thirds of meeting managers indicating that they have four to 10 departments typically adding items to the agenda, while 20% have only one to three departments contributing on a regular basis.



Slightly more than half of all clerks who responded have held positions in which they assembled packets manually.

While the increasing number of contributors might suggest a more convoluted and time-consuming process, more than one-third of clerks surveyed said that they finalize their agendas within a few days, and 20% get it done in one day. Almost 19% spend a week on their agendas, while slightly less than a quarter take two weeks. Automated solutions might be the reason behind these shorter assembly periods. Almost a third of clerks reported that they save between three and five hours preparing their agendas with an automated system, and another 35% say that they save five or more hours.

Other benefits that clerks cited from using automation in their agenda preparation included:



Less paper use (33%)



Higher productivity (19%)



Fewer demands on staff resources (16%)



More professional-looking output (15%)

As more clerks embrace the benefit of digital solutions, an increasing number are moving to totally paperless agenda and packet creation (18%). While 40% print up to 10 copies of packets per meeting, only one in five clerks (20%) is still printing 25 or more agenda packets for each meeting, a significant change to the historical demands on staff.

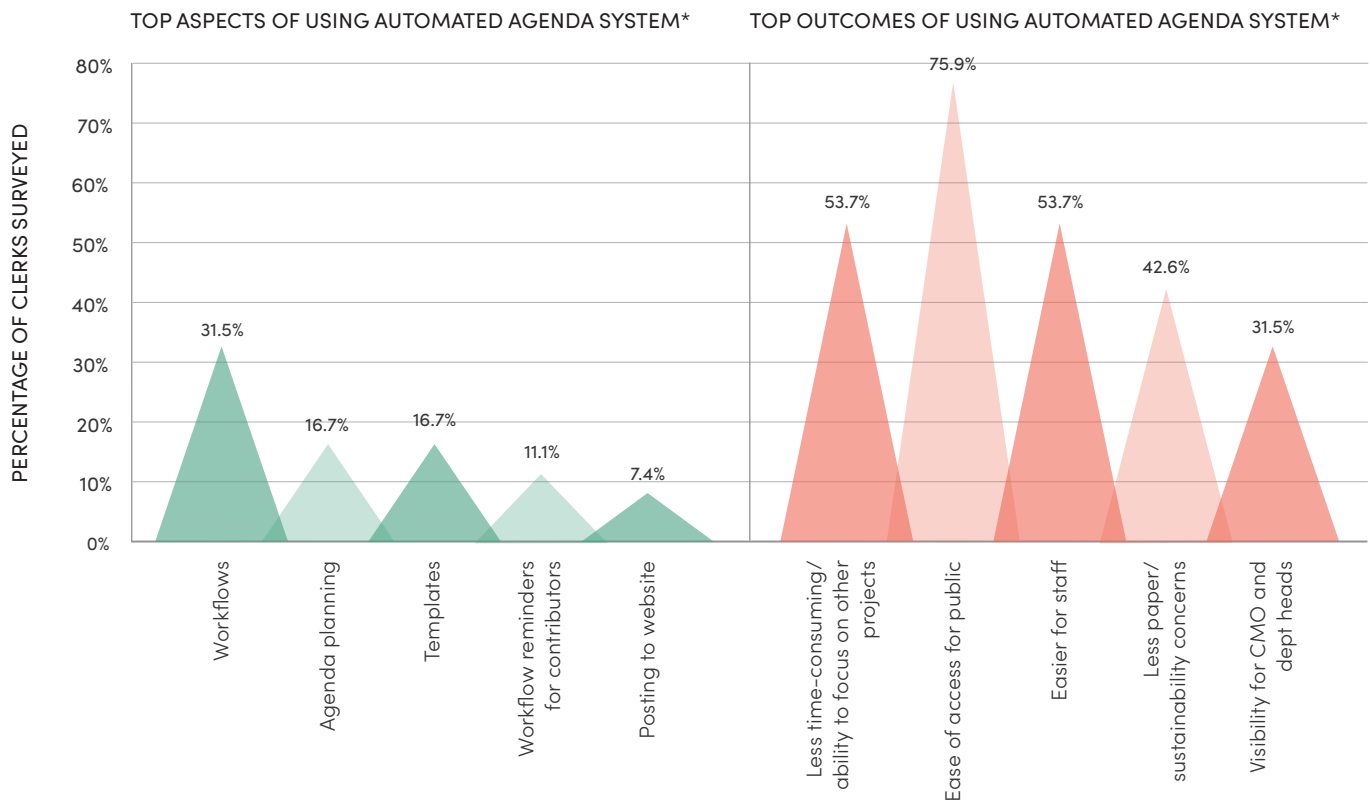


4-10

Two-thirds of meeting managers indicated that they have 4 to 10 departments typically adding items to the agenda.

This move away from paper may reflect an evolution that comes from the longevity of these systems within the organization. Almost half of the clerks surveyed stated that they have had their current automated agenda solution for five years or more. Approximately the same number were involved in its purchase, while more than one-third inherited the system from a predecessor.

## BENEFITS OF AN AUTOMATED AGENDA SYSTEM



\*Percentage can add to over 100% due to ability to select multiple answers to the question.

