



FixMy Community

Report Issues to Build a Better Community
Created by MySociety as FixMyStreets



FixMyCommunity Powers Transparency, Participation, and Accountability

Central to NDI's mission is "making democracy deliver." At the most fundamental, this comes down to improvements in the lives of everyday citizens. For many, their direct experience with government is the proverbial pothole on their street. Unfortunately, government institutions often don't have an easy way to identify these frustrating local problems. In many democracies, citizens are often unaware of the achievements of their government and what they do accomplish. Prolonged perceptions of negative performance around service delivery has consistently threatened the viability of democracy.

Effective public service delivery depends on allocating resources to the most critical needs of a community and then deploying them as promised. For many governments, however, there is limited transparency and accountability around service provision. Lacking information on citizen desires and service needs, administrators often have no easy way to determine what provisions to provide or where they are needed. Without outside pressure from citizen input, government employees in charge of service delivery lack the incentives for sorely needed reforms.

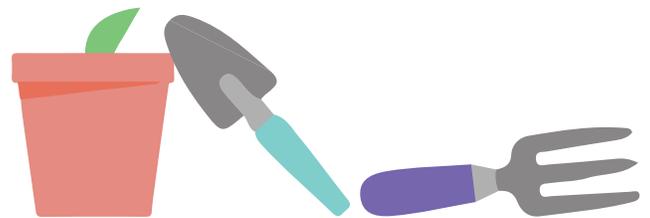
FixMyCommunity is based on mySociety's popular crowdsourcing tool FixMyStreet, an award-winning website that makes it easy to report local problems from a computer or smartphone. A site can be based on categorical areas, such as community housing, crime, or trash pickup, or areas with a responsible managing body, such as a municipal area governed by a city council or an elected official's district. FixMyCommunity then tracks the issue's location and category and sends a report to the department or body responsible for fixing it. The tool doesn't just send problem reports—FixMyCommunity also makes the reports visible to everyone. Anyone can see past reports, leave updates, or subscribe to alerts. Additional features on the platform foster communication with authorities who are actually fixing the reported problems. Finally, FixMyCommunity creates an atmosphere of civic participation, where citizens can experience a direct pathway for expressing grievances and making inquiries to the local government.

Why Should I Use FixMyCommunity?

Citizen to Government Problem Reporting

FixMyCommunity is designed for programs focused on strengthening government institutions in their delivery of public services. In all standard use cases, the government must be a full partner, committed to collecting and acting on the concerns of their citizens. FixMyCommunity is best suited for governments - whether national, provincial or local - where authorities have the desire and capacity to respond to citizen concerns.

Working with a government entity to improve its ability to collect citizen issues also strengthens the capacity for democracy to deliver for voters. Increased transparency in reports submitted shows other citizens their mutual concerns; the public display of updates creates accountability for government to respond. Aggregated reports can provide illustrative data on the types and locations of problems that citizens are concerned about.



