

# WHY A MEDICARE COST SURVEY IS IMPORTANT

By Nicole Huerta, NBS

Does your agency provide ambulance services? If so, it is time to get prepared for a new federal reporting requirement related to Medicare. The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (BBA) includes a major Medicare ambulance services provision pertaining to the development of a data collection system for ground ambulance service providers and suppliers.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is requiring that all providers of ground ambulance services collect and report expenditures, revenues, utilization, and other departmental statistics. Originally, data collection was required to begin on January 1, 2020, but this was postponed to January 1, 2021. Collection of these statistics will be required via the Medicare Cost Survey.

Failure to gather the required data can result in a penalty, so it is imperative that the Cost Survey be conducted accurately.

## What is the Medicare Cost Survey?

The Medicare Cost Survey is a data collection instrument used to evaluate costs related to payment rates under the Medicare Part B Ambulance Fee Schedule (AFS). Sufficient data collection is necessary for CMS to establish appropriate rates in the future. If a provider or supplier does not submit a sufficient Cost Survey, a penalty equal to a 10% payment reduction to the Ambulance Fee Schedule (AFS) payments will be applied.

CMS has designated various Ground Ambulance Services providers and



suppliers required to submit a Cost Survey each year continuing through 2024. Find out if your agency was selected to begin data collection in 2021 by visiting the Ambulance Services Center on the CMS website.

## Why are providers required to submit the Medicare Cost Survey for Ambulance Services?

Currently, assessing how Medicare payment rates are related to costs is

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## Choose the Right Tools for Public Engagement

By guest contributor Melissa Kuehne, Institute for Local Government/ILG

With public health orders and travel restrictions, this year has presented a number of challenges to authentic and inclusive public engagement. The good news is that technology offers local governments a variety of ways to educate and engage local residents. Local governments are experimenting with various online tools to enhance their public engagement efforts. Whether the goal is to broaden participation, accelerate progress on decision-making or create a safe space for feedback on a contentious local issue, online tools can help you achieve those goals. Such tools also provide an opportunity to expand the

number and diversity of voices providing input to the local decision-making process.

According to the Pew Research Center, approximately 70 percent of American adults use at least one social media platform to connect with each other, share information and read news. Nearly 40 percent of adults get their news from online platforms. With these numbers

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# Preliminary Election Results for November 2020

By Sara Mares, NBS

**M**ore than 250 local revenue measures were considered by voters across California on November 3<sup>rd</sup>. Based on the preliminary election night results, 75% of those measures were approved.

Sales tax, cannabis tax and school bond measures appear to have been particularly successful. Hotel occupancy taxes and parcel taxes also had moderate success.

The City of Avalon saw the approval of their proposed admissions tax which charges visitors to the island community a per passenger rate with

proceeds going to their local hospital. Altadena Library District voters, with assistance from NBS, passed a Community Facilities District to finance facilities and provide for ongoing services funding. The cities of Albany, Newark and Union City, all in Alameda County, extended or increased their Utility User Taxes.

In addition to the myriad local revenue measures, many communities saw shifts in the officials elected to govern them. Making history, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors will be governed by an all- female Board for the first time since the Board's

inception more than 150 years ago. Note that LA County is the largest County in the United States.

Proposition 15, the "split roll initiative," which would have changed commercial property taxation, was defeated. On the other hand, Proposition 19, which changes property tax rules around property transfers, was narrowly approved. This proposition allows certain homeowners to transfer the base property tax value to a replacement residence, changes taxation of certain family-property transfers and establishes a fire services protection fund.

## OUR CULTURE SETS US APART



As an employee-owned company, we believe the success of NBS depends on the success of our team members. Employee-owners are more than just workers - they're part of the family. They own the business, and their hard work is rewarded. That's why NBS is committed to building a work culture that's supportive, compassionate, and collaborative.

What does this mean to our clients? Because our employees are owners, our clients benefit through:

**BETTER SERVICE** - We care. Employee-owners have skin in the game—what we call "ownership mentality"—so they will go the extra-mile to give clients the best possible service.