The impact in time savings and ease of use for staff were both cited as top outcomes and favorite aspects of using an automated agenda preparation system. Clerks had a lot to say about why they like their automated agenda solutions. Fully three-quarters cited the improved ease of access for the public as a top reason for having an automated solution. More than half described the benefits of saving staff time and freeing staff to focus on other projects. More than 40% identified paper conservation, and nearly one-third cited visibility for leadership and department heads. Another 18% pointed to digital agenda tools for elected officials as a big improvement.

# Video

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In 2024, organizations using Granicus public meeting video tools streamed more than 156,500 events totaling more than 191,000 hours of video. With approximately 13,000 uploads per month and 650 uploads per day, the importance of online video – whether on-demand or live-streamed – has become a vital part of the public meeting process and the commitment between government organizations and the public.

Here again, the Granicus survey showed the importance of the clerk in the role of managing meeting video. More than 90% of surveyed organizations stated that they use a video streaming solution, and in more than 40% of those organizations, the clerk is the staff member in charge of managing video streaming. IT departments handle those responsibilities in about a quarter of the organizations, with communications and AV staff managing the rest (16.7% and 6.7%, respectively). Almost 7% of organizations outsource those tasks to independent contractors.

This delegation of duties might come out of necessity, as responses suggested that IT departments in these organizations might be under the same staff strain as clerks. More than 40% of respondents reported an IT staff of one to three people. Almost one-third have four to seven IT staff, with another quarter having eight or more.

Thanks in part to the increase in digital tools available to staff, an increasing number of organizations (two-thirds) handle public meeting video production in-house. For post-meeting production, 90% of respondents said one to three people prepare and post meeting videos, while only 10% of respondents post their meeting videos without any additional production work. Common production adjustments made to meeting video include:



Trimming the start and end of the video (65%)



Indexing agenda items to the video (37.5%)



Adding graphics and titles (22.5%)