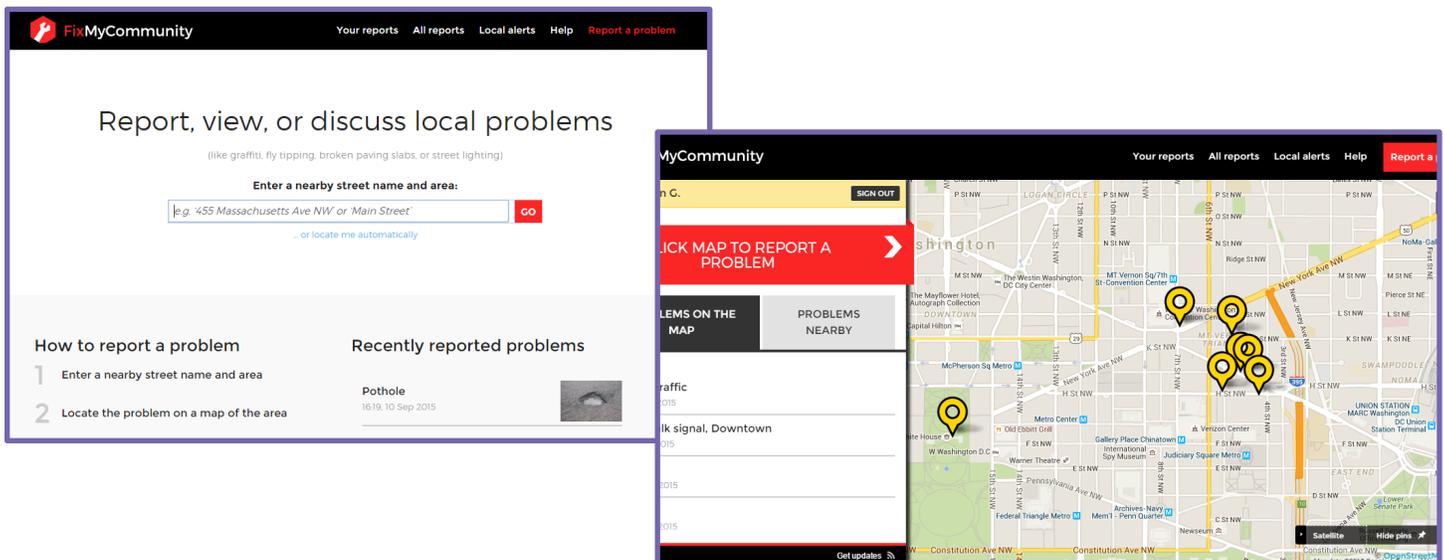
Civil Society Information Collection

FixMyCommunity can be a powerful way of coupling the problems identified by a particular interest group, increasing pressure on the government to address their common needs.

Under certain circumstances government may not have the internal capacity to manage a FixMyCommunity platform, and may instead have a close relationship with a civil society partner who manages the system and provides the problem reports and other analysis to the appropriate government entities. To be of any real use, this still requires a partnership with a government group capable and willing to fix things.

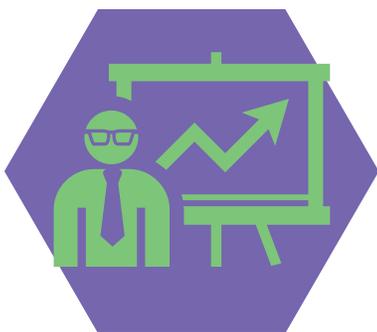
Reporting Government Shortcomings (but be careful!)

Crowdsourcing can be an effective method of tracking government failures or even crimes; one of the most famous is I Paid a Bribe, where Indian citizens have submitted over 40,000 reports of bribery attempts. Given the low trust in government globally, such uses for FixMyCommunity would further undermine political institutions and come with a host of problems of either malicious utilization or reprisals against whistleblowers. Approach this use case with extreme caution.



Past Use Cases

FixMyCommunity's base platform FixMyStreet has been successfully deployed nationwide in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Sweden, Norway, Malaysia, Chile, and Australia, as well as the cities of Delhi and Zürich.



Technical Requirements

Deployment of FixMyCommunity requires someone who can manage content on the platform and should be comfortable learning and managing an online record keeping system. The tool can integrate directly with government databases that maintain open standards; if the government entity has such a system it will require a some programmatic integration. FixMyCommunity will need to be integrated with an automated email service to provide updates to the citizens who submit problems.

Self-hosting FixMyCommunities requires a solid knowledge of Perl, PostgreSQL, and NGINX. Alternatively, you can use the DemCloud hosted software-as-a-service version- check with NDItech for more information.

User Considerations

A program team, partner organization, independent civil society organization, political party, or governmental entity can run FixMyCommunity. The ideal group to manage the platform is someone directly responsible for services or who can liaise with authorities that are responsible for services. This also includes communities capable of organizing themselves to solve the problem. The end user, in most cases, is the general public or an interest group who can use the platform to catalogue and report issues.