**LONG TERM RELIABILITY** - Studies show that employee-owned companies are more reliable, with higher retention rates than conventional businesses. You can count on us year after year to provide great service and products.

**COMMITMENT TO CUSTOMER SATISFACTION** - We understand that our clients make our work possible, so we give each partnership the attention and care it deserves.

## NEW PARCEL TAX COMPLIANCE

Did your voters recently approve a new parcel tax? If so, local agencies need to make sure that they have complied with the parcel tax noticing requirements of Assembly Bill 2476 (2016).

AB 2476 requires a local agency to provide notice of a new parcel tax to the owner of a property that is affected by the tax, if that property owner does not reside within the jurisdictional boundaries of the taxing entity.

The parcel tax notice requires the inclusion of specific information about the parcel tax and needs to be provided to impacted property owners in a certain manner.

If you have not already taken steps to comply with AB 2476, NBS can assist with the necessary requirements such as database management, creation of the parcel tax notice, and mailing coordination. Please contact us if you need assistance or have related questions.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT | *Continued from cover*

trending upward over the last decade, coupled with continued restrictions on in-person gatherings, online engagement and communication are more important than ever.

### Benefits of Online Engagement

Fortunately, there are also many benefits of online engagement, including:

*The ability to reach diverse audiences.* Online options allow residents to provide input at their convenience;

*Better informed participants.* You can provide essential background information with varying levels of detail for

different issues and audiences, keep information up to date and respond to questions as they arise;

*A broader range of perspectives.* Online tools present opportunities to include broader and more diverse perspectives than public meetings, which are often attended primarily by passionate advocates or a small group of “regulars” whose positions may not reflect those of the larger community; and

*More sustained engagement.* You can create a list of all public input for future access and use and develop an audience of informed and interested residents. Such repositories can span a wide range of issues and departments.

### Choosing the “Right” Approach

There are a number of tools and platforms available to engage your community in a virtual environment. These tools vary in cost, staff time required for implementation and the type of feedback you can gather. It is important to match the tools with your public engagement goals, timeline and budget. In order to choose the “right” approach and tools, you should consider the following questions:

- 1 Who is in your community/who are you trying to reach?
- 2 What is the *purpose* of your engagement?
- 3 What input are you seeking?
- 4 Where are you in the process?
- 5 What tools and approaches will help you achieve your goals?
- 6 Do you have a mix of high-tech and low-tech options?

### Find Out More

The Institute for Local Government (ILG) is working with the NBS Team to reschedule a full-day workshop on public engagement options, tips and tricks, especially as it relates to finance topics. This NBS University was scheduled for November 2020 in both Northern California and Southern, and the hope is to hold it in November 2021. Stay tuned for more information on that workshop in the coming months ([www.nbsgov.com/university/](http://www.nbsgov.com/university/)). In the meantime, check out ILG’s website with more information on inclusive and authentic public engagement ([www.ca-ilg.org/engagement](http://www.ca-ilg.org/engagement)).

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## AMBULANCE | *Continued from cover*

complicated by the significant variation in ambulance organizations and by differences in how ambulance services are delivered and financed across communities. Little data exists to evaluate the relationship between Medicare payments and the costs realized by ambulance organizations. The data collected by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 will compile comprehensive information on ambulance costs, revenue, and services samples of all ambulance organizations. This data will be used to evaluate costs related to payment rates under the Medicare Part B Ambulance Fee Schedule (AFS).

*Source: Ambulance Services Center, CMS.gov*

### What can NBS do for you?

NBS can help navigate the data collection process and complete the new Medicare Cost Survey. We have worked with ambulance services organizations to generate over \$20 million in supplemental payments through Medicaid supplemental payment programs. Our team has more than 10 years of experience working with ambulance services organizations on cost report submissions. We understand the cost structures of ambulance services organizations, which enables us to ensure that the Medicare Cost Survey is completed accurately.



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**Our crew, our clients,  
our families, our friends.**

**Wishing you and yours a  
prosperous, peaceful,  
wholesome 2021.**