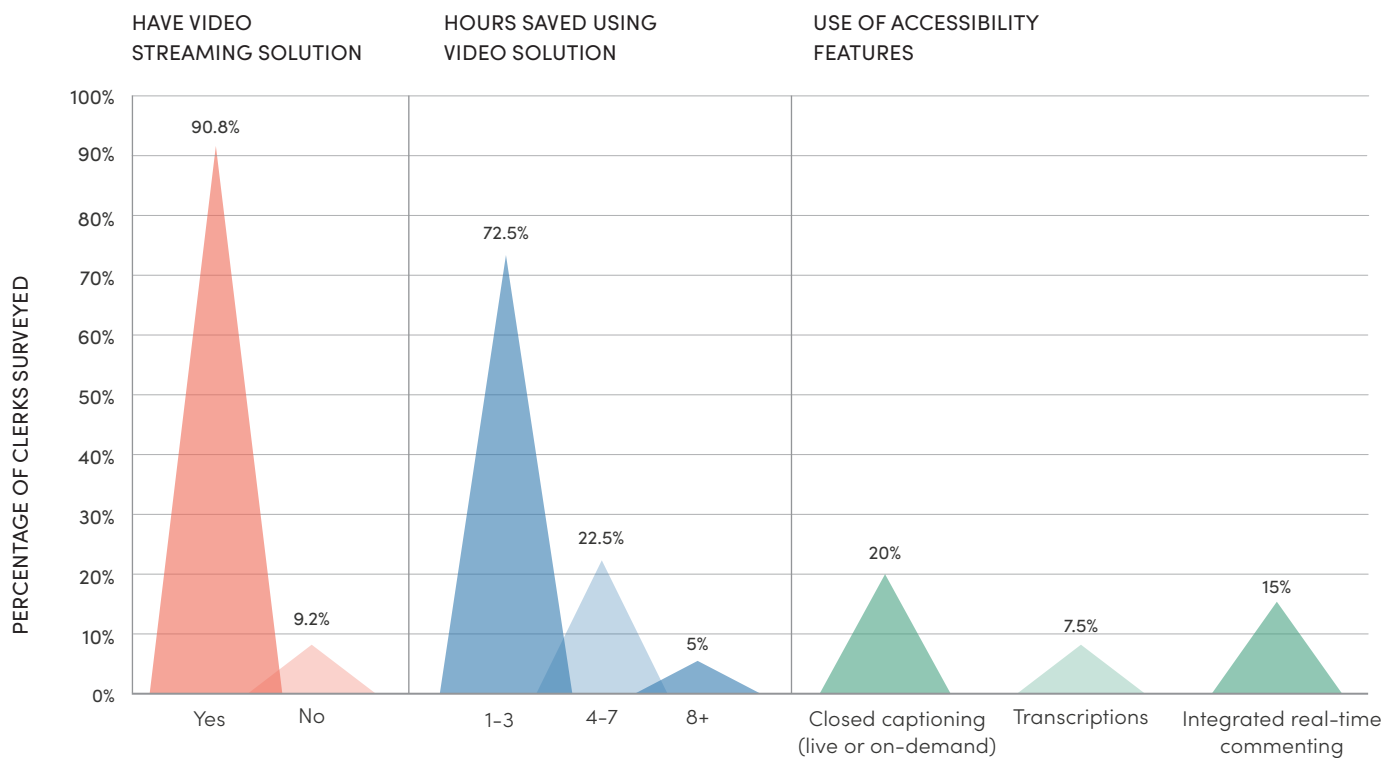
Complex, multi-camera editing (20%)

As with agenda packet preparation, respondents stated that using an automated video solution provides significant time savings. Almost 75% of those surveyed stated that tools reduce their production time by one to three hours per meeting, and more than 20% saved four to seven hours per meeting.

Despite the time-saving production benefits of automated tools, many organizations have been slow to embrace tools that can further increase accessibility for the public. Only 20% of organizations added closed captioning (either live or in on-demand video) with every meeting, and only 7.5% added transcriptions. For those who do include closed captioning, fewer than 10% offer a language other than English and more than 15% of respondents rely on **YouTube closed captioning**.

Organizations can improve options for public interaction by collecting public comment either prior to meetings or through real-time comment tools. Currently, only 15% of respondents use an integrated system that allows for real-time commenting or digital tools to collect public comment prior to meetings.