The managing organization will need a community manager with the time to oversee the sight, interact with users, police citizen submissions, and manage follow-up with the government entities able to fix them. For an Active site this could easily be a full-time job, and in all circumstances requires prompt responsiveness to the users. On the government side an empowered individual or department needs to have the mandate to relay citizen problems to the parts of the administration with the capability of actually making the changes happen and report the results back to the FixMyCommunity team for updating with the platform and with the citizens.

Promotion and Content Sharing

Crowdsourcing requires a crowd. To be successful, FixMyCommunity needs a large audience of citizens aware of the platform's existence and have the right incentives to actually submit cases. If the government entity is genuinely committed to the platform, they will attempt to broadly promote it through official channels. A broad social media advertising campaign can drive interested people directly to the FixMyCommunity platform, while traditional media outreach—particularly radio or public ads—can sensitize a larger population.

Part of the goal of FixMyCommunity is for public entities to get credit for their responses to the needs of citizens; a publicity campaign highlighting the successes of the platform will build faith in government and demonstrate the reasons to engage.



Security Considerations

In a typical implementation, FixMyCommunity doesn't handle a great deal of sensitive information and most of the data it processes is made public. However, it is important to ensure that only the administrator has controlling privileges from the onset, and determining what information should be private is essential as well. Obviously if FixMyCommunity is being used for something more politically controversial, such as reporting bribes or government shortcomings, the calculation is a very different one.

The FixMyCommunity server could face direct hacking attacks, DDOS attempts or blocking. If hosted on DemCloud, NDI will attempt to mitigate those threats as much as possible. Nonetheless, always consult closely with the team if the environment seems threatening. It is theoretically possible for bogus data to be inserted into the system, which can be mitigated by a vigilant content administrator. These considerations are only a small subset of possibilities; if your program is in a sensitive security context, please engage in a holistic risk assessment process to determine the types of threats that your participants may face.

As with any public information posting platform, spam or abuse are likely. The community manager must keep a watchful eye on all submissions and have defined policies in place for response to trolls or other negative contributions.



Considerations for Women & Marginalized Populations

The FixMyCommunity system is not fully accessible for persons with visual impairments. Reports are commonly submitted via smartphone or computer, so populations without access to the internet may be locked out from report submission. As use of information and communication technologies tends to mirror the exclusion present in general society, marginalized groups including women, youth, ethnic and religious minorities, people with disabilities, LGBT populations, low-income and rural populations may have less access to FixMyCommunity.

Translations

FixMyCommunity is completely available in English and Norwegian with training materials available in English. The source platform of FixMyCommunity is partially available in several additional languages. All can be translated into additional languages as needed with modest funding support. The tool will undergo continual maintenance and further development, and customization is available based on new feature requests or unusual country contexts. We can also work with you to translate the tool and manual into additional languages. If you are interested in adapting FixMyCommunity to your language, please contact the NDItech team.



Funding Considerations

With the DemTools deployment of FixMyCommunity, the technology costs required are relatively low, but programs should think through the following activities and budget appropriately for the related staff time.

Initial Deployment

- Program strategy and setup time over several weeks or months
- Building well-defined expectations with the political partner who will be using the citizen data contributed to FixMyCommunity, ideally via a formal MOU
- A targeted outreach strategy to inform the public of the existence of the system including to key audiences such as journalists, good government groups, or other civic organizations
- A redesigned visual theme, if desired.
- New language translations, if necessary.

Ongoing Support

- Community management and content moderation for user submissions
- Advertising campaign management
- Social media management
- Engagement with governmental partner

What Support Does NDItech Offer?

NDI has created user manuals for FixMyCommunity to assist organizations with making use of the DemTool (in English; other languages welcome). The NDItech team can provide strategic advice in the design and deployment of a FixMyCommunity platform in a particular political context. The team is experienced in training on-site management, as well as best practices in social media communication and advertising strategies.

For interested partners, NDI staff can assist in administering FixMyCommunity by managing citizen submissions, content moderation, and advertising or digital outreach efforts. NDItech can provide hosting, technical support, and security for organizations through the DemCloud software-as-a-service platform.

DemTools are a set of open source, web-based software applications designed to help NDI partners solve challenges facing their community.



DemTools
by NDItech

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