

Questionnaire Category Responses

E1. Overview

The questionnaire captured nine core areas of interest across island municipalities and regional districts. Responses showed consistent themes of modernization, shared services and risk reduction, with a strong preference for approaches that allow municipalities to adopt proven practices already deployed by peers—a “me-too” model that helps reduce cost, complexity and risk.

E2. Category Responses

1. Chief information Officer Priorities for 2025–2026

When asked about their top priorities for the next two years, Information Technology (IT) leaders were very consistent:

- Update older, legacy systems so they’re easier and safer to run
- Replacement of financial and human resources systems
- An affordable plan to move more systems to secure cloud platforms over time

Because so many municipalities are trying to do similar or the same things, there’s a real opportunity for them to learn from each other—using the same types of tools, following similar technical “blueprints,” and avoiding the trial-and-error that happens when everyone works alone.

2. How We Could Buy Together (Joint Purchasing Models)

The focus was on how joint purchasing could be organized if municipalities decide to buy services or technology together.

Respondents were open to several options, such as:

- Capital Regional District coordinating group purchases on behalf of multiple municipalities
- Another regional body acting as the “hub”
- Or even creating a small, shared team or office to manage joint agreements

The common idea is “Let’s not each build our own process from scratch”. People want to reuse procurement approaches, templates and contracts that have already been set up somewhere else, instead of every municipality negotiating alone.

In summary this category is about who runs and administers shared deals, not about the specific vendors or provincial agreements themselves.

3. Shared Municipal Voice

This question explored whether municipalities see value in speaking together as a group to the province, vendors and other partners.

Many respondents felt it would be helpful to have a shared voice on:

- Group buying and better pricing
- Funding for cybersecurity and critical infrastructure
- Safe and responsible use of Artificial Intelligence/Large Language Models (AI/LLM)

Rather than every municipality sending separate messages and requests, they see value in one coordinated group speaking on behalf of local governments. This makes it easier for smaller communities to benefit from work that larger organizations may already be doing.

In summary this category is about joint advocacy and influence, not about how contracts are run or how costs are split.

4. Artificial Intelligence/Large Language Model Collaboration

When it comes to AI, respondents are interested in very practical uses, such as:

- Helping residents get answers faster through online chat
- Summarizing long documents and policies
- Drafting reports, council/board materials and other routine writing

At the same time, they are very clear that AI must be used safely. That means:

- Respecting the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA)
- Protecting names and personal information
- Being open about how vendors handle data
- Keeping people “in the loop” to check the AI’s work

The “shared concept” idea is important here: one municipality might pilot an AI tool first, work through the risks and then others can copy that model instead of starting from zero.

5. Plugging into Provincial Agreements

This question asked about using agreements the province has already negotiated, especially for telecom and network services. Many municipalities want to:

- Take advantage of pricing and terms the province has already secured
- Reduce the need for their own lengthy procurement processes
- Benefit from the leverage that comes with larger, province-wide deals

Proposal: if the province already has a good deal, local governments would like to “plug in” rather than start from scratch and duplicate efforts for a lesser outcome.

In summary this category is about riding on existing provincial deals, whereas Question 2 is about creating and running new shared deals within the local government sector.

6. Group Buying and Sharing Contracts

The focus was on creating new shared contracts just for municipalities and regional districts, separate from provincial agreements.

There was strong interest in group buying, where multiple municipalities join the same contract to get:

- Lower prices
- Shared service levels
- Less time spent on duplicate procurements

However, respondents were clear that local choice still matters. They like the idea of opt-in: municipalities can join the common contract when it fits their business and budget cycles, and they still have the ability to step back if it doesn't.

In summary this category is about building our own shared contracts as a sector, not about provincial piggybacking (Question 5) or how costs are split (Question 8).

7. Collaboration on Developing Common Standards and Guardrails

This question looked at what minimum standards should apply across shared work, so everyone is operating at a safe and consistent baseline.

Respondents recognize that some basics should be common across the sector—for example:

- A baseline level of security in tools like Microsoft 365
- Contracts that clearly protect privacy and keep data in the right place
- Following widely recognized security frameworks (e.g., CIS/ISO)

In practice, this means smaller municipalities don't have to design their own standards from scratch or spend their limited funds and resources. They can adopt standards and contract language already used by neighbouring municipalities, speeding things up and reducing legal and technical risk.

In summary this category is about the rules of the road (standards and safeguards), not about who runs contracts or how to pay for them.

8. Cost Sharing and Budget Timing

This question focused on how municipalities might split costs and when they could realistically join in.

Four respondents said they were ready in principle to share costs across municipalities, while others were not yet at that point. Many noted that their timing depends on:

- Internal budget cycles
- Council or Board approvals
- How full their current work plans already are

Again, there's an opportunity: if one or two municipalities successfully launch a shared initiative with a workable cost-sharing model, others can copy that pattern and align their timing later.

In summary this category is about who pays what, and when they can afford to join, not about what is being bought or who manages the contracts.

9. How Participation and Oversight Would Work

This question asked **how people want participation and decision-making to be structured** in any shared initiative.

Most respondents want flexible participation and clear, transparent governance. Common preferences included:

- Opt-in participation (join when ready, not forced from day one)
- Oversight by a group of Chief Information Officers or senior IT leaders
- Clear roles, decision-making rules, and reporting

This lets each municipality participate in shared work when it fits their local priorities and capacity, while still benefiting from being part of a larger community.

10. Overall Priorities and Where to Start First

Finally, respondents were asked to choose their single top priority for 2025–2026 from options such as group buying, using provincial agreements, AI/LLM pilots, or speaking with one voice (advocacy). They could also indicate that all were equally important.

While specific selections varied by organization, the themes were consistent:

- Group buying and using provincial agreements are seen as practical, high impact starting points.
- AI/LLM pilots and shared advocacy are also important, especially for longer-term transformation and influence.

Several respondents commented that these areas really belong together rather than being ranked strictly shared contracts, shared advocacy, and shared AI pilots reinforce each other. That points toward a phased approach where municipalities can join the pieces that align with their local priorities and readiness, instead of a one-size-fits-all program.

In summary this category shows where people want to start first, tying together all the earlier themes.