## AUTOMATED VIDEO STREAMING SOLUTION





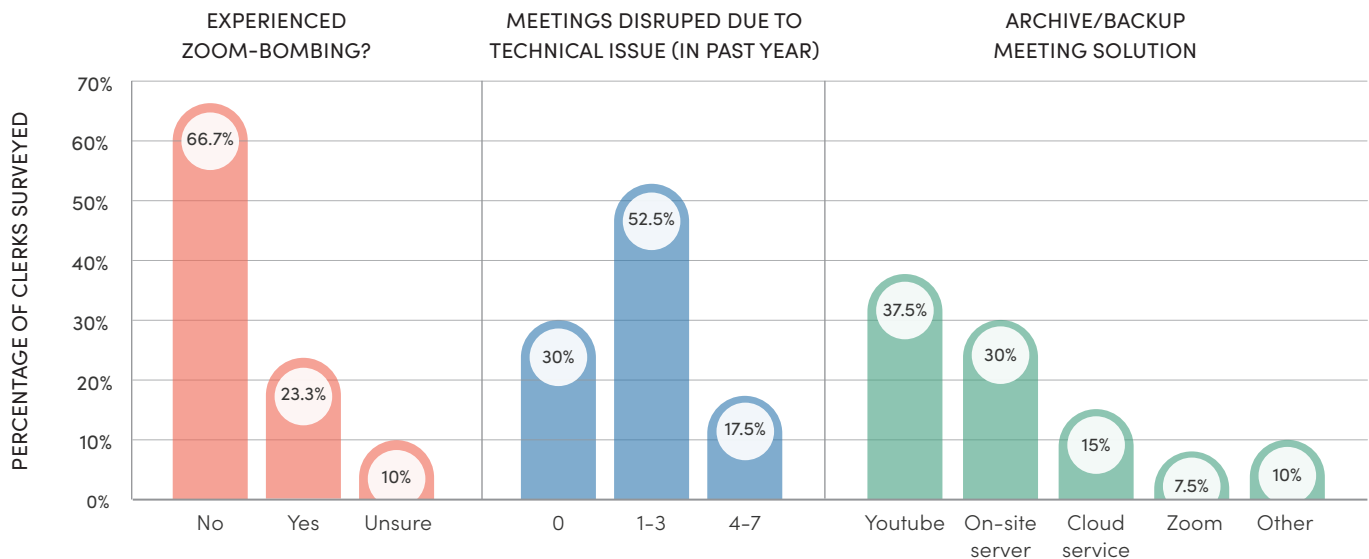
40%

The clerk is the staff member in charge of managing video streaming in more than 40% of organizations surveyed.

While security continues to be at the forefront for all organizations, many still rely on a third-party option for streaming and/or archiving meeting videos. YouTube is the primary solution for cloud storage among those surveyed, with 37.5% stating the service as their choice. Meanwhile, 15% use a different cloud solution and 30% use a secured on-site server.

Security and reliability are spotty for some video solutions, as well. One-quarter of all respondents reported experiencing a Zoombombling incident and more than half of respondents had one to three tech problems that disrupted their meetings over the last year.

## VIDEO SECURITY



# Future technology

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As developing technology offers new opportunities for better serving boards and the public, clerks find themselves trying to find ways to best integrate these advances into their daily duties. The influence of artificial intelligence (AI) is a significant area of digital development that looks to impact all areas of government.

For clerks, AI is already starting to make an impact in their work, with 40% of survey respondents stating that their organizations are already using AI in some form. Those organizations are split unevenly between ChatGPT (75%) and Copilot (25%).

The top uses for AI, according to the survey, include:



Research (62.5%)



Meeting summaries and department summaries (25% each)



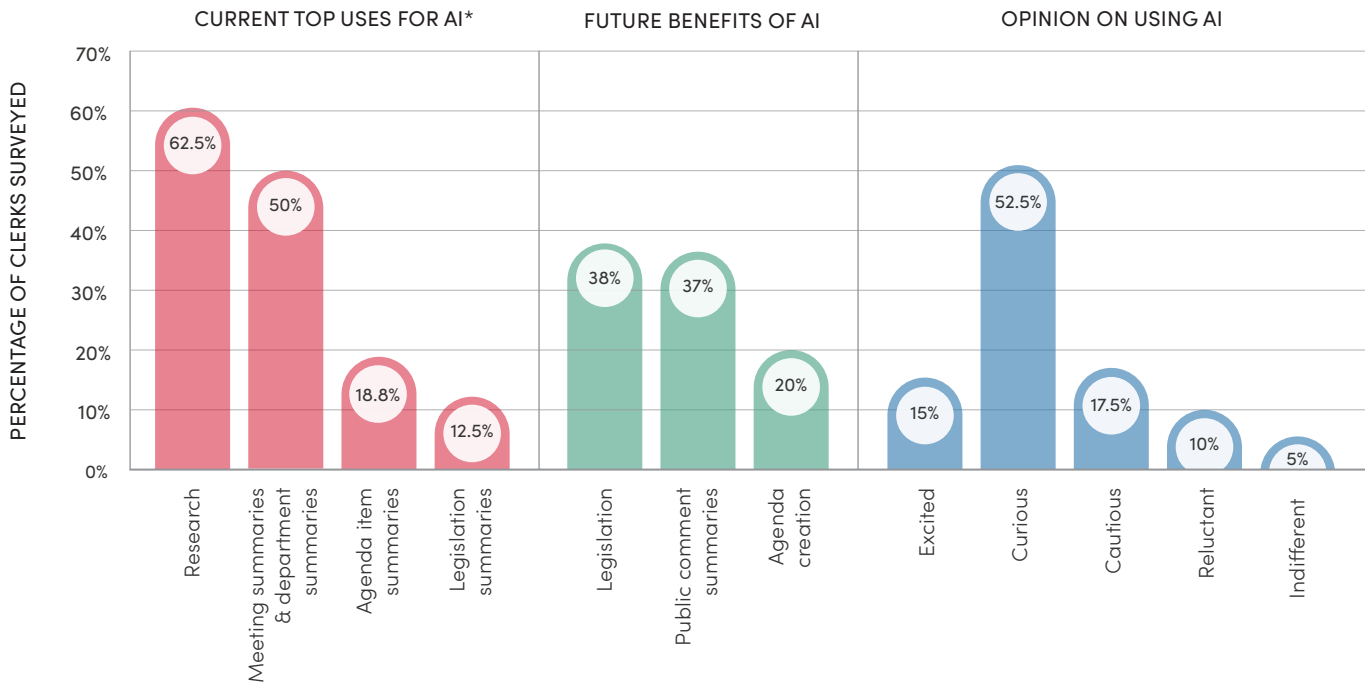
Agenda item summaries (19%)

Staff see potential future benefits of AI in areas including legislation (38%), public comment summaries (37%), and agenda creation (20%).

However, despite the perceived benefits, opinions about the increased role of AI in government run a gamut. A small majority (52.5%) are curious, and another 15% are excited. However, 17.5% feel cautious, 10% feel reluctant, and 5% are indifferent. One reason for this might be the inconsistency in policies around AI. Fewer than a quarter of organizations surveyed (22.5%) currently have policies concerning the use of AI. Of those that do, 66% were created by administrative agencies, with just over 10% created by a legislative body or an IT department.

Almost half of survey-takers think AI will impact government, but another two-thirds aren't sure and 15% think it won't affect government operations. Those who think it won't significantly impact government operations and jobs cite three primary reasons: Its inability to do the more human parts of a job (33.3%), unreliability of information accuracy (20.8%), and government's slow adoption rate (12.5%).

## IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)



\*Percentage can add to over 100% due to ability to select multiple answers to the question.

Of those who believe that AI will have a significant impact on government operations, more than one-third suggested it will likely improve efficiency, more than one-quarter said it will save time and money, and more than one-fifth think it will streamline automated processes and provide deeper data analysis and data insights. Just over 15% think it will help with research, while nearly 11% believe it will ease some administrative tasks and improve accuracy and reduce error rates. Only slightly more than 5% worry that it will result in staff job losses.

When it comes to the more specific effects AI might have on the day-to-day operations of their office, 80% of respondents cited that it will help with repetitive tasks, and another 75% say it will save time. Almost half think it will reduce demands on staff and more than a third believe it will save resources.

## Conclusion

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The modern clerk must be able to deliver digital experiences that meet the expectations of the public and the boards they serve. The increased demands they face are mitigated by the digital tools and automation that more easily allow remote connection with both groups during meeting preparation and participation.

While new trends in technology might provide enticing ways to further reduce the challenges in a clerk's responsibilities, there remain untapped resources and features that can have an immediate impact both on the work being done and the outcomes that organizations hope to achieve with their communities.





## Learn more about how Granicus helps Clerks

[Contact Us](#)

Simplify the public meeting process – internally and externally – to emphasize efficiency, promote transparency, and reduce the burden on staff.

Partner with the industry leader to deliver the right solution for your community. It's easier than you think.

### Granicus has:

- ✓ More meeting management and video solutions than anyone else
- ✓ Been serving clerks since 1999
- ✓ The highest-level compliance with government security standards